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Views and Opinions.

Truth and Falsehood.

Douglas Jerrold was asked his opinion of a certain lecture he had attended on the question of "Drink." "Oh," he replied, "the lecturer was full of his subject." That may be considered a disqualification; but there are some subjects of which a man must be full if he is to do them justice. One of these is certainly that which Sir Charles Walston takes as the topic of his book.¹ Sir Charles Walston's work is one long denunciation of false-speaking, and an equally lengthy exhortation on truth-speaking. And yet one has the feeling that, however worthy the purpose of the essay, he is part of the time labouring the obvious, and failing to stress with sufficient force that which most needs denunciation. For it is not the lies that men speak or write that are most dangerous. The worst forms of lying are the lies that we act and the lies we suggest. At the side of these, the spoken and written lie is comparatively innocuous. The one may injure a person, or a number of persons; but the lie that is lived, which gets incarnated in an institution and embedded in education, by vitiating the social atmosphere, demoralizes a whole population. We could have well spared many pages of *Truth* for a more adequate analysis of the lies that have become imbedded in our civilization, and which do so much to lower our moral currency.

French and English. * * *

Sir Charles Walston has a deal to say that is admirable as regards falsehood and truth in connection with Journalism, Politics, Finance, Public Life, etc.; but he opens his essay with a story that, if unquestionable as to origin, is certainly questionable as a matter of fact. It is that of a French youth who returned home, telling his mother that, much to his surprise, he found it quite the thing in England to tell the truth. The story sounds far more like an Englishman's impression of what a Frenchman should think of us than what one actually does think. And the more impartial observer will probably conclude that as between French and English—and even others—it is not so much a question of a greater or lesser degree of lying in the bulk, as it is of

different kinds of lying. When it comes, for example, to the religious lie, both acted and spoken, we fancy that this country can hold its own with any nation on the face of the earth. Sir Charles speaks of us as "a nation which, as a nation, has recognized truth, not only as a moral duty, but has made its practice highly fashionable"; but as he points out (p. 159), that if all those who professed allegiance to certain Churches were to speak truthfully, the world would be astonished to find out how large a number—and of "the best and most thoughtful"—were acting a lie; that "In every class, in every social layer, in every occupation of our common life, we must be struck by the comparative lowness of our moral standards as regards Truth" (p. 17); that the same holds true of all our trade and finance; and that even with the "upper classes" "the development of the sense of truth and the duties which it imposes is comparatively most rudimentary" (p. 18). One wonders with what class and where the practice of truth-telling has become "highly fashionable." What is fashionable is the practice of lying along recognized grooves. And that is just on a level with the code of honour which decrees that a gambling debt *must* be paid, but a tradesman *may* be swindled out of his dues.

Truth and the Public. * * *

We fancy that Sir Charles is inclined to place too great a responsibility on the War for the prevalence of a low standard of truth. It is true, as he points out, that the practice of the Censorship, the deliberate suppression of truth by the Governments engaged in the War, and the circulation of quite misleading and false "news" (perhaps the most glaring specimen here is the lie of the Russian nationalizing of women, which was endorsed by even a member of the Government in the House of Commons), the practice of deceptions which is the primary condition for the carrying on of wars under modern conditions, have all tended to still further lower the moral standard. But it is quite clear to us that a community in which the accepted standard of truth was tolerably high could not have been so easily or so quickly demoralized. And we think a truth here is that in neither politics, nor in international relations, nor in religion, do the majority of people really look for truth. (It would probably be found that in the business world, resting as it does on credit, there is a higher standard of integrity than in either of the other departments). A people who demanded a high standard of truthfulness in public life would get it; and a people in the habit of receiving it would not have been so easily or so quickly demoralized. The important issue is not whether untruthfulness is general—the fact can hardly be denied; the really vital question is a consideration of the causes that make the public so indifferent to veracity in word and action.

One-Sided Freedom. * * *

Sir Charles Walston says that in our ethical education a proper teaching of truthfulness is neglected. But if we use education in its widest sense, the greatest influence

¹ *Truth: An Essay in Moral Reconstruction.* Cambridge University Press; 5s.

in moulding the tone and temper of the mass of the people has, for generations, been religion. Sir Charles has a chapter on "Religious Truth," but he nowhere touches on the real influence of organized religion in inducing a particular tone and temper in relation to public life. In fact, his ideal here appears to be uniformity of belief, a desire to see all people conforming to a common creed. And in this direction he makes a quite fatal blunder. He points to the prevalence of certain superstitions—the belief in spooks, in unlucky numbers, charms, etc.—and rightly deprecates their existence. Children, he says, must be carefully guarded against their evils, and adults protected, while "the prosecution of all clairvoyants, palmists, and similar impostors must be rigorously carried on by the State." But that is just what must not be done. That an opinion is false is no ground whatever for prosecution by the State. The cure for a false opinion is a true one, and the only medium in which a superstition can thrive is an unenlightened one. And why prosecute the palmist or the clairvoyant, or the fortune-teller, while we permit a Roman Catholic priest to take money for getting "souls" out of purgatory, or a parson to draw a salary for telling us all about our state in the next world? And why protect children, by State action, against certain forms of superstition while we hand them over to a body of clergy whose sole aim is to indoctrinate them with superstitions of their own? Is it not the literal truth that all the minor and comparatively harmless superstitions denounced by Sir Charles Walston are only so many backwaters from the great river of superstition represented by the various religions of the world? The only difference is that noted long ago by Hobbes—Religion is superstition allowed, superstition is religion disallowed.

* * *

A Specimen Christian Liar.

In our last pamphlet, *Creed and Character*, we have devoted some little space to depicting what we conceive to be the great evil inflicted by religion on racial life. There is no need to go over that ground again, further than to say that a religion such as Christianity cannot escape its full share of responsibility for the low public tone which Sir Charles properly deplures. And of that one instance only need be cited. Readers of the *Freethinker* will remember the occasion when the notorious Evangelist, Dr. Torrey, came to England, and the specially filthy and venomous stories he circulated concerning Colonel Ingersoll. They will also remember that G. W. Foote set himself the task of exposing the unscrupulous character of the man, and the falsity of his allegations. In this he had the good fortune to secure the support of the late T. W. Stead. As Dr. Torrey was receiving the patronage of many prominent clergymen, Mr. Stead was sanguine enough to believe that he would get their support in denouncing, or, at least, disowning, so unscrupulous a liar. He wrote to many, and we saw copies of some of the letters he received in reply. There was not one of them who would publicly say anything on the subject. The general tenour of their letters was: "We know the man is a liar, but to publicly say so would bring discredit on religion." And so the lies went on, and the liar enjoyed the public patronage of the clergy to the end. Freethinkers were not surprised at this result. They knew from long experience the small connection between fervent religion and a love of either truth or justice.

* * *

Reaping the Harvest.

Now there is no hiding or denying the fact that for this condition of things a large part of the responsibility rests with the Christian religion. For centuries it has exercised a commanding influence in education, and has

dominated the avenues of public advancement. Internally, its history has been largely made up of lies, trickery, forgery, and deception. Externally, it has fostered a social and political persecution that could have no other consequence than to place a tax upon truth and a premium upon downright lying. Never has a branch of the Christian Church placed emphasis upon the duty of either truth speaking or truth seeking. And given a religion such as Christianity in a dominating position, what else can one expect than a public such as we have around us. We have thousands professing belief in a religion for which they have lost all real respect. We have other thousands, who, while not professing faith in Christianity, seem to spend their time in selecting a name that shall, so far as is possible, hide the fact that they are no longer Christians. The social atmosphere is thick with impostures and insincerities, and it is useless for writers, such as Sir Charles Walston, to lament the fact while they will not, or cannot, see that if they leave the "lie of religion" alone they are strengthening one of the principal causes of the evil they deplore.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The God-Eating Sacrament.

VIII.

CONCLUSION.

It is now clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Lord's Supper, "the greatest of all the sacraments of the Church," is the surviving relic in Christendom of early cannibalism, cannibalism being both in origin and nature profoundly religious. The Aztecs totally disapproved of the consumption of human flesh as ordinary food, and even captives of war they never ate except when sacrificially slain. They abstained from eating the flesh of fellow-citizens because their moral sense condemned the habit. In any form and for whatever purpose resorted to, cannibalism was horrible in the extreme; but as Mr. J. M. Robertson well says, it "was strictly a matter of religion."

After a captive had been sacrificially slain in ordinary course, his body was delivered to the warrior who captured him, and was by him made the special dish at a formal and decorous public banquet to his friends. It was part of the prescribed worship of the Gods. That the Mexicans were no longer cannibals by taste is shown by the fact that in the great siege by Cortes they died of starvation by thousands. They never ate fellow-citizens: only the sacrificially slain captives (*Pagan Christs*, p. 393).

The transition from Anthropophagy to theophagy was extremely subtle. In some instances a captive was taken at random; in others, a young man, of unblemished body, was selected to represent the Supreme Being for a year. During that period he was held in Divine honour, and all alike worshipped him. When the year was up he was slain in sacrifice, and another chosen to take his place for another year. During his year of Godship the young man lived on the fat of the land, at the expiration of which time the priest cut open his breast with a stone-knife and plucked out his heart, which he offered to the Sun-God. Then his legs and arms were duly cooked and prepared for the table, and sacramentally eaten. In course of time, animals were substituted for men, and dough images of both Gods and men were introduced; but it was really immaterial of what the sacrifices consisted, for ere the feast actually began the magic words of consecration spoken by the priest converted the substance of the food and "drink on the table into the substance of the Deity, who came

down to participate in the sacramental meal. In every case, either directly or indirectly, it was a God that was sacrificed, himself to himself, and it was a God that was consumed at each sacramental feast, the underlying belief being that *the mana*, virtue, or qualities of the thing eaten passed into the eater. As Grant Allen puts it:—

If men eat the bodies of their fathers, who are their family and household Gods, they will also naturally eat the bodies of the artificial gods of cultivation, or of the temporary kings who die for the people. By eating the body of a God you absorb his divinity; he and you become one; he is in you and inspires you (*The Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 118).

In point of fact, the world teemed with Saviour-Gods long before Jesus Christ was ever heard of, all of whom died a violent death for the world's redemption, rose again, and became the food and drink of their followers. Isis drank the blood of Osiris, and deepest love for him welled up in her heart in consequence; but it was in a goblet of wine that she quaffed it. In every such case, wine was not a surrogate or substitute for, but by a miracle actually became, blood. There stood the wine, which in outward appearance and taste remained wine throughout; but the great miracle took place whilst the priest repeated seven times: "Thou art wine and not wine, but the head of Athene"; "Thou art wine and not wine, but the bowels of Osiris." Under Mithraism the flesh and blood of the Divine Bull conferred immortality on all who tasted them; and it is well known that the Mithraic celebration of the eucharist was conducted in an almost identical manner with that now in use in Christendom. But Mr. Preserved Smith is of opinion that, "of all the mysteries known to us, that of Dionysus bears the closest resemblance to that of Christ," and that may simply be because Paul was more intimately familiar with it than with any of the others. Dionysus was pre-eminently God of the wild mountains, a God of Intoxication and Inspiration, and giver of immortal life. He belongs to the group of Tree and Vegetation Gods already popular in Greece, and his worship was added to that of the others, whilst the reward of loyalty to him was "perpetual intoxication" beyond the grave.

When admitted into the Olympian hierarchy, Dionysus was designated the youngest of the Gods, son of Zeus. By the sixth century B.C. his religion had been merged into and become known as Orphism, and was the most fashionable of all religions for a long time. Professor Gilbert Murray supplies the following interesting and instructive sketch of it:—

It seems possible that the savage Thracians, in the fury of their worship on the mountains, when they were possessed by the God and became "wild beasts," actually tore with their teeth and hands any hares, goats, fawns, or the like that they came across. There survives a constant tradition of inspired Bacchanals in their miraculous strength tearing even bulls asunder—a fact, happily, beyond the bounds of human possibility. The wild beast that tore was, of course, the savage God himself. And by one of those curious confusions of thought, which seem so inconceivable to us and so absolutely natural and obvious to primitive men, the beast torn was also the God. The Orphic congregations of later times, in their most holy gatherings, solemnly partook of the blood of a bull, which was, by a mystery, the blood of Dionysus-zagreus himself, the "Bull of God," slain in sacrifice for the purification of man.....It is noteworthy, and throws much light on the spirit of Orphism, that apart from this sacramental tasting of the blood, the Orphic worshipper held it an abomination to eat the flesh of animals at all. The same religious fervour and zeal for purity which made him reject the pollution of animal food, made him at the same time cling to a ceremonial

which would utterly disgust the ordinary hardened flesh-eater. It fascinated him just because it was so incredibly primitive and uncanny; because it was a mystery which transcended reason (*The Athenian Drama*, pp. 167-8).

Enough has now been advanced, I trust, in disproof of the oft-repeated contention that Christianity is a Divinely revealed religion, wholly different from and infinitely superior to every other religion under the sun. The truth is that everything in it which savours of supernaturalism has been derived from older cults, just as Christmas was from the Roman Saturnalia, and Easter from an ancient Spring Festival observed by every nation from time immemorial. As already abundantly shown, this is specially true of the God-eating Sacrament. It has come down from prehistoric times, and in all essential points is the same to-day as it was three and four thousand years ago. But there never was a time when its truth was not challenged by the more enlightened members of the different communities involved. No one can read the great religious drama, entitled *The Bacchæ*, by Euripides, without realizing that there were those who doubted and denied, in spite of the cruel persecution that overtook all opponents of the dominant ritual. We cannot but feel humiliated as we read of the women of Thebes leaving their homes, neglecting all their duties, and disporting themselves like maniacs on Mount Kithairon—wildly singing and dancing and tearing in pieces everything they came across; but the thoughtful men and women held themselves aloof, smiling in their sleeves, or weeping bitter tears of pity. As time went on the number of the unbelieving non-participants increased, whose attitude at last found accurate expression in Cicero's well-known words: "When we call corn Ceres and wine Bacchus we use a common figure of speech; but do you imagine that anybody is so insane as to believe that he feeds on God"? Alas, even in Cicero's day, millions did entertain such a wild belief, and millions still hold it in the twentieth century. We are convinced that the Lord's Supper embodies the crudest and wildest superstition this world has ever seen; and our only hope springs from the undeniable fact that as a result of the growth and dissemination of natural knowledge and common sense the faith in it is rapidly declining. In this country strenuous attempts are being made by the Catholic party in the Anglican Church to revive the ancient Pagan and mediæval Christian attitude of childlike reverence for and utter trust in this supreme mystery. In organs, like the *Church Times*, we are constantly meeting with such expressions as "The adorability of the Blessed Sacrament," "After consecration there is no bread and no wine left in the Sacrament," "Since the whole substance of the bread is changed into the whole substance of the Body of Christ, and the whole substance of the wine into the Blood of Christ, our forefathers were right and wise in using the term Transubstantiation," and numerous clergymen, who style themselves priests, vainly dream that by repeating them week after week with appropriate solemnity, they will secure the support of the laity; but in a recent "Protest to the Archbishops" it is sorrowfully confessed that on every hand the signatories have to lament "the notorious disregard of, and disbelief in, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, and his adorable Presence in that Sacrament." The trend of the age is decidedly away from all such absurd superstitions, and confronted by common sense the long reign of the priest is assuredly nearing its close. The childish dreams of the Church are being increasingly discredited, the well-nigh universal cry being for realities. For countless ages dreams have invested the priests with limitless power, and filled the Church's coffers with a superabundance of gold; but their days

are now numbered, for it is being more and more widely realized that, in the words of Dryden:—

Dreams are but interludes, which fancy makes,
When Monarch Reason sleeps.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Man who Made Us all Work.

A COOL ESSAY FOR THE HOT WEATHER.

In the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy.—*Shakespeare.*

A LONDON magistrate has been kind enough to explain why we all have to work hard. That is to say, the majority of the human race. For the aristocracy do not work, and many of the clergy work only one day a week. "You know whose fault it is that we have to work at all," said Mr. Magistrate Symmons at North London Police Court to a defendant who was summoned for income tax, and pleaded that he had to work very hard.

The defendant blushing admitted his ignorance. "You have forgotten the Bible," said the magistrate. "It was Adam's fault, and all men after him were condemned to work by the sweat of their brows. But for him we might have lived without labour."

Who was the monster who robbed the majority of the human race of its leisure? What is known of the wretch who ensured hard labour for all of us, except the aristocracy and the superior clergy? According to the Bible, Adam was one of the most extraordinary creatures who ever existed. Even in the freak museum of the Old Testament, he is one of the star attractions. The Bible declares that Adam was the first man, the father of the whole human race. He was a gardener. Presumably, if he had been a shoemaker, he would also have been the last man. His education was sadly neglected, for he started life as a full-grown man. It is not everyone who can throw hundredweights about on their first day on the earth. But think of what he missed. No mother ever dandled him on her lap; no father ever held him facedownwards on his knees. He never learned to keep half-an-ounce of sweets in his mouth without the schoolmaster noticing it. Neither did he learn to make noises like cats, nor to smoke cigarettes without getting red in the face.

For a time Adam was the only human being on this planet. All the clothing he had was the close of day, and the mantle of night. It did not matter much, for as yet the County Council was not. A wife was found for Adam by putting him into a deep sleep, and carving the lady out of one of his ribs, which interesting case has been facetiously termed by Colonel Ingersoll as the first operation under chloroform.

Eve, for that was the lady's name, was a very fortunate woman in many respects. Like her helpmeet, Adam, she never went to school, and was in the happy position of starting life at full age. She had no washing to do on Mondays; neither did she have to sew buttons on Adam's shirts, get his overcoat out of pawn, or even argue with him earnestly about a long golden hair on his shirt front, nor did she ever lay awake o' nights worrying how to cut down his pantaloons so as to fit the boys. She had much to be thankful for.

It is difficult to write about the lady whom Milton terms "our general mother" without emotion. Tennyson calls her "the snow-limbed Eve," which is a chivalrous tribute from Alfred the Great; but, also, he knew little about her. Like the present scribe, he lived some six thousand brief summers after her death. Moses has written her biography, it is true, but he omitted to mention whether she was a blonde or a brunette, and no

portrait accompanies his monograph. So we must leave the fact in the twilight of human imagination.

Before Adam was introduced to his future house-keeper, he resembled nothing so much as the mule, being without pride of ancestry and without hope of progeny. Eve changed all that. Following her appearance, several small creatures began to creep about their abode, fall into pails, swallow tin-tacks, and run away with mother's best fig-leaf.

The first case at the first assizes was caused by Adam and Eve's theft of some apples. The trouble seems to have been caused by a talkative snake, who offered free advice. Eve listened to the loquacious reptile, and then the fat was in the fire. Adam and his descendants (always excepting the aristocracy and the superior clergy) were condemned to hard labour throughout all time. No wonder Eve repented of listening to that snake's free advice. Maybe that is one reason why none of Eve's daughters even now will ever take advice on any mortal subject.

Poor old Adam must have sighed and swore when he found that he had to go to town daily and work hard, so that his wife and family could have nice, clean, fresh-gathered fig-leaves to wear at church on Sundays. Apparently, hard work did not shorten Adam's life, for the Bible tells us that he lived to the very ripe age of nine hundred and thirty years. We trust that he was not afflicted unduly with gout, lumbago, or rheumatism during his declining centuries. We trust he was tolerably well; he was intolerably old.

We thank the London magistrate for reminding us of the man who made us all work. The full account is written by Moses, who declares that Adam upset the apple-cart of Creation. Unhappily, Moses is not always a reliable writer. He wrote an account of his own funeral.

MIMNERMUS.

The Old Testament.

III.

AFTER THE EXILE.

THE Babylonian exile lasted from 586 to 538 B.C., when Babylon opened its gates to Cyrus, founder of the Persian power. The hatred of the Jewish prophets had by this time been transferred from the ancient priesthood of Judæa, now laid low, to their present Babylonian rulers; and they confidently expected that the Medes and Persians under Cyrus would wipe Babylon off the face of the earth (see the prophecies of Isa. xiii.-xiv. 23, and xl.-xlvii., added to the book of Isaiah at this time). This hope was disappointed; Cyrus entered Babylon peacefully, and was accepted as its king by the Babylonian priests. The Jews had to be content with a decree for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. The opportunity was now present for the restoration of the Jewish national polity on the basis of the prophets' doctrines. The enthusiasts who returned to Jerusalem sternly repulsed the offer of the natives of Palestine to join in the work; and after some consequent obstruction on their part, the new temple was begun and finished (516 B.C.).

The results of the compromise with priestcraft, which has been noticed as a feature of the Deuteronomic reforms, now began to show. The prophetic, or anti-sacerdotal, party had purchased the abolition of sacrifice and priestcraft elsewhere by recognizing it at Jerusalem. The priests proceeded to snatch the utmost advantage from this. A code of law, religious and secular, was required for the community of returned exiles; and such a code, the work of a Jerusalem priest after the return,

we find in "P," the last strand of material embedded in the Pentateuch and in Joshua. This Priests' Book, clear, crabbed, dry, and precise, is traceable in such chapters as Gen. i. (the six days of creation), Gen. xvii. (institution of circumcision), Ex. xxv.-xxxi. (ritual legislation), and the whole of Leviticus. The long genealogies and chronologies of the Pentateuch are also from "P." The whole purpose of this work is to magnify the priesthood of Jerusalem. The history of the world from the creation on is represented as a preparation for the establishment of this hierarchy in all its splendour. Aaron, who cuts such a poor figure in the anti-clerical work of "E," is transformed by "P" into a more than regal personage, who goes about arrayed in wonderful vestments and precious stones, officiates with an elaborate ritual (every detail divinely ordained), and whose rod miraculously bursts into flower to silence all murmuring against his authority. The Levites, or priests of the old local sanctuaries, are degraded by "P" to mere servers and vergers under the Aaronic priesthood.

The compilation of the Pentateuch as we have it—i.e., the amalgamation of "P" with Deuteronomy and the older works of "E" and "J," to form one voluminous record of the supposed origin of Jewish institutions—was very likely the work of Ezra, a priest who came to Jerusalem from Babylon in the year 458 B.C. and reformed various laxities which had already crept in among the descendants of the returned exiles. A Jewish tradition states that the "law of Moses" had been totally lost at the time of the exile, and that Ezra re-wrote the whole of it by divine inspiration. It may very well be that Ezra wrote it, but we should correct the legend by saying that he compiled it from existing sources by the process familiarly known to-day as "scissors and paste."

There are, of course, many portions of the Old Testament later than the time of Ezra. The whole Jewish history was written afresh, about 300 B.C., by another priestly romancer, the author of the books of Chronicles, who resembles "P" in his passion for genealogies, and who subjects even the already much-tinkered history of Kings to further extravagant embellishment from a sacerdotal point of view. The prophetic books continued to be amended and interpolated to a very late day; and the book of Daniel was not written until the time of the Maccabees, under totally new historical conditions and to express ideas quite foreign to the older prophecies. Some of the Psalms are later still.

The prophetic movement, therefore, succeeded in the aim of making Monotheism the exclusive religion of the Jews; but it altogether failed in the worthier aim, announced by the older prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, and even Jeremiah), of emancipating the masses from priestcraft and class-oppression. That cannot be done by any supernatural religion. Amos and his successors went as far against priestcraft as was possible in the atmosphere of their time and country; but it was not far enough. It is impossible to read some of their invectives without sympathy. After all, they were the Voltaires and Paines of that day; and if their devotion to their conception of Yahweh jars upon us, we must remember that Voltaire and Paine, too, were only Deists.

But Deism is a half-way house unfit for permanent habitation. So long as a personal God is believed in, an authoritative revelation will be demanded; and once admit an authoritative revelation from a personal God, and you will have priests and priestcraft—whether the priestcraft be wielded by Oriental priests in turbans and flowing robes, or by Catholic clergy in cassocks and birettas, or by Protestant evangelists in Geneva gowns, is only a matter of degree. Amos called upon Israel to

cease offering fat victims and oppressing the poor, and to "seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night." We say: "Beware of the man whose God is in the skies." Seek *not* him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, for you could not discover him, even if he existed; and the Pleiades and Orion, glorious phenomena as they are, are in truth only vast spheres of matter at high temperatures adrift in space, which owe their glory only to the human eye and brain that perceive them. Seek *not* the maker of these waste globes, but seek the faculties of the human mind itself, and whatever is permanent and satisfying in them; seek to cultivate them, and to secure equal liberty for all to cultivate them also. In seeking this with a single aim, we shall write the doom of priestcraft, kingcraft, and oppression of every kind.

ROBERT ARCH.

Acid Drops.

The woman concerned in the horrible case of baby farming at Leytonstone has now been committed for trial on a charge of manslaughter. The woman, said the coroner, gave the children every facility for dying; they were starved, ill-clad, and in a filthy condition. The coroner also added that he was not at all sure it was right to leave the husband out of the indictment. He is, we believe, a member of the Salvation Army. We agree with the coroner that the husband was let off very easily. Anyway, he can now attend his Salvation Army services with a thankful heart, and no doubt dwell upon the prevalence of a lofty morality in a Christian country.

The Army and Navy canteens made during the War a profit of between six and seven millions. This is now to be used to benefit soldiers and sailors in various ways. What we should like to know is just what profit was made by the Y.M.C.A. in supplying refreshments to soldiers. We believe the prices charged to the soldiers were the same as in other canteens, and very large sums were given by the public. And to any estimate of profits, the value of huts and materials purchased by the public should be added.

I like the pathetic tale that comes from America of the young soldier who tried to get a meal but couldn't, because the place was for officers only, tried to go to an entertainment and a dance, and found he was barred for the same reason, and so went home and prayed: "Lord, don't let us have another war, but if we do, keep it for officers only."—*Daily News*.

The cry of the inferior clergy for more money will hit the Church of England and many Nonconformist bodies hard. The Roman Catholic Church, with its celibate clergy, has an enormous advantage over its rivals. Unhappily, celibacy means, as witty Horace Smith long ago pointed out, "a vow a man takes that he will enjoy none but other men's wives."

The early Christians believed in a community of property, and some modern Christians imitate their ethics. This may account for the fact that one cannot go to an hotel or boarding house without finding the touching text hanging upon the wall: "The proprietor is not responsible for articles left in the bedrooms."

A discussion on "Who reads the Bible?" has been taking place in the *Daily Chronicle*. In the opening article, it was stated on "high authority" that in this country only one person in 20,000 reads the Bible intelligently. This means that out of a population of forty millions the Bible has less than 2,000 intelligent readers. The figures appear to us to be fantastic, but that they are put forward in a daily paper "on high authority" is significant. Certainly, most Christians know very little about the Bible, and that is why they believe it. When the Bible is read intelligently by all, the clergy will be out of work.

The Young Men's Christian Association is still bent on the secularizing of religion. In the advertisement of its Holiday Camps, the attractions mentioned include concerts, social evenings, whist-drives, dances. What a change from the time when the only attraction of the Christian evangelists was the fireworks of hell!

Patriotism sometimes takes queer shapes. During the Peace celebrations at Westcliff-on-Sea, a shop in the London Road displayed a plaster image of Jesus Christ with a Union Jack as an appropriate background. And Jesus was not even a Welshman.

Speaking at a memorial service, the Bishop of London said, addressing the mourners: "If your boy lived to be a hundred years old he could never have done a more glorious thing than he did by dying at nineteen or twenty." His lordship discreetly omitted all reference to the clergy's exemption from military service.

The Bishop of Southwark declares that the Public School System of England is an excellent one. So it is—for the bishops.

"Nobody at the present moment seems anxious to work," declares the Bishop of Birmingham. His Lordship was referring to ordinary citizens. He has never expressed surprise that so many clergy should work only one day a week.

The Bishop of Peterborough knows a cure for the present unrest. "An ounce of Christianity," he declares, "will solve all our industrial troubles." Cannot the Bench of Bishops find that ounce; they have little else to do.

Jesus told his followers that in his name they should take up deadly things and they should not harm them. Most of his followers know how to take that kind of teaching, but some are simple enough to practise it. Thus, we see from the *Salt Lake Tribune* that one, Cleveland Harrison, a member of "The Holy Rollers," in order to exemplify his faith, allowed a rattlesnake to bite him five times. Either Harrison's faith was not strong enough or the rattlesnake had never heard of the text. Anyway, the man died two days after as a result of the bite. Now, when Harrison gets to heaven, we imagine he will have something to say to the author of the text. And it will not be "I was a stranger and ye took me not in." If he quotes that text, we imagine he will leave out the negative.

From the same issue of the *Tribune* we see that Archbishop Moral has ordered all Mexican priests to warn women that short skirts, high boots, and fancy hats are barred from church as immodest. But if they don't wear short skirts, how will the priests be able to tell whether the ladies have on high boots or not? It looks as though they will have to hold some sort of an inspection.

God has been made to serve many parts in the course of his evolution; but never has he been seen in a more comical light than in the *British Weekly* for August 7. The leading article is entitled "The Divine Translator," in which we are informed that "it is the glory of God to translate the speech of heaven into the language of earth." How does Sir W. Robertson Nicoll know that? On what authority does he make so astounding a statement? Heaven's "speech" is a beautiful figment of the imagination, and yet Sir William regards it as an objective reality, and writes as if he knew all about it.

Sir William assures us that "God is a perfectly accurate Translator." The only inference from the assertion is that Sir William knows the original sufficiently well to sit in judgment on the translation, and that the translation was needed only by other people, less learned than himself.

God also translates human prayer into the language of heaven, and Sir William knows exactly what prayer is when so translated. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it

is high, we cannot attain unto it; and we decline to accept the editor of the *British Weekly* as a reliable exponent of it.

A Yarmouth magistrate has stated that many of the houses in the town are not fit for pigs to live in, let alone human beings. In that pious town the inhabitants are not all "bloated" aristocrats.

The latest wills of "the starving clergy" include those of the Rev. O. H. Carey, of Trusham, Devon, £19,585; Canon C. Gray, of West Retford, Notts., £12,174; Rev. K. Prescott, of Overwhitmore, Birmingham, £44,883; and Rev. W. G. Whinfield, £24,853.

The Rev. Stanley Russell, in a remarkable article on "Ism" in the *Christian World* for August 7, says: "To preach the Sermon on the Mount on Sunday and make shells in the backyard on Monday is a strange dualism for a Christian minister"; but several preachers declared, during the War, that the Sermon on the Mount no longer applied, our supreme duty being to kill as many Germans as we could.

A newspaper paragraph (Oh! those newspapers) declares that an American scientist has discovered a method of bleaching the negro's skin. Under this treatment, "God's image carved in ebony" will become as white as snow. The Christian Church also claims it can whitewash the coloured man's "soul," and the scientific gent maintains that he can modify his complexion. This happy union of Science and Religion should enable the American Christian to grasp the African's hand instead of emptying a revolver into him.

A Baltimore lawyer, Mr. O. F. Hershey, is distressed at the state of London. Returning from a European trip, he has been blowing off steam, and he says: "I have never been to Sodom, Gomorrah, nor ancient Babylon, but I have been to London." And the American citizen calmly suggests that the English metropolis is worse than the place the clergy mention so often in their sermons. What a giddy time that Baltimore citizen must have had in London.

In an article on "Prayer" in the *Daily Mail*, it is stated that "men turn instinctively to prayer." "Even the Agnostic in his last agony cried out, 'O God, if there be a God, save my soul if I have a soul.'" It looks as if the editor was on holiday; but a daily paper should not be left in charge of the office boy.

Providence is in a holiday mood. A fire balloon set a Gospel mission alight at Palmer's Green, and it was destroyed. The influenza epidemic in Labrador has nearly wiped out the coast inhabitants. At Hebron, out of a population of 220, there are but seventy survivors, and smaller settlements suffered as badly.

A big London newspaper has been enlivening its columns with a discussion on the subject of folk who married beneath them. No mention was made of the historic case of God "marrying" the Virgin Mary.

Mormons are said to be active in Croydon and neighbourhood, and they have opened a hall for meetings. The Croydonians are not all enamoured of Old Testament ideas on marriage.

An acquaintance of ours was riding on one of the London trams when the vehicle passed the School for the Indigent Blind. He overheard a well-dressed passenger remark to a friend: "That's the school for the *indignant* blind." The defenders of the Benevolent Design Argument might try to find out the serious side to this jest.

At Christie's Sale Rooms, London, a pearl necklace was sold for £10,000; a muff-chain, of brilliants, £7,000; and a silver-gilt table ornament, £3,300. Yet the dear clergy will have it that the War was a time of God's chastening.

To Correspondents.

W. H. BRIDEN.—Letters to the press on our view of current affairs are bound to do good. One must always run the risk of the editorial blue pencil, and one must not always blame the editor overmuch. Public opinion in this country is very unenlightened, and the editor may not always do as he would wish. When the public demand honest papers, they will get them. Let us hope that we are all doing something to create the demand.

T. M. MOSLEY.—The new edition of *Determinism* will be out, we hope, some time before Christmas. Other things will follow. The trouble is to get the work done. Thanks; we were beginning to feel the need of a few days' holiday, and we are getting all we can. Hope that you and your family are quite well.

T. ELMES.—We had no reply from Professor Ray Lankester, or it would have been inserted. Neither did we expect one. There are occasions when silence shows much greater wisdom than speech.

T. KARS.—We should be glad to do as you suggest, but we cannot find time apart from our regular work. That already takes up all the time we have at our disposal.

G. YOUNG.—The only sane way of preventing the clergy talking nonsense is to rob them of an audience to which it is acceptable.

C. L.—The matter is having our consideration.

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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We venture to once more bring before our friends the possibility of doing a little effective propaganda work during the holiday season. There are many thousands of potential *Freethinker* readers about, and if they could only be brought into touch with this paper the trick would be done. Religious people take full advantage of the holiday season, and there is no reason why *Freethinkers* should not be equally alert. This paper can be ordered from any of Smith's railway book-stalls, or from any newsagent, and an extra copy or so ordered while on holiday, for distribution, may be the means of securing a lifelong friend to the cause. We suggest to all our well-wishers that they should give the matter their serious consideration.

A correspondent informs us that some time back he inserted in the *Times* the following advertisement:—

To Spiritualists. The sum of fifty guineas is offered to any medium recommended by Sir Oliver Lodge or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who, instead of holding converse with dead men's ghosts, shall, under strict test conditions, get in touch with the spirit of the advertiser while still alive.

Our correspondent informs us that the replies provided plenty of amusement, but no answer came from a medium.

Those of our readers who possess a fair working knowledge of French will thank us for calling their attention to a pamphlet by M. Jean Robyn, who is a brilliant writer on the staff of our Belgian contemporary, *La Fensee*. His pamphlet, *Dieu et la guerre* (God and the War), deals clearly, vigorously, and eloquently with the problem that faces every Theist, the impossibility of squaring the existence of evil—here posed in its acutest form, the wholesale devastation of Belgium—with a belief in a God who has both the power and the will to do good. He quotes that most militant of Catholics, Joseph de Maistre, who grew lyrical over the divine blessings of war, with all its attendant horrors, and

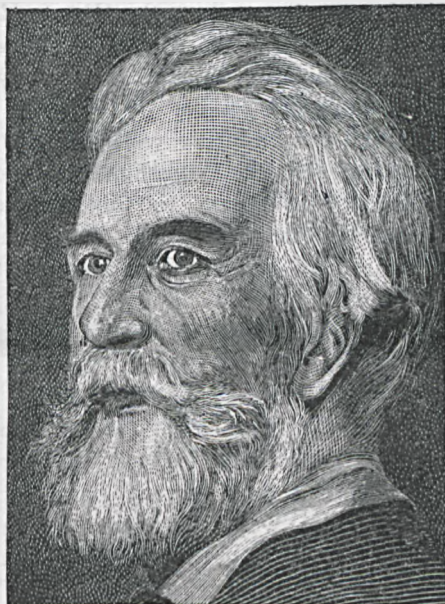
finishes a moving and persuasive piece of writing by saying that a "regenerated and reconciled humanity must triumph without a God, since God is war and all that is evil." The pamphlet is published in Bruxelles by H. Kumps-Robyn, Rue Keyenveld 81-85; price twenty centimes.

La Pensee has issued a leaflet, called *Why We are Freethinkers and What We Want*. It is a vigorous and enthusiastic plea for freedom of thought, an eloquent call for the concerted action of all men and women of independent spirit who would break the fetters of intellectual slavery which bind humanity. "Up, then," it ends—

Up, then, all of you who wish to keep or regain your dignity as human beings! Up, then, men and women of our modern times! The day of religions is past! It gives place to Science and Freethought, which, alone, can lead an unfettered humanity towards its highest destiny—towards happiness, peace, and love! Long live Freethought!

The English reader will note the vibrant combination of emotion and reason in this little leaflet. It would be better for us, and for our Cause here in England, if we had a larger measure of this ardent passion for truth.

We are indebted to Messrs. Watts & Co. for the portrait-block of Professor Haeckel.



1834

1919

Death of Professor Haeckel.

WHEN a man has led a career such as Professor Haeckel's, and dies at the age of eighty-six, it is a mere formality to express regret at the news. His family and intimates may well mourn the loss of a loved figure, the world is concerned with only the publicist, the man of science, the seeker after truth. In these directions Professor Haeckel's work may be counted as finished. All that remains for the public at large is to pay a well-earned tribute of respect to one of the foremost scientists of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

For more than half a century Haeckel stood in Germany as one of the foremost champions of evolution, and his reputation has stood little lower in this country during the larger part of that period. Among the general public his incursions into questions of morals, theology, and even politics, served to make him better known than might otherwise have been the case, and his opposition to the Christian theology was pronounced and undisguised.

For sheer intellectual power and philosophic insight, Haeckel would rank lower than even Darwin, but he possessed in full measure, what is so lacking in our own scientific workers, the moral courage to speak out on matters connected with the current religion. In this

matter the world owes Haeckel a debt it cannot easily repay.

Some of our time-serving newspapers, in dealing with Haeckel's death, remarked that he made himself ridiculous by his remarks on England during the War. This may be true, but it is no more than an illustration of what Spencer called the "patriotic bias," and, in any case, his attitude towards England was not more ridiculous than that of some of our own scientists who, after impressing upon us—prior to 1914—the great scientific services Germany had rendered the world, straightway provided columns of newspaper reading to prove that in science Germany's work had always been a negligible quantity. But your fanatical patriot is ever the last one to recognize patriotism as a virtue in anyone but himself.

The *Daily Telegraph* went a step further in absurdity by saying that Haeckel's "materialistic writings played no small part in guiding the ideas which prepared Germany for the war." That statement simply adds slander to absurdity. Now that the War is over, one would imagine the absurd notion that Germany was solely responsible for the commercial rivalries, international jealousies and distrusting, rivalries in armaments, and the numerous other things out of which war grows, would lose its force. To attribute the War to Haeckel's scientific teaching is well worthy of a Torrey or a Talmage, or the Bishop of London; it is surely out of place with serious-minded people.

Haeckel's great and enduring work lay, on the one hand, in his purely scientific investigations, and in his many important contributions to biological science; and on the other hand in the strenuous manner in which he strove to bring their implications home to the mass of the people. His fighting capacity and expository power stood him in good stead here. In Germany, the orthodox held him in rigorous hatred. In this country his name also became anathema in orthodox circles. And the world could well afford the loss of some of its scientists who lack the courage to apply their knowledge to current problems, if thereby they could secure the continuance of others who, like Haeckel, believe in making their own conclusions the property of all intelligent men and women.

Ho Poneeros.

SOME years ago, two amiable British gentlemen engaged in a most vigorous dispute, which was watched with an almost prize-fight interest by crowds of bishops, deans, and serious laymen. The two gentlemen were Canon Cook and Bishop Lightfoot, and the subject of dispute was *Ho Poneeros*, which is a Greek term for something bad. But the question was whether it means Badness in the abstract, or a personal Bad One, or, as the vulgar would say, the Thorough Bad Lot. In the Lord's Prayer occurs the supplication, "Deliver us from Evil" (*apo tou poneerou*). Ought this to be translated "Deliver us from Evil," or "Deliver us from the Evil One"? (that is, from Satan, the diabolical personality). Canon Cook said "Evil"; Bishop Lightfoot said "Evil One." The debate took place in a Church paper in 1881. In 1919, not much is heard on this topic, and the general opinion seems to have settled on the use of the phrase "the Evil One." It was still a theme of eager discussion in 1891, as we may see by consulting Dr. Robinson's elaborate work of that date.¹

¹ J. Armitage Robinson's *Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature*, vol. i. (Cambridge University Press).

Dr. Robinson must have spent many weeks, and perhaps months, in the cheerful business of hunting all through the New Testament for traces of a personal Diabolos, or Devil. He did so at a period which saw our country filled with agitating problems of unemployment, Socialism, Irish Home Rule, Imperialism in Africa, etc. As all Churchmen are good citizens (they say so continually), and as Dr. Robinson was a good citizen, this good citizen must have considered it of immense importance for the common weal to ascertain whether the Lord's Prayer refers to a personal Bad One. If social evils and exploitations were due, not to a mere floating tendency, so to speak, but to an Abominable Creature who spent his (or her?) time in upsetting everything that was pure and excellent, then it very much concerned the British public, and all mankind, to track the Brute to his (or her) foul lair. And Dr. Robinson earnestly and diligently set out on this business of morality and the State. Who or what was *Ho Poneeros*? From what or from whom does the Lord's Prayer plead that we—the Jewish people, the British people, the Turkish people, and all the rest of us—may be delivered?

Dr. Robinson, like one who explores a charming garden, wanders among the Epistles and Gospels, and pounces with joy upon proofs that *Ho Poneeros* is a raging, tearing, malicious, intelligent, and highly self-conscious He. In the Epistle to the Thessalonians, for instance, Paul's thoughts are much on a personal Devil, and he says that "Even Satan shapes himself into an Angel of Light." Hence, when, in the same letter, he remarks to his correspondents: "The Lord is faithful, and will protect you from the Evil" (*apo tou poneerou*), it is plain he imagines *Ho Poneeros* as a horrid Wretch with a too decided personality. Again, in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul affirms that Christ rescues us (the early Christians) "from the Age of the harassing Evil." Surely this harassing agent is a masculine agent! Surely the Evil is a He! Such an interpretation tallies with the venerable history given in the Gospels, and picturing the harassing thing as a masculine Devil who carried Jesus to a mountain top, and held a conversation with him which is accurately reproduced in the evangelic page.

Besides this, other writers, outside the Bible identify Evil and the Evil One. One is Hermas, who talks of the Angel of Evil (*tees poneerias*). Another is Barnabas, who says something of an Evil Ruler (*ho poneeros archon*). A third is the author of the *Clementine Homilies*, who reports a dialogue between Peter and a heretic. The heretic asks if Peter believes in a Prince of Evil:—

Peter said: "It is impossible for me to deny the assertion of my Teacher [Christ], who was tempted by him for forty days. He saw the Evil One (*ton poneeron*) falling down like lightning from heaven. And in the Prayer which he gave us it is said, 'Deliver us from the Evil One'" (*apo tou poneerou*).

Canon Cook was rather staggered by this last quotation, so he got out of the difficulty by declaring that the book cited was a spurious composition, and not a proper authority at all.

We need not follow Dr. Robinson all round his delightful garden of texts. He makes out an excellent case. The Lord's Prayer acknowledges the existence of a Thoroughly Evil Person, who is the standing enemy of mankind. This is the Unpleasant Person whom Jesus had to resist at the very opening stage of his career, when, as Irenæus said: "He picked up again the ancient and primal quarrel with the Serpent."

Of course, this fact, which was brought into relief by the learned researches of Dr. Armitage Robinson is extremely important. We now know (unless we are too

critical) that all the miseries and misfortunes of human evolution are due to the Marplot Person from whose power the Lord's Prayer begs deliverance. For example, take this list of social ills:—

Diseases	Slavery
Vermin	Serfdom
Famine	Poverty
Drunkenness	Persecutions
Prostitution	Torture
Lunacy	Militarism
Idiocy	Ignorance
Poisons	Freethought

I do not myself consider Freethought an evil, but I include it in the dreadful list as a point of courtesy to Dr. Robinson and his companions in orthodoxy. The list might be greatly extended. Many worthy persons (as, for instance, elderly folk who reside in Harrogate hydros, or in high-class boarding-houses at Scarborough or Torquay) would add Socialism, Proposals for Divorce-law Reform, Family Limitation, and Sunday Games. Perhaps it would be wise not to go into these difficult problems. The sixteen evils above named will suffice.

Now, we are given to understand that the responsibility for these social ills, including Freethought, may finally be traced to the Serpent, or *Ho Poneeros*. All down the ages this Criminal Person has devoted his entire time, his illimitable energy, and his undoubted abilities to doing and propagating things which sanitarians and the clergy abhor. He is apparently as active in 1919 as ever he was, for we observe that Church dignitaries, the Catholic and Evangelical press, and distinguished laymen such as Lord Hugh Cecil, are constantly complaining of his excessive influence. He is the malignant "Hidden Hand," injuring the work of civilization, and impeding the plans of Heaven.

On reflection, we cannot fail to be struck with the remarkable fact that this Anarchic Person should possess such extraordinary brain-capacity. So far as we are aware (I speak with some hesitation on such great questions) he never had any education. Like the heroes of Dr. Samuel Smiles' biographical writings, he was Self-made. No uncle left him any legacies. No rich patron befriended him in his struggling youth. He had no credentials or testimonials commending him to the favourable consideration of our ancestors. Yet he has (if all tales are true) established an empire greater than the empires of Alexander, Cæsar, Jenghis Khan, Akbar, and Napoleon. The united forces of our Universities, Professions, Politicians, Aristocracy, Police, and our magnificent English Bishops, seem unable—owing to one cannot say what obscure cause—to outwit this Degraded Personage.

I have ventured to express myself plainly. The problem ought not to be hushed up. One sees attempts at ignoble concealment. For example, the statesmen who advise the King in the composition of speeches for the opening or closing of Parliamentary sessions frequently refer to Almighty God, and yet never make the least allusion to the Obnoxious Person who sorely taxes the wisdom of Senates and Assemblies. Such a policy exhibits lack of courage. Nor is it honest. We have highly paid Government officials, and we have elaborately equipped clerical orders—Catholic, Protestant, Nonconformist. They have vast resources of talent and scholarship. We, the common people, are entitled to a definite answer to the question,—How is it that this Corrupt Person manages to maintain his enormous intellectual and administrative ascendancy?

Is it too much to ask the Prime Minister to give his attention to the subject? One knows that Mr. Lloyd George is somewhat overworked, but still.....

F. J. GOULD.

The Christian's Day.

Do we ever picture to ourselves what the perfect day of the Christian is, or should be? The basis of all his consciousness, of course, must be that he is but a stranger here—heaven is his home. Here he has no continuing city; he looks for a heavenly home, whose builder or maker is God. Therefore, whether in mundane affairs for six days of the week he must—to find bread for the body which perishes—ply the trade of bagman, butcher, baker, or candlestick maker, or not, his chief thoughts are, or ought to be, centred in the place where his treasure is—where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal:—

There is no night in Heaven
There are no burglars there:
Banks are unknown and the wide streets
Are strewn with jewels rare.

We do not press unfair inferences from that gem of poesy, but leave it with the comment that there appears to be a striking association therein of crib crackers and bankers. To British ears this may be startling. But it probably would not be so startling to the Chinese.

Let us contemplate the sanctified bagman as he springs from his couch in a sleeping chamber, whose walls are decorated with such legends as: "Prepare to meet thy God," "Godliness with contentment is great gain," "Jesus saves," "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Plump upon his knees he goes. His early orisons will be determined by his work for the day. Suppose he is a traveller in the hardware line, he will not scorn to ask for material success in his visits to his customers, for has he not the Divine promise of well being in the world that now is as well as life everlasting in the world to come? Therefore, after an exordium of thanks to the Creator for his night's rest, and a request for the blessing of heaven on those who have not rested, he enters upon the argument: "Lord, thou knowest that there has been a serious slump in flat-irons. O God, thou who causedst the prophet's borrowed axe to float on the water, look in mercy and loving-kindness upon my efforts this day to unload our warehouse of its large stock of flat-irons, and to thy name shall be all the praise! Lord, of the commission I secure, a tenth shall be thine!"

Then, when our sanctified bagman goes forth humming the tune of—

Here we suffer grief and pain,

he feels that matters are in the hands of the Almighty and
All will be well.

And mark the perfect man! He has a customer whom he knows to be a lost sheep. Shall flat-irons stand in the way of his plain duty to endeavour to bring this retailer of hard goods to a knowledge of the truth? Nay, verily, the sanctified bagman, when he enters this ironmonger's premises hands over a little tract headed: "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" with the observation that his heart yearns towards him. Does the ironmonger think of sending for a doctor? Nay, verily, he sees the compelling fire of faith in the eye of the sanctified bagman, and is even induced to have a prayer-meeting in his little office where the bagman shows him the way of salvation. The penitent ironmonger leaves evidence of his tears on musty files of papers, and rises a new man—accepted in the beloved—fit now to join in the praises of the Lamb on a Jew's-harp or mouth-organ. The convert orders a lot of flat-irons, and the sanctified bagman caught up like Philip by the Holy Spirit, goes on his way rejoicing. Thus, we see how happily faith and flat-irons may be associated. And the recording angel makes another

entry to the credit of the sanctified bagman. "The Day" shall declare it!

In similar ways, the Christian lawyer and doctor have opportunities of doing the Lord's work. When the Christian lawyer hears a professional brother say "Damn," he takes that brother to one side and asks him if he knows where lawyers who say such things are likely to go? The professional brother's face is suffused with blushing shame. He trembles when the knowledge of the wrath to come is borne in upon him. He confesses his fault to God, and cries for pardon. And God, who is faithful and just to forgive sin when it is confessed, extends his forgiveness to the poor convicted lawyer, who goes away a happier and a wiser man, but guarding his tongue ever after, and working out his salvation with fear and trembling.

The Christian doctor likewise carries always with him a pocket Testament, with marked passages. It may be, as he says, his duty to heal the body and relieve physical pain; but it is the supreme business to arouse sinful patients to a sense of their lost and undone condition. Illness always provides exceptional opportunities, for then the sinner is weak, and conscious of his miserable fallibility. When things are going well, it is difficult to bring conviction to many a sinner: but when adverse circumstances arise, and things are going badly, then comes the opportunity of using the sword of the Spirit. Therefore, when our Christian doctor is called in to see the very rich, very fat, and very selfish and frivolous Dowager Lady Snuphanuph, he sternly refuses to feel the proffered pulse until her Ladyship has disclosed to him the state of her heart towards God. Her Ladyship is at first startled, then petulant; but as she notes the supernatural gleam in the doctor's eye, she is reduced to tears, that tell how she realizes the vanity and emptiness of her life. In a quarter of an hour her Ladyship has been plucked from the burning and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

And so all along the line these faithful lay ministers of the Cross are day by day securing new converts, effecting new births, and making the bells of heaven going-a-ling-a-ling. No Christian starts the day without the resolve to do all in his power to bring at least one perisher to the foot of the Cross of Jesus, to have the burden of his sins rolled away. And the carrying out of the resolve means much to the Christian. He has the happiness of the smile of God; the consciousness, too, that he is backing his worthy pastor in his great fight with the Devil. On all hands we have the clergy testifying to the nobility of character of these laymen, who are putting forth such strenuous efforts as we have described for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

The layman who puts God first, and uses his talents in the work of salvation, invariably goes to bed with the satisfied feeling that he has reached "the end of a perfect day."

IGNOTUS.

Pages from Voltaire.

AN ADVENTURE IN INDIA.

PYTHAGORAS, when he was in India, studying in the school of the Gymnosophists, mastered the language spoken by beasts and plants. One day, as he was walking through a meadow near the sea, he heard these words: "How wretched is the life of a blade of grass! I have scarcely grown up a few inches above the ground when a devouring monster, a terrifying animal, crushes me beneath his gigantic hooves, and with his jaws, armed with a row of sharp lances, cuts me off, and then mangles and swallows me. Men call this monster a

sheep. I believe there is not a more abominable creature in the whole world."

Pythagoras went a few steps further on; he found an oyster taking the air on a ledge of rock. The ancient philosopher was not bound by that admirable law whereby it is forbidden to eat our equals. He was just about to swallow the oyster, when he was aware of a pitiful voice saying: "O Nature! how happy is the grass that, even as I am, is thy handiwork. When it is cut it is born again; it is immortal; but we poor oysters, in vain are we defended by double armour—scoundrels eat us by the dozen at dinner, and this will go on for ever. What a hideous fate is that of an oyster! how barbarous are human beings!"

Pythagoras trembled; he appreciated the magnitude of the crime he might have committed; weeping, he craved pardon of the unhappy oyster, and put it back carefully on its rock.

He pondered deeply this adventure as he was returning to the town. He beheld spiders eating flies, swallows eating spiders, and hawks making a meal of swallows. "These," he said to himself, "are certainly not philosophers."

When he was just entering the town, Pythagoras was pushed, jostled, and thrown down by a rushing crowd of common people, men and women, who were shouting: "It serves them right, it serves them right; its just what they deserved!" "Who? What?" said Pythagoras, getting up from the ground; but the crowd continued to run about, exclaiming: "What fun it will be to see them cooked!"

Pythagoras thought they were talking about lentils, or some other sort of vegetable. Not at all; it was of two poor Hindus. "No doubt," said Pythagoras to himself, "these men are two philosophers who are tired of life; they are glad to be born again under another form; it is indeed a pleasant thing to change your habitation, even though you are always badly lodged; there is no disputing about tastes."

He went on with the crowd to the public square, where there was a great stake, with logs of wood burning merrily. Facing the stake was a platform, called the *tribunal*, and on this platform were seated the judges, each holding a cow's tail in his hand, while their heads were covered with a cap exactly like the two ears of the animal that carried Silenus when he went aforetime through the countryside with Bacchus, after he had crossed the Erythean Sea dryfooted and stayed the sun and moon in the courses, as we find faithfully recorded in the Orphic hymns.

Among the judges there happened to be a good man whom Pythagoras knew very well. The Hindu wise man explained to him of Samos why they were about to give this entertainment to the people.

"The two Hindus," said he, "have no wish to be burnt alive; my reverend colleagues have condemned them to this punishment; one of them for saying that the substance of Xaca is not the substance of Brama; the other for having suggested that a man could please the Supreme Being by virtue alone, and that it was not necessary to grasp a cow's tail in the hour of death; for," he went on, "a man can be virtuous at all times, but he cannot always find a cow ready to his hand. The honest women of our town were so terrified by these two heretical propositions that they gave the judges no rest until they sentenced the two unfortunates to the stake."

Pythagoras came to the conclusion that, from the blade of grass up to man, the whole of existence was full of wretchedness. However, he made the judges, even the more fanatic among them, listen to reason for once in their lives.

In the end he departed to preach tolerance at Crotona

but an intolerant man set fire to his house: he was burned, even he who had rescued the Hindus from the flames. *Salve qui pevit.* Everyone for himself.

Englised by GEO. UNDERWOOD.

An Open Letter to Certain Members of the L.C.C.

DEAR SIRs,—At the beginning of the War the world was informed by various and numerous public speakers in England that one of the objects for which the British Empire was to take part in the fight was to maintain the cause of liberty. This has been repeated times without number during the years of war through which we have passed. Yet I can take up the *Freethinker* in Cologne and find, in the issue of August 3, 1919, an article in which readers are informed that the L.C.C. is doing its best to prevent the sale, not only of the *Freethinker*, but also of various volumes of Freethought literature.

Now, doubtless, many of the members of the present L.C.C. have, during the last five years, had a good deal to say about the sons of England fighting and suffering for the cause of freedom. Is it not, therefore, time to cease trying to prevent the sale of literature which every sensible person should have the liberty to read?

In the actions which you have taken in order to suppress the sale of literature which does not give expression to your own views, you have adopted the methods of Prussianism—the very thing which you have often told your friends and the public the British Empire has been out to kill.

Who gave you the right to say in a peremptory manner that a certain paper or book shall not be read by the London public? Nobody. You can have your own opinion on the subject, but you should not be peremptory. Who gave you the right to prevent another man from buying certain papers and books which you dislike or cannot understand? Nobody. You have used public power in the interest of your

own beliefs and of a section of the public who agree with you. That is not upholding the cause of freedom; it is Prussianism.

If you could give sound reasons to the effect that Freethought literature degrades the morals of the people, there would be some justification of your action. But you cannot prove that Freethought literature leads to the degradation of the people. What is more: you cannot prove that religious literature is bound to uplift the people. This you should know by now, as public men. If you do not, then come to Cologne, mingle with the troops, and find out for yourselves how religion and religious literature fails to uplift the majority of men. There is nothing like personal experience; and a trip out here, provided you kept your eyes open, would teach you many a lesson with regard to the failures of religion.

So "play the game," and be consistent with your professions about killing Prussianism; and grant to others who often think differently from you the freedom of buying and reading such literature as they care to choose.

Yours sincerely,

Cologne, Aug. 5, 1919.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Band Stand): 6.15, Mr. James Marshall, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 6, Mr. J. J. Darby, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 3.15, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "Secularism—The People's Salvation." A Preface by Bob Norman.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): Mr. E. Burke, 3.15, "The Tree of Knowledge;" 6, "Creation and Evolution."

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