

THE
FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

Education and the Churches

It is wrong to say that the Christian Church has never interested itself in education. On the contrary, ever since the question of the education of the people came to the front, the Christian Church has shown an unceasing interest in it. Even in the days when the "people" had not yet come into existence, the Church claimed the right to control whatever education existed. And for the last century and a quarter the interest of the Churches in education has been constant, pronounced—and disastrous. For the Church aimed at controlling education, and that control involved persistent opposition to much that education ought to be. The growth of religious Nonconformity in this country, at the end of the eighteenth century, accentuated the religious interest in education. The Nonconformists were anxious to protect their children from the influence of the Established Church. Churchmen were anxious to guard everyone against the "poison" of dissent. And beyond these rival sectarian interests was the influence of the French Revolution, and its declaration that the education of the people was one of the prime functions of Government.

The rivalry of the sects, with the agitation due to the development of Freethought among the people, led to the establishment of schools for the children of the people, and for some time these schools represented the two rival religious influences. Early in the nineteenth century the Government began to vote grants of money for the assistance of elementary schools—still under private control. By 1833 this grant amounted to £30,000 a year for the whole of Britain. In that year a commission sat to consider the state of elementary education in this country—it was then the poorest in Europe. The Commission reported that the Government was not getting value for its money. That the conclusion was justified may be seen by the fact that in 1840 forty per cent of the men and sixty-five per cent of the women in Lanca-

shire and Yorkshire could not sign their own names. So much for education under the complete control of the Churches.

* * *

Church and State

The Government was forced to act. In 1870 a Bill was introduced into Parliament for the establishment of elementary schools all over the country. Religious interest in education at once made itself evident. The interest was not for education, as such, but for the maintenance of religious teaching. Nonconformists and Churchmen both recognized that if Christians were to be made they must be caught young. The religious aim, however expressed, has always been "Collar the kids." It was taken for granted that if religion were taught in the schools it would be that of the State Church. Nonconformists were alarmed. They fell back upon the principle (a too sound one for any group of Christians ever honestly to put into practice), that it was not the business of the State to teach religion. They agreed with the Freethinkers that the teaching of religion should be left to parents and parsons. The educational reform party, therefore, took for its motto, "Education, Free, Compulsory, Secular." Education is now, in its elementary stages, compulsory and free, but it is not yet secular. Had this original programme been adhered to, seventy years of squabbling might have been avoided, and the snobbery of English education very much reduced.

But the Church of England took alarm. It looked as though the result might be no religious instruction in the elementary schools. And how could any reasonable person hope to turn an educated community of adults into Christians? Consultations of Churchmen and Nonconformists took place, and in the end these two groups of Christians—no one else mattered—came to terms. As a consequence of much back-stair manoeuvring there came the famous "Compromise." A form of religious teaching of a general character that suited all Christians was to be established. Children were to be turned out on a general Christian pattern, and it was left to the shepherds of particular flocks to place their particular brands on the lambs as delivered. They would grow up into the proper kind of sheep, and would in due course be faithfully sheared by their watchful shepherds. The Nonconformists sold the pass; the Episcopalians took what they could, hoping to get more.

The result was such as might have been anticipated. The arrangement between the rival kidnappers involved the maintenance of two sets of schools, one of which was inadequately equipped, staffed by the poorer kind of teacher, with buildings insanitary, and education kept at as low a level as possible, or just high enough to gain the Government grant. It was as bad a compromise as could have been effected. It meant the perpetuation of religious tests, open or

concealed, it meant shutting out from school many of the more conscientious type of teacher, and opening it wide to those who saw nothing more in it than getting a living, with a pension at the end. In very many instances it turned the teachers into the cats-paws of the parsons. The clergy were placed in a position of influence, and they were well described by John Morley in one of the strongest books he ever wrote, *The Struggle for National Education*, (for some reason this book has never been reprinted in Morley's collected works) as belonging to that class that "never can be brought to see that it is wrong to smuggle or cheat a railway company."

* * *

A Bishop on the Bounce

It is therefore quite in line with clerical practice to find that Dr. Havard, Bishop of St. Asaph, recently wrote the Education Authorities of Denbighshire, asking that the following questions should be put to all applicants for appointments:—

Do you attend any place of worship?

Do you accept the Bible as your supreme guide in moral and spiritual matters?

Are you a Christian?

Would you at all times, by precept and example, encourage others to lead Christian lives?

Would you be prepared to give moral and spiritual instruction on Biblical lines?

Are you prepared to teach the principles of the Christian faith to the children under your care?

No one will be greatly surprised at this from a member of an order that Morley properly described as understanding "by a higher national life no more than a more undisputed ecclesiastical authority." The only interest that any clergyman, as such has in education is to see that it helps to maintain the supply of clients for the churches. Take religion out of the schools, and there would be very few parsons interested in them. One ought not to blame a bishop for acting after the manner of his kind. Nor, knowing the way in which teachers have submitted to clerical control when exercised surreptitiously, are we surprised at their meeting this attempt on the part of the Bishop to secure that only certified Christians shall be appointed, with a very milk and water kind of a protest. The National Union of Teachers, the Assistant Master's Association, and the Assistant Mistress's Association (the distinctiveness of the two latter bodies is itself a part expression of the influence of the Church) have protested against what they rightly say means "the application of religious tests to candidates." "*Whatever may be the intention of the proposed questions,*" as though there could be any other intention than that of applying a religious test to candidates. It is a test that would bar the way to the schools to all independent, self-respecting teachers, and open the road to those who are least fitted to be entrusted with the education of the young. If the Bishop of St. Asaph had his way, the schools of Denbighshire would be closed to all except the narrowest type of Christian. Those teachers appointed would have to go to Church, be prepared to give moral instruction on Biblical lines, and they would have to be Christians. And this in 1937! "Whatever be the intention"! It is not in this way or by adopting that tone that teachers can hope to be supreme where they should be all-powerful. How can self-respecting men and women hold a post where either, willingly or unwillingly, they are the cats-paws of parsons?

When will teachers face the fact that what the Bishop of St. Asaph is trying openly to do for Den-

bighshire, already exists all over the country? Religious tests already exist. In how many rural districts would a Freethinker, or even a non-Christian, stand a chance of appointment? In how many cases, in any part of the country would a teacher be promoted to a headship—that heaven of most teachers—were he known to be a Freethinker? George Eliot once wrote, *apropos* of the parson, that it was no light thing for a young man to pledge himself for the rest of his life to believe only certain things and resolutely to close his mind to new truths that might appear. And it is no small thing for a young man or young woman to enter a profession in which he must keep his mouth closed with regard to one subject on which he has definite opinions, and in addition to be engaged either in teaching those committed to his care things which he believes to be wrong, or, by subterfuge after subterfuge, insinuate the very opposite of what he is expected to teach. Such a condition is mentally and morally healthy for neither teacher nor pupil. The teacher should insist on being master in the school-room—not merely to *appear* as master to outsiders—but to feel within his own mind that he is master. So long as religion is in the schools the teacher cannot avoid being the parson's proxy.

The Teachers' Associations reply to criticism by saying that they are not concerned with the religious opinions of their members. But the declaration that the State ought not to interfere with matters of religious belief, either for or against, is not showing concern with religion, it is merely saying that the teaching of religion lies outside the scope of the modern State, and that the school should be the one place where the elements of religious strife should not be permitted to obtrude. This is a position that is taken up by very many religious people. It is neither attacking nor defending religion. It is merely asserting that the schools should be restricted to their proper place, and must not be used as a manœuvring ground for theological opportunists. Recent events have shown that, given the opportunity, there are no lengths to which the clergy will not go to secure their sectarian ends. Recently at Blackpool it was only the stand made by the teachers that saved their being used to march children to Church on state occasions. When teachers make it quite clear that they will submit to no inquisition regarding their religious opinions, nor become tools in a conspiracy to secure customers for Church and Chapel, the clergy will receive a definite set-back in their sectarian campaign. If teachers wish to be able to act with the same independence as an ordinary working-man displays with regard to an expression of opinion, for or against religion, they must not merely check the particular manœuvres of the parsonry, they must not be slow to declare that it is not necessary to go to the Bible for lessons of morality or citizenship. Teachers must realize that wherever the clergy exercise a predominating influence in either their appointment or in the control of the school, the status of teachers is seriously endangered, and the dignity of their profession undermined. The way out, the only way out, is by the road of secular education.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

NO CHANCE OF DODGING SATAN

D. I. Moody, the American Evangelist, once declared: "There is no one who goes to church as regularly as Satan, in all London. He is always there before the Minister, and he is the last one out of the Church." And yet the parsons tell us that if we don't go to church we are going to the Devil. Apparently we have no chance of dodging him.

The Napoleon of Freethought

"The great Achilles whom we knew."—Tennyson.

Few men have been libelled and slandered more by Christians than Charles Bradlaugh. Like Paine and Voltaire before him, he was gayed and caricatured by professors of the "religion of love" until his name became a hiss and a by-word in Orthodox circles. Nearly fifty years after his untimely death, pious hirelings still repeat the lying watch-story, and equally untruthful accounts of his alleged death agonies still disgrace the pages of religious publications.

This pious mud-slinging was of design and set purpose. Simply because Bradlaugh was an Atheist, Christians declared that he was a wicked and vicious man. Thus they cast dust in the eyes of the innocent and unthinking public, and incapacitated them from seeing the real facts of the case. Incidentally, they discredited the cause to which Bradlaugh dedicated his life.

What manner of man was he? Whatever may have been thought of Bradlaugh's significance as a pioneer and politician, whatever may be the influence he wielded in public affairs, the memory of his personal career must live while anyone has an eye for the dramatic and romantic in English history. The story of his meteoric rise from the bed-rock of poverty to a position of real influence in politics is passing wonderful. Delivering coal from door to door for a bare existence he found time to educate himself. Living from hand to mouth, he dreamed of a British Republic, free alike from the machinations of Kingcraft and Priestcraft. His dream never materialized, but he wrote his name deep on history's page, and he will live with Cromwell, Cobbett, and Gladstone, as a vivid and forceful personality.

The years since he died have quieted the shoutings and tumult of his strenuous time, but they have left the heroic figure of Bradlaugh clear-cut for our regard. Not only was he a great man; he was a man of real distinction in aspect and carriage. The fight he made in Parliament and outside against an overwhelming majority of opponents was Homeric in its intensity, and one of the bravest ever fought. His triumph in the hour of death was as complete as that of Nelson on the deck of the shot-riven "Victory." Thanks to Bradlaugh's courage and determination, and to those of his lieutenants and successors, heterodoxy is no longer a serious bar to the citizen, and ecclesiastical authority has been shorn of its worst dangers.

It is strange that people are only now beginning to perceive that Bradlaugh's attitude to the Christian Religion was actually forced upon him. He had no wish to fight the clergy and their satellites; he did not want to waste his time discussing the absurdities of Noah's Ark, or the veracity of such legends as Jonah and the Whale. But he saw quite clearly that Priestcraft and Kingcraft were the obverse and reverse of the same medal. It was precisely because Clericalism was the shield of injustice that he challenged it; and if he seemed to those outside of the influence a mere iconoclast, he has in this only shared the fate of the world's greatest reformers. He died early because of the ill-treatment he received. Dead, he remains a living force by the nobility of his life and the consistency of his example.

"Thorough" was his motto, and throughout his life he acted up to it. Every copy of his paper, the *National Reformer*, had the announcement that its policy was Atheist, Republican, and Malthusian. First and last, he was a man of action. In his early days the Freethinkers were feebly led and fitfully in-

spired. When he died, it was a compact army, formidable enough to intimidate its enemies. Without his leadership their stay in the desert might have been prolonged many years. It was he, most ably seconded by comrades of real talent, who made the Freethought Party as we know it to-day. Think of his lieutenants. The mere recital of their names is an inspiration: G. W. Foote, J. M. Robertson, Annie Besant, A. B. Moss, and many others. The Leader who could surround himself with such faithful followers was no ordinary man. Had his enemies known Bradlaugh as he really was, they could never have hated him as they did. Jealousies and unkindness and bitterness of spirit are in most human labours; but religion, with its insincerities and intellectual meannesses, seems to hold a poison of its own which narrows the vision and blunts the edge of principle.

Bradlaugh fought for human liberty, and his life-struggle was as heroic as that of the Spartan heroes who held the pass of Thermopylæ against the Persian hosts. He stood like a stone wall against the hordes and machinations of Priestcraft. Bradlaugh grows larger to one's mental and moral vision the more distant he becomes. The best views of the Alps are to be gained from a distance, and we get the better view of the Napoleon of Freethought as we recede from him. A hero in action, he was chivalry incarnate. He was never the man to say to others, "Go on," but he always said "Come on." Now that he is no longer a presence, but a memory, we are free to look at him, free from controversy, and to estimate him at his true worth.

Shall our lives not be nobler because of his worthy example? He fell, prematurely, alas! worn out by hard work and harder usage in that great battlefield of humanity, whose soldiers fight not to shed blood, but to dry up tears; not to murder their fellow-men, but to raise them up; not to enslave others but to emancipate them. Labouring not for himself, but for others, he made an imperishable name, and gave the world assurance of a man. At a superficial glance, his life-work seems a splendid failure, for there is no British Republic. But the realities of the modern world have become charged with the magic of his dreams. For his sincerity was such that he gave his life in the sacred cause of human liberty. Inspiring is the lesson which this great Freethinker of the nineteenth century presents to the twentieth at a time of crisis:—

"Our glorious century gone,
Behold no head that shone
More clear across the storm, above the foam,
More steadfast in the fight
Of warring night and light,
True to the truth whose star leads heroes home."

MIMNERMUS.

EARTHLY POMP

"For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been deposed; some slain in war;
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
Some poison'd by their wives; some sleeping kill'd;
All murder'd: for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temple of a king
Keep Death his court and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable, and numour'd thus
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell King!"

King Richard II.

God's Purple Patches

It seems a fair assumption that if Omnipotence and Omniscience get together, pool their resources, and write a book, the result would be a creditable piece of work. Such a collaboration might well lick creation. The success achieved should at least equal that of *The Sorrows of Satan*, *The Little Visitors*, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, or *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. Under such auspices the qualities of the work might well, one surmises, be allowed to speak for themselves. No preliminary boosting would be necessary and advertising could be cut down to the bare minimum. Some of the characteristics of such a volume could be guessed. It would be profound and yet expressed in such simple terms that the farmer's boy could not mistake its meaning. Its facts would command respect, and its advice on conduct would not only be enlightening, but would withstand any practical trial. It would be consistent; it would be clear. Every budding Lamb or Stevenson could go to it in the knowledge that although he would never be able to improve upon it, if he could manage slavishly to imitate, success would follow. Of course, if the main purpose of the divine *tour de force* were the maintenance of a host of interpreters and the strengthening of Theology, the Queen of the Sciences, the situation alters. We would then have another kind of book altogether, a book very much on the lines of that volume known in England as the Holy Bible.

We will eliminate from our consideration the hypothesis that the Divine Purpose in writing a Holy Bible was to provide a *modus vivendi* for the theologian, and return to the point that with Divine Authorship no boosting would be necessary. Good Wine needs no Bush. And yet was ever a volume so boosted? Clericals and clerically influenced people tumble over one another to assure us (and reassure each other) that God as an author has done his job well. Why this chorusing? Why these Songs of Praise, anthemwise? Must the work that God inspired have so stupendous a blurb? Could it not stand demurely and with a certain amount of dignity upon its merits? Or must we once more have recourse to the business-houses for an explanation? We know that when commercial men are aware that their product has an obvious defect, the policy is to get their blow in first and brazenly to suggest on every possible occasion the exact opposite. Our hoardings testify to this accepted method of defeating the obvious criticism.

But theologians, we are indignantly informed, are not tradesmen. We will concede the point and admit that they are professional gentlemen. Still there are authenticated cases when professional gentlemen have been known to act as tradesmen. The tricks of the profession and the tricks of the trade have a strong family likeness. Let us furnish an example or two. The theologian tells us that the belief in God is instinctive and is shared by the entire human race. Yet the fight to implant this belief in the minds of children in the schools is the fiercest and most earnest fight the Church indulges in. A universal instinct cannot evidently be allowed to look after itself. Again, in the attempt to keep Sunday reserved for the distribution of their commodities and in the deadly opposition to all counter-attractions, another parallel with commercial practice is shown. It needs no elaboration to justify the charge that the Church agrees with Barnum; the Church must be hourly proclaimed as The Greatest Show on Earth, or it will deteriorate into a miserable little tuppenny sideshow. And the Bible, the Alpha and

Omega of the Christian's faith, must be boomed similarly as the Greatest Book on Earth.

How have they compiled this Greatest Book on Earth? They have collected a hotch-potch of old pamphlets, comprising history, folk-lore, proverbs, songs, specifications, genealogical tables, essays and novelettes, written no man knows when, no man knows where, no man knows by whom. They have bound these together and put the name GOD on the Title Page. And then in the pulpit and in the press and wherever and whenever they are allowed, they get together and read portions such as this from Ezekiel i. 16:—

The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl; and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

When they went, they went upon their four sides; and they turned not when they went.

As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

"Could feeble human effort have risen to that?" we are asked. "Who could have written that bit, but God?"

Sometimes we are told of the pious scholars who have had to do with the translation of the Bible in this country; those gentlemen who placed their undoubted erudition at the services of the Church and pored longingly and lovingly over every phrase before they were finally strung together so as to give us the maximum amount of correction and reproof. The exact position of these gentlemen is always a puzzle to us. Admitted that God made use of human instruments (whom he "inspired"), did these scholars improve upon or lag behind the merits of the Divine Original? Or did God so inspire them that they just exactly kept up to his standard? Is it irreverence on our part to wonder whether the purple patches in the Bible are the work of Him who Sitteth on the Throne or just that of some poor servant of letters, who was by nature of the Blood Royal, and found himself harnessed through training and environment to the chariot of ecclesiasticism?

It is more complicated than appears at first sight. It is easy for us to understand the Lord's anxiety to turn his volume out in Magnificent English. But why did he give us differing versions, all in magnificent English? And why, oh why, (and here we have difficulty in really forgiving him) did he inspire versions in magnificent German, magnificent Russian, magnificent Zulu, and magnificent Bantu? Inspiration, of course, one cannot limit, but cosmopolitanism can surely be carried too far. Once upon a time God's special interest in the English was as much an article of faith (in this country) as the Inspiration of the Scriptures. Now, when we are asked to believe that God took an equal interest in these foreign fellows, we are constrained to ask, in the terms of any good theologian, whether the inspiration in perhaps most of these cases did not come from below rather than above.

Patches of colours other than purple can be found in the Bible. The primary colours are well represented. The Bible is a Big Book, and it is not surprising that every day new discoveries are being made. In the *Sunday Times*, of late, it has been pointed out that God is very fond of the literary device known as meiosis, and that Paul and even Jesus favoured it. Yes we have no doubt that there are cases of meiosis in the Bible. We know that Our Lord was a Master of Meiosis, just as he was Master

of Hyperbole, Periphrasis, Onomatopoeia, Non Sequitur, the Vicious Circle and the Petitio Principii. Jesus was a Master of Meiosis, just as he was Master of Everything. Quite a few cases where Jesus believed that he could produce a crushing effect by *under statement* flow to our memory.* We think we can remember his saying to the Chief Priests when they complained of the company he was keeping, "Ye Generation of Vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?" We admit it wasn't half strong enough. We are told that there is "something terrifying in this irony of the Saviour," and in his "rejection of emphasis." And yet somehow we remember we were told to

Take no thought for the morrow

and that he who called his brother a fool was in danger of hell fire.

But the most striking example of meiosis, one collects, is contained in the very last message Jesus gave to us (quite an important occasion), just prior to when he was "received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God":—

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

MEIOSIS! My eye! In the name of all the Gods that he we return thanks for having missed an education in the Queen of the Sciences.

T. H. ELSTON.

"Patches of colours other than purple can be found in the Bible," is an example of *meiosis*.

Thomas Paine: An Investigation

[The following essay on Paine was published in 1888. It has for a long time been out of print. Recent discussions on Paine justify its re-appearance.]

(Continued from page 533)

CHEETHAM'S *Life of Paine* is not only thus discredited on one important point by explicit proofs: it was recognized and proclaimed as collectively untrustworthy by orthodox American writers in Paine's own time and later. I quote first from Mr. Conway:—

It is important . . . to state that the most eminent Christian writers in America were not deceived by these libels [as to Madame Bonneville]. Thus, the Rev. Solomon Southwick, editor of the *Christian Visitor* when Cheetham's book appeared, wrote: Had Thomas Paine been guilty of any crime, we should be the last to eulogise his memory. But we cannot find that he was ever guilty of any other crime than that of advancing his opinions freely upon all subjects connected with public liberty and happiness. . . . We may safely affirm that Paine's conduct in America was that of a real patriot. In the French Convention he displayed the same pure and disinterested spirit. . . . His life, it is true, was written by a ministerial hireling, who strove in vain to blacken his moral character. The late James Cheetham likewise wrote his life, and we have no hesitation in saying that we knew perfectly well at the time the motives of that author for writing and publishing a work which, we have every reason to believe, is a libel almost from beginning to end. In fact, Cheetham had become tired of his country, and had formed

a plan to return to England and become a ministerial editor in opposition to Cobbett, and his *Life of Paine* was written to pave his way back again. (Art. on "Thomas Paine," in *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1879, p. 400, citing the *Testimonials to Thomas Paine*, compiled by J. N. Moreau, 1861—an American pamphlet, not in the British Museum).

The impartial judgment of Paine's own generation is endorsed by that of the next. An unsigned article on "Thomas Paine's Second Appearance in the United States," appears in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July, 1859. Its author thinks (p. 16) that "*The Age of Reason* is a shallow deistical essay, in which the author's opinions are set forth . . . in a most offensive and irreverend style"; that he "drank more brandy than was good for him"; and (p. 13) that he "was no exception to the general rule, that we find no persons so intolerant and illiberal as men professing Liberal principles." There is here small prejudice in Paine's favour. But the same unfriendly critic says: "We suspect that most of our readers, if they cannot date back to the first decade of the century, will find, when they sift their information, that they have only a speaking acquaintance with Thomas Paine, and can give no good reason for their dislike of him" (p. 15). And this is how he comments on the biography by Cheetham:—

This libellous performance was written shortly after Paine's death. It was intended as a peace offering to the English Government. The ex-hatter had made up his mind to return home, and he wished to prove the sincerity of his conversion from Radicalism by trampling on the remains of its high-priest. So long as Cheetham remained in good standing with the Democrats, Paine and he were fast friends; but when he became heretical and schismatic on the Embargo question, some three or four years later, and was formally read out of the party, Paine laid the rod across his back with all his remaining strength. He had vigour enough left, it seems, to make the *Citizen* [edited by Cheetham] smart, for Cheetham cuts and stabs with a spite which shows that the work was as agreeable to his feelings as useful to his plans. His reminiscences must be read *multis cum granis*. (*Id.*, p. 12).

The reader will now probably not hesitate to accept the statement made by Mr. Vale in his *Life of Paine* (p. 2) that it "was the opinion of the intimate friend of Cheetham, Mr. Charles Christian, who gave this relation to Mr. John Fellows and others whom we have seen, and from whom we have learned this fact," that Cheetham meant this book "as a passport to the British treasury favour."

I have thus far dealt with Mr. Stephen's account of Paine as it appears in the first edition of his book, for the moment excluding considerations of certain alterations which he has silently made in his second edition. And I have taken this course on two grounds; first, that the former version is still in the hands of many readers, whose attention has not been publicly called to the partial retractations Mr. Stephen makes; second, that he has made his qualifications in a manner that only aggravates the offence of his first misstatement. Let the reader judge. The alterations are as follows: (1) For "one of his biographers" we now read "a hostile biographer," the rest of the passage being left unaltered down to and including the word "principles." Then we have these sentences:—

The portrait is drawn by an enemy, and represents what we may call the orthodox version of the last days of a notorious infidel. Paine was not likely to

receive full justice from his adversaries, and his admirers urge that his career was sincere and disinterested.

Yet while these qualifications are introduced, the "enemy's" picture is left as it was at first drawn; the expressions which were first used with the most grossly opprobrious intent are left unchanged, and the reader is left to settle for himself how much he will believe of the disgusting charges made, Mr. Stephen simply suggesting that an enemy was "not likely" to do "full justice"! I do not know a more extraordinary piece of procedure in literary history. If the story first told was an enemy's, and is only "what we may call the orthodox version" of a Freethinker's life, why, in the name of common decency, was it allowed to stand? Does Mr. Stephen, like the average Christian bigot, owe neither truth nor justice to an infidel? His first paragraph was bad enough in all conscience. His discovery that Cheetham was Paine's enemy would have been arrived at by most men in his place at the first glance through Cheetham's book; but he apparently only reached it after the publication of Mr. Conway's article. Yet though that article not only revealed this fact, but showed Cheetham's absolute untrustworthiness all round, Mr. Stephen has gone to no other source for his facts, has left his pages befouled with half-admitted falsehoods, neither standing to them nor withdrawing them, and has made no overt avowal that his first edition has at this point undergone alteration. Such a course only adds to the need for exposing the baselessness of the whole story. He who would defend Paine must still furnish the full disproof just as if the first were the only edition of Mr. Stephen's book; and in view of the fashion in which the matter is handled in the second, it is very meet that Mr. Stephen should receive in full what discredit attaches to his production of both versions. It is difficult to say which shows the less readiness to deal justly by the memory of a man held in common odium.

Evidence has been led at length as to the notorious untrustworthiness of Cheetham's book, the venality of his general motives, and his bitter enmity to Paine, though it is not easy to understand how any critic of ordinary fairness of mind, after reading (or even dipping into) Cheetham's book, could require much evidence of its worthlessness. It is on the very face of it a bitter attack on a dead man's memory by his enemy, an attack exceptionally scurrilous even for that time, in which unscrupulous slander went perhaps further than it has ever done in England before or since. Of a previous *American Life* of Paine, nominally by "Francis Oldys," Mr. Edward Smith has observed in his *Life of Cobbett* (ii. 210, note) that it was "one of the most horrible collections of abuse which even that venal day produced." That book was written in reality by George Chalmers, then one of the clerks of the Board of Plantation, to the order of Lord Hawksbury, afterwards Lord Liverpool, who paid or at least promised him £500 for the work (Sherwin, *pref.*). Such transactions were not uncommon in the period, and a historian of English Thought might have been expected as a matter of course to be on his guard, accordingly, in reading any *Life* of such a man as Paine. And Cheetham's book, I repeat, is so gross in its aspersions, so patently malignant in its general drift, that no reader of average judgment, unless much swayed by prejudice, can well suppose it to be a true record. Its slander is the slander of the slums; obscene falsehood retailed with the zest of prostitutes in their cups. To a healthy mind, I should think, some of Cheetham's hearsay and other stories would be a decisive proof, nor that Paine was drunken or dirty, but that Cheetham was an offensive blackguard. But since Mr. Stephen, even after re-

monstrance, declines to make up his mind on this head, and as he is a writer of distinction, I will cite some further evidence to show that Paine was not what he still half-insinuates him to be.

It is often assumed even by Freethinkers who esteem Paine's memory that in his latter years he sometimes "drank more than was good for him." Mr. Conway, like Sherwin, has accepted the tradition to that effect, sensibly pointing out, however, its small virtual importance in the eyes of just-minded people. There are, nevertheless, very strong reasons for doubting whether there is any more positive truth in this tradition than in any of the other stories to Paine's discredit. I quote the temperate and impressive summing-up of Mr. Vale:—

In commencing our inquiries we really thought the fact that Mr. Paine was a drunkard in old age was well established. In seeking, however, for the proofs of this we arrive at a very different conclusion. It is by [Cheetham] that the public have been informed that Paine was drunken and dirty in his person; and so industriously and faithfully have the clergy preached and circulated these calumnies, that we shall scarcely be believed in contradicting them on the very best evidence, that of his companions now alive, and in some cases the very men whom Cheetham impudently names as sources of his information. Thus Mr. Jarvis, the celebrated painter, with whom Mr. Paine lived, informs us distinctly that Mr. Paine was neither dirty in his habits nor drunken; nay, he goodhumoredly added that *he* always drank a good deal more than ever Paine did. Mr. John Fellows lived in the same house with Mr. Paine above a twelvemonth, and was his intimate friend for many years after his return to this country, and never saw him but once even elevated with liquor, and then he had been to a dinner party. We know more than twenty persons who are more or less acquainted with Mr. Paine, and not one of whom ever saw him in liquor. His habit appears to have been to take one glass of rum and water with sugar in it, after dinner, and another after supper. His limit at one period, when at Rochelle, was one quart of rum a week, for himself and friends, for Mr. Paine was rather penurious in his old age. This, and this alone, is the only moral fault we find in his character, and we wish to be his impartial historian. His manner of life at this time we get from Mr. Bürger, a respectable watchmaker in New York, but then a clerk in the only store at Rochelle, who served Mr. Paine with his liquor, and waited upon him when sick, and drove him about the neighbourhood at the request of his employer, and thus saw much of his social habits. This gentleman never saw Mr. Paine intoxicated. Carver, with whom Paine lived, but from whom he parted in anger, is the only man we know who has not spoken distinctly on the subject; and he remarks that "Paine was like other men [at that period] he would sometimes take too much"! But Carver had unfortunately committed himself on this subject in an angry letter, the same on which Cheetham based his libel. In fact, this letter is the groundwork for all Cheetham's calumnies" (Vale's *Life of Paine*, *pref.* pp. 12-14: cf. pp. 142, 163).

JOHN M. ROBERTSON.

(To be continued)

Theology cannot be liberal, and live. Based on an infallible revelation from heaven, it must remain stationary for ever, or die. No progress is possible, except the progress out of it.—J. T. Lloyd.

Apparently no small portion of the educated world in England has come to the conclusion that the evidences of supernatural religion have failed. In that case religion must go and we must look out for some other account of the universe and some other rule of life.—Goldwin Smith.

Acid Drops

The pious *Listener* reports, a talk on "What to Look for in Churches." The report is illustrated and contains a long catalogue of architectural features, but omits to mention that churches are mainly built for teaching and expounding some very silly dogmas. Some features of some churches are of real beauty, but we know of no dogma or creed preached in them which could be called either beautiful, true or helpful to intelligent manhood. Above all, every finely built church is a constant reminder that the House of God has monopolized wealth and energy and art, which no religious peoples have considered essential for the Houses of Man. Cathedrals and Slums have often been the two most obvious elements of church rule.

Our Press! The *Daily Express* is once again to the fore. In a recent issue it devotes a three-column width to a quarter column length to the portrait of a cat that was actually in the room when "French Marie" was murdered in a house in Paddington on August 16. That is what we call "news." Neither the *Times*, nor the *Morning Post*, nor any of the other papers rose to the occasion. The *Express* leads the way. It is because of its leadership in these matters that it has built up a huge circulation. We understand that one of its astrological staff has cast the horoscope of the cat which may shortly be published. An interview with the cat may also appear. One London evening paper has for its slogan, "First with the News." We suggest the *Express* might try "First with the Cats," as this is the second time it has published the portrait of a cat that witnessed a murder. The cat might also provide "Beauchamber" with a column of his alleged wit and humour.

"God," alias Father Divine, the American negro who announced himself as God, is in trouble in the American Courts. He has issued a notice that he will subject himself to "evaporation." Through his legal mouthpiece he has advised the world, and his very numerous followers, that he will "evaporate" and reappear in 1,900 years. Very many gods have disappeared in the past, with a promise of reappearance. That was the case with the New Testament God, although his disappearance was compulsory. Still he promised to come back, and his followers are still expecting his return. Some years ago a building was erected at Chatham to welcome him, and Baxter and other prophets actually announced the exact date of his return. Scores of other gods have disappeared owing to the sheer neglect of their followers. A rather interesting volume might be written on "Gods who have Disappeared." We don't suppose the existing clergy would welcome the work. It might suggest things to their followers.

At the beginning of the Christian era, gods of one kind or another were as common as street-hawkers to-day. Many had but a short career, others managed to last long enough to attract a considerable body of followers. Among these, one of the most interesting was Peregrinus. He was known to Lucian, who described his end. He made his first appearance in a public manner by murdering his father. As a method of self-protection he joined the Christians, and finally became a bishop. Imprisoned during one of the persecutions, the Christians did what they could to help by watching near to where he was imprisoned, bringing presents of food, and so forth. Released from prison he lost popularity, and then discarded Christianity altogether. He appears to have once more gained a considerable body of followers, but again suffered a partial eclipse, in spite of his laying claims to a semi-divine character.

Then, like the modern stunt-hunting parson, he decided on a new move. Faith-healing was too common then to attract attention, or he might have practised the dodge that some parsons are working to-day. Peregrinus announced that on a certain day he would burn himself in public and then rise to heaven in full public view.

His expectation was that his followers would at the last moment prevent his burning. The pile was raised, Peregrinus appeared, but alas for him, his followers had sufficient faith in him to insist on his going through the whole performance. He was duly burned, and Lucian saw the burning. Returning from the show Lucian was asked by a follower of Peregrinus, what had happened. Lucian said he saw the God arise from the flames in the form of a dove and ascend to heaven. Not long after Lucian was told his own story by one who declared that he had been present and had seen the resurrection. These were the days for gods! Nowadays we should have scores of newspaper-men investigating, and, unless the proprietor of the paper saw visions of "circulation," the whole thing would have been denounced as an imposture. Or we might have had the *Daily Express* bringing forward one of its cats and declaring that as the dove rose in the air a cat jumped after it. (Portrait of the cat about to jump, page —).

Miss Elsie Harrison, in her report of one of the meetings of the Methodist Conference refers in the *Methodist Recorder*, to "the lovely virtue of courage that rib of God himself." We confess the allusion staggers us. We were acquainted with the old Genesis story of the origin of Adam's wife. But it was Adam's rib, not Jehovah's. Can it be possible that when God Himself wanted a wife, He adopted the Adamic method, and sacrificed one of His own ribs to produce a "Help Meet for Him." Well, well, we live and learn. "Courage"? We call it Divine Audacity.

The way Freethought is invading the Churches is most alarming. A pious critic of a new book on Ezekiel by Dr. G. A. Cooke (incidentally, its price is 20s.) points out that "the traditional belief is that Ezekiel addressed his prophecies to a small group of exiles in Babylonia just before and after the final fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C., and that he subsequently wrote them down in the form in which they have survived." Unfortunately the traditional belief has had to suffer some rude shocks, for "during the present century critical theories have reduced the prophet Ezekiel to insignificance." In fact, Holscher, in 1924, "maintained that Ezekiel himself could be credited with only a few brief oracles, and that the rest of the book, which bears his name, was compiled in later generations by various editors." Needless to say, Dr. Cooke does not go as far as that, but he is obliged to admit that later editors did "alter and amplify" the "original text"—as if anybody knows what really was the original text. In other words, anyone can now discuss and criticize any Bible book just as if it were a purely secular one; this is not only the method of Freethought, it is Freethought. And for this freedom to criticize Christians have to thank many Freethinkers in the past who had to bear obloquy, persecution, imprisonment, and even death, for their opinions.

The Rev. Henry Emerson Fosdick can always be trusted to amuse his congregation and readers. His latest topic is entitled, "When God Lets Us Down." His "paraphrase" for Christ's dying cry of despair ("My God, My God, etc."), makes Jesus say: "My God, why hast Thou let me down"! Mr. Fosdick, in a mild attempt to imitate his Redeemer (presumably when he too felt "cross") "once tried to give up God." God could scarcely have survived Mr. Fosdick's rejection. But as to letting God down in this way, nothing whatever was done. Mr. Fosdick suddenly remembered that "sometimes on a mountain's crest, one can see the outlines of a human face," and even of Christ's face too. He does not mention the well-known "Toad Rocks," the numerous pigs, apes and devils' faces on other rocks. It seems singularly easy to save Mr. Fosdick from Atheism. Perhaps if he were not Minister of New York's wealthiest Church we might convert him.

A pious leader-writer laments the fact that the English Church "makes no memorial of the heavenly birthday of Our Lady," nor any "commemoration of the reunion

of Christ's Mother with her divine Son in Heaven." He sees little chance of Christian reunion until "our fellow-Christians on the Continent" can no longer be perplexed by our "indifference and lack of interest in the honour due to Our Lord's Mother." And he brushes aside the medieval "legendary" accretions to the wonderful story of her life. It is with this kind of drivel that Christians are still being fed. It makes us wonder whether the writer really believes what he is talking about, or whether he is writing what he knows pleases a number of people who have not yet realized that the Middle Ages ended some centuries ago. But what exactly is the difference between a belief in this "reunion" of Mary and Jesus, and the legendary nonsense the writer does not believe in?

In case all the modern boosting up of "Our Lord" is not enough, one can now buy "a truly encyclopedic work," specially written for nuns, entitled, *Christ is My Life*. It consists of six large volumes of over 2,400 pages, giving no fewer than 600 "meditations," each meditation enriched by an appropriate picture. Those who have studied the character of these "meditations" for nuns and monks, particularly from the point of view of a scientific psychology, will be at no loss to account for the attraction they offer to celibates of both sexes. Many a medical man would be easily able to throw light on the matter. Whether he would do so or not depends largely upon his own independence and the religious beliefs of his patients.

Thrusting a lie back in the teeth of "Holy writ," Denmark can boast that *it has no poor*. And we can understand the reason, considering that a third of the population is engaged in agriculture, a third in industry, and the remaining third in transport and services. Not "divine" services, mark! *Real services*. As a Danish professor put it to a London press contributor: "The great religious disputes over life are ended. It now remains for us to make life worth living for everybody. In Denmark it is not a religious duty to build flats for old age pensioners. Nowadays it is scarcely looked upon as a social responsibility. It's a pleasure." Can any religion produce as practical a moral sense? "There is a happy land not far away." Happy Denmark!

A recent illustration depicts Sir Malcolm Campbell, with mechanics, *seriously* regarding the "blessing" of his speed-boat Blue Bird on Lake Maggiore, by the Locarno village priest. That may relieve any anxiety Lady Campbell or the public may be inclined to show when Sir Malcolm attempts speed records. In case of mishap, a walk on the waters of the lake would be helpful and a great advertisement for "true faith."

The great Jamboree of Boy Scouts, held recently in Holland, was made an orgy of religion for the unlucky lads. There must have been quite a number who were not in the least interested in "Holy Communion," or the other tomfooleries forced on to them in the name of religion, but they were obliged "loyally" to support their religious comrades. The Roman Catholic boys could hardly move a step without their priests; and the French Protestants, Dutch Reformed, and other sects, all had a large number of ministers with them. The British Scouts had nearly forty Anglican clergy, and they had also a Presbyterian, a Roman Catholic, and a Methodist at Headquarters. All the boys were made to remember that the Scout's first promise was "On my honour I will do my best to do my duty to God." Not only had the boys to attend "divine" service in the early hours of the day, but they were made to close their camp fires with prayer; and "unity" verses from St. John were read in English, Dutch, French, and Malay. In fact, as the Bishop of Jarrow triumphantly declared, the Jamboree was "a religious week in every sense of the word."

We wonder what would have been said if a scout-master or even an ordinary visitor among the boys, with Freethought views, had attempted to hold a "service,"

in which the nonsense of religion was properly exposed? How would the hordes of clergy have reacted to meetings in which their pretensions were shown to be false, in which purely secularist views were inculcated? After all, that is what the Scout movement is really for? It is not any duty towards God that matters, but to their own comrades—the Scout's good act for the day is not a humble prayer to Heaven, but has to be something concrete in kindness *here*. Fortunately, the boys as they grow up, will in many cases be able to judge the value of religion for themselves. In any case, we should be glad to know whether the Scouts themselves *want* all this religion thrust upon them? We have an idea they do not.

Miss Dorothy L. Sayers is varying her detective stories with a religious drama. Her new play, "The Zeal of Thy House" may, for all we know, fitly represent the purpose (whatever it is) of religion and Melodrama. But as it is recommended to us (by Mr. Edward Shillito) as "noble," "memorable," and "poetic," we may at least study its claims a moment. If the specimen its eulogist quotes represents the height of the "poetry," we can only regret that the late Miss Wilhelmina Stitch has not left behind a worthier imitator. Here is the specimen chosen by Mr. Shillito:—

How hardly shall the rich man enter in
To what Kingdom of Heaven. By what sharp, thorny ways,
By what strait gate at last! But when he is come,
The angel trumpets split their golden throats
Triumphant, to the stars singing together
And all the sons of God shouting for joy.

"The play ends," says Mr. Shillito, "with a noble piece of adoration to the Holy Trinity." We can quite believe it. It is easier to "adore" than to understand. The lines given above are not likely to establish Miss Sayers' reputation as a poet. The most we can say of them is that they are religious. All we can gather is that the entrance of a rich man is likely to boost the demand for heavenly golden trumpets.

A writer in a religious newspaper quotes Anatole France's beautiful words about arboreal roads, ending with his eulogy of Beauty: "Who is sure of having found a better guide?" The pious scribe thinks there is something far "lovelier" in "the rhythm and balance of a character that has walked with God in a garden in the cool of the evening." Only a benighted wallower in superstition for superstition's sake could possibly imagine a human being "Walking" with a Deity anywhere. The Bible tells us of a man named Enoch, who "walked with God." His fate was that "He was not, for God took him." He was last seen in "a chariot of fire," which sounds like a burning motor car.

Fifty Years Ago

THE term "unbelief" is inaccurate and misleading. Belief is often, foolishly, supposed to describe a creditable state of mind, while unbelief is held to indicate the opposite. The assumption is absurd for the simple reason that belief and unbelief are but two ways of describing the same position. He who believes that Jesus was born without a father disbelieves in that case the proposition that all children have fathers. He who believes in original sin denies natural goodness. He who affirms a Trinity may also affirm God's unity, but logically he denies it, and admittedly he denies polytheism. He who affirms a creator for the universe denies the adequacy of the universe apart from a creator. The Christian is infidel to the Mohammedan as the Mohammedan is to the Christian. If unbelief is discreditable it must imply a reluctance, not to believe in general, but to believe what is reasonable, and in this sense the "infidel" is he who prefers the least evidence to the greatest. And this, again, is assuredly the Christian, who holds implicit faith to be a virtue.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. BENTON.—Your reading of the clerical gentleman does not surprise us. It is what we should have expected. But we did not criticize Mr. Carson because he was personally worth it. He serves to illustrate a type, and states a position that is more common than most people imagine.

L. EMERY.—We strongly dislike using children as instruments of propaganda, but it is probable that we may be driven to issue a leaflet on the Bible written for children. We agree with you that Freethinkers should make a point of withdrawing their children from religious instruction in the schools. It would at least be a protest against the existing condition of affairs. There is not and never was an offence known to the English law as Atheism. Blasphemy does not involve Atheism although the "blasphemer" may be an Atheist.

R. B. MILLER.—Your experience with newspapers is not uncommon. On the other hand persistency often pays. But remember that letters to the editor should be brief and to the point.

H. BLEWETT.—Sorry we cannot say as to how far the writer named is warranted by facts in speaking as he does.

J. HANSON.—We had Major Atlee's assertion, and will deal with it later. One must remember that he is a politician, and writes with one eye, and perhaps his chief thoughts, on the voter. And in the majority of cases the Christian voter does not care whether what is said be true in fact or not. What he does wish to hear is something that runs consonant to his religious prejudices.

G. BENCH.—Thanks for cutting.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

Sugar Plums

An invitation has been sent to the International Union of Freethought Societies, of which the N.S.S. and the Rationalist Press Association are members, to hold its 1938 Conference in London. The invitation has been sent in the names of the two Societies mentioned, and that of the Union of Ethical Societies and the South Place Ethical Society. It is very many years since an International Conference was held in this country, and in the present state of the Continent, there are not very many countries in which such a Conference could conveniently be held. Properly managed it should give an impetus to Freethought here.

The Speeches of Charles Dickens, a volume that has been long out of print, has been re-issued (Michael Joseph, Ltd., 3s. 6d.), and while not great speeches, they make very pleasant reading. Much of the attraction of the speeches at the time they were delivered, one imagines, must have been due to the fame of the speaker,

but there is in them all that exhibition of sympathy with the "under-dog," and that appreciation of the goodness of ordinary human nature, that offer an unconscious indictment of the terrible snobbishness and formalistic morality of the Victorian era. We have so often emphasized the point here made that we have considerable pleasure in quoting it:—

Reflect whether ignorance be not power, and a very dreadful power. Look where we will, do we not find it powerful for every kind of wrong and evil? Powerful to take its enemies to its heart, and strike its best friend down—powerful to fill the prisons, the hospitals, and the graves—powerful for blind violence, prejudice and error, in all their gloomy and destructive shapes. Whereas the power of knowledge, if I understand it, is, to bear and forbear; to learn the path of duty and to tread it; to engender that self-respect which does not stop at self, but cherishes the best respect for the best objects—to turn an always enlarging acquaintance with the joys and sorrows, capabilities and imperfections of our race to daily account in mildness of life and gentleness of construction, and humble efforts for the improvement, stone by stone, of the whole social fabric.

There is again here the common confusion of knowledge with understanding. Knowledge in the absence of the understanding is as bad as power in the hands of an unscrupulous man, and when George Eliot emphasized the same point, she did not, if our memory serves us right, omit the necessary qualification. But the message is one that is always worth re-delivering.

The State Parliamentary Labour Party has endorsed the statement by Acting-Premier P. Pease, that there could be no question of State-aid to denominational schools by the Labour Government of Queensland under the existing platform. It has been officially announced that the party "had unanimously endorsed the statement issued by the Acting-Premier, defining the platform of the Labour Party regarding its education policy and the question of State-aid for denominational schools." The statement which was issued by the Acting-Premier pointed out that members of the Government were bound by the platform of the Labour Party, which was decided by Convention. The platform as passed by Convention, under the heading of education, stated: "Primary education in State schools, secular and free."

That Scotland does not stand where she did perturbs a writer in an Ardrossan paper:—

The customs of inhabitants of Ardrossan and visitors do not appear to tend towards the due observance of the Sabbath Day.

When the younger generation is checked for their conduct on the Lord's Day they reply: "You are too old fashioned."

Well, I prefer to be old fashioned than to be one of those who can come out of an ice-cream vendor's shop on Sunday with both hands full of sliders, and with a face as confident looking as if they were coming out of a church service.

It was not becoming for young ladies to be so brazen in their manners in the face of worshippers returning home from church. Close behind was a young man with a Sunday paper, spread out to the full view of passers-by, and on the opposite side of the street was observed a regular church attender with his Sunday literature projecting out of his pocket.

What next? A man writing an advertisement on the street announcing an evening cruise; also a sandwichman with a notice-board drawing the attention of the public to a railway excursion.

Some little time ago appeared an announcement of the formation of a Company with the object of forming a Freethought Club and Institute in West London. Suitable premises have not yet been obtained, but we are asked to announce that a number of shares have been taken up (the shares are 5s. each), and it is hoped that some definite announcement may shortly be made. Full information may be obtained from the Secretary of the Company, Mr. J. Horowitz, 409 Oxford Street, W.1. The aim of the company is to raise a capital of £500 with which to commence operations. About 700 shares have been applied for.

Mr. G. Whitehead will spend the week commencing from to-day (August 29) in Burnley, lectures being held each evening. The Lancashire Branches of the N.S.S. are forming themselves into a Federation, which will mean a strengthening of the movement and wider propaganda in that area. Burnley will, of course, be represented in the Federation and unattached local saints are asked seriously to consider joining up.

Dr. Louis C. Cornish, the new President of the Congress of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom at Manchester College, Oxford, made reference to the Oxford Movement:—

I cannot refrain from asking you to contemplate the amazing theological swing to the Right, evident in the world's religious meetings this summer, where the Barthian theology and the so-called Oxford Movement and other forms of orthodoxy rise again.

In essentials we believe that these systems of theology are of the past, and one main reason why they recur is because we Liberals have no great, vital, compelling modern theology to appeal to the wisdom and the will of our churches.

Dr. Cornish laments the fact that Theology is no longer the Queen of the Sciences. That, as well, in our opinion is definitely of the past.

Problems of Chronology

III.

It is hardly necessary to state that those Jews and Christians who look upon the Old Testament as divine, appeal only to the Hebrew text. Its chronology differs in many particulars from the ancient versions—though whether we should call even the Septuagint a version is by no means settled. Be that as it may, here are the figures given for what is known as the antediluvian period, by various versions and writers. The number of years from the Creation to the Flood given in the Hebrew Text is 1,656; by the Septuagint, 2,262; by the Samaritan Pentateuch, 1,307; by Josephus, 2,256; by the early Christian, Theophilus, 2,242; by Julius Africanus, 2,262. Now how came all these different figures from a *divine revelation*? How did Josephus, and the Septuagint translator, who could have had no other source of information than the Hebrew text—that is, if religious history be true—manage to get such different figures? Or are the figures just arbitrary ones, made up in accordance with some system of numerology? Dr. Giles in his *Hebrew Records* admits “how hopeless is the possibility of ever arriving at the truth.”

As a matter of fact, there are undoubted traces of numerology in the Bible; one might even go so far as to say that there is abundant evidence of far more than traces. Numbers like three and seven occur in some form or other over and over again in the Bible. Some chapters, like the first of Matthew (in Greek) are marvels of ingenuity in the way sevens and multiples of sevens have been combined. The “Holy” Trinity, the *third* day of the Resurrection, such phrases as “the World, the Flesh, and the Devil,” and “Mene, Tekel, Peres,” God as Spirit, Love and Light, Jesus coming as Prophet, Priest, and King, and numerous others, can all be given as examples of the number three. As for seven, supposed to be the great number of *spiritual* perfection, it occurs in the Old Testament 287 times (7×41) the word “seventh,” 98 times (7×14), and “seven-fold” 7 times; and if you add the three numbers together you get $287 + 98 + 7$, which make 392 or 8 times the square of seven. Needless to say that there is the *seventh* day of rest, while, of course, we get seven seals, and seven trumpets, and crowds of other examples.

This numerology must have gone to the making of the chronology in the Bible—as well as its numerous “prophecies.” And some of its believers seem to spend their whole time in reckoning up various figures, writing them down in coloured inks, and sending their results to confirmed unbelievers like myself, with a challenge to refute them. So strong is their faith that even the date of the Authorized Version is dragged in, added to some number or date in the Bible, and the result triumphantly hailed as a striking example of God's Divine Word which never can be assailed.

Personally, I am quite convinced that a good deal of the “chronology” of the Bible is just made up to fit “magic numbers.” It is all part and parcel of the theory that there is an esoteric, as well as an exoteric, meaning to the Word; and only initiates are supposed to know the former.

But how hopelessly confused is the chronology of the Bible can be shown by the simple query, “When did Jehoshaphat die?” Rensburg, in his work *The Bible*, devotes twenty pages to the query, and he produces some remarkable results. He first gives the Biblical authority for a number of statements concerning the Kingdom of Judah, and of Israel from the Book of Kings. Of Jehoshaphat, it is stated, that he was one of Judah's greatest kings, dying at the age of 60, after a reign of 25 years. Of Ahaziah, King of Israel, it is stated that he was a very wicked King, dying after a reign of only two years. The last chapter of I. Kings records the history of Jehoshaphat; the first chapter of II Kings gives that of Ahaziah. Did the King of Judah die before or after the King of Israel? Rensburg then proceeds to show from a careful computation of the various dates given in the Bible that it is possible to extract sixteen answers, all based on a genuine calculation. The answers vary from the same year to one year before, or after, or seven years before or after to eighteen years before, or sixteen years after. You can take your choice and always prove from Divine Authority that you are right. And yet millions of people are prepared to defend the absolute perfection and infallibility of the Bible.

Need one mention also in these days the perfectly ridiculous ages given to the Patriarchs? That they are mostly based on “magic” numbers must be apparent directly one examines a list of them. Methuselah with his 969 years is as nonsensical as Noah with his 950 or even as Abraham with his 175; and no amount of juggling with the exact length of a “year,” which the hard-pressed defender of the Bible loves to bring into service, can make nonsense other than nonsense.

The truth is that chronology is a very difficult question, and that almost all the dates in Biblical and Secular history are just taken for granted. It saves a lot of trouble to eat what is put before you without questioning how the food was prepared. The recipes are copied from other recipes and queries as to *how* and *why* are highly inconvenient. Our histories have been compiled in a good measure from monkish chronicles, and to suggest that the monks could ever tell a lie, or sin in complete ignorance, is rank blasphemy.

There have been many attempts to get at the truth of our chronology, but their authors do not seem to be very well known outside the ranks of specialists. I can only say that the few “revelations” that have been made leave me aghast. So many idols have been broken, so many historical statements exploded.

Perhaps one day the truth *will* be known, and it *will* make us free.

H. CUTNER.

Religious-educational Propaganda

This feature of moribund theology and ecclesiasticism has numerous phases and facets, and probably, as a result of the late recrudescence and the famous "recall," appears to a considerable extent in educational periodicals. Front page articles (ordinary contributions or insertions at advertisement rate?) have appeared this month (July) in the *Schoolmaster* and the *London Teacher* on the Fourth Centenary of the English Bible, which is to be celebrated in 1938. The "call" (or "recall") is, according to the writer of the article in the former journal, for "more intelligent study" of the book.

No hint is given of the disastrous "higher" and other criticism that is now so well known—if we except the statement in the Syllabus of School Bible Lessons (compiled by the National Council for the celebration of the Centenary, and printed in the former of the journals mentioned) that "the written message was coloured by the writer's own experience of life, by his own personality, and limited by his own knowledge. He was not miraculously endowed with knowledge far ahead of his time, e.g., scientific knowledge." But, notwithstanding, the compilers say that the Bible is "inspired"; that "the men who wrote it were guided by God through the Holy Spirit to give its message"; that the "prophets" were "messengers of God, who revealed his character to the people"; and so on. And the "most unkindest cut of all" to the intelligent, thoughtful, informed rationalistic teacher is that the syllabus is "designed to help teachers *without fettering their freedom* (italics mine) in dealing with the subject." One wonders what would happen if in the area of many local education authorities teachers asserted their freedom to deal with the Bible in a rational way, that is to say, as they might deal with any other old book of religious literature.

One educational periodical has lately adopted the practice of printing articles by well-known writers, chiefly novelists. In a reference to Augustine Birrell's *Things Past Redress*, it is recalled that this man of letters went to the Irish Office instead of remaining President of the Board of Education; and it is added that "a kind of credulous agnosticism ruined him." This, which appears to be a delicate association of credulity and agnosticism, things which are so radically opposed, recalls other absurd lies, such, e.g., as G. K. Chesterton's statement that of all people Rationalists are the most irrational, and the "frenzy of unreason" lately attributed to Freethinkers by a Roman Catholic writer.

I have often wondered whether Birrell's mild heterodoxy had much to do with his removal from an office to which, being a man of high literary culture, he was better fitted than were the great majority of Presidents of the Board of Education. But I have not been able to find out.

In the case of Matthew Arnold, who, though he did some notable educational work (and possessed family and university influence), failed to get promotion from the lower rank to which he was appointed, the story is told (I heard it told by an adult school lecturer) that when the question of Arnold's promotion was raised, the President said, "No, no promotion for the author of *Literature and Dogma*."

Another curiosity of religious propaganda has appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement*—a review of a symposium, *Educational Progress and School Administration*, a book written by more than twenty colleagues of Professor Spalding on his retirement from the professorship of educational administration in Yale University. In the review one naturally ex-

pected to find some interesting information about education, as that word is ordinarily understood. But, incredible as it may seem, the article, after a few preliminary words, deals with nothing but a chapter written by a dean on "Religious Education and School Administration." The dean, writes the reviewer, points out once more that the danger of politically-guided education is that "the best places will be left blank, because it is on the most vital matters that men differ." This cryptic utterance seems to mean that, in the opinion of the writer, public education should be not politically but church-guided. Again, "The American State is not godless"; "it protects religion and expresses its faith in public acts and customs." This view appears to be unduly optimistic, in view of the next sentence: ". . . but in one way or another religious teaching tends to get squeezed out."

For the rest we get the information that in eight States Bible-reading in school is prohibited, and in eleven is obligatory; seven other States permit it, and in twenty-one it may be done because there is no legislation on the point; it is "partially forbidden" in New York State, but is permitted in New York City. It is stated that Bible study has lately spread, as part of the curriculum or out of school hours, so that we may conclude that the U.S. has not quite escaped the recrudescence of religion in connexion with education—a feature so deplorably shown in the retrogression to sectarianism in the State schools of Belgium and Holland, and the narrow escape of pre-war Germany from a like fate. But from what ecclesiasts in this country call "definite religious instruction," whether sectarian or unsectarian, the systems of public education in France, the United States, New Zealand, Japan, Turkey, Mexico, and several States in South America remain free.

J. REEVES.

The World of Books

For those who have a distaste for close thinking, or who prefer to take their philosophy of life from the paragraphic eruptions of writers such as Mr. Beverley Nichols, we cannot honestly advise the reading of Mr. Jack Lindsay's *Anatomy of Spirit* (Methuen, 5s.). But for those who like to "rastle" with a subject, and who even prefer their agreement to be favoured with a critical and stimulating disagreement, then we cannot think of a better book. *The Anatomy* is not big in size, but it is big in its scope, and well conceived in its execution, and it is, as the author realizes, a mere outline of a great subject. The theme of the book is the creation of the unity of (we, of course, use the phrase without its religious implications) the human spirit, the tracing of the relations and inter-relations of man with his world, and the creation of a mobile unity that is an expression of the constant but ever-changing relation between the two. Our own difficulty is that we find ourselves in quite general agreement with what Mr. Lindsay has to say, while not in agreement with the inevitability of some of his conclusions. From our point of view we should have liked a greater emphasis placed on the dominant influence exercised by the later developments in human life, although that fact does receive recognition. A passage such as the following is quite good:—

The distinctive human grouping lies in the factor of the tool. It is the tool that cuts humanity off from all other groups in the animal world. It is the tool that makes the purely biological approach to human problems unsound. It is the tool that must be made the basic fact, and not mind. Mind is not a purely human manifestation; we can observe mind at work, in the other mammals, in birds, and so on. Mind becomes human because of the tool, not the other way about.

That point of view will not be unfamiliar to readers of the *Freethinker*, and in its working out Mr. Lindsay makes an interesting application of Freudian psychology to religion and sociology. It is a book we can strongly recommend, without endorsing all the conclusions that the author might draw. We have only noted one obvious error. In a passing reference to Bishop Berkeley, he remarks that this does not mean "that man created the world subjectively to the Berkeleyan statement." But it is of the very essence of Berkeley's position that the universe is *not* created by man. In relation to man Berkeley insisted that the world was completely objective. The world was not a projection of man, but of God. Berkeley believed in the objective existence of the world *as we see it*.

THE conduct of the murder-gang now ruling Germany, allied to the stupid talk in general about "race," has made a book such as Mr. Cedric Dover's *Half-Caste* (Martin Secker, 7s. 6d.) very welcome. Mr. Dover fights with the gloves off, but his plain speaking and hard-hitting is timely and welcome. When a theory without the slightest basis in sound science is taken as a warranty for one of the most brutal forms of governmental repression the modern world has known, plain speech is required and in *Half-Caste* it is forthcoming. Mr. Dover's book has a fitting preface by Professor Lancelot Hogben, who points out that while most of us have superstitions and prejudices, these become very dangerous, even criminal, when we fail to recognize them as being what they are, and elevate them to scientific generalizations. The striking thing is that this theory of "race," which is in a scientific age made the excuse for the vilest of crimes, is without any scientific foundation whatever. Professor Hogben has no hesitation in saying that "With full responsibility for my words as a professional biologist, I do not hesitate to say that all existing and genuine scientific knowledge about the way in which the physical characteristics of human communities are related to their cultural capabilities can be written out on the back of a postage stamp."

There is no such thing as a "pure race," and if there were it would be something very low in the scale of civilization. Professor Arnold Toynbee, in his excellent *A Study of History*, of which only three out of thirteen volumes have been issued, insists upon the fact that the beginning of civilization requires the mixture of people and cultures, a conclusion that receives strong support from the new Diffusionist School of thinkers. But it is certain that not only is the belief in racial purity a pure myth, the most progressive peoples being the most mongrel in character, but much racial classification is pure nonsense. There is, for example, no Aryan race, there is only a group of languages for which someone invented the term "Aryan." There is no Celtic race, there is only a Celtic tongue. There is no Jewish race, there is only a body of people marked off from others by their religious belief. Not even the majority of Scotchmen look like Scotchmen, or Jews like Jews, or even Germans like Germans. There are masses of people of a psychological character and cast of feature, but that is quite a different question. There are dark people, fair people, yellow and black peoples, but there our power of dogmatic assertion ends.

The truth is that what people call German or British or Irish or any other racial characteristics are not racial at all. They are an outcome of the effect of a particular social environment on masses of people (with wide variations even here) living under the same social institutions and conditions. The English people, as much a mongrel people as any existing, owe their qualities, or their special development of qualities, to the social environment in which they have lived. One is not even sure what the original inhabitants of England were like. But it is certain that during the past two thousand years, we have had Roman, French, German, Dutch, Norse men, to say nothing of the steady infiltration of other peoples, out of which we have manufac-

tured the "true-born Englishman." America is another example of how a national character may be created by an amalgam of widely different peoples.

These aspects of the matter are all discussed by Mr. Dover, but a most interesting portion of his book is that in which he deals with the alleged mental inferiority of the coloured people. Here he has a very easy case, that is, with those who are susceptible to genuinely scientific reason. The mental equality of the native African child with the white has often been noted, but its environment ceases to supply the continual impetus that the white child has, with the result that the coloured competitor drops behind. But given the chance, Mr. Dover's impressive list of the coloured people who have "made good," is enough to kill the superstition of the natural superiority of the white child. Unfortunately, with social boycott, and the general prejudice against "colour," the coloured man or woman has never an equal chance. If it is a case of intermarriage, the man and the woman both suffer from their own people, and so fail to have that social help without which full individual development is impossible. It is an old story, told in different ways. The "lower" British classes were refused baths in their houses because they would not use them—and the old wheeze about using the bath to keep coals in has not yet worn itself thin. So the people did not "want" education, or the vote, or a number of other things that now they will not do without. So also Irish people were always quarrelsome and discontented, when the fact is that the discontent against England during the past couple of centuries has come mainly from those English settlers who were outraged by the British misgovernment of the country. We advise everyone who has 7s. 6d. to spare to get *Half-Caste*. Whether they agree with it or not, it will do them good.

Another book that we have read with very mixed feelings is *Julian the Apostate and the Rise of Christianity*, by F. A. Ridley (Watts & Co., 15s.). So far as the sketch of Julian is concerned, the work is excellently done, and the relation of Julian to his environment is well done. So also is the analysis of the quality and character of Roman culture. And against the arm-chair theory that the triumph of Christianity was inevitable (fore-ordained the Christian would call it) the author makes out an unanswerable case. What was inevitable was that sooner or later the clash of rival creeds in the Roman Empire would end in a synthesis which, whether it was to be called Christianity or Mithraism, or by some other term, was a mere matter of naming. It was, as Mr. Ridley so well shows, as the great champion of Greek and Roman culture against the flood of Oriental superstitions, and the establishment of a form of Fascism which then as now consisted in the artificial centralization of political authority in the hands of a bureaucratic State, culminating in a permanent dictatorship, against which Julian fought. History records the result in the rapid decay of ancient civilization and the erection of the Christian Church on its ruins.

The fault we have to find with Mr. Ridley is his determination to force events into the frame of a pre-conceived economic theory. He says:—

Religion is, in actual history the child of fear; fear of man: a reflex of the human helplessness, scientifically before nature which he cannot subdue; psychologically before the ruling classes, his human oppressors, whom he cannot help to overthrow.

That religion originates in human ignorance, fear and helplessness may be taken as an established fact. But the earliest stages, whatever it may afterwards become, furnish no grounds whatever for believing that man's religion was a reflex of his helplessness before the ruling classes. The ruling classes appear to have originated after religion, and while, so soon as there existed a ruling class it used religion in its own interest, it can hardly be said that religion originated in man's helplessness before a ruling class. Neither do we know of any

evidence that supports the belief that Jesus was merely a fighting revolutionist, who marched into Jerusalem with a band of armed followers amid the acclamations of the Roman mob. That the Jews were troublesome is clear enough, but that does not provide ground for the crucified god. It would have suited the Roman Governors of a later date much better to have had to fight against a mere revolutionist who was killed as a consequence of the failure of the revolt he headed, than to have an incarnated God, who would save people in both this world or the next. What reason could any non-Christian Government have for suppressing the mere revolutionist, and permitting to grow up the legend of a God? The mere characterization of the mythical Jesus, with its repetition of established superstitions concerning a sacrificial saviour is enough to disprove Mr. Riley's explanation. But withal, Mr. Ridley's work is one that provides an excellent study of a period that orthodox historians deal with in anything but a satisfactory manner. It is a pity that the work was not published at a lower price, it might then have had a much larger circulation than it is likely to have at its present price. And a large circulation it deserves.

QUONDAM.

White Feather?

The policy of the Government of this country is for many of us a thing very difficult to understand. There are two things which we find it hard to credit of our countrymen, such is our vanity and pride. We have been properly brought up, and feel assured that any man elected to Parliament must be a believer in Fair Play, and would never show the White Feather. Having been so bred, we, as I have already said, find our Government's policy with regard to a properly elected Spanish Government, hard to follow.

Never bother, we shall be always in the right. Just contemplate what is happening in foreign countries!

In Paris there is the office of a Bureau, an International Bureau, which deals with the Right of Refuge and the Help given to Political Exiles. Every now and then it issues a bulletin. The last one tells of the welcome given by the Dutch authorities to German anti-Nazi refugees. At this moment there are certain similarities between the Dutch Government and our own. I trust, however, that this is not one of them.

In a page and a half is given very briefly the history of the treatment of over fifty unfortunates, who, in the past four years, have escaped from Hitler's concentration camps and prisons to the Dutch frontier. You can picture their inexpressible joy and relief when, after painful and nightmare-ish journeys, they at last crossed the frontier into free Holland. You can also imagine their horror and despair when the Dutch police arrested them and took them back to Hell's frontier, and handed them over to the Nazi Gestapo.

In many cases it has not been possible to discover their subsequent fate. A few cases will suggest what happened to all. In September, 1934, Paul Kuebler, former member of the Prussian Diet, was delivered by the Dutch police to the German Secret Police. He was taken to Dusseldorf, where he was tortured, and finally thrown out of a third floor window into the courtyard of the Dusseldorf Prefecture; which killed him.

Hans Hedemann was a young man nineteen years of age, when, on account of his anti-Nazi activities he found it necessary to flee from Germany on board a boat from Hamburg to Holland. On arriving in Amsterdam he was arrested by the police and imprisoned for four months. He was then taken over the frontier into Belgium, where his nerves gave way, and he wandered from place to place a prey to profound melancholia. He returned to Holland and was sent to an asylum. When he was released as cured the Dutch police again took him into Belgium, and the Belgian police with promptitude sent him back again. From February 2, 1937 to April, this unfortunate young man was looked after by friends. Immediately he felt well enough to go about again, he went, as bound by law, to report at the nearest police

station. There he was immediately arrested, and ever since has been in prison at Amsterdam.

On May 27 last, Edmund Walder of Wuppertal, Elberfeld, committed suicide at Utrecht. This is what one of his friends wrote of this desperate act: "Walder expected to find in Holland a refuge worthy of the name. He was mistaken. . . . Forced, as were his companions, to gain his living against the law, he went from one town to another, haunted by the fear of arrest and expulsion into Germany. This young, strong and healthy man became a wretched, nervous, and desperate fugitive. . . ."

Gustav Schlafer was arrested on February 11, at Groningen, and was taken to that part of Holland where the three countries, Holland, Belgium and Germany, meet. He was told that to be free, he had only to go a couple of yards across German territory and then into Belgium. If arrested by the Gestapo, the Dutch disclaimed responsibility, declaring that he had gone into German territory of his own free will.

Wilhelm Meister, formerly a secretary of the Young Socialist Workingmen, was arrested in Spain by Franco's men at the request of the German consul. He was embarked on the German steamer *Hercules* for Hamburg. The ship stopped at Rotterdam, where Meister made his escape. On reporting to the police he was arrested (November, 1936) and thrown into prison, where he has been ever since. The Dutch authorities have just given instructions for him to be handed over to the German Police.

This is the reactionary policy of Dr. Colijn and his jonkheers. We have already noted the readiness of his Minister of Justice (!) to bring the editor of the *Vrijdenker* into court. Still we must not blame them overmuch for showing fear of their monstrous neighbour. We may have to explain away some awkward actions of our own Government some day.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Correspondence

"A LONDON ENCYCLOPEDIA"

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,— I am grateful to my friend Cutner for his kind appreciation of the above. I know the imperfections of the book well enough, and do not demur at criticism. I feel, however, the fly he has thrown into the ointment of his praise is rather a superfluous one.

This is an Encyclopedia of London, not of thought or of movements. In other words, there must be topographical excuse for what is introduced. If there were plaques (I do not deny that there ought to be), monuments, houses, conspicuous graves associated with Taylor, Hetherington and Carlile, they would have been mentioned. Moreover the existence of my little book *London for Heretics*, referred to by Mr. Cutner as also in the *Encyclopedia*, was a justification for avoiding duplication of matter. Even in that book I had to restrict myself largely to Freethinkers who were great national figures (the larger book I would have produced was not considered a sound economical proposition) and this I think is inevitable in my last work—intended for the general public.

I am sorry for those who are disappointed in this regard, but I fail to see that one could be expected to mention any movement that had its rise in London. So large a number have by reason of its size. The R.P.A. has been treated spacioously enough to please the *Literary Guide*, because it could be introduced under "Fleet Street." Had there been an article on Farringdon Street, I would similarly have mentioned the N.S.S. There are several references to Bradlaugh, one to Thomas Paine, and one to Prof. W. K. Clifford (his Atheistic epitaph in Highgate Cemetery) and I venture to say my treatment of the City churches is the most secularistic in print. Further, there are hints of that Shakespearean heresy which Mr. Cutner shares with me, and which—to our joint surprise—is still anathematized by some Freethinkers.

There is room for a small Encyclopedia of Freethought, presenting biographies of men like Hetherington (such as the admirable one recently published in the *Freethinker*), and the histories of movements, and societies. I should like Mr. Cutner or Mr. Chapman Cohen to undertake it if a publisher could be found.

As a member of the N.S.S. and a keen reader of the *Freethinker*, I am prepared to lecture (free of all charge in London) on literary and London subjects.

W. KENT.

[It is precisely because Fleet Street is dealt with by Mr. Kent that a note should have been made on the important fight that Carlyle carried on from "the street." We fail to see how dealing with the Churches at length atones for following the common practice of leaving the men who did so much for Freethought unmentioned. The important fact that Fleet Street saw one of the most important struggles for Freedom of thought that the nineteenth century provided is ignored in a work in which many of the things noted might well have been omitted.—EDITOR.]

A DREAM

SIR,—I regret my inability to see the point in Maud Simon's article in the August 15 *Freethinker*. I don't see how Freethought can be the basis of Theism and Atheism. One implies a belief that may be blind and stubborn; the other, disbelief, unbelief. Theism is not a child of free unhampered and unfettered thinking. Freethinking is not the prerogative of theist and theologian in the sense that it is of the Agnostic or Atheist. And who could possibly visualize a united front of the Pope, "Arch. Cant.," Dick Sheppard, Tom Mann, Ernest Thurtle, Archbishop Hinsley, Dr. Downey, Leslie Weatherhead, Lord Snell, Chapman Cohen and the Bishop of London, "against those who regard Freethinkers as a danger to society, and little better than criminals"? As Freethought increases, the sphere of religious influence decreases. Whoever heard of any Orthodox religion allowing Freethought and Freethinkers to exist where it had the power of suppression by means of such infamies as the Spanish Inquisition. No! Freethought and orthodoxy do not, never have, and could not exist together, and go hand in hand in sweet peace and harmony.

NORMAN CHARLTON.

A GREAT EXEMPLAR

SIR,—The poor little Methody parson whom you spitted so mercilessly in your last week's issue, was a despicable soldier of the Cross in comparison with Louis IX., a saintly and sainted King of France. He said boldly that a believer should never argue with an infidel otherwise than by plunging his sword up to the hilt into the infidel's belly.

C. C. DOVE.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AUGUST 19, 1937

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Bryant, Preece, Seibert, Elstob, Ebury, Silvester, Tuson, Sandys, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Liverpool, Kingston, North London, West London Branches, and the Parent Society. Reference to the death of Mr. A. B. Moss was made, and a tribute to his long and faithful work for the Society and loyalty to the movement was paid. A preliminary meeting of the committee for inviting the International Congress of Freethinkers to be held in London in 1938 was reported. Police action arising from the sale of literature at N.S.S. meetings in Edinburgh was reported and

steps taken for legal defence were endorsed. The receipt of a legacy under the Will of Mr. J. W. Grey, of Newcastle, of £300 was noted. Provision was made for the continuation of the lecture scheme being administered by Mr. J. T. Brighton. Lecture reports from Messrs. Whitehead, Brighton, Clayton, Shortt, and Mrs. Whitefield were recorded. Correspondence from Liverpool, Glasgow, Birkenhead, and Harrow dealt with.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, September 16, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market): Saturday and Sunday, 7.0, A Lecture. Literature for sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Mr. P. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connell, Tuson and Miss Millard. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Miss R. Millard. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others. The *Freethinker*, *Age of Reason* and Mr. Chapman Cohen's latest pamphlets on sale outside Marble Arch Tube Station every evening.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane Corner): 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

BURNLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Burnley Market): 7.0, Sunday. Nelson, Chapel Street, 7.30, Monday. Burnley Market, 7.30, Tuesday. Accrington Street, 7.30, Wednesday. Burnley Market, 7.30, Thursday. Nelson Market, 7.30, Friday. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at each meeting.

ECCLES (Market): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Grey Place, Greenock): 8.0, Tuesday. Albert Road, 8.0, Wednesday. Vulcan Street, Possilpark, 8.0, Thursday. Albert Road, 8.0, Friday, Muriel Whitefield will speak at each of these meetings.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Mr. Atkinson of Manchester and Mr. Thompson. High Park Street and Park Road, or near vicinity, 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. Robinson and Parry.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Park Gates): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson. Platt Fields, 3.0, Sunday. Debate—"Are the Teachings of Jesus of Moral Value?" Affir.: Mr. Keene, Manchester. neg.: Mr. J. Clayton., Burnley. Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday Mr. J. Clayton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Market): 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEATON DELAVAL (The Avenue): 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (The Cross): 7.0, Monday Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

TEES-SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (The Crescent, Middlesborough): Mr. H. Dalkin—"The Roman Church and Freedom."

WIGAN (Market): 8.0, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

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