

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Vol. XXXVII.—No. 52

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1917

PRICE TWOPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Religion and History.

A correspondent asks, *apropos* of the capture of Jerusalem, What is the function of the Jew in history? We can only reply, in the words of the famous essay on snakes in Ireland, "There isn't any." The question strikes us as a spilling over of theology into the realm of sociology. It is essentially a theological notion that certain peoples have particular parts to play in the development of the world, and it is responsible for a great deal of confused thinking and social harm. We have seen this kind of thing illustrated in the talk of its being part of the mission of Britain to carry civilization to various parts of the world. We see it in the German appeal to God as to the "destiny" of the Germanic race. And it is also seen in the familiar Christian apologetic that while to the Greeks was assigned one function, and to the Romans another, to the Jews was given a genius for religion. And all this is pure nonsense. A nation or a people may play a certain part in the history of the world, but that part is dependent upon the accident of position, of its relations to other peoples, and of a hundred and one other factors. The Jew has no greater innate genius for religion or for finance than anyone else. His clinging to religion and his devotion to finance is an easily imaginable result of discernible historic forces. Modify these and he loses his religion as quickly as anyone else, just as the Jewish people produce quite as freely as other peoples an idealistic non-commercial type. There is no "destiny" driving a people to a set goal. There are numerous forces that determine the direction of a people's development. God in history is as ridiculous as is God elsewhere.

* * *

Life and Religion.

Apart from the view of the subject—a full discussion of which would occupy more space than we have at our disposal—there is one aspect of the part played by religion in history that is worthy of a little attention. At present the case of the German Empire is being held

up to us as an awful example of what happens to a nation when it forsakes religion—a warning usually accompanied by the saving qualification that the religion forsaken is the "true" religion. Little more than a century ago it was France that furnished the example to English conservatives and clericals. A few years hence it may be Russia. And these special examples are part of a general theory that religion promotes the welfare of a nation, and neglect of religion leads to its decline. This theory is not only held in the absence of evidence in its support, it is proclaimed in defiance of the clearest evidence to its disproof. The ordinary apologist, even when better informed himself, knows that ninety-nine people out of every hundred are supremely deficient in anything approaching a philosophy of history, or of even a working knowledge of historic processes. And thus, while on the one hand there is the plainest proof that nations have declined in proportion as they have allowed their secular life to be overshadowed by religious considerations; we have, on the other hand, the confident assertion that nothing is of value to a people once they have lost their grip of "true" religion.

* * *

The Case of the Jew.

Take as an example the case of the Jews. On the Christian thesis, the Jews alone among the people of antiquity possessed the "true" religion. With what result? Instead of this producing a strong, healthy national life, we see them being continually overrun by less religious peoples; while whatever of value the Jew has contributed to the world, he gave *after* the destruction of his national life. In art or in science the Jews, so long as they remained a nation, gave the world absolutely nothing. Egypt, Assyria, Phœnicia, Greece, Rome, have all left enduring records of a healthy national life. Ancient Judea left positively nothing at all. And it lies on the face of the facts that whatever position the Jew assumed later in the world was due to forces causally unconnected with his religion. That the Jew became great in physical, medical, chemical, and mathematical science in the mediæval period—under Mohammedan protection—was due not to his religion, but to his following the line of Greek and Roman developments, and to the boycotting of science by the Christian Church. That he became the financier of mediæval Christendom was again due to the attitude of the same Church towards the Jew and to the development of secular life. And even the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people was wholly due to the sustained persecution of the Christian world. Without that, the Jewish people and the Jewish religion might long since have disappeared. The Jews were preserved as a people by the very means adopted to exterminate them. Persecution here, as is so often the case, defeated its own ends. Persecution, when it does not annihilate, preserves. But the religion of the Jew gave him nothing worth having, and gave the world nothing worth the having. It made for unprogressiveness before Rome finally scattered the Jews over the world. And in common with all religions, it makes for

unprogressiveness wherever it is in a position to exercise coercive influence. * * *

Rome, Pagan and Christian.

Take, again, the case of Rome. Of all the peoples of antiquity the Romans were, probably, the least religious. A formal religion existed, but, as Gladstone admitted, it exerted but little active influence on their life. This was certainly the case before the time of Julius Cæsar. And we see Rome extending its sway over one people after another, in each case more religious than itself. The history of Rome after Cæsar conveys the same lesson. As it became more religious, it became less open to the influence of progressive ideas, its social life began to contract, its statesmanship narrower and more repressive, culminating finally in the welter of superstition and obscurantism that sat enthroned on the ruins of ancient civilization as the Mediæval Christian Church. No Christian will deny that Europe had more of the "true" religion from the fourth to the fourteenth century than it had prior to that period. And no one but a priest would hesitate to place the pre-Christian period as greater in all that makes for a healthy and progressive social life. * * *

The Case of Spain. *

Or consider the case of Spain. Under Rome we have that country sharing in the progressive life of the Empire. Till the eighth century we have it under the sway of Christian ideas, and as stagnant as the rest of the Christian world. Under the Mohammedan conquerors—themselves saved from the consequences of their own religious belief by a succession of wise, liberal, and, probably, Freethinking caliphs, we see it for over 500 years developing a civilization that was without a competitor, and laying the foundations of a general Renaissance in science and philosophy. Reconquered by the Christians, we see Spain becoming the most Christian nation in Europe, and sinking lower and lower in the scale of civilization with every advance of Christian influence. Spain owed its greatness to its liberal Mohammedan rulers, as it owed its decline to the rise to power of the Christian Church. Under the one it was great in commercial, scientific, and social life. Under the other it became a synonym for intolerance, obscurantism, and national decay. And, as with Christianity, so with Mohammedanism. Just so soon as the religious forces in the Moslem world gained the upper hand, decay set in. Christian or non-Christian, the lesson is everywhere the same. National greatness and a controlling religion cannot both exist with the same people. * * *

The Writing on the Wall.

Examples are to be found in all directions that will illustrate the truth on which we have dwelt. They can be found in primitive as in more advanced communities. And the reasons are not hard to discover. By their very nature religions are committed to unprogressiveness. Every new idea is a threat to an established religion, which whether Christian or non-Christian, whether ancient or modern, stands committed to perpetuate the past to the utmost of its power. Everywhere the development of a nation is proportionate to the degree with which religion is checked and controlled by secularizing and rationalizing forces. In brief, no State yet has ever found it possible to give religion a free hand without endangering its own existence. When it has allowed religion to rule it has offered the world such spectacles as Spain or Byzantium, or, in a milder form, Geneva under Calvinism. But in general the State has been compelled to step in and moderate the zeal of religionists in the interests of its own well-being. That is why the history

of civilization—genuine civilization—is everywhere a history of the rationalizing and secularizing of the State. The process is a slow one, but it is nevertheless a sure one. Churches may fight against it with varying degrees of success. Their tactics may delay the march of the army of reason and of humanity, but they are quite powerless against its ultimate triumph.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Apologetic Absurdities.

"VIATOR," of the *Church Times*, tells us of an old Baptist minister, who had learnt Hebrew for the express purpose of studying the first chapter of Genesis in the language in which it was written. To the critical examination of that portion of Holy Writ he devoted seven years. His all-satisfying reward was the discovery that the first chapter of Genesis anticipated all the discoveries of modern science. "And all those that are yet to be made," mischievously suggested a roguish bystander. The reverend gentleman was silent, with good reason, and possibly the bantering remark opened his eyes to the absurdity of his position. Not only Genesis did not anticipate the modern findings of astronomy and geology, but several of its most important statements are flatly contradicted by them. "Viator" does not deny this, but only hints that, in the opinion of his friend, "the text contains nothing inconsistent with such discoveries," the theory being that the author was Divinely guarded against error in relating the story of Creation. As "Viator" says, "on any hypothesis of Divine inspiration there is no intrinsic absurdity in the supposition of such guarding"; but as a matter of indubitable fact there is absolutely no foundation for the theory. "Viator" goes so far as to make the following significant admission:—

I do not expect Divinely inspired writings of two or three thousand years ago to be free from error concerning matters which have more recently come to light. If my friend's object was to justify Holy Scripture in this respect, I am afraid that he wasted his seven years, and perhaps also the preliminary months spent in the acquisition of Hebrew.

On December 19, 1891, Colonel Ingersoll's famous Christmas Sermon appeared in the *Evening Telegram*, the central teaching of which was thus summarized: "The good part of Christmas is not always Christian—it is generally Pagan; that is to say, human, natural." Everybody knows how literally true that statement is. Then came the addition:—

Christianity did not come with tidings of great joy but with a message of eternal grief. It came with the threat of everlasting torture on its lips. It meant war on earth and perdition hereafter.

In reality the short discourse was a vigorous attack on Christianity, claiming that, though "it taught some good things—the beauty of love and kindness in man," yet "as a torch-bearer, as a bringer of joy, it has been a failure." Perhaps the most characteristic and mordant passage in it is the following:—

It (Christianity) has given infinite consequences to the acts of finite beings, crushing the soul with a responsibility too great for mortals to bear. It has filled the future with fear and flame, and made God the keeper of an eternal penitentiary destined to be the home of nearly all the sons of men. Not satisfied with that, it has deprived God of the pardoning power.

While thus assailing the Christian religion, the Colonel expressed his gratitude to it for having borrowed from Paganism the joyous old festival called Christmas. Christmas had been in existence for countless ages before Christ was heard of, and throughout all its history

in Christendom its Pagan elements have been the most conspicuous and by far the most popular. It celebrates the triumph of the sun over all the forces of darkness and cold. In the imaginary foretaste of spring and summer, all hearts rejoice. Washington Irving laments the disappearance of many games and ceremonials which used to characterize Christmas. "They flourished," he informs us, "in times full of spirit and lustihood, when men enjoyed life roughly, but heartily and vigorously: times wild and picturesque, which furnished poetry with its richest materials, and the drama with its most attractive variety of characters and manners" (*The Sketch Book*, p. 204). Colonel Ingersoll closed his celebrated Sermon in the following benevolent strain:—

Christmas is a good day to forgive and forget—a good day to throw away prejudices and hatreds—a good day to fill your heart and your house, and the hearts and houses of others, with sunshine.

In publishing that "Christmas Sermon" the *Evening Telegram* displayed no little courage and impartiality, little dreaming, perhaps, how its action would excite the wrath of the self-appointed ambassadors of the Prince of Peace. The effect was much worse than that of stirring up a hornet's nest. A swarm of malicious enemies hastened to wreak their rage on both the Colonel and the journal. The first of these was the Rev. Dr. J. M. Buckley, editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the recognized organ of the Methodist Church, who headed his attack "Lies That Are Mountainous." This servant of the God of love called upon the public to boycott the *Evening Telegram* for its audacity in publishing such blasphemous stuff. He wanted all religious people to unite for the purpose of destroying the God-denying sheet. The *Telegram* unhesitatingly accepted the issue thus raised, and dared Dr. Buckley to do his utmost. A bitter controversy ensued, which was kept going for more than a year; and every now and then Ingersoll condescended to reply to his angry critics. All the leading clergymen of New York and Brooklyn took part in the attempt to demolish the wicked Infidel, which they vainly imagined they could do by heaping personal abuse upon his head. They called him a devil, a liar, a blasphemer, an enemy of God and man, but left his arguments unanswered. Dr. Buckley charged him with having written "gigantic falsehoods," but utterly failed to prove the charge. Another, unable to refute his statements, looked forward with great glee to the time when the Atheist would be finally discomfited, saying:—

Let the world wait but for a few years at the most, when death's icy fingers feel for the heartstrings of the boaster, and, as most of his like who have gone before him have done, he will sing another strain.

Another, Dr. Deems, a popular New York preacher, and, in many respects, an excellent man, comparing Ingersoll to the Devil, said:—

The Devil is an organizing, imperial intellect, vindictive, sharp, shrewd, persevering, the aim of whose works is to overthrow the authority of God's law.

That typical controversy took place twenty-six years ago, and the fact to be emphasized is that it serves as an instance of the complete futility of all attempts to demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion. Ingersoll was not answered; he was simply vilified for daring to criticize the popular creed. His crime consisted in holding views which differed from those cherished by the clergy. They had a perfect right to differ from one another, but they denied his right to think for himself. This was his retort:—

What right has Dr. Buckley to disagree with Cardinal Gibbons, and what right has Cardinal Gibbons to disagree with Dr. Buckley? The same right that I have to disagree with them both.

Dr. Fort Newton assures his hearers that the unbelief so common twenty and thirty years ago has passed away never to return; but he is radically mistaken. Unbelievers are more numerous to-day than at any former time, and they are still multiplying. Why is it that only some ten or fifteen per cent. of the population of London attend places of worship, while the few picture palaces permitted to open on Sunday are crowded to their utmost capacity? Why is it that doctors of theology have lost their power and their anathemas do not count? Why is it that at places of amusement all allusions to the clerical profession are received with contemptuous laughter? The only explanation is that for the overwhelming majority of people the religion of the Cross possesses no reality whatever. Christmas is nothing but a national holiday for the bulk of the people, and not a religious festival, simply because they do not believe in the Incarnation, or in the God-man whose miraculous birth is commemorated by a few in churches and chapels. How can intelligent people honestly join in the singing of such lines as the following:—

Hark; the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise
Join the triumph of the skies,

when we are in the midst of the horrors of the most inhuman War ever waged? It is an exploded superstition—a myth that ought to have died centuries ago, and the only rational thing to do is to keep Christmas in honour of the triumph and glory of the sun, and all the good things which therefrom accrue.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Voltaire of Our Day.

I am now of all humours that have showed themselves humours since the days of goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock at midnight.

Shakespeare, "Henry IV."

Of all the notable Continental writers, M. Anatole France is the most Voltairean, for he carries on the same splendid literary tradition. As he has himself wittily expressed it, he is a symbol, as the citizen Momoro represented the Goddess of Reason at the festivals of the French Revolution. The word Voltairean means also something of tone and character, something of an alert and indulgent regard, a delicacy of touch, a subtle irony which immediately suggests the very ideal of the French intellect:—

Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid Mœnad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flame with the smoke cap crowned.

Over seventy years of age by the book, M. Anatole France has built up a splendid reputation, "four square to all the winds that blow." Not only is he known throughout the civilized world as a writer, but he is also a humanitarian. A convinced Freethinker, it was only natural that he should take up the brilliant sword of his wit by the side of the Atheist, Emile Zola, in the terrible days of the Dreyfus struggle, when the heroic Zola championed truth and justice in the supreme hour of danger. It was an abiding example of magnificent courage. Honest to their own injury, brave against the enmity of tens of thousands, these Freethinkers, in defending a poor, persecuted Jew, raised the world's opinion of human nature.

M. France's literary forefathers are Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire; three of the most significant and virile names in literature. Yet he is no copyist, but strikingly original, modern, and Parisian. The thing he has in common with these great predecessors is his whole-

hearted hatred of injustice and his power over language. Although a master of the lash, he uses his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift; nor, like Voltaire, overflow with an adroit and subtle humour, which stings like a thousand wasps. Rather is he like Rabelais, who shifts satire into the realm of imaginative comedy, and pities while he smiles.

Rabelais was so much more tolerant than Swift, who, writing in the shadow of the Christian superstition, found all the world a dunghill, and man the most loathsome thing that squatted upon it. But Rabelais, out in the open air, with all the winds of the Renaissance blowing upon him, was more than a mere satirist. Under the motley of the jester beat as generous and as kindly a heart as ever throbbed in the service of humanity. M. France possesses no small share of the tolerant humour of Rabelais, and at a distance of several centuries carries on the same intellectual tradition.

Although M. France has written quite a number of books, his works have a uniform excellence, and it is difficult to pick out any representative masterpieces. He has written no *Candide*, no *Les Misérables*, those seminal masterpieces which represent the sum total of their author's genius. Like his illustrious countryman, Montaigne, he is not to be judged by a single essay. And, like Montaigne, he is a philosopher in disguise. He has used the novel as a medium of expression, personal, and intellectual. In those ever-charming pages of *La Vie Littéraire* he has smilingly told us that he is not speaking pontifically, but only talking of himself, sending his mind adventuring among masterpieces. Similarly in his novels, he is always as personal and as intimate as Charles Lamb. In his *Isle of the Penguins* he puts modern society under the microscope, and in *The Gods Athirst* he unfolds himself on the subject of the French Revolution. With exquisite art and tender understanding, he gets to the heart of the Revolution. With what sympathy does he show the rebel Gamelin starving himself that a poor mother might be fed, or apologizing to the nine-years old child for his fanaticism:—

Child, you will grow up free and happy, and you will owe it to the infamous Gamelin. I am ferocious that you may be happy; I am cruel that you may be kind, I am pitiless that to-morrow the whole French people may embrace each other with tears of joy.

This genial satirist can, in another mood, give us delightful glimpses of his own childhood. *My Friend's Book* is as delightful and trifling as a heart could desire, and in that perfect chapter, "The Hermitage of the Jardin des Plantes," he describes Pierre Noziere's childish passion towards saintship with inimitable grace and irony:—

My sole idea was to live the life of an ascetic. In order to lose no time in putting my ideas in operation, I refused to eat my breakfast. My mother, who knew nothing of my new vocation, thought I was ill, and looked at me with an anxiety that it pained me to behold. Nevertheless, I persevered with my fasting, and then, remembering the example of Saint Simeon Stylites, who spent his life on a pillar, I climbed up on the kitchen cistern, but it was impossible to live there, for Julie, our cook, promptly dislodged me. Though I had thus been ousted from the cistern, I pursued with undiminished ardour the way of perfection, and next decided to imitate Saint Nicholas, of Patras, who gave all his riches to the poor. My father's study window looked out on the quay, and from it I proceeded to fling down a dozen coppers or so which had been presented to me because they were new and bright. These I followed up with marbles, humming tops, whip top, and eelskin whip.

"The child is crazy," exclaimed my father, as he shut the window.

I felt angry and mortified at hearing this judgment passed upon me, but I remembered that my father, not being a saint like myself, would not share with me in the glories of the blessed, a reflection from which I derived great consolation.

No one but a Frenchman could have written this passage, and of this delicate and delightful stuff is woven the golden fabric of his genius. So original, so modern, is this great author, who, among other names, has been called the Pope of Freethought. Anatole France was born in a bookseller's shop, and has "ink in his blood." During the most impressionable years of his life he was surrounded by old folios, illuminated manuscripts, and artistic missals. At every pore of a sensitive nature he drew in the love of literature, and splendid use he has made of his intimate and peculiar knowledge. To-day he is the greatest living writer of French, a magnificent scholar, a student of the bye-ways of knowledge, psychologist, publicist, humourist, humanitarian, and wit. When, by a natural fitness of things, he became librarian to the French Senate, the environment was suitable for changing the bookworm into a delightful writer. Never a hustler, he was near forty years of age when his first notable story, *The Crime of Sylvester Bonnard*, was published, and this proved a veritable triumph. Crowned by the Academy, M. France has taken the tide at the flood which was to lead him to fortune. Later, he issued masterpiece after masterpiece until he had all Europe at his feet.

To this most distinguished of living continental writers we owe much of the present proud position of Freethought, for scepticism is nothing if not intellectual. In the far-off days, Francois Rabelais caught a glimpse of the dawn of liberty, and largely through the magnificent genius of his successors it has now permeated all classes of society. M. Anatole France stands for the liberation of the intellect no less than Rabelais. Like his illustrious predecessor, he is first and last a Freethinker, and has the same abiding faith in the triumph of what our own George Meredith has called "the best of causes."

MIMNERMUS.

The Bible and Immortality.

THE SON OF MAN.

IN searching the Bible for evidence of the belief in the resurrection of the dead and a future life, we find those doctrines in but one period of history—that of the so-called apostolic times. If we add to the canonical books those of the Apocrypha, written during the interval between the Old and New Testaments, we find that the belief in immortality had arisen among a small section of the Jewish people, not as a revelation from heaven, but merely as a speculative philosophy. In the New Testament, however, both the resurrection of the body and eternal life are stated to be undoubted facts, made known to the world by God's only son, Jesus Christ. It is this statement, found in all the New Testament books, which still remains to be verified.

The case stands thus: The God of the New Testament is also the God of the Old, who is represented as saying "I am the Lord; I change not" (Mal. iii. 6). This unchangeable deity chose the Hebrews as a people specially his own, and watched over them for 1460 years (from Abraham to Nehemiah). During the whole of this long period the utmost he ever bestowed on this people may be summed up in peace, prosperity, and longevity upon earth, so that they might enjoy a peaceful national life and die at a good old age: he never thought of giving them another life after death, and therefore never referred to the subject. This system was continued

down to the year A.D. 28, when he suddenly decided that he would grant to all mankind a new life after death, to be passed by some in a paradise of delight, and by others in a place of torment. In accordance with this alleged project we read:—

John iii. 16.—For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

In the same Gospel it is recorded that a Jewish teacher named Jesus went about the country proclaiming himself to be this "only begotten son," and declaring that he had been sent by God, his "Father," to promise all believers a post-mortem life of bliss. Now, with regard to this unique plan of redemption, the first point to be noticed is that not one of the writers of the thirty-nine books in the Hebrew scriptures appears ever to have heard that his God *had* an "only begotten son," or that that deity ever had thoughts at any time of devising a scheme of salvation other than that in force in Old Testament times. These Biblical writers, too, are alleged to have written under the direct inspiration of their God, and to have recorded that deity's will to mankind: but in all these writings there is not a single word, from Genesis to Malachi, which conveys the smallest intimation either that the Hebrew God was blessed with a son, or that he had any intention of drawing up a new plan of salvation for the human race. On the contrary, there are many passages which tend to prove that the "Lord God" lived in blissful ignorance of having any male offspring, and also that he had not the remotest idea of employing a new method of redemption for his people. We read, for instance:—

Deut. iv. 39.—Know therefore this day, and lay it to thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there is none else.*

Isaiah xlv. 6, 9.—Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and *beside me there is no God.* Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no rock, *I know not any.*

Thus, the Lord God of the Hebrews, who must surely have known whether he had any divine relatives, knew of no other God or Redeemer save himself—which fact excludes the godhead of Jesus Christ. Again, we learn from the Jewish Scriptures that the only plan which the Lord had conceived for the benefit of all mankind was the conversion of the Gentile nations to Judaism. In accordance with this project all nations, it is stated, would at some future time go up to Jerusalem from year to year to worship the Hebrew deity. Witness the following:—

Zech. xiv. 16.—And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles.

Isaiah lxvi. 21, 23.—And of the Gentile nations also will I take for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, said the Lord.

Here we see that the Lord God had no idea of ever giving up the Mosaic ritual. The offering of animals in sacrifice, the duties of priests and Levites, the observance of the Jewish feasts and holy days, as prescribed in the Law, were to be continued for ever. The following are some examples of these ordinances. The office of high priest was to be "a perpetual statutethroughout their generations" (Exod. xxix. 9; xl. 15); the feast of Passover was to be "an ordinance to them and their sons for ever" (Exod. xii. 14, 17, 24); the feast of Weeks, the Day of Atonement, and the

feast of Tabernacles were each to be "a statute for ever in their generations" (Lev. xxiii. 14, 31, 41); the Sabbath was to be observed "throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant" (Exod. xxxi. 16); the Peace offerings, and all other sacrifices were to be continued for ever (Lev. iii. 17; xvi. 29, 34; xxiii. 21; Num. xviii. 8, etc.).

Since, then, all the ordinances in the Mosaic ritual were to be continued throughout all the Hebrew generations for ever, no place is left for the New Testament Saviour: that Redeemer and his office are absolutely excluded. Upon this subject the great theorist, Paul, says that: "Since through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned.....For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 22). The reference here is to the story of the "Fall of man" (Gen. iii.); but Paul is wrong here, as he is in all his other theories. The Genesis account of the "Fall" is pure fable, and, as a matter of fact, the doctrine of original sin is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament. Atonement was made for the Hebrew nation as a whole by regular animal sacrifices, and for individual sins by peace offerings. A man who remained faithful to the national God, and was careful in the observance of the appointed festivals, not forgetting the tithes to the priests, was free from all sin in the sight of the Hebrew deity. There was, therefore, no need for a redeemer, or for an atonement by Jesus Christ. Hence, if the latter personage really went about proclaiming "eternal life" to the people of Palestine, he did so without the authorization or sanction of the "Father" in heaven. Neither, again, is any prediction to be found in the Old Testament of the coming of a divine teacher who should preach a new doctrine of immortality, and suffer death for the sins of the world. Every passage which has been cited for this purpose (including Isaiah liii.) can be shown to refer to some other matter.

We come now to the name which Jesus is represented as giving to himself in the Gospels—"the Son of man." This was probably suggested, in the first instance, by reading the book of Ezekiel, in which the Lord God employed that appellation over ninety times in addressing its prophetic writer; but in that book we find nothing but the name. In Dan. vii. 9-14 someone called "the ancient of days" is seated upon a throne ready to judge the nations; then comes "one like unto a son of man," to whom is given "dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him." By reference to verse 27 this "son of man" is seen to be a king or Jewish messiah, and the kingdom that of Israel—which agrees with the plan that all nations shall be converted to Judaism. In this paragraph verses 9 and 10 are misplaced; they should follow verse 12.

We now turn to the Book of Enoch, which was in the hands of Jude and other early Christians. In this book the "Son of man"—who is also named the "Elect One"—is found in seven or eight different chapters, from two of which I make the following extracts:—

Chap. xlv. —There I beheld the Ancient of days whose head was like white wool, and with him another, whose countenance resembled that of man. His countenance was full of grace, like that of one of the holy angels.....This is the Son of man, to whom righteousness belongs.....The Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and he has surpassed all in everlasting uprightness.

Chap. lxxviii.—He sat upon the throne of his glory; and the principal part of the judgment was assigned to him, the Son of man. Sinners shall disappear and perish from the face of the earth.....According to their ranks of corruption shall they be imprisoned.....Every wicked shall disappear and depart from before his

face; and the word of the Son of man shall become powerful in the presence of the Lord of spirits.

The writer of the book of Enoch, there can be little doubt, took his "Ancient of days" and "Son of man" from the book of Daniel, and then drew upon his imagination for all he has to say respecting the latter. The Gospel writers took their "Son of man" from "Enoch." This appears evident from the fact that only in the last-named book is the "principal part of the judgment" placed in the hands of the Son of man. Moreover, in the Fourth Gospel the Son of man is stated to have been "with God" before the creation of the world (John i. 1-4; xvii. 5). Where did this evangelist get his information? This, again, could only have been taken from "Enoch," where it is stated:—

Chap. xlviii.—In that hour was the Son of man invoked before the Lord of spirits.....Before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars were formed, his name was invoked in the presence of the Lord of spirits.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as saying:—

The Father hath given all judgment unto the Son..... and he gave him authority to execute judgment *because he is the Son of man* (John v. 22, 27).

In the words here italicized we have the conundrum: Why did the "Father" give "authority to execute judgment" to Jesus *because* he was the Son of man? Was it because that saviour spoke of himself by this title? No; it was because the Son of man in "Enoch" had received that authority, and the writer of the Fourth Gospel believed that book to be the word of God; and since Jesus was the Son of man predicted in "Enoch," therefore he must of necessity be given that authority. Here I conclude the subject of Immortality so far as the Bible is concerned, to be taken up shortly when I shall have more leisure to consider the question apart from religion.

ABRACADABRA.

The Blank Wall.

V.

THE collective mind of humanity cannot claim to have answered the most important questions concerning its destiny. It has not even arrived at that stage of mentality which inquires these fundamental things.....What caused life?.....What is the meaning of death?.....What is the real purpose of human life?.....etc. This collective mind of humanity cares not whether life be worth living, or whether the mind of man can make it worth living. A few individuals have asked these important questions in every age, but with no apparent effect on the general scheme of existence. The mind of humanity, to put it crudely, cannot determine in what direction it is developing, nor in which direction it wishes to develop. It has not sufficient mental vitality to arrive at these fundamental problems.

The War has proved conclusively that humanity drifts into most indescribable barbarism at ten minutes' notice, yet cannot be settled upon one vitally humanitarian tenet in millions of years! It cannot decide to have a condition of life which would most certainly improve the mental and physical qualities of man, neither is it sufficiently rational to utilize what power exists in those rare and high types who strive against impossible odds to help it. Gods themselves have, throughout history, descended from the skies in a never-ending procession for the specific purpose of saving humanity from itself, but they have accomplished little unless it be additional friction and misery.....Priests gabble in the pulpits; journalists lie with hysterical reiteration in the press; politicians play their odious games of bluff in Parliament, and God says nothing. The voice of reason and common sense is drowned and overwhelmed in a continuous roar of cant, hypocrisy, chicanery, society scandal-mongering,

and general mental degeneration. Nor is the worst manifestation of modern civilization to be found in all this, bad enough as indeed it is; the worst manifestation is to be found where monstrous instruments of war are, in this hour, blasting and rending the bodies of our fellow-creatures..... This is the play that humanity has devised for itself; this is the drama of the people.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Acid Drops.

In the discussion on the new censorship of leaflets it appears to have escaped observation—or perhaps it is that only a paper like the *Freethinker* would make it—that a licensing of books and pamphlets is quite a Christian institution. In ancient Rome and Greece people might be punished for having written and published certain things, but it never dawned upon these States to license a man's thinking and punish him if he did not submit his work for their approval. And for some centuries even the Christian Church did not venture on so drastic a step. The Christian Church is the first historic instance of regulating, with punishment for infraction, not only what men did, but also what they should think.

This much was pointed out by Milton. In his *Areopagitica*, after tracing the practice of licensing books to the Inquisition, he says:—

And thus we have the inventors and the original of book licensing ripped up and drawn as regularly as any pedigree. We have it not that can be heard of from any ancient state, or polity, or church, nor by any statute left us by our ancestors elder or later; nor from the modern custom of any reformed city or church abroad; but from the most unchristian council, and the most tyrannous inquisition that ever inquired. Till then books were as freely admitted into the world as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifled than the issue of the womb; no envious Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual birth.....But that a book, in worse condition than a peccant soul, should be to stand before a jury ere it be born to the world, and undergo yet in darkness the judgment of Radamanah and his colleagues, ere it can pass the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious iniquity,.....sought out new limboes and new hells wherein they might include our books also within the number of the damned.

Those who ponder this fine passage will perhaps realize how incompatible are Christianity and real freedom.

We cannot forbear quoting another splendid passage from the same work:—

I cannot set so lightly all the invention, the art, the wit, the grave and solid judgement which is in England, as that it can be comprehended in any twenty capacities, how good soever; much less that it should not pass except their superintendance be over it, except it be sifted and strained with their strainers, that it should be uncurrent without their mutual stamp. Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolised and traded in by tickets, and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the land, to mark and license it like our broad cloth and our woolpacks.....Nor is it to the common people less than a reproach; for if we be so jealous over them, as that we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet, what do we but censure them for a giddy, vicious and ungrounded people; in such a weak state of faith and discretion, as to be able to take nothing down but through the pipe of a licenser.

What would Milton have said had he lived in 1917?

In a letter published in the *Sunday Times*, Lord Alfred Douglas laments that his father, the Marquis of Queensberry, "was at one time unfortunately associated with agnostic views and propaganda," and adds that the Marquis died in the Christian Faith, and "absolution" was given him on his death-bed by Canon Lord Archibald Douglas. This recantation story is quite a family affair, like so many Catholic conversions.

The piety of journalists is a mercurial quality. The *Daily Express* refers to the Garden of Eden as the place "where

Adam and Eve frivelled." In the ages of faith, Eden was regarded as the place "that brought death into the world, and all our woe," as Milton puts it.

The Catholic *Universe*, reviewing Lord Morley's *Recollections*, says that "his was one of those minds which, had circumstances been different, would have found their way into this City of God." Most people are glad that Lord Morley took the wrong turning.

Dean Hensley Henson has been appointed to the bishopric of Hereford, and the new bishop has been the subject of much eulogy in the press. In 1909 he was inhibited for preaching in a Nonconformist chapel. Even that heroic action scarcely entitles him to the position of a Christian martyr.

A Frenchman, after a visit to Scotland, was relating some of his experiences. "Ah," he observed, "the Scots they are usually good fellows, but what they do say one day they do not say on another. In Edinbourg I visit ze great music hall on ze Saturday night and ven an exciting event is happening on the stage I and others rise up to see more perfectly. How are we greeted? From ze place that is called 'ze gods' come great shouts of 'Sit down, sit down, for Christ's sake.' Then, on the following day, I visit ze grand church, and ven I am sitting quietly vaiting for ze service—a crowd of people jump up and shout: 'Stand up, stand up, for Jesus.' No, ze Scottish character—it is a paradox—vat you call *un peu difficile*."

A country minister of the old school had occasion to rebuke a slow-witted but fiery-tongued parishioner for a violent outburst of profane swearing: "I'm tellin' ye what it is, Weelum, if this gangs on there's only wan end for you. You will go to hell and burn for ever and ever!" "Eh, meenister," queried the swearer, "I'or ever and ever?" "But look, meenister," rejoined the man, "there's nae constitution could stand it!"

One of the Y.M.C.A. officials announces that after the war the recreation huts will be used as working-men's clubs. It will be like tempting an earthquake with a penny bun.

As the result of a breakdown of his motor-car, the Rev. G. W. Dauberry, rector of Knodishall, Suffolk, was fined £3 and costs for being in possession of a sack of sugar, contrary to the Food Control Order. A local grocer was fined £5 for supplying the sugar. The ethical value of religion is not conspicuous in this instance.

The refrain of the national song in Canada has been revised from "God save the king" to "God save our men." Nothing is gained in effectiveness, since the song may be sung a million times without saving a king or a man, but the amendment nevertheless has a more democratic sound.—*Truthseeker*, New York.

The clergy do not like any opposition, and the organizers of the Intercession Day are endeavouring to obtain an order closing cinemas, public houses, and theatres on that day.

Dr. Horton, in his *Autobiography*, says: "I knew that in Dissent it is absolutely impossible to obtain a distinction which gives you any acknowledged place in the national life." Yet Dr. Horton belonged to the Congregationalists, one of the oldest and most respectable Nonconformist bodies, whose leading ministers earn the salaries of Cabinet Ministers. What would he have said had he been in the position of a Bradlaugh or a Holyoake?

The official organ of the Saxon Protestant Community laments the absence of English co-religionists from the annual conference, and refers to them as "those brothers in Christ from across the Channel." This is strange language for "Atheists."

The Rev. W. Temple says: "The Church of England is not given to hasty or reckless action." This is profoundly true, for dear Mother Church has not yet decided whether the working-man is a brute or a human being.

In the *Nation* for December 15 there is an interesting article by "An Officer" on "What do Soldiers Believe?" He says, *inter alia* :—

Organized religion seems to have no influence on the soldier. I should say that the Roman Catholic Church has the strongest hold, and, in its numbers, the various Nonconformist sects the second strongest hold, and the Church of England the least. Numerically, in my regiment at all events, the Church of England leads the Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, but it is perfectly obvious that many of the Anglicans are Anglicans but nominally.....

I should say that, on the whole, Christianity has singularly little influence on the mass of men in the ranks, and since most of them have lately been in civil life, that is tantamount to saying that Christianity has singularly little influence on the whole life of these islands.....

One detects in the conversation of the rank and file a curious strain of disappointment when they talk, as they sometimes do, of religion. There is something, they seem to say, which ought to have made this war impossible, but has not done so; and in that disappointment I find a strong strain of contempt, or failing that, indifference. Certainly the failure of Christianity to influence the lives of these men does not appear to me to be datable from August, 1914. The beginning of the decline was longer ago than that. The curious flippancy with which men speak of the Deity was not acquired in a couple of years, nor is the blasphemy—sometimes perfectly outrageous—which I frequently hear in the barracks, a thing of recent origin.

As a sample, the writer quotes this saying of a sergeant to his men just before entering church for divine service one Sunday morning: "Form two deep, for Christ's sake." He doubts if this style of exhortation assists one to get into a devotional frame of mind. After further analysing the soldier's psychology, the writer concludes:—

There is no indication whatever—apart from exceptional individuals—that the Christian faith has any deep hold on our soldiers' minds. There are signs of an entirely non-committal belief in God, vaguely held. There are more definite signs of difficulty in understanding just what is God's purpose, and a strong suspicion that perhaps that purpose is not quite so beneficent as they had sometimes imagined. Another is an unshakable belief that, in this case at all events, Something has settled definitely and irrevocably that for some men, as my drill sergeant says, it is "thumbs up," and for some other men it is "thumbs down."

Beyond that there is nothing more to be said.

The slump in Christianity continues. Here, for example, are three items from a Scottish paper, one following the other. The first is a plea from the Rev. J. White, that the Churches must present a united front in order to reach the outlying population of the cities. Then comes Rev. D. Watson, who warns people that they must work for a "National Re-Dedication" if they are to hold their own. Finally, the Rev. Professor Reid, advises that when there is a poor attendance at morning service people should spend the afternoon rounding up absentees for the evening. But all agree that the situation is a serious one. Whereat the parson mourns and sensible people rejoice.

Referring to a recent publication, the *British Weekly* says enthusiastically that it is "a book which must be taken into account for ever." Such rhapsodies are usually reserved for the Jewish Scriptures.

Nearly 10,000 cards signed at Y.M.C.A. huts by soldiers are being sent to local councils by the National Free Church Council. The families and dependents, whose addresses are given on the cards, will be personally visited by the representatives of local churches. In the case of Anglicans, the cards will be handed to the vicar of the parish. This information is published in the newspapers, and it shows the method by which the Churches hope to use the recreation huts for their own ends.

Much beautiful nonsense has been written concerning the Holy land recently, but the cold facts discount a great deal of the pietistic platitudes copied from the Bible. A writer in the *Daily News* declares that Palestine is a tiny land, and adds that "an athlete could cross it from west to east in a day, and from north to south it is only a hundred miles."

Religion is a fearful and wonderful thing. A writer in the *Daily News*, referring to caste in India, says "it is humiliating that people should believe themselves polluted at a distance of sixty-four feet by a man who eats beef."

Mr. Ben Tillett, M.P., has the courage of his convictions, and, in an interview, published in the *Daily Sketch*, he has some very pertinent observations on the clergy and the War. "Comb out the parsons," he says, "There are two army corps of men of military age, some of them among the best athletes in the land, and engaged in a very healthy occupation. Longevity among them is especially high, and they ought to be in khaki. Many of them are more afraid of going to heaven than the average Tommy is going to the opposite region."

According to a London evening paper, Father Bernard Vaughan has been flying in an aeroplane. There is at least one real "sky pilot."

The call to a National Day of Prayer is meeting with a response from the Licensed Victuallers' Central Protection Society. That body has decided to recommend that the license holders in Greater London should close on January 6—Intercession Day. We daresay that they will remind their customers on the Saturday of the need for taking home an extra drop to last them till Monday. The newspaper paragraph announcing the resolution is headed "Publican's Sacrifice!" All that is needed now is for the clergy to follow the example and close their place of business for a day.

The piety of Germany is quite affecting. We must, says the Rev. Dr. Von Anon, clutch at the mantle of God, and he adds: "The mantle of this God, who has been with us from the first, is represented by Belgium, which has been forced into our hands by high Providence.....This is the mantle of God which we must clutch and retain in our hands." We expect the rest of the world will have something to say on this point; but one can trust the clergy for finding a religious justification for the worst features of even this War.

The Rev. H. J. F. Tringham, vicar of Longcross, Chertsey, is rendering assistance in other parishes where the staffs of clergy have been reduced. The reverend gentleman might be described as a "war loan."

Pious folk say that the War is the result of sin, but the chastening process is not beyond criticism. The Old Bailey Recorder declared that "bigamy is rampant all over the country." It almost appears as if the remedy were as bad as the disease.

Consoling itself for a war-time Christmas, the *Catholic Universe* says "plum-pudding and mince pies were not exactly served at Bethlehem." Just so! But they cooked enough trouble for the human race.

The Y.M.C.A. has invaded St. James's Square, London, and, according to the *Daily News*, is providing "sleeping accommodation for American officers" at the cost of some thousands of pounds. Doss houses for officers appears to be a novelty in Christian philanthropy.

The following curious advertisement appeared in the *Catholic Universe*: "Will good Catholic family adopt, for the love of Mary Immaculate, bonny, intelligent, good-natured boy (3 years 9 months), nursed from six weeks in religious institution? Never seen mother; no father; good references required."

Wanted, A New Year's Gift.

Is there any reason why the Editor of the *Freethinker* should not ask his readers for a New Year's Gift? Anyway, we are going to risk it, and we shall be greatly surprised if it is not forthcoming.

Everyone is to some extent alive to the difficulties under which a paper like the *Freethinker* is being carried on. Never in the whole thirty-six years of its existence have these difficulties been so great as at present. Month after month the cost of paper rises, and one is fortunate now to buy paper at five times the old price. Part of this increased cost has been met by our Sustentation Fund, part by profit from increased sales, part by the practice of the most careful economy, in which we have not spared ourself.

The steady, but gratifying, increase in the circulation of the *Freethinker* is mainly due to the loyalty and energy of our readers. They have done so well, we are now asking them to do more, and we are also asking others to join this band of willing workers.

That new readers can be got, the experience of the last two years has demonstrated. But there are thousands of others who are to be had almost for the asking. And we want them all without a week's unnecessary delay. Every hundred new readers means a larger sphere of usefulness for the paper; it means also a fresh contribution towards easing a heavy financial burden.

This, then, is the New Year's Gift we are asking for. Let, say, a thousand of our readers resolve to find a new subscriber within the next month. We would sooner have that gift than anything else that could be devised. We are not sparing ourselves, and, to be quite candid, we do not mean to spare others. We want everyone who can do something to do it. We have made a great advance during this now all but defunct 1917, but that should be but a new starting point for a still further move forward. The more readers we get, the more we want—and, we are proud to add, the more we keep.

That venerable structure, the Egyptian constitution, had been raised by no human hands. As the gods had appointed certain animals to swim in the water, and others to fly in the air, and others to move upon the earth, so they had decreed that one man should be a priest, and that another should be a soldier, and that another should till the ground. There are times when every man feels discontented with his lot. But it is evident that if men were able to change their occupations whenever they chose, there would be a continual passing to and fro. Nobody would have patience to learn a trade; nobody would settle down in life. In a short time the land would become a desert, and society would be dissolved. To provide against this the gods had ordained that each man should do his duty in that state of life into which he had been called; and woe be to him that disobeys the gods! Their laws are eternal and can never change; their vengeance is speedy and can never fail.—*Reade, "Martyrdom of Man."*

The modern Christian is a man who has consented to say all the prayers in the liturgy, provided you will let him go straight to bed and sleep quietly afterward. All his prayers begin with "Now I lay me down to sleep," and he is forever looking forward to the time when he shall go to his "long rest." He has consented to perform certain old-established charities, too, after a fashion, but he does not wish to hear of any new-fangled ones; he doesn't wish to have any supplementary articles added to the contract, to fit it to the present time. He shows the whites of his eyes on the Sabbath, and the blacks all the rest of the week. The evil is not merely a stagnation of blood, but a stagnation of spirit.—*Thoreau.*

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 6, Manchester; January 13, London; January 20, Southampton; January 27, Swansea; February 3, Birmingham; February 17, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 6, Birmingham; January 20, London; January 27, South Shields; February 3, Failsworth; February 10, Swansea; February 24, Manchester; March 17, Abertillery; March 24, Leicester.

E. RAWLINGS.—We do not know on what authority you are relying. We can only say G. J. Holyoake's profession of Atheism was definite and precise.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—A. E. Maddock, £2; W. H. Deakin, £4.

A. E. MADDOCK.—Received. Many thanks.

F. E. WYKES.—Thanks for extremely tasty calendar. Also for subscription to L.C.C. Fund.

R. M.—We do not object to advertisements. They are not in evidence because they are not forthcoming. And we venture to think this a mistake, even from a business point of view. We are sure that a larger proportion of subscribers read this paper through from cover to cover than is the case with most journals, and Freethinkers—and others—in business would soon find the *Freethinker* columns a really good medium for advertising. We should certainly be surprised if they did not.

J. THOMPSON.—The quotation from Connolly is very striking, and is full of "horse sense." Your plan of getting the paper into new hands is a good one, and it often produces good results.

H. AUSTIN.—Information to hand, for which thanks. We are taking steps in the matter.

J. L. LIVESEY.—One of the names—the latter is from Browning's poems. The former is a piece of mediæval gibberish, and means nothing in particular. See "Views and Opinions." We may write more fully on the subject some other time.

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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 resumes his lecturing next Sunday, January 6, with two lectures at Manchester. He hopes to see there all the old faces, and also a large number of new ones. There can easily be too few of the former, and there can never be too many of the latter. The reformed Manchester Branch has made good progress, and a good rally will give extra encouragement to all who are working to make the meetings a success.

The N. S. S. is arranging a course of Sunday afternoon lectures at the West Central Hall, 31 Alfred Place, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, W. The course will be opened on January 6 by Mr. Harry Snell, who will lecture on "King George's Day of National Prayer." This is a quite topical subject, and, we hope, will attract a good audience. Admission is free, and the lecture commences at 3.15.

Owing to the Christmas holidays, we are compelled to bring out two numbers of the *Freethinker* in one week. The issue dated December 23 was finished on December 18—to the accompaniment of the booming of guns and the dropping of bombs; and the present issue had to be finished on the Saturday of the same week. This will explain the shortage of paragraphic material in this issue; but in other respects we do not think the concluding number for 1917 has suffered.

Members of the National Secular Society and Branch Secretaries are requested to kindly note that annual subscriptions are due on Tuesday, January 1, except in the case of those who have joined the Society since September, 1917,

whose subscriptions are reckoned already as dating from January, 1918. Both old and new friends may desire to save the time, stamps, and stationery involved in the sending out of reminders, and a letter-box overflowing with old cards and fresh remittances on New Year's Day at 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4, will be an undeniable proof of the good wishes of the senders for a happy and prosperous year for the Movement and for the officials responsible for the conduct of its business.

It is with pleasure that we quote the following sentences from a notice of Sir Henry Newbolt's *A New Study of English Poetry* by our witty and intelligent contemporary, the *Cambridge Magazine*:—

It is a sign of the times that the Poet *par excellence* of the Public Schools should be entering the lists against expurgated editions! In future in art, as in science, there is to be "neither decorous nor indecorous, only relevant and irrelevant." If the vice of Catullus and the indecency of Donne are no longer to be taboo, merely on the ground that "they involve ideas which are contrary to the accepted moral code," it is possible that the irreligion of Lucretius and the atheism of Swinburne will no longer be dexterously glazed over. We foresee that not a few staid persons will tend to raise their eyebrows, when they contemplate the possibilities thus succinctly adumbrated by Sir Henry.

In noticing a little volume of sermons addressed to village congregations, the *Church Times* rather ungratefully—certainly unphilosophically—objects to the exercise of the imagination as shown in this passage:—

Pilate in his palace, eating his mid-day meal of the daintiest luxuries procurable, with the choice vintages of Italy, was not at ease. His mind influenced his body. The good things provided seemed to pall upon him. Why so? Ah! Conscience, that inward monitor, would give him no rest.

We are more reasonable than our friends of the *Church Times*; we do not object to an imaginative interpretation of history, if only it be based on common sense and common knowledge. Pontius Pilate was hardly the man to be troubled with qualms of conscience for the mere suppressing of an obscure and troublesome Nazarene sect. The intelligent critic of Christianity is more likely to agree with M. Anatole France's idea of the effect of Christism on a Roman ruler of the period. Some while after the crucifixion, the Procurator of Judea is visiting a fashionable spa, and chatting with an old friend on bygone times and events. The conversation winds round to those silly and obstinate Jews who used to squabble over their wretched schisms at Jerusalem. The friends talk of the beauty of Mary Magdalene, "how in her prescriptural days she would dance on a dirty strip of carpet, by the light of a smoky lamp. Her back arched, her head thrown back, as if drawn down by the dead weight of her red-gold hair, her eyes drowned in lust, ardent and languishing, she would have caused Cleopatra to blush for envy." The friends sigh, for Mary was very beautiful in those days. Then the friend recalls how she followed a young Nazarean thaumaturge who was crucified for some crime or other. Pontius Pilate thinks for a long time, for crucifixion was common enough in those days. After a while he says: "Jesus? Jesus of Nazareth? No, I don't remember him." This is the sort of imaginative reconstruction, smiling and ironical, which is gall and wormwood to our religious friends

Fund for Fighting the L.C.C.

THE purpose of this Fund is to raise the balance of expenses—estimated at between £8 and £100 incurred in defending the right to sell literature at public meetings in the London parks. On the initiative of the N.S.S. a Protest Committee was formed, and after carrying the question into the High Court, the London County Council was induced to rescind the offending resolution. It was a splendid victory, and one which should specially appeal to all Londoners.

Previously acknowledged:—£30 8s.; H. J. Waters, 10s.; F. E. Wykes, 3s.; D. W. Stewart, 1s.

Religious Education.

THE question of secular *versus* religious education is generally discussed from the point of view of the rightness or wrongness of compelling one man to pay for teaching the beliefs of another, in which he does not himself share, or from the more abstract standpoint of the propriety or otherwise of State interference with belief as such. From both these points of view much can be said on the subject. There is, however, a more vital consideration to be entertained, and one which the egoism and lack of imagination of the adult controversialist tends to overlook: viz., the rights of the child. If we define the rights of the citizen generally as claims to certain liberties or opportunities for the realization of which the State exists, it follows that the aim of education should be to enable the child, when it grows up, to take advantage of and enjoy to the full those liberties or opportunities. Of those liberties one, and not the least important, is freedom of thought. One function of education, therefore, should be to enable the growing citizen to use his or her intellect freely and fully, unclogged by prejudice, and conformably to the natural faculty of reason. This is a debt which the adult community owes to each rising generation.

Let us see how we pay it. Here I can only generalize from what comes within my knowledge. I know nothing directly of the kind of religious education given to the majority of children in public elementary schools, or of instruction given by parents to their children in Nonconformist, Jewish, or Catholic families. But I know what religion I was myself taught; and I have no reason to suppose it less rational than that given in most middle-class households of the Church of England, or than that which is deemed suitable for working-class children. In fact, the latter is probably much worse; so in generalizing from personal experience, I have no fear of unduly blackening the picture.

At an early age the child's curiosity is awakened by the question, "Who made him?" and satisfied by the answer, "God." The child naturally finds nothing absurd in thinking that he and other people are manufactured articles, like dolls or furniture; and when he comes to read it, the Biblical statement that God "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul," corroborates this view. He is taught that God wishes him to be good, and will take him to heaven when he dies, if he behaves. The doctrine of hell may or may not be thrown in; in most educated families, I should imagine, it is not; but this makes little difference, since a very little reading of the Scriptures will soon reveal that grim article of faith, and even parents and teachers who refrain from inculcating it do not venture, in many cases, to *deny* it to children. Inevitably the child, if curious enough to retain its interest in these matters, acquires the idea of God as, in Mr. Wells' words, "an old gentleman with a long beard and uncertain temper." A painting by an old master (I forget whom), familiar to me from very early years, actually portrays the Almighty in this guise, and depicts, underneath, what is meant to be heaven, an attractive green landscape peopled by saints in flowing robes, grouped round "the Lamb of God," who stands on an elevated throne or altar, spurring blood into a chalice from a wound in the chest. A truly edifying picture!

We hear much nowadays of the dangers of bad literature and films in their influence on the young; but I say emphatically—and it cannot be said too often—that the Bible is a worse thing from this point of view than any film likely to escape the attention of the police. No

one would dream of putting Rabelais or Smollett, unexpurgated, into the hands of boys and girls; but our upright Christian parents and our sage educational authorities do not hesitate to afford the young every facility for the perusal of the purplest passages of Genesis, Leviticus, Judges, Samuel, the Song of Songs, Ezekiel, etc. Naturally, the facility is taken advantage of. This is bad enough; but it must not be supposed that the evil effect of early and uncritical Bible-reading is confined to this. The bloody and ferocious spirit of the Old Testament, where indiscriminate massacres are represented as the literal commands of God, to be fulfilled on pain of his extreme displeasure, and the equally ferocious threats of eternal torment against sinners and unbelievers in the New, have a moral influence which can only be called vile. Five centuries before Christ, old Xenophanes declared that "Homer and Hesiod had ascribed to the gods all things that were a shame and a disgrace among men, thefts and adulteries and deceptions of one another"; and Christians nod approvingly, thinking how superior they are to these heathen. But the God of the Bible licks the heathen gods into fits; he is Phalaris, Nero, Tamerlane, and Torquemada rolled into one, and raised to the "nth" power; beside him Von Tirpitz is a humanitarian, and the Kaiser a public benefactor.

All this is obvious to us Freethinkers; but it is not obvious to the child into whose hands the open Bible is put. When he is told that God, the author of his being, commands him to believe a certain creed on pain of everlasting perdition, he naturally does his best to believe it; he is much too frightened to question it. When he is told that this same God has, in the past, commanded his followers to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," and punished them for non-compliance; the natural result is that he regards acts such as this, not as atrocities in themselves, but as acts evidently praiseworthy in certain circumstances. When Christians talk of German atrocities as due to German "atheism"; I think we might do more than merely rebut the falsehood; there is, at any rate, a good case for carrying the war into the Christians' camp, and pointing out the high probability of a casual connection between the strictly *religious* education given in Germany and the callousness which has marked the conduct of the War by that nation.

Bible-reading is thus calculated to uproot in young people both intellectual honesty and common humanity, the former by the fearful penalty denounced on unbelief, the latter by the atrocious conduct set forth as directly commanded by God. In the case of Anglican families, the undermining of intellectual honesty is aided by the teaching of the Catechism, in which the child is informed that his godfathers and godmothers at his baptism promised that he should "believe all the articles of the Christian faith," and that he is bound to believe as they promised for him. The influence of the Catechism is, however, secondary; it is, at any rate, not put forward as a divinely inspired document, as the Bible is.

It may well be wondered how any so brought up contrive to escape from this bondage, and to regain a measure of intellectual freedom. Many, perhaps most, never do. That some do is, I think, due to the fact that the Church of England is, after all, a bungler at its business. It makes the mistake of trying to influence the children chiefly, if not entirely, by word and precept. Now, words are the vehicle of thought, and thought can never be wholly divorced from reason. With the best will in the world, one can never quite believe what is flatly self-contradictory. That is why, among Protestants at any rate, a shade of unreality always attaches to the dogma of the Incarnation. You cannot, when it is put to you coldly in so many words, quite believe that Jesus

Christ is "perfect God, and perfect man." "Perfect God" implies omnipotence and omniscience; "perfect man," on the other hand, implies a man's limitations, infirmities, inabilities—everything, in fact, that the notion of God *excludes*. To set the young mind *thinking* about such things is, from the Church's point of view, a fatal mistake; but it is the inevitable result, if the child is intelligent, of teaching religion mainly by word and precept. The Catholic Church knows better. There, the forces of unreason are backed up by sensuous appeals, by vestments and pictures, banners and processions, the smell of incense and the music of Gregorian chants and hymns, and not least, by the hypnotic power of *repetition*. I was once in a Catholic Church, where I observed that a great part of the service consisted of the words of the "Ave Maria," repeated over and over and over at break-neck pace, half by the priest and half by the congregation. I understood at once; it was sheer mesmerism. Give me leave to bring up a child on that sort of thing, and I will undertake to make him believe that the earth is flat and the moon made of Cheshire cheese.

In spite of the comparative clumsiness of the Protestant method, its effect can be relied on to last *as long as the belief in hell is unimpaired*. But let that belief be unimpaired—say by an indiscreet admission on the part of a pastor or teacher that "it ain't so"—and the slippery slope of Rationalism is reached. If that goes, the rest is in jeopardy, and the result will depend merely on the proportions of habit and reason, inertia and originality, in the individual's composition. He may become merely indifferent; he may try to make sense out of his religion, and compromise on a sort of "liberal Christianity"; or he may pass out of this stage into genuine Freethought. Cases of this last are, unfortunately, a minority.

Even when this happy issue is reached, the individual's development will have been retarded, his time will have been wasted, and his intellect may have suffered appreciable harm, from the involuntary pilgrimage he has made through the backwoods of superstition. After acquiring the habit for many years of believing certain things as a *duty*, it takes a strong counter-effort to accustom oneself to reasoning and weighing evidence. The faculty of reasoned judgment should be encouraged from the *first*. Deliberately to warp it, as our religious educators do, is a crime against mankind, the enormity of which is in no way diminished by the fact that a few of the victims are able, with toil and trouble, to straighten the warped faculty again in after life.

The only consistent position for a Freethinker to adopt is that the child, if it is to enter fully into its civic heritage of intellectual liberty, has a right to be protected against indoctrination with a particular hypothesis about the universe, until it is of an age to judge of such matters for itself. The difficulty is that so many parents—most parents, very likely—are of an opposite opinion. Holding, definitely or vaguely, some religious opinion themselves, they consider that they have a natural right to dose their children with it. Even parents who are indifferent to religion hold that it is "the thing" to have it taught to children. In the face of this "damned compact majority," as Ibsen has it, it is to be feared that a frontal attack on such parental tyranny over the rights of the child would be foredoomed to failure. The only way to combat it is to *make Freethinkers*. But, in the meantime, in practical educational politics, we can at least insist that, if parents and clergy must do this dirty thing to the children's minds, they shall do it without help from the State, in their own time, on their own premises, and at their own expense; and that in the people's schools, at any rate,

only such teaching shall be given as is by common consent necessary for the common good, and to make each child an intelligent citizen of a free country.

ROBERT ARCH.

Tales of Our Times.

I.

THE boys in Dame Europa's school have now got thoroughly out of hand.¹ It all started by those two bullies Fritz and Carl knocking two of the smaller boys—quite little chaps—on the head, and appropriating their belongings, whereupon John Bull and the other big boys set upon the offenders with all their might. But Fritz and Carl, besides being openly helped by one or two of the smaller boys, and secretly helped by some other little sneaks among them, have proved themselves much stronger than had been expected; so the fight rages with ever increasing ferocity, and poor old Dame Europa is at the end of her wits—which were never very bright at the best of times.

Every day, when school closes, the boys, barely waiting for the conclusion of Prayers, rush pell mell into the playground and fall upon each other like tigers. All the rules of fair fighting are disregarded, and hitting below the belt, blows delivered from behind the back, kicking, tripping up, and even biting are resorted to. To make matters worse some of the village boys have joined the fray, and the boys of U.S.A. (Uncle Sam's Academy), a big school some distance away on the other side of the village duck-pond, are getting ready to join in.

However, terribly sad though it all is, it yet presents an element of humour. This is furnished by an old gentleman named Benedict, who lives next door to the school, in an old house surrounded by a garden with high walls called The Vatican. Occasionally the old gentleman, mounting a step ladder, peers over his wall into the playground, and calls out in distressful tones, "Now, boys, this is very wrong. Stop this fight at once, please, and be friends again. The noise you make every day is really very disturbing to me. Shake hands with the others, and don't bear them any ill-will."

But as the old gentleman never has a word of blame for Fritz and Carl for their disgraceful conduct in bullying and robbing the little boys, his admonitions are received with contempt by all except Fritz and Carl themselves, who are known to be rather favourites of his. They take off their caps respectfully to old Benedict when he addresses the combatants, and thank him for his advice, but they go on fighting all the same.

So the old gentleman continues periodically to peer over the wall and plaintively call out, "Now, boys, boys," etc., thus furnishing that saving element of comedy with which even the saddest and most tragic situations are sometimes blessed.

II.

The small craft, Humanity, lay becalmed and motionless on the deep and placid ocean of Existence. The people in the boat wore a restless and anxious look as they gazed at the unbroken horizon all around them. "We must move," they all were thinking. "We must move onward, and find out whether this awful ocean has any shore. If we remain motionless we shall go mad and perish, *Humanity must progress*."

Some Priests spoke first. "Put up a sail," they said.

"But there is no wind," said the others. "What is the use of a sail?"

¹ See "Tales of Our Times" in the *Freethinker* of March 24, 1912.

"We will pray to God," said the priests. "He will send a wind in answer to our prayers, and then humanity will progress."

So they put up a sail, and the Priests started praying for a wind. But though they prayed for a long time and grew weary over it, not a breath stirred, and humanity made not an inch of progress.

Next spoke the Metaphysicians—men with solemn, dreamy faces, and an absent-minded air. They used long words and pronounced them with sonorous emphasis, as though trying to make sound take the place of meaning.

"The only way to make humanity progress," said they, "is to take cognizance of the Infinite and the Absolute. We must ascertain the properties of the Thing-in-Itself and make use of them. Now we have found out that this ocean of Existence on which we float is the Thing-in-Itself, and we have discovered two of its properties which, if rightly applied, will bring about the progress of Humanity. Firstly, Existence has the property of flowing from a higher to a lower level; and, secondly, its Pressure is proportionate to its distance from the surface. Now, let there be two openings made in the boat at different heights, and let the lower opening be in the stern of the boat. In accordance with the first principle the waters of Existence will enter at the higher opening and pass out at the lower, while, in accordance with the second principle, they will exert greater Pressure in passing out than they do in entering, and this excess of Pressure, acting against the waters of Existence outside, will propel our boat forward."

This suggestion was promptly acted on, but no sooner were the two openings made than the waters of the ocean of Existence poured in at both of them, and it was only by quickly plugging up the openings and vigorously baling out the rapidly filling boat that poor Humanity was saved from being swamped.

"We quite anticipated this result," said another group of men who called themselves Deductive Philosophers, and who always spoke with an air of complete finality and certitude. "The Metaphysicians reason from wrong premises, and are therefore bound to reach erroneous conclusions. Now we, reasoning on the Deductive Method from *a priori* premises, have discovered that the moving principle of Existence is not Pressure but Tension, and this Tension, if properly applied, is sure to effect the progress of Humanity. Let two masts be erected of equal height, and let a pulley be fixed to the top of the front mast. Then let a rope be attached to the top of the other mast, taken over the pulley, and fastened to a heavy weight hanging vertically. Now, Tension has the property of exerting a pull *from* the point of attachment *toward* the point where the force is exerted, so it is obvious that in this case the pull of Tension will be in a forward direction, and will cause our boat to move forward in a straight line with uniform velocity for an indefinite period."

This reasoning, delivered with the complete cocksureness which always characterized the utterances of these philosophers, carried immediate conviction to most of their hearers, and their directions were eagerly carried out. But alas! the predicted result did not follow, and, as before, Humanity progressed not a single inch.

Meanwhile, some quiet, thoughtful-looking men had been engaged near the prow of the boat dipping pieces of flat wood into the water and moving them steadily and carefully, now in one direction, now in another, and observing the results. Presently they noticed that the prow of the boat stirred a little as the boards were pushed this way or that. No one had paid much attention to these men so far, and they had spoken little with the

others, but one of them now stood up and spoke, with the light of victory in his eyes.

"You have been proceeding on a wrong assumption, my friends," said he, "an assumption which is as false in theory as it is futile in practice. You have been trying to get Movement out of Rest—to create Progress out of Stagnation. You have been expecting that some imaginary God who answers prayer or some imaginary principle of Existence will do the work of progress for us, while we sit down lazily and look on. The principle of progress is not Prayer, nor Pressure, nor Tension, but *action on the part of ourselves*. If we want movement, we ourselves must supply its motive power. Now make you some instruments called oars, the use of which we will teach you, and we can promise that, provided you exert yourselves in the use of them, Humanity will progress, and its advance will be in exact proportion to the strength and efficiency of your exertions."

This advice, though not quite so agreeable and encouraging as that of the others, was eventually acted on, and the promise of the Scientists was amply fulfilled. Thus it was discovered that the Progress of Humanity can only be achieved by Human Effort.

A. E. MADDOCK.

New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

VIII.—ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS.

You remember how, as a boy, the Wonder-worker had trod the road with Joseph and Mary to the city of Jerusalem. It was a place with high walls round it; and just outside it was a hill where olive-trees grew in gardens, and another hill called Calvary, with a round top like a man's skull.

Day by day Jesus approached this city. At nights he would lodge in any house where the folk were friendly; and, even if he found it uncomfortable, he would not change to another. One or two of his Delegates would go on in front and fix where he might stay.

"Master," said his messengers one day, "not a single house in yonder village will have you to-night."

"Why?"

"Because they say you are a Jew going to your Jerusalem, and they will not deal with Jews."

The village was in the country or province of Samaria, where the people were a mixed race—only Jewish in part. Hundreds of years ago the King of Assyria had taken away many thousands of the Israelites, and brought in strange tribes in their place. The Jews scowled at these neighbours, and when the Samaritans (as they were now called) built a temple of their own, the men of Jerusalem were more bitter than ever.¹

Fisherman John and fishermen James were very angry.

"Call down fire from heaven to burn the village and the villagers," they cried.

"No, no," said Jesus; "I came to save men's lives, not to destroy. We will go to another village."

As they toiled across the stony hill to reach some other night-shelter, a man ran up saying—

"Lord, let me be a follower. Wherever you go I will go."

"Ah," replied Jesus, with a sigh, as he looked back on the village which had cast him off, "foxes have holes in the earth, and birds have nests, but I have no where to lay my head."

¹ About 150 Samaritans lived at Nablous in the early years of the twentieth century—the last members of the Samaritan race. They had a High Priest and a synagogue.

However, in spite of the hard life of the pioneer, his band of followers grew, and he made a plan for sending out seventy forerunners who should go on in front, two and two, to preach the kingdom and to drive out the jinn. To them, as to the Twelve, he gave marching orders as to carrying no wallet or money, and shaking the dust from their feet, and so on.

After a while the seventy returned with a glowing account of their deeds.

"Master," they said, "we found your name was a powerful spell! When we bade demons come out of the sick and the mad, out the jinn came!"

"Yes, of course," answered Jesus. "I knew it would be so; and I saw the Prince of the Air—that evil and cunning Satan who tempted me in the wilderness—fall like a flash of lightning, for his power is being taken from him. My friends, you will do other extraordinary feats".....

The seventy forerunners and the Twelve Apostles waited, breathless, to hear the news.

"You will tread poison-snakes under foot; you will tread vile scorpions to death, and you will receive no harm from their poison or their stings. But, beware! Do not become proud of your power over jinn. Rather be glad that you are my comrades in the new Kingdom, and that your names are written in the book of Heaven."

The Delegates and the seventy forerunners smiled for joy to think that their names were entered in the book of life—everlasting heavenly life. And any humble fisherman, shepherd, ploughman, tanner, coppersmith, beggar, or slave might join the Kingdom.

A lecturer salaamed to Jesus one day. He was a man who stood up in pulpits to talk, in a learned way, about the Law of Moses, and what to do or not do on the Sabbath, and how to eat and drink, and how to fast, and how to say prayers, and how a thousand other things. Such lecturers were called Scribes, or Writers of the Law; or you could call them Grammar Men, and Holy Clerks.¹

"Master," asked the scribe, "what shall I do to get everlasting life?"

"Well, you are a holy clerk; you know the Law; what does it say about life?"

"It says," replied the lawyer, "we should love God, and love our neighbour."

"Very good; that is the way of life."

"Ah, but, Master, who is my neighbour?"

"Who is your neighbour? Well, let me tell you a little tale," said Jesus. "You know the road that runs through the valley, between rocky hills, from Jerusalem to Jericho city?"

"I do."

"A man was travelling along that road when a gang of robbers sprang out from a hiding-place, set upon him, beat him cruelly, stripped his clothes off, and went away with clothes, money, and all, leaving him half dead. Presently, a priest of the Temple of God came by; and when he caught sight of the poor wounded traveller, he guessed there were robbers about, and had no mind to stop; and he kept the other side of the road, and hastened out of the place of danger. Then came along a Levite, an attendant in the Holy Temple of God. He approached the wounded man, looked on him, and passed by on the other side. A third man came that way,—a Samaritan merchant, with a camel, or ass. When he saw the unfortunate traveller, his heart was touched with pity. He went to him, mixed olive-oil and wine in the palm of his hand, and gently moistened the poor fellow's bruises, bound up his wounds with bandages, hoisted him on the beast, and so brought him some miles further

on to a roadside caravan shelter. There he laid him on a bed, and took care of him during the night. Next daybreak, when he must go off on his business, the Samaritan gave two silver coins to the inn-keeper, and said, 'Look after this poor fellow till I pass this way again; and if you go to more expense, I will repay you.' Now, my good Scribe and learned Lecturer, which of the three was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?"

"The merciful Samaritan, no doubt."

"Very well; now you go and do likewise."

This did not mean that Jesus always wanted people to be *doing* things, even merciful and useful things; he thought that *listening* was sometimes good, too. For instance, he dined at the house of a village dame, named Martha. She was a bustling woman, full of pride in her pots, pans, cookery, wash-basins for guests, well-arranged seats, and all the rest; and her cheeks were red with her hard labour in waiting on the company. For the Twelve Apostles had good appetites. But Martha's sister Mary sat on the ground at Jesus feet, listening eagerly to his talk of life, and the Kingdom, and crosses, and good Samaritans.

"Master," exclaimed Martha, vexed, "you do not seem to mind my sister leaving me to do all the work!"

"Martha, Martha," said Jesus, with good humour, "you are fearfully anxious about many things, and worry without reason. But one thing is needful, and that is to find what really matters, and what does not matter. And Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

It was about this time that one of his companions asked him to teach the folk of the new kingdom a new prayer. He then repeated what has ever since been called the "Lord's Prayer,"¹ which ran something like this:—

Father dear in heaven,
With respect we say your name;
Let the Kingdom come soon;
And we, poor simple folk, will do your bidding here
quite as truly as it is done by the folk in heaven.
Give us bread every day, for every day we hunger.
Wipe out our debts to you, and we will forgive our
neighbours their little debts to us.
Don't let the trials of life be too cruel for us, for the
world is a hard place for the poor;
And save us from the evil things that tempt us.

"It is quite easy to get gifts from God," added Jesus. "You just knock at the door, and he opens; perhaps not at once, but he will if you keep knocking."

The prayers of the common people were short. The prayers of the Lecturers and the Pharisee prigs were long and loud. A common man—a shepherd or fish-pickler—would often go to his meal with hands unwashed; but the same man might have a great, good heart, like the Samaritan who showed mercy.

A Pharisee once asked Jesus to dine with him, and other Lecturers and Writers sat at the table. Horror of horrors! The Master of the Jinn did not wash his hands before eating. Catching sight of the Pharisee's scornful glance, Jesus said,—

"You Pharisees make the outside of the pot nice and clean; but inside the pot is a beastly mess. You march about in pious style, boasting of the Tenth Parts that you give from your stores to the use of God and his priests. You even give a tenth part of the wretched little herbs in your kitchen-garden plots; and yet you do not move a hand to help a neighbour. You make-believes! You hypocrites! Woe unto you, lawyers!"

A shout of rage arose from the lawyers, learned Lecturers, holy Clerks, and pious synagogue men!

¹ Greek, *grammateis*.

¹ The *Our Father*, or, in Latin, *Paternoster*.

But the common folk listened gladly to the pioneer of the Kingdom.

* * * *

If you would hear a little more about prayer, let me tell of a famous Greek and of two English poets.

Socrates and his friends rested one summer morning under a spreading plane-tree on the bank of the Ilyssus stream; and the waters ran cool. Here they talked of man's Thoughts and man's Speech, and other things of interest. And at the end they rose to go home to Athens, and Socrates prayed thus to the Gods of the Woods and Open Air:—

Beloved Pan, and all ye other Gods who haunt this place, give me beauty of the inward soul, and may the outward and inward man be one. May I reckon the Wise to be the Wealthy; and may I have such a quantity of gold as a temperate man, and he only, can bear and carry.¹

We may be sure Socrates did not want much gold.

In our Shakespeare's play of *Coriolanus* we have a scene before the city of Rome. This Roman general, Coriolanus, is about to lay the city waste with fire and sword, though, in doing so, he will be injuring his own kith and kin. His mother, his wife, and his young son, kneel before him, and pray him to show mercy. Their tears move his heart from anger to pity, and the women's prayer does what armies could not do. Coriolanus spares Rome, and says to his mother and wife:—

Ladies, you deserve
To have a temple built you: all the swords
In Italy, and her confederate arms,
Could not have made this peace.

(Act V, scene 3).

It was a prayer from human lips to the human heart.

Then every man of every clime
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.
For mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And love the human form divine,
And Peace the human dress.

The two verses just repeated are from the *Songs of Innocence*, by the poet-artist, William Blake, who lived in a humble lodging near the Strand, London, and died there in 1827.

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

THE TWO STRUGGLES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Lately there has been quite an epidemic of protesting. Let me protest against the latest protestations. I have had to rub my eyes on reading the last few issues of the *Freethinker*. Surely Major Russell and young Colquhoun have been playing Rip van Winkle when it is necessary at this time of day to explain to them that the survival of the fittest does not necessarily mean the survival of the best.

I think Mr. Warren may safely be left to defend himself, but the letter of young Colquhoun illustrates clearly the purport of Mr. Thorn's admirable articles—that virile and independent thought is a very rare quality.

Why, in the name of common sense—merely because their works are widely known—should I, or anyone else, accept, unquestionably, what Spencer or Huxley has said? The "Unknowable" and the "Agnostic" tangles were created by these two writers. When I was a boy, I thought something of Spencer's little brochure on "Education"; but, as the father of a family, I can think of most of it only with amusement, and pity for Spencer's small know-

¹ Jowett's *Plato*. Dialogue "Phædrus."

ledge of life. And although Mr. Colquhoun asks: "Who is Mr. Arthur Kitson?" (that stunt is getting a bit stale now, Oscar Wilde with "Where is Liverpool?" and Shaw with "Who is Hall Caine?" to one of whose books G. B. Shaw wrote a preface, have worn the wheeze thin). I am sure the writer on the gold currency would have little difficulty in disposing of the economic fallacies of Herbert Spencer. It is hard that, in the *Freethinker*, one has to state that it is not *who* a man is, but what he *says* that matters.

Oh, to the devil with all your so-called "laws," divine, human, and "natural," and all your philosophy, which seems only "the losing of oneself by method." When Mark Antony said: "Judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason," he demonstrated that Shakespeare had not studied biology; for, as Cunninghame Graham points out, it is the possession of reason that makes a man inferior to the beasts!

If it is fated that "We must turn this fair world into a hell more awful than anything dreamt of by Dante," and "So long as unrestricted multiplication goes on the struggle will continue," then let us, in the name of Malthus, realize our doom. But it is all confounded nonsense. The biological struggle for existence is totally different from the mad, artificial, scramble for food which persists only because men have not the wit to manage their affairs sensibly, and are side-tracked by all manner of "reasoning" on biology, government, law, eugenics, two in a family, science, Dr. Saleeby, and all the other "flowers that bloom in the spring!"

Never mind the dead opinions of dead philosophers, or the exploded political economy of the Freethought God and his earthly representative, Dr. Binnie Dunlop. Nature is bountiful, and, as Mr. Warren says, there is abundance for all—if only we had a little sense.

J. EFFEL.

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