

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVII.—No. 40

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
What is the Bible?—The Editor	625
"Christ is Very Real There"—Mimnermus	627
The Origin of the Exact Sciences—T. F. Palmer	628
Answers to Freethinkers—H. Cutner	629
From one Generation to Another—George Bedborough	630
Destructive Propaganda—T. H. Elstob	634
Thomas Paine: An Investigation—John M. Robertson	634
Go to the Ant!—E.A.M.	635
Dust—George Wallace	636
Scientific Marriage—H. Wright	637

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

Views and Opinions

What is the Bible?
In his *Short History of the English People*, John Richard Green says that from the middle of the reign of Elizabeth to the meeting of the Long Parliament, England became the people of a book, and that "book the Bible." This is a gross exaggeration, and Green proceeds to back it up with a mis-statement. The English people became a people of a book because, he explains, "The nation at large had no history, no romance, hardly any poetry," and he goes on to say that the Bible formed "the whole literature which was practically accessible to the ordinary Englishman." Now of "ordinary Englishmen" only a small proportion could read at all, and for those who could there were large numbers of broadsides and ballads, plays and romances, translations from the Greek, Latin, French and Italian. The period named by Green, from, say 1580-1640, actually covers the greatest succession of great writers England has ever known. England, as a contemporary put it, became "a land of singing birds." A period that saw Shakespeare and Marlow, Spenser and Drayton, Chapman and Daniel, Nash and Marston, Heywood and Carew, Raleigh and Donne, to name but a few, could hardly be accused of literary poverty. Bookstalls were prominent in London, and it was the English golden age of translations from foreign tongues. There were, as well, many reprints of Lydgate, Langland, Chaucer and other English writers. Green's statement is absurd in the face of facts. Granted that the Bible was much talked about during the period named, this was because it was the day of the struggle between the Roman and the Protestant Churches, and in this the Bible played its part. But there is no evidence that the Bible influenced English literature to any great extent, while there is evidence that English literature influenced translations of the Bible.

The reformed Church took its stand on what it called the free interpretation of the Bible, which meant, in practice and at law, a rival official interpretation set up against that of the older Church. But

all that can be said with truth is that the Bible became the book of a body of people who even then were looked upon as "fanatics." The multiplication of Protestant sects, and what one may call the domestication of dogma under Protestantism, led to a vogue of the Bible, until it did later become, to some extent, a household ornament, although never quite the universal one that interested tradition has made it. At a later date it became with many a general family register of births and deaths, but the very ancient joke of the Bible being used as a flowerpot stand in a front window, is an indication that the reading of the Bible was confined to a minority of the people.

In fact I do not know any period in English history when the English people could be called "a people of the book." Its greatest vogue was in the mid-seventeenth century. And even then it was popular with a section of the people only. If one turns to the essays, the novels, the plays, the general amusements of the people right through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he will see what a misrepresentation it is to picture the people of this country as being devoted to the Bible. It was generally taken for granted; its use became incorporated in law and custom; the mass of the people read it but little, and understood it less. The people were *religious*, one section was too ignorant, and another section too much dominated by self-interest to be otherwise. The picture of the English people as being devoted to the Bible is a piece of historical nonsense. Every cottage was not a place for the enacting of a "Cottar's Saturday Night." That picture belongs to the same category of religious lies as the story of Queen Victoria (officially rejected as untrue) presenting a copy of the Bible to an African chief as the source of England's greatness.

* * *

Thus saith the Lord!

It is, however, important to revise Green's statement to the extent of saying that the Christian religion is the religion of a book, and that book the Bible. In these days when so large a body of Christians are trying to evade the responsibilities involved in this, it is well to bear that fact in mind. For Christianity claimed obedience on the ground that the Bible was a revelation from God, a revelation that it was a crime to question, and which gave man all he needed for his guidance in this world, and to secure salvation hereafter. Take away that revelation from the Christian Church and it is left without any historic standing. The claim to credence and obedience was based upon it; on that ground it demanded the position of a lawgiver, and denied the right of anyone to even question its claims. Take away the Bible as a revelation from God, and the Church stands without any authority whatever. There may be another Church bearing the same name, but it is not the Christian Church which meets us in history.

I am not surprised that the majority of educated Christians should to-day seek to repudiate the responsibility of commending this revelation; for no greater shadow ever fell upon mankind than this curse of a "sacred" book. It legitimized some of the worst evils of history. When a people are faced with and accept a "Thus saith the Lord," criticism is dumb and investigation useless; a new idea is a standing danger, and often a passport to damnation. It was a "Thus saith the Lord" that suppressed the science of the ancient world and gave Europe the darkness of the Dark Ages. It burned Bruno at the stake and sent Galileo to prison. It was God's revelation that said "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and burned, drowned and tortured many thousands of women and children for the imaginary offence of intercourse with the Devil. The Bible said, in the name of God, that if any one sought to induce another to worship strange gods he should be stoned to death, and it placed, and retains, on the statute books of Christian countries the priest-made crime of blasphemy. It was "God's word" that denied woman equality with man. It made one-seventh of the lives of men, women and children a day of gloom. "Thus saith the Lord" made the lives of myriads a misery with its doctrine of eternal damnation, and taught multitudes to prefer an established lie to a demonstrated truth. There is hardly a single statement which this revelation gave to mankind, and which could be brought to the test of fact and experience, which has not been shown to be wrong. It taught hatred in the name of love and falsehood in the name of truth. No known truth has ever needed a "Thus said the Lord" for its establishment or its vindication. It is only a lie that needs the fear of God for its enthronement.

Thanks to a century and a half of hard fighting Freethinking criticism has liberated the minds of multitudes, and made the majority of those who still retain the name of Christian ashamed of much that went to the make-up of historic Christianity. To-day, so far as the Bible is concerned, we may divide the Christian world into three main groups. There is a large section of believers that has thrown overboard the traditional estimate of the Bible as a revelation from God. They say it is a collection of ancient writings coming down to us from a people who had a genius for religion (this gives us a stupidity in place of a superstition) but it must be taken for what it is worth. There is a much larger body of believers who still call the Bible a revelation from God, but in a sense which permits it being adapted to and interpreted in terms of modern knowledge and modern needs, and who praise the Bible mainly because of the "spirit of righteousness" it displays. There is a third, and probably the largest body of all, who still hold to the Bible in something like the old sense, and denounce the rest of the Christian world as being traitors to their God. The world is inclined to laugh at this last group, but so far as they go they are at least true to their salt. They represent a diluted picture of what Christendom once was as a whole.

The one quality the two first groups have in common is that of intellectual crookedness. Thus, a theory of the common origin of languages is broached. That is taken to prove the Bible story of the origin of languages at the building of the Tower of Babel. Another discovers in the course of excavations evidence of a great flood in a certain part of the world. That is proof of the actuality of a *universal* deluge. Another unearths a ruined wall round an ancient town near where Jericho may have existed. That is evidence of the truth of the fall of Jericho as described in the Bible. But the Bible stories are not true unless the Lord sent a flood with the express purpose of

drowning everyone on earth with the exception of a single family; the Bible is not true unless a people who knew but one language suddenly by an act of God began to talk different languages; and unless the walls of a city fell down on the blowing of a number of trumpets, to carry out the will of God. The impact of modern thought on religion usually results in a coruscation of dishonesties on the part of the threatened creed.

A Noteworthy Book

Now we Freethinkers must not let Christians get away with it. We are not aiming at a purification of Christianity but at ending it. We do not wish to make Christians *less* superstitious, we want to cleanse their minds of the foul thing. We do not wish to make Christianity more "rational," we desire to make it impossible. And to do this we must insist on due regard to honesty of speech and thought; we must insist that the Bible means the Bible of our ancestors, that revelation means a revelation from God, not a figure of speech or a harmless metaphor. Merely giving up the old names will not do. What Christians have surrendered has been forced from them by Freethinking criticism. But they still, when not indulging in apologetics, refer to the Bible in the old language, and appeal to the old and discredited belief. And so long as they are able to do this they keep in being many of the worst feelings and practices associated with Christianity.

Moreover, the decay of Bible reading by the general body of the public has, to a very considerable extent, left in being a vague feeling that in some way or other the "old Book" must still be treated with special veneration. We still have it in the schools, it is still in the courts, and it figures in such pantomimic displays as the Coronation. And while I write there lies in front of me a notice of the extraordinary measures that are being taken to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the English Bible being placed in Churches. One of the steps to be taken is to try and get a copy of the Bible into every home. Whether people read it or not, it will help to keep alive a feeling of veneration for the Bible, and so far the interests of the priesthoods will be served.

Now I do not object to the Bible being placed in every home. And if it gets there I hope it will be read. But I want it to be read with understanding, not used as a narcotic. And there is an excellent way in which this can be done. The Pioneer Press is just publishing the *eighth edition* of a book that has done as much as anything—probably more than any other one thing—to open the eyes of people to the true nature of the Bible. I refer to the *Bible Handbook*, prepared by G. W. Foote, one of the finest writers who ever placed a fine brain at the service of the Freethought cause. The work was done in collaboration with W. P. Ball, a man who was a capable scientist, and a very conscientious worker in the Best of Causes. The authors very wisely let the Bible do its own talking; their work is confined to arrangement and to illustrative headlines and notes. In other words, the Bible is placed in the witness-box and gives its own evidence. Thousands of people, at home and abroad, who have read the Bible have testified that they never quite realized what the Bible actually taught until they read the *Handbook*. They had read it under the influence of old associations, or under the glamour of parsonic rationalizations. In this work all may read it, probably for the first time, as it really is, with its gross superstitions, its indecencies (to modern ears), its glaring absurdities, its gross contradictions. I cannot hope that a copy of the *Handbook* will be in every home that is presented with a Bible, but Free-

thinkers can do something to open the eyes of many who believe in the Bible because they have never understood it. Exact references are given, and everyone may read the Bible as it really is. Nor must it ever be forgotten that if so many Christians to-day have given up the belief in the Bible as a revelation from God, if they see the Bible as it really is, a museum of primitive superstitions, brutal customs, and strange, often revolting practices, if the fear of hell has been lifted from so many minds, if religious liberty is greater than it was, and if large bodies of even professed believers are ashamed of the statements made by leading clergymen less than a century ago that every word in the Bible was written by "Him who sitteth on the throne," it is because of the ceaseless war that has been waged by thousands of brave men and women, to which war the *Bible Handbook* was and is so brilliant a contribution.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Christ is Very Real There"

"Even the most convinced Atheist could not live ten years in East London without recognizing the contribution which religious organizations make to the welfare and happiness of the people. Christ is very real there."
—*Times* (London) September 15.

ONE of the most overrated things in the world is Christian charity, both in word and deed. Yet Christians themselves are never tired of emphasizing the humanism which they pretend is an integral part of their intolerant creed. It is only to be expected that they should hate Freethinkers, but they detest one another just as heartily. Roman Catholics spit venom at Protestants; Anglicans see little good in Free Churchmen, and all jump on the Unitarians. There is very little charity, Christian or otherwise, in all this religious rough and tumble. Unseemly as it is, it is but a pale shadow of the enmities of the Ages of Faith, when priests rode roughshod over their fellow-men, and actually burnt men and women alive for differences of religious belief.

The same spirit of intolerance still survives, but there are far too many heretics to-day to be treated in this brutal and summary fashion. It is only in the case of Freethinkers that the old flash of persecuting zeal is seen in all its crudity, and it was the world-wide outcry at the shooting of Francesco Ferrer that prevented repetitions of so vile a deed. Priests and their satellites are "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike," and the restraining force is not religion but public opinion, which brings so many tyrannies to a halt.

Priests mouth of a religion of love, and silly laymen repeat the nonsense with the reiteration of parrots. Yet the Christian Bible absolutely reeks with bigotry and persecution, and the Old Testament Hebrews were expressly ordered to kill heretics. The earliest apostles of Christianity were also imbued with the spirit of persecution. The apostle Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and John, the "beloved disciple," said: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the infant Christian Church the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and the history of Christianity after its accession to power justifies the Freethinker in regarding bigotry and persecution as part and parcel of that religion. Indeed, while Christianity survives, the recrudescence of religious persecution is always possible. To con-

tend that a two-thousand years' old Oriental superstition which threatened everlasting hell-fire for unbelief is opposed to persecution on earth is but to gloss the plainest of facts. The Blasphemy Laws are still on the Statute Book, and are at any minute liable to enforcement. These persecuting laws are the standing menace of a dying creed to those who smile at its childish fables and outworn ideas too ostentatiously.

As for the dole departments and the numerous social activities associated with Christian Churches, these things are not prompted solely by kindness of heart, but are used as sprats to catch mackerels. Just as in India, China, and elsewhere, the missionaries bribe the unsuspecting natives with medical dispensaries, and other lures, so at home, in England, the clergy use the bait of coals and blankets, soup kitchens, children's nurseries, Sunday-school "treats," Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, concerts, cinemas, and other attractions. This particular form of Christian charity is largely a bribe to the working-classes to keep them quiet, and to attract them into the churches and chapels.

Especially is this the case in the East-End of London, which includes some of the worst parts of the Metropolis. Some other districts of the capital of the British Empire are nothing to be proud of, but the condition of the people in Tidal Basin, Custom House, Poplar, and parts of West Ham, is unhappily paralleled in the slums of so many cities and towns. "Christ is very real there," says the *Times* correspondent, and the irony of the remark is as plain as a pikestaff. If, however, Christian charity is something other than pious make-believe, how comes it that these unfortunate people are in this terrible state after two thousand years of this so-called "Religion of Love"? Are they not human beings? Yet they lack all the decencies of life, and are half-starved. A hundredweight of coals at Christmas; a day at the seaside in the summer; a packet of tea now and again; are no substitute, and not even a panacea, for a human being cheated out of his life. A Christian employer exploits their labour; a Christian landlord takes a third of their wages; Christians prevent them enjoying themselves on the weekly holiday; and the Christians boast of their share in the happiness of the people.

The Christian Churches have had unlimited power, and possessed almost boundless wealth, for very many centuries. All they have ever done is to pretend to cure the cancer of poverty by using sticking-plaster. They have never attempted to cure poverty, regarding it as an act of God and implicit in the social system. Their paltry gifts of threepenny bits, and cups of tea, never deserved the thanks they got. If the unfortunate recipients had not been slaves in mind as well as body, they would have thrown them back at the charlatans who offered them. What the world wants is not charity, but justice. If society were run on fair and reasonable lines, there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist.

"Christ is very real there!" The Christian Religion has been carried to the slums, and they have remained slums. It was the London County Council who rehoused some of the slum dwellers, not the Church of Christ. It was the London County Council who planned better schools, improved sanitation, planned "a green belt," free from jerry builders and their machinations, not the Christian Church. It was the State that provided pensions for old people, not the Church of Christ. It is Trades Unions that are seeking to raise the standards of living. All that the clergy and their catspaws ever did was to tempt poor people into their Churches and chapels by means of paltry and unimportant gifts, and to boast of their benevolence afterwards so as to obtain subscriptions from believers with banking accounts.

"Christ is very real there," says the *Times*, speaking of this East End of London. There are nearly 200,000 Jewish people in the East-End to whom "Christ" is but a legendary figure of an alien faith. As for the remainder of the population, the half-empty churches and chapels, the declining Sunday-schools, the fall in contributions, all tend to show that religion is at the ebb-tide in East-London. It is this decline which is the real cause of the desire to make religion more attractive. It will take something more than doles and theatrical side-shows to reinstate an Oriental superstition which has fallen into disfavour through being found out. People may be poor, but they are beginning to see that the cash-box and the cassock are on the same side. They now perceive that the surplus thousands which builds churches and chapels is more often than not derived from underpaid and sweated labour. And they also suspect that the narcotic of religion is very useful to the upper classes. By promises of a "beautiful home above," men are prevented from dwelling too much on present discomforts. The *Times* has a great reputation as a newspaper, but it appears to be most inadequately informed concerning East London and its inhabitants. Maybe, West-End journalists do not often get so far as Aldgate Pump. If they did visit this area more regularly, they would see people living under conditions that would make a decent man blush with shame. For such life as this East-End of London shows is quite sufficient to make a rational person question whether the boasted Christian Superstition is quite what its industrious and well-paid advertisers would have us all believe. For the so-called blessings of poverty really mean that men and women are not only poor in pocket, but poor in all that makes life worth living, and in all that should distinguish men from brutes.

The child-man of great Plato's imagination, who had grown up in a dark cave and suddenly emerged into daylight, was filled with wonder at the glory and splendour of life. When the men and women finally emerge from the darkness and foulness of the slums, they will never again be defiled by the threepenny bits of the prosperous. They will never again be patronized and petted by district visitors with tracts. They will be contented citizens of a free and self-governing people, poles asunder from the wage-slaves of Christian civilization.

MIMNERMUS.

The Origin of the Exact Sciences

THE major part of the multitude of readers who revel in inferior fiction view with aversion the study of science. Science, they declare, is an intensely dry and dreary theme. Yet, as a matter of plain fact, the picture presented by science of the world around us awakens wonder, stimulates our emotions and imagination, arouses curiosity, and reveals beauty to a superlative degree. Huxley once described science as organized common sense, while Tylor, the famous pioneer anthropologist, defined it as: exact, regular, arranged knowledge. And, in its simpler forms, science has been utilized by the human race from the remotest times in its conflict or co-operation with the environment in which its lot was cast.

Upon science every aspect of civilization and culture reposes. However rudimentary the information acquired by primitive peoples, past or present, it has ever been the outcome of observation and testing, and this, when applied in a practical manner, has formed the foundations of those subsequent scientific achievements that have revolutionized the modern world.

The lowliest extant savage is aware that fire burns

and that rain comes from above; he has learnt to distinguish between poisonous and nutritious plant food. He has studied the habits of the animals upon which he preys and he turns his knowledge to account. He has his rude remedies for accidents or disease. As the late Sir Edward Tylor noted, the savage in his crude way, "is a physicist in making fire, a chemist in cooking, a surgeon in binding up wounds, a geographer in knowing his rivers and mountains, a mathematician in counting on his fingers. All this is knowledge, and it was on these foundations that science proper began to be built up, when the art of writing had come in, and society had entered on a civilized stage."

By means of counting and measurement exact science has achieved many of its more signal triumphs, while all the complexities of contemporary mathematics practically rest on arithmetic with its four branches of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and these were originally made possible by the circumstance that men first reckoned on their fingers, and then added their toes. Children of all races and social standing even now commence to count with their fingers, and adults are occasionally apt to revert to this prehistoric practice. Living savage tribes, whose languages contain no name for a number higher than two or three, are able to enumerate up to 15 or 20 by means of their fingers and toes.

The story of the evolution of numerical terms clearly demonstrates their lowly origin. For instance, the Orinico Indians signify the number five by the term "the whole hand," six is expressed as "one of the other hand," ten "both hands," while "one man" means twenty, and "two men" signifies forty, the fingers and toes being included in the latter calculations. Also, in various regions of the globe the words in use for *hand*, *foot* and *man* have themselves become numerals.

Thus, in ancient, medieval and modern days alike, men have ever been prone to compute by fives, tens and twenties (scores). Since Europe gained the advantage of the Indian numerals introduced into Christendom by the Moslem Arabians of Spain, numbers ceased to be symbolized by letters, although they are still in evidence in the Roman numerals. But reckoning by tens is still everywhere in use, and our ordinary computation is conducted by means of the decimal system. Thus, the figures 66 represent six tens and six, while computing by scores is common in many lands, and its influence survives in our three score and ten, while traces are evident in French and many other languages and customs. Tylor, who shared Herbert Spencer's antagonism to our adoption of the metric system, cogently concluded that: "Thus it can hardly be doubted that the modern world has inherited directly from primitive man his earliest arithmetic worked out on Nature's counting-board—the hands and feet. This also explains why the civilized world uses a numerical system based on the inconvenient number ten, which will not divide either by three or four. Were we starting our arithmetic afresh, we should more likely base it on the duodecimal notation, and use dozens and grosses instead of tens and hundreds."

When man had conferred names on his numbers he made a great stride. Still this only met the requirements of the simplest calculations. Special symbols for numerals became necessary, and their appearance was foreshadowed when strokes were made to signify small numbers. The Red Indian made four strokes to indicate that he had taken four scalps, but while in small reckonings this was convenient enough, it proved extremely awkward and inconvenient for larger ones. So, as the art of writing developed from

pictorial signs the ancient civilized peoples devised the plan of employing special signs to represent their fives, tens and higher decimal numbers, while retaining the earlier strokes as signs of the additional units. This method was adopted in ancient Egypt and Assyria, and the Roman numerals still seen on our watches and clocks, chapter numberings in books, etc., preserve the same principle, as we observe in iv. (one less than five); xiii. ten and three as a sign for thirteen, and the letter l. for 50.

One may visualize the natural growth of the ciphering art in dimly remote times by noting the business methods of uncivilized stocks. Native traders in Africa counted with pebbles, which they gathered in heaps of five, while in other regions tens were, and still are, in use. Indeed, pebbles were in common use as counters in rural Europe until recent generations, and so general was this custom in classic Greece and Rome that the Greek word for reckoning was derived from *psephos*, a pebble, while the equivalent term in Latin was a derivation of *calculus*, a pebble, so it has been truly said that "our word *calculate* is a relic of very early arithmetic."

It seems fairly conclusive then, that man's first measurements as well as his earliest reckonings were made on his own body. When primitives used their finger lengths to determine the difference between one tool or weapon and another, and, by placing one foot before the other, ascertained the distance between two stakes in erecting their rude shelters, they had initiated the art of mensuration. We still speak of a horse as being so many hands high, and in linear measurement twelve inches is still called a foot. The terms cubit, span, nail are all relics of earlier body measurement. In England, the *ell* is a cloth measure of forty-five inches, and is clearly associated with the fore arm as we witness in the words *elbow* and *elbone*. The words *fathom* and *pace* or double step point to a similar origin.

The rough and ready estimates of the distant past have long been superseded by measures of standard lengths. But in the main these have descended to us from the civilized nations of antiquity. For both in Babylonia and Egypt standard measures of considerable accuracy were in common use. Weights and scales, wet and dry measures, date back to very remote ages. The pint and gallon, ounce and pound, with various other well known weights and measures, are all legacies from Pagan Rome.

As its name indicates, the important science of geometry owes its inception to the plotting of land for agricultural purposes and, according to tradition, land surveying was first undertaken to apportion the fertile sediment of the River Nile for the culture of corn. Invaluable geometrical principles were established, but these unfortunately grew to be regarded as sacred and inviolable. Thus, despite the firm foundations of the science laid in Egypt, little further progress was made there. It was reserved for the brilliant successes of Archimedes, Apollonius and others culminated in the labours of the celebrated Euclid who ably utilized the theorems of his predecessors, while adding others of his own devising.

Geometry, like every other department of knowledge, has evolved from the relatively simple to the complexities it now presents. Its definitions, axioms and demonstrations necessarily imply prolonged anterior experiences such as those of prehistoric land surveyors, masons and carpenters. For example, the altar builders of early India were without the advantage of maps and plans, but were instructed to erect poles at prescribed distances and stretch strings between them. It is extremely interesting to note that our term *straight line* preserves traces of its former

practical bearing. For, "*line* is *linen* thread, and *straight* is the participle of the old verb *to stretch*. If we stretch a thread tight between two pegs, we see that the stretched thread must be the shortest possible; which suggests how the straight line came to be defined as the shortest distance between two points." In fact, all the definitions and axioms of Euclid are ultimately dependent upon the prolonged experiences of mankind in a space of three dimensions—length, breadth and depth.

Thus, the study of the genesis and development of the exact sciences demonstrates their purely natural character. Knowledge grew from more to more until, with the downfall of Pagan civilization, darkness descended on Christian Europe. Later, Arabian and other renovating influences served to awaken Christendom from its ignorant and dogmatic slumber. In the seventeenth century of our era, however, Descartes, Galileo, Newton, Leibnitz and other natural philosophers proceeded to provide the means by which modern mathematical science has reached its present vast range and power.

T. F. PALMER.

Answers to Freethinkers

II.

JUST as the Church of Rome—in its own opinion—declines any responsibility for the Inquisition, so it refuses to take any blame for such massacres as that of St. Bartholomew. Its spokesmen take an easy way out of the difficulty. One of them, the Rev. B. L. Conway, for example, insists that "the massacre was a dastardly political crime of Catherine de Médicis," and she was "a Freethinker of the school of Machiavelli, bred in the worst traditions of the Italian tyrants, and ruling one of the most corrupt courts in Christendom." This is carrying the war into the enemy's camp with a vengeance. This picture of Catherine as a "Freethinker" is delightful; while the "corrupt court" is surely a description of genius.

Catherine, of course, was born and bred a Catholic. The Court of France was Catholic, and has mostly never been anything else. In fact few countries have been more predominantly Catholic than France. The priest and his Pope are still a power there even today. But in the sixteenth century, it was dominated politically and religiously by the Church of Rome, and whatever it did, was done in the interests of the Church. The Huguenots, with Coligny at their head, were fighting for toleration and the right to live; and Catherine, finding they might at last get some measure of freedom, and hating the reformed religion as only a Catholic can hate, planned the assassination of Coligny as a prelude to the extermination of heresy in one final blow. Hence the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, surely one of the vilest mass murders on record. When the tragedy was consummated, and the Catholic Party saw what had been done, they were by no means disposed to allow the Church to take the blame. And it is interesting to see how they tried to put the blame in turn on Catherine, on the Guises, on Charles IX., and even on Coligny himself. Buckle—himself a Theist—was under no delusion as to the cause of the massacre. He says:—

In the leading events of this period of French history, the predominance of the theological spirit was painfully shown. It was shown in the universal determination to subordinate political acts to religious opinions. It was shown in the conspiracy

of Amboise, and in the Conference of Poissy; and still more was it shown in those revolting crimes, so natural to superstition, the massacres of Vassy and of St. Bartholomew, the murder of Guise by Poltrot, and of Henry III., by Clement. These were the legitimate results of the spirit of religious bigotry. They were the results of that accursed spirit, which, whenever it has had the power, has punished even to the death those who dared to differ from it.

The Church of Rome was, therefore, really not to blame for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. The Pope of Rome was really not to blame for having struck a medal in its honour, or for having a *Te Deum* sung in "thanksgiving." Catherine, the "Free-thinker," was the real cause of the tragedy, while the medal and the *Te Deum* were merely the Pope's thanks to the Lord "for the saving of the King and the Royal Family from death"—as the Rev. B. L. Conway carefully explains to his readers. And I have not the slightest doubt that the "sheep" who follow Fr. Conway believe all this.

The question of Joan of Arc is another very sore point with Catholics. In France, every Catholic child is solemnly taught that she was brutally burnt to death by the English; and it is, wherever possible, carefully hidden from them that she was, in reality, burnt by the Church of Rome as a witch, after having been tried by a number of Bishops, headed by the Bishop of Beauvais. It is all very well to call this gentleman a "scoundrel"—as does Fr. Conway. It is, indeed quite easy to write in these days that Bishop Cauchon and his infamous judges found no difficulty in declaring St. Joan "guilty of every conceivable crime," because, though an "ecclesiastical tribunal," it was really composed of "highly-paid political partisans." The fact remains that they were all to a man Roman Catholics, brought up as Catholics, and taught by Catholics all they knew. Almost everybody in those days, in England and France, was a Catholic. Adroitly to shift the onus of the crime from religion to politics is no answer to anyone with intelligence. The rude English soldiers obviously thought Joan was a witch; and the Church had a "divine" command to put witches to death. It was religion, and the Roman Catholic religion at that, which was responsible for the death of Joan. And it must not be forgotten that the religion of the Bishop of Beauvais—a Frenchman—was that of the humblest soldier in the English ranks. What would have happened to Joan had the Roman Catholic religion not been in power? Is it conceivable that she would have been burnt alive by a purely military tribunal? Was that the way in which captured leaders were treated? Does not history definitely say no?

Sometimes, our Catholic apologists will admit quite frankly that everything was not quite right with the Church at certain epochs. Talking about the Reformation, for instance, Fr. Conway says, "Catholics readily grant that a reformation in the lives of many unworthy Catholic clergies and laymen was indeed called for in the sixteenth century"; but, he adds, "the good Catholic remained within the fold, and prayed and worked for reform." And then, lest one should dwell too long on the shortcomings of Catholicism, the argument is quietly shifted to the shortcomings of Protestantism. Luther is quoted: "Now we see the people [after the Reformation] becoming more infamous, more avaricious, more unchaste, and in every way worse than they were under Popery. . . . Wittenberg is a Sodom of immorality, and half the town is guilty of adultery, theft, usury, and cheating."

To the Freethinker all this is very interesting. Whether a man was a Catholic or a Protestant in the sixteenth century was no guarantee that he was a

decent citizen.. Either brand of the Christian religion seems to have had little effect in keeping him on the straight and narrow path. Or, to put it another way, of what earthly use was Christianity? Not until men had imbibed a genuine spirit of humanism, derived, for the most part, from the heretic, was any progress in civilization possible. The ghastly quarrels and wars of religion three or four hundred years ago were the direct outcome of Christian rule. To shift the blame from the Church—the one unchanging Universal teacher with a Divine commission in its hands—on to the people it taught, may be apologetics of a kind, but it is very bad argument.

Had Freethought been universally taught say in the sixteenth century, had it been in absolute power, had it swayed governments as well as schools and universities, and had the resulting teaching made men guilty of the atrocities which history relates of the Christians, would not Freethought have been blamed by all impartial historians? Why, even today, whatever Christians do not like in the Russian Government is put down to its Atheistic teaching—and by no means to the Russian people. The Church of Rome, on the contrary, seems always ready to blame its sheeplike followers for all its own shortcomings, and its pious devotees accept their guilt with the meekness of a lamb. Such is the power of Faith!

To deal fully with "replies" made by Christians to "infidel" objections, one would require a few volumes at least. I have only called attention to a few statements which have caught my eye in some desultory reading. It may be worth while to examine some of the more subtle answers more fully another time. The Catholic Church has had a long innings, and it has had indeed some notable defenders.

H. CUTNER.

From one Generation to Another

THE recent correspondence on "What We Believe," in the *News-Chronicle*, like its predecessor in the *Daily Telegraph*, must be taken as indicating that even Editors of Daily Journals of wide circulation cannot wholly ignore the current tendency towards irreligion.

Editors begin to "feel a draught," which sooner or later will sweep complacent conservatism into the Museums—where the Mummies find forgetfulness. Editors, who weigh carefully the "main chance," are wondering whether the big anti-church public added to the still bigger "don't care a damn" crowd, may perhaps be attracted to a newspaper whose Editor—or Advertisement Manager—actually knows that God and His Holy (but incredible) Word are thoroughly out of date.

Churches are undoubtedly emptying, funds are drying up and in many cases would be non-existent altogether but for endowments dating from days when rich men firmly believed in the Good Tidings about Hell Fire. Can one wonder that pious editors are being pressed by worldly-minded proprietors to study the "news-value" of a mild scepticism. Of course the orthodox authorities will have the "last word" in any case.

A volume called *Youth Looks At Religion*, has attracted some attention, mainly because the authors—chosen by the Rev. Kenneth Ingram—betray their youth and its usual inexperience. These honest believers and semi-believers stumble into audacities which they will learn to avoid if we may judge by past precedents of successful authorship.

Naturally no mere "Materialist" was asked to contribute. His audacities would be beyond ecclesiastical "reply." The ponderous theologian who "finishes off" the "Youth" criticisms has a pretty easy task, even if one feels that "Youth" has left some serious although elementary problems which no Archbishop even can attempt to solve.

These "youths" are exponents of what they think

THEIR generation thinks of the Religion of the generation which was responsible for the World War. Mr. Christopher Casson, son of Dame Sybil Thorndyke, is the first "youth" to speak. He believes in a sort of a kind of a God. He describes his God as "the symbol of the highest state of mind, the greatest consciousness, and the most wonderful sense of humour." Mr. Casson may be young, but he is hardly modern. He writes as if his curious God was just the Ancient Creator of another generation. "One can hardly," he says, "imagine that God had not an exquisite sense of humour in creating such a design" as a Mosquito! A medieval Inquisitor's humour we should have thought. But then we have suffered from a twentieth-century mosquito's unwelcome "design" (and execution too). But with much silliness of belief ("in the Old Testament symbolically, and the New Testament more or less literally"), Mr. Casson's "God" doesn't fit into the orthodoxy of the last generation, and a whole bench of bishops will be puzzled to "harmonize" Mr. Casson with their own greater sillinesses.

Miss Pamela Frankau's creed may be expressed in the Modernist formula: "Keep it vague" . . . except that she adds, "and lovely." She thinks Church-going "to pray about one's own negligible problems," "acts as a stumbling-block to the intellect." She considers that "the Holy War of to-day is the fight between Faith and Intellect," and she is NOT on the side of faith. She "accepts the Unknowable," and is prepared to "push the problem to the back of my head saying: 'I don't know, and I never shall know and here's an end of it.'"

Mr. Louis Hawkin, a London relative of the late General Botha, writes as an outsider where religion is concerned. He voices the views of those who consider subjects like Sex and Marriage "as entirely and completely outside the scope of the Church, which they feel has a bigoted, old-fashioned, impractical, and narrow outlook on these vital subjects." Mr. Hawkin considers that "on the face of it, it looks as if this criticism were justified." As to the Nonconformists they "in the main are narrow, bigoted and filled with a sense of their own uprightness; the Pharisees were tolerant in comparison." He praises the Quakers, but for himself accepts a purely secular creed.

Mr. Giles Playfair (Actor and Playwright) says: "I am not a Christian, and I do not know anyone who is." He considers Christianity incompatible with civilization. He however retains not a few illusions of the past generations. He does not consider Christianity to have wholly "failed as an influence for good," and he says the Church was responsible "for the theatre's birth." He is apparently relying upon the lies of the last generation—he cannot have heard of the Greek drama.

Mr. Fearnley-Whittingstall says many good and true things, but he confuses social usefulness with religion. Consequently he can flatter the pious with the reflexion that "If youth were really irreligious the ideals of public service would perish: it is the observance of religion that has changed and not the standard." He cannot see that to relinquish belief in theology, in favour of looking after human material welfare, is a triumph of pure Secularism.

Mr. Peter Winckworth (prominent in the Boy Scout Movement) likes the Mass, likes the Music and the rest of it, but cannot stand the people who take these things seriously. Above all, "it is a tragedy that in an Institution that lays a premium on personal sanctity its own members must ever be its worst advertisement." The Bishops will forgive a lot, but Mr. Winckworth can't expect them to tolerate that kind of heresy.

In the end the Archbishop of York "answers" all the foregoing critics. He is the present generation "telling them what's what." Dr. Temple knows that all this stuff is just a natural rebound after a big war. But everything is going to be all right! "The Church is surviving all that." He has been looking around and finds that already in many centres, the student youth of to-day is rapidly becoming very much like pre-war stuff. We don't believe it. The Archbishop belongs to another generation, and cannot even speak the same language as modern youth. Fancy, the Prelate trots out the old words—we can guess with what effect on the youth of to-

day's schools: "What vitally matters," says he, "is not that I have apprehended God, but that He has apprehended me." It is the language of long before the war. Finally he urges that youth which questions and doubts, should join the Church "as a disciple" in order "to find out that the Church's belief about Christ is true." A student of this generation seeking truth would have a difficult path to follow if he became a "disciple" of every sect that claimed to possess a knowledge of the truth.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops

A great deal has been made of the statement by Mr. Mullins at the recent Edinburgh Conference that in his police court practice he had noticed that it was from Christian organizations and Christian leaders that the objection to humanitarian reforms had come. This was also pointed out by Dean Inge, in one of his *Evening Standard* articles, but the Dean put it more forcibly, more positively, and in closer accord with the facts. He said that humanitarian reforms had mainly come from the non-Christian side. Mr. Mullins diluted and spoiled his confession by the remark that the reforms that Christians had opposed "incorporated really Christian principles." As those whom Mr. Mullins was trouncing consider that their conduct illustrated "really Christian principles," it seems we are back with the old conundrum, "What is True Christianity?" And the answer to that is, whatever you please to-day, and anything else you please to-morrow. We do not see, when an avowed Christian stumbles on a truth, why he should mix it up with some insipid remark that robs it of a large part of its value. We say we cannot see why, but we suspect that the answer to the question is "Because he is a Christian." Anyway we will let it go at that until a better answer comes along.

No doubt Mr. A. P. Herbert will feel pleased to learn from the Bishop of Liverpool's Diocesan Leaflet that if Jesus Christ were here, and, presumably, if he had been in the House of Commons, he would have supported the new Marriage Act. For, so says the Bishop, Jesus laid down no law about marriage, although to the unenlightened it would seem that the command "Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder," looks like a pretty definite sort of regulation. What Jesus laid down was an "ideal," which we must get as close to as we can. Meanwhile others of the Bishops, who also represent God on earth, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is God's chief representative on earth, have a different opinion about the matter. What a pity it is that God's son did not have enough "gumption" to make his meaning quite clear!

It is also strange that always a reform has to be forced upon the Churches, only for them to discover, when the reform is effected, that this was just what Jesus would have supported were he here. Well, Jesus, too, had his chance, and when he was here he said nothing about the family, nothing about art, or science, nothing against slavery, and nothing against any one of the superstitions that flourished on every side of him. He did support the lowest forms of demonism and passed away his time in performing very familiar miracles, and lacked even the wit to perform these in a way that would have prevented subsequent generations doubting whether they ever occurred.

Meanwhile, the Bishop of Southwark has issued a notice that he cannot in any circumstances either marry a divorced person, while the other party is alive, nor will any other clergyman perform such a marriage with his permission. But the Bishop of Southwark, so far as marriages are concerned, is a State official licensed to perform marriages, and taking payment for so doing. To put the matter legally, he "refuses to act." It is true that the new Act explicitly states that no clergyman

should be forced to marry a divorced person. We suggest to Mr. Herbert that he should now promote a Bill which provides that when a clergyman refuses to exercise the function he is appointed to perform he should be deprived of the right to perform it on any occasion. It is ridiculous to appoint a man to an office, and then say that he need not do his duty unless he feels so inclined. If Mr. Herbert will do this he will give evidence that he has some courage. After all it did not need a brave man to champion a reform that already had behind it a large army of men and women of almost every shade of belief. To do as we suggest would be a move worth making. Will Mr. Herbert take that step?

The *Universe* reports some wonderful discoveries "relating to the Bible" through recent excavations in the Holy Land. At Iachish, for example, "an altar was found in a temple devoted to sun-worship." As sun-worship is mentioned in Ezekiel viii. 16, that proves the truth of Ezekiel. At Megiddo, "numerous pieces of carved and decorated ivory work" were found, one of them containing some hieroglyphics on a cartouche of Rameses III. (1195-1164 B.C.). The *Universe*, alas, does not tell us what part of the Bible this proves true. Then, at Khirbet Tannur, a Nabatean temple of the first century A.D. was excavated containing various Syrian gods and goddesses. What this has to do with the truth of the Bible is also not explained, but we are glad to record the details. They show pretty conclusively that whatever else excavations prove, they do not prove the truth of Bible stories. There may be some truth in the Bible; but the truth of the supernatural is the only truth that matters.

The Pope has solemnly anathematized "The Myth of the Nineteenth Century," by one of Hitler's foremost men. We do not question the mythical part of the book, but history as taught in Fascist Germany is mainly myth, and if this teaching keeps on for a generation or so, the German people will become, in the eyes of the rest of the world, a laughing stock. But there is not much in principle to choose between the kind of history on which the Roman Church brings up the most docile of its children and that which flourishes under the crowd that rules Germany. Anyway the Pope probably thinks that the Roman Church has enough of myth already, without adding to its stock by the stupid mythology which does duty for history in German schools.

The Penistone Urban District Council is a business body, and the business that they have to transact is of a secular nature. But clerical members of that body have managed to bring a relish of salvation into the Council Chamber by opening the meetings with prayer. However, you can take a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. At the last meeting of the Council it was pointed out that the Chairman of the Council had proceeded with the signing of cheques whilst prayers were being offered. Canon Carleton then put the question of whether the meeting be opened with prayer to the Council and his proposal was carried by six votes to three. The Chairman, as before, went on with his secular duties while the meeting was occupied with matter which was not on the agenda. On a protest by a Councillor, the Chairman rightly said that he never intended to observe such a custom. We suppose that if it were carried that the meeting opened with the singing of "How Sweet the name of Guinness sounds," the Canon would have seen the absolute correctness of the Chairman's attitude. The "recall to religion" is taking some peculiar forms. It is impossible to distinguish between Christian zeal and ordinary impudence.

The Very Rev. the Provost of Sheffield is annoyed with Mr. H. G. Wells, particularly on account of his remarks before the British Association at Nottingham. He said in the course of a sermon at Worksop:—

Strange as it may seem, there are thousands and thousands of people who listen to Mr. Wells. This is the trouble.

There seems to be no explanation of this trouble, save original sin. He also said:—

Before Christ was born in Bethlehem, philosophy was afraid of life; it lived in the temple of abstract thought. It saw many visions and possibilities, but it missed the people.

Now Christianity, with its God and Revelation to boot, is also, in the same way, missing the people, for the trouble appears to be that the people, in their thousands and thousands, are preferring to listen to secular prophets such as H. G. Wells. And when we think of the empty pews and the recall to religion, it is evident in more senses than one that it is the Christian Church that is missing the people.

It will be hard to convince posterity of many facts relating to our time: particularly the fact that in the name of religion unhealthy-minded people may organize any kind of sect they please, and, with their followers, establish what really constitute private lunatic asylums. "Spiritual abodes," new "faiths," missions, chapels, Churches have come and gone in plenty, and continue to be formed this day. Surely this aspect of national unfitness should be seriously reviewed by the sponsors of the "keep fit" campaign and all who have the real interests of the country at heart.

Last year, according to a Tenby (Wales) correspondent of *The Star*, a man hanged himself after a "prophet" had announced "translation to Heaven would take place" the previous Saturday. The man's sister is an ardent "disciple" of the "prophet," a man of 85 named Charles Geard, known as "Uncle Charlie." Last weekend, a husband whose wife had joined Geard, went to the farm where the "disciples" abide. He was accompanied by Geard's own nephew and other sympathizers. To their threats and questions, one disciple replied "Praise the Lord, I have nothing to say." Evidently the Geard plague spreads, for the correspondent reports that "a similar attack has been made on the Devon colony, and further visitations are threatened at the Pembrokeshire temple." He adds: "Geard, who stipulates the surrender of all earthly possessions, visits his followers in a luxurious chauffeur-driven limousine. For several weeks he has been under medical treatment, but nothing can shake his disciples' belief that neither he nor they will ever die. . . ." And no doubt these poor, pathetic "believers" would gibe at a poor Harlem negro—"Father Divine"—being accounted co-equal with "Uncle Charlie!"

Fifty Years Ago

IBSEN, Bjornson, and Kielland, the three greatest writers in Norway, are all Freethinkers. Two years ago, when the Storthing was asked to grant Kielland a "poet's salary," to compensate him for his losses through the imperfections of the International Copyright Law, a large number of members refused to favour the measure, because Kielland had attacked the clergy, and might therefore be supposed to be hostile to Christianity. This debate grieved Bjornson, and last year he and Ibsen sent a petition to the Storthing, requesting that Kielland should be granted a stipend equal to their own. Bjornson declared that if such stipends were granted with the implied condition that the recipient must be an orthodox Liberal Christian, then he was in exactly the same position as Kielland, and should regard the vote on the petition as indicating the Storthing's attitude towards himself. If he were to continue to draw his "poet's salary" it must be without any condition restricting his spiritual liberty. Kielland's salary was then granted, but its renewal has since been rejected by a narrow majority. Thereupon Bjornson telegraphed from Paris, renouncing his own salary, although in doing so he deprived himself of his chief means of subsistence. It is a miserable reflection that the Conservatives first granted this salary, and that the Liberals have brought it to an end. But the high spirit of true Liberals—Liberals in thought, and not merely in current politics—like Bjornson and Ibsen, will stir the grateful sympathies of every Freethinker in the world.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. W. WILLETTS (North Queensland).—Many thanks for the cuttings which we will make use of.

F. C. HOLDEN.—Thanks for address of likely new reader. Paper being sent for four weeks.

L. TAYLOR (Holmfirth).—It is impossible to supply matter to suit all tastes.

S. W. SAVILLE.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader. Paper will be sent for the next three weeks.

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.

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

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

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

Owing to the death of a very old and dear friend, Mr. Cohen was compelled to go direct to Glasgow after his Manchester meeting, instead of returning to London. Correspondents will therefore excuse certain matters being held over until next week. Some things that would have been noted in this column are also held over.

The Manchester Branch of the N.S.S. made a capital start with its Winter Session on Sunday last. The Picture house was filled, many were turned away, and Mr. Cohen was in excellent form. In addition the energetic campaign carried on by the Branch during the Summer months brought a number of new comers to these meetings, and that was all to the good. We were glad to learn that Mr. Atkinson had done valuable work on the platform in the open-air, and had in this manner contributed to last Sunday's success. It was a record meeting in point of numbers, and sales of literature. The President of the Branch, Mr. Blaney, presided.

We had not long to wait for an illustration of the truth of what was said in last week's "Views and Opinions," that vigilance was even more the eternal price of tyranny than it was of liberty. In catching hold of an aphorism, those who might have been expected to see the other side of the medal failed to do so. Yet look at the meeting of Hitler and Mussolini. Travelling in armoured trains, guarded every step of the way by armed men, unable to move a step in freedom, the whole existence of men of this type is a constant exhibition of vigilance. They move in a complete atmosphere of fear, until at length they tremble at a shadow, and see a potential enemy in every human being. The man who loves liberty finds eternal vigilance irksome. He knows that liberty and a multitude of spies, a place in which every man is a possible enemy of every other man, cannot exist together. To think that liberty can exist with eternal vigilance is equal to talking of the free air of a prison.

A recent number of the *New Statesman* refers to a Colonel who, at the beginning of the last war, got so an-

noyed at the multiplicity of sects favoured by his battalion that he invented a rough and ready scheme of "sorting out." The Church of England and the Roman Catholic were intelligible to him (there was something about them in *Orders*); after this division had been made, he ruled that the "fancy religions" must occupy one of two groups, the "ists" and the "ans." This rough and ready method of dealing with the saints was characteristically "Army" and good enough, it was presumed, for war time. It leaves the Freethinker still unclassified, which meant, one suppose, in practice, that that unfortunate person would be put on Sanitary duties, with members of the Mormon, Shaker and Holy Roller denomination—and for that matter, the Agnostic. The Atheist would receive the high honour of being bundled together with the Baptist, the Congregationalist, the Christian Scientist and the Seventh Day Adventist and the chance of becoming still further confirmed in the faith that was or wasn't in him.

The Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. begins its indoor season with a lecture by Mr. G. Whitehead on "Freethought versus All Dictatorships," in the Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead, at 7.0 p.m. to-day (October 3). A syllabus extending to March has been arranged, and the variety of speakers and subjects is very attractive, and for intelligent citizens in Birkenhead should supply the answer to "Where shall we go on Sunday evenings." A copy of the syllabus may be obtained from the Branch Secretary, Mr. W. Fletcher, 5 Queensbury Avenue, Bromboro', Wirral, Cheshire.

An Australian friend writes informing us of the existence of Bill Cusack, a twelve-year-old school-boy of Maroubra, whose mission in life is

condemning bankers and picking holes in the economic system with all the confidence of a Professor of Economics. He has amazed all who have heard him and displayed an astonishing knowledge of economics.

A son of Mr. W. G. Cusack, Bill has been on the platform for the last two years. At a political meeting at Randwick he spoke for one hour on the causes of depression. His flow of oratory in itself was remarkable, but the mass statistics he introduced in support of his arguments added to the interest of his performance. During the whole of his speech, only once did he refer to his notes.

When Jesus was a little boy it is reported that he showed equal erudition. If Bill Cusack had been born fifty years ago, the possibility is that he would have been spending his energies on the Scheme of Salvation, which might have culminated in his Anointing, Beatification and Deification.

We are glad to report that a Branch of the N.S.S. has been formed at Greenock. The officers have been elected as follows: President, Mr. John McCann; Treasurer, Mr. Wm. Murdoch; Literary Secretary, Mr. Harry Murphy; and General Secretary, Mr. C. H. Mair, 10 Mearns Street, Greenock. We hope all Freethinkers in the neighbourhood will get in communication with the Secretary with a view to giving the new Branch all the support in their power.

We are indebted to the current *Lecture Recorder* for the following taken from an address delivered to 230,000 at Wurzburg, Germany, on June 27, by Herr Adolf Hitler:—

We believe that we are also acting according to the will of the Almighty. Just as individual man is weak in his whole being and action on this earth, as compared with almighty Providence and Its will, Man will be immeasurably stronger the moment he acts in harmony with this Providence. It is then that he radiates the power which has distinguished the great phenomena of this world. Were I to glance back at the five years which lie behind us, I should most certainly say, "This cannot be the work of Man alone." Had it not been for the kindness of Providence, there were many times when I should have lost the narrow and deceptive path to be traversed. Our critics must realize this only too well. It is, therefore, readily understandable why we National-Socialists are believers in our deepest hearts. We could not be otherwise; for no one can make either world-history or the history of a nation unless his desire and his ability receive the blessing of this very Providence.

Destructive Propaganda

"There are no constructive ideas in the *Freethinker*."

How the Reverend gentleman got into that field I cannot tell! There was a large board at the entrance gate on which was the notice NO ADMISSION EXCEPT ON BUSINESS. The Recall to Religion has however raised, in some clerical breasts, wonderful hopes, and one of them perhaps is that the time has come again when a public notice will not be taken to refer to the people who preach that their business is not of this world. Anyway there he was, and engaged in an animated one-sided conversation with a somewhat puzzled ganger.

"Really," said the cleric, "I cannot see what you are engaged in. Round about, there are numerous men and much material and plant. There is noise. There are many signs of activity. But what, I ask you, may you be doing?"

"The Plans is in the cabin," said the ganger.

"I have not the time nor the inclination to go beyond the evidence of my eyes," continued the cleric. "Now, what do I see? Nothing but a huge hole in the ground. A mechanical digger is engaged in taking mouthfuls of clay out of the earth. It drops the mouthfuls into little wagons which run along a narrow railway, drop the earth into a huge heap and then come back for more. To me this is sheer footling. What I am concerned about is that a few weeks ago there was a building where to-day there is a hole. In that building were housed quite a large number of human beings. In the place of that building, what have we now? A hole in the ground. You may say the homes you have destroyed were inferior homes ('Ovels," said Punch Robinson), but where are those homes now? It is plain to see that where there was recently a building capable of accommodating three hundred souls, now no such accommodation exists. You say that in the future (at least I gather as much from your remark about plans), better and more satisfactory accommodation will exist. But all I can see now is a hole in the ground. What is going to be in the future I will judge when I see it. I believe in Faith, but not that kind of faith. Faith in God, not man. The heart of man is deceitful and wicked—"I've never had a better set of men under me in my life, and, wot's more—" "Oh, far be it from me to throw doubt upon the integrity of your men. What they are doing they seem to be doing quite well. But it is purely destructive work. I am, let me remind you, dealing with the evidence of my eyes, not with some problematical future. You have destroyed something, are continuing to destroy something. What you call "hovels" are going to be mansions. That may or may not be. My heart bleeds all the same for those few hundred unfortunate souls who lived here and called it home. This hole was once a home! Do you understand?: HOLE—HOME. (Here the cleric pulled out his notebook and made a little note.) It is even worse than that. The contents of the hole are being emptied on to good arable land, which but last year was turning out crops to help to feed the hungry masses. And now you are rendering this land useless. Destruction all around, I see. ("Them's paths," said Punch.) Your faith is greater thine mine, my man. I have told you that the faith that I have has no such basis as sinful man. Man is vile.

"You have interfered with crops, my man. And crops, I suppose you realize, mean food. Hungry men and women, ah, and hungry children, depend upon those crops. And next year there will be no crops. They will be hungry. They will want bread

and you will give them a—hole. (The notebook is brought out again and another happy thought inserted.)

"Would you mind standing away from that line sir?" said Punch. "You're interfering with the job."

"Interfering with the job? *Whal* a job, my good man! *Pulling down, pulling down!* Nothing constructive about it! Not a thought do you give to those who lived on this very area! Now, I see those people and see them plainly. They are without the means to enjoy their existence. They have no comfort. True they were but scantily provided with the good things, the mere material things, but they had their compensations. I saw to their compensations. You see nothing of these things. All you see is your job. Making a hole. Throwing the debris all over the place and interfering with crops. Why, this very site interferes with an old road! There was an old road along here that led to, that led to—somewhere or other—and now it isn't here. Destruction, I call it."

"Clear off that line, please sir! You're taking my time. Look in again in a twelvemonth, that's all I can say. And take care where you walk. That loco ain't no respecter of persons. Mornin'.

"I'll get run over, will that cove, Jack, and I ain't certain it wouldn't be a good thing. 'E can't see beyond the end of his nose. The world's full of blamed lunatics and one more or less don't make no difference. But I ain't going to have him interfere with my job. Next time he comes here, if he does, the loco may push him in the hole for all I cares. It isn't as if I hadn't warned him. And I'm looking in this afternoon to see if I can book one of these 'ere flats. Nothing like lookin' ahead!

T. H. ELSTON.

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 615)

We have seen that, even by the admission of a critic with small gift for fairness, Paine did two very remarkable things in his day. Without political or social influence, he roused the American people to revolution by one stirring manifesto; without learning, he began a new epoch of rationalism by a new and straightforward criticism of the reigning religion. These, be it observed, were not the transient successes of a demagogue; they were performances which gave trend to history, and notably affected the courses of thought and civilization. Wilkes made more local uproar, but Wilkes did not appreciably influence universal politics, and Wilkes's scepticism bore no fruit in influence on his nation's mind. The constant note of Paine's writing is a commanding and compulsive sincerity, which won for his writings a hearing and a following without precedent in English affairs. In his gift of getting at the heart of any matter he took up he is excelled by no writer of his age; if he could not, like Burke, "wind into a subject like a serpent," he struck into it as with the hammer of Thor. By sheer murderous directness of stroke, his pamphlet on English finance at one blow vanquished and convinced Cobbett, who had hated Paine by repute with all his robust gift of hatred, and assailed him with the ferocity in which he excelled his whole generation; and the bitter enemy was thenceforth the extravagant worshipper and champion of the dead man he had

vituperated living. Genius is a word very loosely used, and it is not necessary to commit Paine's case to any definition of it; but if not the note of genius, then certainly the note of power, is felt in Paine's swift exertions of living force; as when, after precipitating the American Revolution and inspiring it till its consummation, he felt convinced that if he could only get quietly to England and issue a pamphlet he could sway the nation to a new purpose, and did so sway it with a rapidity which startled into new fear the holders of power. And to the end his faculty of conquering conviction never left him. In the leaflet he wrote on *Gunboats* shortly before his death, every phrase is a blow.

But this faculty and this achievement, eminent as they are, do not nearly exhaust Paine's intellectual inventory. Let me again quote from the competent and appreciative essay of Mr. Conway, who, I believe, has been the first to do full justice to the range of ability exhibited in the *Age of Reason*:—

What homage should we have heard if, in any orthodox work of the last century, had occurred the far-seeing astronomic speculations of the *Age of Reason*? It was from the humble man who in early life studied his globes, purchased at cost of many a life studied his globes, purchased at cost of many a dinner, and attended the lectures of Martin, Ferguson, and Bevis, that there came twenty-one years before Herschel's famous paper on the Nebulæ, the sentence: "The probability, therefore, is that each of those fixed stars is also a sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions." (Article on "Thomas Paine," *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1879, p. 413.)

But this is not the only exhibition on Paine's part of an energy and endowment of mind which carried forward human achievement in other directions than politics. In the appendix to Sherwin's Life, and in some other quarters, will be found an account of Paine's invention of an arched iron bridge, which compelled the approval of the scientific men of his day, and which has been the pioneer of the long line of great modern works of bridge-making in metal. The credit for the first use of iron in bridge-building, like so many other first steps in human progress, appears to be due to the unprogressive Chinese but Paine seems to have had no predecessor's hint or help in his introduction of the idea among his race. I cannot ascertain the date at which, in his first sojourn in the States, he constructed his model of an arched iron bridge to cross the Schuylkill at Philadelphia, and it may be that he was preceded in point of time by the English projector of the iron bridge built over the Severn at Coalbrookdale in 1779; but I believe I am right in saying that this small structure was essentially different from Paine's in its principles. Certainly there is no trace of his having got his idea from it, and the French Academy of Sciences dealt with his as a new invention, furnishing "a new example of the application of a metal of which sufficient use has not hitherto been made on a grand scale." It is in 1789 that we find him superintending the construction of his bridge at Rotherham in England, and his accounts of the work give striking proof of his practical capacity in the walk of engineering, for which he had had no formal training. He had been moved to the task by the difficulty of bridging the Schuylkill, where the periodical passage of vast masses of ice made piers impossible, and the 400 feet span precluded the erection of a stone arch. And coming to the problem of the bridge with the same native vigour of insight which he brought to bear on politics and religion, he "took the idea of constructing it from a spider's web, of which it resembles a section." I am not competent to speak of the degree of engineering originality implied in this

inspiration; but it is, I believe, the fact that he made a very great advance in his perception of the tubular principle, which dates from the same time. "Another idea I have taken from nature," he writes, "is that of increasing the strength of matter by causing it to act over a larger space than it would occupy in a solid state, as is evidenced in the bones of animals, quills of birds, reeds, canes, etc., which, were they solid with the same quantity of matter, would have the same weight with a much less degree of strength."

Had Mr. Stephen bethought him to ascertain these matters, which alone would seem to some of us enough to prove Paine a man of uncommon ability, he might perhaps have allowed that they pointed to yet another "dash" of genius. But it never occurs to Mr. Stephen, in writing the history of the English "Thought" of last century, to take any trouble about estimating the nature, amount, and value of thinking done in connexion with physical science. His critical method is not concerned with these sides of mind. Let me, in exposition of a critical question of some general importance, beg the reader's jaded attention to the passage in which Mr. Stephen passes general judgment on the intellect of Priestley:—

Priestley . . . possessed one of those restless intellects which are incapable of confining themselves to any single task, and, unfortunately, incapable in consequence of sounding the depths of any philosophical system. . . . He gave to the world a numerous series of dissertations which, with the exception of his scientific writings, bear the marks of hasty and superficial thought. As a man of science he has left his mark upon the intellectual history of the century; but, besides being a man of science, he aimed at being a metaphysician, a theologian, a politician, a classical scholar, and a historian. . . . So discursive a thinker could hardly do much thorough work, nor really work out or co-ordinate his own opinions. Pushing rationalism to conclusions which shocked the orthodox, he yet retained the most puerile superstitions. He disbelieved in the inspiration of the Apostles, and found fault with St. Paul's reasoning, but had full faith in the prophecies, and at a late period of his life expected the coming of Christ within twenty years. . . . He flashes out at times some quick and instructive estimate of one side of a disputed argument, only to relapse at the next moment into crude dogmas and obsolete superstitions (i. 430-1).

JOHN M. ROBERTSON.

(To be concluded)

Go to the Ant!

THE great naturalists have probably been amongst the happiest of mortals in an otherwise distracted world. "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" they have patiently studied the habits of the so-called lower creatures and, as a result, mankind has been enriched with an increase of knowledge beyond price and reckoning. A Darwin or a Mendel is worth a bushel of Hitlers and Mussolinis. Bereft of the harmless and useful labours of such as these, the modern scene would be bewildering to the student and lover of his kind. They are the unfolding eyes of our species, and we neglect their discernment at our peril.

Eugène Marais, a South African Dutchman who died recently, has bequeathed a book entitled *The Soul of the White Ant*,* epitomizing the fruits of years of observation of these insects in the remote countryside of the Transvaal. Marais was a gentle and culti-

* *The Soul of the White Ant* is published by Messrs. Methuen at 7s. 6d.

vated recluse who fled civilization for reasons of health and disillusionment. He composed in Afrikaans, and the work under review has been capably translated. He was a fearless interpreter of Nature and deserves the notice of his fellow-Freethinkers.

Dotted over the Transvaal veld are thousands upon thousands of the Termitaries, or earthen nests, of the White Ant, so destructive of the habitations of man that even a vast city like Johannesburg would speedily be reduced to powdery ruin if builders did not provide for its depredations. Some of these termitaries are huge, comprising mounds and hillocks weighing hundreds of tons which must have taken centuries, at least, to construct. The inmates consist of workers and soldiers (which Marais claims are analogous in function to the red and white blood corpuscles of the human body) and the King and Queen, once flying ants, imprisoned in a dark chamber from which the Queen directs the activities of the community in as mysterious a sense as the brain, imprisoned in the skull, directs the human organism. The clay exterior of the termitary is comparable to the skin of living mobile animals. Wounds made in its surface are repaired from within, *if the Queen is alive*—otherwise the whole termitary becomes an inert and lifeless mass, like the human body when the brain is destroyed. Marais advances the interesting theory that these heaps of apparently dead matter may, in the course of evolutionary change, one day become mobile. "In every termitary," he says, "there is a brain, a stomach, a liver and sexual organs, which ensure the propagation of the race. They have legs and arms for gathering food they have a mouth. If natural selection continues to operate, the final result may be a termitary which moves slowly over the veld." Absorbingly fascinating are his accounts of experiments with the psyche, or community-sense, of the termitary. "Take a steel plate a few feet wider and higher than the termitary. Drive it right through the centre of the breach you have made, in such a way that you divide both the wound and the termitary into two separate parts. One section of the community can never be in touch with the other, and one of the sections will be separated from the Queen's cell. The builders on one side of the breach know nothing of those on the other side. In spite of this the termites build a similar arch or tower on each side of the plate. When eventually you withdraw the plate, the two halves match perfectly after the dividing cut has been repaired. We cannot escape the ultimate conclusion that somewhere there exists a preconceived plan which the termites merely execute. . . . Expose the Queen and destroy her. Immediately the whole community ceases work on either side of the plate. It appears therefore as if the workers and soldiers carry with them *something* of their Queen. We will assume it is something analogous to scent. Personally I do not think it is scent but something much more subtle. The power of the Queen can penetrate earth, rock and even metal plates. It evaporates within one or two days (of her death). The Queen . . . is the brain of the organism we call a termitary." Marais confesses that science cannot certainly explain how life in the termitary functions. Upon a similar limitation of knowledge concerning our bodies some religious apologists base their belief in immortality. If their arguments are valid the Termitary must surely also be immortal!

Water is for the White Ant a vital necessity. Marais graphically describes the behaviour of a giant Termitary during a period of terrible drought. The blood stream (workers and soldiers, blind and sexless) flowed to a well that had been dug 65 feet down for water, and disappeared into the earth 100 feet or more to an underground spring. It was a fierce battle for existence against the drought that Marais was watch-

ing. "I could hear distinctly the unceasing alarm calls of the soldiers (a faint tik-tik) a sound which roused even in me a feeling of terrible anxiety. My electric searchlight revealed the restless stream constantly passing to and fro, as sure and indomitable as fate itself. Nothing could turn them from their purpose, no external terror could distract them. The death of a thousand individuals made not the least impression on that living stream. Vaguely and faintly, I began to realize, as I watched, what the struggle for existence really means in nature."

What does this gifted naturalist think about Purpose in nature? "When we make our own deepest feelings the arbiter, we are dismayed. For we seek in vain in nature for love, sympathy, pity, justice, altruism, protection of the innocent and weak. From the very beginnings of life we hear a chorus of anguish. Pain is a condition of existence. Escape from pain is the purpose in all striving. And Nature? Pitiless cruelty, torment, and destruction of the weak and innocent. The thief, the assassin, the bloodstained robber, these are her favourites, these are the psychological types which are the triumphant victors of the strife. The psyche, which we see faint and barely recognizable in the higher mammals, attaining its highest pinnacle in man, seems to be an exception to the great principles which dominate the universe. So the hope arises there is some purpose in nature, whose guiding principle is a psyche similar but infinitely more developed than the soul of the primate. If this is so, we seek in vain for evidence in our natural surroundings. . . . If Nature possesses a universal psyche, it is one far above the common and most impelling feelings of the human psyche. She certainly has never wept in sympathy, nor stretched a hand protectively over even the most beautiful or innocent of her creatures." I hope that I have quoted enough to give readers of the *Freethinker* a taste for more.

E. A. M.

Dust

"WHO hath comprehended the dust of the earth?" (Isaiah xl. 12) asked the prophet Isaiah some 2,700 years ago. With the coming of the microscope, the revelations of palæo-botany and modern science, his question became significant. But what prompted him to ask?

Describing Darwin's voyage in the *Beagle*, Grant Allen, in his *Life of Darwin* (p. 42) writes:—

The *Beagle* sailed from England to the Cape de Verdes, and already, even before she had touched her first land, the young naturalist had observed with interest that the impalpably fine dust which fell on the deck contained no less than sixty-seven distinct organic forms, two of them belonging to species peculiar to South America. In some of the dust he found particles of stone so very big that they measured above the thousandth of an inch square; and after this fact, says the keen student, one need not be surprised at the diffusion of the far lighter and smaller sporules of cryptogamic plants?

We are just beginning (after 2,700 years) to scientifically describe parts of the dust of the earth, beyond the ken of Isaiah, which have come within our comprehension.

This point of "impalpably fine dust, falling on the deck of the ship," is very interesting. He would then be in the Atlantic Ocean. The atmosphere there would be clean and pure. And yet in this dust Darwin found sixty-seven distinct organic forms. Here

in the filthy atmosphere found almost everywhere, and especially in our towns, what an amount of dust we must swallow, what a continuous fall of soot, germs, seeds, etc., there must be taking place. How many disease germs fall on our exposed food stuffs—milk, butter, fresh-meat, etc?

But is there any truth in the germ theory? Were germs dangerous before we became conscious of them? Had the germ been a very active person the human race would have been wiped out of existence before now. In the middle ages—the ages of faith and filth—germs had a chance of asserting themselves. They seem to have been unknown, then. Fear was not an ally of theirs. They were not even excommunicated, like most of the lower animals from the flea upwards. They had a free, open, unchallenged field, and they failed. The only germ present then was the human species. One can understand lice, bugs, and fleas being excommunicated in the Middle Ages, and one hopes it was as effective then as our materialistic flea powder is now.

But germs or no germs, so far as it is possible, a surgical cleanliness ought to be observed. Before such a thing can become possible, however, the manufacture of our food as well as the details of its distribution must be nationalized. The three following personal experiences should convince readers of the necessity of this:—

(1) A shop assistant, when giving me change, inadvertently exposed the palm of his hand on which I detected unmistakable evidence of secondary syphilis. On being charged with it he confessed, but said it had nearly disappeared, "thanks to the public baths!" Now, should this man have been allowed to handle food, or to have entered a public bath?

(2) A prize bullock took ill, and the veterinary surgeon advised that if the beast was killed at once, it might be possible to dress it for the dead meat market; if not, it would have to be destroyed. The farmer ordered killing, to mitigate his loss, and asked the Vet. to cut himself a nice roast for his Sunday's dinner. "Not for a thousand pounds," said the Vet.

(3) The Vicar, at the suggestion of the farmer, having ordered a leg of pork for the week end, found the farmer's boy delivering a leg of mutton. "Why mutton," said the Vicar, "when I ordered pork?" "Please sir," said the boy, "the sow's got better."

Under nationalization such things would not be possible.

From the Bible we learn that when the Hebrews mourned they comforted themselves with dust and ashes, sprinkling them on their heads. In their afflictions they sat down in the dust, threw themselves with their faces on the ground, and rent their garments. A hirsute people, their long hair and beards must have been a happy hunting-ground for lice and fleas.

In Gen. iii. 8, the diet of the serpent and his new mode of progression is given—"Dust and Ashes shalt thou eat, and upon thy belly shall thou go," leaving one to infer that, previously, the serpent, like Ezekiel's wheels, turned not as he went.

That the patriarch Job was "clothed with worms and clods of dust" (Job vii. 5.)

And that Shimei walked along one side of a brook whilst David walked on the other, and how Shimei cursed as he went and shouted over the brook unto David—"Thou bloody son of Belial! and cast stones and dust at him."

Shakespeare asks, "Why may not the imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till we find it stopping a bung-hole?" Shakespeare was of opinion that some sensible use might be found for monarchs after they were dead if none could be found while they were living. And having honoured Alex-

ander with a bung-hole, he makes Cæsar into a draught preventer—

"Imperial Cæsar dead, and turned to clay,
May stop a hole to keep the wind away."

Then:

There follows a personal recollection of a quarrel, some sixty years ago, at a churchyard gate, between a vicar and a dissenting minister, over the latter's right to say a few words at the grave-side.

As the clods fell on the coffin-lid, the professional voice of the vicar, not the fighting one, could be heard saying, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." An ideal end, surely!

"To slumber on one pillow in the dust."

But an objection to this unconscious idleness has been made by those of us who have left instructions that our bodies be cremated and our ashes scattered so that they may be:—

Imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown with restless violence round about the pendent world.

What a glorious ending! Things animate and inanimate will:—

"In the dust be equal made."

Our dream of equality perfectly realized at last!
"The unconscious is the alone complete!"

But better sure is this than being left to the disposal of a merciless God:—

"For what he might have done with us
It's better only guessing."

GEORGE WALLACE.

Scientific Marriage

ACCEPTING evolution as the only way to get something really comforting out of the riddle of the universe, which man in all his generations has tried to solve ever since he became a part of the puzzle, I have been trying to apply evolutionary optimism to the new Divorce Bill, and see how it fails, or falls in with, that particular faith.

The House of Lords debates upon it quite raised the matter above the "Commons" place, secular-minded lower House. When bishops fall out, it becomes epoch making! As the enemies of old orthodox marriage ideas would say, to alter an old proverb slightly, when Bishops fall out, Common-sense may come by its own, as represented by Mr. Herbert's Bill over this matter. One thinks that the man in the street, when he sees two Archbishops and many Bishops falling out over the meaning of a dictum, will conclude that that is not the fault of its Author, but of the reporters of that time, and so, seeing that the Author's meaning can never now be proved, further reference as to that point of view becomes futile.

So where are we left when we come to this unending question of sex association? How are we to make it fall in with our evolutionary advance and get harmony established in accordance with a belief in "the ultimate rationality of the universe?" The ideal of that advance is that nature is constantly throwing off old garments for better ones. So far as man is concerned, we need not argue the point from the material side, because the fact is obvious when we contrast the Stone Age with the man who can cross the Atlantic in 15 hours. So our mechanical geniuses just wonder and laugh at the stupidity of former ages, and exclaim, "Could you believe it of them? They didn't know even how to make a cartwheel!"

But in the unseen mental and spiritual it is quite another story. Far from laughing over what man's long-ago ancestors thought, we regard them as having reached the peak in evolutionary advance on spiritual matters especially, as well as on "wise saws." When a difficulty crops up, we turn to the old records for guidance and don't trust to our own brain power at all. Now and then a sporadic individual does so, but the best he can hope for is that he won't be burned for his pains. So while we can be in no sort of doubt of the evolutionary in material matters and act upon it, we show utter distrust of bettering our spiritual and mental possibilities by looking forward instead of back.

We don't look facts in the face or consider the changes evolution has brought to human nature, so we go back to see what our long-past ancestors had to say about the way we ought to think. So thought-evolution is apt to come to a standstill just as would the mechanical side of it, if the decision of old-time mechanicians were taken as final.

Wildly, or wisely, according to our point of view, we are now wanting to alter the sex problem and see if it can be bettered. Well then, how would our wonder-working evolutionary mechanical geniuses of today look at it if we transferred the matter to their decision and solution? "Well," they would say, at first glance at the "machine," "there is something seriously wrong here. This was built, so the makers said, guaranteed to work smoothly for a life-time, and here it is stuck in the mud very often, and refusing to travel any further than just a honeymoon run. Ah, we see what's the matter; the passion-petrol has run out! Well, our advice, to be honest, is to get quit of it, because it will never carry you a yard further on your life's journey, so, of course, you are bound to die of mental and physical starvation."

Still, it's a useful machine. In fact, the human world would come to an end without it. But look here! We are ready to build you a new machine on evolutionary lines. But we won't take this one as an infallible model; it is clearly out-of-date. Ours will be based on the latest discoveries in psychology and physiology, and we shall fit it up with brakes, which will make any foul play over the use of the machine practically impossible.

H. WRIGHT.

Correspondence

"GOLDEN MEMORIES"

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The article by "Mimmermus" in the *Freethinker* for September 12, recalls many golden memories—I attended the meetings he speaks of and knew personally most of the speakers he mentions. But there were others equally eloquent who "stumbled and fell by the wayside" ("Sic transit gloria") who I think should be remembered.

Annie Besant he recalls. I had a short correspondence with her after her lapse, and still have her last letter to me in my archives.

Dr. Aveling, clever and eloquent, but "what a fall was there."

A lecturer named Marchant—most silver-tongued man I ever heard, but by a mysterious process, he ultimately became a Christian Evidence speaker!

Another one was a Mr. Dent, clever, level-headed, capital speaker. He left the Cause, for, I believe, family reasons.

And then Frederick Miller, one-time Atheist-Republican: the last I heard of him was as Secretary of Lord Wemyss' fatuous Liberty and Property Defence League!

E. LARKIN.

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

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W. C.1) : 11.0, Vyvyan Adams, M.A., M.P.—"The Proper Use of Force."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4) : 7.30, Mr. G. Bedborough, N.S.S. (Author of *Arms and the Clergy*)—"Let's Pretend."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, E. C. Saphin—"Why Christians have no Morality and no Ideal."

OUTDOOR

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 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.

BIKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead (London : N.S.S. Executive)—"Freethought versus All Dictatorships."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate) : 7.15, Dr. W. Rueben—"Biblical Hygiene."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street) : 7.0, 7.0, Harrison Maxwell—A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Transport Hall, corner of Christian Street and Islington) : 7.30. Open discussion led by Mr. Thompson. Branch President in the chair.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Name-lock Entertainment Room 31/35 Oxford Road, Manchester) : 7.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Christ's Horoscope" with illustrations.

OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN MARKET : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (Pountain) : 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BURNLEY MARKET : 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

HAPTON : 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LUMB CORNER : 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

MIDDLESBROUGH (The Crescent) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, Mr. H. Dalkin—"The Twilight of the Gods."

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

BOOKS

OWING to incipient blindness Mr. J. R. Holmes wishes to dispose of his library. Hundreds of Books. A set of the *National Reformer*, from first to last number (a few numbers missing) 30 Vols. in cloth; 60 Vols. in paper boards is offered at 6l. a Vol. to take the lot, packing and carriage free. A fine set of Ingersoll's Works, Dresden edition, 12 Vols. in half-morocco; and Conway's *Monumental Life and Works of Paine* in six Vols. What offers for these two sets? —HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks

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