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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
Should Opinion be Free?—The Editor	609
The Upshot of "Hamlet"—Mimmermus	610
Hell With the Lid Off—Ignotus	611
Freethinkers and the Historicity of Jesus—G. Todhunter	613
Thomas Paine: An Investigation—John M. Robertson	614
Justice to a Justice—T. H. Elstob	618
An Indispensable Handbook—H. Culner	619
The Flat Earth Idea—J. Reeves	619
The Pure Word—A.R.W.	620

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

Views and Opinions

Should Opinion be Free?

A friendly critic on whose judgment I place some value, sent me a little while back what he considered a "poser." He wrote,

In a reply to a correspondent you say that you believe in the absolute freedom of expression. The question I pose is this; would you support (I mean support their right to freedom) a party who wished freedom to propagand cannibalism? Of course, to get this question into perspective one would have to suppose it asked at a time when cannibalism was a live issue, so that the theoretical statement of it would be liable to lead to immediate action.

There is, of course, a way of asking a question so that it admits of but one answer. The old poser, "Do you still beat your wife?" is an example. My friend's letter is another. I must deal with the question, therefore, by restating it.

In the first place I have never, so far as I know, even advocated the absolute right of anything or to do anything. It looks like an absolute truth that a parent ought to support his children and a husband his wife, or that no man should take the life of another. And yet there are imaginable circumstances in which one would be held justified in not doing the first two things, and in doing the last one. Rules of conduct are bred of circumstances, and they must be interpreted in the light of circumstances. That is why I have so often written against what some people call "absolute morality." There is no such thing. Actions are good or bad, desirable or undesirable in view of certain ends. All the rest is moonshine. The form and amount of freedom depend upon circumstances. I can easily imagine circumstances in which a man would either be a fool, or guilty of a positive offence in giving way at all times and under all circumstances to absolute freedom of expression. Besides, I did not say that I believed in the absolute freedom of expression. What I did say was that I believed in the right of

others to hold and to express what I hold to be wrong opinions, and that I protest, without regard to the colour of the party concerned, against interruptions in public meetings. That is a very different position.

The case of liberty to propagate cannibalism is not, I think, well chosen. It implies that cannibalism might become a general practice in society, and might follow propaganda, as the adoption of a fruitarian or a vegetarian diet might result from advocacy of these forms of feeding. But cannibalism is religious in origin, and is never more than a casual ceremony, and is then ceremoniously performed. In every society, primitive or modern there are sharp limits set to the way in which life may be taken, and for a very obvious reason. The practice of promiscuous and regular cannibalism as would be the case with regular and promiscuous homicide, would make group life impossible by destroying one of its foundational conditions. The question thus pre-supposes an impossible situation. It is equal to asking me how would I arrange the affairs of a society for a hundred years hence, in which women have already lost the capacity for bearing babies. Long before cannibalism could become a daily habit, society would be a dead fact.

* * *

The Evil of Intolerance

But I will not meet my friendly critic merely on the ground of a faulty illustration. His obvious challenge is to my statement that the fact of an opinion being wrong, or even, within limits, dangerous, does not afford adequate ground for denying it liberty of expression. There are few opinions that are not wrong to some people, and there are few that are not considered dangerous to someone or to something. We are up against the old question, "Ought poisonous opinions to be suppressed?" In the course of history that question has been put many times, and when put by those in power has frequently been answered in the affirmative. But just as frequently history has shown that the decision was a wrong one. The only exceptions are those where the conditions were abnormal, and the exceptions could honestly deal with a transient set of circumstances only. But the wrongness of forcibly and continuously suppressing opinion has been shown to be wrong not because the opinions suppressed were admittedly non-poisonous, but because the ill-consequences that arose from the suppression of free-opinion were in the long run greater than the benefits conferred.

Everything in this world has to be purchased with a price, and not even liberality can be enjoyed without payment. The position was well put by a Roman Catholic to a Freethinker, "I demand from you liberty on your own principles and refuse it to you on my own."

First Principles

I rest my position on the following considerations which I will state as tersely as I can:—

(1) Human society is essentially a battleground of opinion. Shall we do this or that? Shall we adopt this policy or that? Shall we retain or modify or destroy this or that institution? That is the form in which almost every problem that comes up for consideration faces the human group. But opinion implies an opposite. An opinion that will not permit an expression against it is not an opinion of any social value. The argument that the opinion of A is, in the judgment of B, wrong, begs the question. B has the same objection to urge against A. One cannot think of any important opinion that would not have been crushed out had the belief, that it was wrong, even in the judgment of the majority been held to justify suppression.

(2) An opinion when established, to the extent to which it modifies existing conditions, gives rise to new needs and new possibilities, and, therefore, creates new opinions concerning the necessity for the revision of existing institutions and practices. It may, and often does, lead to the revision or cancellation of the new steps that have been taken. The demands of the individual upon society, and those of society on the individual increase because of the advance made, and in determining how far these demands shall go the free expression of opinion is indispensable.

(3) If there are no such things as "natural rights," and I agree there are not (natural rights died out with the growth of the conception of evolution), then the suppression of opinion, merely because it is believed to be wrong, is no more than an expression of physical force. It exhibits the social arena, not as the scene of the contest of conflicting opinions, beliefs and theories, but as a theatre for the display of brute force. The sword is made officially stronger than the pen. The evolutionary order is inverted, and brawn lords it over brain.

(4) If evolution be accepted then it must be admitted that progress is dependent upon variations—biologically in structure, psychologically in the varieties of opinion that are formed and expressed. But the fruits of variation can only be suppressed by rigorous and continuous elimination. Nature does this by universal and continuous slaughter. The breeder follows the same line in trying to give stability to a desired form. The Christian Church tried this method for centuries, and to some extent still attempts it. The choice before society thus becomes that of continuing at a set and a comparatively low level by the continuous suppression of opinion, or by taking the expression of varied opinions as a settled principle. The level maintained by methods of suppression is bound to be relatively low, because the human brain like every other organ becomes more efficient with use and less efficient with disuse.

* * *

Taking Risks

I have compressed into a very small space the essential material for a volume, but what is lacking in elaboration is, I hope to some extent, compensated by definiteness of outline. I admit that long continued and complete suppression of freedom of expression, over a period that covers many, many generations, may reduce human society to an anti-like condition in which certain functions are discharged with efficiency. Society may *exist* in such circumstances, but in the human sense of the term it will have ceased to *live*. Fortunately the development of the essentially human qualities in the *genus*

homo makes such a state of things a practical impossibility. The quality of sympathy, if nothing else, calls a halt. But what could be done in the direction of making society of one opinion was tried for centuries on a colossal scale—a much larger scale than is possible to-day—by the Christian Church. The actual result was failure, although it has left the ill-consequences of its control on many millions of human beings.

I do not deny the dangers of free expression of opinion, and its awkwardness for governments is unquestionable. The establishment of freedom of opinion, real freedom of opinion, has its dangers and its inconveniences, but so has the prohibition of freedom. I do not agree with those who say that it is easy to govern a nation of slaves. It is not. When Milton said that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, he expressed one of those truths that applies to the opposite of liberty just as decidedly. Eternal vigilance is also the price of slavery and tyranny. The slave-owner has always to be on guard. The tyrant sees a possible enemy in everyone around him. The maintenance of German Fascism is made possible only by a vigilance, a sense of suspicion, an expectation of enemies within the camp, that to a properly balanced brain and a developed human nature would make life intolerable. Eternal vigilance is necessary only when a people are half-free, when large numbers of the population are free only in the sense that they exercise a freedom that has been gained for them and which they fail to estimate at its proper value, or use in a proper manner.

I admit that the policy of freedom exposes society to risks, but I do not know any policy that is free from risks. Life itself involves risks, and the only way to avoid them is to be dead. But the risks run in following a policy of suppression, which in the end robs the social service of its vital intelligence are, in my judgment, less than the risks taken by a policy of suppression. Over and over again this policy has been attempted, often with periods of success. But always in the end men have come back to some form of freedom as the only one in which humanity can grow. And a policy of freedom has this recommendation—it carries within itself the remedy for its own mistakes. A policy of suppression can only strive to perpetuate its mistakes—and its crimes.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Upshot of "Hamlet"

"To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty."—Keats.

It is curious that in the numerous volumes which have appeared, and are constantly appearing, having for their subject the works of Shakespeare, there has been so much triviality. Far too much prominence has been given to the sources of the plots, to very trifling emendations of the text, to considerations of historic surroundings, and to other small matters dealing with technique. But, in the vast majority of cases, the profound intellectuality with which Shakespeare's pages are pregnant has been ignored, or kept in the background.

In other words, form has been unduly magnified, while the mind which animates the form has been neglected. This peculiarity is manifest in a new book, *The Meaning of Hamlet*, by Levin L. Schuckling, translated by Graham Rawson. (Oxford Press,

68.). This is a translation from the German, but it is done so skilfully that it reads like an original work. The work itself is singularly well-informed, but for some inscrutable reason the author does not stress his conviction, nor does he draw the inevitable conclusion from his own arguments.

For example, Herr Schucking sees quite clearly that *Hamlet* is full of ingrained scepticism, and that there is a very close association between the mind of Shakespeare and the "mind" of "Hamlet." Indeed, he goes so far as to declare emphatically that the play itself is "the echo of happenings that have shaken the author's soul to its very depths." Yet the critic harps upon the well-worn theme of the Essex insurrection, as if that could be the principal source of Hamlet's intellectual melancholy. Schucking thinks that it was from old Michael de Montaigne that Shakespeare learned intellectual sincerity, although he had previously noticed that Shakespeare had no belief in a future life, which is one of the very mainsprings of religious belief.

This secularism is quite clearly brought out in *Hamlet*, for the ghost and its Materialism in the play is just part of the fiction, and used by Shakespeare as mere stage machinery, just as he uses witches to heighten the effect in *Macbeth*, and fairies to brighten the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The "ghost" rants and plays his part upon the stage, but to Shakespeare himself "the rest is silence," and death is "that bourne from which no traveller returns." Man is no fallen angel, but the "quintessence of dust," and the "paragon of animals." *Hamlet* is the most intellectual of all the numerous creations of Shakespeare's wonderful mind. If he put such sceptical thoughts into his mouth, does it not imply that such thoughts were natural to such a type of man?

In such matters Shakespeare held the scales firmly and evenly. Of course, the dramatist couldn't help revealing himself in his writings. We learn, most certainly, something authentic of his likes and dislikes, his intellectuality, his patriotism. His art tells us of his own passion for justice, his hatred of tyranny, and his liking for "the golden mean." In no sense was he a bigot. With equal interest and equal ease he portrays Hamlet's philosophizing, Wolsey's piety, and Falstaff's blasphemy. In his great tragedies he deals with the very deepest issues of life and conduct, but he never points to the Christian Cross as a solution. In an age when religious wars and schisms were convulsing Europe, and in this England of ours the Protestant Religion was engaged in a life and death struggle with Roman Catholicism, it is really remarkable that Shakespeare himself turned his back on the Christian Religion. Not, observe, from hostility, for he was too free from prejudice for that. It was from the knowledge that, as a philosophy of life, it was worthless, and threw no useful light over the abysses of human thought, and over the awful tides of human circumstance. On these important questions his own views were neither Catholic nor Protestant, but Secularistic. That is why three centuries after his death, when the Christian Religion is in the melting-pot, men still turn to his pages for guidance on those momentous questions which arise in every thoughtful man's mind.

Shakespeare lived, it is well to recall, at a time when a padded buffoon like James the First might claim divine right without being laughed at. He wrote in days when men were racked, imprisoned, and even murdered for their want of orthodoxy. He lived in days when Democracy in its modern sense was as unknown as the aeroplane, the motor-car, or the submarine. Shakespeare's complete detachment from the sanguinary theological turmoil of the spacious days

in which he played and wrote ought, in themselves, to inform us of his indifference, not only to Christianity, but to all forms of religion.

Sidney Lee, to whose untiring industry in Shakespearean scholarship we all owe so much, has pointed out that the master-dramatist often states both sides of a question by various utterances placed in the mouths of the various characters. It was this extraordinary power of detachment that caused John Ruskin to say that Shakespeare was not only unknowable, but inconceivable. Shakespeare was no fanatic. He had opinions, but in him the artist was always stronger than the propagandist.

Once, Shakespeare's face flushed, and he almost lost his discretion. In the *Merchant of Venice*, he was most unusually outspoken. When Jewish people were treated like mad dogs, and were hounded in all the ghettos of Europe, it wanted some courage to make Shylock say before a popular Christian audience:—

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility?—revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example?—why revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute; and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction.

Note also the humanistic thoughts put in the mouth of Portia, one of his tenderest and most delightful creations. When the Christian world was a cock-pit of religious fanaticism, and heresy punishable with torture and death, Shakespeare pleads for mercy. It was a splendid gesture. Shakespeare's magnificent genius is like a pure, white flame, which seen amid the bigotry and blood of Elizabethan days, is a beacon to those whose lives are consecrated to truth and liberty. Shakespeare was a great liberator, first and foremost, because he was a great Freethinker. The very thought should make us all proud.

MIMNERMUS.

Hell with the Lid Off

THE writer has before him (*Oh Shade of Dante!*), a specimen of squalid and illiterate bilge in the form of a tract (published by John Ritchie, Ltd., Kilmarnock, at 6d. per 100; 5s. per 1,000) bearing the title *Do Men Exist for Ever?* This gross insult to the intelligence of Puir Auld Scotland is worth quoting as affording proof of the fact that there are still well-to-do Scottish Christians who subsidize the production and distribution of terroristic threats designed to add to the number of recruits to the Banner of Clericalism.

In answer to the question—Do Men Exist for Ever? the writer pens this: "God says—Yes. Where? Either in the Eternal Glory with Christ and his redeemed people or in the "Lake of Fire," with the devil and his legions. Of course, men of learning and of science say—No. But the question is—Are we to believe God or men? Who is best informed on the subject? God, the infinite eternal God; or Man, the finite creature of a day? There can be but one answer, and that is—God. And God has told us that he knows about the matter. He has caused it to be written in his inspired and eternal word, where men will exist for ever.

"There are two destinies prepared for men—only two. A heaven of holiness and happiness, a hell of sin and woe. To either of these places men go immediately after death. Some to be with Christ, which is "far better" than the highest bliss that can be known on earth. Immediately the ransomed spirit leaves the body it is at home with the Lord.

"Others immediately after death are found in hell. Their own plan, for which sin and Christ-rejection had fully prepared them.

"Banished from God and Heaven, yet destined to exist for ever in conscious misery. Doomed to the second death, yet existing in it. Reader, let me ask, to which of these eternal destinies are you passing onward? To one or the other you are being carried, whether you own it, think of it, or deny it; you cannot hinder it. You must exist for ever: you cannot annihilate yourself if you would. Death will then refuse to end your sorrows: when men seek it, it will flee from them. And must all this last for ever? Will no coming age bring with it another chance to those who in their folly despised God's grace in gospel days? The Son of God who came to live and love says—NO. Listen to his word. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life. These shall go away into everlasting punishment." These are stern realities; the true sayings of God. Reader, ask yourself personally and now—"Where shall I spend Eternity?"

Despite its fundamentalistic crudity (the author of it can probably polish off a dozen of the same sort of thing before breakfast) it must be recognized that this tract does not, like so many modernistic sermons, beat about the bush or try to tone down the fate of the unbeliever. It winds up with the question (the implication of which is clearly untenable): "Where shall I spend Eternity?" How can anybody spend Eternity? You may spend *time*; but eternity is unspendable. "Spending Eternity" is a contradiction in terms.

In the Christian Scheme of Redemption, God, of course, is a Law unto himself: it is open to him to violate all ideas of justice, which are not accordant with the Divine will and Divine dogmatism. But how do we regard the repudiation of the highest forms of jurisprudence evolved in human experience even when that repudiation is the act of an alleged supreme being who changes not? Assuming the existence of a supernatural ruler, he certainly has not moved with the times. And it is by the principles of Justice so far as established by the best human thought that men in practice govern themselves, whatever else they may profess to believe in. Thus, in human affairs individual and communal—it is the Secular Law that is the practically effective Law, not the Law laid down by some supernatural law-giver whose existence has never been proved.

Such a tract is another manifestation of the encouragement religion gives to mental indolence. The issues of life and death are to the ignorant religionist so very, very simple! He conveniently closes his eyes to the erosive effects of the swelling tide of knowledge upon the domain of Faith. The wealthy Christian has no desire to see any increase of knowledge or of intellectual activity in the masses. On the contrary! And if, by the pressure of Freethought, we are obliged to give the children of the "lower orders" schooling up to the age of 14, let us see to it that all the instruction they get is subject to, and without prejudice to, implicit and believing acceptance of the authority of the Almighty Dictator.

It is therefore intellectual freedom that is the bugbear of rich religionists and the Hope of the masses. So long as the rich can dig the channels through which they want the thoughts of the common people to run, well and good. The foundations of security for the favoured minority are menaced when independent and original minds dig channels for themselves.

Meanwhile the religious robbers of the ages and their heirs are afforded a double protection: they shelter behind the comfortable doctrine that their present position is assured by the service and sacrifice of the workers; and their future position—after the present life—by the service and sacrifice of Jesus

Christ. Their confidence is in the unrighteous system of vicarious suffering. So they keep their own skins unblemished and unscarred.

And their priests are never very far away when some succulent offering is laid at the feet of their God. The priests pull the wires that move the Joss. Perhaps, after all, the Almighty Dictator is but a big Wooden Horse packed with clerics set in the midst of modern Trojan toilers. He does nothing in the way of dictating; but is himself driven and dictated to by the leaders of a militant ecclesiasticism!

And the poor, deluded, impoverished believers bow their necks to the yoke, and render homage to their so-called "Bettors"!

Not but that we come across occasional instances of the remorseful sweater, who strives to allay his mental discomfort by paying back what he stole from his fellows. O. Henry puts such cases cogently by the mouth of Jeff Peters in "The Gentle Grafter."

"When a man swindles the public out of a certain amount he begins to get scared and wants to return part of it. And if you'll watch close and notice the way his charity runs you'll see that he tries to restore it to the same people he got it from. As a hydrostatic case take, let's say A. A made his millions selling oil to poor students who sit up nights studying political economy and methods for regulating the trusts. So back to the universities and colleges go his conscience dollars.

"There's B got his from the common labouring man that works with his hands and tools. How's he to get some of the remorse fund back into their overalls?"

"'Aha,' says B, 'I'll do it in the name of education. I've skinned the labouring man,' says he to himself, 'but according to the old proverb, Charity covers a multitude of skins.'

"So he puts up eighty million dollars' worth of libraries; and the boys with the dinner pail that builds 'em gets the benefit.

"'Where's the Books?' asks the reading public." "I dinna ken," says B, 'I offered ye libraries an' there they are. I suppose if I'd given ye preferred steel trust stock instead, ye'd have wanted the water in it to set out in cut-glass decanters. Hoot for ye!'"

The regulated working-man is bribed with libraries, recreation grounds, billiard-rooms and concert halls, and for all of these he has himself paid the price many times over!

And on the top of all, these Holy Joes and Holy Willies have the effrontery and insolence to dump upon him bushels of these illiterate compositions showing him his future abode with the lid off if he doesn't subscribe to the Scheme of Redemption! Let us show the supremacy of mind and replace the lid.

IGNOTUS.

The influence of the ecclesiastics in Spain may be traced back to the age of the Visigoths, when they controlled the affairs of the State in the great national councils of Toledo. This influence was maintained by the extraordinary position of the nation after the conquest. The holy warfare in which it was embarked seemed to require the co-operation of the clergy to propitiate Heaven in its behalf, to interpret its mysterious omens, and to move all the machinery of miracles, by which the imagination is so powerfully affected in a rude and superstitious age. They even condescended, in imitation of their patron saint, to mingle in the ranks, and with the crucifix in their hands, to lead the soldiers on to battle. Examples of these militant prelates are to be found in Spain so late as the sixteenth century.

Prescott, "History of Ferdinand and Isabella."

Freethinkers and the Historicity of Jesus

In the eighteenth century, we are told, Deism was much affected by thinkers both sacred and profane; and, of course, the gospel story correspondingly discounted. To-day we find numbers of profane thinkers—yea, even Rationalists yclept—unreservedly rejecting both Deism and Theism, but clinging untimely to a phantom Personality which they appear to be able to descry through the mists of the gospel story. How can these things be? In the first place, we must allow that the majority of the Deists—being Unitarians in fact, though not in name—never permitted themselves to doubt the validity of that story on its human side. They believed it to be a true biography—though disfigured by accretions of superstition, myth, and miracle—of a great-souled philanthropist and moralist who “went about doing good.” Of the minority who suspected or perceived the allegorical and tendentious character of the literature, few indeed would care to risk the consequences of publishing their views. Secondly, we may surmise that the dissenting Rationalists—to whom we shall hereinafter refer as the *Dissidents*—while still adhering to certain impressions they derive from the gospels, nevertheless jettison a far larger share of their contents than did the Deists. When these adjustments are made, contrast—at first sight suggestive of reaction—becomes so much modified as to point rather to slow progress than to reaction. The Deists have Elymerized their gospels; the *Dissidents* have, in addition, Elymerized the Deity; but continue to see in gospels—shorn (as they vainly suppose) of all myth and miracle—the veritable portrait of the posset-superman into whom the Deity has been rationalized.

The *orthodox* rely on the following five “witnesses,” if we may so call them: (1) profane writers (2) the Epistles (3) the Gospels; and the two favourite clerical gambits: (4) “a religion like ours must have had a Founder” (5) “Why accept the evidence for Napoleon, and reject that for Jesus?”

What “witnesses” the *Dissidents* rely upon we do not know; but can, we think, make a shrewd guess. One—Mr. Archibald Robertson—certainly quoted a text from the gospels in support of his views. We cannot, of course, apply the principle *ex uno disce omnes*; but we are frankly unable to conceive that, for Rationalists of any calibre, the witnesses (1), (2), (4), (5), could survive the battery of critics brought to bear upon them by experts like Edwin Johnson, Drews, W. B. Smith, J. M. Robertson, the Dutch School, Thos. Whitaker and J. Gordon Rylands. We therefore feel justified in our provisional assumption that the *Dissidents* found—mainly at any rate—on the sole remaining source, viz., the Gospels; and shall accordingly, after quoting briefly from the experts on each of the other lines of evidence, restrict our further comments to the Gospels.

(1) *The famous passages from Josephus, Tacitus and Suetonius.* “For our part we can only regard any attempt to prove the existence of an historical Jesus by these supposed profane witnesses is a sign of intellectual unscrupulousness or lamentable superficiality.” (Drews, *Witness to the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 60).

(2) *The supposed references to the person of Jesus in the Pauline Epistles.* “The frantic efforts of theologians to discover the historical Jesus in the Pauline Epistles merely show, if they show anything, the impossibility of quoting Paul as a witness (*Id.*, p. 102).

(4) *Christianity must have had a Founder.* “A divine . . . founder is craved; history, like science, may roughly be said to begin when that craving . . .

has been discredited . . . by the later arising instinct of exact observation.” (J. M. Robertson, *Short History of Christianity*, 3rd edition, p. 1).

(5) “Why accept the evidence for Napoleon and reject that for Jesus?” “That such arguments rely upon the thoughtlessness of the majority of people to have any effect, throws equal light upon the general intelligence, and on the frame of mind of men who can make use of such arguments” (Drews’s, *Id.* p. 48).

Finally, on the conclusion of an exhaustive examination of all the alleged extra-gospel evidence as above, we have the following emphatic declaration from Prof. Drews: “There is no other source of the belief in an historical Jesus but the gospels (*Id.* p. 122).

(3) *The Gospels.* We have now briefly to consider the claims of these ancient documents, as testifying to the birth, life, and death of a remarkable man called Jesus. Millions of inexpert persons have preceded us in this intellectual adventure. Drawing unsound inferences from inaccurate data, they have divided the Christian Fellowship into a multitude of contending sects. If our inferences are to be sound, we must *perforce* rely upon one or more experts (preferably of our own careful selection) “to put us wise” over such questions as the age, authorship, authenticity, type of literature, peculiarities of language, etc., of these documents. What are the characteristics of a good expert? Adequate learning, good judgment, scrupulous accuracy and honesty, judicial serenity, and freedom from economic and religious or anti-religious bias. The last-named qualification summarily excludes the great majority of theological or clerical candidates for the office. They may try to be fair, but they cannot be disinterested. It would also, we think, exclude perhaps the great secular scholar and critic who would probably be the first choice of most of us—Mr. J. M. Robertson—were it not for the fact that his bias, by his own admission, was (when he began his enquiry into the subject) definitely “on the side of the angels,” i.e., in favour of an historical Jesus!

Let us suppose, then, that we who are not experts have taken the very unusual course of refraining from making fools of ourselves by drawing unsound and unscientific inferences from inadmissible data, and have selected experts on the principles we have tentatively formulated above. We believe that their report will run somewhat as follows: “The Gospels in their present form are compilations, much interpolated, from older and simpler documents. The authorship of any of them, or of any part (omitting verifiable quotations) of them, is quite unknown. They were for the most part written, edited, revised and re-edited, during the Second Century A.D. They neither are, nor purport to be, of the same nature as secular biography or history. They belong to that class of literature which tends to acquire the label ‘sacred,’ because its main preoccupation is with gods rather than men.”

On the strength of this report, we may now usefully proceed to examine the gospels for ourselves. What is our first impression? We are supposed to be reading the biography of the greatest and most notable man who ever trod this earth; yet we look in vain for any recognizable human figure. Where was he born, what was his upbringing, what was his physical appearance, his manner of speech, what are the personal and individual traits by which alone we can recognize or identify a friend or a hero; where did he travel, and when and where did he die?

Such answers as are given in the gospels to these elementary enquiries are on a plane of myth and miracle which surely will “cut no ice” for us, or even for

our *Dissident* Rationalist friends. Most of the questions are quite unanswered. Never surely, in the whole course of literature, was a hero so poorly served by his biographers. Neither "head nor tail" can be assigned to the itinerary. The words put into the hero's mouth are taken from current ethical sources.

Bearing in mind the above impressions, we have in conclusion, to ask ourselves the question: "Is this the biography of a man of flesh and blood like unto our own who—after his tragic death—was mythologized (like so many more before him) into a God; or is it, on the other hand, the story of a God who has subsequently been Evêmerized into a man?" Surely the Gospels themselves supply the answer. The history they relate is that of a God, "who for our sins became man," etc. Can any Rationalists accept this miracle? Yet when we find some of our brother Rationalists contriving to extract this phantom (the man Jesus) from the pious pie of myth, miracle, transcribed mystery-play, borrowed ethical aphorisms, tendentious dialogue, fictional narrative, sheer allegorical gnosticism, and devotional "sob-stuff"—which we label "The Gospels"—what epithet can we apply to the phenomenon except "*miraculous*"? From the learned, judicial, and exhaustive treatise of Prof. Drews, we quote this final declaration (*Id.* p. 29): "There is not a single passage in the gospels they (the orthodox) can show to be historical."

G. TODHUNTER.

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 605)

TRY him by his relation to non-political ideas, and the limitations become clear. He thought freely and freshly on law, history, and language, but what was his cosmogony, what his religion? When Mr. Stephen wishes to discredit Buckle, he asserts that the latter evaded the theological problems of his day; insisting that this proves intellectual restriction. Of Buckle the statement is simply not true: of Burke it is true. He contrived to set aside, by his sheer force of prejudice, all the religious questionings of his time, and to rest in the exulting, blatant orthodoxy of the rural Tories of his and our day. And his science? I cannot recall a trace of proof that he gained anything seminal from the scientific movement of his age: on that side he was at bottom non-receptive. What Paine could see in regard to traditional faith by "rough common-sense," Burke could not see with all his endowment; where Paine was natively alive to the great problem of the physical universe, Burke was wrapped in a husk of literature, book-culture, and every-day human association.

Consider in particular, however, the attitude of the two men towards the French Revolution, the issue on which they can best be weighed against each other in respect of breadth and sanity of mind, as distinguished from brilliance of rhetoric. It is presumably in this connexion, indeed, that Mr. Stephen draws his comparison of the two men; since he does not refer to Burke's bigotry, and appears to know nothing of Paine save as a writer on politics, and against the Bible. It is like Mr. Stephen to say that the *Reflections* are pitched on an intellectual plane "altogether superior" to that represented by the *Rights of Man*, but the proposition, like so many others of his, will not bear examination. Burke, after a life-

time of *succès d'estime*, suddenly attained a popular success just because he voiced with incomparable eloquence and energy the sentiments of the average Englishman at the Revolution crisis. To say that the work by which he first caught the upper-class and middle-class mind, and produced a general and enduring reaction, is addressed to intellects of a comparatively high order—this is only a sample of that unreasoning panegyric of Burke which has so long discredited criticism. To anyone who will apply fair tests it is plain that the elevation lies in the style and not in the thought, which is again merely typical Tory sentiment dignified by an uncommon range of association and argument. So to dignify it was assuredly a great feat, which let us duly admire; but let us not pretend that the great rhetorician is a great thinker.

Even Mr. Stephen has a feeling that such a performance as the *Reflections*—of which the sounder elements are not profoundly original, while the unsound are shallow with the shallowness of George the Third—will not survive impartial comparative criticism, much less arbitrary treatment such as he accords to Paine; and he indicates his apprehension in the fashion with which we are now so familiar:—

Paine fully believed, or appeared to believe, in the speedy advent of the millennium. His vanity, it is true, was interested in the assumption. The American Revolution, he thought, had brought about the grand explosion, and the foundation of the American Constitution had given the first example of a Government founded on purely reasonable principles. Now the pamphlet *Common Sense* had led to the Revolution, and therefore Paine had fired the match which blew into ruin the whole existing structure of irrational despotism. Still the belief was *probably not the less genuine*, though thus associated with an excessive estimate of personal merits, and Paine is at times eloquent in expressing the anticipations of universal peace and fraternity destined to such speedy disappointment. His retort upon Burke's sentimentalism about chivalry and Marie Antoinette is *not without dignity*. . . . A *degraded representative* of the popular sympathies, Paine yet feels for the people, instead of treating their outcry as too (*sic*) much puling jargon. And therefore he gives utterance to sentiments *not to be entirely quenched by Burke's philosophy*" (ii. 263-4).

Like nearly every passage of Mr. Stephen's that we have had under notice, the foregoing would suffice by itself to convict him of a singular incapacity for equity. Assuming that he had made good his point as to Paine's vanity, which again is worded with hostile animus, what becomes of the insinuation of insincerity? Either Paine believed, as he was well entitled to do, that his *Common Sense* had been a main influence in precipitating the Revolution, or he did not. If not, there was no vanity; yet even in that case he might surely be perfectly sincere in the hope at which Mr. Stephen sneers. We know he lost it later; but we (*nous autres*, that is, excluding Mr. Stephen) know him to have been full of it before the collapse in France. But if, as Mr. Stephen is satisfied, Paine vaingloriously believed he had brought about a beneficent revolution in America, where is there any pretext for hinting at insincerity in his words as to the movement of things in Europe? "The belief," our acute historian finally decides, was "probably not the less genuine though thus associated" with personal vanity; this just after pointing out that the vanity was "interested in" that very belief. As who should say, Cromwell was probably "not the less" sincere in believing God was with him after he had won Dunbar. One would be inclined to say that explicit absurdity was Mr. Stephen's strong point, were there not so many reminders that he can

be worse than absurd. The deduction as to Paine's probable sincerity, despite vanity, in a belief which flourished on vanity, is worthy to be treasured beside that other that an argument "loses little from not being smothered"; but we are not allowed to forget dissatisfaction in amusement. The question in hand is the validity of Paine's answer to Burke, from the point of view of right reason. Mr. Stephen will not say that Burke's defence of "prescription" will stand, or that his attitude towards the Revolution was that of one who rightly appreciated the case. He does not like to defend the treatment of the hoarse cry of a wretched people as "too much puling jargon." He feels that Paine has "even some advantages in point of argument," is not always "without dignity," and utters sentiments "not to be entirely quenched by Burke's philosophy." Partially quenched they may perhaps be (that is for the reader to ascertain), but not entirely. Is Burke's "philosophy" then, after all, left in possession of the field? On the contrary, the conclusion of Mr. Stephen's chapter, after all this unspeakable see-sawing, is that Burke's political philosophy is a mere wreck on the shore of time! But before this was conceded, the man who had the right end of the stick must needs be described as "degraded," as appealing to popular passions, as a meagre intelligence, as excessively vain; and his failure to reach finality of political science must be alleged with contempt before the other's failure could be admitted with reluctance and respect.

A final comparison of Mr. Stephen's dismissals of Paine and Burke respectively will serve to close an examination of which, in that connexion, the reader is perhaps already weary. It is after he has given a "pejorative" account of the drift of the *Rights of Man* that the critic thus pronounces judgment:—

The doctrines thus vigorously laid down [by Paine in politics] have become tolerably threadbare, and every scribbler can expose their fallacy" (ii. 263).

The said doctrines included, even on Mr. Stephen's showing, the proposition that the hereditary principle in Government is an absurdity; that morality consists mainly in doing as we would be done by, and not, as Burke insisted, in reverently regarding all constituted authorities in their order; that the British Constitution was predisposed to corruption; and that the representative system "meets the reason of man"—theses which some of us are fain to maintain still, against even Mr. Stephen and "every scribbler." Nay, Mr. Stephen himself concedes, with his inalienable grace of modification, that Paine spoke "pretty forcibly" when he said that "a body of men holding themselves accountable to nobody ought to be trusted by nobody." But one hastens from such details to a contemplation of the historian's final judgment on Burke, which presents a consummation of dead-lock in antithetic allegation not easily to be paralleled in critical literature:—

Burke's magnificent imagination and true philosophical insight led him more nearly than any of his contemporaries, and even than any of his successors in English political life, to a genuine historical theory. Unluckily his *hatred of unsound metaphysical doctrine* induced him to adopt a view which seems often to amount to a denial of the possibility of basing any general principles upon experience. Like the cruder empiricists, he admires the "rule of thumb" as the ultimate rule, and conservates mere prejudice under the name of prescription. Godwin's title, "Political Justice," indicates the weak side of his great opponent. Burke had not solved the problem of reconciling expediency with morality, though he indicated the road to a solution" (ii. 280).

That is to say, his true philosophical insight led Burke nearer the truth than any man of his time, or

any English politician since; and at the same time his hatred of bad philosophy made him such a bad philosopher that he landed in the philosophy of the "cruder empiricists," *videlicet*, the rule of thumb. And yet, after all, though he attained no solution of his problem, he "indicated the road to a solution." And the solution—which no English politician has yet hit on?—In the very act of coming to a fair conclusion on Burke, Mr. Stephen must needs drown decision in contradiction and leave the reader facing blank frustration. It were superfluous to deduce at length the net value of the correlative judgment on Paine; and in any case the task has become too monotonous to be supportable. One grows weary of this suicidal process of vacillating commentary and incoherent prejudice parading as analytical criticism. Turning from counsel darkened to the stage of darkness visible, let the reader attempt fairly to measure Paine by his relation to his age on the main grounds of universal mental activity. There are some further materials for such a judgment, of the existence of which Mr. Stephen does not appear to be aware.

JOHN M. ROBERTSON.

(To be continued)

Acid Drops

According to the British United Press, a school teacher and a Mohammedan priest have been sentenced to death at Darzhansky, in the Kirghiz Republic of the Soviet Union, "because they frightened children with tales of demons and ghosts." Capital punishment may seem drastic to mete out to the foul seducers of infant minds, who in the name of religion poison many more lives than do the traffickers in chemical "dope," but there is little doubt that the day will come when it will be accounted a serious offence to propagate superstitions under whatever names they may be known, by instilling them into the minds of helpless children.

Commissioner Hay of the Salvation Army, speaking in Australia the other day, prophesied that "Catholicism will one day be the dominant religion" there. And as he was opposed to Communism, he added, "We do not want a change that will take down God and Christ and the Virgin Mary." Members of the Salvation Army have not always been enthusiastic about Roman Catholicism; but when it comes to Communism they would vote for almost any religion against it. Any belief, even an idolatrous one, is better than a godless Communism. All the same the "godless" state need not necessarily be Communistic. It can quite conceivably be Secularistic and Freethought. And Australia is far more likely to be that than it is to be Catholic.

Do unbaptized babies go to Hell or not is a question which has been puzzling a Roman Catholic very much. The answer given by a priest in a Catholic paper is that they do—or at least that "they never enjoy the Beatific Vision," which amounts to the same thing. The proof is that "Our Lord" said that "unless a man be born of water and of the Holy Ghost he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven," and all Christian theologians are almost unanimous in agreeing with their deity. Unbaptized infants who die, die with "original sin still on their souls," so we now hope that our puzzled Catholic enquirer is satisfied. If he still has little tiny doubts about the question let us whisper in his ear that there really "ain't such a place as Hell"—or Heaven for that matter—and that all we know about people who die is that they die and that is all. The *fear of Hell* is part of the Church's grand assets.

Reported to be "the most favoured candidate for the Presidency of the United States in the event of Mr. Roosevelt not standing," Mr. George H. Earle, Governor of Pennsylvania, submits that "American democracy

would be safe so long as three fundamental principles were observed. They were the maintenance of a belief in God, the sanctity of the ballot, and the freedom of the Press and of speech." But which of all the numerous American "Gods" does Mr. Earle advocate? Their production has become frequent and large enough to constitute a busy export trade.

"Some time ago," said Garry Allikhan, the other day, in the *Evening Standard*: "I wrote that a thriller was to be broadcast in the Sunday programme (of the B.B.C.). It is not. Second thoughts have prevailed. . . . After the news leaked out the Director of Broadcast Religion, the Rev. F. A. Iremonger, was approached by certain people, who considered it sacrilegious to broadcast that type of play on a Sunday. It was due to Mr. Iremonger's representations that the Drama Director—changed his plans. Hitler Iremonger and Musso Reith are extraordinary figures to meet with in the "land of the free!" Can we hope that the forthcoming "Get fit" campaign will develop a firm and straight backbone among listeners?"

State Church and Free Church are combining to make 1938 a "Bible Year." A committee has been formed under the Bishop of Manchester, and its Secretary, Rev. F. S. Cragg, states that "newspapers, B.B.C., and other educational (!) authorities will be enlisted to urge Britain to become a nation of Bible-readers again." (What justification has he for using the word "again"? Britain's glory is all due to the holy book, according to Mr. Cragg, and the committee believes that "Back to the Bible" slogan will save Britain from troubles that agitate Europe and cause wars. The Committee of Imperial Defence is obviously the Bible Committee's first "canvas," though it is possible that the former would only refer the matter "to the marines.")

Sir George Middleton is First Estates Commissioner and Chairman of the Finance and Estates, Investments and Tithes Committees of Queen Anne's Bounty. Sir George has written a pamphlet published by the Church Assembly, "explaining" the allocation of certain of the Church's "considerable funds,"—to quote his own words. "They are mostly trust funds, in no way available for 'fancy' schemes," he writes: "They are required for purposes inseparable from the very existence of the Church as at present constituted." A special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* begins a review of the pamphlet with these words: "The misconception that the Church has at its free disposal vast funds for ANY GOOD PURPOSE (our emphasis) is corrected by Sir George Middleton." The cure of souls is the Church's work and, although salvation is without money and without price, those who do the dispensing have had an "augmentation" of over two and a half millions a year.

Once again the Lord has moved in a mysterious way. Once again the awful mystery of his religion has been shown to the world. A pilgrim train in Germany on its way to Kevelaer to see "the miracle figure of the Blessed Virgin" jumped the track at 40 m.p.h., with the result that the engine and a number of coaches were overturned. Thirteen of the pilgrims were killed, as well as the driver, and thirty-seven injured. All good Catholics could have understood the accident had the train conveyed unbelievers to a Freethought Conference; but how can it be explained when the victims were such fervent and pious believers that they were ready to believe anything whatever even without proof? Great indeed is the mystery of God's unfathomable ways.

In his sermon, delivered specially for the British Association, Fr. Gill included Darwin as a believer in a "Creator." It need hardly be said to any well-informed person that Darwin took his stand upon Agnosticism—though there seem little difference between his Agnosticism and Atheism. Darwin had some vague Theistic belief when he wrote *The Origin of Species*; but he shed it all by the time he wrote *The Descent of Man*—and Fr.

Gill knew this perfectly well. A goodly number of Scientists during the Victorian age also declared their belief in some vague Theism; and there may be some who do so even now. The great majority these days are, however, very far removed from the crude credulity and superstition of Catholicism; and even those who may affirm belief in some sort of a Deity—mathematical or otherwise—would protest in the strongest terms at being associated in any way with beliefs such as those of Fr. Gill.

The *Streatham News* reports a Sermon—or was it a Revelation—delivered to the local Spiritual Church by Mr. H. Edwards, in which is offered a solution to one of the many difficulties involved in orthodox theories about Prayers to Omnipotent Benevolent Deity. Mr. Edwards apparently pities the One poor solitary God having to listen to all the prayers of all the universes. Accordingly, the helpful Spiritualist leader "very much doubts that God Himself hears all our prayers directly." He thinks:—

God has delegated certain of his functions to other ethereal beings who have evolved in process of time to a lesser royalty. They, in turn, delegate their duties.

It reminds us of the American Episcopalian who sent in his card at Lambeth Palace, expecting he would get an interview with the "boss." One of the Chaplains came out to the ante-room and declared indignantly: "You cannot possibly see the Archbishop." The visitor retorted: "What! Is he as small as that?" But we must remind our Spiritual Modernists that if God doesn't hear our prayers, it is difficult to see the utility in praying to Him. God only knows how He can answer them if He does not hear them.

Fifty Years Ago

To argue with a Liberal Christian is much like punching a feather pillow. He gives way before every attack, but always bulges out in another place. If the scheme of Christianity is impugned, he appeals to its beneficent history. Expose the criminality of its history, and he repudiates the Christianity of all who lived before himself, and refers to the beneficence of its teachings. Not that the Liberal Christian ever thinks of following the teachings of Christ. To give to every one that asks, to take no thought for the morrow, or to lend hoping for nothing again, is about the last thing the Liberal Christian would think of doing. He tells you that he interprets the Gospel in accordance with the laws of political economy. He pretends to believe the Bible, but really only gives a modified assent to certain portions of it. Ask him squarely in private conversation, does he believe in Samson's slaying a thousand with the jaw-bone of an ass, or in the story of Elisha and the she-bears, and he will probably resent the supposition that he can be so silly. Push him further with the question, does he really believe that God was born of a virgin in Palestine, or that he wrought miracles and was tempted by a personal devil, or that he was crucified in order to save us from eternal damnation, and he will gravely assure you that such statements by no means represent his belief. The truth is, Christianity itself having become incredible the Liberal Christian adopts a mongrel mixture of new science and old supernaturalism, and covers up the latter as far as possible when in the presence of those who have the courage to say they reject it entirely.

I remember listening to a well-known minister of the Church of Scotland dilating, in private, on the absurdity of believing in the inspiration of the Bible. I commended his heretical sentiments, but asked how he reconciled them with the Westminster Confession of Faith. "Oh," he said, "you can put twenty different interpretations on every clause of the Confession, just as you can upon every text of the Bible." I could not help reflecting that the gentleman's £600 a year might prove a powerful incentive to ingenuity of interpretation.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- J. WILSON (Montreal) and S. W. WILLETTS.—Thanks for cuttings, which are always useful.
 H. D. HEROLD.—Literature despatched to Norway as requested. Thank you.
 L. M. ANSTEX.—One of the *Pamphlets for the People* will deal with *The Bible*.
 T. BICOR.—Next week.

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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

To-day (September 26), Mr. Cohen will open his lecturing season by an address in The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester. The subject will be "Are we Civilized?" The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. Admission is free, but there will be Reserved Seats at 6d. and 1s. each.

At the time of writing the authorities have not reached a decision as to whether the Fascist Demonstration to Bermondsey is to be banned or not. If it is banned, it is not likely to be persisted in, for these gallant Fascists, who, as we have seen abroad, are as fierce as may be when it is a case of bludgeoning defenceless people, or old men, or torturing prisoners, and as we have seen in this country are heroes in action when in a ratio of about three to one or armed with knuckle-dusters, are not of the type of which real reformers are made.

But we have never been in favour of this policy of prohibition. It is something that ought never to be resorted to save in a really desperate situation. It is a two edged policy, which can always be used against what should be considered the legitimate rights of the people. Used against the party with which one disagrees to-day, it is against the party with which one agrees to-morrow. It is essentially the weapon of reaction, and the less we have of it the better; for the only ones who are authorized to use it, and who have the physical force at their command to order its use, are those in power. Public liberty, in such important a form of demonstration as public processions and gatherings, is too valuable a thing to be placed at the mercy of any crowd that dares to abuse it.

If we had the power, which we have not and are never likely to have, we would permit Mosley and his crowd to have as many public processions as they pleased. And we would see that enough force was present to prevent any further disorder. We would also enforce the law prohibiting an incitement to a breach of the peace on the part of the speakers, and see to it that not even wealthy

people escaped punishment. Nothing would kill Fascism quicker than people listening quietly to what such a person as Mosley has to say. Even the dullest would soon tire of listening to the constant repetition of empty phrases. A very heavy blow was struck at Fascism by banning that display of childish vanity, a uniform. Children, immature persons, and outworn institutions have a passionate attachment to uniforms, and Mosley and his crowd have felt the effects of this ban. If all could be forced to listen to a couple of hours of Mosley's rant, delivered without what is practically a theatrical setting, they would take Fascism at its proper value.

But, again, no people really and intelligently interested in the well-being of democracy, should welcome the suppression of a movement merely because they do not agree with it. We might, if this kind of thing is encouraged, hear one day, that owing to the inhabitants of the West-end of London not agreeing with processions to Hyde Park to hold demonstrations asking for the abolition of something or the other, the Government has prohibited all such demonstrations. And Governments fatten on precedents—of the wrong kind.

Mr. Maurice Byrn writes from the Sorbonne School of Languages: "Many hearty congratulations and happy returns for your birthday. What greater compliment could I say than that you have been to all of us a teacher." If we have earned thanks in this direction we are content. It is all at which we have ever aimed.

The *Bible Handbook* is now ready, and by the time of going to press all outstanding orders should have been attended to. If any order has been overlooked notice should be sent to the business office.

The *Daily Mirror* tells us that:—

Before his nurse and a congregation of 1,500, Charles Jaynes, aged seven, was ordained clergyman in Trinity Gospel Church, Peoria, Illinois.

Then, reminding the congregation he was now a minister according to United States law, cables our New York Correspondent, he stood on a chair in front of the pulpit and preached on "Hell or God's penitentiary."

The youngest licensed clergyman in the world, the Rev. Jaynes told me his theology was founded on a profound belief in the doctrine of hell fire.

"Hell is a threat to us all," he prattled, while his nurse, Miss Neva Duff, watched admiringly. "I want to see everyone purged of their sins to escape it."

Chubby, round-faced, the Rev. Jaynes cannot read or write well yet, but he speaks five languages.

"I sometimes wish I could be a fireman, too," he said. Then, with one eye on his nurse, he declared: "Drinking, dancing, smoking—they all lead to hell's torments."

We have known people six times as old who prattle just as charmingly.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Summer Campaign is now nearing the end. Beginning in May, he has, as far as possible, covered the country from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Plymouth, where he begins the last week of the campaign to-day (September 26). During the five months some very useful propaganda work has been done in the form of lectures, discussions, and the disposal of our literature. The expenses of such a campaign are necessarily heavy and the Executive of the National Secular Society is financially responsible.

The Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. begins its indoor season to-day (September 26), when Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "Dictators, People, and Persecution," in the Clarence Club Hall, next to the "Fighting Cocks," London Road, Kingston, at 7.30 p.m. Thanks to the opposition of local Christians, the Branch has had a very successful season in the open, and all saints and supporters within range are asked to continue their support during the indoor session when expenses are necessarily higher. Admission is free, and questions and discussion invited at all meetings.

Justice to a Justice

IN *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*, Mr. Cohen gave a typical instance of the Law which was, and is (to the same extent), the embodiment of everything that's excellent. An Atheist lady, in 1860, had brought a suit for damages. She was asked by the judge, "Do you believe in a God who can punish you for telling a lie?" The answer was "No." The judge then said, "I cannot hear you. I nonsuit the plaintiff with costs for defendant's advocate. If people will insult public opinion in a court of justice, they must take the consequences."

Different indeed was the attitude of Sir William Henry Maule.* Maule was born in 1788, and became a judge of scholarship and personality. Contrast Sir William's conduct in a similar situation. This was the dialogue between him and a little girl witness:—

"Do you know what an oath is, my child," said Maule.

"Yes, Sir. I am obliged to tell the truth."

"And if you do always tell the truth, where will you go to when you die?"

"Up to heaven, Sir."

"And what will become of you if you tell lies?"

"I shall go down to the naughty place, Sir."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, Sir; quite!"

"Let her be sworn," said Maule, "it is quite clear she knows a great deal more than I do."

Justice Parry, himself a legal personage whom Freethinkers can liberally admire, is the only person, as far as one's researches go, who has not only appreciated Maule, but, knowing the treatment meted out by the established institutions to such men, has made a special effort to keep his memory green. Twenty-two years ago he was responsible for an article in the *Cornhill Magazine* (March, 1915) entitled "Mauleiana: A Study in Judicial Irony," Parry considers Maule not to have been a great judge, but a "great character," and "probably the greatest wit on the English bench." Gilbert without a doubt would have delighted in this "judicial humorist." Certainly he would, himself, have resented his inclusion in that category of personages who "never would be missed."

Parry proves his qualifications to sit in judgment upon Maule as a humourist, for, in the article referred to, he admits that Maule in the exercise of his humour sometimes forgot his more "menial duties." This criticism however does not apply to the instances which are here given, every one of which stresses, and in a way that only humour can, points which required emphasis and never, or rarely, got it. Like Parry himself, and the late lamented Justice McCardie, Maule respected the Law, but did not carry that respect to the point of refusing to wield a besom where the dust of antique time laid too thickly upon its reputation.

Maule had no vestige of sycophancy in him, and he was incapable of withholding the "nipping jest" when the occasion seemed to him to call for it. The jests of Maule were not introduced, as one is inclined to believe they are in some more modern instances to force ripples of delightful laughter from those in court who are in a sense at the judges' mercy. The following instance will be sufficient to acquit Maule of that charge:—

The prisoner was found guilty of a sensational murder, and being asked in the usual way why sentence should not be passed upon him, exclaimed dramatically, in a loud voice, "May God strike me dead, my Lord, if I did it!" There was a hushed silence throughout the crowded court. The spectators gazed at the prisoner in horror. Maule looked steadily in front of him and waited, without a move-

ment. At length, after a pause of several moments, he coughed, and began to address the prisoner in his dry, asthmatic voice, as though he were dealing with some legal point that had been raised in the case: "Prisoner at the bar, as Providence has not seen fit to interfere in your case, it now becomes my duty to pronounce upon you the sentence of death."

Maule seems to have had a pronounced antipathy to the clergy, and he did not keep this to himself. Once, on a case of murder, a plea of insanity was raised. The principal witness was a cleric, who gave evidence that for thirty-four years prisoner had regularly attended his Church, then, without any apparent reason, he became a Sabbath-breaker, and the murder had taken place. A case of the "Rake's Progress." Maule made rough calculations. He then asked the cleric if he were aware that the prisoner had heard 5,034 of his sermons and then followed this up with:—

I was going to ask you, Sir, had the idea ever struck you when you think of this unhappy being suddenly leaving your ministrations and becoming a Sabbath-breaker, that after thirty-four years he might want a little change. Would it not be reasonable to suppose that the man had had enough of it?

On the unhappy parson nervously assenting, he put it to him that instead of this proving the prisoner to be insane, did it not point to his being a *very sensible man*?

An altogether admirable example of this side of his nature can be got from his reply to a counsel who had once the temerity to remind him that in his summing-up he had omitted the testimony advanced "as to the prisoner's character." "You are right, Sir," said his Lordship, and then addressing the jury, he continued:—

Gentlemen, I am requested to draw your attention to the prisoner's character, which has been spoken to by gentlemen, I do not doubt, of the greatest respect and veracity. If you believe them, and also the witnesses for the prosecution, it appears to me that they have established what to many persons may be incredible, namely, that even a man of piety and virtue, occupying the position of Bible reader and Sunday-school teacher, may be guilty of committing a heinous and grossly immoral crime.

This is perfect in its way; and many of his smart rejoinders are equally impervious to criticism. Could anything be more effective than his retort to a counsel who complained that his client was the victim of a "diabolical prosecution": "It is my duty to direct you that you must give the Devil his due, and that can only be done by finding the defendant guilty."

It is apparent that the memory of Maule will only be kept alive if Freethinkers do their duty by him. It would be interesting to read the comments of the *Morning Post*, *Times*, *Daily Express*, *Spectator*, etc., if such judicial comments escaped a learned judge in one of our Courts to-day. One has little difficulty in imagining His Grace of Canterbury perspiring in appearing at No. 10 Downing Street, in dread anticipation of something having arisen in the land, even more serious than a Coronation Crisis.

T. H. ELSTOB.

* William Henry Maule. Born Edmonton, 1788. Chas. Greville described him as "a very clever boy." Senior-Wrangler at Trinity College, Cambs., and in 1810 was first Smith's Prizeman. Called to bar 1814. Took chambers in the Temple. Gradually obtained reputation as a commercial lawyer. Became K.C. in 1833 and in 1838, Counsel to the Bank of England. In 1837, became Liberal M.P. for Carlou. Knighted 1839. Transferred to Common Pleas on death of Justice Vaughan. Member of the Privy Council (!) Did not marry. "An excellent judge," says the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "combining knowledge of the law with common-sense, courtesy and ingenuity in defeating technicalities." Could one praise more highly? His ironical observations, we are also told, "sometimes misled country juries." Died, 1858.

An Indispensable Handbook

If I were asked to give the title of one absolutely indispensable work which all Freethinkers should possess, I should say Foote and Ball's *Bible Handbook*, a new (and thoroughly revised) edition of which will shortly appear.

To our older readers my recommendation is hardly necessary. They not only have the book, but they will also have used it. It is eminently not a book for the shelves, but one which must be at hand for use. I can say that in my own more hectic days of controversy it hardly ever left me. I found it easily my biggest champion in the war against religion—and there is a reason for this.

It is quite a mistake to imagine that the Bible, as an infallible book is dead. Of course it is dead for Freethinkers—we know what a hotch-potch of legends, folk-lore, dubious history, fairy tales, and superstitious beliefs it is. We have read the many brilliant books written against it, those Freethought Masterpieces about which I occasionally write. Moreover, we know the Bible, that is, we really have read it, and can quote from it; we know, as far as it is possible to know, how it gained dominance over the minds of men, and how, in the religious world it came to hold a position higher than any other book, and it would be folly to assume that this view is dead.

Almost every sermon that is being delivered these days takes its text from the Bible. Almost from the moment one is born and goes to school, it is the Bible which is shown and taught as something apart from all other books. One might throw a secular work into a heap of rubbish, but even when the Bible is tattered and torn, it is held reverently apart as something infinitely precious. We can say what we like, and say it how we like, about any other book; but in describing the Bible, one must choose one's words and say them—even if we are unbelievers—with reverence. It is Blasphemy to do otherwise. It is the Bible which is held up reverently in our secular courts of law for us to kiss and swear to tell the truth upon. And it is the Bible which believers insist is the only Book in the world which contains the Truth. It is the Bible which has been translated into hundreds of languages, and which still can make men and women devote their lives, in strange and barbarous countries, to the sole purpose of teaching its doctrines to savage and backward peoples.

Therefore, if Freethinkers wish to make all the headway that might be made, it is necessary to deal with the Christian Fetish Book, and to hammer away at that with all their might and main.

Nor should we ignore the fact that it is the boast of Bible believers that our attacks have failed; that for more than a century the infidels have poured shot and shell upon the Holy Book, have tried to show its history false, its miracles absurd, its God a myth—and, it is claimed, they have utterly failed. The Bible, Christians cry, has emerged from the battle almost untouched. Whatever has been conceded by believers was only a word here and there which made no difference whatever to the Divine Message. And the ceaseless excavations in the Holy Land and adjacent countries are proving more and more that the Bible is really God's Word, really His Revelation to man.

This is, of course, nonsense. There are multitudes of Christians who do not make the claims their predecessors made on behalf of the Bible. So far, freethinking criticism has had its effect, but there are also multitudes who still cling to old-fashioned views of the Bible, and in dealing with these, it is necessary either to have an extraordinary memory which

can at will recall almost any text for the purpose of rebuffing our opponents—or we must have a handbook which gives them to us at a glance, so to speak. And our *Bible Handbook* fulfils its purpose more than any other Freethought work ever published. I can assure those readers—and there must be many new to the movement—that I know of few books which can prove such a Godsend as this.

It is divided into five parts—Bible Contradictions, Bible Atrocities, Unfulfilled Prophecies and Broken Promises, and Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, and Obscenities. These are all given, wherever possible, in the Bible's own words. Every verse has been checked and readers can quote them with every confidence. They will prove—even to many infidels—veritable eye-openers. One would never think that any work containing such a mass of imbecilities and contradictions could ever have become the world's most famous Book.

Open the *Bible Handbook* at any page and one will find something for our attacks, something which we have forgotten, something which Christians either do not like, or which they will be hard put to, to defend.

It must not be thought that the Bible has not been defended against such attacks as our *Bible Handbook*. It has, and very ingenious, if not disingenuous, the defences are. I may one day deal with some of these, to let readers see how Bible-believers have persuaded themselves that there is nothing in our attacks—when the Bible is rightly understood.

Foote has written a characteristic Preface for the *Bible Handbook*, one sentence from which is worth repeating:—

Should he [a Freethinker] as is very probable, get into discussion with a Christian, he has only to open our *Handbook*, and in five minutes he will be able to advance more arguments against the Bible than his opponent will be able to answer in a lifetime.

This is a fact; but to do so one must possess the book. Those new readers who have not got a copy, or those old ones whose copies show irremediable signs of wear should hasten and get the new edition when it appears. For I can only repeat what I said at the beginning of this article: for Freethinkers, there is no more useful reference work than the *Bible Handbook*.

H. CUTNER.

The Flat Earth Idea

I HAVE previously drawn attention to a pamphlet issued by the Historical Association dealing with education in medieval times, and to a letter concerning it (in *History*, the organ of the Association) which characterized it as an attempt to "save the face" of the Roman Church. In a later issue of the periodical mentioned, there has appeared an article on "Ideas of the Shape . . . of the Earth Prior to the Great Age of Discovery," by Professor E. G. R. Taylor, of the University of London. As her professorial subject is geography, and I have not heard of her in connexion with the history of science, it may perhaps be excusable to surmise that the production in question also has some basal relation to the damaged reputation of that Church.

In the article there is a passing reference to Lactantius and his notion that if the Antipodes existed the people and crops would hang downwards and the rain fall upwards, though not to the argument that the people on the other side of the world would be unable

to see the Lord descending on the Last Day. The "fanciful cosmogony of Cosmos Indicopleustis" is also dismissed very lightly. It will be remembered that this monk had been a merchant and had travelled widely, possessed a keen, inquisitive mind, and was interested in science, and that about 535 A.D., at the instance of theologians, he wrote an elaborate work, *Topographia Christiana*. This was an attempt not only to refute the "anile fable" of the Antipodes, but to construct a system of the Universe. But as the work was based upon the "Revelation of Scripture," it is not surprising that he described the world (or universe) as a flat parallelogram with the sky glued to its edges.

That this view was generally adopted—though not perhaps an official ecclesiastical "article" (like the fixity of the earth for the denial of which, a few centuries later, Copernicus and two of his disciples were censured and Galileo condemned and imprisoned)—is sufficiently shown by the fact that when Virgilius, an Irish monk, asserted in Bavaria the existence of the Antipodes, "the whole religious world was thrown into a paroxysm of indignation, St. Boniface leading the attack and Pope Zachary, at least for a time, encouraging it."

This doleful occurrence is one of many proofs of the abysmal intellectual darkness into which Europe had fallen. As early as the eighth century B.C., writes Dr. Singer (*Religion and Science*), there were astronomical observatories in the great (Babylonian) cities of the Euphrates Valley, in which professional astronomers were taking regular observations of the heavens, and Thales, the early Greek philosopher-scientist (about 640-546 B.C.), predicted the eclipse of May 28, 585 B.C. from data of Mesopotamian origin. Other Greeks, including Aristotle, concluded that the earth was a sphere, and Aristarchus held that the earth moved round the sun. And though chiefly for lack of observational and experimental apparatus these and other points could not then be definitely proved, we may take it that if it had not been for the great fall due to the adoption by Christianity of ancient Hebrew and other oriental superstition—following on the "spiritual philosophy" of Plato and others—both instruments and proofs would soon have been forthcoming (at least in the Byzantine region, which was not "overrun by barbarians") and the loss of 1500 years of scientific progress avoided.

J. REEVES.

The Pure Word

I.

EVERY Sunday morning before eleven o'clock Abram Teneer was at the front entrance to the Gospel Mission Hall. Attired in black, with his hair brushed down, he had words of welcome and handshakes both for old friends and newcomers, though the latter were few.

He accorded his wife and daughters but a nod, which they acknowledged by quick glances, timid on the little girls' part, hard-eyed and thin-lipped from Jael.

These Teneers took seats at the rear of the chapel, participating in the service with impassive faces and unemotional voices.

The man went up to the front into the elders' pew. Often he preached, for there was no paid minister. His voice was harsh, yet he had an uncouth eloquence arising out of his earnestness and command of Bible-texts and verses of evangelical hymns.

His belief in the truth he was teaching bore him along. The supreme need for faith in God, one of justice and rigour rather than mercy and love, and the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ to save sinners—who were all

people—formed the substance of Abram Teneer's religion.

Sunday dinner in the living room behind the shop was a cold one, cooked on Saturday. It was prefaced by a solemn grace from the head of the household, after which Dinah and Esther sat and ate with correctitude what was put before them.

The only conversation was about that morning's chapel service and religion generally, with some questions to the girls concerning such, especially what they had imbibed spiritually at the Mission. Frivolity, any departure from gravity, would be rewarded by slapping after dismissal from the table.

Afternoon, all four Teneers attended Sunday School, the man and woman as teachers. Their daughters were model pupils, reciting Bible passages and answering questions thereon with placid assurance wherefrom smugness was not absent.

Home to tea was followed by return to chapel for evening service.

If Abram Teneer officiated, his sermon seemed coloured by the approaching shades of night. Often he preached on the end of life, death and its consequences, the judgment which awaits all beyond the grave, with certainty of eternal punishment for the wicked and sceptical.

Upon the torments of hell-fire he enlarged vigorously, painting lurid pictures, as though to terrify his hearers into repentance and faith if he could not persuade or lure them.

After supper, as in other intervals at home during Sunday, Dinah and Esther might read religious books and papers, if not helping their mother with preparing and clearing meals. No other literature was permitted, much less play of any sort. Their father read his Bible, and the two girls went early to bed.

II.

Monday nights Abram Teneer conducted Band of Hope in the Chapel Schoolroom. His denunciations of alcohol lacked nothing in dogmatism and extremeness. To vary proceedings the assembled children entertained themselves by rendering songs, recitations and stories.

In this Dinah and Esther had prominence; correct but unsmiling, almost a detached attitude. Their contributions had thoroughgoing abstinence as theme, illustrated by a variety of horrific details.

On Wednesday night was held a meeting for prayer and testimony. Abraham and Jael Teneer attended this, he, vocal and earnest, she, devout and quiet, but both intent.

While her husband locked the shop punctually, Mrs. Teneer gave the two girls a small supper and dispatched them to bed. Allowing them a few minutes to undress their mother ran up to see them safely abed. Often they were only partially undressed. Hastening off their remaining clothes Jael Teneer would bestow several slaps upon their bare bodies to accelerate disrobing and their assumption of nightgowns, and then leave them settled till morning.

Teneers' house and shop were old, having no electric supply and gas only downstairs. Candles were used upstairs. Formerly, for safety, Mrs. Teneer took candle and matches away after seeing the girls in bed. Now they were bigger, aged twelve and eleven years, she no longer practised this precaution.

Rarely they would light the candle again for a few minutes. They had no use for it, not being conceded bedroom books. Occasionally they lay awake and talked. Frequently they bickered, quarrels being common when by themselves, accentuated by slaps and pinches and hair-pulling.

One Wednesday evening Dinah and Esther seemed unusually slow getting to bed and undressing. Their mother accused them of dawdling, and after making them hurry off the last garments smacked them harder than usual. Offences against parental standards of propriety were dealt with thus. Blowing out the light Jael Teneer bid the children a swift "Good-night," and ran downstairs to accompany her waiting husband to the Prayer Meeting.

III.

Within a short while Dinah cried out, "Keep your own side, Est."

"I am."

"No, you're not. I haven't room to breathe."

"Oh, Dine! You fibber! You've got more'n half the bed now."

"Anyrate, I can hardly turn over. I shall fall out of bed if I do."

"Fall out then!" snapped Esther.

Instead the elder arched her body and pushed her buttocks into Esther's side to heave her away, a trick favoured by both girls.

The younger pinched the fleshy protuberance, whereupon Dinah jumped round and thrust at her with her hands. Forced to the edge of the bed the junior climbed out, protesting tearfully, but with asperity, "You're a mean cat, Dine. We could both be comfortable if you'd let us."

Dinah's answer was a sigh of content as she spread toward the middle of the bed and snuggled down warmly.

Esther went to the dressing-table and slowly drew a match out of the box, struck it, and lighted the candle. Standing with her back to the bed the girl twisted the match-stale in the wax, then held it to the flame, where it spluttered and sizzled. Looking over her shoulder and grinning Esther exclaimed, "Oh Dine! Isn't it like a wicked soul frizzling in hell!"

"Esther, don't talk blasphemy," rebuked Dinah in imitation of her parents.

Chuckling, the younger child resumed her pyrotechnics, pleased with the noise and little flashes she caused. Slipping out of bed Dinah crept behind Esther and gave her a hard pushing slap on her shoulder, crying, "Stop fooling, naughty girl, and come back to bed."

Esther uttered a little shriek as the blow threw her arm forward over the candle. Next instant she was screaming with pain and terror. The cheap flannelette of her nightdress caught like tinder. Almost at once she was a blazing mass.

Impelled by panic or sisterly love or a blind instinct to crush the danger Dinah threw her arms round the other girl, involving herself in flames, which spread hungrily to all else in the room.

IV.

When later the firemen were able to penetrate the scorching house to reach the girls' bedroom, they found the charred bodies still interlocked as they had fallen to the floor.

A.R.W.

Correspondence

FREETHOUGHT AND FICTION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—While I gladly reciprocate Mr. Rowland's compliment, I would respectfully suggest that my article, far from being wide of the mark, has actually scored a hit. There is an unmistakable likeness in Mr. Rowland's letter to the duellist's cry of "Touché!"

As a fiction-writer, Mr. Rowland resents my suggestion that all he has been doing is to act as a kind of opium-peddler. (The phrase is Mr. Rowland's, not mine.) But resentment is no argument. I will not stress the similarity between Mr. Rowland's resentment at my contentions and the resentment which is doubtless felt by priests and parsons at Mr. Rowland's own anti-religious contributions.

Again, to cite a number of great artists in fiction is not an argument in favour of fiction-writing as a practice. As an admirer of all good work, I believe myself to be as capable as anyone else of appreciating the relative merits of fiction-writers. But I was not discussing whether certain writers were or were not great artists in their own particular sphere. One may admire the artistry of Jim the Penman without necessarily agreeing that forgery is a great art.

In his rhetorical finale Mr. Rowland declares that the product of certain fiction-writers constitutes "nintenths of what is finest in all the grand heritage of English literature," and says that, to be logical, I shall destroy all this. I fear that Mr. Rowland's emotions have got the better of his logic. As a Freethinker, I advocate reform by argument and suggestion, not by dictator-like methods of destruction. I would no more destroy Mr. Rowland's "nintenths" than I would destroy all the religious books in the world. But I would point out that there is more to life than fine words.

I put it to Mr. Rowland as a Rationalist—if it ever came to a choice between destroying all fiction books or all fact books in the world, which cataclysm does Mr. Rowland think would be the greater disaster to humanity? As against the score or so of fiction-writers named by Mr. Rowland, I would set the following fact-writers in what, I presume, Mr. Rowland considers to be the remaining "one-tenth."

John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, J. S. Mill, Darwin, Huxley, Lecky, Hume, Gibbon, Spencer, Buckle, Bradlaugh, Paine, Havelock Ellis, William James, J. G. Frazer, J. M. Robertson, G. H. Lewis, Alfred Russel Wallace, Ruskin. These are all Rationalists; I could name many more fact-writers of equal fame who were not Rationalists.

In conclusion, Mr. Rowland implies that, were it not for the relief afforded by reading fiction, one would have no alternative but to "brood" on the horrors of existence and finally go mad. Frankly, I fail to see the connexion. But then, perhaps I am already mad! At least I have not read fiction for twelve years, and I still feel quite cheerful, thank you.

C. S. FRASER.

THE QUESTION OF ATHEISM

SIR,—I fear the Rev. Carnson has made a very bad beginning, if his intention is to "put the Christian position effectively in the columns of the *Freethinker*." He devotes considerable space to the psychoanalysis of Mr. Shortt and yourself without making us understand what bearing this has upon religious controversy. Indeed he seems to realize that he does not touch the subject of Atheism, for he tells us that in his sermon he "was not dealing with Atheism in general," and later that he "has no ambition to deal with Atheism." It is as well we are told this lest we should think that he would approach the problem of the belief of millions by the psychoanalysis of two private individuals, or that he would so misread psychology as to advance the conception of psychic trauma to explain that part of the world with which he is in profound disagreement.

But why, after all, should the Rev. Carnson shun this problem of "Atheism in general?" It is the cardinal problem of Atheism that it is so general, and a courageous and clear-headed parson ought to see this. Moreover, as the intelligence quotient in society rises the incidence of scepticism is found to rise. That has been publicly recognized since Gibbon wrote chapter fifteen of his most famous work. Here is a statistical problem of interest and urgency. It is no longer sufficient for a parson to keep re-iterating the Christian position. If this reverend gentleman is really bent on action he must face up fairly and squarely to the life that is going on around him; and he must do this more effectively than to "show us in supports." I do not happen to know Mr. Shortt's particular theory upon Evolution, but if the Rev. Carnson is speaking of Evolution in the sense in which it would be understood at a meeting of the British Association, then it is not a theory at all, but a very well-recognized fact. The only theories relating to it are concerned with the precise mechanism by which the process operates.

But first, perhaps, the Rev. Carnson should read your books, sir. He was bolder than he thought in confessing that he had never heard of them. They happen to be the books of one of the most representative Atheists in the country, and should be known in any circle where there is a pretension to understand the movement that is taking place away from religion. The day is past when a parson can hope to affect the scepticism of cultured people from such a position of intellectual isolation.

MEDICUS.

SIR,—It is of interest to find a clergyman, of whatever make-up, threatening to recognize the existence of the *Freethinker*, by actually allowing his name to be associated with it. But, one rather imagines that this gentleman will get a hint from high quarters, telling him to drop the project.

May be he will let us know if he does get a hint.

Sincerity is everything, and it will be of interest to know if the rev. gentleman will advise his congregation to read the paper. For subject matter, in his articles, he may begin by answering Editor Chapman's remark in this week's leader, that "His revelation is not in accord with the facts."

W. I. ENGLISH.

PROLETARIAN SCIENCE

SIR,—May I comment in your statement, "Twentieth Century Nazi and Proletarian Science is but a faint echo of the early and strident demand of the (Christian) Church." That statement is exactly true of Nazi "science." A splendidly precise and destructive account of that "science" is to be found in the just-issued book by Prof. Robert A. Brady, *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* (Left Book Club choice for September). Prof. Brady, in a note on page 368, makes this very point of yours, ending, "Can Fascism find a 'Petrine Rock,' and a 'Council of Nicea' to bring these (its various trends) together—the stuff being the same, but the language different?"

But "Proletarian Science" is quite a different proposition. The Nazi, as Prof. Brady shows in illuminating detail, sets up a pragmatic principle of national-need and insists that science should conform to it, "truth" being merely what serves the national ends. But "Proletarian Science" is merely what science discovers in its free development in a Socialist society.

Perhaps I can explain this better by pointing out that Marxist analysis of any particular scientific movement of the past distinguishes two elements (1) the objective element; (2) the subjective element which is conditioned by the scientist's own personal shortcomings and his social relativity. There is thus both an absolute and a relative in a scientific discovery. There are several Marxist essays which show with detail how Newton was conditioned and directed in his work by the technical needs of his day; that is, the needs of his day; that is, the needs of bourgeois productivity. In this sense he was a "Bourgeois Scientist." That is the relative side; and subjectively it appears in his Deism.

But, apart from this conditioning element (which sets up the terms of approach), there is the objectively scientific side. In this sense any scientist under Socialism will get his relative position from Socialism—that is, the social relations that surround him, the human needs with which he is inextricably bound up; but as "scientist" he will at the same time be seeking nothing but objective truth and must in no way, for any consideration, palter with his unceasing aim to achieve objectivity.

The term "Proletarian" scientist then does not mean that the scientist under Socialism is tied down to a dogma (as under the medieval Church or the Nazis), but merely that the Marxist recognizes the social relations of everything human. The Soviet Union is a society which sets up the ideal of society conforming to science; Nazi Germany is a society which frankly confesses its aim of making science tributary to the State-needs (which are the buttressing of monopoly-Capitalism, as Prof. Brady amply shows).

JACK LINDSAY.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 16, 1937

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

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Bryant, Preece, Elstob, Seibert, Ebury, Tuson, Wood, Bedborough, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were ad-

mitted to North London, West London, Greenock, and the Parent Society. Permission given for the formation of a Branch of the Society at Greenock, to be known as the Greenock Branch N.S.S. The Edinburgh summons, adjourned to October 26, and police interference with Bradford meetings, were discussed and instructions given. Lecture reports were noted from Messrs. Whitehead, Clayton, Brighton, Shortt, and Mrs. Whitefield. Sanction given to Mr. Shortt for winter lectures where possible. Indoor lectures at Birmingham, Newcastle, and Greenock were agreed upon. Correspondence from Edinburgh, Birmingham, Greenock, Queensland, etc., was dealt with, and preliminary details in connexion with the Annual Dinner, and a Social, received attention. The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, October 21, 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

INDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarence Club Hall, next to the "Fighting Cocks," London Road, Kingston): 7.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Dictators, People and Persecution."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.): 11.0, Professor H. Levy, D.Sc.—"Can Palestine Free Jewry?"

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. P. Goldman—"Bradlaugh."

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

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 E. 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.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Court, Kirkgate): 7.15 A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"Are We Civilized?" Reserved seats 6d. and 1s. each.

OUTDOOR

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

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place, if fine; Chapel Street School, if wet): 7.30, Monday, September 27, Debate—"Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" *Affir.*: Rev. W. A. Painter, M.A., B.D., Cong. *Neg.*: Mr. J. V. Shortt, N.S.S.

BURNLEY MARKET, 7.0, Sunday, September 26, Mr. J. Clayton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, September 24, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

FOULRIDGE, 7.45, Friday, September 24, Mr. J. Clayton.

HIGHAM, 7.30, Tuesday, September 28, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, (The Mound, Edinburgh): 8.0, Sunday, September 26. Greenock (Grey Place), 8.0, Tuesday, September 28. Glasgow (Albert Road), 8.0, Wednesday, September 29. Glasgow (Albert Street), 8.0, Friday, October 1. Mrs. M. I. Whitefield will speak at each meeting.

(Continued on page 623)

ARMS AND THE CLERGY

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(Continued from page 622)

- LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday, September 26, Messrs. Shortt and Robinson. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, or near vicinity, 8.0, Thursday, Messrs Robinson and Thompson.
- NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday, September 28, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- PADIHAM, 7.30, Monday, September 27, Mr. J. Clayton.
- PRESTON Market) : 8.0, Wednesday, September 29, Mr. J. V. Shortt.
- SEATON DELAVAL (The Avenue) : 7.0, Wednesday, September 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- SEGHILL (Bee Hive) : 10.30 a.m.,—"A Discussion with Local Spirits and Mediums," Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- STOCKTON (The Cross) : 7.0, Monday September 27, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, Mr Allan Planders, A Lecture.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN.
General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The Trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

MEMBERSHIP

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

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