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Views and Opinions

Christianity on Trial

THIS is not exactly a Christian country, but it is a country in which Christianity has a vogue. It is more the fashion to call oneself a Christian than it is to deny being one. Moreover, it is a country in which Christianity has for many centuries been the dominant form of religious belief, and which has been given a position denied to any other religion. Many millions of public money have been spent on the upkeep of Christianity, and laws have been passed forbidding anyone to question its truth. Christianity is still strong enough to deny to large numbers of people the freedom to spend one seventh of their lives in a manner which is deemed quite lawful and quite respectable on the other six-sevenths. It demands a position in the legislature not given to believers in other religions, and millions of pounds are spent annually in carrying Christian beliefs to various parts of the world. Christianity is strong enough to demand from the King a profession of belief in it, and in every public school the sacred book of Christians holds a place denied to any other writing. In public functions of many kinds the Christian clergy occupy a prominent position, and powerful as is the press, it treats Christianity with a respect that is more of a testimony to its influence than a compliment to either its honesty or its intelligence. So, I repeat, if we are not exactly a Christian country—for there are millions who do not believe in Christianity—we are more Christian in religion than in anything else.

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Bible Teaching and the Law

But between believing in Christianity and practising Christianity there is a difference. Thus, at the Chelmsford Assizes, on February 6, a man and his wife were brought to trial charged with the manslaughter of their child. The "crime" did not consist in starving the child, or in beating the child, or in killing it in a fit of temper. The sole ground of their offence was that they had trusted to God to cure their child of tonsillitis. That was all. These poor

people had been brought up to believe in the Bible—which until recent times it was a crime to deny as being the word of God. They had been told that their welfare in this world and the next depended upon the belief that the Bible was true; and in that book they had read :—

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up.

It is the plainest of all passages in the New Testament. Moreover it is deeply imbedded in all Christian history. It is repeated in the prayer book of the Established Church of England, and there is not a Christian minister of any denomination who dares to say that the cure of sickness in this way, and through the agency of the Lord, is not possible—that is, dares not deny the possibility in words that are without equivocation. Yet this man and woman stood charged with the manslaughter of their child! Not with the deliberate ill-treatment of the child, but with manslaughter through practising the teachings of the New Testament!

* * *

Honesty v. Humbug

The only evidence against his unhappy mother and father was that they had declined to call in a doctor, and had preferred to trust in God's promise as given in the New Testament. "There was not the slightest doubt," said the prosecutor, "that the accused were a devoted father and mother," but they had followed the teachings of the New Testament, and so were charged with the manslaughter of their child. The elder of the Church had been called, he had prayed, and had anointed the child's throat with oil. After that they had left the matter in the hands of God, as directed, and the facts had given the lie to the New Testament. The Commissioner of Assize, Mr. Hilbery, K.C., asked the father, "Is it your belief that you believe in the intervention of Almighty God in human affairs?" The reply to this was obvious, since it was for trusting to God's intervention—in a Christian country—that both parents were in the dock. Mr. Eastwood, prosecuting, asked, "If you broke a leg would you call in a doctor?" a rather stupid question, since in the case of a broken leg, where knowledge is certain, doctors usually are called in. It is where considerable ignorance prevails as to the exact nature of the disease or the nature of cure, or both, that God is invoked. If the father had replied with a counter-question, "ought we not to believe in God's ability to cure disease?" Mr. Eastwood would probably have found it convenient to ask a different question or to sit down. The sight of judge and lawyer listening to the evidence of two people who had taken an oath on the Bible, and who stood charged with the offence of carrying out its plain

teaching is too absurd for words. And when we bear in mind that, if a man had been brought before the same court on a charge of blasphemy, the same judge would have dilated on the "crime" of unbelief, the absurdity becomes grotesque.

By the Act under which the mother and father were charged, anyone who fails to call in a doctor to attend to a child when medical attention is necessary, stands open to be charged with manslaughter or with neglecting to call in a doctor. In this case the Commissioner, after warning the world in general that if other people acted as these parents did, they would be sent to prison, instructed the jury to find the accused not guilty of manslaughter, but to deal with the case on the ground of neglecting to call in medical advice. Then, Mr. Hilbery, who seems to have little sense of either logic or humour, bound the parents to be of good behaviour for twelve months. The sentence means that if another child is ill they are to have no faith in prayer for a year, or, alternatively, they are not to trust God to do anything for them for twelve months. Whether God Almighty will take notice of the decree of the court, or whether he will tell Mr. Hilbery to go to the devil, and will continue to cure people if he feels so inclined, I do not know. But it is worth noting that on February 6, at the Chelmsford Assizes, a judge threatened two quite decent people with imprisonment if they trusted God, during the next year, to cure a sick child! After that they can trust in God—and take the risk.

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Can We Trust God?

If Commissioner Hilbery had but the wit to see it, he would have recognized that he was passing judgment, not merely upon the accused father and mother, but upon the Christian religion. If that hotch-potch of primitive superstitions affirms one thing clearly, it is the intervention of Almighty God in human affairs. Without this it has nothing to affirm. And if this intervention is believed to take a definite form it is with regard to the cure of disease. When Jesus gave his disciples the power to cure the sick, it was not by subjecting them to a medical course; they were to cure "In my name." The Christian Church is filled with accounts of diseases that have been cured by the intervention of God in response to human prayer. One must do God the justice to say that he never thrusts his aid upon man. It is always because he is asked. The unbeliever is never cured by God's intervention, only the believer. Every year one of the largest Churches runs special trains to Lourdes, where God cures all sorts of diseases in answer to prayer. When the King was ill the Churches united in praying God to cure the King, and He did so. I admit that in the latter instance the King had the finest medical advice and treatment that could be secured, but it is not for me to suggest that God could not have done the job alone. One, Pastor Jeffries, runs a very profitable campaign in curing diseases of all kinds. The Church of England prayer book provides special prayers to be offered for the cure of the sick, and definitely states that whatever disease the sick person is suffering from comes directly from God. At Brighton a special Church has been allotted by the bishops for the cure of the sick through prayer. More than that, special hours on special days have been arranged when these prayers are to be said, so that God may not get things mixed and be busy with the weather, or inspiring his preachers when he is asked to cure the sick, and thus make mistakes in what he is doing. Take away from the Christian religion the cure of sickness, and one of the greatest aids to faith is gone. Take away the belief that God Almighty intervenes in human

affairs and Christianity is nothing but the tale of an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

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Cowardly Clerics

It was not really Mr. and Mrs. Levett who were on trial at Chelmsford Assizes. It was Christianity that was being indicted, even though the prosecuting lawyer and the presiding K.C. were unaware of the fact. On the authority of the Old and New Testaments, on the authority of Jesus Christ, on the authority of all the Christian Churches, on the authority of all Christian teachers of every age, God does intervene in human affairs, he does cure disease in response to prayer. And when a judge and jury have before them a man and a woman against whom, as parents, nothing could be said—save that they were the dupes of Christian teaching—there is added to their natural grief over the loss of their child the humiliation of being exposed before the world as almost criminals; and they are bound over to be of good behaviour—their bad behaviour being trust in God. And not a single parson in the whole of the country has the decency to stand forth in their defence! They teach the thing that this man and woman practised. They owe the places they occupy to the belief that these people were being tried for practising; every shilling of their salaries is derived from the belief that God does interfere in human affairs in response to prayer, yet they say nothing and do nothing in defence of those who are suffering from their instruction. If they protested against the judgment and the remarks of the Commissioner and the verdict of the jury, we might rest content with calling them blind leaders of the blind, but their silence gives point to the charge that vast numbers of them are mere rogues fattening upon the ignorance of their dupes.

* * *

God and the Doctors

It would be a compliment to the wit of the Commissioner if one said that he delivered his judgment in a spirit of satire. He said that no doubt *other judges* would give such people imprisonment if they came before them. *He* merely bound them to be of "good behaviour" for twelve months. For a whole year, if another child fell ill, they were not to bother God, but were to call in a doctor. The doctors were to be given extra work while God Almighty took a holiday. After that time they were to do as they pleased, but at the risk of coming before some judge who would have no patience with their belief that God Almighty intervened in human affairs, and would send them straight to prison. If they had a bad cold the Commissioner evidently would advise them to take a hot bath and go to bed, and then pray to God. Or they must take aspirin or Epsom salts or some other concoction with their prayers, and then "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise them up." God and a dose of Epsom salts may be expected to do much; God minus Epsom salts can do nothing—except expose those who believe otherwise to a term of imprisonment. So the kind-hearted Commissioner dismisses with a severe caution a man and a woman who have been guilty of the crime of believing that God can do what all the Churches say he does. God is to be given a holiday—for twelve months. With so much before him during 1935—listening to thanksgiving services over the King's Jubilee, attending to prayers for the return of the National Government to power, noting the special massed prayers that will be arranged for this, that and the other, the Commissioner asks Mr. and Mrs. Levett to give him a rest from their petitions. Leave it to the doctors. It may

be that in many cases the result will be the same; but with a doctor in attendance we shall at least be without doubt as to the cause of death.

A child is sick. In all good faith, with love to their child and confidence in their deity, the parents call in God to tend the sick child—and the child dies. Why was not the Coroner's verdict "Ineffective administration of the One in charge of the case?"

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Sweetness and Light"

"The crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven."—*Shelley*.

"Christians have never lost the instinct of universal dominion."—*Bible Society Report*.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, in one of those charming essays in which he was endeavouring to infuse "sweetness and light" into his hard-headed and commercially-minded countrymen, criticized the aggressive manner in literature and journalism. He called it the manner which "aims rather at an effect upon the blood and senses than upon the spirit and intellect, and loves hard-hitting rather than persuading." Matthew Arnold himself, it is pleasant to remember, could hit very hard, but he always wore the velvet glove over the steel gauntlet, although it was very difficult to persuade any of his numerous antagonists that he was a Bayard rather than a boxer.

Indeed, this apostle of "sweetness and light" was never tired of the pleasant pastime of bishop-baiting, and his jibes at a former Bishop of Gloucester, who wished to do something for "the honour of the God-head," has preserved the bishop's memory like a fly in amber. Arnold also fluttered the dovescotes of Orthodoxy by comparing the Christian Trinity to "three Lord Shaftesburys," and by his inimitable explanation, when the storm was at its height, that he had no wish to give pain to a distinguished philanthropist. All this was but "pretty Fanny's way." Like the ecclesiastical curse directed against the famous jackdaw of Rheims, nobody was a penny the worse for it.

Purely religious animosity, on the other hand, has far too frequently been responsible for much that was really brutal in speech, and ferocious in action. Romanists burned Protestants and Protestants killed Catholics. Both Catholics and Protestants tortured and murdered Freethinkers. It was the custom of the bad old times of the Ages of Faith. The austere Milton left the slopes of Parnassus and used the language of Billingsgate when he attacked his religious opponents. The light-hearted Sydney Smith could no more speak civilly of the early Methodists than Mr. Hilaire Belloc, or the editor of the aristocratic *Morning Post*, of Jewish people. William Cobbett always a pungent writer, was more than usually outspoken in his treatment of Quakers. That every Freethinker must be either a fool or a rogue is a postulate of Christian Evidence lecturers, and other defenders of the Faith once delivered to the saints. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in his later years, denounced Materialists with very unsavoury rhetoric, a form of speech he never used before he embraced Spiritualism.

Old Doctor Samuel Johnson was not by any means a bad-hearted man, but Oliver Goldsmith was perfectly right when he said: "There is no arguing with Johnson, for when his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt-end." Johnson was at his very worst concerning Freethinkers. He called Bolingbroke "a scoundrel and a coward." Yet the erudite old doctor had never read the author he so

savagely pilloried. "I have never read Bolingbroke's impicity," he remarked, with unexpected ingenuousness. To Johnson, Freethinkers were vermin, which his fierce rhetoric would fain exterminate. To him, Hume, Gibbon and Voltaire were all scoundrels. Men like Priestley and Price were an offence and an abomination. Boswell has told us that when Doctor Price came into a company where old Sam Johnson was, the latter instantly left the room. Even Rousseau, who flamed the claims of Humanity over a continent, was objectionable to Johnson. He regarded him as "one of the worst of men, a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society."

The known Atheism of the poet Shelley incurred the special hatred of Christians, and few enmities are more relentless and more venomous. The abuse which was supposed to have killed poor Keats was the quintessence of courtesy compared with the assault and battery made upon Shelley by the supposedly enlightened press of a Christian country. When the news of Shelley's untimely death by drowning reached England, the *Gentleman's Magazine* said that the young poet was "a fitter subject for a penitentiary dying-speech than a lauding elegy; for the muse of the rope rather than of the cypress." That was what a periodical edited by a Christian gentleman for Christian gentlemen had to say of the young Freethinker who had devoted his short life of twenty-nine years to the service of his fellow-men. Not long before another representative of the "religion of Love," we recall, met Shelley at the post-office at Pisa, called him "a damned Atheist," and knocked him down.

The late G. W. Foote, the first editor of the *Freethinker*, had more than his share of abuse. His waste-paper basket was seldom without an insulting letter or postcard sent to him by Orthodox people. "I have been accused of all the crimes in the calendar, except murder," he once remarked with a smile. "That solitary exception is due, not to Christian charity, but to the difficulty of finding a corpse." Charles Bradlaugh was subjected to similar treatment, and he was excluded from the House of Commons for some years on account of his known Atheistic opinions.

This insolence and malevolence is inseparable from Christianity, and shows itself everywhere. In the Great Republic of the West, Christian prejudice barred Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll from important positions in the political world. A friend, admiring a handsomely-bound edition of Voltaire's works in the Colonel's library, asked him the price. "It cost me the Governorship of Illinois," was the reply. A man of Ingersoll's consummate ability might easily have attained the proud position of President of the United States. Fortunately for us all, Ingersoll esteemed duty more highly than ambitions. It is to his lasting credit that in an age of commercialism he remained faithful to principles; in an age of hypocrisy he cared for truth.

Christians have systematically insulted and persecuted Freethinkers, but the Freethinkers have brought the persecuting religion to the bar of Humanity. It is the beginning of the end of an Oriental Superstition, which, in the words of Professor Clifford, has already destroyed one civilization, and threatens the present with destruction.

MIMNERMUS.

In 958-975 A.D. the payment of dues to the church was enjoined with a severity almost beyond belief. A day was appointed for a man to pay his tithes; and if they were not paid he was to forfeit nine-tenths of his tithable property.—*Knight's "England."*

A Stoic Sage of Imperial Rome

AMONG Pagan precursors of modern scientific method the Roman philosopher Seneca occupies a high position. Born in Spain in 4 B.C., Lucius Annæus Seneca early interested himself in the study of rhetoric and philosophy. He soon became celebrated at the bar, while his popularity was duly noted by the Emperor Caligula, who expressed a very poor opinion of Seneca's oratorical achievements. His brilliant successes, however, received a check when, in 41 A.D., the then reigning Claudius, instigated by his notorious consort Messalina, who had involved Seneca in the ruin of Julia, the daughter of Germanicus, ordered his banishment abroad. Eight years later, however, Agrippina procured the sage's return to Rome as preceptor to her son Domitius, then eleven years of age, who subsequently became known as the Emperor Nero.

When Nero assumed the purple, Seneca and Burrus remained the chief advisers of the youthful prince, and while these able men retained power, the State was well governed. Indeed, the progressive programme with which Nero opened his reign was largely, if not entirely, inspired by Seneca. Burrus died in A.D. 62, and with his demise Seneca's influence over the Emperor seriously declined, for his envious enemies and rivals constantly hinted at his vanity and ambition. The vast fortune the statesman had accumulated was also a perpetual grievance, and to Seneca's wealth Nero's attention was directed. Seneca's marked popularity with the citizens, his alleged assumption of superiority over others in poetry, oratory, and other accomplishments upon which Nero flattered himself, were insidiously urged against him. The Courtiers complained that everything of moment was attributed to the genius of Seneca. No one, not even the Emperor himself, was ever credited with noble achievement!

At this critical stage, Seneca craved an audience with his royal master, which ended amicably enough, but Seneca felt constrained to retire from public life, and was afterwards rarely abroad in Rome. But the fates were against him; he was drawn into the Pisonian conspiracy and then arraigned, found guilty and condemned. He was ordered to commit suicide and departed with a Stoic's fortitude, amid the lamentations of his family and faithful friends. Very touching is the description penned by Tacitus of this splendid Pagan's end.

Both from the literary and scientific standpoint Seneca is supremely interesting and instructive to the modern mind. For useless learning—Pope's "learned lumber"—he entertained a healthy aversion. In keeping with Stoic teaching, he held the theory that our world is, from time to time, destroyed by a tremendous conflagration and, thus purified by fire, evolves into something better. These epochal events are determined by divine agency. Dr. Murray, in his in many ways excellent *Science and Scientists in the Nineteenth Century*, thus epitomizes Seneca's cosmological doctrine: "In the interval between the appearance of a new world the Deity enjoys a period of rest during which he can leisurely meditate upon the universe which has vanished into smoke, and plan improvements in the one he is about to create." Yet inconsistently, in all conscience, Seneca's ideal age existed in the past when happiness and innocence were unalloyed. "Men," he asserts, "lived together in the distant past in societies, willing to obey the wisest and strongest of their number; none was tempted to wrong his neighbour." As time advanced, men emerged from their primitive simplicity; they baked their bread; they learnt to build dwellings

and discovered the use of metals. Although he admits man's material progress as well as improvements in science and culture, yet Seneca deplors his moral decline. For, in the gracious times of old, human requirements were easily satisfied, but when gold became known it was greedily cherished, and its possession led to every possible evil. The cult of pessimism boasted many adherents in the first and second centuries of our era, so there is nothing singular in Seneca's seeming despondency.

Despite these mournful reflections Seneca acknowledges the extended advantages of scientific application. Man, in common with the lower creatures, may exist without the aid of science. But as man's necessities increase with advancing civilization, necessity becomes the mother of invention. With improved appliances we create wealth that enriches posterity. "There remains yet," Seneca says, "and there will remain much to do; and the man who will be born a thousand years hence will not refuse the opportunity of adding something more."

Seneca's masterpiece, *Natural Questions*, teems with interest and, if hypothetical in character, and dominated by ethical sentiment, it is still significant to later evolutionary science and philosophy. Instead of belittling his forerunners for the blunders they committed he makes ample allowance for the many difficulties encountered in striving to unravel Nature's secrets. Moreover, he observes that "all subsequent discoveries must be set down to those early thinkers. It was a task demanding great courage to remove the veil that hid Nature, and, not satisfied with a superficial view, to look beneath the surface and dive into the secrets of the gods. A great contribution to discovery was made by the man who first conceived the hope of its possibility. . . . No subject is perfect while it is but beginning." Once more: "Every succeeding age will still find something fresh to accomplish." Obviously, at this stage of his mental pilgrimage, Seneca had completely forsaken the Platonic doctrine that "the whole body of truth had been discovered."

Seneca's *Natural Questions* may be regarded as the latest utterance on science bequeathed to us by classical times, and has even been described as "the only work of importance bearing on science that has come down to us in Latin." It is certainly far superior to the later compilation of the elder Pliny, but whether it equals, or even compares with the majestic achievement of Lucretius is very doubtful indeed.

That idolatrous adherence to Aristotle's *Physics* which congealed the mind of the Middle Ages might have been mitigated, and Europe's mental recovery hastened, had more attention been devoted to the wisdom of Seneca. The Stagirite, he sagely observes, tells men that they should never be more reverent than in their bearing towards the gods. "How much more is all this due," proceeds Seneca, "when we discuss the heavenly bodies, the stars . . . lest in ignorance we make any assertion regarding them that is hasty or disrespectful; or lest we unwittingly lie. Let us not be surprised that what is buried so deep should be unearthed so slowly." And when referring to cometary bodies, Seneca says: "But all these questions are foreclosed by my statement that they are not accidental fires, but inwoven in the texture of the universe, directed by it in secret, but not often revealed. And how many bodies besides revolve in secret never dawning on human eyes? Nor is it for man that God has made all things. How small a portion of this mighty work is entrusted to us!" It is one of the ironies of history that for more than 1,000 years the entire people of Europe, from Pope to peasant, were panic stricken when comets

shone in the sky, for were they not the harbingers of woe and death?

Seneca also dwells on man's growing acquaintance with animal life witnessed in his own day, and anticipates still wider knowledge in times to come. "Nature does not reveal all her secrets at once. We imagine we are initiated in her mysteries; we are yet but hanging round her outer courts. These secrets of hers are not open to all indiscriminately. They are withdrawn and shut up in the inner shrine. Of one of them this age will catch a glimpse, of another the age that will come after."

Unfortunately, these far-seeing thoughts exercised no influence on the Church. Yet, Seneca was considered as nearly a Christian as was conceivable in a Pagan. Forged letters of Seneca to St. Paul were universally received as authentic. Jerome ranked him among ecclesiastical writers. Dante mentions him; Albert Magnus, Vincent of Beauvais and others quote Seneca's *Natural Questions*. Yet the single thinker who refers to this work with any clear appreciation of its meaning is Roger Bacon. The others appear to have condescended Seneca's pages for their bald facts, while remaining entirely blind to his philosophy. But as many of the manuscript copies of Seneca's work were incomplete, his fertile suggestions were largely unknown. Several of the manuscripts are confined to Books i-iv., and this section of *Natural Questions* was generally thought complete. Books vi. and vii. contain the pregnant passages which escaped the notice of all but an almost silent, if reflective, few.

T. F. PALMER.

Masterpieces of Freethought

CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHOLOGY

By

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

III.

(Concluded from page 86)

ROBERTSON'S two books, *Christianity and Mythology*, and *Pagan Christs*, could not be ignored. Orthodoxy received the challenge full in the face. Here was no mild attempt to discredit or "rationalize" Christ's miracles, reserving a few pages for more or less pious twaddle about a wonderful Jesus of Nazareth. Not only were the miracles relegated to myth, not only were the ethics and moral teaching of Jesus shown to be, if true, not new, and if new, not true, but the whole personage of, or the conglomeration of characteristics of Pagan Gods in, Jesus, denied to have any existence whatever outside the pages of the Gospels—Canonical and Apocryphal.

The result was a bestirring of theologians, both here and abroad, rarely accorded to any Freethinker; at least, not since Lightfoot attempted, and so egregiously failed, to answer the author of *Supernatural Religion*. Among a crowd of lesser lights, Neumann, Schmiedel, Pfeleiderer, Carpenter, Schweitzer, Crawley, Tisdall, Martindale, Clemen, and Loisy, all attempted to demolish the structure put up by Robertson, and to discover some clear proof that there was such a person as Jesus. The result of their labours anyone who has the patience can examine for himself; it is sufficient to say here that most of their books lamentably failed and are now almost forgotten.

Robertson complained over and over again of being deliberately misrepresented. Often he is made to affirm what he actually does, in the text, deny. But the extraordinary point to remember is that his

central thesis, the transcription of a religious mystery-drama, was for the most part utterly ignored. He says:—

Much more surprising is the general evasion of the two theses upon which criticism was specially challenged, the theses that the gospel story of the Last Supper, the Agony, the Betrayal, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, is demonstrably not a narrative, but a mystery-drama which has been transcribed with a minimum of modification; and that the mystery-drama was inferribly an evolution from a Palestinian rite of human sacrifice, in which the annual victim was "Jesus the Son of the Father." Against this two-fold position I have not seen a single detailed argument. Writers who confidently and angrily undertake to expose error in another section of the book pass this with at most a defiant shot. Like the legendary Scottish preacher, they recognize a "difficult passage, and having looked it boldly in the face pass on."

One blustering Christian, Dr. St. Clair Tisdall, who had challenged Robertson to a public debate on the question, and then ran for dear life when he thought the debate might come off, thought it was safe to attack his opponent on the question of a reference to Mithraism. He actually had the impudence to deny that a chapter which Robertson quotes, "was in existence." Prove that it was "made up," or "invented," and, of course, the whole story of Jesus must be true. Robertson had little trouble in exposing this kind of "reply," as well as bluster of another kind, that of the Rev. Father Martindale. The two chapters he devotes to these people are among his most entertaining. For Schweitzer, one must have far more respect, and his *Quest of the Historical Jesus* is, in its way, a classic on the question. But as he could not read English when he wrote his book, it is not in any way a reply to Robertson, whom he, perhaps unintentionally, misrepresents. Whatever his Jesus may have been, it was not the Jesus of believing Christians. Dr. Schmiedel is also an opponent for whom one must have the greatest respect, and the reply given in *Christianity and Mythology*, including a detailed criticism of the famous "pillar" texts, put forward by Schmiedel, must be studied by all those who come into contact with the historical—whether man or God—school. In fact, in all the replies to his critics, Robertson is at his best; for he was a master of analysis and controversy. In the meantime, another opponent, a "Rationalist," took the field with far more trumpet-sounding than even the Christians. This was Dr. Fred C. Conybeare, who had been an Hon. Doctor of Theology, and was the author of *Myth, Magic and Ritual*. In the *Historical Christ* (1913), Conybeare attacked not only Robertson but Drews and W. B. Smith. When I say attacked, I really mean ridiculed almost the whole of their case. There were actually no myths—except those he himself pointed out in *Myth, Magic and Ritual*. Parallelisms and similarities in Pagan religions may or may not have anything to do with Christianity; but as a rule, they had nothing to do with it. In particular, as Robertson was quite ignorant of this or that, it was very necessary "to proceed cautiously because obscurantists are incessantly on the watch for solecisms or 'howlers.'" In fact, it was quite natural that an "uneducated" man, finding that some of the traditional stories about Jesus to be untrue, should "hastily make up his mind that the figure of Jesus never lived at all."

Conybeare pool-pools almost everything in the three works he is criticizing. And he commences—without any argument about it—with the Gospel of Mark, which he declares to be the earliest narrative document in the New Testament. This is "evident," when compared with the three other evangelists.

Conybeare, in fact, accepts the Gospel as true authentic history, except where he—and no one but he—finds “myth.” Anyone else finding other myths in it, is indubitably wrong. Moreover, Conybeare refers constantly to “an old document” called Q (*Quelle*) which, he says, was used by Luke and Matthew. He forgets to let his readers into the “secret” that there is no “Q” document in existence, and that Christian theologians have had to “infer” it to back up their case for the authenticity of the four “Canonical” gospels.

Conybeare ridicules the sun-myth theory altogether, without giving any reasoned reply whatever. He preferred to suggest that Robertson was ignorant, and had never studied what he—Conybeare—thought he should have done. And he preferred to accept the explanation of the early Christians or the Church Fathers of any story he himself believed rather than accept any mythic theory.

To go through the *Historical Christ* would be tedious. Robertson replied in one or two articles, and in parts of two new books published during the war, *The Historical Jesus* and the *Jesus Problem*, both excellent résumés with fresh and additional arguments and matter. He carried on his own thesis still further in *Jesus and Judas*, the three books being indispensable for all students of this very complicated question.

There is one argument which I cannot remember Robertson having dealt with in the problem; and that is, the fact that the Jews never questioned the historical reality of Jesus. This is constantly put forward, and the replies, like the reply to Frazer, constantly ignored. The truth is, no one knows what the Jews as a body said of the Jesus of the New Testament or of the Apocryphal Gospels as they were being circulated. The history of the race for many centuries after the fall of Jerusalem is very obscure. It was during this time that the Talmud was being compiled, but here again are many difficulties, one of them being that a good deal of the Talmud is a transcript of student notes. What was actually thought of the “Gospels” is not recorded in the Talmud, the references to “Jesus” being almost unintelligible. If anything positive can be deduced from them, it is that a “Jesus” living about 100 B.C. was stoned to death; and obviously this cannot mean Jesus of Nazareth.

But, curiously enough, there is a passage in the *Dialogues* of Justin Martyr with a Jew called Trypho, in which the latter vigorously denies that the Jews know anything about a Messiah (or Christ); the Messiah being, as Justin maintained, Jesus of Nazareth. Justin could not have been talking about vague Messiahs in general. Either it was Jesus or not, and his whole argument is for Jesus. Trypho says:—

But Christ—if he has indeed been born and exists anywhere—is unknown and does not even know himself and has no power until Elias come to anoint him and make him manifest to all. And you, having accepted a groundless report *invent a Christ for yourselves* and for his sake are inconsiderately perishing. . . . We have not believed empty fables.

If Trypho was a real Jew who actually talked with Justin in or about 160 A.D., and said what he is reported above to have said, then some Jews certainly did deny the existence of Christ and “empty fables.”

While we must be careful not to accept any “myth” or legend; while we must not accept any explanation without careful consideration; surely the time has come for Freethinkers to be ready to treat the story of Jesus just as they would that of Osiris. Dupuis, Volney and Robert Taylor were not afraid to deny his existence with a wealth of argument

wonderfully maintained, considering the poor state of the study of comparative mythology and religion in their day. Robertson, gathering together facts and theories from many of the greatest and best informed writers of his day, presented a statement of the myth theory which shook the Christian world as few writers have shaken it. His arguments, except with a few students who want his memory and scholarship kept green, are in danger of being forgotten. They seem to be rarely used in discussion with the “historical” school; as, of course, they require a certain amount of scholarship and close reasoning to follow. But one may rest assured that the mythological solution of the problems of both Jesus and the New Testament put forward by John M. Robertson, will eventually prevail. It rests on the solid foundations of scholarship and truth.

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops

The *Sunday Dispatch* of last week, has nearly half of its front page filled with two topics of extraordinary importance. One is to warn people that Britain must have an air-force that is the greatest in the world, then we shall be safe. This will make us secure against attack. And by parity of reasoning, when every other country has an air-force greater than any other country then every country will be safe from attack. That is the Rothermere receipt for the abolition of war. We must all be stronger than each other, then we shall be afraid to attack each other, and fear fed by power will lead to the millenium. Universal peace for twopence! Then the *Dispatch* turns its eagle eye to internal affairs. The Royal Crown is displayed on post office vans, war office waggons and numerous other things. Now King Edward the Seventh, of blessed Memory, laid it down that drawings of the Crown should be such as to display nine pearls on each side of the drawing. But the *Dispatch*, quick to guard the country's honour and to prevent desecration of its most sacred possessions, has discovered that the post office Crowns show not nine pearls, but ten pearls on each side. Horrible! It is enough to make King Edward, of blessed memory, turn in his grave. So an enquiry was made at the Post Office as to what was to be done about it. And the Post Office refuses to do anything. This is scandal much greater than anything connected with unemployed payments. It strikes at the root of our national welfare. What is the good of our most brilliant young men modelling their trousers on the pattern of those worn by the Prince of Wales, or our women wearing their hair and their hats *à la Marina* if the Post Office is to picture the British Crown with ten pearls on each side when it should only show nine? We suspect that the Post Office is a nest of Bolsheviks. Is Sir Kingsley Wood in the pay of Russia, that he thus defies the will of Edward the Seventh—of blessed memory?

With regard to the King's Jubilee, the Bishop of London offers two items of information. First he has to thank the King for “his good influence on the religious life of the country. . . . The whole Empire was moved by the expression he gave (in his Christmas message) of his personal belief in God.” We do not know what the King's personal influence on religion has been. His religion was selected for him, and he could not disclaim it without giving up his post. All that he has done in addition, is to take part in those religious ceremonies he is expected to figure in. And it is quite inspiring to be told that the whole Empire was moved because the King said he believed in God. In the name of all that is sensible, why? What greater authority on God is the King than the greenest of green curates? Perhaps the Bishop means that there are some people who if the King believes in God, will also straightway feel their faith in God confirmed. In that case, so much the worse for the people. If that be true, then whatever change for

the better has taken place during the past twenty-five years we may take it for granted there has been no improvement in the general intelligence.

The ghost of Lady Calliard has been very busy since she "passed over," and has reported back to earth several times. The latest news is that she is annoyed that no champagne was drunk at the funeral ceremony. The mourners explain they forgot. Lady Calliard, who had been married twice, says she has met both husbands since she has been in the summerland, and has "talked to them both."

We can quite understand Lady Calliard's annoyance that no champagne was drunk at her funeral. Given enough champagne and all sorts of things could have been seen by the mourners. And the fact that she has met both her husbands is very interesting. We have always wondered what happened to a wife in the next world who had married two husbands, or a husband who had married two wives. If they were to be re-united, it looks as though polygamy and polyandry would be the result. But Lady Calliard does not say there has been any re-union. She is not living with either or both. She has just talked to them. That might or might not be pleasant to the husbands, everything would depend on how they were talked to when on earth.

The other day there was, according to the *Liverpool Echo*, an influx of animals in St. Mary's (R.C.) Church, Rhyl. They came to be blessed. Canon Quin did the blessing, and the ceremony is said to have been profitable. Well, the two most admired animals in the New Testament are sheep and donkeys, and we may, following many pious commentators, treat them as types which are regarded with special favour by the Roman Church.

The editor of the *Liverpool Echo* has dared to say that at the next election Sir Oswald Mosley has small prospect of getting even one follower returned to Parliament. For saying this he has been promptly called to order by Mr. A. K. Chesterton, a Fascist official, who says, that "Under Fascism, editors of papers will be required to answer for the veracity of all such announcements." We are not quite sure how one can be made answerable for a forecast concerning the result of an election, but the German Nazi Movement has given an object lesson, and the British Branch will probably travel along the same lines. So the editor of the *Echo* must look for something in the boiling oil line. His reply that he is simply using "the freedom we have in this country to express an opinion," may do very well for the moment, but when Fascism is enthroned then—!!!

Samples of the intelligence of our leaders. *Exhibit A*, by Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., "I believe that the Association of India and Britain is in the providence of God. *Exhibit B*, by Winston Churchill, "We are not Aliens in India." Evidently it is the Hindoos who are the foreigners, unless it is we who are the Hindoos.

A reviewer of Prof. Gibb's work *Whither Islam*, shows that

Islam as a religion has lost little of its power, but as an arbiter of social life it is rapidly declining. A new world of thought is opening everywhere, and secular interests are more and more replacing those of religion.

How like Christianity!

Another reviewer, dealing with a pamphlet entitled *Church, Community and State*, by J. H. Oldham, points out that:—

The menace to Christianity (of the expansion of the functions of the State) is evident, and it is when Christian people are unaware that their faith is being undermined that the greatest harm is done. This is illustrated in the sphere of education. The Church's liberty to preach and conduct its devotions will avail but little if the whole weight of a public system of education in-

culcates on the impressionable mind of youth beliefs about the world and man, which are incompatible with the Christian interpretation of life.

This is splendid. If we were sure that our State education did show how utterly incompatible were Christian beliefs and the scientific interpretation of the Universe, a splendid step to Secular education would be made. And that is obviously coming anyway.

After all the "wonderful" discoveries, made by archaeologists to prove the truth of the Bible, in a book written by Mr. Stanley Casson on the subject, we find that "what he has to say in detail of the numerous fields of activity is tantalizingly little." This really means that almost nothing of value as to Bible history has been discovered. One can, of course, talk a great deal about Ur of the Chaldees, but no one has yet discovered a single reference anywhere, archaeologically speaking, to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, David or Solomon—and none, for that matter, to Sarah, Leah, Miriam, Ruth or Esther. And not even to Jesus, either. But Faith can always live on Hope.

We thought that Balaam's Ass had been laughed out of existence. We at least believed that a journal like the *British Weekly* would not at this time of day resurrect in all its literalness a story long ago discarded by every intelligent schoolboy. "It would have been a dreadful thing," says the *British Weekly*, "if a book like the Bible had not told us about that angel who appeared before Balaam and withstood him with a drawn sword." Opinions differ, of course, but for ourselves we could have forgiven the Holy Ghost if he (or it) had "inspired" some "sacred word" against Slavery, Dictatorship and Superstition, instead of these turnip-candle yarns, of which the Bible is full.

Mr. H. V. Morton, having concluded his glorification of *Women and the Bible*, is apparently another example of the "evil communications" which "corrupt good manners." He is at it again, this time with no excuse that he is saying nasty things for the glory of God and Potiphar's wife. He is writing about Old Mayfair, in the *Herald*, which he tells us rather unnecessarily used to be of old, where a Fair was held in May. He passes on without protest or denial the curious untruth that this "boisterous gathering" was suppressed "as 'a public nuisance' and a 'nursery of vice and Atheism.'" We wonder where the Atheism came in. Did the "vicious" crowds pause in their vice to attend a few lectures on Atheism? Or is the story just another instance of sheer mud-throwing, and possibly altogether a lie, the "vice," most likely being as false a report as the Atheism most obviously is.

"Lives" of Christ continue to multiply. The first volume of the *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, by Jules Lebreton, has just been published, packed with learning and full of information about "Our Lord," and his sayings and doings. The other book is by Fr. E. Mara, and is entitled the *Mystical Body of Christ*, and is all about the doctrines associated with that engrossing—and so necessary—subject. Christians will find it a mine of information drawn from St. Paul and the theologians; and it is also a work of "Ascetical and Mystical Theology, useful both as a dogmatic treatise, and as a book of Ascetics." Is it possible that there are people who not only buy this kind of rubbish but can actually read it? And for what purpose?

A terrible tragedy has happened to the Finns! Poor old Finland has lost its "Apostolic Succession," owing to three Finnish Bishops dying before they had a chance to pass the buck—or rather the Ordination—on to a chap who would then become the Successor of the Apostles. Owing to this misfortune the Convocation of Canterbury while expressing "great sympathy," felt itself unable to consider any application for any sort of union with the Finnish Church. Fortunately our own country is in no danger of all our bishops dying simultaneously—we

have far too many bishops for that. We could actually spare ninety bishops without being in any danger of losing the Apostolic Succession—or indeed anything of any value at all. We go further. We could quite well spare at least 16,000 English Clergymen, to say nothing of mere Nonconformists.

The *Methodist Recorder* bemoans the "grave situation" in their Mission Field. They call it God's, we prefer to call it theirs as the Methodist Corner is only a small section of the abyss of waste involved in Christian Missions to the "Heathen." It is gratifying, to a certain extent, to learn that the Methodist Missionary Society "faces a large deficit," but it shows, and history will tell with astonished horror, the callous indifference of wealthy Christians to the real needs of their time. Although the contributions to this sectarian mission is less than formerly, actually £384,694 was raised in the last year in this country "to give our Master for His Kingdom abroad." And this in a year of unexampled poverty and want at home.

General Eva Booth proclaims, through that stout old Salvation Army journal, the *Daily Mail*, that she wants £250,000 from the public for "Self-denial Week." It is splendid to learn that half this money will help to feed the hungry, etc., and the other half will go to "maintain and develop the work over-seas, work which includes leper colonies, hospitals in India and missionary enterprises generally." The generous British public will give wholeheartedly for such Godly work. Why worry about our own "devastated areas" when "missionary enterprises generally," out of England, must be encouraged? General Eva says, "I am praying more people than ever will give this year. I am sure the nation will be happier if it does." Ask the "devastated areas"!

What poor "Consolation" religion gives mankind. A page of the *British Weekly* expounds the Editor's views of what he calls "The Gracious Invitation"—a Sermon on the words, "All ye that labour and are heavy laden." Christ's promise: "I will give you rest," is the most obvious dope. "We live by faith," repeats the Editor. And we might add that many millions who prayed for Peace on Earth died in their faith. If a human being offered us any sort of gift, we should expect at least to have it in our life-time if the offer were genuine. What can we say of a "Consolation" which kills us before it pays out the gift it promises?

That people all over the country want birth-control clinics, and intend having them must be apparent to all. Yet Catholics are doing their utmost to prevent any being formed—though that such a minority of our citizens should interfere at all is a piece of sheer impudence. At Stockport, the other day, they called a meeting to express their determination not to have such a clinic in the town. Dr. O'Donovan, M.P., and Dr. Moore both spoke, the former claiming that if the clinic were established "the Christian tradition of healing would be blotted out of medicine"—which, incidentally, would be a good thing. Bishops and Canons of the Church also spoke, and "the meeting pledged itself to vote against any member of the Council who supported the proposal." We wonder how non-Catholics like to be dictated to by these bigots? Nobody wants to force Catholics to use contraceptives.

In noticing a new book by Dr. Anderson Scott, called *Footnotes to St. Paul*, a reviewer quotes Harnack's remark that "all the great movements in the history of the Church may be traced to a fresh discovery of the meaning of the words of St. Paul." It is amusing to see how every expositor of Paul (and other "inspired" writers) finds out that all his predecessors misunderstood him. There is no end, for instance, to the "interpretations," and even the alleged "facts" of what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus. There must be myriads of "profound" and contradictory comments on every

clause of every verse of "Romans." Dr. Scott modestly thrusts them all aside in favour of his own originalities. He characteristically remarks that "much of the popular estimate of Christianity in our time is based on misunderstanding." All the regiment is out of step except our Willie!

Since the war, more than 100 churches—all Roman Catholic, of course—have been built in Algeria, France's famous colony; and many others are being built in Southern Sahara. This proves once again that no "depression" can effect religion very much; and that the Christian Church is by no means finished. It also proves that Freethought and its fight are as necessary as ever—a fact some Freethinkers are apt to forget.

The "Holy Year" is extended for another twelve months, and there is going to be a "world-wide outpouring of prayer" during the whole time. If this doesn't bring the world to Christ, surely nothing else will. Millions of prayers wafted from God's own flock should move "Our Lord" to compel everybody to come in—that is, everybody but those obstinate Secularists who simply will not see the Light. Even "Our Lord" will be obliged to admit utter failure there.

Even in Edinburgh, Catholics are not particularly liked. At a Protestant demonstration held recently there, one of the speakers said: "When we get command of the City Chambers, no Papist organization would get the use of any hall. Papists, moreover, have no right of free speech; there is not a loyal Papist in the country." And both sects worship the same Deities and swear by the same Book!

A Roman Catholic correspondent to one of the religious papers thinks blessing lambs a "beautiful ceremony." But as for "blessing dogs, cats and birds inside a Church—that seems preposterous and disgusting!" He is horrified at the idea of the "blessing" being done perhaps before the "Blessed Sacrament," and "disgusted" at the thought that "Our Lord's" Sanctuary should be put to such "improper uses." We fancy that this gentleman knows very little about his Church. What about grovelling before bits of bones, hair, wood and other filthy "relics"? Are there many things more "disgusting" than that?

Catholics and Protestants in Ireland are as bitterly opposed to each other as ever. Mr. McConnell, the Vice-Chairman of the Protestant League in Drumahaire, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, declared at a recent meeting that he stood by Lord Craigaron's declaration of "A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People." He wanted only sound Protestants to be returned to this Protestant Parliament. Another speaker, Mr. Crawford, hoped that Protestant employers would employ only 100 per cent Protestants; while those who shop, should shop only at Protestant shops which employed out-and-out Protestants. Moreover, vacancies in situations offered by Protestant employers should be only filled by genuine Protestants. What a delightfully happy family are these Christians!

The *News of the World* has a sensational article headed "Wicked Ramp of the Fortune-Teller." The word "Wicked" seems to suggest that the clergy intend to cover up their own "Fortune Telling" under the pretext that they are "good" fortune-tellers. The same report condemns "bogus fortune-tellers." Are there then some of these gentry who are not bogus?

The Rev. Charles Gimblett, M.A., speaking recently at Hull, declared that "Some Christians seem to be too heavenly to be human, and others seem too human to be heavenly." We never heard of a Christian who was too INHUMAN to be heavenly.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. MCCARTNEY (Hawick).—Pleased you think the *Freethinker* is better than ever.

K. H. MCALLISTER.—We do not see why Mr. Middleton Murry has no right to call himself a Communist because he believes in Jesus, and has some sort of a religion. Communism may exist with or without religion, with or without belief in a "God," and there have been Communists of both varieties, just as religious and non-religious folk have held all sorts of social and economic theories.

G. F. LAWS.—Obliged for cuttings. Some people are on awfully friendly terms with God, and so expect him to look after them. When he fails to do so they are naturally a little indignant.

J. JACOBS (Jo'burgh).—Pleased to hear from you, and to know that yourself and wife are quite well.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A. R. Chapman, 10s. DISTRIBUTING THE "FREETHINKER."—"Worker," 1s. 6d.; Don Fisher, 3s.

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

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 offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.

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

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

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.

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

To-day (February 17) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Queen's Hall, Morley Street, Bradford. His subject will be, "Is Christianity Played Out?" The lecture will commence at 7. Admission will be free, but there are reserved seats at 6d. and 1s.

On Sunday next (February 24) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, on "How Science Explains Religion." On the last two or three occasions a number have been unable to gain admission to the meeting, and we advise early attendance on the part of those coming from a distance. Admission will be free, but there will be reserved seats at 1s. each. Tickets may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. S. R. A. Ready, 29 Sycamore Road, Waterloo.

On Saturday evening (February 23) the Branch holds its Annual Dinner in the Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool. Queen Square is within easy reach of tram, train, and ferry. There will be the usual speeches and entertainment. The Dinner is timed for seven, and there will be a reception at 6.30. Mr. Cohen has promised to be present. Tickets are 5s. 6d. each, a double ticket—

lady and gentleman—10s., and these should be obtained in advance of the General Secretary, Mr. Ready, address as above.

The recent successful meeting addressed by Mr. Cohen in the King Edward Hall, Church End, Finchley, has prompted the Executive of the N.S.S. to repeat the venture. Mr. Cohen will speak in the same hall on Sunday evening, March 3. Some good hard work went on behind the scenes on the last occasion, and the offer is being repeated for the coming event. Any saints in the district wishing to join in the distribution of slips should communicate with the General Secretary, at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

We have had of late—not for the first time—a couple of suggestions as to inserting illustrations in the *Freethinker*. The idea is that it might lead to sales. We do not think so. The *Freethinker* does not, and is not likely to appeal to the type of intelligence that is attracted to a paper because of its pictures, and that when it reads of a murder, likes to see a picture of the house close to where the murderer once lived, or that feels it is moving in society if it can see a picture of the Duchess of York looking at Bertram Mills' Circus. Apart from this there is the question of expense. Every issue of the *Freethinker* is published at a loss, and that loss is not covered by the Endowment Trust. With greater financial resources experiments might be tried in directions that promise increased circulation, but those experiments must await opportunities.

We are pleased to learn from a Stockton correspondent that Mr. J. T. Brighton made a very favourable impression upon a large audience in his recent debate with a Wesleyan Minister at South Bank. As is very often the case the Minister showed but a poor acquaintance with the case for Freethought—those who do know what the case is usually decline to engage in discussion. But Mr. Brighton appears to have made good use of the opportunity of putting his case before the religious portion of the audience, and it was received with unexpected attention and sympathy. So far everything made for the best. Our correspondent also reports very good results from Mr. Cohen's recent visit to the Stockton district.

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. reports a successful year's work, in which all departments of its activity shared. A course of four indoor meetings were tried, and justified another course, which at present is being held in Grove House, High Road, Leyton, E.10. All the officials were re-elected, and efforts are to be made during the ensuing year to increase the membership roll and finances of the Branch. The Branch Secretary Mr. F. G. Warner, 83a Dawlish Road, Leyton, London E.10, will be pleased to furnish particulars as to membership, etc.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be speaking for the West London Branch N.S.S. to-day (February 17) in the "Laurie Arms" Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W., at 7.30 p.m., on "The God Men of Science Believe in." The subject looks attractive and the local saints will no doubt see to it that those friends are present who attach so much importance to the religious utterances of scientists.

From the *Shetland Times*, on *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*:—

Mr. Cohen expresses a strongly individual line of thought in politics, religion, art, science and other matters. His book is downright denunciation of many tendencies in the thought of to-day, and it should do some good in stimulating people to think for themselves.

A terrible accusation comes from Mr. Handel Brown of the University of Leeds. He doesn't like Dr. Soper's scepticism about the Virgin Birth. Handel Brown hurls at the famous theologian the awful question, "Does Dr. Soper believe in the Holy Ghost?" But according to Acts xix. 2, there were baptized Christians, admittedly "disciples," who "believed," but who answered Paul's conundrum "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" with the straightforward answer, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

The Future of the "Friends"

As a body of Christian believers, the Society of Friends appears to be in a precarious state. So far as we can discover, the Members are as active as ever in what we can all unite to recognize as "good works." There is no lack of real "Friendliness," in the form of philanthropic aid to victims of national, international, capitalistic and other misfortunes.

It has also to be said that the Quakers still continue to exhibit detestation of intolerance, and love of liberty, political, religious and other kinds.

Freethinkers have always been quick to acknowledge and appreciate the many human virtues of Quakers, and have naturally sympathized with their "Sufferings" under persecutions shared in equal degree by Quakers and Freethinkers.

There were also religious and intellectual as well as social relationships between many of the old Deistic Freethinkers and the Friends. Thomas Paine, for instance, felt at home in many of the Friends' Meeting Houses, and William Penn was openly accused of Deism. Paine did not have to be a Quaker, nor Penn a Deist—the Friends have so often understood the meaning of intellectual hospitality.

If Quakers were mainly poor long ago, persecutions probably accounted for it. Quaker capitalists to-day are as common as Jewish money-lenders perhaps. Quakers formerly wore peculiar dress; that is at an end. They strove to perpetuate the Second person singular in speech and writing. "Thou" and "thee" have now become "you" in Quaker, as in other people's converse. While we notice that the weekly *Friend*—the admirable Quaker organ—is dated "1st Month," the commoner "January" is added in brackets, which is much the same as if a polite objector to profanity said "Bother—I mean, of course, Damn!"

"Christmas," "Nativity," and all sorts of Church Feasts, Fasts and Festivals are now openly named (without the absurd notes of interrogation.) And the days of the week have ceased to be called First Day, etc. They appear in *The Friend* as Monday, Tuesday, etc., although formerly it was said that the Friends hated the Pagan nomenclature (Wodens Day, etc.) and refused to soil their Christian lips with such words.

It has always been a mystery to some of us why Quakers, who objected to titles, not only aristocratic, but also "Esq." and even the very plain "Mr.," should glory in what they call "loyalty to the LORDSHIP of Jesus." But then it is difficult to explain why American Christians should adore God as King, and believe that the ideal state is a Kingdom (of Heaven), with an absolute monarch as Divine Dictator without any sort of popular representation.

For the first two centuries of Quakerism, a church has been regarded as a pagan institution, into which no "Friend" would ever enter, despite persecution and coercion. This boycott was continued long after penalties for non-attendance had ceased. The Friends were courageous enough to stay away from churches in days when marriages were not recognized unless "solemnized": in churches. So antagonistic were they to the church that they bravely accepted social ostracism for themselves, and the title of "bastard" for their children, rather than enter these "pagan buildings."

The last inhibition has apparently disappeared. On Sunday, January 6, 1935, Mr. Herbert G. Wood, a prominent "Friend," preached in St. Martin's Parish Church, Birmingham, and his Sermon was broadcast in the B.B.C. Regional Programme. This sermon fitted both the church in which it was delivered, and

the B.B.C. "religion." Its topic was the superior claim of Jesus Christ to the title of LORD, as compared with "Lord Serapis," or Mithras or Osiris.

Mr. Wood's address was not devoid of frank denunciation of some current "idolatrics," but we do not think we are doing Mr. Wood any injustice in saying he apparently aimed at some sort of union between the once-hated pagan institution, and "Christians of every church and school" (which we presume includes Quakers), under the "One Lord." "Why do we not," he asked, "discover ourselves as fellow-members of the household of faith here and now?"

Affirming "the Lordship of Jesus," Mr. Wood, in this sermon, claimed that "the Christian may surrender everything to the State" the only exception being "the Crown Rights of the Lord Jesus." We saw during the World War that these "crown rights" usually agree with the current popular mob-prejudices, according to the judgments delivered from these "pagan buildings" at the time. In any case, these "crown rights" being indefinite and often self-contradictory, are singularly subject to the chance interpretation of human prejudices.

In the present instance, Mr. Wood leaves us in no doubt that whatever other interpretations there may be (e.g. in Germany now) he voices the orthodox Christian fear of "the desire in this country to secularize the State, and to secure for a Secular State the monopoly of education," as if this were the crime of crimes against which Quakers, Anglo-Catholics and others must unite.

We recognize a sinister note in this Quaker's praise of Wilfrid Ward, whose conviction was

that the age-long feud which had divided Christendom into two warring camps was coming to an end, and that a new and more fundamental conflict between religion and the forces of Atheism and Secularism was about to take its place. Wilfrid Ward thought all Christians, all Theists should co-operate to counteract an Atheism which was eating into the very roots of human life and society. Surely, he was right.

It sounds all very sad to the ears of Secularists when Mr. Wood endorses "unity" on these lines. We are reluctant to see the Friends swallowed up in so obviously a lying campaign of hate and calumny, whose language has so little in common with the traditions of the Friends. The "Inner Light" seems degraded by association with mildewed church candles. Possibly it represents only an individual conservative craving for Cathedral celebrity. If it is more than this, and the prominence given to Mr. Wood in *The Friend* almost warrants the apprehension, it must mean that a failing sect desires to lose its identity in the larger sphere where its old enemies still reign.

The cry of the rank and file Quaker finds utterance in a letter appearing in the same issue of *The Friend*, wherein Mr. Wood's sermon appears:—

We are the happy hunting ground of all strange, unbalanced folk without a congregation. Anyone may join us and rise and deliver the sediment from years of local preaching, or strange dogmas from an ignorant comprehension of the Scriptures fostered in any of the three hundred sects which divide the seamless robe between them in this country.

Our own contributions are often pitiful; any trivial anecdote may be, with a smile and a by-your-leave trotted out as a means of grace, however ridiculous to the average intelligence. Men who speak elsewhere with accuracy and in orderly form make contributions that lack cohesion, freshness and charm; they bear the mark of unpreparedness erected into an unchallengeable principle. Nothing is apparently at stake. There is no longer war in Heaven, the Satanic powers have been laid to sleep,

souls are not in danger, there is nothing urgent, no cry to repent and believe. Therefore the Christian ministry as far as we are concerned, has laid aside its armour, intellectual and spiritual, for there is nothing to be fought for.

The letter may throw some light upon the sermon.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The New Book; a Criticism

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN'S book, *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*, is another valuable contribution to Freethought literature, as a treatise on the art of thinking and method of approach in various fields, and, as he anticipates, Chap. IV. will occasion some opposition among Materialists.

I submit that this chapter is featured by a confusion of metaphysics with epistemology (p. xii.), a confusion of appearance with phenomenon (p. 103), an erroneous acceptance of the relation of noumenon to phenomenon as that of ego to non-ego (p. 108), an obsolete Idealist theory of knowing, a mistaken notion of the Thing-in-Itself as something apart from phenomena (p. 74, 77), a non-recognition of the scientific use of the concept substance (p. 97), a non-scientific rendering of qualities as existentially dependent on perception (p. 88), and an ill-advised restriction of Materialism to Determinism (p. 96).

On several minor issues, also, there are questionable assertions, to wit, first, an unusual Aristotelian meaning for metaphysics (p. xii.) (Histories of Greek philosophy give the preserved denotation as the science of pure being, the various sciences dealing only with forms of being). Secondly, the wrong idea that "no one outside the realm of fantasy has ever assumed the 'It' is alive." (p. 101.) (It has been so conceived in serious philosophy, from the post-Kantians, Fechner and Wundt, to the late Prof. H. W. Carr, and it is a salient feature of Brahman belief, "Thou art Thou.") Thirdly, a mistaken reading of Bradlaugh (p. 103). (I have before shown by quotation that Bradlaugh does not take "existence" as a term for the totality of modes; *Freethinker* No. 2, 4 and 5; 1934). Fourthly, a questionable assertion that the Thing-in-Itself has gravitated towards identification with God (p. 79). (The evidence for this is too small to constitute a "development.") And finally, the misleading suggestion that philosophers have not found the Thing-in-Itself (p. 78). (It is for science to define the substance of phenomena; philosophy merely speculates as to its status and character; i.e., is it monistic? purposive? interfered with? guided? teleologically pulled? mind-ejected? etc.)

* * *

On p. 95 Mr. Cohen says, "When we speak of a book we mean that complex of 'sensational' effects which comprise our knowledge of the book. We do not find a residuum which we are able to describe as the thing-in-itself."

I shall here attempt logically (in popular form) to disprove this assertion:—

The sensation of "book," and that of "hippopotamus," have something in common (i.e., sensation); they have also a differentiating content (re shape, weight, texture, and other qualities). But what they have in common (sensation) relates to the percipient (the subject).

But the percipient—you or I—has no say in the matter as to whether the experienced sense-data are of a book or a hippopotamus. That is decided by something in the "outside" world.

Hence something exists in the external world which determines the content of our sensations.

Hence our sensations presuppose an external existence *waiting* to be sensed, and therefore existentially indifferent to being sensed.

Hence if all perceptive organisms were destroyed to-morrow, if all living beings were annihilated, that which served as datum for their experiences would still exist: call it "stuff."

Hence the stuff which meant "book" for sentient beings still exists.

Thus we have removed the sensational effects, and *still have something left*.

Now Mr. Cohen is under the peculiar impression that certain misguided Materialists think that what is left is the "book-in-itself." Nothing of the kind. Book is an object; object stands against subject. Therefore, no subject, no object. We have taken away perception and no object appears. Now here is the crux of the whole matter:—

From "no subject, no object," it follows, "no sense-effects, no book." It DOES NOT follow: "no sense-effects, no stuff" (no electrons and protons).

For we have seen that we can discount all organic sensations, destroy the entire race, so that there is not a sense-organ left, and we still have something left, i.e., stuff, or substance, which science at the moment posits as protonic and electronic charges.

So that it is hardly true to say, as Mr. Cohen does, that when we take away every impression of the book we find that we have nothing left (p. 86).

Have we got outside experience? No. Electrons are facts of experience. Have we asserted a "book" independent of perception? No. The object disappears with the subject. Have we posited a book over and above its qualities? No. The qualities are all there, sensed or not sensed, as I shall later show further. Take away the sense-organs and the phenomenon remains, *no longer an object, but still composed of substance*.

Now let us burn our object,¹ the book. By this we get ashes and smoke. We have exchanged phenomenon "book" for phenomena "smoke" and "ashes." But the substance which constituted book now constitutes smoke and ashes. i.e., the Thing-in-Itself has changed its form, or, in modern terms, the matter-units which conditioned book now by a different organization, condition smoke and ashes. May I now use the metaphysical language which Mr. Cohen so deplores? Substance manifests phenomena, i.e., takes forms, e.g., book, smoke; river, lake, mountain-snow, cloud, and river again. When its material phenomena become perceived they merit the name objects.

No sense-effects, no appearance of "table," but, sense effects, or no sense effects, the wood is there; i.e., atomic behaviour persists independently of whether the phenomenon it conditions is or is not an object for experience. Hence, to remove the sensational effects is not equal to removing the *substance*² of which the phenomenon is composed.

Thus, substance is not divorced from phenomena (cf. p. 77); on the contrary, it is to phenomena what wood is to table. Substance is the Materialists' noumenon.³ It is the ontological datum for a materialist metaphysics, and the materialist with no metaphysics has a hole in his hat; he lacks a datum. This substance (at present defined by science in terms of matter units) may be logically inferred to exist independently of our experience, though the possibility of thinking about it in terms

¹ An object is a material phenomenon as it appeals to the senses.

² Substance is the primary unanalysable constituent of matter, wherever it transpires to be.

³ Principle of existence.

other than those of its appearances is peculiar to Mr. Cohen. In insisting that we cannot get outside our own experiences he is only stating the obvious, and flogging thin air, for no Materialist says we can.

No; what we infer is that this fundamental substance enters into our consciousness when its phenomena are experienced as objects, and we can infer it to exist independently of sense-organs.

This is supported further by the fact that substance antedates mind; mind is one of its creations. The primitive nebula was not experienced by anybody (the conditions barred the possibility of life), but scientists are able to say it existed, and are able to say what its unexperienced qualities were (hot, liquid, etc.). They are able to say that stars were bright, soil was black, rocks were brown, water was wet, the sun was hot, stones were heavy, etc., millions of years before their like came to be confronted with animal or human eyes and ears, long before the advent of living creatures with sense-perception. Perhaps Mr. Cohen will offer the "permanent possibility" of sensation, but what I am after is actuality, not possibility.

What now becomes of Mr. Cohen's statement that "the qualities of weight, of extension, of hardness, etc., . . . are affections of the organism"? (p. 96.) Or on p. 88, "Science tells me that weight is a matter of muscular tension, etc."?

What "science tells us" about weight ought to be found in a manual of physics, and the manual of physics tells us that weight is nothing of the kind; weight, in fact, is gravitational pull exerted on a mass.

Mr. Cohen's error, I suggest, is the confusion of weight with the sensation of weight; i.e., the confusion of qualities with their perception by the organism.

I assert, then, that the table is heavy whether I lift it or not; that the iron is hot (heat is molecular movement) when nobody touches it; that the ball is round even when our eyes are not turned in its direction. That is, qualities, are not existentially dependent on experience.

Does any reader seriously contend that they are, i.e., that qualities exist only when sensed? Let him, then, light a fire, quit the room, and leave a thermometer to register *heat which no one feels*.

In his absence, then, the heat of the fire would exist in virtue of its effects, not on us, but on the atmosphere and furniture. Mr. Cohen's error, I believe, is in taking *sense-effects* as the only ones that qualify a thing to exist, whereas the truth is surely that material things can *affect one another*, and if they do that they certainly exist, i.e., their qualities are not annihilated in our absence; they precede and endure being known. Knowing is not a necessary condition of being; so that the absence of a sentient subject robs a phenomenon of no existential quality. All the phenomenon can do it still does—on its surrounding field.

I have spared authoritative support for the sake of brevity, but it is instanced by the following: "Science looks for one primordial substance from which all the varying forms have been evolved or built up" (symposium by scientists, *Outline of Science*; ed. Thomson).

Finally, the fallacy of restricting Materialism to Determinism (p. 96, etc.) would require an article, for there are several reasons why Determinism is not enough; one is, that Materialism is not the only philosophy which holds Determinism; it is held also by one form of Holism (Prof. Forsyth), of Neo-Vitalism, and by all Teleologists (Profs. Sorley, Needham, Millikan, etc.)

I take Mr. Cohen's word for it that he is an uncompromising Materialist, but I am not sure where, in Chap. IV., he parts company with the neo-Idealist, for the latter is also employing "publicity" as the distinguishing feature of objectivity.⁴

⁴ e.g., the Italian school of Atheist Idealism.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Note by Mr. Cohen

MR. TAYLOR'S article shows so many misunderstandings of the position laid down in the chapter of my book, "The Ghost of a God," that if it had not been a criticism of myself I should have been tempted to return it as not meeting the arguments set forth. As it is, I take part of the responsibility for the misunderstanding as probably due to my not making myself sufficiently clear. But I think some of Mr. Taylor's criticism is due to the existence of the very thing which the chapter was intended to remove, namely, the persistence of the theological frame of mind with so many who think themselves freed from its influence. I must presently devote a special article to illustrate this very important point.

For the present, Mr. Taylor. Mr. Taylor thinks that my statement that Aristotle used "Metaphysics" as covering all with which he had not dealt with under the term "physics" gives the word an unusual meaning. I can only say in defence, as others will see if they consult Aristotle, that it was Aristotle's own use of the term. It was afterwards that it became identified with a "science of pure being." I do not know what "pure being" is, but I think it must be a close relation of Mr. Taylor's "substance" which is like nothing we know or can even conceive.

Next, I am charged with saying that Bradlaugh took existence as the equivalent of "modes." If Mr. Taylor will re-read the paragraph to which he refers he will see that he quite misunderstands me. My position there is that Bradlaugh in positing an "existence" apart from modes was illustrating the mental evil of which I am complaining—namely, importing the ghost of a God into philosophy.

Mr. Taylor says I offer a "misleading suggestion that philosophers have not found the 'thing-in-itself.'" I make no misleading assertion, but state emphatically they have not found a "thing-in-itself," that is, something that exists apart from the thing we know, and cannot be thought of in terms of the things we know.

Mr. Taylor says that electrons are "facts of experience." That is a real contribution to science, or rather it would be, were it true. The difficulty is that science persists in treating them as *conceptions* which may help us to explain observed phenomena. Electrons are only facts of experience as the "ether" is a fact of experience.

There is a plain misunderstanding of what Mill meant (I was quoting J. S. Mill) by defining matter as the permanent possibility of sensation. Mr. Taylor says he is after actuality, not possibility. But if Mr. Taylor will consult Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, and also pay attention to what I wrote, he will see that in order to make sense of the passage, "possibility" and "actuality" are interchangeable terms. One may reject a statement, but one should not distort its plain meaning.

Mr. Taylor does not believe that "the qualities of weight, of extension, of hardness . . . are affections of the organism." I should have thought the statement self-evident, as all serious psychologists take it to be. Mr. Taylor tells me that what science says about weight is found in a manual of physics. I am

obliged for the information that a manual of physics tells us that weight is gravitational "pull." Quite so, but Mr. Taylor must have more of primitive fetichism in his constitution than I thought he had, if he believes that the earth literally "pulls" a stone down to it, or cannot see that when we talk of the moon pulling the tides we are using a figure that is directly derived from our own physical sensations—that is from a feeling of muscular tension.

Mr. Taylor thinks I am guilty of fallacy in saying that the essence of Materialism is the affirmation of a universal Determinism, because determinism is accepted by some who are not Materialists. So have many believers in faith-healing mixed curative methods with their faith, but that has never been taken as good grounds for rejecting scientific medicine.

There is the same mental attitude indicated in criticizing the use of the terms "public" and "private" as synonyms for the old "objective" and "subjective." It seems that presently I may be accused of being a believer in the teachings of the Established Church because I make use of the English language. Mr. Taylor should remember that "objective" and "subjective" or their equivalents, "public" and "private," are common to thinkers of all schools. The differences lies in the implications of the terms.

Finally, after answering so many questions, I may be permitted to ask Mr. Taylor one, and I think that will cover the other points in his criticism. He speaks of "substance" and "stuff," which may mean something or may mean nothing at all. My trouble is in trying to think of a substance that is not like some substance I know or can conceive, or of "stuff" that is not like some "stuff" I know or can conceive. If the stuff or substance is not like the things I know (when I use these words) what are they like? But if they are like the substance I know then they belong to the category of known or knowable things. If, for example, the substance of the book is not like the book I know, neither in colour, nor in size, nor in weight, what is it like? If it is like the book in colour and size, etc., how does Mr. Taylor distinguish the book we know from the book that is only substance? It seems as though the conundrum, "When is a book not a book, while at the same time remaining a book?" has for its answer, "When it is Substance." And between that and "There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, yet there are not three Gods, but only one God," and a substance which is not like the substance we know, I'm hanged if I can detect any difference. That is why I think, mind I say I think, that Mr. Taylor has not yet completely outgrown his theology. But in this he is one of a very, very numerous company.

A Provincial's Thoughts on the London Freethinkers' Dinner

FROM the far edge of the New Forest beneath a cloudless sunlit sky I, in due course, found myself, head down, forcing my way through a blinding snowstorm in the direction of the Holborn Restaurant, and incidentally—

"Loudly aspersing
With many a cursing
Our wretched English climate."

Shedding outermost garments in a cloak-room I sauntered into the nearby reception-room and wandered about amid a sea of strangely unfamiliar faces. "Glad to see so large a muster of Freethinkers here to-night," I ventured in my most affable Sunday-go-to-meeting manner to an individual who seemed as lost as myself in the crowd. The stony silence with which he greeted my remark, and the horny eye with which he slowly

swept my anatomy from pumps to "nudist patch"—to borrow Lord Snell's apt description of the occipito-frontal area of a thatch on which the god Chronos has commenced scything operations—convinced me that all was not well, made me realize that my observation was not appropriate to the environment; made me, in fact, feel that I was mere "matter out of place." So, fading away from the outraged one, I sidled towards the doorway and handing my ticket to an attendant, I asked: "This is the Holborn Restaurant, isn't it?" "Oh, yes, Sir," he replied—"but the Freethinkers' Dinner is at the other end of the building"; then, calling a bell-hop, "Conduct this gentleman to the Venetian Chamber." And thus, into the more genial and naughty assemblage of those who do their own thinking I was led, still chuckling over my butting into, and "providential" escape from, the hornet's nest "on the other side." Well, as Dan Leno used to say: "He laughs last who laughs—last," from which one concludes that laughter should never be premature, as witness the fate of the young lady from Riga:—

Puella Rigensis ridebat
Quam tigris in tergo vehebat;
Externa profecta,
Interna revecta,
Sed risus cum tigre manebat.

It was good once more to see Mr. and Mrs. Chapman Cohen both bearing evidence that the key to prolonged youth is the constant, strenuous, judicious exercise of the pyramidal cells of the cerebral cortex!

The several speeches provided as much food for thought as did the dinner for the "inner man." One quite casual remark in the Chairman's speech is so timely, so fitting to present conditions, as to be worthy of inclusion in the "best sayings"—not of the week, but—"of the year." I allude to the following:—

"Dictatorship means bullies at the top, cowards at the bottom, with a layer of hypocrites in between." Verily a most unsavoury sandwich, and one which, it is fervently hoped, we, as a nation with all our admitted shortcomings, will never have to stomach.

Passing to the lighter side of this annual gathering, I note that Mr. Cutner describes Giovanni's victims as "the more or less unwilling members of the audience." Personally, I should have put that much stronger, for never before did I realize so intensively what the unfortunate rabbit must feel like the while the nimble stoat indulges in his hypnotising pre-prandial gyrations around it. If anyone had told me that a prestidigitator—I believe that's the correct designation—could remove from my wrist a watch strapped to it without my being aware of his action, that he could, further, empty my pockets, not once, but thrice, of all cash to say nothing of a cloak-room ticket, I should have called him—no, offered him a hundred to one it could not be done. But these things, and many more equally marvellous—one victim had his braces removed!—were done, and they point a moral. Had Giovanni flourished when Aaron helped Moses with conjuring tricks the whole of history might have been different. Only the purblind could fail to draw but one conclusion on contrasting his "miraculous" feats, all done in the broad glare of electric lights, with the piffling "phenomena" of the dimly illuminated séance room, the blowing of tin trumpets, twanging of guitars and banging of banjos, rapping of tables and jingling of bells, and all the other well-known characteristic baboonery of the spiritists, indulged in to the reiterated wailings of *Lead kindly Light* or the *lustig* waulings of *O Katherina*. In a world where fools are like common, and wise men like precious stones, one hardly dare think what would happen were adepts of the calibre of this conjuror to become "mediumistic," and apply their wonderful gifts to—in the jargon of the spookists—"exploring the occult." Anyway, I take my hat off to Giovanni, while at the same time warning him that, if ever again I should have the good luck to be attending one of his performances, I shall emulate the well-known pessimist who wore both "braces and belt to his bags." And so to bed, as Pepys would say, marvelling at yet another "miracle"—how the devil the N.S.S. Executive manage to "put up" so excellent a dinner and entertainment at so modest a price.

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.

Obituary

MR. WALTER MANN

It is with the very deepest regret that we have to announce the death of one of the oldest and most esteemed of our contributors, Mr. Walter Mann. It will be recalled that only a little time ago Mr. Mann met with an accident from a motor-cycle. He recovered from this, only to meet with another, and a fatal one, this time from a motor-car. It is probable that his deafness was contributory to the disaster.

Mr. Mann's death will leave a gap in the ranks of the writers for the *Freethinker*. His articles were greatly appreciated, and have served many Freethinkers, on and off the platform, with material for thought and discussion. Mr. Mann's articles displayed a wide range of reading, with all references very carefully given; and the ability of the man was very often veiled from the undiscerning by his modesty and candour in giving credit to this or that writer, by way of quotation. From his early years he had been a staunch supporter of the Free-thought movement, and while Freethought may have many who equal him in this, there are very few who can truthfully count themselves his superior.

It is with real sorrow that we pay our late colleague this slight tribute of our respect.—C.C.

EDITH ALMOND

We deeply regret to announce the death of Edith Almond, wife of A. L. Almond, which took place on February 3, after a long illness. Of orthodox opinions until the war of 1914-18, the events of that period altered her outlook upon religion, and she definitely ceased to believe in Christianity, retaining that position until the end of her life, which took place at the early age of thirty-four. Her husband, also a Freethinker, saw that her wish for no religion at the last rite was observed, and a Secular Address was read at the funeral, which took place at Twickenham Cemetery, on February 6, in the presence of a number of friends and relatives, by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THANKS

SIR,—I thank you very much for your courtesy in publishing my letter in the last issue. We are subject to so much misrepresentation that it is a pleasure to find an editor with a sufficient sense of decency to allow us to speak for ourselves, and I therefore very much appreciate your action.

A. K. CHESTERTON.

THE THIRST FOR INFINITY

SIR,—Most Freethinkers will range themselves alongside "Medicus," because there is a spirit amongst them straining to burst the bonds that philosophers have woven and bound around their bodies and souls.

It is lamentable to find an intellect so diamond-like as the Editor's, confining itself to parish-pump thought. Outside the possibilities of experience Mr. Cohen declines to adventure. We pray that he may become more imperialistic or rather infinitary. We admire "Medicus," who swishes us to a time before beforeness and after afterness; to "summat before 'owt and summat after nowt."

How otherwise can we carry out our trust, which is to plan for a race that will never be born? How can we insure the never-to-be-born a lifelessness worth living?

Let us get in front and behind infinity and cease this muddling through with things as they crop up.

H. IRVING.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Ect.

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. Bury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Messrs. W. B. Collins and E. Gee. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Gee and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park gates, and literature to order.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Debate—*Affir.*: Mr. R. Roberts. *Neg.*: Mr. H. Cutner—"Is Communism the Remedy?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, E. W. Stone, L.C.P.—"Man—Still a Half-Instructed Savage."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Prof. H. Levy, D.Sc.—"Thinking Straight."

STUDY CIRCLE (63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, February 18, Mr. R. Harding—"The Need for a New Religion."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 5 Room, Grove House, High Road, Leyton, E.10.): 7.30, Mrs. Frida Laski—"Birth Control."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti—"The God Men of Science Believe in."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street): 7.30, Mr. H. W. Cottingham—"Biology—Reproduction."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Cinema, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, Wm. Olaf Stapledon, M.A. (West Kirby)—"The Value and Danger of Modern Science."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. K. O. Hunt (Read)—"Evolution; from the Evidence of the Human Embryo."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Hall, Morley Street, Bradford): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"Is Christianity Played Out?"

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Thompson (Nelson)—"Ductless Glands and their Functions." Postponed Lecture from February 3, 1935.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. R. Stevenson—"Christian Dreams and Earthly Realities." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, C. McKelvie (Liverpool)—"Freethought and the Modern World."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, A Lecture—"What Think Ye of Christ?"

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. Lynden—"Freethought and Peace."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, Laygate): 7.30, Friday, February 15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Blood and Fire Brigade."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0 Mr. A. Flanders—"Christianity and Unemployment."

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The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

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PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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