

# The FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Christian Slander.

The old Christian explanation of "Infidelity" had all the merit of simplicity, even though it lacked the virtue of truth. The unbeliever was one who rejected Christianity either because of the evil life he led or because of the evil life he wished to lead. In either case he was one whom a good and virtuous Christian, and by implication all Christians were good and virtuous, would be well advised to shun. This charmingly charitable theory is not yet quite dead. It is still held by a certain number of persons who bear about the same relation to mental evolution that rudimentary physical structures do physical evolution. They are reminiscent of a lower stage of culture. But, in the main, this theory of the cause of unbelief has been given up, because unbelievers became too well-known for it to be of service. A more prevalent theory to-day is that the Freethinker is almost as good as a Christian—one bears up against the compliment; but this is because of the example of Christians, and added to this we have a Christian ancestry and move in a Christian environment. To paraphrase Falstaff, the Christian is not only good himself, but the cause of goodness in others. Pity it is that so much goodness receives such scant recognition from the world at large.

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### Theory versus Facts.

Now, we haven't the slightest doubt that the average person would much rather see a Freethinker a scoundrel than see him behaving in a decent manner. As a blackguard the Freethinker would fit well with the Christian theory of things. For centuries the believer has been telling the unbeliever what a blackguard he ought to be, he has drawn up a list of offences the Freethinker ought to commit, and he would naturally be pleased to find his theory borne out by facts. But in spite of all inducements, the Freethinker persists in behaving much as other people. He pays police rates, and it is chiefly Christians who are watched. He pays for the upkeep of prisons, and, in the main, Christians fill them. If judges, police-

men, prison warders, etc., had to depend upon Freethinkers for patronage, their plight would be a desperate one. The majority would have to be discharged, and the rest would earn but a scanty livelihood. The Christian theory is in one direction, the facts are all the other way. And the facts are so insistent, that Christians are driven to surrender the old theory, and offer in its stead the explanation that our humanity and decency is due to the unconscious influence of Christian teaching and Christian example. But, for our own part, we prefer the straightforwardness of the old slander, to the veiled insult of the slimy Christian compliment.

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### Compliment or Insult?

The latest version of this modern theory concerning unbelief appears in the shape of an editorial note in last week's *Church Times*. A little time back, when the British took over a portion of the French line, which included the graveyard at Vimy, a French officer said to an English one, "We leave you our trenches and our dead." It was an expression characteristically French—simple, direct, human, and yet with that dramatic touch dear to the French intellect. And one may assume that above those French graves there stood the usual inscription that their inmates died for their country. Nothing of the hope of a glorious resurrection, or of Jesus, or of religion. They were French soldiers killed in the discharge of duty and in defence of their country, and the simple inscription told the whole story. Most right-minded men would have been content to leave it at that. But not so the professional theologian. He will make capital out of corpses, and measure the value of even the War only as it serves the aggrandizement of his Church. And so the *Church Times* makes the smug comment, "We can scarcely doubt that the persistence in France of the Christian doctrine of a life beyond the grave is the cause of the splendid provision the French have made for the graves of fallen soldiers." Was there ever a more contemptible insult offered by way of a compliment? It is only the persistence in France of Christian belief that prevents the French nation forgetting decency and humanity in relation to its dead! We would give much to have the plain opinion of French people on that observation.

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### Freethinking France.

One can sympathize with the position of a paper like the *Church Times*. Before the War it was the custom of religious papers to point out that France, which had secularized its schools, disestablished the Church, turned God out of the constitution, and which contains so large a proportion of avowed Atheists, had undergone a marked moral deterioration. The War has put a stop to that particular display of religious slander, and so the many sterling qualities of the French people are explained as due to the persistence of Christian teaching. And, again we say, we prefer the slander to the insult—not alone to French men and women, but to common decency. The conclusion is one that only a mind warped and prejudiced by Christian teaching could reach. Grief and respect for



the dead has no more to do with Christianity than it has with the habitability of Mars. Let the pious writer in the *Church Times* contemplate a cat crying over its dead kitten, or a bitch mourning over a dead puppy, and he may perhaps realize that he is in contact with a feeling that existed in germ long before any of the gods existed, and which will remain dominant when the last of them has been consigned to a deserved oblivion.

\* \* \*

#### The Poison and the Antidote.

It would be an insult to educated men and women to dwell upon the fact that respect and love towards the dead is evidenced by the monuments of all peoples in all ages and places. The spot where the dead rest is sacred to all; and the hush that falls upon all in the presence of death is a testimony to the universality and strength of a feeling that may almost rank as an instinct. It antedated religion, and it will survive it. All the influence of Christianity was in the direction of fear, this is a feature strikingly absent in pre-Christian monumental inscriptions. There is the solemnity of a last parting and the shadow of a great grief, but there is no fear. It was Christianity that taught the world to dread death, and to surround it with a horror such as had never before been known. It frightened the world into an unwholesome and unmanly dread of the inevitable, and developed a cowardice in the face of death unequalled elsewhere. The century-old dirge of "Prepare for Death" is conclusive evidence of this. And after driving Europe grey with fear with its doctrine of death and eternal torment, it claims credit for having provided a doubtful remedy for its own poison.

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#### Human Nature v. Religion.

Fortunately, human nature, here as elsewhere, was so built as to overcome even the insistence of Christian teaching. Man must become reconciled to the inevitable, and the tendency of social evolution has been to render the Christian antidote unnecessary by developing an organism immune to the poison Christianity has provided. Life would be impossible under any other condition. Death, at all times sad, need never be terrible. The terrors of death are all artificial, its sadness is part of its health-giving discipline. Respect for the dead is not built upon religious belief, but upon human affection, and religion, while it may distort that, can never destroy it. French or English, Atheist or Christian, the inevitable facts of existence face all alike, and whereas a religious mind may see in respect for the dead evidence in favour of a particular creed, the Freethinker sees only a fresh proof of the indestructible wholesomeness of human nature.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Rampant Credulity.

WHEN the question is asked, "Will orthodox Christianity survive the War?" another question suggests itself at once, namely, "What is orthodox Christianity?" Upon careful investigation we soon discover that even the theologians are by no means agreed as to what constitutes orthodox Christianity, and that much of their time is consumed in vigorous attempts to demolish one another. In the *Church Times* for October 27 there is a notable sermon from the pen of the Rev. Thomas J. Hardy, of St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth, in which the doctrinal divisions which prevail in the Anglican Church are dwelt upon and deplored. Of course, similar differences obtain in all other denominations. Mr. Hardy champions the strictest form of historical orthodoxy, which is to be found in all the great

Creeds, and resents being called narrow-minded by fellow-Churchmen who differ from him. He says:—

To have the aspersion cast upon us by "those of our own household" leads to much searching of heart. It is not the personal aspect of the question that weighs with us—or it is not chiefly the personal aspect. Every loyal Churchman must feel deeply the censure of his fellow-Churchmen. The serious aspect of the matter, however, is that it presents the world with the spectacle of "a house divided against itself." That the English Church does at the present time present such a spectacle, that it is "a house divided against itself," no one whose eyes are open can deny. That because of this we have very largely lost the ear of the nation is, I think, another fact that is patent to all. And this is a very terrible state to be in, for it means a Church which is ineffective in its witness for God and righteousness—a religion which has "lost grip" of a people who in their past history placed themselves under its rule and direction.

For such a state of things Mr. Hardy holds those who claim to be "broad" largely, if not wholly, responsible. Their effort to accommodate the Faith to the mentality of the age and to change the constitution of the Church agreeably with popular estimates of Christianity, is an unmistakable sign of disloyalty to him who died for the world's redemption. Criticism is an unholy thing, with which a Christian should have nothing whatever to do. His one business is to accept with deepest gratitude what God has seen fit to bestow upon him.

Not long ago one of our best known critics justified his work on the plea that he was engaged in the discovery of truth.....As a Christian that critic was pledged to the position that the truth has already been revealed. He might elucidate what has been revealed, by reverent study, as others are doing, but to regard himself as embarked on the discovery of truth is to adopt a tactless position. Agnosticism which is the very antithesis of the Christian position.

On this point we are in complete harmony with the reverend gentleman. If the Bible is, or contains, a Divine revelation, we have no right to sit in judgment upon it, but are bound to take it as it stands, or not at all. Mr. Hardy is beautifully consistent. His capacity for believing is unlimited. To him the constitution of the Church is Divine, and, therefore, final. "No power on earth," he says, "can alter that which is of God's appointment." Consequently, "the Church is not an aggregate of individuals; it is a Body. It is not even merely an organization; it is an organism." The Church is therefore above criticism. The "broad"-minded sentiment regards it as simply a human institution, subject to all human weaknesses, and partaker of all human faults and foibles. The Church, as an institution, is above criticism, and so is the act of believing in her divinity. A "defect which underlies the temper of accommodation is neglect of the fact that faith, the assent of the soul, comes by illumination of the Spirit of God."

It is not yielded merely by the limited and natural reason. Accommodation springs from regarding faith as an effort of man, not as the gift of God. Hence the Faith is reduced by those who term themselves "broad" to a purely human "experience." And this is the real peril of our age, the attribution of everything to a human origin, the elimination of God.

On this point, also, Mr. Hardy is absolutely right. Theological "breadth" is a departure from sound doctrine, a distinct step towards unbelief. If the Church is of human origin, both she and her doctrinal deposit are fallible. Besides, she has been guilty throughout the ages of deliberately misrepresenting herself. Mr. Hardy expresses this conclusion with exceeding clearness:—

So far, then, from leading to "breadth" you see what this account of our Faith does lead to: in the



Creed, to no historic fact; in Holy Scripture, to no revelation; and in the Church, to no Divine warrant. That is what so-called "breadth" comes to in the long run. As a matter of fact, it is so narrow that nothing can be seen of it. It leaves us exactly where the Heathen world was before Christ came to us. It is only natural it should do so, for out of humanitarian conceptions can proceed nothing but humanism.

We cannot but admire Mr. Hardy's audacious consistency, but our admiration turns to pity as we contemplate his confession of faith. Confirmation is for him a *sine qua non* of church membership, and he inferentially casts suspicion upon the validity of Nonconformist "orders." He believes in the Virgin Birth as a literal fact in the absence of all evidence. He believes in the resurrection from the tomb on the third day, and the subsequent ascension to heaven. Those within the Church who cannot look upon the three alleged events as having literally happened are accused of narrowing the beliefs of the Church to extinction. We frankly admit that rejection of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection amounts to a virtual denial of Christianity as a supernatural religion; but we utterly fail to understand how those who treat them symbolically can have the temerity to call themselves Christians. Those stupendous miracles either did or did not happen. If they did, they are historical facts, not symbols; if they did not, why should they not be interpreted as purely legendary? Mr. Hardy proudly avows his belief in both, as well as in every other Catholic dogma. He describes how these doctrines were proclaimed to a dying shipowner who had spent a lifetime in unbelief, but who then gave them lodgment in his heart and died a happy death. The reverend gentleman imagines that the world is most eager to embrace the Catholic Faith; is, in fact, naturally in full sympathy with all its contents. He goes to the absurd length of asserting that man is a natural Christian, though it seems strange that, preaching to an English congregation, he should have put it in Latin—*naturaliter Christianus*. But the assertion is entirely false. Man is not a natural Christian; if he were there would be no need for the clerical profession. The truth is that it is the most difficult task in the world to persuade anyone to become a Christian; and most Christians betray a constant tendency to backslide. Children are scarcely out of their cradles before a systematic attempt is made to force religion down their throats. At home, in the schools, and at catechumen classes in the Church they are given no rest until they are won over to make a religious profession. Despite all these long-continued and skilfully executed assaults upon their young hearts, many of them resist successfully all the way through, and enter upon responsible life without any religion at all; while from the ranks of those who make the supreme surrender comes an ever-growing army of backsliders, only a few of whom are ever reached by evangelistic and revival campaigns conducted for the purpose of restoring them to the Christian fold. This proves beyond the possibility of rational doubt that no one is *naturaliter Christianus*.

Mr. Hardy makes statements which are obviously very largely untrue. Take the following:—

Look at our men at the Front. They are getting religion fast enough there, but what sort of religion is it? Is it the religion of the P.S.A. and the Brotherhoods? Is it the religion made palatable by coatings of philosophy and poetry? It is the old religion of the Cross, the Mass, and the Confessional that is helping our fellows to fight and to die. That is the religion we want to have here, at the back of the Front, the old Catholic religion, the breadth of whose house is upward! And that is the religion we are going to have, no matter who says nay.

We do not believe, indeed there is considerable evidence to show that there is no truth in the oft-repeated assertion, that the soldiers at the Front are getting religion so wonderfully fast. It is well known that not a few of them have renounced religion altogether, and that those who were Atheists when they went out not only continue to cherish the same faith still, but have been considerably confirmed in it by what they have experienced and witnessed there. It is comic songs that succeed best in cheering our fighting men. The fact that they attend religious services proves nothing, as attendance is usually compulsory; and it is only in comparatively few instances that the chaplains get into close personal touch with them. Almost anything is welcomed that tends to divert their minds from the unspeakable horrors of the War.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Torch-Bearers of Freedom.

Edward Clodd and His Circle.

*Memories*, by Edward Clodd. Chapman & Hall. 1916.

EVEN the great European War cannot impair the value of Mr. Edward Clodd's *Memories*, just published by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, for the veteran Rationalist has known most of the leading men and women "intellectuals" for two generations. Few men, living or dead, have had such a genius for friendship, and through Mr. Clodd's generosity we are permitted to meet in intimacy some of the most brilliant personalities of our time. For he played Boswell to so many Johnsons in his pretty Aldeburgh home, and in his fascinating recollections we encounter such world-famous figures as Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley, besides Professor Clifford, Sir Richard Burton, George Meredith, George Gissing, Andrew Lang, Samuel Butler, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and a perfect galaxy of genius. And it adds to our interest to find that all these various friends were Freethinkers, and united in a common bond to enlarge the boundaries of human thought.

Mr. Clodd is no novice in literature. Many years ago he wrote those charming books, *The Childhood of the World* and *The Childhood of Religions*, and gave pleasure and instruction to tens of thousands of readers. Now, in the evening of his days, he has written one of the best books of memories, which will interest and amuse the younger generation, and inform them of the striking personalities who helped to make the Victorian era one of the greatest in our history.

The pages on Herbert Spencer, George Meredith, and George Gissing are the most interesting in the book, and these alone would make the volume an abiding delight, were there not other chapters crowded with interest. As for Meredith and Gissing, few men living, not even their own relations, knew them so well as Mr. Clodd, and their portraits have been presented most effectively. Indeed, so brilliantly has the author done his work, that his book will be treasured by all admirers of these famous authors.

Meredith used to call Mr. Clodd "Sir Reynard," on account of his having, with fox-like cunning as Meredith professed to think, beguiled him into making his first speech in public. As for his own works, Meredith told Mr. Clodd many things not generally known. Speaking of his masterpiece, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, he said, "Mudie's Select Library would not circulate it, and all the parsons banned it in the parish book clubs as immoral." Some of the Gissing letters are very intimate. In one place Gissing comments on the small financial gains that came from his books, and he adds, pathetically, "The fact of the matter is that some men are born not to make money." Mr. Clodd is righteously indignant



against the "ecclesiastical soul-snatchers," who pretend that Gissing died in the Christian faith. He declares roundly that the story is based on an utter misapprehension.

Of the great names, we hear less of Herbert Spencer, but it must be remembered that the great philosopher was a life-long invalid. Mr. Clodd speaks of his "fussiness," but he also mentions some of Spencer's spontaneous acts of kindness and help. At one of his meetings Mr. Clodd had a fine object-lesson in the philosopher's foibles, for Spencer stopped his ears in the middle of a meal, which was, Mr. Clodd thinks, caused by a frivolous remark of his own. There is, however, something uncanny in Spencer's foresight when, refusing to support the League of Peace and Arbitration, he prophesied: "There is a bad time coming, and civilized mankind will, morally, be uncivilized before civilization can again advance." And, be it remembered, Spencer belongs to that rare company to whom may be applied the supreme tribute, "Others abide our question; thou art free." Long before his death, men had come to think of him with Plato, with Bacon, with Kant, as one of the really great men who mark an era.

Mr. Clodd's book covers much fresh ground, besides adding to our knowledge of the outstanding figures of the Victorian era, and it is extraordinarily bright and fresh. Speaking of Sir George Airy, the Astronomer-Royal, Mr. Clodd recalls that the distinguished scientist was pestered to cast nativities and tell fortunes by poor servant-girls and high-born dames:—

Every letter was answered and every letter was pigeonholed under the general heading, "Insanity," with subdivisions "Astrology" and "Squaring the Circle."

An amusing story is told concerning Bates, the naturalist, to whom Mr. Clodd was executor, and who was describing to a lady how difficult he found it to keep the collection of beetles in first-class condition. "But how did you feed them?" she asked, artlessly. The book, indeed, is a treasury of anecdotes, but there are also more weighty matters.

The opening chapter is devoted to autobiography, and in it we learn how Mr. Clodd made the pilgrimage from orthodoxy to rationalism. These illuminating pages have a profound psychological value, for they show plainly that Mr. Clodd's friendship with the really great men of his generation was due to a mutual understanding. His intellectual equipment was of the same order as theirs, and he brought sympathetic insight into his social relationship with them. His own books show this clearly, for, writing on abstruse subjects, plain men can read him with instruction, and literary folk can read him with delight.

There is propaganda, too, in the reminiscences. What vigour there is in his denunciation of the Bible in the schools. Listen to Mr. Clodd's relentless questionings:—

Were they (the children) to be taught that the Almighty Maker of all things visible and invisible left his throne in heaven from time to time, and came to this earth to do things of which man, at his lowest, would be ashamed? Were they to be taught that all that is set down in the Bible about God actually happened? That he put the first man and woman in a garden and threatened them that if they ate of the fruit of a certain tree they would be punished with death, and not only this, but that their sin would be visited on all mankind, whose everlasting fate would be determined at the Judgment Day? Were they to be taught that this Almighty One played the part of "Peeping Tom" to see what Adam and Eve would do, knowing all the time what would happen? Were they to be taught that all the people who were afterwards born (how any could be born seems a puzzler, since no mention is made of Cain's wife) would,

save eight persons, act so wickedly as to cause God to drown them? Were they to be taught that he walked and talked as man; that he was fond of the smell of roast meats; that he showed his "back parts" to the leader of a small tribe whom he made his "chosen people"; that he became their War Lord, aiding them as best he could? As best, for is it not related in the Book of Judges (ch. i. 10) that, while he helped the Hebrews to conquer their mountain enemies, he could not help them to victory over their enemies in the valley because these had chariots of iron! He commanded that of his chosen people fifty thousand and seventy men should be put to death because they had been so curious and so wicked as to look into a sacred box called the ark, wherein he was believed to dwell! And so on; all through the repellent stories of meanness and massacres, of blessings on liars and tricksters, filling writings of which I was taught to believe God himself was the author—a God thus made his own libeller! At what level of barbarism must the people have been who could thus conceive of their God!

This has been said a thousand times in the *Freethinker*; but it is refreshing to find it echoed in a half-guinea volume. Mr. Clodd, indeed, shows clearly that the work of the Secularist leaders was not unknown among his circle of friends, for he tells us that George Meredith admired Mr. Foote's forthright methods of advocacy. And it is pleasant to remember that the present leader of Secularism is constantly in receipt of encouragement from the foremost writers and publicists of the day.

At the present time there is a tendency to admire the great figures of the preceding generation without attempting to understand them. Mr. Clodd is one of the privileged few who knew these great personalities intimately, and he knew also that their ideas were altering the face of the civilized world. In recalling these high and important matters to present-day people, who are inclined to value their heritage too lightly, Mr. Clodd has proved himself a true and devoted disciple of Liberty, and he has written a book which will be treasured, not only for its charm and originality, but also for the weighty lessons it conveys. Eternal vigilance is the price of Liberty, and without this constant caution against retrogression a return to barbarism is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun. So brilliantly and wisely has Mr. Clodd done his work, that he has added an indispensable book, which should be on every Freethinker's bookshelf.

MIMNERMUS.

## Pagan and Christian Morality.

### III.

(Continued from p. 710.)

Five centuries before the Christian era Buddhism had already inculcated gentleness and compassion, not only towards men, but towards all living creatures. Among the Jews themselves, the Rabbi Hillel had already taught, a generation before Christ, that the commandment of loving one's neighbour as one's self constituted the very essence of the law. To assist even our enemies was a maxim of the Stoics in Jesus' time. And but one generation later, although without doubt independently of him, and strictly in keeping with the principles of the Stoic school, Epictetus called all men brothers, inasmuch as all were the children of God.—D. F. Strauss, "The Old Faith and the New" (1874), pp. 95-96.

In the later Stoics, self-examination and purity of thought were continually inculcated. There are some writers who, with an obstinacy which it is more easy to explain than to excuse, persist, in defiance of the very clearest evidence to the contrary, in representing these virtues as exclusively Christian, and in maintaining, without a shadow of proof, that the place they undeniably occupy in the later Roman moralists was due to the direct or indirect influence of the new faith. The plain fact is that they were fully known to the Greeks, and both Plato and Xenon even exhorted men to study their dreams, on



the ground that these often reveal the latent tendencies of the disposition.—Lecky, "History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne" (1902), vol. i., pp. 147-148.

"THE Lord's Prayer" is also included in the Sermon on the Mount, and is considered by Christians to be an ideally perfect form of supplication. This also can be wholly reconstructed from the Talmud. The learned author of the anonymous work, *The Gospel History*, after comparing "The Lord's Prayer" with "The Kadish," an ancient Jewish prayer in use long before the time of Christ, and with which it presents only a few verbal differences, further observes:—

"Our Father which art in heaven" is a Jewish expression, and occurs not only in the above prayer, but repeatedly in the Jewish compositions which preceded the Christian era. In the most ancient prayers used in the synagogues the words "Our Father" and "Our Father in heaven" in Hebrew are stereotyped forms of expression. In the Mishna Rosch-Haschana it is said, "The Israelites have always been great in raising their thoughts, and submitting their hearts to their Father who is in heaven."....."Give us this day our daily bread" is an expression which is found in the Talmud (Treatise Yom-Tob, p. 16A), "May God be blessed each day for the daily bread which he gives us," and was uttered by Hillel. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" is also in Treatise Meghilla, f. 28: "whoever is ready to forgive, his sins also are forgiven him."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. J. M. Robertson devotes a section of his work, *Christianity and Mythology*, to a consideration of the "Lord's Prayer," and conclusively proves, not only that the prayer as a whole was an ancient Jewish prayer in daily use at the time of Christ, and known as the *Kadish*, but concludes, "there is reason to surmise that, as so many of the Jewish legends and myths are originally Babylonian, so the 'Lord's' Prayer, or *Kadish*, is originally a Babylonian prayer." Only a month after Mr. Robertson had written this, Mr. G. T. Pinches published, in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for October, 1891, a translation of a Babylonian tablet containing an invocation of the Babylonian God, Merodach, in which occur the lines:—

May the abundance of the world descend into thy [the city's] midst;  
May thy command be accomplished in time to come.....  
May [the evil spirit] dwell outside of thee.

"Here," remarks Mr. Robertson, "we have prayer-norms, on the lines of the Lord's Prayer, dating perhaps 4000 B.C."<sup>2</sup>

It will be noticed that the Babylonian tablet speaks of the "evil spirit," where the "Lord's Prayer" speaks merely of delivering "from evil"; but if we turn to the Revised Version of the New Testament we find the correct translation reads, Deliver us from "the Evil One," which not only agrees with the ancient formula, but incorporates the Devil—which advanced Christians have quietly dropped overboard—in the midst of the most sacred prayer known to Christendom.

And what is the reply of Christian scholarship to this exposure of the antiquity of the "Lord's Prayer"? To cite Mr. Robertson again:—

It is hardly necessary to remark here that the Talmudic parallels to any part of the Sermon on the Mount cannot conceivably have been borrowed by the Rabbis from the Christian Gospels: they would as soon have borrowed from the ritual of the Pagans. This is now tacitly admitted by Christian scholars; and the claim made for the "Lord's" authorship of the prayer ascribed to him takes the following shape:—

"The prayer is doubtless based upon expressions and sentiments already familiar to the Jews; indeed parallel phrases to nearly all its contents have been discovered in

the Talmud. This, however, does not detract from its beauty or originality as a whole" (Article "Lord's Prayer" in McClintock and Strong's *Biblical Cyclopaedia*).

In none save an ecclesiastical cause would such a claim now be made; and it is needless here to deal with it, since it can be shown that the prayer as a whole is pre-Christian. Even the authority cited admits that "The closing doxology is omitted by Luke, and is probably spurious in Matthew, as it is not found there in any of the early MSS."

That is to say, even after the Gospels had taken substantially their present shape, even after the third was compiled, Christians did not hesitate to add to their Lord's Prayer phrases already in Judaic use. There need then be no difficulty in believing that the other phrases of the prayer were taken even in their present context from a Jewish formula.<sup>1</sup>

The *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, which represents the most advanced Christian scholarship of our time, in the article "Lord's Prayer," after dismissing Dr. Margoliouth's work, *The Lord's Prayer no Adoption of Existing Jewish Prayers*, as "rather rhetorical than historical and critical in character," openly confesses, in a burst of confidence, that: "The truth is that we may say of the Lord's Prayer—applying what Theodore Zahn lately wrote of the teaching of Jesus as a whole—that Jesus uttered things which were said almost literally by Jewish teachers before and after him,"<sup>2</sup> but still pleads for its "uniqueness."

Well, supposing it is as unique as Christians claim (we do not admit for a moment that it is unique, but supposing it is), uniqueness is not a virtue. To Christians brought up from earliest infancy to regard this prayer as inspired and absolutely perfect, criticism of which would be flat blasphemy, it may seem a great and marvellous prayer, but to an independent mind it partakes more of the character of a begging letter. It commences with an assertion of relationship. He is our Father, and therefore he is expected to act as such. Next comes some specious adulation about his name being "hallowed," that his kingdom will come, and that his wishes will be done on earth as they are in heaven. Having thus put the Father in a good humour, the prayer proceeds to put in an application for poor-relief. The Father is asked for daily bread, to forgive us our debts, not to lead us into temptation—as if any good father would think of leading his children into temptation—to deliver us from evil (the Evil One in the original), finishing up with another dose of flattery—which, as Burke remarked, "corrupts both the receiver and the giver"—about his kingdom, power, and glory. It is saturated with the cringing servility of the Oriental in the presence of his master. It is a product of the Orient, and betrays its origin.

Then there is the advice as to giving alms, "that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of men," like the hypocrites, "that they may have glory of men." This sentiment is common in the Talmud, where we read: "R. Eleazar said: He who giveth alms in secret is greater than Moses himself" (*Baba Bathra*, 9, 2). And again: "All the charity of the heathen will be counted a sin unto them if they have only a mind to be praised for it" (*Baba Bathra*, 10, 2). Yet again: "Do good for good's sake, with a pure intention: make not of it a crown wherewith to adorn thyself" (*Nedarim*, 62).<sup>3</sup>

Plutarch, the Greek writer, taught: "He who hath done some good and laudable action, and then telleth it to others, showeth that he still looketh without and desireth glory, and hath not yet a true vision of virtue."

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 450-451.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1911), vol. iii., column 2821.

<sup>3</sup> McCabe, *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*, pp. 235-

<sup>1</sup> *The Gospel History*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 453.



On *Progress in Virtue*,<sup>1</sup> Epictetus exhorts: "Wait not for applauses, and shouts, and praises, in order to do good" (*Fragments*, lxxxiii.).

Marcus Aurelius advises: "When thou hast done a good act and another hath received it, why dost thou still look for a third thing beside these, as fools do; either to have the reputation of having done a good act, or to obtain a return?" (vii., 73).

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

### The Priests.

BACK to the dawn of history, in the night of forgotten years  
They rose from amongst the people, to trade on the people's  
fears;  
On the bended necks of the lowly, they fastened and clamped  
their yoke;  
And ages have passed, but the gird holds fast, and never a  
thong hath broke.  
The backward path of the years, is strewn with a tangle of  
outworn myth;  
It is dotted with dogmas of cranky creeds that craft has  
juggled with;  
For it matters no whit what weary God yields claim to the  
bending skies;  
Full sure from the ash of his buried cult, new born shall the  
craft arise,  
To trade as they traded in older times, and all for their  
worldly gain,  
On fears down deep in the human soul, of death and its after  
pain;  
They have nourished the seeds of a souring strife, and hearts  
that else were caught  
Together in bond of kinship fond, o'er a tenet of faith have  
fought;  
More hearts have broken and more hearts bled through the  
guile of the priestly clan,  
Than political wars have accounted for since ever the world  
began.  
They have hallowed unholy things for gain, for gain they  
have cursed the true,  
In the name of their Lord they have drawn the sword, and  
struck—when it paid them to;  
Lagging an age behind their age, and the spirits which  
marked its time,  
They have dragged on the skirt of advancing thought in  
every age and clime:  
They claim their "truths" as the only truths it is fit that  
our minds shall know;  
And they say of the paths wherein they tread, "Herein it is  
meet ye go;  
Or, failing, take care of your soul's welfare, it is ours as we  
choose to blight  
Your immortal soul, or save it whole, in your own or your  
God's despite."  
And ever their business sense forbade them hold small things  
in scorn,  
They lay claim to the widow's mite, and a tithe of the  
people's corn.  
Back to the dawn of history, in the night of forgotten years,  
They rose from amongst the people to trade on the people's  
fears;  
And their woven spell has served them well, and evil it is to  
break,  
For the priest fights hard in his keen regard for the gold and  
the power at stake. —*Hong Kong Telegraph.*

Wisdom is to be found in truth alone.—*Goethe.*

Only he who thinks is free and independent.—*Feuerbach.*

What a boundless capacity for sleep, and for serene  
stupidity, there is in the human mind.—*Ruskin.*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

### Acid Drops.

Mr. Arthur Machen, in a recent issue of the *Evening News* :—

We do not go mad, because by special grace we are certified that, in the final Court of Appeal all science is a lie, even the highest science of all, and so we simply grin at Achilles and the Tortoise, as we grin at Darwin, deride Huxley, and laugh at Herbert Spencer.

We rather fancy that what Mr. Machen intended to write was: "We do not complain, because we are convinced that the average member of the public is an Ass, and so we simply grin at the attempts of Darwin, and Huxley, and Spencer, to teach them better, and take comfort in the fact that the possibilities of literary exploitation are practically inexhaustible." But, probably, something happened to the "copy."

Mr. R. J. Campbell, the quick-change artist of the pulpit, is not satisfied that the War is worth it, if we are only fighting for the sake of humanity. "I want to point out," he said, in a sermon at Hatton Garden, on November 1, "that if our boys are suffering and dying for humanity, the humanity of to-day, and the humanity yet to be born, or for that abstraction called England, the sacrifice is hardly worth it." To be valuable, in Mr. Campbell's opinion, the results must be seen in our immortal welfare. A meaner and more contemptible preaching than this it would be difficult to find. But real Christianity tends that way.

A very generous man is the Rev. Wilson Lee, member of the Atherstone Rural District Council. A discussion was raised as to the wages of the roadmen in view of the present cost of living. The roadmen at present get 20s. 8d. per week, and it was suggested that a rise should be given. Then rose the Rev. Lee and suggested that these men were well paid on a pound a week, and we ought to hear something about self-denial. We suggest that the Rev. Wilson Lee's congregation should start at once by treating their pastor on the same principle.

Queens Mary and Alexandra have patronized the newly erected shrines erected in the streets of London, and the clergy are jubilant. With shrines and religious processions in the streets, English Christianity is fast becoming a burlesque of continental Catholicism. What will the dear clergy say if the continental Sunday follows in its wake?

We see from the *Daily Chronicle* that Mr. Oswald Stoll and the Alhambra Company, Limited, have issued a writ against Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien in regard to his articles and speeches. It is distinctly to the good that somebody should have the pluck to take up the gloves, to teach some of these wordy moralists something of consistency, fair play, and common sense. The Puritans and autocrats want bending back to sanity, and respect for others' rights and ideas.

Seeing that Germany is a nation of Atheists—so say quite a number of our leading medicine-men—it is surprising to find the *Daily Chronicle* reporting in its issue of November 2 that a speaker in the Reichstag complained that those professing no religion were not allowed to become officers. As a matter of fact, this is quite in accord with German Army regulations. Thus M. Jules Huret, in his book *En Allemagne*, says on p. 295, dealing with candidates for "Sous-officiers":—

If there is the least trace of socialistic opinion the candidate is rejected. If he is an Atheist or opposed to religion, it is the same. Notorious Atheism is banned to officers as it is to all German functionaries.

Germany insists upon its officers being pious, and the result is before the world.

We are almost tempted to run a column in this paper under the heading of "The Bishop of London Day by Day," or "Studies in Prelatical Pathology." Here are some of his latest gems, "When one nation is determined on war God cannot stop it, but he produces the next best thing—5,000,000 men in this country who voluntarily offered to fight for the



rights of smaller nations." That is, when a nation determines on war God cannot stop it, so he raises another army to make sure that the nation bent on war shall not be disappointed! What a God! And what a Bishop!

The Bishop of London thinks the child is very badly catered for in the theatre. He prefers that children should be frightened with stories of hell in Sunday and day-schools; or, perhaps, being a bachelor, he knows nothing of them.

The dear Bishop says the object of the National Mission is to make the nation "godlier." Englishmen already worship three gods; how many more does his lordship wish to add to the Pantheon?

Will the dear Bishop of London finish his career as an Archbishop or as a quick-change artiste?

Suet pudding is to replace the time-honoured Christmas pudding at Walsall workhouse. This trumpety war-time economy will make the unhappy inmates appreciate more fully the blessings of poverty.

In one week the casualties were—dead, 673; wounded, 38,653. One's first impression is, naturally, that these figures refer to the European War. They have, however, nothing to do with it. They are the casualties for a single week in the American army of labour, and is given by a writer in the *New York Outlook*. Truly, peace hath its casualties no less than war, and these continue even when "Peace" is universal.

A South Wales paper publishes the following:—

The following appears in the "Briton Ferry Parish Magazine" for this month:—"The Primitive Methodist Chapel, Hunter Street, has been sold to a cinema company, and two others are practically forsaken. A fourth is kept going by the generosity of one man; a fifth without a minister for two years, but with an old debt of £1,200; a sixth, with a roll of 800 members ten years ago (so it was said), had only two baptisms (two years ago) in two years; last year not one; and the congregation often too small in the morning to make a collection. There are four more at hand—all within half a mile radius. The population is increasing, and wages are better than ever.

More proofs of the great revival in religion!

Two clergymen have been fined for allowing their church bells to be rung after dark. Perhaps they will console themselves with the beautiful hymn, "The bells of hell go ting-a-ling."

A boy of eleven years of age has been appointed organist at Boxmoor Catholic Church. Most juveniles at that tender age prefer mouth-organs.

The Duc D'Orleans has petitioned the Pope to dissolve his marriage with the Archduchess Marie, of Austria, on the ground that she is an enemy alien. The Catholic Church insists on the indissolubility of marriage, and it remains to be seen how far the Pope will favour so distinguished a suppliant.

Dean Inge has been called the "gloomy" ecclesiastic, but his pessimistic utterances are brightly expressed. Writing on the High Churchmen in the *Guardian*, he says: "The joy-ride of the Romanizing Anglican must end in the fate of the lady of Riga."

Donkey-meat is being eaten at Trieste, and costs thirteence a pound. Balaam's ass would have been eloquent on such a subject.

The *Manchester City News* reports Dean Welldon thus, "It is the Bible which ensures freedom, justice, progress." In defence of the Dean it must be explained that the statement was made at a drawing-room meeting on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society, where such things are expected. Otherwise, we really think the Dean knows better. Look at Russia, Spain, Germany, or even Britain.

What has the Bible done to secure freedom and justice in any of these countries? What reform is there during, say, the past two centuries that has not met with opposition based upon Biblical teaching? Even improvement in religious teaching, as most clergymen admit, has had to fight the opposition of the Bible. For irresponsible chatter the clergy, even the most intelligent among them, are hard to beat.

The Salvation Army is emulating the Y.M.C.A., and has opened a hostel for soldiers in London, and the announcement adds, "those who can pay will be charged 6d. and 9d. per night." Although "salvation" is supposed to be "free," there seem to be plenty of "extras."

The Bishop of London has been elected a vice-president of the Navy League. Probably his lordship knows more about Noah's Ark than of modern battleships.

The stories of pictures and images of the Virgin and crucifixes left intact in continental towns when all else was wrecked by shell-fire have roused the ire of the *Daily News*, which says that some of them are "pure romances." If our esteemed contemporary had been dealing with other than religious matters, it would have used a shorter term.

Church and State work very nicely together. All Army chaplains are privileged to receive boxes of literature for distribution among the troops. We often wondered where the millions of tracts were sent.

At a London music-hall one of the attractions is a talking horse, from America. There is a talking donkey in the Bible, but that species seems to have died out.

At a Sheffield munition factory two new high-pressure engines were "christened." Is this to be considered a proof of the revival of religion?

A Mormon elder's appeal for exemption has been refused by a Tribunal, although he pleaded that he was a minister of a denomination. He has the consolation, however, that all his wives can petition the Throne of Grace for his welfare.

In the *Lancet*, Captain J. Bennett Tombleson, R.A.M.C. gives a chart of sixty cases of cures of war-broken men by means of hypnotism, most of the cases being of nervous breakdown and neurasthenia. A newspaper calls the cures "miracles of science." They are certainly more satisfactory than the war-area "miracles" of religion, which seem mostly concerned with plaster images of the Virgin and very hazy angels.

An American has invented an odourless and tearless onion. Religious folk, who believe that Providence doeth all things well, will prefer the original product.

Rev. C. Unmach, of West Horsley, has been fined 30s. for ringing church-bells at night and for having too much light in the church. The Rev. Unmach need not be dismayed. He is not the first who has got into trouble for having too much light in church.

Police Constable Packhan, of Brighton, was charged with entering a shop and stealing goods therefrom. Incidentally we may mention that Police Constable Packhan was a member of a Salvation Army band.

"The war has called attention to the fact that so-called Christian civilization has been living by false ideals." So says the Rev. R. J. Campbell. He ought to know, for he has been associated with the Government religion and also with Nonconformity.

Mr. Lloyd George, speaking at Castle Street Welsh Chapel, said at present there was much of the Gospel of Cain mixed up with the Gospel of Christ. Mr. George should remember



that, whereas Cain murdered one man, Christians have killed millions. As for Cain's "gospel," he was a husbandman, and not a preacher.

"Dead Premier's Refusal to Summon Parliament" is the headline in a Midland paper. And Sir Oliver Lodge has not noticed it publicly.

A good story is told of a clergyman who jibed at a Freethinker by saying that his opponent was the great-grandson of an ape. "Just so!" replied the Freethinker; "my pedigree begins where yours ends."

Lord Selborne says there is little hostility to Christianity in England to-day, and less professed Atheism. His lordship would do well to confine his remarks to subjects on which he possesses information, for it is plain he possesses little on this one. For our part, we venture to say that at no other period has Christianity been treated with so much contempt. And as to *professed* Atheism, that can never be a safe guide as to the amount of Atheism current. The Englishman is never remarkable for his courage in openly professing an unpopular opinion; but we have the best of reasons for stating that even here there has been progress. There is less timidity in professing Atheism than there was, and if complete honesty of expression became the rule, Lord Selborne would soon see cause to change his opinion.

Probably because Russia is a little-known country to most English people, it has been largely used by religious writers and speakers to strengthen religion in this country. The Bishop of London's discourses may serve as one example, and Mr. Stephen Graham's book on Russia—which is an endless theme for ridicule in the Russian Press—for another. We are, therefore, the more pleased to find the *Church Times* commenting as follows:—

The example of Russia and France is adduced in advocacy of "the suspension of the liquor traffic during the war." What are the facts? In Russia the sale of vodka, or spirit, which was a monopoly of the Government, is stopped; but no new restriction has been put on the sale of other beverages containing alcohol. In France the sale of some special concoctions, such as absinthe, and of beverages containing more than a certain large percentage of alcohol, is prohibited; the sale of wine and beer is not in any way restricted.....They describe the total suppression of the liquor traffic as "the natural step that France and Russia have already taken." It is a falsification of the facts. Since we cannot suppose ignorance, we fear we must call it a deliberate falsification.

"Deliberate falsification." That seems a quite correct description. And, as is not unusual, these people are "lying for the greater glory of God."

*Apropos* of what has just been said, we see that Mr. R. J. Campbell said that "the difference between Russia and England is that Russia is a spiritual and religious country, and England is not." Mr. Campbell would, of course, forgive a country anything but the giving up of religion; and so we can understand his overlooking the massacres of Jews in Russia, and the fact that for many years its reforming spirits had to either leave the country or work with the prospect of Siberia always before them. And as in Russia something like eighty per cent. of the people are unable to read or write, we are not at all surprised that Russia is more religious than England. And if we set on one side the ignorant and misleading chatter about Russia by men of the Mr. Graham type, there are few writers on Russia who have not indicated the religion of Russia as one of the sources of its past misgovernment. That Russia is a great country with a great future, and that the Russian *people* offer splendid material for progress, we quite believe. But, like other countries, Russia will only achieve real freedom and happiness in proportion as it shakes off the influence of its religion.

The Earl of Selborne, speaking at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Church, said that a great deal of religion was carefully concealed. Evidently he was not thinking of the Church and Salvation Armies.

The Rev. F. H. Gillingham, Rector of Bermondsey, says that "the Church of England seemed to represent all the worst characteristics of the nation—easy-going, slow, and hide-bound by old customs." This is quite an unsolicited testimonial!

The "C" class is being called up now for military service. It is a pity that this does not mean that the clergy, of whom there are 50,000, will receive their marching orders.

Many of the dear clergy are recommending their flocks to read the Bible regularly. And this at a time when a number of municipalities have decided that fiction is a needless luxury.

## Correspondence.

### THE THREE LORD SHAFTESBURYS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Mimmermus,” in his interesting article on “Free-thought and Literature,” refers to Matthew Arnold as having poked fun at the Trinity by comparing it (or them) to “three Lord Shaftesburys.” The passage occurs in *Literature and Dogma*, though a reader seeking it to-day would probably not find it. The reason will be known to your readers of six years' standing, as the story of this famous passage was told by the late Mr. Foote in the *Freethinker* of August 14, 1910. As this journal will doubtless have found its way since then to many new readers, I may perhaps be allowed to briefly refer to the matter.

The “three Lord Shaftesburys” passage was one of a number from well-known writers quoted by Mr. Foote in his trial for blasphemy in 1883 before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge.

Lord Coleridge, in summing up, told the jury that some of the passages he had heard for the first time; that, hearing them only from him (Mr. Foote) for the first time, he had a difficulty in distinguishing them from the incriminated publication; and that they appeared to him to be open to exactly the same charge that Mr. Foote's publications were. He then stated that if there were two persons, however eminent, who used language not fairly distinguishable from that used by Mr. Foote, and if they were ever brought before him they should have neither more nor less than the justice he was trying to do Mr. Foote.

Arnold, in the preface to the 1883 edition, gave the following reason for omitting the passage:—

The whole notion of *Literature and Dogma*, with many people, is that it is a book containing an abominable illustration, and attacking Christianity. It may be regretted that an illustration likely to be torn from its context, to be improperly used, and to give pain, should ever have been adopted.....But the illustration has given pain, I am told, in a quarter where my deference, and the deference of all who can appreciate one of the purest careers and noblest characters of our time, is indeed due; and finding that in that quarter pain has been given by the illustration, I do not hesitate to expunge it.

Mr. Foote expressed the opinion that the person thus referred to by Arnold was no other than Lord Coleridge himself, since he and Arnold were close personal friends, and Coleridge answered the high description. But he contended that Arnold's statement about the illustration having been torn from its context and improperly used was nonsense, as he had quoted the passage *in extenso*, and for a legitimate purpose, to show that while Arnold and others in high positions, writing in expensive books for the select few, were allowed to indulge with impunity in their fun-poking propensities, he (Foote), writing in cheap publications for the masses, was prosecuted for blasphemy. Mr. Foote, nevertheless, referred not unkindly to Arnold's action in suppressing the passage, apparently fully appreciating his motive in doing so. This was no doubt due in no small measure to his own great admiration of the high character of Lord Coleridge. But he thought that Arnold, having published the passage, should have let it stand, and he probably felt that in suppressing it in deference to one person, he had done an injustice to another.

J. A. TOMKINS.



C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 12, Glasgow; December 10, Leicester; January 14, Nottingham; February 4, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 12, Brixton; November 19, Birmingham; December 31, Abertillery.
- M. DIBSDALE.—It is gratifying to learn that the change from Christianity has done much to "inspire and help" you. Thousands of others could well write to the same effect.
- W. PANCOTT.—We do not quite see the point of your communication. Affirmations of belief in anything have no more than a biographical interest, and evidence can only be conclusive to the one who receives it.
- W. M. (Dulwich).—The thing looks "fishy," but we could pass judgment better if, as you offer, you send us the original document for inspection.
- G. E. WEBB.—Many thanks for portrait of Paine's house at Lewes. We should be quite ready to consider an article such as you suggest.
- A. L. M.—We have no desire to defend "vulgar" plays, let alone suggestive ones. But we are quite convinced that the method adopted by General Smith-Dorrien and the Bishop of London is the wrong one. It sends people looking for indecency, and in the main they will find it. Meanwhile it does nothing whatever to raise the level of taste. The method is harmful all round. The public is not improved, and the salacious imagination of our would-be improvers grows steadily worse.
- E. GURNSEY.—Your letter would have done good if inserted in the paper to which it was originally sent. But refusal to insert may have been due to its length. Always make it a rule to avoid lengthy letters. No editor likes them, and it gives them an excuse for refusal. We do not see how your letter would achieve its purpose by appearing in the *Freethinker*.
- J. R. D.—We are not at all blind to the point raised in your letter, but it only raises the issue in the same form. If German preparations for war necessitate warlike preparation on our part, then it is plain that their preparedness fails to achieve its end. For, quite clearly, Germany would hope by its action to prevent other nations going to war with her, and so securing peace for Germany. The militarist argument moves in a vicious circle, and overlooks the important psychological truth that all these preparations for war—with the underlying assumption that war will come some day—familiarizes people's minds with the thought of war, and so makes its emergence the more certain.
- H. MEREDITH (Calcutta).—We join you in doubting whether Lord Roberts ever told the Bishop of London "what we want is a nation on its knees." But clerics have been for centuries manufacturing this kind of thing, and the occupation is too profitable to be easily given up.
- E. A. McDONALD.—You will have seen by this time the response to the Sustentation Fund. All we can say of our own work is that we enjoy it. We are not conscious of any "sacrifice." We are doing what we like, and we venture to think that no one could be better employed. And a humorous side to one's troubles can always be found if one is built that way.
- F. WELLS.—Very pleased to know that our writings have been of so much service to you. Thanks for booklet, which will prove useful.
- L. BRANDES.—We already had a paragraph ready when your letter reached us. Thanks for what you have done, and are doing.
- TOM MARSON.—We quite agree with you that the question of cadet institutions in schools has a very important bearing upon the question of Militarism and Civilization. We are astonished that any public man should hold a different opinion.
- A. LAW.—We deeply regret to learn of Mrs. Law's death. It does indeed represent the snapping of a link between the old and new generation of Freethinkers.
- A. POLWARTH.—We think you may take it for granted that Mr. J. M. Robertson has never, or to any one, said that he believed in Jesus Christ. Your informant must be either a fool or a —.
- J. D. RESTALL.—Thanks for your appreciation of what we are doing.
- S. ROBERTS.—Sorry for the mistake. You will see it has been rectified.
- A. S. PICKERING.—Many thanks for the interest in our Sustentation Fund.
- 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.

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

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

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures at Glasgow to-day (Nov. 12). His subjects are: morning, at 12, "Will Christianity Survive the War?" and at 6.30, "A World Without God." Weather permitting—we feel constrained to say that after last Sunday—we have no doubt there will be good meetings. Mr. Cohen will also lecture at Falkirk before his return, but whether on Friday evening or Monday evening he is unable to say, as no definite information is to hand at the time of going to press.

Last week we only had time, owing to the L.C.C. meeting not being held until Tuesday, to barely record the result of the voting. And although the decision was against us, the voting showed that the agitation had borne fruit. When the resolution was passed in favour of prohibiting the sale of literature, there was a practically unanimous vote for it. Last week the voting was 33 to 42, so that the agitation had succeeded in winning many over to the side of non-interference. We observe that the bitterest opponent to the continued sale of literature was the member for Whitechapel, Mr. W. C. Johnson, J.P. That gentleman must be dealt with when the time for re-election comes round. And we hope his constituents will bear in mind, whether this attempt to curtail freedom of propaganda is ultimately successful or not, that this gentleman did his "bit" in favour of repression and reaction.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam made his first appearance at the Council after a very severe illness, and supported our cause most strongly. Freethinkers are all well aware that on a question of principle Mr. Headlam can always be depended on, and in this matter he has shown himself worthy of his past. The best thanks of all lovers of liberty are due to him for his strenuous exertions in this matter. We say this without at all ignoring the efforts made by those others who spoke and voted with the minority. One who heard the debate assures us that all the common sense of the Council was with us; and that we can well believe.

A word of recognition is also due to all those who, in order to keep the issue alive, have made it their business to see that literature should be sold right through October, although the Council declared that its sale should cease at the end of September. The names and addresses of these have been taken—Miss Vance, Miss Kough, Mr. Wood, Mr. Henley, and Mr. Neate—and we now await the next move on the part of the L.C.C. We believe that others have also sold literature, but we can only speak at the moment for the N.S.S. But in all possible ways the protest and the agitation will go on. Indeed, we may say it is more than ever necessary that it should be continued as vigorously as ever. We have every reason for believing that the original decision of the Parks Committee was reached in complete ignorance of the hostility it would arouse. It is for those who value such liberties as we possess to show the Council how real that hostility is.

Just as we are going to press, and after the above was written, we understand that at the last meeting of the Parks



Committee a resolution was moved by Mr. Jesson, and seconded by Mr. Hobson, that the Council take no action until the end of the War. In the ordinary course, this resolution should come up as a recommendation from the Committee at next Tuesday's Council meeting. If it is then carried, the right to sell literature is safeguarded while the War lasts. After the War, the Council will be brought into contact with its constituents once more. Our best thanks are due to Mr. Jesson for the gallant manner in which he has conducted this fight.

It is useless to blackguard last Sunday's weather in London. For one reason no language could do it justice. In the circumstances, therefore, there was a very good start made with the course of lectures at Brixton, and several new members were made at the close of the meeting. There was also a good sale of literature. Mr. Wilde officiated as Chairman, and did his best to secure some discussion, but only a few questions were asked.

Mr. Lloyd takes the second meeting of the course, and we have every expectation of a full hall. Avondale Hall is about three minutes from Clapham Road Tube Station, and can be reached by 'bus or tram from the Elephant and Castle. We hope all South London Freethinkers will do their best to induce the attendance of their Christian friends.

We are pleased to report that an attempt is being made to commence regular work at Walsall. The Lecture Hall, Milton Street, adjoining the Palfrey Working Men's Club, has been taken for to-day (Nov. 12), and Mr. F. E. Willis, of Birmingham, has arranged to lecture on "The Tottering Creed of Christianity." The lecture will commence at 7 o'clock, and admission is free. There is a prospect of forming a regular Branch of the N.S.S. for future activity. The present move has been made under the inspiration of our Birmingham friends and the active support of a few local sympathisers.

In our "Acid Drops" for September 24 we gave a long citation from the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, dealing with education in Japan. A correspondent now asks for more exact reference, and we should like to oblige him. Unfortunately, we do not keep these things after they are used; and as this magazine was sent us by a correspondent, perhaps the gentleman will be good enough to send us the information for which we are asked.

Will those interested in the proposed classes, to which reference was made in a recent issue of this paper, please note that Mr. Howell Smith lectures this evening (November 12) at the St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, Kentish Town Road, at 7.30, on "The Outlook for Free-thought." The lecture will be an attempt to sketch a line of study for propagandists, in view of the changed conditions of to-day. Admission is free.

Owing to the Press Bureau regulations we are afraid that our American subscribers will have been receiving their paper irregularly. That matter is now satisfactorily arranged, and we are now able to send the *Freethinker* regularly—the necessary permit having been at last issued. If those subscribers who have missed any numbers of the *Freethinker* will communicate with our Business Manager, they may rely upon having the missing issues forwarded at once.

### Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £180 os. 8d.—E. A. McDonald, £1 1s.; W. A. Williams, 2s.; M. Dibsdale, 2s. 6d.; F. Wells, 2s. 6d.; J. Kilpatrick, 5s.; Ernest, 5s.; A. Bullock, 2s.; A. S. Andrews, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. R. Polwarth, 5s.; H. C. S. (bi-weekly contribution), 1s. J. B. Saukhall, 2s. 6d.; H. Mason, 2s. 6d.; J. O. Restall, 5s.; Per L. Brandes, collected at Avondale Hall, £1 2s.; O. B., 3s.; J. Evans, 2s.; M. Streimer, 17s.; Per A. S. Pickering (Nuncaton)—Pointon, 2s.; Park, 2s.; Speight, 2s.; Sanders, 2s.; Johnson, 1s.; A. S. Pickering, 2s.—Total, 11s.; W. Owen, 2s. 6d.; W. Jannaway, 3s.

## A Human Creator of Plant Life.

### III.

(Concluded from p. 715.)

BURBANK has transmuted the dangerously aggressive thorny cactus into a plant serviceable to man and the herbivorous creatures. He caused the multitudinous thorns to disappear from its branches, leaves, and fruit; he eliminated the deadly spicules from the leaves and branches which had rendered them unfit for food. Then he proceeded to improve the fruit in yield, size, and nutritive powers, and made the leaves and stems into fodder for cattle, and vegetable sustenance for the human race.

The social and economic magnitude of this achievement is incalculable. The immense desert wastes where the cactus usually reigns as monarch of all it surveys, and where no other mode of vegetation will even attempt to dwell, may be transformed into vast cultivated areas, even in the absence of irrigation. And with a little irrigation the desert may be made to blossom like the rose.

A few cacti were known to specialists which were less thorny than the remaining species, and which bore fruit that was eaten by native tribes. Burbank determined to combine these milder forms with the normal thorny plants. There are some twenty genera of cacti known to botanists, and five of these are found in the United States. The cactus seems to vary more in America than elsewhere, and it was upon an American form—the *Opuntia*—that Burbank prosecuted his initial experiments.

One variety of *Opuntia* is quite at home even in the harsh climate of Alaska. This hardy cactus was chosen to form part of the coming plant. Not only was a cactus required *minus* spicules and thorns, and furnished with reliable feeding qualities, but it was likewise essential to evolve a plant equally adapted to the equatorial or semi-arctic zones. Other varieties were pressed into service to secure this end or that, the ultimate object being the provision of a permanent cactus of general utility.

Thousands of plants were grown from different varieties that were tended by Burbank with more than a parent's care. As soon as the cactus crop was in flower, the plants were freely cross-fertilized—the pollen, or male element of the blossom, being artificially transferred from one variety to the female organs of another. This plan was adopted for several consecutive seasons. This extensive system of hybridization was carried out for the purpose of liberating the plants from their customary habits so long fixed by heredity. The seeds of these elaborately hybridized cacti were in their turn sown. But thousands of the new plants remained obstinately unprogressive, and betrayed no sign of improvement. Some of them were more powerfully entrenched behind their powerful fortifications of thorns than ever. Others were harder and tougher than either of their parent plants. But a few varied in the desired direction, their defences of thorns, spikes, and bristles proving much less pronounced. These plants were isolated for subsequent crossing and selection. Further, a few others were found freer from spicules, and these also were separated for future experiment. This kind of labour was continued for ten years, and then there arose a splendid cactus tree eight feet high,—

bearing thalli or leaves from ten inches to a foot in length, five to eight inches in width, nearly an inch in thickness, bearing fruit of large size, not a thorn upon it, not a spicule in all its rich meat, the bitter enemy of the desert, converted into an abiding friend of man.

It may or may not seem surprising that, several years after Burbank had experimented with thousands of cacti



in California, the agents of the American Government were still carefully searching the world's deserts to discover some thornless cactus suitable for growth in the arid areas of the United States. These enterprising men at last hit upon a pear in Algeria provided with prickles, but few spines. But Burbank's productions had by this time altogether eclipsed anything occurring in Nature. A single specimen of the new cactus raised from seed will in three years yield 600 pounds of food. When grown from seed, the improved cactus breeds true, while leaf cuttings reproduce the plant with all its superior qualities.

Burbank's estimate of the importance of the reformed cactus in relation to the world's food supply may, on the surface, seem extravagant, as he thinks that "The population of the globe may be doubled and yet, in the immediate food of the cactus plant itself and in the food animals which may be raised upon it, there would still be enough for all."

Yet, when we reflect that the earth's deserts form an area more than 6,000 square miles greater than that of the United States with all its insular possessions included, and that this vast region may, except in those districts where no rain ever falls, be made to bear the cactus in abundance, then there appears little, if any, exaggeration in Burbank's calculation. Another immense area of practically waste lands, such as the steppes of Asia and elsewhere, may at little cost return a magnificent profit to the cactus-grower, while in agricultural countries where inferior soils yield but indifferent crops of cereals, roots, and other plants, these same soils would render a munificent return if cacti were cultivated.

Later experiments have led to the evolution of several new *Opuntias*, all of which possess some useful attribute or other. Burbank has received many communications from those parts of the world likely to benefit through the introduction of his new cactus. Among his correspondents were the representatives of the British Government in India, who were anxious to ascertain how this wonderful plant could be successfully introduced into the famine-smitten provinces of the great Asiatic peninsula. There is every reason to believe all that is necessary is to establish the transformed cactus over an extensive territory, and then the plant will need no further attention. And no further labour is demanded, for the cactus constantly increases in size and ceaselessly adds to its vast stores of nutrient material, so that when the lean years come, and ordinary crops fail, this amazing vegetable organism stands and waits in readiness to supply sustenance to a grateful human and animal population. An acre under cactus cultivation may prolong the lives of hundreds of people for several months, should famine invade the land.

As Harwood sums up the subject:—

From the commercial standpoint, from the standpoint of those who live and die where Famine stalks, as well as from the point of view of those who, from economic reasons, would see the vast waste places of the earth made fertile, this is certainly the most commanding act in the life of the world's greatest constructive plant breeder, an act of splendid usefulness.

T. F. PALMER.

What does it matter if one is violent? To be right, that is everything.—*Victor Hugo.*

Every noble life leaves the fibre of it interwoven with the work of the world.—*Ruskin.*

He that would end his days well must spend them well.—*Henry Montagu.*

## Talks With Young Listeners.

### XVIII.—Three Legends.

HERE are three tales, or novelettes, which interested the ancient Jews.

#### I.—THE DOOMED CITY.

A howling storm burst over a sailing-ship, and the mariners resolved to soften the wrath of the Sea-God by throwing one of the crew into the foaming waters. They cast lots as to who the victim should be, and the lot fell upon a man who lay fast asleep, despite the tempest. Before they pitched him overboard they asked him who he was, for he was their only passenger, and a stranger.

"To tell you the truth," he said, "this storm is my fault. My God, Yahweh, sent me to cry doom on a city, and I shrank from doing it, and fled away in your ship. However, throw me over, and the ocean will be calm."

They hated to do that after his telling them so frankly of his fault. However, the wind kept up a fearful roar, and, with much regret, they flung him over, and the sea became as smooth as a pond.

Meanwhile, an enormous sea-monster was swimming near the ship, mouth open, ready to swallow Jonah—for such was the stranger's name. For three days and three nights the monster floated here and there, and Jonah sat inside the creature's stomach, and made up his mind that next time Yahweh ordered him to preach a doom, he would obey.

After the monster had vomited out Jonah on the sea-beach, Yahweh again bade the prophet preach in the city. He did so, and walked up and down the High Street calling out in a doleful voice that in forty days the whole place would be ruined. Thereupon the king and court and citizens kept a fast, and all dressed in sackcloth, and even the flocks and herds were clad in the sad-coloured cloth, in sign of penance for sin. This pleased Yahweh, and he said the ruin should not take place. This displeased Jonah, for prophets of his mean sort would sooner see folk suffer than have their prophecies brought to nought. In great dudgeon, he built a hut outside the city, hoping to see the town burned, or in some way wiped out. A gourd-plant grew up in one night and gave his hut a delightful shade. But when it withered under the sun's scorching rays, Jonah whined and moaned like the selfish prig he was. Then Yahweh said:

"How is this, Jonah? You seem wretched when a gourd-plant dies, and want it kept alive. Well, if it is right to pity a plant, surely it is right to pity a big city and spare the lives of men, and women, and babies, and animals?"

Some people think the story of Jonah is a sun-myth, and comes from the old familiar story of the sun in winter being swallowed by the dragon of darkness and storm, and then appearing again in the brightness of the spring. The three days during which the man lay hid in his singular cabin may mean the three shortest days of the year, namely, December 20, 21, and 22, when the sun is (to us in Europe) at his lowest point in the sky. People often talk of "Jonah and the Whale," but no whale is mentioned in the Bible legend.

#### II.—THE JEWESS WHO BECAME A QUEEN.

There was once a Jewish exile in Persia, named Mordecai, and he had taken care of his cousin Esther, because she was an orphan. When the King of Persia wanted a new wife, hundreds of girls were brought before him to choose from, and Mordecai managed to have his pretty cousin Esther among the candidates.



You may as well hear the reason why the king wanted a new wife. The late queen was still alive, but because she would not come out of her chamber for the courtiers to gape at while they drank wine and sang merry songs, she was dismissed.

Esther, being the handsomest girl of all, was chosen, and married to the king, though he did not know she was a Jewess.

Her cousin, Mordecai, was appointed an officer at court. He discovered a plot got up by two traitors to assassinate the king, and the traitors were hanged, and a note about Mordecai's conduct was entered in the king's diary.

There was a mighty fine courtier named Haman, to whom Mordecai never would salaam; and Haman hated the very sight of the queen's cousin, and resolved to destroy him and all the rest of the Jews in Persia. So he told the king what an evil and dangerous race the Hebrews were, and how it would be good policy to kill the lot; and the simple-minded king agreed, and Haman prepared to put all the Jews to massacre.

Mordecai, who was a very shrewd man, told the queen; and the queen outwitted Haman by the following plan. She asked the king to invite Haman to next day's dinner. Haman, in great joy, and not knowing Esther was Mordecai's cousin, told the news to his wife, and dressed for the banquet. Meanwhile, a gallows was built very high to hang Mordecai on next day.

At night, the king, not being able to sleep, had his old diary read to him, and found, to his surprise, that no reward had even been bestowed upon Mordecai for defeating the two traitors. So the king called for Haman, and ordered him to lead Mordecai through the crowded streets, riding on a horse, and dressed in the royal crown and mantle, and Haman was to keep crying, "Behold the man whom his Majesty delights to honour!" Haman nearly choked with rage and envy, but he had to call out just the same.

Next day, as the king, queen, and Haman drank wine, Esther said:

"Sir, you do not, it seems, know that your wife's life is in peril."

"Who dares threaten you?"

"That man," cried she, pointing to Haman; "for he has persuaded you to destroy all the race of the Jews; and I am a Jewess!"

Of course, Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for his enemy. Swift riders were sent all over Persia to say that the officers who had been told to massacre the Jews were to treat them with much courtesy instead; and Mordecai was given a new costume of blue, white and purple, and a great crown of gold.

For many a year afterwards the Jews observed the feast of Purim, in memory of this happy event. They lit candles in their houses, and attended a service at the synagogue, where the story of Esther was read aloud; and they shouted at the mention of the names, "Mordecai"—Bless him! "Esther"—Bless her! "Haman"—Curse him! And they also blessed the hangman who hoisted Haman on the high gallows.

Not many hangmen have been so kindly remembered.

### III.—IN SPITE OF FIRE AND LIONS.

Drums, trumpets, harps, flutes, and other instruments clashed together in a storm of music. At this loud signal an immense host of people, in flowing robes and turbans, bent their knees and touched the earth with their foreheads. They were saluting a gold image, which stood on a high pillar. It was the statue of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

Three men stood upright, and would not bow the knee; and they were ruthlessly pitched into a furnace, where the flames roared in fury. However, King Nebuchadnezzar was much annoyed to see the three rebels against his divine right coolly walking about in the fire, and talking to a fourth person who had joined them in their very warm corner. Of course, the king saw that the fourth person must be God himself, who had thus come to the aid of the three martyrs; and there was nothing to be done but invite them to come out, which they did; without showing any ill-feeling against the king who had thrown them in.

These three men were Hebrew exiles. They, with their friend Daniel, had been selected as pupils in the royal School of Magic, so that in time they would serve the king as tellers of fortune, interpreters of dreams, secretaries, and privy councillors. When they were offered dainties and luxuries at the school-table, they declined. They ate vegetarian food, and would not drink wine; and, as their health remained sound, and their complexions ruddy, they were not forced to give up their simple and temperate diet.

Daniel was principal magician at the court, and he pleased the king by unfolding the secret of a dream. The king had dreamed of a giant tree which was cut down to the stump, and grew again after seven years. This meant (so Daniel explained) that the king would lose his wits for seven years and live on grass, like an ox. And so it came to pass; and Nebuchadnezzar went on all-fours for seven years, unclothed and hairy, like a wild beast, and he grazed in meadows. This was the way he was brought low, as a punishment for his conceit; for he was always boasting of the size and wonder of great Babylon that he had built.

In the days of Belshazzar (of whom our Lord Byron has made a stirring poem), Daniel was still interpreter. When, at a banquet in the palace, all the courtiers were terrified to see a Hand come out of the air and write mysterious words on the wall, Daniel was fetched, and he declared that an invading army would break into Babylon. And the enemy arrived that very night, and Belshazzar was slain.

Later on, when King Darius ruled Babylon, a very unusual law was passed, that for a whole month no prayer should be prayed except to the king. Daniel was in the habit of praying, with his face towards far-off Jerusalem, every day. His enemies watched him do so, and denounced him to the king, and Daniel was thrust into a den where lions were kept. However, when the king arrived at the den next morning and, in a lamentable voice, called down to the dead magician (as he supposed), Daniel cheerfully called up that all was well, for the lions had not touched him. Naturally, the enemies were then pitched in, and the king and Daniel watched the lions devouring them.

Besides telling other people the meaning of their dreams, Daniel had dreams of his own, and Yahweh explained them. In one of these he saw a grim tyrant walk into the holy Temple at Jerusalem and set up in it a horrible Abomination of Desolation. This was, in fact, the statue of the Greek God Zeus with his eagle, of which we heard in our last Talk.

Hence it is thought that the Book of "Daniel," which recounts these wonders and dreams, was written about 165 B.C., while the Abomination was still in the Temple. The writer of the legend-book wished to show how, in spite of fire, and lions, and tyrants, and terrors, the Jewish people might hope to come out victorious.

People in the nineteenth century used to think the prophet Daniel wrote the dreams hundreds of years before they came true.

F. J. GOULD.



"Indecent," "Immoral."

THE Puritans are again on the war-path; in one way, perhaps, it is in accord with the mood of the moment. We are in the midst of a great war, and the parsons are making the most of their opportunities to treat us to a special orgy of cant.

One of the principal movers is, of course, the Bishop of London, who, just lately, has been especially lucky in securing a dealer in war, and therefore a popular person, to second his efforts.

General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien and the Bishop together make quite an important pair, but how any man closely connected with the British Army dare take upon himself to play the Censor in Morals passes the wit of any man to understand.

General Smith-Dorrien has been expressing much concern because of some items in music-hall performances which he deems "indecent."

A letter was recently addressed to him suggesting that such a Censorship of Morals as he was considering was almost always a failure, and asking him to define a few of the words he and his kind are so fond of using, so often without any real understanding, and calling upon him to explain and justify certain pages of a book issued by the War Office under the title *Regulations for the Allowance of the Army*.

In this book, pp. 41-51, is a mass of detail dealing with the "Married Establishment and Issue of Separation Allowances to Families."

It is to these paragraphs that attention is desired. Paragraph 97, p. 42 (edition 1910), consists of a table:—

97. Except as provided in paragraphs 96 and 96a, the married roll will be formed as follows:—

A. O. 72, 1909, MARRIED ROLL.

Class.	Per cent.
15, 16, 17, and 18 ... ..	100
19 (except Military Provost Staff Corps ... ..	50
Military Provost Staff Corps ... ..	100
20, Corps—	
Household Cavalry ... ..	7
Cavalry ... ..	4
Military Mounted and Foot Police, each	25
Royal Artillery—	
Horse, Field, and Mountain Batteries	4
School of Gunnery ... ..	16
Bands ... ..	10
Brigade Trumpeters, R. H. A. and R. F. A., and Shoeing and Carriage Smiths, Brigade Staff, R. H. A. ...	20 <sup>1</sup>
Royal Engineers (except coast battalion)	4
Royal Engineers (coast battalion) ...	20
Foot Guards ... ..	3
Army Service Corps—	
Supply Branch ... ..	7
Horse Transport Branch ... ..	3
Remount Companies and Mechanical Transport Section ... ..	28
Military Provost Staff Corps ... ..	100

There are thirty or thirty-five classifications, varying in the above arbitrary fashion from 3 per cent. to 100;

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that while "Bands" are allowed only 10 per cent. of marriage, "Trumpeters" are allowed double the amount of "lawful marriage." Can our splendid musical authority, Mr. G. Farmer, give us any reason why that particular instrumentalist should have this great concession?

and when all that has been studied, with the details given in the column "Remarks," there is a further three pages of small print, which has to be studied carefully before an applicant can really know whether he may get married and how much he may expect to get in money and allowances, if finally he is graciously allowed permission to be a male adult, instead of a serf, helot, eunuch.

Will any doctor, sanitarian, or sociologist explain why the "Military Provost Staff Corps" should be allowed marriage at the rate of 100 per cent., while the "Foot Guards" should be allowed only 3 per cent. of their strength?

Why should "Army Service Corps" men "if mounted" be allowed only 3 per cent., while the "Supply Branch" is allowed 7 per cent., and the "Remount and Mechanical Transport" is permitted to wear the toga virilis to the extent of 28 per cent.?

What in the name of common sense and hygiene does all this fine-drawn precision mean? Upon what data can such a scale ever have been drawn up? What are the physiological and pathological rules which govern grown men and which will permit such fantastic tricks with vital functions and health? Does any sane person really think that strong, healthy men can be scaled off to function by precise scales with such immense variations, 3 per cent., 4 per cent., then jumps of 10, 25, and 28, and then 50 and 100?

Did the genius who first worked out this scale have any definite plan by which the proper men should be sure to get into their proper classes? e.g., "Royal Arsenal" men are allowed manhood at the rate of 26 per cent., but "an experimental detachment, Shoeburyness," is cut down to 16 of virility.

Consequent on the awful revelations of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, there is a new outcry for stern methods to "put down prostitution," and General Smith-Dorrien and our incontinent-mouthed Bishop are in full cry for a rigid Censorship—for everything they do not approve.

Prostitution has never been restricted by either a celibate priesthood or a celibate army—it has always been the other way about, a wide-spread celibacy, either of priesthood or soldiers, has always been more sex crime, infanticide, and prostitution, and a whole flood of sexual vice, crime, and sexual irregularity; and the demand for the new Censorship is only one of the many ways in which the parsons and the Puritans are hoping to use the distractions of the moment to strengthen the fetters on the masses.

The very terms these coercionists make so much use of, "Decent," "Indecent," "Moral," "Immoral," are all fluid and changing, have different values in every age, in every country, in different societies and ranks in the same country.

In the minds of a considerable number of thinkers two of the most "unmoral" public men of the day appear to be two celibate priests, who spend a large portion of their time in advising poor women to have large families.<sup>1</sup>

It is "unmoral," economically "criminal," especially when there is in this country a vast army of State servants, both "Civil" and "Military," by the State prohibited marriage, deliberately prohibited by State ukase, though the pick of the nation.

T. SHORE.

<sup>1</sup> These sort of people seem very accurately placed by a Church of England reverend gentleman, M.A., and Head of a well-known Public School, who, in the Preface to a book on "Love and Marriage," says: "The whole world is full of voluptuous or ascetic lies, set going by unmarried men, or moral lepers, and sensational novels; though no unmarried man knows anything whatever about marriage and its chastity, or can know."



## The Right to Affirm.

By the Oaths Amendment Act of 1888 affirmation may take the place of an oath in courts of law and in all other places where the taking of an oath is necessary.

Affirmation may be claimed on one of two grounds, (1) On the ground of having no religious belief, (2) on the ground of an oath being contrary to one's religious belief.

A judge or other official may ask on what ground affirmation is claimed, but no further question is warranted, and all such additional questions should be respectfully and firmly declined.

In all cases where any trouble or difficulty occurs it would be well to inform us of the circumstances at once.

## Obituary.

We regret to announce the death of a staunch Freethinker and an old friend of this paper in the person of Captain E. Raggett. The last we heard of him was from a nursing home in Edinburgh, and he then wrote cheerfully and hopefully. These expectations were unrealized, and we have to regret the loss of a sincere friend of and servant to the great cause of Freethought. We understand that the orthodox ceremony was carried out over his body, which we are quite sure was against his wishes. It is a pity that respect for the dead should take such strange forms in orthodox circles.

There passed away on October 31 another of the grand old stalwarts of Freethought in the person of Mr. Noah Briggs, of Prestwich, near Manchester. The deceased was highly respected in the neighbourhood of his abode, and for miles round. Mr. Briggs was best known as Manager and Secretary of the Prestwich Co-operative Society, a position he held for fifty-four years, retiring in January of the present year. The deceased had often expressed a wish for a Secular funeral, but of late he had doubts as to whether this would materialize. However, on his death his daughter communicated with the officials of the Failsworth Secular School, who appointed their President, Mr. James Pollett, to conduct the service. This he did with reverent fervour, before a concourse of about 1,000 people, representing relatives, personal friends, and representatives from the numerous bodies and associations with which he was connected. The deceased was interred in the graveyard of the Prestwich Parish Churchyard on Saturday, November 4.—J. SMITH.

In the passing away of Mr. Edward Law, at the advanced age of eighty-eight, we have lost one whose memory carried him back to the earliest days of the Freethought Movement, when every inch of progress was hotly contested by the Christians, and when to be a Freethinker frequently meant being ostracized by society and cast out from one's family. Although Mr. Law was chiefly known as the husband of Mrs. Harriet Law, who occupied the position of Freethought lecturer for over thirty years, he was himself an ardent and outspoken Freethinker. Reared in a family more than ordinarily devout, and having a brother a clergyman, it is evident he did not choose for himself the least thorny of paths, but wandered out of the beaten track in search of truer, and therefore higher, things. And thus we find in our contact with the older Freethinkers, whose day is not of this generation, a certain touch of the heroic, even in men not otherwise distinguished, than that they had the courage to think for themselves and speak for others.—ALICE LAW.

The heavens declare the glory of Kepler, Galileo, and Newton.—*Conte.*

Generosity is first, although it is not in the Decalogue.—*Mark Rutherford.*

## 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.

#### INDOOR.

AVONDALE HALL (Londor Road, Clapham, S.W.): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "The Lying Gospel."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "The Outlook for Freethought."

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park): 3.30, a Lecture. CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, a Lecture. FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, a Lecture.

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales, "What is Sacred?"; 6.30, Messrs. Beale, Shaller, and Hyatt.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templars' Hall, 122 Ingram Street): C. Cohen, 12 noon, "Will Christianity Survive the War?" 6.30, "A World Without God."

WALSALL (Lecture Hall, Milton Street, adjoining Palfrey Working Men's Club): 7, F. E. Willis, "The Tottering Creed of Christianity."

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