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Views and Opinions.

Theology and the Stone Age.

If some Rip Van Winkle of the Stone Age had fallen asleep on the floor of his cave many thousands of years ago to suddenly awake in the year of our Lord, 1919, he would find himself in an alien world. The people around him would look unlike those with whom he had lived, they would speak differently, dress differently, and in a very large measure, think differently. He would observe their mechanical contrivances with awe, and their dwelling-places with wonder. He would feel himself to be of the same species and yet apart from it. One can picture him wandering disconsolately around, experiencing that intense loneliness which can only be felt in a crowd of human beings. In only one place—were he lucky enough to strike it—would he feel himself at home and at one with his surroundings. This would be if he managed to stumble upon a meeting of the House of Convocation, or some similar assemblage, discussing a question of doctrinal theology. Then, if he could understand the language used and follow the ideas expressed, he would, indeed, feel himself at home. In the world outside he would have felt himself moving amid people to whose whole mental outlook he was a stranger, talking about things he did not understand, using appliances, the workings of which he failed to comprehend. But here, with this assemblage of "grave and reverend seigneurs," he would realize a mental affinity. There were more of this class than he had seen in the old days, and they were more soberly dressed. But their mental outlook was one with which he was familiar. And he might well assume that, like himself, they had fallen asleep thousands of years before to awaken with a knowledge of another tongue but with all else unchanged.

* * *

Noah's Ark.

The fancy is not so far-fetched as might appear at first sight. In the House of Convocation the other day there was much excitement, and what the newspapers called "an animated discussion" on the topic of—Noah's Ark. Mentally we were back in the Stone Age at once. Outside the world was seething with revolution. People's minds were busy with schemes of reconstruction of all kinds and values. Millions are convinced that upon the decisions of the immediate future rests the destiny of the civilized world for generations. An assemblage

of deans, and canons, and archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical odds and ends left over from the Dark Ages, set to work solemnly discussing Noah's Ark. Could anything be more grotesque? The Dean of Lincoln said he did not believe in the story, that everybody knew where it came from, and the reference to it should be omitted from the baptismal service. The Archdeacon of Berkshire thought that such speeches as the Dean of Lincoln's would shake the faith of people in the Bible. Never mind the truth, don't let us shake people's faith in a lie; that is his motto, evidently. Canon Newbolt thought the deletion of the story was a dangerous step; but, in the end, Convocation took the risk, and decided to delete the reference. The victory was against the Stone Age, but one can imagine our primitive Rip Van Winkle sitting down with a sigh of relief, and feeling that he was at last at home. He was in a mental atmosphere he could thoroughly appreciate.

Fact or Fiction?

* * *

One is not surprised at the House of Convocation. It is the appointed habitat of the surviving representatives of the Stone Age, and it is their business to keep up faith in the Bible at all costs. But there was no need for the *Daily Telegraph* to advertise either its mental affinity or its political alliance with these people. But it did. In a leading article it solemnly rebuked the Dean of Lincoln against such statements as his at a time "like the present." Evidently the *Telegraph* believes in a close season for truth. It uttered a lot of solemn balderdash about the "pure and lofty spirit" of the Jewish myths, and against taking literally poetic or symbolic legends. This was piling absurdity on dishonesty. The story of the Deluge is not told in the Bible as either poetry or legend, but as part of an assumed historic narrative. And when we turn to the baptismal service what we find is that the priest is ordered to say:—

Almighty and everlasting God, who of thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the Ark from perishing by water, etc.

There is no hint of poetry or symbol here. It is a plain statement of fact. God saved Noah in the Ark from water, therefore will he please cleanse Mary Jones or Tommy Smith through baptism. Of course, we know that is all nonsense. The *Telegraph* knows it is nonsense. We venture to say the majority of the House of Convocation know it is nonsense. We know that the Noachian Deluge never occurred; we know that Noah never existed, that he never built the ark; and, better still, we actually have the original Babylonian myth from which the Jews took their "inspired" history. Substantially, this is what the Dean of Lincoln told Convocation. He said: The story is false; nearly everybody outside this place knows it to be false; and we had better drop talking about it as though it were true. But he was told: Certainly we know it is not true; but there are plenty outside who think it is; so let us keep up the pretence, lest we lose caste altogether. Honesty on our part will not

convert those who do not believe; it may open the eyes of those who do. Long live the Stone Age!

* * *

An Indiscreet Champion.

The *Daily Telegraph* talked learnedly but stupidly about venerable traditions that are so widely distributed as to be worthy of respect; of applying in too crude a form the criterion of truth or falsehood; of the peril of the conclusions that hasty minds would draw; the advice to Convocation not to act so as to lead people to believe that the clergy make statements in which they do not believe, etc. Really, the last piece of advice is unnecessary. Large numbers of people have already made up their minds on that head. "Say, Bill," said one coster to another, "did you tell Jack I was a liar?" "No," replied Bill; "I thought he knew it." That really expresses their position. If people don't call the clergy unpleasant names, it is largely because they do not apply to them, as a class, the same standard of mental rectitude they apply to other people. But they feel that large numbers of the clergy simply cannot believe in the truth of Biblical myths and Prayer-book fantasies. People are really not surprised at the clergy not believing the story of Creation, of the Flood, of the Virgin Birth, etc.; they are only surprised when a clergyman here and there says he doesn't believe in them. It is not the unbelief of a clergyman that surprises them, but his intellectual honesty. It is always the unusual that attracts most attention.

* * *

The Danger of Truth.

The *Telegraph* defence strikes us as singularly ill-advised. It sort of gives the game away. Thousands of people are awakening to the fact that there is more in this alliance of religion with vested interests than meets the eye. And in their minds the conviction is growing that the power of organized religion must be broken before a sound social State can be established. When the *Telegraph* warns us of the "peril of discussion," and that if the "confidence of the people is shaken in the Bible.....the effect will surely be disastrous," it is exposing the secret of that huge, and very real even when unspoken, alliance between theology and the powers that be. There can be nothing disastrous in the people finding out the truth about the Bible, except that it prevents its being used as a means to drug their minds for unavowed purposes. The truth, as usual, is disastrous to falsehood and wrong, and those who profit from falsehood and wrong know it.

* * *

The Use of Convocation.

To talk of these Biblical stories being poetry, or symbols of some great truth; to say that "the mind of early man is more open to allegorical versions and responds more easily to accounts of man's origin clad in the shape of poetry," is downright nonsense. There is not an atom of truth in the statement. Early man is not poetic, but extremely literal. His stories are neither intended to be, nor are they accepted as, legends. The primitive man does not spend his time inventing poetic legends to convey truths that can only be known after centuries of scientific research. These stories that have come down to us as legends were the simple, realistic accounts of the world's origin and history given in the childhood of the race. They form the foundation-stones of all the religions of the world; and complete honesty would realize that, when they are once reduced to the rank of primitive legends, the religions of the world are robbed of all warranty. But, properly studied, these religious legends have a very real value. Valueless as guides to truth, they are valuable records of the mental development of the race. Taking them as they stand,

we can realize something of how the men of the Stone Age thought and felt, and how their thoughts and feelings became modified with the progress of humanity. Even the discussion in 1919, on Noah's Ark, has its value. The geologist has brought to light long-buried skeletons of primitive man, and helped us to realize what he looked like. A study of the House of Convocation discussion helps us to realize the nature of the talks that may have taken place around the rude fire of the primitive cave-man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Resurrection of Jesus.

IN Acts ii. 34 we read, "For David ascended not into the heavens," and puzzled by these words, "Delta" asked the Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D., to explain them. In the *British Weekly* for February 13 the desired explanation duly appeared. The Professor says that "St. Peter is referring to the Resurrection, that amazing miracle which demonstrated to the disciples that their Lord was indeed the Promised Redeemer, and that the seeming disaster of his death was in truth a Divine triumph." In the great speech attributed to him, Peter's argument is that the resurrection of Jesus is predicted by David in Psalm xvi. Apparently the Psalmist is speaking of himself when he says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption"; but Peter's comment is as follows: "Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the Patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day." Consequently, "he spake of the resurrection of the Christ," for "this Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." Taking the resurrection narratives as they stand, no one witnessed that "amazing miracle." It is not even alleged that any one was present at the grave when Jesus rose. Several people there were who testified that they had both seen and worshipped him; "but some doubted." Of course, Jesus would not have been a Saviour-God had not his death been followed by a resurrection. Pagan mythology abounded in risings from the dead. Paul's missionary tours would have been complete failures had his Gospel not included the resurrection story. We all know what a large place the death of Christ occupies in the Pauline theology; but his death would have possessed no value whatever to an evangelist apart from the empty tomb. All the Saviour-Gods of antiquity had died for sin and risen again for the purification of men. At the commencement of our era the Greeco-Roman world was being overrun by religions which offered salvation by mystic union with a risen and glorified Redeemer. Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Mithra, and Dionysus had all been slain and raised up. In the sixth century B.C. Orphism spread over Greece and South Italy, and, as Gilbert Murray informs us, "in doctrine it laid special stress upon sin, and the sacerdotal purification of sin" through faith in the death and resurrection of Dionysus. To the Gentiles the only new thing in Paul's Gospel was the name of Jesus. With all else in it they were already perfectly familiar, and what he urged them to do was to transfer their faith from their own Saviour-Gods, whom he denounced as false, to Jesus Christ, the only true Redeemer. Had he left out the resurrection, however, they would not have lent him an appreciative ear.

What evidence is there that Jesus rose from the dead? None. Neither Paul nor Professor Smith adduces any. The divines speak of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians as Paul's unanswerable argument for the resurrection; but they conveniently ignore the fact that this famous chapter contains not a single proof that

Jesus rose from the dead. He admits that he delivered unto the Corinthians, first of all, only that which also he had received, or only what he had been told. With much of his so-called argument we are in full agreement. It is quite true that if Christ was raised up, the dead may rise at the end of the world. It is also true that if Christ did not rise, Christianity is founded upon a lie, and the hope it engenders is utterly vain. It likewise follows that "they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." This argument is sound enough, but it does not demonstrate the resurrection of Jesus. Canon Liddon was wholly justified in writing as follows:—

A denial, let us mark it well, of the literal resurrection of the human body of Jesus involves nothing less than an absolute and total rejection of Christianity. All orthodox Churches, all the great heresies, even Socinianism, have believed in the resurrection of Jesus. The literal resurrection of Jesus was the cardinal fact upon which the earliest preachers of Christianity based their appeal to the Jewish people. St. Paul, writing to a Gentile Church, expressly makes Christianity answer with its life for the literal truth of the resurrection (*The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, p. 233).

Dr. Smith affirms that Psalm xvi. "is a prophecy of one who should have an experience which neither David nor any other mortal had ever yet known," and that "it was fulfilled in Christ"; but of the truth of that assertion he gives absolutely no evidence. He plays the dogmatist quite as well as the Apostle Paul. If we examine the narratives of the resurrection contained in the Gospels, we shall find that they "exhibit numerous contradictions of the most glaring kind." For example, Matthew tells us that the grave was duly sealed and guarded; but Mark and Luke not only make no allusion to the watch and seal, but mention the women's intended visit to anoint the body, which would have been impossible in the presence of a military guard. The evangelists disagree as to the persons supposed to have gone to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection, as to the rolling away of the stone, as to the number of angels in the tomb, and as to what was seen by those who entered it. Reimarus enumerated ten contradictions, but Schmiedel says that in reality their number is much greater. But even if the different accounts of the resurrection of Jesus agreed on every point, they would furnish not a single shred of evidence that such an event actually took place. The contradictions and discrepancies only show that there were different versions of the legend floating about among the disciples, just as there had been discrepant reports of the resurrection of various Pagan Christs.

After stating his firm belief in the literal resurrection of Jesus, Dr. Smith proceeds to describe the certain resurrection of his believing people thus:—

They die, and their bodies see corruption; but at the final consummation their dust will be reanimated, and their "mortal forms shall spring to life immortal in the skies." Meanwhile their souls are with God, safe and blessed in his keeping; but at the Resurrection their felicity will be perfected by reunion with their bodies, no longer frail and perishing, but transfigured and qualified to enter the kingdom of God.

This is sheer dogmatism, based on total ignorance. It is the orthodoxy of fifty years ago, cherished by but few to-day. There are many distinguished divines who no longer hold it, and are convinced that Paul did not really teach it. Indeed, no one can read the Epistles ascribed to him, especially that to the Romans, without perceiving that he shared Plato's conception of matter. He knew that his flesh was the dwelling-place of evil; he found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity. So vile was the flesh, in his estimation, that it contaminated every-

thing that came in contact with it, rendering even the law weak. Not only inanimate matter, but even the human body, he declares to be vile, and he represents himself as yearning unspeakably to get rid of it; or, at any rate, to have it refashioned, perhaps "dissolved," even to receive another, "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He assures us "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"; that these "terrestrial bodies" are doomed to vanish that we may put on the "celestial bodies" which await us on the other side.

Death does not mean annihilation but a change from one state of existence into another. We are taught by science that as nothing ever comes into, so nothing can go out of, existence. Life is not an entity but a condition of the organism. We do not know the exact derivation of the word "soul," but "spirit" or "ghost," means breath, or wind. The Greek "*thumos*," translated mind, heart, soul, is simply smoke or vapour. It is the body that lives, and death is merely the disintegration or decomposition of that same body. When dead the body still exists, but in another form. And death signifies the same thing to all kinds of organism—a change of form, a resolving of the constituent parts into their original elements. That is a definition of death that has come down to us from one of the greatest Stoic philosophers, and a more accurate one cannot be given. The souls spoken of by Professor Smith are purely imaginary beings, and his knowledge of them is as imaginary as themselves. Death is not disembodiment but disorganization, and it means the same thing to all living things—to a man as to a dog or a fly.

J. T. LLOYD.

Royal Recusants.

Pardon, gentles all,
The flat, unraised spirit that has dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object.—*Shakespeare*, "*King Henry V.*"

JOHN STUART MILL said that the world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of well-known people were sceptics. Many of these, as Mill points out, refrained for various reasons from speaking out. Biographers, too, varnish; they gloss facts, they whitewash, they garble and suppress. Especially is this the case with royal Freethinkers. A short time since Mr. Joseph McCabe made a mild sensation by telling, for the first time, the full story of the Rationalist Queen of England, Caroline, wife of George the Second. Pious folk were very astonished that so exalted a person should be a Freethinker, and a militant one, too. Few more *piquant* stories have been told than the account of the Queen's deathbed, when the Archbishop of Canterbury waited in vain to administer the communion to the royal recusant, who preferred to die without priestly assistance.

Yet there have been many royal Freethinkers, from the far-off days of Queen Marguerite of Valois down to our own time. Rabelais, who did not like woman, royal or plebeian, dedicated to the fair Marguerite the third book of his immortal *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. She deserved the dignified tribute from the great writer. Great daring, she always befriended the "intellectuals" of her day. The persecuted Calvin, no less than the Freethinking Desperiers, were both harboured at her Court. It was a most weighty service. Though all else about her be sprinkled with the poppy of oblivion, this should be remembered to her eternal credit.

During the three hundred years in which the Romanoffs ruled Russia, they gave to the world one

great man in Peter the Great, and a brilliant Empress in Catherine the Second. Indeed, Catherine stands out on the stage of history as no other woman of her century, and few of her sex have ever exercised so commanding and dominant a position. She used a phrase once, that she was "as frank as an Englishman," and there is no doubt that in her capacity and intellectuality Catherine, with all her faults, was a successful sovereign. In her princely patronage of Voltaire and the French encyclopædists, she found the firmest support for the security of her political reputation that Europe could afford her. One of her finest actions, Oriental in its magnificence, was her generous help of old Denis Diderot, who was driven by poverty to offer his loved library for sale. Catherine not only bought it, but left him with it, and paid him a salary as librarian.

Napoleon's character has baffled many critics and biographers. Even his own brother did not really know him, for after the great soldier's death he marvelled at the impression his brother had produced on the world. "He was not so much a great as a good man," he said, with touching simplicity. Doubtless he had been good to him. For he was not the only man deceived by this colossus who bestrode Europe for a generation, and whose greatness endures beyond the stillness of the tomb. Napoleon had very free-and-easy views concerning religion, and he preferred Mohammedanism to Christianity. His objection to the Christian religion was that it damned Plato and Socrates, and he questioned the justice of eternal punishment. Another nice point of theology he raised was that Christians who worshipped three deities must, necessarily, be Polytheists. "As for me," Napoleon said bluntly on one occasion, "my opinion is formed that Christ never existed." Like so many monarchs, Napoleon used priests to further his political schemes. He forced the Pope to be present at his coronation simply to please the Catholics. This patronage of religion on the part of rulers is one of the commonest facts of history. The Roman Emperors did it systematically. Did not Henry of Navarre retract his Protestantism, saying, "Paris is well worth a mass"? In quite recent days the "Holy Carpet" of the Mohammedans has been saluted by British warships, and received with military honours at the hands of Christian soldiers.

Frederick the Great would have lifted his eyebrows at the ex-Kaiser William's assumption of Divine assistance, and thrown the imperial sermons, so faithfully reported by Reuter's young men, into the waste-paper basket. Frederick was a Frenchman at heart. He had a great liking for all things French, and he spoke no more German than served him to order a sentry or instruct a servant. French was the language used at his table; he wrote French verse, which he thought fondly was poetry; he loved to have Voltaire and other witty "intellectuals" at his supper parties. "Old Fritz," too, was tolerant in his way. "Bring it down lower," he shouted, on coming across a crowd reading a high-hung libellous poster on himself. He also told the Lutheran hymn-writers that they might sing what nonsense they liked. On this side of the Channel it is humorous to recall that this Freethinker was regarded as a Protestant hero, second only to good old Doctor Martin Luther. His birthday was a day of rejoicing, especially in London, and he achieved the signal honour of having public-houses named after him. A Christian community could do no more.

Another and greater Frederick was the famous Emperor of Germany who is said to be the founder of the Renaissance. His heresy is "four square to all the winds that blow," for he was twice excommunicated by the Pope. A true patron of learning, he founded the

Universities of Naples and Vienna, promoted the study of the classics, and assisted many of the ablest men of his time. The greatest name, however, among Royal Rationalists is that of Julius Cæsar, "the foremost man of all this world," as Shakespeare calls him. His life is one of the most familiar and splendid pages of history, and, as Froude points out, "his own writings contain nothing to indicate that he himself had any religious belief at all."

MIMNERMUS.

True Salvation.

The fair fields of freedom and equal rights lie close beside us. Nothing hinders us from entering them but the fence of superstition—the superstition that deters us from asserting our own rights and impels us to concede superior rights to a few of our fellow-men.—*T. L. M'Creedy.*

WE are living in an eventful time. The human mind is in a fretful tumult about religious and social questions. Old faiths are being recast to bring them into conformity with the world of to-day, which is so different from the world in which the present religious creeds were made. And the old ideas of how society should be organized are undergoing just as radical a change.

Modern science has made the old religious faith impossible to educated and thoughtful persons. Many people still talk of God, and cling passionately to the word; but their God is not the same as the old ruffian of ruder days, who fought their battles for them, provided them with concubines from among the maidens of their foes, and who looked on with approval and delight when his beloved and chosen fellow-ruffians burned people at the stake because they were so much better than God or the children of God. The present God is an impersonal person, entirely synonymous with natural energy. Religious people deserve no praise for this salutary change, for they have not made it willingly. It has been forced on them, and accepted as slowly and reluctantly as possible; and, indeed, there are still some who actually long for the bad old days when God was an active member of society, who could make things warm for Freethinkers as disturbers of the peace.

So, too, modern civilization, as our present methods of legalized highway robbery are called, has forced a change in ideas as to how society should be organized. The evolution of machinery, with its attendant growth of what is called capitalism, has produced phenomena which were quite unforeseen one hundred years ago, and are the prime cause of the present social chaos.

There was a time when we could regard without fear the enterprise of men who went into industry poor and came out of it comfortably rich, after a lifetime of careful work. But all this is changed. One cannot regard the rich men of to-day with any such complacency, because business has evolved into an unfair gambling scheme, carried on with marked cards and loaded dice—or, rather, a pugilistic encounter, where the crafty slugger strikes a foul blow every chance, and the referee will not allow a claim of foul because he shares the stakes. Thus we see the holders of vested interests solidly arrayed against the heroic Russian revolutionists, using their hireling press to vilify and discredit them, and their armed forces to starve and massacre them, while the clergy and the politicians refuse to protest against such foul fighting.

Now, at such a time as this, two questions arise, and they are of great importance: What must society do to be saved? and what must I do to be saved?

The first is an economic question, and therefore requires an economic answer. The second is a personal question, and requires a personal answer. Society, to be saved, must abandon its present iniquitous form, in

which a few privileged persons obtain enormous quantities of the wealth produced by the labour of others. The main sources of this injustice are the present legalized monopolies of banking and of land. Give the workers free access to the land by making the use and occupation of it the sole title to control it, and your land problem is solved. Remove all restrictions on the manufacture and sale of the tools of exchange, and your money problem is solved. Rent and interest thus abolished, wages will rise to the full value of the worker's labour.

And now, what must I do to be saved? I do not mean saved from a future hell, or present misfortune and suffering. I mean, what must you and I do to retain our self-respect and the consciousness of our true manhood, in the midst of the villainous surroundings that tempt us to give up both for the sake of peace and respectability?

Now, I am positive that the prevalent religious faith is so intimately a part of the present social system, that they must fall together. When people cease to believe in the divine right of kings, there will be no more kings. When they no longer believe in the Atonement, there will be no more vicarious sacrifice of the workers to maintain the idlers. When they cease to believe in a divinely inspired priesthood, there will be no more contented slavery in this world with a view to everlasting bliss in the next. When there is no longer an overruling Providence, there will be no longer an overruling class in the community. When the workers thoroughly understand that there is no kind of a God to right their wrongs for them, they will stop praying and take the matter into their own hands, and then it will be done properly, because it is true that if you want such things well done, you must do them yourself.

To Christians, this sounds like the destruction of all religion; but it is very far from being so. It is rather the initiation of a new and better religion, a binding tie that draws us to devote our lives to the emancipation of the workers from the foul superstitions that enslave them, and thus render true happiness impossible for both rich and poor alike.

I was once a believer in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, for that is the only consistent Christian belief about it. It is either the word of God or it is not. If it is the word of an Omniscient God, it should be believed implicitly, and if it is not, it should be accepted, like all other human books, on its merits. I know, too, all about what is called "spiritual experience," and the comfort to be got by putting down all the miseries of life to an overruling and all-wise Providence. But I can honestly say that I have known more genuine spiritual inspiration since I became a Freethinker than ever before. Christians assert that Freethought, or as they falsely call it, infidelity, tends to make men worse. My experience is that the more I discover how little I can do for God, and how much I can do for my fellow-men, the more determined I become to expose the superstitions from which they suffer. The more I see how impossible are a future heaven and hell, and how easy it is to make a heaven here, right where a hell now is—the veritable hell of undeserved and unnecessary poverty—the more I feel driven to let no day pass without doing something for freedom.

We do not want more churches. We need more homes in which men and women who work may enjoy the full reward of their labour, and fewer in which ill gotten wealth is squandered. We do not need wealthy bishops to tell us to shun the rational pleasures of this world and submit to every unjust decree of the monopolists. We need men to tell the people that this is the only world and this the only life, and that they should make them as clean and happy and free as possible.

The Spiritualists are talking of their vagaries as a new religion, but we do not want our atmosphere crowded again with ghosts and angels and spooks. We want it merry with the laughter of children who never hunger; with the songs of women who are free from anxiety and care; with the stout voices of free men who strike the teeming land with the magic wand of labour and bring forth wealth, and then rise up to play.

Turn away from the Spiritualists whose palsied brains render them the easy prey of crafty mediums, from the parsons with their flabby consciences, from the politicians with their thimble-rigging schemes, and hearken to the economic and social Freethinkers who preach of wealth fairly earned, of liberty and happiness. Turn away from the past with its gods, and ghosts, and tyrants. Turn to the future with its possibilities of congenial labour and easily earned general wealth, its leisure and refinement—to that future in which men and women will live so sanely, so satisfied with this life, so unterrified by death, that each, when his days are numbered, may say: "This is the end of earth; I am content."

Until at last the world Republic free
Be world-religion, with this blest result:
Our God—our commonweal divinity!
Our after-life—our social immortality!

G. O. WARREN.

Acid Drops.

A film depicting the slum-dwellings of the East End was shown at St. Martin's-in-the-Field's Church. The Mayor of Bethnal Green was present, and it would have been as well had he pointed out how much of the Bethnal Green slum area belonged to the ecclesiastical Commission, and was the property of the Church of England. Anyway, depicting slum property in a West End church filled with well dressed Christians was a striking way of illustrating the social inutility of Christianity. And the Church is asking for five millions—to build and endow new churches. Houses before churches, or houses *instead* of churches, would not make a bad election cry if people were only sensible.

Bishop Gore, of Oxford, has reprinted his pamphlet on *The League of Nations and the Opportunity of the Church*. It is very outspoken, but, unfortunately, his clerical brethren seldom see eye to eye with him. Some time ago Bishop Gore said: "If you want to get a reform carried out, you have to go to every kind of Atheist and Nonconformist and other kind of person, for if you go to Churchmen you are confronted with blank indifference." The meaning is good, even if the expression is bad. "Every kind of Atheist," for example, is decidedly amusing.

A returned Army chaplain is known (and advertised) as "Woodbine Willie." Quite the flower of his flock, we presume.

The 107th celebration of the birth of Charles Dickens was held at Westminster Abbey. This associates the place of worship with the great writer; but, if the teaching of the Church of England be true, Dickens is now in torment and not in bliss. For Dickens was a Unitarian, and, from the Church point of view, a heretic.

Many of the dear clergy are near starvation—so they tell us. A few manage to keep the wolf from the door. Here is a case in point. The Rev. A. Nairne, Fellow of Jesus College, and Vicar of All Saints, Cambridge, has been appointed Hulsean Lecturer at Cambridge. It sounds like three jobs for one man.

The Salvation Army has opened a hostel for girls at Endsleigh Gardens. A bed costs a shilling a night, and a dinner can be had for the same figure. Other charges are

pro rata, and all are quite sufficient to remove any suspicion of philanthropy.

Editors are supposed to keep their hands on the public pulse. It is highly significant that two leading articles in a Sunday newspaper, read by over a million people, should be on "Jazz Dancing" and "White Slavery." This is in addition to the usual weekly summary of police-court and divorce-court cases. It is almost as racy reading as the Old Testament itself.

Sir Arthur Yapp—who is, of course, a Christian—is terribly alarmed at the "friendliness of the German people" towards our soldiers in the Army of Occupation. So he solemnly warns the British people against encouraging it. Nothing like a good Christian for preaching the gospel of hate. His religion supplies him with inspiration for that, in whatever else it may be lacking.

Cardinal Amette, the Archbishop of Paris, has censured "foreign dances, which are contrary to good social usages and modesty." He does not indicate whether he has fox-trots, tangoes, or jazz band dances in mind. The modest "can-can," not being a "foreign dance," does not come within the priestly denunciation.

Mr. Edmund Candler has some interesting stories of the vagaries of our Press Censor during the War. Mr. Candler was one of the War correspondents in Mesopotamia, and there was, apparently, a Government order that all Arabs must be described as "friendly." So when Mr. Candler wrote that Arabs had attacked the British, the Censor turned that into "Marauders in Turkish pay." When he described, from Thibet this time, a group of ruffianly-looking officers "drinking rum over a Yak-dung fire," it became, under the Censor's care, a group of officers drinking tea over a fire. All things considered, it would not be a bad thing if all the War books written during the last four years for public consumption were destroyed and an impartial commission set to work to tell us what really did occur.

The church of St. Katherine Coleman, City, London, is to be demolished, the churchyard being preserved as an open space. Presumably, the coals and blankets brigades have moved to the nearest church.

A Sunday paper boasts that there is "no privileged class." The editor of a Sunday paper ought to have left school long enough to know of the existence of the clergy.

The *British Weekly* suggests the return to active work of Mr. Evan Roberts, the Welsh revivalist, who caused a sensation in his native country about fifteen years ago. Perhaps the Welsh revivalist has learned English in the interval.

A sum of £250 is being raised to restore the canopy over the tomb of Bishop Andrewes in Southwark Cathedral. The Bishop died in 1626.

A Norfolk clergyman, the Rev. Edward E. Montford, of Swanton Abbot, died, leaving £16,269. He should be sure of an introduction to Dives where so many moneyed men are gnashing their teeth.

Dr. C. W. Kimmens, speaking on "Children's Dreams" at the Child Study Society, said he had records of 5,000 dreams. He enumerated many varieties, but nothing was said of dreams of the fear of hell which once were the horror of child-life. "For this relief, much thanks."

We deal elsewhere with the discussion on "Noah's Ark" in the House of Convocation. But we see that the Canterbury House of Laymen have been having *their* say on the matter. Mr. Athelstan Riley was "profoundly disgusted as a Churchman" at the Dean of Lincoln saying he did not believe in the Noachian Flood. Lord Hugh Cecil said they wanted more teaching of the Scriptures. Professor Beres-

ford Pite said that "All Scripture was profitable to public morals." This gentleman wants "the whole Bible." Others voiced the same sentiment, and the discussion makes us wonder whether we are living in the twentieth century or the tenth. At any rate, it is obvious that the need for Free-thought propaganda is as great as ever, and the sooner our work becomes more strongly organized the better.

At the funeral of the late Mr. Joseph Arch, for so many years the spokesman of the Agricultural Labourers, the Bishop of Coventry said that Arch's ideals were "once called revolutionary." Just so! And the Church was the worst offender.

Mischievous boys so ransacked and wrecked a chapel at Markham Village, Mon., that the services had to be discontinued. Organ, pulpit, lamps, windows, and seats were all broken. Pity the sorrows of a poor old Providence!

Scratch a Christian and you will find a savage! Here is a Sunday paper discussing what it would do with leading Germans, and beginning, "Hanging, however, is too crude and speedy." Presumably, this Christian gentleman wishes for "something with boiling-oil in it."

During the past week a course of lectures have been delivered at the Picton Hall, Liverpool, under the auspices of the Catholic Truth Society. The lecturer should have been the Rev. R. Downey, of London. On the Monday night Dr. Downey spoke on "The Existence of God," but was unable to appear again during the week owing to being taken ill, and deputy speakers had to be provided for the other lectures. Now, we consider this a very poor way for God to treat his humble servant after giving such a lecture. If it had been a Freethought lecturer, no doubt the finger of God would have been clearly seen by Christians. We congratulate the Catholic Truth Society on inviting the public to "Come and hear What is the Christian Religion?" It is a great improvement on the rack and thumbscrew. After all, though, is it not a sign of the times?—the truth being that, along with all the other Churches, they are beginning to "feel the draught." The labour of Freethought pioneers is now commencing to bear fruit, although there is still plenty of work to do yet.

Dean Inge says that Christianity is caught like measles. The Dean omitted to say that like measles it is children that are principally attacked. Adults are practically immune. And there is nothing like a good dose of a Freethought serum to guard against infection.

The London Fire Brigade Committee have issued an instruction that firemen are not to be ordered to attend Church parade. We wonder that anyone ever had the impudence to issue such an order, or that the men were submissive enough to obey it. But the docility of some people passes comprehension. The power to revolt is really an asset of social value, even though the revolt may be in the wrong direction, and may cause annoyance to the community.

Swinburne.

CHILDREN and lovers and the cloud-robbed sea
Shall mourn him first; and then the mother-land,
Weeping in silence by his empty hand
And fallen sword, that flashed for Liberty.
Song-bringer of a glad new minstrelsy,
He came and found joy sleeping and swift fanned
Old pagan fires, then snatched an altar brand
And wrote, "The fearless only shall be free!"

Oh, by the flame that made thine heart a home,
By the wild surges of thy silver song,
Seer before the sunrise, may there come
Spirits of dawn to light this aching wrong
Called Earth! Thou saw'st them in the foreglow roam;
But we still wait and watch, still thirst and long.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

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.

March 2, Swansea; March 9, Liverpool; March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester; March 26 and 27, Belfast; March 30, Leeds.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 2, Maesteg; March 9, Ferndale; March 16, Pontycymer.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—K. C. Clarkson, 10s. 6d.; J. A., 4s. 6d.; J. Lauder (S.A.), £1.

J. P. HARDING.—Thanks for cuttings. It was a pretty safe test—so long as the roof was sound.

L. S.—References and quotations quite useful. Thanks.

E. MAY —(1) There are surely enough Christian journals singing the "Hymn of Hate" without a Freethought paper joining in the chorus. And it is poor sport when the other side can't hit back. (2) One must judge every revolution more from the point of view of what it revolts against and what it aims at than at what actually occurs during a season of upheaval. Revolutions are apt to be bloody just in proportion to the misgovernment that has caused them.

J. LAUDER.—Papers are being sent. It is useful work to send on copies to likely readers. A large proportion of our readers are gained in this way.

EAST ANGLIAN.—As you will see, we have dealt with the relation of Christianity to Labour in *Christianity and Slavery*.

J. HARGRAVE.—Have not yet seen the volume, but will take the earliest opportunity of doing so—no doubt with pleasure.

K. GRIFFITHS.—Unfortunately we do not possess a sub-editor so cannot do as you suggest. One day, when the financial strain is not so heavy as it is at present, we hope to acquire the luxury of a sub. We often feel we should like things a little easier, but what is one to do?

E. G.—Three new subscribers in a month is good work. Many thanks. Many of our readers really work hard in this way, and we are deeply indebted to them. We wish *all* were bitten with the same desire.

W. FREEMAN.—We are pleased to learn that our parcel of literature proved so useful, and has been so eagerly read by the men.

J. CLARKE.—A primer of evolution would make clear the absurdity of expecting to get a starting-point for any fully-developed form.

W. BINDON.—We can't explain the root fallacy of "Idealism" in a sentence. Put it that it mistakes an infirmity of thought for a necessity of existence, and you will have gone a long way on the road.

T. C. WYKES.—These matters have to be conducted with discretion, and with a definite purpose in view. Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

S. THOMPSON.—Read first Roquain's *Revolutionary Spirit in France before the Revolution* (Allen & Unwin), then Mallet's *The French Revolution* (Murray). Carlyle should be read when some knowledge of the Revolution has been acquired. Kropotkin's book on the Revolution is well worth reading for its point of view. A first rate work, from what one may call the official point of view, is Morse Stephen's *History of the French Revolution*. The literature on this subject is very large and growing.

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.

The "Freethinker."

WE continue to receive complaints from readers who say they are unable to get their copies of this paper regularly. We do not know why this should be so, and we can only advise them to press for regular delivery, or transfer their custom elsewhere. A Freethinker should demand the same civility and attention that is bestowed upon others. He does not ask for more, but he should not be satisfied with less.

We also take the present occasion of urging upon our friends not to relax their efforts of getting the paper into new hands. The War is over, but the cost of production has not decreased, and will not do so for some months. We have maintained the paper at its pre-War price because we wished to place no obstacle to an increased circulation. Thanks to the efforts of our friends, a much larger circulation has been secured. But we want more, and if our readers will continue to help, we hope to be able to announce, when normal times return, that the *Freethinker* has been made quite self-supporting.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 2) Mr. Cohen lectures twice, afternoon and evening, in the Dockers' Hall, High Street, Swansea. Judging from previous visits, those who wish for a comfortable seat should get there in good time. Next Sunday (March 9) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Clarion Cafe, Cable Street, Liverpool. There will be no meeting at this place to-day (Mar. 2).

We are asked to announce that a special meeting of the members of the Swansea Branch will be held at 60 Alexandra Road on Saturday, March 1, at 6 p.m.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd is spending two or three Sundays in South Wales, and starts to-day (March 2) at Maesteg, afternoon and evening. The meetings are held in the Gem Cinema at 2.30 and 7. We hope local "saints" will take advantage of his presence to see that he is kept as busy as possible between the Sundays, and also that his meetings at Maesteg to-day will be what the lecturer deserves. In that case it will be "standing room only." Mr. Lloyd, we are pleased to hear, held two very successful meetings at Manchester on Sunday last.

We have received several letters dealing with Dr. Lyttelton's acceptance of the newspaper reports of barbarities in Russia and their assumed connection with Atheism. We regret our limited space will not permit their publication in full, besides which, as might be expected, they traverse the same ground. B. F. B., who happens to know Russia, very rightly repudiates sympathy with barbarities, whether committed by Christian or Atheist, but points out that one must bear in mind the ill-treatment of the people of Russia for so long, and also that this misgovernment was made possible by the greed, corruption, and immorality of the Russian State Church, of which Rasputin was one of the latest examples. Mr. J. Rankin writes in the same vein, but points out that the tales of "atrocities" are met with a flat denial by many who know Russia, that the country districts are quiet, and encloses newspaper cuttings detailing the wholesale execution of Bolsheviks by the "Whites," and that these make no secret whatever of their intentions. Finally, we have to note a letter from Mr. A. J. Denison who writes: "I was naturally indignant at the aspersion cast upon Freethought by Dr. Lyttelton, and awaited your reply with interest. When I read it I felt that all had been said that need be said, and offer my congratulations on the effective reply to an attack that should never have been made."

So far as we are concerned, it is quite certain (1) that the British public are not getting the truth about Russia. (2) That, as in the Portuguese Revolution of a few years ago, nothing is being said of the reconstructive work that is going on in Russia, while every atrocity story, no matter from whom, is given the widest publicity. (3) The Anti-Bolsheviks are as liberal with *their* "atrocities" as are others. (4) The stories of the suppression of religious freedom are contradicted by the reports of evangelical activities which are appearing in some of the English Nonconformist papers. (5) The Press Censorship still exists, and the British press submits to it with a docility that must make many Continental Governments jealous. These are plain facts that all fair-minded men and women should bear in mind in forming a judgment on the question.

It may be of interest to our readers to learn what are the actual regulations of the Soviet (Bolshevik) Government of Russia concerning marriage, etc. These are officially stated by the Russian Information Bureau to be as follows:—

Persons intending to marry must notify either verbally or in writing the registry office for marriages and for births attached to the county, district, or parish council in the district of their abode.

Civil marriage is absolutely obligatory. The additional performance of a Church ceremony is the private affair of the individuals concerned.

Notifications of marriages are not accepted from males under 18 and from females under 16 years of age (For the natives of Transcaucasus the legal age for marriage is 16 and for females 13 years of age), from relatives of linear descent, brothers and sisters, half-brothers and half-sisters, from married persons and lunatics.

It is necessary for those intending to marry to call at the registry office for marriages, and to sign a form declaring that they are free from impediments, and that the marriage is a voluntary act on their part.

Persons deliberately making false statements will be proceeded against and the marriages declared void.

The officer in charge of the registry office for marriages, after obtaining the required signatures, enters the fact in the registry book and then declares the marriage already to be in force. A copy of the marriage licence is immediately issued and given to the couple. Appeals against refusal to perform the marriage ceremony, or against any irregularity in the entry in the register, can be made at any time to the local judge in the district where the marriage was registered.

Illegitimate children are to be treated in the same manner as legitimate children in regard to their rights and obligations towards their parents, and the rights and obligations of the parents towards their children.

It will be seen that the marriage laws are substantially those which obtain in this country, except that civil marriage is obligatory in all cases—as in France. The regulation concerning illegitimate children differs from ours in the direction of greater humanity.

To help the funds of the Manchester Branch, it has been decided to hold a Sale of Work at the Small Hall, Downing Street, on Saturday afternoon, March 22, prior to the last Social in the evening of that day. The Committee will be thankful for any articles which can be sold, or any cash contributions in lieu thereof. Gifts may be addressed to Mrs. Bayfield, 61 Claude Street, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, or to the Secretary. We trust there will be a ready and generous response.

In spite of many counter attractions in the town, there were two capital audiences at South Shields on Sunday last at Mr. Cohen's meeting. The hall was well filled in the afternoon, and crowded to the doors in the evening. The lectures, too, were followed with the keenest appreciation and the heartiest applause. Many friends were present from Newcastle and other places, and it was a pleasure to the lecturer to once again see and meet such a number of old friends. Before the evening lecture Mr. Lee (piano) and Mr. J. Chapman (violin) gave a musical selection which was received with the greatest appreciation, and deserved it. Quite evidently Tyneside, as elsewhere, is ripe for energetic Freethought work, and we should like to see all friends of the movement more active there than they are at present.

Mr. J. H. Van Bienne will open a debate to-night on "The Positive Evils for which Religion is Responsible." North London "saints" should try to bring some Christian friends with them to the St. Pancras Reform Club. The proceedings will begin punctually at 7.30.

The new Belfast Branch continues to make steady progress in spite of the disturbed state of the city. Mr. McCombrey, we are informed, gave a much-appreciated address on Sunday last on "Religion and Woman," and Mr. Cohen has arranged to visit the Branch on Wednesday and Thursday, March 26 and 27.

Mr. F. E. Willis, of Birmingham, will lecture at the Corn Exchange, Coventry, to-day (March 2), at 3, on "The Madmen of the Gods," and at 7 on "The Theory of Immortality." Will Coventry Freethinkers do what they can in the direction of making these meetings as widely known as possible?

Mr. S. H. Swinny, the well-known London Positivist, is lecturing for the Birmingham Branch to-day at the Repertory Theatre. His subject is "The Religion of Humanity"; time of meeting, 7 o'clock. Birmingham Freethinkers should make a special point of being present.

The Birth and Development of Gods.

V.

(Continued from p. 86.)

JEHOVAH, Yahweh, or Jahweh, the supreme deity of Israel, presents another instance of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for pre-eminence among competing gods. It is usually assumed that the Hebrews were the worshippers from the very beginning of the one true divinity. But modern critical research has conclusively proved that all the Semitic stocks, the old Jews among them, have passed through the stage of polytheism. And there can be no serious question that the ghosts of the dead were the begetters of the mighty supernatural being, who ultimately commanded the allegiance of the whole Jewish race.

Sacred stones, trees, and stakes are constantly mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures. Now, in all quarters of the known world, we encounter the sacred trees and groves, wood stakes, and stone memorials which distinguish the graves of the dead. Mannhardt and Frazer provide abundant examples of the worship of holy trees, and there is clear evidence to show that the tree that grows on or near the sepulchral mound is supposed to be intimately related to the souls of the people who repose within. Without exception, the sacred groves are immediately or remotely connected with the dead. Prayers and offerings are made to divine trees, just as they are made at the tombs of departed men, while they are sometimes actually associated with the images of deceased ancestors. Tylor remarks with reference to the sanctuaries of Northern races that:—

Gaily decked idols in their warm fur coats, each set up beneath its great tree swathed with cloth and tinfoil, endless reindeer hides and peltry hanging from the trees around, kettles and spoons and snuff horns and household valuables strewn as offerings before the gods—such is the description of a Siberian holy grove at the stage when the contact of foreign civilization has begun by ornamenting the rude old ceremonial it must end by abolishing. A race ethnologically allied to these tribes, though risen to a higher culture, kept up remarkable relics of tree worship in Northern Europe. In Esthonian districts.....the traveller might often see the sacred tree, generally an ancient lime, oak, or ash, standing inviolate in a sheltered spot near the dwelling-house; and the old memories are handed down of the

time when the first blood of a slaughtered beast was sprinkled on its roots that the cattle might prosper, or when an offering was laid beneath the holy linden, on the stone where the worshipper knelt on his bare kneeswhich stone he kissed when he said, "Receive the food as an offering."

From grave-stakes wooden images of the dead were derived, and from these in turn the wooden idols of rude races were evolved. From these, again, proceeded the matchless marble sculptures of Grecian gods and heroes which still remain the masterpieces of human art. The Ashera of the Semites was a sacred log or pole which stood near the early altar which had itself been developed from the primitive gravestone. Robertson Smith tells us that "every altar had its *ashera*, even such altars as in the popular preprophetic forms of the Hebrew religion were dedicated to Jehovah." In some instances the sex of the person interred is indicated. Among the aboriginal Ainus of Japan, Landor observed that the burial staves were fashioned to display the male and female organs of generation. With the Ostyaks the ligneous grave images are speedily removed and buried where the ordinary dead are concerned, but the image of the medicine man becomes a permanent memorial which soon receives divine worship.

One has only to glance at such a work as Lord Avebury's *Prehistoric Times* to realize the world-wide distribution of megalithic remains. Carnac, with its stately stone avenues, and our own Avebury and Stonehenge are represented over the earth even in remote Indonesia. Standing stones or menhirs, dolmens or stone tables, cairns or stone heaps, and cromlechs or stone circles, are, apparently, all of sepulchral origin. The spirits of the dead are revered among the Khonds of India as village gods of stone. In Peru and elsewhere the standing stone (grave stone) "represented the penates of households and the patron deities of villages." Stones of this nature were once everywhere regarded as the outward and visible signs of the ghosts or gods dwelling within.

The early Semites bowed down to stones as embodiments of their divinities. In Phœnicia, the stone pillars of Baal and the Ashera poles were the leading idols. We may remember that the celebrated Stone of Bethel was presumably a menhir, while the cairn of Mizpah was certainly a burial memorial. We glean from the Scriptures that in the days of Joshua the Israelites built a Gilgal composed of twelve erect stone pillars. Moreover,—

among the Arabs at the time of Mohammed, two of the chief deities were Manah and Lat, the one a rock, the other a sacred stone or stone idol: and the Kaaba itself, the great black stone of local worship, even the Prophet was compelled to recognize and Islamise by adopting it bodily into his own monotheistic religion.

On their rude pillars and cairns the ancient Arabians offered their bloody sacrifices to the spirits of the dead. That the early Hebrews sacrificed to stones is proved by many passages in the older Jewish documents. Robertson Smith pointed out that although monolithic pillars are never definitely associated with ritual, they are nevertheless specifically condemned in the later priestly code as idolatrous images. Doubtless the evidences of primitive idol-worship would be very much stronger but for the glosses afterwards placed by the priestly editors over the early texts. Stone pillars seemingly occupied a prominent position in the ceremonies of Canaanite temples. Again, declares Robertson Smith,—

as Hosea speaks of the pillar as an indispensable feature in the sanctuaries of Northern Israel in his time, so we may be sure that by the mass of the Hebrews the pillars of Shechem, Bethel, Gilgal, and other shrines were looked upon, not as mere memorials of historical events,

but as necessary parts of the ritual apparatus of a place of worship.

Professor Cheyne noted that the primitive Hebrews called their primitive stones Bethels, a name that survives in Dissenting chapels. El is the old Semitic term for a god, and Bethel means "houses of El." Despite all the reforming zeal of the later Monotheistic priests and prophets, the worship and sacrificial offerings devoted to stone divinities were continued in Israel, and, quite normally, in secluded sanctuaries, right down to the Babylonian conquest.

From a multitude of stone images originally dedicated to the religious service of ancestral spirits, Jahweh, the god of generation and war, at last emerged as victor. Jacob, Joshua, and other Biblical worthies are associated with holy stones. Every year Samuel judged the Jews at Bethel, and "It was to the stone circle at Gilgal that Samuel directed Saul to go, saying, 'I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings.'" Saul, the first king of Israel, was chosen at a sacred cairn; and after the rout of the Ammonite army, Saul repaired to the megalithic shrine at Gilgal to renew the kingdom. "There they made Saul king before Jahweh at Gilgal, and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before Jahweh." The only possible inference from this passage is that the Hebrew god was a resident among the stones of that sacred circle. And it was within the camp at Gilgal that the holy, perhaps the phallic, image which represented Jahweh was supposed to have tarried after the traditional exodus from Egypt until the chosen people had established themselves in Canaan. The conquest accomplished, the ark or tent containing the god of Israel was conveyed to Shiloh. Jahweh was stationed there in the time of Joshua, and there he remained until the close of the period of the Judges. That the divinity was an idol travelling in an ark is evident from the story that Jahweh was carried into the fighting line, and that the Philistines were sore dismayed by his presence, although they made the ark and its occupant prisoner during the battle. Various other passages necessitate the conclusion that Jahweh was a rude stone image, no better and no worse than the rugged idols of contemporary savage tribes.

Even in the days of Hezekiah the Hebrews adored their local gods. Jeremiah moaned that in proportion "to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah." And this as recent as the sixth century B.C. In truth, it was only when the Israelites were released from the captivity in Babylon that the mass of the people had reached the Monotheistic stage of religion.

The curious domestic gods, the teraphim, were apparently the images which represented the spirits of departed ancestors. The great scholar Kuenen states that these teraphim were the household deities who presided over the prosperity of the family. When Saul despatched his followers to slay David, that adventurer's wife, Michal, placed her teraph in the bed where her husband was thought to be, thus aiding his escape. Micah treasured his ancestral idols, and appointed one of his sons as their priest. Hosea mentions the household images as objects of wood, while Zechariah scorns them as idols that deceive their worshippers. The teraphim were akin to the gods of Laban stolen by his daughter Rachel, and were preserved as divine images in Israel's dwellings. In times of trouble they were consulted by the priests, and at certain seasons sacrifices were made to them. Allen quotes a passage from Lenormant, relating to the sepulchral monuments of Yemen, in Semitic Arabia, as follows:—

Here, then, we have twice repeated a whole series of human persons, decidedly deceased ancestors or rela-

tives of the authors of the dedications. Their names are accompanied with the titles they bore during life. They are invoked by their descendants in the same way as the gods. They are incontestably deified persons, objects of a family worship, and gods or genii in the belief of the people of their race.

(To be concluded.) T. F. PALMER.

Notes: Personal and Otherwise.

BOOKS.

A BOOKMAN cannot live contentedly without books. If he has assimilated the knowledge of good books he will live better as a consequence, but he feels his temporary divorce from the friendship of their pages. Thirst of intellect must be continually refreshed by draughts from the immortal fountain. The return to our books was one of the pleasures that a dissolving civilization had not affected. Perhaps it had made us more critical; but our love was in no way diminished.

"THE FREETHINKER" AS A LITERARY GUIDE.

It is safe to say that the taste of this paper will encumber no reader's bookshelf with rubbish. If it errs too much on the side of Materialism, it will save many from the dangers of metaphysics, so aptly described by Michelet as the art of bewildering oneself methodically. Stay a moment, we can hear several saying, what dogma is this? Yes, dissatisfied and inquiring spirits; must we not still trust to our big guns to demolish the defences so that the ground will be ready for the occupation of reason? Must we not still use the weapons of ridicule and satire to force the enemy to evacuate his position from the mind of mankind? *Your* metaphysics will bloom much better after this has been done. How near to reason were we in 1914? Let us hear the recession of nations from that year to this—with our ears stopped.

TOLERATION.

This, a virtue between equals. Our equality with professional Christians—what is it? We are not on the side of the angels. But there *are* angels of light. The Middle Age angels resemble those of the present day, since their plumes are black and they all work in the dark. Our equality with professional Christians—as citizens, yes; as students, scholars, humanists never. Christian values, active or passive, are dangerous. With our ears open let us listen to the verdict of history, or, as jurymen, have we only just viewed the

NIETZSCHE.

We lost our twopenny copy of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in the Great War, and did not find another to replace it in the advance. We did, however, find a German Bible on the battlefield. Did not the newspapers say that this philosopher was in the knapsack of the German soldier? But are the newspapers ever right? Yes, in their methods of the diffusion of ignorance for their own ends. There is nearly always a priest's finger in the printer's pie—was not the name of God in a *Daily Mail* leading article? Nietzsche's aphorism: "We despise all newspaper culture" was rather mild after all; but, look at the intensive newspaper culture of the last twenty years! Errand boys laugh at newspapers, and only the vicious believe them.

CRITICISM.

What is the aim of criticism? The commercial modern's reply, To sell my books. The professional Christian's reply, To advertise our wares. The open-minded reply, To give me the truth whether it is sweet or bitter. Cannot immortality look after itself without the need of a gilded pill called "faith"? But if the dispensing of pills can be dispensed with, the medicine-men will be like Othello—their occupation gone. Must the world always need gilded pills? The quantity of cheap Christian literature proves that there is a supply of pill advertisements bought and paid for by the sick—at least, the advertisements tell them that they are sick. You must have good lungs to breathe the mountain air of, say, Rabelais; but it is quite easy if you are not, according to Christian values, a "sick" person.

ECONOMICS.

A thorny question: Where are the leather gloves? Christian values again; if a man surrenders his soul to a priest and his body "lowly and humbly before his betters," he is a thing, and not a man. A production of the open-minded? We think not. Independence and true human dignity were never Christian virtues—if the ascent of man from four legs to two were true, how long would his return take, given intensive Christian culture? "The meek shall inherit the earth,"—was this some bitter jest? Fishermen—marines—well, we know the tales they tell—and are told. Have Christian busybodies ever told the poor how they can get the money to buy blankets and soup instead of being—rice-Christians? Labour was sacred—dedicated to God—up above, not down on earth. A most convenient gospel, suiting everybody except the labourer. John Ball:—

If we all come of the same father and mother, of Adam and Eve, how can they say or prove that they are better than we, if it be not that they make us gain for them by our toil, what they spend in their pride?.....They have leisure and fine houses; we have pain and labour, the rain and the wind in the fields.

We are all equal in the sight of the Lord; this equality makes one—revengeful. What is the matter with equity, or justice? But, my friend, these thoughts come from reading silly books. You are sick—take this pill. WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

"BASELESS ASSUMPTIONS."—IV.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As a Determinist, I am of opinion that Mr. Lloyd's claim for individual responsibility is untenable, and Mr. Cohen's arguments quoted are both illogical and unconvincing.

A child is born inheriting a legacy of latent ancestral qualities; it then becomes continuously exposed to the influences of external forces, and, through adolescence, maturity, to old age and death, it travels on these dual lines of Heredity and Environment; and that person is powerless to leave them. Go that way it must, and no other—the lines of Fate, one may call them.

That is a law, a solid fact, which no sane man can dispute.

Now, the assertion that because that character may be modified in its progress through life for good or evil, thus makes it responsible to society, when we know that such modification is beyond the control of the subject, seems to be illogical, and very like another "baseless assumption." This human engine may toil up or run down the grades, but it cannot leave the rails. Individual irresponsibility is the offspring of Determinism—by Heredity out of Environment, as the stock-books say; and any attempt to mystify that pedigree by any "mystification" is useless. There is no getting away from it. Society alone is responsible for the character of the individual after its appearance in the State. One has only to see how a nation has, in the course of forty years, become perverted to vicious criminal courses by the teachings of a ruling class and the madness of its megalomaniac-monarch. Our English society educates some boys at Eton College by a learned doctor. They all live in comfort and every luxury, stuffed bodily and mentally with good things. Fagin the Jew brings up other boys in a different way—they live to steal and steal to live; their ways are those of foxes in a den. And so through all the strata of our many classes this law, written and unwritten, of society, acts ceaselessly on the individual; and yet when he goes wrong—breaks the law—he is punished by a good "Free Will" magistrate or judge, because he could have been good had he chosen—has he not got a free will?

The Artful Dodger pinched a "wipe," and was "copped"; and society, that should have seen to him from his infancy and taught him thoroughly, having neglected its duty, proceeds to punish their own trained criminal. But they are not to be blamed in following the lines of their God they believe in and the doctrine of predestination given to them out of his Divine love, mercy, and justice.

But Mr. Cohen, the Determinist, also says this boy trained in a school of thieves, is responsible, because Fagin has been "modified," by the "cop" around the corner; he knows that if he is caught he will get a "stretch." I fail to see that to be a sufficient justification any more than beating a dog for stealing a bone from a butcher's shop; they are both powerless to have acted otherwise, therefore punishment is unjust.

It is evident that society could not progress in a satisfactory state if all ill-doers pleaded irresponsibility as Determinists. We should have to assume that they are responsible just as the plea of ignorance of the law is no excuse, or that there is a substance called ether, although we know nothing at all about it. The individual must be sacrificed to society for its good—its lessons of what is wrong to the young and ignorant are beneficial to the majority. The nation—the whole community comes first if there is any meaning at all in creation. The drones are killed to the number of 200 when his winter comes—the hive, the home, the whole is the first consideration. As the common curse of mankind folly and ignorance will be with us yet in great reverence, and not one in a thousand are Determinists—we need not worry.

W. G. KERLE, C.E.

JUSTICE FOR REVOLUTIONISTS.

SIR,—Allow me to express my admiration for your bold and trenchant defence to-day of the Russian revolutionists.

The following passage from Mark Twain's *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* gives that great Freethinker's view of the French Revolution:—

Why, it was like reading about France and the French, before the ever memorable and blessed Revolution, which swept a thousand years of such villainy away in one swift tidal-wave of blood—one: a settlement of that hoary debt in the proportion of half a drop of blood for each hoghead of it that had been pressed by slow tortures out of that people in the weary stretch of ten centuries of wrong and shame and misery, the like of which was not to be mated but in hell.

There were two "Reigns of Terror," if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot

passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other had lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon ten thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the "horrors" of the minor Terror, the momentary Terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe, compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty, and heartbreak? What is swift death by lightning compared with death by slow fire at the stake? A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by that brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver at and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by that older and real Terror—that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness, or pity as it deserves (pp. 132-3).

Nobody deploras more than I do any excesses of which the Russian revolutionists may have been guilty; but I have nothing but contempt for those who blindly believe the misleading reports of them so sedulously spread by our gutter press, in order to discredit their plans to gain economic and religious freedom.

G. O. WARREN, Major.

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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, Mr. T. F. Palmer, "Christianity at the Bar of History."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, J. H. Van Bienne, "The Positive Evils for which Religion is Responsible." Open Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. E. Burke, "The Higher Criticism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "John Ruskin, Revolutionist."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

BELFAST (I.L.P. Hall, 77A Victoria Street). 3.30, Mr. J. Effel, "Christianity, Socialism, Science, and Freethought."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. S. H. Swinny, "The Religion of Humanity."

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): Thirty-Eighth Anniversary of the Opening of the Secular Hall. Meetings at 3 and 6.30. Speakers: Mr. Sydney A. Gimson and Mr. W. H. Scott. Music by Edith C. Ensor (Piano), Gladys E. Lamb (Violin), The Choir, and Mrs. W. H. Scott. Public Tea at 4.30.

MAESTEG BRANCH N. S. S. (Gem Cinema): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 2.30, "Religion and Morals in the Light of Science"; 7, "The Lord's Supper: Christian and Pagan."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): Mr. St. Rhone will conclude his paper on "How to Improve the Relationship of the Sexes."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (60 Alexandra Road, Swansea): March 1, 6, Special Branch Meeting. March 2 (The Docker's Hall): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "Religion and the Breeding of a Better Race"; 7, "Freethought, Religion, and Death."

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