

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### The Psychology of Saffron-Tea.

There is an old-fashioned remedy for measles. It consists in dosing the sufferer with saffron-tea. One might as profitably stroke the child's back with a brick, or perform a war-dance round its cot. But the decoction has its place as a remedy for measles, and it keeps its position. One woman hands it on to another, and few young mothers with a sick child have the courage to turn their backs on so well-established a remedy. She feels that perhaps, after all, there may be something in it; at anyrate, she declines to take the risk of rejecting it. Everyone will appreciate the position of the mother, although one would wish to see the maternal solicitude expressed in a more intelligent manner. And as—in spite of the saying to the contrary—our minds are not kept in watertight compartments, it happens that the mother with her saffron-tea will serve to open to inspection a whole area of our mental life.

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### The Saffron-Tea Type.

The mother, afraid to risk the unknown by giving up saffron-tea in a case of measles, stands for a very common type of mind. One can see in all directions customs, beliefs, and institutions perpetuated for no better reason than that they already exist. People find them here when they arrive, and they intend to leave them here when they depart. It is the risk of breaking away that daunts them. Monarchies and aristocracies, armies and the Church, with a score of other things, are kept going for no better reason than the one that keeps up the use of saffron-tea. People feel safer in the old ruts, even though they grumble at the discomfort of the road. Indeed, with most, love of the old is but another term for fear of the new. A charm for some the new may have, but to the average man or woman it gives rise to a vague apprehension that is more unnerving than a definite fear. Sometimes the expressed fears are simply grotesque. A prison chaplain, solemnly looking over his conscript congregation—among whom a Freethinker is seldom seen—will assure them and the rest of the world that, in the absence of religion, people would surely take to evil living. Men without home or clothing will be found wondering how they would get on did an enemy land in England. Women were refused the vote for generations simply because

people feared what would happen if they got it. Every reformer has to fight this fear of the future; every vested interest finds in it its best friend.

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### Religion and Humbug.

Modern religion rests almost entirely on the perpetuation of this saffron-tea type of mind. Religion always has been, therefore it must continue to be. People cloak their fear of the future under various disguises, but it is there. Many thousands have no religious belief themselves, but they appear to think it would be rather risky for their women-folk to be without it. Others persuade themselves that in some unknown way religion does a deal of good, and that if we throw it overboard altogether society may be exposed to serious danger. Yet others are afraid that for some people religion does act as a moral restraint. The humour of the situation is that each one thinks it is good for the other. "A" will assure you that religion is of no use to him, but it helps to keep "B" straight. And "B" will be equally convinced that "A" needs religion, while quite certain of his own impeccability. Each half thus spends its time in playing the hypocrite for the moral improvement of the other half. Each is engaged in inoculating the other with insincerity in order to encourage straightforwardness. And all that is wanted to end this general game of humbug is moral courage—the rarest of all the virtues.

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### Moral Cant.

It is the same if we take morality apart from religion. An innovation in morals is resisted, merely because it is an innovation. Professional moralists solemnly warn us of the danger of disturbing accepted conventions, as though morality was dependent for its existence upon the maintenance of a general, even though unacknowledged, conspiracy. The obligation to morality does not come from theory, but from life, and unless the whole basis of social life undergoes a radical alteration, a fundamental change in morals is a sheer impossibility. And those who implore us not to disturb things are sublimely unconscious of the fact that not to do so often means the greatest disturbance of all. Life is made better and cleaner by disturbance—which is only another name for a more profitable adjustment of the human organism to its surroundings. If people were only wise enough they would realize that it is precisely those who aim at keeping things as they are, are the creators of the greatest disturbance of all. They prevent that orderly and almost insensible process of development which distinguishes evolution from revolution. And, in such cases, it is not moral strength that is protesting against change, but moral weakness. Moral strength would act upon the perception of the fact that the adjustment of the organism to its environment proceeds with the least friction and disturbance where and when the power of the intellect in modifying and adapting is appreciated and exercised. It is the saffron tea order of intellect again; the mind that is afraid to chance it, that sees only the possibilities of danger, and nothing of the probabilities of better things.

### The Cowardice of Custom.

To come back to our opening illustration. Saffron-tea as a cure for measles is a survival. It rests probably upon a basis of sympathetic magic. The colour of saffron and that of the rash of measles is about the same, and like was held to cure like. The reason for its use is forgotten; the practice of using it continues. And that, in a sentence, is the whole position of religion in a modern society. Who knows the origin of religion? Certainly not the one who believes in it. Understanding and belief are here quite antagonistic. The man who understands religion does not believe in it; the man who believes in it does not understand it. Like the saffron-tea cure, religion is based on magic, more or less, and it is perpetuated in a spirit of sheer conservatism. Originally man dare not offend his gods because, to him, they are very real. Later, the belief in them grows weak; but by that time custom has done its part, and custom, as well as conscience, "makes cowards of us all." There *may* be something in religion, or there may not be. At any rate, they say, let us keep on the safe side. It is just as well to be out of danger. And in this matter the reformer is at a considerable disadvantage. His opponents are speaking a language the ordinary man well understands. The reformer is speaking a new language, voicing unfamiliar ideas; he has to create the material for his work; the reactionist finds everything he needs ready to his hand.

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### Wanted, Moral Courage.

Intellectually, the issue is between mental clarity and mental confusion. But the moral issue, that between moral strength and cowardice, goes deeper still. And it is one that is of consequence in every direction. No one who has studied public affairs can have failed to notice the lack of moral strength in both the general public and its leaders. At the top we have a series of tricks and evasions; below there is a sheer dislike in forcing a straight issue of principle, and an overmastering desire to rest on the apparently safe basis of custom. Faith, in the religious sense of the word, the Free-thinker may not have; but faith in the best sense of the word he does possess. He has faith in the future; in the undeveloped possibilities of human nature—its power for good, its capacities for great deeds. He, at least, is not afraid to leave the saffron-tea stage of culture behind him. To him experience is a school in which the lessons of the past are only properly appreciated and utilized when they result in an orderly and progressive change in the life of the present and the future.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Dumb Oracles.

INNUMERABLE were the oracles sought and relied upon in the ancient world. In Greece, for example, they were in constant demand, and, when obtained, regarded as absolutely infallible, though often so vague and mysterious as to admit of various and conflicting interpretations. The most famous were the oracles of Zeus at Dodona and of Apollo at Delphi. The latter may be taken as typical. As is well known, Delphi was a small town in the territory of Phocis, situated on one of the southern slopes of Mount Parnassus, about six miles inland from the Gulf of Corinth, and upwards of two thousand feet above sea-level. Delphi owes its renown to its temple, the site of which was determined by a fissure in the ground from which arose a strange, intoxicating vapour, on inhaling which a goatherd began to frisk about and dance in the most frenzied manner, and to

make weird noises which were accepted by the superstitious populace as inspired prophecies. Hence a temple to Apollo was erected over the chasm in which Pythia reigned supreme as priestess. A three-legged stool, or bronze altar, was placed over the opening, on which Pythia sat whenever an oracle was expected. After inhaling the delightful intoxicant for a little while, she never failed to receive the expected message from the God Apollo. Becoming inebriated meant getting into direct communication with heaven; and the oracle was the Divine answer to an inquiry respecting some puzzling affair or future event. An oracle also means, not merely the Divine answer, but the Deity from whom the answer comes, and sometimes the temple or sanctuary wherein the answer is officially granted. Now, in whatever sense the term is taken, it represents a superstition. Is it conceivable that Apollo would disclose his purpose only through an intoxicated woman, or that Jehovah would speak to his people nowhere except in a sanctuary, and not without mediation even there? In any sense, indeed,—

The oracles are dumb;

No voice or hideous hum

Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.

The Rev. A. T. S. James, of Gloucester, in an article in the *Christian World* for May 15, refers to a conversation which the late Mr. Myers once had with George Eliot, in the course of which the distinguished novelist, "speaking of the three words, *God, Immortality, Duty*, said with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable was the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*." That statement impresses us as an eminently sensible one; but Myers, while he listened to it in the falling shadows, "seemed to be gazing, like Titus at Jerusalem, on vacant seats and empty halls, on a sanctuary with no Presence to hallow it, and heaven left lonely of a God." In the sense in which it was uttered, that is true enough; but we must strongly object to Mr. James' following comment:—

This exactly hits the nameless desolation through which the soul drifts when the deep sea lights of Christian revelation have burnt out and the oracles are dumb. One after another the heights of faith have dropped out of sight. And there remains only the stoic will to play a man's part in a world which answers no questions and gives little help.

Our contention is not that the oracles no longer speak, but that superhuman oracles never did speak; not that the heavens are now silent, but that they were never vocal. If we are living "in a world which answers no questions and gives little help," the same was true of all our ancestors, the only difference being that we have fewer illusions than they had. For them, the Bible contained the oracles of God, and they imagined that they were privileged to listen to Divine oracles in church on Sundays. We have outgrown that illusion, and are all the richer in consequence. When the Gods vanish, we merely get rid of an intellectual and emotional encumbrance, and are all the better off. But it is not true that the world answers no questions and gives but little help in the absence of a Deity; as a matter of fact, it responds to our calls and renders assistance on a much larger scale than it ever did when supernatural belief denominated life. It is sheer nonsense to claim that "high-tension pessimism" results from unbelief in God and his Providence. Mr. James himself admits that within what he calls "the warmer climes of Christian faith life's strain is perhaps not less." We maintain that Christian faith increases and intensifies life's natural strain, rendering the way narrower and the gate straighter than they naturally are, and that the "reliefs" and the

"assurances" spoken of are deceptive and demoralizing. Naturally, "the clouds have chinks and the sun breaks through"; but the "chinks" Mr. James has in mind are wholly imaginary. One of them, according to him, is the intercession of Christ. "Such a truth," he says, "changes the world from a voiceless chaos into a dwelling place with fires and lamps burning in its rooms."

From this point to the end of the article the reverend gentleman welters in mawkish sentimentalism. The compassion and companionship of Christ have simply an imaginary existence, like Christ himself. The human world has never been transformed from a state of voiceless chaos into that of a warm, luminous, peaceful, and comfortable dwelling-place. Faith in the so-called eternal Christ, it is true, does at times give rise to rapture, ecstasy, spiritual inebriation, frenzy, and world-forgetfulness; but its inevitable tendency is to weaken and lower the tone of character, and, as history abundantly testifies, it has never redeemed and ennobled social and national life.

We are fully aware that the New Testament describes Christ as Intercessor, as constantly interceding for the disciples, and as being his people's advocate with the Father. Mr. James says that "it is much for men if they have such an advocate in the heavens, one who 'ever liveth to make intercession for them.'" The question, however, is, why should men need an intercessor? Is the reverend gentleman a slave to the ancient superstition which represents man's Maker and Father as his enemy who could only be converted into his friend by the costliest and most cruel and wicked sacrifice? The ministry of intercession is intellectually the most illogical and absurd, and morally the most Godless ministry ever heard of; and one is amazed that even a clergyman should have the temerity to fall back upon it at this late hour. Unfortunately, after nearly two millenniums of the Christian religion, the world is still a chaos; but, at last, in the slow process of evolution, it has become a vocal chaos, a fact in which lies its only real hope of regeneration. As against this listen to the voice of superstition, which is given as an oracle of God:—

There is the special case of Peter, to whom Christ said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." So he came to the closeness of single instances, as if his care and desire found a focus in our separate selves. As if he knew that the shafts of sin are not bowshots at a venture but the settled aim of a cool marksman; and as though he as distinctly adopted our individual defence. It is so human. We are no longer cusps in an ether maelstrom. The dramatic centre is a contest of giants for the possession of spiritual citadels. These men, said he, live all the time on the edge of defeat, and "wonder that there is no intercessor, therefore his own arm brought salvation." And Christ's intercession means intervention.

Having indulged in that orgy of emotionalism, Mr. James says of it that "at first it may seem neither sound philosophy nor valid logic." We are profoundly convinced that both to begin and to end with it is essentially unphilosophical and entirely illogical. Its clear natural sense stamps it as an outrage upon reason and contradictory to all the known facts of life. Supernatural interventions in the history of mankind are utterly unknown. As Matthew Arnold used to reiterate endlessly, "miracles do not happen." Prayer, Christian or Pagan, has never had the slightest effect upon events. The reverend gentleman cannot establish a single case of "direct, plain interposition." Did God intervene in the world-war to shorten it by one hour or to lessen its horrors by a single iota? He was claimed as an avowed Ally by both sides, and yet he allowed the curse to go on until it naturally exhausted itself. It is

the biggest and best equipped battalions which always win. Individual, social, national, and international salvation must be worked out from within, every attempt to work it in from without having ended in total failure.

No, the gods have never intervened; their policy has ever been one of masterly inactivity; the Divine oracles have been throughout the ages absolutely dumb. If we do not or cannot save ourselves we are lost indeed. All reforms have been the rewards of persistent struggle. Even justice never comes of its own accord, but must be fought for with might and main.

J. T. LLOYD.

## How the Clergy Exploit Sunday.

Religion, everywhere present, as a warp running through the woof of human history.—*Herbert Spencer.*

It is time to fling aside the antiquated rubbish of the clergy, and arrange our periods of rest and recreation according to the dictates of common sense.—*G. W. Foote.*

ONE of the results of the Great War is the increasing secularization of Sunday. The manhood of Britain is no longer deceived in the matter of Sabbatarianism. They have seen with their own eyes that Sunday is a genuine holiday throughout the Continent, and they are not to be satisfied with the deadly dullness of the British Sabbath. Accordingly, men are everywhere seeking to introduce Sunday sports, and this has already provoked the clergy into those extreme opinions on the subject which are very generally received with derision, if not with contempt. Even a modest proposal to raise money for blinded soldiers by Sunday entertainments aroused the ire of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and others.

With the wisdom of the serpent, the clergy recognize that under modern conditions it is useless to expect the democracy to spend their only free day in the midst of the scene of their work; being faced by the alternatives of spiritual and spirituous intoxication provided by places of worship and public-houses. The clergy do not venture to propose attacking Sunday travel by rail, bus, or tram, but they influence railway companies so that the Sabbath time-tables are a delusion and a snare. They concentrate rather on denouncing Sunday games, and the Sunday Observance Movement promises to lose what influence it possessed, and to court disaster in a cloud of public disfavour.

Sunday relaxation is taboo for the simple reason that the clergy desire one day in seven for their own special purposes. Despite their hypocritical plea for a day of rest, the clergy themselves work on Sunday, so do their servants, choristers, organists, and all who are engaged about their churches. Religious people delight in noise, and plenty of it, and inflict their barbarous taste upon others. Acts of Parliament give local authorities power to suppress unnecessary noise, and vendors of milk, watercress, and muffins have, here and there, been compelled to desist from their raucous cries. Even cab-whistling may be suppressed. A man may proceed against his neighbour if he has a dog that bays the moon, or cocks that challenge the dawn. Organ-grinders may be moved on. But the "unco' guid" turn the "day of rest" into a pious pandemonium, and the peaceful citizen does nothing, because the noise is associated with religion. We do not discriminate between any sect, and criticize equally the State and fancy religions. We object as much to the clanging of bells in church-steeple and tin-tabernacles as we do to the trombones and tambourines of the Church and Salvation Armies, and side-street mission bands. Leather-lunged preachers, with throats of brass, are equally distasteful to our ears, whether dressed in scarlet, corduroy, or black. The banging

of drums, the blare of brass instruments, the droning of harmoniums, and the bellowing of hymns is sufficient to make the term "day of rest" a fine piece of irony.

Of all these noises bell-ringing is the most perfect anomaly. People no longer believe in evil spirits, hence there is no necessity to ring bells to drive them away. Since none are so poor as not to possess a clock, the secondary purpose of the Sunday cacophony is also a need of the past. Unless the clergy, who profess to care so much for "the day of rest," are prepared to grapple with this problem of noise, we cannot see that they can escape the accusation of hypocrisy. The modern idea of Sunday is broadening, and with the return of millions of soldiers who have had actual experience of saner customs, the religious minority must adapt themselves to the changed conditions. The time has gone by for ever when the working-folk of a great nation can be fobbed off with the sole resources of the public-house as an alternative to the ritual of an outworn creed. Not much longer will the democracy consent to wallow in such kennels, and so give excuse to saintly tyrants to call aloud for more laws which shall convert the one free day in a week of work into one of gloom, bigotry, and persecution. Let those who have six days in the week for the world's pleasures appropriate Sunday to sackcloth and ashes, but let those who employ six days in toil devote their Sundays to a different purpose. Let the workers have one day's freedom in the week—freedom for rational enjoyment. There are other people in the world beside the clergy. We could manage to exist without parsons, but we must have workers.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Origin of Life.

V.

(Continued from p. 225.)

Expectation is permissible where belief is not; and if it were given me to look beyond the abyss of geologically recorded time to the still more remote period when the earth was passing through physical and chemical conditions, which it can no more see again than a man can recall his infancy, I should expect to be a witness of the evolution of living protoplasm from not living matter.—Professor T. H. Huxley, "Biogenis and Abiogenesis," *British Association Address*; 1870.

The study of protoplasm has given no reason for abandoning the productive *working hypothesis* that life phenomena are an expression of a complex interaction of physico-chemical laws which do not differ fundamentally from the so-called laws operating in the inorganic world.—Professor L. L. Woodruff, "The Evolution of the Earth and its Inhabitants"; 1919; pp. 86-87.

A question long perplexing physiologists and psychologists alike is that concerned with the great mystery that underlies memory. But now, through certain experiments I have carried out, it is possible to trace "memory impressions" backwards even in organic matter, such latent impressions being capable of subsequent revival.—Professor J. C. Bose, "The Socialist Review," June, 1918; p. 145.

PROFESSOR BOSE, in his valuable work, *Response in the Living and Non-living* (1902), has proved by actual experiments that non-living matter is responsive to the same stimulus as nerve or plant. Metals, for instance, suffer from fatigue—a fact well known to engineers—respond to electricity and heat, and even respond to poison and contract disease. In the just published *Life of Matter*, by Mr. A. Turnbull, there is an illustration given of a plate of tin attacked by disease, which, in time, reduces it to a shapeless mass of grey powder. This is not due to rust. Mr. Turnbull also gives a quotation from the famous chemist, J. H. van Hoff, who declares that this "change is not due to the influence of the atmosphere or its moisture," and "the phenomena

has this in common with disease, that it is contagious. When the phenomenon exhibits itself, as it sometimes does in the pipes of church organs, it is consequently a good plan to remove the objects which have become infected."<sup>1</sup> Which all bears out the remarkable experiments of Professor Bose, who summing up the result of his researches, declares:—

Finally, just as the response of animal tissue is exalted by stimulants, lowered by depressants, and abolished by poisons, so also we have found the response in plants and metals undergoing similar exaltation, depression, or abolition.....The parallel is the more striking since it has long been known with regard to animal tissues that the same drug, administered in large or small doses, might have opposite effects; and in preceding chapters we have seen that the same statement holds good of plants and metals also.....Thus living response in all its diverse manifestations is found to be only a repetition of responses seen in the inorganic. There is in it no element of mystery or caprice, such as we must admit to be applied in the assumption of a hyper-mechanical vital force, acting in contradiction or defiance of those physical laws that govern the world of matter. Nowhere in the entire range of these response phenomena—inclusive as that is of metals, plants, and animals—do we detect any breach of continuity.....there is no necessity for the assumption of vital force. They are, on the contrary, physico-chemical phenomena, susceptible of a physical inquiry as definite as any other in unorganic regions.<sup>2</sup>

A consideration of these facts will lead to a proper appreciation of the following words of Professor Tyndall, written over fifty years ago. He says: "Supposing a planet carved from the sun, set spinning round an axis, and revolving round the sun at a distance from him equal to that of our earth, would one of the consequences of its refrigeration be the development of organic forms? I lean to the affirmative. *Structural* forces are certainly in the mass whether or not those forces reach to the extent of forming a plant or an animal. In an amorphous drop of water lie latent all the marvels of crystalline force; and who will set limits to the possible play of molecules in a cooling planet? If these statements startle, it is because matter has been defined and maligned by philosophers and theologians, who were equally unaware that it is, at bottom, essentially mystical and transcendental."

Not quite so mystical and transcendental now as at the time of Tyndall it appeared to be. We know a great deal more about the internal construction of matter since the discovery of radium, and if the rate of progress of the last ten years is maintained, it will not take long to solve the few remaining problems which the pious are always declaring that science never can, or will, solve.

All the infinite variety of form and colour displayed by plant and animal life are the result of the selfsame energies and forces operating in the world of non living matter. As Professor D'Arcy Thompson well observes: "Cell and tissue, shell and bone, leaf and flower, are so many portions of matter, and it is in obedience to the laws of physics that their particles have been moved, moulded, and conformed."

The problems of biology and morphology can only be solved by the physicist and the chemist. "Their problems of form are in the first instance, mathematical problems; and their problems of growth are essentially physical problems; and the morphologist is, *ipso facto*, a student of physical form."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Turnbull, *The Life of Matter*, 1919, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Bose, *Response in the Living and Non-living*, pp. 188-189-190.

<sup>3</sup> Tyndall, *Fragments of Science* (1876), p. 464.

<sup>4</sup> D'Arcy M. Thompson, *Growth and Form*, p. 8.

"But," objects the apologist for Creation, "you cannot compare the growth of a crystal to the growth of a plant. The crystal grows by assimilation or accretion, from without, whereas the cell and the plant grow from within." This argument might have been valid before the year 1866, but it is not valid now; for the forms of many plants, shells, corals, amœba, cells, and other organized living bodies have been imitated from inorganic matter by growth from within. This has been accomplished by the force of osmosis, a purely physical force.

Osmosis is the force by means of which the sap of plants is caused to rise against the force of gravity. If it were not for osmosis, there would have been no trees, shrubs, or grass; probably there would have been no life at all—at any rate, it would have been very different to life as we know it now.

There is nothing mysterious about osmosis; it is a perfectly natural force. For instance, if you place a solution of cane sugar in a bladder or membrane sufficiently porous to absorb water, and immerse it in water, the water will pass through the membrane, but the sugar solution will not pass out into the water. This will go on until the membrane fills to bursting point. Leduc says that a solution of sugar containing 342 grammes of sugar per litre will develop the enormous pressure of 22.35 atmospheres.

It was Moritz Traube, of Breslau, who, in 1866, discovered the osmotic properties of certain chemical precipitates. He made the first artificial cell, and studied the osmotic properties of membranes; but, like Newlands, the discoverer of the periodicity of the chemical elements, and Mayer, the discoverer of the Conservation of Energy, his discovery fell into complete oblivion. As he rightly complained: "There are a number of persons quite blind to all progress, who in the presence of a new discovery think only of the objections which may be brought against it."<sup>1</sup> His work has since been collected and published by his son.

A great deal has been discovered in this line of research since then by many eminent experimenters, and the works on the subject would make a long list, of which Professor Benedikt's *Crystallization and Morphogenesis* and Professor Dubois' *Creation of Living Beings* may be cited as examples. But perhaps Professor Stephane Leduc, of Nantes, has achieved most success in the production of living forms from lifeless matter. His numerous contributions to scientific journals during the previous ten years have been collected and translated into English, in 1911, under the title, *The Mechanism of Life*; and an astonishing work it is. There are illustrations given of plants produced, roots and stems, culminating in a tulip-like expansion at the top, of varying colours, which no one would hesitate for a moment to declare were living plants. There are illustrations of osmotic mushrooms, of which Leduc declares, "The resemblance is so perfect that some of our productions have been taken for fungi even by experts."<sup>2</sup>

(To be concluded.) W. MANN.

#### REASON.

We possess, however, a sense, which, with respect to the scope of the relations which it can comprehend, is richer than any other. It is our reason. This stands above the senses. It alone is competent to found a permanent and sufficient view of the world. The mechanical conception of the world has performed wonders since Galileo's time. But it must now yield to a broader view of things.—*Ernst Mach*, "Popular Lectures."

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Leduc, *The Mechanism of Life*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Leduc, *The Mechanism of Life*, p. 134.

## Acid Drops.

Dr. Fort Newton is disappointed at there being no mention of God or religion in the Peace treaty. Now, what on earth can Dr. Newton expect? For nearly five years God let the whole world fight away without bothering himself in the least about them. And, naturally, by that time people had become convinced God was leaving them to get out of the muddle as they best could. Mr. Churchill warned Italy that if she didn't come in while the War was on, she couldn't expect anything when the War was over. And it is only reasonable to apply the same rule to God. Having muddled through the War without "divine help," we can certainly manage the rest without heavenly aid.

To the annals of clerical poverty may be added the name of the unfortunate Rev. E. C. P. Adams, of Bexhill-on-Sea, who died leaving only £21,132. A companion in misfortune was Dr. Percival, Bishop of Hereford, who left the beggarly sum of £39,000.

It looks as if Roman Catholics had organized a press bureau of their own for supply "news" to the papers. In a London daily recently nearly a column was devoted to an account of the damage done to Rheims Cathedral during the War, the outstanding incident in the article being the cheering of a Roman Catholic cardinal by British officers. The editor discreetly headed the article "From Our Special Correspondent."

When the Church was disestablished in Russia, there was a howl of indignation in the religious press in this country, and tales—true and false—began to fly around. In the *Daily Telegraph* for May 17 there appears a circumstantial account of the massacre—by Catholic Poles—of Jews at Vilna. On April 18 Vilna was taken by 400 Polish Legionaries. A pogrom was started, and over 2,000 Jews were killed. All the Jewish houses were plundered, and about 10,000 Jews deported to Lida. The Chief Rabbi was arrested because he refused to confirm the statement that the pogrom was the work of Bolsheviks. Pious Poland seems bent on following the road of "Holy Russia."

Speaking in the House of Commons on the Education Bill, Mr. Lynn, M.P., declared that "clericalism was strangling education in Ireland."

Canon Cooper, Vicar of Filey, is arranging two walking tours. One will be round about the Peak of Derbyshire; and later, according to the papers, "he hopes to walk to Madrid." Presumably, in the Spanish excursion, he will emulate the Founder of his religion, and walk the waves.

Of 3,000 Church of England army chaplains, only 820 have been demobilized. Army chaplains receive officers' pay, and, in many cases, are better off in the army than out of it. The majority, therefore, are still guarding England—and the communion port.

Father Vaughan is quite disgusted with the behaviour of the people to-day. He says that people are empty-headed, the Divorce Courts are congested, and the community generally going to the Devil. We have no doubt this kind of thing helps to fill a church; but Father Vaughan should bethink that it says little for the moral influence of his creed if the country is in so desperate a condition. For ourselves, we expected a certain amount of relaxation and demoralization following the War, and we are not disappointed. It was the clergy who talked loudly and stupidly on the "moral uplift" of going to war.

Father Bernard Vaughan considers the peace terms to Germany "generous and magnanimous." Now, we wonder what he would consider severity? It would certainly be something with boiling oil in it—with a special preservative for keeping the victim alive as long as possible. Father Vaughan's Church has quite an expert knowledge of that kind of thing.

We wonder whether Father Vaughan considers the starvation of millions of women and children, through the maintenance of the blockade, and six months after the cessation of fighting, "magnanimous"? It was this Christian priest who said it was our business to go on killing Germans—not to defeat them, but to kill them! Nothing less than that would satisfy him. And this is still being done. For we do it as well by starvation as by bullets. It is not the Kaiser, or any of the military gang that let loose this War on Europe, that we are killing. They will escape. Nor do we suppose a single one of that crowd is going hungry. It is the women and children, and the poor, who will suffer most. "Suffer little children to come unto me," says the New Testament. "And I will sort them out," comments Father Vaughan.

A Sunday paper suggests that if the nations had understood the Gospels there would have been no World-War. That editor has soon forgotten that they all fought "for God and Liberty," and the Germans had the inscription "God with Us" on their uniforms.

The Lower House of Convocation is imbued with some of the wisdom of the serpent, even though the ecclesiastics coo like doves. In a discussion on the incomes of the clergy, the Dean of Lincoln spoke of the "nominally large incomes" of the Bishops. We shall hear presently of the "nominal income" of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, although the ground-rents and royalties paid to that estimable body of business men are real enough. In 1917 the coal royalties and way-leaves alone amounted to £370,000.

What a saving grace is a healthy sense of humour! At Portsmouth, Councillor Perkins raised an indignant protest against the Sunday Pier concerts. Councillor Perkins so far sacrificed himself as to spend several hours watching the people. There were about two thousand in the pavilion, with about 500 young girls. On the balcony was a crowd smoking. So Councillor Perkins expressed his "serious grief" and suggested "lectures on venereal disease" as a substitute for these Sabbath-breaking concerts. What a nice man Mr. Perkins must be! And what a comment on the value of Christianity!

There has been a certain liveliness on the Forfar Town Council over the request by a travelling company to hold a sacred concert on a Sunday. After some discussion permission was given the Council insisting that the music must be of a "sacred" character.

Sir J. D. Maclure, the new chairman of the Congregational Union, has been condemning some popular hymns as "doggerel." The *Daily News*, in referring to the matter, says:—

We have discarded at least some of the really distressing compositions that had vogue half a century ago. This, for instance, seems to have been thought quite suitable in the fifties:—

There is a place below  
Where wicked children go;  
Their tiny bodies die and rot,  
Eaten by worms that dieth not.

It is well to have the rationalization of hymnology admitted in the daily press. A very interesting volume could be written on the evolution of hymns. Some startling changes in sentiment and theology would be forthcoming in such a survey. While competent authors are compiling such a record, our readers may amuse themselves by looking up the hymns they used to sing with so much gusto in their uncritical childhood and see what they think of them now. "I cannot sing the old hymns" would be an almost universal confession when the full sum total of the ignorance and servility of these compositions dawned upon them.

We are very pleased to note a request from the Canadian authorities to the British Government that no more titles be conferred on Canadian citizens. Seeing the way in which titles are given, and for what services, we are surprised they are accepted by self-respecting men. The only honest plan would be to draw up a regular schedule of prices, and sell to all and sundry. There would still be plenty of purchasers.

Mr. E. Cope, preaching at Hinckley, said that the disturbed condition of the country proved "the last days" were upon us, and that Christ will come again at no distant date. We hope Mr. Cope is mistaken. The "first coming" made trouble enough. To have all the bother of a second visit, on top of the Peace Conference, and the disturbed state of things generally, would be too much for ordinary human nature. And why not remit the advisability of a second coming to the Peace Conference. It would be rather awkward if the "Lord" did arrive and found himself excluded under some blockading resolution, or interned as an "undesirable."

The veteran Dr. Clifford has been expressing himself very vigorously on the subject of Christian union. He said he was not ready for incorporation with some of the Churches. "Nothing on earth, or anywhere else, would induce him to incorporate himself with some." Evidently, the Doctor has no desire to see the Nonconformist lamb lay down with the sacerdotal lion.

A suburban vicar suggests that the clergy, in order to win public confidence, should remodel their dress. It would perhaps be difficult for a parson to persuade his congregation that they were "miserable sinners" if he himself were attired in a suit of loud checks suggestive of a bookmaker shouting the odds.

The Church likes to get things for nothing. "The system of paying choristers makes them into mercenary professionals," says the Rev. W. Mitchell, of Ealing. It seems as if the local choristers had requested increased wages.

A correspondent sends us the following, which, he says was picked up outside a Catholic church:—

Dear Rev. Father,—

I enclose sixpence in stamps. Hope I will get my petition.—Yours truly,  
SARAH THORN.

The stamps referred to were not with the letter when it was picked up. Let us hope the "Rev. Father" had committed the petition to memory before throwing away the letter—and *after* taking out the stamps.

Pious folk are getting frightened at the public demand for bright Sundays. They realize that "the unco guid" are in a minority, and fear to trust the people. The *Methodist Recorder* voices this fear, and, referring to the secular, and sacred aspect of Sunday, adds: "the populations may have a right to choose in which region they will serve. But it is not kind or wise on the part of those who know the weakness of populations to lead them into temptation." O, Holy innocence!

When a manifesto is signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Bourne, the Rev. Dr. Meyer, and two tame Labour leaders, there is some mischief in the air. This particular manifesto is issued under the auspices of the Imperial Sunday Alliance and the Sunday Lay Movement, and seeks to limit Sunday labour, other than that undertaken by the clergy themselves. The movement is designed to prevent Sunday from being a weekly Bank Holiday, and aims at making it a Blank Holiday.

Optimism is a pleasing quality, but it is often amusing, and sometimes silly. For instance, we see that a proposal is on foot to form a "League of Faiths," in order to promote the peace of the world. If the proposal materializes, we expect to find among the chief subscribers some of the large armament rings, for we can conceive nothing better calculated to create a demand for their services. On what are these faiths to unite? Certainly not on religious belief. Fancy calling a meeting of Catholics and Protestants in Ireland to secure unity of action in religion! Or a meeting of Christians and Mohammedans in the East! There is simply nothing on which religious people—as such—can unite, or on which they have ever united. All they can work together on is non-religious subjects. And that is only another way of saying that the only way to keep religious people from fighting is to keep them away from religion.

### To Correspondents.

- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Mrs. F. Whatcott, 4s. 6d.
- J. REID.—Sorry to hear of your loss. Accept our sincere sympathy.
- T. FISHER.—See "Acid Drops."
- J. G.—It is not a question of the daily papers being religious; it is a question of catering for the crowd. Our "free" press is a ghastly sham. It panders to power and plays to prejudice all the time. We shall convert the press to honesty only when we create a greater love of truth in the general public.
- R. MARTIN.—Have not lost sight of the project. Only waiting for a favourable opportunity.
- L. GAIR.—Cuttings are always useful. Thanks.
- LAGOS FREETHINKER.—We know nothing of Colonel Ingersoll's charges for lectures, but the statement that he charged £400 per lecture strikes us as rather "tall." We do know that Ingersoll frequently gave his services free, and often took up cases in the courts for poor people without any charge whatever. And we should say that whatever Ingersoll was paid he was worth it.
- W. MAY.—We know of no better way of getting fair play for Freethinkers than to go on making more Freethinkers. Christians will remain Christians so long as they can.
- A. SYMONDS.—Certainly the whole of the Church revenue is not derived from tithes, but a considerable amount is. The total runs into millions. In addition, a great many of the tithes were commuted under the Tithe Commutation Act. Proceeds of this are held by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Originally tithes were divided into three parts—one for the parson, one for the upkeep of the Church, and one for the poor. Nowadays, the latter is generally, if not always, absorbed by the other two.
- W. SIMPSON.—Yes, we have other books in view dealing with the effects of Christianity on civilization, but cannot now say when they will be published. Pleased you find the two on "Woman" and "Slavery" so helpful.
- R. MORRIS.—We are sending you on a copy of the paper, which will give you all the information you require.
- C. MARVIN.—If you can spare the time to pray for our conversion, we can stand it. We will certainly let you know if anything results. Meanwhile we are getting ready a little book on "Atheism." We trust the Lord will allow us to finish it before he calls us to other work.
- J. G.—It is very difficult to stop a religious fanatic from making a nuisance of himself. As you say, a Freethinker would soon be called to order.
- G. ARUNDEL.—We wish you success. Please let us have a copy of your new venture when it appears.
- W. J.—Will deal with the point you suggest when a favourable occasion presents itself.
- A. R. W. and S. C.—MSS. received, and shall appear as early as possible.
- C. T. SHAW.—Many thanks for cuttings. Most useful.
- MAJOR WARREN.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.
- J. DRISCOLL.—Glad to see your article in the *Daily Sketch*. It was well put, and should do good.
- A. ALDWINKLE.—Will do what we can. Please call when you come to London.
- W. E. S.—Many thanks for securing two new readers. That is the kind of help we like. You get; we keep.
- M. MURRAY.—We quite agree with you that until the Labour Party has the courage to cut itself free from the parsons and religious "slops," it will be robbed of the better part of its force. The world's need, now as ever, is clear and vigorous thinking.
- 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 by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention. The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

### Sugar Plums.

We again call the attention of Freethinkers to the National Secular Society's Annual Conference at Manchester on Whit-Sunday. For several years past the attendance at the Conference has been very good, and it is to be hoped that this year the record will be maintained. The only way in which a really strong organization can be built up is by all members taking part in the business of the Society. We trust, therefore, that members all over the country will make an effort to be present at the Conference. The business meetings of the Conference—morning and afternoon—will be held in the Clarion Cafe, Market Street, at 10.30 and 2.30. In the evening a public meeting will be held in the Palladium. There will be a good array of speakers, including Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, Mr. Willis, Mr. Cohen, and others. It would be a good propagandist stroke for Freethinkers to bring along a Christian friend. Freethought only needs to be known to be appreciated. Above all, we impress upon all who are coming from a distance to write in good time for accommodation. It will save time to write the local secretary direct. His address is H. Black, 446 Great Cheetham Street East, Higher Broughton, Salford, Lancs.

Members going to the Conference will note that admission to the business meeting is by production of member's card. Anyone who has not yet received a card should write the General Secretary at once. There will be a luncheon arranged between the morning and afternoon meetings, at an inclusive cost of 3s. It would be well for those who intend joining to signify the same to Mr. Black.

Mr. Cohen will not, after all, be able to visit Pontcymmer this week-end. After promising the use of the hall, the authorities found it was already booked for the date required. Fortunately, the error was discovered before any advertising was done. Mr. Cohen's visit will now have to be postponed till the autumn. He, however, hopes to meet many of his Welsh friends at the Manchester Conference. The more the merrier!

In last week's *Freethinker* Mr. Underwood raised a quite legitimate query concerning a subject touched on in my *Woman and Christianity*. He is of opinion that the practice of the "Jus Prima Noctis" is mythical. I pointed out that doubt had been cast upon the genuineness of this custom, but I am inclined to go farther back to find an origin for it. Personally, I am inclined to derive the custom from the primitive superstitions which gather round the sexual functions of woman. "The right of the first night" is not unlike what occurs amongst some primitive peoples where defloration of the bride is performed by the priest as a religious function. I cannot now deal with the subject, but it seems to me not unlikely that we have in the "Jus Prima Noctis" a survival of this primitive practice. Probably the line of development would lie in the gradual separation of the secular ruler from the primitive priest. At any rate, whether there is evidence of the custom existing at a late date, or the existence of the tradition calls for some explanation. I suggest the above line of inquiry as likely to be fruitful to one who has the time to pursue it.

The Belfast Branch has now completed its course of weekly lectures which have been well attended by thoughtful audiences. Altogether the members have reason to congratulate themselves on the success of their first winter session. For the summer, monthly rambles are being

arranged, and will be announced in our "outdoor" advertisements, an excellent way for keeping the members in touch during the summer.

An interested reader writes to us from the West of England:—

It may interest you to know my experience with the *Freethinker* in this town. I had decided on a round of the newsagents, inquiring for it at all, and purchasing a copy wherever possible. Here is the result of my investigations:—

- 1st shop ...Never heard of the paper.
- 2nd ,, ...Only took it to order.
- 3rd ,, ...Ditto.
- 4th ,, ...Didn't take it; believed it had been dead for years.
- 5th ,, ...Would let me have a copy already ordered, and get another down.
- 6th & 7th ,, ...Didn't know anything about the paper.
- 8th ,, ...Only got it to order.
- 9th ,, ...Ditto.
- 10th ,, ...It was only supplied from the office direct to subscribers.

Grand result, I bought one copy, and ordered one at five other shops for the education of the newsagents. I have other shops to visit, but it is evident that what is needed is for the *Freethinker* to be better known.

We quite agree. The question is how to get greater publicity. Outside the help of our readers we are almost powerless. What little we can do in the way of advertising we do, but that is always an expensive affair.

Mr. G. Rawlinson writes:—

May I thank you for giving me an unexpected treat in the reading of the first volume of Voltaire's *Dictionary*? I am ashamed to confess that all I knew of Voltaire was by quotation or from hearsay. I was the more surprised and delighted at the wit and brilliancy of the writing. As you say, one can well understand, after reading the *Dictionary*, why it was that Voltaire was so heartily hated by the "Black Army." The only grumble I have to make is regarding your own Preface. That is not nearly long enough. It is so brilliantly written that one longs for more. I hope the second vol. will not be long before it makes its appearance.

We shall certainly get out the second volume so soon as is possible. But there are other things that have a prior claim, and there are still many difficulties in printing all one would wish.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Thresh had capital meetings at Failsworth on Sunday, and that his lectures gave great satisfaction to all present. Before the evening meeting Mr. Thresh performed the ceremony of "naming" a baby. We hope that baby Schofield's early appearance (we do not know the sex, but could guess it in twice) will be the beginning of a life-long intimacy with active Freethought.

### The Grave of Landor.

O MAN that hated kings—thyself a king,  
 What lifted trophies, what loud pæan of praise  
 Record the glorious vintage of thy days?  
 Thy marble lies uncumbered; here we fling  
 No symbols and no sorrows; only strays  
 Sweet marjoram; and vernal grasses bring  
 Their little verdure for a wreath of bays,  
 Where gold-eyed lizards bask and grey birds sing.  
 Thou lamp of beauty, with what crystal light,  
 Lifted austere in starry strength and grace,  
 For Freedom dost thou burn! And now thy might,  
 Wisdom and wonder hearten men apace.  
 Higher and higher leaps thy dayspring, bright  
 As Tuscan sky above thy dreamless place.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

'Tis education forms the common mind;  
 Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.

—*Popc.*

### Christ the Plagiariſt.

THE alleged divinity of Jesus Christ, the Nazarean, rests on three fundamental bases, viz., his miraculous birth, resurrection, and ascension. In this article I shall endeavour to examine these three points dispassionately.

Christ, himself, like Socrates, left no written record of his life and teachings. We must rely on the testimony of his followers who may have set down what to them seemed a true account of his actions, or who, on the other hand, may have acted in collusion in an endeavour to surround their leader with a halo of divinity. Be that as it may, all the Gospels agree in a superficial way on these three fundamentals. There are, of course, divergences and additions which may be laid down to the personal idiosyncracies of the writers.

In itself, the idea of a virgin birth is by no means uncommon. With barbarous and semi-civilized peoples it was believed that women could conceive by the spirits of the departed. In Palestine the idea lingers to this day. The Australian aborigines, as a matter of fact, denied that sexual intercourse was the true explanation of conception.

The prophecy in Isaiah, which is supposed to have been fulfilled by Christ through his virgin-birth, merely deals with conception by an unmarried woman. The Authorized Version mistranslates the word "virgin." Apparently we moderns differ from the ancients in our idea of the status of a virgin. However, even if a virgin was referred to, it is quite compatible with the old Syrian belief that woman could conceive to jinnies.

One thing is apparent to the unbiased observer, and that is, if a woman conceived of a God, she would expect her child to act as a god. Yet Mary was surprised when the child-Christ disputed with the Pharisees. What was then to wonder at in God doing this?

Yet is it not more in keeping with the natural order of things that, as a boy, Christ, in common with other boys, frequented the Temple, heard the reading of the word, and, amongst other things, the story of Isaiah and his prophecy; heard, too, the expression of hope that the day of the coming of the Messiah was at hand? In common with other children, can we not imagine him eagerly listening to the stories of the old people round about Nazareth, and to the Roman soldiers during his visits to Jerusalem; so, when he came to manhood, feeling the stigma of his unfortunate birth, to assert it as divine?

Both the Romans and the old men would have many stories to tell of how mortal women bore immortal men.

Roman historians tell of how Ocrisia, a slave-woman of King Tarquin the Elder, was offering libations on the royal hearth when a flame in the form of the male member shot out of the fire. Taking this as a sign that the slave was to become the mother of a more than mortal son, the queen ordered the woman to be down beside the hearth. Her orders were obeyed; Ocrisia conceived of the god of the fire, and in due time brought forth Servius Tullus, who was thus born of a slave, being the reputed son of a slave mother and a divine father.

Plutarch tells of how the oracle told the King of Alba that a virgin should conceive of a flame like to the male organ of generation. The result was the birth of the twins, Romulus and Remus.

Christ might have heard either or both of these stories from the lips of a Roman, or from one of the learned men in the Temple who was discussing the text in Isaiah and who had had the stories from the Romans. From the Romans, too, he might have heard of the virgin-birth of Perseus.

From the old inhabitants of his home country, he would probably hear the story of Attis, of how his mother, Nana, a virgin, conceived by putting a ripe almond in her breast. Attis was a shepherd before being a god; why should he, Christ, a carpenter, not become a god?

From these old men he might also have heard of Adonis, who was born of a virgin, and who was worshipped amongst other places at Bethlehem. But of the similarity between Attis, and Adonis, and Christ I shall deal fully later.

It was more than likely that he had also heard of the old Persian deity, Mithra. The ritual of the nativity of this deity as practised in Egypt and Syria is remarkable. Celebrants issued from an inner chamber at midnight with the cry, "The Virgin has brought forth." The virgin was the Oriental goddess called the Heavenly Virgin. The date of this ceremony was the 25th December, the birthday of Christ. Verily, a strange coincidence.

Perhaps Satan had a spy in heaven, and got news of what was about regarding the coming of the Son, and got to work first. Some theologians think so. In this, they apparently don't see that they compare Satan favourably with Christ.

"But," say the followers of Christ, "did not our master comport himself while on earth like a god?"

"Yes," I reply; "but what does that prove?"

Empedocles, the Sicilian philosopher, states that he was a god. Is the bare word of Christ to be believed and the bare word of Empedocles denied?

Again, a traveller amongst the Fijians conversed with a person bearing the euphonious name of Taikilakili, who stated, "I am a God"; and, adds the traveller, he believed it too. If one tells a lie often enough, he himself will eventually believe it to be truth. No, I'm afraid this line will not bring refreshing fruit to the Christians.

With the preaching and the betrayal of Christ I hope to deal in future articles.

Before dealing with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, I shall merely state that he is not even unique amongst divinities in having started business as a carpenter. There was once a human-god in India who was of the same trade, and whose followers worshipped him as a god, and believed in his power of working miracles.

Nor is he original amongst gods in the manner of his death. Centuries before his coming, Odin hung on the tree; he even had the spear in his side. The following weird verses from *The Havamal* tell of the sacrifice of Odin:—

I know that I hung on the windy tree  
For nine whole nights,  
Wounded with the spear, dedicated to Odin,  
Myself to myself.

Of the resurrection, we have the parallel of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, who died, rose again, and ascended to his father in heaven.

But closer is the parallel of Adonis. In the Phœnician sanctuary of Astarte, at Bybtus, the death of Adonis was annually mourned. But the next day he was supposed to come to life again and ascend up to heaven in the presence of his worshippers. At Antioch, the appearance of the morning star was held to be the signal of the resurrection of Adonis. As Adonis was worshipped at Bethlehem, probably this was the star which brought the wise men out of the East.

The day on which Christ is believed to have been crucified is the 25th March. This was the day of the resurrection of Adonis.

Firmicus Maternus, in his *De errore profanarum religionum*, states, describing the rites at the celebration of

the death of Attis: "Suddenly a light shone from the darkness: the god has risen from the dead. The resurrection of the god was held by his disciples as a promise that they too would issue triumphant from the corruption of the grave." This is what Christianity promises, at the same time describing as false the teachings of all other religions.

Thus the fabric of Christianity crumbles into dust, whence its progenitor sprang, and into which he returned. Its fate is written in this epitaph on a cynic's tomb:—

Pass on, O stranger, only dust is here;  
Surely a thing so common needs no tear.

H. C. MELLOR.

## The Trials and Tribulations of Animals.

COMPARATIVE psychologists may differ concerning the common opinion that the deeds of lower creatures are dictated by motives akin to man's. That there exists not merely a bodily kinship, but also a mental relationship between humanity and the superior vertebrate organisms, no naturalist will dispute. Even the activities of ants, bees, wasps, and other insects manifest marked indications of intelligence. But the uncritical extension of the involved psychical processes of the higher animals to organisms low down in the zoological scale is open to considerable objection from the scientific and philosophical standpoint alike.

Savage and barbarous races throughout the world; or, for that matter, the bucolic populations in all advanced communities, almost invariably read into the habits and instincts of animals the emotions, will, and intellect, and sometimes even endow them with the moral sentiments of civilized man. Nor is this attitude confined to uncultured stocks. In civilized ancient India and Persia, as well as in Greece and Rome, these ideas prevailed in the very heyday of classic civilization. The penalties attached to human crimes and misdemeanours were usually applied to the lower animals. And even now, as previously stated, the rustic communities of Western Europe take for granted the belief that wild and domesticated animals are fully amenable to the rough-and-ready chastisement which the rude peasant is only too eager to administer to the human malefactor. Apart, however, from the ethical habits of animals, which are apparently far more rudimentary than those of modern man, yet, on the whole, we are compelled to concede that the evidences of even high intelligence among superior animals are very much more powerful than some are inclined to admit. Perhaps it may be remarked that as mankind rose in the scale of culture, and the division widened between man and brute, there has arisen a constantly increasing tendency to exalt the paragon of animals far above the beasts that perish. Religion has long lent her countenance to the dogma that man, proud man alone, is endowed with reasoning faculties, while the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea are guided by instinct only.

The animal lore of the Hebrew Scriptures materially influenced the attitude of the Church towards the "brute creation." With the ancient Jews, a homicidal ox was stoned to death, and its flesh was not eaten. The ox alone was regarded as guilty, and its owner was considered to be free from censure, provided that this was the animal's first offence. "But," continues the Book of the Covenant, "if the ox were wont to gore in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a

woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner shall also be put to death."

The foregoing passage indicates an early view, but in the later tradition introduced by the priestly editors into the ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis, the punishment of homicidal beasts forms part of the law of blood revenge. In this we learn that the Lord, after the Deluge had subsided, revealed to Noah the divine law that all man-slayers, whether human or animal, lay under sentence of death. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Under no circumstances whatsoever could a homicidal creature escape the penalty of blood retaliation.

In a brilliant essay in his *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*, Sir James Frazer has presented instances of the custom of blood revenge from various parts of the globe. Not only plants and animals, but lifeless objects as well, have been punished or destroyed when in any way implicated in the death of human beings. For example, the Kukis of India organize a tiger hunt when one of these ferocious creatures has slain and devoured a member of their tribe. If they succeed in killing the guilty carnivore, the deceased's family make a banquet of its carcass. If, on the other hand, the man-slaying tiger escapes, some other tiger must be despatched to appease the passion for blood atonement. It is deemed disgraceful to permit the murder of one's kindred to pass unavenged, and until a family has fully retaliated on an aggressor, it is ostracized by the remainder of the community. Even if a man suffer death through accidental descent from a tree, his relatives know no rest until they have cut it down. So powerful is this feeling of retaliatory justice that even if the tree be a forest giant, the survivors "reduce it to chips, which they scatter to the winds, for having, as they say, been the cause of the death of their brother."

Among the rude Ainus of Japan a tree fatality is not so much associated with the tree itself as with the baleful spirits that haunt its boughs and branches, which are never so happy as when wreaking their ill-will on frail humanity. This umbrageous ghostly dwelling-place, when of manageable proportions, is utterly destroyed, but when too large for such thorough treatment, a compromise is effected, but although left standing, its treacherous character is plainly indicated, and all wayfarers are warned against it.

Tools and weapons involved in accidental or deliberate death are with many races broken, burnt, or thrown into deep water. There flourishes a widespread fancy that anything which has been concerned with death retains its homicidal qualities, and is consequently uncanny and unlucky.

We all remember the dying David's sanguinary injunctions to his promising son Solomon which that wise sovereign so faithfully executed when he reigned over Israel. In Burma there survive barbarous races on a similar plane of ethical culture. For we learn that an expiring parent "bequeaths to his sons the duty of avenging his wrongs, and the sons bide their time until they can obey the paternal behest. Generally, old scores are settled once a year, and on such occasions even inanimate objects are remembered and requited." But it is not so much the lifeless objects that receive chastisement for their sins as the malign spirits that animate them. In Central Celebes the Toradjas regard the lower animals as proper subjects for blood revenge. The views entertained by these tropical savages concerning man's relationship to the animal kingdom are very suggestive. They hold that the inferior creatures and man are alike internally if unlike externally. The differences which divide mankind from the brute-world are, in terms of this primitive biology, more those of structure

than of function. "The animal cannot speak," they say,—

because its beak or snout is different from the mouth of a man; the animal runs on all fours, because its hands (fore paws) are different from human hands; but the inmost nature of the animal is the same as that of a man. If a crocodile kills somebody the family of the victim may thereupon kill a crocodile.....but if more crocodiles than men are killed, then the right of revenge reverts to the crocodiles, and they are sure to exercise their right on somebody or other. If a dog does not receive his share of the game, he will refuse to join next time in the hunt, because he feels himself aggrieved."

No one, according to this naive philosophy, should be foolish enough to arouse the enmity of beasts. To cast ridicule on an ape by attiring it in human clothing is to invite disastrous storms and floods, and no sensible person would dream of incurring the hostility of cats and dogs by poking fun at them.

In his fascinating essay on "The Ox that Gored," Sir James Frazer refers to the remarkable fact that in the very citadel of classical civilization, in peerless Athens itself, and at the height of its glory, there survived a special court of justice devoted to the trials of animals and inanimate objects accused of having killed or wounded human beings. In the Pyrtaneum (town hall) of Athens these cases were tried by five judges. The quaint court ceremonial, combined with other observances which distinguished these trials, clearly indicate that these solemn judicial proceedings dated from a remote antiquity and probably to that ancient period when the ancestors of the refined and artistic Athenians of the age of Plato were little removed from the stage of savagery.

The punishment to which convicted animals were sentenced is not stated in any known document, but it is asserted that lifeless culprits were banished beyond the boundaries of the city. Aristophanes, in one of his comedies, derided these trials by depicting a demented juryman weighing the evidence presented in a court against a dog which had purloined and devoured a cheese.

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

### God's Care.

God save the King, how strangely true it sounds;  
But God saves other things with surplice pomp and gowns:  
Saves Reason, the force that all myths dread;  
Saves man's intellect from firmer tread.  
Saves superstition, credulity, and creeds;  
And for his confusion—saves all the weeds.  
Aye, saves lies with sophistic care;  
Saves infinite obscurantism for robes to wear,  
Saves Right of Might and all military things,  
Saves Divine Right—yes—for Kings.  
Saves chloroform for dull slaves wits,  
And petty business men from remorseful fits.  
Soon comes the time with no lies to save,  
Truth will prevail and priests will not rave.  
God is the culprit, pity his creatures,  
Cause and effect so alike in features,  
One thing he can't save, and that is his face;  
He'll soon be exposed to the whole human race.  
Can't save understanding when the *Freethinker's* read,  
For men will live, when God is dead.  
He saveth others, himself he cannot save,  
From mankind's progressive Freethought wave.

P. G. T.

Of all nonsense, religious nonsense is the most nonsensical.—Robert Burns.

### Correspondence.

#### THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—One of George Eliot's characters is represented as saying, and very truly, "There's many a good bit of work done with a sad heart." No doubt many of the greatest achievements of man have been conceived and perfected in sadness, in discouragement, almost in despair, out of the depths, as it were. But gladness inspires also; the dawn seen from the heights; the prospect when the moon is at its full, and when there is no moon. Sometimes the letter illumines the spirit; sometimes, perhaps more often, the spirit outshines the letter. I think we are all agreed that Mr. Gould seldom misuses "the king's press" (to adapt Falstaff), but in his latest article (*Freethinker*, May 18) it is the spirit that attracts, independent of the letter. Mr. Gould had obviously caught himself in a happy, whimsical, tolerant, broadly philosophical, not-expecting-too-much, not-going-to-fret, kind of mood; the cultured and wisely contented state of mind the poor old self-torturing world has needed so long, and still requires; for still much in the dark, man bemuses and destroys himself on the imaginary obstacles of prejudice, prestige, sect, nationality, honour, hempire, hetceteraet-cetera. Our writer is a true Vine, and it just happened that—

The Vine had struck a fibre; which about  
It clings my Being—let the Sufi flout;  
Of my Base Metal may be filed a Key,  
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

No; it is not Love the world needs, but Light.

A. MILLAR.

#### ECONOMICS.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. J. Fothergill, objects to the use and occupation theory of land tenure on the ground that "the owners of those favoured portions which happened to flow with 'milk and honey' would inherit the possibilities of the greatest tyranny the world has seen."

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.

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There are many other things we require besides milk and honey; for example, coal and iron; the world is wide and men are very few compared with the amount of good land. If the whole present population of the world were crowded into the single state of Texas, there would be rather more than half an acre of land to every family of five. And if Mr. Fothergill will try the experiment of using the most productive kind of labour, *i.e.*, spade labour, he will find that half an acre of the best land will take him all his time to make the most of it. And the possibility of his tyrannizing over anybody by doing so seems to me rather remote.

G. O. WARREN.

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Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if sent on postcard.

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