

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

VOL. XXXVI.—No. 25

SUNDAY JUNE 18, 1916

PRICE TWOPENCE

*Destiny is no miracle-worker, and the event which is mistaken for a sudden development is no more than the final visible touch to a gradual hidden process.*—JOHN OLIVER HOBBS.

## Views and Opinions.

God.

On the highest religious authority, it is a serious thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And on the authority of common sense it seems equally serious to do as we are doing if there is not a God—living or dead—to bother about. For there is no denying that the world generally does trouble itself about this question of God. His self-appointed representatives form a not inconsiderable body in every nation; the money spent in building temples to his honour would go a long way towards providing suitable dwellings for the poorer classes of the population; and the energy spent in his service might be well utilized in other directions. On the whole, this business of not falling foul of God is a very serious one. If getting into his hands is a fearful thing, keeping out of them is an expensive and a troublesome operation. Getting right with God is a bothersome business. \* \* \*

The Hypothesis of Deity.

And the worst of it is that all our trouble may be sheer waste. It may be that there is no God into whose hands we may fall, or out of whose clutches we may keep. It may be that the mining royalties, the tithe charges, the ground rents we pay, and the taxes we remit to the Churches, are not collected for the glory of God, but for the profit of the clergy. At most, "God" is only a hypothesis. That is a consideration religious folk are apt to overlook. "God" is not an established and verifiable fact. It cannot be taken as gravitation, for example, may be taken, and forced upon the hesitant mind by sheer weight of proof. The utmost that can be said for it is that it *may* be true; and this implies that it *may* be false. God is a hypothesis that explains nothing, a force which does nothing. And when one comes to think of it, the world does put itself to a deal of trouble and expense to bolster up a mere hypothesis. What we really need is some decisive test, some experiment, that would decide the question one way or another. Or, failing that, it would seem only common sense to refrain from so lavish an endowment of a hypothesis of so dubious a character. \* \* \*

Wanted, a Test.

Where is the test to come from? Readers will remember the pious legend of Charles Bradlaugh and the watch. Bradlaugh, it was said, pulled out his watch and challenged God to prove his existence by striking him dead within three minutes. And the story relates how the three minutes passed in tense expectancy—and nothing happened. Bradlaugh remained very much alive; not even the watch stopped. The pious folk who invented and circulated this story were shocked at such

a challenge; and yet one may safely say that, had Bradlaugh been struck dead, or blinded, or paralysed—had even the watch refused to go on ticking in such a cause—these same pious folk would have rejoiced. They objected to the test because nothing came of it. It was indecisive, or decisive against the Godites. When the late Professor Tyndall suggested putting the power of prayer to cure disease to a test, that also was rejected as being blasphemous. But there is nothing blasphemous in testing a hypothesis. I do not think that Christians objected to these tests because they were afraid that something might happen. They would have survived Bradlaugh being struck dead, or an Atheist losing his life through trusting wholly to medical science and eliminating religion altogether. Their objection was not to *the* test, but to *a* test. They object to the Atheist devising a test of his own, and they will not propound one on their own account. They prefer a hypothesis that is advanced without evidence and accepted without verification.

Some Early Experiments.

To be quite fair to Christians, it must be pointed out that the God hypothesis has been put to the test of experiment. There was the famous case of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, as told in the First Book of Kings. Elijah, being a genuine believer, challenged the prophets to call fire from heaven, and, in a proper scientific spirit, said, "And the God that answereth by fire, let him be the true God." This was straightforward. Elijah had no use for a God that would do nothing. Here, he said to the prophets, is my hypothesis, and I will prove its truth. He called fire from heaven—and it came. No Atheist would ask nowadays for a more decisive test. A single control experiment of that kind would kill Atheism for ever. Even believers of a much later date have offered evidence. We are all more or less familiar with histories of unbelievers who have been struck down in the midst of their blasphemies, of children who have been killed through playing on Sunday, of obstacles removed from the path of the faithful as a consequence of their prayers, and of the thousand and one miracles by which the being and power of God have been manifested. Experimental religion still survives in our legal procedure. We have the oath, and the essence of the "S'elp m'God" is, "If I do not tell the truth, may God punish me." Of course, no one believes that a witness will tell the truth because he has called in God as a help, or believes that God will punish him if he tells a lie. Such cases have no more than an archæological or an anthropological interest.

\* \* \*

Then and Now.

But all these experiments belong to a far-off time; they are reminiscent of a departed frame of mind. In the days when God ruled the thunder, sent and cured disease, when prodigies announced his will and ordeals manifested his power, people were quite unconscious that they were experiencing what after ages would be only too glad to witness. Things are now quite changed.

Prodigies are catalogued, not worshipped. Disinfectants and anti-toxins have displaced saintly relics and pious prayers. In an outbreak of diphtheria we look to the drains, not to divinity. Inoculation is almost compulsory in the Army, but few care a brass button about baptism. Attacks have been made upon the Government for its conduct of the War, but no one—except a few wild parsons—has said that our losses have been due to the anger of God. What, then, is the poor Atheist to do? He would have got on well enough with Elijah; he was ready to submit his hypothesis to experiment. But what is he to do with men who decline to submit their hypothesis to any rational test, who believe in a God who does nothing—and doesn't even do that consistently?

\* \* \*

#### Dangerous Neutrality.

Quite clearly, if the question of God is of the profound importance that theologians say, some sort of a decisive test should be invented and applied. A God who is *everywhere* ought to be located *somewhere*. A God who does everything ought to be occasionally discovered doing something. A God who is all-wise ought not to permit his warmest advocates to be so generally otherwise. A God who is really concerned in his creatures' welfare might have taken a hand in the present War with advantage. Strict neutrality may be consistent with the functions of a President of the United States; it is quite out of place with the President of the Universe. It is a dangerous policy, too, this neutrality on the part of heaven. If men can get through their present troubles without God, it is possible they may decide on not troubling him any further. And there are signs that the clergy are quite alive to that danger.

\* \* \*

#### A Serious Position.

Although my text comes at the end instead of at the beginning, it has been before me all the time. It was provided by the Archbishop of York, who reminded his hearers the other day that without God the affairs of the nation could not be set right. And I venture to humbly suggest that priority should be given to proving that there is a God to set anything right. Cannot the clergy devise what is called "a control experiment" that would be decisive? No one would welcome it more than the Atheist. The Atheist rejects the God hypothesis because he believes that every hypothesis should do something or explain something; and this particular hypothesis does nothing and explains nothing. The world might even excuse God for not vindicating his government if he would demonstrate his existence. Whatever duties man owes God, this is a duty God owes man. It may be a serious thing, as the Archbishop suggests, to ignore God. We quite believe that his grace is quite alive to the gravity of that. But it is quite as serious to continue wasting time and energy on what may be no more than an incarnation of primitive ignorance, a personification of human folly.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Traditionalism.

THE study of the past is replete with interest and instruction. We of to-day are yesterday's offspring. By looking backwards we can see what we have been, what we have outgrown and left behind, as well as how much we owe to bygone days. In many respects we are a vast improvement upon our ancestors. For one thing, we simply laugh at many traditions which they treated as truths. They verily believed that the dark stripe running down the back of an ass and crossed by another at the shoulders, was communicated to the animal when Jesus rode on the back of an ass in his so-called trium-

phant entrance into Jerusalem. Our forefathers were convinced that the eggs of the yellowhammer are spotted with red because this bird fluttered about the cross during the crucifixion, and that for its audacity its plumage was stained with the blood and its eggs have ever since borne marks of blood. The people of long ago were simple enough to hold the view that the two marks on the haddock's head were the impressions of Peter's finger and thumb as he got the piece of money out of the fish's mouth. It is stated that the Russians object to the eating of pigeons because the Holy Ghost assumed the form of a dove at the baptism of Jesus. Not so very long ago we used to be told that the robin got his red breast because he picked a thorn out of Christ's mock crown, when a drop of blood that issued from the wound fell on his breast and dyed it red. It was once said that the swallow was called the bird of consolation because it hovered over the Cross while the Saviour was agonized upon it, crying "Svala! Svala!" which, in Scandinavian, means "Console! Console!" Such traditions, and many more of like nature, are now regarded as amusing instances of the superstitious credulity that characterized ignorant ages of the past. We have outgrown them because science has taught us to look at natural phenomena from a more rational point of view.

Now, the fact that our ancestors regarded such foolish traditions as undeniably true furnishes no ground whatever for our so treating them in these enlightened days. And yet we are assured by the divines that "the mere fact that a doctrine has been held by many people, in many times, and in many places, should encourage us to hold on until our sky clears," and that "in this great sense the most intellectually independent need not be ashamed to recognize the place of authority in religion." This is an exceedingly fallacious position, which cannot reasonably be defended. Numerous beliefs which were firmly held by the majority of people for many centuries, have long ago been completely discarded. The doctrine of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible has been wholly discredited by modern criticism, and is now believed by only a few fanatics here and there, such as the members of the Bible League, who occasionally hold conferences, at which they read essays and deliver sermons and lectures on "the Inspiration, Infallibility, and Sole Sufficiency of the Word of God." To any sane person nothing can be more indubitable than the proposition that the Bible is a purely human document, and, like all other literary products of the periods covered by it, full of all sorts of inaccuracies, contradictions, myths, and legends. This view is now supported by the bulk of theologians, and opposed only by a very small company of traditionists, who are obscurantists with a vengeance. Another belief cherished until quite lately, but now entirely abandoned, was the belief in witchcraft and magic. It was generally thought for ages that the Devil exerted almost as much influence and power in the world as God, and people feared both with wellnigh equal intensity. Witchcraft, magic, and sorcery represented for fully fifteen hundred years the occult but real practices or powers of persons, chiefly women, who were believed to be working in league with his Satanic Majesty. Though nobody doubted the truth of witchcraft, it was considered to be a crime. Witches were popularly divided into three classes, the first of which, powerful to hurt but not to help, was appropriately called Black; the second, being able to render help, but never hurtful, received the designation of White; while the third, capable of both good and evil deeds, was called Grey. So firmly did the Church believe in witchcraft, and so greatly it feared and hated witches that, as Lecky informs us, "tens of thousands of victims perished by

the most agonizing and protracted torments, without exciting the faintest compassion." Buckle tells us that as late as 1660, "the majority of educated men still believed in witchcraft." By the time of Wesley the belief had practically disappeared, a misfortune which he deplored with all his heart, for "the giving up of witchcraft," he said, "is, in effect, giving up the Bible." Then he indulged in the following outburst: "But I cannot give up, to all the Deists in Great Britain, the existence of witchcraft, till I give up the credit of all history, sacred and profane." Now, does the writer of the leading article in the *Christian Commonwealth* for May 31 imagine that because the belief in witchcraft flourished throughout Christendom for the space of fifteen centuries, we have every encouragement still to hold on to it as a true belief? If not, his whole argument falls to the ground.

He admits, however, that such a belief would be, at best, but second-hand, while maintaining that not on that account would it be any less worth clinging to. Nevertheless, "when all is said, it is faith at first-hand that is *the prize and the power*." What does he mean by "faith at first-hand"? He says that "we shall never realize the full glories of the Scriptures until we understand that they are the hot product of first-hand belief"; but is he not aware that the Bible is composed of documents of most unequal merits? Are the Books of Esther, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Epistle of James "the hot products of first-hand belief"? Does he not know that in some of the documents Scepticism finds a most open and uncompromising expression? It strikes us most forcibly that the writer's view of the Bible is an extremely traditional one, and cannot be justified at the bar of common sense. Even the New Testament is crowded with irreconcilable traditions. There are in it, for example, the Matthaean tradition, the Petrine tradition, and the Johannine tradition, all of which differ more or less materially from one another. It contains two distinct Gospels, with several versions of each, while each Gospel, and every version of it, claim to be Divinely inspired. Can the writer under consideration tell us which is the more reliable interpreter of Jesus, James or Paul? Their points of view are fundamentally different; so that if Paul's representation be accepted as authentic, James's must be pronounced fatally inadequate. It is unquestionably true that the New Testament did not make its writers, but that the writers made the New Testament; but how is it possible to harmonize two radically contradictory Gospels, the Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel about Jesus, as Professor Bacon, of Yale University, styles them? In the former there is no propitiation for sin, no justification by faith, no exaggerated individualism, the whole emphasis being upon a good and noble life in society. Peter, John, and Paul were theologians, Paul in particular being a metaphysical theorist of the most dogmatic kind. Is not the writer of the leader under review familiar with the Pauline theory of the Fall and its consequences, a theory which science has proved to be largely false? And yet it is on his false theory of the Fall that Paul erects his whole theory of salvation. The leading article mentions "the loss there has been in treating Paul as though he were a systematic theologian," forgetting that every systematic theology claims Paul as its final authority. Why, the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are severely theoretical, and it is about their theories that the Church has been so bitterly wrangling from that day to this. It is impossible to speak about supernaturalism without being theoretical, the supernatural, in all the forms of belief in it, being an absolutely unverified and yet unverifiable theory.

The leading article talks superiorly about what it calls "progressive religion," an angle-worm sort of religion minus the backbone of dogma, an emotional religion that cannot bear any contact with the cold feet of reason, ignoring the undoubted fact that religious emotionalism is induced by a red-hot belief in the alleged reality of purely imaginary things. Have you never been present at an old-fashioned Methodist prayer-meeting, when the imagination runs riot among the so-called realities of the spiritual world, and the feelings of the worshippers gradually reach the state of white heat and glow, until the poor people are beside themselves with intoxicating rapture? As soon as the prayer-meeting is over, and the high emotionalism cools down, however, those men and women are ready to enter upon a theological dispute over the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, or of falling from grace, during which tempers rise higher and higher, until anger sits on the throne of life, with the result that the imaginary communion with Heaven enjoyed at the throne of grace gives place to bickering and acrimonious contention concerning what nobody has ever known anything whatever about.

We are assured that this hour of brutal war "is glorious and crowded and pregnant beyond all human imagining, and that God sends us to meet it, not with ancient Scriptures and doubtful texts, but with mercies and counsels and inspirations that are 'new every morning.'" That is building upon a traditionalism that has been falsified by events in every age; and such pious rhapsody as is indulged in throughout the leading article in question is worse than useless, for it leads along the way that ends in madness. All who are engaged in this War passionately believe in and appeal to God, and most of them are professed followers of the Prince of Peace; but the fact beyond all shadow of doubt is that from the midst of the present calamitous conflict there rises the clear voice of reason and humanity, calling upon all alike to fling traditionalism down the winds and realize that they are men, who ought to be ashamed to be involved in "this game of beasts." May all the belligerent nations hear and take seriously to heart that finally authoritative Voice.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Prince of Jesters.

How many and many a weary day  
When sad enough were we, Mark's way  
(Unlike the Laureate's Mark's)  
Has made us laugh until we cried,  
And sinking back exhausted, sighed  
Like Gargery, "Wot larx!"

—Andrew Lang.

FOR forty years Mark Twain filled the English-speaking world with laughter; always generous, always clean, often springing, as the truest humour must always spring, from the source of tears. Beneath his quaint drollery was partially concealed one of the sanest writers of our time; a satirist who reserved his scorn for the mean and ignoble, and all his praise for the worthy and pure. The incident of his financial failure, which, like Sir Walter Scott's, was wholly the work of others, raised him to the rank of the heroes of literature, and every new revelation of his character only brought him closer to the hearts of his admirers. This famous Freethinker was, in his day, the most eminent man of letters in America, and his career was a large asset of national pride.

The function of humorist is frequently undervalued. With the exception of Rabelais, Cervantes, Moliere, and Dickens, who is liked as much for his pathos as for his fun, humorous writers are held to be only second-rate

artists. Matter-of-fact readers will not take them seriously. Perhaps it is their own fault for electing to provide fun for staid folk. Mark Twain was, unquestionably, a great humorist, and, in his way, somewhat of a philosopher. Owing to the opposition of his wife, who was a captious critic on the hearth, many of his profane jests were suppressed, and his most clearly expressed heresies remain unpublished, or are buried in privately printed volumes with limited issues. Fortunately, through the sincerity of his friend and biographer, Mr. Bigelow Paine, we now know the extent of Mark Twain's Freethought. As the literary hirelings who write for the "free" Press of England have chosen to ignore the subject of Twain's heresies, it is necessary to refer to the subject.

Probably we shall never know how far Mark Twain's writings were edited in the interests of God and Mrs. Grundy. Some of his jokes have disappeared from recent editions of his works, such as the jest on Joseph and his brethren, in which Joseph says, "Pity me!" and Twain adds, "his brethren pitted him." Even Twain's serious attempt at philosophical writing, *What is Man?* was withdrawn from circulation by pious relatives after the author's death.

It was, perhaps, only natural that Mark Twain, who permitted his Puritan wife to edit his writings, should have hugged the shore and never put his prow towards the open sea. In other words, he was for some years Theistic rather than Agnostic; but his creed, which he penned in the early "eighties," is such a characteristic document, that it is well worth a perusal. In it Twain states that he believed in God, but does not believe that he ever sent a message to mankind. As to the Bible, Twain considered that was the work of men. Eternal punishment excited his indignation, and he preserved an open mind on the subject of a hereafter. Moral laws, to him, were simply the outcome of the world's experience. The question of ethics and religion is well put in the following:—

It needed no God to come down from heaven to tell men that murder and theft and other immoralities were bad, both for the individual who commits them and for society which suffers from them. If I break all these moral laws, I cannot see how I injure God by it, for he is beyond reach of injury from me—I could as easily injure a planet by throwing mud at it.

As time went on, Twain's ideas underwent modification, and it is quite clear that had he re-written his creed in his later years, that it would have been shorn of much of its Godism. As his biographer tells us, "Mark Twain had many moods, and he did not always approve of his own God."

He was audacious on occasion, as in the cynical passage:—

If I had been helping the Almighty when he created man, I would have had him begin at the other end, and start human beings with old age. Think of the joyous prospect of growing young instead of old; of working forward to eighteen instead of eighty.

The orthodox journalist who suggested the Westminster Abbey memorial to Mark Twain must have forgotten the great jester's jokes on the Christian superstition. They have something of the charm of Ingersoll, although they lack the Colonel's epigrammatic power. Some of the best occur in *The New Pilgrim's Progress*, in which he describes the travels of an excursion party through the Holy Land. Here is a characteristic jibe:—

The street called Straight is straighter than a corkscrew, but not as straight as a rainbow. St. Luke is careful not to commit himself. He does not say it is the street which is straight, but the "street which is called straight." It is a fine piece of irony, and it is the only facetious remark in the Bible, I believe.

There is a palpable thrust at Oriental boasting in the following:—

When I used to read of "Kings" in Sunday-school, it suggested to me the Kings of such countries as England and France, arrayed in splendid robes ablaze with jewels, marching in grave procession, with sceptres of gold in their hands, and flashing crowns on their heads. But here, in Syria, it suggested ill-clad and ill-conditioned savages, much like our Indians, who lived in sight of each other, and whose "kingdoms" were large at five miles square and containing two thousand souls.

A shrewd hit at clerical fraud is shown in his laughable remark:—

These gifted monks never do anything by halves. If they were to show you the brazen serpent that was elevated in the wilderness, you could depend upon it they had on hand the pole it was elevated on also, and even the hole it stood in.

A delightful piece of irony is displayed in his comment on Adam's tomb:—

There is no question that he is actually buried in the grave which is pointed out as his—there can be none—because it has never yet been proved that that grave is not the grave in which he is buried.

Writing of monks, he is in his most Ingersollian vein:—

They have banished the tender grace of life, and left only the sapped and skinny mockery. Their lips are lips that never kiss and never sing; their hearts are hearts that never hate and never love. They are dead men that walk.

In his autobiography there are many characteristic touches. Whilst visiting Europe, he had an invitation to dinner from an Emperor. For some time previously Mark Twain had been meeting titled persons, but when the royal card was passed around the breakfast-table, his daughter said with emotion and excitement, "Why, papa, if it keeps going on like this, there won't be anybody left for you to get acquainted with but God." It was not complimentary, adds Twain, to think that I was unknown in that august quarter, but the young jump to conclusions without reflection.

Sometimes the cap and bells are thrown aside, and the kind eyes are filled with tears. In an article, recently recalled by Dr. Newman, Mark Twain tells how a regiment, on its way to battle, goes into a church to pray for victory. At the conclusion of the invocation a white-robed stranger tells the troops that their appeal will be answered favourably, if they repeat it realizing its actual meaning. He then repeats the prayer, filling in the blanks in the original appeal:—

O Lord, we go forth to smite the foe. Help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of the dead; help us to lay waste their homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief. For our sakes, who adore thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears.

It is Ariel turned Prospero, and showing in the transformation how impressionable a spirit Ariel is. Now Mark Twain has passed away, and his passing eclipsed the gaiety of the English-speaking peoples. Despite his motley dress, he was a knight-errant. Honour was his shield, and truth tipped his lance. Gentle in his dealings with gentle people, he was relentless in his contest with Humbug. The lustre of his fame must deepen with the progress of the years.

MIMNERMUS.

---

A Christian objector said at Cambridge that he could not pass a butcher's shop without shuddering. Does he keep silent when his fellow-worshippers sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood"?

## Talks With Young Listeners.

### IX.—The Prophet of Yahweh.

"WHAT a strange sight! What on earth can it mean?"

It was a shepherd who spoke. His sheep lay on a pasture in a wady or vale, through which a stream tumbled. The hills above were rocky and dry, and the cliffs of Mount Horeb rose up, ragged and dark purple.

He saw a bush on fire, yet it kept burning without being reduced to ashes.

"Shoes off!" cried a voice from the fire, as the shepherd drew near.

He removed his sandals and bowed low; for he felt he stood on holy ground.

The voice from the burning bush said:

"I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and I am come down to save my chosen people from their slavery in Egypt. You shall lead them out of the land of bondage; and I will be their God. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob called me *El* and *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), but my name shall now be *Yahweh*. Take this shepherd's crook of yours to Egypt, and it shall be Yahweh's rod, working signs and wonders."

The shepherd, whose name was Moses, left his friends of the land of Horeb, and journeyed over the desert of Sinai till he came to the land of Egypt, where thousands of Hebrews toiled, as slaves, in brick-making, wall-building, and city-building.

He had himself been born of the slave-people. But when the King of Egypt, in a fit of rage, bade that all Hebrew boy-babies should be massacred, Moses' mother placed the baby, in a basket woven out of bulrushes, in a quiet bathing-pool formed from the river Nile. The king's daughter came to bathe, saw the child, pitied the little innocent, and had it cared for at the palace. When grown to manhood, and learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians, Moses longed to help the people whose blood was Hebrew like his own. Seeing an Egyptian strike a Jew, Moses felled the tyrant with a mighty blow. But when, next day, he strove to part two Hebrews who quarrelled and fought, one of them sneered:

"What! Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

Yes, though Moses had hid the dead tyrant's body in the sand, somebody had watched. For fear of the king's wrath, he fled to the wilds of Horeb, and sat, weary and foot-worn, by a well.

Shepherdesses drove their bleating flocks to the well, when a troop of wild-eyed, hairy desert men appeared, and began to beat them off. Moses flew to the help of the women, thrashed the raiders, and sent them flying. The end of the adventure was his marriage with one of the shepherdesses.

"Who is this Yahweh?" asked King Pharaoh, in a tone of disdain, when Moses and his brother Aaron demanded that the Hebrew slaves should have three days' rest for the worship of their God.

So a battle began between the proud king and the God of the burning bush of Horeb.

Moses' rod, flung down, became a serpent; but the king's medicine-men, or magicians, also changed rods into serpents; whereupon Moses' serpent swallowed the Egyptian serpents.

The battle grew fast and furious, and the unhappy folk of the land of the Nile suffered grievously (as people have done often enough) through the hard heart and hard temper of their king. Ten plagues made havoc with things—crops, households, and the whole kingdom; plagues of water turned to blood, armies of frogs invading houses, armies of lice, armies of flies, death of cattle,

hailstorms, skin diseases, armies of six-legged locusts eating green stuff, three days of pitch-black darkness, and, lastly, the sudden death, one dreadful night, of the eldest child in every Egyptian family. And in the dead of night, the king sent for Moses and Aaron to attend at his palace, and he said, hoarsely and desperately:

"Go! go! get you forth, you and all the sons of Israel, and serve your Yahweh."

Then there was hurrying and shouting, and a tramping of feet of men and cattle; and the wretched Egyptians were glad to thrust jewels of silver and gold into the hands of the departing slaves; and the vast troop of Hebrews—slaves no more—marched towards the Red Sea. Yahweh led the way in a moving pillar of cloud. At night the cloud changed to a pillar of fire; for Yahweh, being a Fire-god and Storm-god, always had clouds, lightnings, and other such weapons at command. So the host went marching on.

Standing on the beach of the sea, Moses raised his rod, and the ocean divided, leaving a dry pathway across to the Arabian coast on the east. The Egyptians, who had now recovered their courage, pursued with chariots. It was a race for freedom; and in the night Yahweh's flame-pillar guarded the escaping Jews in the rear, the enemy's cars trundling heavily behind, unable to dash through the fire. At dawn the battle was ended; and the Hebrews, crowded on the Arabian shore, saw that the Red Sea had closed up again, and drowned the pursuers, and many a dead Egyptian warrior was tossed by the waves upon the sandy beach. A war-song, or psalm, was sung by the children of Israel:

"Yahweh is a man of war, Yahweh is his name; Yahweh's right hand has dashed in pieces the enemy!"

But of all that singing multitude only two men ever entered the homeland of Canaan, towards which the Hebrew tribes were now trudging their painful way. The Hebrews were always offending Yahweh, and Yahweh's anger was always waxing hot against what he called "this stiff-necked people."

Scarcely had they begun their exodus, or going-out, when they complained that the pools of water in the Arabian wilderness were salt; and Moses changed the bitter water into sweet. They complained of shortness of food, and Yahweh rained manna from heaven; that is, a white layer of bread-like seeds or crumbs covered the earth each day-break (except on Sabbath, or Saturday), and was collected in shovels and baskets, and then baked or boiled. They complained when they reached the dark and ragged peak of Horeb that they were dying of thirst; and Moses struck the rock, and a fountain flowed from the dry stone. Hardly was this trouble past, when a sudden charge by wild men of Amalek nearly captured the Hebrew camp; but young Captain Joshua led a band of picked men in a counter-charge, and put the foe to rout. But, for centuries afterwards, no love was lost between Israel and Amalek.

Moses climbed to the top of Horeb (or Sinai), and the Storm-god raised a tempest of lightnings and thunderings, and the trumpets of the sons of God sounded terrible blasts, and the whole mountain quaked.

Then Yahweh spake the Ten Words, or Commands:<sup>1</sup>

1. Have no God but me.
2. Worship no images.
3. Use not Yahweh's name for magic.
4. Labour not on Saturday.
5. Honour parents.
6. Murder not.
7. Commit not adultery.
8. Steal not.
9. Lie not.
10. Hanker not after a neighbour's goods.

These and other laws were engraved by Yahweh's finger on two slabs or plates of stone. Proudly bearing these, Moses came down the hill of Horeb; and then, to his horror, found

<sup>1</sup> The Decalogue, Exodus xx. There is another decalogue in Exodus xxxiv.

the stiff-necked Hebrews worshipping an image, in spite of the Second Word of Yahweh's Ten. He broke the two tables of stone in rage and sorrow, and two fresh ones were engraved later. The affair finished very miserably; for a troop of the men of the Levi tribe armed themselves, and massacred some thousands of their kinsmen who had foolishly worshipped the image. This image was a god shaped as a calf, and moulded out of gold. All through the story of the Jews, we find this war between the party who wished to adore God in the form of "graven images," and the party who wished to adore him as a Holy Ghost, or unseen spirit.

Twelve spies went forward into Canaan to reconnoitre the old homeland of Abraham, and came back with a blood-curdling report of giants so huge that the Hebrews looked like tiny grasshoppers beside them. At least, ten spies so reported; but Joshua and his friend Caleb, who were not carried away by panic, coolly maintained that Canaan could easily be conquered. The people burst into wild cries:

"Would God we had died in the land of Egypt!"

Yahweh's patience was worn out. He flatly declared that not a soul of all the host—except Joshua and Caleb—should enter the Promised Land. No tears, no prayers, no knocking of the breast would avail. The stiff-necked generation should be shut out.

So, for forty years, the tribes of Israel hung about Horeb, and the wilderness of Paran, and a place called Kadesh, pasturing their flocks and herds in this or that valley or plain, and shifting when the supply of grass and fodder gave out, and waiting until Joshua thought the time was ripe for the great migration into Canaan. The old slave-generation passed away; a new generation grew up.

Moses himself, like an ancient shepherd whose shepherding days were done, climbed a high peak at Pisgah, looked at the distant hills of Canaan, and then the prophet of Yahweh sank back and died. The old pioneer showed the way, but did not himself enjoy the triumph.

\* \* \* \*

Some people think the real starting-point of the nation of the Jews was in this very wilderness of Paran and Horeb (or Sin and Sinai), and the city of Kadesh. The God of this region, which was some fifty or seventy miles south of Canaan, was the Fire-god or Storm-god, whose rain-clouds loomed black over the rugged mountains, and whose lightnings flashed and thunders pealed across the "wadys" and gorges. This God, or Yahweh, was the tribal or national God, whose worship the Hebrews carried with them into Canaan, or Palestine. It is possible that a few Hebrews had lived in Egypt, and joined the settlement near Kadesh, and taught their kinsmen some Egyptian ideas; but of this we know nothing certain, for the beginnings of Israel are hidden in legends and myths.

You remember how Moses, when a baby, was placed by his mother in an ark, or basket-boat, of bulrushes. A like story was told by the folk of Babylon. In this story, we hear of a poor woman who laid her baby in a basket of reeds on the river, and it floated with the current till it was seen by a peasant, who, in the goodness of his heart, reared the castaway child till manhood, and taught him gardening; and the gardener became a king under the name of Sargon.

A Roman legend told how twin-boys, Romulus and Remus, were placed in a wooden box, or trough, on the stream of Tiber, by order of their wicked uncle, who had taken the property which rightly belonged to these poor babes. The box stranded on the Tiber's bank, and a she-wolf (perhaps this means a rough peasant woman) suckled them and reared them; and, in due time, one of

them became the first chief, or king, of Romulus City or Rome.

You see how such stories go side by side with Bible stories; hence we call them parallel stories.

F. J. GOULD.

## N. S. S. Conference.

### Executive's Annual Report.

THE Executive's Report this year will of necessity be brief. The time has not been favourable for anything on an heroic scale, and a record of the routine work of a Society, while important and necessary, cannot be expected to furnish material of an exciting character. It is something, in these times, to maintain an existence, leaving its justification to a more propitious occasion.

When this Conference last met, although its President for so many years was then absent, owing to illness, it was hoped the progress then made was an indication that he would soon resume his old place as active leader of the Freethought movement. This expectation was, alas, unrealized. A sudden relapse took place, and Freethinkers all over the world were grieved to learn that the one who had stood for so many years as the representative of fighting Freethought had passed away on October 17, 1915.

This is not the place in which to attempt an estimate of the value of G. W. Foote's work in the world of advanced opinion. His work in that direction was indicated by the overcrowded Memorial Meeting called by the Executive at the Queen's Hall on December 5, when representatives of the Church of England, Nonconformity, Positivism, as well as those of more closely allied Freethinking organizations placed their appreciation of his services on record. In the general Press, English, American, and Colonial, the notices of his death were numerous, and, without an exception, couched in a kindly tone. Most of the bitter feeling aroused by his attacks on theology had evidently worn down, and a newer generation, enjoying a larger liberty, which they in part owed to his work, were more ready to recognize the sincerity of the motive which underlay his uncompromising advocacy.

To these general, and so to speak, outside tributes, the Executive desires only to add its high appreciation of one who was for twenty-five years their President, and whose rare literary ability, powerful oratory, unquestionable courage, and resourcefulness in any emergency that threatened Freethought, gives him an unchallengable place in the forefront of the heroic band whose labours have resulted in our larger intellectual liberty.

The Executive has also to report, with regret, the death of two of its vice-presidents, Mr. W. H. Spivey of Huddersfield, and Mr. W. Davey of London. Mr. Spivey was an earnest worker when there was an active propaganda in Huddersfield, and although of late years the work there has been in abeyance, he had never lost touch with the Society, and was ever ready to strike a blow for the cause. Mr. T. Davey was a very old and active member of the Society, a warm-hearted, generous-natured man, and one whose unostentatious performance of duty endeared him to all who knew him. To the relatives of both Mr. Spivey and Mr. Davey the Executive wishes to offer a warm tribute of respect and its sincerest sympathy with them in the loss sustained.

To return to the Society's work. The Executive has been unable, during the past twelve months, to undertake any provincial lectures, but something has been done in London, which, with its six millions of population, offers plenty of scope for work at a minimum expense. Three successful Open-Air Demonstrations were held in Brockwell Park, Hyde Park, and Finsbury Park, and the open-air work at Regent's Park and Finsbury Park continued by the Executive. In other parts of London the open-air propaganda has been well maintained, while in the provinces renewed activity has been manifested. Work has been recommenced in Liverpool and South Shields, and there has been increased Freethought activity in South Wales. Several outside societies have been supplied with speakers on request.

Generally speaking, the meetings that have been held throughout the country have been highly successful and well attended. The enthusiasm has been keener and there has also been an increase in the number of young men that attended these meetings. On a broad survey, the Executive feel that the outlook is of a most promising character. Whatever else the close of this disastrous War may bring, it will most certainly mean many new converts and a more determined spirit in the service of Freethought. It will be the Society's own fault if it fails to harness that determination and enthusiasm in such a manner as to effectually promote the end for which it exists.

With reference to the question of Secular Funerals, re-mitted to the Executive by the last Conference, a Committee was appointed and a scheme devised, which will be submitted to this Conference in the course of its proceedings.

The Executive also appointed a Committee to redraft the rules of the Society. The result of their deliberation will also be submitted to the Conference. The resolution of the last Conference on the desirability of keeping in touch with old members and friends of the movement, has also received attention.

A very important matter arose in connection with the treatment of one of the Society's Vice-President's, Mr. H. Cowell, by a Judge of the Central Criminal Court. Mr. Cowell had been summoned to act as a juror at the Old Bailey, and duly presented himself for service. On asking to affirm—a request quite within the legal right of every citizen since the passing of Bradlaugh's Oaths Amendment Act—one of the counsel in the case before the court, Mr. Muir, challenged his right to judge a grave case as he was without religious convictions. The counsel was within his rights in challenging a juror, the remarkable thing is that the judge should have acquiesced in his dismissal on this ground and ordered Mr. Cowell to stand down. This incident is enough to show that even though the law grants a Freethinker certain liberties, it needs a strong outside public opinion to make these laws operative. A letter on the subject was addressed by the Executive to the Lord Chancellor, and met with a formal acknowledgment. Fortunately, the protests against the judge's action were numerous in the general Press, and it is likely that in the future judges will exercise greater discretion.

Your Executive regrets to report that the unsatisfactory conditions with reference to Freethinkers in both the Army and Navy continues. As everyone between the ages of 18 and 41 is called upon to yield military service, irrespective of religious opinions, it seems only fair that their treatment should be irrespective of religious opinions likewise. This, however, is not so. Attendance at religious service is still compulsory; release from it is still a favour granted by the commanding officer. And even when this favour is granted, it is usually conditional on some "fatigue" work being undertaken, which thus gives to the task the character of a punishment for non-attendance at Church. This disability is kept before the public as much as possible in the pages of the *Freethinker* and by other means, and the authorities have promised that after the War the whole subject shall receive consideration. Your Executive can only repeat last year's regret that in a war in which "Right," and "Justice," and "Freedom" play so great a part, the authorities should fail to illustrate these in the treatment of the opinions of those who are risking their lives in their country's service.

The attitude of officials towards Freethinkers has also received illustration from the behaviour of many of the Military Service Tribunals. The Military Service Act allowed certain exemptions to those who could prove the genuineness of a conscientious objection to military service. This conviction might be based on either moral or religious grounds. Your Executive has no desire—it does not fall within its functions—to express any opinion either upon the law itself, or upon the genuineness of the convictions expressed. But it does feel warranted in protesting against the action of numerous Tribunals that, because a man is without religion, therefore he cannot possess a conscientious objection to anything. Under some circumstances, the ignorance and

## Acid Drops.

The *Daily Telegraph* turns "with disgust" from the Kaiser's address to his troops, in which he said "God Almighty has steeled your arms and kept your eyes clear." What kind of language does the *Daily Telegraph* expect a man like the Kaiser to use? Presumably the *Telegraph* believes that God is somewhere in the fight, and we see no more in the Kaiser claiming his patronage than in anyone else doing so. If there is a God, Germany has as much right to see the hand of Providence when it secures an advantage as has anyone else. The point that strikes us about such expressions is their absurdity. But that does not apparently strike the *Daily Telegraph*. It would be far better to leave God out of it altogether.

The ill influence of missionary activity on national life was never more clearly, even though innocently, shown than by the Rev. W. C. Roberts, Rector of Crick, near Rugby. After saying that the young men who come to the missionary colleges in India want to get their degree, and not to learn about Christianity, he said:—

Amid all the changes which had come into Indian life, the immensely strong influence of the home remained stable, and it was certain that if the influence of college and home clashed, the home would predominate. Hence conversions and baptisms were rare. Baptism meant an entire breach with the home.

The meaning of the above is unmistakable. Indian home life and Christianity are in irreconcilable opposition, and when such is the case we all know what a Christian clergyman would decide must be destroyed.

Now, we have no hesitation in saying that in any community the general home life is the most important feature it possesses, and it determines the stability of the whole social structure. It also stands for the most humanizing of influences so far as the individual is concerned. Destroy this, and the individual is, to use a colloquialism, "on a loose end." No religious belief can possibly compensate a society for the injury inflicted in this way. It is no wonder that unprejudiced observers have often noted that native converts usually contrive to acquire the vices of their teachers, without getting any of their virtues; while the old social restraints altogether lose, for them, their force. It is Christianity or the home—and the missionary says, "Let the home go."

Mr. A. G. Gardiner, writing in the *Daily News*, says "France has discovered her soul." Did he hear that from the French priests?

The Bishop of Edinburgh doubts if, out of the whole population of this country, there are ten thousand who really believe in the power of prayer. We should like to believe that the Bishop is right, but we fear that he has underestimated the number. The character of the people has not altered so greatly since Carlyle gave his famous description of the majority, and we fancy there are more than ten thousand who could properly be classed as among the "mostlies."

By a vote of the United Free Church Assembly at Edinburgh, it was decided that women may be elected as deacons when approved by the minister and the Kirk Sessions. This is enough to make the "unco guid" turn in their graves. "Nature," said John Knox of women, "doth paint them to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish; and experience hath declared them to be unconstant, variable, cruel, and lacking the spirit of counsel and rule." And now they are to become deacons—if the minister approves. There may be something in that proviso, and Scotland may yet be saved from the sacrilege of women deacons. Poor Knox! Poor Paul!

According to Bishop Gore, the object of the Anglican Church Mission of Repentance and Hope to be held in the autumn is, not to win the nation to Christ, which would mean to win the nation to "a vague indifferentism," but to

strengthen the position of the Church as a national institution, to induce the people generally to adopt the view of the Church, its ministry, and its sacraments so firmly held by the High Anglican or Catholic Party. The Bishop is entirely right. Christ is, at best, an extremely vague term, as to the exact meaning of which scarcely any two people are in agreement. To many, indeed, Christ is a theological creation, whose creators are innumerable, and each one working from a different ideal. People can understand the Church, but not the Christ.

The songs the soldiers at the Front love to sing are not excessively religious, we are told by the Rev. A. W. Anderson. "I want to go home," "Loch Lomond," "Killarney," "Genevieve," "Clementine," "Hearts of Oak," "Keep the Home Fires Burning," are among the most popular. There is a new song, of which they are very fond, the chorus to which is as follows:—

Tickler's jam, Tickler's jam,  
How I love old Tickler's jam!  
Plum and apple in one pound pots,  
Sent from England in one ton lots.  
Every night when I'm asleep,  
I am dreaming that I am  
Washing my poor old frozen feet  
With Toby Tickler's jam.

The last lines vary from verse to verse, one couplet running thus:—

Taking my tea with Kaiser Bill  
On Toby Tickler's jam.

These are the men who are said to be so serious and God-fearing now that they have served in the Trenches.

During the enforced absence of men on military service, the stay-at-home clergy are getting more aggressive. In several parts of London side-street shrines have been erected, and processions of women and clergy bearing crosses are not uncommon sights.

There must be many thousands of able-bodied men of military age sheltering themselves under the clerical umbrella, many of whom were fond of sports in their college days. In France, priests are compelled to serve in the Army as non-combatants, and some are fighting in the ranks.

The Rev. W. M. Macphail, a Presbyterian minister, says that Shakespeare learnt "all he knew of the brotherhood of man from Christ." Observe, it was not from the Bible! We wonder if they met at the Mermaid Tavern.

At last it is frankly admitted by men of God that "if our youth are not won for Christ, the Church must perish." This admission was made by the Rev. J. H. French, of Woodgrange Baptist Church, at a recent conference, held to consider the serious decline in the number of Sunday-school scholars. The falling off, it seems from the statistics, "prevails in all denominations, both in the Anglican and Free Churches." The significance of the decrease is seen the moment it is borne in mind that 80 per cent. of Church members are recruited from the Sunday-schools. Mr. French attributed the decline to the growing indifference to religion, disregard of the Bible and the Sabbath; but it by no means follows that the decay of religion is accompanied, as he imagines, by a lowering of the noble ideals of home life. The fact to be emphasized is that, unless the Church gets hold of the young, she is doomed. It is now admitted that conversions take place, if at all, prior to arrival at years of discretion. Once a girl or a boy begins to think for herself or himself, conversion becomes practically hopeless. Thank you, Mr. French, for your refreshing candour.

The German Protestant Churches have held a solemn service of prayer for a bountiful harvest. Christians in other countries are praying that God will bring the Germans to submission—either through want of food, or want of men, or want of ammunition. Some years ago Marie Corelli wrote a novel called *The Sorrows of Satan*. With Germans asking him for one thing, and the Allies asking him for the exact opposite, it looks as though a new volume on *The Sorrows of*

God might be appropriate. And we expect that God will decide on not interfering on either side. Strict neutrality is the only safe rule here.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell has been writing on "Things I Have Suffered," in which he expressed his wonder that he "was able to survive them all." He omits to mention that he rode to his Golgotha in a motor-car, and was sustained by the salary of a Cabinet Minister.

In spite of the world-war, Providence finds time for playfulness. In Surrey there is a serious plague of caterpillars, and farmers are petitioning the Board of Agriculture. In an age of Faith they would have petitioned the Throne of Grace.

"The day of the old religious tract is gone for ever," says the Bishop of Chelmsford. We are not so sure. The millions of tracts connected with the Billy Sunday, Pastor Russell, and other revival crusades are quite sufficiently old-fashioned for us.

When the *Titanic* went down, the pious legend was circulated, for a time, that its doomed passengers gathered together and sang "Nearer My God to Thee." That evidently set the fashion. Now we see that, on the authority of Charles Herbert Shaw, A.B., one of the survivors of the *Shark*, one of our lost destroyers in the recent Naval Battle off the coast of Jutland, this was the hymn which the survivors sang while they were floating about on a raft. We do not know whether it is an infringement of the Defence of the Realm Act to doubt this story, so we venture to suggest that, in all probability, copies of the hymn are served out to seamen when they are exposed to danger. That would account for its being sung on such occasions.

There are many people who object to German music being played, and Sir Walter Parratt, Master of the King's Music, points out that if all German music is to be forbidden, the hymn-books must be expurgated, for "our hymnody is permeated by it." He adds that the well-known hymn, "Praise the Lord! ye heavens, adore him," is set to the tune of "Deutschland Uber Alles" as an English hymn tune. Not only are the Church of England hymn-books full of German music, but there are many Methodist hymns that have Teutonic tunes.

Christian workers are at loggerheads over the present missionary outlook. Dr. J. R. Mott, the American missionary enthusiast, holds extremely pessimistic views with regard to it; while Mr. Fullerton, Home Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, is decidedly optimistic. We agree with Dr. Mott, so far, at least, as missions to the more intelligent and civilized heathens are concerned. The Chinese, the Japs, and the various tribes of India, are not blind to the fact that Christianity is such a colossal failure among European nations; and in the future they will be more determined than ever to have nothing to do with it.

Gospel Oak is a popular London suburb, and someone described it as having no oak and very little gospel. The absence of oak trees is a real loss. Perhaps the little gospel is a natural compensation for their absence.

The Bishop of Chelmsford wishes that those people who intend writing religious tracts would read a number of advanced writers before doing so. If they did, we expect the tracts would never get written at all. At any rate, we shall be pleased to send the *Freethinker* to any intending tract writer who will let us have his address. If, after reading it for awhile, he still wishes to write tracts, we shall take it for granted that Nature intended him for nothing better.

What hysterical writing is to be found in the press! In a leading article in the *Daily News* we are told, "Our Allies in this war are Catholics; our enemies are Protestants." As a fact, there are men of nearly all religions, and of no religion, in the ranks of the Allies; whilst the Central Powers can claim adherents of the Catholic and Greek Churches, Mohammedans, and Protestants.



### To Correspondents.

- D. N.—We quite share your opinion of the gentleman in question. His nightly prayer ought to be, "Thank God for the fools!"
- C. R. PARRY.—In what way do you suggest the N. S. S. might do something at Letchworth? Will see what can be done with regard to newsagents and the *Freethinker*.
- PTE. W. J. LEAN.—We quite appreciate your position. The cutting you send is a fine illustration of abuse taking the place of argument. It should amuse rather than annoy.
- C. COLLETT.—We have something of the kind you suggest in view, and will see what can be done.
- A. EMMOT.—Very pleased that discussions on the contents of the *Freethinker* helps to "enliven the monotony" of duty in the trenches.
- R. MILLER.—We do not understand what it is you wish us to explain. The Act gives you the right of appeal to the Military Service Tribunals, and there is nothing to do but to place your case before them. What follows must depend upon your own judgment.
- W. THETFORD.—Mr. Cohen will prepare his volume of essays as early as possible, but one has to be cautious with printing while the War is on. He has never written on the Sybilline Oracles. Perhaps he may do so one day—which answer strikes us, now we have written it, as quite oracular in character.
- H. W. EDWARDS.—Mr. George Moore has several publishers we believe, among them Walter Scott and Messrs. Osgood. Any good bookseller would be able to give you a fuller list.
- T. MAY.—The article might be reprinted in leaflet form, but we are diffident at undertaking more at the moment than is absolutely necessary. It will keep, anyway, for awhile.
- F. ARCHER.—We hope that our article on the L. C. C. will prove what you call "an inspiring call to Arms," also that advanced societies generally will recognize that in this matter we have everything in common.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

### Special.

ON Sunday last, the National Secular Society's Annual Conference did me the honour of electing me its President. I have now time for no more than a bare acknowledgment of that honour by way of thanking the members of the N. S. S.—both those who were actually present and those who were represented by proxy. The Presidency is a post that makes no small demands upon one, and I can only hope that by the time the next conference arrives, Freethinkers will have no cause to regret their choice. I can only promise to do my best, and express the hope that in doing it I may have the cordial co-operation of all interested in the great cause for which the Society stands. There are some things in connection with the Society which I desire to say, but which may well be deferred for two or three weeks. Meanwhile, I will only add that the sentiments expressed at the Conference by delegates, combined with the messages received from all parts

of the country, were enough to show that I have the esteem and confidence of the Freethought Party. My aim will be to see that the twenty-six years' work which has won that confidence will not be weakened by anything I may do—or fail to do—in the future.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Sugar Plums.

Concerning the N. S. S. Conference, we have only space this week for the Executive's Annual Report and for a brief account of the evening meeting. Of the business meetings—a report of which will appear next week—we can only say that the attendance was larger than it has been for some years. There was a smaller attendance of visitors from the provinces, owing to the cancelled Whitsuntide holiday, but, on the other hand, the delegation was as complete as it has ever been. Practically every Branch of the N. S. S. was represented, and there was a good representation of private members. We hope to see that record quite maintained in future years. The Conference is only once a year, and every Branch should take it as a duty to send a representative.

The evening public meeting was a complete success. When the gates of heaven were opened, just about the time when people would be leaving home for the meeting, we expected to find more seats than listeners. In this we were agreeably disappointed. The audience was really a good one, and all the speakers were admirable in both matter and tone, and were well received. Mr. Rosetti made a good opening; Mr. Willis and Mr. Williams, both of Birmingham, quite convinced the gathering that the sinister implications of "Brunnagem" could not apply to Freethought speakers. Mr. Lloyd was—well, he was Mr. Lloyd, and all who have heard him will appreciate what that means. Mr. Moss was at his best, and seems to get more vigorous as he grows older; and Mr. Cohen's closing speech drew frequent applause, and appeared to send everyone home in a good humour. It is not every cause that could supply speakers able to keep an audience interested and fresh for two and a half hours.

Prior to Mr. Rosetti's opening speech, Mr. Cohen placed the matter of the London County Council ban on the sale of literature before the meeting. After describing the situation, a resolution was proposed, condemning the action of the Council, and calling for a reconsideration of the proposal. This was carried unanimously, and will be sent to the proper quarters. There is not much doubt but that the Party will fight the question by every means in its power.

We are very pleased to be able to publish the following communication from that sturdy old fighter, the Rev. Stewart Headlam:—

SIR,—The fact that there is probably not another paragraph in your issue of June 11 with which I do not strenuously disagree, may perhaps make my cordial support of your front article on the L. C. C. and Free Speech all the more valuable.

I opposed the decision of the Parks Committee at the Council, but only got one supporter.

I am quite willing to put up with all sorts of interference with Freedom during the War and on account of the War. But there was no pretence that this interference had anything to do with the War.

I hope all the various propagandists who fight each other will unite in protesting against this interference, for there are those who say, quite logically, stop the sale of literature first, and then stop the speaking which the literature more thoughtfully supports. I am yours, in remembrance of the Bradlaugh days.—STEWART D. HEADLAM.

We have never known Mr. Headlam to hold back where a principle was at stake, and we hope that all will take his advice, and act on it.

Happily, the protest of the N. S. S. against the action of the London County Council in prohibiting the sale of literature in the public parks is not to stand alone. The following

resolution was proposed at a meeting of the London Trades Council on June 8:—

This Meeting of the London Trades Council strongly condemns the action of the L. C. C. in withdrawing permits hitherto granted to accredited societies for the sale of literature at their meetings in the London Parks; believing that the censorship which the Parks Committee has always exercised over pamphlets and periodicals so sold has been effective in preventing the distribution of any printed matter of an objectionable character, we regard the action of the Council as an unnecessary interference with the established right of these societies; and instruct the Executive Committee to request the L. C. C. to receive a deputation on the subject before their decision takes effect.

We were pleased to learn that the resolution was carried unanimously, and we believe that the L. C. C. has already been approached on the matter.

The first of a series of Freethought Demonstrations will be held to-day (June 18) in Finsbury Park at 6 o'clock. The list of speakers is not yet complete, but will include Messrs. Rosetti, Hooper, Saphin, and Miss Kough. An engagement prevents Mr. Cohen attending this meeting, but he will speak at the later ones. We hope that Freethinkers will make it a point of attending, as it is possible that something may be said about the L.C.C., and a resolution passed. The larger the meeting, the more effective from all points of view.

Mr. Stephen Hooper writes that he has been wrongly credited with the degree of M.A. in our "Lecture Notice" column. We regret the error, and also that Mr. Hooper should have been annoyed thereby, but the fault was not ours. The Lecture Notice came from the Camberwell Branch, and was inserted as sent. We must request that greater care be taken in writing out these notices.

Many of our readers will have missed Mr. T. F. Palmer's informing articles from these pages for the last week or so. This was not his fault, nor, in a sense, was it ours. But we had so much copy in hand, and so many demands on our space, that someone had to suffer. Readers will, therefore, exercise charity in the matter. An article from Mr. Palmer's pen will appear in our next issue.

We are pleased to see that on the vote for the War Secretary's salary, Mr. J. M. Robertson raised the question of compulsory church parades in the Army. He said they involved compulsion on men who did not believe in the religion of the Church. These men had offered their lives to the service of the country, and they ought not to be compelled to attend church against their will. It was an indefensible imposition of religious discipline. We do not gather that any reply was made to this protest. Probably the authorities think that Freethinkers may be ignored in this matter. If they continue of that opinion, it will be Freethinkers' own fault. Politicians will only be roused to act justly on this question when Freethinkers show that they cannot be ignored with safety.

A correspondent writes:—

Regarding "The Floral Loves of Shakespeare," by T. F. Palmer, in the Centenary Number of the *Freethinker* (April 23)—that Shakespeare *does* refer to the fox-glove; but by its rustic name of "dead men's fingers." See Ophelia episode in *Hamlet*. It is a pity if he did not, but probably he did, also refer to "the chaste snowdrop, the forget-me-not, the delicate lily of the valley." No doubt he noted them, and patterned them in the exquisite tapestry of his mental loom. All men, all flowers, all things, all time, was his, *ad infinitum*. He is thus the greatest man, and, it must needs follow, the greatest *free* thinker. A church contains his bones; his Paradise is the wide world and the universal heart of man.

Christian tradesmen are very busy exploiting their less fortunate neighbours, and nearly every article of ordinary use has been advanced greatly in price, milk being the latest commodity to be raised. In Christian countries the one thing that never advances in value is the milk of human kindness,

## Nietzsche and His Critics.

### IV.

(Continued from p. 374.)

The fact that the great majority of human beings are utterly incapable of original thought, and so must, perforce, borrow their ideas or submit tamely to authority, explains Nietzsche's violent loathing and contempt for the masses. The average, self-satisfied, conservative, orthodox, law-abiding citizen appeared to him to be a being but little raised above the cattle in the barnyard.....The masses are always a century or two behind. They have made a virtue of their obtuseness, and call it by various fine names: conservatism, piety, respectability, faith. The nineteenth century witnessed greater human progress than all the centuries before it saw or even imagined, but the majority of white men of to-day still believe in ghosts, still fear the devil, still hold that the number 13 is unlucky, and still picture the deity as a patriarch in a white beard, surrounded by a choir of resplendent amateur musicians. "We think a thing," says Professor Henry Sedgwick, "because all other people think so; or because, after all, we do think so; or because we are told so, and think we must think so; or because we once thought so, and think we still think so; or because, having thought so, we think we *will* think so."—H. L. Mencken, "The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche," pp. 159-160.

Nietzsche's objections apply, not to the belief in God absolutely, but only to that conception of Him which represents Him as a kind of bogey, making man afraid of the world and of life; and also to that conception of God which discourages all strenuous effort by encouraging the belief that men can leave everything in His care, if they only pray, pray. Such people, thinks Nietzsche, do not worship God, but something with long ears.—A. Wolf, "The Philosophy of Nietzsche" (1915), pp. 74-5.

As a matter of fact, says Mr. Wolf:—

Nietzsche's social and political theories were altogether opposed to the kind of fanatical patriotism which finds vent in international animosities—*Vaterlinderie* he called it contemptuously. He was essentially a broad-minded citizen of the world, "a good European" (as he styled himself), anxious to see the different nations working in friendly rivalry towards the advancement of mankind, and the development of the highest type of men.

He observes that war "betrays people into exaggerated self-esteem; each side claims for itself a monopoly of good taste, sound judgment, and all the virtues. Nor, he thinks, is the result ever satisfactory; the victors are apt to become stupid, and the vanquished revengeful."

In the same volume, *Human All-Too-Human*, he remarks on the waste of energy incurred by the system of conscription, when "year after year the ablest, strongest, and most industrious men are withdrawn, in extraordinary numbers, from their proper occupations and callings, to be turned into soldiers." Nietzsche also saw through the fallacy of the "armed peace," and the doctrine that to preserve peace we must be prepared for war, which never does preserve peace, and in the long run is always bound to end in disaster such as we are suffering to-day. "His criticism," says Mr. Wolf, "is well worth noting."

"No Government," says Nietzsche, "will nowadays admit that it maintains an army in order to satisfy occasionally its passion for conquest. The army, it is said, is intended only for purposes of defence. But this means that each state in turn claims to be more moral than its neighbours, whose assumed eagerness for unjust attack makes defensive preparations necessary. The neighbouring states, however, also disavow aggressive intentions, and ostensibly maintain their armies likewise, not for offensive, but only for defensive purposes. Hence virtually each state accuses its neighbouring state of criminal hypocrisy and cunning, of lying in wait for it in order to pounce upon it unexpectedly." Nietzsche condemns the whole attitude as inhuman; it is a constant challenge and provocation to war; it is as bad as war, or even worse. The so-called armed peace, he

maintains, is the expression of a bellicose disposition which trusts neither itself nor its neighbour, and refuses to lay down arms partly from hatred and partly from fear. "But," protests Nietzsche, "better to perish than to hate and fear; and thrice better to perish than to make oneself hated and feared!"<sup>1</sup>

He declared that half-measures, like the gradual reduction of armaments, are vain—"the tree of military glory can only be destroyed at one swoop, with one stroke of lightning." And he hopes to see the day when some nation, distinguished for the highest military skill and organization, will deliberately proclaim: "'Let us break our swords,' and demolish its entire military organization, lock, stock, and barrel."

Although born a German, he was never tired of girding at German culture:—

German pride of race he denounced as a "mendacious race-swindle." German pride of intellect he met with the humiliating taunt that, in spite of their bookishness, the German people are boorish and devoid of genuine culture. In the very hour of their greatest triumph, in 1871, he dared tell his conquering countrymen that the culture of vanquished France was incomparably superior to theirs. Again and again he denounced German state-idolatry, its militarism, its fanatical patriotism, its high politics, the Bismarckian worship of success, and the arrogant creed of *Deutschland über alles*.<sup>2</sup>

He refers to the "tasteless arrogance" in the speeches of leading German statesmen, "an accent which the ear of the foreigner repudiates with aversion."

No wonder that Treitschke declared—to a mutual friend who wished to bring Treitschke and Nietzsche together—that "your Basle," the Swiss University at which Nietzsche taught, "is a boudoir, from which German culture is insulted."<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche retorting "I have known scholars who thought Kant was deep. At the Court of Prussia I fear that Herr von Treitschke is regarded as deep." And again, "there is also history written with an eye to the Court, and Herr von Treitschke is not ashamed of himself." In the *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Halevy speaks of the affront which Nietzsche had offered to the "10,000 Herr professors." By this means he had aroused at once both their silence and hatred. His books, which were published at his own expense, "they treated with disdain."<sup>4</sup>

Nietzsche himself declared "I have now written fifteen books, and I have never yet seen an honest German review of one of them."<sup>5</sup> Such was the influence in Germany of the man, who, some people pretend, by his teachings, brought about the War!

Having cleared away some of the stumbling-blocks from a due appreciation of Nietzsche, we may now give a short sketch of his life, and deal with the main points of his philosophy—or, as some people dispute that he had a philosophy—his teachings.

Friedrich Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844, at the village of Rocken, near Lutzen, in the Prussian province of Saxony. His father, Karl Ludwig Nietzsche, was the pastor of Rocken. His father and grandfather had been preachers before him, and he married the daughter and granddaughter of parsons. Friedrich, the future philosopher, was the first-born child; there were two more children of the marriage—a girl and a boy, the boy died within two years; the girl, Elizabeth, survived her famous brother, and is still living at Weimar, and has written a life of Nietzsche in two volumes.

Some years before Friedrich was born, his father had

<sup>1</sup> A. Wolf, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> Dimsdale Stocker, *The Real Nietzsche*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. Kennedy, *Nietzsche*, p. 27.

been tutor to the children of the Duke of Altenburg, who introduced him to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV., who, being favourably impressed with him, gave him the vicarage at Rocken.

When Nietzsche was barely five years of age, his father died from concussion of the brain, caused by a fall. His young widow then removed to the neighbouring town of Naumburg—where she had some relatives living—and which has been described as being then "a typical provincial town with almost mediæval aspects, governed by narrow conventions, and swayed by a clique of lawyers, officials, parsons, and old fogeys."<sup>1</sup> The household consisted of the mother, the two children, their paternal grandmother, and two maiden aunts. Mencken says:—

It was a house of holy women, with something of a convent's placidity and quiet exaltation. Little Friedrich was the idol in the shrine. It was the hope of all that he would grow up into a man illimitably noble and impossibly good.....His school-fellows, in derision, called him "the little parson," and took delight in waylaying him and venting upon him their grotesque and barbarous humour. He liked flowers and books and music, and when he went abroad, it was for solitary walks. He could recite and sing, and he knew the Bible so well that he was able to dispute about its mysteries.<sup>2</sup>

In a short autobiography, written in his early teens, he says: "From my very childhood I sought solitude, and I was happiest when I could find some secluded spot and give myself up undisturbed to my own thoughts." He was instinctively aristocratic, with a horror of vulgarity and low companions, and a moral and physical repulsion for the vicious and unclean; these characteristics distinguished Nietzsche throughout his life. His aristocratic ideas were, no doubt, instilled into him in early life; his father's connection with court life was, no doubt, impressed upon him. He also believed himself to be of noble origin. "The Counts of Nietzki, who had to flee from Poland on account of their religious beliefs, he considered to be his ancestors. So the boy was told, and he believed it gladly. Indeed, he said one day, 'A Count Nietzki must not lie.'"<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, this had a great influence upon his philosophy, and accounts largely for his unsympathetic attitude towards the democracy. The fact is, he never mixed with the lower (socially lower) classes, he had no contact with them until late in life, therefore he did not know them, or understand them.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

The following gem appears in a religious contemporary, "Sunday-school parties catered for and neatly executed." Even the Germans have not gone beyond this.

According to the papers, an eleven years' old boy is officiating as organist at a Margate church. Boys of that tender age, as a rule, do not aspire beyond the tea-tray and hammer band.

The dear *Daily News* still continues to dub a great reformer "Tom" Paine, instead of Thomas Paine. Our Free Church contemporary never made the mistake of printing "Bill" Booth for William Booth.

In the offertory-bag at a Yarmouth church was found a jar of beef extract. It must have been donated by a recent convert, who thought that religion was "without money and without price."

It is said that a book, which has been "kept back on account of the War," is entitled *Hell's Playground*. In our opinion it is quite a topical title.

<sup>1</sup> Mugge, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> H. L. Mencken, *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Mugge, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 10.

(EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT.—Continued.)

intolerance of such a statement would be merely amusing. Under existing circumstances, your Executive feels that it must be treated as a grave and public injustice to all Freethinkers. Conscience—whatever be its nature or value—must be adjudged as the same, *per se*, with all, and it is quite indefensible that a right or privilege should be created by Act of Parliament and then deliberately withheld by some because of an absence of religious belief. This, again, may be taken as evidence that the only sure way of Freethinkers getting justice in a Christian community is to make themselves so strong that their legitimate claims cannot safely be ignored nor their rights safely withheld.

There is very little to say about Freethought abroad. On the Continent, propaganda is naturally in abeyance during the continuance of the War; although Freethought publications are not entirely suppressed, and Freethought is not entirely lost sight of in the advanced Republican and Radical press. On the Continent, as at home, the clerical parties seem to be taking full advantage of the War, and the fight against reactionaries when the War ceases is likely to be general. Fortunately, continental Freethinkers do not suffer from the timidity that oppresses so many here, and we feel sure that reaction will be met with a vigorous, and it is to be hoped successful, opposition. The occupation of Brussels by the Germans has suspended the labours of Eugene Hins, one of the Society's Vice-President's and Secretary of the International Bureau. The German occupation has also been signalized by the destruction of the Ferrer Monument. We feel that continental Freethinkers may safely be trusted to repair this outrage at the earliest opportunity. On the recommendation of Mr. James Morton, of New York, the centre of international Freethought has been provisionally fixed at Lausanne, which continues to issue *La Libre Pensée Internationale* under what must be trying circumstances.

In Spain there is considerable activity, and the Escuela Moderna continues its publication of popular works, which are bound to act as a dissolvent of superstition in one of the firmest of its European strongholds. From France, Italy, and Germany there is nothing to report, save that Freethinkers in these countries are constrained to kill each other in the trenches because Christians cannot keep the world's peace.

In South America, happily far distant from the European conflict, the work of Freethought still continues in unabated vigour. In Buenos Ayres that brave journal, *El Progreso*, which boldly styles itself "an atheistic journal," is now in its thirtieth year of publication, and is ably edited by the well-known lecturer and writer Francisco Gicca, and his daughter Anita. One of the most pleasing features of South American Freethought is the large place therein taken by women workers, lecturers, and writers. A striking proof of this is afforded in the *Biographical Album of Freethinkers* shortly to be issued by the Argentine Freethought National League.

In Uruguay the well-established work of the Asociacion de Propaganda Liberal (founded in 1900) still continues to flourish. It issues, at Montivideo, its fortnightly organ *El Libre Pensamiento* (circulation 2,000) and a fine series of Freethought pamphlets, also published fortnightly, having a circulation of 3,000 each. No less than 182 pamphlets of about 16 pages each have already been issued up to April of this year. The series is remarkably varied and interesting, and the continued flow of these splendid publications affords abundant proof of the vitality of the South American Freethought Movement.

In New Zealand, Mr. W. W. Collins, one of the Society's Vice-Presidents, still keeps the *Examiner* afloat. In the United States there appears to be an increased lecturing propaganda, and one or two new Freethought papers have recently made their appearance. The *Truthseeker*, of course, continues its way under the able editorship of Mr. Macdonald, and judging from the reports of police activity in suppressing free speech wherever possible, vigilance is as necessary as ever to the maintenance of intellectual freedom. Divided by three thousand miles, the fight is yet the same, and the soldiers in our own battle-line can heartily wish success to their brother fighters against a common enemy.

On a general survey your Executive see no ground whatever for discouragement or despair. Propagandist movements are of necessity subject to an ebb and flow determined by circumstances that are quite beyond their control. Vast as is the European War, the war in which we are engaged is vaster. And in a war which continues over centuries, where campaigns are measured by generations, ordinary methods of computation break down. It is not by measuring one year with another that one can rightly estimate the advance made, and a period of inactivity may have within it the conditions of a more sustained advance. When this War opened, the clergy were quick enough to appeal to the superstitious feelings of the people, and for a time it looked as though they had really succeeded in gaining more ground. But the gain, if it ever existed, was quite tentative, and the last position of the forces of superstition is worse than the first. That the War has not been the occasion of any gains to the Christian Churches we know; that it has been the cause of some losses that also we know; and that it may be the occasion of great gains to Freethought we believe. Thousands of men have had their attention directed to religious problems on account of the War. To these the spectacle of a world in which Christianity has for so long exerted a powerful influence, engaged in a fratricidal war, such as the present one, has awakened grave doubts as to the position and value of organized Christianity. They cannot but ask themselves of what use is the teaching and influence of the Churches in a world where this can occur? Whatever risks society may run in giving up Christianity, they cannot be graver than the actual dangers encountered by societies in which Christianity is still all but supreme.

Finally, the Executive desires to emphasize the message of last year's report, that the immediate need is for organization and systematic propaganda. All the Churches appear to be laying plans for the capture of the public mind when the War is over, and we ought not to be behind them in at least attempting this. There is ample evidence that, so far as Freethought is concerned, we are faced with an opportunity of making our existence felt, such as has not occurred for many years. It should be our united endeavour to take full advantage of this opportunity, and so make a decisive step towards that ultimate victory which, however long delayed, must finally rest with the forces of reason, justice, and humanity.

### Evening Public Meeting.

THE public meeting, in connection with the Forty-Ninth Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, was held at the Queen's Hall, London, W., on Whit-Sunday, and was well attended by delegates and individual members from all parts of the kingdom; two representatives from Birmingham, Messrs. Willis and Williams, being among the speakers.

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN, the newly-elected President of the N. S. S., was in the chair, and a resolution strongly protesting against the action of the London County Council in threatening to stop the sale of literature in the parks was carried unanimously.

MR. R. H. ROSETTI said active Freethought was the most dangerous enemy of the Churches, for it had a message for the mental emancipation of the race. Freethinkers had a care for the mental health of society, which they wished to see sane for twenty-four hours daily. Men ought not to be anchored to the superstitions of savages because some dear old ladies derive comfort from it. The clergy were time-servers. They prated of peace in peace-time, and talked of war in war-time. They were glorifying war to-day, and abstaining from fighting. The clergy would find that gold was no match for brains, and Freethinkers desired that education should be befitting Nature's masterpiece, the paragon of animals—man.

MR. WILLIS, of Birmingham, followed, and quoted Paine's words, "These are the times that try men's souls," and added that the twentieth century seemed to be drifting towards barbarism. His own town, Birmingham, was a jumping-off ground for the clergy who had converted London. The Rev. R. J. Campbell was the latest import, and years

before he made a reputation by translating Old Freethought into the New Theology. It was rare to find the clergy doing anything useful. In Birmingham, at present, they were protesting against picture-theatres.

MR. J. T. LLOYD, the Chairman of the Secular Society, Ltd., was in excellent form. He pointed out that Whit-Sunday was one of the chief festivals of the Christian Church, for on that day it was supposed that the Holy Ghost descended on the disciples. That story bore all the marks of a modern revival meeting, for it was an orgy of religious dissipation. Pathology went hand-in-hand with such manifestations. The famous dancing epidemics of the Middle Ages followed the Black Death, in which 25,000,000 persons perished. Modern revivals were paralleled in the case of the Convulsionists in the eighteenth century. Religion was itself a disease, contracted in childhood. Doctors exist for the purpose of curing disease, but priests exist for the purpose of keeping it in working order, and Freethinkers exist for the purpose of ridding men of superstition and of giving an education which is fitted for life.

The veteran, MR. A. B. MOSS, said the object of Freethought was to destroy superstition. The frontal attacks made by Charles Bradlaugh and his colleagues meant a great expenditure of energy, but it had helped to undermine the enemy. We attack Christianity because it is not true nor useful, and an obstacle to progress. Nothing showed the utter collapse and futility of orthodoxy more than this colossal War. It had also showed the folly of prayer. Even the Pope of Rome had his prayers unanswered, and force was found to be more powerful than God. He rejoiced that the destinies of the Party were in the hands of a young and brilliant leader like Mr. Chapman Cohen, who could be relied upon to keep Freethought before the present generation. The evangel of Freethought was the uplifting of the people.

MR. WILLIAMS, of Birmingham, said that a Christian ought to believe in the whole of the sects in order to be quite safe. The last thing parted with was a belief in deity. Happily, even Christianity was susceptible to evolution. The fundamental position of Freethought was the happiness of the whole human race. He concluded by reciting Ingersoll's wonderful prose-poem on "Napoleon's tomb."

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN, who received an enthusiastic ovation, referred to the National Secular Society, which, he said, was now sufficiently mature to be called an old organization. To look at religion fifty years ago and to-day proved that the energy of the N. S. S. had not been ill-spent or unproductive of good results. The Society was started by Charles Bradlaugh, an illustrious fighter for Freedom, and headed for twenty-five years by G. W. Foote, one of the ablest thinkers of his time. If religion had kept to its proper place, we should not be quarrelling about it. Religion is barbarism. We know it and the clergy feel it. Why must children be taught religion? If the clergy let the child alone, life itself will educate it out of religion. The prayers used by the clergy were as out of date as their dresses. All religion and all gods belonged to the past. All gods were made in the image of men who lived many centuries ago, and were unfit to stand by the side of the best men. The fight was between the man of the past and the man of the present; between the ideas of savages against the ideas of civilization. Our duty was to establish rationalism in sociology, freedom in intellect, and humanism in morals. What is needed is not conversion, but education. The clergy were afraid of thinking. Freethinkers were not animated by blind hatred of religion, for who would wish to waste five minutes on the puerilities of Christian theology? Iconoclasm was the road to construction. Freethinkers attack theology because it is a barrier to a larger and better life. At the end they could face all that might happen without either masks on their faces or lies in their mouths.

So closed a Conference which has been full of interest, and, in spite of the dread shadow of war, full of hope—perhaps full of hope because fuller than usual of the spirit of determinism. Is it too much to hope that this issue of the *Freethinker* will be read with care from cover to cover, so that a vastly larger audience than Queen's Hall could hold may "attend the Conference," and feel how large and varied is the work of the National Secular Society? Organized

Freethought has always had the best speakers since the days of Holyoake and Southwell, down through the stormy Bradlaugh and Foote eras to the present day, and the present orators maintain easily the proud reputations of their honoured predecessors. It is one of the chief of the fighting weapons of a great party, which has done more for intellectual liberty than any other organization in the English-speaking world, and it is one that will lead ultimately to the emancipation of the nation from the "lie at the lips of the priest." It is a noble dream, and the National Secular Society's Annual Conferences bring it yet nearer and nearer the realities of the future.

C. E. S.

## Correspondence.

### "SCIENTIFIC HISTORIC MATERIALISM VERSUS METAPHYSICS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. A. E. Cook's letter under the above heading is an example of those false antitheses which, by wasting valuable energy, do a lot of harm to causes that get entangled with them. The false antithesis here is that drawn between the views that "conditions alter ideas" and that "ideas alter conditions." Obviously, both are the case. To take the simplest illustration, if the day is fine, and I go out, the fine weather makes me think of a walk, and my thought in its turn makes me perform certain acts. It would be absurd to discuss in this connection a supposed antithesis between a "metaphysical" and a "meteorological" theory of walks. Yet this is what Mr. Cook does with the history of institutions. I have as high an opinion of Marx as Mr. Cook; and, granting the importance of the economic interpretation of history as a contribution to sociology, I cannot imagine that Marx dreamt of claiming for it the exclusive and universal validity which Mr. Cook does. *E.g.*, how does Mr. Cook trace the connection between "Hamlet" and "the economic conditions of human society" in Shakespeare's time?

Take, again, the antithesis between determinism and such phrases as "the free play of ideas." This supposed antithesis is simply founded on the equivocal meaning of the word "free." No idea is "free" in the sense of being free from the law of causality; but an idea may be "free" in the sense of freedom from certain specific influences, to wit, legal and social pressure, which are calculated to deflect ideas from the truth. On Mr. Cook's theory, the *Freethinker* ought to change its title at once.

Lastly, the most serious point of all: it is easy to sneer at metaphysics, and easy for anyone to "explode" Kant who has the patience to read his difficult style; but it is not easy to dispose of the question Kant asked, *viz.*, "How are *a priori* judgments possible?" Now, when you have "exploded" Kant, your next task is to find some other answer to that question than his. It is no use answering, as Mr. Cook in effect does, that *a priori* judgments are *not* possible, nothing is "absolute," "eternal truth" is a fiction, and so forth. Are mathematics a fiction? Yet, if economic conditions *alone* give rise to ideas, we have no guarantee that they are not, and no guarantee that any theory or generalization is anything but an illusion sprung of economic forces. As Mr. Cook evidently thinks *his* generalizations are objectively valid, he is probably not prepared to admit this. But if the faculty of knowledge is neither a gift from God on the one hand, nor an accident of economic development on the other, it remains for us to regard it as something inherent in all nature, though developed only under special conditions; something that "sleeps in the stone, dreams in the animal, and wakes in the man."

ROBERT ARCH.

A good story is told in the *Recollections of Bishop Browne*, which is of interest just now. The Bishop says that Archibald Forbes, the famous war correspondent, told him that he had been with troops of all nationalities on the battlefield. They were all scared, not of battle, but of the next world, except the Turks. And Forbes added, "Till you gentlemen in black abolish hell, Christian troops will never fight as Turks do."

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

**LONDON.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, E. Burke, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Stephen Hooper, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, R. H. Rosetti; 6, Free-thought Demonstration.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kennedy and Dales "Religious Ideas"; 6.30, Messrs. Shaller, Beale, and Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, a Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 6.45, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.****INDOOR.**

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templars' Hall, 122 Ingram Street): June 25, at 12 noon, Meeting to receive Delegate's Report of Conference.

**OUTDOOR.**

GLASGOW (Jail Square): 3.30, R. Ogilvie, a Lecture.

**WANTED**, Situation as Correspondent, Cashier, or Private Secretary; English, French, German, Italian.—Write to A. C. F., c/o the Pioneer Press.

**THE SECULAR SOCIETY, Ltd.**

*Company Limited by Guarantee.*

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Chairman: MR. J. T. LLOYD.

Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert

a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration.

*A Form of Bequest.*—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

**A Propagandist Issue.****G. W. Foote Memorial Number**

OF

**"THE FREETHINKER."****With Portrait and Appreciations.**Price **TWOPENCE.**

(Postage ½d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

**PIONEER PAMPHLETS.***Now being issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.***No. I.—BIBLE AND BEER,**By **G. W. Foote.****FORTY PAGES—ONE PENNY.**

Postage: single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 18 copies, 3d.; 26 copies 4d. (parcel post).

**No. II.—DEITY AND DESIGN,**(A Reply to Dr. A. R. Wallace.) By **C. Cohen.****THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.**

Postage: Single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 18 copies, 2½d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

**No. III.—MISTAKES OF MOSES,**By **Colonel Ingersoll.****THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.**

Postage: Single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 18 copies, 2½d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

*Special Terms for Quantities for Free Distribution or to Advanced Societies.*

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON-STREET, LONDON, E.C.

About 1d. in the 1s. should be added on all Foreign and Colonial orders

## Books Every Freethinker Should Possess.

### Three Essays on Religion.

By J. S. MILL.

Published at 5s.

Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

There is no need to praise Mill's Essays on Nature, The Utility of Religion, and Theism. The work has become a Classic in the History of Freethought.

Only a limited number of copies available.

No greater attack on the morality of nature and the God of natural theology has ever been made than in this work.

### The World's Desires; or, The Results of Monism.

An Elementary Treatise on a Realistic Religion and Philosophy of Human Life.

By E. A. ASHCROFT.

440 pages. Published at 10s. 6d.

Price 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

Mr. Ashcroft writes from the point of view of a convinced Freethinker, and deals with the question of Man and the Universe in a thoroughly suggestive manner.

### Priests, Philosophers, and Prophets,

By T. WHITTAKER.

Large 8vo. 1911. Published at 7s. 6d.

Price 1s. 9d., postage 5d.

### Natural and Social Morals,

By CARVETH READ,

Professor of Philosophy in the University of London.

8vo. 1909. Published at 7s. 6d. net.

Price 3s., postage 5d.

A Fine Exposition of Morals from the Standpoint of a Rationalistic Naturalism.

### Phases of Evolution and Heredity,

By D. B. HART, M.D.

Crown 8vo. 1910. Published at 5s.

Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

An Examination of Evolution as affecting Heredity, Disease, Sex, Religion, etc. With Notes, Glossary, and Index.

### The Theories of Evolution,

By YVES DELAGE.

1912 Edition. Published at 7s. 6d. net.

Price 3s., postage 5d.

A Popular, but Thorough, Exposition of the various Theories of Evolution from Darwin onward.

### History of the Taxes on Knowledge.

By C. D. COLLET

With an Introduction by George Jacob Holyoake.

Two Vols. Published at 7s.

Price 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

Mr. Collet was very closely associated for very many years with the movement for abolishing the tax on newspapers, and writes with an intimate knowledge that few others possessed. Mr. Collet traces the history of the subject from the earliest times to the repeal of the tax after the Bradlaugh Struggle.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

## A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF FREETHINKERS OF ALL AGES AND NATIONS.

BY

J. M. WHEELER.

Price THREE SHILLINGS Net.  
(Postage 5d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON-STREET, LONDON, E.C.

## BIBLE STUDIES

ESSAYS ON

Phallic Worship and Other Curious Rites and Customs.

BY

J. M. WHEELER.

Price ONE SHILLING Net.  
(Postage 2½d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

## FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT BY G. W. FOOTE.

### FIRST SERIES (with Portrait).

Fifty-One Articles on a Variety of Freethought Topics.  
213 pages. Cloth.

Price 2s. 6d. net, postage 4d.

### SECOND SERIES.

Fifty-Eight Articles on a Variety of Freethought Topics.  
302 pages. Cloth.

Price 2s. 6d. net, postage 4d.

The Two Volumes, post free, Five Shillings.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

**Pamphlets by G. W. FOOTE.**

	s. d.
BIBLE AND BEER. 40 pp. ... post	½d. 0 1
WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM? 32 pp	,, ½d. 0 1
ROME OR ATHEISM? 32 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
JOHN MORLEY AS A FREETHINKER. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY. 16 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
MY RESURRECTION. 16 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
THE NEW CAGLIOSTRO. 16 pp....	,, ½d. 0 1
THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER. 32 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
THE PASSING OF JESUS. 24 pp. ...	,, ½d. 0 1
DARWIN ON GOD. 64 pp.	,, 1d. 0 2
THE SIGN OF THE CROSS. 48 pp.	,, 1½d. 0 3
HALL OF SCIENCE LIBEL CASE. 58 pp.	,, 1d. 0 3
CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM? 120 pp.	,, 1½d. 0 4
THEISM OR ATHEISM? 92 pp. ...	,, 1½d. 0 6
BIBLE HANDBOOK. 162 pp. Cloth	,, 2d. 1 0

**Other Freethought Pamphlets.**

REFUTATION OF DEISM, by P. B. Shelley. 32 pp. ... .. post	½d. 0 1
UTILITARIANISM, by J. Bentham. 32 pp...	,, ½d. 0 1
PAGAN MYTHOLOGY, by Lord Bacon. 60 pp.	,, 1½d. 0 3
ESSAY ON SUICIDE, by D. Hume. 16 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
MORTALITY OF SOUL, by D. Hume. 16 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA, by M. Mangasarian. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
CODE OF NATURE, by Diderot and Holbach. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
FREEWILL AND NECESSITY, Anthony Collins. 82 pp....	,, 1d. 0 3
ESSENCE OF RELIGION, by L. Feuerbach. 82 pp. ... .. Nett.	,, 1d. 6
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY, by D. Hume. 32 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
FROM CHRISTIAN PULPIT TO SECULAR PLATFORM, by J. T. Lloyd. 64 pp. ...	,, ½d. 0 1
WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED? by A. Bierbower. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
BIRTH OF CHRIST, by D. F. Strauss. 34 pp.	,, 1d. 0 3
IS IMMORTALITY A FACT? by C. Watts. 34 pp. ... ..	,, 1d. 0 1

**Pamphlets by COL. INGERSOLL.**

	s. d.
A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM. 48 pp. ... post	1d. 0 2
WOODEN GOD. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
CRIMES AGAINST CRIMINALS. 29 pp....	,, ½d. 0 1
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. 24 pp. ...	,, ½d. 0 1
MISTAKES OF MOSES. Pioneer Pamphlet, No. 3. 32 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
COMING CIVILIZATION. 30 pp....	,, ½d. 0 1
DO I BLASPHEME? 28 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
ERNEST RENAN. 16 pp....	,, ½d. 0 1
HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 16 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 28 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 1
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. 16 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
THE GODS. An Oration. 47 pp. ...	,, 1d. 0 1
LIVE TOPICS. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. An Oration. 30 pp.	,, ½d. 0 1
MYTH AND MIRACLE. 14 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
ROME OR REASON. 48 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1

	s. d.
LIMITS OF TOLERATION. 29 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0 1
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED? 39 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. 16 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0 1
SUPERSTITION. 48 pp. ... ..	,, 1d. 0 2
SOCIAL SALVATION. 16 pp. ... ..	,, ½d. 0 1
DEFENCE OF FREETHOUGHT. 60 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0 2
WHY I AM AN AGNOSTIC. 23 pp. ... ,, ½d.	0 1

*About 1d. in the 1s. should be added on Foreign and Colonial orders.*

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

**Determinism or Free Will?**

By C. COHEN.

*Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.*

**CONTENTS.**

I. The Question Stated.—II. "Freedom" and "Will."—III. Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice.—IV. Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism.—V. Professor James on "The Dilemma of Determinism."—VI. The Nature and Implications of Responsibility.—VII. Determinism and Character.—VIII. A Problem in Determinism.—IX. Environment.

**PRICE ONE SHILLING NET.**  
(POSTAGE 2d.)

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR.**

SOCIALISM, ATHEISM, AND CHRISTIANITY. Price 1d.,  
postage ½d.  
CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS. Price 1d.  
postage ½d.  
PAIN AND PROVIDENCE. Price 1d., postage ½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

**LIFE-LIKE PORTRAIT**

OF

**G. W. FOOTE.**

Art Mounted, 10 by 7. With Autograph.

SUITABLE FOR FRAMING.

Price ONE SHILLING.  
(Postage: Inland, 3d.; Foreign, 6d)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON-STREET E.C.

Printed and Published by THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. FOOTE AND CO., LTD.), 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 1,823