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• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

Life and Death

Joy and sorrow are two qualities that bind together all classes of humanity in a community of feeling. And of the two it is perhaps sorrow that brings the closer union. Many may find it possible to stand apart from joy, but there are fewer who can avoid showing sympathy where grief or suffering is manifest. Normal human nature readily sympathizes with a family that has lost a parent, a child, a wife, or a husband. We know it means a break that nothing can mend, a gap that nothing can fill. It matters not the slightest whether that gap occurs in a cottage or in a palace. It is, of necessity, neither stronger nor less irreparable in the one place than in the other. Hysteria may exaggerate in one case or callousness under-estimate in another, but there remains a solid core of sympathy with each. It is this which gives real significance to such an expression as "the human family."

But while there is a community of suffering which binds human beings together, there is in a family loss a certain singularity, and intimacy that cannot be transferred to those outside the circle. At most it can be extended only to a select body of intimates. But to say that, in any real sense of the word, we share sorrow is an abuse of language. If we could, and if we did actually feel the grief that enters a home when one of its members cease to exist, if we could feel all the calamities that beset life, decent men and women would be driven to insanity. It would be more than human nature could stand. Death calls for sympathy, for what help can be given to those whom it directly affects, but there is a sacredness (if the word may be used) about the death of a husband or wife, a parent or child, that forbids us to vulgarize death or even cheapen it by pretending that it can be shared with those outside the family circle. Do not let us vulgarize death. It forms the bed-rock of so much that is good in human nature that we should avoid this at all costs.

The Dead King

We sympathize with the family of George the Fifth as we should with any other family that had experienced a similar loss. Neither more nor less. And that sympathy is offered the more readily because so far as we know (although of the inner lives of royalty so little is really known by any ordinary person, and so much depends upon interested or idle chatter, and which may be roughly removed when history gets to work) the family of the late King does appear to have been more firmly knit together than is the case with many royal families. I have often noted that in the portrait groups of the Royal Family, those taken when the King's own family were young, or those taken with his grandchildren, the children were nearly always round the father or the grandfather. That is to me far more reliable evidence of his good nature than anything offered by the Archbishop or Prime Minister or the paid pens of the press. For children are deadly critics; they have that responsiveness to natural kindness that young animals possess. The affection of children cannot be bought, save by the love or kindness that invites trust. The criticism of a child ignores place or power; it fixes itself upon the man or the woman that lies behind.

For this reason, the most dependable one that I know, I am quite willing to believe what is said of the late King's geniality and general kindness. Without any known inclination to intellectual occupations, a feature that he had in common with his father, there does not appear to have been any of the fussy interference of Queen Victoria, and none of the stories current about Edward VII. were afloat concerning him. I have always had the impression that could his own personal wishes have been indulged he would have preferred the life of a country gentleman to anything else. And in spite of the repute of a very strong conservatism he appears to have played well the part of a constitutional monarch. This is the best praise that can be given him in that direction. Called on to do a certain "job," he did it to the best of his ability, and loyally held to his coronation oath. The faults that attach to an hereditary monarchy can never be absent, but these faults do not of necessity belong to the occupant of the office. To say that these faults were less manifest during the reign of the late King, is a compliment that may be paid to the man.

* * *

Save Me from My Friends

Those who set themselves to idolize George the Fifth invite criticism where none might otherwise be given, and help to bury the man in the King. The *Referee*, on its financial page, gives birth to the perfectly idiotic remark that "the buoyancy of markets following the death of George V. . . . shows how truly our late King is known to have wrought for peace." Another paper (I think the *Star*, but I have

omitted to note the name of the paper on the cutting) referred to the King as the "Master" of the greatest empire the world has seen. Not the Chief, or the Head or even the Ruler, but the *Master*—the kind of title that is given to a Hitler or a Mussolini. It used to be the boast of the British people that they had no "Master," that their loyalty was given to the King freely and conditionally, that the greatness of the British Empire rested upon the common sense of the people, the soundness of its institutions, and the working straightforwardness of those who fill the offices to which they are elected or appointed. George V. himself claimed to be the head of a *free* people. I hope, I think, he would promptly have repudiated any such dishonouring title as that of "Master." It will be a bad day for the British people whenever they consent to any such title for the one who is at its head, whether that one be called King, President, or is known by any other term. I also view with considerable suspicion the story given currency by Mr. Baldwin, that the King, waking from a semi-conscious condition enquired of his attendant "How is the Empire?" If the story were true it would indicate an unconscious egotism that would be almost pathologic in character, and does not fit into the King's general character, certainly not into that of a simple natured, modest man trying to fulfill the duties that were his. Any psychologist who analyses the expression will see what I mean. To me it sounds like a political slogan manufactured for political purposes.

At this kind of thing none can hold a candle to "Jimmy" Douglas. Writing in the *Sunday Express*, on the day before the death of the King, he said that the news of the King's serious illness brought about "a silence of history, one of those silences wherein humanity hears its own heart beating," and "breathes its own most sacred prayers for its own life." If Douglas had been a Roman Catholic priest speaking of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ he could hardly have said more. Encouraged by his own extravagance, and his faith in the stupidity of his public, Douglas proceeds:—

He made us a band of united brothers as free nations in a commonwealth of peoples united by his sagacity in peace and war. The world marvels at his achievements in the creation of a new Empire, and the building of a world-unity which withstood the strain of the Great War.

In 1914, George had been King barely four years. I agree that a man who could, tied down as he was by constitutional custom and law, create a united commonwealth of peoples, and build up a "world-unity" that could withstand the strain of the Great War, deserves all the praise that can be given. All in less than four years! It is more than "great," it is miraculous. I pay George the Fifth the compliment of believing that had anyone said that to his face, he would have believed as did the Duke of Wellington when a spiritual forerunner of J.D. told him that he had shown himself a greater soldier than Cæsar or Hannibal, and one of the greatest administrators that had ever lived. The Duke replied, "Don't say that to anyone else, or he may think I am damned fool enough to believe it." Such men vulgarize kingship as did the professions of extravagant grief of shopkeepers who promptly doubled the price of black ties, vulgarize one of the most solemn moments of life.

* * *

Mourning True and False

It is to the credit of Queen Mary that by her orders no blinds were lowered and no windows were darkened on the death of the King. I honour the Queen for so sensible a decision. It was a step away from the darkness towards the dawn. Real grief needs no such adventitious advertisement as darkened

rooms, and it is a pity that so healthy a sentiment was not imitated in other directions and over a wider area. And if what is said about the new King be true, then, I think, he would have preferred that they who sympathize with him over the death of his father should be simple and sincere in their manifestations. But we note that the Duke of Norfolk has issued a decree, "It is expected that all persons do put themselves into decent mourning to begin on Wednesday, January 22, and to continue until after his Majesty's funeral." To issue a request which most unthinking people will take as a command, and will try to enforce on others is to rob death of its dignity and sympathy of its spontaneity. It mixes the true and the false in an indistinguishable mass. There are multitudes to-day who have given up the wearing of black at a death because they have outgrown the stage of culture to which it properly belongs. They realize that the way to meet the shock and disruption of death is to bathe anew in the stream of life, and to live one's normal life as well as one may. Where grief is real, where it is even respectful, it must be spontaneous and sincere. To mimic grief is to insult the living and the dead. To bring pressure to bear upon any—even the pressure of public opinion—to wear a prescribed uniform is to prevent one knowing sham sorrow from real sympathy. Manifestations of grief by decree and in a prescribed manner is dishonouring to those who give such an order and to those who obey it. The grief that death brings should be fought with the joy and the power of life, not prolonged by the artificial stimulation of external trappings, or advertised by the public manifestation of a formal sorrow.

I am not concerned with the death of a *King*. Kings, as we know are quickly replaced, and with each we have the record of virtues while he lived, and the same extravagant manifestations of sorrow when he died. And in each case the ease with which the dead King is replaced bears eloquent witness to the extravagance of the praise that has been uttered. But I have sympathy with the family that has lost a parent, and whether the family be that of King or dustman, that sympathy remains. I am not foolish enough to say that I *share* their sorrow; I cannot. I can only express what sympathy I have with any family that suffers so great a loss, and trust that they will face their loss with courage. Time must be left to do the rest, and if it leads us to reflect that while death waits on life, yet life owes much to death in the affection it breeds and tests, then all is—if not so well as we would wish—yet well.

But do not let us insult our dead by vulgarizing death.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

On the Death of our Sovereign Lord the King

THIS grief extravagant for Great Ones dead
Comes queerly from the very folk who say,
"There is no death; he hath but passed away;
With Christ he reigns, now he to Heaven hath sped."
The infidel, who truly pitièd
The man departed from Life's pleasant day,
In which he joyed to love, to work, to play,
Must think illogical the tears they shed.
The truth, of course, is they do not believe
The idle words that priestly lips have muttered;
Their grief extravagant is really sorrow.
But though the Churches practice to deceive,
Grown men will scorn the foolish lies they uttered
And know that for the dead there is no morrow.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Exploitation of Death

"An error cannot be believed sincerely enough to make it a truth."—*Ingersoll*.

"Logical consequences are the scarecrows of fools and the beacons of wise men."—*Huxley*.

SINCE the dawn of Christianity the fear of death has increased among believers, especially among the inhabitants of great cities. This is due to the base exploitation of death by the Christian clergy, who have made it a steady source of revenue. Death is, according to these charlatans, the King of terrors. They heighten the effect by appealing to the fears of their hearers, and use a purely imaginary Devil and horrible hell as a lever. They have even added a new terror to death in the thought of being cut off in sin "unhoused, unanealed." The Church of England has a prayer against sudden death, which Pagans always regarded as best. This idea is strikingly illustrated in *Hamlet*, where the Prince refrains from killing the King whilst at prayer, because:—

"To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage,"

is to send his father's murderer to heaven.

Indeed, the clergy have found it very advantageous to invest death with all that is hideous and horrible. "Prepare for death, flee from the wrath to come," has been their cry. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," shout these pastors and masters. By such specious appeals to fear and imagination they have made a terror of that which should be accepted with serenity. Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the nineteenth century, taught and wrote that the majority of human beings were destined to everlasting torture in full view of their deity. To-day, the Roman Catholic, the most powerful Church in all Christendom, still preaches a fiery damnation, and the Salvation Army actually works the same threat into its trade-mark—"Blood and Fire."

The clergy know their own sorry business. Old Dr. Samuel Johnson was not a fool, but he was tormented by the fear of death. The gentle William Cowper was driven mad by the horrors of the Christian Religion. Yet fear of death scarcely exists among Asiatics, because, living in the open, their experience tells them that death and life are ever entwined in a struggle for mastery; that the victorious soldier of to-day is the corpse of to-morrow. Under Asiatic skies death is regarded as no less benign than birth, and death is not feared as the horror of horrors. Dwellers in large towns necessarily acquire their knowledge of Nature from books, or from the most superficial and fleeting observation. For five months in every year Nature is represented in the towns by fog, rain, and snow, and the sheer necessity for fires and artificial lighting. Dwellers in mean streets have little or no chance of meditating on the rigid processes of natural law.

The clergy basely exploit this ignorance to the utmost. They solicit money at the death-bed; and extract fees at funerals; some get money for the repose of the deceased person's soul. All through the centuries these parasites have ever sought financial advantage from the bare fact that man is mortal. For their own sorry ends they have taught generation after generation of men that death is the most dreadful evil. All the terrors that theology could gather from ancient savage nations have been added to increase the horrors, and they have invariably tried to paralyse reason with the clutch of fear.

The terror such stories inspire is largely owing to the gross ignorance which surrounds the subject of death. Men fear it, like little children do the dark,

through not knowing what it is. The fear of the night can be dissipated by a little light. Death would be no bugbear if it were seen in its right perspective, and if it were known better. And nobody is there to tell people, except a small number of devoted Freethinkers, who are anathema to all the Churches of Christendom. The sermons from the clergy, archaic in thought and inflated with the merest rhetoric, deal in generalities and exaggerations. "The wages of sin is death" is the priestly idea of wisdom. The clergy are hopelessly out of touch, not only with modern men and women, but with common-sense itself. Hence the Christian Churches are emptying. The "cure of souls" is passing from the hands of the priest to that of the physician with the cure of the human body. For it is now admitted that a healthy body and a healthy mind go together.

Many men dread dying rather than death itself, and here science comes to the rescue of suffering humanity with its anodynes and anæsthetics. The clergy, who actually opposed the introduction of chloroform because they said it interfered with their god's primal curse upon women, are very fond of pointing the feeble finger of scorn at scientists. The clergy made death more awful and gruesome with their lies and mummeries, but the doctors have robbed death of half its terrors. As a result of scientific discoveries, death comes as a tender nurse to patients who otherwise had died in suffering. Not only have the doctors saved lives, and helped troubled humanity, but they have taken a black fear out of life.

The clergy claim that death can only be countered by aid of their Christian Superstition. Yet modern Chinese, Hindoos, and Japanese have as great a contempt of life as the old Greeks and Romans of the heroic age. In truth, priests have, for their own commercial ends, harped constantly on the terrors of death. For thousands of years priests have chanted the old, sad refrain of death as an enemy, but the Freethinker listens to far other strains. Death is the universal law of Nature, which befalls all living beings, though the majority of animals encounter it far sooner than man.

Freethought everywhere destroys the terror of death. Shelley in *Queen Mab* sings of death and sleep being brothers. Walt Whitman chants a hymn of welcome to death. George Meredith asks with a fine touch of stoicism:—

"Into the breast that gives the rose,
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

For thousands of years priests have exploited the fact of death, and used it as a means of extorting money from innocent believers. At long last this abject terror of death is passing away, for the simple reason that the Christian Religion is decaying, and priests are everywhere being discredited.

Europe is semi-barbarous at the present hour, and it is largely owing to the machinations of Priestcraft, which has battered on the ignorance of people for so many centuries. The innocence of the community has been the chief ambition of the clergy, for it is by this onerous condition that an impudent and audacious set of impostors has been gaining an easy and comfortable livelihood for two thousand years. When people realize the truth of things, and the clergy have to turn to more honest employment, the earth will be cleaner and happier for the change.

MIMNERMUS.

It is terrible to die of thirst at sea. Is it necessary that you should salt your truth that it will no longer quench thirst?—*Nietzsche*.

The Devil

THE proprietors of a well-known "hair restorer" in America advertise: "Keep your hair on. War and Bald-headedness are Hell." The advertiser may or may not be familiar with the legend of Satan, which declares that the Monk's "tonsure" deprived the priests from miraculous powers vouchsafed to Satanic co-operation.

Satan himself is said to have preached once at a Church in North Berwick, when he comforted his congregation, according to Frazer, by assuring them that "sa lang as their hair wes on," no harm could befall them, and "sould newir latt ane teir fall fra thair ene." According to this theory, it would appear as if Samson was a friend of Satan. But why then do all the "authentic" portraits of Jesus Christ show Him with long hair and a beard?

On so perplexing a subject as The Devil, it is well to be able to turn to a genuine biography of Satan, written by the Rev. Robert Brown fifty years ago, called *The Personality and History of Satan*. Mr. Brown is described by the then leading religious journal (the *Record*), as "a ripe Biblical scholar with no taint of German neology."

The author, in a somewhat pessimistic Preface, bewails the fact that even in the Y.M.C.A., where he lectured, "Some of the young men doubted the existence" of Brown's satanic subject. Indeed, Brown had worse enemies than mere devils. He declares himself to be the victim of some terrible disease—or as he quaintly expresses it, "I was detained by some Afflictive Providence."

One can hardly assert that the author starts with any prejudice in favour of his "biographee." He begins his work by calling him "The Dragon . . . the Prince of This World . . . The Prince of the Power of the Air . . . Satan . . . The Devil . . . the Wicked One . . . the Lying Traducer . . . the Accuser of God as well as Man." He divides his biography into sections: "(1) His Being. (2) His Character, and (3) His Mode of Carrying out His Hellish Designs." His object is to prove Satan to be "Evil-disposed . . . malignant . . . evil . . . awful . . . malevolent . . ." and so on, but Brown admits Satan "has a mighty intellect and untiring energies."

Mr. Brown writes as of a living personality. His great point was that Satan is still an active power amongst us. Satan "is very persuasive," and it seems that "some who have made a profession of Godliness subsequently turn aside after Satan."

It is interesting to learn that "Satan possesses a throne at Pergamos, and Synagogues at Smyrna and Philadelphia." This bald list of possessions does not exhaust Satan's conquests however. There are some queer relationships between God and Satan, not unlike those Secret Treaties denounced by President Wilson. One remembers the strange yarn about the liberties God allowed Satan to take with Job and his property. Mr. Brown tells the story of God handing over to Satan certain people like "Hymeneus and Alexander," and even whole organizations such as the Churches of the Corinthians.

Certainly these "Secret Treaties" had reciprocal clauses; they are said to be those who are "plucked like brands from the burning." But curiously few cases are on record of Satan having to "cotgh-up" half-baked souls, from Hell to Heaven (presumably in chariots of fire). Christ admitted that Satan desired to have Peter "that he might sift him like wheat"; but apparently Satan tired of the job, or perhaps found too much "chaff" in the Rocky Peter, who was released to become the foundation of Christ's Church—the "Sham-Rock" as the Irish might say.

Mr. Brown's book is not without humour—of the unintentional sort. He draws attention to Satan "as a schoolmaster" in cases "where God's children might be taught not to blaspheme" (2 Tim. ii. 17-18). We are reminded too that Satan at times "acts as a Saviour of Mankind" (1 Cor. v. 1-5).

Satan is no mystery to Mr. Brown. He proves on the authority of Scripture that Satan is a real person, a Son of God! Even that is more reasonable than to believe that God specially created a Devil. Many a good father has a scalliwag son. Brown is sure that Satan "created sin"—and here we should like to have had particulars of so curious a process. Anyhow, Satan was once a nice clean respectable unfallen angel.

Christ's own relations with Satan cry out for clarification. For instance Jesus is said to have been "full of the Holy Spirit" when He was "led into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil" (Matt. iv. 1). Could the Holy Ghost also "fall" on this occasion? Mr. Brown claims that Satan tempted Jesus oftener than is usually believed. It was Satan who wanted Jesus to pray that "this cup pass from me," and (says Brown) it was Satan who caused the Eclipse of the Sun (John xviii. 3) and other "hellish efforts and dreadful pressures."

Satan and Jesus apparently met on friendly terms. When Jesus "descended into Hell" (for no evident purpose), there is no record of Christ creating "a hell of a row," nor did the Devils fail in polite etiquette when being "cast out" on more than one occasion. It will also be remembered that Jesus was accused of "casting out devils by Beelzebub," one of Satan's many aliases. Satan is said to be the hero (or villain) of the Parable of the Sowers.

And now, we are told, "the whole world lieth in or under the dominion of the Wicked One"—at least "everybody outside the Christ of God": wherever that is. "The carnal mind is the product of the Devil's sin"—and strange to say—"is not subject to the law of God, neither can be." God's omnipotence has curious limitations.

We rather doubt the Devil's "mighty intellect" when we read that Satan wastes much of his "untiring energies" in hurling "fiery darts at the righteous," who, being provided with "the shield of faith" are able to "quench" these darts. Perhaps "quench" means "liquidate"—a word whose meaning has lately stepped into new definitions.

Man Friday's question is still unanswered—"Why doesn't God kill debbil?" Satan "fell from heaven" ("like lightning" too!), and has already been judged (John xvi. 11), but sentence has been deferred for an unconscionable time. Mr. Brown thinks we may be content to know that "the time is at hand when the Devil shall be cast into the earth and his angels with him, and at length both he and they shall be cast into the lake of fire where they shall be tormented day and night." We do not understand the allusion to the Devil's new visit to "earth," but his eventual torturing in hell suggests a sort of poetic justice. In this event, the torturers are no longer to be devils as pictured by Dante, Milton and Doré, as well as millions of preachers. The fires of hell will then be stoked by God and the Angelic Host. Goodwill to all men will give way to a new slogan: "Glory to hell in the lowest, where we give the devil his 'due.'"

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Nothing during the American struggle against the slave system did more to wean religious and God-fearing men and women from the old interpretation than the use of it to justify slavery.—A. D. White.

Things Worth Knowing*

XXVI.

DID JESUS EXIST?

ACCORDING to its own premises, this story is impossible. The main premise is, of course, that a man with supernatural qualities, a god or demi-god, walks around day after day, quite openly, in a certain city and its surroundings. He cares so little to hide his movements that a while earlier he had entered that city by full daylight, and it is even said that he had been greeted with enthusiasm by the people, so that he was known by everybody, to every woman and every child. He walks around in the company of his disciples, preaching by day, and sleeping in the open air at night, with those same disciples around him. Nevertheless it is supposed to be necessary to bribe one of these disciples into betraying him, and for the sake of greater dramatic effect this is done by a kiss. Imagine the police authorities of Berlin in 1888 bribing a Socialist into revealing the whereabouts of Bebel. The police might just as well save their money by using the city directory.

If we had been told that Jesus had sought refuge in a cave or cellar, there might, after all, be some sort of feeble sense attached to the story. But under the circumstances related to us, those looking for Jesus had only to ask, "Which one of you is Jesus?" And he would certainly not have attempted to deny his own name by a lie.

Not only is Judas more superfluous than a fifth wheel on a cart, but he is an absurdity, explicable only as a manifestation of the hatred felt by Gentile Christianity against the Jewish Christians during the second century, when it had become expedient to forget or deny that Jesus himself, Mary, Joseph, all the Apostles, all the Disciples, all the Evangelists, had been Jews.

Jesus calms the storm and walks on the water. But Moses had already divided the waters of the sea (Exodus xiv. 21). Joshua had already mastered the waters of the Jordan, so that the bearers of the Ark could walk across dryshod. (Joshua iii. 13). Elijah had only to smite the waters with his mantle in order to divide them hither and thither so that Elijah could cross the Jordan as on dry ground. (2 Kings ii. 8). Jesus ascended to heaven, but already Elijah had been taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, drawn by horses of fire. (2 Kings ii. 11).

It is impossible to overlook the extent which miraculous actions ascribed to Elisha in the Old Testament have become attributed to Jesus in the new one. At Nain Jesus recalls the single son of a widow from the dead. (Luke vii. 12). But this miracle had already been performed by Elijah. (1 Kings xvii. 17). When he was dead, Elijah carried him up to his own bed, cried unto the Lord, and the child came back to life again. Elisha forestalled the miraculous feeding credited to Jesus. With only twenty loaves of bread he fed one hundred men, and they "left thereof." The Gospels have to overbid. Jesus feeds four thousand men on a few little fishes and seven loaves, and there are seven baskets of food left behind. In John vi. 5, this overbidding is carried still farther. There are five thousand men and only two fishes.

. . . As late as the beginning of our era, Elijah stood in the popular imagination side by side with

Moses, and it is not likely that he was placed below Jesus. This is made clear in the seventeenth chapter of Matthew and the ninth of Mark, where Jesus becomes transfigured on the mountain, and it is said that his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. . . . The whole story of the Passion is so saturated with mythology that the sifting out of any historical foundations may be regarded as out of the question.

Thus, for instance, there is evidently some sort of mysticism hidden behind the story of Barabbas as told in Matthew. The meaning of Barabbas is simply "the son of the father." The original version of the name in the oldest Christian Church was even Jesus Barabbas. The evidence seems to be that Jesus and Barabbas are identical. The name Jesus has been dropped from the text because readers were offended by having that name applied to a prisoner who perhaps was a murderer. The likelihood is that an animal sacrifice of the son of a father, of a Barabbas, formed an established feature of Semitic life. In the same manner the scene where the soldiers are mocking the captive Jesus seems to point to a pagan ritual custom of some kind. Such is the suggestion made by Abbé Loisy, the great French Bible student, who is sceptically inclined. . . . Philo Judæus tells about a piece of mummery staged at Alexandria and aimed at King Agrippa, the grandson of Herod, which seems to have represented the survival of a local Jewish custom. A crazy man named Barabbas is said to have paraded as a make-believe king, with a tinsel crown, a sceptre, and purple robes. . . . Thus the story of a prisoner mocked by Roman soldiers, quite out of keeping with Roman discipline, and the equally fantastic story about a Jewish mob's preference for Barabbas, would become harmonized as a reminiscence of a sort of Semitic carnival, which in its turn carried reminiscences of very early human sacrifices, of the sacrifice of the first-born son by his father, which ancient custom was replaced by the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.

Jesus a Myth,

by GEORGES BRANDES, pp. 105-112.

Freethought Anniversaries

THOMAS PAINE—JANUARY 29

ON this date, year 1737, in Thetford, County of Norfolk, was born Thomas Paine, son of Joseph Paine, stay-maker, and Frances Cocks, his wife. Thomas had a Quaker father, while his mother was Church of England. From neither sect did he get any kindness or toleration in later years.

Paine was sent to the Grammar School, where he was more interested in the science side than in the classics. He is said to have distinguished himself at mathematics. But he had to leave school in 1750. He tried to run away to sea but his father stopped him. For six years he wrought with his father, but when 19 war was declared against France, and he joined the privateer *King of Prussia*, Captain Mendez. Here he served only for a short time, and of this period nothing is known. During the next 16 years Paine was in business as a stay-maker, was an Excise Officer, was discharged for agitating for better conditions for the officers, was married and widowed in a few months, reinstated, teaching in school, attending lectures on philosophical subjects and on astronomy. And then when 37 years old he sailed for the American Colonies, landing there in November, 1774.

J. M. Robertson has pointed out that Paine's life divides itself from now on into three periods; the period when he was helping firmly to establish the American Revolution; the next when, once more in his native land, he published *The Rights of Man*, "and laid in England the foundations of a new democracy in the very

* 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.

teeth of the great reaction of which Burke was the prophet," and lastly when "he expected death as his own meed, he wrote his *Age of Reason*."

It is this last period which will be dealt with here.

The *Age of Reason* is probably the best hated and most heartily abused book in the language. Hundreds of men and women have been sent to prison for having sold it. It has been denounced from hundreds of pulpits and by thousands of the clergy, as "obscene." Perhaps that is why so many of the clergy replied (?) to it. What was all the noise about? Why the denunciation? Paine was attacking vested interests here just as much as in his works on political and economic subjects. Writing to an opponent in 1806, he said his motive was "to bring man to the right reason that God has given him; to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice, mercy, and a benevolent disposition to all men and all creatures."

At the beginning of Part the First he says, "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life." Then he goes on to say what he does not believe; none of the churches, Jewish, Roman, Greek, Turkish, Protestant, "nor by any that I know of." None of the creeds. The priest takes on the job for *gain*, and begins with a perjury. And so in this part he gives in a general sort of way his views on the Bible. He was in Paris, 1793, and had no Bible, so he had to write from memory. He had long before resolved to write on this subject, and now, when he saw his friends being taken to prison, he decided to see it through. There is no trace of excitement, the pages follow each other with a logic that is perfect, the book reads smoothly from beginning to end. And only a few hours after completing this part he was arrested. "The intolerant spirit of Church persecutions had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals, styled revolutionary, supplied the place of an Inquisition; and the Guillotine of the State outdid the fire and faggot of the Church." Arrested because he was a foreigner!

His stay in prison lasted about 7 months, and included a serious illness which he appears to have expected would have a fatal ending.

Then came Part the Second, and now he had a Bible. And he finds the case is worse than he had thought it. Of those who have been attacking him, he says that there is only one treatment; he will oppose them with their own weapon, the Bible. And his was the simplest method yet devised. Thousands of clergymen to-day believe as Paine believed one and a half centuries ago. He took the books of the Old Testament and of the New, in their order in the Bible, comparing one with another as far as is possible; examining the chronology; analysing the teaching, praising or condemning as seemed to him proper. The Divine Inspiration was denied absolutely. "The Bible tells us that these assassinations were done by the *express command of God*. To believe therefore the Bible to be true, we must *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? . . ." The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are compared with results that are astonishing at the first time of reading. And his verdict is just. "These writers may do well enough for Bible makers, but not for anything where truth and exactness are necessary."

Of the next book. "If Madame Esther thought it any honour to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to Queen Vashti, who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of (for the account says they had been drinking seven days and were merry), let Esther and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of ours, at least it is none of mine; besides which, the story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous, and is also anonymous. . . ."

Of Ecclesiastes: ". . . It is written as the solitary reflection of a worn-out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who, looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, *All is vanity!*"

Of Solomon: "He was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy; he lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

"Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines,

are worse than none; and however it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection by leaving it no point to fix upon; divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon; and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterwards endured. In this point of view his preaching is unnecessary, because, to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the case. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines would have stood in place of the whole book. It was needless after this to say that all was vanity and vexation of spirit, for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness."

In Part the Third he examines the alleged prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Jesus of the New. And after the usual systematic examination he concludes—"He that believes the story of Christ is an infidel to God."

It is not here intended to give more than these few extracts to show the manner of his writing; and that, in turn, shows the manner of man he was. It has been said of the Inquisitors who were accusers as well as judges of Bruno and Galileo, that some of them were believers of the very heresies for which these men were being tried: and it is probably correct to say so. It is also probable that a goodly proportion of the clergy of his day knew that Paine's work was right and true; but whether or not, between then and now the difference is great. Paine's position is now unassailable. Probably no book, not even the Bible, has sold so well and still it goes on; no subsidy, no giving away, no Societies for its Propagation; but in their stead, abuse, persecution and imprisonment.

In our own day one who had been President of the United States of America went out of his way to call Paine a "dirty little Atheist," an economy of language of which his friends did not think him capable. Three lies in three words seemed impossible even for Theodore Roosevelt.

How many people will be able to say one hundred and fifty years hence who Teddy Roosevelt was?

Paine left Europe—restless and wretched Europe—in 1802. He landed in America in October, after a voyage of sixty days. He remained there for the remainder of his life, pursued, even in his last illness by the scurrilous abuse to which he had long been accustomed. He died on June 8, 1809.

AUTOLYCUS.

The Adventure of Freethought

YOUTH ever seeks, and generally finds, some suitable form of adventure. If intellectually inclined, and of independent mind, he will often delight in controversial matters; and with the zeal and ardour of youth, he will boldly march forward to some kind of iconoclastic fray. It is at this period of life, more so than any other, when the environment stimuli incite to action with the greatest effect. To join, to support idealistic and progressive movements, is admirable. To remain in them—without losing enthusiasm as the years go by—is where the greatest honour lies.

There are all around us various kinds of adventure.

There is, for example, a mild, studious, almost uncontroversial, but extremely intellectual adventure—The Science of Language—The Adventure of Words. The origin of words—their changing meanings—and historical associations—is an absorbing study, and can be transformed with the assistance of historical knowledge, into an imaginative adventure. Back through the ages we travel, to dwell amongst the Wiros or Aryans. Through the medium of Philology we migrate from the Steppes of Russia to India—from Ancient Greece to Modern Wales. But we should endeavour to preserve our mental balance, because, going back to the Aryans seems to be a dangerous diversion, especially to Northern Europeans.

One more intellectual adventure—this time a controversial, an ethical, and a social one. The Adventure of Freethought. A few elementary remarks concerning the literature of Freethought, will perhaps be acceptable to the young adventurer.

The literature of Freethought offers a vast floodlit province of intellectual stimulation, illuminating information, absorbing controversies, and not infrequently æsthetic enjoyment. There can be read the interesting research work appertaining to the religious beliefs and practices of mankind from primitive ages to modern times.

In the ranks of Intellectual Liberty, adventuring youth can assist in the combat against priestcraft, and can help to abolish the anomalous privileges of religious sects. Though confronted by a wealthy and powerful opposition, Freethinkers are, as of old, still undaunted.

The most essential qualities needed by the youthful recruit—judging by the glorious vanguard, the honoured veterans, and the rank and file—seem to be devotion to principle and independence of mind.

It is the intention of Freethinkers, to spread knowledge, to insist upon freedom of discussion—to exterminate the phantom gods and devils still lurking in the jungles of superstition. It is their avowed intention *permanently* to floodlight the dark, fearsome caves of religious terror.

Above all, they are determined to resist intolerance wherever this atavistic emotion is shown.

What nobler inducements to generous youth can be proffered? As for us—we have enlisted, and are marching in the advancing Army of Liberation: This is our Grand Adventure! "Stop us who can!"

T. E. WILLIAMS.

Acid Drops

The Rev. A. Stanley Parker, of Burnley, wished to preach a sermon on "Science and Religion," and wrote to a number of eminent men to get their opinions on the subject. Among others Mr. Bernard Shaw wrote him:—

If religion is not a science it is a lie. If science is not a religion it is black magic. The two have got badly mixed nowadays. The remedy is more religion and more science on both sides.

A fitting comment here is that if this statement is not nonsense, then sense and nonsense are identical. For Mr. Shaw's opinion is that science and religion are one, and that separating science and religion are not possible without spoiling both. If he does not mean this, then he means nothing at all. And all that one need ask Mr. Shaw is *how does the same thing get mixed?* If you can mix two things they must be separate in order to get mixed. And how do you make a mixture not a mixture by increasing the quantity of the mixture not a mixture that constitute the mixture? We give two ingredients that constitute the mixture? We give it up; but it probably illustrates the danger of a man having got the ear of the public, and resolving to maintain it at any cost. Or it may be that Mr. Shaw has such a contempt for the clergy that he felt that anything would pass. We hesitate to believe that Mr. Shaw would have tried the trick on anyone for whose intelligence he had the slightest respect.

But the *Christian World*, which probably saw through Mr. Shaw, has got level with him by heading the paragraph from which we take the sentence cited: "Mr. Shaw wants more Religion." That serves him right.

From a press paragraph we see that the Christian Girl's Friendly Society has decided to change the rule "which forbids either admittance to or continuance in the Society to any girl who has fallen from virginity."

The Society thinks this change will "uphold the Christian standard of purity in heart and life." So far as pure humbug or hypocrisy is concerned we agree; it is true to the tradition of the Christian practice of purity of heart and life, and will persuade the Society that it is "moving with the times," for, save in the wording we do not see any difference between the old rule and the new. The "devoted ladies" who founded the society 60 years ago, meant what they said, and they belonged to a Christian age which managed to wreck the lives of thousands of young girls, and then denounced and ostracized them when the inevitable happened. The new rule will work in about the same manner as did the old one, we expect, and having drawn a line between "pure" and the "impure" the Christian conscience will go on as before.

Dr. Albert Belden (he came back from America "decorated" with an "honorary D.D.") often speaks and writes as a Pacifist. But his job demands that he praise the bloody wars of the Old Testament. In the *British Weekly* he refers to Joshua's wars of aggressive brutality in the "Promised Land," i.e., land belonging to other people "promised" to the murderous hosts of Israel who invaded it. But in Dr. Belden's view Joshua was "splendidly vindicated," simply because in one instance he spared a tribe whose princes came out to meet him and made a treaty with him. True, Joshua kept these princes as slaves for the rest of their lives—but he didn't murder them as he killed thousands of perfectly innocent people. Joshua's "kindness" on this occasion is as significant as the log-book-entry which read, "The Captain was sober to-day."

The *Methodist Times* is surely hard up for Christians! It is running a Series of Talks to Children called "Little Stories of Great Christians." We presume the first was Christ, but we were hardly prepared to see that the *Methodist Times* has the impudence to give its Second "Great Christian" as Abraham Lincoln. Our columns have often demonstrated that Lincoln was NOT a Christian—great or small. We have his wife and his business partner both testifying that he was never a Christian. Lincoln's religion was the same as Voltaire's and Paine's. We suppose the next "Christians" to figure in this childishly lying list will be Mahomet, Marcus Aurelius and Confucius!

Archbishop Hinsley has become the President of "Catholic Action"—to accomplish which successfully he says that he must "rely very largely on esteemed Catholic writers and editors." We have no doubt whatever that they will obey their Archbishop with the utmost docility. Our national press is honeycombed with Catholics, who put the Pope first in everything. One of them wants to see the "combined Catholic Press" establish a Catholic "Reuters" and a Catholic "Press Association" thus to spread "news and truth throughout the world." But why stop at that? Why not every newspaper, journal, and magazine in the world to be controlled entirely by the Pope and his (mostly) Italian Cardinals? What a happy world this would be with nothing but Catholic "truth"!

A Catholic editor tells one of his perplexed readers that "it is not a question of what a man is prepared to believe, that is the essence of private judgment. A Catholic believes *all* the doctrines of the Catholic Church, not because he can see that they are true—he cannot—but because they come to him on the authority of God, the supreme Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived . . . they are above reason, not contrary to reason." Whether the perplexed reader will swallow this "logic," we have no means of knowing. But it is the kind of thing Catholics do swallow and much even far sillier. Otherwise Catholicism would have been dead long ago. But *why* they do so would take too long to discuss in a paragraph. Some kinds of "belief" are hopeless.

The *Methodist Recorder* has a startling headline: "A Methodist Mussolini." It is a more or less faithful account of the Rev. Jabez Bunting—a gentleman who has often been described as "the greatest name in the middle period of Methodist history." A recently published work by Dr. Maldwyn Edwards: *After Wesley*, exposed some of the weak spots in this once heroic (at least in Methodist eyes heroic) figure. Other authorities have added revelation after revelation, till at last the Rev. George Jackson sums him up as "inquisitorial," "of domineering temper," of "rough pistolling ways with his brethren," and in fact the "Mussolini" of his day. After considering all the facts of the case, we are bound to agree with Mr. Jackson that the chief culprits are the vast majority of the contemporary Methodists in their "tame and almost cringing submissiveness" . . . "the Conference was more to blame than even Bunting himself." Of the Conferences where such abject servility was paid to this despot, Mr. Jackson says, "The himnies! One's fingers itch to give all their black coats a good dusting."

The Rev. Edward Langton, B.D., a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, asks in a contemporary, "Why Should We Not Believe in Angels?" He thinks the present "lapse of belief in angelic ministries has been in many ways detrimental to religious experience." Mr. Langton very artfully steers round the question. It is impossible to say whether he believes in angels or not. All he seems concerned about is the loss which religion sustains every time mankind lops off bits of the old creeds.

Even the clergy get occasional qualms that the Second Coming is a bit overdue. "This generation shall not pass away till all these things are fulfilled," said Christ nearly two thousand years ago, but "He cometh not, she said." And Canon Spencer Elliott, in the new *Discipleship* is tempted to admit, "I feel sometimes like the Psalmist when he said, 'O God wherefore art Thou absent from us so long?'"

"The Gospel on a Blackboard," was the title of what is said to be the "Rev. W. H. Russell's Last Word to London Laymen." We all recognize the peculiar appropriateness of the colour of the "board." Christian history is black indeed. The story of the Dark Ages need a very "black" board. Mr. Russell told a comic story of how a little Moslem boy in a Mission School was asked to write on a black-board "the best name for Jesus." As the story is told by a Christian, we naturally learn that the "Moslem" boy wrote a Christian orthodox answer. Perhaps he wrote it in a language Mr. Russell did not understand, and that the translation would have been an eye-opener. The Kaiser once sent some officers to interview a great Moslem Sultan who received the officers with ostentatious hospitality, afterwards giving each a silver "Order," which he said, was kept specially for those of the Kaiser's faith. On translation, the inscription is said to have read, "To Hell with the Christian Dogs."

Leicester has a particularly pressing Housing problem. After centuries of Christian "philanthropy" the Chairman of the Health Committee is abundantly justified in his denunciation—a little belated—of the abominable over-crowding—whole families, and even strangers as well, sleeping in one small high-rented room. It seems a strange environment in which the Humberstone Road Methodist Church can boast (in the *Methodist Recorder*) that it realizes £220 a year from "seat-rents" alone, and that £7,000 is being raised for "re-decorating" and similar luxuries. Wealth abounds in these pious circles. One donor alone contributes £4,000 to this Leicester Lounge. It is the old story. "The poor ye have always with you," said Christ when a sensible critic pointed out that to spend a thousand pounds in pedicure perfumery was a heartless waste in the midst of poverty.

Walt Whitman complained of "the never-ending audacity of elected persons." We find the non-elected person's audacity even more intolerable. A Methodist Minister's letter is published in the *Methodist Recorder*, in which he tells how he appeared at Brewster Sessions. He gave no notice of his intention to oppose licence renewals, but is indignant that he was courteously listened to as a witness, just like other witnesses. "I merely had a place in the witness box," says the meek and lowly one: "Had I not a right to speak from the floor?" The real fact is that the clergy are given far too many privileges. This complainant, for example, was allowed to talk "generalities" about what he thought were the terrible evils of all "drinking." The Chairman should have insisted that the Magistrates had to deal with local licences only, and to listen only to complaints against these and to the licences' replies.

It is not only the Arabs who resent Jewish supremacy in Palestine; Christians are beginning to do so likewise. These claim they also have "rights" in the "sacred" land. "The Christian population in the Holy Land," we are told, "is lagging more and more behind the non-Christian groups, in numerical proportion, in prestige and prosperity." Yes, but whose fault is that? The Jews are certainly doing their utmost to make Palestine a real home for themselves, and now that they are succeeding, jealous plaints are coming both from the Arabs, who utterly failed to do anything for centuries, either for themselves or the land, and the Christians who seem only to think in terms of Holy Sepulchres and Holy Sites, and not at all in terms of economics. They certainly never moved in favour of the Jews.

How the converted Jew hates the believing Jew! A week or so back, one of them, Miss Olga Levertoff, wrote a bitter attack in one of the Church papers that Jewish Relief Organizations discriminated between Jewish and Christian-Jewish Refugees from Germany, and never helped the converts. The answer, from a German "Aryan," was a flat denial. Not only did the Jewish Organizations help "baptized Christian Jewish emigrants," but also "non-Jewish," and he adds that "in France, Jewish circles have contributed comparatively larger assistance for non-Jewish emigrants than Christian." One would like to know exactly how much Jewish converts like Miss Levertoff have contributed to the help of genuine Jewish refugees—particularly as Christians are always boasting so much about "love and charity." Precious little of either—if any at all—for the hated "unconverted," we suspect.

We note that Canon Anthony Deane is introducing a series of broadcast religious talks, "for young people between the ages of 16 and 18." The first series lasts for 10 weeks—every Monday—and the subject will be on the "contents and value of the Gospels and other sources of information about Our Lord and St. Paul, and the meaning of Our Lord's own life and teaching." The Rev. F. A. Iremonger, the B.B.C. Director of Religion is, of course, responsible for this boosting up of religion on a week-day, and no doubt he will take good care that, under no circumstances, will any Freethought reply be allowed.

Moreover, Mr. Iremonger is seeing that the series is brought to the notice of "many headmasters and mistresses of the upper classes of our secondary schools." One can see how religion has gripped a national institution like the B.B.C., with its millions of listeners, and how helpless Freethought must inevitably be unless a determined effort is made by all who value freedom of speech to put a stop to this one-sided broadcast. Gradually other religious broadcasts will take place on other days—we already have one on Thursday evening—and there is nothing to prevent Mr. Iremonger roping in all the week. The point is, not that religion is broadcasted, but that no reply or comment is allowed. And this is intolerable.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CAN any reader supply us with a copy of Gerald Massey's *Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*, published about 1921? It will be returned within a day or two.

H. BINNS.—*Arms and the Clergy* has been sent. Sorry we do not recall the name of the Bishop who made the statement to which you refer.

R. H. YELDMAN.—Many thanks for address, books and paper sent.

NICHOLAS KEANE.—Letter has been forwarded.

C. COOTE.—We do not grasp the exact nature of the grievance about which you complain. Can you forward a short statement for publication as a letter?

A. G. LYE.—Thanks. The 100 copies of *Humanity and War* will be distributed according to order.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*, A. V., 10s.; E. Dunsford, 5s.; A. Horgan (Lugarno), £2.

H.L.—It is impossible for us to insert notices of meetings that have been held, and which are to be held unless Branch Secretaries make it a point of sending the necessary information. These notices should reach the *Freethinker* office not later than the first post on Tuesday morning—earlier, if possible.

C. S. FRASER.—Your letter will appear next week.

R. E. WAY AND "BLUSIS."—Letters will appear next week.

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.

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

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

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

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

Another success was chronicled at the Society's Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday last. The number present was a little larger than last year, and the beautiful display of flowers on the tables was an attractive part what formed a very pleasing picture. The speeches were brief, as usual, but a specially warm reception was given to the veteran, Mr. A. B. Moss, who now, in his eighty-first year, can look back to over sixty years work as speaker and writer in the Freethought movement. The Chairman expressed the feeling of the meeting, and of Mr. Moss himself, when he said that they hoped Mr. Moss would be with them just so long as he found life enjoyable. No sensible person wishes to continue living merely to avoid dying.

For many years the arrangements for the musical programme has been in the hands of Mr. George Royle, who provided an entertainment that has ranked very high in quality. He generously gave his services, and his place in the entertainment world ensured probably the best dinner concert programme in London. But Mr. Royle has now retired from business and the whole arrangements had to be undertaken by the General Secretary,

Mr. Rosetti. This with the general arrangements for the dinner meant very hard work, and one can best express the result by saying that in the opinion of those present, the 1936 dinner was well up to record in every respect. We believe that the dinner brought many new acquaintances who bid fair to become firm friends.

The easy way in which prominent Christian preachers misrepresent, or badly misunderstand—either purposely or through sheer inability, or laziness—what they are talking about, was illustrated by Dean Matthews the other Sunday evening. Talking about immortality he said Herbert Spencer claimed that unconceivability was the test of truth. Spencer said nothing of the kind, and if Dean Matthews had been a fundamentally capable thinker he would have known that Spencer could have said nothing of the kind. Spencer's statement was that the ultimate test of truth was the inconceivability of a negation. That is a very different proposition. If anyone will turn to chapter xi. in the *Principles of Psychology*, they will find a statement of the position.

We are not either accepting or rejecting here the statement of Spencer, but referring to it as an example of the careless way in which Christian apologists in particular handle such subjects. Another reason for saying what we have said is that, so soon as we have time we intend writing on a book by Dr. Matthews dealing with purpose in nature, which has been greatly praised in the press. Judging from the reviews (we have not yet had time to read it), the work contains all the fundamental faults of the eighteenth century, expressed in a little later form. The majority of reviews on philosophical works nowadays appear to be due to the writers having friends on the press.

The Bradford Branch has another visit from Mr. G. Whitehead, who will speak in the Bradford Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, this evening (February 2), at 7 o'clock on "The Case for Atheism." Admission is free, with reserved seats at sixpence and one shilling each. The local Branch puts in a lot of work at these special meetings, and it is hoped that all saints within a reasonable distance will help by being present.

We regret to see that Mr. Ebury, who has been doing some very good work in North London, was subjected to an outburst or rowdiness at his meeting at the White Stone Pond, Hampstead, on Sunday last. A number of Fascists and others created a disturbance with the object of ending his meeting. In the scuffle that ensued the platform was broken and some literature was destroyed. The police also wished him to close the meeting to avoid a disturbance. Mr. Ebury declined to have his meeting ended unless the police closed it by force. The speaker's firmness won the support of a number of those present and the meeting continued to its destined end. We hope that North London Freethinkers will make it a point of attending these meetings when they can. They will be found advertised in our Lecture Notice column.

Bolton Branch N.S.S. reports a forward movement during the past year. The range of open-air work was increased and many meetings were held on new ground around the area. Local speaking talent is a very valuable asset to a Branch, and in that respect Bolton has made good use of its material. Mr. W. H. Sissons, 197 Eskrick Street, Bolton, the Branch Secretary, would like to furnish full particulars of membership to unattached Freethinkers living in the district.

We are asked to announce that a meeting of those interested in the formation of a Leeds Branch of the N.S.S. will be held to-day (February 2) at 139 North Street, Leeds, at 8 p.m. We hope there will be a good muster of friends, and that the Leeds Branch will soon be in existence.

The National Secular Society

ANNUAL DINNER

If any proof were required as to the enthusiasm and vitality which dominates the fighting Freethinkers of this country, it was given in full last Saturday evening, when for the thirty-ninth time the National Secular Society held its Annual Dinner. This year it was again held at the Holborn Restaurant. There was a splendid attendance of members and friends from all parts of the country. It is pleasing to find that groups of visitors from the provinces are becoming a regular feature of the gathering.

The reception which preceded the Dinner gave everybody the chance of a word with the President and Mrs. Cohen, and also the opportunity of meeting old friends and acquaintances as well as discussing points of mutual interest. The National Secular Society is catholic in its scope, and members reserve the right of differing on many things. But in the one object of advancing the principles of the N.S.S. they are all unanimous, and this serves as the greatest of bonds between them. No Dinner could have been gayer or happier.

The ladies turned up perhaps in fuller force than has been the case for some years, and one noticeable feature was the large number of young people. The greater the interest in Freethought shown by the younger generation, the more happy are the older members. Inevitably, in the course of time, these must drop out; but the presence of the younger ones bears the promise that the ranks will be filled.

It was one of the points stressed by the President in the Chairman's Address. Speaking very quietly and with that ease of expression and thought pregnant with meaning which characterizes almost all his speeches, he was listened to with intense interest. As usual, he commenced by referring to the unavoidable absence of many members, and the number of letters of real regret he had received. Both Dr. C. Carmichael and Lord Snell were absentees, among others. After referring to the fact that the Dinner originated with the London Secular Federation, and that he attended his first as far back as 1892, Mr. Cohen said that in three years or so, he would be celebrating his own Jubilee on the Freethought platform; for he gave his first lecture in 1889. It was then that he pointed out how one looks back in old age, notices how one's old friends drop out one by one, and how they are often not replaced. Of course, it can be said that "things are not as they were"—but then they never are, and they never ought to be. Mr. Cohen thought that on the whole things were better, and he pointed out how vague and nebulous religion had come to be. Freethought, of course, had its setbacks—the Blasphemy Laws were still on the statute books, as well as the Incitement to Disaffection Act. Mr. Cohen discussed these and our shallow national press with acuteness, and felt that the dangers from all were greater than perhaps we thought. Progress, he concluded, was always a struggle. Man was always fighting to clear away the clutching hand of the dead, but ever with a better prospect of a permanent benefit.

In proposing the toast of the National Secular Society, Mrs. Janet Chance said she was specially pleased to do so for three reasons. The first was because one meets with old friends and common interests here. The second was the first-class entertainment which always accompanied the Dinner; and the third reason that the N.S.S. was one of the few Societies in which one could fearlessly express one's

views. In her witty speech Mrs. Chance amplified these reasons, and showed how rarely one could get a rational hearing elsewhere on such a subject, for example, as sex.

In support of the toast, Mr. Arthur B. Moss gave a short but intensely interesting speech on the grand old Freethinkers he had the privilege of meeting in the past. Mr. Moss, is perhaps the oldest member of the N.S.S. living, his testimonial, signed by Charles Bradlaugh, is dated 1878, and he must have been proud of the ovation he received. He told his audience of Bradlaugh, Foote, Charles Watts, George Jacob Holyoake, Joseph Symes, and finally, of Chapman Cohen; and Mr. Moss—who himself has done valuable work for the cause—spoke with all his old fire and conviction. On proposing the toast to "Freethought, at Home and Abroad," Dr. Har Dayal felt that there was no need of pessimism since Freethought was making such progress in many other countries. Turkey, China, Mexico, Spain, Denmark, Sweden and Norway were all well on their way to Freethought. Here in England, fewer and fewer people went to Church, the motor car and hiking and other Sunday sports were all helping to keep people away. Dr. Dayal gave an eloquent defence of reason, and also insisted on the supremacy of Freethought Reforms in such questions as economics can never become real without rational thinking and freedom of thought.

All the speakers were loudly cheered—the speeches were short, to the point, and excellent in every way.

Interspersed was the entertainment for which the N.S.S. Dinner has become so famous. All the artistes were in great form. A special favourite always, Miss Emmie Joyce, both at the piano, and with her beautiful singing, was never better. Miss Thelma Tuson gave a beautiful rendering of two songs. Miss Charmaine Somerville followed with an exquisite violin solo. Mr. Harry Brunning's playing of a Hawaiian guitar, his funny stories, and his astonishing make-up as Mr. Lloyd George delivering a perfectly ridiculous and inconsequential speech, proved great entertainment. Finally, an old favourite, Mr. Will Kings and his "something to say," caused roars of laughter; and Messrs. Gregory and Sterndale Bennett at the piano with excellent songs wound up what Mrs. Chance rightly called a first-class entertainment. And the Dinner concluded with the usual happy rendering of Auld Lang Syne. The length of the programme prevented some of the artistes giving encores which were deserved, and which the audience would have liked. But the chairman was compelled to exert his authority in order to bring the proceedings to a close at a little later hour than is usual.

A word ought to be said for the excellent organization of the Dinner generally. Everything went without a hitch, and the Secretary must be congratulated on his work "behind the scenes." Its difficulties are not always appreciated.

H.C.

Countries are well cultivated, not as they are futile, but as they are free.—*Montesquieu*.

As for the people, what thoughts they have in matters of religion, in their own breasts, I cannot reach; but shall think it my duty, if they walk honestly and peaceably, not to cause them in the least to suffer for the same; and shall endeavour to walk patiently and in love towards them, to see if it shall please God to give them another or better mind.—*Cromwell*.

The Witch Mania

IV.

It would be a pity to leave the Devil without some more interesting details of his history that can be gathered from the large number of books describing him. After all, witches devoted their lives to his service. Some of them certainly went as willingly to martyrdom for his sake as any Christian martyr died for Jesus. They gloried in their intercourse with him; and whether it were hallucination on their part or not, there was, in the whole of the genuinely Christian world, as strong a belief in him as in God.

It was possible to evoke him. We all remember how Faust, who had studied every work on occultism and philosophy that he could during his long life, uttered the magic words which brought Mephistopheles to earth. Whether Faust had attended many Sabbaths also before this, I cannot remember at the moment. But he was obviously one of the sorcerers who commanded the Devil to appear to him rather than one who obeyed the Devil and went to the Sabbath. There were many such, and there seem always to have been, even in the days of the Romans. A large number of saints had this power of invoking demons merely by their whole-hearted belief in Jesus; the demons were so very jealous of such touching faith. What were the incantations necessary for invocations? In what mere word or words consisted this marvellous power of compelling evil spirits to leave the infernal regions, come to earth, and help the sorcerer to do whatever he willed?

It is interesting to note that there still exist the magical works wherein will be found the identical formulæ used by the old-time wizards. In *Solomon's Clavicule*, and in *Pope Honorius' Grimoire*, will be found the fullest information on this important subject. Solomon was, of course—at least, so say the Jews, and they ought to know—the wisest man that ever lived. He seemed to know everything, particularly all about magic and the occult. The legends relating his wisdom and knowledge of the supernatural are numerous, and it is not surprising to find him as the Pope, so to speak, of all magicians. Whether anybody will think it worth while, one day, to separate truth from legend, to try and discover exactly what we can accept as fact about Solomon, or even whether he ever existed—for there is precious little proof of this—does not need discussion here. But all sorts of writers, Arab, Turkish and Persian, have related his extraordinary exploits; and we know now that—according to them—he had power over everything, both in this world and the infernal regions. No one knew, indeed, better than he, how to raise demons and spirits. He had a ring which could command a "jinn" much like Aladdin's; and he also had a seal, a lamp and a cup. In the latter was deposited all his supernatural knowledge and it was buried in his father's tomb. Later, it was discovered by some wise men of Babylon, who, with the help of an angel, unfolded many of the fabulous secrets. Solomon seems to have loved too many strange women to have pleased God very much; and a great deal of uncertainty exists about his death, and whether he had made peace with the Lord. However all this may be, it is certain he could raise demons, and during the Middle Ages, hosts of legends were printed about him, and a large number of engravings appeared showing how these evil spirits were evoked. The *Clavicule* was certainly known to Roger Bacon, who was credited with almost the same magical powers as Solomon. Bacon appears, however, to have been extremely sceptical about the authorship of the *Clavicule*.

To invoke demons, a magic circle is necessary, and this has to be drawn according to the diagrams given in the book—a mixture of circles, squares, and triangles, together with many holy names written in Greek and Hebrew. It must be added that the exact form of the circle differs somewhat in the various manuscript copies of the *Clavicule*. This accounts for the fact, perhaps, that while the truth is undoubtedly enshrined in them all, each individual circle may have something missing which prevents it from being quite efficacious. At all events, a few years ago, one of our modern occult investigators—I think, Mr. Harry Price—decided to follow the complete directions given, and see if it were not possible to change a goat into a young man, in the presence of a virgin girl, at dawn, on the top of one of the Harz mountains. The details were all followed minutely—as far as I know—and the incantation meticulously delivered. But the goat obstinately remained a goat, and not even a single spirit appeared. The failure was due, no doubt, to the incantation not being just right—or perhaps the young lady was not a virgin; or perhaps dawn was the wrong time. When we get the precise formula as known to Solomon, we may be able to raise a spirit from the mighty deep; or may we?

At all events, there are precise directions for the job and de Givry, in his book on *Witchcraft*, gives one of the formulæ:—

Bagabi luca bachabe Lamac cahi achababe
Karreluos,

and so on. It is probably just as efficacious as another one:—

Palas aron ozinomas Baske bano tudan donas.

Rembrandt did a very famous etching of Faust trying to conjure-up the Devil, and on the window will be found another formula.

Selling one's soul to the Devil was the theme of many stories in the Middle Ages, and de Givry mentions quite a number of them, the first going back as far as 538 A.D. All, or nearly all, the great occultists like Paracelsus, Urbain Grandier, and Agrippa, were accused of intercourse with demons in some way; and, of course, after printing was in full swing artists began to draw the various devils, imps, and spirits, vying with each other in fantasy. Their number in Hell was computed with great exactness. According to Jean Wier, physician to the Duke of Cleves in the sixteenth century, there are 7,409,127 commanded by 79 princes. Other authorities put the figure at 7,405,920, with 72 princes. Still others claim that there are six legions of demons, each comprising 66 cohorts, each cohort with 666 companies, and each company with 6,666 individuals. So we get 1,758,864,176 demons—not a bad number, and infernally too big sometimes to be resisted. Of course, all devils have names and some of these are known. Satan, Beelzebub, Ashtaroth, Abaddon, Mammon, Apollyon, Cham, Uriel, Ahas—but these are enough. There are very long lists given in magical works, with portraits. The curious will find a great many in Colin de Plancy's work, *Dictionnaire Infernal*. Some, of course, were always in the form of an animal like the spaniel in *Faust*. Others were cripples like Asmodeus in Le Sage's famous story, *The Devil on Two Sticks*.

Finally, one must say a word about the poor people who were "possessed" of devils. That is, they took forcible possession of men and women's bodies as can be verified in an instant by reference to the New Testament, and the accounts given by many religious writers. The Church vouches for this "possession" and fortunately has prepared many forms of exorcism to be incanted by priests. Naturally, this is a difficult job as demons hate to be thus expelled; but the

power of the words of Christ works wonders. A number of books have been published showing how the devil leaves the sick person so that there can be no doubt about the fact. It is as true as the miracles of Lourdes, the materializations of mediums, and fairy photographs. There is even a signed document written by Asmodeus admitting that he was expelled. Can anything be more conclusive?

Can there be any wonder, with such a devilish background, that the witch-mania became so widely distributed, and so implicitly believed in?

H. CUTNER.

Some Martyrs of Edessa

(Continued from page 45)

FURTHER, it is very improbable that any documents in the archives of Edessa escaped destruction when Lusius Quietus took, sacked, and fired the city in vengeance for the treachery of Augar its King to Trajan the Roman Emperor. Tillemont, who mentions this tragic event five times,¹⁵ says that it occurred in the nineteenth year of Trajan's reign, when Ælius Lamia and Ælianus Vetus occupied the consulate, which period, as he adds, corresponds with A.D. 116.¹⁶

Asseman takes this Augar for Maanus, son of Ajazeta, makes him the twenty-second King of Edessa,¹⁷ and gives him a reign of sixteen years and eight months. He may well have survived to recover his independence when the Emperor Hadrian, upon his succession in A.D. 117, abandoned all Trajan's conquests situated beyond the Euphrates, one of these being Osroene.¹⁸

Except the bare facts that a man named Sharbil, who was a Pagan priest, got converted to Christianity, and died a martyr's death because of his refusal to perform Pagan rites, *The Acts of Sharbil* contain little, if anything save incredible statements, many of which are falsehoods no less obvious than stupid. Sharbil may never have existed, but, if he did exist and was executed by public authorities, then a report of his trial and execution would no doubt be made for preservation.

If such an account were known to have existed, and could not be found, circumstances might arise in which some Christian, or Christians, saw that Christianity would greatly benefit if a spurious lucubration purporting to be the missing document were imposed upon the public, and therefore he, or they forged the existing Acts, got them into the Archives, and had them opportunely discovered. This is exactly what appears to have happened! The facts alleged in connexion with the trials and the execution of Sharbil could not have been attested by any notaries of the time, much less by notaries who compiled them for preservation in the civic archives. It is true that the *Acts of Sharbil* show their author to

have been acquainted with the topography of Edessa, and the customs of the Edessenes, at the period in question, but this knowledge he might easily have derived from written or oral traditions; besides which he describes the city as "Edessa of the Parthians," a mistake that could not have been made by any native author who wrote before the mists of oblivion had obscured its history, much less by a notary inhabiting at Sharbil's day, for there is no trace of its being then in any way subject to Parthia, and Asseman, who knew its history perfectly declares that it never was ruled by the Parthians.¹⁹

What I have hitherto remarked concerns the body of the *Acts*, and not the part following the attestation. Here we may have to do with an interpolated addition. The things related are obviously fictitious, and deserve no attention; it is, however, worth noting that because A.D. 112 is the date assigned to Sharbil's alleged martyrdom, Barsamya, the Bishop by whom he was converted could not have lived under Fabianus, since A.D. 236-250 was the period of this man's papacy.²⁰

III.

BARSAMYA THE BISHOP.²¹

"In the year 416 of the Kingdom of the Greeks, which is the fifteenth year of the reign of the Autocrat, our lord, Trajan Cæsar, in the consulship of Commodus and Cyrillus, in the month Iul, on the fifth day of the same, the day after Lysinas,²² the judge of the country, had heard Sarbil the priest," the Sharirs laid information before Lysinas against "Barsamya, the Guide of the Christians," for his having converted Sharbil, and four "chief persons of the city" to the Christian Faith. Lysinas ordered the Sharirs and other officials to fetch Barsamya from the church. He was brought thence to the judgment hall in company with "many Christians," and his illustrious converts, the whole party loudly declaring their willingness to share his death. The judge commanded the Sharirs to take the names of the demonstrators, but these were too numerous to be recorded. The tumult then became so great that the Sharirs returned to the judge. He had Barsamya taken to prison to avoid "trouble in the city." After many days "Lysinas" interrogated Barsamya, who frankly declared that he had converted Sharbil, and was quite willing to die for it. Lysinas said that Barsamya must be held responsible for the condemnation and execution of Sharbil, because Barsamya had led Sharbil into transgression; and that on this account Barsamya himself ought to suffer death. Barsamya answered that not only he but all the other "children of the Church" desired to die as Sharbil had died, in order to find "salvation before God." A lengthy argument between the judge and the prisoner now took place. The judge urged the prisoner to save his life by renouncing his creed, and threatened him with unheard-of tortures if he persisted to hold it. The prisoner replied with temerity. After having him scourged by five men, the judge again exhorted him to repentance. More discussion then followed, the prisoner talking theology, and the judge vainly trying to keep him at the legal point. At last, when the defiant attitude of Barsamya had caused Lysinas to abandon threats and to say, "Let Barsamya be hanged up and be

¹⁵ *Mémoires Pour Servir à l'Histoire Ecclésiastique Des Dix Premiers Siècles*, Paris, 1701, I., p. 617; II., pp. 180, 803. Also *Empereurs*, II., pp. 203-578. Asseman thus renders Dio's words: *Edessam [Lusius] expugnavit, et direptamque incendit* (p. 422.) Those who are acquainted with the methods of Roman generals, and who take into account that Lusius was a Roman general of Moorish birth will be able to estimate correctly the state of Edessa when he had done with it.

¹⁶ Liebenham has this date for these consuls, but he calls them L. Lamia Ælianus and Sex. Carminus Vetus, p. 20.

¹⁷ His authority is the *Chronicle* of Dionysius, Patriarch of the Jacobites, which he gives on pp. 417-423 to supplement the *Edessan Chronicle*.

¹⁸ Eutropius VIII., 3.

¹⁹ Asseman, p. 421.

²⁰ Haydn's *Dates*, art. *Popes*.

²¹ *Martyrdom of Barsamya, the Bishop of the Blessed City Edessa*, Cureton, pp. 62-73. Only Cod B.

²² Here Cod. B has "Lycinus or Iusinus," but in an interpolated passage of the *Sharbil Acts* (p. 45) it has Lysinas, as it has elsewhere in Barsamya's *Acts*.

torn with combs," letters arrived from "Alusis [Lusius] the chief Proconsul, father of Emperors," and thereupon Lysinas rescinded the punishment of Barsamya, and summoned before himself all the great ones of the city to learn "what was the order which was issued by the Emperors, through the Proconsuls, who were the rulers of the countries of the dominion of the Romans. And it was found that the Emperors²³ had written by the hand of the Proconsuls to the judges of the countries," saying that since their decree against the Christians, they had learned from their Sharirs the innocence of these people respecting murder, sorcery, adultery, theft, bribery, fraud, and even statutory offences,²⁴ wherefore they now abrogated the aforesaid decree, and gave the Christians liberty to practice their religion without let or hindrance, this permission being given not from affection for them but because their laws agreed with the imperial laws, moreover the penalty formerly decreed against the Christians should from henceforth be inflicted upon any one who hindered the Christians. After the reading of the edict, Lysinas released Barsamya, who was received in triumph by "great numbers" of Christians, and by "a vast multitude" of citizens. He was welcomed under the title "Persecuted Confessor, friend of Sharbil the martyr." When he protested that he was not to be compared with Sharbil, they reminded him that "a doctor of the Church" had said, "The will, according to what it is, so is it accepted." As for Lysinas, after setting "his hand to these Acts," he was next day "dismissed from his authority."

But we, Zenophilus and Patrophilus, are the notaries who wrote these things, Diodorus and Enterpes, sharirs of the city, bearing witness with us by setting their hand, as the ancient laws of the ancient Kings prescribe.

Then we read, "But this Barsamya, the Bishop of Edessa, who converted Sharbil, the high priest of the same city, lived in the days of Fabianus, the Bishop of the City of Rome." Barsamya we read, had "the hand of priesthood" from Abshelma, "Bishop in Edessa," who had it from "Palut the former," who had it by succession from the following Bishops of Rome: Zephyrinus, Victor, Eleutherius, Sotor, Anicetus "[Pius]," Telesphorus, Xystus, Alexander, Prastus, Cletus, Anus, "[Linus]," and Simon Cephas, which last had it "from our Lord," on the 4th of Heziran in the year 341, the 19th in the reign of "Tiberius Cæsar," when Rufus and Rubelinus occupied the consulate. "For in the year 309, was the manifestation of our Saviour in the world, according to the testimony which we have found in the correct volume of the archives, which errs not at all in whatever it declares."

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued)

²³ Elsewhere than in this quotation, the document refers no less than fourteen times to "the Emperors."

²⁴ "and those things for which even the laws of our Majesty require punishment for such as do them." p. 70.

Energy will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged animal a man without it.

Goethe.

Timour the Tartar went to pray indifferently on the tombs of the Christian Saints, and on those of the noted dervishes. His worship of science and virtue was impartial; was it philosophy, was it policy? Nothing in history explains this mystery in the life of the Conqueror.—Lamarline.

Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm

(Continued from page 55)

AND now comes a sudden and wonderful change in the history of this mysterious Jah. Whether it was the original Jah, who felt himself too old to conduct the immense business alone, or whether it was some successor of his, who had not the same self-reliance and imperious will, one cannot venture to decide; but we all know that it was publicly announced, and soon came to be extensively believed, that Jah had taken unto himself two partners, and that the business was thenceforth to be carried on by a firm, under the style of Father, Son, and Co. It is commonly thought that history has more of certainty as it becomes more recent; but unfortunately, in the life of Jah, uncertainty grows ten more times uncertain when we attain the period of this alleged partnership, for the Jews deny it altogether; and of those who believe in it not one is able to define its character, or even to state its possibility in intelligible language. The Jews assert roundly that the alleged partners are a couple of vile impostors, that Jah still conducts his world-wide business alone, that he has good reasons (known only to himself) for delaying the exposure of these pretenders; and that, however sternly he has been dealing with the Jews for a long time past, and however little they may seem to have improved so as to deserve better treatment, he will yet be reconciled to them, and restore them to possession of their old land, and exalt them above all their rivals and enemies, and of his own free will and absolute pleasure burn and destroy every bond of their indebtedness now in his hands. And in support of these modest expectations they can produce a bundle of documents which they assert to be his promissory notes, undoubtedly for very large amounts; but which, being carefully examined, turn out to be all framed on this model: "I, the above-mentioned A. B." (an obscure or utterly unknown Jew, supposed to have lived about three thousand years ago) "hereby promise in the name of Jah, that the said Jah shall in some future year unknown, pay unto the house of Israel the following amount, that is to say, etc." If we ask, Where is the power of attorney authorizing this dubious A. B. to promise this amount in the name of Jah? the Jews retort: "If you believe in the partnership, you must believe in such power, for you have accepted all the obligations of the old house, and have never refused to discount its paper: if you believe neither in Jah nor in the partnership, you are a wretch utterly without faith, a commercial outlaw." In addition, however, to these remarkable promissory notes, the Jews rely upon the fact that Jah, in the midst of his terrible anger, has still preserved some kindness for them. He threatened many pains and penalties upon them for breach of the covenant, and many of these threats he has carried out; but the most cruel and horrific of all he has not had the heart to fulfil: they have been oppressed and crushed, strangers have come into their landed property, they have been scattered among all peoples, a proverb and a by-word of scorn among the nations, their religion has been accursed, their holy places are defiled, but the crowning woe has been spared them (Deut. xxviii. 44); never yet has it come to pass that the stranger should lend to them, and they should not lend to the stranger. There is yet balm in Gilead, a rose of beauty in Sharon, and a cedar of majesty on Lebanon; the Jew still lends to the stranger, and does not borrow from him, except as he "borrowed" from the Egyptian—and the interest on money lent is still capable, with judicious treatment, of surpassing the noble standard of "shent per shent."

And even among the Gentiles there are some who believe that Jah is still the sole head of the house, and that the pair who are commonly accounted junior partners are in fact only superior servants, the one a sort of manager, the other general superintendent and agent, though Jah may allow them a liberal commission on the profits, as well as a fixed salary.

But the commercial world of Europe, in general, professes to believe that there is a *bond fide* partnership, and that the three partners have exactly equal authority and interest in the concern; that, in fact, there is such

thorough identity in every respect that the three may, and ought to, be, for all purposes, of business, considered as one. The second partner, they say, is really the son of Jah; though Jah, with that eccentricity which has ever abundantly characterized his proceedings, had this son brought up as a poor Jewish youth, apparently the child of a carpenter called Joseph, and his wife Mary. Joseph has little or no influence with the firm, and we scarcely hear of a transaction done through him, but Mary has made the most profitable use of her old *liaison* with Jah, and the majority of those who do business with the firm seek her good offices, and pay her very liberal commissions. Those who do not think so highly of her influence deal with the house chiefly through the Son, and thus it has come to pass that poor Jah is virtually ousted from his own business. He and the third partner are little more than sleeping partners, while his mistress and her son manage every affair of importance.

This state of things seems somewhat unfair to Jah; yet one must own that there are good reasons for it. Jah was a most haughty and humorous gentleman, extremely difficult to deal with, liable to sudden fits of rage, wherein he maltreated friends and foes alike, implacable when once offended, a desperately sharp shaver in a bargain, a terrible fellow for going to law. The son was a much more kindly personage, very affable and pleasant in conversation, willing and eager to do a favour to any one, liberal in promises even beyond his powers of performance, fond of strangers, and good to the poor; and his mother, with or without reason, is credited with a similar character. Moreover, Jah always kept himself invisible, while the son and mother were possibly seen, during some years, by a large number of persons; and among those who have never seen them their portraits are almost as popular as photographs of the Prince and Princess of Wales.

With the real or pretended establishment of the Firm, a great change took place in the business of Jah. This business had been chiefly with the Jews, and even when it extended to foreign transactions, these were all subordinate to the Jewish trade. But the Firm lost no time in proclaiming that it would deal with the whole world on equal terms: no wonder the Jews abhor the alleged partners! And the nature of the contracts, the principal articles of trade, the mode of keeping the accounts, the commission and interest charged and allowed, the salaries of the agents and clerks, the advantages offered to clients, were all changed too. The head establishment was removed from Jerusalem to Rome, and branch establishments were gradually opened in nearly all the towns and villages of Europe, besides many in Asia and Africa, and afterwards in America and Australia. It is worth noting that in Asia and Africa (although the firm arose in the former) the business has never been carried on very successfully; Messrs. Brahma, Vishnu, Seeva and Co., the great houses of Buddha and Mumbo Jumbo, various Parsee firms, and other opposition houses, having among them almost monopolized the trade.

The novel, distinctive, and most useful article which the Firm engaged to supply was a bread called *par excellence* the Bread of Life. The prospectus (which was first drafted, apparently in perfect good faith, by the Son; but which has since been so altered and expanded by successive agents that we cannot learn what the original, no longer extant, exactly stated) sets forth that the House of Jah, Son and Co., has sole possession of the districts yielding the corn whereof this bread is made, the sole patents of the mills for grinding and ovens for baking, and that it alone has the secret of the proper process for kneading. The Firm admits that many other houses have pretended to supply this invaluable bread, but accuses them all of imposture or poisonous adulteration. For itself, it commands the genuine supply in such quantities that it can undertake to feed the whole world, and at so cheap a rate that the poorest will be able to purchase as much as he needs; and, moreover, as the firm differs essentially from all other firms in having no object in view save the benefit of its customers, the partners being already so rich that no profits could add to their wealth, it will supply the bread for mere love to those who have not money!

(Reprinted.)

JAMES THOMSON.

(To be continued)

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, Mrs. C. Tamplin (Eugenics Society)—"Hereditary and the Race."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor H. Levy, D.Sc.—"Modern European Morality."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, February 3, Mr. P. Goldman—"What is Freethought?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Rooms, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton, E.10): 7.30, H. Stewart Wishart—"Atheism Against the Gods—Old and New."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A.—"Freethinkers' Children, Some Thoughts on School."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

ACCRINGTON (King's Hall Cinema): 6.30, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead): 7.0, Sam Cohen (Manchester)—"Britain Without God."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham): 7.30, Mr. H. W. Cottingham—"Morality and Religion."

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Institute, 164 Elm Grove, Brighton): 7.30, Mr. L. Anton Miles—"Christian Authority."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. George Whitehead (London)—"The Case for Atheism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Annual General Meeting. Will members kindly attend.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Arthur Copland—"Our Father."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Prof. R. J. Howrie, M.A. (Loughborough College)—"Scientific Method in the Study of Behaviour."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12 Shaw Street, Liverpool): 7.0, George Garrett (Liverpool)—"The Hairy Ape."

PRESTON (Garth Arms, Avenham Street Preston): 7.30, Mr. F. Maughan—"Freethought and the Press."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Hall, Laygate): 7.30, Wednesday, February 5, Mr. A. Flanders.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Is Life a Tragedy?"

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