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## Views and Opinions.

### Christian "Corruptions."

We have been reading an attack on the Roman Catholic Church by a Protestant, and a reply thereto. Each accuses the other of obstructing progress, of being bigoted, of foisting a false Christianity on the people, etc. Being a Freethinker, we sympathise with both sides. We agree with each that the other is bigoted; that each side has falsified history, distorted man's moral sense, and obstructed science. It is, indeed, curious that the only time when one gets a fair measure of truth from these controversialists is when they are showing each other up. And one is reminded of the maxim that when rogues fall out honest men are likely to get their due. For instance, each accuse the other of corrupting primitive Christian teaching. But neither appear to realize that this corrupting of primitive Christian teaching was an essential condition of its continued existence. Absurd and impracticable doctrines such as non-resistance, celibacy, etc., may remain uncorrupted so long as they are held by a small body of fanatics. Quakers may practise non-resistance while a police force is maintained by less "spiritual" Christians, or Shakers practise celibacy while others perpetuate the race. But let either dominate the State, and their teachings become corrupted or society ceases to exist.

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### The Meaning of "Corruption."

All sorts of Christians appear to miss this point. Had Christian doctrines been adhered to in all their primitive impracticability, Christianity would have remained of no more historic consequence than the long-haired followers of the Lost House of Israel who may be found in modern London. The corruption and secularizing of Christianity was in reality a rationalizing of it; an attempt to adapt it to contemporary needs and ideas. And, as a matter of fact, every attempt to govern society by Christian doctrines has necessarily ended in failure or corruption. Calvinism in Geneva broke down utterly after two hundred years of rule, during which period its higher intellectual life lagged behind the rest of Europe. Presbyterianism in Scotland went through a long process of secularizing in order to live. The reign of the Puritans in England, which was essentially an attempt to govern the nation according to ideas derived from the Bible, is one of the most ghastly failures

recorded in history. To keep Christianity pure, therefore, is to keep it before the public in all its native absurdity and unworkability. It becomes rationalized in order to live. Its "corruptions" are the modifications forced upon it by the desire to live and rule. In this way the "corrupting" of Christianity has led to the dropping of Biblical inspiration and infallibility, eternal damnation, miracles, and the assumption of liberal thinking by various sections of the Christian Church.

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### The Benefit of Accident.

Much is made by Protestants of the circumstance that Roman Catholic countries are in general backward countries. And, of course, the difference is set down to the presence or absence of Protestantism. But to make the comparison of value, cases would have to be found where Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, with their respective clergy, have an equal quantity of political power, and therefore equal power to help or injure. As it is, any careful student will find that the only benefit conferred by Protestantism is an accidental and a negative one. Protestant countries are, on the whole, more progressive than Catholic ones, not because of what Protestantism does, but because of what it does *not* do. The divisions of Protestant bodies, their never-ending rivalry, prevent any one of them from securing supreme power such as that which for centuries was enjoyed by the Catholic Church, and so leaves a larger area of civil life *outside religion*. It is that which gives us the sole benefit of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism—it does not interfere to so large an extent with social life. The Roman Catholic priest avowedly aims at dominating life as a whole. The Protestant minister is forced by political conditions to disavow any attempt to coerce the State; and it is to this negative quality that the development of countries where Protestantism is dominant is due. But with this distinction, and allowing for the difference in the social powers of the two faiths, the Protestant clergy show themselves as inimical to progress as do the Catholic clergy. If the Roman Church punished the scientific workers of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, the Protestant Churches of the *nineteenth* century showed as bitter hostility to Lyell and Darwin. Protestant Churches, in their small peddling way, are as much given to heresy-hunting as are Roman Catholics—perhaps more so. And they are quite as greedy of State help, and as fond of State patronage. The whole lesson of history is that, once you place *any* Christian Church in power, the results are disastrous. Christianity is only harmless when it is powerless.

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### The Lesson of History.

Most amusing of all is it to find Protestants charging the Roman Church with intolerance. The charge is true enough, but it does not lie with Protestants to urge it. For, allowing for difference of opportunity, has Protestantism shown itself more tolerant of opinion than Roman Catholicism? We do not find that it has. On the contrary, it is to Protestantism we owe the circum-

stance that heresy was taken out of the hands of the Church, and its suppression made the business of the State. Historically, Protestant Churches have been hotbeds of intolerance and centres of persecution. For savage intolerance, it is hard to beat the early generations of Protestants. Calvin, Luther, Beza, Knox, are names that suggest an intolerance as bitter as anything displayed in the annals of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther believed in stamping out all who denied the principles of the Christian religion, and also that Jews should be confined as lunatics. Calvin's burning of Servetus was accompanied by every desire to prolong his victim's agony for the satisfaction of his religious bigotry. Knox was intolerance incarnate, and his followers openly taught that the killing of heretics was a justifiable act. In England, heretics certainly gained no more favour from the Puritans and their successors than they did from Catholics. It was under Protestantism that men and women were sent to prison, time after time, for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*. And in New England, wholly Protestant from the first, the reign of the Puritans was accompanied by every mark of savage bigotry and brutal intolerance.

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Semper Eadem.

And even to-day it is an error to speak or think of persecution as being over. People are no longer burned, and not often imprisoned; but they are banned and ostracised. Their living is filched from them, and their peace of mind, where they are of a not sufficiently stern type, destroyed. And between the church that cuts off a man's living, or severs him from social intercourse, because of his dissent, and the church that burns for the same offence, the difference is one of degree only. There is no difference in kind. It is the same spirit in both cases, but in the former it can only express itself imperfectly. There is no greater delusion than this of accepting Protestantism *per se* as more tolerant than Roman Catholicism. The one is just as intolerant as the other. In brief, every form of supernaturalism, and in particular Christian supernaturalism, is necessarily intolerant and destructive. It ceases to persecute science only when science is strong enough to cry "Hands off!" It yields to reform only when it is too weak to resist. And it is the height of folly to mistake weakness for a virtue or impotency for goodwill.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Apologetics in a Quagmire.

THE late Professor Bruce, of Glasgow, defined Apologetics as the science of stating and explaining Christianity defensively. It is a wonderfully illuminating fact that, after being in the world for so many centuries, Christianity still needs to be so stated and explained. Indeed, theologians have always been apologists; and, strangely enough, the apologies of one age have never satisfied another. More than that, no apologist ever arose who fully met the demands of his own age. In other words, at no period in its history has the Christian religion succeeded in convincing all the people of its own truth and efficiency. Even in the Ages of Faith there were doubters not a few, when doubt was treated as a crime. To-day, the masses in almost every country in Christendom have lost all interest in religion, while multitudes of the more thoughtful and reflective not only doubt, but openly disbelieve, all its doctrines. This state of things is causing the pulpit the greatest quietude and alarm. Sometimes a note of despair is heard, usually sounded by those clergymen whose

churches and chapels are comparatively empty. It has become a habit with them to indulge in angry tirades against the ignorance, materialism, and besottedness of the working classes, and against the worldliness, luxury, and love of pleasure which blind the minds and sear the consciences of the upper and middle classes. Others, who are more generously endowed, whose churches and chapels are full, cultivate an optimism which is anything but justified by the sum total of the facts. These, too, occasionally complain of the forgetfulness of God and the neglect of religious ordinances which seem to prevail in certain quarters; but they comfort themselves and their followers by giving vigorous expression to a confident hope that the present wave of religious indifference will soon spend itself, and that almost immediately the mightiest revival ever seen will be upon us. But all preachers alike, be they optimists or pessimists, are apologists. Recognizing the existence of numerous arguments against the Faith which prevent many people from accepting it, and realizing the fact that round about them there are thousands of well-informed men and women who even glory in their unbelief, they feel bound to do all they can to rebut those arguments and to enlighten the darkened understanding of their absent opponents. In the prosecution of this defensive mission, they often make use of their own press. As a rule, the religious newspapers are seldom read by non-believers, with the result that the apologies published therein rarely reach those for whom they are primarily intended. In the *Christian World* for September 19, there was a highly suggestive article, entitled "Wanted—An Interpreter," from the pen of J. A. Patten, M.A., M.C., C.F. By "an interpreter" Mr. Patten really means an apologist who will undertake to deal with religious questions defensively. He starts with the Genesis legend of Jacob wrestling with an angel through the dark hours of the night, and asking his Divine opponent what his name was. Mr. Patten treats that ancient legend as an historical fact. The wrestler is reported to have inflicted upon Jacob a bodily injury from which he suffered to the end of his life. This is how he puts it:—

The Divine wrestler had overcome his human opponent by a touch that meant pain and weakness and humiliation. Jacob accepted the chastisement without a murmur, but he wanted to understand the why and wherefore of the strange occurrence. He must needs go on with his shattered, weakened life, but he longed for an interpretation of the angel's touch.

Thus is Mr. Patten led to discuss the problem of suffering in general. According to him our greatest need is, not an alleviation of suffering, but an interpretation of it. We are all constitutionally "fitted to bear an incredible amount of pain," he tells us; but that is not true. Many a suicide is exclusively due to a constitutional dread of suffering. John Davidson, poet and playwright, is believed to have taken his own life through his inability to face the prospect of becoming the victim of the horrible disease of cancer. It is false to state that "in the last analysis we are stoics" in relation to suffering and sorrow. Surely, Mr. Patten cannot be ignorant of the fact that there are myriads of our fellow-beings who are hopelessly groaning under burdens which are crushing them to the earth. What they desire above everything else is release from the awful pressure. Most people are bearing burdens unjustly thrust upon them by those in power. What troubles them is the fact of the burden, not the reason for it, which they understand only too well. At this point the writer quotes the dying cry of the great Goethe: "More light, more light," though the relevancy of it is very doubtful. It is quite possible, of course, that, as a Christian Theist, Mr. Patten is more concerned about the mystery of pain than

about pain itself, but the Atheist is under no necessity to entertain any anxiety on that score. Naturally, everybody wishes to discover why he suffers, but only in order, if possible, to be delivered from the terrible ordeal. In any case, the mystery of suffering owes its existence very largely to the belief in an over-ruling, all-good, and all-loving Deity.

This applies with peculiar pertinency to the present War. To the Atheist the War is by no means an insoluble problem. For him the full explanation of it is to be found in human nature itself. On the whole, evolution is an upward movement, a progressive tendency; but, as every scientist knows, it is a process characterized by numerous zigzags or fluctuations. There are national and international, as well as individual, lapses and relapses, religiously known as backslidings; and the War is *par excellence* a case in point. But on the assumption that there lives an infinite Being, in possession of infinite power, who sitteth as King for ever, the War becomes at once a perplexing, baffling mystery, a tragedy which no one can understand and explain. The parsons are utterly helpless, and yet they dare not leave the problem alone, though they are at sixes and sevens every time they touch it. It is no wonder Mr. Patten declares that "the world needs interpreters of the mystery in which it is enshrouded," and interpreters without number there are, whose interpretations, alas, are equally without number, no two of them alike, but all of them tragically futile. It is frankly admitted in the article under review that the true interpreter has not yet arrived, and that so far the War is an inexplicable enigma, an unrelieved mystery. The Bishop of London has several times removed his coat and rolled back his sleeves, intent upon tackling the difficulty with all his might, but each time nothing but humiliating defeat has been his reward. On one occasion he went so far as to confess that the War had already resulted in the partial defeat of God himself—had, in fact, completely smashed his first design of a porcelain vase of universal peace, and compelled him to substitute for it a second design of universal service. It is silly beyond compare to call theology "the queen of the sciences," and in its name to say that God inspired Darwin to discover the origin of species, a discovery which has done more than all other discoveries put together to bow God out of the Universe, as it led Darwin to evict him from his own consciousness during the latter half of his life.

One is gratified to find that Mr. Patten does not attempt to play the part of an interpreter in his well-written article. Interpreters of the Universe in terms of Theism are at best but idle dreamers. Mr. Patten alludes to Jean Paul Richter's exquisite dream in which a man is summoned to the vestibule of heaven to contemplate the immensity of space. "Then the man sighed and stopped, shuddered and wept. His overlaid heart uttered itself in tears, and he said, 'Angel, I will go no further, for the spirit of man acheth with this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God.'" Mr. Patten imagines himself much wiser than Jean Paul Richter, who was a man of genius, and finds fault with the utterance, "Angel, I will go no further," saying:—

Ours is a nobler part than that—to believe that God, who planted the love of truth in our hearts, will lead us to the truth, however uphill the path may be.....The questions that demand an answer are far-reaching and perplexing: the relation of God to the War; the meaning of this universal suffering; the arrest of human progress, and the uncertain progress for the future—these and many other perplexed themes.

And these are questions which Mr. Patten, an ardent believer in God, does not even try to answer, but contents himself with expressing the hope that an inter-

preter may soon appear who will successfully resolve them. In the course of nineteen centuries there have come and gone innumerable defenders of the Faith, and even now, far on in the second decade of the twentieth, the cry is for more, the Christian religion still standing in as much need of being defended as ever. With this fact in mind, are we not justified in concluding that the Faith is in its very nature absolutely indefensible? The all-satisfying interpreter is yet to come. The truest thing written by Mr. Patten, on the present occasion, is the title of his very interesting article: WANTED—AN INTERPRETER.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Christianity and Labour.

We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions; and even if we abolish the House of Lords we shall still dwell in the house of bondage unless we abolish the Lord of Lords; for the evil principle will remain to develop into new forms of oppression.—G. W. Foote.

THE Modern Labour Movement has never proclaimed, and never sought after, an alliance with the clergy. So evident is this aloofness that, whenever a Trades Union Congress is held, the clergy are certain to break out into hysterical appeals to Labour leaders to remember that God and the Churches have always been on their side. But, as an old proverb assures us, in vain is the net spread in full sight of the bird. The instinct of self-preservation on the part of the Labour leaders prompts other and safer measures than a close contact with the Black Army.

Why this feeling of estrangement should exist between the Labour Movement and Christian Orthodoxy is explained by Mr. Chapman Cohen in his masterly *Christianity and Slavery*, with a chapter on Christianity and the Labour Movement (The Pioneer Press). A more powerful or opportune analysis of the Democratic indictment of Christian Orthodoxy it would be difficult to conceive. Mr. Cohen is not a writer who trusts to rhetoric and purple passages. His is the logical, judicial mind, prone to examine the present in the light of the past, that sees in the struggle between Democracy and Clericalism the efforts of priests to survive the fate of Destiny.

Stage by stage, calmly, dispassionately, the author develops his theme. Each chapter is an armoury of facts; an arsenal of argument. He shows the attitude of the Bible to slavery; compares slavery under Paganism and under Christianity; examines the institution of servitude in the Ages of Faith; outlines the history of the English Slave Trade, and of American negro slavery. Finally, the subject is rounded off with an acute and illuminative analysis of the Black and White Races, and of the attitude of Christianity to Labour. In the chapter on the attitude of Orthodoxy towards the working classes, Mr. Cohen has written some of the most telling pages of his book. Terrible as the earlier chapters on slavery are, this plain, unvarnished record of nineteenth century wage-slavery is one of the most appalling in the history of religious hypocrisy. Mr. Cohen does but recall the horrors inflicted upon women and young children by their employment in mines, collieries, and factories, but no one can read his masterly summary without a strong feeling of indignation that such things were possible in any country claiming to be civilized. Mr. Cohen's comment is well worth quotation:—

It only remains to add that during the existence of these complicated horrors, and the systematic ill-treatment and slaughter of children for pure gain, the country was bristling with renewed religious activities, imprisoning men and women for publishing and selling Paine's *Age of Reason*, and fighting France in defence of civilization.

Mr. Cohen's careful and elaborate analysis of the whole subject of Christianity and slavery should be welcomed by every social reformer, for it is the most exhaustive and painstaking work on this important subject. He has worked to save his readers the trouble he took himself, and he deserves their gratitude as well as their admiration. The wonderful industry, the honest, previous toil of the writer is a thing to marvel at. He has read a pamphlet to write a sentence; he has spent hours in a study to make a paragraph. "Mr. Bradlaugh a great lawyer?" said an honest Secularist, discussing the Freethought leader at the height of his Parliamentary struggle, "why, he always has such easy cases." To make a simple thing complicated, as is the habit of ordinary journalists, will always attract more praise than to make a complicated thing simple.

Here is Mr. Cohen's considered verdict on the Christian Church:—

It certainly could not be for lack of power that the Christian Church did not condemn slavery. For many centuries it exercised a position of commanding influence. It claimed the power to make and unmake kings, whole nations trembled at the threat of excommunication; it could set nation fighting nation for a difference of religious belief; it could send the whole of Europe on such a madman's errand as the Crusades; it could burn and imprison hundreds of thousands for witchcraft and heresy. The Church lacked neither power nor opportunity. And yet it not only failed to destroy slavery; under its auspices there was impressed upon the world the most brutal and degraded slave system known to man.

Men's memories are short, and the clergy's new found zeal on behalf of labour may deceive numbers of people. It is better to attach more importance to what the clergy do than what they say. In their hearts they care as little for the welfare of the working-classes as the Sultan of Zanzibar for his slaves. The votes of the clergy in the House of Lords prove it beyond dispute. The bare record is sufficient to rouse the lasting hostility of all right-thinking people, and their shameful opposition to all progress shows how hopelessly the clergy are out of touch with democratic aspirations and the humanist tendencies of the age. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of labour have been opposed by these ecclesiastics, and their record carries its own condemnation.

Mr. Cohen's judgment anticipates history. In vain does the Black Army invite the representatives of labour to reconcile themselves with the Churches. Christianity has let the mastery of the democratic movement pass to other forces. It is the orthodox priestly attitude which is unchanged through the centuries, and which is the same in all nations, which convinces the long-suffering democrat to give in the verdict of guilty.

In view of political conditions, Mr. Cohen comes forward at the right moment with the right book. Admirably arranged, this impeachment of orthodoxy is crowded with illuminating facts relating to the subject. No single pen has revealed at once so clearly and so comprehensively the hypocritical affectation of the Churches with regard to their attitude to labour, nor has helped the busy reader to visualize better the conditions which obtained when the authority of the Church was undisputed and undisturbed. The present-day hypocritical pretensions of the clergy are nauseating. They have an aroma like that of the crowded cabin of a small Channel steamer on a rough day. MIMNERMUS.

## Religion and Life.

By E. LYTTTELTON.

SIR,—Enjoying, as we do, the very rare opportunity of carrying on a discussion at a leisurely pace, I find it is advisable at this point to make clear what I am aiming at. For in your second column you imply that I put certain questions to you as if I were seeking a "dialectical advantage." I had no such object in view. The last thing in the world that I want to do is to prove that you are wrong. My hope is to show that in certain great convictions you are right; my only dissent from you is because you don't push those convictions on to the next stage. I will explain.

First, as to these convictions. I wanted to be sure if you held them or not. You have answered the questions rather guardedly, but I think I have ascertained with sufficient correctness how the convictions enter into your interpretation of life; but I beg you not to suppose that I wanted you to make any admission which might enable me to score a point in argument. Arguing is a pretty pastime, but on great questions is about as profitable as playing Bridge.

Next, as to your view. You draw a contrast between the two positions as follows: "Not having to marry these facts to a special theory, I am only concerned with their logical interpretation.....Dr. Lyttelton has to harmonize the facts with a theory." I am at a loss to understand the first statement. Do you not hold there is no God? If so, surely it deserves to be called a theory; and if a sincere man holds a theory, can he avoid trying to harmonize facts with it? If you say your theory is that there is a God, then we have, indeed, been writing at cross purposes. But, perhaps, you would prefer to formulate your view as a *via media*—that there may be a God, but there is no evidence to show that there is; and if there is, there is no possibility of knowing him. Even that I should call a theory—not a good one, I admit, but still a theory; and my objection to it is that it is unintelligible and self-contradictory.

It is Herbert Spencer's; but he was unable to see that in saying God is unknowable he not only postulated his existence, but also affirmed something about him. If God is unknowable we could not say or think anything about him at all.

I hope this comment on your words will not be taken as a *tu quoque*, or as it is expressed in more modern parlance a common "you're another." The only reason I say you have a theory is because it seems to me to be a fact; and yet you deny it; and I hold that the neglect of any truth brings mischief with it.

It is possible, however, that you rest your emphasis on having a theory, but on the necessity I am under of marrying the facts to mine, while you are relieved from the necessity of marrying any facts to yours. I would suggest that we cannot judge how far either of us does this thing till we each have been more explicit as to our main position. I hope very shortly to be as explicit as possible as to what Theism and Christianity are, because that is required if I am to show at all clearly where your affirmations agree with mine, and where they fall short.

But in this letter I cannot go further than to indicate in very rough outline what I am sure is the cardinal point of difference between us. It is not conceivable to me that anyone who is not mad should tilt against the Christian doctrine of God if he really understood what it is. But it is exceedingly easy to misunderstand it, especially as it has been a thousand times obscured, distorted, wrenched out of its true relations, watered

down, and so perverted as to become almost its own opposite, even in the hands of those who are doing their best to defend it. We need not waste time in speculating who has been most to blame; but it is a plain fact that all through his whole history man has repeatedly given way to a natural tendency to try to explain the Infinite; and in so doing he has unconsciously turned it into the Finite, and then wondered at finding it fails to satisfy thoughtful minds.

So far as I understand your position, you are attacking a doctrine which you believe to be fundamentally superstitious and fraught with manifold mischief to mankind. I say you have been doing a service to us all, in that you have helped to show that our most central doctrine is very easy to state erroneously, so erroneously that it naturally expresses to inquiring people something incredibly different from what it really is. In other words, you have been attacking a doctrine of a finite god, which I fancy, though it has been again and again dressed up by its votaries in quite attractive colours, is such nonsense that no one really believes it except a few lunatics who are happy in worshipping either a paltry figment of man's brain or some image fashioned by the joiner's hand. (For to try to worship a finite god is the very essence of idolatry.) I must do my best to prove that this statement of the divergence between us is sound.

Meantime, it is relevant to remark that this characteristic of Christian Theism (viz., that it is very easy to state quite erroneously) is common to many other spiritual doctrines or subjects of thought—I mean those which appeal to something in us other than the five senses—which I am pretty sure you hold to be true and of vital importance to man's welfare: such as Law, Order, Progress, Patriotism, Moral Goodness, etc. These have often been wrongly stated with results disastrous in proportion to the bigness of the doctrine or subject. Thus I hope you will resist the temptation to say that Religion must be nonsense *because* it is so difficult to explain. In the long run I fancy we shall see that this fact tells immensely in its favour, but that must come later.

Sir, in younger days I have occasionally indulged in the ancient pastime known as Aunt Sally; the throwing of short, stout sticks at a figure carved into a very rough resemblance to a human face, or merely a coconut set on a pole. A successful shot was rewarded by a good deal of clatter, and a strange sense of satisfaction felt by most healthy minded young people of the male sex. Such, I regret to say, has often been religious controversy: a species of intellectual Aunt Sally, in which the object of attack has been a sorry counterfeit of a living thing or a grievously misused natural product; misused because wholly misunderstood. To avoid such waste of time, I will endeavour in my next letter to substantiate what I have said above, and can trust to you to pull me up if any statements are obscure or seem to be contradictory. In the course of this I hope to answer the questions you put in your last article.

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For He who has denied to the most devoted psalm-makers and moral poets all beautiful thoughts and all literary reputation, lest they should be praised too much by their earthly fellow-creatures, and thereby forget heaven, where the angels have already engaged board for them in advance;—He, I say, provides us other profane, sinful, heretical authors, for whom heaven is as good as nailed up, all the more with admirable ideas of earthly fame, and this indeed from divine grace and mercy, so that the poor souls, since they are really here, be not altogether wanting, and that they may at least enjoy upon earth some of that joy which is denied to them in heaven.—*Heine.*

## Acid Drops.

Commenting on our discussion with Dr. Lyttelton, the Church newspaper, the *Challenge*, says: "It is naturally vexatious to the Atheist or Agnostic to be told that his (often very great) virtues, and his (often very noble) ideals, are the work in him of the God whose existence he doubts or denies." We can assure the *Challenge* that we are not at all vexed, but rather amused, by such a statement. And is it not astonishing that the God who can produce such noble ideals and great virtues in the Atheist falls short of producing a conviction of God's existence? And we might remind the *Challenge* of the sound rule that when things can be explained by known forces, there is no need to call in unknown ones. The Naturalistic theory explains all there is to be explained. The Theistic theory explains nothing, while itself ranking as another puzzle.

Sometimes there is an amusing outcome of the War-time regulations. At Rochford Session a fine was inflicted on a Jewish minister who came to bless the crops, but had forgotten to bring with him his identity book.

A clergyman has written a book with the title, *The Hardes Part*. It does not describe the position of the clergy in the great World-War, for in this country they are engaged in consoling the girls that the soldiers have left behind them.

You can always trust the dear clergy to use their opportunities. "Harvest festivals" have been held in some of the soldiers' "huts" in France.

A man named George Moss, found wandering about the country, suffers from the delusion that he has £10,000 a year and owns the Hotel Cecil. This is almost as curious a case as that of the Bishop of London, who has £10,000 a year, and imagines he is a poor man.

Scarce a week passes but some enthusiast leaves money for the endowment of superstition. This week, by the will of the late Mr. E. C. Burton, the Manchester City Mission receives a substantial bequest in the Longfield Hall, Salford, besides other gifts.

Some time ago the Bishop of London published a balance-sheet of his income showing that the more money he received the poorer he became. According to a newspaper report, the Rev. F. Pickford, of Farucombe, near Godalming, has the same delicate sense of humour. Replying to the suggestion that he had money, he preached from the text: "Silver and gold have I none," and afterwards gave details of his own and wife's private means. It may, of course, be explained that a man who really believes the dogma of the Trinity cannot be expected to be strong in the knowledge of arithmetic.

A Day of Prayer is to be held to return thanks for the liberation of Jerusalem from the Turks. Christians will meet to thank God for taking Jerusalem from Christians to give it to the Jews. The Mohammedan, who regarded Jesus as a prophet, is turned out. The Jew, who declares him to be an impostor, is to be ushered in! And the people who attend the Day of Prayer can keep a straight face! Oh for a lively sense of humour among the people!

A good story is going the rounds concerning the late Sir Samuel Evans, the divorce court judge. After the funeral service an acquaintance said: "Poor, old Sam! He's gone to heaven, but he can't be happy there, because in that place 'there is no marrying or giving in marriage.'"

The Rev. F. C. Spurr, who was a great "infidel slayer" in the Antipodes, writes in the *Christian World* that, when addressing soldiers, he was "pelted with questions concerning the value of prayer," and that one man wanted an

assurance that he was not "talking into space" when praying. We should like to hear Mr. Spurr's opinion as to whether prayer could shift the bullets fired from a machine-gun, and if not, why not? —

Canon Ring, of Westminster Cathedral, is stated to have said his first mass in a stable at Silvertown. Curiously, the Christian religion is also said to have been started in a stable. —

According to the *Evening News*, the French Government has ordered four thousand Y.M.C.A. huts for use in the Army. Apparently they have not asked for the flannel-mouthed evangelists. —

The civilizing effect of Christianity is not so apparent as the meat-roasting power of the meat-jack. A symposium of readers in the *New York Herald War Magazine* on the subject, "What's to be done with the Kaiser?" evoked the caustic comment of the editor, "Most of the letters are written by persons who can think of nothing so fitting as physical torture of the most extreme kind." —

The Christian Conscientious Objector who told the Tribunal that he wouldn't kill a flea ought to try a course of cheap seaside lodgings. —

Mr. Gompers, the American Labour leader, it appears, does not know where he was born, and he called at Fort Street, Spitalfields, when he should have gone to Tenter Street, near by. One remembers Mark Twain's story of the two rival Gardens of Eden. Mark's own choice was the one where the trees were not fully grown. —

Cardinal Bourne dedicated at the Pro-Cathedral recently a War-shrine, with crucifix, to the memory of soldiers. This War-shrine movement is a clever dodge to popularize religious emblems, and also to exploit the War for the benefit of the Churches. —

The endowment of superstition still goes on merrily. A large bequest has been left for the resident canons at the Anglican Cathedral of St. George at Jerusalem. It will be noted that the endowment of the Church means the enrichment of the clergy. —

"Amid all the welter of this present tragedy, the one thing not observable is any sign of Providence as ordinarily understood. 'Bill prayed to God, and Bill had his head blown off,' is a soldier's rough summary of the dilemma." So says the Rev. Arthur Pringle, in the *Christian World*, and he ought to know. Well, really, Bill's summary is not unjust. Christians believe that some people are helped by Providence, and others have therefore a reason for thinking they are neglected. Providence does its work, apparently, in fits and starts. Sometimes it looks after things; at other times it lets things go to the Devil. It is as unreliable as a politician, as variable as an opportunist parson. —

So Mr. Pringle says we must "explain this with all candour," because unless it is done, "there will be a dangerous leakage of faith." An explanation set about in that spirit is not likely to be very impressive. "We must be candid because it won't pay to be otherwise." In other words, "we must find an explanation that will remove the danger fronting us." Whether it is a sound one doesn't matter so long as it satisfies. And Mr. Pringle's explanation is, baldly, things are all right so long as our immortal soul is unharmed. But "Bill's" problem was not concerned with his immortal soul, but with his mortal head. He was not concerned with what Providence was doing to his "soul," but why Providence didn't pay more attention to his body. Providence in this War seems bent on remaining neutral. All the "Great" Powers are engaged; it is only the small and negligible ones that stand apart. —

The editors of the illustrated papers have keen eyes for pictorial effect. In a recent issue of a London daily two pictures showed the procession of the Mohammedan Holy Carpet at Cairo, and a portrait of the American Archbishop

Hayes in full war-paint. Both were fine examples of savage survivals. —

Miss Mary Macarthur holds that "the great force in politics is going to be the baby. Why not? The great force in politics to-day is men in their second childhood. —

Mr. H. G. Wells may have been converted, but he wears his rue with a difference. In his new work, *Joan and Peter*, he makes the lady ask, "If there isn't a hell, what does God do?" A palpable hit! —

The Rev. James Drummond, formerly incumbent of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, has died, leaving £14,164. This sum should be sufficient to prevent him handling a harp. —

We see from the *Christian World* that in a discussion between teachers in theological colleges, held at Harvard, U.S.A., one of the speakers said he had found no revival of religion among the men in the ranks, but he had "seen a revival of religion among the chaplains." Now, that is decidedly rich. Putting on one side the consideration that it says little for the religion of the chaplains when they went out, a cynic might suggest that the revival of religion among Army chaplains is no more than increased business activity. Whether the enterprise will yield a fair dividend we have our doubts. It certainly has not done so up to the present. —

The boys of Stoneyhurst Catholic College have sent to General Foch a list of 2,000 communions which have been offered in the school for victory. Now, we shan't be long! —

A daily paper editor expresses astonishment that a London vicar was seen shopping, and adds that this is presumptive evidence of the shortage of servants. But why should a preacher of the Gospel of Poverty have servants? —

"The German soul is God's soul; it shall and will rule over mankind. Verily the Bible is *our* book. It was given and assigned to *us*, and in it we read the original text of *our* destiny, which proclaims to mankind salvation or disaster, *as we will it*," so says a German Doctor of Divinity, quoted in the Ministry of Information's publications. The refining effects of God and the Bible is not very clear. —

We hear much of the poverty of the [clergy—from the parsons themselves—but they are not all near the casual ward. Here is a cutting from a provincial paper: "The vicarage at Grays, Essex, an old-fashioned house standing in large grounds, has been sold, and a modern up-to-date house will be erected for the incumbent." —

The promised revival of religion is overdue, but there is a crudescence of barbaric Biblical habits, notably in the use of the stick in the case of juvenile offenders. At Southend six boys, charged with theft, were birched. Two of the elder boys were ordered to receive six strokes, and the four younger ones three strokes. —

The Rev. J. J. Sandys, vicar of Gatacre, Liverpool, died in the parish church of Woolton whilst attending a service. There is no moral. —

Church congregations are being urged by printed appeals to economize in the use of coal. Formerly congregations were frightened by appeals to avoid coal—in the next world. —

The Christian religion is not the only one that is feeling the east wind of adversity caused by the World-War. The Chief Rabbi has sent a letter to all Jewish ministers protesting against the increasing number of mixed marriages between Jews and outsiders, which he regards as a grave menace to the Jewish faith. Another factor at work is the stoppage of immigration, which always helped the more orthodox party among the Jews, for most immigrants are more strict than those long resident in this country.

## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 6, Manchester; October 13, Swansea.

## To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 6, Leicester; October 13, Maesteg; October 20, Southampton; November 3, Manchester; November 10, Sheffield; December 1, Swansea.
- A. J. S.—We regret that our limited space prevents the insertion of your letter. But we do not say that evil comes through "Natural Law." Natural law is no more than a description of uniform processes. And as evil is the name given by man to processes which he finds unpleasant or undesirable, the Atheist has no need to ask whom it came from, or why it is here. These are Theistic, not Atheistic, questions. Nor do we see, from the standpoint of naturalism, why one form of existence should be called higher or lower than another. In nature things simply are. High and low are distinctions of our own creating.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—Pleased to hear from you, and to know that you are keeping well. We hardly need your assurance that your interest in Freethought is as keen as ever. We do not think you are made of the stuff that forms opinions lightly or discards them easily. Hope you will soon be back.
- MRS. B. SIGER.—Your soldier son's contemptuous attitude towards "Days of Intercession" is, we have good reason for saying, that of very many thousands in the British Army. We wish him the best of good fortune.
- W. E. KERSLAKE.—Thanks for sending on waste paper. It is urgently needed, and all helps.
- MR. F. E. WILLIS writes:—"I enclose cheque for my mite towards the Sustentation Fund for the best of causes. The manner in which you have kept the *Freethinker* going is itself a veritable triumph, and speaks volumes for the enthusiasm, sincerity, and intelligent discernment of your devoted admirers, and your own organizing skill. I do think, however, it would be wise to increase the price 50 per cent. to cope with some of the financial difficulties." We can only say we shall do this when we deem it necessary; but we are taking long views, and do not care to sacrifice to the ease of the moment the success of plans that will give the *Freethinker* its proper and an assured position.
- M. ARTHUR E. PREECE writes that we are wrong in saying that all religions place their golden age in the past. The Bible does not, and is quite opposed to the "superstitions" of the Church. Mr. Preece thanks the "splendid evidence for the true Christian religion," and encloses a six months' subscription to the paper. This is a pleasant way of heaping coals of fire on our head, but, all the same, we must point out that the Bible *does* place the golden age in the past, as is seen in the story of Eden.
- T. HENSWORTH (Shrewsbury).—We do not care to make a special appeal for funds to send literature to the troops, bearing in mind that we have already to ask the help of our readers for the Sustentation. Such sums as are sent voluntarily we distribute, and, in any case, no request for literature has been refused since the opening of the War. We have supplied it ourselves when needed.
- MR. A. W. DAVIS writes, in forwarding cheque: "I have been a reader since 1888, and never liked it better than now." Thanks.
- W. J. WILMOT.—We are very glad so warm an expression of attachment to the *Freethinker* from a reader of three years standing.
- G. GROVE.—Copies of the *Freethinker* are being sent to all the addresses. We are obliged to you for sending them.
- C. EMWELL.—We don't quite see the bearing of your question. So far as we are aware there is no difference in the original power of reproduction of somatic and germ cells. The reproductive power of somatic cells grows weaker as the cells themselves are, so to speak, allocated to other duties. This is what one would expect from what is known of the laws of evolution.
- HUGH HIGGINS.—Yours is a very practical way of showing your appreciation. The ready response you received is also very gratifying.
- SAPPER WALDER.—A man on joining the Army has the right to demand that he shall be entered as a Freethinker or an Atheist, or by under any other title. That being so, we imagine that few officers would decline to re-classify a man for any adequate reason. But we are not sure that re-classification can be demanded. Exemption from Church Parade is getting very common, and the more it is asked for the easier it will be to get. Thanks for what you have done.
- T. CRESSWELL.—It is not only among Christians that prejudice is encountered, unfortunately. Your instance is a case in point.

We imagine that the fear of religion is often only another name for fear of Mrs. Grundy. We are pleased to have your appreciation of the work of Bradlaugh and Foote.

W. H. BRIDEN.—The cutting, as you say, quite bears out what we have said concerning the influence of the literature we are distributing among the troops. We are keeping it up. The full results will be seen when the War is over.

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

*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.*

*All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."*

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

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

*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.

There must have been something in what we said last week, in connection with the Sustentation Fund, to lead to the belief that we were losing heart in the continued and growing severity of the struggle. We are judging from a couple of letters to hand from the very warm friends of this journal. But we can assure them, and others, that this is not the case. The struggle is hard, and when it is recognized that the increased cost of paper, wages, and machining, leaving out other odds and ends, represents an advance of over £800 a year on pre-War cost, it will be seen that the task of carrying on is no light one. But in spite of this we were never more confident of pulling through, and of giving the *Freethinker* a better position than it has yet held in the country. We are so confident that we are already working at plans, which, although they may take several years to mature, *will* mature, unless something wholly unexpected occurs. What these plans are will appear as soon as the proper time arrives. Meanwhile we are not at all down-hearted, or doubtful of our pulling through. We have too many sincere friends and well-wishers for disaster to occur. Our only concern is with the methods that must be adopted to overcome the ever-growing expenses and other difficulties. On that we may have to make a public statement in the course of the next two or three months.

The North London Branch opens its indoor work to-day (October 6) with a debate between Mr. Palmer and Mr. Muir, of the C.E.S., on "That the Evil in the Universe is Reconcilable with an All-knowing and Beneficent Creator." The discussion commences at 7.30.

Mr. T. C. Longridge writes:—

Having just finished the reading of your *Christianity and Slavery*, I feel I must congratulate you on having produced a splendid propagandist work. The case you set forth is overwhelming in its completeness. But my object in writing is not to pay compliments, but to say that in my opinion the chapter on "Christianity and Labour" would make a capital pamphlet by itself, and if it could be reprinted would gladly take 500 copies for distribution. In any case, I enclose cheque for 50 copies of *Christianity and Slavery*, to be sent to soldiers at the Front. It will supply them with ammunition for many an engagement.

Another friend also sends us £2 for the same purpose. Needless to say, we shall be pleased to undertake the distribution of these copies if our readers will send on names and addresses. Particulars, please.

The Manchester Branch opens its session to-day with two lectures by Mr. Cohen in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick. The afternoon subject at 3 is "God and the State"; evening at 6.30, "The Old Religion and the New

World." Both subjects should give rise to plenty of discussion. In order to give the lectures a good "send off" it has been arranged that on this occasion admission is to be quite free, with, of course, a collection towards expenses. We hope those who do attend will bear this in mind, as otherwise the experiment is apt to bear adversely on the Branch funds, which are already sufficiently low. In any case, we hope that all Freethinkers, attached and unattached, will do their best to see that the hall is crowded on both occasions. It is a good opportunity for introducing newcomers.

As further evidence that our circulation of Freethought literature in the Army and Navy is telling, we observe a letter in the *Daily Mail* from a Mr. C. F. Wollouth, asking the Admiralty and the Army Council to "take action in the matter and issue such instructions to the authorities.....as will have the effect of safeguarding our men from the malign influences which are being brought to bear upon them." We feel quite flattered by this testimony to our "malign influence," and are strengthened in the resolve to pursue our evil course.

The weather was vile all over the country on Sunday last. It prevented Mr. Cohen's meetings at Southampton being as good as they would have been otherwise, but it didn't damp either the enthusiasm of those present or of those responsible for the work. The Branch Committee is full of energy, and intend to make things hum. At Birmingham, Mr. Lloyd, we are pleased to say, had a splendid meeting, with a rapid fire of questions at the close of the lecture. That always adds interest to the meeting.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (October 6) at the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. The lecture commences at 6.30, and Freethinkers should make it a special point to introduce new-comers to the meeting. The hall is a fine one, and ought to be crowded.

We have been much struck by the number of women who have contributed to our Sustentation Fund. This is not observable to readers, as names do not always carry an indication of sex. But a very palpable feature in the list is the number of joint contributions from husband and wife. These are both features to be proud of. We are getting the women, we are getting the family. This represents an advance of great significance. We are forcing one of the great strongholds of the Churches.

## "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

### Fifth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £308 17s. 9d. A Few Dundee Friends, 15s. G. Dixon, 5s. Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Kerslake, 10s. C. F. Barker, 10s. W. H. Hicks, £1 1s. W. Hopper, £1 1s. A. W. Davis, £2 2s. W. J. Wilmot, 10s. J. Burrell, 2s. 6d. G. F. Dixon, £5. Per Hugh Higgins, £2 5s. T. H. Elstob, £1. Duncan Stewart, 5s. E. J. Jones, 5s. Alexandra Hall, 2s. Miss Palphreyman, 1s. J. Boston, 1s. S. E. Carvell, 10s. A. O. Warley, 5s. J. Irving, 10s. T. Cresswell, £1. Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Browne, 5s. Arthur Baker, 5s. The Misses Black, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. Gorrie, £1 1s. Per Sapper W. Walder, 5s. T. C. Riglin (second subscription), 2s. 6d. E. Lechmere (second subscription), 2s. 6d. F. E. Willis, 10s. J. V., £5. A. Radley, 4s. E. Rickard, 2s. 6d. S. Clowes (second subscription), 4s. T. M. Mosley, 2s. J. H. English, 2s. 6d. T. O'Neil, 5s. Capt. J. Latham, £5. H. A. Lupton, 10s. Mr. Eichert, 10s. S. D. V. W., 5s. E. Broad, 3s.

Per Secretary Manchester Branch:—Mr. and Mrs. Pulman, £1 1s. Mr. and Mrs. Hollins, £1. Mr. H. Black, 10s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Willis, 5s. Mr. and Mrs. Rosetti, 10s. 6d. "S.," 2s. Mr. and Mrs.

Monks, 10s. 6d. T. F. G., 2s. Mr. O'Neill, 2s. 6d. L. E. Owen, 10s. Mr. J. Smith, 2s. 6d. J. H. Langford, 10s. St. Rhone, 3s. Mr. Thornley, 5s. G. Bailey, 10s. And Mr. and Mrs. Batt, 2s. Total, £348 3s. 9d.

## A Search for the Soul.

### XIII.

(Continued from p. 509.)

In the *Weekly Dispatch* of August 27, 1916, there appeared two articles by different writers, both dealing with the same subject. In introducing them to his readers, the Editor said: "While Sir Oliver Lodge deals with the *purely scientific* aspect of survival after death, Miss Estelle Stead deals with what she describes as actual experiences of spirit conversations between the living and the so-called dead." The words I have italicized plainly indicate how any writings of Sir Oliver Lodge are regarded by the press: they are all "purely scientific." It is mainly for this reason that I selected Sir Oliver's *Man and the Universe* as perhaps the most rational and scientific book on the Dualistic side of the question; for it professes to speak in the name of science without discussing Spiritism. I now make another extract from that remarkable work; in this the writer says:—

Superficially, nothing is easier than to claim that just as when the brain is damaged the memory fails, so when the brain is destroyed the memory ceases. The reasoning is so plausible and obvious, so within the reach of the meanest capacity, that those who use it against adversaries of any but the lowest intelligence might surely assume that it had already occurred to them and exhibited its weak point. The weak point in the argument is its tacit assumption that whatever is non-manifest is non-existent; and that by destroying the mechanism of interaction between the spiritual and the material aspects of existence you must necessarily be destroying one or other of those aspects themselves (p. 92).

This argument, Sir Oliver says, is "so plausible and obvious, so within the reach of the meanest capacity," that it is fitted only to be employed against "adversaries of the lowest intelligence." If this be so, then the argument is not at all unsuitable; for in Christian countries the "lowest intelligence," at least upon this subject, will be found among church and chapel-goers and Spiritists, who believe in the survival of the soul after death, and who throw common sense, discrimination, and rational judgment to the winds. I can therefore quite understand why Dualists do not like to see it used. As an argument, however, it is perfectly sound; for it is simply a statement of fact.

Now, in the first place, it is not memory only that is affected, but all the mental faculties. The whole mind, during the period when the body is unconscious, appears to be absolutely non-existent, and unless the brain can be restored to its normal condition, the mental faculties *will never be able to manifest themselves again*. The significance of the latter fact is conveniently ignored. It is quite true that in this case a "tacit assumption" is made that what is non-manifest is non-existent; but this is perfectly legitimate, because the action of what is called "the mind" is known to be dependent in some way upon the molecular activity of the cerebral organ—a fact which is admitted even by Sir Oliver himself. Could it be shown that the mind, soul, or spirit is an entity distinct from the brain, its non-manifestation when the latter organ was damaged would not matter a scrap; it might then be admitted to be in existence,



though quiescent. But this is not the case: the soul and mind are assumed to constitute an entity apart from the brain without a scintilla of corroborative evidence, and even in the face of the strongest evidence to the contrary. Hence, the fact that mental activities are non-manifest whenever the cerebral organ is unable to function is a clear proof that they are dependent entirely upon that organ for their existence. This is the main point of the argument which Sir Oliver says is "so within the reach of the meanest capacity," and it should be specially noted; for if the qualities or activities attributed to the Mind are always non-manifest when the brain is too damaged to function, it should become obvious even to the Christians and Spiritists of the "meanest capacity" that those mental attributes are really produced by the cerebral organ itself.

Let us consider this matter for a moment. Consciousness and thought are only found in connection with a living brain; and just as physical exercise exhausts the muscles of the body, so continuous thought exhausts the nervous substance of the brain. Long-sustained intellectual work is also accompanied by a loss of substance of the brain, which loss has to be made good—as in the case of the muscles—by suitable food. Again, arterial blood is absolutely necessary for repairing the waste tissues of the brain, without which mental activity ceases. Complete rest, especially by dreamless sleep, is to the brain what needful repose is to the fatigued limbs—the necessary condition of health.

In cases of the fracture of the skull or a blow on the head, by which a portion of the cranium is made to press upon the brain, the person stricken remains unconscious, and the mind is a blank, until the depressed portion has been removed, however long the period may be. When this has been done and consciousness returns, the man can remember everything that happened to him up to the moment of receiving the blow, but nothing whatever during the weeks he lay unconscious until the moment the pressure upon his brain was removed. This return to consciousness then appears to him to immediately follow the time he received the blow, and if he happened to be talking to any one at that time, he continues what he had been saying the moment he regains his lost consciousness. The latter fact proves that his mental faculties were non-existent during the time he lay unconscious; so that non-manifestation *does* mean non-existence.

Now, during the time he lay unconscious his brain was still a living organ; but consciousness and thought had ceased. Why was this? Simply because the brain which produced those sensations had not, by reason of the pressure upon it, the freedom to continue its molecular activities. It is thus perfectly clear that Mind, or so-called "spirit," is dependent solely upon the brain, and could have no independent existence apart from it; it is, in fact, something which is produced by the functioning of the cerebral organ, and is, therefore, continually changing; it is only the memory of what has gone before that makes it appear continuous. As a simple matter of fact, the latter theory is the only one which explains the complete absence of "mind" during a long period of unconsciousness. As already stated, we have no evidence that there exists in the human organism a mental faculty separate from the cerebral organ, and that is why we hear such nonsense as "the mechanism of the *interaction* between the spiritual and the material aspects of existence." We may admit the words "psychic" or "spiritual" as being synonymous with "mental"; but we have no reason for admitting a psychic or a spiritual "entity"; the latter is purely imaginary.

Dr. Maudsley, in his work on *Body and Mind* says:—

When a blow on the head has paralysed sensibility and movement, in consequence of the disease in the brain which it has initiated, the patient is sent to the hospital; but when a blow on the head has caused mental derangement, in consequence of the disease of the brain which it has initiated, the patient is sent to an asylum.....When two persons undergo a similar moral shock, or a similar prolonged anxiety, and one of them goes mad in consequence, while the other goes to sleep and recovers his equanimity, it is plain that all the co-operating conditions have not been the same. In a great many cases there is something in the nervous organization of the person, some native peculiarity, which predisposes him to an outbreak of insanity (pp 41, 42).

Here we see, as the physiological effect of a blow on the head, that whether the brain is rendered unable to function at all (*i.e.*, total unconsciousness), or to function in some abnormal manner (*i.e.*, mental derangement), the result is due solely to the condition of the cerebral organ itself, and has no relation whatever to an imaginary entity called "the mind."

(To be continued.) ABRACADABRA.

## The Gods Afraid.

IN a recent article, I traced the progress of the Hebrew Fire-and-storm God Yahweh from his visibility in the days of the Patriarchs to his disappearance behind a cloud in the first or second Christian century. The subject recurred to my mind when I read the interesting chapters of a book on *The Lau Islands, and their Fairy-tales and Folklore*, by T. R. St. Johnston,<sup>1</sup> British Commissioner. The islands are adjacent to the Fiji group. Mr. Johnston picked up folk-lore and myths from old inhabitants.

One day, he visited an old widow, whom he found seated on native grass-mats, and, while she smoked, she chatted, and told him stories of the times previous to the arrival of the Wesleyan *lotu*, or religion.

"Before the foreign ships came to Lau," she said, "there lived in an island yonder a God named Rasikilau."

She went on to describe how when Rasikilau walked, the hills trembled, and his head reached as high as the tallest palm-trees. A canoe from the mysterious North brought a Goddess, whom he married, and the divine offspring was two handsome and extremely robust boys. A favourite sport of the boys was to pull up big Mamekara trees by the roots. Another recreation was to stand, one at each end of the island and pelt each other with pebbles. But when they quarrelled over a catch of fish, and hurled enormous boulders at each other, their father reflected that two such strong youths would be powerful enough to turn him out of his possessions, and he endeavoured to restore peace. This he did by rushing in between, and knocking their heads together, with the result that they both fell dead. He broke the news—or part of it—to their mother by saying they had killed each other by throwing stones.

Not long afterwards, a God named Koroibo, who reigned over a neighbouring island, crossed the intervening lagoon, and brought gifts of friendship to Rasikilau, and he much enjoyed dining with his host under a shady Mamekara tree.

"I like these Mamekaras," he said, "and I have a proposal to make. I hear that accidents occasionally happen here through young people throwing stones. Now in my own island, the juveniles throw the soft

<sup>1</sup> Pub. in 1918 by the Times Book Company.

fruits of the Dawa tree. Give me your Mamekaras to plant in my territory, and I will give you Dawa trees in exchange."

They agreed, drank out of a bowl together, and parted politely.

The Goddess died of grief.

No good came of the tree transactions, for the transplanted specimens all died.

When the old lady got thus far in her tale, Mr. Johnston asked her—

"But are these Gods never seen nowadays?"

She looked a little confused, and replied—

"No; not since the missionaries brought the light of the good *lotu* to us; but"—

"But?"—

"Well," she added, "of course, there was *Adi Mailagi*, who used to appear till a few years ago. And then there is *Daucina*, who lives a *little way down the coast*."

The old lady was really revealing one of the secrets of the Evolution of Gods, when she made this simple observation! And she wound up with another.

"All the other Gods now," she said, "only show themselves in their *waqawaga* [earthly shapes] as birds, or animals, or fishes. They are the people of the dark times, and they *fear the missionaries*."

That was another way of saying that an inferior culture gives place to a superior. The missionaries would readily accept such a theory. They would not be so ready to accept the further conclusion that, in precisely the same manner, their own system of theology would have to yield before the advance of a humanist conception of the universe.

The reader may be edified by another anecdote drawn from Mr. Johnston's entertaining pages, though it has no relevance to the theme I have just discussed. It relates to the remarkable fashion in which the people of the village of Mabula (in the Lau Islands group) were persuaded to accept the Christian faith.

A native magistrate, named Samani, had himself become Christian under the more or less efficient instruction of the missionaries; and, hearing that, though Mabula possessed a church, many of the villagers were still unbelievers, he obeyed the call of duty and summoned a meeting. He ascended the pulpit and discoursed, but was vexed when his remarks were greeted with laughter.

Next Sunday, he returned, climbed the pulpit, and began again. The laughter began again. Mr. Johnston heard the following account of what happened next:—

Great, then, was his anger, and he pulled off his white shirt (for he had on a foreign shirt which a missionary had given him), and stood upright in the pulpit, very fierce, and holding aloft his club:—

"Men of Mabula," he cried, scornfully, "if ye will not listen to my Bible—the Bible of the *lotu*—ye shall at least listen to the Bible of *Tui Lakeba*" (the God of Lakeba).

And he banged the club on the pulpit, so that he almost broke the desk.

Then were the men of Mabula much afraid, and remained silent, and listened to his words, and never again did they mock in the church; for he warned them that he would return and beat them, should such a report reach him.

One cannot suppose that the zealous Samani had ever read a translation of Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, otherwise it might be thought he had taken a hint from Butler's description of the Church Militant:—

Such as do build their faith upon  
The holy text of pike and gun,  
Decide all controversies by  
Infallible artillery,  
And prove their doctrine orthodox  
By apostolic blows and knocks.

At anyrate, it shows that philosophers speak truly when they say that the laws of human psychology act similarly in the most widely separated parts of the world.

F. J. GOULD.

### Scottish Notes.

The "Wee Frees" have passed a resolution at the Edinburgh Presbytery meeting proposing that the new Education Bill should contain provisions which would prevent the use and exhibition of religious symbolism in the transferred schools during school hours; yet they are in favour of the amendment, which was lost in Scottish Grand Committee, that use and wont should be secured in the provisions of the Bill itself, and should not be left even to the option of the education authorities. What idealic notions of liberty these reverend Fathers in God possess! They want to keep their Church free from the State, yet they want the State to enforce their doctrine on the people through the teaching in public schools.

The Rev. Professor Kennedy Cameron says if they had been taught anything in connection with this War, he thought the importance that attached to religious teaching in a community had been forced upon them more than any other question. His own belief was that at the very root of all this conflict was the want of religion among the German people. How long are such men to be allowed to make such statements? Is Germany not the most religious nation on earth? The Kaiser is constantly thanking God for past favours, and invoking his help for those to come. Is not religion taught in all the schools of Germany?

The Rev. Hugh Armstrong, Winchburgh, says they want to take away from "careless" School Boards the power of determining the place of religious instruction in the school curriculum, and to make it a statutory duty on teachers to teach religion in the school. What proportion of the community does the Rev. Hugh represent, and who cares what he wants?

The Rev. A. Robb, Lauriston, says he is curious to know how it came about that the Roman Catholic and Episcopal bodies in Scotland had succeeded in gaining the ear of the Government to obtain public grants for the teaching of religion on a denominational basis in their schools while this was not conceded to the Presbyterian Churches. What we want to know is how long any privileges are to be given to religious denominations at the expense of Secularists.

What are the Secularists in Scotland doing to prevent compulsory religious education being thrust upon them? Are they making their voices to be heard in the matter? If not why not? Surely with so much squabbling amongst the various sects, the secular solution is the only logical position.

Dr. John Strong, Royal High School, Edinburgh, in his presidential address at the Educational Institute of Scotland, said as a profession the teachers held a strong and abiding belief in the value and necessity of religious instruction in schools. Does Dr. Strong think it would be in the interests of morality if he and his colleagues were compelled by law to teach the Bible from cover to cover, and to explain to children of tender years all the immoral practices of the ancient Jews? How would he like his female assistants to explain to a class of boys Numbers xxxi. 13, or the story of Boaz and Ruth? Does Dr. Strong draw no distinction between Bible teaching and ethical instruction? SCOTIA.

Some ideas there are that lie beyond the reach of any catastrophe. He will be far less exposed to disaster who cherishes ideas within him that soar high above the indifference, selfishness, vanities of every-day life. And, therefore, come happiness or sorrow, the happiest man will be he within whom the greatest idea shall burn most ardently.

—Masterlinck.

## Correspondence.

### "THE TASK OF FREETHOUGHT."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My few and casual remarks on the present condition of Freethought advocacy have drawn a rather lengthy, very able and interesting article, under the above heading, from the pen of "Mimmermus" With much that he says no Secularist will disagree, but some will hardly appreciate his (and Mr. Cohen's) satisfaction with the merely critical work of Freethought, and their repudiation of Secularism as a sect. In my hot youth, "when George the Third was King," we used to talk of the "Secular Party," and looked forward to the time when it should assume the reins of government. Now it seems we must be content to remain for ever in "the cold shades of opposition."

J. F. RAVNER.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON  
SEPTEMBER 26.

The President occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Brandes, Davidson Eager, Gorniot, Heaford, Kelf, Lazarnick, Leat, Neate, Palmer, Roger, Samuels, Silverstein, Thurlow, and Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, Miss Pitcher, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Coventry, Garw Valley, Maesteg, Regent's Park, and the Parent Society.

Permission was given for the formation of a new Branch at Garw Valley, and for the title "South Wales Divisional Council" to be used, conditionally, in connection with other Branches in that locality.

Mr. Cohen consented to allow his recent article, *God and Man*, to be reprinted for use as a propagandist tract.

It was reported that Branch secretaries had now received the printed report of the Special Committee on Re-organization.

The President ruled that any discussion by the Executive of this report was out of order, but all resolutions or amendments would be remitted to the Agenda Committee, which was then elected. November 17 was suggested as the date of the Conference meeting, and the Secretary was instructed to fix the meeting-place in a town that could be considered central.

Branch Secretaries are reminded that meetings of their members should be called as speedily as possible for the discussion of the Special Committee's report, as all notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must reach this office not later than October 12. Individual members can be supplied with copies on application.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

## Sonnet "Nature."

DEAR FRIEND: no man knows anything of God.

All men are Atheists, though they know it not,

Nature includes the All from star to sod,

And none can soar beyond her range one jot.

Being infinite she shall for ever be,

She knoweth no beginning and no end;

Revealing no design in earth, sky, sea,

In life or death; is neither foe nor friend.

She knoweth naught of evil nor of good,

She knoweth naught of darkness nor of light,

Of beauty or repose; earthquake and flood

Are all the same to her as truth and right.

She is one vast and self-existent whole,

And careth nothing for the human soul.

A. J. WILLETTS.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Mazzini and the New Nationalism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): "That the Evil in the Universe is reconcilable with an all-knowing and beneficent Creator." Affirmative, Mr. Percy H. Muir; Negative, Mr. T. F. Palmer.

#### OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Kells, Ratcliffe, Dales, and Swasey.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "The Value of the Bible in National Life." (A reply to Dr. Campbell Morgan's Lecture, with particular reference to Reconstruction after the War.)

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-Operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Mr. C. Cohen, 3, "God and the State"; 6.30, "The Old Religion and the New World."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, First Floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, "Charles Bradlaugh: Appreciation"; 7, Important Business, Special Committee Reports, etc.

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