

# 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. 11

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Religion in Ireland.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	125
<i>"Vital Things."—J. T. Lloyd</i> . . . . .	126
<i>A Half-Forgotten Humorist.—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	127
<i>The Free-Will Puzzle.—Arthur B. Moys</i> . . . . .	128
<i>Religion and Life.—Dr. E. Lyttelton</i> . . . . .	131
<i>What is an "Entity" ?—Keridon</i> . . . . .	133
<i>A Traveller's Tale.—E. Anderson</i> . . . . .	134
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letter to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Religion in Ireland.

It would be idle to claim that the Irish Question is wholly a religious question. It would be equally futile to deny that religion enters very largely into that question, and is one of the chief obstacles to its satisfactory solution. Whatever difficulties there be, are greater because of its presence. It rends the nation into sharply divided and hostile camps, the division being indicated by the most intractable of forces. Protestants assert that it would be dangerous to trust Catholics to rule over them; Catholics are equally convinced they cannot look for justice from Protestants. With the exception of Spain, whose history presents some important features analogous to Irish history, there is no other country in Europe in which the clergy possess so much power as in Ireland; and nowhere else in these Islands do the clergy play so open and so great a part in social and political life. Writing so far back as 1861, in a little-known essay on *Clerical Influences*, Lecky said:—

For seven hundred years England has ruled over a nation which has exhibited more than average intellect at home, and far more than average success abroad—a nation which, though its faults are doubtless many and serious, is certainly neither unenviable, ungrateful, nor intractable—and she has left it one of the most discontented and degraded in Europe. She has ruled over a country which seemed designed by Providence to be one of the most flourishing in the world; indented with the noblest harbours—placed between two continents as if to reap the advantages of both—possessing a temperate and salubrious climate and a soil of more than common fertility—and she has left it one of the most wretched on earth.

Improvement has taken place since Lecky wrote. And yet England, with its genius for governing people in all parts of the earth, has to confess Ireland to be one of its failures. Why is this? Religion, we believe, goes a long way towards answering the question.

### The Curse of Creeds. \* \* \*

It is safe to assume that had Ireland been wholly Protestant, or had England been wholly Catholic, or even had Ireland been wholly of a religion neither Catholic nor Protestant, its history would have been very different from what it is. But it has been the double misfortune of Ireland to be governed by a country which,

regarded as alien by men like Swift, and Molyneux, and Sheridan, and Flood, and Grattan, to mention only a few, possessed also an alien form of religion. The consequence of this was that in Ireland the claim for national independence became fused with the opposition to a rival religion. A coalition of national and religious feelings were produced—two of the strongest and narrowest feelings than can animate groups. The settlement in Ireland of a colony of Protestants, endowed with power and favoured with privilege, served to cement the alliance more firmly. The principal consequence of this, and certainly a most fatal consequence so far as concerns Irish welfare, is that for the Catholic portion of Ireland there has never been what it regarded as a legitimate and proper outlet for its political interests and energies. All attempts to obtain this have involved a fight with another religion. On the other hand, the Protestants in Ireland have seen in every attempt on the part of the Catholics to satisfy Irish nationalism, the establishment in power of a rival and tyrannical religious creed. The political activities of the two sections in Ireland have thus been largely expressed in terms of religion and under cover of religious feeling. Sectarian rivalries and animosities in Ireland take the place of political rivalries elsewhere. Religious sectarianism is a power and a curse to Ireland such as it is nowhere else in Europe. It is one of the chief obstacles that prevent all classes in Ireland from coming to a working agreement, or arriving at an amicable understanding with England. The secularization of the political life of Ireland is essential to the better development of the Irish people. The priest must be swept out of politics—swept out and kept out. And by "priest" we mean all varieties—Catholic and Protestant:

\* \* \*

### The Church's Dilemma.

Everywhere the free development of political life involves a weakening of the power of the priesthood and of religious organizations. There is no reason for assuming a difference of development in Ireland. Nor does the Catholic Church really desire satisfaction for the political and national aspirations of the Irish people. The Church does not favour political development in Spain or in Italy; it did not favour it in France or in Austria. Has it any different policy in Ireland? The truth is, that in Ireland the Church is between the Devil and the deep sea. If it is to retain its grip on the people, it dare not oppose the Nationalist feeling. On the other hand, it realizes that, given a gratification of those feelings, the foundations of its power is undermined. The Catholic priest will then no longer stand as the representative of an "oppressed" people, as against the religion of the "oppressor." His claim to leadership must then rest upon the religious convictions of his followers—and these will weaken, as elsewhere, with the development of political education. Thus the Church in Ireland is between the horns of a dilemma. If it opposes the Nationalist feeling, it loses power at once. If it helps it to victory, it is digging its own grave—and Young Ireland



will do the digging. In these circumstances, it can only go on openly backing a policy which, if successful, means its own destruction. It is committing suicide to save itself from being slaughtered. And one may excuse the suspicion that beneath the surface it is less sympathetic towards Irish Nationalism than its public professors would lead one to believe is the case.

\* \* \*

#### A Wilderness of Verbiage.

Very much more might be said here, but we really commenced writing these notes because of a copy of the *Irish News* sent by one of our readers. It is the issue dated March 3, and it contains no less than twelve columns of Lenten Pastorals from the Irish Bishops. That so large a part of a daily paper should, in these times, be given up to a full report of such documents is in itself an illustration of the truth of much that has been said above. The whole tone of these Pastorals indicates the possession of an influence over the people hard to realize, while the treatment of the issues raised therein quietly assumes that Irish politics is, or ought to be, a department of Church activity; or, at any rate, a department concerning which the Church has the right and authority to issue orders. Socialists are solemnly warned that "Socialism, in any of the forms in which its advocates propound it, is inconsistent with Catholic Christianity," and workmen generally are warned (by Cardinal Logue) against bartering their "glorious inheritance" in heaven "for mere deceptive visions of earthly happiness." We commend both these utterances to those Labour advocates in England who are so fond of coquetting with the Catholic Church. The notion that this or that branch of the Christian Church can be "captured" is a besetting one with many Labour advocates. All the Christian Churches have been too busy in the business of buying and selling movements to be so easily taken in. The Christian Church will be captured by advanced movements when it is not worth the capturing.

\* \* \*

#### Education and the Church.

On education the Pastorals are quite unanimous. The Church is, it appears, threatened with a new danger. A Bill is in being which is to give the Belfast Corporation power to levy an education rate on the same basis as the poor rate—to build new schools, acquire existing ones, and generally to give education a much-needed move forward. But this has roused the ire of the bishops; for, says the Bishop of Down, it means schools where "the teacher might be of any religion, or indeed of no religion at all." This would be dangerous, he says, to faith and morals, and "loyal Catholics" cannot and will not have anything to do with them. It is the old game. The Church—Catholic or Protestant—must capture the child if it is to make sure of the adult. All the talk of the danger to morals is mere camouflage, it is the danger to faith that is real. The people of Belfast will have to choose between a danger to faith and a danger to education. Want of space prevents my dealing now with the education question in Ireland; but those who require illustrations of the pernicious consequences of Irish religion in relation to education should read Mr. F. H. O'Donnell's *The Ruin of Education in Ireland*. They will need no further proof. It will also help them to realize that next to Spain there is no country in Europe in which religion has been a greater curse than in Ireland. The peculiar conditions of Irish life, the long misgovernment of England, a misgovernment admitted by all leading historians, have contributed to give religion a strangle hold on the Irish people. To break that hold is one of the chief conditions of genuine progress in Ireland.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## "Vital Things."

THE Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, of Brighton, is deservedly a popular and influential Nonconformist divine, who holds exceedingly liberal views in theology and politics. At one time he was a prominent member of the New Theology school under the brief but sensational leadership of Mr. R. J. Campbell. With the latter gentleman's dramatic reversion to the old theological type the school as such ceased to exist. The New Theology Campaign was a pre-War eccentricity, and is already almost entirely forgotten. It by no means follows, however, that the views advocated by the New Theologians have been repudiated, except by Mr. Campbell himself. Mr. Rhondda Williams, for example, teaches to-day just exactly what he taught ten and twenty years ago. His interesting article in the *Christian World* for February 27 contains exceptionally advanced opinions on Biblical and theological questions, and to a certain extent we are in complete agreement with him. As to what the "Vital Things" verily are we differ essentially from him, but his strictures upon the conservative divines in the Anglican Church meet with our whole-hearted approval. When amendments to the Baptismal Service were being discussed at Convocation, the Dean of Lincoln suggested the deletion of the allusion to Noah and the Ark, on the ground that the story is a pure legend. Some clergymen, on hearing that heresy, were terribly shocked, and solemnly warned the Dean that if he were to repeat that to a congregation it would rob them of their confidence in the Bible. Mr. Williams says:—

When men talk like that, I always wonder whether they are living intellectually. Is it any wonder that educated persons cannot go to church when the man in the pulpit is so childish and so ignorant as to suppose that the value of the Bible must depend upon the literal truth of all the stories contained in it? The preacher who cannot find value in the Bible without a theory of that kind is surely not up to his work. It would be far more suitable for him to be living in the ark with Noah than to be preaching in the twentieth century.

That is perfectly true and well said, no doubt; but Mr. Williams forgets two things. In the Ordering of Deacons this question is put to the candidate: "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" and the ordinant answers: "I do believe them." Is it not possible, therefore, that a clergyman's first duty, so long as he remains in the Church, is to be loyal to the creed he has so solemnly signed? We once knew a curate who did not believe in prayer, and yet he constantly prayed because his profession required it of him. The Dean of Lincoln is intellectually a Modernist, whose rightful place is not in an orthodox pulpit, but on a secular platform. Mr. Williams seems to ignore this fact, and he also forgets that there are those to whom his own Creed is as groundless and absurd as that of the Dean's critics is to him. Mr. Williams candidly admits the fallible and erratic character of the Bible. He unhesitatingly pronounces many of its stories entirely unhistorical, and regards much of its morality as shockingly low and imperfect. Well do we remember a book of his in which Jehovah was described as merely a tribal Deity, and condemned as a moral monster, especially as portrayed in such books as that of Joshua.

As critic, pure and simple, Mr. Williams is admirable, but as theologian he is as superstitious and credulous as the narrowest-minded literalist, as, in fact, every theologian is bound to be. It may be too much to say that the world is, as yet, intellectually and morally alive; but to those in it who are so, Mr. Williams' Gospel is as



unbelievable as that of the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan. It is not true that the great Christian beliefs are independent of miracle and legendary tales. How does Mr. Williams know that there is a God whose love was manifested in Jesus of Nazareth? Some of the greatest Christian scholars, such as Professor Bacon, of America, openly teach that the Four Gospels contain much legendary matter, and that to distinguish between fact and legend in them is an extremely difficult task. With this fact probably in mind, Mr. Williams observes that "so far as believing anything about Jesus has to do with Christianity, surely this is the important thing—to believe that the love of God was working in his heart, and revealed in his life, and proclaimed in his Gospel as the hope of the world"; but to believe all that is to rely on the biggest miracle conceivable. It is easy to belittle the various metaphysical theories of the person of Jesus; but it is impossible to believe in him as the revealer of God's love without holding some theory or other concerning him. Can anyone truly believe that grace and truth came by him without regarding him as the Divine Logos, who from eternity was with God, and was God, and who in the fulness of time was made flesh and dwelt among men, ending his life by dying for the world's redemption? Is it not true that the people who profess to have found their way to God through him worship him as God manifested in the flesh? As a matter of simple fact, the Christian religion, even as preached by such advanced men as Mr. Rhondda Williams, does "rest upon the insecure basis of miracle and myth-stories." The greatest of all myths is the love of God made known in Jesus Christ.

It is fashionable just now to disparage the great creeds of Christendom. Mr. Williams has discovered that "it is no use to-day using the old forms of thought concerning Jesus which were hammered out in the early councils of the Church"; and yet he himself continues to employ forms of thought that are quite as objectionable to exact, scientific thinkers. It ill becomes the reverend gentleman to gird at orthodox believers in the supernatural so long as he believes in it himself in a less orthodox manner. He and they belong to the same category of supernatural believers, and the difference between them is but nominal. To give Jesus a place all his own, to make him the central figure in religion and the Redeemer of the world, is to give the greatest possible prominence to the miraculous. To regard him as the way, the truth, and the life is to raise him into a superhuman category and attribute to him a superhuman mission, with the inevitable result that a believer in Jesus is of necessity a believer in the miraculous, whether he has a right theory of it or not.

Mr. Williams maintains that God redeems the world through Jesus Christ; but as God is a supernatural Being, it follows that the redemption is achieved by means of a miracle, for in no other way, surely, can the supernatural get into touch with the natural. Yet this is what the reverend gentleman says:—

Do not appeal for proofs that God means the redemption of the world to miracle-stories which are themselves unproved and unsupported by adequate evidence; nothing can prove God's redeeming power but actual redemption, and where there is actual redemption you need no other proof.

If God is a supernatural Being, his redeeming the world would be a supernatural act, and a supernatural act can be nothing short of a miracle. Divine Providence, again, signifies miraculous intervention in human affairs; but of this Mr. Williams naively says: "Ordinary life, deeply enough seen, will yield the ground of real trust." We ask, trust in what? The only rational inference from Mr. Williams' language is that

God himself is a myth, and his redemption a farce. Jesus is supposed to have lived nineteen centuries ago; but the Redeemer's work is still unaccomplished. We are told that "for us the one outstanding proof of God must always be the work of the Divine Spirit himself in the heart of humanity," and our retort is that the said proof is conspicuous only by its absence. History teaches that humanity must save itself or be lost; that no Divine Redeemer has ever yet materialized; that the love of God is at best but a beautiful dream; and that the hope of the world, as interpreted by the Pulpit, is a gigantic lie.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Half-Forgotten Humorist.

A fellow that writes books for children ought to write the truth.

"The little preciouss wudden't read thim," said Mr. Dooley. "Annyhow, th' truth is a tough boss in literature. He don't pay even board wages, and if ye go to work for him, ye want to have a job on the side."—*Finlay Dunne.*

A SHORT time since Mr. Harry Furniss, the artist, recalling his recollections of half a century of Bohemian life, referred to Phil Robinson, the war correspondent, as "the most finished and accomplished" liar that he had ever met. Phil Robinson certainly was an imaginative man, but he was also a rare humorist. Why his books were not as popular as those by Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, or Jerome K. Jerome, is a mystery. That he was as funny as any of those popular humorists was evident. If his humour was not appreciated by the reading-public to the extent of those others, it may be because he chose to expend it mainly upon birds, beasts, and fishes. The proper study of mankind is man, and possibly the only burlesque that causes the mouth of the general public to broaden to a grin, must also concern a human animal. Yet people love Richard Jefferies, appreciate Kipling's *Jungle Books*, are sentimental over vivisection, are generous to starving cats and lost dogs, and sensitive concerning old Army horses.

A refined Anglo-Indian, who had travelled much and knew the book of the world as well as the world of books, Phil Robinson had so many qualifications for popularity. When a delightful pocket series of his works was initiated, the preface promised entertainment, for the author said:—

My publishers assured me that each successive work they brought out for me plunged them deeper and deeper into poverty,

and concluded by suggesting that twelve volumes should appear, one for each month of the year, and, if successful, that the series should be continued for ever. Yet three of these mirth-provoking booklets were all that were issued, although they were as full of fun as an egg is full of meat. For uproarious farce, that is impossible to read calmly, the stories of *The Tiger in the Ticket Office*, *Ought Boys to Sit on Whales' Blow Holes?* and *My Wife's Birds*, to mention but a few, are hilarious to a degree.

For staid humour, in the caustic American manner, the volume, entitled *Noah's Ark*, an essay on unnatural history, was devoted to a disrespectful perversion of sentiment, popularly ascribed to certain wild animals. The lion, tiger, elephant, and other animals fare as badly as the Christian superstition at the hands of Sir James Frazer. With all the jesting, there is also a naturalist's regard for the animals themselves.

In *My Indian Garden* there are studies of black men, cattle, and plants. As White's *Natural History of Selborne* is to England so ought this to be to India. It is a feast of good things.



The gems of humour scattered in Phil Robinson's writings scintillate after all these years. "The impossible giraffe" with its potential "seven feet of sore throat" has been often quoted. In a quaintly worded letter to the secretary of the Zoological Gardens, he suggests that the old elephant should be restuffed and re-upholstered, and that the smaller elephant might be neatly covered in cretonne, and ebonized and gilded. The record of Phil Robinson's interminable ride in the fast train to Chicago is excellent. The query, "Does the fast train to Chicago ever stop?" with the reply, "Oh, yes; it stops—at Chicago!" is the keynote. His dismay at the endless miles of split rails, and his quaint remark that, whereas he had been surprised before by the biographies of distinguished Americans who had "split rails" for a living, he now wondered whether every Yankee had not done it at one time; or, indeed, gone on doing it all his life. Another amusing passage concerns the first sight of Chicago. "Not a pig in sight; I had thought Chicago was all pigs."

On the text supplied by an alarmist that flies carry contagion, he points out the difficulty of staying cholera by catching the flies: "That it would be as useless to attempt to stop the cholera by killing bluebottles as trying to coax an earthquake with a penny bun."

In his book, *Saints and Sinners*, a revelation concerning the Mormons, there is one passage that is well worth quoting. When speaking of bugbears, he says:—

Is a bugbear most bug or bear? I never met one yet fairly face to face, for the bugbear is an evasive insect. Nor, if I met one, can I say whether I should prefer to find it mainly bug or mainly bear. The latter is of various sorts. Thus one—the little black bear of the Indian hills—is about as formidable as a portmanteau of the same size. Another—the grizzly of the Rockies—is a very unamiable person. His temper is as short as his tail, and he has very little more sense of right or wrong than a Land Leaguer. But he is not quite so mean as the bug. He does not go and cuddle himself up flat in a crease of the pillow-case, and then slip out edgeways, and bite you in the nape of the neck. It is not on record that a bear ever got inside a nightcap, and waited till the gas was turned out, to come forth and feed like grief on the damask cheek of beauty. I cannot make out whether bugs or bears are the worst thing to have about a house. You see, you could shoot at a bear out of the window; but it would be absurd to fire off a rifle at bugs between the blankets. Altogether, there is a good deal to be said on the side of the bear.

To pick out passages at random is not doing justice to a charming jester. Not only does a jest's prosperity lie in the ear of him who hears it, but it has its life in an atmosphere of its own—a soil of its own; and there are few plants so tender in transplanting. While the creator of *Mr. Dooley* is welcomed, and *Three Men in a Boat* is a classic, I cannot help regretting the inadequate appreciation Phil Robinson won. Older readers must needs remember his writings, but that the present generation of readers should not have an opportunity of laughing over his humorous pages is unsatisfactory.

MIMNERMUS.

#### MATTER.

Whether the notion which we now call matter will continue to have a scientific significance beyond the crude purposes of common life, we do not know. But we certainly shall wonder how colours and tones which were such innermost parts of us could certainly get lost in our physical world of atoms; how we could be suddenly surprised that something which outside us simply clicked and beat, in our heads should make light and music; and how we could ask whether matter can feel; that is to say, whether a mental symbol for a group of sensations can feel?—*Ernst Mach*, "Popular Lectures."

## The Free-Will Puzzle.

"THE Free-Will Puzzle" has been a favourite with me for many years. Ever since I read D'Holbach's famous *System de la Nature*, when I was quite a youth, I have prided myself on understanding the real problem of the so-called "Freedom of the Will." Early in the discussion of the question I grasped the fact that in the realm of mind, as in the realm of all physical phenomena, each and every effect has a cause, without which it could not happen, and with which it is bound to happen. Every effort of the will is caused; and there is no more freedom in volition, in the sense of freedom from the law of causation, than there is in any other physical phenomenon, or phenomena.

At one time the dogma of the alleged Freedom of the Will was the chief one relied upon by theologians in their disputations with Freethinkers on man's moral responsibility to God and his fellow-man for his actions in every-day life. For some time we have not heard so much about it, although it is quite obvious from their writings that Christians have not abandoned it altogether in favour of some other doctrine, as Mr. J. T. Lloyd showed in his masterly reply to Professor Hough's articles on "Fundamental Issues."

No doubt the doctrine of Determinism has made much headway during the last quarter of a century. Robert Blatchford tried to popularize it in some very thoughtful articles he wrote a few years ago in the *Clarion*, and Mr. Chapman Cohen's work on the subject has done much to enlighten the minds of the rising generation of Freethinkers on this important doctrine.

The other evening my dear old friend and relative, Uncle Joe, called on me. He came to tell me that he had been held up on the Embankment for over an hour, when he was in a hurry to get home, on account of a breakdown on the tram-line; and when he tried to get some part of the way home by Tube, he found the Tube stations closed, and all the employees out on strike.

"Why didn't you walk, uncle?" I said, with a satirical grin.

"What! walk all the way from the Thames Embankment to Dulwich? It isn't likely."

"Why not?"

"What! walk five or six miles home after a hard day's work? Certainly not."

And then I thought of "The Free-Will Puzzle," and I thought I would try it on Uncle Joe. I always like concrete examples, so I continued.

"I can tell you why you would not walk the journey," I said, with an air of confidence. "You believe you have a 'free will,' don't you?"

"Certainly."

"But there wasn't sufficient inducement for you to undertake the journey; so you thought you would wait till the tram-line was cleared, or that you could get to your destination by 'bus.'"

"But I could have walked if I had chosen."

"Why didn't you, then?"

"Because I didn't want to."

"You mean because the journey was too long. Now, if the journey had been short, you would have willed at once to have walked, without waiting for the car or troubling about the car or the 'bus'; in other words, the inducement to walk would have been strong enough to cause you to will in favour of it. But there is no freedom of will there. The will to act has been caused by the strength of the motive to reach your destination."

"I don't see it," said Uncle Joe, with a puzzled look.

"Don't you? Well, let me try another illustration. Suppose we went upstairs. I said to you: 'Now, you



say you have a free will. Prove it by jumping out of the window."

"But I don't want to do anything so foolish," said Uncle Joe; "why should I?"

"I will tell you why you do not jump out of the window to try and demonstrate that you have a free will."

"Why not?"

"Because at present there is no inducement for you to do so. But suppose I said, 'I will give you a hundred pounds if you will jump out of the window,' you would at once begin to consider whether you could accomplish the feat without injury to your limbs, and if you thought you could you might venture on the task."

"But I tell you, again, that I would not attempt such a foolish performance," retorted Uncle Joe, with some emphasis.

"I know. But even if you did, it would not prove that you had a free-will, it would only prove that the inducement to attempt to accomplish the task and win the hundred pounds was greater than that of remaining where you were."

"Exactly, and it would only prove that I was a precious fool for my pains. But I have a free-will all the same. Do you mean to say that I am not free to choose between two or more objects, which I shall have?"

"You can choose of course, but you are never master of your choice; there will always be something you will see in one object that will attract you more than another. Your choice is never free."

"Oh, I deny that," said Uncle Joe. "I feel that I can choose as I like, and I do. Did I not choose your Aunt Jane for my wife when there were dozens of others I might have chosen?"

"Not a dozen at a time, I hope, Uncle? But Aunt Jane was the most attractive to your mind or you would not have chosen her."

"Of course not; and that shows my power of choice."

"I have admitted that you have the power of choice, but the something that attracts you and makes your power of choice independent of you, and you can't help it. You cannot help liking some things and disliking others; you know that as well as I do. I know you are an admirer of Mark Twain as a humorist. Did you know that he was also a philosopher and 'a Determinist?'"

"I always knew that he was a bit of a philosopher. Even his most humorous essays prove that; but I was not aware that he was a Determinist."

"He was; I've got a book here on my bookshelf by Mark Twain, entitled *What is Man?* which proves that he was a thorough Freethinker and a Determinist."

"Indeed, I should like to see it."

"Wait a minute. Here it is. Well, is that all?"

"No; I should like to give you another illustration on the fallacy of the 'free-will doctrine.' Suppose a gentleman is standing outside a shop in a busy neighbourhood: he is standing there carelessly taking note of various articles in the shop window, his watch chain is dangling from his pocket. A thief comes up and stands by his side. He sees the dangling chain, and at once feels inclined to seize it. But, just as he is about to grab it, he looks round and sees a policeman just behind him. The fear of being caught in the act changes the motive. He refrains from taking the watch, and passes on, probably, cursing his fate that he lost such a chance. But he was a thief at heart. It was only opportunity he needed."

"Exactly. But a man is free to be a thief or not a thief. If he could not help being a thief under such and

such conditions, by what right does society punish him for being what, under the circumstances, he cannot help being?"

"Ah, that is a great problem, but it is more easily explained on the principle of Determinism than on that of Free-Will."

"But you read Mark Twain first, and if he does not satisfy you, why I'll see what my humble efforts can do to help to clear up the difficulty. In the meanwhile, when the trams break down again you look to it and see that you get the right members returned to the County Council, and then, probably, you'll get a better service—that's what you want.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Acid Drops.

The Manchester *Daily Dispatch* has discovered that, excluding the Quakers, all the other conscientious objectors were neurotics and cowards, largely "Atheist, Agnostic, and Anarchist." We do not know on what facts the "largely" is based. So far as we could judge, the proportion of Freethinkers and believers seem to have been about equal, and while we do not agree with the legislation which legalized the conscientious objector, once the law was passed, it was sheer dishonesty to punish men for claiming a legal right. Having passed a Conscription Act no one could have blamed the Government for imprisoning men who refused military service. But deliberately to legislate certain people out of the law, and then imprison them for claiming a legal right, is as dishonourable a transaction as any Government ever committed.

To sneer at all these men as cowards is supremely contemptible. A man who will endure one or two years' imprisonment, and face it a second or third time, may be mistaken, a fanatic, or aught else—except a coward. Whatever else he is he cannot be that. We wonder whether the *Daily Dispatch* writer would have faced the same kind of torture in defence of his opinions—presuming he possesses them? Some of these men have come out of prison broken in health, some have died in prison, some have been released to die. What better proof than this can men give of their sincerity? It is not a question of agreeing with opinions, it is a question of respecting sincerity when one meets it. Freethinkers have small respect for the beliefs of Christians but they can all respect the courage and sincerity of a Christian who suffers or dies in defence of even a ridiculous creed. No one need trouble about these comments of an anonymous newspaper scribbler; the unfortunate thing is that it so often expresses a very general state of mind, otherwise it would not expressed.

The clergy are still doing their utmost to revive religion, but their heroic efforts are not always successful. Doncaster Council has rejected the petition of local parsons to suspend or abolish the races.

Mr. Harry Furniss tells a very funny story in a daily paper. Recalling the "Malaprop" qualities of speech of a theatrical lady, he says that on one occasion she referred to Gustave Dore's masterpiece as a picture of "Christ leaving the *Criterion*" instead of the "Prætorium."

Lord Strathspey, in the House of Lords, called attention to the "starvation salaries" of the clergy of the National Church. The bishops must have smiled behind their lawn sleeves at his lordship's simplicity.

The founder of the Christian religion was poor, but the clergy generally manage to escape the blessings of poverty. The late Rev. H. W. Trower, rector of Finmere, Oxford, left estate of the value of £35,208.

It is said that the Revenue Authorities are seeking new forms of taxation. Why not tax churches, chapels, and ecclesiastical property, which is exempt?



The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury declares that "the world is a joyous place, and Christianity makes it more joyous." Someone should introduce Mr. Rattenbury to "the gloomy dean." They ought to be acquainted.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has become President of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, formerly the Navy Mission Society. As a poor man, with a starvation income of £300 weekly, his Grace is in a position to sympathize with the workers.

Dr. Wace, the Dean of Canterbury, in sending a donation to the Dover Patrol Fund, wrote: "The preservation of Canterbury Cathedral during the war is a matter for profound thankfulness." The dean is under no illusion as to who protected the cathedral.

The flood of "horrors" reported lately from Russia appear to have a clerical flavour. For instance, one lurid account states that the Savinsky Monastery, outside Moscow, is occupied by an Anarchist gang, who have conscripted the monks for labour. In other stories the Bolsheviks are denounced as "Anti-Christis." No laymen would worry about priests working six days a week instead of one.

Rev. Samuel Chadwick is a man of faith. Evidently he believes there are plenty of the same kind about, as he recently informed a Birmingham audience that when the War Cabinet received Haig's message that the British Army had its back to the wall, a member of the Cabinet said, "It is heaven help us now." The Prime Minister replied, "That's just where we are; let us ask heaven"; and "for the first time a Cabinet meeting was turned into a prayer-meeting." It is not for us to doubt the word of the President of the Wesleyan Conference. We can only deplore our want of faith. The power to believe anything is a rare gift. Perhaps, if we tried hard, we might acquire it.

St. Senan's bell, which has just been purchased and given to the Royal Irish Academy, is said to have the gift of detecting a liar. We suppose it would have been too disastrous an experiment to have hung it in Fleet Street. As the bell rings every time a liar approaches it the constant noise would have made it a public nuisance.

The Rev. J. N. Elias, a Congregationalist minister, died during a service at Narberth, South Wales. Had he been a Freethinker, who died whilst delivering a lecture, the finger of Providence would have been traced in the event.

Writing in the *Sunday Pictorial*, Mr. Edward Cecil says: "The National Church is inviting criticism." Dear Mother Church never did anything else.

The *Petit Parisien*, discussing the question of a Jewish State in Palestine, suggests that the "Holy Places" would be assigned to the Pope. Papa will be pleased at the idea. The "gate" should make any theatrical manager's mouth water.

Revivalists used to assert that only Atheists committed suicide. The body of the Rev. Edward Lane, of Harlesden, was found in the river Thames near Waterloo Bridge.

Nine bishops and 3,128 clergy signed a memorial against proposed changes in the Church of England Prayer Book Communion service. They could hardly have made more fuss had water been substituted for the familiar "communion port."

The Relief Commissions abroad calculate that at least 125,000,000 of destitute peoples of Europe need food and clothing. Providence might stop counting the hairs of the head, and see to this matter.

We see that a Sunday Games Association is being formed. The moving spirits are ex-soldiers, and the temporary secretary is Major S. R. Noble. Some time back the Bishop of

London told the public that the soldiers would be shocked if they came and found how the Sabbath was being "deseccrated." Now they are home, they are bearing the shock with great fortitude. After all, if men can make guns and shells—and use them—on Sunday, we think the Lord might put up with a game of cricket or football.

The *Christian World* for March 6 contains an article on forerunners of the League of Nations idea. But somehow it manages to omit all mention of Thomas Paine. We suppose it would never have done to let it be known that the greatest advocate of humanitarian politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a Freethinker.

The London County Council is offering cookery scholarships. It is a good thing for the judges that the prophet Ezekiel is not among the candidates.

"I have never been one of those who have tried to make the Gospel of Christ attractive by cheapening it or watering it down," says the Rev. J. Rattenbury, of the West London Mission. That looks as if the flames of Hades still illuminate the West of the Metropolis.

"I know all the sciences," exclaimed a farmer's son, applying to a County Tyrone Education Committee for a teacher's job. He did not get it. The Committee thought he knew too much.

A lengthy paragraph in a daily paper is headed, "The Clergy's Fight to Live," and narrates the story of two country vicars who envy the lot of a War-time labourer. If any reader wishes to know how the clergy starve, let him turn to the records of the Archbishops and Bishops, thirty-nine of whom share annually the modest sum of £180,700.

Christians pretend that they are the salt of the earth; but you can't dine off salt. At a Young Men's Christian Association establishment at Victoria a notice is displayed: "We know that books are being stolen."

Since his conversion, Mr. Horatio Bottomley takes himself very seriously. Recently he suggested that the Ten Commandments were not abreast of the present stormy times, and hinted at improvements. His first suggestion was the addition of a new one: "Thou Shalt Not Strike!" To adopt sporting phraseology, it looks like a "non-starter."

Harry H. Price, an Apostolic Zionist preacher, was defendant in a case of seduction at Bridgend the other day. It was stated in court that Price was an advocate of "Free Love," and in the end was ordered to pay costs and 7s. 6d. per week. We are afraid Price cannot credit his lapse to the spread of Freethought in Wales.

A poster is being displayed advertising a National Day of Prayer on behalf of Christians in Russia. But why only for Christians? If Russia is in a bad way, and if prayer will do any good, why not pray for the *people* of Russia? Perhaps they think God Almighty is interested only in the Christians there. But we suspect the real reason is, that all Christians care about are other Christians. Christianity has always been sectarian in its affections and catholic in its hatreds.

The Rector of Whaffield, near Ipswich, committed suicide, and in a written statement said he was horrified in having all his life received so much money. The deceased man's brother said that he suffered from religious mania, and the Coroner agreed. We quite agree that for a Christian clergyman to feel oppressed by having too much money is so abnormal as to border on insanity. But we do not anticipate any general outbreak of this description.

A few weeks ago we suggested a fitting place for the headquarters of the League of Nations would be Constantinople. We see that Major Davies, M.P., advocates the same policy in the *Daily News* for March 11.



**C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.**

March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester; March 26 and 27, Belfast; March 30, Leeds; April 27, South Place, London.

**To Correspondents.**

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 16, Pontycymmer.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Vivian Phelps, £1 1s.; A. S. Thomas, £5; D. H. Kerr, £5; Julius Petersen, £5.

THELA.—Utilitarianism does *not* teach that anything useful is good; it must be good in relation to an agreed end. In this case it is good in relation to an increase of life—to use Spencer's phrase—both in length and breadth. And there is a sound physiological basis for the identification of actions which preserve happiness and actions which preserve life.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Thanks for paper. It will be very useful for future reference.

R. H. KEYS.—Will take the first opportunity that presents itself of dealing with the subject you name.

B. THOMPSON.—Free copies of the paper are being sent to addresses given. Thanks.

H. LECOMTE.—We deeply regret to hear of the death of M. Lecomte. Please accept our sympathy. Paper will be sent as directed.

G. H. DANN (Port Elizabeth).—Thanks for address of and subscription for a new reader. We are much indebted to our friends all over the world.

R. EDWARDS.—We are not quite certain what meaning you attach to "Reality." But you are certainly wrong with regard to William James. He distinctly held that "consciousness" was not a "Real," but a function. See his *Essays in Radical Empiricism*.

W. WILMER.—Pleased to learn that you acted so promptly and so effectively. We shall be pleased to supply the library with a copy weekly, and will also send copies to the addresses given. Will you send us the exact postal address of the library?

W. DODD.—We are puzzled as to how your address was obtained. Both in the *Freethinker* and in the N. S. S. office names and addresses are treated as strictly confidential.

*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.*

*The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d. three months, 2s. 8d.*

**Sugar Plums.**

To-day (March 16) Mr. Cohen lectures at the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Next Sunday (the 23rd) he lectures twice in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, Manchester; on the Wednesday and Thursday following he will address two meetings in the Ulster Hall, Belfast.

Birmingham friends should make a special note of the fact that Mr. F. G. Willis lectures this evening (March 16) in the Repertory Theatre, at 7, on "Religion and Labour." There ought to be a crowded theatre and a good discussion.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd had large and enthusiastic meetings at Ferndale on Sunday last. Unfortunately the lecturer was suffering from a heavy cold, but managed to pull through despite discomfort. To-day (March 16) Mr. Lloyd lectures twice at Pontycymmer, where we hope his Ferndale experience will be repeated—minus the cold. We are unable to give the time of the meetings as no details have

reached us, but, we presume, at 2.30 and 7 in the Picture Palace.

We have received a copy of a circular appealing for money, signed "Geo. H. Swasey." Appended is a note that among the societies endorsing the appeal and helping to circulate it is the National Secular Society. We are not called upon to express an opinion on the appeal itself, but we desire to say that the N. S. S. has nothing to do with the appeal, and has neither endorsed nor circulated it. When an appeal for money is endorsed by the N. S. S., our friends may rely upon seeing it in these columns. Without that it may be taken that the Society's name is being used without authority.

Newspaper casualties were very heavy in England during the War, and they appear to have been almost as heavy in the United States. We see from the *Star* that no less than 1,178 papers ceased to appear during the War period. Naturally, the papers that went to the wall were those with small capital behind them. But we are quite certain that none had a smaller financial capital than ourselves. We say "financial capital," because it was the capital we possessed in the shape of the good will of our readers that enabled us to pull through.

Now that the order concerning posters has been withdrawn, we have had a supply printed advertising the *Freethinker*, and shall be pleased to hear from any one who can display them, or who can induce newsagents to display them. Any suggestions from readers as to how they can be utilized to advertise the paper will also be acceptable.

Dr. Lyttelton writes us that he purposes sending one more article after the one which appears in the present issue, and that will close the correspondence. This will bring to an end a discussion of which we can say that it has been throughout conducted with courtesy and good temper. A great many interesting points have been raised, and while the principals remain where they were, we have no doubt that, for many readers, fresh light has been cast upon old questions.

The Swansea Branch of the N. S. S. closes its winter season with a whist drive and dance on Friday, March 28. The functions commence at 6.30 in the Dockers' Hall, Swansea, and tickets are 2s. 6d. each. The Branch has worked well during the year, and we hope the entertainment turns to be all that its promoters desire.

**Religion and Life.**

BY DR. E. LYTTELTON.

SIR,—With your permission I will send one more letter after this one, which will consist of an affirmative statement of the Christian position in brief outline, since it is plainly misunderstood far and wide; and no wonder, considering how badly it has been taught. To-day I send a few comments on your reply to my question about Trotsky.

The question concerned the behaviour of this worthy in three particulars: brutally torturing his victims, looking on while thousands are perishing from starvation, himself wallowing in luxury meantime; and ordering Atheism to be taught compulsorily. I asked, if granting these allegations to be correct, it was not fair to infer that Trotsky deemed Atheism to be the creed that gave countenance to these malpractices; and if so, where exactly do you, and others who have a high moral standard, part company with Trotsky? Assuming that you condemn his actions, what do you make of his connecting them with Atheism?

In your rejoinder you palliate the enormities of the Bolsheviks by pointing to the French Revolution. I happen to have just read Belloc's *Marie Antoinette*, and Tocqueville's *Ancien Regime*; and at this moment am



reading Morley's *Oliver Cromwell*. Admitting all you say about the horrible tyranny of the Russian monarchy, and the hideous violence of the French regicides, Trotsky's conduct seems to me still a little strong. To hang men upside down and flay them alive is a proceeding which requires something rather out of the common by way of defence: let alone his monstrous and wholly gratuitous selfishness. My point is that, whatever you or I may think of the morals of Atheism and Christianity, Trotsky must be allowed to be a good judge of the kind of doctrinal support required to commend his singular conduct to his countrymen. He evidently thinks that Atheism is better for this purpose than Theism. You ask what I think; but that is not the question just now. I have no intention of obeying Trotsky's teaching, whatever it is. Ethically, I look on him as a most untrustworthy guide; and so, I have no doubt, do you. But surely his advocacy of Atheism is an unfortunate fact for those who wish to propagate the creed; and I invited you to show precisely where he was wrong in connecting the two things: the creed of an Atheist and the conduct of a ruffian.

Your article very soon goes off into the somewhat well-worn theme of the crimes of Christians. If I were to describe this subject as a red herring drawn across the trail, I should add that it is a fish by this time very familiar to me. Nor can I wonder. You handle a large body of facts in an attractive fashion, and a large proportion of your readers could hardly fail to feel that the case against Christianity is very grave; that is, all the numerous thoughtful people who love to have their thinking done for them.

With the object of warning them off a side track, I must point out (1) that it is hardly accurate to imply that Carpocrations, Manichæans, or the Hebrews led by Joshua, were representative Christians. Have you heard of Le Fanu's old Irish woman who, when told that Solomon had a vast harem, exclaimed with unction: "Dear me! to think what privileges them early Christians had to be sure!" She was a little out in her history. The Christian Church has quite enough faults of her own to bear without being saddled by those of sham members whom she has long disowned.

2. Your eagerness to attribute criminality to Christians is intelligible enough, because it is a line of argument which always prevails with unthinking folk. But to anyone who, like yourself, is really desirous of thinking independently and, if possible, consistently, I wish to put the question in all seriousness. "Is it relevant to the matter in hand?" There are two sets of facts to be considered (a) the principles of Christianity, (b) the conduct of Christians. You have been assuming all along what the unthinking multitude always will assume, viz., that if the principles are sound the conduct of those who profess them will be praiseworthy or, anyhow, innocent. But what grounds are there for this assumption? Only another assumption, viz., that Christianity has no sham adherents, and that is contrary to all evidence and to common sense. As I have said before, you don't cease to believe in patriotism because there are sham patriots, nor in Socialism because there are sham Socialists. No more can I forgo Christianity because the world is full of sham Christians. It always has been, since the day when one, Ananias, showed himself more of a business man than a follower of Christ.

Let me appeal to the citizenship of all Atheists and of all honest would-be Atheists. You have within you, I doubt not, a longing desire for the real good of your country, and you know that nothing militates against that good more than discord between different groups of citizens. Very well; the next question concerns your policy. You are filled with scorn and amazement at the

follies, the shams and muddled-mindedness of religious people, and no wonder. What, as reformers of society, are you to do? There is a choice. You can either denounce the religious principles or the professors of them. I don't think I am wrong in saying you have, for the most part, chosen the latter. If from early years we had been in your shoes I have little doubt we should have done the same. As it is, we are not only appalled as you are at the evidence of all this rottenness in our fellow-creatures' lives, but we have to bear an additional burden when we find that the same rottenness is in full measure in our own lives too. This discovery would have moderated our denunciations, but critics who are conscious of no rottenness whatever in their own minds, no inconsistencies, no shams, cannot be expected to curb their tongues or to refrain from dipping their pens in gall. Moreover, there is the audience to consider; and they being mostly English, so heartily enjoy reading denunciations of people that many of them read little else: the truth being that discussion or even denunciation of principles—which is your alternative—bores them: a fact which a writer who feels he has a message and wants to be read must take into account.

Thus, there is nothing in the least surprising in the course you have adopted. It is vastly more amusing to abuse people's conduct than to discuss their principles, and at the present time we, all of us, are mainly in quest of amusement, and if while seeking it we can secure the approval of our readers. The inclination to spend time and even trouble in polishing up our indictment and barbing our javelin-points would be irresistible. Indeed, we have not resisted it; many of us having shouted our *tu quoque's* from our side of the gulf quite persistently, after having talked sweetly about unity and concord, but have failed to notice that as our voices gained in resonance the gulf has widened.

That is where the mistake, if I may so call it, lies. When you insist on the folly, nay, even the criminality, of Christians, you are missing an opportunity, as we clergy have often done, by telling people what they know already. That is what is wrong with our sermons; partly because of our countrymen's strange taste for such talk. It saves them all pain of a new idea, and makes them for a time think themselves rather clever; and many of them will pat the parson on the back for his "beautiful discourse," because it has at least confirmed their self-complacency. But, believe me, in the long run it fails to nourish or to cheer or to guide. Nay, it begins to cloy, like Rahat Lakhum, or even a cracknel. All the time we professing Christians would be grateful to you or any other searching and dispassionate critic if, instead of belabouring us for our faults—most of which we know quite well, but cannot at once give over—you would show us that *the principles enforced by Jesus were anti-social*. If your crusade is to have any permanent effect, it will come from success in this endeavour. Anyhow, you will be trying to tell us something which we certainly do not yet know.

---

O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.  
 They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heavenward,  
 whose faith is as flame;  
 O thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their  
 God, by their name.  
 By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the  
 point of thy sword,  
 Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy death is  
 upon thee, O Lord.  
 And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through  
 the wind of her wings—  
 Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of  
 things.—Swinburne, "Hymn of Man."



## What is an "Entity" ?

### I.—ITS PRE-SCIENTIFIC MEANINGS.

As some of the readers of this journal will probably remember that the above question was suggested by an apprehension expressed by a correspondent ("H. V. T.") that possibly my reference to "Energy" in my criticism of Dr. McDougall's "soul" theory might be construed as an expression of belief on my part that energy was an "entity."

It is hardly necessary to point out that the idea signified by a term, when used as a subject of a sentence, becomes *ipso facto* a formal entity; or to call attention to the truism that that fact does not carry with it the corollary that the writer, in so doing, commits himself to a belief in its real or metaphysical existence. Such an inference would obviously rest upon quite other considerations.

Our first task is to inquire into the meaning of the term, which, on account of its metamorphic life-history, is inevitably vague. It began "life" as an abstract term, meaning "being"; it then ousted its parent "ens," and became the more familiar of the two as a concrete noun.

The dictionary defines it as "an independent ens; a thing; a substance; an ontological chimera." And "ens" is defined as "that which in any sense is; an object; something that can be named and spoken of."

The essential idea in all these seems to be an independent existence of some kind. But the existence it first signified was entirely metaphysical. We shall therefore confine our remarks in this first paper to its pre-scientific meaning; that is, to its meaning before man had gained possession of any true knowledge whatsoever of the real nature of matter and, consequently, of the physical universe.

It must not, however, be supposed that man, prior to the advent of science, had no guiding principle or rule in his creation of gratuitous entities; for all his entities were *causal agents*, or explanatory causes, intended to supply him with the reason for the genesis of his feelings and ideas.

Man desired to account for every type of experience, whether of sensation, of perception, or of thought, which possessed any degree of distinctness and unity—any discreteness or oneness. This he did by ascribing it to some entity as *cause*—a practice which a brief summary of the results of his mental labours will, I trust, sufficiently exemplify. Let us first consider his senses of *Touch*, *Muscular effort*, *Heat*, and *Sight*. These are all ultimates.

Resistance to his sense of Touch and Muscular effort he ascribed to inert, motionless, lifeless "Matter"—the accursed basic entity of all evil—"the very essence of which was the negation of all true being," and the direful cause of all the woeful tribulations which had befallen gods and man. According to some, even "Satan was the offspring of matter."

In like manner, Heat and Cold, Light and Darkness, were entities, the causal agents of the respective sensation. The senses of sound, taste, and smell were rarely, if ever, ascribed to *special* entities. Ordinary objects were usually treated as the sources of these affections.

The next class of entities—a vast one—consisted of *visible* objects. They were of two kinds, material and immaterial. If they were heavy and resisting as well as visible, they were material entities, and shared the evil nature of matter. If only visible, they were immaterial, and were therefore not essentially evil. This class included fire, fog, vapour, smoke, incense, the horizon, the blue sky, the lightning, the rainbow, the heavens, the

sun, the moon, and the stars. None of these were material, though they belonged to the physical universe, for "obviously" they were without weight and power of resistance. It had never entered even "the dreams of man" that "sun, moon, and stars" were material till physical and mathematical astronomy gradually proved them to be.

The air, though invisible, was an entity, because it was *felt*; but as it was without weight it was an immaterial one. The materiality of the air was never suspected till Torricelli's epochal experiment demonstrated the fact.

So were the powers of Nature, entities. Our sense of muscular effort is unique among the senses. It *acts*, instead of being acted upon. Whatever, therefore, caused movement or produced any visible or sensible effect was due to a force-entity. Such were the winds, the powers of which fructified earth or which destroyed her products. Of this order were life and death, the gods and goddesses, and the host of minor divinities and demons.

Living things, both animal and vegetal, were *double* entities—a material one, which made them visible and tangible objects, and a spiritual one, which made them living things.

A type of this union between the material and the spiritual was found in fire and flame. The flame was the immaterial essence or entity which inhered in and pervaded the combustible object, and imparted to it its combustibility. During combustion, this inflammable essence quitted it as *flame*, and vanished heavenwards. On this hypothesis was based the pre-scientific theory of combustion, which was considered as true down to the days of Priestley. And as the Greek word for flame was Phlox, this inflammable principle or essence was known as phlogiston.

Now, all living things were exactly such dual entities: the body was the material substance or base, and the life the immaterial essence which pervaded it and quickened it into a living thing. As this life partook of the nature of the "immaterial" air with which it was so intimately associated, it was called spirit, *i.e.*, "breath."

The reader cannot fail to observe that this gnostic conception of "spirit" was as crude and primitive as its notion of "matter" was barbaric and unmitigably false. And yet these very notions of matter and spirit are those which are expressly taught in every book of the New Testament, and upon which the entire fabric of Christianity is based. Paul's "spiritual body" possessed all the peculiarities and attributes of matter save those of weight and resistance. His spiritual substance was simply matter emasculated of these two essential properties.

Turning now from the outer world of sense to the inner world of thought—the realm of "real" entities—we find that the same rule obtains, man is still restlessly anxious to account for the contents of his mind.

It was not enough to ascribe the phenomenon of mind as a whole to an immortal and migrating "soul" as a causal entity. He had to find entities for its component parts. This process began with the famous "Platonic ideas." This strange speculation ushered in one of the most noted periods in the annals of human thought—the era of gnosticism—whose main characteristic was an extraordinary activity in discovering or creating psychic entities. So prolific were their minds, and so abundant and ceaseless the "output," that the "manufacture of entities" might not inaptly be called "the gnostic industry." For at least 600 years the Mediterranean world was simply inundated with these imaginary "goblins."



It began, as I said, with Plato's fateful speculation about the nature of abstract and general notions, which eventually developed into the famous scholastic doctrine known as Realism. According to the teachings of this superlatively "learned ignorance," the concepts justice, beauty, and goodness, for instance, possessed an independent existence—apart from any act or conduct which embodied them. So did class name represent entities. For example: "Over and above all individual men and women, there existed an entity man—man in general—which inhered in the individual men and women and communicated to them its essence." And though to the "learned" mediæval ecclesiastic nothing that the mind could conceive was intrinsically too absurd for *belief*, yet this "philosophy" of Realism provoked dissent and opposition, and gave rise to the rival school of Nominalism which denied the existence of any such entities, and maintained that abstract and general terms were mere names of concepts formed by the mind.

(To be continued.)

KERIDON.

### A Traveller's Tale.

"TRUE," said my uncle, who was paying us a visit, I have been among many strange people during my fifteen years' travel in Africa and other lands, but perhaps the strangest was a large tribe living on a wide tract of land well watered by five big rivers and their tributaries. These people are not highly intelligent, as you will believe, when I tell you that they occupy most of their time in manufacturing useless things with which they decorate their bodies and dwellings. They have the peculiar notion that these things improve their appearance and are more value than necessities of life. And, at the same time, they live on very poor food, and most of them die for want of good things.

If you would like to hear of some of the extraordinary ideas and habits of these people, all you boys and girls come and sit down quietly, be very attentive, and I will try and remember some of the most strange things I noticed among this foolish race. Are you all ready? Now, let me see. Yes—.

It was very strange to wander along the tracks made by wild animals and note the quantity of land left almost uncultivated, or, at best, only partially used or enclosed by the big chiefs for their pleasure, while most of the people herded together on the swampy ground near the rivers, and died in great numbers from disease and even famine, or lived an unhealthy and miserable existence.

Prejudice, as well as ignorance, is very strong among this primitive race. They hate new ideas, and I was almost afraid to suggest that civilization, and comfort, and happiness were within the reach of every one of them if they only would turn their attention to useful occupations and gain some knowledge of science. I found it most embarrassing to hold a conversation with even the better-conditioned, to find the lack of information upon the commonest subjects of nature, although there are a few well-informed persons, and knowledge could be obtained from them if it were wished. But few had any inclination to acquire knowledge or devote time to study. Indeed, to the mass of the people, study is discouraged and is obnoxious, so they continue to embrace stupid notions from age to age. Moreover, there is one class which live upon charity, and which periodically speak to the people in ancient words upon matters of which they know nothing, and intentionally foster ignorance and untrue ideas.

After I had been with these people some time I had a chat with one of this class, and I found an abyss of wickedness almost unbelievable. I purposely broached the subject of science, and after a little asked him how he accounted for the origin of the world and the living things upon it. Among other foolish things he said that once upon a time a Great Spirit made all the trees and plants, and after a little time made all the insects and other living things. I pointed out

to him that the plants lived and produced seeds because insects were attracted to the flowers, and by carrying pollen from the male to the bearing flower it became fertilized and the seed developed. So he should reverse his tale and make the insects first. This criticism made him savagely angry, and by working up the feelings of the dupes to his system he made my position rather uncomfortable, until I obtained the patronage of an influential chief who warned the mendicants that I was a good man and was to be left alone.

What is that you say, William? I am telling you about your own country all this time. Well, suppose I am? It is quite true, and you will find that when you go about the world mankind is much the same everywhere, and, unless one keeps his eyes open and meditates upon whatever he sees, he may just as well stop in one place, for travelling will otherwise be only pastime and a waste of life.

E. ANDERSON.

## Correspondence.

### RESPONSIBILITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If we are to draw any inference from the letter of Mr. W. G. Earle, it means that the child and its heredity is one thing and its whole environment is another; that the former is a mere blown-up bladder buffeted about on the sea-saw rudder, without compass or power of any kind.

The "baseless assumption" underlying this view is that the child is helpless, and that environment is wholly wandering. Neither of the propositions are true. We came into the world as mere bundles of potentialities. No one can say what we may become. We cannot apply the law of averages even. This bundle, and all outside it, act and re-act upon each other, sometimes with marvellous results. Under influences from without the bundle unfolds, grows, develops, and acquires modifying influence. We grow stronger and wiser, and realize our personal limitations; then we cast about for useful, necessary co-operation, and by this means overcome menacing influences which would crush us as individuals. We catch an idea of the "laws" of "Nature," which are accurately observed happenings of things outside ourselves. These are registered and memoried as factors of adaptability.

In this way individuals strengthen their power, and lengthen the periods of their influence by adjusting themselves to the favourable and avoiding the unfavourable force of their environment.

In the end, of course, individuals go down; but by means of heredity they pass on their powers to others—to the race; and by co-operation the race is better able to combat the threatening forces of Nature, and to adapt itself to the strengthening ones, than at any previous time.

Again, Mr. Earle is mistaken. Men are not really punished because they "*could have been good*," but because it is calculated to be a modifying factor in making them so. Here is a world of difference; the one is vindictive, the other is reformative in character.

If a gardener wishes to produce desirable fruits, flowers, or vegetables, he studies all the elements necessary to their production—the soil, the seed, the seasons; takes all the factors into account. So with the human family. It is all a matter of calculating means to ends.

What's the use of saying "society is alone responsible for character?" Is not society made up of individuals? Well, then, individuals and society are both responsible, only the one in less degree than the other.

To fix the onus upon society is to provide individuals with excuses for inactivity, and to open up a wide field for governmental abuses and tyrannous influences.

Government can do some things better than individuals. Others, individuals can do better than Government. It is for those who know, and know that they know, to decide the means of utility, and act accordingly.

Finally, to write about society, "having neglected its duty, proceeds to punish their own trained criminal," is a little too loose for those of us who cannot fall back upon "divine mercy."

JOHN SANDERS,



Obituary.

One more sincere Freethinker has passed away in Brighton, Frank Lionel Fox, aged thirty-three, and the remains were interred on the 8th instant. As he expressly desired that no religious ceremony should take place at his funeral, the Secular Burial Service was read by Mr. Wilmer in the chapel, which created a profound impression. Our sympathies are extended to his relatives and friends.—W. W.

We regret to hear of the death of Mrs. W. McEwan, last surviving daughter of Mr. J. Harrison, a respected member of the Glasgow Branch, to whom we tender our sincerest sympathy. She was buried on Saturday, 9th inst. Mr. J. Robertson read the Secular Burial Service in a very appropriate manner.—J. LONSDALE.

Many Scotch Freethinkers will learn with regret of the death of Mr. Charles McDermid (late of Cambuslang) at the residence of his sister at Fort William, on February 28, aged sixty-six. Of a retiring disposition, Mr. McDermid, in a quiet way, did much service to Freethought. It was chiefly through his efforts that scientific works of an advanced kind were introduced into the Cambuslang Library. He was a natural genius, entirely self-taught, and played the violin with considerable skill. A year or two prior to his decease he began to study Gaelic, which indicates the vigour of his intellect. A talk with him was an education.—T. C. F.

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, Mr. J. Van Biene, "My Philosophy."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Debate: "Is Christianity True?" Opener: Mr. Bolton.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Medieval Guild."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (Labour Hall, 77A Victoria Street). 3.30, Mr. J. Foster, "The Bible and Man."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, "Religion and Labour."

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, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought, Religion, and Death."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street) 6.30, Mrs. B. A. Bayfield, "Humanity v. Religion."

PONTYCYMMER.—Mr. J. T. Lloyd.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, First Floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, Discussion: "Does Death Create Affection"? 7.15, Reports and other Important Business.

W. H. THRESH has Vacant Dates for Lectures on Popular Science, Evolution, and Education.—Write for List and Terms to 5 Waddon Court Road, Waddon, Surrey.

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. International 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 free 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. Price 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.



## For a Freethinker's Bookshelf.

NOW READY.

### FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT.

By G. W. FOOTE.

First Series, 216 pp. Cloth. Price 3s. net, postage 6d.

Second Series, 302 pp. Cloth. Price 3s. net, postage 6d.

### HERESIES; OR, AGNOSTIC THEISM, ETHICS, SOCIOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS.

By H. CROFT HILLER.

Published at 32s. 6d. Five Volumes for 11s., postage 9d.

### ROBERT BUCHANAN: THE POET OF MODERN REVOLT.

By ARCHIBALD STODART-WALKER.

An Introduction to Buchanan's Writings, in which full justice is done to his Freethinking Poems, *The Devil's Case*, *The Wandering Jew*, etc.

333 pages. Published 6s. net. Price 2s. 6d., postage 6d.

### THE METAPHYSICS OF NATURE.

By CARVETH READ, M.A.

A Scientific and Philosophic Study.

Published 7s. 6d. net. Price 3s. 6d., postage 6d.

### A FIGHT FOR RIGHT.

A Verbatim Report of the Decision in the House of Lords  
*in re*

Bowman and Others *v.* The Secular Society, Limited.

With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN.

*Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.*

Price 1s., postage 1½d.

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.

## 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.

## 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 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

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.

## 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., postage 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.

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.