

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XXXIX.—No. 8

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Atheism and Brutality.</i> —The Editor - - - - -	89
<i>Baseless Assumptions.</i> —J. T. Lloyd - - - - -	90
<i>Whitewash and Eyewash.</i> —Mimnermus - - - - -	91
<i>A "One-Eyed" Philosophy.</i> —Arthur B. Moss - - - - -	92
<i>The Glorious Privilege!</i> —Ignotus - - - - -	96
<i>Writers and Readers.</i> —Geo. Underwood - - - - -	97
<i>Judge Not?</i> —E. Anderson - - - - -	98
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letter to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Atheism and Brutality.

Speaking in the House of Commons on February 12, Mr. Lloyd George advised those who were talking about Russia to turn their minds away from newspapers and read the French Revolution. I have given the same advice several times during the past year, and so cheerfully endorse it now. And reading the first part of Dr. Lyttelton's article in last week's *Freethinker*, I feel impelled to hand on the advice to my critic. For the history of the two movements are instructively analogous. In both instances an age long and intolerable tyranny, backed up in both cases by the Church, was ended by the only possible method—a revolution. In both instances other countries, alarmed at its possible influence, depicted the revolutionists as a band of blood-stained scoundrels, sought to suppress the revolution by force, under the plea of restoring order, while the press of that day shrieked over the Atheism of the French, attributing the exaggerated and manufactured horrors of the revolution to the disestablishment of religion. Quite as remarkable was the insensibility to the age-long suffering of the people, and the extreme sensitiveness to the sufferings of those who were put to death during the revolution. So Christians could see the Russian people robbed, tortured, and ill-treated, could see Jews murdered wholesale, and Jewesses compelled to register themselves as prostitutes before being allowed to study at their own universities, could see, in the rising headed by Father Gapon, scores of unarmed men and women shot down by the Czar's troops and yet remain unmoved. For these things were done by the order of the anointed Czar and with the sanction of the Church. It is when the people rise in their turn, and lives are lost, that there is an outburst of horror and indignation. In Paine's immortal phrase, they pity the plumage and forget the dying bird. The injustice to the many by the few may be easily forgiven, the revenge taken by the many on the few calls for denunciation and is unforgivable. A year of retaliation for centuries of wrong. A people brutalized by a religion-soaked autocracy behaving as their masters have taught them to behave. I am not defending brutality and wrong whether committed by Atheist or Christian, by peer or peasant, but I do marvel at the state of mind that can calmly bear the injustice of an Established Church and a tyrannous Government

and become convulsed with horror when the people commit excesses in the attempt to end an intolerable wrong. By all means read the French Revolution.

* * *

Russia and Religion.

Now, I think I may safely leave my previous articles as an answer to the major portion of Dr. Lyttelton's last contribution; but he puts a direct question to me, and I do not care to avoid that. He takes certain statements contributed, for the most part, by anonymous correspondents, and building upon them, as upon a rock, asks me what I make of them. For, he says, Trotsky is an Atheist, and he believes (I do not know how Dr. Lyttelton can know this) he is acting in accordance with the principles of Atheism. And he concludes that we see there Atheism leading not to an improvement of the world, but the reverse. I must say in passing that there is no evidence that all the stories our papers print about Russia are true, and some are clearly not true, while others are flatly contradicted by reputable witnesses who put their names to their communications. It is not true, for instance, that Trotsky has "organized compulsory lessons on the non-existence of a Divine Being." The *Christian World* is my authority (and I have others) for saying that, for the first time in its history, Russia possesses religious freedom, and there is a great deal of Evangelical work going on in the villages. Any religion may be professed, but there are no religious tests, and, as in France, the State is completely secularized. That, I presume, is a grave offence in the eyes of English Christians; and only a few years ago these same daily dreadfuls were making our flesh creep with tales of the moral degradation that had overtaken France because she had done what Russia has now done—secularized the State. And perhaps Dr. Lyttelton will inform me, assuming the statement is true, is there anything worse in the compulsory teaching of the non-existence of God than in the compulsory teaching of his existence? Both to me are equally stupid, but is one more wrong than the other?

* * *

Who is to Blame?

The Freethought case is so strong it can afford to be more than fair—it can well be generous. So let me give Dr. Lyttelton all for which he asks. Let me assume that all his statements are actually verified facts, and that the brutality of the Lenin-Trotsky regime has in twelve months so outdone the slaughtering, and torturing, and outraging, and killing, and robbing of the whole of Czardom that we are justifiably outraged. What have I to say? Well, my first comment is that of Mirabeau's. If you treat a people like brutes you must expect them to behave like brutes. How a people behave is a consequence of their antecedents, an exhibition of their education. The Church has had more influence over the mind of the Russian people for centuries than any other power. It alone made the autocracy possible for so long. And if the outcome of this influence—not for a year but for many centuries—is that at the first opportunity the people behave, as Dr.

Lyttelton believes they behave, does it not occur to him that it is the Atheist who should call on the Christian for an explanation of his conduct and not *vice versa*? Christianity had the training of these people—not Atheism. And the Atheist might reply, What on earth can you expect from a people with so Christian an heredity? Russia brought about its revolution without God; Germany went to war with the name of God on its lips. Looking at the conduct of Germany since 1914, does Dr. Lyttelton really think the Godly power comes well out of the test by comparison?

Crime and Atheism. * * *

But I am really puzzled to see why Dr. Lyttelton should connect Atheism with brutality or murder, or why, because an Atheist is brutal, it should be at once held to be a logical result of his Atheism. Theoretically, Atheism is a rejection of Theism. In practice the Atheist believes that the world will be the better for its rejection of Theism. There is plenty of proof to be offered for this belief, but it is not now germane to the issue. But how can you logically connect Atheism and crime? Granted that an Atheist can and does commit crime, is there any reason in the nature of things why he should not? If vice and virtue are, as I believe, qualities of human nature, is there any ground for assuming that Theists should have a monopoly of vice? And if the criminality of one Atheist is to be placed to the credit of his Atheism, to what are we to attribute the criminality of thousands of Theists? Atheism, said Bacon, "leaves a man to sense; to philosophy; to natural piety, to reputation"; in other words, it leaves a man face to face with the world, to make the best or the worst of it, as his sense and character will determine. Atheism does not prevent a man making blunders or perpetuating follies—I do not know anything that does. But it does prevent his blinding himself and drugging his conscience with theological formulæ, which, as the world's history shows, have helped men to commit the vilest of crimes. My difference with the Trotsky of the British press—I do not know how far it corresponds with the Trotsky of real life—is that brutality and crime remain brutality and crime whether perpetrated in the name of God or in the name of the State. I will only add that, while brutality in man is sporadic in its outbursts and carries the germs of its own destruction, brutality in the name of God has endured from the dawn of history, and carries the seeds of its own perpetuation.

* * *

Religion and Rascality.

It seems to a Christian, says Dr. Lyttelton, as if Trotsky "was preaching Atheism as a help to license." Is there really need for one to go beyond religion for all the excuse that one needs? Is it not like exchanging an oak cudgel for a reed? When Spain, in the space of three centuries (1471-1781), killed or imprisoned over 330,000 men and women for religious offences alone, there was no question of Atheism. And when it proceeded to wreck the welfare of the country by driving out the whole Jewish and Moorish population, its justification was God, not Atheism. It was not in the frenzy of a revolution that men and women and children were subjected to obscene and unspeakable tortures in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or burned alive in public, with thousands of Christians looking on and gloating over their agonies. The excuse was God and Christ. What need for adopting Atheism was there when France put thousands to death on the night of St. Bartholomew? Look at the records of religious cruelty and spoliation in every country, at the pious rascals that have figured in the financial world, at the pious criminals who fill our prisons, and then say whether it is at all necessary

to adopt Atheism as an excuse for ill-doing. And if warranty for slaughter during a time of war is required, it is not in a text-book of Atheism that one need search, but in the "Holy Bible," where one can find:—

And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it (the city) into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle therein, even all the spoil thereof, thou shalt take unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies which the Lord thy God hath given thee.....Of the cities of these people..... thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth.

Really, Dr. Lyttelton strangely undervalues the accommodating capacity of Christianity, historical and doctrinal, if he thinks that anyone need stray beyond its confines in order to find an excuse for rascality. The late sainted Monk Rasputin certainly laboured under no sense of the limitations of religion.

The Witness of Facts. * * *

And if sexual license is needed, Christianity shows itself, historically, as accommodating here as elsewhere. I must be very brief, although I can assure Dr. Lyttelton that I am only giving samples from bulk. The story begins with St. Paul, whose claim that he had power to lead about "a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles," caused some scandal, and has provided a basis for Christian Free Love down to our own day. It continues through a number of the early Christian teachers, who, as Rev. S. Baring Gould says, "defiantly urged on the converts to the gospel to commit adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness"—to prove their freedom of the natural moral law. It goes on through the sexual scandals of the Love Feasts; the second-century Adamites, who held their religious services in a state of nudity; the Manicheans, accused of religious prostitution; the Carpoeratrians, who taught the holding of women in common; the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and similar mediæval sects, all of whom indulged in some form or other of sexual extravagance. It is found in modern America, in the Christian sects of Free Love; and more significant still, it is found active in pre-revolutionary Russia. There was the Klysti, whose ceremonies were performed round a naked woman; the Jumpers, who practised debauchery to prove that all things were permitted to the saints; the Eunuchs, who practised castration, etc. And these sects, remarks their historian, Mr. Heard, "justify their abominations by the Biblical legends of Lot's daughters, Solomon's harem, and the like." There is no need to continue the tale. One could fill a volume. I content myself with asking Dr. Lyttelton, what does he make of it all? And looking at the history we have, and the people we know, does he still think people are compeled to fly to Atheism as an excuse for crime? And is there a form of villainy known to man that has not been justified by an appeal to Christianity?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Baseless Assumptions.

V.

It is generally assumed by Christian apologists that unbelievers have cast off what they call the moral law and wallow in immoral license, their vaunted zeal for liberty being but the outflow of their inward depravity. In them Milton's well-known line is abundantly verified—

License they mean when they cry liberty.

But so far as Freethinkers as a class are concerned, this assumption is wholly groundless. Professor Hough, however, seems to take its truth for granted in his sixth article on "Fundamental Issues," which appeared in

the *Christian Commonwealth* for February 11. According to his teaching, it is impossible to reject the supernatural without attacking the moral sanctions and sinking into a hopeless state of degradation. His so-called "disillusioned man" is a hideous monster, to whom life is not a matter of principle, but of skilful strategy. There are men in the world, no doubt, who will not tell the truth unless it is to their advantage, who are guided by the immediate results rather than by any ethical responsibility; but the Professor cannot be ignorant of the fact that, as a rule, such men are believers in God and immortality. Statistics show conclusively that among the criminal classes there are very few Freethinkers. Dr. Hough tells us of "a brilliant young literary man" who prided himself upon his freedom from conventional standards of morality, saying:—

It is my first responsibility to get all the kinds of sensations I can out of life; then I will write about them. No man has a right to stand between me and vivid and glowing sensations and gripping and compelling experiences. If he tries, I will simply push past his objections and have them in spite of him.

Curiously enough, when that statement was made, a man was standing near who, on hearing it, looked up, surveyed the young author for a moment, and said:—

Of course, the fundamental difficulty about your position in these matters lies in the fact that it involves the death of the capacity to feel; life is so built that self-restraint in the name of a great ideal increases a man's capacity to feel.

The brilliant young author is nameless, and it is not even affirmed that he was an unbeliever. It is true that Byron "did not believe in any revealed religion," and would "have nothing to do with immortality"; and it must be admitted that his character was extremely faulty. There were strange contrasts in it, such as strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, magnanimity and vindictiveness, "silent rages" and wholehearted forgivingness. A more generous and tender-hearted man never lived. It must also be borne in mind that he was the victim of constitutional melancholy and restlessness, which rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for him to resist certain temptations, with the result that, on completing his thirty-sixth year, he uttered this lament:—

My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

Dr. Hough's apotheosis of conscience is an amazing performance. He quotes the saying, "I have a mind, but my conscience has me," and describes the speaker as "a man with a shrewd and analytical habit of observing his own mental and moral processes." Of course, there was a friend standing beside him, and the following dialogue occurred:—

"I know just what you mean about your conscience having you. But the question to me is where conscience gets its right to be so masterful." The first speaker had a reply ready: "All that I need to know is this: All the horses would run away if conscience lost its grip on the reins."

On that dialogue the Professor bases the following observation:—

In the period of searching of brain and searching of heart following the War, it is, of course, inevitable that the moral processes of human life will be subjected to the most prolonged and critical scrutiny. Conscience must justify itself at the bar of the experience of the world. Is it an ugly and tyrannical autocrat which must go its way with the other autocrats who are being sent on long journeys in these amazing days? Is it a wise old judge whose decisions have the very welfare of the world in their grasp? No questions have a more strategic significance than these in these days of momentous

change. A quick and effective way to get at the heart of the problem is found when we raise the question as to what would be the practical result if we were to discard the results of the ethical experience of the race and put the categorical imperative on the scrapheap.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the absurdity of the suggested "quick and effective way" of dealing with the subject under discussion. Sad beyond description, in some respects, is the history of the human race; but that it has its value is not open to dispute. It is the story of the long and painful struggle for existence, during which progress seems to "halt on palsied feet." Morally, mankind has advanced but little in four thousand years. And yet there has been advance however sluggish and disappointing, and surely to discard it, if we could do it, would be the quintessence of folly. The ethical experience of the centuries has borne but scanty fruit, but to throw it away as if it were of no use would be a crime, while to destroy the moral sense, or put it on the scrapheap, would be to reduce humanity to the state in which it was at the very commencement of its career. Conscience is a product of evolution; not an innate and divinely implanted mental faculty, the function of which is to distinguish between right and wrong in conduct, but the sense of social responsibility engendered by social experience. Every gregarious animal has a conscience. In the dog, for example, we see it in a fairly advanced stage of development; but in all stages of its evolution it signifies the gregarious sense of responsibility which arises as the result of each individual's own experience in the effect of different actions upon the community. There is no absolute law of right and wrong, no moral law which remains unchanged through all the ages, right and wrong being purely relative terms. Every virtue was once a vice, and every vice a virtue. Students are fully aware that there have been endless diversities of moral theory and practice, even murder, lying, and thieving having been prescribed as honourable and virtuous. Even, to-day, the Fijians look upon human slaughter as the surest means of winning the favour of their gods. Among the Egyptians lying is a fixed principle of life, almost the highest form of honour; and yet the Egyptians are not Atheists.

Dr. Hough's apologetic is anything but convincing. It is culpably unfair to judge any section of society by the views and conduct of decadent members thereof, of a Cellini or a Byron. It is wholly untrue to say that unbelief in the supernatural tends to weaken or corrupt the moral sense. Taken as a class, Atheists compare morally most favourably with Christian Theists. The moral sanctions, as the Professor himself declares, "are not something imposed upon men from without," but the feelings or sentiments which arise from the contemplation of the effect of actions on the community.

J. T. LLOYD.

Whitewash and Eyewash.

The divine stands wrapt up in his cloud of mysteries, and the amused laity must pay tithes and veneration to be kept in obscurity.—George Farquhar.

Clericalism, there is the enemy.—Leon Gambetta.

It was Napoleon who described us as a nation of shopkeepers. It will be left to the historian of the future, compiling his records from the reports of the Archbishops' Committee of Inquiry on Christianity and Industrial Problems, to stigmatize us as a nation of hypocrites. For if there is one feature of our social life in the twentieth century more obtrusive than the rest, it is the continued existence in our midst of a wealthy and powerful priesthood. Taking the form of an army of

25,000 salaried officials, it is supposed to exercise some potent influence over the morals of individuals, some of whom Nature made in a moment of apparent hilarity. Their intent is to impose upon all people *their* idea of what is good for the flesh, the intellect, and the sobriety of others. Just as we witness the poor, pale, gaunt, fanatic preaching hysterically to strong men of self-control, so we hear from the solemn conclaves of equally hysterical priests, admonitions to the community that they must regulate their conduct on a basis selected for them.

We are a strange nation, and our parochial rulers are stranger than the people whom they aspire to govern. The intolerance and prejudice and fears of the fifteenth century are still with us. The Archbishops' Committee's Report says bluntly that the existing industrial system makes it exceedingly difficult to carry out the principles of Christianity. Many people will be captivated and ensnared by the siren song that poor, unassisted religion can do little in the face of organized industrialism. That religion may be, that it has been, checked and limited by the pressure of external circumstances, is undoubted; but it must always be remembered that the spirit of religion is unchanged and unchangeable in its purpose. To the Christian clergy, the progress of man is offensive. Under the glamour of the Gregorian chants, wax lights, and antiquated vestments, is a despotism none the less real because thatched by ecclesiastical stage-properties. Such despotism, meekly accepted by millions of Christians, cannot be lightly regarded, especially when the average worshipper deems it profanity to call an ape an ape if it but wear a clerical collar.

The Established Church, far less intolerant than the Roman Catholic Church, and, intellectually, miles above any Nonconformist body, is still as hostile as ever to all modern impulses. The Established Church has not entitled itself to the respect of liberal-minded men and women. A glance at the conduct of the Lords Spiritual is sufficient to rouse the lasting hostility of all right-thinking persons. Here are a few examples of the votes of the Bishops in the House of Lords, which show Christian ethics in practice.

The Right Reverend Fathers-in-God voted against Catholic emancipation, against admitting Dissenters to University degrees, against removing the civil disabilities of the Jews. They voted against abolishing compulsory Church rates, payable by Nonconformists as well as Church people. They voted against the various Reform Bills, and two only voted for the suppression of the Slave Trade. One bishop only was present when the Bill forbidding child chimney sweeps was brought in; and one only supported the first Bill for limiting the hours of child labour. Five voted for still inflicting the death penalty for thefts over £10. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, thrashing women in prison, or the use of the lash in the Army and Navy. Thirteen voted against free education for the people.

With such prelates and such a record the Established Church is, indeed, in a bad way in the twentieth century. Such a terrible account of reactionary despotism cannot be relegated to the past by a committee appointed by the archbishops. It is this opposition to progress, coupled with a two-thousand years' superstition, which explains the manless congregations of the country. The Church of England suffers from the drowsiness of all institutions that keep themselves apart from the people. The Church is largely a mediæval survival, and it has become more and more a caste. The printed sayings of bishops and parsons prove how hopelessly out of touch they are with realities. The old world of the twelfth century has gone, as though some cosmic catastrophe had destroyed it. The growth of know-

ledge has swirled us on to new conditions, and we are face to face with new phases of human society. Faced by the ever-pressing problems of the twentieth century, the Christian Church cannot survive in its present form. Even the mission fields cannot save it, for the conversion of a savage to Christianity is the conversion of Christianity to barbarism. In any event, the Christian religion is an organized hypocrisy, bound up with the worship of a book, which, as history, is no more true than *Gulliver's Travels*, as ethics is no more a reliable guide than *Alice in Wonderland*.

MIMNERMUS.

A "One-Eyed" Philosophy.

IN the course of my perigrinations up and down the country during the past forty years I have met with many curious and some very distinguished men; I have also come in contact with a number of very fine characters, who, although they had not achieved any success in the world, as success is measured in this hard, competitive, money-grabbing age, nevertheless possessed charming personalities, and in their own careers had carried out in practice the simple and useful doctrines they had preached.

When I was quite a youth I had the privilege of meeting a Secularist who wrote many admirable articles on "The Philosophy of Secularism" in the journals that then represented a large section of Freethinkers in this country, viz., the *Secular Chronicle* and the *Secular Review*. His daily occupation was that of a hairdresser and barber in a large provincial town—I forget the name—and he used to dispense words of wisdom on religion and other subjects "without money and without price" for the edification of his numerous customers. I was once shaved by him myself, so I know. His name was Mayer; and some of his articles on Secularism, I think, are worthy of reproduction even in this so-called advanced stage of our civilization.

During the horrible World-War, which has only temporarily ceased while statesmen and diplomats from all quarters of the globe discuss and settle the terms of peace, one of the best-informed men I found in my numerous journeys in London on the subject of the War as it occurred from day to day was a gentleman who followed the modest but necessary calling of a purveyor of horseflesh, or, as our friend Mr. T. F. Palmer would say, "food for our feline friends." I have also, in my numerous journeys round and about London, come across some highly intelligent postmen and tailors, who have not only been very efficient in their occupation or trade, but have been able to conduct with a good deal of skill a serious argument on disputed points in philosophy and religion. All this goes to show that the "leisured class" is not the only intelligent class in the community, and that many working men have distinguished themselves as writers and lecturers on various subjects, and some, indeed, have been poets and thinkers. I was glad to read in the *Freethinker* a few weeks ago that Mr. Andrew Millar had written his fine descriptive essays entitled *The Robes of Pan* in leisure moments while engaged in the strenuous and exacting occupation of signalman.

But one of the wisest men I have ever met in the course of my wanderings, on matters of general information on all sorts of topics, was an old gentleman who had been a sailor, who had travelled in various parts of the globe, and picked up a good deal of useful information respecting the religions and customs of the various peoples he had come in contact with in the course of his travels. He had been to India and China,

and the Fiji Islands, on a long voyage round the world in a sailing vessel, calling at Australia and New Zealand, as well as America and Canada, and other places too numerous to mention. It was most interesting to listen as he narrated some of his extraordinary and thrilling experiences; and I began to take a very keen interest in him when I discovered that, in addition to being a traveller, a man of the world, and an amateur scientist, he was also a Freethinker. I met him frequently a few years ago in one of the London parks, among a group of "old pensioners" that I knew very well indeed; but I have not seen him during the last four years, and consequently I came to the conclusion that he had "gone over to the majority" before the hideous War commenced.

My old friend the "sailor philosopher" was quite a character—an original—as my readers will judge for themselves when I have described some of his chief ideas and mental characteristics.

And first let me say that he was a man with a good idea of himself. He loved to talk, but his conversation was mainly about himself and his travels. Well over seventy years of age, with long, grey hair, deeply sunken eyes and a prominent Wellington nose, a strong upper lip—he was a man of commanding appearance; anyone could see at once that, whatever his position had been on board ship, his style and bearing cut him out for a commander. Then, too, he had a good knowledge of astronomy. He had studied the stars, as he said, in his youth, and his knowledge had been of great service to him on his numerous voyages. One day I ventured to ask him whether he had ever heard the theory that the alleged birth of Christ was associated with the birth of the sun by such writers as Sir Wm. Drummond and the Rev. Robt. Taylor. He said that he had heard it, and his reading of Pagan mythology and folklore confirmed the belief. But his main objection to Christianity was that it was "a one-eyed philosophy." It was a religion that was intended for the Jews, and the spreading of its teachings among the Gentiles was an afterthought. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," he maintained most strenuously, was an interpolation.

He had been to Turkey and was favourably impressed with the religious Turk. Although the Turks did not hold the same views on moral questions as modern Christians, they shared the views of the early Jewish patriarchs and were polygamists to a man. Moreover, the religious Turk believed in the Koran more thoroughly than the Christian believed in his Bible. The Turk knew his Koran from beginning to end. He not only knew how many verses it contained, but how many words, nay, how many letters. My "Sailor Philosopher" also knew something about Buddhism, and he thought that in some respects the teachings of Gautama were superior to those of Christ. At all events, Bhudda did not propose to send people to an eternity in hell for disbelief in any of his teachings.

Further, "The Noble Eight Fold Path" of Bhudda was certainly finer in many respects than much of the alleged teaching of Jesus in his "Sermon on the Mount."

I remember, on one occasion, that one of the old pensioners, "who professed and called himself a Christian," asked the old sailor whether he believed that Jesus was a real historical character, and he replied cautiously *that he did not think* that the Jesus of the Gospels was an historical character, because he bore such a remarkable resemblance to other characters he had read about who were reputed to have lived before him—such as Bhudda, or Confucius, and Khrishna. And when I questioned him about his belief in the alleged miracles of Christ he answered quite frankly

that he did not believe that Jesus ever wrought such wonders, but the writers of the Gospels had made him a wonder-worker to outrival other religious teachers. In fact, the statement of the old sailor's belief on these matters so much accorded with my own that I began to wonder what books he had been reading, and how his deductions from his reading coincided so closely with my own. It was refreshing to listen to him as he polished off his opponents one after the other not only by superior reasoning power but by a knowledge of the evidence that was accessible to those who had the leisure and the inclination to study the subject. But his famous phrase that he repeated whenever he had an opportunity was that "Christianity was a one-eyed philosophy," because its devotees, its priests, and its parsons, and its little Bethelites, all went on the assumption that Christianity was the only religion in the world; or, at all events, that all other so-called religions were mere impostures, and that it was absolutely incumbent on man to believe in it or be damned. And, remember, this old sailor had lived through the time when the belief in hell was a real tangible belief among Christians, and was accepted by millions of credulous persons without question. He knew the menace to independent thought that that belief had been, and he denounced it in strong, powerful terms that no person, however ill-educated, could fail to understand. I thought, perhaps, that he had been reading some of Ingersoll's famous lectures, but he assured me that though he had read some of Ingersoll's lectures his denunciation of a belief in a personal Devil and a material hell fire arose entirely from his strong feeling against the evil wrought among the masses by the promulgation of such a teaching.

One evening I met my old friend up on the hill alone, and when we had talked for a while I ventured to ask him how he had got such broad views on religion as those I had heard him expound? "Well," he said, with a smile, "there is nothing more calculated to enlarge your views on any subject than travel. When I returned to England and gave up my career as a seafaring man, I travelled about London and I went and heard all the famous preachers and teachers I could—Newman Hall, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Watts, Foote, Moncure D. Conway, and many others, and I read the best books I could get on the subject—travel, reading, and thinking, and hearing the best arguments on both sides on any subject are the sure road to intellectual enlightenment, and I commend this method to all the young enquirers after truth that I meet. I have never known it to fail," he said, with an air of satisfaction. "It is the best antidote to 'a one-eyed philosophy' that I know of." I expressed my cordial agreement with the wise old man, and we parted company, and I have not heard of him since.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Acid Drops.

The death of Joseph Arch calls to mind the fact that he organized and led a strike of agricultural labourers to secure a wage of sixteen shillings per week. Those who are deluded with the talk about the Church's friendship to labour should ponder the fact. If there was one class that, more than any other, was under the direct influence of the Church it was the agricultural labourer—yet he was expected to bring up a family on anything from 9s. to 12s. per week. And a little resolution had to be engineered to secure the colossal sum of 16s. Yet the Church that aided and abetted this form of slavery could calmly talk of how much Christianity had done for the uplifting of the home, and the dignity of labour!

In the *Winchester Diocesan Chronicle* for February, the Rev. W. R. Williams points out that the Church of England "is

the greatest landowner in the country." That is a confession we hope some of our labour friends, who think they can leave religion alone, will note. Now, Mr. Williams does not suggest that the Church should voluntarily surrender all or part of its land for the benefit of the people. What he suggests is that the Church should throw open its spare land for building sites, and charge a ground rent, and thus "ensure the Church a steady income." We hope that Mr. Williams' suggestion will get the attention it deserves, which ought not to be the kind of attention for which Mr. Williams is asking.

It would be interesting, by the way, to find out how much Church land, if any, was leased during the War for munition works.

The Bishop of Birmingham has been filmed alongside of Charlie Chaplain. Both were in fancy dress, for his lordship wore a khaki uniform and Charlie was in his customary theatrical "make-up."

From the *Leicester Mercury* we learn that Dover Street Chapel closed its doors on February 16, owing to a "dwindling congregation." The chapel is a very old one in Leicester, and probably it has received the "last straw" in the shock given to religious believers by the War. Other churches, please copy.

The *Hospital* prints a story of a Fijian lunatic, formerly a native preacher, who had the delusion that he had just returned from a visit to heaven. He said it was "Glorious. There were sing-songs every evening, and we actually had mutton for dinner every day." This gentleman was born too late. Once upon a time "lunatic" would have read "saint." Religions have been founded on no sounder basis than is furnished by the above case.

From a recent issue of the *Newsagent* :—

Sunday week was devoted to an "anti-Sunday trading campaign" at Ystalyfera, the centre of a big industrial district in South-West Wales, criticism in the churches being particularly directed against the sale of Sunday newspapers. Commenting upon the campaign, a local newspaper published the following little story:—Deacon (to newspaper boy): "Here, John, take the *Sunday Pictorial* to our house. Go round the back, and whatever you do, mind that no one sees you."

In the Upper House of Convocation on February 12, the Bishop of Ely moved a resolution to the effect that women might be allowed to speak and pray in consecrated buildings for prayer or instruction other than "the regular and appointed services of the Church." He said there were dangers in granting this, but they must take some risk. What a dare-devil? But it is to be noted that the Church will not permit an equality of the sexes so far as regular services are concerned. Eventually the subject was remitted to a committee to report at a later date. Yet it doesn't seem to require a colossal intellect to preach an ordinary sermon.

There have been a number of tennis and other matches between well-known clubs and players lately that have been played on Sunday, and the *Manchester Guardian* calls attention to the way some of these are reported in the press. The *Times* reports them as having been played on Saturday. The *Daily Telegraph* hedges by saying "during the week-end"; the *Daily Mail*, "begun on Saturday." We are not surprised at the *Manchester Guardian* asking for greater straightforwardness in the matter. But for unadulterated hypocrisy, particularly in connection with religion, the average English newspaper beats the world.

The Church of England Central Advisory Council of Training for the Ministry announces that the recruits for the Ministry are needed, and the "Church is prepared to fling its net wide." The chief conditions are that the candidate should be under thirty-five and unmarried. There are three things that emerge from the statement:—(1) The Church is short of material, and it doesn't care much what it gets, so long as it is something that can wear a surplice. (2) It wants

candidates as cheaply as possible, and an unmarried man may be cheaper than a married one. (3) The shriek of the Bishop of London and others of his kind for larger families is pure humbug. Their encouragement is to celibacy, not matrimony, and at least, so far as the clergy is concerned.

Although the clergy pretend that the Christian religion is a divine institution, it suffers exactly in proportion to other, and, admittedly, human institutions. A Nonconformist minister writes to the *Daily News*, pointing out that the "minimum stipend" (not wage, mark you!) of a Congregational minister is still £120 per year, with no allowance for children, and no house. The minister, it will be observed, acts precisely as if he were employed in a pickle factory, and all his fine nonsense about being "God's vicegerent" has evaporated. In his haste he has forgotten all about the value of prayer, which can move mountains, but cannot get money from stingy Christians.

A clergyman advertises in the *Liverpool Daily Post* that he wishes to exchange livings. His present one is nine miles from Manchester, a population of 4,000, no poor, and an income of £420. We wonder whether this preacher of poverty would like to exchange his living for ours?

We have seen a number of explanations of the cause of strikes, but a correspondent of the *Daily Graphic* strikes a new note. He says that the origin of all the trouble is the disuse of the cane in schools, and the practical abolition of religious instruction. The writer signs himself "A Country Vicar." As a matter of fact, neither the cane nor religion is abolished in schools—we wish they were. But it is instructive that this letter should come from a clergyman. Plenty of stick and plenty of religion. Both belong to the same level of culture.

In St. Silas's Church, Kentish Town, Epiphany play the final tableau included Saint George and Joan of Arc in khaki uniforms. It must have been as disconcerting as seeing the twelve disciples wearing trousers.

We see that a "St. Sophia Redemption League" has been formed, of which Lord Bryce—who appears to join anything and everything with a splendid but puzzling impartiality—is chairman. The proposal is quite Christian in its impertinence; but it is not to Christians that one would look for either generosity or justice. Of course, St. Sophia was once Christian. But Westminster Abbey was once Roman Catholic. We wonder whether Lord Bryce would go in for restoration all round? Or is it, again, a case of the spoils to the victor?

The Central Board of Church Finance has taken Knutsford Prison, Cheshire, for training candidates for ordination. The site should be an excellent one for reminding the candidates that they are "miserable sinners"

You.

- You can help us by introducing the *Freethinker* to your friends and acquaintances.
- You can help us by inducing your newsagent to display a copy in his window or paper-rack.
- You can help by leaving your copy, when read, in train, or tram, or 'bus.
- You can help by taking an extra copy and posting it to a likely subscriber.
- You can help by sending us the name and address of anyone whom you think would care to receive a copy.
- You can help in other ways, which your own ingenuity will suggest, to make the *Freethinker* a greater power in the land, and a more potent factor in the cause of enlightenment and progress.

NOTICE.

THE *Freethinker* is now distributed to the Trade through all the principal wholesale Newspaper Agents, and may be ordered from any Newsagent or from Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son's railway bookstalls. To those who wish to have the *Freethinker* supplied through the post the terms are: 3 months, 2s. 8d.; 6 months, 5s. 3d.; 12 months, 10s. 6d., post free.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 23, South Shields; February 26, Coventry; March 2, Swansea; March 9, Liverpool; March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester; March 30, Leeds.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 23, Manchester; March 2, Maesteg; March 9, Ferndale; March 16, Pontycymmer.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—"Kepler," 5s.

A. SEATE.—Sorry we have not the space at our disposal to publish the correspondence. On the face of it, your strictures appear quite unwarranted; but we have not the full facts before us on which we could base an opinion. It is certainly monstrous that a magistrate should by his language give encouragement to rowdy Christians to create disturbances at meetings with the purpose of which they disagree. The remedy for anyone who doesn't like a meeting or a speaker is to go away. Had the magistrate made that plain, he would have done his duty.

F. HOLT.—It is not for us to say whether we have "done splendidly during the past year," although we are glad to have your opinion to that effect. All we can say is, we have done, and are doing, our best.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—We quite agree with you that if Freethought speakers are to be punished because some Christians take umbrage at what is said, and create a disturbance, such a procedure places a premium upon bigotry and religious hooliganism. The bottom cure is to go on making more Freethinkers.

C. T. SHAW.—We are obliged for cuttings.

W. H. TWYMAN.—Thanks for paper. It is a pity that so much money should be spent on such stupidities, but the follies of faith have never lacked financial support.

W. M.—No one would be more pleased than ourselves to issue our usual sixteen pages. But at present prices of material and labour that would be a very considerable addition to our expenses, and as we are issuing at a loss, we cannot risk it. However, the enlargement of the paper will take place at the earliest possible moment.

L. OLIVER.—We are much obliged for your having secured us two new subscribers. That is the kind of help we really want. Our friends have worked well in this direction during the War, and we hope they will continue doing so now the War is over. Your suggestion is noted. We are always glad to hear from readers how they think the paper might be pushed in their respective localities.

L. A.—We have returned your article, in spite of your offer to take 300 copies of the paper if it were printed. We are, indeed, replying here so that others may save themselves the trouble of making a similar offer. We accept or reject an article on its merits. But we feel proud to say that no man can purchase space in the *Freethinker*, even by taking 5,000 copies. The *Freethinker* is not for sale—except through the usual trade channels.

MRS. POOLE AND J. J. O.—We were a little surprised ourselves. Certainly anything published by the newspaper press should be most carefully verified before it is accepted. Among the other legends published as facts by the *Times* and other papers, one ought not to forget the boiling down of German dead for the purpose of extracting fats from the bodies. That ghastly story touched about the lowest level possible.

H. C. CROSFIELD (Church Army).—The paragraph in question merely expressed a mild wonder as to how long after training it would be before the "salaried posts were forthcoming."

J. LYLE.—In all papers there must appear some articles which a reader here and there would think better left out. And the editor who ran his paper so as to satisfy every reader would soon end without any readers to satisfy. After all, Freethought is better exemplified by Catholicity towards opinions we do not

share than by the championing of those with which we are in agreement. Strength of personal conviction should encourage rather than exclude intellectual hospitality.

W. J.—The value of the Jewish Life of Christ is not all dependent upon whether Jesus Christ was an historical character or not. Apart from the question of there being some person around whom the Christian myth gathered, such things have a psychological value to the students of religious history. The history of a delusion may be as informing as the history of a reality.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

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 of marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day at Victoria Hall, South Shields; in the afternoon, at 3, upon "Freethought, Religion, and Death," and evening, at 6.30, "Why Men Believe in God." The local friends expect a rally of supporters from all parts of the Tyneside district. The only adverse factor at work is the unhappy Labour dispute; but as admission is free to the meetings, with a few reserved seats, this ought not to interfere seriously with the attendance. All are welcome, and any visitors from a distance needing tea in the interval are invited to communicate with the Secretary or attendants.

Mr. Cohen pays a flying visit to Coventry on Wednesday, February 26, and will lecture in the I.L.P. Hall, Broadgate, at 7.15, on "Do the Dead Live?" Coventry friends are expecting a good rally of local Freethinkers.

To-day (February 23) Mr. J. T. Lloyd pays a visit to Manchester. He will lecture there, afternoon and evening, in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick. Previous to the evening meeting there will be music, and Mr. Glynn Taylor will sing. We have heard Mr. Taylor, and can promise those who attend an enjoyable time. If the lecturer and the vocalist have the audience they both deserve the hall will be crowded. We hope that Manchester will do their best to see that this is so. Advertising is an expensive business nowadays, and the most effective is the unpaid effort of those interested in the success of the meetings. The Branch is holding a Social Evening, Whist Drive, Dancing, etc., in the same hall on Saturday evening (the 22nd), and it is hoped that Mr. Lloyd will find it convenient to be present.

We are very glad to be able to announce that Mr. R. H. Rosetti is now home from France, and clear of the Army. He has been an ardent Freethought propagandist while with the Army, and is keener than ever to take his share of the work in this country. We hope to see his energies well employed on the lecture platform. Our readers will also be glad to learn that an old contributor, Mr. W. Repton, is likewise demobilized, and his pen will soon be busy again in these columns.

To-night Mr. T. F. Palmer opens the North London Branch debate on "The Social Evil in Western Europe." In view of the publicity that is now given to this question, and the important bearing it has on the health of the nation, Freethinkers should welcome this opportunity for its discussion.

Our London readers will not have forgotten that for over two years there has been a fight going on between the L.C.C. and the N.S.S., with other Societies, to maintain the right to sell literature at meetings held in the Council's parks. So far, the right has been maintained; but it is necessary to guard against its being taken away. And now that the L.C.C. elections are at hand, it is essential that *all candidates* should be heckled on the subject. We therefore ask our readers in all the London constituencies to put the following question to the candidates:—

Will you, if elected, maintain the right of selling literature in connection with public meetings held under the Council's Bye-Laws in the parks and open spaces under the control of the Council?

The nature of the reply should be sent to Miss Vance at 62 Farringdon Street, E.C., so that it may be filed for reference.

Last year one of our readers, keenly interested in promoting the circulation of the *Freethinker*, was good enough to pay twenty-one quarterly subscriptions, the paper to be posted to names and addresses sent to this office. We know of several new subscribers gained through this offer, and there may have been more. But this year the same gentleman renews his offer, and we have received his cheque in payment for sending the *Freethinker* for 13 weeks free to twenty-one different addresses. The only conditions are that they shall be different from last year's list, and the persons who receive the paper must not be subscribers already. We cordially appreciate the help thus given, and we have no doubt our readers will soon supply us with the names of the twenty-one who are to receive a quarter's issue of the *Freethinker*. And we shall not bother if more than the allotted number of names and addresses are forwarded.

Prince Kropotkin has a great many friends among Freethinkers in this country, and they will be pleased to learn that, having been killed by the mob in Petrograd, imprisoned in the Fortress of Peter and Paul, and subsequently shot, he now sends a message to his British friends (published in the *Cambridge Magazine* for February 15) that he is quite well. He is living at Dmitsovka, near Moscow; is engaged in literary work; and the news circulated about his troubles is without foundation. Our press censorship is quite an admirable institution. It gives a too free hand to lies, and carefully censors the truth. Its motto appears to be: So as the news isn't true, it may pass.

The following is worth recording as a statement of fact. In a provincial school the teacher gave out his customary "Thought for the Day." He selected "The World is my Country and to do Good my Religion." Having read it, he turned to his class and said: "Now, boys, this great thought was said by an Atheist, and he was a far better man than many a Christian." Paine was not an Atheist, but the inaccuracy may be forgiven for the sake of the courage of the teacher, and an act of homage to the memory of one of the pioneers of the world's progress.

The *Crucible*, a Freethought weekly, published at Seattle (Washington), gives a lengthy and enthusiastic review of Mr. Millar's *Robes of Pan*. The excerpts given are well-chosen, and the writer of the review warmly advises all his American readers to send at once for a copy. We hope they will take the advice as seriously as it is offered.

The *South Wales Gazette* prints a very fair report of the opening speeches of the Rev. J. Town and Mr. Cohen in the debate at Abertillery on February 10. We learn from other quarters that the debate made a great impression upon many who attended, and good results are anticipated in the shape of a more active propaganda.

Be like the promotory against which the waves continually break, but it stands firm and tames the fury of the waters around it.—*Marcus Aurelius*.

The Glorious Privilege!

THE lute is silent; but its strains will be heard by men in all ages. When Nature made Burns, she threw the mould away. *He* was Nature's child—and there is nothing above Nature. Nature has evolved man with potentialities for great, heroic things; with capacities and faculties for the production of beautiful things and happy conditions; with desires to make life a high, noble, enduring thing. But—ah, the "buts" and the "ifs"!—these potentialities, faculties, and desires are stifled and frustrated by the inhumanity that makes countless thousands mourn.

What was the burden of the music of Robert Burns? It was a passionate love of Freedom. All his patriotic songs are charged with it. He loved Scotland struggling to be free, and championing the cause of others downtrodden and oppressed; but he had fiery, scathing denunciation for Scotsmen and Scottish institutions guilty of treachery to Freedom's cause. He was quick to detect and expose in biting satire sneaking meanness and parasitical hypocrisy.

Many Scotsmen mouth with maudlin melancholy the challenging indictment in the lines about "man's inhumanity to man" without perceiving their most significant implications. Surely, the leading implication is just this: that humanistic agencies should unite to deprive any man or body of men of the means to act inhumanly. When Burns dwells on the "glorious privilege of being independent," he is necessarily advocating the independence of each individual man. It is almost tragical to listen to some fat-bellied "self-made" Cræsus, who has been lucky enough to "strike oil," taking upon his greasy lips these inspiring words of Burns as descriptive of the motives which guided him in building his sordid fortune. Who values an "independence" which can only be enjoyed by depriving thousands of other men of theirs? Not the lovers of freedom of thought, at any rate!

"A healthy mind in a healthy body," ay, and "a free mind in a free body." "The world is my country," said Paine. How much of the world can most of us see with our little mole eyes as we peep through the heaped-up mass of inhibitions, restrictions, and disabilities? A roving spirit occasionally arises amongst us, and pining for cleaner air and bigger horizons cuts the bonds that tie him to an arid conventionality, and takes ship for distant lands. He returns with wonderful tales of breathless adventures full of chiding and challenging invitations. But no—we continue to hug our chains!

The free man is not to be fettered by dogmas, rules, dualities, trinities, pluralities! With Carlyle we demand "the living unity." False theories of life have made it squalid through divisions, discords, and dissensions. Despotic rules, however benevolently conceived, are never unifying, composing, healing; on the contrary, they are disruptive, sundering, alienating.

Independence does not depend upon the dependence of others. From the harmony of Nature grow the natural rights of man. Artificial "rights" are discordant. Individual independence is entirely consonant with healthy co-operation which involves independence. Independence is never licentiousness, which is always anti-social. It is only against what menaces or injures the social organism that Freethinkers would legislate. And it is this note of individual independence which some of us would wish to hear more clearly sounded at the Quai d'Orsay. President Wilson truly says that the rulers of the world have been thinking of the relations of Governments and forgetting the relations of peoples; but he and others are guilty of the studious omission to acknow-

ledge that Thomas Paine, whom President Wilson's illustrious predecessor Washington delighted to honour, pressed this very argument in his *Rights of Man*. We are not out to devise an international system which will mean "safety" and "security" for parasites and profiteers. We are out to assert the natural rights of man and his "glorious privilege of being independent." The first adversary to be slain is ignorance.

IGNOTUS.

Writers and Readers.

MANY more years ago than I care to remember, when I was in my teens, I had the temerity to ask a well-known Oxford don to tell me what he considered the best history of French literature. He told me, in a curt and offhand manner, to read Sainte-Beuve, Faguet, Lemaitre, Scherer, and Taine. I was less accustomed to the short and sharp Oxford way than I am now, and felt a little hurt. It was not until I had reached the age of literary discretion that I saw the wisdom of the advice. Now I am fair to answer in a similar way a correspondent who wants to know what I consider the best selection of English poetry. I say frankly and emphatically, get Chalmers' *English Poets*, and the complete works of every writer not included in and later than that useful if ill-printed compendium. When you have done that, you may very well amuse yourself with selections. This, of course, is a counsel of perfection; and I am far from suggesting that it is not more preferable to read your Palgrave and your Oxford Book of English Verse than to remain ignorant of English poetry altogether. I myself have pleasant and grateful memories of Crepet's four volumes of selections from French poets, with their scholarly essays by the great critics of the 'sixties. It was on this comprehensive introduction to French verse that Mr. Humphrey Ward modelled his *English Poets*, which some of my readers may know. Like all selections, it has its use at a certain stage of one's literary education.

It is to this, in some respects, excellent selection that Messrs. Macmillan's have added a fifth volume (10s. 6d. net), covering the ground more or less completely from Browning to Rupert Brooke. Death is the qualification for admittance; but in a few instances it would appear as if the poetry had died with, or even before, the writer. There never was much vitality in George Eliot's divagations in metre, and the passage of time has killed them. She used to confess that verse-writing was the hardest of labour, and for most people who have not an incorrigible bias to ethics the reading of her so-called poetry is worse than the treadmill. The well-known lines beginning "O may I join the choir invisible" is her nearest approach to verse, and they want that indefinable something which marks off aspiring rhetoric from pure song. It always reminds me of the stuffy moral atmosphere of an Ethical church which I used to attend in my unregenerate days. No; George Eliot may have been Shakespeare's step-sister, and you may irreverently compare Mrs. Poyser to the immortal Falstaff, but certainly she was no poet; indeed, her intellectual environment was dead against poetry. If Mr. Ward had thrown her overboard, and printed some of the verse of Constance Naden—say "The Pantheist's Song of Immortality"—he would have gained the thanks of all lovers of English poetry.

Another interloper in this Victorian "paradise of dainty devices" is Swinburne's pet aversion, the second Lord Lytton, an insufferable poetaster, who diluted and pilfered the work of Tennyson and Browning. He is an illustration of a law which is everywhere operative in literature—the survival of the unfittest, the immortality of the invalid. Yet another is Lyall, the Asiatic scholar, who, whatever he may have been in other fields, was certainly no more than a tenth-rate poet. Mr. Ward reveals the customary incompetence of the merely academic critic, or the malice of a friend, by inviting comparisons. The gravest disservice anyone can do to our literature is to perpetuate bad or indifferent work. Similarly, a vaguely melodious and sentimental pessimist like Richard Middleton is unkindly given a high place in Victorian poetry, a place from which a speedy and sudden

descent is inevitable. He had his brief hour of posthumous success a few years ago, and is now as dead as a red-herring or Mr. Le Galliene's saccharine muse. Both of them appear to have been knocked out by a surfeit of poetic diction.

If Mr. Humphrey Ward's incapacity for intelligent literary criticism is shown by his inclusion of poets who are no poets, it is also shown by his exclusion of poets whom no critic with a decent reputation to lose would ever dream of ignoring. The moment I opened my copy I was surprised to find that Oscar Wilde was absent. I rubbed my eyes, and said to myself: Surely Wilde is not still among the living; the slander and curses of his sometime friends are proof enough of that. Being dead, he is entitled to a place with Morris and Henley. There must be some subtle reason for shutting the door on him. Can it be that the moral Mr. Ward refuses to recognize Wilde's value as a poet because he had the misfortune to be sexually abnormal? I think not; for on that condition an elegant sonneteer whom Mr. Ward is delighted to honour would also have been given the cold shoulder. His case, it is true, was not a notorious one; yet Mr. Ward is not likely not to have heard of it. Does he not remember "An Ode to a Grecian Urning," the proceeds from the sale of which, my friend Robert Ross once told me, went to the Arts and Crafts Ebbing Guild? But perhaps Wilde is despised and rejected of academic anthologists because of his bad conduct. Well, for that matter, Byron was not what you would call a saint; Coleridge was hopeless as husband and father; Dowson and Francis Thompson were not models of average decent conduct. Yet they were—and rightly too—for it is not the man but the work that counts. Where, then, are we to look for the cause of this literary misjudgment? A friend of mine who has more experience than I have had of the smallness of the academic literary mind has suggested to me that the cause lies in an amusing passage in Wilde's witty dialogue *The Decay of Lying*. I may remind my reader that Wilde did not take kindly to the theological tracts of a lady known to the profane as Mrs. Humphry Ward Preacher. For him *Robert Elsmere*, is, of course, "a masterpiece—a masterpiece of the *genre enuyeux*, the one form of literature the English people seems thoroughly to enjoy. A thoughtful young friend of ours Wilde continues, once told us that it reminded him of the sort of conversation that goes on at a meat tea in the house of a serious Nonconformist family, and we can quite believe it. Indeed, it is only in England that such a book could be produced. England is the home of lost ideas." I should be the last one to assert that Wilde has no faults as a poet. He often consciously imitated the work of greater men; at times he is artificial, frigid or sentimental. But there is enough fine work to give him a place in Victorian literature—three poems: *The Sphinx*, *The Harlot's House*, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, will set him, in my opinion, only a little lower than Rossetti and Swinburne, and infinitely higher than Stevenson and the pious jingo Henley.

Those who know the vagaries of the academic mind will not be surprised to find that either through stupidity or prejudice, Robert Buchanan also is shut out of his garden enclosed of English verse. Yet he is given his rightful and prominent place in Prof. Hugh Walker's excellent history of Victorian literature, by far the best all-round survey of the period. Buchanan's great fault was that he was satisfied with less than perfection. Yet he had a mental and emotional range much wider than that of Swinburne, and width of range must be taken into account in a critical estimate. The classical idylls, the moving and lovely pictures of Scottish life, the realistic London sketches, overflowing with profound human sympathy, the mysticism, the Celtic glamour of the *Book of Orm*, the later religious (or, shall I say, irreligious?) and philosophic poems make up a body of work which represents and reflects the aspirations and thought of the time. If he is less of an artist than Rossetti, he is more of a representative man. And in two poems, *The Ballad of Judas Iscariot* and *The Vision of a Man Accurst*, the fusion of form and matter is complete. The Victorian art-ballad is mere artificial frippery compared with the forth-right sympathy of these examples of a lost art. Buchanan was a heretic, but that apparently is not the reason why he is excluded, since

Meredith and John Davidson, both Freethinkers, are treated honourably. Then, again, to continue my bearish growl, Rupert Brooke is pushed forward at the expense of a poet quite as genuine—James Elroy Flecker—whose reputation has not been shaped by the repercussion of idiots. I don't undervalue Brooke, but, like Omar Khayyam, he is spoilt for us by the praise of fools. Something, too, should have been given of Charles Sorley, another victim of the War.

It is curious that the best of the introductory essays are those on Swinburne and Patmore by Mr. Edmund Gosse, who seems to have discovered the secret of perpetual youth. At the age of twenty his writing is even fresher than it was forty years ago. The other essays are safe if not inspiring. In fine if you must a selection of our English poets there is no reason why you should not make a companion of these four handsome volumes. Up to the Victorian period you will find them a trustworthy guide, and my notes will serve as a warning not to put your trust in an academic judgment on any writer who was not dead fifty years before the critic was born.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Judge Not?

Judge not, that ye be not judged.—*Matt. vii. 1.*

THIS is one of the many commandments in the New Testament which is of an impossible nature.

No sane person can refrain from judging the acts, the ideas, and the character of the people whom he meets. Neither can he cease, at any waking moment, from judging of what is good or evil for himself and his fellows. The lobes of the brain exercise their function by weighing or judging everything brought to their notice by the five senses.

"Oh, but," the Christian will say, "that is not the meaning. You are not to condemn." But that is the same thing. In judging, we arrive at a conclusion, and if that conclusion is opposed to our opinion of what is good or beneficial, we are forced to condemn; and, in spite of their belief in the text, Christians will continue to condemn Freethought. They are only doing as they must, owing to their mental training.

Freethinkers, on the other hand, while judging and condemning religious opinions, recognize that conditions are also to be considered, and make allowance for evil installations during the growth of the individual. At the same time they claim, as Robert Buchanan put it,—

the right of free deliverance, free speech, free thought, and what I claim for myself I claim for every human being. I claim the right to attack and to defend. I claim the right to justify the Devil, if I want to. I can be suppressed by deeper insight, by greater knowledge, but not by the magistrate, civil or literary. I would stand even by Judas Iscariot in the dock, if his Judge denied him a free hearing, a fair trial. The Truth, if she is as great as we assume her to be, must prevail (*The Defence of Vizetelly*).

Note particularly the right to "attack." Many professing Christians claim that they also believe in Freethought, but all they mean is to let every person believe what he pleases without interference from others. That is not my understanding of the term. If I meet with anything noxious in life, it is my duty to try and destroy it; and if I am confronted with a belief which I believe to be harmful, I should be lacking in my profession of Altruism if I did not combat it. I give the same right to Christians. They may willingly endeavour to show me if and where my ideas are wrong, and I have the determined right to defend them by force of argument.

Unfortunately the Christian, when he finds himself defeated in argument, by his nature, flies to revenge, and, if he has the power, will not stop short of murder to sate his hate. If he has not such power, he will ostracize, traduce, or malign me, and many of the best thinkers of the world have suffered more or less from this cause. The only way to prevent such things is to bring up the children of the future generations in a better manner than in the past, and trust to the natural goodness of the race to eradicate the evil.

E. ANDERSON.

Correspondence.

IS THERE A "GOD," AND IS THERE ANY PURPOSE IN THE UNIVERSE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Either by habit, constitution, usage, or training, the Western mind seems incapable of conceiving of "God-Power," or "sublime, beneficent, and dominant force," except as a conscious entity, or of expressing the thought embodied in the words "the highest" in other terms than those of personality. This indictment applies equally to Freethinkers and Christians, and the limitation with which it charges them is quite excusable; for, after all, we ourselves *are* persons, and we naturally tend to think in terms of ourselves.

And yet the abstract is higher than the concrete. A truthful person cannot be so truthful as to be as truthful as truth. Virtue is higher than a virtuous person, kindness than a kind person, and so on through the whole gamut of the qualities we agree to look upon as admirable.

And so, may it not be that force is higher than any particular expression of force? And may it not be that attractive force, which makes of a molten mass a habitable planet; selective force, which evolves a higher from a lower form; maternal force, which sustains immaturity; social force, which builds up the fabric of collective faith and security; intellectual force, which elucidates problems and confers enlightenment; and artistic force, which can weave the conclusions of the intellect into the being so that they are reproduced in the life, thought, and actions—are all manifestations of a power culminating in the impulse (= force) towards that unbounded good-will which we call perfect love?

I think this suggestion merits consideration, because it shows the meeting-point of all men of good-will, whether Freethinkers or Christians, or of any faith or none. "God is, and is a rewarder of all that diligently seek Him," means, perhaps, no more than "a principle is; it runs right through the universe, and, if sought and lived by, will give rewards incomparable." Indeed, as we know (and that quite independently of whether we are Freethinkers, Mormons, or Moslems), honour, truthfulness, considerateness, gentleness, and other virtues give rewards to their servants without taking anything either from their servants or from those who despise and reject their services.

And if this is so, what boots it that we do or do not speak of this all-pervading force as "God"? Names are, at most, a matter of convenience. Of what importance is it whether we do or do not look upon this force dominant as a personal force. Personality is an attribute we know only in connection with human and other animals. We have no logical justification for ascribing this attribute to forces, but (so long as we do not let it carry with it human qualities) I do not see that there is any logical interdict against our doing so; after all, we do not *know* that there is not personality behind forces. Given a hut on the top of a hill ten miles distant, you and I approaching, you are not entitled to say that there is not a person in the hut, and I am not entitled to say that there is. If we fall to arguing about it we are, to the extent of our argument, two foolish persons wasting time.

But to gratuitously attribute *purpose* is quite another matter. In attributing personality we are, it seems to me, choosing between *two* possibilities, one of which must be in accordance with fact, and neither of which we *know* to be so. But in attributing character, intention, design, or purpose, we are choosing one from an almost infinite number of possibilities, none of which we know anything about. This is the error into which theologies have fallen in their anxiety to escape the inexplicable. Primitive Buddhism, I think, escapes this error, for it recognizes "the good law" as the fundamental universal fact; and it sees the good law not in the strictly material universe only, but in the world of mind and sentiment.

COSMO-THRIST.

Religion in any form hates and fears science.—*Von Hartmann.*

Obituary.

All our readers will hear with the deepest regret of the death of our old and esteemed contributor, "Abracadabra." His illness was contracted during the recent spell of severe weather, and was of short duration. His contributions to the *Freethinker* extend over a fairly lengthy period, and were always read with the greatest appreciation, were marked by careful thinking and reliable scholarship. Removal from London prevented his writing with as great frequency of recent years, but his interest in the *Freethinker* and the Cause for which it stood never weakened. We had hoped to have published a pamphlet or two from his pen, and had secured his promise to consider the matter. We heard from him a few weeks ago, when he told us he was planning a new series of articles, and wrote with kindly concern and warning against overwork. We feel that the *Freethinker* has lost a good friend and the Movement a sturdy and incorruptible worker.—C. C.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents (God and the Air-Raid)*, Chapman Cohen. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

MALTHUSIAN LEAGUE,
48 BROADWAY, WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1.

The Humanitarian works by Joachim Kaspary, out of print, can be studied in the Reading Room of the British Museum, London. They will, however, be Revised and Published as soon as possible.

THE FOLLOWING WORKS ARE IN PRINT.

1. International Peace. Price 2d., post free ... 1898
2. The Guide of Life and the Ethics of Humanitarian Deism compared with those of Christianity and Buddhism ... 1899
Price for Poor People, 2s., post free.
Price for Rich People, 21s., post free.
3. The Humanitarian View of the British-Boer War, of the Chinese Question, and of the Restoration and Maintenance of Peace. Price 6d., post free ... 1901
4. An Addition to the Humanitarian View of the British-Boer War, etc. Price 2d., post free ... 1902
5. The Humanitarian View of the Fiscal Question ... 1904
Price 2d., post free.
6. Humanitarian Deism. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1904
7. Self Knowledge, or the Humanitarian Psychology ... 1904
Price 1d., post free 1½d.
8. The Life of the Real Jesus. Price 1d., post free 1½d. 1904
9. The Character of the Apostles. Price 1d., post free 1½d. 1904
10. The Humanitarian View of the Public School Question ... 1904
Price 3d., post free.
11. The Life and Character of Paul ... 1905
Price 1d., post free, 1½d.
12. The Primitive Christians. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1905
13. The Humanitarian Protest against Christian Blasphemies, Slanders, and Superstition ... 1905
Price 1d., post free 1½d.
14. The Humanitarian Protest against Atheist Conceit, Ignorance, and Sophistries. Price 1d., post free 1½d. 1905
15. The Humanitarian Protest against the Devil Worship of Unitarian Christianity. Price 1d., post free 1½d. 1905
16. The Permanent Settlement of the Unemployed and School Questions. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1906
17. The Dishonesty of Broad Churchism and the Humanitarian Review of The Rev. R. J. Campbell's "The New Theology." Price 2d., post free 2½d. ... 1907

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.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 8, Social Gathering—Music and Dancing.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, T. F. Palmer, "The Social Evil in Western Europe." Open Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. C. Ratcliffe, "Christian Evidence."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Mordaunt Shairp, B.A., "Granville Barker, Dramatist."

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Saphin, Yates, Kells, and Dales.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (The I.L.P. Hall, Broadgate): Wednesday, February 26, 7.15, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Do the Dead Live?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Old and New Members cordially invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. Marion Phillips.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-Operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Religion and Morals in the Light of Science"; 6.30, "The Lord's Supper: Pagan and Christian"

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall, Fowler Street) Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "Freethought, Religion, and Death"; 6, Music; 6.30, "Why Men Believe in God."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (60 Alexandra Road, Swansea): 6.30, Branch Meeting.

18. The Humanitarian Address to the Congregation of Westminster Chapel.
The Abolition of Legal Murder, miscalled Capital Punishment.
The Humanitarian Manifesto for the General Election.
The above 3 pamphlets together, 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1909
19. Lady Cook on the Franchise for Women, and Joachim Kaspary on the Wise Home Rule Bill, and Home Rule Letters. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1910
20. Real Liberalism and Real Progress against Sham Liberalism and Disguised Conservatism... 1910
Price 1d., post free 1½d.
21. The Political Crisis and Eternity against The Origin of Species. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1910
22. The Humanitarian Foreign and Home Policy. Also Humanitarian Salvation *against* Christian Damnation. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1912
23. Internatioaal Peace and the Termination and Prevention of Strikes and Lock-Outs. Price 1d., post free 1½d. 1912
24. Wars of Conquest, or Wholesale Robbery by Wholesale Murders. Price 1d., post free 1½d. ... 1912
25. The Balkan-Turkish War and the Humanitarian Defence of Jesus against Christianity. ... 1913
Price 1d., post free 1½d.
26. International Peace Armaments ... 1913
Price 1d., post free 1½d.
27. The Restoration and Maintenance of Peace .. 1915
Price 1d., post iree 1½d.
28. The Science of Reincarnation, or the Eternity of the Soul. Price 10s. 6d. nett, post free ... 1917
29. Dr. Woodrow Wilson's Oration and the Prevention of Future Wars. I rice 1d., post free 1½d.
30. The League of Nations. War Price 6d., post free 6½d. 1918

If any of the above published works cannot be obtained through Newspaper Agents or Booksellers, please order direct, enclosing Stamps or Postal Orders, from

J. KASPARY & CO.,
Sole Selling Agents for the British Empire and U.S.A. for The Humanitarian Publishing Society, Ltd., 58 City Road, London, E. C. 1.

NOW READY.

The Jewish Life of Christ

BEING THE
SEPHER TOLDOTH JESHU,
OR
BOOK of the GENERATION of JESUS.

EDITED
(With an Historical Preface and Voluminous Notes)

BY
G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER.
Price Sixpence, postage 1d.

A Work that should be read by all earnest Christians
and preserved by all Freethinkers.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

- No. 1. What Will You Put in Its Place?
- No. 2. What is the Use of the Clergy?
- No. 3. Dying Freethinkers.
- No. 4. The Beliefs of Unbelievers.
- No. 5. Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?
- No. 6. Does Man Desire God?

Price 1s. 6d. per 100.
(Postage 3d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

German Crime and Secular Education.

A Telling Exposure of the Falsehood that German Crime
in the War was due to the lack of religious instruction, and
a consequence of a system of Secular Education.

Every Freethinker should assist in the distribution of this
Tract.

Price 2s. per 100, postage 4d., from
THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

LIFE-LIKE PORTRAIT OF MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.

On Rich, Sepia-toned, Bromide-de-Luxe Paper.
Mounted in Booklet Form. Cabinet Size, 11 by 8.

Price TWO SHILLINGS. Postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

"The Freethinker"

Published every Thursday. Price 2d.
SUBSCRIPTIONS—12 months, 10s. 6d.; 6 months, 5s. 3d.;
3 months, 2s. 8d.

To THE BUSINESS MANAGER,
61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

Please send me "THE FREETHINKER" weekly for
.....months commencing.....for which
I enclose.....

Name.....

Postal Address.....

Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

BIBLE AND BEER. Price 1d., postage 1d.
MY RESURRECTION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. Price 2d., postage 1d.
THE MOTHER OF GOD. With Preface. Price 2d.,
postage 1d.
THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. Price 2d.,
postage ½d.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

DEITY AND DESIGN. Price 1d., postage ½d.
WAR AND CIVILIZATION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
RELIGION AND THE CHILD. Price 1d., postage ½d.
GOD AND MAN: An Essay in Common Sense and Natural
Morality. Price 3d., postage ½d.
CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY: With a Chapter on
Christianity and the Labour Movement. Price 1s.,
postage 1½d.

By J. T. LLOYD.

PRAYER: ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND FUTILITY.
Price 2d., postage 1d.

By WALTER MANN.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. Price 2d.,
postage ½d.

By MIMNERMUS.

FREETHOUGHT AND LITERATURE. Price 1d., post-
age ½d.

By H. G. FARMER.

HERESY IN ART. The Religious Opinions of Famous
Artists and Musicians. Price 3d., postage ½d.

By T. F. PALMER.

THE STORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF LIFE.
Price 2d., postage 1d.

By A. MILLAR.

THE ROBES OF PAN: And Other Prose Fantasies.
Price 1s., postage 1½d.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
DO I BLASPHEME? Price 1d., postage 1d.
IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON
SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage 1d.
LIVE TOPICS. Price 1d., postage ½d.
LIMITS OF TOLERATION. Price 1d., postage 1d.
CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. Price 1d., postage ½d.
FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH. Price 2d., postage 1d.
THE GHOSTS. Price 2d., postage ½d.

By D. HUME.

ESSAY ON SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage ½d.
MORTALITY OF SOUL. Price 1d., postage ½d.
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY. Price 1d., postage 1d.

By J. BENTHAM.

UTILITARIANISM. Price 1d postage 1d.

By ANTHONY COLLINS.

FREEWILL AND NECESSITY. Price 3d., postage 1½d.

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

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

Printed and Published by THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. FOOTE
AND CO., LTD.), 61, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.