

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions

Freethought and Society

I FIND so much with which I agree in Mr. Lindsay's concluding article that I dissent from him on the remaining points with considerable reluctance. I agree, for instance, with what he says about Fascism. Against this every man who values decency in public life must protest. Fascism in operation is surely the vilest thing that ever crawled the earth. It has no method that does not appeal to ignorance and brutality, and no practice save that which tramples alike on old and young, the weak, the sick and the helpless. It is the only system with which I am acquainted that has deliberately made war upon children, and which has done this, not in the heat of passion, but as a set policy. It deliberately disowns truthfulness in public life, and as a set principle aims at bringing its people up with the mentality of sheep and the ferocity of wolves. It is the only system that avowedly aims at perpetual tyranny and perpetual persecution. Mr. Lindsay cannot say more of the danger inherent in such a system; and he is correct when he says that many people in this country are favouring its growth here, because they hate, or profess to hate, another system which they say may get established.

I also agree, and have pointed out the fact in these columns, that, all things considered, the Russian experiment has met with a great measure of success. This should not be hidden from English people because it has been accompanied by many things which one hopes will not take place here. But Russia must be judged from what it is when contrasted with what it was; and it does not follow that because Russia could be saved only by violent revolution that a violent revolution is necessary here. A technique of reform that fitted Russia is not bound to fit here. That is a lesson that all reformers should master (it is one that Communists may get from Marx), if they are to think concretely—that is if they will test their theory in the light of existing facts, and frame their

practice accordingly. As Mr. Lindsay says, one need not be a Marxist to see the evils of Fascism. That is exactly my position. That is why I agree with so many things that Mr. Lindsay has said, but do not see that even while agreeing with them they of necessity involve adherence to Marxism.

* * *

The Common Front

Mr. Lindsay also appeals to me and asks whether I will not take a careful look at "Dialectics" and see whether they can fruitfully add some useful weapons to my armoury. I can assure him that I took a very careful look at these weapons somewhere about fifty years ago, and have been using them ever since. I have found them very useful indeed, and have explained their use in preceding articles, and in my books. I think Mr. Lindsay means that if I did as he asks I should at once adopt Marxism and make it a plank in the Freethought platform. It is here that we part company. I do not, as I have explained at very great length, believe that dialectics necessarily leads to Marxism. But even if I did, I should still hold that there is a function of Freethought which would yet remain very valuable, and might be used with profit in even a Marxist State in criticizing the established order. But I believe in a common front, and so I shall continue to advocate the permanency of the N.S.S. as at present constituted, so that we may unite the largest possible number in defence of Freethought and in the attack on religious beliefs. That is what I understand by the common front, sinking points of difference to unite on points of agreement. And I am pleased to have the help of Mr. Lindsay in the work, in spite of our disagreement on some questions.

But I should not be worthy of the position I occupy, it would be behaving in quite a Fascistic manner, if I used my position to urge in the name of the Society, and as a leader of the Freethought movement in this country, the adoption of something that does not come within the scope of the N.S.S., and which, I think, ought not to come within its scope. If someone, or some number of people, believes that Freethought to-day ought to include Communism, there is nothing to prevent their forming an organization in which they could work for that end. In that case I hope that I should ask for the same fair play for them that I ask for myself. But it is not my job either to defend Communism or attack it.

* * *

Society and Man

In what has gone before I have indicated the many respects in which one may agree with what informed Marxists lay down as first principles, without agreeing with the conclusions they draw from them. This is because they are not first principles of Marxism; they are forms of thought, laws of social life, and so forth, which are as common to all as are laws of

psychology or principles of mathematics. If I have made that much plain I shall be content, for I believe that clarity of thought applied to social problems was never so necessary as it is to-day. And to clarity of thought I add evenness of temper, for these two things are essential to a balanced judgment. When a man begins to foam at the mouth every time he comes across a doctrine with which he disagrees, he disqualifies himself from expressing an opinion.

I may therefore take one last point in which I agree with Marx, although it is very much older than Marx; it is taken for granted in all sorts of writing, and I have been advocating it for the past half-century. This is that man as an individual is what he is because of his relations to other individuals. In Marxian jargon, Society is made up of persons in relation. This is implied in all our social legislation, it is present in most essays on sociology, it is in fact a common datum with all modern writers on sociology. I would in this matter go as far as one can possibly go. I would argue that all we have, language, letters, inventions, ideals and ideas, are ultimately born of social life, of which we are all parts, and that we all inherit what the past has achieved, even though the share of that heritage may not be equably distributed—perhaps cannot be so distributed.

Let me put the matter in a picturesque manner. A little while ago there was launched a vessel, the Queen Mary. Who built it? John Brown and Company, is the reply. Nonsense! The building of the Queen Mary began when some one found they could easily float down a stream by sitting on a log. It was advanced when it was found out that by sticking a pole in the water the log, by this time hollowed out, could be pushed along. Another step was taken when someone found out that by stretching something that resisted wind pressure the boat could be moved along without human exertion. Generation after generation, men went on their work of building the Queen Mary. All the applicable knowledge and skill that man has acquired since that first log floated down the stream has gone to building the Queen Mary. That ship is only a last stage in a very, very lengthy process. The boat was not built by John Brown and Co. It was built by the race. John Brown was a mere accident.

Take another example; who wrote *Hamlet*? Shakespeare? Again, No! Not if we are to include in the answer the manner in which the play came to birth. The writing of *Hamlet* began when man first uttered sounds that could be taken as the starting point of an articulate language. And from that remote age down to the days of Queen Bess, all the improvements of language, the creation of institutions, beliefs, customs, habits, the skill in the various arts, everything that goes to the writing of *Hamlet*—including the marvellous intelligence and imagination of Shakespeare—was being fashioned to issue in an immortal play. *Hamlet* is a product of racial culture, with Shakespeare as its magnificent mouthpiece.

So we might go from one thing to another until we had exhausted every product of human society. Creation, whether literary or otherwise, whether it applies to the products of man's brain, or hands, or to the productions of nature at large, does not mean the bringing forth of something from nothing, but the refashioning, the recombining, of that which already exists. In life, genius consists in taking what the past has given us, refashioning it, and presenting it to us in a new form. But no man wholly makes that which he fashions. It is part of that vast heritage the past has bequeathed, a heritage that has been accumulating from the most remote ages. This heritage is in the nature of an entailed estate; it is

ours to use, it is also ours to remould and hand on to succeeding generations intact and improved by our stewardship.

I think that this recognition lies at the base of all reasoned reform. It is also recognized in a blundering, half-hearted, imperfect way by very much that takes place in society. The social responsibility of all for each and each for all is recognized in such things as laws for the relief of the poor, for the treatment of the sick, for education, the existence of death duties, legacy duties, income tax, etc. These are so many blundering recognitions of the truth that all the wealth of civilized life is a social product, and that all have the right to a share in that social heritage. I know how imperfect this recognition is, and how badly it shows itself in practice. I am only pressing the point that it is there, and it is so much of a natural fact that it has been impossible at any time for it to escape complete lack of recognition. The predatory feelings of man are still active, nationally and internationally, and it is within the rights of any human group to say that this predatory capacity of man must be controlled in the interests of the group as a whole, and that cannot effectively be done unless those feelings are sublimated to the extent of converting the exploitation of man by man into the exploitation of nature in the interests of mankind forming a great human family.

* * *

The Work of Freethought

Now I hope I have made my position—which is really the position of the N.S.S.—quite clear. There is no disagreement between myself and Mr. Lindsay on the broad question of Freethought, or on the question of the need for a common front. But he believes that this common front ought to, or must, include a special socio-economic theory. It is here that we part company, and this not on the ground that his economic theory is false—with that I am not concerned—but wholly on the grounds that it is not our business as a Freethought organization, and that it ought not to be our business. Religious belief is very active, however weakened it may have become with regard to its traditional forms of expression. As I have said many times, the religious outlook and religious forms of thought are to be found among those who pride themselves on being free from such influences. It is not in a generation that one can destroy the influence of factors that have been in operation since the dawn of human history; nor is it by even a revolution of force that one can hope to bring about the complete sanitation of the human mind. And, again to repeat myself, religion is never so dangerous as when it is expressed in non-religious forms.

Neither do I believe that even though religion, in form and temper, as well as in deliberate expression, were eliminated Freethought would have done its work. Add to this the abolition of the money power, and we still have to fight in human society the power of vested interest and established positions, the pull of the past on the present, the influence of the dead on the living. These are not religious facts, they are inescapable sociological positions. Until men have achieved an "angelic" state of perfection the need for a body of informed, critical, and independent opinion will be there. And as Mr. Lindsay asked me to review my position, so I ask him to review his, and seriously to consider whether the time has come, or the emergency has developed, when the specific task of Freethought may safely be laid aside.

Freethinkers are free, as they always have been, to take whatever side they please with regard to any question in which they are interested. They always

have been so free; I hope they always will be. And there is not a reform movement during the past hundred and fifty years that has not been vitalized by Freethinkers and by Freethought. Take militant Freethought out of the social history of Britain during that period and it remains an insoluble puzzle. Submerge Freethought principles in the muddy struggle for political positions and power, and it ceases to have any influence worth bothering about. When Marx said that the criticism of religion was the pre-requisite of all criticism, he stated a truth of which sight should never be lost. He was defining what I have been trying to describe in these articles—a mental attitude. Our work is to go on maintaining a real Common Front, amid the strife of sectional parties and theories, a Common Front which shall hold firmly to principles that should govern all particular policies, and insist upon the supreme value of freedom of thought and speech whatever party or movement may be in power. So far, the National Secular Society welcomes all men and women as part of a "Common Front" that will secure this freedom, leaving to all liberty to pursue, in other directions, whatever path they please. It will not submit to the imposition of particular theories that would reduce freedom of thought and speech to a nullity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Marvel of Mecca

"What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, tho' with might?"—Tennyson.

"The star of Mahomet,
Arose and it shall set."—Shelley.

ONLY a mere handful of British people know or care a straw about Oriental faiths, yet there are far more non-Christian inhabitants of the British Empire than Christian. The fact remains that the Koran, the sacred scripture of the Mohammedans, is one of the most widely-read books in existence. Moslems number some two hundred and thirty millions, who use the Koran for public worship, and in schools more than Christians use their own Bible. The various sects of Protestants of the world number only one hundred and fifty millions, whilst the Roman Catholic Church does not encourage undue familiarity with the Christian Bible among the laity. The ecclesiastics of the Greek Church are in the happy position of catering for the pious needs of folks who care far more for life than for literature. Moslems are as fanatical as they are pious. They really regard their Koran as the actual word of their god, revealed to their prophet, Mohammed. So profound is their reverence for the sacred volume that they may not even touch it without ceremony.

This Moslem Bible, revered by over two hundred and thirty millions, of whom eighty millions are British subjects, is a curious volume, less in size than the Christian New Testament. If the specious arguments by which the divine inspiration of the Christian Bible is bolstered up, are worth a pin, this Koran must be inspired also. There is the same apparent incompatibility of the illiterate author with the fine writing; a borrowed morality and stolen mythology, the same beauty of language and wealth of Oriental imagery; the same claim to prophecy and the fulfilment of prophecy.

The outstanding divergence is that there is no claim on the part of the prophet to work miracles. Another divergence is that Mohammedanism is monotheistic. Its theology is simplicity itself compared with the maze of Christian creeds and the tangle of the

Trinity. In spite of these differences, however, there is a family likeness in the phrasing of the sacred book. Take the first Sura from the Koran:—

Glory to God, Master of the Universe, the Merciful, the Compassionate, Lord of the Day of Judgment, we adore Thee and implore Thy aid; guide us in the right path.

Then, again, "There is no God, but God, God is most Great" was a bold message to bring to a nation that had gods by the dozen, and sharp swords and strong arms to defend them. The morality, too, is impressive. Take the faith as laid down in the Second Sura:—

Piety does not consist in turning your faces to the East or the West. He is pious who believes in God, and in the prophets; who, for the love of God, gives of his own to his neighbour; to the orphans, to the poor, to the traveller, and to those who ask; who ransoms the captives, who observes prayer, who gives alms, fulfils the engagements he contracts, who is patient in adversity, in hard times, and times of violence. These are just and fear the Lord.

The founder of this great religion was a camel-driver, Mohammed, in the service of a wealthy woman. Handsome, in his way, he captivated his mistress to such purpose that he married her. Inheriting her money, he led a butterfly existence until he was nearly fifty. Then he became more serious, and eventually told his family and friends that he had had a divine revelation. When he emerged with his disciples and began to preach in public, he was confronted with the existing religion, which was a vested interest. The people of Mecca, the city in which Mohammed lived, had a score of gods, and had a large black stone in the market-place to which thousands of pilgrims came and paid homage. Mohammed's success meant less visitors to that sacred stone, and less business to the town, and the new prophet had to fly for his life. He fled to Medina, collected an armed gang, and, after years of fighting, a compromise was effected between the old and new faiths. The people of Mecca agreed to acknowledge Mohammed's deity, and he permitted Mecca to be a place of pilgrimage under the new religion, which was now firmly established.

Compared with the Christian Religion, Islam possesses great advantages. The text of the Koran was finally settled within a few years of Mohammed's death, and, so far as his own life is concerned, friends and enemies are agreed as to the main facts of his career. For English readers, the prophet's life may be traced in the stately sentences of Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, in the picturesque phrases of Carlyle's *Heroes*, and in many other volumes. Mohammed's career is astonishing. An ardent propagandist, he made only thirteen converts in three years, and these among his own acquaintances. Think of it! To-day a large proportion of the human race mention his name with reverence. Such forceful propaganda as Mohammed's meant the risk of death or most severe persecution. Forced to take the sword in his hand, it took him ten years' hard fighting before he prevailed.

Christian priests have throughout the centuries been very envious of their Mohammedan rivals. The history of the eight Crusades shows some of the extent of that jealousy, and also shows that Christian love is but lip-service and hypocrisy. The Roman Pontiffs, the most powerful ecclesiastics in Christendom, pitted the Cross against the Crescent and impudently staked the authenticity of each on the result. Had not the defeat of Islam resulted, a predominant part of the world might have become Moslem, or, as Gibbon declared, Oxford University might to-day be expounding the Koran instead of the Christian Bible.

Mohammedanism was born in the clear light of day, and not in the monastic twilight of superstition as was Christianity. A man who could neither read nor write was its founder, and the authenticity of the Koran is unquestioned. To examine its history is to unlock the secret of many religions. The explanation is to be looked for in Mohammed's own personality. Handsome, forceful, sensitive, he had a tendency to see visions, and he suffered from fits. Doubtless, the man who had married an old woman for her money, was not incapable of charlatanism. But the religion he preached is one of the simplest in the world. Wine is strictly forbidden, but Moslems are permitted four wives, apart from any additions they care to make to their harems.

Islam has a noble and ancient history, but no people can live on its past. She has given to the world one of its immortal books in *The Arabian Nights*. She has incarnated dreams in architectural marble. Her poets produced manuscripts, which throughout the ages retain the perfume of scented gardens. For a long period she was truly powerful in the world, and now she is at the foot of the ladder of progress.

What is the reason for this terrible downfall? The answer is simple. She is the victim of stereotyped religion. To the Moslem, religion is not an amusement, or a social decoration, or a social police force. It is a passion that inflames his nature, and makes all other things trivial. Christianity is open to many of these objections, only there is less religion in it. It is better only as a mild attack of fever is better than a severe attack of fever. Most Christians have the disease at recurring periods, coming on once a week. The followers of Mohammed were more fanatical than the Prophet. The Caliph Omar wished to burn all books except the Koran, which he regarded as the beginning and end of wisdom. This self-sufficient spirit has destroyed the value of Islamism. During the past five centuries the Moslems have done little indeed for human advancement. They have not made a single contribution to art, literature, science, manufacture, or invention. They have not produced an engineer, or a chemist, or a biologist, or an historian, or a painter, or a musician of the first rank. Their doom is said. On that day when superstitions will be transformed into the religion of Humanity, both Christianity and Islamism will be as remote as when the star of Ormuzd burned out in the unquiet skies.

MIMNERMUS.

Disturbers of the Peace

"All reformers are simply disturbers of the peace."
Ingersoll.

SIMPLISSIMUS has a pleasing explanation to offer for most of life's happenings which challenge his attention. These explanations have certain factors in common. They are easily propounded, rarely requiring more than a dozen words or so; they are just as easily accepted if one is not finical as regards definitions of terms. The explanations are pleasing in the sense that they are pleasing to Simplissimus; they are by no means universally so. He has prejudices with which his theories never conflict. His conclusions never cause him discomfort; they invariably gratify his vanity. Those who attempt by ratiocination to lead him away from green pastures and still waters, he does not care for and he may show his dislike, orally, by terming them Highbrows. If they, after that discouragement, foolishly persist in being reason-

able, he goes further and terms them Nitwits. Being always on the side of many, he perpetually enjoys the comfort of a kindly chorus, one of the most gratifying sensations he experiences. Even in the lighter sides of his life, prejudice and vanity rule. When he attends a football match he knows the direction in which his sympathies lie before he has paid his shilling at the gate or his five shillings on the Stand. He favours, to the point of ligotry, a set of individuals drawn from all parts of the British Isles, who are paid to masquerade as the defenders of the honour and glory of his native town. He feels that the place which shelters *him* is no mean city. As he is of the best, so is his town of the best, and the legionnaires that his town has mobilized are also of the best. Should they lose the day, it is clear that they have been unlucky, or there has been a tampering with the scales of justice. Simplissimus "senses" everything, quickly and acutely.

Not only in lowly cot is found Simplissimus of the Pleasing Theory; he can be located without much difficulty in Belgrave Square. And change the name to Simplissima, if you will; it is all the same. The example of short and easy generalization that one will take by way of example is that one of his to account for social unrest. He will have none of your high falutin ideas of cause and effect. Tickle a man and he laughs; prick him and he bleeds; poison him and he dies; wrong him and possibly you reap a whirlwind. Such an array of *sequiturs* may have impressed a Shylock but who was Shylock, anyhow? *Had he blue eyes?* Causation has no place in the philosophy of Simplissimus. Social unrest, he will tell you, is brought about by AGITATORS. According to his thesis, all would go along swimmingly in the best of all possible worlds if only the imperfectly-washed, liberally-bearded, individuals could be prevented from mounting egg-boxes in public places, and bellowing like bulls. If that is allowed to happen, the fat is in the fire indeed. Then Smith, Brown and Robinson, honest fellows all, who wash with regularity, are agitated into acquiescence. They become demoralized and neglect, in due course, their razors. Then Simplissimus is disturbed at night by visions of the green pastures on which he plays golf being over-run with thistles and the still waters in which he fishes becoming one terrible turbulence.

Simplissimus might have indeed fallen to alluring doctrines of causation—they are so plausible—but fortunately he has found himself stuffed with self-ministering intuitions. The most comforting one of the whole bunch is that the system that had brought placidity to him is the system approved by *le bon Dieu*. Intuitions yielding that degree of comfort must not indeed be given up in a hurry. Reason, in its attempt to understand and collate such intuitions, brings itself thereby plainly into contempt. In the whole of his intellectual life Simplissimus remembers only one uncomfortable quarter of an hour. That was during the time when he had to go to bed on account of a mild attack of influenza. His prolonged inanimation brought about unusual symptoms. Something stirred within him. It could perhaps be diagnosed as a cerebration, for he discovered himself wondering how it was that *le bon dieu* had ever so far forgotten himself as to disfigure the fair face of creation by dropping the bushy-whiskered malefactor in Hyde Park. In the midst of his distress, however, another first-class intuition came to his salvation. He "sensed" quite clearly that speculation on such themes was *improper*; since then the temptation to explore any avenue of thought to its terminus has never again arisen. He encountered thus the "pain of a new idea." That will not happen again, for new

ideas can be avoided while yet a long way off by the simple expedient of seeing them coming, mental uneasiness sharpening the vision. He knows now that they can be put to flight by a few deep breathing exercises culminating in a war-cry. Ejaculation, frequent and loud, of what are called slogans, will put the enemy to flight. A handsome selection of these can be acquired by reading the Daily Paper—there you can find a fine assortment in bright colours arranged to match any old intuition. These papers derive their sustenance from Simplissimus and Simplissima; they set out to give them the Real Goods. S. and S. pay their pennies—not an unimportant consideration—and they take their choice.

The Agitator, then, is a man who tries to put new ideas into peoples' heads. New ideas of course tend to disturb the *status quo*. Once upon a time it was apparently all right to disturb the *status quo*. New ideas were required two thousand years ago, and just at the right moment, up popped Jesus. He got the fate that agitators, according to the *status quo*ites and the Mailites of that day, richly deserve. Any way that was a long time ago, and things have changed. We have had two-thousand years of Jesus, and mankind has now arrived, thanks to supernatural interference, at the summit of the Delectable Mountains. There are now no heights left to conquer. The lesson is plain: Stay put, for motion is dangerous. We may not be able to get higher, but we can get lower. *Facilis descensus Averno*.

Those who would dwell in the House of the Lord for ever speak thusly with the tongues of men and angels:—

Putting ideas into peoples' head is, of course, all right if they are our ideas. That is not done by agitation or propagandism. Both of these words are suspect. The received way, approved by the best circles, is to get hold of young children who cannot answer back, fill their young minds with the ideas which keep our institutions intact, in the sure and certain hope that they will develop on approved lines. There is every chance then that the breed of Simplissimus will not run out; they will be ready, when they come to years of discretion, for the Slogan (not, by any means, to be confounded with propagandism). We of the Slogan are not so ill-bred as to go about disturbing other peoples' ideas, giving them pain and hurting their feelings. The Agitator lacks this nicety of touch. This chap speaks (if he is a dangerous Agitator, an Agitator worthy of the name) as the great Huxley spoke: This much have I learnt, this is how I learnt it, go you and learn better; but do not put upon my shoulders the responsibility of arriving at conclusions which you ought to have tested for yourselves. A dreadful fellow, this Agitator! How essentially unclean! Why cannot he have our straightforwardness, our faith in our Gospel. Why doesn't he repeat with us and the well-bred: *God, Jesus, Our King, Our Country, Plum Pudding, School Ties*. All those for Uplift and Subterranean Strategy please step this way and line up for the Day that Was.

T. H. ELSTON.

There is positive proof, in the writings of the first ages of Christianity, that the same question as to the age and authorship of the books of the New Testament was even then agitated, and if it was then set at rest, this was done, not by a deliberate sentence of the judge, but by burning all the evidence on which one side of the controversy was supported.—Rev. Dr. Giles.

The Greek Bible

II.

THE importance of the Septuagint cannot be minimized from the point of view of Christians. It was the earliest Bible of the Church. It was, indeed, the Bible upon which Christianity was founded. It was from this Greek translation that the Gospel writers make Jesus quote the Scriptures. As far as I have been able to find out, most, if not all, of the texts from the Old Testament quoted in the New Testament are taken direct from the Septuagint, and none from the Hebrew.

This is rather strange; for if the Old Testament existed in the original Hebrew, how is it that the Gospel writers do not seem to know it? Does anybody know anything about it?? Has anybody seen anything of the Old Testament in "old" Hebrew at any time or anywhere?

As some readers are aware, I have long maintained that Hebrew, that is, the Hebrew in which the Old Testament is written, was never a spoken language. It was, with its alphabet, a made-up language for priestly use, from the languages and dialects with which the Jews of the first century were surrounded. It was a mystery language, a holy language, the language of God, not made for the vulgar. It had no vowels, and its pronunciation was learnt orally and handed down from generation to generation. It was not till about the sixth century (no one knows exactly when) that the text of the Old Testament was finally settled in written form by the Massorites. They it was who settled the vexed question of vowel points, and by surrounding their edition of the text with very definite rules and regulations they succeeded in handing it down to us in a form which has perhaps hardly altered.

But what was the text previously? No one knows for certain, though it may be freely admitted it was not very different from that we have now. But, whatever *this* text was, all we really know is, that it is the one originally written in the square letter Hebrew, which alphabet was evolved somewhere between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., nobody knows exactly when.

Now the real question which Biblical critics have to face is, what was the text of the Old Testament before the square letter Hebrew definitely fixed it? What was the text of the Old Testament from which the Septuagint was translated?

And here it should be made clear that the original translation (if this term can be used) was of the Pentateuch only. The other books were added later and the translation varies in quality as more or less skilful translators were employed.

The history of the translation of the Septuagint was written by Aristeas. He even gives the names of the translators, but his "history" is based on sheer credibility. It seems that each Hebrew tribe sent six divinely-inspired translators to the court of King Ptolemy Philadelphus (about 280 B.C.), and that the whole Bible was translated in seventy-two days. They each made a separate translation, which, when afterwards compared one with the other, did not differ in a single letter. Even Christians, gullible as they are, cannot swallow this in its entirety, so they prefer to give up Aristeas and his "fabulous" history. The principal authority in England on the Septuagint, Professor Swete, calls it "insignificant and even intolerable as a literary work."

Now what exactly is the value of the Septuagint? Will an intensive study of it show us what was the text of the Bible about 300 B.C.? Here is the Greek,

it is obviously a translation, but of what? No Biblical question is so hard to answer, for there is nothing by which we can test the Septuagint except the Old Testament as we have it—and it represents a text as late at least as 600 A.D. or 800 years after the Greek translation was made. This is why any scrap of manuscript which can be identified, such as the one recently discovered in the John Rylands Library at Manchester, is hailed as a veritable god-send. Something claimed as of the second century B.C. is certainly a wonderful find; even though it is, as in the present case, merely fragments of Deuteronomy.

The Septuagint has been violently attacked by many very orthodox critics. After the fall of Jerusalem, it was thrown overboard by the Jews who had for centuries used it and called it divine. Indeed, it can be claimed that the Jews for two centuries before the fall of Jerusalem used the Septuagint almost exclusively. If they used a Hebrew Bible, it seems rather strange that not a scrap has survived. But after the dispersion, they violently attacked the Greek version and forbade its use, and even went so far as to boycott more or less, the Greek language and Hellenism in general. When their own Hebrew text was finally established, it was accepted as God's Divine Word without question both by Jews and Christians. Any departure whatever was sin, and as the Greek text differed in hundreds of places from the Hebrew, the Greek must be wrong. To the Freethinker, any differences in the actual text are of no importance whatever; but to the Biblical critic the discovery of God's actual words is of supreme importance. But Hebrew is a sort of fetish to the pious. It is a "sacred" language; it can never, therefore, be wrong. This partly accounts for the storm a heretic like myself causes even among the emancipated, when the mere idea that Hebrew never was a spoken language is broached. Say anything you like, for heaven's sake, but don't say that!

Thus, the Septuagint was violently attacked by Archbishop Usher. He declared that it was not only packed with error, but that the copy we have is a *spurious* copy. (It should be mentioned that the three great codices, the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the *Codex Vaticanus*, and the *Codex Alexandrinus* all contain the Septuagint). Usher says that the real Septuagint was never circulated, but was destroyed with the rest of the Alexandrian Library where it was deposited. How he knew this is not stated. "The Septuagint," says Usher, "continually adds to, takes from, and changes the Hebrew text at pleasure. . . . The original translation was lost long ago, and what has ever since gone by that name is a spurious copy, abounding in omissions, additions and alterations of the Hebrew text." Here we see that Usher has taken as his standard the Hebrew, but why? Jesus never used the Hebrew, but the text we know as the Septuagint. Why is it hardly ever said that it is the Hebrew text which is wrong? As a matter of fact, the Church historian Dupin actually does say, "It is mere superstition to assert, as some authors do, that the Hebrew text which we have at present is not corrupted at any place, and that there is no fault nor anything left out and that we must indispensably follow it at all times. We have every good proof to the contrary." And Dupin actually claims that in spite of the severe restrictions and regulations which the Massorites have imposed on those scribes who have to copy the Hebrew by hand, the Massoretic text has two names, Keri and Ketil, one of which is the text, while the other goes to the margin (probably only various readings go into the margin) and thus we have the text of the Jews of the East, and that of the Jews of the West. So that even the Hebrew text has not always its champions.

What was the *language* of the text from which the Septuagint was translated? No one knows. To say, therefore, that the Septuagint translators did not understand the Hebrew from which they translated is making the statement that it was Hebrew. But, I repeat, no one knows. It is mere supposition. So that to maintain that the Septuagint is wrong because it differs from the Hebrew is mere talk. No one knows which is right—a pretty pass for the Word of God, through which only can we be saved.

H. CUTNER.

The Religion of the "Klu-Klux-Klan"

BRITISH newspapers give little information about the United States, its politics, and its personalities. Probably not one in a hundred thousand readers of British newspapers could name the Labour candidate for the Presidency, or his Communist rival. Sometimes a "dramatic" crime like the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby is reported fully enough. But what English editor cares about the long victimization of Mooney in a Californian jail, the constant lynching of negroes, or the numerous assassinations perpetrated by that Terrorist religious gang called the "Klu-Klux-Klan"?

The Klu-Klux-Klan was formed in the anti-evolution fundamentalist area of Tennessee in 1866. It was originally a branch of the anti-liberationist movement. It began as a negro-lynching league. It grew in numbers and activity, notwithstanding the Federal Government's repeated attempts to suppress it. By the year 1921 its then Leader, Edward Young Clarke, claimed that the membership exceeded 2,500,000 men and women.

In 1922 a systematic exposure of the Klu-Klux-Klan was made by the *New York World*—now defunct—whose editor was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his public-spirited attack, which damaged its immediate advance, but did not kill the Klu-Klux-Klan. By 1926 the gang was as powerful as ever, when a Georgia newspaper took up the exposure the *World* had begun. The Georgia paper gave details of the men concerned, and recounted some startling instances of recent interferences with human life.

Since then Klu-Klux-Klan has become the synonym for fanatical gangsterism. Its bosses, encouraged no doubt by the European examples of imitative flattery, have lately reappeared under a new name. The Klu-Klux-Klan is now the Black Legion. Although maintaining its underground predilections, it thinks the time ripe for assuming some political influence. *The New York Post* says, "It reproduces part of the familiar pattern which led to the present German and Italian Governments." It calls for a Dictatorship in America. Its "dress" is neither "black-shirt," nor "brown-shirt," but a white night-shirt with head-cover and eye-holes.

The immediate victims the Black Legion is fighting are negroes, Catholics and Freethinkers. *The Literary Digest* reproduces photostat copies of the "Declaration," which all candidates for membership must sign:—

THE ORDER

Organized and known as the UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF AMERICA. Its membership is composed entirely of male white Protestants. The object of this Order is to promote, protect, and preserve Protestantism; to create and guard the welfare of the Protestant people socially as well as politically. This Order owes no allegiance to any Foreign or World power except that of GOD and of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

To all those concerned may it be known that I am a Protestant by birth, a believer in our GOD THE ALMIGHTY, and a loyal subject of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and a supporter of its Laws and Constitution. I hereby declare my intent and loyalty to the UNITED BROTHERHOOD and as a member I further declare and pledge my whole-hearted support and loyalty to its Officers and Constitution. Willingly, I, now, submit to the ORGANIZATION'S OATH.

Candidate's Signature.

It is interesting at least to see that Freethinkers are debarred from membership of this obnoxious gang. Even the worst of murderers would be disqualified if "tainted" with negro blood or imbued with Catholic principles.

In Detroit thirteen men—said to be members of the Black Legion—are held on murder charges, showing that this organization has extended its sphere of action considerably. The Michigan authorities are said to be investigating a number of murders, floggings and so-called suicides, which are believed to be the work of the Black Legion. Michigan, says the *Digest*, is also investigating:—

Whether the Black Legion is a far-flung empire with 6,000,000 members hostile to Catholics, Jews and Negroes, wearing black robes and skull-and-cross-bones hoods, bound together by a blood oath, pledged to kill if ordered to do so by their leaders, and with the ultimate purpose of setting up a dictatorship of white Protestants in the United States.

The District Attorney of Wayne County (Mich.) whose name has been fraudulently forged to give police "authority" to the crimes of the Legion, says that "Police raids on Black Legion headquarters have netted not only firearms, daggers, whips, hoods and robes, but literature revealing that the Legion has a woman's auxiliary and branches in fifteen States."

It is by no means a singular phenomenon that this vile gang of violent enemies of citizenship call themselves a "Brotherhood." We frequently come across simple—and other—Christians who profess to find in terms like "Brotherhood," the same consoling sweetness that (before the war) some people found in "that blessed word Mesopotamia." Some people profess that in the "Fatherhood of God" is promise of eternal universal friendliness. Brotherhood and Brotherhood need defining to be understood. Only the worst of men needs to be assured that a man is a blood-relation before acting decently towards him.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops

Lord Rankeillour speaking on the new Education Act, in the House of Lords, the other day, made some very pertinent remarks. He admitted the Act could not be regarded as a settlement. "There cannot be a settlement so long as one particular form of religious teaching is privileged and endowed, and other forms, to a greater or lesser extent, are penalized."

Lord Rankeillour added:—

We have the most anomalous position in England. For example, the Catechism I learned in my youth would be illegal in a council school. The Church of England Catechism would be illegal in a council school. The Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterians would be illegal. The Free Church Catechism is not illegal because it covers more than one denomination, and although those who believe in that Catechism have not attempted to get it taught, yet in fact they do get the particular kind of teaching that they want in council schools entirely at the public expense. They do these things better in Scotland, and I cannot help thinking that it is on the Scottish lines that a settlement will ultimately be sought and, I hope, found.

Surely this state of affairs proves indisputably that the real solution lies, not on "Scottish lines," but in genuine Secular Education? Why not leave all religious teaching entirely to those who want it, and are prepared to pay for it, in their own time and in their own buildings?

Mr. J. L. Hammond, joint author of the valuable, one might almost say indispensable, series of studies of the industrial period 1760-1832, writes an interesting letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, of August 27, drawing a parallel between the agrarian state of Spain, and that of Ireland under the British Government of a hundred years ago. But he says:—

There is one important difference. In Ireland the best friends of the oppressed peasants were the Roman Catholic priests. . . . If the Catholic Church had stood by the poor labourers in Spain, as it stood by the poor peasants in Ireland, the excesses of those labourers would never have taken that form.

We are obliged to differ from the inference that many, perhaps Mr. Hammond himself, may draw from such a passage. The Roman Church in Spain acted on the same principle as did the Roman Church in Ireland, and as it acted in France, Germany and elsewhere. In Ireland the Church was on the side of the peasant who wanted the land. In Spain the Church is with General Franco, who has openly declared his intention to take the land from the peasants and give it to the Church and the Royalists. But the Government that was responsible for so much wrong in Ireland was a Protestant Government, and the Church helped the peasant, not because the peasant was treated harshly, but because he was oppressed by a Government which was Protestant, and with which the Church itself was at enmity. The patriotic and the religious question was fused in Ireland by the action of the British Government, just as the two questions were fused in Spain by the Moorish conquest. And the power of the priest in both Spain and Ireland was strengthened accordingly. The Church brought Spain to ruin, and it might easily have done the same in Ireland, but for other circumstances that helped to save the Irish people.

The following passage from Stanley Lane Poole's well known *The Moors in Spain*, summing up the consequences of the action of the Church, in securing the banishment of the Moors, is well worth citing at the present moment:—

For centuries Spain had been the centre of civilization, the seat of arts and sciences, of learning, and every form of refined enlightenment. No other country in Europe had so far approached the cultivated dominion of the Moors. The brief brilliancy of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of the empire of Charles V. could find no such enduring pre-eminence. The Moors were banished; for awhile Christian Spain shone, like the moon, with a borrowed light; then came the eclipse, and in that darkness Spain has grovelled ever since. The true memorial of the Moors is seen in desolate tracts of barrenness, where once the Moslem grew luxuriant vines and olives and yellow ears of corn; in a stupid ignorant population where once wit and learning flourished; in the general stagnation and degradation of a people which has hopelessly fallen in the scale of the nations, and has deserved its humiliation.

No nation ever more richly merited this condemnation than did Spain under the Church. And it is to restore this Church to power, a Church which up to yesterday was playing its old game, that a few of the more reputable of our papers, such as the *Daily Mail*, are pleading. We have summed up the influence of the Church in Spain as having made the country "a heaven for monks and a hell for men."

Dr. Inge has been poking fun at prayers recently. Of course, he did it quite seriously and piously; but when he asks whether "the husband of a loving and prayerful wife is a better life from the point of view of life-insurance than a man who has no Christian relative anxious for the prolongation of his existence," we fancy his belief in the divine answer to prayer is about as great as our own. And merely copying his statement makes an excellent "Acid Drop."

However, our pious contemporary, the *Daily Express*, immediately got one of its bright young reporters on the telephone to ask a few people, chosen at random, whether they agree with Dr. Inge. Thirty per cent did not; thirty per cent were not sure; while forty per cent were quite certain that prayers did alter events. The most interesting answer was from a Mr. G., an Atheist. He said he did not believe in prayer, but he "envied people who can pray because it seems

to give them comfort." This kind of Atheist always pops up in questions of this kind. He does not believe in prayer, but oh, how he wished he did; he does not believe in Jesus, but oh, how he wished he could; miracles were, of course, quite impossible, but oh, how he wished for the child-like faith to believe in them. We wonder whether Mr. G. has ever read anything Atheistic. Merely to call oneself an Atheist without its philosophy behind one is not our idea of Atheism.

How many books have been written, from the Christian standpoint, on the problem of Evil, it is perhaps impossible to compute; but they keep cropping up regularly. The latest is by Mr. J. S. Whale, which he calls, *The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil*. It was broadcasted recently, but whether it convinced anybody or not, is by no means clear. We could have given the Christian solution to the problem without reading Mr. Whale's book or any of the others. It is simply what he maintains, that "the Cross of Christ provides the real solution of the problem of evil." There was no need for the thousands of books which have been written. The Cross of Christ is all that is necessary. As Mr. Whale puts it, "The Cross is not only a scandalous fact of history; it is the triumphant act of God. It is not only man's deed of sin, but God's deed of grace." Dear, dear, and to think (if this refers to the Crucifixion) that the Cross is just as mythical as the Virgin Birth. In other words, there is no evidence whatever, worth looking into, that the Crucifixion ever took place. Mr. Whale will have to find another solution.

Proving miracles has also produced hundreds of thousands of books. The latest is *The Case for Miracles* by Mr. C. F. Rogers, M.A. Mr. Rogers—who, by the way, imagines himself to be a genuine infidel slayer—must have thought all the other books on miracles more or less dead failures, for it is claimed that "he can be relied upon for popular apologetics adapted to the mind of the man-in-the-street." It is pathetic to see how anxiously these writers work to convince the man-in-the-street. He seems always to want convincing—which really means that miracles can only be believed in if one has oceans of Faith, which the average man-in-the-street obviously has not. Or else why all these books? Mr. Rogers will convince only those who are convinced already; and even they often have some teeny weeny doubts about the sheer drivel of Christian miracles.

The *Church Times* has been having, for some weeks past, an amusing discussion on Transubstantiation. Most of the writers differ violently from each other, not only on the meaning of the word, but on the various interpretations culled from the Fathers, from the Reformers, from the Councils and Decrees, and from the Articles of the Church and Prayer Book. Columns of "argument" appear regularly, and we cannot refrain from giving a sample of the kind of thing presumably sane men write, in discussing such tomfoolery:—

That the ancient Church knew nothing of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and would almost certainly have repudiated it as erroneous, is surely evident from the fact that the mysterious co-existence in the Blessed Sacrament of its two parts—the outward and the inward was commonly adduced by the early Fathers as an illustration of the equally mysterious co-existence in Our Lord's Divine Person, of His two Natures—the Human and Divine. . . . The true parallel to such a doctrine [Transubstantiation] would have seemed to them to be not the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation, but the Eutychian heresy.

How the "early" Fathers could have known about the fifth century "heretic" Eutyches is not apparent; but apart from that, think of people in the twentieth century seriously discussing such egregious nonsense!

One of the Roman Catholic papers is publishing a "refresher" course in the Catechism; and it dealt, the other day, with the question of God having a beginning. We are told that "we must come ultimately to some being which did not begin to be, but which always was,

is, and always will be. And this is God." This is splendidly proven, there is no better way to prove anything than to insist that something must be because it must be. And it is clinched, so to speak, by insisting that "the eternal life of God is and must be a life which is *tota simul*, 'altogether at once.'" This should settle the matter once for all, but in case it does not, the expositor puts in the snag: "remember that any truth concerning God must be difficult for human minds to grasp." Ergo, God never had any beginning.

A Pittsburg (U.S.A.) newspaper announced that a local clergyman would "preach next Sunday on the House built upon a rock: this service will last one hour only." The comment of the *Literary Digest* which copies the notice is the simple and sufficient one: "ROCK OF AGES"!

Beer is Best say the Brewers. *Eat More Fish* say the Fishmongers. Also we are told that there is Nothing Like Leather, and that for the outlay of a few coppers we can Cure that Cold, or, if we prefer it, have that Schoolgirl complexion all over. Sweet are the uses of advertisement. And now we find the Great Christian Church by God established picking up a wrinkle or two from other sources than the Holy Bible, which we have always understood, contains all things necessary to salvation. In the *Western Telegraph*, a paper published in the Manchester district, there appears a displayed advertisement under the heading *Religion and Business*, which puts up a syllogism with the useful conclusion that "many steady and sincere Church-goers are successful in business." The advertisement ends in large Capitals with the words GO TO CHURCH. Now this has started, no one can say where it will end. Their next week's catch phrase may perhaps run: TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW.

The Melbourne *Rationalist* does useful work in reprinting matter, every now and again, from Catholic publications, exemplifying credulity. These papers are packed with examples of the good that has accrued from sending Postal Orders to "My Dear Jesus," "Little Flower," etc., through the intermediate establishment of the Roman Church. Recently, however, in the *Catholic Phillipinas* there appeared the following notice:—

Warning! We warn our readers that letters may be intercepted by letter pilferers. If you do not get an answer to your letter by return post, write and ask us. Also, keep the number of your postal note or money order. Again, fill in your postal order.

"My Dear Jesus," or "Little Flower," it would appear, will only bestir themselves when the cash arrives safely to hand. Surely there can be few superstitions more abject than this.

The "Freethinker" Circulation Drive

It is proposed to celebrate the coming-of-age of the present editorship by an attempt to create a substantial increase in the circulation of this paper. The plan suggested is:—

(1) Each interested reader is to take an extra copy for a period of twelve months, and to use this copy as a means of interesting a non-subscriber to the point of taking the *Freethinker* regularly.

(2) So soon as this new subscriber is secured, the extra copy may be dropped by the present subscriber. Until this is accomplished, he will regard the extra threepence weekly (for one year) as a fine for his want of success.

The plan is simple, and it is not costly; but it does mean a little work, and whether or not it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is certainly easier for most to give than it is to work. But in this case it is the work alone that will yield permanent benefit. There are many thousands of potential readers in the country; why not try and secure some of them?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THE editor has to thank the many friends for their warm birthday greetings, and wishes for his future welfare.

T. MURRAY.—You do not get our point, which is that as psychology deals with the laws defining and describing mental operations, there can no more be a proletarian psychology than there can be an aristocratic psychology. There are forms of mentality peculiar to both classes. But this is also true of writers, artists, and others.

A. H. EDGEY.—“Evolution” has nothing whatever to do with a process that is “pushed on” by some power. The fundamental fact in nature is change, and evolution is merely “law” which describes the directions or the “behaviour” of these changes.

G. H. TAYLOR.—Thanks for article and birthday greetings. We hope you never will get away from the best of causes.

A. BARON.—The quotation from the *Evening Standard* referring to ex-King Alfonso appeared in the issue dated July 24, page 1, and runs as follows: “In my opinion only the extermination once and for all of the Left parties will put an end to the civil war, and will give Spain the peace so much desired by all true Spaniards.”

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—H. Buck, 28. 6d.

F. GOODWIN.—Thanks for note. Will do as you suggest.

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.

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

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

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

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

The following from Ingersoll appears to fit the situation to-day:—

When the poor combine it is a “conspiracy.” If they act in concert it is a “mob.” If they defend themselves it is “treason.”

Our new pamphlet, *Spain and the Church*, was published last week, and is selling extraordinarily well. But we want it to sell even better. Fifty thousand should be sold within a month if all lend a hand. We have a number of men selling it on the streets in London, and would like to see this done also in the provinces. We shall be glad to hear of anyone in the provinces who can assist us. It is also on sale at a number of newsagents, and most of these sold out their supply within the first twenty-four hours. Advertisements of the pamphlet are also being inserted in a number of provincial papers. We expect to reprint in the course of a week or two.

We have had printed a supply of an attractive show-card, large enough to be distinctive, but not too large for exhibition in a shop window. Perhaps friends will help us in their distribution among newsagents.

We are asking for the help of our friends because we wish to utilize the occasion for advertising both the *Freethinker* and the movement. However great the sales, it is not a question of profit. There will be a loss, but the money will be well lost, and may bring a good return in other directions. We have already had some results in this direction. Spain and the Church is in everybody’s mind, and there is no better or clearer instance of the meaning of Church-rule than Spain supplies.

When we issued our plan for new subscribers for this paper—we hope that this is not being forgotten, and that the new subscriber is still being hunted for by those who have not yet been successful—we said that we had many other things in view. We still have these things in mind, but we must have the help of readers if they are to be tried, and above all, if they are to be successful. We have no large office staff to do the work, but we want a large staff outside the office, and scattered all over the country. Who will help?

At the present juncture the following letter from a Canadian subscriber, will probably be of interest to our readers:—

Allow a distant reader to write a few words of thanks and appreciation for the excellent work you are doing. My opinion is that in Canada we are a number of years behind the times, as regards Freethought, possibly because we have no writers of your calibre and experience.

Ever since 1930, when I bought my first copy of the *Freethinker*, I have been a constant and satisfied reader of this best of all publications. I have all the back numbers of the *Freethinker* bound. Only recently I was able to turn back to one of your 1933 numbers and get some information that was very useful to me to use in the cause of Freethought.

I believe I have been able to advance the cause of Freethinking in some small measure here, and now have one or two of my friends reading and getting the *Freethinker* regularly.

Keep up the great work; the need is patent, especially in Canada.

We regret that in our notice of Mr. T. H. Savory’s book in last week’s issue, the title and price were given incorrectly. The proper title is *Mechanistic Biology and Animal Behaviour*, and the price is 7s. 6d., not 5s. as stated.

Manchester saints are asked to note that Mr. G. Whitehead will commence a week’s lecturing there from to-day—September 6—and it is hoped that good support for the meetings will be the order. The new pamphlet, *Spain and the Church*, will be on sale, and by acquiring a few copies to distribute among intelligent friends, really good and useful work can be done for our movement. Whilst all cannot be speakers, there should be very few Freethinkers indeed who cannot help in this way.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick pays a tribute to the scientific mind which we gladly reproduce from the *Christian World*:—

We may begin with a familiar and comparatively simple illustration. One of the most admirable factors in the goodness of to-day is the scientific conscience about truth. Science is not simply intellectual or inventive. It is a moral matter, a disinterested care about facts, a devotion to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. There is in science at its best a certain rigorous honesty about facts and the statements one makes concerning them that constitutes one of the noblest elements in the morals of to-day, whereas, in general, organized Christianity is far behind science in that regard.

Can you imagine groups of scientists standing up to make formal confession of their faith in solemn words

beginning "I believe," when they do not believe? It is unthinkable. The scientific conscience would not tolerate that.

That Messrs. Brighton and Clayton are meeting with success in their respective campaigns, may be gathered from the fact that Christian opposition is beginning to take the form of hooliganism in a number of places visited. Squads of the faithful are mobilized by their moral guides to attend the meetings, and where religion is concerned the average Christian is a rank coward. The courage of the Christian rises with his numbers in the crowd, and the surest way to keep him in check is by providing strong support for our platform.

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. reports a very successful outing last Sunday, when a large party spent an enjoyable day in the country and forest with perfect weather prevailing. The Sunday evening meetings will now be renewed at the corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E., where friends of the movement in West Ham will be welcomed.

One of our readers on holiday has sent us a copy of the inscription cut on the High Rocks at Tunbridge Wells. It is worth reproducing:—

Infidel! who, with thy finite wisdom,
Wouldst grasp things Infinite, and dost become
A scoffer of Gods holiest Mysteries;
Behold this Rock, then tremble and rejoice:
Tremble! for He who form'd the mighty mass,
Could, in His Justice, crush thee where thou art;
Rejoice!—that still his Mercy spares thee.

J. Phippen.

March 21st 1831.

We do rejoice, but the cause of our rejoicing is that this particular type of Christian mentality is becoming less and less common.

Epistolary Pearls From The Archives of Edessa

(Continued from page 558)

THE narrative which accompanies the letters declares that although Thaddæus was sent to Edessa to heal Abgar and to teach the Gospel in fulfilment of Christ's promise, yet Thaddæus, upon his arrival in the city, instead of announcing his mission unto the King, took up his abode with a private person, and did not approach the King before his fame as a wonder-worker had induced the King to have him presented at court. This suggests the possibility that Christ's promise to Abgar, and the letters concerning it, are comparatively late inventions added to, and intermingled with, an old tradition that Christianity was brought to Edessa by Thaddæus, a man variously specified as one of "the twelve," and one of "the seventy," whom Jesus is said to have chosen as his messengers.

THE DOCTRINE OF ADDÆUS

It is possible that the person who wrote this work began with the Eusebian Account, or with the original thereof, and completed his narrative from other sources. But, alternatively, he may have had before him a document which gave a different report of how the gospel came to reach Edessa by the preaching of Addæus; and he may have altered the statements of this document in order to make them agree with the subsequently related story of the correspondence between Abgar and Christ. Certainly, if Eusebius had got his information upon the matter out of such a pretentious performance as the treatise in question, he would have been very likely both to mention its title, and to draw more fully from its contents. The

confusion at the point where the two documents are parting company, suggests an unskilful attempt at adjustment between primitive and posterior elements. Many absurdities occur in the book.

Thus we are told that Addæus read *The Acts of the Apostles* to the people of Edessa in the life-time of King Abgar, who in fact survived him. But the Patriarch Dionysius, cited by Asseman, declares that the said Abgar reigned thirty-seven years and one month,²¹ whilst Moses of Chorene, followed by Samuel of Anita, asserts that his reign began two years before the birth of Christ.²² Hence the book called *Acts* could not have been read during his time, since it records matters of a later period, besides which there is evidence that it did not appear earlier than the second century. We are also told that Addæus and his converts studied "the Old Testament and the New of the *Ditornon*." This last evidently means the *Diatessaron*, a harmony of the Four Gospels which was compiled about the middle of the second century by the Assyrian Tatian, a disciple of Justin Martyr, and which was used in the church at Edessa up to the fourth century, whilst some thirty years later Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, a city less than ninety miles from Edessa, removed 200 copies found in his diocese.²³ Another indication of relatively late date is furnished by the following statement in the address of Addæus to the Edessens:—

Let no man of you doubt in his heart how the promise of [Christ's] blessing which he sent to you will be established with you—Blessed are ye that have believed in me, the city in which ye dwell shall be blessed and the enemy shall not prevail against it forever.²⁴

This remarkable assurance does not occur in the Eusebian version of Christ's letter to Abgar. A reference to it was supposed to exist in the *Testament of Ephraem Syrus*, a celebrated deacon of Edessa, who died in A.D. 378 or 379, at an advanced age,²⁵ but Asserman,²⁶ and other scholars assert that the said reference is spurious, being absent from the original text, and first occurring in the Greek translation. The famous historian, Procopius, a native of Palestine, who flourished at Constantinople during the first half of the sixth century, declares that the earliest records of Christ's letter to Abgar did not contain the promise in question; but that the Edessenes exhibited certain copies containing it, and placed them on the gates of their city as a safeguard.²⁷ These remarks of Procopius are mentioned by his younger contemporary, Evagrius, a Syrian advocate, who, after agreeing with him about the absence of the promise from the original letter, adds that, nevertheless, it was believed by the Faithful to have been verified by events!²⁸ Had it not been for the testimony of Procopius and Evagrius, I should have been inclined to think that

²¹ p. 420.

²² Cureton, p. 125. Samuel was an Armenian Chronographer of the twelfth century. His work, translated into Latin by Johannes Zohratus, an Armenian, and Angelus Maius, an Italian—both scholars of eminence—appeared at Milan in 1818.

²³ Fabricius, B.I. c. 20, cited by Cureton.

²⁴ Cureton, p. 10.

²⁵ Tillemont, *Memoires Pour Servir à La Historie Ecclesiastique Des Six Premier Siecles*. Paris, 1713, Vol. VIII, p. 744.

²⁶ p. 262.

²⁷ Procop. *Bel. Pers.* II., 12.

²⁸ *Hist. Eccles.*, IV., 27. The belief in this protective efficacy became widely spread, reaching even our own country. For in a Service Book dating from Saxon times, Christ's alleged Epistle, in the Latin version of Rufinus, follows at once the Paternoster and the Apostle's Creed, whilst a note at the end sets forth its manifold defensiveness for every one who goes about with a copy of it. Cureton (p. 154).

the promise of inexpugnability to Edessa occurred in the original document set forth as a letter from Christ to Abgar, and to suspect that Eusebius suppressed the part because of his having read in Dio Cassius, and probably in other authors, how completely Lusius Quietus destroyed Edessa less than one hundred years after the time when Christ, in his alleged letter to Abgar, was found giving Edessa a written promise of everlasting security against all invaders. The earliest writer to mention the promise, is, as far as I can discover, Darius Comes, who in an epistle to St. Augustine says that Christ, "Deus," as he calls him, had "by letter transmitted not only health to the suppliant, but also security to the King. He ordered, moreover, that the city should be always and forever immune from enemies." In the Paris Edition of Augustine, published by the Benedictines, the Epistle of Darius Comes is numbered 230, and referred to the year 429.

The alleged reply of Tiberius to Abgar contains a remarkable untruth. There we find Tiberius saying that because Pilate had unjustly condemned Jesus to death, he had recalled Pilate, and appointed another governor in Pilate's place, whereas the conversion of Abgar is referred by the Eusebian Account to A.D. 29, whilst, according to Josephus, Pilate, after governing Judæa [and Samaria] for ten years, was sent to Rome by Vitellius, his superior, to answer the charge of having too drastically suppressed a disturbance of the Samaritans, but did not arrive in Rome before the death of Tiberius,²⁹ which, as we know from other sources, occurred on March 16, A.D. 37.³⁰ Besides the above, obviously false statement, the same document contains a respectable reference. This is in the assertion that "the governor Pilate" had reported the case of Jesus to "the proconsul Aulbinus."

As Pilate was procurator of Judæa and Samaria, his superior would be the legatus of Syria. It is strange that Tiberius does not give those officials their proper titles. Aullinus is not a Roman name, but it may be an Oriental rendering of Albinus. A Roman family bearing the name was very distinguished in the Republican period, and a few persons who bore it gained celebrity in the Imperial period. Still there is no trace of any Albinus who governed Syria under Tiberius. The book refers the events in question to a year which equates with A.D. 29 of our era. Now it appears from Tacitus as if Ælius Lamia and Flaccus Pomponius were the men who governed Syria during the inclusive period of A.D. 29-33. Describing what happened under the consuls S. Galba and L. Sulla (whose time was A.D. 33), Tacitus says that at the end of their year, Ælius Lamia, "who at length discharged from the semblance of governing Syria, had been made prefect of the city [Rome]" departed this life; and a few lines below he mentions the death of Flaccus Pomponius, propraetor of Syria.³¹

Smith states that Ælius Lamia became prefect of Rome in A.D. 32, and died in the following year.³² The word *tandem* (here rendered "at length") implies that Lamia had long held the post in question, namely, the governorship of Syria, but the term *imagine* (here rendered "semblance") seems to imply that for a while at any rate he did not personally exercise the function. Flaccus Pomponius, whose death appears to have followed Lamia's closely, was probably Lamia's deputy and successor in the Syrian office.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded)

Sorcery in Savage Society

In recent decades the study of the savage mind has been approached from an angle frequently disregarded by earlier inquirers. The difficulties encountered by the sophisticated European when attempting to probe the problems of primitive psychology have been stressed, and perhaps overstressed, by some contemporary observers. Among the more prominent representatives of this school stands the French anthropologist, M. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, whose volumes on *Primitive Mentality*, and *The "Soul" of the Primitive* have occasioned considerable controversy. In a later work, *Primitives and the Supernatural* (Allen and Unwin, 1936), he has reinforced his conclusions respecting primitive customs and beliefs, and remains firmly convinced that dread of the inscrutable and uncanny forms the foundation of all the weird rites and ceremonies inseparable from savage life from birth to death, while also colouring native concepts of the spirit realm.

Yet, although fear of the unseen influences is ever present, the normal native derives considerable enjoyment from life. Among other instances, the evidence of Mills concerning the Nagas of North Eastern India is cited. The religion of the Ao Nagas "is a system of ceremonies. A man will not prosper if he omit the sacrifices due to the deities around him who, unappeased, are ever ready to blight his crops and bring illness upon him and his. This does not mean that he is a devil-ridden, terrified wretch. Far from it. . . . The presence around him of potentially malignant spirits no more weighs upon his mind than does the prospect of the wrath to come drive to moody despondency the average Christian. He cheerfully performs the necessary sacrifices and hopes for the best."

The long, almost universal, dread of wizardry which is still by no means extinct in rustic circles throughout Europe and America, seems remarkable to the modern mind. Its record within Christendom itself inspires horror and disgust. Yet this baneful superstition still prevails among countless millions of the lowlier cultures who are firmly persuaded that when every conceivable precaution has been taken to placate the spirits, they persecute and punish the people. The harvest is ruined for lack of rain or devastated by storm and deluge; famine stalks the land, while the apparently hale and hearty are seized by the hand of death.

The European Rationalist regards such calamities as purely natural, but Lévy-Bruhl contends that even the most simple scientific reasoning carries little, if any, weight with the uncivilized whenever anything unusual occurs. Still, he allows that the savage "is not entirely unaware of the actual connexions between phenomena; on the contrary, he has noted some of them very carefully, and also successfully. He knows very well how to turn them to account in his 'technique' of hunting, fishing, agriculture, manufactures, art, etc. But such knowledge as this maintains its exclusively practical character. Although he profits by it, he never seems to reflect upon it. He does not realize that if he were to pursue such knowledge further, it would contribute to an understanding of things and events, and would give him more control over them. . . . When therefore he experiences failure or misfortune he does not stop there. He asks himself what evil influence is being exerted upon him, and why this should be. The cause that is of supreme interest to him lies outside the shackles of circumstance."

The savage is thus pictured as viewing every mishap as foreshadowing others in store, and this attitude is held to explain the faith in witchcraft so widespread

²⁹ *Ant.* XVIII. 4, sec. 1, 2.

³⁰ Liebenham's *Fasti*, p. 104.

³¹ *Annales*, VI. 27 (Leipzig, 1882).

³² *Dic. Class. Biog.*, p. 364.

in savage life. Illness and death are rarely regarded as natural events, and their baleful character is attributed either to the malevolence of ancestral spirits or the machinations of sorcery. If the ghosts are guilty there is no remedy, but if death or disaster is due to witchcraft, the living malefactor may be properly punished.

The Zulus admit some natural maladies, but most are regarded as the inflictions of enraged ancestors, or are caused by living practitioners of black magic. When in doubt concerning the cause of misfortune, the savage usually resorts to divination, save when he strongly suspects a sorcerer. Whenever their cattle are smitten with the plague the natives of Pondoland at once assume the guilt of some evilly-disposed neighbour. In fact, every misfortune is assigned to black magic, and it appears that the Kaffir's certainty of sorcery and witchcraft is so ingrained that medical remedies are with him almost unknown.

With the Bantus it is just the same. Drought, the barrenness of women, infertile flocks and herds, indeed, every untoward event is attributed to sorcery. Basutos and other African savages share this superstition. Much as witches were long hunted down in Christian Europe, so the sorcerers of the Dark Continent are smelt out and put to death. In order to prove the guilt or innocence of those accused of evil arts, trial by means of the poison ordeal takes place. Talbot even estimates that "from thirty to forty per cent of the population perish on such an occasion the mortality depending on the amount of witchcraft in the place. All the witches then die or leave the town as dangerous; the hoot of the owl is no longer heard, and the country has peace from sorcery for three or four years." Such appalling mortality is doubtless unusual, but the testimony of several other careful observers confirms its practical truth.

Some backward peoples, however, have learnt to ascribe death and disease to natural causes. Still even with these, in times of trouble they display an irresistible desire to return to their earlier eerie beliefs with the restoration of ordeals and enchantments to vanquish the sinister influences they dread. While a state of panic prevails, any member of a savage community, however highly placed, may fall under suspicion. When a Papuan's plantation has been devastated by rodents or wild pigs it is assumed that some envious tribesman has urged these animals on their evil mission. If a Kaffir rainmaker's enchantments are of no avail and the parched vegetation continues to wither, his failure to produce rain is caused by the arts of baneful spellbinders, and when these are discovered their doom is sealed.

Accidental fires, or any other unusual occurrences, are invariably placed to the account of witches, and anyone whose conduct departs from the normal is viewed with aversion. Also, those who display indifference to religious rites or ceremonies soon become marked men. Such remissness as this enrages the spirits who are never mocked with impunity. The native Gallio or sceptic, Colonel Maclean noted, "will be avoided by his friends and neighbours as a suspicious character, who must be trusting to the arts and powers of witchcraft, or he would never be guilty of such a heinous crime." Moreover, should any calamity occur, a man such as this would be denounced by the native medicine official, and then seized and slain as a sorcerer.

Those tribesmen who are credited with the possession of the evil eye are regarded with intense fear. Even among ourselves few like being stared at, while with many savage stocks the direct or fixed look is highly suggestive of danger. The baneful influence of the evil eye is akin to bewitchment, and its possessor is most potent for ill when in an angry mood.

At childbirth every precaution is taken to preclude difficult delivery, but should such safeguards prove abortive, it is taken for granted that the sufferer has been bewitched. The Bergdama natives therefore stroke the woman's body with the right hand, which is "moistened with saliva, for to spit upon anybody or wet them with saliva is not only excellent for the health, but is also a sign of peace and good-will." But when an enemy is suspected a messenger is sent to her hut, and returns with a rag damped with the spittle of this person which may, perhaps, remove the curse laid upon the bewitched mother.

Witchcraft also delays death, and when the death struggle is prolonged, this is attributed to the devilish devices of someone with whom the dying savage is at variance. If this evil-doer can be discovered, he is brought into the presence of the dying man. He then smears his hand with spittle and passes it over the lingerer's chest or back. But to ensure a peaceful death the visitor's urine when sprinkled over the invalid is still more efficacious. These, with many other instances of a kindred character, at least suggest that serious injury may be caused by those afflicted by the possession of the evil eye or other occult influence in utter unawareness of the pain and misery they produced. Indeed, Lévy-Bruhl concludes that: "This evil influence is sometimes quite unknown to the person from whom it emanates, and possibly, if he knew the ill he is bringing to those who are dear to him, he would be in despair."

The widows of Bushmen rarely remarried and were popularly regarded as being in some degree implicated in their husbands' deaths. Among the Kaffirs, charges against near relatives of the ailing or deceased of complicity in crime are of common occurrence. This applies to black Africa as a whole, while similar practices are reported from South America and elsewhere. Speaking from personal knowledge of the Safwa, Madame Kootz-Kretschmer records many charges of witchcraft urged by members of the deceased's family against each other. In one instance a married pair lost their firstborn child and a second soon died. The parents anxiously sought to ascertain the reason of this. One child had apparently been deprived of its scrotum, and the outrage was imputed to evil influences. As no sorcerer could be discovered, the parents began to suspect each other of crimes unknowingly committed. So to put the matter to the proof, each parent decided to undergo the poison ordeal, but as both vomited the deadly draught previously swallowed, their innocence was clearly and convincingly established. Commenting on this case, Lévy-Bruhl suggests that: "These unhappy parents, then, do not think that the idea that they themselves have caused the death of their child at all strange, and they feel that they must ascertain its truth or falsity at the risk of their own lives." It thus ceases to appear surprising that when any remarkable happening is related to death, a wife may suspect her son or daughter, or these their mother or near kin, as the deliberate or entirely unwitting agents or accessories of evil.

T. F. PALMER.

Jesus had no more idea than his countrymen of a rational medical science; he believed, like every one else, that healing was to be effected by religious practices, and such a belief was perfectly consistent. From the moment that disease was regarded as the punishment of sin, or as the act of a demon, and by no means as the result of physical causes, the best physician was the holy man who had power in the supernatural world.

Ernest Renan.

Things Worth Knowing*

LII.

SALEM AND ITS WITCHES

THE ancient belief in witchcraft, though never extinct, passed through a sort of renaissance in the religious excitements of the sixteenth century. As early as 1548 newborn Protestant zeal against superstition began to attack all kinds of sorcery; and there was opposition also to various popular superstitions in Catholic countries. The charms by which women sought to mitigate the sorrows of childbearing were special subjects of ecclesiastical censure in the first year of Elizabeth's reign. The tendency of this was to make a witch of every midwife and wise woman who encouraged her patients by little quackeries. The trial of a supposed witch by balancing her withered form in the balance against the huge Church Bible bound in heavy boards with metal clasps, or by tying her thumbs and her toes together crosswise to see whether she would float when put into the water, attracted a concourse of people, and spread abroad the horrible superstition. "Swimming witches" became a favourite amusement of the brutal populace. "Our country people," says an English writer in 1718, "are still as fond of it as they are of baiting a Bear or a Bull."

Worst element of all in this delusion was the mistaken zeal of the clergy. Ministers of differing creeds agreed in believing that the palpable proof of spiritual existence afforded by witchcraft might serve to vanquish the ever present scepticism regarding the supernatural. Squalid tales gathered at witch-trials, many of them foul and revolting as well as unbelievable, were disseminated as religious reading, in hope that they might prove a means of grace by revulsion. If any man had the courage to question the supernatural character of these disgusting apparitions, he found himself gazetted in the authoritative writings of eminent divines as a Sadducee, a patron of witches and a witch advocate; if he took a neutral position for safety, averring the existence of witchcraft but denying the possibility of proving it in particular cases, he was dubbed a "nullibist." This in America as well as England. A new case of witchcraft did not excite pity, but something like exultation; the Sadducees were again confounded.

The village of Salem had the elements needed for a witchcraft mania—a quarrel between minister and people; a circle of young girls between eleven and twenty; including some who worked as helps, who met at the minister's house and practised together folk-sorcery and that kind of divination that has been the amusement of such for ages. The girls soon began to manifest symptoms, hysteria and hypnotism . . . a doctor called to attend them decided that they were afflicted by an "evil hand."

The glimpses of the infernal world that we get at Salem are highly incredible. The witches say prayers to a tall black man with a high-crowned hat—always a high-crowned hat. They ride on sticks and poles; sometimes they are on brooms, and sometimes three are on one pole. . . . The witches fondle yellow birds, suckling them between their fingers, and one day a girl cries out in meeting that a yellow bird sits on the minister's hat as it hangs on a pin on the pul-

pit. The witch usually sits on the great cross-beam of the meeting-house, fondling the yellow bird. One man was seen to nurse two black pigs at his breast. Sometimes a hog, sometimes a black dog appears and says "Serve me." Then the dog or the yellow pig "looks like a man," and this man has a yellow bird. . . . A great mass of inconsequent and paltry foolery was believed, not alone by owl-blasted children, but by Stoughton and the other judges and by pious Samuel Sewell himself.

The trial scenes were perdition. The "afflicted children" screamed, went into spasms, shouted, charged the prisoners with torturing them, and their apparent torments were frightful. They laid to the charge of the accused unheard of devilries, such as the charge of killing wives long since dead, attempting to choke aged grandparents, and what not beside. Husbands, in some instances, turned against wives, in others they adhered to them, were accused themselves and died with them.

The trials were accompanied by great cruelties. Officers of the law were allowed to plunder the estates of the accused of all movable property. The prisoners had to pay their gaol expenses, and many families were utterly impoverished. Prisoners were cast into dungeons and were "fettered." . . . Some were tortured to make them confess; lads were laid neck and heel until the blood gushed from their noses.

The very skill of the accused was against them. One very neat woman walked over thirty miles over dirty roads without showing any mud. "I scorn to be drabbled," she said, and was hanged for her cleanliness. George Burrough, the minister, was a strong man much addicted to gymnastics. He carried barrels of cider by inserting his fingers in the bung-hole and held a seven-foot gun at arm's length. He was the devil's man, away with him to the gallows! The first people in the colony became involved. Twenty in all were executed, four or five at the time.

There were brave men and women among them. Giles Corey, an eccentric old man, had at first signed an affidavit of uncertainty about his wife, a woman of piety, and, strange to say, an entire unbeliever in witchcraft. Two of his sons-in-law turned against her, two were for her. But when old Giles was accused he stiffened his neck. He would save his property, which was considerable and might be compromised; he would will it all to his two faithful sons-in-law. He would prove his steadfastness. He made a will perfect in every part, giving his property to his sons-in-law, and then totally refused to plead and was pressed to death. The constancy of the old man did much to overthrow the partizans of witchcraft.

The excitement had arisen with every arrest. More than fifty badgered souls had confessed that they were witches. But the wide extent of the accusations produced a change in the minds of the people. They knew not who would be struck at next. The governor at length refused to call the special court together, and after a tedious confinement a hundred and fifty were released by proclamation. The population of Salem had decreased, its business had suffered, and perhaps it never recovered its prosperity. Slowly the people got over the delusion and came to realize the incalculable and irretrievable harm that had been wrought. Judge Sewell, at a general fast, handed up to the minister to be read a humble confession, and stood while it was read. He annually kept a private day of humiliation. Honour to his memory. The twelve jurymen also signed a paper asking to be forgiven. Cotton Mather, who had been very conspicuous and published a book about it, never acknowledged himself wrong in this

* 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.

or in any other matter. From the time it became unpopular he speaks of the witchcraft trials in a far-away manner, as if they were wholly the work of someone else. He was never forgiven and probably never ought to have been.

The revulsion was complete. No witches were hanged or "swimmied" in America after the Salem trials.

The Transit of Civilization,
by E. EGGLESTON, pp. 20-34.

Correspondence

THE RIVAL RELIGIONS, ROMAN AND RUSSIAN TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—“Anyone,” writes Prof. H. J. Laski, “who deals with modern Communism is dealing with a new religion.” “Shoot all the sixteen mad dogs,” cried Vyskinsky at the Moscow trial. “In my opinion,” said ex-King Alfonso, “only the extermination once and for all of the left parties will put an end to the civil war.” “We would like,” wrote Father D. J. Phelan, “to rack and quarter Protestantism; we would like to impale it and hang it up for crows to build nests of. We would like to tear it with pincers and pierce it with red-hot irons.” Such is the sweetness and light of both religions.

A.G. CARDEW.

Branch News

A VERY successful outing was held by the Preston Branch of the N.S.S. on Sunday, August 23. We engaged a Chara to take us over 150 miles of beautiful land and water scenery, around the gorgeous lakes of Windermere, and the weather just happened to be lovely. With the inclusion of several members of the Bolton Branch we just had to have a good time. I am sure our very genial and hard-working Secretary, Mrs. Coward, must have felt well paid for the energy she must have put in this venture, after seeing everybody so happy. Community singing to the accompaniment of a musical instrument was indulged in, with a few happy interludes, helped to keep all in a very lively condition, and then on arrival at Grange Over Sands, we held a meeting on the Foreshore, and although from apparently nowhere we soon got a crowd of over 400 people. We think it can safely be said that no Free-thought meeting has ever been held there before in history, and judging by one or two of the crowd, we had evidently committed sacrilege anyway. The crowd was very orderly and listened very intently, questions followed and were dealt with by the speaker.—J.M.C.

SUICIDE FOR RELIGION

Suicide was preached in Russia by fervent missionaries as the only means to escape the snare of Antichrist, and to pass from the sins and sorrows of this fleeting world to the eternal joys of heaven. Whole communities hailed with enthusiasm the gospel of death, and hastened to put its precept into practice. At first, the favourite mode of death was by starvation. . . . Hundreds died a lingering death. . . . Death by fire was then preferred as surer and more expeditious. Priests, monks, and laymen scoured the villages and hamlets preaching salvation by flames. Men, women and children rushed into the flames. Sometimes hundreds and even thousands thus perished together . . . the stench of burnt human flesh poisoned the air for days afterwards.

Sir J. G. Frazer in the "Dying God."

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

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BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. P. Goldman.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, September 7, Mr. H. Preece.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, September 8, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham, 8.0, Friday, September 11, Mr. L. Ebury.

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