

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XXXIX.—No. 16

SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
Religion and the Young.—The Editor	185
"From Unbelief to Faith."—J. T. Lloyd	186
Twisting the Tiger's Tail.—Mimmermus	188
The Origin of Life.—W. Mann	188
Man's Discovery of the World.—T. F. Palmer	192
Determinism and Responsibility.—Arthur B. Moss	193
Writers and Readers.—A. Millar	194
God's Ways.—S. C.	195
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.	

## Views and Opinions.

### Religion and the Young.

The *Church Times* of April 4 contains a curious but illuminating document addressed by the Federation of Catholic Priests to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The letter itself is concerned with the proper age of confirmation, but it says more than it is supposed to say, and conveys a lesson very different from the one intended. The point submitted in the document is the age at which boys and girls are most susceptible to religious teaching and influence; the unconscious lesson of the communication is the perversion of the mind and character of youth in the interests of religious organizations. It is pointed out that psychologically the greatest "receptivity to religious impressions" in children is at about twelve years of age. A couple of letters from clergymen, it is said of wide experience, drives home the lesson. And the programme is, on the whole, complete. First, the young child, by religious instruction, is to be familiarized with religious phrases, expressions, and doctrines. This is enough to give religious form and phrases a certain hypnotic value, so that they may be taken without examination. Then at about twelve—a really susceptible age—the child is to be formally and officially confirmed. Doctored in childhood, branded at adolescence, exploited during manhood and womanhood. The circle is complete. "Ye are my sheep." And for what else are sheep but to be properly, thoroughly, and profitably sheared? \*

### The Age of Conversion.

Now, we do not question that if people are to be made religious, the earlier years are the best in which to do the trick. It is, in fact, the only period in which success can be reckoned on. Some years ago we had occasion to hunt up biographical details concerning a number of prominent figures in Christian history. We found that the immense majority of these experienced "Conversion" at a young age. Thus religious conviction came to H. Thekla at 18, St. Agnes at 13, St. Antony at 18, Martin of Fours at 18, Euprasia at 12, Benedict at 14, Cuthbert at 15, St. Bernard at 12, St. Dominic at 15, St. Catherine at 7, St. Teresa at 12, St. Francis at 12. In a statistical survey, conducted a few years back by Professor Starbuck, and dealing with present day conversions, out of 1,265 cases, it was found that religious conversion began as early as

the ages of 7 or 8, increased gradually till 10 or 11, then a more rapid increase till 18, followed by a rapid decrease up to the age of 26, when it practically disappeared. Starbuck's conclusion—a conclusion we pointed out in this Journal many years before—was that "conversion" is distinctly a phenomenon of adolescence. When the notorious Dr. Torrey was in England, in 1904, the editor of the *British Weekly* invited opinions from ministers of religion as to the value of Torrey's work. Information as to the age of converts was not requested, but it appeared incidentally. Thus, the Rev. T. Torrey (Birmingham) reported that 16 out of 25 converts were children. Rev. A. LeGros (Rugby), said the converts were among their youngest members. Rev. Singleton (Smethwick), said the bulk of the converts were under 13 years of age. Others followed with the same story. Susceptibility to religious impressions, to the point of the feeling known as "conversion," is essentially a phenomenon of adolescence. Incidentally, it should be noted that this is not peculiarly a Christian phenomenon. It is common to all religions. All over the world, with savages as with civilized peoples, the beginnings of adolescence is the time chosen for religious initiation. The Federation of Catholic priests are not the only ones who have discovered that religion must be impressed upon people while they are young. It is the practice of all medicine-men from the most primitive times down to our own.

\* \* \*

### The Critical Age.

Now, why should the religious appeal be so powerful between, say, the ages of twelve and twenty-six, and become almost powerless afterwards? The answer to this question is that the phenomenon under consideration is no more than a distortion of sexual and social developments in terms, and in the interests of religion. To begin with, adolescence is a time of great and significant organic growth. There is a development of new organs and new functions, with a transformation of both the emotional and intellectual output. Before puberty the main function of the brain is acquisition. After puberty new tracts of brain tissue become active, and development becomes more rapid. But all periods of rapid development are periods of instability, and with both sexes this adolescent instability involves a susceptibility to suggestion and to impressions. Moreover, the mental and emotional life undergoes a transformation. There is a more conscious and direct concern with the life of others, the interest is less self-centred. There is a consciousness of new desires, new attractions, a vague feeling of unrest, with a desire for the company of the opposite sex. The childish desire for protection weakens; the more mature desire to play the part of protector asserts itself. The changes here are fundamentally sexual and social. Human life, it may be said, has a two-fold aspect. As a mere animal organism nature secures the perpetuation of the species through the sex impulse. As a human being, part of the social structure, "cell in the social tissue," nature secures what is necessary by the presence of impulses and cravings as

imperious in their way, and more permanent in their expression, than mere sex-craving. In practice the two impulses complement each other. The species is perpetuated in the interests of society; society is perpetuated in the interests of the species. And, as is only to be expected, there are developed desires and capacities suitable to each phase of life as it emerges. Thus, with puberty and adolescence, which marks the sexual and social maturing of the individual, a whole new field of motive and feeling comes into operation. Their real and legitimate spheres of operation are family and social. They have not the slightest necessary connection with religion. Ignorance has permitted this plastic period of life to be utilized by religion. It has done so to the direct and serious injury both of the individual and of society at large.

\* \* \*

#### A Matter of Interpretation.

The whole significance of puberty and adolescence is not the development of a religious sense, but the entry of the individual into the larger life of the race. If we eliminate religion altogether, there is not a single feeling experienced at adolescence, not a single individual craving, that would not undergo complete development and receive full satisfaction. The truth of this is shown by the fact that it occurs in a very large number of cases. The desire to serve has no necessary connection with religion, neither has the craving for the ideal, the care for others, nor even the capacity for sacrifices. All these are qualities that may be expressed in the service of religion, but they exist and function apart from it. Naturally, when an individual is completely ignorant of the nature of his or her own development, and where those around are no better informed; where, moreover, those in a position of authority are ready with a special interpretation, it is not surprising that the religious hypothesis is accepted as the genuine one. It is substantially the same phenomenon that meets us in connection with the growth of knowledge in other directions. Plagues and famines, comets and earthquakes, disease and disaster, were equally interpreted by ignorance as the workings of God in the world. And whether we are dealing with interpretations of physical phenomena as the work of God in the world, or the feelings and impulses of human nature as "the voice of God in the human soul," we are on the same level of interpretation. It is a matter of ignorance permitting, and interest perpetuating, an explanation of things that has no warranty in fact.

\* \* \*

#### Religion and Society.

We quite agree that puberty is a period of tremendous and important possibilities for either good or evil. And for that very reason it is essential that the developing capacities of boy and girl should be wisely and properly directed. At puberty, as we have pointed out, what takes place is the socialization of the child. All that takes place may be described as Nature's preparation for the larger life of the race. Naturally, it is a period of great susceptibility, and this gives religionists their chance. The new vague feelings that arise in connection with adolescence are given a religious interpretation, and tendencies which in a better ordered state of society would be turned into a helpful and proper channel of social activity, are expended in the services of a stupid and often degrading superstition. Religion's gain is here society's loss. Those energies which should be intelligently expended on sane social service are squandered on religious work. There is a vast diversion of human feeling and energy, and a gross misinterpretation of human faculty. There is no religious awakening at puberty; there is only the dawn of a larger social consciousness. There is no sense of communion with God;

there is only a nascent sense of the identification of self with the larger social body. A wise social guidance would educate and develop this to a socially useful end. It is part of the tragedy of life that, generation after generation, we see it exploited in the interests of superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## "From Unbelief to Faith."

(Concluded from p. 175.)

PROFESSOR ORR devotes fully two-thirds of his tract to what he calls "the drift from unbelief to faith." He represents his hearers as saying: "Oh, we do not hear about that in magazines, newspapers, in the *Clarion*, or in the secularist lecture halls." "And yet," he declares, "it is the case in far larger volume than I believe almost any one has realized." Unfortunately, however, the evidence, the actual proof, of such an assertion is not adduced, the Professor contenting himself with stating that if any one doubts his word he will be most happy to place the evidence in his hands; but, surely, if a convincing evidence exists it should have been made as public as the assertion. "Illustrations," or "specimens," in the absence of positive proofs, are practically of no value. Revivalists often boast of the numbers of notorious infidels converted at their meetings, but on investigation it is generally found that the boast is groundless. Let us, therefore, examine a few of the cases related by Dr. Orr in order to ascertain their true significance. The first of importance mentioned is that of William Hone, author of the famous work *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Now, the curious fact about Hone is that he was never an unbeliever, that he always waxed extremely angry whenever the charge of infidelity was brought against him by his enemies. He was simply a parodist, and it was for publishing parodies, namely, *The Late John Wilkes's Catechism*, *The Political Litany*, and *The Sinecure's Creed*, that he underwent three trials at the Guildhall, at the close of each of which the jury emphatically pronounced him *Not Guilty*. Professor Orr himself admits that he was tried for blasphemy in 1817 and acquitted. He had parodied the Book of Common Prayer, but this is what we read in his *Autobiography*: "Upon my Trials I really believed I knew Christianity—I declared myself to be a Christian." He was never, not even in his later teens, a thorough-going unbeliever, though he occasionally thought that he was. Between his fifteenth and twentieth years he strove hard to become a complete anti-Christian, but failed. Every Sunday he attended church or chapel, and was profoundly impressed by many of the sermons he heard, particularly those delivered by the eccentric pulpit wit, Rowland Hill, of Surrey Chapel, and William Jay, of Bath; and all the time he "both wished and dreaded to be religious." Towards the end of life, when weakened in body and mind by ill-health, he made a public profession of faith in Christ, and was admitted to the communion of the Weigh House Church, then under the ministry of the well-known Thomas Binney.

Another of Professor Orr's "specimens" is Joseph Barker, by whom, he confesses, his own mind was at one time considerably upset. He alludes to a debate between Barker and a notorious clergyman named Brewin Grant on the Bible, and in his then state of mind it seemed to him that Joseph Barker on the whole had the best of it. As writer of the tract, the most interesting fact to him is that Joseph Barker "ultimately surrendered to the Lord Jesus, and entered the Christian ministry, becoming a minister of the Methodist Church in America." Now, though I do not possess a copy of

Barker's *Autobiography*, certain significant facts in his career are well known to me. The debate between him and the Rev. Brewin Grant took place at Halifax in the year 1855, and, it must be admitted, that he shone in it as a versatile, resourceful disputant; but, in 1841, he had displayed equal competence as a defender of the Divine origin and character of the Bible in a book entitled *Christianity Triumphant*, with awkward quotations from which his opponent kept pelting him most unmercifully. When confronted with his own arguments for the inspiration of the Scriptures he could only meet them by saying that they had been framed in ignorance and foolishness while he was under the paralyzing influence of parents and priests. Soon after the debate he emigrated to America, and settled with his family in Nebraska; but, in 1860, he was back in Great Britain with a tremendous reputation as a Freethought lecturer, and became joint editor with Charles Bradlaugh of a new literary venture, entitled the *National Reformer*, but so eccentric and reprehensible was his behaviour in that capacity that at the close of a year he had to be dismissed. On his arrival he received an enthusiastic ovation, but rumours had preceded him that he had Theistic leanings, which were openly mentioned and discussed in Holyoake's journal, the *Reasoner*. Erelong, after his dismissal from the *National Reformer*, it is recorded, he calumniated his quondam friend, Mr. Bradlaugh, "as a more dangerous man, as a greater criminal, as a deadlier foe to virtue and humanity, than the vilest murderer that ever plotted or sinned against mankind." Holyoake describes him as a man "without the sense of taste" (*Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Part I., p. 126), while Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, in her *Life of her father* (vol. i., p. 121), sums him up thus:—

It is difficult for us to-day, having before us his whole public career, with its kaleidoscopic changes of front, to realize the enthusiasm which his name provoked in 1860.

We conclude, therefore, that Joseph Barker, whilst endowed with intellectual gifts above the average, lacked depth and sincerity of conviction, and that his return to the Christian fold was no loss, but rather a gain, to the Secularist cause.

Thomas Cooper is the Professor's next "illustration" of the drift from unbelief to faith, and this is what he says of him:—

Thomas Cooper, the Chartist—Thomas Cooper, the infidel lecturer, as we used to call him. He went about lecturing on Strauss's *Life of Jesus*; and he went through a somewhat similar experience (to Barker's), and became an earnest Christian man and a downright defender of the faith he once persecuted.

Now, George Jacob Holyoake was Cooper's intimate friend for the space of fifty years, and he assures us that, like Henry Vincent, he was "a greater advocate than he was a heretic, being a heretic from indignation rather than from intellectual conviction" (*Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Part I., p. 104). In 1829 he became a schoolmaster, Methodist local preacher, and writer for country newspapers; but as leader of the Chartists in 1842 he went about lecturing in the Potteries during the riots, was arrested for conspiracy and sedition, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Stafford Gaol. After his release he spent ten years as a political and Secularist lecturer; but *at heart* he was a Christian all the time; and in 1855 he blossomed into a Christian apologist of the most violent type. In 1864 he engaged in a debate with Mr. Bradlaugh.

Dr. Orr's next important convert is the late George John Romanes, the scientist, of whom, however, he discreetly only says that he "died, as you know, an earnest Christian, testifying to the faith he once opposed." The truth here again is that Romanes was not, at any time, a

soundly convinced Atheist. He was a friend of Darwin and an enthusiastic advocate of the Darwinian theory, which, he knew, logically led to Atheism, as in Darwin's own case; but Romanes was an Atheist against his will. *Logically*, he was an Atheist even to the end of his life; but his heart resented and revolted from the verdict of his head. The intellectual and the emotional elements in his nature were at never-ceasing strife. No one can read his *Candid Examination of Theism* without discerning that, though its conclusions are inevitably Atheistic, it is in reality the wail of a disappointed, half-broken heart which, in the violence of its black despair, pronounces the finding of the intellect the most terrible calamity in the history of man. "I am not ashamed to confess," he says, "that with this virtual negation of God the Universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness" (p. 114). With the reasoning process that characterizes that volume we are not at present concerned, the only thing that matters on this occasion being the fact that, while the theory of evolution as interpreted in Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* drove the author irresistibly to an intellectual rejection of Theism, his heart clung to it with all its might, and prevented his becoming a rejoicing Atheist. To him was incessantly present the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which was once his and the lonely mystery as now he found it, the very thought of which invariably caused him "the deepest pang of which his nature was susceptible." Is it any wonder, then, that when health declined and the reasoning faculties weakened, the heart triumphed and the intellect was silenced? The faith of his youth was his once more, not because he *won* it on the field of argument, but simply because he *desired* it with such ardour. But in support of such a frame of mind the following is all he could say:—

This may be all deplorable enough in politics and in all other beliefs secular; but who shall say it is not exactly as it ought to be in the matter of belief religious?

Neither is it any wonder that Professor Orr withheld the evidence of the drift or current from scepticism to faith. All his so-called "illustrations" or "specimens" are devoid of any proof that would carry weight with thoughtful people. The reverend gentleman went to America to tell the people there that Great Britain was rapidly returning to the faith, and that he had in his possession a list of some twenty-eight Secularist leaders who had become Christians; but there also, as well as here, he withheld the evidence. Is not the reason why self-evident?

There is a strong drift, a mighty current, in motion throughout Christendom, but it is not towards, but clean away from the faith, and its existence is recognized and bemoaned by practically all the leaders of the Churches.

J. T. LLOYD.

#### RECONCILIATION.

Word over all, beautiful as the sky!  
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly wash again, and ever again, this soiled world.  
For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead.  
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin,—I draw near;  
I bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

Walt Whitman.

Moderation in the carrying out of what is good and right is rare. What we commonly see is either pedantic delay or reckless hurry.—Goethe.

## Twisting the Tiger's Tail.

The religion of the day is a theatrical Sinai, where the thunders are supplied by the property man.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions.—*G. W. Foote.*

THE recent amusing reference to Farrar's story, *Eric; or, Little by Little*, in the House of Commons, recalls the career of an ecclesiastic who had an enormous following in his day. To provide instruction and amusement for the young, Canon Farrar set out to prove, in *Eric; or, Little by Little*, that the British schoolboy, if he be not addicted to twisting the vine-leaves in his hair, and to fits of kleptomania, must be a most offensive little prig. To provide instruction and amusement for adult Christians, the worthy Canon wrote his entertaining *Life of Christ*, which has been wittily described as "a Cook's excursion through the Gospels." But, of course, the Canon's most distinguished performance was his *Eternal Hope*, a work which gave much comfort and consolation to many who were held fast by the trammels of a barbarous creed. With what eloquence did the Canon explain that everlasting punishment was not really everlasting, but only eternal. With leonine assurance he demonstrated that the punishment of the wicked was not so much a punishment as an unpleasantness which might be smoothed over. And thousands were always ready to accept his fluent bombast as the fine gold of eloquence. They hailed his adjectives as a passion of style, and read his unctuous periods in which he advanced his doubts as an evidence of intellectual emancipation.

With fluent persistence, Cannon Farrar persuaded a number of his co-religionists that, contrary to centuries of belief, hell was slightly less monotonous than heaven, and that the Deity was at least a gentleman. These were not Farrar's own ideas, for he never had an original thought in his long life, but he popularized them. After that came the deluge, which has brought upon its flood undogmatic religionism, faith-healing, Christian Socialism, and the rest of the counterfeit and hypocritical nonsense which now shelters itself under the banner of the Christian religion. The dilution of dogma has had its disintegrating effect upon all the Churches except the Roman Catholic, ever the hindmost of the reactionaries. The High Church Party in the Church of England dutifully plays second fiddle to her elder and uglier Roman sister.

The fact remains that Priestcraft, whether Roman or Anglican, has two voices whenever its representatives are pushed hard in controversy. Humanitarian teaching is reserved only for the educated and intelligent. The simple and ignorant who accept the ministrations of the clergy are still taught that hell is the destiny of the heretic. If anyone doubts this, let him inquire among the peasantry of Ireland, Belgium, or Spain, or any other Catholic country. Even in High Church circles in England it is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant folk generally, are frequently taught Church principles in language which leads them to believe, and is intended to make them believe, that the overwhelming majority of their fellow-countrymen are outside the pale of civilization.

Away from the public eye the clergy are daily endeavouring to put back the clock of civilization. High Churchmen are as reactionary as Catholics. Catechisms and books of devotion, full of the spirit of the tenth century, are placed in the hands of the children of free Englishmen in the twentieth century. Freethinkers who imagine that some of the oldest and most barbarous religious dogmas are losing their hold on the

national mind, because, here and there, a mere handful of the clergy appear to be giving the old savage ideas faint support in their public utterances, will do well to remember that, while the objectionable dogmas are still taught throughout the Christian world, the protests of the humanitarians are boycotted in the libraries and in the newspapers. Wherever the clergy retain a shadow of their old power they still preach a hell of literal fire. In the Great Republic of the West, loud-mouthed and well-paid evangelists flame the fires of hell over a continent. The thousands of priests of the Roman Catholic Church have never damped a solitary spark of their fiery damnation. The Church of England, particularly the High Churchmen, who form the majority of that body, still pin their faith to hell; and the Salvation Army, which caters for the least-educated of the community, includes brimstone in its trade-mark: "Blood and Fire." It is worthy of the followers of a creed, who, in this country, outraging the spirit of the age, pray for rain, and offer daily prayers for the individual members of the Royal Family, and the House of Lords. If organized Free-thought disappeared to-morrow, the ancient audacious claims of the clergy would be revived everywhere. So far as women and children and the illiterate are concerned, such claims are still urged with unabated zeal.

Clericalism here, as in other countries, is the most disturbing factor in modern political life. Reactionary statesmen, with lazy tolerance, regard the clergy as a useful adjunct to the police force, and expect them to support the Government. Like the Duke of Wellington, they esteem the clergy only so far as they keep men quiet. The Iron Duke praised an Army chaplain because he "got the better of Methodism, which had appeared among the soldiers, and once among the officers." Happily, the reign of the Dukes, iron and otherwise, is over, and, sooner or later, the manhood of England will curb the power of the Black Army. Meanwhile, let democracy beware of the double tongue of the clergy, which is "poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth."

MIMNERMUS.

## The Origin of Life.

Is there not a temptation to close to some extent with Lucretius, when he affirms that "Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the Gods"? or with Bruno, when he declares that Matter is not "that mere empty capacity which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb"? Believing as I do, in the continuity of nature, I cannot stop abruptly where our microscopes cease to be of use. Here the vision of the mind authoritatively supplements the vision of the eye. By an intellectual necessity I cross the boundary of experimental evidence, and discern in that Matter which we, in our ignorance of its latent powers, and notwithstanding our professed reverence for its Creator, have hitherto covered with opprobrium the promise and potency of all terrestrial life.—*Professor Tyndall, "Belfast Address," "Fragments of Science"; 1876; p. 524.*

Protoplasm, simple or nucleated, is the formal basis of all life. It is the clay of the potter: which, bake it and paint it as he will, remains clay, separated by artifice, and not by nature, from the commonest brick or sun-dried clod.—*Professor Huxley, "The Physical Basis of Life," "Lay Sermons."*

WHEN Professor Tyndall delivered his famous "Belfast Address" to the British Association in the year 1874, in which he treated Life and Mind as products of the evolution of Force and Matter, the statement was received with howls of indignation. The most violent denunciation, abuse, and invective, to say nothing of malignant misrepresentation, came from the religious pulpit and

press. It was a repetition of the campaign against Darwin, and few and far between were the scientists prepared to support Tyndall's views.

But science has made great advances in knowledge of organic matter since then, and the position is now reversed, for, as Dr. Russel Wallace lamented, in 1903, "When Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge expressed their belief in some outside power, some external cause, leading scientific men went dead against them."<sup>1</sup> And it should be remarked that neither Lord Kelvin nor Sir Oliver Lodge were biologists, and, as Sir Thistleton Dyer pointed out, "For dogmatic utterance on biological questions there is no reason to suppose that he (Lord Kelvin) is better equipped than any person of average intelligence."<sup>2</sup>

To-day we are not aware of a single biologist who still believes that life was due to a special creative act of God.

We give the opinions of some of the most eminent biologists of the present time upon this point:—

The consensus of opinion among biologists, if one may judge from a multitude of expressions by them concerning life, is that all the phenomena exhibited by a living thing are finally resolvable into physical and chemical processes (Professor A. E. Dolbear, "Life from a Physical Standpoint," *Biological Lectures*; 1895; p. 4).

All life phenomena are determined by chemical processes. This is equally the case whether we have to do with the contraction of a muscle, with the process of secretion, or with the formation of an embryo or a single organ (Professor Jacques Loeb, *The Mechanistic Conception of Life*; 1912; p. 103).

The more modern scientific opinion is that life arose from a recombination of forces pre-existing in the Cosmos.

We find in our search for causes of the origin and evolution of life that we have reached an entirely new point of departure, namely, that of the physicist and chemist rather than the old point of departure of the naturalist (Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn, *The Origin and Evolution of Life*, 1918, pp. xvii. 2).

There is no breach of continuity between the inorganic and the organic, or any need for the postulation of an abrupt act of creation of the organic from the inorganic at some definite past moment in cosmic history which has never been repeated (Professor Benjamin Moore, *The Origin and Nature of Life*, p. 18.)

Life is, therefore, quite inseparable from chemical reactions, and on the whole what we call life is nothing else but a complex of innumerable chemical reactions in the living substance which we call protoplasm (Professor Czapek, *Chemical Phenomena of Life*, 1911, p. 63)

The aim of modern physiology is to conceive all organic processes as physical or chemical (Hoffding, *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 57.)

Living organisms contain no special vital elements differing from those of non-living matter, and are actuated by no special vital force (E. R. Goodrich, *The Nature and Origin of Life*, 1912, p. 15.)

We trace the evolution backwards and find, in our interpretation thereof, simpler and simpler organisms, until the organic passes into the inorganic (Professor Lloyd Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, 1894, p. 8.)

All cell activities are at bottom chemical or physical changes in the relationships of the cell molecules and their constituents, and so living matter is similar to matter of all other orders in that molecular change and activities require to be set in motion by the influence of forces acting from without (Dr. J. G. Adami, *Medical Contributions to the Study of Evolution*, 1918, p. 241.)

The problems of life are essentially problems of matter; we cannot conceive of life in the scientific sense as existing apart from matter. The phenomena of life are investigated, and can only be investigated, by the same methods as all other phenomena of matter, and the general results of such investigations tend to show that living beings are governed by laws identical with those which govern inanimate matter. The more we study the manifestations of life the more we become convinced of the truth of this statement, and the less we are disposed to call in the aid of a special and unknown form of energy to explain those manifestations (Professor E. A. Schafer, *Life: its Nature, Origin and Maintenance*, 1912, p. 8.)

It will be found that the opposition to the spontaneous evolution of life from lifeless elements is invariably inspired by religious sentiment. The last defenders of the supernatural origin of life now take refuge in a "Vital Force." That is to say, they declare that the physical and chemical forces inherent in lifeless matter are incapable of producing life or living matter. That the phenomena of living matter are due to a special "Vital Force" distinct from the forces governing inorganic matter.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

## Acid Drops.

The Scottish education elections will give small satisfaction to any intelligent or far-seeing reformer. There has been a large number of Roman Catholic candidates returned—quite out of proportion to the number of Roman Catholics in the community. In Glasgow, for instance, no less than twelve R.C. candidates were returned, and in other parts of Scotland they were well in evidence. And this has evidently been secured by organization. Thus, we believe that the Roman Catholic vote in Glasgow polled ninety per cent. of its total strength. The other votes represented only twenty-seven per cent. of the electorate.

Now, this state of things is very unsatisfactory. The Roman Catholic candidates are there for one thing mainly—that is, to safeguard the interests of the Church; and in relation to education, we all know what that means. If people will not see that the schools are kept free from sectarian interests, their efforts for reform are certain to be frustrated or rendered impotent. For our own part, we should have liked to have seen a number of candidates definitely pledged to a policy of Secular Education, and we hope by the time the next election comes round to see Scottish Free-thought sufficiently organized for that purpose.

Religious folk often adopt the manners of showmen in advertising their views, but the following, taken from an Essex newspaper, has a distinctly sporting flavour: "Why is Sunday observed as a Sacred Day? Is it a Sin to Garden or Play Golf on Sunday? £200 Offered for a Text."

"The menace of a tax on celibacy is causing a notable commotion among bachelors," comments a daily paper. We hope the tax will not prove the last straw to break the Bishop of London's back.

A religious contemporary heads an article: "Plea for a New Catholicism." Certainly, the old Catholicism is so wormeaten that it is time it went to the dust-destroyer.

The clergy pretend that our civilization is owing to Christianity. Let them ponder these two items, taken from the same issue of the same daily paper. The will of the late Lord Glentanar (of the firm of J. & P. Coats, Paisley), has been valued at £4,642,263. At Chertsey, seven human beings were living in one room of a small cottage.

<sup>1</sup> Cited, W. Mann, *The Religion of Famous Men*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Mrs. Mary Williams, aged forty-five, died while attending "divine service" at Siloh Chapel, S. Wales. This will, we expect, be taken as evidence of the Lord's care for the deceased woman. Had it happened at a Freethought meeting, it would have been evidence of the Lord's anger.

The distinguished ornament of the Church known as "Woodbine Willie" preached in Westminster Abbey recently. If some of the prelates of other days could "revisit the glimpses of the moon," they would think the Church was ending in smoke.

Verger at Edinsor Church, Chatsworth, Egbert Mather has committed suicide. The boasted restraints of religion are conspicuous by their absence in this case.

An Army officer left £100 to the Y.M.C.A. because it has been moved by Christianity far more than other religious bodies. The strange thing is that in the Y.M.C.A. billiards seemed as important as Bibles, and dominoes were more in evidence than dogmas.

A controversy is going on in the Leeds papers concerning the Vicar of Leeds deliverance on the subject of the Virgin Birth. The discussion of such a topic makes one almost despair of civilization. How the story originated, the frame of mind that gave it birth, the conditions that favoured its perpetuation—all these are questions full of interest. But to discuss whether the thing really happened is an indictment of civilization. One might just as well discuss the historic veracity of Jack the Giant Killer. We know that such a thing never did occur, and never could occur. It is possible only to such as are ignorant of the nature of human creation.

The three hours' service at St. Botolph's on Good Friday is to be conducted by Miss Royden, of the City Temple, and the narrow-minded Bishop of London informs us that the arrangements for this service not only have not his sanction but have been made in direct disobedience to his "express wishes." His Lordship shares Paul's views about women's inferiority to men, and their duty to be silent in the Church.

Miss Royden, of the City Temple, candidly admits that Marcus Aurelius was "one of the noblest men that ever breathed"; but adds that, being a Pagan, he was the victim of "an appalling sense of sadness." The reverend lady forgets, however, that optimism or pessimism, is due, not to a man's religion or non-religion, but to his temperament. Lucian, too, was a Pagan, and a derider of the gods as well; but a happier man never lived. He was richly dowered with the comic spirit, and went through life indulging in perpetual laughter. There have been and there are Christian pessimists; there have been and there are Pagan and even Atheistic optimists.

The Rev. Dr. Percy Dearmer is an Anglican clergyman who believes that as one result of the War there is taking place a wonderful revival of religion *in the East*. Curiously enough, of late religious revivals occur, not at home, but abroad, if not in the West, certainly in the Orient—always, *somewhere else*. As a matter of fact, they exist only in the imagination of those who ardently desire them. One of the chief charges against Bolshevism is that it is anti-Christian, even Atheistical. Apparently Dr. Dearmer has lost faith in Supernaturalism, for he pleads for "concentration upon humanity instead of doctrine."

On one point Dr. Dearmer is clearly right. He says that the people of Belgium "are half Roman Catholic and half Liberal." Now, if by "Liberal" is meant "Freethinking," the remark is perfectly true. We are informed, on reliable authority, that the Belgian refugees in this country during the War were either Catholics or Freethinkers. For many years before the War it was well known that our cause was marching on to victory in Belgium.

The newspaper campaign now being undertaken to discredit the present Russian Government is funny without being vulgar. For instance, the story of the "nationalization of women" was a shade too thin, and it has been exposed very quickly. At a meeting at Chandos Hall, London, Dr. Rickman, who has just returned from two years' relief work in Russia, gave an address on that country. At the conclusion he was asked if it were true that women were "nationalized" in Russia, and at first Dr. Rickman was not inclined to treat the question seriously. He replied that such a declaration had been posted up by one solitary Anarchist club, but nothing more had happened, for the Soviets all repudiated it.

The Bishop of Coventry cannot find a house in his diocese, and is forced to live away. The Right Reverend Father-in-God, in his afflictions, has the proud consolation of knowing that the Founder of his religion had not where to lay his head.

Writing in a Sunday paper on "Sports and Pastimes and Liberties," Mr. Horatio Bottomley says: "For four years we have followed the laborious precepts of Dr. Lyttelton." Does this imply that the Member for Hackney has attended church regularly for four years? He cannot mean that the majority of his countrymen have so troubled the pew-openers.

Canon Maurice Cowell, Vicar of Ash Bocking, Suffolk, left estate to the value of £27,524; the Rev. J. G. Crowley, formerly of Winchester, left £35,061. Pity the poor "starving" clergy!

Thanks to "the glorious free press," the majority of English newspaper readers are firmly persuaded that in the late War we fought against orang-outangs. Now the raging, tearing press propaganda is directed against Russia, and we are asked to believe that the Muscovites are no better than chimpanzees. If our authorities quarrel with many more folk, the only human beings left alive will be "God's own Englishmen."

Writing on history, Mr. H. G. Wells says: "much is known now, but it is not generally known as it should be, of the slow transition of men's thoughts from tribal gods and city gods to the idea of one God, the Father and Judge of all Mankind." Why does Mr. Wells stop at the deism of the eighteenth century? We are living in the twentieth century, and he need not dissemble his love for advanced thought.

Professor T. Reaveley Glover, speaking at Bristol the other day, admitted that 80 per cent. of the people in this country have no use for the Church of Christ, although 70 per cent. have been through Sunday-schools. This state of things he attributed, in part, to the fact that the Church has given up thinking and praying, and is ashamed of Jesus Christ. Science and politics have driven the Gospel into the background, and there is a feeling of unreality about the Saviour. The Church is going down, and the situation is bound to get worse. But, like all Christian leaders, Dr. Glover predicts the advent ere long of a marvellous revival.

The Bishop of Oxford is often the very soul of frankness. Preaching recently on the League of Nations he bemoaned the fact that Christianity is now "so narrow, so restricted, so degraded," that its impotence is a by-word. But Christianity has always been the same in its relation to the social and moral progress of mankind. Once it exerted stupendous power, but it was a power that made chiefly for evil; and even *that* is to-day almost entirely a thing of the past.

A feature of a recent service at Westminster Abbey was a Shakespearean anthem set to music. A pleasant change after Kipling's heroics.

"Moods in the Free Churches" is the title of an article by the Rev. Edward Shillito. Judging by the funereal emptiness of the pews, we should imagine the moods are black.

## 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.

## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

April 27, South Place, London.

## To Correspondents.

G. E. PATTERSON.—Thanks for writing. We are continually complaining to agents concerning delay in delivery of the *Freethinker*, and each one places the responsibility on someone else. We, however, intend to keep up the pressure at this end, and we hope that our readers will help by doing the same at their end. There is never any delay in the issue of this paper to the trade.

F. B. LAWES.—Much obliged for getting posters displayed. More being sent.

C. T. SHAW.—The story told concerning Bradlaugh by the evangelist is too ridiculous for discussion. Unfortunately, Christianity has made the kind of lying so common that people have ceased to regard it as reprehensible.

B. G. LEWIN.—One day, perhaps, Paine and others of the earlier Freethinkers will receive credit as pioneers of ideas such as that of a genuine League of Nations. That will come the quicker when Labour leaders are done truckling to the Churches and voicing social intellectual stupidities such as the "ideal character of Jesus."

L. S. LOVE.—We are sending parcel of literature for distribution with books ordered. Delighted to know the *Freethinker* is circulated in the East. As you indicate, some permanent good is sure to follow. Will try and arrange the other matter to which you refer.

H. PURDY.—Pleased to hear from you, and to learn that you are "doing your bit," so far as circumstances permit, towards increasing the influence of this journal.

S. WARR.—We quite agree with your judgment of missions in India. "Rice Christians" is a sufficiently expressive description of the bulk of the converts, and in the mass Hindoos—particularly educated ones—are unaffected by missionary effort. Why should it be otherwise? Christianity has nothing new to offer; India has plenty of superstitions of its own, and is equally able to compete with Christianity on ethical grounds.

E. RUSSELL.—References to Proteus should be found in any good work dealing with the Greek mythology. The quotation you refer to was taken, not from Shakespeare, but from Emerson's *Representative Men*, a great book by a rare genius.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence! It is the most utter falsehood, and a crime against the human race.—Richard Jeffries.

## Sugar Plums.

The course of lectures at South Place opens on Sunday next (April 27), and we bespeak the help of our London readers in seeing that the hall is crowded. The first lecture of the course will be on "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact." South Place can be easily reached by bus, tram, or train from any part of London. It is only three minutes walk from Liverpool Street.

Mr. Cohen's week in Scotland, proved very successful. At Edinburgh, on the 6th, there were two very encouraging meetings, the outcome of which is likely to be the formation of a new Branch of the N. S. S., and regular work next autumn and winter. At Falkirk, on the 7th, there was a good meeting, and the folk there are determined to push ahead with all energy. Paisley, on the 8th, provided a full hall, with very animated questions and discussion afterwards. This was the liveliest meeting of the week, and a Branch of the Society ought to be formed there at once. At Milngavie, on the 10th, there was a small but very interested audience, and whatever results from that will fall naturally to the Glasgow Branch. But Scotland, like the rest of Britain, is clearly on the move, and that fact should be taken full advantage of.

On Sunday, the 13th, the Glasgow meetings gave a fitting close to the visit. The hall was quite full in the morning, and crowded—inconveniently so—in the evening. There was much questioning, and it is evident that Glasgow is ready for a big move in Freethought propaganda. We were informed that the sale of literature was very large indeed—creating a record—and some new members were made. The Branch intends carrying on a vigorous propaganda next autumn, and those willing to help should write Mr. F. Lonsdale, 256 Calder Street, Govanhill, Glasgow. Scotland, we repeat, is moving.

Owing to Mr. Cohen's absence from London many correspondents will have had to wait for replies to their letters. Mr. Cohen has dealt with all that was possible while he was away, and others will have guessed and will excuse the delay. We have also to thank Mr. Lloyd who, during our absence in Scotland as in Ireland, has been good enough to see the *Freethinker* through the press. After the South Place meeting on April 27, we hope to have a little rest from lecturing during the summer months. There is plenty of work in other directions that need attention.

## MAN.

Kinship is universal. The orders, families, species, and races of the animal kingdom are the branches of a gigantic arbour. Every individual is a cell, every species is a tissue, and every order is an organ in this great surging, suffering, palpitating process. Man is simply one portion of the immense enterprise. He is as veritably an animal as the insect that drinks its little fill from his veins, the ox he goads, or the wild-fox that flees before his bellowings. Man is not a god, nor in any imminent danger of becoming one. He is not a celestial star-babe dropped down among mundane matters for a time and endowed with wing possibilities and the anatomy of a deity. He is a mammal of the order of primates, not so lamentable when we think of the hyena and serpent, but an exceedingly discouraging vertebrate compared with what he ought to be. He has come up from the worm and the quadruped. His relatives dwell on the prairies and in the fields, forests, and waves. He shares the honours and partakes of the infirmities of all his kindred. He walks on his hind limbs like an ape; he eats herbage and suckles his young like the ox; he slays his fellows and fills himself with their blood like the crocodile and the tiger; he grows old and dies and turns to banqueting worms, like all that come from the elemental loins.—J. Howard Moore, "The Universal Kinship."

## Man's Discovery of the World.

### IV.

(Continued from p. 181).

NESTORIAN and Jewish example appear to have inspired their Arabian masters with an ambition to emulate their successes in science and culture. In the eighth century, under Almansor, the science of geography attained a prominent position among the Arabs. The Caliph Almansor commissioned the translations of a Sanscrit astronomy into Arabic. The interest aroused by this rendering was great. A generation later the successor of Haroun, the Caliph Almamoun, established the first academy of geographical science seen in Europe since the days of the expiring Pagan Empire of Rome. Various priceless Greek manuscript volumes were collected, and the *Almagest* and other celebrated writings were turned into Arabic. Among these were works of Euclid, Aristotle, and Archimedes. At Bagdad, an observatory was erected. Travel became more general, and much important knowledge of other countries was gained.

A highly imaginative race, as their *Thousand and One Nights'* prove, the Arabians introduced into their early accounts of the earth many of the myths and marvels of the age. But with the advance of science and the strengthening of the critical spirit, various of these stories suffered discredit. Cathay, a land of mystery, was made known to the Western World. Soleyman, a Moslem traveller, penned a vivid description of his experiences in China, India, and other Eastern lands, in the closing years of the ninth century. One would infer that the customs of the Chinese have undergone little change since. Their relentless punishments, the silken dresses, the poll-tax, their rice beverages, porcelain, and tea are all referred to; while the suttee, self-torture, and caste system of India also receive mention.

Ahmed Ibn Fozlan visited Russia and Bulgaria in the tenth century, and his narrative is perhaps the first authentic account of Moscovy. His references to the steppes are clear and accurate, and he speaks of their human dwellers as "the most unwashed of men whom God has created."

Their dirtiness was in keeping with their manners, which were coarse and brutal. These primitive people were never at peace. Their dead were cremated, and those wives were most highly esteemed who voluntarily sacrificed themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. The ghosts of the dead were greatly feared, and human and animal sacrifices, with gifts of food, were offered to secure their goodwill or turn away their resentment.

The heathen Russian's divinities were rough wooden images, mostly rugged beams thrust vertically into the earth with their upper ends crudely fashioned to resemble a human form. The spirits of the dead visited the living in their sleep. No attention was devoted to the sick, who were merely provided with bread and water, and left to recover if they could. When a sufferer was restored to health, the ghostly gods became the recipients of sacrifices and gifts as an acknowledgment of their mercy and to secure their future favours. Here, as elsewhere, the spirits of the dead were the tyrannical deities of the living.

Ali Hassan, more usually known as Al Massoudy, whose birthplace was Bagdad, was a geographical pioneer of the tenth century. Massoudy was a widely travelled man who visited in the course of his journeyings the whole of the Islamic world from Hindostan to Spain. He also appears to have visited China and Madagascar in his later wanderings. But he held no official position in the State. This was probably an advantage, for he was a man of remarkable versatility

whose writings form a thesaurus of geographical facts. In his *Meadows of Gold*, which is a very instructive work, he surveys a vast territory. A great collector of details, he proves his independence of thought in dissenting from several of the orthodox opinions of his age. When we remember the utter darkness which reigned at this period throughout Christendom, and which persisted for many subsequent centuries, the maturity of Massoudy's judgments is very striking. When we allow for the necessarily imperfect knowledge, even of the better instructed, such a passage as the following seems remarkably modern. "Mathematicians," writes Massoudy,—

"have divided the earth into four quarters.....and into inhabited and uninhabited worlds. They say it is round, that its centre falls in the midst of the universe, and that the air surrounds it on all sides. The cultivated or inhabited land begins from the Fortunate Islands in the Western Ocean and goes to the extremity of China—a space of twelve hours (in the daily revolution of the sun), which amounts to half the circumference of the earth, or 13,500 of those miles which are in use in such a measurement. The breadth of the habitable land extends from the equator northward to the Isle of Thule, which belongs to Britain, and where the longest day has twenty hours—a distance of sixty degrees, or one sixth of the circumference of the earth. The extent of the cultivated land is thus one twelfth of the whole surface of the globe.

Massoudy forecasted several discoveries and guiding principles of modern science. He realized that the soil, the rivers, and the sea were subject to constant change, and in dealing with the curvature of the earth he advances the illustration of the gradual disappearance of objects on the ocean, and he notes that mountain peaks and summits are first visible, the whole mass coming into view on nearer approach only. He also insisted that night and day are of equal duration in the equatorial zone. To the dwellers at the equator, both the northern and southern poles lie within vision, while those of the north "never see Canopus and those who live in the south never catch sight of the Bear." And all this long centuries before the time ended in Christendom when men were tortured, imprisoned, and driven to ignoble death for daring to espouse such unscriptural doctrines.

And still there are men who decline to accept the truth of our planet's sphericity, despite the overwhelming evidences which establish it. One has only to stand on the sea-shore and observe the appearance of vessels as they approach or depart. When near, the entire ship is visible; at a greater distance the hull or body of the ship is lost to view. At a still further distance the top mast alone can be seen; while further yet, the whole vessel disappears. Obviously, were the world flat the hull being the bulk of the vessel would remain longest within view; while, as a matter of fact, the lower part of the ship vanishes and the rigging is last lost to sight. Something intervenes between the eye of the observer and the lower part of the vessel. This obstacle is, of course, the curvature of the earth. Again, the circular shadow thrown by the earth on the moon when our satellite is eclipsed is a further proof of the roundness of our planet. Moreover, as those who have crossed the Atlantic are well aware, the time of sunrise changes day by day. In sailing from Liverpool to New York the sun rises an hour later for every 600 miles as we journey west. Most assuredly, if the earth were flat, the sun would rise at the same moment over its entire surface. Furthermore, if the earth were a plane surface, Mont Blanc would be easily visible in England. The only possible explanation of these various phenomena is the real rotundity of the earth. T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)



## Determinism and Responsibility.

WHEN I next met Uncle Joe I lost no time in coming to grips with him on my favourite subjects of Free Will, Determinism, and Responsibility.

"Well Uncle," I said, after having remarked on the awful severity of the weather, the wintry cold and the biting Easterly winds—"Have you read Mark Twain's book on *What is Man?*?"

"Yes, I've gone through it."

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"Oh, not much," said Uncle Joe, with a sneer; "It does not read at all like the other works of the American humorist. Of course, it is well written, and has some fine passages in it; but, to my mind, it is unconvincing. In other words, I am still a believer in the freedom of man's will."

"And you do not believe that man's will is determined by the strength of the motive acting on his brain at the moment of volition?"

"No, not altogether. I admit that man is influenced by motives to a certain extent; but I do not think that he is a slave to the strongest motive. Why, sometimes he seems to act without a motive at all; at least, without a motive that we can discover."

"Ah, now you are referring, I presume, to those actions that man performs wherein he wills to do an act automatically. For instance, when I get up in the morning I do not ask myself whether I should put on my clothes, have my breakfast, and go to business. I have performed these actions so many thousands of times, that they become quite automatic, and I do not analyse the mental process by which I decide to perform them."

"But I feel that I am perfectly free to perform or not to perform these actions," said Uncle Joe, with emphasis.

"Exactly, but you are like a fly on the wheel, you are carried along without being conscious of the process by which such a result is brought about."

"But if we are merely machines, as you and Mark Twain and others like you, seem to think, by what right can you make a man responsible for his actions, if he has to do what he does by the force of the motives acting upon his mind? That's the point."

"Well, I'll tell you. A man is responsible to his fellow man because he can injure him by his actions, and we are all responsible to one another, and to society collectively for the same reason. And, in my opinion, the only people with a free will are idiots and people who are insane."

"How do you make that out?" said Uncle Joe, with a severity of tone which seemed to imply that I had by implication associated him with that kind of people.

"What I mean is this. An insane person is not regarded by the law of any civilized country as being responsible for his actions. Why? Simply because ordinary motives do not act upon him in the same way as they act upon healthy, rational men. You can never calculate, under any given circumstances, what an insane person is likely to do; in other words, his will seems to act without any guidance from his rational faculties. With regard to idiots, we know that they are persons with small brains, and are not responsible for their actions, because they cannot reason out the consequences of their acts."

"According to you, then, a rational being ought to be punished, though he cannot help doing what he does in the circumstances; but an insane person does not deserve to be punished, although he seems to be able to do what he chooses, apart, altogether from the motives which act upon the rational man's will. No, that will not do for me."

"Very well, Uncle Joe, let us reason the matter out further, and think what an important part rewards and punishments play in the formation of the will to act. We begin with the education of the child; and we promise children prizes for certain praiseworthy conduct, and punishment for the opposite. It does not matter what form the punishment may take, it may merely mean sending a child into the corner of a room for disobedience, or it may be caning one for a more serious offence. The object is not one of revenge, but is merely meant first as a chastisement for the offence, and secondly, with the object of so acting upon the mind of the child as to deter him or her, from a repetition of such conduct."

"Yes, I understand all that," said Uncle Joe. "I went through some of it in my childhood and my youth. But why punish the child if he cannot help doing what he does?"

"Because the child comes into the world with certain qualities of nature and mind; and these qualities are developed in the course of its life—by its education, and by habits formed from day to day. The child is not a mere passive being, but is endowed by Nature with immense potentialities, which are brought into full play by proper instruction, and are developed by contact with other children, its parents, and in other ways, by the environment in which it lives, moves and has its being. My experience has proved in the past that rewards and punishments play a most important part in the formation of character. Christians know that full well. Don't they hold out the promise of a heaven with everlasting bliss for believers, and hell, with eternal torment for unbelievers?"

"Ah, I thought you would not go far without saying something unkind about Christians!"

"Well, Uncle, you know it's true, you can't deny it. And, besides, look how our Christian statesmen or politicians have been giving away titles during the War to people who have been supposed to be doing some useful service."

"Come, I like that," said Uncle Joe. "*People who have been supposed to be doing something; people who have done something to merit their reward, you mean.*"

"Well, have it your own way, but Lords, Knights, and O.B.E.'s have become as plentiful as blackberries in autumn, haven't they? And now I come to the question of punishment of people who, the majority of their fellows regard as wrongdoers, and whose views are expressed on the Statute Books of our country in the shape of laws for the punishment of offences and crimes."

"Yes, that is exactly what I want to hear you on. How can you justify punishing a man for an offence, if he could not help doing it under the conditions in which he was placed, and all the circumstances attending the action?"

"Well, we punish him so that the punishment may act upon his mind and become a sufficiently strong motive to deter him and others from committing similar offences in the future."

"Well, suppose it does not deter him, or others, from committing such an offence in the future, what then?"

"Why, then we have to go on changing the form of punishment until it does deter them."

"But what about the confirmed criminal; you do not reform him?"

"No, perhaps not; but we go on punishing him nevertheless, so that his punishment may deter others from committing similar crimes."

"But suppose a criminal came before a judge," said Uncle Joe, waxing eloquent, pleading his case and said: "My Lord, I am charged with committing a very cold-blooded murder. Well, suppose I acknowledge that I committed the crime, what then? I say, my Lord,

that I have not a free will ; I am entirely a creature of circumstances, I have to act according to the motive strongest in my mind at the moment of volition. I could not help doing what I did in the circumstances, and I say that it would be a crime to punish me for doing what, under the conditions, I could not help doing."

"Yes, Uncle Joe, very well put ; very well put indeed ! But this is what I expect a wise and philosophic judge would say in reply : ' Prisoner at the bar, you confess to having committed a very cold-blooded and cruel murder. But in order to evade the consequences of your crime you plead that you have not a "free will" ; that your actions are determined by motives which were too strong for you to resist, and that you did this crime because, in the circumstances, you could not help it. My reply is that neither can we, the judges of this country, who represent the State or community in which you live, help punishing you. The State has to defend itself against you as a dangerous person. We cannot help it. You act like a wild beast, and we cage you and sometimes kill persons like you as we would a wild beast. We do not revenge ourselves against wild animals, but we protect ourselves against them or we should be destroyed. Moreover, we have to think of others ; and the punishment we inflict upon you is inflicted more for the purpose of deterring others from committing similar offences than acting upon you. We look upon your case as hopeless.'"

"Oh, that is what you think a wise judge would say, is it," said Uncle Joe, sternly. "Well, I don't think that would have much effect in reforming the criminal classes."

"Oh, yes, it would ; it would wipe the most dangerous of them off the face of the earth, and those that were capable of being reformed, in the process of evolution, would accept and act upon higher and nobler motives, and thus become decent and well-behaved citizens. This is really what has happened in the history of every civilized country, and some of the worst sort of criminals have been gradually stamped out. But other kinds have arisen of a different order, whose crimes are of greater magnitude—criminals in high places—and these we shall have to deal with later on."

"I think you had better leave it at that," said Uncle Joe.

"Oh, very well, let us change the subject." And after a short interval, we did.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Writers and Readers.

With acknowledgements to Mr. Geo. Underwood for the very apt title of his monthly contribution.

THERE is an ebb-tide in the affairs of men, of some men at least, writers and readers in particular, when book and periodical, writing and reading, are anathema, when the mental invalid is fain to cry out, like the famishing tribes of Israel,—“My soul abhorreth this light bread!” when books are a plague, or lumber, and learning seems an intolerable burden. When, for example, he takes up the Oxford Dictionary and peruses all the idiomatic (and, as he thinks), idiotic, renderings of the English verb *to make*, the burden of learning seems to crush him like an avalanche, he closes the book and his eyes, and rubs his forehead, wearied and dismayed, if not despairing, and, when he reflects further, this is but one word in one language and that his own, he is apt to look upon those who have acquired say, seven or eight others as super men—which indeed they are. Knowledge is power, but it is also an oppression to him who has it, so the perplexed one quite excusably concludes. But he is

merely sated and replete. He will hunger and thirst again, and find himself digging in the mine of learning once more, growing more skilful and eclectic as the days pass, and wasting of his treasure trove. He enriches his mind, not as the miser heaps his gold, but as a light to his path and to that of others. He pauses, musing, perhaps, and says : “It is not in the number of words a man uses, but in their significance, in the clarity and intensity of the thought and the power of their utterance wherein lie the true greatness and goodness.” “Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, these three alone lead life to sovereign power,”—not personal power alone, not the mere pedantic or ornamental perquisite of the individual, but power unto the salvation and happiness of mankind. It may be held as certain that no wisely, earnest, and devoted student studies in vain. Though in his little span of time he seems to cast his bread upon the turgid waste of waters, yet will it be cast up again upon some other shore, perhaps to gladden and refresh the giver on some distant desperate day. A man's dark chickens oft come home to roost skulkingly, to their rafters dim and worm-eated ; but the bright-plumaged, pure, and noble brood come also, and gladden his heart like the azure and the sun of spring. Man at worst is but an exile: he has “Returning visions”—

Evening comes, through my dreams  
The vesper chimes are ringing ;  
I see the tapers gleam,  
And hear the maidens sing.....

in fancy, perhaps, on the sequestered roadway, the pine wood appears again, the resinous scent is remembered, and the woodland fringe that waved and blanched in the attacking wind. He would go there again ; he was not mistaken ! It was an abiding joy, because a wholly necessary and natural one. In one word, it is Con-valescence.

A. MILLAR.

## Correspondence.

### SOME QUESTIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—May an interested follower of the discussion between yourself and Dr. Lyttelton suggest that it would “clear the air” considerably if he would answer the direct questions put to him ? He says: “life is not long enough,” etc. ; but, surely, as he suggested this discussion, it is only fair to answer all questions asked. You, on your side, have dealt with his main points fully and clearly ; and I, and other readers, wish to see yours dealt with as plainly. May I request Dr. Lyttelton to say something definite on the following heads ?—

1. That religion is, in its origin, a *mistaken interpretation* of man and nature by primitive ignorance.
2. Christian apologetics are irrelevant to the point that Christianity is *untrue*.<sup>1</sup>
3. The article of November 17, on the *reliability* of convictions and the correct diagnosis of mental states, is vital to the issue and requires an answer.
4. Is morality necessarily connected with religion ?

The point at issue between Freethinkers and Christians is, the truth or untruth of Christianity, and the only way to commend it to Rationalists is to give valid reasons for believing it.

W. JAMESON.

Fame is not got by seeking it. All such pursuit is vain. It may very well come about that a man will succeed through tact and various artifices in making for himself some sort of name. But if there is no inner worth, all will prove empty and ephemeral.—*Goethe*.

<sup>1</sup> See “Views and Opinions,” January 26, February 2 and 9, and last paragraph, March 23.

### God's Ways.

I THOUGHT, as I gazed at the Scriptural text that emblazoned the parson's tract,  
 How many were left believing such stuff after yesterday morning's scrap:  
 So I rallied the men, and challenged them all, as to whether they thought it a fact  
 That the Lord was loving their erring souls by leading them into a trap.

The silence ensuing hung heavy and dank on ears that betokened suspense,—  
 For the trenches had bred in these stalwarts of men the pose of a questing mien,—  
 Each glanced at his neighbour, and then at the tract;—the silence grew more intense,—  
 For somehow they felt that His scheme of things was not as it might have been.

"Well, boys, I must say," said one of the group, "though the saying may strike me dead;  
 That I never could, truthfully, understand the motives surrounding His scheme:  
 For how could He love poor Teddy O'Brien by blowing away his head?  
 Then gaze like a Sphinx on his wife and bairns, making silence His proof of esteem"?

"That's so," said a corporal just to the left, "and what about Charlie Bell?  
 —As trusty a sport, and a gentleman, as you never hailed chum in your life.—  
 Whilst carrying his wounded sergeant away a shell came along, and,—well  
 All that remained of the pair of them was a blood-stained pocket-knife."

"Well, mates," said a third, "I've been through the lot from the time of the battle of Mons;  
 I've seen fellows killed with the rifle and 'Lewis,' and I've seen them bayoneted through:  
 But I'd never have thought that the Lord would allow some poor mothers' dutiful sons  
 To linger alive on a barbed-wire fence with their abdomens cloven in two."

A clamour of voices then surged to a flood, protesting their angered thoughts  
 At the puppets they'd been in His universe,—mere skittles to His crazy whim:  
 For in the hearts of these men resentment ran deep when they thought of the battles they'd fought,  
 And the Lord all the while not seeming to care a damn if they sink or swim.

I told them I thought that their anger was just 'gainst a Father conniving such deeds:  
 That if we as His children were going astray, His omnipotence should have been will'd  
 To render life's pathway much sweeter and bright; *virtuous* rivalry temper our needs:  
 Instead of bemusing in silence these crimes,—making silence interpret His guilt.

"Yet I urge you, good chaps, to remember," I said, "and attempt not His plans to amend,  
 For if Providence wishes to love you at all, relentless He'll chasten you well:  
 And if reason compels you to doubt and deny that to our wayward souls He's a Friend,  
 Just simply ignore Him,—as being 'non est,'—and fear not the priest-threats of Hell."

S. C.

No answer has come through the ages  
 To the poets, the seers, and the sages  
 Who have sought in the secrets of science  
 The name and the nature of God.—*John Hay.*

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): Easter Sunday.—No Service.

##### OUTDOOR.

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

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): Easter Sunday.—No Meeting.

LANCASTER AND MORCAMBE.—Readers in this district are invited to communicate with Mr. C. E. Hill, Blea Tarn.

WANTED.—Furnished Bedroom in E.C. District Apply "M.," *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

### THE SECULAR SOCIETY, Ltd.

*Company Limited by Guarantee.*

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Secretary: MISS E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

*A Form of Bequest.*—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

## South Place Institute

SOUTH PLACE, MOORGATE STREET, E.C. 4

### Sunday Evening Lectures

(Under the auspices of the National Secular Society.)

APRIL 27.

**Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN**

"The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact."

MAY 4.

**Mr. J. T. LLOYD**

"The Lord's Supper: Christian and Pagan."

MAY 11.

**Mr. HARRY SNELL**

"Do the Dead Still Live?"

Doors open at 7. Chair taken at 7.30.  
Admission Free. Collection. Discussion Cordially Invited.

### PRINTING.

Under Healthy Conditions, Trade Union Hours and Rates of Pay.

Send me a Trial Order. Estimates for any Class of Work.

Quality and Value my Working Motto.

**W. H. HEARSON,**

Printer,  
**UTTOXETER.**

### Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

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

### 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.

### Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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 G. W. FOOTE AND J. M. WHEELER.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. Being the Sepher Toldoth Jeshu, or Book of the Generation of Jesus. Price 6d., postage 1d.

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.

### 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.

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