

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVI.—No. 3

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 1936

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

Liberty and Tyranny

WHEN John Stewart Mill wrote his famous treatise *Liberty* (1859) he gave it as his deliberate opinion that so far as this country was concerned the era of pains and penalties for avowing heretical opinions in politics was finished. And he believed there were good grounds for assuming that what had taken place in this country would take place in others, and that the freedom that had been won in the political field would be won in all others. I think the picture was painted in too rosy colours even for 1859, and one wonders what would be the feelings of Mill if he could be suddenly revived and placed in contact with world conditions in 1935. He would find about half the people of Europe living in conditions where the right to freedom of thought and speech was not merely denied, as far as may be, in practice, but also challenged specifically in theory. He would find large numbers of people, even in this country, actually pleading to have chains put round their necks, and to be told what they must believe and what they must do. He would see leading figures in the Government "kite-flying" in order to see how far the press might safely be muzzled in the interests of party policies. And he would find on the statute book a measure such as the Incitement to Disaffection Act, one of the most sinister of recent occurrences, and one which a government of fifty years ago would never have dared to introduce. In these circumstances I think Mill would have been mournfully ready to confess that he had overvalued the devotion of people to liberty, and had also underestimated the strength of reactionary forces in political and social life.

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The Power of Minorities

The probability is that, in common with many others, Mill overlooked the important truth that reforms, particularly those of an intellectual character, are nearly always won by a determined minority

against either a less organized minority, or by enlisting on its side for the time being the support of the mass of the general public. But the mass of the public is constitutionally and traditionally fickle. It will applaud a Mussolini with the same enthusiasm that it does a Mazzini. So long as the inconveniences and wrongs to which all are exposed are not obvious and continued, the mass of the people care very little about liberty in the abstract. The extension of the franchise was not secured because the mass thought much of the abstract principle of the Rights of Man, but because the minority that did so was able to link it with the possibility of the removal of a great deal of injustice and suffering. Again, with the question of Secular Education. The principle upon which this is claimed is obvious, and its justice is so clear that it is admitted by many who are firm upholders of religious doctrines. Neither is there much room for question that the retention of religious teaching in the schools does very great harm both to the quality of the teachers employed and to the educational level reached. But it remains a reformer's question on the one side and a priest's question on the other, with the overwhelming mass of parents very little interested either on the one side or the other. It is, indeed this fact that gives point to the old maxim that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance; but it is vigilance on the part of the few, not of the many, and when that vigilance is relaxed, or circumstances for the time work in favour of reaction, then one may look for a revival of both reaction and intolerance such as that through which much of the world is now passing.

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In Praise of Freedom

Two books that have recently been published are specially worthy of notice in the present circumstances. The first, *Liberty and Tyranny*, by Francis W. Hirst (Duckworth, 8s. 6d.) is a "full dress" study of the subject indicated in its title. The second, *The Press*, by A. J. Cummings, the political correspondent to the *News-Chronicle* (John Lane, 3s. 6d.) is a slighter work, and is strictly limited to the subject indicated by its title. One might differentiate the two books by saying that Mr. Hirst is concerned with the history and philosophy of intolerance and its opposite, while Mr. Cummings shows the working of the spirit of frustration in one department—that of the press, on which as a leading journalist he is in a position to speak with authority.

Mr. Hirst gives an admirable survey of the growth of political freedom in England, with useful sketches of the United States and some European countries, and does justice, even more than justice, to the efforts of our own judges to administer the law in defence of the liberty of the subject. And although one is loth to find fault with so good a book, if criticism must be offered, it would be in the direc-

tion that to those unacquainted with the subject the picture of the growth of liberty, with precedent leading up to precedent, and creating a steadily growing stream of tendency in favour of liberty presents too favourable a picture, and so tends to create in the mind of the reader a complacency against which Mr. Hirst would be the first to warn them.

The first thing to be borne in mind is that practice and theory have never run in quite double harness in this country. On the whole, political freedom has been greater here than in many other places, and the progress has been more uniform. This is mainly due to our geographical situation, which has freed it from the close proximity of enemies against whom watchfulness had to be exerted; and, secondly, by the mixed character of its inhabitants, derived from various waves of hostile or friendly invasion, with each wave divided from the next, long enough in time to permit a fusion, the two factors working on the whole for political liberality. But the war of 1914-18, as Mr. Hirst notes, tended to play havoc with the fact of political liberty, and even with its theory. Still, if the scope of Mr. Hirst's work had called for a depicting of the interaction of religion and politics, a somewhat different picture might have been given. The story of the period say 1780-1840, might have invited the comment that reaction is no new thing and no unlikely thing in British history.

Nor can we agree with one statement contained in the following passage. It deals with the infractions of personal liberty during the war.

Under the Defence of the Realm Act, many encroachments, some necessary, some of doubtful value, others unnecessary, were made upon the ordinary rights of citizens, including the right to free discussion, the right to free movement in various parts of the country, and economic rights. By far the most oppressive, however of our war measures was the introduction, for the first time in the history of England, of general military conscription, which reduced to a state of servitude all the young men of the country. Happily D.O.R.A. and conscription disappeared soon after the war, and *English liberty revived in full force*. Nothing is more likely to break the spirit of a nation than conscription. It is to this horrible institution more perhaps than any other cause that Europe owes the growth of military tyrannies and the decline of popular liberties in our time.

I have italicized one statement in the above passage, while cordially agreeing with the rest, because it simply is not true. If the influence of D.O.R.A. had been removed, and if English liberties had been restored to what they were before the war, I do not think that Mr. Hirst would have written the warning he has written, and might not have written his book at all. The truth is that the spirit of D.O.R.A. is still with us, and there is decidedly not that feeling of freedom and the attachment to freedom that existed before the war. There not only exists in this country a branch of the Fascist movement with which some of our political leaders were obviously coquetting, and which might have become something serious had it been in the hands of a man with better brains than Mosley, but there is substantial agreement between political parties to-day that a Government in power must be expected to use its power to limit the activity of counter-forces, as far as opportunity permits, and to restrict the propagandist activities of its adversaries.

Apart from the encouragement given to official interference with individual freedom of action, there is the existence of the Incitement to Disaffection Act, which has revived the iniquitous right of general search, and which will form the basis of an extension

from an application to the forces of the crown to the general public when opportunity and fancied need arise. I do not expect that whatever party is in power will repeal or amend this Act. The Labour Party is as likely to find it a convenient weapon to have in reserve as those who passed the Act. And still more ominous has been the increased activity of the police in their interference—mostly without legal warranty—in the matter of public meetings. But the chief evil of D.O.R.A. and other war measures was not their interference with personal liberty, that might have been overlooked in a time when mass-hysteria ruled, and so many imagined they showed courage by exhibiting cowardice in face of every suggested danger. The real evil of the war-time legislation was that so far as it did interfere with personal freedom and the right of freedom of speech and publication, it was chiefly those dubbed "cranks" who felt they were being deprived of anything worth bothering about. The mass of people never having placed any value upon the freedom gained by generations of struggle did not feel themselves aggrieved when that freedom was suspended. The creation of freedom is nearly always the work of a determined few who appreciate its value, but its permanence, the security against even its temporary narrowing must depend upon the existence of a particular temper in the general body of the public.

* * *

The Fallacy of Intolerance

Mr. Hirst has written so fine and so important a book that I am inclined to go on quoting from it. But I may close with one impression the book has made upon me. This is the ease with which a people slide into intolerance and the care—the constant care—necessary to maintain a balanced judgment and a reasoned tolerance. The mother of all intolerance, religion, justified persecution by two pleas—first, the thing to be suppressed was false, second the teaching on behalf of which it was suppressed was true. And whether intolerance is manifested in the field of religion or in that of politics the plea remains unaltered. In religion truth is something that is given by the gods. In politics, truth is something that is given by the King, or by Parliament, or, in recent years, by a Party Organization. The philosophy of the subject was well put by Justice Holmes, of the United States Supreme Court, in 1918, in delivering judgment in a case arising out of one of the war Acts, and is cited by Mr. Hirst.

Persecution for the expression of opinion seems to me perfectly logical. If you have no doubt of your premises of power and want a certain result with all your heart, you naturally express your wishes in law and sweep away all opposition. . . . But when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe . . . that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas—that the best test of truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes can safely be carried out. That at any rate is the theory of our Constitution. It is an experiment, as all life is an experiment. . . . While that experiment is part of our system, I think that we should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death, unless they so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country. . . . Only the emergency that makes it immediately dangerous to leave the correction of evil counsels to time warrants making any exception to the sweeping command, "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech."

I would like to have that injunction hung over every school and every meeting-place in the country—including the House of Commons and the House of Lords. I would also have it hung in all military establishments, but with them it seems a settled principle that their inmates cannot be trusted, as civilians are trusted, to form their own opinions.

I have been tempted by Mr. Hurst's book to use up all my space, so must leave Mr. Cumming's essay till next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Lesson of Leicester

"Never were such sharp questions asked as this day. Never was the average man more energetic, more like a god."—*Walt Whitman*.

"More life, and fuller, that we want."—*Tennyson*.

APART from the National Secular Society itself, few Freethought organizations have had such a long and successful career as the Leicester Secular Society, which is now in its eighty-fourth year. Its history is a veritable romance, and dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. It is a noble record of small beginnings, of dire struggles, and of ultimate brilliant victory, gained against enormous odds.

The Leicester Society had its origin in a discussion class held in 1851 in the local Mechanics' Institution, formed and animated by George Brown, one of the small and determined band of pioneers who carried the flag of Liberty in those dark days of Victorian oppression. Among the young men who gathered about him was Josiah Gimson, the father of Sidney Gimson. The intellectual subjects discussed in this class soon became the talk of the town. Afterwards a school was carried on during the week, with lectures on Sundays, and a lending library was formed. The advanced views of progressive thinkers were discussed constantly, and Leicester thus had the opportunity of listening to new thoughts, and of widening her mental horizon.

Out of this evolving institution, which so readily adapted itself to changing circumstances, was organized the Secular Hall Company, and the site of the present hall was purchased. Eight years later, in 1880, the hall itself was completed from the designs of the architect, W. Larnier Sugden, one of whose hobbies was the publication of pretty little books of a definitely Freethought character. The hall is a handsome building on one of the best streets of Leicester, with ample accommodation for improvement and pleasure.

The opening of the hall took place on the first Sunday in March, 1881, and a large number of notable Freethinkers were present from all parts of the country. The occasion was rendered more notable by the presence of James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, who contributed a poetic address at the opening of the hall. A few lines are well worth quotation, for they show the vigorous Freethought views of the poet, whose rare genius has won for him an imperishable name in his country's literature:—

"So, all the lands wherein our wandering race
Have led their flocks, or fixed their dwelling-place,
To till with patient toil the fruitful sod,
Abound with altars to the unknown god
Or gods, whom man created from of old,
In his own image, one yet manifold,
And ignorantly worshipped. We now dare,
Taught by millenniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and hate and bloody strife,
With which these dreams have poisoned our poor life,

To build our temples on another plan,
Devoting them to God's creator, man:
Not to man's creature, God. And thus, indeed,
All men and women of whatever creed,
We welcome gladly if they love their kind;
No other valid test of worth we find,
Who loveth not his brother at his side,
How can he love a dim dream deified?"

Another illustrious name associated with this Leicester Secular Society is that of Professor Thomas Henry Huxley, the world-famous scientist, and champion of evolution. Not only was he in entire agreement with the objects of the organization, but he was one of its financial supporters. In enclosing a cheque in support, Huxley said it was sent "in evidence of the full sympathy with the objects of the Society." To a request for permission to publish the note, he replied further: "You are quite at liberty to publish my note, and I shall be glad if it is of any service." This record places Huxley in complete accord with the principles of Secularism, and should clear away much misapprehension from the subject.

In the hall itself are the portraits of Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, and Josiah Gimson: The name and fame of the last-named of these stalwart Freethinkers can never be forgotten in the history of this Leicester Society, or even in the record of the Freethought Movement. He was one of the founders of the Leicester Society, and a most generous supporter. At his death, in 1880, he bequeathed, in maintenance of the institution, an income of one hundred pounds annually for ten years. His son, Sydney A. Gimson, worthily carried on the work of his father, and has been for many years a pillar of strength to the Society.

For over four generations this Leicester Secular Society has broadcasted the message of Freethought, and during that period its platform has been graced by most of the men and women who have mattered in this movement for human emancipation. What other organization ever produced such magnificent orators? The mere recital of the names is sufficient. Recall: Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, John M. Robertson, G. W. Foote, J. T. Lloyd, and Frederick J. Gould, the last-named, happily with us still. It was his graceful pen that wrote the history of the Leicester Society, and enshrined in beautiful English a story well worth telling.

Indeed, the importance and far-reaching nature of the Secularist Movement is only just beginning to be understood by the better-educated public. Secularism, like Co-operation, is a working-class movement to emancipate the workers from the thralldom of tyranny. But Secularism deals with far more things than commercialism, and is a courageous and sustained effort to free men and women from a galling superstition, fatal to all advance in knowledge and to all independent intellectual effort. The oft-repeated accusation that Secularists are crude and coarse is simply priestly prejudice. As if any reform was ever instituted, or abuse swept away, without wounding the susceptibilities of some ignorant or bigoted persons.

The story of the early struggles of the Leicester Society is typical of much Freethought effort in the past. It is a story of brave men and women fighting at fearful odds, and ultimately triumphing. Indeed, it cannot be repeated too often, for it is the record of modest heroes and heroines who fought well for the betterment of their fellow-citizens. It is precisely because the hearts of these dauntless pioneers were aflame with human sympathy that their work has had such vital and permanent effect. They deserved well of their country, for they did their best and bravest to hasten the day when the world would be one country and to do good the only

religion. These pioneers were not afraid of greatness, for they believed that:—

“Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate.”

MIMNERMUS.

The Witch Mania

II.

ALL over the ancient world was a belief in evil spirits, in charms and amulets. Christianity did not “invent” these; it took them bodily over with so much of the other Pagan paraphernalia. It certainly opposed the belief in devils and demons and evil spirits, but not because it believed they did not exist. Its opposition was due mainly to the fear of rivalry, and also to the fact that it could not explain the existence of evil in the world in any other way. Besides, there was the Holy Writ.

How widespread was the belief in devils, and fallen angels, and wicked spirits, can be seen by anyone taking the trouble to go through the Bible. That in its present form it is a late compilation is admitted; but it certainly contains many old documents, relating all sorts of stories derived from folk-lore and primitive beliefs.

One of the oldest books is *Job*—some authorities are convinced it is not a “Hebrew” book at all, but quite Pagan, and edited in the Jewish interests. There, in the plainest sense, will be found “Satan” amongst the sons of God—“going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it.” But the very first pages of the Bible give an account of the temptation of Eve by the “serpent,” who, of course, is identified as the Devil. Wizardry is found in Egypt among the “magicians” of Pharaoh, who were, as is well known, beaten by Moses and Aaron only because God is always more powerful than his infernal rival.

The commands against witches, wizards, enchanters, necromancers, charmers, and those with familiar spirits in the Pentateuch are well known. “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” has been, perhaps, responsible for more persecution of witches than anything else, and caused some of the foulest scenes in history.

But nothing in the Bible shows such unquestioned belief in the reality of witches, the nether world, and the raising of the dead as the famous description of the Witch of Endor. This could only have been written by someone who thoroughly believed in the existence of all these things; or, at least, one who found such a belief almost universal. Saul was a bitter opponent of the men and women who had a “familiar spirit,” for he gave orders to exterminate them. All the same he could not have done this completely, for when he found himself opposed by an army of Philistines, and was afraid, and could get no answer from the Lord, “neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets,” he asked his servants to find him a woman who had a familiar spirit. They did so, and at his request she brought him up Samuel—who, by the way, seemed strongly incensed at having been thus forced out of the upper or nether world to speak to Saul. Samuel’s prophecy gave the King a pretty rough time; the whole story is described by a master-hand, so vividly is it written. Whether it ever happened, whether there ever was a Witch of Endor, whether, if the story is truthfully reported, some old man may have impersonated Samuel, much as imper-

sonations regularly take place in modern spiritualistic manifestations, is beside the point. Centuries before the Christian era there was practically the same belief as there is in these days in Spiritualism and its implications.

As for the Christianity of the New Testament, one can almost call it a Devil-religion. Devils galore abound in the pages of this precious portion of God’s words. Beelzebub was already a well known name for “the prince of devils,” while casting out devils was a mere everyday occurrence. The modern explanation that Jesus and his disciples simply misunderstood the nature of illness can only be a partial explanation. Certain illnesses could only have been caused according to ancient beliefs by devils. They had to be expelled and the famous story of the “unclean spirit,” whose name was “Legion,” in the country of the Gadarenes, who wanted to be sent into swine is one of the humorous gems of Mark. And even at this day, there are priests who claim to be “exorcists,” the gift of exorcism coming, through the Church, direct from Jesus.

There can be little doubt that many of the ancient cults and practices existed side by side with the spread of Christianity. Customs which had been common among the people for many centuries must have been particularly hard to eradicate. All sorts of rites were believed in all over Europe, particularly those connected with what is known as the fertility motive. Sex has always played a prominent part in religion; and when it came to the increase of flocks and the growing of fine and large crops which increased the wealth of the individual or the community one can understand how a superstition-ridden and ignorant people would be ready to believe anything.

The festivals in connexion with the worship of Priapus or Bacchus generally celebrated the bountifulness of nature—however much they may later have degenerated into sexual orgies. But festivals similar to those of Greece and Rome must have taken place all over Europe; and certainly some must have survived in Britain long after the conversion of England by Augustine. In Miss M. A. Murray’s valuable work, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, will be found her reasons for claiming the continuity of these customs under the cloak of a religion, in spite of the efforts of the Christian authorities to stamp them out. Prohibitions against offerings to devils, against witchcraft, auguries, and incantations, appear as early as the seventh century. Under Athelstan, all sorts of texts for witches and sorcerers were in full swing, and constantly put into practice. Laws against heathenism and witchcraft were reinforced almost under every king; and it looks as if the more the laws, the more the witchcraft.

It was not till the Papal Church had gathered into its fold all Europe; had frightened everybody with the dread penalty of excommunication; had become perhaps the most powerful organization the world has ever known; that it promulgated the ferocious war against the old pagan cults of which witchcraft was a manifestation, with such terrible ferocity. The attack was not only made against poor old men and women, but even against leading figures of the Church. For example, the priest of Inverkeithing was accused before his bishop in 1282 of “leading a fertility dance at Easter round the phallic figure of a god”; and in 1303, “the Bishop of Coventry was accused before the Pope for doing homage to the Devil.” The proceedings of trials began to be written and preserved; and it is from these details that we get the accounts of the rites, the assemblies, and the Sabbaths as well as the way in which law and the Church punished the offenders.

While it is true that as Miss Murray contends, the trials were conducted fairly as far as the kind of justice in those days can be considered justice, one must not be too ready to accept everything the Church says, or her reasons, or even what the witches are supposed to have said or admitted. A great many of the so-called confessions were obtained under torture. But, if everything is taken into consideration, there can be little doubt that the Sabbath did take place and the descriptions of this meeting of witches and wizards as given both by writers and artists must be considered in the main fairly accurate. A woman was not just a witch as an isolated unit. There were others in the district who were connected with or members of the same society, whatever it was. This Sabbath, as it was called, probably had been much the same through many centuries; only the fact that Christianity was becoming more and more powerful made it oppose so violently all heretical cults.

The head of all heresies, in the eyes of the Church, was the Devil; and it was the Devil himself who presided at the Sabbath. At least, that was what the witches thought, but it need hardly be said that this gentleman was obviously a real human being disguised in some way and ready to take his share in whatever way the "fertility" cult allowed him. Given the tremendous belief not only in God, but in evil spirits, in those days, it was obviously not too difficult for any cunning scoundrel to dupe the poor foolish women he could persuade—or his fellow cheats persuade—to join in the secret society. They all probably had some secret sign; it is easy to believe this when one reads about Freemasons.

That the Devil often wore a mask of an animal's head is obvious when we look at the various prints depicting the Sabbath. But he was described with wonderful veracity or imagination by many of the women who were tried for witchcraft. Reading some of these descriptions one can see that often the Devil was dressed exactly like an Englishman, or a Scotsman, or a German, or a Frenchman—it all depended upon the nationality of the witch. He often had "cloven feet"—perhaps he deliberately wore a split shoe.

It cannot be wondered at that the people, speaking generally, believed in a real Devil. The Church had fulminated for centuries against him. The history of many of their saints shows with what perseverance he pursued these holy—though unwashed—men in trying to secure their souls. The whole of the Christian world was full of the Devil and his evil works. The strongest impressions of them were the visual representations carved on hundreds of churches many of which still remain. Naïve they appear to us, it is true; nevertheless they were the real thing to the uneducated and uninstructed though pious believer in Christianity. It may be true the Devil was an inheritance from the ancient world; but it was Christianity which made him alive in its most affluent days, and he is not yet dead.

H. CUTNER.

Things Worth Knowing*

XXIV.

THE RUIN OF SPAIN BY THE CHURCH

VARIOUS ingenious theories have been framed to relieve the Inquisition of responsibility for the remarkable eclipse of Spanish intellectual progress after the sixteenth century. It is one of the interesting problems in the history of literature that Spain, whose brilliant achievements throughout the Reformation period promised to make her as dominant in the world of letters as in military and naval enterprise, should, within the space of a couple of generations, have become the most uncultured land in Christendom, without a public to encourage learning and genius, and without learning and genius to stimulate a public. For this there must have been a cause, and no other adequate one than the Inquisition has been discovered to account for this occultation.

. . . The Inquisition was founded to extirpate Jewish and Moorish apostasy; in this it long had ample work without developing its evil capacity in the direction of censorship. . . . With the advent of Lutheranism there gradually commenced the search for errors; crude indexes of condemned books were compiled, reading and investigation became restricted; the pragmática of 1559 forbade education at foreign seats of learning and an elaborate system was gradually organized for protecting Spain from intellectual intercourse with other lands, while at home every phrase that could be construed in an objectionable sense was condemned. For awhile the men whose education had been free from these trammels persisted, in spite of persecution more or less severe, but they gradually died out and had no successors.

. . . The intellectual energy of the nation, diverted from more serious channels, continued through another period to exhibit itself in the lighter fields of literature, where the names of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Terso de Molina, Calderon de la Barca, Quevedo de Vilegas and others show what Spanish intellect was still capable if it were allowed free play. Even these however passed away and had no successors in the growing intellectual torpor created by obscurantist censorship, and a dreary blank followed which even the stimulus attempted by Philip V. could not relieve.

To produce and preserve this torpor, by repressing all dangerous intellectuality, Spain was carefully kept out of the current of European progress. In other lands the debates of the Reformation forced Catholics as well as Protestants to investigations and speculations shocking to Spanish conservatism. The human mind was enabled to cast off the shackles of the Dark Ages, and was led to investigate the laws of nature and the relations of man to the universe and to God. From all this bustling intellectual movement Spain was carefully secluded. . . . Even the great theologians and mystics disappeared from the field which they had made their own, and were succeeded by a race of probabilistic casuists, who sought only to promote and to justify self-indulgence. How intellectual progress fared under these influences may be estimated by a single instance. When, in England, Halley was investigating the periodicity of the comet which bears his name, in Spain learned professors of Salamanca and Saragossa were publishing tracts to

* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

It is unfortunate to be born too soon. It is equally unfortunate to be born too late. In the latter case there is very often the criminal, the man who, born several centuries ago, would have achieved fame as a founder of a "noble" family, but who born to-day becomes a Chicago gunman. In the former case we have the reformer who if very much in advance of his time may, as contemporary circumstances decide, be burned at the stake, spend many years of his life in prison, or suffer the inconveniences of social boycott and legal ostracism. In either case the experience is likely to be a disagreeable one.—"Opinions," Chapman Cohen.

reassure the frightened people, by proving that the dreadful portent boded evil only to the wicked—to the Turk and the heretic. The perfect success of the Inquisition in its work is manifested in the contrast between the eighteenth and early sixteenth century, as illustrated by the statement of Juan Antonio Myansy Siscar, that a cartload of the precious MSS. bestowed by Ximenes on his university of Alcala was sold to the fire-works maker Torrecilla, for a display in honour of Philip V., and that several other similar collections had shared the same fate. . . . The awakening from intellectual stupor was slow, for Dom Clemencin tells us that there was less printing in Spain at the commencement of the nineteenth century than there had been in the fifteenth under Isabella. It is impossible not to conclude that the Inquisition paralysed both the intellectual and the economic development of Spain, and it is scarce reasonable for Valera to complain that, when Spain was aroused from its mental marasmus, it was to receive a foreign and not revive a native culture.

That science and art and literature should thus be submerged was a national misfortune, but even more to be deplored were the indirect consequences. Material progress became impossible, industry languished, and the inability to meet foreign competition assisted the mistaken internal policy of the Government in prolonging and intensifying the poverty of the people. Nor was this the chief of the evils that sprang from keeping the mind of the nation in leading strings, from repressing thought and from excluding foreign ideas, for the people were thus rendered absolutely unfitted to meet the inevitable change that came with the Revolution. To this in large measure, may be attributed the suffering through which Spain passed in the transition from absolute to modern conditions.

We have thus followed the career of the Spanish Inquisition from its foundation to its suppression; we have examined its method and its acts, and have sought to appraise its influence and its share in the misfortunes that overwhelmed the nation. The conclusion can scarce be avoided that its work was almost wholly evil, and that through its reflex action, the persecutors suffered along with the persecuted. Yet who can blame Isabella or Torquemada or the Hapsburg princes for their share in originating and maintaining this disastrous instrument of wrong? The Church had taught for centuries that implicit acceptance of its dogmas and blind obedience to its commands were the only avenues to salvation, that heresy was treason to God, its extermination the highest service to God and the highest duty to man. This grew to be the universal belief and, when the Protestant sects framed their several confessions, each one was so supremely confident that the secret of the Divine Being and his dealings with his creatures rested with it that all that shared the zeal to serve God acted in the same cruel fashion.

The Spanish Inquisition was only a more perfect and a more lasting institution than the others were able to fashion. . . . The spirit among all was the same, and none are entitled to cast the first stone, unless we expect the humble and despised Moravian Brethren and the disciples of George Fox. The faggots of Miguel Servetus bear witness to the stern resolve of Calvinism. Lutheranism has its roll-call of victims. Anglicanism, under Edward VI. undertook to organize an Inquisition on the Spanish pattern, which burnt Joan of Kent for Arianism, and the writ *De Heretico Comburendo* was not abolished until 1676. . . . The real responsibility can be traced to distant ages, to St. Augustine and St. Leo the Great and the Fathers, who deduced, from the doctrine of exclusive salvation, that the obstinate dissident is to

be put to death, not only in punishment for his sin, but to save the faithful from infection. This hideous teaching, crystallized into a practical system, came, in the course of centuries, to be as essential a feature of the religion which it distorted so utterly from the love and charity inculcated by its Founder. . . .

This resolve to enforce unity of belief, in the conviction that it was essential to human happiness here and hereafter, led to the framing of a system of so-called justice more iniquitous than has been evolved by the cruellest despotism; which placed the lives, the fortunes and the honour, not only of individuals, but of their posterity, in the hands of those who could commit wrong without responsibility; which tempted human frailty to indulge its passions and its greed without restraint, and which subjected the population to a blind and unreasoning tyranny, against which the slightest murmur of complaint was a crime. The procedure which left the fate of the accused virtually in the hands of his judges was rendered doubly vicious by the inviolable secrecy in which it was enveloped. . . . It was the crowning iniquity that . . . it thus afforded to the evil-minded the amplest opportunity of doing wrong. History affords no parallel to such a skilfully organized system, working relentlessly through centuries.

History of the Spanish Inquisition,
H. C. LEA, Vol. IV., pp. 528-33.

Strange Books and Strange Men

THE first book given me some sixty odd years ago was *Gulliver's Travels*. On reading it I thought the book was a pack of lies. I was so young, then, I could not see wood for trees. On telling my father what I thought of it, he laughed, but next time he went to town he brought me *The Swiss Family Robinson*, which was more suited to my youthful years.

Some years later *Waterton's Wanderings in South America* was given to me. What a book for boys! Why has it been overlooked so? This led on to Bates' *The Naturalist on the Amazons*, and to Darwin's *Naturalist's Voyage Round the World*.

Then I was sidetracked by Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, Byron, Shelley, and the wonderful penny plays of John Dicks. I can get a laugh over memories of reading *Chrononhotonthologos*. Complete 1s. editions, of the above-named poets, we had from the same publisher as the penny plays. Why has not a monument been erected to the memory of John Dicks?

When I see old books in a furniture dealer's shop window, I get no rest until I go and examine them. Where one would least expect to find anything valuable is often the place where it is to be found. My first find was *Dissertations on the Origins of Language*, by Lord Monboddo. He anticipated Darwin in thinking human origins were of an ape-like character. He lived 1714-1799.

Sometime later on examining an old window for the very last time, it had been the very last time many times before, I found Matthew Tindal's—*Christianity as old as Creation; or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature*. Tindal did not attack Christianity. He tried to rationalize it. He set me thinking in a way he never intended to and, curiously, another Tyndal, nearly two hundred years later, showed me that I was thinking correctly. John Tyndal gave his famous Belfast Address in 1874.

Having read the aforementioned books, and many more besides, I was beginning to disbelieve in revealed religion when I, fortunately, became acquainted with an old university man, a queer old man who reminded me of Browning's "Grammarians," but, unlike the "Grammarians," with a fondness for whisky. He introduced me to Herbert Spencer's *Study of Sociology*, which gave point and direction to my studies. *First Principles* followed, and I well remember Chapter 2, §ii.,

"On Ultimate Religious Ideas," dealing with the origin of the universe, and that of Chap. x., dealing with the "Rythm of Motion." I'm afraid that, in a short time, Spencer had knocked all the revealed religion out of my head, and some of his own philosophy besides. I felt, as many a student may feel to-day, in a strange dilemma. I had rejected revealed religion, but was continually meeting friends who wished me to argue along their lines. One of their favourite questions being, "Are all our highly-trained priests fools?" As though highly-trained men usually disbelieved what they were trained to believe. But to be able to meet my theological friends necessitated a study of their beliefs. So I thought I had better consult my friend. When I did he was in his cups. And when I told him of my need, he first of all attempted to dance the highland fling. Then he produced *Boyd's Bible*. Zachary Boyd made a metrical version of the Bible. His idea was to familiarize the youth of Scotland with the Bible by adding, wherever possible, to each verse something common to our daily life. For instance:—

"O mother dear Jerusalem,
When shall we come to thee;
For when the lid lifts off the pot
The dumplin' we shall see."

That is a fairly respectable sample. Here is one taken from Deut. Ch. xxxii., v. 15. "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked."

"Now Jeshurun waxed fat,
And down his painches hang,
And, by the Lord his God,
He farted and he flang."

Zachary Boyd was some time rector of Glasgow University, and he preached before Cromwell after the Battle of Dunbar.

Had the *Bible Handbook* of Foote and Ball been available, then, it would have saved me endless trouble. But it did not appear for many years after this, 1892.

My friend never told me what he believed. When I asked any question he more often than otherwise pointed to his fine library saying, "You'll find all you want there."

Turned loose in his library I picked out what attracted me. Robert Taylor's *Devil's Pulpit*, and *Diegesis*, Dupuis' *Origin of All Worships*, and Fuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* supplied me with munitions enough to silence my religious friends.

My next queer acquaintance, who also rendered me yeoman service, reverted to Roman Catholicism. His first confession, I think, would be taken as read.

Another, who assisted me to break my fetters, was a minister of religion, whose phrasology will remain with me, "while memory hold a seat in this distracted globe." A tea spoonful of his brew will suffice to indicate its strength:—

A being who could consciously create such a creature as man, with the ideality of an angel and the viscera of a beast, should be smothered in a cesspool.

But I write with a purpose. Many of my friends, of a similar way of thinking, have sent their children to Sunday School, and have allowed them to receive religious teaching at the day school. This is wrong. My parents, in giving me a religious education, acted according to their light. Thy did right. No one of us should be indifferent. Had my parents thought as I now do what a glorious ten years of free study I should have had. Think of the useless work that children may be saved by acting justly by them.

GEORGE WALLACE.

Science, then, commands our respect, not on the basis that its present assumptions and deductions are absolutely and for all time true, but on the ground that its method is for all time true—the method of discovery, the method of observation, research, experimentation, comparison, examination, testing, analysis, and synthesis.

Maynard Shipley, "The War on Modern Science."

Acid Drops

The *News-Chronicle* reports that Greta Garbo is taking a "great interest in religion," and with characteristic religious accuracy converts this into a headline "Garbo has taken to religion." Then, with a muddle-headedness that is also characteristically religious, the paper goes on to remark that the fact of Garbo remaining indoors, and is taking "a great interest in religion" *has probably given rise to a report that she is seriously ill*. The italics are ours; but it is very interesting to find so religious a journal as the *News-Chronicle* deciding that taking to religion affords ground for a presumption that one is seriously ill. At any rate the heavenly choir will fully appreciate the advertising value of a testimonial supplied by one of the leading film stars. Dan Leno and Charles Peace, Horatio Bottomley and Harry Lauder are among the many outstanding lights in the worlds of intellect and morals who have testified to the truth and value of religion.

The Rev. F. B. Barry, speaking at a meeting of the Educational Associations, said that "The cause of Christ is fighting for its life." Now that is a pretty outcome of an inspired Bible, a sacrificed God, and many hundreds of years of control of the life of a people! It could not have been worse had Christianity been just an ordinary religion, created by folly, perpetuated by folly and rascality, and if the mass of the people had discovered things. But we do not wish to see Christians too depressed, so we may cheer them up by assuring them that in all probability, when Canon Barry is addressing a Missionary meeting he will inform his audience that the conquering cross of Christ is carrying all before it, and in one of his sermons he is almost certain to talk of the universal hunger of mankind for religion, and that Christianity stands firm and unshaken against all that unbelief is able to do.

Whether the Pope is beginning to "feel the pinch"—that is, whether he is beginning to see that fewer men want to be priests, may or may not be the reason for his latest "encyclical." But it is a most delightful "boost-up" of priests and priesthood. It seems that not only is the priest "the chief apostle and tireless furtherer of the Christian education of youth," and the defender of the sanctity of Christian marriage "against the attacks and evasions suggested by cupidity and sensuality"; not only does he bring justice and charity and peace "to hearts embittered by moral and economic hardship"; but, in the Mass, "the ineffable greatness of the human priest stands forth in all its splendour." There are columns of this kind of drivel about priests; we wonder whether now there will be a rush for the vocation of priesthood—particularly as it promises the continuation of celebaey in the next world.

Another book has been written about the Holy Ghost. It is by Dom Anscar Vonier, and is entitled *The Spirit and the Bride*. It seems that the Church is both the "organ of the Holy Spirit and the Bride of Christ." Moreover, "people are apt to envisage the work of the Holy Ghost, Giver of Life and Sanctifier as something done for, and carried on within the individual soul. So it is, but it is so only because the individual soul has become part of the whole Mystical Body of Christ." Books written on these lines seem to have no difficulty in finding a publisher, but we wonder who buys them or reads them? What earthly use is the Holy Ghost, with or without his Bride or the Mystical Body of Christ? We give it up.

The Vicar of St. Andrew's, Streatham, who has often lectured for the Christian Evidence Society in Hyde Park, although asked by the Christian Evidence Society to continue, finds that "the demands of his parish prevent his doing so until the Spring." In an interview

with the local *News*, Mr. Coulson speaks (good-humouredly on the whole) about his Hyde Park experiences. He admits that "the Atheists are led by men who are very well read in their arguments"—which may well indicate that they are not so easy to answer as he might wish. It is difficult, however, to understand his idea that these "Atheists go about in groups," and that "they seem to have an axe to grind." We invite Mr. Coulson to amplify this suggestion of his, which probably means only that his critics in the Park are as devoted to their principles as he is to his—but have no private axe to grind or pay to earn by their devotion to a great cause.

Mr. Fred Madison, J.P., spoke last week at a West Norwood Church, on "Human Nature and War," a very good subject, on which Mr. Madison has some sane views. Probably the environment of a Church gathering went to his head in the course of his address. We cannot otherwise account for his begging the congregation, "Let us have faith and join the Prophet Isaiah." Why "join" the mad author of the 34th Chapter of Isaiah with its ghastly war-mongering: "The Sword of the Lord is filled with blood," etc. Mr. Madison was merely silly when he said that "human nature is changing all the time through God's Holy Spirit." What sense or consistency could there be in "changing all the time?" Mr. Madison professes to believe that "War is man-made." We agree. But man also is the only author of Peace, and until man learns that fact we shall see religion blessing the flags of war in the name of God.

David the Man after God's Own Heart is to be the subject of a new play by Sir James Barrie. Of this we need merely express our confidence that the subject is full of tragedy, and that if David is the "hero," we wonder what the "villain" can be like. This same David is also the principle character in the new "full-length" ballet in a London theatre. Mr. Antin Dolin as David is sure to succeed. He is a magnificent dancer. But we imagine the famous "Dance Before the Ark" will take place "off-stage." The costume for that dance, while absolutely inexpensive, is more fitting for a warmer environment than a London theatre.

The *Observer's* Moscow correspondent, writing about Christmas in Russia, sadly admits that "religion is losing ground in the Soviet Union." Out of the 400 odd churches in Moscow, only about 35 remain open—though these seemed to be packed to overflowing on "every great religious holiday." But the worshippers are mostly old men and women. It is the younger generation which has found out the truth about religion and its utter uselessness in a work-a-day world.

The *St. Helens and District Reporter* announced in its Church notices, that on January 14, Mr. Smith, of the Evangelization Society, would lecture on "Heaven," admission 3d. each, and on January 17, Mr. Smith will lecture on "Hell." Admission here is free. Heaven at threepence per head and "Hell" to which all are welcome without charge, makes quite an interesting discrimination. Perhaps it means that Mr. Smith has in mind all those who are not willing to pay threepence for being shown the way to heaven, and so offers to direct them to hell without any charge whatever.

The Bishop of Durham is afraid that wireless religious services will exert a bad religious influence. We may, it seems, "indulge" ourselves by listening to "services and sermons," but nothing should be permitted to take the place of coming to Church. We do hope that the Bishop will not manage to stop the preaching and sermonizing on the wireless. Some of the sermons are just pure joy, and nearly all so deadly dull that we can conceive no better plan of exhibiting the quality of the modern preacher than broadcasting. Of preachers such

as the Rev. Eliot, we are quite sure that if his Thursday evening sermon was transferred direct to the variety section, most listeners would imagine that a new star had arisen in the music-hall firmament. And there are others not far behind him. We are beginning to alter our attitude towards the B.B.C. and religion. We cannot conceive anyone being converted by B.B.C. religion, and it does at least prevent any sensible person being attracted by the present-day preacher. We have not yet quite freed ourselves from the suspicion that Sir John Reith, being a "child of the manse," remembers the horrors of his early religious teaching, and is trying to hold the parsons up to contempt.

But quite seriously, why does Dr. Henson fear the "indulgence" in listening to wireless sermons and services? Granted an intelligent preacher who manages to give a sensible address, does it matter whether the place in which the said address is given is a Church or a B.B.C. studio? Dr. Henson evidently believes it does, because he thinks that if people "listen-in" their belief will gradually decay. But if that be the case it follows that it is not so much the religious teaching in itself that commends itself to people as the mass-hypnotism of collective singing and worship. Singing together in Latin or Sanskrit would have just the same effect. Added to this is the effect of social pressure. One can see who goes to Church, one cannot tell who is listening. Finally, there is the fact that a few wireless preachers could do the job at a very few pounds per sermon. And what then would become of the army of preachers and the incomes and palaces of bishops? So it may be that, after all, Bishop Henson's fear of wireless worship is positively based on self-interest. As who should say, "Prithee, if folk do not come to Church to make their offertory, what, then will become of me?"

The Dean of Durham, deplored, the other day, in the *Sunday Times*, that "in an age when Bible reading is more and more neglected, the only parts of the Book with which millions are familiar are precisely those which have no religious value." But what else could he expect? The various entertaining fictions with which the Bible is filled, such as, the Flood Story, Lot and his daughters, Elijah and the Fiery Chariot, Joseph and his Brethren, the Annunciation, Jesus flying to Heaven, and many other similar stories are just the kind of things which can be remembered; while the truly theological portions, say from the Prophets or Paul, are so hopelessly confused, vague, and foreign to modern life that the majority of the clergy are still squabbling as to what they actually mean. Does the Dean of Durham himself agree with the interpretations put on those parts of the Bible which have a "religious value," coming from Gypsy Smith, Mrs. Eddy, the Bishop of London, Father Knox, or the head of the Plymouth Brethren, to mention but a few people who call themselves Christians?

Dr. Alington is very severe about the religious teaching given at his old school, Eton; and is forced to admit "that there is a general agreement among theorists that the age normally selected for confirmation for boys of the public school type is the worst conceivable," and he adds, "the theorists have an unanswerable case." Unfortunately Dr. Alington "makes no serious attempt," according to one of his critics, "to refute, on spiritual grounds, the arguments for early Confirmation." Well, whether he does or does not, is not a matter of much importance; nor is it very serious whether boys of the public school type or any other type are confirmed early or late. The truth is that however slow it may be, most boys, as they grow to be men, recognize the utter futility of religion; that is why there is all this wailing among Deans and Bishops and Priests generally about the "indifference" to religion which many moderns exhibit so unequivocally; and also why Dr. Alington and others are filling columns in our national papers, of hopeless despair at the modern trend towards "paganism" or the more hateful Atheism.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- D. FISHER.—Thanks for cuttings. May provide material for an article later.
- B. MACK.—See "Acid Drops."
- R.K.—We are unacquainted with the source of "An ounce of mother wit is worth a pound of clergy." It strikes us as anything but a perfect witticism.
- H. MAY.—There is nothing officially or editorially barred in the *Freethinker*, but we have neither space nor the time for the insertion of everything, or for dealing with every subject. The importance of a particular subject must be determined by the immediate circumstances. The decision rests with the editor. He must decide what is suitable for publication. It is more than probable that his judgment is sometimes at fault, and in all such cases the readers must make the best of a bad job.
- R. J. JENKINSON.—Hope to meet you at Preston, and that the meeting will have the good influence you wish.
- J. T. BRIGHTON.—Thanks for good wishes. We saw the letter in *Reynolds*, but newspaper editors are very fearful of admitting to their columns a straightforward discussion on Freethought. Glad to know that a new Branch is being formed at Hetton. We wish it every success.
- G. J. WARREN.—Thanks. The pamphlet is being distributed very widely. Italy's desire to impose its own "civilization" on Abyssinia is quite touching. But Mussolini's intelligence is not of the order that can deceive anyone save those whom it is no credit to deceive. He says he is copying the policy of England, all we can say is that he lacks the subtlety and patience of British diplomacy.
- G. STEWART.—We appreciate your point, but it is never wasted labour carefully to examine the implication of terms used, and also consider their consequence on others of bolstering up false ideas.
- E. HALE.—We don't know the writer either. But there are many cases of Freethinkers being "let down in the houses of their friends." There are some people who are more concerned about what people will think about them than they are about the reputation of the one about whom they profess to be honouring.
- J. NEWMAN (Cape Town).—Thanks for good wishes. Pleased to know that you are well. Hope to see you one day.
- H. ANDERSON.—Next week. Too late for this issue.
- W. COLLINS.—We appreciate your opinion of *Humanity and War*, and also for your help in distributing it.
- W. WILLIAMS (Birkenhead).—Delighted to learn of the excellent sale of *Humanity and War* by your newsagent. Shall hope to see you at Birkenhead.
- W. FLETCHER (Birkenhead).—Copies shall be sent. Our business manager will write you on the matter.

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 1367.

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, 3/0.

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

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

Sugar Plums

To-day (January 19) Mr. Cohen is paying a special visit to Preston. He will speak in the Majestic, Tenter Fields Street, at 7.0, on "Things Christians Ought to Know." Admission is free, but there will be some reserved seats at 6d. It is some years since Mr. Cohen was in Preston, and a good audience is expected. We hope that Freethinkers will be able to bring their Christian friends along with them.

This is the last opportunity we shall have of reminding laggards of the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant, on Saturday, Jan. 25. The earlier those who intend coming secure tickets the easier and the more complete the arrangements will be. Nothing is worse than leaving this till the last moment, which means a deal of rearrangement, and sometimes a refusal. There is a special menu provided for those who prefer a vegetarian dinner, but requirements in this direction must be stated beforehand. Dinner will be served at 7.0 prompt, but there will be a reception at 6.30. As for the function itself, there is no need to say more than that it will be as usual—a good dinner, good speeches, a first-class concert by first-rate entertainers, and everyone going home with the feeling of having had a really good time.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture twice to-day (January 19) in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester, on behalf of the local N.S.S. Branch. In the afternoon, at 3.0, the speaker will deal with a number of items, including the present outlook, Abyssinia, Spiritualism, etc., from a commonsense point of view. At 7 p.m., the subject will be "Jesus, Fascism, and Freethought." Admission is free, and reserved seats may be had at sixpence and one shilling each. The subjects are topical, and there should be a full audience at each session.

Membership subscriptions to the National Secular Society fall due on January 1. We are pleased to learn from the General Secretary that the subscriptions have rather bettered those of last year, to date, but there are still many subscriptions outstanding. We hope that all will take the hint, and also that all will bear in mind that beyond a small minimum subscription everything is left to the generosity of the subscriber. There is also need for generous members and friends to consider the Benevolent Fund. This is deplorably low at the moment, although no deserving call is ever ignored.

The *Psychic News* deals us what it calls a "blow," in an attempt to correct our statement that the late Charles Richet, while admitting the genuineness of some so-called "psychic phenomena" never accepted the Spiritualist explanation. Our only source for saying this was Richet's own writings, and a recent article on Richet from the pen of Sir Oliver Lodge, which appeared in the Spiritualist paper *The Two Worlds*. We have no knowledge of the letter which the *Psychic News* says Richet wrote, and which refuted what we said. The *Psychic News* merely refers to "a letter." We regret that while we might take other Spiritual papers more seriously, we must decline to accept a statement upon the mere word of the *Psychic News*.

The Pioneer Press has secured a limited number of copies of the well-known work by Mr. Floyd Dell, *Love in the Machine Age*. The work is a comprehensive study of the sex question in its historical, psychological and sociological aspects, and extends to well over 400 pages. Published at 12s. 6d., it is being sold at 5s., by post 5s. 6d. The number of copies at that price is strictly limited, and we advise those who wish to possess a copy to apply at once.

There are two ways of writing an historical novel. One is to refer to some historical event with a lavish use of real names, and leaves the uninformed reader with the impression that he has been actually learning something of history. This class embraces nine-tenths of the so-called historical novels, and is sheer fustian. The smaller and quite select class of historical novels may help us to realize the sting in Henry Fielding's retort to

the historian who said that Fielding was a writer of fiction. "Oh no," replied the author of *Tom Jones*, "it is you gentlemen who write fiction. With us the only things that are false are the names and dates. But with you historians these are the only things that are correct." The genuine historical novel proceeds on definite lines. Given a perception of the fact that human nature is fundamentally the same, whether it is taken to-day or two thousand years ago, given also an understanding of human psychology, the problem of the novelist becomes that of deciding the manner in which men and women will react to a condition of things which comes under the head of different in form from those now existing. It is the handling of the problem on these lines that lifts a novel such as *Salambo*, or a play such as "The Merchant of Venice" into a class that helps to an understanding of the fundamental unity of life in the midst of constant change.

We are not challenging comparison with either Flaubert or Shakespeare, when we say that in treating history as he has done in several of his works dealing with Roman life and manners, Mr. Jack Lindsay has marked himself as one who has the art of forcing on readers a realization of the essential identity of social life by giving them history in the form of a novel, instead of presenting the world with a novel in the form of history. It is just possible that Mr. Lindsay might resent his last work (as well as previous ones) being called a novel, and might say that all he has done is to give life to characters which so often are made to appear as though they did not belong to the ordinary world of human nature. In that case the difference would be between us one of terms only. *Despoiling Venus* has for its main theme the love affair of Marcus Caelius Rufus, and covers a period immediately preceding the rise of the dictatorship of Julius Caesar. That runs right through the book, and there is a very powerful picture drawn of the play of love and hatred in the minds of the two principal characters. But more striking than this characterization is the background of Roman life—or at least certain aspects of it, which presents to us the human environment in which the story is set. These scenes *live* and one feels that the distance between ourselves and the people that pass before us is one of time. In other respects we have the human nature with which we are all acquainted, reacting in a different environment—the same struggle of contending individual wills and established interests, the same contests of passions and conflict of classes, and we fancy that if Mr. Lindsay were challenged as to the verisimilitude of his picture, as Flaubert was once challenged as to his historical veracity, he might well be able to reply in the same manner, by producing positive evidence of his keeping to the essential truth. *Despoiling Venus* has added to Mr. Lindsay's reputation, and that reputation will lose nothing by his book being banned in the Irish Free State. The work is published by Messrs. Ivor Nicholson and Watson, at 7s. 6d.

There were some good things said at the meeting of the Association of Headmasters held recently in Leeds. Here is one that came from Mr. Ernest Raymond, commenting on the Public School ideal of producing a "gentleman":—

Producing a good citizen too often means taming that lovely thing, a fresh new mind, to our snobbery, our dullness, our timidity, our fear of thought, our terror of the herd, our taming him with stripes till he's a blunted man and sychophantic soul like ourselves; breeding apes and slaves. We should go nearer the mark if we said that the business of education was to produce rebels, men who would willingly conform to what little was sane in society, but would rebel healthily and indignantly against all that was cruel and stupid and tyrannous. Thus the half of education should be to teach disobedience.

That is enough to make the hair of ninety-five teachers out of a hundred, and about 100 per cent of head teachers stand on end. Their ideal of a good pupil is one who behaves himself, learns what he is told to learn, performs his tasks with the dexterity of a well-trained monkey, and conforms to a moderate, but fairly unintelligent standard of good behaviour.

It is probable that in no other direction is the change that has taken place in legislation, and in public opinion during the past century more remarkable than in relation to the position of woman. One hundred years ago the married woman was legally a chattel owned by the husband, and when single she was shut out from many professions, and so tied down by custom and traditions of respectability that she was little better off. This does not mean, of course, that women a hundred years ago, or even before then, did not play a part in public life, or in literature, and in the higher intellectual life of the nation. But it was done in the face of a great deal of opposition, and the uplifted eyebrows, or the positive denunciation of a people that had been for many centuries under the dominating influence of Christian teaching and Christian tradition.

How great is the change in the position of women is well brought out in Miss Irene Clephane's *Towards Sex Freedom* (John Lane, 8s. 6d.) Miss Clephane restricts her survey to this country, but she follows the woman movement through its various phases from the time of Mary Wollstonecraft, until to-day—the general struggle for independence, the fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts, the fight to prevent child prostitution, the political fight, the winning of the right of women to enter the medical and other professions, etc., etc. Some of these struggles, such as the fight over the right to make public the truth about birth-control, although on the narrower view they concerned women primarily, yet were as much a man's movement as belonging to women. This, Miss Clephane admits, and points out not merely the help that man gave to women in their fight, but that the fight would have been impossible without such help. But the history should prove to the younger generation very enlightening. At the commencement, a period that falls within the life of our grandparents, woman stands, unmarried, kept within very narrow bounds, with everything save looking pretty and pretending to be "good," and keeping an eye for a husband, braided as "unladylike," and married, a mere item in her husband's possession, without civic rights and without the right—until 1870, of owning a shilling in cash or property. Probably no other movement shows so great a change in so short a period.

Miss Clephane's work is written without rhetoric of passion, and is the more telling for their absence. On the other side of the case it is a pity from our point of view that no stress is laid upon the extent to which religious prejudice supported a view of womankind that made so many worthy men ashamed of what was going on around them. The Woman Movement in its earliest stages was overwhelmingly Freethinking in character, because so much of the subordination of women was based upon Christian teaching, and so strongly supported by the Churches. If Miss Clephane would in a second edition pay attention to the number of women working in the early days of the Freethought movement, and the part they played in developing the feeling in favour of the equality of the sexes, she would find a very rich field. We have only noted one case in which Miss Clephane falls into a blunder in her history. In dealing with the Knowlton Pamphlet and the Bradlaugh and Besant case, she says that the Charles Watts who published the Knowlton Pamphlet, and afterwards withdrew from the case, was the founder of the Rationalist Press Society. This is not the case. This Charles Watts was the father of the founder of the R.P.A., which did not come into existence until the nineties.

Those who are interested in knowing all about Communism—at least all about it from the Communist point of view—will find it in a report of the speeches made and papers read at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International. The report is contained in 13 pamphlets, published at either twopenny or one penny each, and published by Modern Books Limited, Parton Street, London. The 13 pamphlets cover more than 400 pages of reading matter, and are well produced.

The Village Hitler

In the tiny country "living" he reigns supreme; to the worthy parishioners he is more than a little "tingod"; he is their only source of learning, information and possibly their only scanty comfort.

In many outlying districts the parson wields a great power; he brings most of the villagers into the Church at birth, he administers some sort of control over them for the rest of their lives, and he gabbles words over them as they are lowered to their last resting place.

In more than a few instances he is, to the discerning mind at least, an irritating relic of a bye-gone age, an age when all the education, wealth and civilization of the time were centred in the clerics, when humble folk ran to him to write their letters for them, to tell him every detail of their private lives, to place themselves more and more in his hands.

It is in these obscure country parishes that one learns to appreciate what is meant by "the power of the Church"; the dread the locals have of going against him, the awe in which they stand, the grip he has on the life of the community. These things are dead in a teeming London suburb, but they are real in the backward areas despite our boast of the spread of education, of civilization and of modern thought.

One good parson has ideas of his own with regard to the burial ground in a country town where the writer recently buried a relative; "ideas" is perhaps a mild word, he dictates his whim upon very nearly helpless victims.

Now to overhaul the system of burial in England, to remove the ghastly spots that masquerade under the name of cemeteries is a laudable purpose, and one that should be undertaken the length and breadth of the land; but it is another matter to extort fees by the arbitrary will of the cleric from those who, by the force of circumstance must somehow pay them, and another thing to override the sentiments (if any) of the mourners by the insistence upon a certain wording on the stone erected.

One can well understand that in the bad old days it was perhaps necessary for the villagers to have their proposed inscriptions passed by the Vicar as to spelling or as to suitability; in these enlightened days, it is a piece of dictatorship suffered only by those worthies of the parish who do not presume to argue it out. To charge a Vicar's fee for "breaking the ground" dependent upon the cost of the stone chosen is unjust and unreasonable; it is autocratic, but almost unavoidable, for the good vicar so has the local masons under his spell that they dare not exclude his scale of charges in their estimate.

Neither the plea that these things make for uniformity in appearance, nor that they conform to Ecclesiastical Law carries much weight with the thinking layman; to the hidebound local, in whose life the Vicar plays a prominent part, the case is otherwise, for every clerical decree is law and cannot be wrong.

Fortunately the autocratic parson, even if strictly within the bounds of his church-made law is amenable to the laws of the State, which override any domestic rules or regulations.

The State for once in its wisdom, recognizes that a matter of death cannot be left to the arbitrary will or idiosyncrasy of church servants.

The Established Church at any rate, much as it denies the fact, is the hand-maiden of the State; it performs certain definite, and in some cases, necessary services for the community at large. In marriages, and to a great extent in more civilized parts of the country where crematoria exist, these church

functions are more and more being reduced to a minimum. Does the parson object to marrying two people? Then he can continue his objections; they will go to a State institution known as a Registry Office and ignore the blathering and fuss. Are the arrangements irksome, and the cost high for a piece of ground for ordinary burial—a barbaric method well in keeping with medieval doctrine? The crematorium offers a simple and expeditious way out. Reduced to terms of economics, cremations will in the course of time become less costly than they are at the moment when the demand becomes intensified; the functions performed at such cremations by the clergy are merely formal, and the arrangements are in the hands of competent business folk.

The countryman, far removed perhaps from such institutions, is at a great disadvantage. The local Vicar is monarch of all he surveys in the churchyard and there is no gainsaying him.

It is high time that Christian burial, by which phrase nowadays we mean or should mean hygienic, decent burial, should be thoroughly organized and taken out of the hands of autocrats, removed from the vagaries of village clerics. The old story of the village doctor and parson who were arguing over a dying patient is too often true in life; the parson says with all truth, "Well, whatever you can do, I shall no doubt have the last word."

The perfunctory performance of an oft-repeated duty is only to be expected, and in the last resort is always dependent upon the individual performing; there is nothing to which the harassed and bereaved relative can turn to avoid the unpleasant "hokey pokey" of the parsimonious prelate. Not that a State-organized burial board with its civil servants would eradicate the personal autocracy, but it would provide more control. At present, the incumbent is subject to Ecclesiastical law first and to State law second, and is rather resentful of the latter encroaching upon a matter which he considers is primarily a matter for the Church. But Death knows no dogmas, sects or creeds; it is too big a concern to be left to small-minded clerics and their local prejudices.

A. F. WILLIAMS.

God and Spahlinger

LAST night as I (didn't) lie on my pillow, but for two hours tramped the floor in an effort to rid myself of cramp in the toes and insteps of both feet, I asked myself, in fairly forcible language, what was the purpose of cramp? I couldn't answer; and no answer came out of the immensities. Then I recalled Scotland's national bard on toothache! Thereby I was afforded some mental consolation in the hells of the cramp—and then I got gyp again and had to search for a colder place for my contorted feet or apply to them a douche from the cold water tap.

When I achieved a moderate amount of relief there flashed back to me Colonel Ingersoll's rejoinder to the shocked and astounded lady believer who told him she almost imagined he thought he could control the Universe better than God. "Madam," said Ingersoll smilingly, "I believe I could; and in the first place I would make good health catching instead of disease."

It is scarcely to be supposed that Ingersoll's feminine interlocutor would appreciate the profundity or philosophical significance of his rejoinder. But it isn't a mere jest. It is charged with a great and invulnerable truth. It is entirely consonant with Spencer's declaration that if there were some supreme

intelligence behind the Universe, it could only be conceived of as entirely diabolical. What in the name of common sense can the wishy-washy, milk and watery haa-haa sentimentality of the Church and Sunday School do in the face of great pain and suffering? The futility of Christian Science is merely mirth-provoking when it is not infuriating. When Sir James Simpson discovered and used chloroform, his bitterest opponents were—not jealous professional brethren—but prominent Christian believers who said that if God meant human beings to have pain they had to have it—and that was that! Who was puny man to interfere with God's plans and arrangements? But that is one instance merely of Christian opposition to great schemes for the relief of humanity. In these days, the subtle lie is sedulously sown, especially among the young, that the Churches have always been on the side of reform; the ascertainment of truth and the levelling of social distinctions. And the credulity of the majority is such that the lie is accepted as truth. For people do not read impartial historians. The vast majority of believers swallow what is put before them by their spiritual chefs without even knowing the source of their meals.

In point of actual fact, the benefactors of humanity have arisen from humanity itself—not from any supernal, supernatural region beyond the clouds—who essentially have been fighting God's pain-inflicting diseases. Praying with the utmost fervency would never had equipped us with the knowledge necessary to fight cancer and tuberculosis. On the contrary, when empirical pioneers came forward with a discovery likely to cure pain and disease, they were discouraged, frowned upon or sneered at by orthodox schools of thought. Original thinkers, Freethinkers and Secularists claimed a fair field for the reformers in which to demonstrate their claims. God's attitude to man's suffering is simply that of an amoral entomologist or vivisectionist towards the writhing creatures under operation and experiment in his hands. Just as the followers of the Duce say that he doeth all things well, so Christian believers speak of their infallible deity. The day has gone by for putting any confidence in extra-natural means of dealing with disease, pain and suffering. And this fact cannot be denied by the submissive medical men who bow to ecclesiastical conventions. No doubt these gentlemen maintain an attitude of orthodoxy because they would lose the most of their practice if they didn't or they may say that with their pious patients they find acquiescence helps cures by way of comforting suggestions. The clerical misleaders are bad enough in all conscience; but when they are backed by eminent doctors and lawyers who pretend to believe in a supernatural being, it is at once seen what a tremendous task lies before Freethought and Freethinking reformers. The great majority of titled people also find it pays them to support the supernatural dictators who batten upon the public, and who toil not, neither do they spin.

From the point of view of the militant Freethinker, whatever public opinions may be held by Spahlinger, for example, do not matter. He stands out as a welcome enemy of God and an heroic fighter of God's system of disease and pain as a desirable disciplinary process. More power to his arm!

IGNOTUS.

In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see my country's honour fade;
Oh! let me see our land retain its soul!
Her pride in Freedom, and not Freedom's shade.

Keats.

Some Martyrs of Edessa

(Continued from page 13)

REMARKS

THE *Acts of Sharbil* refer his martyrdom to the 15th year of Trajan's reign, and equate this date with the 416th year of Alexander's Kingdom. As Trajan became emperor on January 27, A.D. 98,⁷ January 27, A.D. 112, would be the first day of his fifteenth year. The other reference, that to Alexander's Kingdom, indicates the use of the Seleucidian, or Syro-Macedonian chronology, often named the Greek reckoning. This was commonly believed to have begun at B.C. 309, but a close inspection of the *Edessan Chronicle* led Asseman, an indubitable authority, to take B.C. 311 for the true beginning.⁸ According to Asseman's conclusion, A.G. 416 would equal A.D. 105 instead of A.D. 112 which it ought to have equalled had it coincided with the fifteenth year of Trajan's reign. Moreover, as regards Trajan, although his name, his reign, and his edict are so emphatically mentioned in the beginning of the *Acts*, yet, nevertheless, the later references are made, not to "the emperor," but to "the emperors," and this is done no less than twenty times. But Trajan was then the only Roman emperor, and it was close on 150 years after the incident in point that the system of co-empery was introduced by his successors. How then could "Lysanius the judge of the country" refer over and over again to "the emperors" as the source of his authority, when he, being obviously a Roman administrator of high rank must have known that Trajan was the sole master of the Roman Empire? Besides, how could Marinus and Anatolus, notaries of Edessa, have so falsely reported what Lysanius had said, and have got their false report admitted into the archives of the city? These anomalies strongly suggest that the *Acts* in question are a forgery dating from a time when the conjoint rule of two or more emperors had become perfectly familiar to all Roman subjects. Again, the account implies that Asroene, a small State in the north-west of Mesopotamia, with Edessa as its capital, was at the time of the incident in some way or other, under the authority of the Romans. This subjection, however, is contradicted by recorded events which took place as follows. Trajan, after making glorious conquests in the south-east of Europe, desired to do the same thing in the south-west of Asia, where the Parthians were a constant menace to the Roman province of Syria. Therefore, asserting that the King of Armenia had received his crown from the Parthians instead of receiving it from the Romans, who possessed the right to bestow it. Trajan demanded in a threatening manner that the Parthians should repair this injury. At first the Parthian King scornfully refused to make the required reparation, then, on hear-

⁷ Liebenham's *Fasti*, Bonn, 1910, p. 107.

⁸ *Bibliotheca Orientalis* . . . Joseph Simonius Assemanus, *Syrus Maronita* . . . Rome, 1719. I., p. 387. By the order and at the expense of Pope Clement XI. Asseman, a Syrian Maronite, collected for the Vatican Library a number of MSS. in the East, laying twelve languages under contribution. The *Chronicon Edessenum* was compiled by an unnamed writer who flourished about A.D. 550, and brought his work up to A.D. 540, ending at the outbreak of the war between Justinian and Chosroës. Asseman (I., pp. 387-417), gives the original text and a Latin translation in parallel columns provided with footnotes. Under the same title he adds (pp. 417-423) a register of the Edessan Kings made from the Chronicle of Dionysius, Patriarch of the Jacobites; and also (pp. 424-429), a list of all the Edessan bishops who are mentioned by one, or other, or both, the aforesaid authorities. A Latin translation and annotations, accompany these supplementary sections, but, here, the notes, instead of being below the text, are intermingled with it, thus forming a sort of fluent commentary.

ing that Trajan was coming to enforce it with arms, he vainly sought for a diplomatic arrangement. Trajan, leaving Rome some time in October, A.D. 106, took up his quarters at Antioch on the sixth of January, A.D. 107.⁹ Hearing of Trajan's arrival, Augar (i.e., Abgar) Prince of Edessa, "sent him presents and professions of friendship, but, fearing both the Parthians and the Romans, and wishing not to give either of them offence, he never made him any visit. This conduct he kept up for some time, and supported it by sending his son, whose charms completely won Trajan's heart. After occupying Armenia with very little difficulty, and making it a Roman province, Trajan continued his advance. Edessa was on his way, but before he got there, King Augar, persuaded by his aforesaid son came forth to meet him with excuses for not having previously brought him his respects. Affection for the son gained acceptance for the father, and Trajan accorded Abgar his friendship.¹⁰ In a closely condensed summary of Trajan's exploits, Flavius Eutropius, an author flourishing in the second half of the fourth century, mentions the King of Osdroëne as one of five monarchs whom Trajan *in fidem accepit*, that is, accepted as allies; but, later on in the same passage he mentions Edessa as one of four cities which Trajan subsequently *vicit ac tenuit*, that is took and kept.¹¹ This turn of events occurred in A.D. 116, when several peoples of the East whom Trajan had conquered, or with whom he had made alliance, began to treat him in a rebellious, or in a treacherous manner, and when, for their correction Trajan sent Lucius Pietus, his best general, who among other martial deeds then captured and destroyed Edessa.¹² Taking all the above facts into account, we seem to be justified in declining to believe that during A.D. 112, Trajan was in a position to make religious edicts valid for the Edessenes.

There is also no independent evidence supporting the statement that Trajan, in A.D. 112, or indeed at any other time, afflicted the Christians by an edict enforcing, under penalties of torture and death, an increase in the offering of "sacrifices and libations" to the Pagan deities. On the contrary, a few years earlier, he had ameliorated the state of the Christians by a famous ordinance. This was a Rescript which he sent to Pliny the Younger between 103 and 105, when Pliny was governing a province on the Black Sea.¹³

Therein Trajan, speaking of the Christians, says:—
They must not be sought out. If they are reported, and convicted, they must be punished, nevertheless so, that he who denies himself to be a Christian, and makes it really manifest by supplicating our deities, shall, however much suspected in the past, receive pardon because of his repentance.

The Rescript concluded by saying that anonymous accusations should not be permitted in the case of any crime.¹⁴

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued)

⁹ Tillemont's *Histoire des Empereurs*, Paris, 1720, II., p. 189. He refers to Dio [B. 68] for the facts, and to Malala (with the *Acts of Ignatius*) for the date. See much more pp. 505 and 506.

¹⁰ Tillemont's *Empereurs*, II., pp. 109, 193, Ref. Dio. B. 68 and 69.

¹¹ *Breviarium Historiæ* (VIII., 2) Panckoucke, Paris, 1844, p. 152.

¹² Tillemont's *Empereurs*, II., p. 203.

¹³ Tillemont, who spares no pains to discover the time when Pliny ruled those provinces, Pontres and Bithynia, is of opinion that it began on September 17 A.D. 103, and continued for eighteen months. *Empereurs*, II., pp. 179, 501, 576. Smith (*New Classical Dictionary of Biography, etc.*, London, 1850, p. 591) says that Pliny took up his Pontian Praetorship in A.D. 103, and held it not quite two years.

¹⁴ Teubner Edition of Pliny's *Epistolarium*. Leipzig, MCMIII., p. 293.

God's Museum

A CURIOUS sight in Paris is the Museum for Religions and all the Gods, founded by Emile Guimet, 1878, to preserve specimens showing the evolution of deities.

A museum for gods is a masterpiece to expose the folly of religions, and Guimet's collection of a holy horde of divine unrealities is truly laughter-provoking. There are saviours, saints, angels and devils all in promiscuous array, and the Committee published, "Les Annales du Musée Guimet," under the directorship of M. de Milloné.

Guimet had the good sense not to house "relics" such as the glue-pot used by Joseph, but collected illuminated MSS. and books of exquisite workmanship, illustrated with drawings of gods in every conceivable attitude. There are over 1,000 volumes and 600 god-models, arranged in sections, according to the geographical ideas of heavenly beings. The European and Asiatic groups are grotesquely comparative to explain Christian gods, Father, Son, etc., and supreme deities as Shang-ti, Lord of the Heavenly Sun, not eclipsed by any other God.

Emile Guimet travelled, and spent much, to obtain these divine specimens, while his assistants, in Europe, collected whatever was appropriate for "God's Museum," including what is known as the "religious bestiary."

There is a nigger Christ and a Mohammedan Jesus; and another item, lot 98, represents "the ancient reverend Yu-wang-shang-ti, with Limp-ao, Heaven Lord, Southern Cross God, and Nan-kieu-laô-dzin, Child of Happiness."

One extraordinary creature, Kuan-yin is a Christian competitor as God made flesh; for Kuan-yin incarnated 33 times as man, woman and beast, and remained vegetarian.

Virgins with infants in divine systems are pretty and numerous. The Chinese Tien-heu, heaven's sovereign lady with baby saviour Zen-zai, has a smile bewitching as Mona Lisa's.

Large all-seeing eyes of biblical narration, vie with godly Kuan-yin, one-eyed, in the forehead, but capable of viewing the whole Universe with a single wink. Kuan-yin possesses 18 arms to prove he is handy at receiving gifts.

Near the Museum's main door, stands Pu-tai, a champion of sanctity, "lousy but happy." This Pu-tai is the popular London lucky charm; smiling, huge belly, and carries a sackful of good gifts for mankind. He is barefooted, having left one shoe in heaven and the other in hell, through haste to escape both places. Billet D'Entrée; prix deux francs.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

Freethought Anniversaries

PETER ANNET, 1693-1769.

It has been said that two kinds of history of England and the English people have been written. There is the History of the Drums and the Trumpets, the Kings and the Battles: and there is the History of the common lot, the toilers on land and sea, town and country. With the latter we are concerned here, with the former we are not.

Reading the period of, say, two hundred years ago, we see not only an absence of elementary schools, an absence of teachers, but an absence of means to train suitable candidates either in sciences or the arts. There were a few schools, principally engaged in turning out properly disciplined servants for the people of quality. The slunkey-mind had to be cultivated.

At the same time there was going on a Freethought propaganda, but by the conditions it was confined, or nearly so, to the upper and professional classes. To Peter Annet belongs the high honour of taking Freethought to the working-class. He took it by pamphlet, book and periodical. He was also engaged in lecture work, his first pamphlet *Judging for Ourselves: or*

Freethinking the Great Duty of Religion, being a reprint of two lectures. He seems to have been the first Freethought lecturer, first of an illustrious line. There is said to have been in all his propaganda a "train of shrewd critical sense, put forth in crisp and vivacious English, which made him a popular figure." After considering the different conditions—1735 and 1935—it seems to be ungrateful to say that he was lacking in "the due gravity and dignity for the handling of such a theme as the reversal of a nation's faith." And, further, "he is facetious where he should be serious"; entertaining where he had need be impressive; "provocative where he should have aimed at persuasion." In 1761 he published nine numbers of the *Free Inquirer*, attacking the Pentateuch with insight and cogency, and was at once arrested. He was sentenced to stand in the pillory twice, to have a label "for Blasphemy," to one month's imprisonment in Newgate, then to one year with hard labour in Bridewell, and finally to find sureties for his good behaviour during the rest of his life. He was then 68 years of age!

Annet, who was a Deist, was born at Liverpool in 1693. He was a schoolmaster, and invented a system of shorthand. He corresponded with Priestley, the Unitarian, who had learned the shorthand at school. In various works he attacks the "Incarnation," the "Resurrection," "St. Paul," and the credibility of miracles.

After his release he established a school at Lambeth. He died January 18, 1769.

AUTOLYCUS.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"
SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

SIR,—I am writing to reply to the ill-advised remarks of your contributor, Mr. H. Cutner, concerning the fairy photographs which were in the possession of my father, the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Mr. Cutner's pointed disregard of veracity appears to be as marked as ever. He says that the photographs in question, some of which incidentally appeared in my father's book, *The Coming of the Fairies*, "are clever examples of trick photography, which almost any photographer who knows his job could duplicate."

As a matter of actual fact, as distinct from Mr. Cutner's irresponsible surmise, these photographs were submitted to the leading photographic experts of this country, who were unable to offer any adequate explanation for them. My father would not have exhibited these photographs had they not been examined first by experts for any traces of trick photography, etc. Mr. Cutner does not appear to be aware of the conditions and circumstances under which they were taken.

It is easy enough to sneer at a subject of which one knows nothing, but Mr. Cutner would do well to realize that such a mental attitude as he exhibits constitutes an exposure of his own ignorance rather than a display of sagacity on his part. In an abortive endeavour to be clever and/or humorous Mr. Cutner quotes the prehistoric animals which appeared in Edgar Wallace's film "King Kong" as examples of trick photography which my father would have been glad to accept as genuine. In actual fact, most of the model prehistoric animals which appeared in "King Kong" were the *very same models* as those used in the film of my father's own story *The Lost World*, which appeared some years before his death.

Mr. Cutner shall really be more careful not to commit himself to absurd assertions which expose him to such direct and complete refutation.

I may say, in conclusion, that this letter represents my final word on this matter, as I do not propose to enter upon a protracted controversy with one possessed of Mr. Cutner's amazing if unconscious powers of distorting fact.

DENIS P. S. CONAN DOYLE.

Obituary

MATHEW W. SOWDEN

FREETHOUGHT has lost a very devoted follower in the death of Mathew W. Sowden, of Cramlington. For many years he had experienced ill-health, and for the last eight years of his life was confined to bed. During the whole of that time he remained a devoted reader of the *Freethinker* and a constant student of Freethought writings. So far as his opportunities permitted, he even played the part of a propagandist by an ever-ready loan of his books to those who would read them. His outlook on life was ever brave and cheerful, and his high character won the respect of those who knew him. He died at the early age of 58.—S.S.

JOHN ROBERT ALEXANDER

WE regret to report the death of Mr. John Robert Alexander, of Leeds, at the age of 78. Mr. Alexander was a Freethinker of many years standing, and held the respect of all who knew him. Freethought was to him more than mere intellectual conviction. It was a rule of life. The Freethought Cause had no more sincere supporter than he.—C.A.B.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday. Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. Current *Freethinkers* on sale.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Gauden Hotel, Gauden Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. A. Burall—"D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W. C.1): 11.0, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—"Some Outworn Ideologies?"

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 20, Mr. L. W. Knott—"The Influence of Science on Art."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Rooms, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton, E.10): 7.30, L. Ebury—"The Social Evil of Christian Ethics."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Debate—"Is Theism Rational?" *Affir.*: B. Buller. *Neg.*: E. Bryant.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead): 7.0, Rabbi Raphael Levine, B.A., LL.B. (Liverpool)—"Why Jews are Persecuted."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham): 7.30, Mr. H. C. Smith—"The World an Asylum Run by Lunatics." Review from "1066 and All That."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Mr. R. M. Gott (Pres. B. Burn, Theosophical Lodge)—"Theosophy."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Tavern Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.15, Mr. H. Binns—"What is Personal Judgment?"

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Jack Clayton—A Lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Unity House, Hillside Crescent, Edinburgh): 7.0, George Whitehead—"Spiritualism: Explained."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, A. B. MacKay—"Burns: Prose and Poetry."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Woodside Hall, St. Georges Cross): 8.0, Tuesday, January 21. Debate—"Is Birth-Control an Evil?" *Affir.*: Anthony M. Ludovici. *Neg.*: George Whitehead. Admission 1s. 6d., 1s. and 6d.

(Continued on page 17)

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