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Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions

The Press, the B.B.C. and Thomas Paine

I HAVE now before me a large number of newspaper articles from all over the country. It is not, of course, a complete list, but I fancy that the articles are more numerous than they were in the centenary of 1909, and are, on the whole, more favourable to their subject. Professor Laski wrote the article for the *Daily Herald*, and H. W. Nevinson for the *News-Chronicle*. Both were excellent. One feature about the notices we have seen is the scarcity of scandals about Paine, the product of the combination of the British Government's paid hacks and the Churches. Perhaps these have had their day, although the lower order of Christians still hang on to them. The higher ones have dropped them because they have ceased to pay. Another feature is the number of papers that stop short with noting the *Rights of Man*. *The Age of Reason* is mentioned by the few only. Perhaps the majority are afraid they may be charged with introducing a "dangerous" book to unwary readers. It is an example of the same unwritten law that prevents papers quoting the *Freethinker* by name but permits stealing from it without acknowledgment. There are a number of references to Paine's "brutality" of expression, although none of the writers is sufficiently intemperate to give us samples. One does cite the fact that Paine called King George III. a "brute." This was in *Common Sense*, and when Franklin—to whom the work was at first attributed—was asked why he did so, replied, "I did not, I would never have so insulted the animal creation." The *Yorkshire Post* says, that in Paine's last years "his habits had grown squalid," and "society no longer received him," but omits to point out that his loss of those who might have professed friendship was entirely due to his having written *The Age of Reason*. Such notices prove that we were right when we said, in the introduction to *The Age of Reason*, that everything would have been forgiven Paine, had he not written that book—a book written under the shadow of the scaffold, and from which he

never took a halfpenny of profit. No book the world possesses was ever written with so completely unselfish a purpose. But Christianity has taught its followers to hate Freethinkers for their virtues, not for their vices.

The *Times Literary Supplement* devotes two pages to a review of Paine's life. It points out that most of the stories told about Paine were the product of "professional slanderers," but repeats Sir Leslie Stephen's phrase "ignorance and impudence" concerning him. The "ignorance and impudence" Leslie Stephen was forced to withdraw. The reviewer must know that Stephen was forced by J. M. Robertson and Moncure Conway to retract what he had said about Paine, although he did so half-heartedly. The reviewer also says that with Paine "the argument dominates the presentation." This simply is not true—but in the *Supplement* one must say something deprecatory when praising a man like Paine. Paine's arguments were set in phrases that captured the imagination, and were expressed in a manner that set a new standard of English writing. In this style he has had imitators by the thousand. One could cite hundreds of passages from Paine, in which the presentation is almost completely independent of the argument. In the passages cited by the reviewer, when dealing with America, "Freedom hath been hunted round the globe," and America had been designed by Providence to "receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind," there is a clear disproof of what has just been said.

I have space for but one more comment on this aspect of Paine. Comparing Paine with Burke the reviewer says, "To-day *The Rights of Man* may seem poor enough stuff to set beside the *Reflections*." I recently read again, after some years, Burke's work. I was astonished that I had at one time been rather impressed by its style. A lot of it is sheer fustian, and the argument is poverty-stricken. Burke's style is different from that of Paine's, but is certainly not superior to it. And as an exercise in logical reasoning Burke's argument is very feeble at the side of *The Rights of Man*. One day I may give illustrations of this; it would be a good example for young readers. Burke everywhere begs the question at issue, and very often one may grant him his premiss without agreeing with his conclusion. As a reasoner—in that book—Paine had Burke at his mercy. To Paine, it must have been child's play to demolish his opponent.

Professor J. B. Firth writes in the *Daily Telegraph*, an article of the "I would if I dared" kind of an effort in which the desire to belittle Paine is checked by the facts being in the way. Paine was "checked" in England by those "responsible for orderly government," the fact being Paine never desired anything but an orderly remedying of an absurd system. But Mr. Firth says enough to comfort members of the service clubs, and old ladies of both sexes. He says that

Paine's *Crisis* was read by "excited groups of the Pennsylvania militia," while the fact was that Washington ordered the *Crisis* to be read to the whole of the American Army, and its power to nerve the men to renewed and successful efforts was admitted by all. Firth's article shows that the animus against Paine is yet lively when it has the opportunity to express itself. But decency has been acquired at the cost of courage.

On the other hand, Thetford, Paine's native town, which until recent times ignored Paine, held a public commemoration meeting with the Mayor in the chair.

* * *

Paine and the B.B.C.

When I proposed to the Executive that a letter should be sent the B.B.C. suggesting a broadcast for January 29 on Paine, one of the members remarked that the B.B.C. would not agree to the proposal. I replied I did not care much either way. If Sir John Reith and his religious council permitted it they would admit the greatness of Paine and supply an antidote to some of the religious humbuggery they put out. If they did not, they would further demonstrate their bigotry. Of course, if Paine had a century and a half ago made a raid on the Crown Jewels, or if he had been a General who had won a great victory, or if he had been the first to send missionaries to the South Seas, the B.B.C. would not have needed a reminder that January 29 was the bi-centenary of his birth. But as Paine was only one of the chief figures in the creation of the United States of America, the founder of democracy in this country, and the man who was principally responsible for the creation of a popular movement that forced the Churches to admit the fraudulent character of their claims on behalf of the Bible, it could not be expected to spend ten minutes in telling the world something about him.

Anyway a letter was sent to the B.B.C. in these terms on December 21 from the General Secretary:—

I am instructed by my Executive to call your attention to the bi-centenary of Thomas Paine which occurs on January 29, 1937. In view of the character of Thomas Paine's work and his influence in the history of reform, and of the numerous commemorative meetings that will be held in different parts of the country, my Executive suggests the advisability of arrangements being made for a broadcast by a qualified speaker on the evening of January 29.

To that came the reply:—

We are grateful to you for drawing our attention to the Bi-Centenary of Thomas Paine, but after a good deal of experiment we have now decided to use centenaries very sparingly; and in any case we regret that our arrangements for January 29 have already been made.

The letter was acknowledged expressing regret that the B.B.C.:—

cannot find ten minutes on January 29 in which to say a few words in a broadcast on one of the greatest Englishman of his time, and perhaps of all time. If your Executive cannot find time to talk of his life on January 29, perhaps it would introduce in one of its series of talks an address on *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*, two books which played so great a part in the early history of democracy in this country.

This brought the following, and final letter:—

Without being able to give any commitment, we will bear your request in mind.

The London section of the B.B.C. was unable to muster enough fairness to permit a broadcast. But we are informed by several that a mention was made of the centenary on some station. If our information

is correct, it must have been from one of the provincial regionals, from abroad, or from Ireland.

So the matter ends for the moment. Whether the B.B.C. will have the courage to introduce into one of its series of talks, a notice of Paine's two great books, we have our doubts. We shall see. But as Paine's name has been kept alive, and his reputation vindicated in spite of all that Christian malignity and political hostility could do to the contrary, we do not care very much what the B.B.C. may do. It is just possible that wide-spread attention given to Paine may cause the B.B.C. to discover that its ignoring of Paine will give him a better advertisement than its notice. Religious bigotry so often overleaps itself. The public scandal of an institution such as the B.B.C., which holds its position in virtue of the monopoly given it by the Government, being able to convert itself into a propagandist agency remains. And propaganda may be pursued either by what is suppressed or by what is made public. Freethought will get what it is strong enough to demand, and no more. For our part we haven't the least doubt that it was the fear of introducing the name of Paine to all parts of the country that determined the silence of the B.B.C. The oldest members of the community would recall the name, the younger ones might be induced to investigate. The better policy was thought to be that of silence.

And yet this better policy may have its dangers. The widespread notices might have been wider had it been possible to remind editors of local papers of the importance of Paine, but those that have been published may serve to bring to the B.B.C. the discredit it deserves. The closing words of the leading article in the *Manchester Guardian* deserve recording.

To how few men is it given to do so much with his pen as to this self-taught English staymaker and Exciseman, to write in *Common Sense* what Lord Morley has called "the most important political piece that was ever composed," to sweep England off her feet by a justification of Republicanism (in the *Rights of Man* that made him a sort of Anti-Christ to the propertied classes, and to round off all (in *The Age of Reason*) with the most sweeping attack on dogmatic orthodoxy that had ever been circulated. His memory has barely lived down the scandal with which authority (and a British Government's hired libeller) bespattered it. Yet Paine is even now something more than an historical figure, the antagonist of Burke, the friend of Washington and Jefferson and Lafayette, of William Blake and Priestley. His writings can still be read with emotion and with profit. . . . For the simple democratic case against the assumption of monarchy and aristocracy, against titles and privileges, against self-interest in war, we might do worse than go to Paine. English democracy owes him much; it may still find useful refreshment in his honest outspokenness.

And bearing in mind that this is the *least* that can be said on behalf of Paine, I beg readers to reflect on the conduct of our writers on the history of this country who deliberately exclude Paine from their pages, and on our educational system, from elementary schools up to the University, which takes care that students shall be turned out either in ignorance of Paine's work, or with a complete misunderstanding of his life and influence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Whatever fate befalls you, do not give way to great rejoicings or great lamentation; partly because all things are full of change, and your fortune may turn at any moment; partly because men are so apt to be deceived in their judgment as to what is good or bad for them.

Schopenhauer.

The Bagmen of Belief

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it." *Paine.*

"Freedom is of as much importance to humanity as food or clothing."—*Wells.*

Just as the scarlet-coloured vehicles of the General Omnibus Company relieve the drabness of London, so do the annual reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society give a welcome light relief to the output of dry-as-dust theological books. For the reports of this Society are edited by "literary superintendents," who combine the flamboyant qualities of the writers of patent-medicine advertisements and the yellowest of Fleet Street journalists. The union of these qualities makes spicy reading, and helps to add to the gaiety of a nation, which, according to old Monsieur Froissart, "takes its pleasures sadly."

A recent issue bears the arresting title *The Common Bond*, and continues a series which has included the more attractive books entitled, *Deep Calleth Unto Deep*, and *The Book and the Sword*.

In this more restrained issue the Rev. J. A. Patten justifies the title by suggesting that in a wicked world in which saucy nations are kept apart by restless ambitions, uneasy suspicions, and love of money, the Christian Bible is a common bond between them, making for brotherly love and unity. Then he gets into his usual stride and stuns the reader with figures and statistics carefully calculated to turn that unfortunate person's hair white, and curl it afterwards, and leave him reaching for his cheque-book in order to participate in so glorious a commercial proposition as helping Omnipotence to have his own way.

According to "the literary superintendent," this Bible Society has, since its foundation, published altogether 464,000,000 copies or parts of the Christian Scriptures, and sold and distributed during the last twelve months a paltry 10,970,000. Publication is now being carried on in 692 languages and dialects, no less than 14 being added last year.

Just imagine what all this huge mass of printing and bookbinding amounts to. A heap of books several times the height of the Nelson column, and, like that memorial, more ornamental than useful. If these sacred volumes were distributed amongst the population of this country every man, woman, and child would be the proud possessor of ten Bibles; but, as the sacred works are also sold, bartered and distributed abroad, some unfortunate people at home have no Bible, and some other dusky and yellow seekers after divine truth in Africa or the Polar Regions are the proud possessors of "God's Word," and cannot read it. Is it not "too deep for tears"? Even if our dear brothers, the "Chinese Presbyterians," referred to in an earlier report, are able to read this divine revelation, we wonder what they really think of the stories of "Noah's Ark" or "Jonah and the Whale"? And are these Celestials like "Mr. Wu" or the proprietor of a chop-suey restaurant at Limehouse?

There is one pleasing feature in the colporteurs of this Bible Society. Like the dear clergy, they are business men, but unlike the priests, they frankly admit the soft impeachment. The clergy pooh-poo the very idea of business, which they associate with Mammon, but they never let a shilling pass them alive. The colporteurs actually sell their Bibles, and sometimes swap them for something else, perhaps a boxing kangaroo or a white elephant. Nothing comes amiss, for the "Word of God" must be of inestimable value as barter. Anyhow, the colporteurs make

much money for the Society, for the report shows a surplus of £2,680 on the year's working. There should be a surplus, for, even if these millions of Bibles were each sold at the price of a glass of beer, the income would be very considerable. Of course, there are heavy expenses. The brave colporteurs do not work for the love of Christ, but for hard cash, and the translators, printers, and bookbinders have the same materialistic ideas. The report adds defiantly that the Society has never been in debt, and there is no reason for doubting the statement.

Ingersoll once said that when a thing was too stupid even for the pulpit, it was passed on to the missionaries. The truth of this jest is seen in the bare statement that copies of "Genesis" and "The Book of Jonah" were sold and expounded literally, by Bible Society agents. This happens, be it noted, at the time when mendacious preachers at home are assuring their badly-educated congregations that the "Book of Genesis" is an early edition of *The Origin of Species*, without Charles Darwin's tiresome details.

I have known the reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society for far more years than I care to remember. When I was a small boy, with the ambition to become a pirate and sail under the Jolly Roger, the hair-breath and thrilling adventures of the brave colporteurs filled me with envy and despair. They were to me, in those far-off days, what the bewhiskered desperados of the Pacific Coast are to the young frequenters of cinema theatres to-day. But my men had actually diddled the natives, and not just played at being pirates. Now I am getting old, and have parted with much of my hair and most of my illusions, and my dear old colporteurs are still hard at it, telling the "old, old story," pocketing the pesetas and other coins, at the peril of their lives and their sacred stock-in-trade.

This annual report, however, should make any "Intellectual" pause for a moment and reflect that the Freethought Movement has to make headway not only against the grossest ignorance, but against a most heavily endowed system of superstition. We are fighting not only the living but also dead men's money. The British and Foreign Bible Society is but one of many similar institutions which have enormous resources. Hardly a week passes but one or other of these organizations receive legacies, and collections are made constantly in churches and chapels in sympathy with them. Against all this Freethought propaganda is most severely handicapped. Its publications are boycotted in municipal and private libraries, and few booksellers have the courage to display them.

In spite of these drawbacks, the "Intellectuals" do make some headway. If Freethinkers would support systematically their own propaganda there would soon be a great alteration, and the struggle would be carried on under far more favourable conditions. What is needed is concerted support, for spasmodic supplies embarrass rather than help. If numbers of Freethinkers contributed regularly to propagandist purposes, more literature could be circulated, and more lectures delivered. Every Freethought pamphlet, every lecture, every extra copy of the *Freethinker*, are ambassadors for reason against superstition. In fighting this stupendous battle we are opposing a powerful and organized Priestcraft entrenched behind mountains of money-bags, largely dead men's money. In money lies the power of priests and their fetish-book, but, as Shakespeare has reminded us, gold can break religion as well as knit it. This particular Bible is the cord which binds together Christian priestcraft. Cut it, and the great mass of consecrated charlatanism breaks apart.

The Religious Cults of Ancient Egypt

THE hoary civilization of old time Egypt has for centuries been encircled in a halo of romance. The more its ancient history is investigated the greater its complexities become and the most learned Egyptologists agree to differ concerning many of the problems presented by recent discovery and research.

The early Greek historian, Herodotus, termed Egypt "the gift of the Nile." Such it still is. This small country is limited to the distance embraced by the annual inundation of its famous river which deposits its stratum of fertilizing sediment, carried down from the scourings of the Abyssinian highlands, and thus transforms Egypt's barren sands into productive soil. When the floods subside and the river returns to its normal channel, and its fertile sediment is exposed to the influence of the sunlit air the corn is sown which long since made Egypt the granary of Pagan Rome.

Economically, modern Egypt is confined to the valley of the Nile. The adjoining provinces of Nubia, Khartoum, and others nearer the equator have never formed any natural or historical part of the country, although they have at times been subject to Egypt's rule. Egypt proper is less than 12,000 square miles in extent, which is only about a third of the area of Ireland.

The religion of classic Egypt, assuming that a single religion ever existed in that land, has been the parent of much speculation and discussion. When the genius of Young and Champollion enabled scholars to decipher the old Egyptian inscriptions and papyri the scanty references of Greek and other early writers were greatly augmented. But, as the new knowledge increased, the more apparent became its obvious limitations, and two rival schools of interpreters arose. In his lecture on Egyptian religion, Prof. Tiele truly declared that: "The advocates of the one view see in the Egyptian religion what amounts to a pure monotheism, exhibiting itself through the manifestly silly or even barbaric forms of a multiform polytheism, with the loftiest ideas hidden like a pure gem in the crude shell of magical arts and symbolical notions." The opposing school, on the other hand, discerned nothing in the cult but ignorant and fantastic superstitions which the scribes and priests interpreted in an allegorical sense while leaving the religion of the multitude undisturbed, much as in our enlightened land, the Hebrew mythology is retained in Christian rites and ceremonies which the scholarly and evolutionary clergy dismiss in their writings as mere popular misunderstanding.

Since Dr. Tiele's address was delivered immense strides have taken place in ancient archaeology. The old conservative school of Egyptologists has been largely superseded, so much so that Dr. Holland Hall, the Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, emphatically states that: "In religious matters, the Egyptians at all periods, except the educated at the end of the eighteenth dynasty, and probably under the Saites were in the mental condition of the blacks of the Gold Coast and Niger delta. That was about their level."

In Egypt the splendour of the heavens is seldom dimmed by cloud and the solar and lunar divinities are both of the male sex. Egyptian women occupy a subordinate position, and all the goddesses save Isis are inferior in character. The spirits of the dead dwelt in the stars, and such natural entities as the Nile, mountains, and trees were regarded as living things. The deities and their inseparable associates, the sacred animals were man's perpetual protectors.

These powerful beings also preserved the dead body from the decomposition which would prevent the soul's reanimation of the corpse. The positive certainty of an after-life which appears to have been universal from the remotest times induced the Egyptians to construct the resting-places of the mummified dead with solicitude and care and to furnish the deceased with all things requisite in the abodes of the blest. Future rewards or punishments formed part of their belief. Every city had its deity who was the incarnation of natural forces, the community's totem, the guardian of the burial places or acted in some other capacity.

Centuries passed away, until the independent city communities were incorporated either in the Upper or Lower Egyptian State. Then, about 3,300 B.C., Menes established the First Dynasty, and the two States were united by that powerful ruler. This consolidation is reflected in the religion, and Dr. Günther Roeder concludes that the sun-god then became the ruler both of all other deities and mankind. The moon-god officiated as the solar divinity's deputy and messenger. Also, the moon-god becomes "the inventor of writing, arithmetic, the keeping of archives, and other administrative activities. High above all the old intertribal conflicts now rises the majesty of the godlike Pharaoh, and his Court provides a pattern for the heavenly government. The various local gods are reconceived and redefined. . . . The chief god is given a family, and round him are grouped his kindred and friends. These groups are at first not on amicable terms, but under the pressure of circumstances they gradually modify each other. The reigning Pharaoh instals his own district deity as the King's god, and imposes his worship throughout the whole country. This deity, thus raised temporarily for political reasons to the dignity of the god of the empire, has long been supreme king of the gods in his own district. When thus introduced into other temples and given a place beside the local deities this imperial god tends to displace the former, and ultimately absorb them."

Yet, so complex were conditions then prevalent, that it is extremely difficult to determine the course of religious evolution and gods once powerful have become mere shadows. Amon was the supreme deity of Thebes, and when in 2,000 B.C. that city's rulers made Amon the State divinity, all the temples accepted this strange god, while the ancient and customary deities were dismissed. Osiris, the divinity of the dead at Busiris, similarly eclipsed all other gods who had protected the remains of the dead.

Religious reformers appeared even in Egypt, and surviving scripts testify to their activities. Presumably, the reformation attempted by King Amenophis IV. (1375-58 B.C.) was preceded by protestors against the dogmas and persecuting zeal of the priesthood. Amenophis, or Aknâton, as he afterwards called himself, strove to exalt his own cult to supreme religious power. All the divine images were driven from the temples, and if the royal commands were obeyed, even the names of the gods were erased, even that of Amon, the imperial divinity. Then the people were bidden to worship a new god set up in the temples, and apparently they outwardly conformed.

The new divinity was the solar orb venerated as the creator and sustainer of the earth and its inhabitants. The centre of the reformed faith was at El-Amarna, a city erected by order of the King. The sun had long been recognized as a god, but now the lord of day was declared to be not a personal deity either in human or animal form. "Sacrifice," writes Roeder, "was paid to this new ruler of the worlds not in an enclosed temple in subdued light, but on an altar under the open sky."

The priests bitterly resented, then as now, the conduct of a Freethinking monarch and their opposition was stubborn. So, after Aknâton's death, although his immediate successors adhered to the new religion the older faith was restored, and in the brief reign of Tutankhamen the deposed god Amon of Thebes was reinstated as the national deity. The animosity of the orthodox displayed itself in the erasure of the heretic King's name in the temples, and it was even deleted from the lists of rulers so that Aknâton's very memory should be blotted out. Indeed, in later times, he was almost forgotten.

Through the whole course of Egyptian history the populace combined magic with religion. Our earliest sources of religious ideas are the Pyramid texts, and these are little concerned with ethics. The virtuous are rewarded and sinners punished, and in the *Book of the Dead*, the departed spirit is depicted as it makes the negative confession that it has not been guilty of this, that or the other misdoing for the gods may punish, but also graciously forgive the delinquent.

Egyptian religion largely influenced the cults of neighbouring lands, and it served to mould Hebrew thought. Roeder notes that: "The Old Testament contains Psalms closely akin to Egyptian songs. Among the Proverbs of Solomon are literal translations from an Egyptian book of proverbial philosophy. The Hellenes carried far afield—even into Russia and France—deities of Egypt in Greek attire—especially Osiris, Isis and Horus. The Roman Empire thereafter established them in Italy, and the Roman legions took them with them across the Rhine and into Asia. Christianity modelled its group of Mother and Child on that of Isis with her son Horus, and shaped its cross, St. Anthony's Cross, from the Egyptian symbol of life."

Animism and ancestor-worship remained the real religion of Egypt from prehistoric times until the ancient cults were forcibly suppressed by the Christian Church. But even then the old rites and ceremonies were secretly conducted by soothsayers and magicians. The souls of the dead were still held to survive, and anxiously await an opportunity to return to the body or to dwell within the framework of some lower animal. The residence of the dead is frequently placed in the land of the setting sun, and the dead man's face was turned in his grave towards the Western sky. Beliefs varied from place to place, and in some districts the departed ascended to the distant stars. In others the dead descended to the underworld where Osiris is enthroned as judge, and confers happiness on those deemed just while consigning to perdition all those whose lives were wicked.

T. F. PALMER.

Beauty Implacable

A SONNET

IRKED by Life's futile Creed of Selfishness,
 After a tedious day of trivial toil,
 Oft have I known the hungry heart recoil
 From thought of Sleep's benign unconsciousness,
 Choosing instead the stab of Thought's duress,
 Yet feeling agony will be the foil
 Of gnawing nerve and brain-cell, in that moil
 Men know as self-contempt, amid Time's stress!
 Incredibly alone at life's worst hour,
 My soul aware of Love's remorseless throe,
 And conscious of the unending quest for Light,
 I have looked up, where reeling stars enflower
 The fields of heaven: once more to feel and know
 The insupportable loveliness of Night!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria, W.C.A.

The Progress of Naturalism

PROBABLY all Secularists make a definite distinction between what is natural on the one hand, and that which is alleged to be supernatural, extra-natural, mystic or occult on the other. The antithesis clearly corresponds to that between the realm of genuine causation and the spurious realm of transcendentalism. The extension of the former at the expense of the latter is one of the cardinal features of progress; and except for the great gap in the Dark and Middle Ages, the process has been on the whole continuous during the last 2600 years or so.

The earlier civilized peoples of the Near East evidently "inherited" a great mass of non-natural ideas and beliefs from primitive ancestors, and the general mental condition may be gathered from the following passage in Breasted's *Ancient Times*: "Just as the ancient Orientals accepted the rule of Kings without question, so they accepted the rule of the gods. . . . This limited their ideas of the world about them. They thought that every storm was due to the interference of some god, and that every eclipse must be the angry act of some god or demon. Hence the Orientals made little inquiry into the natural causes of such things. In general they suffered from a kind of intellectual bondage to religion and to old ideas."

Among these early peoples the progress of ideas—except those concerned with the more obvious things about them—was relatively slow. And this may be explained by the fact that progress with them was *original*, no help being received from others, as was the case with peoples developing later, such as the Greeks and the Hebrews.

The early Greeks also took over a mass of primitive ideas. E.g., the mention in Homer of "owl-faced" and "cow-faced" goddesses points to animal-gods such as those of Egypt. But the "nimble-witted" Hellenes broke through the old subservience to tradition and advanced apace. By the sixth century B.C. Thales had made what we must regard as one of the greatest, most fundamental and far-reaching discoveries of all time. To quote Breasted again: "Hitherto men had believed that eclipses and all other strange things that happened in the skies were caused by the momentary angry whim of some god. Now, however, Thales boldly proclaimed that the movements of the heavenly bodies were in accordance with fixed laws. The gods were thus banished from control of the sky-world where the eagle of Zeus once ruled." And to this we add the arrival at naturalistic, pro-evolutionary views in biology, followed by the enunciation of the rise of man from a savage to a civilized condition, the like advance from transcendentalism to naturalism in history, the initiation of a rational system of medicine, and many other progressive features.

The ancient Hebrews offer a marked contrast to the Greeks. The two peoples acquired civilization at about the same time (800 B.C.). But unfortunately for the Western world, the former—able, energetic, but non-intellectual, egotistic, exclusive, intolerant, aggressive, and, so far as matters of religion were concerned, cruel and treacherous—chose the transcendental way. Their course was in the main followed by Christianity. Natural investigation became needless, and sinful so far as it resulted in conflict with Christian doctrines and the old adopted legends. Hence the intellectual debacle which initiated the Dark and Middle Ages.

But though well-nigh extinct for more than a thousand years, naturalism definitely reappeared with the work of Copernicus and others in the sixteenth century, and it has since made continuous progress.

The interesting and significant result has been that just as the free intellectual outbreak in Greece resulted in "Greek Rationalism," so the modern renaissance has been inevitably followed by the re-development of Rationalism, Freethought or Secularism. And despite minor checks we are justified in believing that in civilized and tolerably educated societies there will be no more intense and wholesale retrogression to superstition, and that the emancipative movement will sooner or later be consummated.

J. REEVES.

Bi-Centenary of Thomas Paine

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S COMMEMORATION DINNER

IN spite of the number of intended guests who were paying compulsory tribute to the influenza fiend, there were well over 200 present at the Paine Commemoration at the Holborn Restaurant on January 23. The tables were delightfully decorated with a plentiful display of spring flowers, and the dinner itself was all that could be desired. Everyone appeared to spend an enjoyable evening, and the enthusiasm was most marked. The following is a verbatim report of the speeches:—

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN: I am sorry to say that we have been disappointed in the matter of some of the speakers this evening. On Tuesday we had notice that Professor Laski was very ill with influenza. On Wednesday night I had warning by telephone that Dr. Carmichael was in bed with a high temperature, and on Friday night I had a 'phone message from Mrs. Brailsford, telling us that her husband was also ill with influenza, and the doctor had warned him that he must not leave home. Lord Snell also wrote that other engagements would prevent his being with us. That robs us of four of the speakers whom we had hoped to hear. Then, in addition to that, we have a number of friends who would have been present to-night—quite a considerable number—who are not speakers, but are usually here, whose absence is also due to the epidemic. So, that in the midst of your jollification, you will remember the poor souls who are away and would like to be present. Then, of course, there are just two or three, perhaps more, of our friends whom, unfortunately, we shall not see at the Society's meetings again. We remember, with pleasure, their presence; and with pride and gratitude their work for the cause.

To-night there is some departure from our usual programme. We are not concerned with the National Secular Society as such, we are concerned with the commemoration of a very very great man (hear, hear). I do not know any organization in this country which has a better right to speak about Thomas Paine than the National Secular Society, for the National Secular Society was formed of a number of Freethinking Societies, under various names, which dated right back to the time of Paine, and most of which were formed under the inspiration of his teaching. We have, I think, been in the true line of apostolic descent. We have carried, so far as we can, Paine's principles into practice, and we have done what we could to teach people to stand upright, with their eyes open and their minds alert.

We are commemorating the birth of Thomas Paine, but I hope we are doing more than that. I don't know that birth is a thing for which any man may take credit to himself. Not many of us had anything to do with it. Everyone is born to die, and I am certain that if it required great intellectual exertion to achieve death the majority of the human race would be sure of immortality. After all, what matters is not where and when a man is born or when and where he dies, but what happens in between birth and death. The important thing is whether, when we go out we fall as so many leaves in a huge forest that go fluttering to the ground and are lost, or whether we have so lived that when we die those who knew us are able to say "here stood a man."

I want to indicate the chief characteristics of Thomas Paine, and I think the cardinal feature of his character was shown in his reply to the very well

known saying that Franklin had uttered in his presence: "Where liberty is, there is my country." And Paine said, "No; where liberty is not, there is mine"; Wherever Paine went, wherever he was, he was always fighting for liberty for other people. That was the key-note of his character: fighting for liberty. In America, when he arrived there in the end, he found the American colonists protesting and fighting against the tyranny of the British Government, then headed by a half-insane monarch, who was preceded by a stupid monarch, and followed by a very bad one. He found that they had imposed upon the American people a series of regulations and rules and laws that were not in force in England, and in that famous essay of his *Common Sense*, he, for the first time, pointed out that if the Americans were only fighting for the remission of taxation they were fighting about something for which it was not worth while taking up arms. He was the first one to drive home the lesson that the only salvation for America was independence. More than any other man he was responsible for the creation of the United States of America. He was the man who first used that phrase; he was the man to drive home its meaning; he was the man, foremost among the leaders of America, of those who finally achieved the independence of the Colonists. And when, during the fighting the American troops were in disorderly retreat before the British, they were disheartened, and even Washington said that the game was up, then it was that Paine wrote—fighting by day and writing by night—that famous series of short pamphlets called *The Crisis*, which put fresh heart into the American soldiers and took them forward on a course to ultimate victory. No man, I repeat, more than Paine, was responsible for the creation of the United States of America. And it was left for a President of the United States—Theodore Roosevelt—to describe Thomas Paine as "a filthy little Atheist." The only great thing about that remark was that it managed to put three lies into three words, and not even an American President could do better than that. Paine was not filthy; he was not little, unless you call five feet ten little; and he was not an Atheist. That is the one fault I have to find with him. Freethought had not generally developed to that point. Paine's aim was to fight Atheism, but like so many people who fought for theism he did more injury to religion than to Atheism.

From America Paine went to France, and there found twenty million people without rights; without sufficient food; mere serfs to a corrupt aristocracy; a court saturated with viciousness, and a church bitter and intolerant, owning three-fourths of the land of France. Twenty millions with no rights at all; five millions with all power, privilege, rights, and wealth. Again he figured as the champion of the oppressed. His pen, his ideas are as clearly evident in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, as they are in the American Declaration of Independence. The French honoured Paine. I think they honour him more today than he is honoured in England, and French historians do not play such a cowardly and contemptible part as our schools and colleges and universities do with regard to him.

Then he returned to England, the land of his birth, and found here the masses of the people uneducated; he found again a corrupt court and King, which had openly adopted a policy of bribery from top to bottom. He found a parliament where the motto was that every man had his price; a parliament half-filled with the nominees of rotten boroughs, members kept in the pockets of this or that noble or great landlord; he found the Press muzzled; he found the people without education; he found free speech prohibited; he set to

work here, as he had set to work in France and America, to right these wrongs, recognizing that what he had written with special application to America and France had equal application to England.

In England Paine's chief work was done with three books. They were *Common Sense*, in which the theory of government was analysed; *The Rights of Man*, in which the theory of monarchy was examined; and in which, over 140 years ago, there was laid down a scheme of death duties and old age pensions to start at 60, free education, paid members of Parliament, universal suffrage, and a maternity benefit. Well, we have maternity benefits of some sort now; and it is good to find the British Government is alive to the necessity of maternity benefit, putting £25,000 a year by for the education of the young Princess Elizabeth. It is well that the Government should thus be alive to the fact that the proper bringing up of children entails expense, and that it should do its best to remove part of the back-breaking burden from the shoulders of parents.

In England, Paine met with an opponent—I won't say a doughty opponent, because when you compare Burke's argumentation with Paine's, it is, in parts at least, almost pitiful in its weakness. But the book that Paine wrote in reply, *The Rights of Man*, became the great guide for reformers in England for well over thirty years. Most of you will remember how in the Christian mythology some men, watching at night in the fields, saw suddenly a great light, and then a star showed itself, and that star had the wonderful capacity for guiding those men across country and then standing still over a little inn where the Saviour of the world was being born; and if we can borrow at least the imagery of that we may say that the people of Paine's time saw in his teaching a great light, they found in him a star to follow, and they followed him in a way that hardly any other man in England was followed. No man in England was more hated than Paine, but no man was more passionately loved. His books circulated by the hundreds of thousands. In two or three months two hundred thousand copies of Paine's *Rights of Man* were sold at two or three shillings a copy. One of his biographers, Clio Rickman, calculated that two million copies were sold altogether. Large sales also accompanied *Common Sense* and *The Crisis*, but Paine did not draw a single farthing of the money. Every penny of it was given to the various societies that were established up and down the country to preach and propagate his principles.

One cannot realize unless one has gone into the literature of the time and, above all, of the trials of the period, what the effect of Paine's work was in those days. The Government was in a very great panic. Troops were ordered to London, the guard at the Tower was strengthened, the Seditious Purposes Act, the Treasonable Purposes Act, and the Seditious Meetings Act, were passed expressly for the purpose of suppressing Paine's writings, and these were proscribed by royal proclamation. It was more than a man's liberty was worth to be found reading them or to be found recommending others to read them. Men were hunted down and sent to transportation for as long a period as fourteen years for having been known to recommend Paine's writings to be read by others. Burke said, and said well, that the only way to answer Paine was by criminal justice. I agree with Burke: that was the only satisfactory way they could answer Paine—with prison, not with argument.

The only answer Burke could find to Paine was in imprisonment, and the only answer the Government could find to Paine was in imprisonment. It prosecuted, it imprisoned. Paine was the first one to be summoned. He was summoned

to the Guildhall and tried for seditious and treasonable writing. He had said of hereditary monarchy, that to hand down a people from generation to generation to one family was treating them as though they were cattle. He was the first man in this country to propagate a set policy of Republicanism. There could be no answer to his arguments except that of prison. At the Guildhall trial of Paine the Attorney-General, in his opening speech, pointed out that actually pages of *The Rights of Man* had been used to wrap up sweets for children. Think of it! Sugar and sedition; toffee and treason; blasphemy and butterscotch! Could anyone think of a more infamous method of inoculating the human system with Republicanism than that? The very print might have stuck to the toffee and been swallowed by the children in all innocence!

In those days the juries were very complaisant. They were all special juries and the special jurors had two guineas and a dinner if they brought in a verdict of guilty; one guinea and no dinner if they brought in a verdict of not guilty. The jury that tried Paine's case would not even trouble the judge to sum up; would not even listen to counsel for the prosecution to answer the counsel for the defence; they found Paine guilty at once and then went on to their dinner and two guineas. Sometimes I think that in those days people were made of sterner stuff than they are to-day. Reformers did not cry immediately "Let's have a petition." They said over and over again, "We will not do it," and they did not do it, and they went to prison for not doing it, and they taught the Government that it could not stop them doing. Search for Paine's works was everywhere made. One curious thing occurred in Bolton, one of the centres of the factory system. The town crier went through the streets of the town searching for copies of Paine's *Rights of Man* and *Common Sense*, and reported that in the whole of Bolton he had not been able to find the least trace of the rights of man or commonsense (laughter). Bolton was evidently a very pious and loyal constituency.

Well, things went on in spite of the Government persecution, and then came *The Age of Reason*. That was Paine's unforgivable crime. You may be forgiven anything in this country except attacking religion. *The Age of Reason* is a book the main principles of which to-day no educated clergyman would contradict. There was in Paine's book nothing that was strikingly new. All that he said had in the main been said before him by the deists, but there was in this book what was not in the others. Paine was not only a great reformer but a great writer. He initiated a new type of literary advocacy. Paine wrote so that every man could read, whether he was of the mob who were educated or the mob who were uneducated—there is no real distinction here. There is no difference in the mob mind in its emotions, in its proneness to passion and prejudice, no matter where one may find it. Paine's offence was that he attacked the Bible in a way that everybody could understand.

In Richard Carlile, Paine found a great follower some years after he was dead. Richard Carlile did more to achieve the freedom of the Press in England than any other man. Carlile was largely influenced, as he tells us, by reading Paine. He came to London, saw what was being done, and made up his mind that he would publish every book that the Government said should not be published, and he published them one after the other. He published edition after edition of *The Age of Reason*. Carlile went to prison for it more than once; and altogether spent nine years and seven months in gaol. When he was in prison his wife sold *The Age of Reason* and she went to

(Continued on page 90)

Acid Drops

Mr. Beverley Nichols writes in the *Sunday Chronicle*, that he is astonished at the silly letters he receives from those who write for his advice. We are only surprised that Mr. Nichols should be surprised at the quality of his devotees.

The advertising campaign of the Coronation is now gaining momentum, and we have no doubt that the experts will get their reward. So far as we can see, the only thing that would stop a "full house" being secured for the show, and the advertised enthusiasm being realized, would be if Edward VIII. were to take it into his head to stage a public ride down Oxford Street at the time the procession was passing to Westminster Abbey.

Prebendary Carlile, who recently celebrated his ninetyeth birthday, is disturbed to think that many children in this country have not learned to say their prayers. The Prebendary may take heart, for there are many children of mature years who have not given up saying them. The opinions of the non-praying children at one end of this scale might be worth having concerning the praying ones at the other end.

The Dean of Rochester is convinced that a great revival is at hand. The Dean has evidently taken a leaf from the boosting of the Coronation, which makes certain of a big crowd by arranging a gaudy procession and advising crowds to go and see the crowds that will be there. But we doubt if it will work as the Dean wishes. Now if the Dean could guarantee that the King would preach a sermon, with his mother by his side, and the Princess Elizabeth would recite something, then we could guarantee an enormous crowd. But merely to get converted? We are afraid not.

The *Universe* says that the bodily ascension of Jesus to heaven "forty days after his resurrection," is not merely "an historical fact," but it is one of "religious significance." We agree with the last sentence. Every student of mental pathology will recognize its significance. Alienists have scores of such cases.

Karl Barth's fatuous letter to the *British Weekly* (five and a half columns, and even then "to be continued") is a sort of manifesto asking the Christian Church to support those Germans who have not yet toed the line in acknowledging Hitlerist supremacy in church government. The letter is hopefully addressed to "Dear Fellow Christians," but which sect or division of "Christians" does he mean? Is it the Church of England which almost unanimously followed King Henry the Eighth, or is it the section of Christians who follow the Papal Dictatorship? We see multitudinous signs that the "Vicar of Bray" policy is as popular in Germany as elsewhere.

James Hilton, the popular writer, has written a "Prayer" which is printed in the pious press as if "Mr. Chipp's" had come to life wearing a clerical dog-collar. Mr. Hilton starts asking God to "Help us to rebuild the world." Yes, that is the latest note in godism: if the world is to be rebuilt man has got to do it just as if there was no God. But we can still drag in God by pretending that God "helps." G. W. Foote used to tell the story of the cook who said there were these ingredients in roasting meat: the joint, the fire, the roasting-jack; and then also the Spirit of Meat-roastery which really did the business!

The vicar of St. Mark's, Mitcham has been giving a lecture on the causes of crime. For once a parson omits to talk of "infidelity" as the source of criminality. The vicar has been a prison chaplain—as he puts it: "I have been in prison for three years, and I sometimes feel sorry I ever came out." We wonder whether the Vicar has ever canvassed his congregation on this point.

The *Methodist Recorder*—notwithstanding a general sympathy with the Archbishop's recent "impressive broadcast" appeal for a revival of religion—says "It must be recognized that the Archbishop's appeal, even though backed by other religious leaders, cannot work a miracle." That's the worst of these sceptical days. In olden times a saint's toenail could have converted more people in ten minutes than all our clergy can do in a century.

Glorious news from the land of guns and concentration camps. At the University of Heidelberg (Germany), a student before matriculating must produce documentary evidence of the religion of both his parents and of his four grandparents. Give youth a chance is the growing demand in England, but in Nazi Germany it is a question of the grandmothers and grandfathers. Back to the grandmothers and grandfathers is after all but a stepping stone in the Nazi policy of back to the dark ages.

The question of Birth-Control worries Roman Catholics almost to their graves. Why it should do so is not quite clear; for, as Mr. Belloc told Archbishop Hinsley one day, there was nothing to worry about really. Even if the Reformation had succeeded to a certain measure, the success was almost nullified because, according to Mr. Belloc, Catholics were "outbreeding" Protestants. "Among my own people," said the Archbishop, "there will be no empty cradles." Then why oppose birth-control for other people? One Jesuit, Father Davis, thinks Catholic chemists should combine to fight Birth-Control—a piece of insolence if ever there was any. No one wants to dictate to Catholics on the subject; why are they so anxious to dictate to others and do their utmost to force their medieval views on non-Catholics, especially if it is to their advantage to "outbreed" everybody?

"Catholics kiss the crucifix," we are told by a very orthodox Catholic editor, "because it is a very devout practice thoroughly approved by the Church, and indeed indulged in many cases. A similar explanation will apply to the kissing of statues." Just in the same way an African witch-doctor would explain the kissing of an African idol or totem; and if there is any difference in a "savage" grovelling in front of some idiotic totem, and a Catholic grovelling in front of some equally absurd "statue," we should like to know of it. Curious that the controversial pen of Mr. Belloc, ready almost always to defend any credulous piece of superstition so long as it is labelled Catholic, is nearly always silent on that kind of grovelling.

Fifty Years Ago

SIMPLE BIBLE TEACHING

THE children in Standard IV. were told to write out the commandment against lying, but, of course, they were not invited to give some Bible illustrations of this part of the decalogue. Here are a couple as samples of what might be given. "Now, therefore, behold the Lord hath put a *lying spirit* in the mouth of all these thy prophets" (1 Kings xxii, 23). "If the truth of God hath more abounded through *my lie* unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" (Romans iii 7). God and his great apostle Paul both did a little lying on their own account, and as example is stronger than precept, we may judge how veracious children are likely to be who study the "blessed book."

Children in Standard V. are requested to "Give instances of bravery and generosity in the life of Jonathan." Capital, splendid, or, as the Frenchman said, "magnificent—very good." Surely the youthful mind must have wondered why the examiners did not ask them to give instances of bravery and generosity in the lives of God's favourites. The reason is obvious. God's favourites, the heroes of Bible history, were a scurvy lot, and virtue has to be sought for in the Esaus whom God hated and the Jonathans he contemned.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—D. Fisher, 48.; A. Pyfett, £1.
- S. GRIFFITH.—Thanks, but we are terribly overcrowded at the moment; so much of our space has been taken up with Paine Bi-Centenary.
- C. HARPER.—Later, no space at the moment.
- L. H. BORRILL.—Received and shall appear as soon as possible.
- J. BROWNE.—Thanks for good wishes. Space badly wanted at the moment.
- ATHOS ZENOO.—Shall appear as soon as possible.
- S. NEWTON.—Sorry we are unable to locate exactly the passage from Ingersoll. The edition of the works of Paine you have is probably the first edition issued by Carlile. Pleased you like the introduction.
- J. PARVIS.—We note your report of the excellent work being done by Mr. J. T. Brighton. He deserves all the support that can be given him.
- R. EDMUNDS.—Thanks for new subscriber; paper being sent.
- A. BARKER and T. F. PALMER.—Thanks. You both have an acquaintance with Freethought literature to make your praise of the Paine issue of value. We are considering the question of turning the sketch into a pamphlet.
- E. TRASK.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- H. WIGGLESWORTH.—Pleased to hear the *Freethinker* has been of such help to you. Cuttings are always welcome—it is the principal method of keeping in touch with the things we are interested in.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. Roselli, giving as long notice as possible.
- All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

Sugar Plums

To-day (February 7) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh. His subject will be "Modern Science and the Idea of God." Admission will be free, with reserved seats at sixpence and one shilling. The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock.

The Secular Society, Limited has just issued Colonel Ingersoll's magnificent *Oration on Thomas Paine*. It is published at price twopence, with tasteful coloured wrapper. Postage will be extra. We anticipate a large sale for this pamphlet.

We have to call attention to two errors in the introduction to *The Age of Reason*, both discovered when it was too late to make the correction. On page 10, line two, "£150" should read £50, and on page 22, line nine, "£203," should read £20. At the rate the book is selling we ought to be able to correct these errors in a new edition in a few months.

The wide-spread notices of Paine in the public press indicate that the great reformer still has a real public

and that his name and works may still be used to advance Freethought in both religion and politics. We have done what we could to help on this possible revival of Paine, and the *Age of Reason* at 4d. is an indication of what might be done. While the subject is "warm" we suggest that our friends all over the country may help in the distribution of *The Age of Reason* by inducing newsagents and booksellers to display copies of the book with window cards that have been printed. Supplies of the book will be sent, on sale or return, and as every bookseller that has placed the work on sale has sent repeat orders, the sale is assured. We beg all Freethinkers to take advantage of the opportunity.

A social evening under the auspices of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. will be held in Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, London, E., on Saturday evening, February 13. The programme will consist of dancing, games, musical items, etc., and all Freethinkers within range are invited. Admission is free, and the proceedings begin at 7 o'clock. A hearty welcome, and an enjoyable evening is the usual order at the West Ham Branch Socials.

Dr. W. A. Brend writes:—

You were kind enough to review my book, *Sacrifice to Atlantis: A Study of Sex and Civilization*, at some length in the *Freethinker* last autumn. In view of the appeal of the London Labour Party for support for those with progressive ideas at the forthcoming L.C.C. election, it may interest you to know that the Council has decided that my book is "unsuitable" for their Education Library—a library, I understand, intended mainly for the use of teachers.

We think some of the London voters might well make it their business to write their member on this matter. We are used to different parties, religious and—ostensibly non-religious "doping" children, but there is no justification whatever for their preventing adults indulging in a moderate course of mental development. Dr. Brend's book is a valuable one, and naturally contains much "controversial" matter. But is there any adequate reason why the L.C.C. should so insult the intelligent teachers it has in its employ by doing what it can to prevent them reading outside the limit of scholastic orthodoxy? As we have so often said, we wish teachers would show greater independence in these matter and vigorously protest against this kind of treatment.

"Christianity and the Growth of Militarism" will be the subject dealt with by Mr. R. H. Roselli at the Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, London, W., on behalf of the West London Branch N.S.S. this evening (February 7), at 7.30. The subject is topical and of general interest, and the local saints will no doubt see that a number of orthodox friends are present.

Mr. H. Cutner pays a return visit to the Leicester Secular Society to-day (February 7). His address, "Who Was Shakespeare?" should interest all lovers of England's greatest writer, particularly as Mr. Cutner is taking a very unorthodox standpoint. It is expected that what he has to say will provoke considerable discussion and defenders of the "Man from Stratford" should turn up in good force.

The Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. have secured headquarters at 17 Grange Road, Kingston-on-Thames, and a syllabus of lectures, debates, discussions, and socials for Thursday evenings at 8 o'clock is arranged. Freethought literature will also be available. Members and friends of the movement are invited to allocate their Thursday evenings for attendance at the new centre.

Professor Levy was unable to keep his appointment to speak for the Manchester Branch N.S.S. last Sunday owing to an attack of influenza. Naturally there was keen disappointment, but fortunately the services of Mr. Shortt of Manchester were available, and he stepped into the breach and gave an interesting lecture on "Science and Religion."

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prison. Then his wife's sister followed. Shopmen sold one after the other and also went to prison. These people went from shop to prison and from prison to shop time after time. Carlile said to the Government, "You can break but you cannot bend me," and in the end Carlile and his group of fighters won. The fight for the freedom of the Press; the fight for the free discussion of religion was substantially won in the first thirty years of the last century; and the influence around which it was won, the personality at the centre of that struggle, was Thomas Paine.

Some of you will recall that in the Great War—it was a war which was called great merely because it was large—when the Germans were marching over France there came a point at which the French general gave the word "They shall not pass"; and the French took heart and fought as Frenchmen can fight, with all that idealism that very few other people can feel as the French do; they fought and held the enemy back in one of the most desperate battles of that war. And so it is, that in history there comes a time when wrong has had its day, when tyranny has grown so intolerable that some man stands up and says, "This thing shall end," and then after days and nights of struggle the terrible thing is thrown back crippled and maimed, and men take heart from the partial defeat of humanity's oppressors.

To-day, nearly 130 years after Paine's death, we need a man like Thomas Paine; to-day, when politicians write their records in the causes they betray rather than in the principles they advocate; when it has become a sheer matter of truth that belief in religion can no longer be accompanied by intellectual integrity, and when over a large part of Europe you have a narrow nationalism enshrining intolerance, in these days we have great need for a man like Paine—at least for a man with something of the spirit of Paine—a man who can say "This thing shall no longer be"; that men must stand erect and face whatever is before them, that there are conditions where it may be nobler to die than to live. Thanks to the miseducation of our schools, colleges, universities, and historians generally, men and women to-day know little how much they owe to Paine; they do not realize how much of the liberty they have dates from Paine.

Luckily, though a man may be buried his work goes on; though a man may be forgotten, that which he has taught has its effect in the lives of those who know him not; the good a man does lives after him just as truly as the evil that he commits, and those to-day who breathe a larger, a freer air; those who to-day cherish nobler ambitions than they otherwise might do, little know how much they owe to Thomas Paine, the citizen of the world, champion of the oppressed, knight-errant of humanity.

MRS. JANET CHANCE: I am glad that the Chairman did not carry out his original thought of leaving it to others to speak of Tom Paine, for then we should have missed one of the finest surveys and appreciations of Tom Paine that we are likely to hear, and one which no one else could have given but Mr. Cohen. He tells me that at one stage of his recent illness his mind became clearer than it had become in recent years. All I say is God help the rest of us if Mr. Cohen's mind gets any clearer.

Well, we are here to-night to pay tribute to Tom Paine and *The Age of Reason*; that man who, as Brailsford said, drew horizons on paper and pursued the infinite in deeds. Now if any of you have not been reading Brailsford's chapter on Paine, in his book on Shelley and Godwin, I recommend that phrase to whet your appetite for more, and it makes me

sorry that he is not with us to-night. It would be better if others besides ourselves were here to-night to do honour to Tom Paine. Surely all the lovers of democracy, all the citizens of the United States, all the heirs of the French Revolution, and all enemies of superstition ought to be with us here to-night to do honour to him, and not only to do honour, but surely to take up his work and carry it one stage further; and what an amazing work it was.

Has it ever been given to any man to deal such resounding blows at such critical times and on such fundamental issues? I sometimes wonder, you know, if the younger generation has any idea of the kind of world out of which Tom Paine and people like him have lifted us. I don't pretend that I have lived for 150 years, but I do think that in my young days there was a sturdiness both in belief and in opposition to it that is now sometimes lacking; certainly sturdiness of belief is lacking. I don't think we really know what it was to live in a time when belief really meant something; when dogma was a cast-iron thing and people knew what was literal truth in eternal verities.

I know Arnold Bennett says there was no uncertainty, and every child knew of God and could tell you precisely where you would be in a million years, and I remember once going to my own father on a very critical matter in my own small life, and he said "The only thing I care about is whether you are washed in the blood of the Lamb." I could not help feeling that it did not help me in my little problem, but that was what belief was in those days. Those were days of sturdy beliefs and people lived up to them; while, frankly, I think, this is an age of slurry, and there are people who would believe anything. I sometimes wish I could go eaves-dropping, for if some will say to a rank outsider like me certain things, what would they say when we are not there. One told me of a birth-control case in our village—a virgin birth. I said, "Oh," and she said, "You need not laugh, the doctor has told me that such cases are common." I said, "I am not laughing. I think it is an extremely serious matter." "What do you mean by an extremely serious matter?" "Well," I said, "if this sort of thing spreads, the entire basis of the birth-control movement will have to be revised." (Laughter.)

Now, if there is one thing that Tom Paine did it was to show the international character of freedom of thought, and I want to say one word, because I felt deeply when in Vienna and Budapest last autumn and met councillors and public men, how strongly it was felt in Europe that a responsibility rests on England to maintain such liberties as she has; and I came home with a sense of pride in England. But, as one friend put it, I was plunged when I came back into what I may call a modern witch-hunt, and I was no longer so sure of England and no longer so proud of England. I got back to England on that fatal Thursday of the late King's abdication, and there in my cathedral city I attended a mayor's tea party. I don't know whether you have ever been amongst a pack of savages, with clashing teeth, tomahawks displayed, and javelins whistling round your head, but that was about what was happening in the mayor's parlour. One of the painted savages told me things I must not repeat, and when the idea of physical torture was raised, expressed the desire to see her victim subjected to all the torture we have seen inflicted by superstition when it is challenged. But I felt safe. I saw a man across the room—a man whom we may not agree with entirely, but whose soul of a Rationalist led me to shake him by the hand and say—"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" As I was thinking of those experiences which, as I say, make me seem ashamed of England, a phrase of Tom Paine's which had impressed me when I was reading his book recurred to

me. It was "The Bible is the word of God: who told us so?" The answer to that question is no one at all, except that we tell one another so, and it struck me what a responsibility lies upon all of us because of what we tell one another, and how it makes it incumbent upon us to take our Secularism out from here into every phase of social work and into political work and make it felt, because, as the Chairman has so well said already, how badly we need at present people of courage, with clarity of thought, and, above all, full of the standards of thought which Tom Paine had, and I should like to close by modifying the words of Wordsworth and saying "Tom Paine, thou shouldst be living at this hour; England hath need of thee."

DR. HAR DAYAL: I wish only to emphasize another aspect of Thomas Paine's teaching, especially as I come from Asia, where you will be pleased to learn that Thomas Paine's works, *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*, were translated by a friend of mine into my language several years ago, so that our young people are reading Thomas Paine in our own language. They are proud that Thomas Paine said "The world is my country." I honour him as absolutely one of the greatest men I have read of in history and on account of his complete freedom from that distressing malady called patriotism and nationalism. This is just a despicable mental aberration and one which is dangerous, too, because, after all, what is nationalism and what is nationality but an historical accident falling upon the top of a geological accident. And therefore there is no more reason to be proud of being an Englishman or a Frenchman than of being proud of being a crocodile. Our minds have been, by the system of education, led to the conclusion that we are first and foremost patriots of some sort, but I find in the writings of Thomas Paine a great antidote to a poison which is slowly sapping the vitality of modern civilization and which may destroy it unless we can apply the remedy in time. Now, at that time, in the eighteenth century, every English gentleman was supposed to be a patriot, but in the writings of Thomas Paine what do we find? He made no distinction between Englishmen and Frenchmen. He was elected a member of the French Convention—a Member of Parliament, a deputy. His mind was absolutely free from that anti-French bias which was like meat and drink to the Englishman of that generation. Imagine an Englishman of to-day being absolutely free from anti-German bias. I find none professing a nationalism free from anti-German bias in some way or another. At that time England had been at war with France for many years, but Thomas Paine was completely free from any anti-French prejudice, and that was what made him so welcome there. Further, he was a good European, and said in one letter to French friends that because of the French Revolution it would be pleasant that they would be able to fraternize with soldiers of the German and Austrian armies. Not only was he a good European and friend of the white races, his heart beat also in unison with the Indians. I mean the Red Indians—men red in complexion, not politics. Those Red Indians were so hated at that time by the majority of English settlers there, except the Quakers, that they had, as you know, the old saying, "There is no good Indian but a dead Indian."

Well, we find Thomas Paine was the pioneer of sympathy and friendliness between those Indians and the white settlers. When he met some Indian chiefs at a conference, he called them "my brothers." And not only the red people but the black people had a corner in his heart. He wrote in defence of the negroes of Dominica in their struggle for freedom, and was the pioneer of the anti-slavery agitation in America. Thomas Paine was a man for all the human race, and not only had he got the sentiment of human

unity, but he also pointed out the way to universal peace. I find in his writings the idea that there should be an international court of justice to settle disputes among the nations, and, further, that he has given us the basis of international ethics, and taught that what was virtuous conduct for the individual was also virtuous conduct for a nation. There you have in a nutshell the whole principle of international morality, and when we realize that nations should behave towards one another as honest men and women do, then war will be abolished. In this way Thomas Paine is the pioneer to-day of that world covenant towards which all the progressive spirits of the world are groping. I am quite sure that if we work in his spirit and make such sacrifices as he made, we shall see the realization of the time when there will be no nations and no national threatenings, but one mother earth and one human race.

MR. GEORGE BEDBOROUGH: I am very glad that the last speaker referred to one of Paine's finest suggestions for peace. We all put too much emphasis on our nationality and what we call patriotism. I think that when we have got to the international stage we have begun to learn one of Paine's noblest lessons. Patriotism is largely individual egotism. Did you ever hear of the Frenchman and the Englishman who tried to be polite to each other after a dinner in this fashion: "I suppose," the Frenchman said, "If I were not a Frenchman I would pray to be an Englishman," and the Englishman said in his very polite way, "If I were not an Englishman I would pray God to make me one." I was very delighted to hear Mrs. Chance refer to Tom Paine. We hear sometimes of Thomas Paine, Esquire, and Mr. Paine and the late editor of the *Freethinker*—a Plymouth man, and therefore to be excused—was very insistent that he should never be called Tom Paine, but myriads of admirers of many nations have called him Tom Paine, and I think it is a familiar abbreviation which we should love and not dislike. I was upset—for even I have my limitations—when lecturing at Chicago almost every Sunday for a society called the Thomas Paine Forum, to find that they always printed it "Thos. Paine." That I thought was a degradation of a very great name.

Do you know that only a few yards from the spot where this restaurant stands, there lived Edward Truelove, one of the many men who went to prison for the right to sell prohibited books. I heard Edward Truelove on the platform at the opening of the Camberwell Secular Hall, when he stood with a number of those who, in various ways, had suffered for their belief in liberty, and Truelove told a story of a policeman who came one day and asked him "What is the Age of Reason?" and Truelove replied, "The Age of Reason will be when the Government employs policemen to protect liberty instead of attacking it." I have been in the birthplace of Thomas Paine, at Thetford, and I think I was the last member of the public to stand in the little Friends' meeting-house, where Paine and his parents regularly attended. Thomas Paine's house still stands where he lived with his wife and where he did his work, but the meeting-house is now a Unitarian Chapel, but it is easy to obtain admission. I have been in New Rochelle, where Paine had a farm, and where his house used to be is now a Paine Museum, open to the public every day, where autographs, manuscripts, and all kinds of relics of Thomas Paine may be seen. I have also had food in the house in New York where Paine is said to have died. The United States cannot possibly forget Paine. Paine is part of their history. As for the scoundrels who miswrite history and tell lies about Paine, I would like to except Cecil Chesterton, brother of G. K. Chesterton, who wrote a his-

tory of the United States, in which Paine's part in the Revolution is pointed out as being as important as that of George Washington. One must also remember that the Declaration of Independence—one of the noblest documents ever penned—was the work of Freethinkers—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine. If the United States ever came to forget Paine, it would be to forget the greatest of all Americans.

Paine's influence in America to-day is not exactly on the wane, but it is in a state of transformation. Most Freethinkers of America have adopted an out-and-out Atheistical platform, and although Paine's *Age of Reason* is sold continuously, and an Annual Paine Dinner is held, the direct and indirect influence of Thomas Paine in the religious world in the United States has been transferred to the Unitarians. In the Unitarians there are two distinct bodies. There are Modernists whose creed is very little different from that of Thomas Paine, and there is another section of the Unitarian Church whose name might very justly apply to the Modernist Church in England. They call themselves or are called the Adult Modernists.

In Chicago many years ago Colonel Ingersoll gave a series of lectures to establish a Paine Fund. Part of that fund has been used to help the New Rochelle Paine Museum, and I am sorry to say I do not know where the other part is, except that it is in Chicago. I am hoping that that fund might be available for the Paine statue, and the work that is being done throughout the world to make Paine live again, for such work as the Pioneer Press is doing. It delighted me very much when I asked to-day at a Birmingham bookshop whether they had a display of the "Pioneer" card advertising the new edition of *The Age of Reason*, and tendered my fourpence, to be told that their stock was sold out.

I think that the Paine of to-day would suffer even more than Paine suffered—not in lies, though they said that Paine suffered the taunts of the devil on his death-bed and went straight to hell. To-day we see a process not so much of vilification as of damning with faint praise. We find in his year of centenary all sorts of hypocrites who try their best to undo his work. Mr. Cohen referred last week, in the *Freethinker*, to the way in which Francis Place's biographer concealed Paine's influence. I have read a biography of Sir Samuel Romilly. It makes no mention of Paine, and that fine Freethinker is described in these abominable words: "To be a staunch churchman, he made no pretence. In fact he rarely went to church at all. But religion without its ritual, its shibboleths, its dogmas, he possessed as much as any man, and he manifested a Christian character which might have put a bishop to the blush." That is the sort of thing we have to meet to-day, and I warn you that unless you support outspoken journals like the *Freethinker*, and societies like the National Secular Society, you will certainly see the great name of Paine traduced and slandered in a similar way. Mr. Benn, in his *History of Modern Rationalism*, says that "Paine generally distinguished between legendary stories and mythical stories, and that it was one of the great qualities of Paine that he wrote in plain language that all could understand, and not in the language of the Modernist of to-day." He attacked prayer and he attacked miracles. What has the believer in prayer to do? Even the clergy tell us that if God answers prayer He is just as likely to say "No" as to say "Yes." I heard a story, the other day, of a lady who heard her husband blaspheming in the next room. He was opening a tin of something or other, and she asked, "What are you opening that tin with?" "The tin-opener, of course," he replied "Oh," she said, "I thought you were opening it

with prayer." I must before sitting down tell you the story about a miracle. There was a gentleman at a dance of nurses who paid great attention to one nurse—danced with her all the evening—and at the end said "I know what I am going to do now. I am going to have an accident and be taken into your hospital and you will nurse me." She said "It won't be an accident; it will be a miracle. I am at the Lying-In Hospital." (Laughter).

THE CHAIRMAN: Some of you may be interested to know that when Paine wrote his *Rights of Man* he was staying and wrote part of the first part at the Angel Hotel in Islington. I remember the Angel Hotel when it was a real public house. It is now a branch of Lyons, where you can only get a cup of tea or coffee and such like non-intoxicating things. It would not be bad if we could get somehow or other a plate put on that establishment recording the fact that Paine's great work was written on those premises. By the way, an old friend reminds me that when he went to Thetford some years ago and inquired about Paine, he was told that the only man who knew anything about Paine was the vicar. I suppose he had most cause to remember him. When the National Secular Society, of which next Wednesday I shall have had the honour of being President for 21 years, was founded, its founder was one of the foremost politicians and Freethinkers of his day—Charles Bradlaugh. Some of you will have had the pleasure which I never had of seeing and hearing him. We have his grandson here, and I will now ask Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner to speak to you.

MR. CHARLES BRADLAUGH BONNER: Mr. Cohen and friends—you will permit me to call you friends this evening, because this address is a suitable one when celebrating the memory of Thomas Paine, who was born and brought up a Quaker. In view of the repeated statement of our President, that our society includes in its secular fold all colours of political sheep, I should perhaps have altered my address to you so as to offend no one and to include you all. I should have started, "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, citizens, comrades, friends," and then surely we should all be agreed. Now we are met here to celebrate the memory of a great man, and if you could only have that man, Thomas Paine, here, do you know I think that as he looked around this company he might do what you would not approve of, for he would, like Little Audrey, laugh and laugh and laugh till he got a pain. But why? When he wrote that famous book of his, which is of the greatest interest to us, *The Age of Reason*, he said that he wrote it to induce men to return to a pure, unmixed, unadulterated belief in one God and no other, and I don't think that most of us here are here for that purpose. Again we are here to observe the ancient rites of a ceremonial banquet to the memory of a hero. This is why we have heard a kind of litany, an alternation of solemn chants, with the recited praises of our hero. This is the high mass of Saint Thomas Paine. And I think you will agree that the officiating high priest and the other officiants of the mass and all you participants are not here to propagate the unadulterated belief in one God and no other. But strange as the posthumous fortunes of a saint have been, even when he has existed, it is perhaps a fitting conclusion to to-night that there should be published at this moment a new edition of *The Age of Reason* at the price of fourpence. There is one thing new which Thomas Paine would have appreciated and approved of highly—the price of it—for Paine, as you have heard this evening, made no profit by his works. He was a man who believed in all people reading what he had to say. And what has been Paine's fate for carrying out this belief? To borrow language from St.

Paul, I have a sort of fellow-feeling with St. Paul at the present moment, when you know that his bodily presence was weak and his speech of no account—we are only too aware at this moment that the prince of this world is the power of darkness. Paine is one of our heroes because he brought to this world of darkness something of light—the light of reason. Paine was a most extraordinary man when you come to think of it. Unheard of until he had left this country at the age of 37 to seek new ways of gaining his living in a new country, this man in a short time became the hero of two worlds. He was accepted and for a short time was the lion of society in the New World, and he came back to the Old World to become the lion of society there. If Washington was the sword of liberty, greater than the sword was the pen. For such a man you would expect to find wherever liberty is loved an enduring monument to his memory. In this country we profess to love liberty, but you cannot find in this town an enduring monument to Paine. If you go not far from here you will see a place of many monuments. To whom are those monuments? To men of war, to men of blood; to a bad king, or to a mad king: those are the people to whom we have raised monuments in the past. What did this man so that from being a hero in two countries he has come in these days to be almost forgotten and unknown? He offered reason to all people not only on the subject of government, but on the subject of an even more potent vested interest, that of the church. We have heard already of some of the sort of things he had to meet, and that his memory has had to meet, but one thing which has not been mentioned was that in his lifetime an agent of the Government was paid to write a scurrilous libel of him. You have heard how his effigy was burnt. You have read, in one of Carlyle's letters, how Richard Carlyle himself, as a boy, burnt Paine in effigy. But the opposition which Paine's memory has had to meet is one of the things which most interest us. We hold him as one of us—a Freethinker—because he led the way for us; because his book, *The Age of Reason*, was the starting point for us and our movement, and therefore it is of the utmost importance to us to consider in what way he has been attacked. In 1900, when the centenary of his death was celebrated this society held a meeting (and meetings were also held at Thetford) and in most of the papers there appeared articles mentioning Paine and his celebration. I have not time to give you all of them, but I will mention one or two. Now *The Manchester Guardian* had a very good article. That started off with the words that it was unfortunate that the celebration would pass by almost unnoticed. In the *Times* article there was matter to which I would draw your particular attention, because it shows you in what way attacks can be made. There were seven paragraphs in that article. In the first paragraph—it was not a long paragraph—it managed to bring in most of the stories true, untrue, or half-true against Paine. It told of his poverty and neglect in his last days; how he had to flee from one country he had served to another he had helped, and how he died and was buried by strangers; how his bones passed into the hands of a furniture dealer, and where they were now nobody knew. His failings, which were not few or small, were remembered—his traits of vanity and untidy ways duly chronicled; his coarseness of speech; it was, indeed, rather clever to bring all that into one paragraph, which was supposed to be in praise of him. The second paragraph said that his admirers were to blame for the neglect of Thomas Paine, and the seventh and last paragraph started: "We have said little of Paine's faults, which were many and obvious," and then goes on to give a nice catalogue, and I think it is the longest paragraph of the lot. Paine, as I have

said, brought cheap literature into being and this was his reward. Now, I will ask you, whether we must not all be ready here to face attacks of this kind; open or of the subtle detraction order, of which I have given you an example. I ask you to go out from this hall imbued with something of the consuming passion for justice and liberty and reason which inspired Paine; to go and shed in this world of darkness something of his commonsense, and in these days of crisis—if they are not here they are elsewhere—the time is now before us when we must meet again with staunchness what Paine met with in this country. A tide of reaction is now again coming, which may set back the cause of progress for 50 to 80 years, and it is our duty to do all we can to stem that tide and prevent such a catastrophe.

Spain

Spain in Revolt by H. Gannes and T. Repard (Gollancz 5s. and Left Book Club for December. 287 pp.).

Spain and the Church by Chapman Cohen (Pioneer Press, 1d. 14 pp.).

Reporter in Spain by Frank Pitcairn (Lawrence and Wishart. 2s. 6d., 141 pp.).

THE struggle for democracy in Spain deserves the serious attention of all who wish to see an oppressed people free themselves from age-long tyranny. In addition to this, the struggle of the Spanish people is not isolated; it is part of a world-wide struggle against the forces of Fascism. Failure on the part of the Spanish people to defeat the Fascist Rebels would bring the danger of Fascism nearer to ourselves, and further encourage Hitler and Mussolini.

The international importance of the so-called civil war in Spain is brought out in *Spain in Revolt*. As the authors say, "Spain is becoming a pivot on which the world may turn either its Fascist or democratic side to the rising sun of the future." p. 15.

Geographical and historical factors, which have contributed to the fact that Spain has remained a largely feudal country down to modern times, are rapidly reviewed. While the influence and power of the Church and landlords are dealt with, it is made quite clear that the Spanish people will never gain freedom until both the Church and the landlords are deprived of power.

Attention is also paid to the reactionary officer class in the army, and the dangerous influence wielded by that caste in Spanish political life. The authors say, "Until 1931 Spain was saddled with all the institutions typical of feudalism, both in its property system and in its social system." p. 204.

After reading of the way in which the dead hand of feudalism has weighed upon agricultural workers, and also checked industrial development, with evil effect upon industrial workers, there should be no surprise at the determination of the workers, and better placed progressives, to win the present conflict.

Revolts and strikes have taken place in the past, but lack of unity on a large scale has too often meant defeat for the oppressed. With growing unity, not only on the part of the workers but, also, in the wider People's Front, the possibility of defeating the Rebels has increased.

Over against this is the fact that the Fascist Rebels are not merely concerned with re-establishing the old Church, court and landlord form of government. The Rebel leaders are Fascists working with the help of Hitler and Mussolini, and are prepared to pay a price in the form of concessions which would strengthen the Fascist powers in Europe. On this score, the chapter on "A World War Looms" should be carefully read.

Freethinkers will find useful material in the chapter on "Church Over Spain," and Left Book Club readers should acquaint themselves with Chapman Cohen's *Spain and the Church*, for a graphic account of the destroying influence of the Catholic Church in Spain. The

pamphlet outlines the Mohammedan civilization of Spain and its subsequent destruction by the Church when it regained power. As it does not come beyond the seventeenth century, it presents a view of the Church which is detached from the present turmoil.

Frank Pitcairn's *Reporter in Spain* deals with the opening of the revolt and the early days of the struggle. Pitcairn himself spent some time as a soldier at the front in order to obtain first hand knowledge of the condition under which the Spanish loyalists were fighting. His descriptions of the Spanish workers getting out of their beds and going into the fight, badly armed and even unarmed, against well-equipped Rebel officers and troops; and of a small group of men with eight rounds of ammunition each, faced by machine guns, and German planes dropping bombs around, bring into relief the crime of preventing a legitimate Government obtaining much needed arms.

These are not isolated incidents, and there should be no doubt, after reading Pitcairn's book, as to the heroism of the Spanish people who are fighting to save democracy from the Fascist destroyers of culture and a worth-while social life.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Correspondence

THE QUESTION OF RACE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your issue of January 24 you seem to maintain that differences of national character are entirely due to environment. I am very doubtful about this theory, for the following reasons:—

1. Differences between individuals are certainly in large measure due to heredity. One man has a perfect ear for music, and another has none at all. One man is colour-blind, and another has an infallible eye for colour. Are we to suppose that such individual differences do not result in national differences? Is the proportion of the population which has a talent for music exactly the same in France as in Germany? If not, one of these nations must be by heredity more musical than the other.

2. Different peoples differ outwardly in a marked degree. A Negro and a Swede are exceedingly unlike one another, and this applies not merely to superficial but to physiological characteristics. Professor MacBride says—
"The Negro is a thoroughly tropical animal; his dark skin shields him from the deleterious effects of the sun's rays, and his wide nostrils permit of a large surge of air into and out of his lungs, and this surge plays an important part in ventilation and the getting rid of superfluous heat. He thrives in heat and in fact luxuriates in it, and competes eagerly for positions in the engine-room of the steamers on the equatorial lakes of Africa." (*The Study of Heredity*, p. 242).

Are we to suppose that deep-seated differences separate the bodies of different peoples, and yet that their minds are quite alike?

3. Environment seems inadequate to explain the degree of difference between different peoples. Take the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans, as they existed two thousand five hundred years ago. Can anyone maintain that the differences between those three peoples are wholly explained by their different dwelling-places? To me such a contention seems quite absurd.

R. B. KERR.

[Mr. Kerr's difficulty appears to arise from his peculiar conception of the nature of environment. Cultural influences such as beliefs, customs, institutions, are all parts of the environment that affects human beings. That is the reason why "national" characteristics that are detectable in children brought up in France are different from the "national" characteristics of children brought up in Russia, and both disappear or are profoundly modified in the course of a generation or two brought up in different "environments." The citation from Professor MacBride has no bearing whatever on the question. It is certainly news to learn that the differences between a good eye for colour, or a good ear for sound is due to "national" differences.

I do not think I was ever so absurd as to suggest that

"minds" are all alike. It is the functions of "mind" that are identical, the form of their expression that varies. It is the difference in the forms of expression that are to be traced to cultural influences, which are the most important part of the "environment" in civilized life.—E.D.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Evans, Barnes and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment. *Freethinker* and *Spain and the Church* on sale outside the Park gates.

INDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH (17 Grange Road, Kingston-on-Thames): 8.0, each Thursday evening, lectures, discussions, etc.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Tube Station): 7.30, Debate—"Does Humanity Need Religion?" *Affir.*: Father Dunstan Pontifex, O.S.B. *Neg.*: Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Debate—"That the Free-thought Movement Should be Political." *Affir.*: G. F. Green (Militant Socialist International). *Neg.*: Mr. H. Preece.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Moritz J. Bonn, D.Sc.—"Isolation."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Christianity and the Growth of Militarism."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BEDLINGTON (Cramlington Co-operative Hall): 7.0, Tuesday, February 9. Debate: "Can a Socialist be a Christian?" *Affir.*: County Councillor N. Garrow, J.P. *Neg.*: John T. Brighton, N.S.S.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, W. L. Owen—"Religion and Reality."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street): 7.0, Mr. C. H. Smith—"Which Frees the Mind Most—Socialism or Freethought?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance via passage facing Burtons): 7.15, Councillor Dr. Black.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"And Man Made God in His Own Image." No. 35.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"Modern Science and the Idea of God."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, John S. Clarke—"Some Pioneers of Modern Thought."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Who Was Shakespeare?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, A. Planders—"Blessing the Guns."

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, entrance in Ormskirk Road): 7.15, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"Evolution Reconsidered."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, A Lecture.

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