

THE FREETHINKER

▪ EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN ▪

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Views and Opinions.

Freethought and To-day.

ONE of my valued correspondents, writing to congratulate me on the publication of *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*, thought that opportunities for the display of heroism were not so great to-day as in Bradlaugh's time. I do not agree with this, although it is an opinion that is, I fancy, widely held. I would prefer to put it that the opportunities for the same kind of heroism are not so general to-day, but the opportunities for a rarer kind of courage, so far as Freethought is concerned, are greater to-day than ever they were. A hundred years ago Freethought was still largely fighting for the right of expression, and against an enemy that showed no hesitation in avowing the conviction that open antagonism to religious ideas should and ought to be suppressed. Men were openly threatened with severe consequences if they opposed religion, and the older reading of the blasphemy laws was still in operation. To-day the legal, and even the general, right openly to criticize religion is publicly admitted, although it may privately be denied. And the distinction between these two situations is one of which my correspondent had evidently lost sight. I do not think that there are fewer opportunities for fighting than there were in the height of the Bradlaugh struggle, it is only that to-day the fight has changed in form, and this change calls for a rarer and actually stronger type of character.

The distinction is really that between open and disguised coercion. The former creates antagonism and rouses to resistance. Threaten a man with physical violence or offer an open bribe to secure conformity, and there is a tendency to resist. But concede the right to free thought and free speech in theory, while denying it in practice, and let this denial take, not the form of openly applied force, but the force of a social boycott, or inability to gain a place in the public eye—in the press, in Parliament,

or the council chamber, or the loss of promotion in one or another branch of the civil service, and for one who will submit in the first case you have twenty who will submit in the latter.

* * *

A Demoralizing Process.

There is a still further difference of consequence in the two cases. There is no necessary humiliation in submission to openly applied force. There is none in a man not speaking because a gang of ruffians threatens to break his neck if he does. That situation arouses only feelings of contempt for the bullies. A soldier is not humiliated because he surrenders to a superior force, and when there is no ulterior purpose served by his dying at his post. But the man who submits to coercion for fear of a loss of social prestige, or to gain social distinction, is in a different position. In the first set of circumstances he yields to the bully without, and his whole nature resents the necessity. In the second, he has to deal with his own sense of right and justice, and that is a very different business. It is not the bully without, but the “God” within, with whom he has to deal. And he does this by declining to recognize his own motives. He does not say, as he would in submitting to openly applied force, “I am submitting because it is hopeless to resist.” He excuses his submission, rationalizes his weakness, and by justifying it acts as a defender of a system he should seek to destroy. The champions of religion have been taught by experience that it is far easier to buy the silence of opponents than it is to avert opposition by open intolerance. I do not agree with those who say that the character of Freethinkers is not what it was. The truth is rather that it requires a finer fighting type than it did a century ago. The power of social bribery requires a stronger moral fibre for resistance than does the oppression that is exercised through judge and gaoler.

* * *

Mass Opinion.

There are other obstacles to the growth of genuine Freethinking which, while they are not new in the world's history, exist in a very aggravated form to-day. Chief among these is one that was dealt with by Mr. Howard Whitehouse, at the Educational Associations, Conference at University College the other day. His speech dealt with the manufacture of mass opinion, and I read Mr. Whitehouse's address with the greater pleasure, since it travelled over much the same lines as an article of mine on the same topic written some time ago. Control by mass opinion is, of course, nothing new in history. For many centuries it indicated the main policy of the Christian Church. Individual thinking was discouraged, and by a dual process of eliminating the intellectually wayward, and a method of control which aimed at an absolute uniformity of opinion, the Church hoped to create a united and perpetual Christian society. Now

that this has been given up as hopeless we see the same thing taken up by Italy, Russia, Germany, and some other smaller States. In addition, the course of our political development, the growth of the newspaper press, and the general tendency of education, has transferred this policy of making mass opinion from the religious to the political sphere. In politics, no matter what the party, from Communist to Conservative, the aim is to provide the electorate with a number of parrot-like cries which may be voiced whenever the particular political machine in which they believe sounds the note for their use. "The downtrodden proletariat" is as effective with one group as "For King and Country" is with another, and on the face of it each indicates about the same degree of understanding. The newspapers have for long learned the value of dosing the public with a repetition of phrases, and the development of our national educational systems, whether in elementary or in the large public schools, turns out the same mass opinion, which bears a far greater tribute to the education given than to the understanding that is developed. The last war was fought on the strength of these parrot-technics, and in the next war, whenever it comes, we shall find the same machinery working at full pressure. "National Unity" has come to mean little more than a shouting together of the same "slogans" on the same occasion.

There is, however, one new feature in the situation. Hitherto intolerance has acted with a certain shame-facedness. To-day it is bolder and claims the status of a first principle. The "State" or its synonym "the Country," has usurped the place of God and the Church. Man does not exist for the greater glory of God, he exists for the greater glory of the State. The traitor is not merely the man who *acts*, he is the man who *thinks* contrary to orders. That is at least the temporary philosophy of Russia, it is the announced permanent philosophy of both Germany and Italy and in our own country we have the Fascist movement, which only awaits the opportunity to become as brutal and as intolerant, and as uncivilized as Fascism is in other countries. That is the worst of slogans. They are not to make people reflect, they make no appeal to intelligence, they have no room for discussion, and therefore no place for freedom of thought. They are the voice of the pack, the unthinking howl of the herd, and have no other purpose than to set the unreflective passions of a crowd working towards a given end. This is so clearly recognized in Germany that Hitler has now announced that the number of young men and women who are to be admitted to the higher education courses is to be severely restricted, even when the candidates are among his own Nazi followers. That is more than logical, it is necessary if Fascism in any of its forms is to survive. Its followers might well paraphrase Gambetta and cry "Intelligence, free, unfettered intelligence, that is the enemy."

* * *

The Outlook.

I do not think, then, that Freethought is less robust than it was. The courage demanded to-day is partly of a different kind, and so far as the required courage is different it is manifested on a higher level, because it has to resist a more insidious attack, one which fewer are able to resist. The more ostensibly liberal religion becomes, the greater the inducement for many to purchase social ease, and perhaps social distinction, by ceasing to attack the "infamous." There is, of course, an attack which comes in the old form—the attack against freedom of thought and speech in the countries I have named, and which has many advocates in this country. And there are

many signs that they who really value individual intellectual independence may have, in this country, their courage put to the test in the not distant future.

But of that I have no very great fear—at least so far as Freethought is concerned. A very shrewd observer—a German, one who had left his country, not for his country's good, but for his own, said to me recently that the Nazi regime was one foredoomed to a progressive deterioration. At the outset it is conceivable that a large number of people, anxious for improvement, may seize on a barbarous thing such as Hitlerism, on some other dictatorship as offering a probable way out of their difficulties. Even the brutalities incident to this regime may be "rationalized" just as the Church rationalized the brutalities that were practiced under its rule, and in its name. But the brutalities, the persecution involved gradually disgusts the better character, and the dictatorship is reduced to selecting a progressively lower type to carry out its decrees. A dictatorship, a tyranny, carries within it the seeds of its own dissolution. It deteriorates as rapidly as an army that is not able to replenish its manhood by contact with social life. I believe that it is this cause, partly, at least, that led to the breakdown of Church rule. It was so antagonistic to the fundamentally better feelings of men that it had to depend for maintenance upon a progressively lower type of character, while all along it was filling the ranks of its opponents with those who were morally and intellectually superior.

Finally, it may be that to the more thoughtful and the more courageous in the Freethought ranks the present situation will awaken the conviction that we have been taking our freedom too much for granted. It is neither so great nor so secure as many have imagined. Some few legal injustices have been removed, but the social injustices remain, and there are greater inducements to compromise and actual hypocrisy. It may be that a very strenuous fight lies before us, not to make a greater advance, but to retain what has already been won.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

O Listen to the Banned.

"The divine stands wrapt up in his cloud of mysteries, and the amused laity must pay titles and veneration to be kept in obscurity, grounding their hope of future knowledge on present ignorance."—George Farguhar.

In studying Christian origins, the inquirer after truth is faced by the fantastic and unreal character of the voluminous literature of the Ages of Faith. Not only is far too much of the theological writing neurotic, but it too often sinks to the level of the tommyrotic. All the writings are, more or less, open to these serious objections, but the outpouring of the so-called Fathers of the Christian Church are grotesque to the point of the ridiculous. Allowing for an Eastern background, even allowing for an Oriental exaggeration, the writings of these men represent nothing so much as a Mississippi of falsehood and fabrication.

This divorce from reality is just as apparent in the four gospels of the New Testament. None of these precious documents profess to give an exhaustive account of the acts of Jesus Christ, and "John's Gospel" concludes by saying:—

There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

This is a holy "howler" to conclude an alleged sober account of the earthly life of a deity. It must be confessed that tradition does make very startling

demands even on the childlike faith which is nurtured on the fairy-tales of the Gospels. Few more instructive volumes could be placed in the hands of anyone interested in the origins of Christianity than the tabooed scriptures known as the Apocryphal Gospels, of which few Christians have any knowledge. Even the Apocryphal books associated with the Old Testament have been pushed into the background by astute ecclesiastics, and when Queen Victoria placed a quotation from the "Book of Wisdom" upon the tomb of her husband, the Prince Consort, she caused rare flutterings in the dovecotes of Orthodoxy. Yet down to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, this particular Apocrypha was an integral portion of the Christian Bible, as by law allowed. Since that date it has almost disappeared from the public eye, and is mainly read by theological students and sceptics.

The far more interesting Apocryphal Gospels are not easy to obtain. An edition was issued by Hone, but it has long been out of print; and another edition, edited by Cowper, has shared the same fate. Some day, perhaps, an enterprising publisher will place a handy edition of these tabooed gospels upon the book market at a cheap price. For in these comparatively unknown accounts of Jesus Christ one finds the gospel legends in the making, the rough studies of the completed painting of the "Old, Old Story," foisted upon the world as something entirely unique and incomparable, and the fact of the volume being taboo to the religious world is all the more reason why it should reappear in an easily accessible form.

Much of the matter in these banned scriptures covers entirely unfamiliar ground. Listen to these passages from the "Second Gospel of the Infancy," piously attributed to "Saint Thomas":—

1. When the child Jesus was five years of age, and there had been a shower of rain, which was now over, Jesus was playing with other Hebrew boys by a running stream, and the water running over the banks stood in little lakes.
2. But the water instantly became clear and useful again; he having smote them by his word, they readily obeyed him.
3. Then he took from the bank of the stream some soft clay, and formed out of it twelve sparrows, and there were other boys playing with him.
4. But a Jew, seeing the things which he was doing, namely, forming clay into the figures of sparrows on the Sabbath, went away and told his father, Joseph, and said.
5. Behold thy boy is playing by the river-side, and has taken clay and formed it into twelve sparrows and profaned the Sabbath.
6. Then Joseph came to the place, and said, why doest that which is not lawful on the Sabbath.
7. Then Jesus, clapping together the palms of his hands, called to the sparrows, and said to them: "Go, fly away, and while ye live remember me."
8. So the sparrows fled away, making a great noise.
9. The Jews, seeing this, were astonished, and went away and told their chief persons what a strange miracle they had seen wrought by Jesus.

This same story is elaborated in the "First Gospel of the Infancy," where it is stated that this extraordinary boy performed a similar miracle in his seventh year, astonishing his playmates by making clay figures of donkeys, oxen, and birds, walk, fly, eat and drink, as he commanded them, and this account concludes:—

When at length the boys went away and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them: Take heed, children, for the future of his company, for he is a sorcerer.

This child-like credulity runs through the entire Ages of Faith, manifesting itself in a thousand ways. Tradition, that "lying jade," says that the donkey has borne a cross on his back ever since Jesus Christ made his entry into Jerusalem "sitting on an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." According to Didron, the praises of the cross were sung in the ninth century in like manner as people celebrate those "of a god or a hero," and right-reverend and most ignorant Fathers of the Great Lying Church did not fail to remark that its figure was "engraven on the production of Nature, seen in the works of men, in the position of inanimate objects and the gestures of the living." Joyful indeed must have been the heart of the early Christian who, gazing on a jackass, was first struck by the illusion that the markings were cruciform.

This priestly-cultivated credulity of pious people blinds their eyes to facts. The Gospel legends are poured into their ears from earliest childhood, and the "Old, Old Story" has a familiar ring even when half believed. But the unblushing mendacity of the Apocryphal Gospels, being in an unfamiliar setting, should make the most bigoted believer rub his eyes in amazement. And one thing must be evident to every honest reader. The Christian Religion is based upon similar nonsense, for Christianity is based upon miracles. It is on the truth or falsehood of miracles that the very personality of Jesus Christ must stand or fall. According to the New Testament, it was by miracles that he attested his divine mission. It was by miracles that he won his first following. Without credulous belief in these yarns, Christianity would long since have died out. It is not a creed of "love" and "brotherhood" which has fascinated ignorant millions throughout the centuries, and caused them to fill the priests' coffers with untold gold.

The priests claim that Jesus Christ was a God, and they are his representatives. They point to the "proofs" in their own Bible; that he multiplied loaves and fishes, healed the sick, restored the dead to life. The whole question is reduced to one of facts. If people can be persuaded to believe that Christ was really born of a Virgin, that he performed miracles, that he died and was buried, resurrected and afterwards left the earth like a balloon, then the pretensions of the priests are acceptable. If, on the other hand, we believe that these things are all legends, it dwarfs the figure of Christ from that of a deity to that of a howling dervish. No talk of a "Golden Rule" will make believable the nonsense upon which the Christian Religion is based.

The most important Christian Body, the Romish Church, recognizes this, and brazenly declares that its own miracles are a continuation of those said to be wrought by Christ, his disciples, and an army of saints. They shout that the so-called "cures" at Lourdes, and elsewhere, and the fraudulent liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, are precisely such as are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and that the apparition of the Virgin at La Salette is as genuine as the so-called miracles in Palestine. The priests of the Greek Church take the same impudent attitude, and contend that the faked revelation of the "Holy Fire" at Jerusalem every year is simply the latest link in a great chain that extends back to the astonishing times of the Bible heroes. To-day the two greatest of the Christian Churches rely on fraud for the perpetuation of their views, and the assumption is that their priestly predecessors in the Ages of Faith did precisely the same thing. The moral of the whole sorry business is refreshing in these days. It is that gross ignorance, even when associated with re-

ligion, is still ignorance, and the clergy trade upon it. To live, as the clergy do live, by exploiting the carefully nurtured mental serfdom of their fellow-men is the meanest piece of charlatany in the world.

MIMNERMUS.

The Truth about Russia.

(Concluded from p. 844, Vol. liii.)

DURING the period from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, under feudalism, the Russian Church flourished exceedingly. Russian bishops were chosen by the ruling princes, and "The administration of bishops," says Hecker, "consisted chiefly in collecting income from the Churches in the given dioceses." They also collected tithes from the Episcopal estates. Some of these estates were of great extent. For instance, "the Bishop of Vyatka owned thirty villages with the lands and forests surrounding them." For all this wealth wrung from the labour of the peasants, the monks and the priests did nothing; for, says Hecker, "Indigenous Russian Christianity was strikingly backward in intellectual achievements. Most priests were as illiterate as their parishioners." They debauched the peasants with superstition by teaching them of the magical power attached to the reading of prayers. "The same prayers when read for the soul of the departed had a similar effect. Because of this the number of professional prayer-makers, *i.e.*, monks, was rapidly increasing, and resulted in the abuse of the monasteries and their huge accumulation of wealth."¹

In the sixteenth century a situation arose similar to that of the Middle Ages in Europe. The Church became so powerful that it rivalled the power and splendour of the court of the Tsars. Nikon the Patriarch, or head of the Russian Church, who is compared, by historians, with our Thomas à Becket, declared that the Tsars received their authority from the Church, therefore, he pointed out: "it is clear that priesthood is a far greater thing than royalty." This caused his downfall, and henceforth the supremacy of the State over the Church was established. Hand in hand, Church and State now proceeded to the exploitation and slavery of the people:—

The seventeenth century is called, in Russian Church History, the Epoch of the Russian Patriarchy. It could equally be called the Epoch of the Triumph of Serfdom in Russia. During this century the centralized power of the Moscow Tsars, backed by the nobility and the upper hierarchy, steadily oppressed the free peasants and forced them into servitude, robbing them of their possessions and their lands. By this time the Patriarch, the bishops, and the monasteries owned about one million serfs, roughly eight per cent of the population. These they exploited as did the boyars and princes and, of course, it was to their mutual interest to maintain the dignity of the Church and of the Throne, both of which blessed and protected the institution of serfdom.

Thus the Church, depending for protection of its property upon the Tsar, became his willing tool.²

This state of things continued right through to the end of the nineteenth century, which Hecker describes as: "the darkest period in the history of the Church; its unholy alliance with the State undermined its influence upon the people, and prepared

the ground for a mass Atheist propaganda." (p. 52.) The head of the Church during this time was the infamous Pobyedonostzev, who, fortunately for himself, died in 1907, or he would have been the first to experience the vengeance of the revolutionists. He persecuted all those infected with modern ideas, the intelligentsia, the Jews, and all the numerous sects. "Believing that ignorance was the best safeguard against revolutionary propaganda," says Hecker, "Pobyedonostzev suppressed the zemstvo (public) schools, and made great efforts to organize a parochial school system under the supervision of the parish priests." Who were themselves totally illiterate and uneducated! "The ordinary clergy was enlisted in this wide-spread persecution. The priests were requested to co-operate with the secret service of the Tsar, and inform the police of any revolutionary propaganda carried on in their parishes. As a result of their information, more than 10,000 school teachers were imprisoned or sent into exile." The higher clergy, also, followed his leadership, continues Hecker: "and became zealous advocates of his reactionary policies. Some went so far as to abuse the most sacred institution of the Church, the confessional, for spying purposes, and the blood of many innocent victims may be charged to this heinous espionage." (pp. 52-53.) Such is the record of the innocent, holy, benevolent Russian Church; so misrepresented and persecuted to-day!

The Church had accumulated enormous possessions, says Hecker:—

According to the 1914 report of the Holy Synod, there were on the territory of the former Russian Empire 57,173 churches and 23,593 chapels—with 112,629 priests and deacons—550 monasteries and 475 convents with 95,259 inmates. The property and wealth of the Church was enormous. It owned 7,000,000 desyatins³ of land, and many commercial enterprises and houses. Its annual income, was estimated to be about 500 million roubles.⁴ At the time of the nationalization of the banks its deposits were about eight billion roubles.

This army of over 200,000 clerics, besides millions of armed forces, stood behind the tsarist regime and yet could not prevent its collapse. When in February, 1917, the Tsar abdicated, the Church joined forces with the Kerensky regime to prevent the Bolsheviks from coming into power, and when this failed it fought them by every means, understanding very well that the triumph of Bolshevism meant death to the Church. (pp. 194-195.)

And this attitude, says Hecker, "the Church maintained even long after the white armies and the interventionists were defeated, and the Bolsheviks had firmly established the Soviet Government." And the Church "is still their most formidable enemy, which would seize every opportunity to overthrow the Soviet régime and turn the wheels of progress backward." On January 19, 1917, the Patriarch, or head of the Russian Church, publicly anathematized the revolutionary Government, threatening it with "hell-fire excommunication." "We also conjure all you faithful children of the Orthodox Church not to enter into any kind of association with these monsters of the human race."

The Government would have been perfectly justified in suppressing the Church and its services, out of hand. What it did do, four days later (January 23), was to publish its famous decree "on freedom of conscience and religious societies." In which, says Hecker: "Like the United States it recognizes the equality before the law of all religious cults, with

¹ J. F. Hecker: *Religion and Communism*, pp. 38-39.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

³ A desyatina equals 2.7 acres.

⁴ Over 50 million pounds.

preference to none, and tolerates every form of religious custom and ceremony as long as it does not disturb the public peace, and does not infringe upon the rights of other citizens." And similar to the practice of France, it excluded religious teaching from all public schools. It also nationalized the property of the Church, and in this, as Hecker points out, "the State did not discriminate against it, but treated it similarly to other institutions and private enterprises, such as industrial corporations, banks, great landholders and others whose properties were also nationalized. In its practical sense it did not curtail the religious significance of the Church, since Church buildings used for worship were left to their congregations free of rent, and only revenue-producing property was taken from the Church for the benefit of the people." (p. 203.)

During the famine caused by the failure of the crops in 1921, an agitation began in the press for the realization of some of the enormous wealth contained in the Churches. This moved the Patriarch to suggest "unnecessary objects such as trinkets, jewelry, and broken objects of gold and silver, which might be found in the churches, be given to the famine fund, with the consent of the congregation." How generous! All the unnecessary objects would be those that were worthless.

Then the Government moved, and instructed the local Soviets to remove from the Churches, all articles of gold, silver and precious stones, not actually used during the service, and surrender them to the central committee for famine aid. The Patriarch Tikhon branded this order as sacrilegious, and called upon the faithful to resist by every available means. As Hecker justly observes:—

Certainly the resistance of the Patriarch could not be justified from the humanitarian, not to speak of the Christian, point of view. Hence his policy was doomed to failure. The Government did not refrain from carrying out the decree, and crushed every resistance on the part of the leaders of the Church. The committees which were entrusted with the task of appropriating the valuables were instructed to use the greatest care in selecting the articles to be taken. No object should be removed which was needed for the cult, so that none could complain that his religious practices had been interfered with. The amount of surplus wealth taken from the Churches was enormous, and yet so much remains that the loss is hardly noticeable to the visitor.

In fact, the Government, as Hecker observes, could not, consistently, "abolish private and corporation property generally and leave that of the Church untouched," and "Had the leadership of the Church recognized the justice and inevitability of the social revolution it could have adjusted its affairs much less painfully, by conferring with the Government and coming to an understanding." (p. 204.) Everybody interested in the subject should buy, or borrow, this most interesting book, which we have only skimmed.

W. MANN.

It is surely strange that not one of the verities of Christian supernaturalism has been established. No chain is stronger than its weakest link. In the Christian chain every link is broken, shadowy, unreal. How many natural men have prayed that one solid, unequivocal supernatural link could be produced—a Deity, or an "Evil One," or a soul, or a heaven, or a hell? The production, beyond cavil, of even one poor ghost would be the greatest event in history.—*Furneaux Jordan.*

The Break-up of the Drought.

I THINK it was the last Wednesday in September that our enlightened Prime Minister fixed upon as a day of humiliation and prayer, when all the churches were to unite in their incantations to put an end to about the worst drought South Africa has ever known. The proclamation is quoted on the first page of your issue for October 22.

Not content with this, a request was made that all the tennis and other sports clubs should be closed on the usual Wednesday half-holiday, so that people might be as miserable as possible—and this was complied with.

And the result?—Well, in the course of the next month, there were a few local, and often violent hailstorms in different parts of the country, one or two dull days or nights with spots of rain, but apart from this the heavens were as brass and storms of wind at once dried up any reasonable rain that fell.

Towards the end of October, I began reading the R.P.A. edition of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and reading about the way people all over the world, from our immediate neighbourhood in S. Africa to further India, Australia, S. and N. America, nay, even in Europe itself had for untold generations set to work, to their own satisfaction, for untold ages, to procure rain. I couldn't help reflecting that it was a pity that we were too wrapped-up in our own holy but mushroom religion to benefit by this universal experience. Even the Church of Rome makes the test of a doctrine's truth, "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus," has been believed ("Because always, because everywhere, because by everyone.") Is not a matter of a few thousand generations a good enough test for time; Zululand, Siberia, the Americas good enough for area, and the inhabitants of these countries! will they not fill the 'bus?

I had seen the pictures of the bishops and clergy who conducted these services; I had seen portraits of Hertzog and the Governor-General, and it was obvious that none of these had the youth and vigour necessary to ensure the success of their incantations. What was obviously wanted was that the elderly man who was the leading spirit, say Mr. Hertzog, should be removed, and a young and vigorous man put in his place. If the elderly gent. were blown to pieces by a cannon, would that not stimulate the thunder, and, if black powder were used, put strength into the clouds?

But no one would listen to me, so I suggested an equally popular, equally widespread and equally ancient device—that a black animal, the colour of the clouds, should be taken and thrown into water, so that as it jumped out and sprinkled water over the ground so the clouds might blow up and sprinkle the ground in like manner.

But people only scoffed; and our cat is a gray one, and no use for anything.

However, on Saturday, November 3, some five and a half weeks or so after the abortive "humiliation and prayer," I saw what I was looking forward to. I was crossing a bridge at 9 o'clock over a stream and I saw a black retriever running down the sloop and jumping in and out of the water, not once but half a dozen times, shaking itself and scattering the water far and wide.

If that doesn't mean good and steady rain, thought I, universal experience is worth nothing.

At 2 o'clock steady rain set in and lasted two hours. I then made a dash across the town on a bike to keep an appointment, and as I started back the rain came down and drenched me to the skin. It rained for about four hours more.

Now mark this—that is what happened in the "black dog area"; on the East Rand they had locally, hailstones "as big as golf-balls"; in the far Northern suburbs the hailstones were as big as hen's eggs—so also on the West Rand. So much for the dog! Ever since the influence of this intelligent animal's behaviour has spread over the land and everywhere there has been abundant rain, only a dozen, or so, people struck by lightning and a few hundred sheep and cattle drowned, but the lives of the rest saved.

I hope that when you read this true account of how the drought was arrested in S. Africa, you will take it to heart and not scorn the universal experience of mankind—have a look at your bishops and see whether they are as young as they ought to be, and even the higher rulers of the church and nation.

Johannesburg.

J. LATHAM.

Stormy Weather.

(Revised Version.)

"I am in a position to state that Lord Hugh Cecil has now definitely decided to begin proceedings according to ecclesiastical law against the Dean and the Bishop of Liverpool in respect to Unitarians preaching in the Cathedral."—*From a Liverpool Paper.*

O CITIZENS of Liverpool awake!
There's a row commencing over the Cathedral;
A rumpus right enough, and no mistake,
And polyhedral.

Lord Cecil's on the warpath, so look out!
And his battle-cries unquestionably date him;
But lest you don't know what it's all about,
We quote—verbatim.

Upon "irregularity" he's pounced,
Of a kind he has to class as "very serious."
"It constitutes a scandal," he's announced
In tones imperious.

How far the thing may go there's yet no telling,
But he cannot let it rest there in the raw;
The issues are too big and too compelling.
It's going to Law.

The case is on the threshold of proceeding;
He is putting Dean and Bishop through the hoop.
If everything goes on the way it's leading,
They're in the soup.

We're gratified, of course, by their detection,
(Though we're sorry it disturbed a holy week).
We view aghast this ethical defection,
This yellow streak!

These miscreants must face the Law—but wait!
I quite forgot to specify their crime.
It's possible you think they stole the plate;
No—not this time.

It's worse than that—a veritable sink
Of blackest sin. Believe it if you can.
*They let a parson preach who seems to think
Christ was a man!!*

TWINKLE.

The Plain Man and Philosophy.

WE all find ourselves in a strange unexplained world, but a world which is constantly challenging us to explain it and know it. Curiosity, fear, hope, evil, pain, and death are the spurs which goad us to unravel the mysteries of existence. The world looks very beautiful and there seems no reason why it should not give uninterrupted runs of pleasure and happiness, but somehow it does not do so, for any length of time. As small children we are tormented with trivial wants and accidents, at school, driven in awe by teachers, burdened with lessons, and often jeered at by our companions; as youths painfully corrected by our employers, and often in the doldrums on account of sex; and as men tied down to work and responsibility; and our own counter-action and vitality can only modify, but by no means eradicate, these disagreeable influences. Everything also is insecure, even our life itself. The beautiful world of nature then seems to mock us. But do we feel like taking all this lying down? No! We are seized with an impulse to get to the bottom of it all, and to find out whether it is all absolutely necessary, and if there is any hope of a final elimination of evil. We think and go to the library and the bookseller.

But in thinking should we start at the beginning? Have not deep thinkers in all ages left records of their thoughts? Have they not built one upon another? Is the wise course not to read them and start where they left off?

The Greeks, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, Malebranche, Berkeley, Hobbes, Leibnitz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer are perhaps the outstanding names in the line.

But the ordinary man has little time for thinking along those lines or for extensive study. What he needs is a reliable and brilliant metaphysician. Accordingly he feels he must select one with great care.

If it were left to me to suggest the name of a philosopher who has studied all previous philosophers with effect, seen their mistakes, appreciated their true discoveries and blended them and infused a great deal of dynamic thinking of his own, in which he reaches the heart and essence of existence, and reveals its nature, and claims—rightly in my opinion—to have discovered the philosopher's stone; the name I would ask him to welcome would be that of Arthur Schopenhauer.

I can fully vouch that he has satisfied all my longings, needs, and aspirations in this regard. He has been far too much overlooked, in my opinion, generally for interested reasons. A few of his sayings, I may remark frankly, may, at first, shock Freethinkers and Rationalists. He was partial to the benefits of religion for the ignorant multitudes of his days, on account of it containing so much truth in the form of allegory; the only form in which many people, especially before general education came in, could imbibe philosophic truth.

But Freethinkers should not reject a great constructive Freethinker just because of that. After all, religion is only a wrong way of satisfying our deepest intellectual and spiritual needs. Schopenhauer is an example of the right way of satisfying them, and gives a sufficient alternative. We surely don't object to a Loving God on principle, but only because He does not exist. We object to giving reverence, time and sacrifice to a non-existent God. I gave these for years, but was reluctantly obliged to come to the conclusion, after conscious and sub-conscious review of, and reflection on, these years, that in spite of my fervid and detective imagination I had really had no supernatural or authentic response from this God or His Son or Spirit. I had fulfilled the conditions, I had been faithful, I should have had some response, but on the contrary was actually left badly in the lurch in an expedition undertaken with every so-called sign of His inspiration and will.

I am convinced, however, and Arthur Schopenhauer has proved it to me, that there is something analogous to religious or occult or metaphysical reality. He has shown where we can get to know it.

I regard this life with its gift of consciousness as an exceptional opportunity for ascertaining our normal or eternal state. We might even be able to influence that state by our attitude here, and, in fact, Schopenhauer has shown that we can; though the result might not, at first, appear attractive to us, we will be ultimately more than reconciled to it. He is not exactly a scientist, though he took full cognizance of science. He showed, however, that the sphere of science is limited, and can never penetrate to the true heart of things.

His chief work is entitled *The World as Will and Idea*, which should be preceded, however, by his *Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*. For those, who, as an introduction, would prefer a succinct abstract of his work he wrote *On the Will in Nature*—a conveniently small book. Again, there will be those who would rather choose his smaller and more popular books, at first, which afford an example of his style. Such are "The Wisdom of Life," "Counsels and Maxims," and "Studies in Pessimism"; and, in morals, the "Basis of Morality."

His works are, at the same time, fine literature, a rare thing among philosophers, and even his opponents have admitted that they will last on account of their literary value alone.

W. H. RYDER.

Acid Drops.

We congratulate the leader writer of the *Daily Telegraph* on an important historic discovery. He referred recently to "the authors of the British Constitution." Unfortunately the names of these authors were not given, nor was the date. So we are still in the dark as to when and by whom the British Constitution was created, and what precisely it is.

We do not think that the term "Preventive war" is a new one, but in the present state of affairs it is peculiarly significant. It was used recently by one of the fire-eating Japanese Generals in advocating a war on Russia. He said that the duty of the Japanese was to wage a preventive war on Russia, to stay Russia attacking Japan. It is quite a good phrase, and should do excellent duty. For our own part, our wars have always been defensive wars—in defence of our trade, or our liberties, or in defence of our possessions (previously obtained in defence of the natives to whom they previously belonged) or in defence of Europe, or in defence of civilization as a whole. But we prefer "preventive." A. justifiably goes to war with B. to prevent B. attacking A; B. attacks C. to prevent his helping A. or B. D. joins in because if A. or B. or C. or D. comes out on top the survivor must be prevented from attacking D.—and so the round game proceeds. We present this term to Mr. Macdonald and we are not asking for a peage in return.

From the *Liverpool Echo* :—

Mr. R. W. Brighouse, deputy county coroner—holding an inquest at St. Helens, to-day, on Aaron Seddon, aged six, of 141 Park Street, Haydock, who died in the Providence Hospital on Christmas Day, asked a nine-year-old witness named Stephen Kenyon, of 167 Park Street, Haydock, if he knew how to tell the truth. The lad said he did.

The Coroner: Do you know where you will go to if you don't?

The boy shook his head.

Coroner: Perhaps you don't, nor does anybody else.

A Kentish vicar, the Rev. R. S. B. Sinclair, candidly admits, in his parish magazine, that he always listens "with special anxiety" to the Saturday evening weather forecast. The "special anxiety," it appears, is intimately concerned with the possibility that Sunday's weather may reduce his takings. He explains that the things that keep people out of church are: fine weather, wet weather, hot weather, cold weather, fog, ice, snow, rain, wind, sunshine, mud, and thunder. Mr. Sinclair ought to pray for "mixed" weather, for that is as near to "muddled" as we can get.

Mr. Moses Bourne, Vice-President of the Methodist Church, asks: "Do we realize the wonderful sense of comfort and joy that would suffuse life if it were lived under the conscious approval of God?" We don't. But we have no difficulty in realizing the conceit, arrogance, and bigotry which are pronounced characteristics of those pious folk who believe they are living "under the conscious approval of God." And when they prate about their "humbleness," they become even more repulsive to ordinary folk. If there is a heaven, we sincerely hope they may never be allowed to escape from it.

In a discussion about "Women and the ministry," a reader of a Nonconformist paper says that "Our Lord chose the Twelve 'that he might send them forth to preach' (evangelists, not ministers). It is obvious that women could not be sent thus in those days." Curious, is it not, that "Our Lord," who came to break down all barriers, could not get over so small a thing, relatively, as an ancient Eastern taboo? But perhaps our pious

friend is only inventing an excuse to explain why Jesus ignored women in choosing twelve representatives for his new creed.

The Rev. E. L. Wiseman's New Year call to the faithful sheep of the Methodist flock is thoroughly business-like. "Give all you can. Make your earnings holy by offering the first-fruits of all you receive to God. Your joy will abound, and your spiritual profiting will appear to many." This call of the priest for money—how ancient it is! It has echoed down the corridors of time in a continual refrain. The religions revealed unto man may differ widely in belief and precept, but there is a wonderful unanimity among them concerning the importance of exhorting the faithful to part with money. Perhaps it is a divine revelation of the essential "oneness" of all religions.

A church at Consett, County Durham, has been discovered to be built on the mouth of a disused pit-shaft. The special correspondent of the *Sunday Times* tells us that :—

In spite of its uncertain foundations and local subsidences, which have caused neighbouring dwelling-houses to be condemned, the parish church still stands four-square without any sign of defects in its masonry.

That God always shows special solicitude towards the buildings erected to His Honour and Glory is a fact so palpable that it is questioned only by wine-bibbers and the blankest of blank negationists. More sober rationalists, however, who revere facts are impressed more than a little by the uniform practice of Church Authorities in neglecting the use of such devices as lightning conductors on their buildings and spurning all such agencies as fire, burglary and other insurances which might imply shortage of faith. It is facts like these that make even such hardened sceptics sometimes prone to confess that the Galilean has almost conquered. Why the Lord's Tabernacles in Toronto have had such an unhappy 1933 presents no problems to the careful thinker, for after all there are still quite a number of churches that remain unburnt, and one swallow or even a few does not make a summer. Besides he also reads that at Consett "huge iron girders have been discovered, which stretch across the mine shaft." When conditions of this kind exist, they are apt to prove invaluable to those whose business it is to carry out "Special Providences."

When Special Providence was presumably examining and strengthening where necessary, the foundations of Christ Church, Consett, thieves seized the opportunity to break into Hornsey Parish Church, making off with some valuables and eleven bottles of Communion Port (prior to metamorphosis). This has taken place during a gap between rectors, so that we may surmise that the burglary and "sacrilege" would not have occurred if the technique of supplication had not unfortunately been left for a few weeks in less experienced hands.

The Rev. A. E. Whitham (Methodist) confesses that :—

A young fellow, clean and wholesome, once poured out to me his contempt for the hymns on heaven; he said he found no appeal in their morbid sickly sentiment. I told him he was quite right, that there would have been something radically wrong with him if he had liked them or wanted to sing them. But I did suggest, as delicately as I knew how, that one day, when the fire in his veins cooled, and he had dropped a long way down the hill, he would be very glad the section remained in the Hymn Book, . . . and would probably sigh out his little life on one of those very hymns.

This seems like a rather cynical admission that the morbid, sickly, sentimental hymns are retained to soothe feeble and morbid minds among the Church's adherents. The more intelligent leaders of the Church laugh at such hymns in private, but say nothing against them in public. The policy no doubt pays. But it also enables one to see how little there is to choose between Roman priest and Methodist minister.

Apropos of a Report issued by the Registrar-General, which records a further fall in the birth-rate in England and Wales, a newspaper says:—

This is one of the most important and significant changes in the history of the world. It means that the population is not now being replaced by new lives, and that, unless a great change occurs, the English race must soon diminish rapidly.

Before our super-patriots prepare to shed tears at this piece of news, we hope they will enquire whether the *quality* of the race, physically and mentally, has improved or deteriorated. For, after all, that is the more important question—even if one is concerned only about "cannon fodder."

From the *Cape Times* we learn that the natives have made their annual pilgrimage to the M'Limo (Rain God) with seed-grain to be "doctored." The devotees declare that the Rain God has been very satisfactory in his response to plentiful rains and abundant crops. For the last fortnight, indeed, the rainfall has been copious and almost continuous, so M'Limo is already one up. Claims are, of course, also made that the rain has been sent by "Jehovah," in answer to Christian petitions, but we see no way of deciding this point. The natives, however, declare that M'Limo has not yet committed himself on the question of locusts. There is an old-fashioned thoroughness about native petitions which commends itself to us. The Gods have always had a way of answering prayers in ways that have surprised the petitioners, because of, we presume, their careless and slovenly wording. Midas prayed that everything he touched might turn to gold and the gods rather meanly, we think, played the very dickens with him because of the thoughtless wording of his petition. Similarly the Christian congregations of South Africa may pay very dearly for having forgotten the locusts. The incorrect incantations may lead to lamentations.

A special correspondent to the *Times* tells us that "the exquisite story of the Epiphany," that is, the story of the Magi who followed the star until it pulled up over the Bethlehem stable, should be rejected in its "crude literalism," and "we should, instead, be content to take the lovely tale as it stands, grateful for its spiritual truth. The wrong way to read it is with minds intent on testing its minute exactitude of detail." All the same at the Chapel Royal, on Saturday, Epiphany gifts were offered up by the King. "Yeomen of the King's Body-guard, in scarlet and gold Tudor uniforms, with gold tasselled halberds, stood on guard, whilst a Priest-in-Ordinary-in-Waiting received the gifts from the hands of two members of the Royal Household." The gifts were, in minute exactitude of detail, gold, frankincense and myrrh.

From another angle a pious religious writer has been declaiming about the presents brought the infant Jesus by the Magi. He has made some wonderful discoveries. They managed to follow the Star of Jesus so well because they were astrologers—which really means, it seems, that they were genuine scientists, mathematicians and "highly cultivated and extremely learned research workers." For, "if learning counts for anything in the pursuit of wisdom, the Magi were wise indeed. . . . Their supreme title to wisdom lay in their recognition of Him when they saw Him. Higher mathematics had led them to Bethlehem"—and so on. This takes our breath away, and we can only wonder that the aforesaid writer did not make the Magi charter an aeroplane and follow the Star, or ring up Mary on the stable automatic telephone, to say that they had located her and would be round in a jiffy with the presents. A good fable is always better rounded off with a little science, and surely God Almighty could have given the Magi both an aeroplane and a telephone exchange at such a supreme moment of the world's history. If not, why not?

The *Saturday Review* has announced that "A.A.B." will now contribute regularly to its columns, probably in the hopes that the depths to which they have already

descended will be surpassed by this museum-specimen of old-crusted toryism. From the following specimen, he appears to be living up to expectations:—

The worst tendency of the peerage is to allow their younger members to marry ballet girls and actresses. I ventured to say to a certain noble duke that I thought it a pity that these mesalliances should be recognized or encouraged by the heads of their families, to which the Duke replied: "It is quite a good thing that the Cavendish blood should be a little diluted." It is this kind of levity and foolishness which is undermining the whole Constitution. How can anyone defend the peers when they will not defend themselves? However I admit that an English ballet girl is better than an American heiress.

Years ago, George Meredith remarked, when English critics condemned the greater liberality in matters of divorce then obtaining in America, that many people mistook symptoms of health for those of disease. "A.A.B." is in the same galley when he condemns instead of congratulates the English peer for his impersonal common-sense utterance.

The Lord Bishop of Bloemfontein very graciously says he believes in the woman of to-day; he finds in her the same courage, decency, unselfishness, as was of old in the best women. In many ways he thinks "there is a gain." There is more reality and demand for reality in life; there is "more frankness as regards sex, and yet a true respect for the decency and honesty, and the things that really matter in life." Strangely enough, the Bishop appears not to have noticed that this improvement coincides with a widespread indifference to his religion, and a repudiation of most of the pious customs, beliefs, conventions, observances, and taboos current in the very religious age of Victoria. If a little more religion is got rid of, there ought to be a little more "gain." If not, why not? In any case, it may be truly said that most of the women of to-day (and the men) don't care a brass farthing about a bishop's opinion of them. And that independent state of mind shows a tremendous "gain." But possibly the Bishop of Bloemfontein will not be able to appreciate that. For the independent mind has always been abhorrent to priests.

From the *Cape Times*, we learn that a "prophet and heaven-sent healer" has appeared at Ladysmith. But not being of the Christian variety he has been ordered by the Native Commissioner to "move on." A deputation of natives asked for his being permitted to remain on the ground of the many miraculous cures he had effected. But the Commissioner was quite firm. We live in days when Protection is a strong economic force and it has always been in operation where religion is concerned. But it does not matter very much in the case of these miraculous cures. Mumbo-Jumbo is just as powerful as Jesus Christ, and a Hindoo Fakir as good as either.

From the same paper we learn that December 31 was appointed by the Government as a Day of Thanksgiving for the rain that has fallen *after* the Day of Prayer for rain that was ordered. Cause and effect is here quite clear. And in all such prayers one has only to wait for the answer to come. God will not be hastened.

The Bishop of Liverpool is quite sure that the Churches acted quite correctly with regard to the war of 1914. The Bishop does not believe that "a Christian is never to knock a man down," this in spite of Jesus saying that a Christian should turn one cheek when the other is smitten. Probably the Bishop would say that such a teaching is practicable only when one is assured that the striker will not avail himself of the "other cheek" that is presented to him. But the Bishop also believes that the great need of to-day is the belief that God can save—provided, that is, that we are ready to knock the other fellow down in case God does not do what we expect him to do.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—R. B. Fowler, 10s.; H. Blewitt, 2s. 6d.

F. G. WOODHALL.—We do not feel so keenly on the spending of the £50,000 to acquire the Codex. After all it is not likely that the Government would have spent the money in any more useful manner. And we are something of a book-collector ourselves. In any case we would sooner see the money spent in that direction than in military displays or Royal Parades.

V. PHELIPS (Cape Town).—Thanks for cutting.

P. J. MORSE.—Your cuttings always appreciated.

L. MARTIN.—A newcomer to the *Freethinker*, writes: "I have been reading the *Freethinker* for over six months, and am deeply interested in its contents. Your "Views and Opinions" act as a weekly tonic, and other articles are also interesting. But I must confess that I am antagonised a little by the tone you adopt towards religious beliefs in general, and I feel that many possible readers may be prevented subscribing from this cause." There may be truth in what this correspondent says, but the *Freethinker* is written by men and women who really believe what they write. And the purpose of the paper is not that of merely getting readers, but to induce the right type of thinking. And the writer who tries to run with the hare and keep in with the hounds attracts only those of his own type. The aim of this paper is not to please but instruct, not to gain the good-will of Christians, but to work for a time when there shall be no Christians to please.

H. HUMPHREY.—Many thanks for cuttings.

R. YOUNG.—Many thanks for parcel. Contents will be distributed to best advantage.

J. STEPHENS.—On consulting our bookshelves we find that our copy of Conway's essay on Christianity has gone the way of many of our other books. We seem to have a number of friends who, as someone said, may be bad arithmeticians, but are damned good book-keepers. We hope this will meet their eyes.

A. SLOANE.—You have got things upside down. It is not of vital consequence to us what God thinks about us; it is of vital consequence to God what we think about Him. You see, we can obviously exist with disbelieving in God, but can he exist if all cease to believe in him?

F. S. LAWES.—Thanks for high appreciation of our work. The repayment we value most is that which takes the form of doing what one can to advance the cause of Free-thought. There is greater need for activity to-day than ever.

A. H. JACKSON.—Obliged for paper. We note that the Grocers' Association is allowing itself to be used as a catspaw by religious organizations. Wireless advertising on Sunday cannot be objected to on any ground save that of sheer religious bigotry of the narrowest kind. It is a pity that trading firms are not run by men with sufficient self-respect to stand out against such religious terrorism.

J. HANLON.—Pleased to know that you are now joining the N.S.S. We should like to see at least a thousand of our readers follow your example before this month is out. Full information will be given by the General Secretary.

C. HEMANS.—When you say that *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll* should rank as one of the best pieces of work done by Mr. Cohen, you are probably influenced chiefly by the subject matter of the book. But we do not claim that it is a *life* of Bradlaugh. That still remains a work for someone in the future. If we have excited interest in the two men, and in the cause for which they fought so well, we are content with what has been done.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

On Sunday next (January 21) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, at 7 p.m., on "Is Christianity Played Out?" The Glasgow Branch has been having excellent meetings this season, and it may be taken that next Sunday's will be no exception.

The Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday, February 3. Already the number of tickets applied for has been quite up to the usual, and it is very necessary that those who wish to attend should make application for tickets as soon as possible. We wish to very strongly impress this upon our readers, as on the last occasion, we have had to refuse many who deferred their applications till the last moment. It may be possible to accommodate everybody, but *only* if we are able to make arrangements in good time, and, naturally, we wish to disappoint no one. Tickets are 8s. each, and evening dress is optional.

In addition to the excursions which will run in time for the Dinner, and which were announced last week, a day excursion will leave Manchester, London, at midnight on February 2, fare 15s. 6d., and from Derby, at 7.25 on the morning of February 3, fare 12s. 6d. Liverpool is sending a good contingent as usual, and we believe other Provincial Branches will be well to the fore.

Arrangements will be made for those who prefer a vegetarian diet, if they will acquaint the General Secretary in time. Those who require hotel accommodation over the week end should also write as soon as possible.

Mr. Cohen has in the press a new book, which will consist of about 100 pages, and will be issued shortly by the Pioneer Press at the price of One Shilling. It is entitled *Letters to a Country Vicar*, and will consist of a detailed criticism of religion in the form which it usually takes nowadays amongst the better-informed supporters of the Christian faith. The Country Vicar is a real personage, and Mr. Cohen is replying to his actual communications. It should be out before the end of January.

Liverpool Freethinkers are reminded that Mr. A. D. McLaren (London) will speak in the Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, to-day (January 14) on "Dictatorships, New and Old." The subject is topical, and Mr. McLaren can be relied upon to handle it in an interesting manner. The lecture begins at 7 p.m.

We were pleased to hear the other day from an old friend, Mr. W. A. Rogerson, whom we knew many years ago as a member of the Manchester Branch, and who is now in Vancouver. We regret to say he is not very well, but he wishes to be remembered to any of his old friends who are still in the land of the living. We join our best wishes to theirs to one who was always a very good Freethinker.

On January 3 the Bradlaugh Centenary Committee, at an informal luncheon at Anderton's Hotel, presented to Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner a handsomely bound copy of *Bradlaugh and To-day*, as a memento of the Centenary activities. Mr. Brookes, Secretary to the Committee, also presented her with a still more striking and valuable memento. This consisted of the several hundred newspaper notices of the Centenary that had appeared, neatly arranged in a large quarto volume, and indexed. This will be of great value to future historians of the Freethought movement, and we hope that the ultimate destination of this volume will be the British Museum.

The further supply of the works of Ingersoll is now on the road, and should not be much longer delayed. For the price of 7s. 6d. (postage 9d. extra) buyers will obtain substantially the whole of the 12-Volume Dresden edition (with a biography and appreciations in addition), bound in strong cloth, and covering nearly 1,000 pages octavo. Already there is a large waiting list, and the volumes will be dispatched as soon as they come to hand.

Bradlaugh and Metaphysics

GENUINE admiration and respect must stop at idolatry, and in his high estimation of Bradlaugh, Mr. Chapman Cohen, true as ever to the name of Freethinker, has adversely criticized Bradlaugh's metaphysical postulate with which his presentation of Atheism was accompanied. (*Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*, pp. 41-44.)

As one of the many whose feelings for Mr. Cohen are akin to his own for Bradlaugh, I regard this criticism as invalid, and look on Bradlaugh's hypostatizing of substance as tenable; it is, incidentally, an accepted postulate in Neo and Critical Realism to-day. (See e.g., *Philosophy of Substance*, an American symposium).

* * *

Bradlaugh "defined his groundwork," writes Mr. Cohen, "as consisting in the belief in an existence, or substance, which exists in itself, and the conception of which does not involve the conception of any other existence." Now, "if existence is the sum of phenomena, then whether we use the one term or the other we are saying the same thing. But when we begin to talk of an 'existence,' which is conceived by itself and through itself, then we are mistaking a generalization for something distinct from the concrete facts which it summarizes and represents. . . . What is 'Man' apart from particular men? . . . The general is the sum of the particular, the abstract rests finally upon the concrete. Neither is separate from the other." "And so to speak of a 'substance' as prior to its modes, or the conception of which does not involve the conception of anything else, is to mistake words for things." (p. 41 *et seq.*)

Mr. Cohen calls these supposed assertions of Bradlaugh "metaphysical moonshine." Bradlaugh might have referred to them in stronger language, since I don't believe he was guilty of them.

However, the characteristic lucidity of the criticism renders it the easier to deal with. "If existence be the sum of phenomena," says Mr. Cohen, then

whether we use the one term or the other, we are saying the same thing." There are not *two* things, existence and phenomena.

"I do not affirm existence AND phenomena." Whose words are these? They might well be attributed to Mr. Cohen. But they are Bradlaugh's (taken from the Lawson correspondence). "The definition of existence which I give," wrote Bradlaugh, "includes phenomena."

But Bradlaugh says, and Mr. Cohen rightly quotes him as saying, that existence may be conceived *per se* (in itself). Thus follows Mr. Cohen's criticism: if existence is the sum, or totality, of phenomena, it cannot be conceived prior to, or separable from, phenomena, since it is the generalization which is based on, and must follow, the piecemeal phenomena from which it cannot be divorced.

Quite true—if Bradlaugh's "existence" be the sum of phenomena. But the point is that Bradlaugh *did not* define existence as the sum of phenomena.¹

One of his epistolary opponents objected to Bradlaugh's supposed definition of existence as the totality, or sum, of phenomena. Bradlaugh replied, "It seems useless to ask him to read my letters. I refer him to my definition of existence in my first letter. By existence I mean the totality of phenomena *and of all that has been, is, or may be, necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon.*"

Bradlaugh's gesture of impatience is not to be wondered at, since he had already repeated this four times in the discussion. He was a keen student of that very fine exponent, the younger Mill, who defined nature as "the sum of all phenomena together with the causes which produce them."²

But let us keep to Bradlaugh. The phrase in italics is important, and brings us to that which is conceived *per se*.

It is the "hypostatization" of substance.

Bradlaugh maintained that its conception does not involve any antecedent conception. (See *Baylee Debate*, and also *Lawson Letters*).

The notion goes back to the Ionian Greeks, and is a postulate of science to-day. "Give us existence, give us some datum, and we will build a world," they said in effect, and "that is what sound science has been saying ever since," the latter quotation being from Mr. Cohen himself (*Materialism Re-stated*).

Science is still on the track of primary substance, its lowest denominator. All sorts of non-committal names have been applied (Monon, Noumenon, etc.) and Bradlaugh sometimes used the fairly apt but now obsolete expression, "cause absolute."

We await the physicist's verdict. Atoms are broken up into charges of electricity, which Prof. Rice (Liverpool University) regards as the ultimate constituent of existence. But whatever it may prove to be, it is the rock-bottom unanalysable factor, "from which all the varying forms have been built up" (Prof. J. A. Thomson). It is "all that has been, is, or may be, necessary for the happening of any and every phenomena" (Bradlaugh). The history of the universe I conceive to be the story of its creativity.

It is that of which phenomena are composed. It manifests phenomena, which are transitory, while it is permanent. We burn a wooden object and get smoke and ashes. What once constituted phenomenon "chair" now conditions phenomena

¹ And, of course, even if we decided that it should mean that, Bradlaugh's position is untouched, since we should then have to posit another word for Bradlaugh's denotation.

² Refer Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism*.

"smoke" and "ashes." Protons and electrons (assuming them to be the primary stuff for the sake of argument) have persisted, and by change of relationship have occasioned other phenomena.

All this, of course, is physics. Bradlaugh's metaphysics start when he asserts that substance is monistic and impersonal. Thus we come to appreciate his notion of substance manifesting various phenomena. And Bradlaugh's impersonal "it" was Spinoza's impersonal "He."

* * *

The conception of phenomena ultimately involves the conception of electric charges on which they depend. Did Bradlaugh say we could form a conception of something which does not involve the conception of anything else, as Mr. Cohen says he does? Does the conception of electric charges involve the conception of anything else? Yes, it does. For we know of electricity by what it *does* (not what it is). We know of electrons only by what happens elsewhere.

And Bradlaugh, note well, *did not* say we could conceive something which does not involve the conception of anything else. He said the conception of substance "does not involve the conception of anything else as antecedent to it" (*Lawson Correspondence*), and my researches have not revealed anything contradictory.

Substance is the common antecedent of phenomena, and while it may or may not always have consequents, it never has antecedent. Its conception does not involve the conception of anything antecedent, as does the conception of phenomena. In Santayana's felicitous language, "substance is the natural parent of all scattered empirical facts."

Note, then, that we are not *in fact* divorcing substance from phenomena, as though it had nothing to do with them. It is the common bedding, as it were, of phenomena. Eddington believes the universe once consisted solely of wandering electric charges (or etheric wavy "strains"); substance in its pure state, one might say. When "modes" come, then comes the divorcement, but only in conceptual thought, and Mr. Cohen will not deny the scientific utility of concepts.

The history of philosophy shows a "glorious (?) gallery of failures," but let us not mistake the failures of metaphysicians for the failure of metaphysics.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Rejoinder by Mr. Cohen.

Mr. TAYLOR's criticism is marked with his usual ability, but I do not think he proves his case. For a reason which follows I will make my comments very brief.

(1) Mr. Taylor appears to have fixed his mind more upon what Bradlaugh might be made to mean, than upon what he actually did mean. Bradlaugh's use of "existence" or "substance," in the exact words of Spinoza, proves that he did think of it as something which existed apart from phenomena. That he sometimes defined existence as something that can be conceived in and by itself, and at other times defined it as the sum of phenomena, indicates confusion, but confusion is not substantiation.

(2) I do not know how a thing can be conceived in itself and not involve the conception of other things. A conception is a generalization expressing the common features of a group—"man" of men, "tree" of trees, etc. But even then it is not thought of by itself and through itself. Man still stands against "not-man," "tree" against "not-tree." Every act of thought involves resemblance and difference. An avowal of what a thing *is*, is an implied assertion of what a thing is not.

This statement of a substance, existing in itself, and of which phenomena are a product, is one of the oldest of philosophic bugbears, useless for any purpose whatsoever, and a mere jangle of words.

(3) If Bradlaugh's impersonal "It" is Spinoza's impersonal "He," and I agree it is, then the full force of my criticism is admitted. Spinoza did mean "substance" to stand for an existence quite separate from attributes and modes (phenomena), although how the attributes and modes were derived from his substance is a puzzle that none has ever been able to solve. And Spinoza does not explain. But I cannot detect any vital difference between an unknown "substance," of which all things are the expression, or manifestation, and the "incomprehensibles" of the Athanasian Creed, which if we do not believe we shall certainly be damned. It is something of which we have no experience, of which we have no knowledge, and which cannot be of the slightest use to us if we were quite sure it existed.

(4) Mr. Taylor's illustrations from the world of physics are beside the point. I do not agree that science is on the track of a "primary substance." Resolving an effect into its cause or a fact into its factors is not searching for a primary substance. The work of science is always illustrating an extension of causation, and this is an example; but to take this as searching for a primary substance, that is something uncaused, is to get back to a disguised form of "God." If Mr. Taylor will again read what I have to say in *Materialism Re-stated*, concerning the function of the categories in science, he will see more clearly what I mean.

(5) Reducing one phenomenon to other phenomena (burning a chair, etc.) has nothing to do with the question at issue. If Eddington is right and the universe once consisted solely of electric charges or etheric wavy strains, the same reply is adequate. These are "modes" only, and give us no indication of this mysterious "substance." We are still within the world of phenomena, and are just as near to, or as far from, a primary substance as when we started.

Neither can I admit the distinction between our knowledge of what electricity is and what it does. When we use the term "electricity," we refer to an event, or a happening. It is the thing we know that we mean by the term, not a thing we do not know. Electricity is to us the phenomenon known. If science is able to show us the factors which constitute the fact of electricity, it will have done only what was done when we learned that water was composed of oxygen and hydrogen. But oxygen and hydrogen are not water in itself. Water remains what we know. Nothing is added to our knowledge of a fact by giving a statement of its factors. "The conception of an electric charge" does not involve the conception of anything else. It does imply—to a determinist—the existence of prior conditions of which the electric charge is product. But that is not what Mr. Taylor implies by his statement, and the generalization is true everywhere and all the time.

(6) I have replied very briefly to Mr. Taylor's criticism for the following reason. Some time back I promised to deal with a number of terms that are in use in Freethought controversy. I intend doing so in the course of the next two or three weeks, and I may then deal with this notion of "The thing in itself," a very old bugbear in philosophy, and which I believe to be the mere ghost of a god. The confusion of the philosophic with a theological question, and the way in which the former has been used to back up the latter, are interesting subjects for examination.

The Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse assert the existence of the Devil, of his demons, and of Hell, as plainly as they do that of God and his angels and heaven. It is plain that the Messianic and the Satanic conceptions of the writers of these books are the obverse and the reverse of the same intellectual coinage.

T. H. Huxley.

"The Rock of Truth."

EXCEPT in works of fiction, one can nearly always be sure that a book with the word "rock" in the title has to do with some kind of religion. The "Rock of Faith," or the "Rock of God," or the "Rock of Christianity," or even the "Rock of Ages," tells the reader almost at once what he is to expect. When the author of such a book uses the word "rock," he means it to be a synonym for the word "truth," against which nothing can prevail, and I am sure that, in the majority of cases, the writer is quite sincere and really believes he has discovered or emphasized the unalterable truth.

Mr. J. Arthur Findlay is the author of *The Rock of Truth* (Rider & Co.), and the reader knows at once that Mr. Findlay is doubly certain of his thesis, which is that Spiritualism is the coming World Religion. The copy before me is the fourth impression, and his last book, *On the Edge of the Etheric*, went through thirty impressions last year, so he can speak with some authority.

Mr. Findlay claims to have located the Etheric World (it looks exactly like Andrew Jackson Davis's *Summerland* to me), and to have put it on the map of the Universe; and the *Rock of Truth* tells you all about it, and how we are all obliged to go there willy-nilly. But before dealing with the Etheric World, Mr. Findlay has a smashing bout with Christianity. He devotes four long chapters to it, and they are really my excuse for noting his book. *Summerland*, or however you may name it, has been now described so often that I think it would be a waste of time to criticize it or analyse it in detail.

Mr. Findlay is a determined opponent of Christianity, partly, it seems to me, because he doesn't altogether believe in it, and partly because Christianity, in general, has really been a determined opponent of Spiritualism. He is a whole-hearted believer in the Sun Myth hypothesis, and he goes into detail and shows how "the different seasons had a story about the Sun, which came to be woven into the life of each great teacher after his death, and Jesus was no exception." Not that Mr. Findlay believes that Jesus was a sun-myth. He was really a great—very great, of course—teacher, a genuine psychic (naturally), and the sun-stories were woven around him after his death on the Cross. Nor is Mr. Findlay an Atheist. He is a whole-hearted believer in God, who is Mind—a God which seems to me also very much like the true and original Almighty Gods of other religions.

Still, this does not stop Mr. Findlay from a scathing analysis of Christian credulity, and in the four hectic chapters which he devotes to the disintegration of Christianity, we are breathlessly carried over a good deal of ground, ranging from an account of various crucified Saviours, about whom he relies on Kersey Graves's well known work (and which he seems to think is faultlessly authoritative), to the symbols and ceremonies which Christianity borrowed from other religions, and even to an examination of the Bible, which, we are told, is made up of "two sections, one the Old Testament and the other the New Testament." It is all very good in its way, and while no actual authorities are cited for each assertion, we are assured they can all be depended upon as "these four chapters have been carefully read over, checked and passed by one of our greatest authorities on the various world religions in general, and Christianity in particular." I am afraid, in spite of this, the great authority has passed some "bloomers"—not very important in themselves, but sufficiently obvious as proof that Mr. Findlay has "swotted up"

his facts, and is not really very familiar with the Free-thought attack. Indeed, I had an uneasy feeling all the time I was reading his book that, excepting the part purely spiritualistic, he was more unfamiliar with our case than familiar. For example, he cites as "some of the standard works" the reader could consult on the subject, Dupuis' *L'Origine de tous les Cultes*, a work in its original form exceptionally difficult to obtain, and which has not, as far as I know, ever been translated into English; though one chapter from the abridged edition was, I think, translated for and published by Thomas Scott. Then he mentions Higgins' *Anacalypsis*—which also is almost impossible to get hold of; the late American reprint costs over £10—if it can be got. Bryant's *Eastern Antiquities* is another rare work, as is the complete set of Sir W. Jones' *Asiatic Researches*, and they are all mentioned much as one would mention an ordinary easily-obtainable modern pamphlet. And I am very doubtful if Mr. Findlay consulted any of these books at first hand.

As Jesus was really a Spiritualist, the thesis put forward by John M. Robertson, Arthur Drews, and W. B. Smith, that "he was purely a mythical character and never lived on earth," seems to Mr. Findlay "overstepping the bounds of reason," and he calls in as his support, F. C. Conybeare's, *The Historical Christ*. That is, Mr. Findlay, while quoting (at any hand) all that he can to show Jesus was a myth, finally comes to the conclusion that he wasn't; very much like a man, who, collecting all the arguments against the existence of God, ends up by fervently believing in him. At all events, Mr. Findlay is quite certain of his real Jesus, that he was born "prior to 4 B.C.," that he worked with his father, possibly joined the Essenes, became a teacher and a healer, was both clairvoyant and clairaudient, "could speak with authority on the Etheric World," was controlled by higher intelligences in the Etheric World, was very outspoken against the priests, and was finally "martyred." His "etheric body," owing to his psychic gifts, was seen after his death, and this "fact" can now be explained by "natural laws." Mr. Findlay seems rather uncertain about the Crucifixion—a word which "must be taken in a wider sense than usual," he says, and he attributes to Paul the saying that Jesus was "hanged on a tree"—one of the little blunders which was passed by the eminent religious authority.

Of course, it is all to the good that the large numbers of Spiritualists who also believe in Christ should be given some home truths, even as Mr. Findlay has given and be given also the names of such eminent Freethinkers as Robertson, Dupuis and Higgins to think about. But I do wish he had added Ingersoll. While I am almost certain that he never quotes Dupuis and Higgins at first hand, I—but let me give some quotations from both Mr. Findlay and Col. Ingersoll. Here is our Spiritualist on Jesus first:—

Mr. Findlay: Why did not he (Jesus) distinctly say that he was not God, and that there is only one God, when all the time he was one of three Gods? (p. 123.)

Ingersoll: Why did he not plainly say, "I am the Son of God," or "I am God?" Why did he not explain the Trinity? (*About the Holy Bible*, X.)

Mr. Findlay: If Jesus is God he must have known all the religious wars which would be waged in his name, and the cruelty and misery which would follow his life on earth.

Ingersoll: If Jesus was in fact God he knew all the future. . . . He knew what crimes, what horrors, what infamies would be committed in his name. . . . He saw all the wars that would be waged. . . .

Mr. Findlay: Why did he not say which books of the Old Testament would be inspired?

Ingersoll: Why did he not say that the Old Testament was or was not the inspired word of God? Why did he not write the New Testament himself?

Mr. Findlay: Why did he say nothing in favour of education? . . . and something about Astronomy, Geology, Medicine and the other sciences and arts? . . . Why did he not warn his followers not to shed blood, to torture and imprison in his name?

Ingersoll: He never said a word in favour of education. He never even hinted at the existence of any science. . . . Why did he not tell his disciples, "you shall not burn, torture and imprison in my name?"

Mr. Findlay: Why? Because he was a man and did not know.

Ingersoll: I will tell you why. He was a man and did not know.

There is, of course, a great deal more which shows how *Ingersoll*, fifty years ago, was writing exactly like *Mr. Findlay* to-day, and I think the value of his book as an attack on Christianity would have been enhanced if he could have sent his readers to the easily-obtained work of *Ingersoll* rather than to *Dupuis*, *Higgins* and *Bryant*. And I hope *Mr. Findlay* will not mind my saying that *About the Holy Bible* is one of the very finest essays ever written on God's Revelation to man, and certainly equal to the very best things *Ingersoll* himself ever wrote against it. I congratulate *Mr. Findlay* on his perspicaciousness in singling out this essay for emulation. With regard to *Mr. Findlay's* chapters on the *Etheric World*, I confess my inability to deal with it, just as I would find it difficult to deal with *Laputa*, *Brobdingnag* and *Lilliput* had *Dean Swift* insisted that these were real places. I cannot believe in a world like our own, only "spiritual"; in a world in which, after death, we find the same hills and valleys, sun and seasons, wants and emotions that we have here. *Mr. Findlay* calls to his aid a good deal of modern physics, which he explains very lucidly, but it is rather astonishing that more physicists have not been converted to Spiritualism, if their science offered such striking proofs of the existence of the *Etheric World*. My disbelief or inability to believe is no proof, of course, that it does not exist; only that I am personally not convinced by the arguments he uses.

"The only difference," *Mr. Findlay* tells us, "between death in the *Etheric World* and death in this world is that here we leave a body behind us to be buried; but there, as we progress, we rise to higher planes and more beautiful surroundings." You see, we die here and we also die in the *Etheric World*. But every time you die there you get on to a higher plane, and I was not in the least astonished to find there were just seven of these "planes." The way that blessed number seven persists in religion and spiritualism is extraordinary. It is a veritable magic number.

Mr. Findlay paints a glorious picture of his *Etheric World*. No pain or suffering or fatigue worries anybody there, and no one ever wishes to be born here again. "All physical deformities will become right," and love will be rediscovered—though I am not quite sure whether this will be what we call "carnal" love here, or whether it be that delightful aerial "spiritual" love with which virgin saints are more familiar than materialistic men of the world like myself. Nor am I quite clear if a man or woman has married several times how the love-issue will be amicably adjusted between the various parties. Of course, while the first plane in the *Etheric World* is exactly like our world here, I am rather confused as to where the resemblance begins or ends. Do we have teeming multitudes there with all the adjuncts of modern civilization—cinemas, trains, motor-cars, hot and cold water, etc., or are things a little less

crowded, such as we find in the Australian bush?

Mr. Findlay does not tell us, and while I quite agree that *Mind* (about which he writes hundreds of pages) has a lot to do with everything we want or think about, I must confess I never could visualize a mind or any mind without a gross materialistic body of flesh and blood hanging around it.

This is where my difficulties in accepting the *Etheric World*, or *Summerland*, or the *Vales of Heaven*, or the *Theosophic Astral Planes*, come in. I am tied down in thought to this world. It is a cruel and mad world sometimes, I admit. But it has beauty and love in it as well. And I do feel how much more necessary it is to encourage that which makes for good and happiness, here and now, than to indulge in idle dreams of the hereafter, based on the mumblings of mediums. I prefer Secularism.

H. CUTNER.

The Old Men of the Cross-roads.

IN my period of enforced idleness I have been foregathering with the old men of the cross-roads. The ages of the old men range from sixty to eighty and over. The cross-roads on the uplands of our Scottish village are bleak and wind-swept in winter, and in all seasons notorious as the scene of many sudden deaths by automobile accidents, etc. To the ancients, however, it is their favourite foregathering place. I would not label them as Christian or Infidel; they are on the whole much confused or hypnotized by the various religious teachings, though the last thing they speak about is religion. They are too much concerned with gee-gees, dogs and coupons, especially the younger men. But I must not omit the old men who are fond of tittle-tattle round the parish pump. These are some of the compensations and consolations of old age. I would not be a "disturbing element" among them, though I am often fain to be so.

S.M. is the most rational and logical of them all, but he, too, has his reservations. He is, in *Meredith's* phrase, "Hot for certainties in this our life," even the *Freethinker* does not satisfy him. On the other hand, J.B. is a man who is certainly "saved," and booked for eternal glory. While believing in a God of vengeance, he is the mildest mannered little pirate that ever cut a throat or scuttled ship. He is an inexplicable paradox. But whether the S.M. Type or the J.B. type, "their hearts' desire is still for length of days." This is of the utmost significance. I am reminded here of the old parishioner who was sure of heaven but would not barter his backyard for all the realms of bliss.

It was at the cross-roads that I met the travelling evangelist who almost fondled me for dear Christ's sake. On a final occasion when telling him that I was keeping better he exclaimed, "Ah! God is good after all," to which I answered in the most brief and conclusive way, "God is neither good nor bad, he simply does not exist." I hope my pious friend put that in his pipe and smoked it. There are some of the old men who are shrewd and logical enough but, as said, much confused on the matter of religion. Perhaps this, too, is one of the compensations; especially for old men, many of whom have burdens enough already, and who for the most part dislike to be drawn into religious discussion:—

Thought would destroy their paradise;

Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise.

Honest nature does not merely deny the creeds, but shouts and shrieks denial. The proof of that is the pains these old men take to ward off the inevitable end. I am convinced they believe in their heart of hearts that we are all going the same way home. They would all ward off unpleasant thoughts and, in *Ingersoll's* phrase, "Suck the orange of life dry and give Death the peelings." A sentiment which the priestly caste are never slow to exploit in the first or second childhood of the human race.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Religion in Spain.

MR. JOSEPH LEWIS'S latest work, *Spain, A Land Blighted by Religion*, is an excellent short account of the author's journey to Spain. He arrived just after the revolution, and was able to contrast the early days of the new Government with the old, dominated by Roman Catholicism. His lucid descriptions of the strangle-hold this religion had on the life of all classes of society, and the way in which it kept the masses in the direst poverty and ignorance, would form a valuable commentary on the wily puffs of the Church in this country if only people here could be induced to read the book. Mr. Lewis visited Cadiz, Seville, Cordova, Granada, Malaga, Madrid, the Escorial, Valladolid, Toledo and Barcelona, and has something intensely interesting to say about all these world-famed and historical places. His notes on the Inquisition, on the work of Columbus, on Cardinal Mendoza, on the artistic magnificence of the Moors, and the tremendous loss to culture entailed by their expulsion from Spain, are all written from a definite Free-thought standpoint, and are therefore all the more valuable. Mr. Lewis says that "the belief that Columbus was of Jewish ancestry is prevalent throughout Spain. . . . This fact is a thorn in the Catholic Church. For years there has been a movement to canonize Columbus; but the pointed question is: How can they canonize a heretic who was a Jew?" Mr. Lewis's final verdict is that "the people did not strike a moment too soon against the combination of Church and King that was robbing them of their life's blood"—a statement which would be hard to refute by our converted *intelligentsia*. The work is well printed and bound, and contains nineteen full page illustrations. It is published by the Free-thought Press Association of New York, and its price is one dollar.

H.C.

A WITCH TRIAL.

In the Good Old (Christian) Times.

Towards the end of 1593 there was trouble in the family of the Earl of Orkney. His brother laid a plot to murder him, and was said to have sought the help of a "notorious witch" called Alison Balfour. When Alison Balfour's life was looked into, no evidence could be found connecting her either with the particular offence or with witchcraft in general; but it was enough in these matters to be accused. She swore she was innocent; but her guilt was only held to be aggravated by perjury. She was tortured again and again. Her legs were put in the *caschilaws*—an iron frame which was gradually heated till it burned into the flesh—but no confession could be wrung from her. The *caschilaws* failed utterly, and something else had to be tried. She had a husband, a son, and a daughter, a child seven years old. As her own sufferings did not work upon her, she might be touched, perhaps, by the sufferings of those who were dear to her. They were brought into court, and placed at her side; and the husband first was placed in the "lang irons"—some accursed instrument; I know not what. Still, the Devil did not yield. She bore this; and her son was next operated on. The boy's legs were set in "the boot,"—the iron boot you may have heard of. The wedges were driven in, which, when forced home, crushed the very bone and marrow. Fifty-seven mallet strokes were delivered upon the wedges. Yet this, too, failed. There was no confession yet. So, last of all, the little daughter was taken. There was a machine called the *pinwinkies*—a kind of thumbscrew, which brought blood from under the finger nails, with a pain successfully terrible. These things were applied to the poor child's hands, and the mother's constancy broke down, and she said she would admit anything they wished. She confessed her witchcraft—so tried, she would have confessed to the seven deadly sins—and then she was burned, recalling her confession—and with her last breath protesting her innocence.

J. A. Froude, "Short Studies on Great Subjects."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform 1, Messrs. Collins and Bryant. Platform 2, B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Various speakers. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P.—"The Russian Land Organization."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Dr. Euid Charles (London School of Economics)—"The Menace of Under-Population."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 15, Mr. E. Holdup will speak on G. B. Shaw's "On the Rocks."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite Kings' Cross Station): 7.15, Mr. J. Jones—"My Impressions of Russia."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"The Sexual Implications of Buchmanism."

CHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Peoples' Hall, Delamere Street, 7.0, Mr. W. J. Paul (Neston)—"Religion in Soviet Russia."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Arthur Holder (Burnley)—"Why I Left the Holy Roman Catholic Church." Annual Meeting at close of lecture. Will all members kindly do their utmost to attend.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. J. M. McCormick, M.A., I.L.B.—"Scottish Nationalism." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

HERTON (Assembly Room): 7.30, Monday, January 15, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren (London)—"Dictatorship, Old and New." Reserved seats 6d each.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, Mr. Sam Cohen (Manchester)—"A Freethinker Looks at Life."

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Social Hall): 7.30, Thursday, January 18, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Christian Science."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, Councillor Ross—"Cremation."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Chapter Row): 7.0, Mr. Flanders.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green 7.30, Sunday, January 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Lower Hillgate, Stockport): 7.30, Saturday, January 13, Annual Social, Whist Drive and Dance. Tickets, including refreshments and prizes, 1s. 3d. each. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be present. Sunday, January 14, in the same hall, Mr. R. H. Rosetti (General Secretary, N.S.S.) will lecture on "Christianity and the Crisis." 7.0, admission free.

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