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## Views and Opinions.

### Evolution and Religion.

The religious world has never really reconciled itself to the triumph of the doctrine of evolution. It has been compelled to acknowledge it, but it has done so in the same spirit that Poland acknowledged the supremacy of Russia and Germany, or Ireland that of England. And at every opportunity the repressed hostility breaks forth. All sorts of social evils are derived from the prevalence of so Godless a theory, and any adverse criticism of the doctrine is hailed with delight. It is not difficult to account for this. The strength of religion is always and everywhere proportionate to human ignorance and helplessness. Increase the one and you weaken the other. Whether we are dealing with the savage who sees supernatural power manifested all around him, or with present-day religious leaders, who place a God somewhere at the back of the cosmic process, the principle is always the same. It is always the unexplained that provides room for God; always the emergence of a satisfactory explanation that rules God out. We pray for that which is beyond our control or which evades our understanding—never for that which is within our power or comprehension. We pray for a man to recover from fever, but never for the replacement of a shattered limb. Ignorance in the one case and knowledge in the other is enough to account for the discrimination. The Goddite sees clearly enough that given a generally accepted cosmical theory such as evolution, there is nothing left for God to do. And a God who does nothing is soon ignored in both practice and theory.

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### The Press and Haeckel.

The death of Professor Haeckel has given a splendid opportunity for the concealed or repressed hostility of the pietistic world to evolution to express itself. For Haeckel was a Freethinker, and one who made no secret of the fact. And as he happened to be also a German, there was offered a splendid chance of using the unreasoning hatred excited by war to discredit the attack on religion. Religious papers referred airily to the refutation of Haeckel's theories, leaving the uninformed reader to assume that the theory of evolution had been decisively disproved. And the secular press was not very far behind. As it has to cater for a class of readers of

which not one in a thousand has any knowledge of or interest in scientific things, and as the average journalist himself is little better informed than his readers, a sneer at Haeckel's work was certain to be found acceptable. Even a paper, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, can tell us that "Haeckel rode the evolutionary theory more recklessly than Darwin had ever dared" (it is well known that Darwin deliberately refrained from applying his theory as Haeckel did, in order to disarm antagonism) and would not rest until he had demolished the existence of God, freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul. And as we are informed that Haeckel's "imposing edifice.....crumbled almost as soon as it was built," the reader who knows no better is again left with the impression that after having been demolished by the science of the nineteenth century, God, the soul, and freewill have been securely re-established by that of the twentieth. All of which, as Euclid would say, is absurd. The doctrine of evolution is as well established as the Copernician theory. There is discussion only as to the mechanism of the process. God, free-will, and soul are more discredited than ever. And the truth of Haeckel's speculations as to the machinery of the evolutionary process no more affect its reality than our ignorance of the nature and causation of cancer affects the existence of the disease. If anyone wished to prove that we are a scientifically uneducated people, a collection of newspaper comments on the death of Haeckel might well establish the thesis.

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### Darwinism and Imperialism.

From Haeckel to Darwinism is a simple transition, and a depreciation of the one may easily be made an occasion for the depreciation of the other. And sometimes this depreciation comes from men whom one does not usually associate with orthodox obscurantism. Thus, Mr. W. L. Courtney, in the course of a review in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 15, remarks that the "Sin of modern Imperialism.....is the reckless way in which European countries have dealt with native populations having their own right to exist—a policy of gradual extermination which is supported by a wrong-headed application of Darwin's law of the survival of the fittest." Now, while it is true that some writers have used the Darwinian formula in support of their imperialistic aims, the prevalence of Darwinism has had nothing whatever to do with either their initiation or prevalence. Broadly, the modern struggle for colonies may be said to have set in with the Spanish conquest of South America. England's fight with Spain, as later with Holland in the seventeenth century, and with France throughout the whole of the eighteenth century—in India, America, and Europe—were mainly struggles for the possession of colonies. Certainly Darwinism cannot be held responsible for these contests. The disappearance of the Redskins in North America or of the Peruvians and Mexicans in South America, the dying out of the Tasmanians, the dwindling of the native Australians and New Zealanders, the disappearance of



natives before the piratical Europeans, have not the remotest connection with scientific theory. The ruling motive here was exploitation, mingled with crude theories of greatness, patriotism, and religious evangelization. And in the nineteenth century, had Darwinism never been heard of, the exploitation and subjection of the native races of the world would still have gone on. The connection of Darwinism with the gradual extermination of native races is as fantastical as anything could well be.

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#### Humanism and Evolution.

Two considerations might have given some of these journalists pause—that is, on the assumption that they were honest and informed. The first is that a public opinion more alert in the interests of the weaker races has developed side by side with the growth of the theory of evolution. Just as the researches into animal and child life, directly inspired by the growth of evolutionary thought, has been accompanied by what one may call a humanization of these studies, so the attention of men having no commercial or imperialistic concern in the exploitation and subjection of the native races, but animated by a scientific interest in their life and culture, has been accompanied by a more humanistic tone in relation to them. To the buccaneers of Elizabeth's day, or to the commercial adventurers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, natives were everywhere regarded as almost an inferior species of animal, or as so many opportunities for plunder. Monarchs calmly gave their subjects rights against people over whom they had no more real moral jurisdiction than they had over the man in the moon. Whether as cause or as accompaniment, the historical fact remains that a more humane note in the relations between "civilized" and "uncivilized" peoples has developed side by side with the growth of evolutionary thinking in all departments of knowledge.

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#### Civilization and Religion.

The second consideration is that the exploitation of native races has for several centuries been carried on under the cloak of religion. When Spain set forth on its conquest of South America, it was partly based on the avowed purpose of establishing the "true faith." A Papal Bull authorized the expedition, and, in virtue of his spiritual power, the Pope gave the Spaniards control over almost a whole hemisphere. And for generations—reckoning both before and after the Spanish adventure—the fact that certain peoples were not Christians robbed them of the right to even such elementary moral considerations as were then in force. And with the advent of the modern missionary movement we can see how, in India, in China, and elsewhere, the pretext of religion has been used as a cover for a system of exploitation that necessarily resulted in gradual extermination. Look at the sickening religious cant with which the Belgian rule of the Congo was initiated, and the almost unbelievable horrors that followed! Look at the way in which the evangelization of the Chinese has been used as a cover for their exploitation by the European Christian nations! Of course, these things might have taken place without religion; the undeniable fact is that it took place with it. And so far as the influence of religion hindered the development of a rationalized and humanized society, to that extent it has helped in their perpetuation. The spread of scientific knowledge has not, it is true, abolished the evils of our modern civilization, but it at least holds out a greater prospect of doing so than religion has ever done.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Soul.

DR. FORT NEWTON preached, in the City Temple, a sermon on "Winning our Souls," which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for August 13, and which calls for serious comment. The text is Luke xxi. 19: "In your patience ye shall win your souls." Soul is usually defined as the spiritual, rational, and immortal part in man—that part of him which enables him to think, and by means of which he becomes a subject of moral government. According to this definition, the soul is a distinct entity or substance, tabernacled for a period in a physical body. It is in this sense that Dr. Fort Newton seems to treat the term, for he says that "saint and sage agree that life has meaning only when it has reference to the soul and its unfolding." He is fully justified in stating that the Greek verb for "win" literally means to procure, purchase, or acquire; but he omits to tell us what the Greek noun translated "souls" signifies, though he apparently takes it for granted that there dwells in every man the "seed of immortality," "the germ of the Eternal," and that it is out of this seed or germ, or somehow by means of it, the soul is to be won as a priceless possession. Dr. Fort Newton's language is peculiarly vague, even ambiguous, so that it is difficult, almost impossible, to ascertain what his real meaning is. The only thing that we may be certain of is that he regards the soul as the gift of God, "bequeathed to us through 'the mystic continuities of inheritance,'" and that it begins as a seed or germ which we are called upon to train and develop until it attains to the fullness of its spiritual stature. Now, curiously enough, while all alike receive this soul as a seed or germ, yet the destiny of it depends alone upon our treatment of it. Though in its very nature the seed of immortality, the germ of the Eternal, if we live unworthy lives, if we reject the salvation offered by Christ, we shall lose it, and, one would naturally infer, cease to be immortal. Yet the inference would be false, for lost souls are said to be cast, at death, "into the outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Greek word rendered "souls" in the reverend gentleman's text means wind. As a matter of fact, all the Greek words in the New Testament translated spirit, mind, soul, might be rendered breath, wind, smoke, vapour; and the same is true of their Hebrew equivalents in the Old Testament. In Genesis ii. 7 we read: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostril the breath of life: and man became a living soul." Driver, in his Commentary on the Book of Genesis, admits that "soul" in "Hebrew psychology is common to both animals and men." Hence no pre-eminence of man is declared in the words "a living soul." Thus the soul, as conceived in the Bible, is not the seed of immortality or the germ of the Eternal, but life as a breath common to all living beings, which all alike lose when they die.

Dr. Fort Newton gains nothing, even for his hortatory purpose, from his unscientific definition of the soul. There is not a shred of evidence that man is a dual being, composed of two distinct and independent entities, one physical and the other spiritual, one of the earth, earthy, and the other from heaven. There is not the shadow of proof that there is anything in man destined to survive death. There are absolutely no data upon which the belief in immortality can legitimately be held. Even the reverend gentleman's famous countryman, John Fiske, admits that probably we shall never "succeed in making the immortality of the soul a matter of scientific demonstration, for we lack the requisite data"; and one



naturally infers that the absence of such data is due to the fact that there are no data upon which even the existence of the soul can be demonstrated. Surely Dr. Newton cannot plead ignorance of the history of the soul-theory as traced in Durkheim's scholarly work, *Les Formes Elementaires de la Vie Religieuse* (1912), and most interestingly sketched in Professor Leuba's *The Belief in God and Immortality*. Familiarity with that history makes the belief in the soul quite impossible. In early Buddhism it was discarded completely, the fundamental teaching being that "man is never the same for two consecutive moments, and that there is within him no abiding principle whatever." By soul the Buddha understood self, the existence of which he denied, and he was naturally led to say:—

Since neither self nor ought belonging to self, brethren, can really and truly exist, the view which holds that this I who am "world," who am "self," shall hereafter live permanent, persisting, eternal, unchanging, yea, abide eternally: is not this utterly and entirely a foolish doctrine (Mrs. Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*, p. 52)?

Apart from the soul theory, there is much in Dr. Fort Newton's sermon with which we are in hearty agreement. Some of his comments on the ethical defects of the day are excellent, the only fault one can find with them being that they are rooted and grounded in theology. But when he lays it down as a principle that we "must make up our minds to accept life as it is—with its risks, its tasks, its bereavements, its benedictions," we are impelled to give expression to our most emphatic and uncompromising dissent; and we are equally opposed to the unfortunate addition that we must accept it "as an opportunity for the making of a soul." Having already formally defined the soul as "this seed of immortality, this germ of the Eternal," he surely forgets himself when he talks of *making* it. And why the ill-natured allusion to Carlyle's sneer at Margaret Fuller because she said: "I accept the Universe"? After all, was not Carlyle the wiser of the two? Assuming the existence of the Christian God, is not the Universe a stupendous farce, the most tragic of all failures? "This world of ours," is it possible to accept it as the product of a God of love and justice? In contemplation of it, as Newman repeatedly points out, Atheism is the only logical and ethical conclusion; and as a matter of simple fact, man, as Sir Ray Lankester observes, is "Nature's insurgent Son," who is so far from accepting the Universe that he has always rebelled against it, and, in several directions, triumphed over it. To a certain extent he has learned to control ruthless Nature. Sir Ray Lankester says:—

And as he has more and more obtained this control over his surroundings, he has expanded that unconscious protective attitude towards his immature offspring which natural selection had already favoured and established in the animal race, into a conscious and larger love for his tribe, his race, his nationality, and his kind.....At every step of his progress man has receded further and further from the ancient rule exercised by Nature. He has advanced so far and become so unfitted to the earlier rule, that to suppose that man can "return to Nature" is as unreasonable as to suppose that an adult animal can return to its mother's womb (*The Kingdom of Man*, p. 26, 27).

What we need above everything else is, not a soul, but strength to fit us for the inescapable struggle against "life as it is," and for life as it ought to be. Man is a gregarious animal, and the only difference between him and other animals is, not that he has a soul, which they have not, but that he possesses a brain of superior size and educability. He belongs to the same order of beings as they do, but he leaves them far behind by

reason of his greater skill in at once obeying and controlling natural forces. Resolved not to take life as it is, he sets out to alter it, to improve its conditions, elevate its aims, and ennoble its processes; in other words, to perfect himself and his brethren in the art of gregarious life. Dr. Newton idealizes the disciples of Jesus. So far as the Gospel records are concerned, they were in no sense whatever paragons of virtue. Not only they displayed no superiority to their contemporaries, they were rather distinguished for their intellectual dullness and moral inefficiency, and yet the reverend gentleman attributes to them a well-nigh perfect character. He declares that "nothing in the life of Jesus is more wonderful than his achievement in the making of men." If his own disciples as depicted in the Four Gospels are specimens of his workmanship we must pronounce his achievement anything but wonderful. Taking them as a class, the twelve disciples were nobodies. With one or two exceptions they are utterly unknown to history; and in his glowing tribute to them the reverend gentleman draws entirely on his imagination.

The same thing is true of Dr. Newton's eulogy of Jesus; it is purely idealistic. He maintains that what Jesus did for his disciples "he has been doing ever since to those who trust their souls to him." Taking history as our witness, we learn that never have Christians, as a class, been celebrated for their exemplary moral character. Does not the reverend gentleman remember the testimony of Baronius in his *Ecclesiastical Annals*, where he characterizes the tenth century as the darkest and worst period in history, when Pope after Pope was at the beck and call of notorious prostitutes; a period which has been justly stigmatized at "the Pornocracy"? Has he forgotten that the Church, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Ghost, has never been free from bickering, wrangling, and bitter controversy, has never shone in the world as a supreme moral luminary, but has revelled in horrible scenes of intolerance, persecution, and bloodshed? He may retort, But look at the illustrious saints whom she has produced! True, there have been multitudes of saints; but in the light thrown upon them by history, most of them are seen as highly undesirable characters, deifying dirt and self-torture, retiring from the world and shunning all the obligations of social life; and one wonders whether Gustave Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Antony* is not a fairly accurate picture of the majority of them. Even the best and noblest of them were the slaves of intolerance and cruelty. Who can forget St. Bernard's persistent persecution of Peter Abelard and Arnold of Brescia, ending in the death of both, the former of a broken heart and the latter at the stake?

We conclude that, if by soul is meant life, character, nobility, as Dr. Fort Newton now and then hints, it cannot be regarded as a special product of the Christian religion. It is to be found, here and there, in all parts of the world; and there are times when one is quite sure that it is more in evidence in some Pagan than in Christian countries.

J. T. LLOYD.

Religion never made any man in the world just and honest, who had not some foundation for it in his nature before. For all the operation it can have upon others is but artificial; and all their conversation prevail no farther upon their natural corruptions than to enable them to perform the same unjust and wicked actions under other forms and dispensations, which their inclinations led them to before; and not seldom render them more barbarous and inhuman than they were before, when zeal and conscience light in their way to serve for pretence.—*Samuel Butler*, "Thoughts upon various Subjects, 1660."



## The Beginning of the End.

Christianity has never lost the instinct of universal dominion.—*B. and F. Bible Society Report.*

The only hope for the future of society lies in the absolute extermination of Christianity.—*G. W. Foote.*

THE clergy seldom admit their fear of Freethought. In public they never tire of the bold refrain, "Who's afraid?" In private, however, they arrange quietly the means of retreat. And, unhappily for them, retreat is the order of the day, and will continue to be so.

Since Freethought has been organized, the clergy have had no rest. The frontal attacks of the Freethinkers are beginning to tell heavily, and the ecclesiastics are getting nervous. A short time ago the House of Convocation of Canterbury decided to abandon portions of "God's Holy Word," and to eliminate from the Prayer Book some objectionable features of the Old Testament. This astute clerical manœuvre may bamboozle believers for a time, but it will not save the Christian religion.

The ruse is a smart one, but it cannot serve for long. To prune the barbarities of the Psalms may spare the blushes of Christian ladies and of young clergymen, but it is a very hazardous proceeding. The Psalms are an integral part of the Holy Bible, and David, "the man after God's own heart," is too closely allied with the legendary figure of Christ to be thrown thus rudely to the rubbish-heap without disastrous results to orthodoxy. It is not only a desperate policy in the particular instance, but a precedent which will exert, in the long run, anything but a happy effect upon the Christian position.

"The Psalms" were written many centuries ago, and have been regarded by religious folk as the inspired utterances of the Almighty. For the future, Psalm lviii. will not be printed in the Prayer Book "as appointed to be read." The Convocation of Canterbury has so decreed by forty-three votes to thirteen, and the superior clergy have dismissed King David as though he were a church-organist who had dared to ask for a living wage.

What is wrong with the fifty-eighth Psalm? It is a comparatively short one, but the clergy contend that it is "un-Christian in character," which is a polite way of saying that it is entirely out of harmony with modern ideas. This is the sort of thing that the clergy do not wish their congregations to read:—

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

It is not pretty, and it is not remarkable for its "spirituality"; but the clergy have not selected the worst utterances in the Bible. Other portions of God's Holy Word are equally open to objection, as for instance, the unlovely passage in Psalm cix.:—

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

And, again, in Psalm cxxxvii.:—

Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

You will observe the clergy have themselves started to pull "God's word" to pieces. They have begun with "the Psalms," and King David, "the man after God's own heart," thus comes in for tardy, but none the

less deserved, rebuke. For David is now admitted by the clergy to be a barbarian, and the champions of Christianity are obliged to throw the old Oriental savage overboard in order to absolve their deity from the crimes and vices of his favourite. Let there be no mistake about it. The remarks of that accomplished scholar, Ernest Renan, are so apt that they deserve to be quoted:—

We shall see the brigand of Adullam and Ziklag assume gradually the airs of a saint. He will be the author of the Psalms; the sacred choræus, the type of the future saviour. Jesus must be the son of David! The evangelical biography will be falsified in a multitude of points by the idea that the life of the Messiah should reproduce the traits of David. Pious souls, while enjoying the sentiments, full of resignation and tender melancholy, of the finest of liturgical books, will fancy themselves in communion with this bandit. Humanity will believe in a final justice on the testimony of David, who never thought of it, and of the Sybil, who never existed. O the Divine comedy!

It would be a thankless task to enumerate the false, foolish, and wicked features of the Bible, but the sacred volume is full of savagery from cover to cover. From the first error in Genesis to the final absurdity in Revelation, much of the writing is revolting to modern readers. In many places in the Old Testament the writing is filled with the scuffles of savages, whose arrows are "drunk with blood," to adapt its own charming phraseology. As for the New Testament, the moral perceptions of to-day are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrine that countless millions of mankind will suffer eternal punishment. The clergy know this, and are seeking to purify their Bible so as to retain the respect of their congregations.

This clerical move of mutilating the Bible is not a paltry matter. For the Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament, it is forced (including the Psalms, and all other unseemly passages) into the hands of children at schools, it is used as a fetish for swearing upon in courts of law. Men and women have even been punished for bringing it into "disbelief and contempt." The clergy are in retreat. At present, it is true, the process is confined to the Old Testament; but, before long, the New Testament will suffer. When the process is complete, the Christian religion will be a thing of shreds and patches. The Hebrew Bible will take its proper place beside the other Sacred Books of the East, and the clergy will have to look for honest employment. The eviction of King David is the beginning of the end.

MIMNERMUS.

## On the Courage of Being Impartial.

FOR the exercise of Christian virtues, neither courage nor great knowledge is necessary. It is singularly true also that ignorance is an assistance to faith, and the Irish peasant or the Spanish labourer will take without question that which has torn countries asunder and caused Huguenots to be buried in England. It is easy to be orthodox—or give lip service to orthodoxy. Faith is fixed on a reward, and a preference for a reward is in the nature of an investment. Heaven is pictured somewhat in the style of an excessively rich man's country house, and the one-time currency of gold—a commodity scarce to the poor—was weaved in the building of this immortal house. Jewels and marble are also used; but if gold should continue to hide its head, celestial harps will have to be wrought of —. But here we gently stir a matter in the form of a question: The Bearing of



Currency on Inducements to Faith. And that is not our purpose.

We assert that self-interest is the motive of the Christian faith. What must *I* do to be saved? Apart from the selfishness implied in the question, there is a suggestion of a choice. We know the answer to the question, and the distracted inquirer launches on a voyage of faith with his reward in the distance. The honesty of impartial thought gives no reward beyond the grave; perhaps, through the promise of eternal life, Christian subtlety has surmounted the impossible as defined by the Greeks, "Death is the only god who cannot be wooed by gifts."

Let us now examine the inducements to scepticism. To speak candidly, they are little delight to the mentally anæmic—nay, they are even repellant. Groping for the stone of faith, this class will not venture further than arm's length from its haven of safety. To leave that place of shelter for the rocks and shoals of independent thought demands a stouter heart than it possesses. Far better to stay in peace and comfort, with the weekly sermon and—respectability. Besides, it gives the assurance of a life to come. You disturbers of things as they are, have you no feeling for its investment? But, say we, if the system that gave you your sound investment was a philosophy, we should have no quarrel with it. Then it would appeal to reason—when has Christianity appealed to Reason? We like not the spikes of the Iron Maiden, nor the fires of green wood—too significant for our taste as an assistance to believe in a philosophy. Philosophy will state truths and deductions—and will not care if they are accepted to-day, to-morrow, or not at all.

A glorious book will be written some day explaining the motive that makes man choose the dangerous path—the unorthodox path. It would, or should, contain some mention of that difficult philosopher, Nietzsche.

What is good? Everything that increases the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in mass.

What is bad? All that proceeds from weakness.

It is scarcely necessary, at this time, to state, that our block-headed journalists, writing with the thick end of the sword, have wilfully misinterpreted the author of that affirmation. That is, assuming that they can spell his name, and have enough mob cowardice to do their master's biddings. It is a gift from the Gods that be, that the journalist's work only lives for a day—caterpillars and gnats do not differ in this respect. View their activity and pliability as set forth in a translation from the documents unearthed in Russia. That country under the Czar *regime*, in obtaining the aid of France, speaks through its diplomats in this manner "I know how Tittoni (the Italian Ambassador in Paris) has worked up the leading French papers most thoroughly and with the most open hand." With rare exceptions that is true of all journalists. And, if they can be worked up, like flour in a cake mixture, or mud with a Thames barge, their opinions of their betters can be estimated at their true worth. Man shall have the courage to speak truth, and his reward shall be abuse by these bats of the night. Comfort for the timid: "do as others do and no one will look at you."

Come we now to the naked man, stripped of all illusions. He is divested of every material incentive, one after another, through, what I shall call, the Sieve of Trivialities, Riches, Fame, and the Pleasures of Sense have been winnowed. Courage must imperatively bring a man to this stage. Although the lack of riches may leave him impotent with mob-thought (this a good of no small value), although fame may be left to our fleeting idols of the market-place, and pleasures of sense to the Midas of industry, and muck-raking novelists, our

Courageous one shall stand as a Man. There shall be no Christian virtue in his composition.

Our Man's self-interest—of what does it consist? His path of independence shall not lack thorns—peculiar self-interest when he might have journeyed to Rome—with peas in his boots—boiled, and his conscience in the hands of the Pope! Our Man's body might be plump and round, with a rubicund face supported by a port-wine neck—if he would use his gifts to soothe the impatient with tales of a far, far, better land than this—an occupation, be it noted, that can be followed with the aid of penny sermons. And, we dissatisfied ones, should we not rightly hate an age content with penny sermons?

So that, my readers, we arrive at our conclusion. The will to independent thought—your Odyssey—demands courage and patience—with the Christian God as a mere incident on the way. That path steadily followed shall give you what cannot be found in fasting and prayer, or in monasteries, for

This thing is God: to be Man with thy might  
To go straight in the strength of thy spirit,  
And live out thy life in the light.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## Acid Drops.

The *National News* declares that Haeckel had no "reverence in his temperament"—which only means that he did not "reverence" the things the *National News* writer is paid to uphold. He was a "most destructive critic" of the Christian religion, but "his theories and teachings have been easily answered in the apologetics of modern Christian writers." So much for Haeckel! He has been easily answered. So was Paine, so was Darwin, so was Bradlaugh. All these people are so easily answered that one is surprised anyone ever bothers to reply to them. The keen and cultured intelligence of the ordinary chapel-goer could easily detect their fallacies without the assistance of such giants as, say, a Begbie, or a Ballard, or the Bishop of London.

For unadulterated stupidity commend us to Mr. Arthur Mee. In *Lloyd's Newspaper*, under the heading of "A Plain Man's Pulpit," Mr. Mee displays his want of knowledge with all the pride that most people feel in imparting valuable information. His sermon for August 17 is concerned with Haeckel, and he leads off with the startling information that "but for him there might not have been a German Empire." And after having created the German Empire, Haeckel next "founded what is called Materialism." That is really not bad as a record of work, although one certainly had an impression that Materialism was a little older than Haeckel. Then Haeckel opened "the floodgates of despair and let loose their foul waters to drown whatever faith there was beyond the Rhine." There is plenty more of the same sort of thing, and that issue of *Lloyd's* is worth preserving as the finest example of ignorance that has appeared in print for many a day. In fact we do not remember ever seeing anything to equal it. It is surprising that the editor ever permitted it to appear. He must have known better than to have taken it seriously, for we decline to believe, without good evidence, that there are two people alive at the same time with the stupidity of Mr. Mee.

English people are threatened with a "Pussyfoot" Temperance Crusade, in which every effort will be made to drive the country into the arms of the mineral water and cocoa merchants. An amusing story used to be told of a temperance advocate who used to quote the lines from *Omar Khayyam* :—

O Thou, who did'st with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the road I was to wander in,

and then gravely argued that old Omar meant the "unsweetened" sold at the public-houses.



An evening paper refers to Landru, the French "Bluebeard," as "the hub of the Universe." Surely the honour belongs to Solomon. "Bluebeard's" thirteen wives make a poor show compared with the "wise man's" selection of female loveliness.

The Assistant-Secretary of the Poor Clergy Relief Corporation states the average value of a living in the Church of England is less than £250. It may be so, but the clergy are not all homeless wanderers. Thirty-nine ecclesiastics of the State Church share £180,700 annually, and bishoprics have been multiplied of late years.

Six columns were given by the *Daily Telegraph* to the death of Andrew Carnegie—followed by a couple more columns by the inevitable T. P. O'Connor, and one column to the obituary of Professor Haeckel. The allocation of space is significant. The one was only a scientist of world-wide reputation, and whose work had its part in influencing the life of humanity. The other was a multi-millionaire who gave part of his millions to founding libraries, etc., that always advertised—Carnegie. Eight columns to the millionaire. A single column to the scientist. Further comment is needless.

We have always understood that Mr. Carnegie was a Freethinker belonging to the variety that preferred to camouflage itself under the name of "Agnostic." But he took no part that we are aware of in helping Freethought propaganda in any part of the world. That kind of work has no advertising value in the world as it is to-day. The greater honour to those who do help so unpopular a cause. Mr. T. P. O'Connor says his religious opinions were "essentially unorthodox," and that he came "nearest in his religious outlook to that band of Scotch Freethinkers with Hume at their head," etc. Oh, rare "Tay Pay"! Hume is quite a respectable name now—he has been so long dead. It is therefore quite safe to say that one agreed with Hume. Had it been Bradlaugh or Ingersoll, that would have been a quite different matter. What moral humbugs most men are!

It is highly significant that in their obituary notices of the late Andrew Carnegie, the religious newspapers do not venture to claim him as a Christian believer. The *Christian World* mentions the fact that he "gave little of his money, comparatively, to directly religious objects." Not many years ago a long letter from him appeared in the *New York Truth-seeker*, in which he eulogized the celebrated Colonel Ingersoll, and described his work for Freethought in terms of warmest praise.

Civil List Pensions are being drawn by 310 persons, the highest being £300, the lowest £20, and the average £77. The majority of these people have rendered some service to the country. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishop of London, share £700 weekly. Their record is seen in the voting lists in the House of Lords.

Now that most of the fighting is over, the brave clergy are getting quite bold. The Bishop of Swansea has gone to the front—at Swanage with the Church Lads' Brigade, and his lordship is actually on the staff. Another ecclesiastic, the Bishop of Barking, dedicated a banner belonging to the East Ham branch of the Federation of Discharged Soldiers.

The clergy may consider themselves a caste apart from their fellows, but they often fare like other mortals. The Rev. E. Greenshiel, of the Isle of Wight, has lost nearly all his belongings, including wedding presents, by the sinking of a steamer in a storm. The Rev. G. C. W. Sweet was drowned while boating at Oxford, and the Rev. J. Millett has resigned his curacy at Guildford because he cannot find suitable lodgings.

The sympathy of our readers is asked for the Rev. Arthur Tomlinson, Vicar of Bolton-le-Sands, who, on his death, was found to have borne the burden of property to

the value of £86,177. Such a burden on the shoulders of a preacher of the blessings of poverty must have been indeed hard to bear. It is to the credit of Mr. Tomlinson that he carried his cross to the very end without complaint.

A man who married eight women in sixteen years will surrender himself for trial here next week. He is Charles Hugh Wilson, who for many years associated himself with the Y.M.C.A. and other religious bodies. He has been a regular churchgoer, a diligent student of the Bible, and maintains a sober and devout mien. All his wives are living, and expect to face him when he appeals to the Court. Wilson appears to have lived with each wife an average of a year, but often after abandoning one he would return to a former spouse for a short while. It is alleged one of his favourite methods of wooing was to arouse sympathy in the breast of the object of his temporary affections by recounting how he had lost his first wife and three children in a fire. He has announced that now he intends to reform and wishes to become "a channel of blessing to all men."—The *Daily News* New York correspondent.

Among the holiday items in a daily paper was one referring to a woman excursionist aged ninety-three, who was accompanied by her daughter aged seventy-two. There is nothing extraordinary in these ages. Think of poor old Adam, aged 900, introducing folk to his "baby boy," aged over eight centuries.

"Seven hundred blind persons live in London on less than ten shillings a week," declares Mr. Alfred Shortt in the House of Commons. It is strange that so large a number should have escaped the attention of "Our Father which art in heaven."

Sir William Ridgeway, in a letter to the *Times* newspaper, mentions that "No Irish Roman Catholic ecclesiastic ever pays a penny of income tax." As the clergy were also exempted from military service, they seem to occupy a very happy position.

An article in a literary weekly deals with the fascinating topic, "Not too old at forty," and refers to a number of well-known personalities who did things when over that age. Unfortunately, the writer omitted to mention Adam, Methuselah, and the other Bible patriarchs, who were not too old at four hundred.

The new Welsh Church Bill provides for a Government grant of £1,000,000, that will ultimately pass over to the Church. In addition to this, and solely as a result of the War, the increased value of tithes, etc., totals another million. We can understand, therefore, why the preachers in this country have been so quiet on the subject of profiteering. And while the Church of England is silent for one reason, the Nonconformist Churches are silent for another, although similar reason. A list of those prominent Nonconformists who have made huge fortunes out of the War would be very interesting reading. Piety pays in this country, and its profession helps to disarm attack as nothing else can.

The Rev. S. McEwan Lawson contributes an article to the *Christian World* for August 14, entitled "A Misunderstood Story," by which he means the Book of Jonah. All we can say is that the author of this Book would not recognize his own story as related by Mr. Lawson. One omits the three days' journey inside the whale, and the threatened destruction of wicked Nineveh. We love the Book of Jonah, and decline to endorse Mr. Lawson's revised version. We must have the whale.

Pastor Russell is dead and buried, but Russellism is still alive and flourishing. It claims to be the only absolutely true "ism" in the world. It is the seven hundred and seventy-sixth sect, and the seven hundred and seventy-five are all wholly false churches, it alone being the only infallible exponent of God's revelation in the Bible. Russellism's chief fascination for many people lies in the fact that it has the courage to banish hell from the Universe.



### To Correspondents.

- W. H. W.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible.
- J. G.—The comments of many of the English papers on Haeckel are simply contemptible. But what can one expect? Such men write as they are paid to write, and their standards are the passions of the moment and the profit of the occasion.
- D. MAPP.—The best translation of Lucretius is by Munro (Longmans); one vol. Latin text, one vol. translation. There is a translation in the Bohn Series, and numerous translations of parts. A four vol. edition of some of Lucian's works was published some time back by the Cambridge Press. An almost complete translation was issued in the early nineteenth century, two vols. 4to.
- A. BROWN (S. Shields).—We have read your paper with much interest as coming from one who has recently made acquaintance with Freethought. Do you wish for back numbers of the *Freethinker* for reading and distribution? If so, please let us know, and we will send on a parcel. If there are any special pamphlets you are needing, we will send them on also on hearing from you.
- J. A. S.—For the historical side read Lecky's *History of European Morals* and *Rise of Rationalism*, Buckle's *History of Civilization*, and Draper's *Conflict of Religion and Science*. Larger and more specialized works can follow later. G. W. Foote's *Flowers of Freethought* should also be read. J. M. Robertson's *Short History of Christianity* will also help. We cannot advise more definitely unless we know just what subject it is you wish to study.
- G. GROVE.—There are numbers of books on ethics, and we are unable to say which would suit your friend best. We are sending a couple of pamphlets that may help.
- J. BREESE.—We saw the letter, which we thought very opportune.
- A. RUBIN (Johannesburg).—Pamphlets are being sent. (1) You may find what you need in Mr. Cohen's *Religion and the Child*, which is included in the parcel. Some of Mr. F. J. Gould's writings on the training of children would probably give all you require. (2) The inquiry to your answer concerning the Editor is in the affirmative. (3) We should reply that the less a child hears of rewards and punishments the better for its moral welfare.
- L. EASTERBROOK.—We do not know of any Secular Organization in the neighbourhood of Paignton.
- T. LEITCH.—Received. Will be acknowledged later.
- L. J. ROE.—We can send a parcel of back numbers of the *Freethinker* if of use. Please let us know.
- E. ROSE.—Thanks for securing five new readers. That is a splendid way to help. We are sending the paper weekly to the address given.
- 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.

Mr. W. Thresh lectures in Victoria Park to-day, near the Bandstand, at 6.45. This is Mr. Thresh's first visit to Victoria Park, and we hope that local Freethinkers will do their best to see that the audience is a good one

We hope that Freethinkers in South Shields and district will give a fitting response to the letter of Mr. Fothergill, which appears in another column. There are plenty of sympathizers in the neighbourhood, and the present time

is a favourable one for propaganda. Some can help financially, and some in other ways; but all can give some help, if they only will. While we are on this topic, we should like to say that it is high time there was more activity on the whole of Tyneside. The district has been resting too long.

One consequence of the War is likely to be the abolition, for some years, of cheap books and journals. Publishers say there is no likelihood of books being published at anything like the old prices, and it is said to be likely that the newspapers will retain their increased prices. Of course, some increase in price is inevitable, seeing the largely increased cost of production; but one feels that there is profiteering going on here as elsewhere. And the worst of it is that the enhanced prices will tell most with the most serious works. Good books were ridiculously high priced in this country before the War; they bid fair to become monstrous now. We have noticed several books of late, of not more than a couple of hundred pages, published at 10s. 6d., and no increased cost justifies that price.

A well-known Rationalist has written an article in which he states that there exist 2,339 MSS. of the Greek New Testament, and that these contain 200,000 different readings, some of them in flat contradiction to each other, and he naturally asks: "Which of these MSS. is to be accepted as the inspired text?" Asked about it by "W.A.M." in the *British Weekly* for August 14, Professor David Smith says: "If this sort of thing is the best that Rationalism has to say for itself, it is surely a lost cause." And yet he goes on to admit that the number of MSS. at present catalogued is 3,829, and that the variant readings may be roughly put at 140,000. But he does not dare to determine which is the inspired text. It is orthodoxy that is "a lost cause," not Rationalism.

### Arrigo Boito (1842-1918).

Fear not for any man's terrors;  
Wait not for any man's word;  
Patiently each take his place,  
Gird up your loins to the race;  
Following the print of her pace,  
Purged of desires and of errors,  
March to the tune ye have heard.

—Swinburne, "The Halt before Rome."

ARRIGO BOITO, who died last year, was the last of the *nuova scuola* of Italian poesis. In those dark days, when that "too much loved" land that Swinburne sang of was still prostrate before altar and throne, Boito was one of that brave band of rebellious *litterati*, which included Stechetti, Praga, and Carducci, who attuned their lyres to "Liberty." And "liberty" meant to them not merely that political screech which has ever afflicted our ears, but the only "liberty" that is worth fighting for—the "liberty of the mind." To Stechetti, this was the first of all liberties, and in the preface to his *Nuova Polemica* he said: "First of all I say, have no belief in God." His friend, the brilliant Carducci, the author of the immortal *Hymn to Satan*, was none the less appassioned for this "real liberty" when he wrote that line: "This vile Christian century," for he knew which was the greatest of all the enemies of liberty.

The key-note of the *Nuova Scuola* was "realism," and this "realism" said Stechetti, was "nothing more than the effect of a social condition—a moment in social evolution." Yet this moment of realism, as sung by the *nuova scuola*, roused Italy from its lethargy. In the awakening, literature and art, so long bound to foreign conventions, arose rehabilitated in all its natural splendour. In music, Boito became the apostle of the *nuova scuola*, but, unfortunately, the slopes of Parnassus found him more often than the altars of St. Cecilia.

Boito was born at Padua in 1842, and was educated (a terrible word for a man of genius) at Milan conser-



vatoire, where he gained honours with a cantata, *Le Sorelle d'Italie* (1862), written in conjunction with Faccio, who was another rebel. This brought him official recognition from the Government in the shape of a grant of money. Boito's poetry had also come to be recognized, and Victor Hugo wrote him a flattering letter, as did also his compatriot Andrea Maffei. By this time, however, Boito had a musical masterpiece ready for the public—the opera *Mefistofele*, but alas, his country was not yet ready for his new ideas. What was to be done? Rebel that he was, he felt that he could not express himself within the existing operatic formulæ, the aim of which was simply to “amuse the public.” To straighten his people to a better view of art, and especially his art, Boito decided that their minds had first to be freed from existing conventions, and we find his pen busy in Praga's *Figaro* and Mazzucato's *Giornale della Societa del Quartetto di Milano*. He then started concerts and a newspaper in order to improve the taste of the land of the *bel canto*, but the war clouds of 1866 soon put an end to his dreams. At the call to arms, he and other rebels of the *nuova scuola*, including Praga, Faccio, etc., joined Garibaldi's corps, and fought bravely against the “Austrian oppressors.”

The war over, Victor Hugo prevailed upon him to adopt literature as his *metier*, and, unfortunately, for musical art he agreed. The failure of his opera, *Mefistofele*, in 1868, probably helped Boito in this decision. Literature has possibly gained by the choice. Besides being the author of several stage pieces, including *Le Madri Galanti* (in collaboration with Praga), Boito wrote the *libretti* to his own musical words—*Mefistofele*, *Nerone*, and *Orestiaide*. For Bottesini and Mancinelli he wrote *Ero e Leandro*, for Ponchielli—*Gioconda*, for Faccio—*Amleto*, for Verdi—*Otello* and *Falstaff*. That these works have a high place in the literature of *libretti* there cannot be two opinions. *Nerone* has been awarded the highest praise by the great Italian dramatist, Cossa. Strange to say, Cossa himself owed his fame to a tragedy by the same name, but his own work, in comparison with that of Boito, he says, is “mere child's play.” He further says that Boito's poem has in it “conceptions worthy of Shakespeare.” But to return to Boito the musician.

Unfortunately, all that the general public know of Boito, the musician, is through the opera *Mefistofele*. This was produced at Milan in 1868. What a storm it occasioned we shall see. Boito, as we have said, belonged to the *nuova scuola*, which had its roots in “realism,” and it was upon his insistence of this principle, in both the text and music of his work, that nearly brought the opera to shipwreck. Much has been written both for and against Boito's principles in this work. Mazzucato, whilst admitting the most palpable defects in Boito's attempt to weld the philosophical scheme of Goethe with an operatic setting, is, on the whole, fulsome in praise of the opera. On the other hand, our own critic, Ernest Newman, pours out his contempt upon Boito's scheme. Suffice it to say that most of the composer's so-called defects are due to his striving for “realism.” Yet his efforts were the means of guiding his contemporaries and his successors. One of the most usual charges brought against *Mefistofele* is that Boito was bitten with Wagderian ideals. Nothing could be further from the truth. A glance at the music of Verdi will show that Italy had already felt the “new spirit” which had come with the “awakening of Italy.” Boito, who was bolder and more original than the composer of *Rigoletto*, was the continuator of the “new spirit,” and indeed he helped to give the change to Verdi's *Aida* and *Falstaff*, and to delineate the direct line of development to Ponchielli, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, and Puccini. Mascagni's prelude to *Iris* and

Boito's “Prologue in Heaven” have more than an accidental resemblance. What Boito's opera *Nerone* is like no one knows as yet. Although commenced so far back as 1878, only the poem has seen the light of day. The composer was still at work upon the music up to the day of his death. However, from æsthetic considerations and estimates of Boito's music, let us turn to a phase of Boito which, as one of the *nuova scuola*, we cannot afford to ignore. As a *confrere* of the heretical Carducci, Praga, and Stechetti, he did not forget to express his contempt for the Christian religion. As I pointed out in my *Heresy in Art*, Boito openly satirized the Roman Church. In the scene in *Mefistofele* where the master of the nether world is crowned, the whole crowd of imps, demons, and witches kneel in adoration before him to a travestied version of one of the most sacred hymns of the Church—the *Tantum Ergo*. A riot took place on the night of production, and duels were fought the next day. Needless to say, the police interdicted the performance. Boito was clearly a Free-thinker and humanist. Although his *Nerone* (based evidently on the exaggerated, if not forged, account of the persecution of the Christians under Nero, in the *Annals* of Tacitus) might lead some simple people to imagine that Boito must have been quite orthodox, we must remember that the subject of the heroic has always had a fascination for artists. Boito had too broad and open a mind to trouble much with other-worldism. That quaint little volume of poetry from his pen entitled *Il libro dei versi* reveals the sceptical bent of the philosopher and humanist. One of the poems—*Re Orso*—has been a puzzle to critics as to its specific drift. But there can be little doubt as to the meaning of the fifth section of the second legend, describing the thirty years' wanderings of a worm which had entered the tomb of King Orso!

Death, which the ordinary religionist prates about as the birth of a new life, was to Boito something different. When Verdi died, Boito, who had watched his friend struggle against “that fell sergeant, Death,” for nearly a week, took up his pen and wrote:—

He (Verdi) resisted with an heroic resistance.....And so he was strong and beautiful to the very last moment. So be it. And the ancient reaper must have borne away his scythe well blunted!.....I have lost in my life beings whom I idolized, and my sorrow has survived my resignation. But never have I felt a sentiment of hate for death, and of contempt for that mysterious power at once blind and stupid, triumphant and vile. It needed the death of that nonagenarian to arouse in me such an impression. He too hated it, because he was the most powerful expression of life that one could imagine well, and he hated it as he hated idleness, as he hated an enigma or doubt. Now it is all over, and he sleeps like a king of Spain in his Escorial, under a bronze that covers all that there is of him.....

Such words were worthy of Boito, and of the *nuova scuola*.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

### Pious Lying.

It is a fact known to most people that, once a lie is perpetrated, the liar has to go on lying to prevent being found out over the first lie and to bolster up his plausible story. It is thus with the Christian lie, which has resulted in the hugest fraud that has ever been perpetrated upon mankind. The Tertullian principle, initiated by Paul and perpetuated by the early “Fathers”—Eusebius, Origen, etc.—was of a pious nature. Paul said: “For if the truth of God hath abounded *through my lie unto his glory*, why am I judged a sinner?” He did not object to lie if it added to the glory of his God.



The principle of Tertullian, which produced such appalling ignorance amongst these early Fathers and stemmed the tide of intellectual development started by the Greek philosophers, was "Desire for knowledge other than of Jesus, learning other than of the Gospel, was no longer necessary." Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian (third century) said that he had related "what might redound to the glory" and that he had "suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace of religion" (here is an admission); also that he was "by no means scrupulous to record the whole truth concerning the early Christians in the various works he has left behind," and that "it was lawful and fitting to employ falsehood on behalf of the Church." He admitted, too, the gross prevalence in his time of "sacred forgeries and lying frauds.....whole paragraphs have been foisted in (to the Gospels) by our predecessors." Origen, another Church historian (same period) said "it is not only justifiable, but our bounden duty, to lie and deceive, if by such guiles we can catch souls."

The latest example of these pious liars, who act on the Jesuitical principle that it is justifiable to do evil that good may come, and who lie for the "glory" of their religion, traduces the dead to obtain this solar halo for his God. In his obituary of the late Professor Haeckel, in the *Daily Mail* of August 11, the following words occur: "He (Haeckel) was an enemy of all religions, was a materialist, and believed that matter alone exists, and that the soul or spirit is imaginary." The first portion of the statement is true, because all religions, with the exception of Pantheism, are dualistic, but the latter portions are absolutely untrue, and are not in accordance with his teaching in the *Riddle of the Universe*, of which, we presume, the writer of the obituary must have had a knowledge. Haeckel opposed Materialism, which taught that matter alone exists, as we shall see from his own words; and taught that the soul was transmitted by the parents to the offspring through the sperm and germ. But this soul was *intra cosmos* not *extra cosmos*. It was the dualistic or spirit world which he did not believe in, an imaginary world outside and apart from the universe, inhabited by benevolent and malevolent souls and beings, such as cloud-riding and cloud-hiding gods, trumpeting angels, pitch-forking demons; and containing a heaven of harps, wine, and women, a purgatory of departed souls, and a hell of eternally enduring flames.

At p. 139, writing of souls, Haeckel says: "In the act of procreation, a portion is detached from both the (immaterial) souls of the parents; the maternal contribution passes in the ovum, the paternal in the sperm; when these two germinal cells coalesce, the two psychic fragments that accompany them also combine to form a new (immaterial) soul." Again, he says (p. 21):—

The different ideas of *monism* and *materialism*.....are still very frequently confused. (1) Pure monism is identified neither with the theoretical materialism that denies the existence of spirit, and dissolves the world into a heap of dead atoms, nor with the theoretical spiritualism which rejects the notion of matter, and considers the world to be a specially arranged group of energies, or immaterial natural forces. (2) On the contrary, we hold with Goethe, that matter cannot exist and be operative without spirit, nor spirit without matter. We adhere firmly to the pure, unequivocal monism of Spinoza: Matter, or infinitely extended substance, and spirit (or energy), or sensitive and thinking substance are the two fundamental attributes, or principle properties, of the all-embracing divine essence of the world, the universal substance."

Further comment on the lying obituary of the *Daily Mail* seems unnecessary, but the Church has a poor case when its advocates have to resort to such means to bolster up its claims, or rather, to oppose and hide the arguments against it.

W. W. HARDWICKE, M.D.

## Pages from Voltaire.

THE A B C;

OR, CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN A, B, AND C.

ON THE SOUL.

B.—Come, let us make a start! But perhaps it would be just as well before we assure ourselves as to what is good and just and seemly in relation to the human soul, to find out where it comes from, and where it goes to. It is always best, you know, to have a thorough knowledge of people with whom you have business.

C.—Your remarks are excellent, although not very pertinent. Whatever may be the origin and destiny of the soul, the essential thing is that it should be virtuous. However, I have always found pleasure in discussing a subject which appealed to Cicero. What is your opinion, Mr. A? Is the soul immortal?

A.—Don't you think that such a question is a little too blunt, Mr. B? It seems to me that before I can say that the soul is immortal, I must know for certain that it exists; but that is precisely where I have no knowledge at all—except, of course, by faith, which cuts through all difficulties. Lucretius said, some eighteen hundred years ago:—

Ignoratur enim quæ sit natura animæ,

"they cannot tell what is the nature of the soul"; he could have said: "We have no knowledge that it exists." I have read two or three hundred essays on this great subject, and they have taught me nothing. I stand in the same relation to you as did Saint Augustine to Saint Jerome. Augustine told him point blank that he knew nothing about the soul. Cicero, a better philosopher than Augustine, had often made a similar confession before him, and had phrased his opinion more elegantly. Our young bachelors of philosophy have the same sort of knowledge, I don't doubt; but, speaking for myself, I am as ignorant at sixty as I was when I first saw the light.

C.—You are joking, surely! Do you not know for certain that brute creation has life, that plants have vegetation, the atmosphere fluidity, and the winds their courses? Do you doubt that you have an aged soul in your aged body?

A.—It is exactly because I know nothing about all these things that you press upon me that I am completely ignorant as to whether I possess a soul—that is, when I consult reason alone. I see that the atmosphere is in motion, but I certainly do not see in the air the real entity which you name the *course of the wind*. A rose vegetates, but within the rose I find no tiny hidden personality that is the cause of vegetation. That, I hold, is as philosophically absurd as it is to say that the scent is something in the rose. Yet this absurdity was held as truth for centuries. The ignorant natural philosophy of the whole of antiquity tells us that the scent leaves the flower to go up the nostrils, and that colours detach themselves from objects in order to reach my eyes. It gave a sort of separate existence to odour, flavour, sight, and hearing; it even went the length of believing that life was an entity that constituted the living animal. It was the misfortune of antiquity to transform in this way mere words into real existences; it was maintained that a mere idea was something that existed outside the mind, and that was necessary, above all, to take into account the ideas, the archetypes, which existed somewhere in empty space. Plato gave currency to this jargon, which was called *philosophy*. Aristotle schematized these ideological chimeras; hence his entities, quiddities, ecceties, and all the barbarisms of the schoolmen.



A few wise men there were who saw that these imaginary entities were merely words invented to aid the understanding, that the life of an animal is no more than the living animal, that its ideas constitute the thinking animal, that the vegetation of a plant is no more than the plant vegetates, that the movement of a ball is only the ball's changing its position; in a word, that every metaphysical entity is merely one of our conceptions. It took two thousand years for wise men to reach this rational standpoint.

C.—Well, if that be the right way of thinking, if all these metaphysical entities are mere words, your soul, which is understood to be such an entity, is, therefore, nothing at all. We really do not possess a soul?

A.—I did not say that: I said that, for myself, I had no knowledge of one. What I do believe is that God has given us five senses and thought, and it is not unlikely that we had our being in God, as Aratus and St. Paul assures us, and that we shall see all things in him, to borrow an expression of Malebranche.

C.—On your showing I ought to possess thought without a soul. Surely that is ridiculous, is it not?

A.—Not as ridiculous as you think. Do you admit that animals have feeling?

B.—Certainly, it would be a denial of common sense not to do so.

A.—Do you believe that a living unknown entity is lodged in them, an entity which either you name, feeling or memory, or appetite, or describe by the vague and indefinable term "soul"?

B.—Emphatically, I do not; nor does anyone I know believe such a thing. Brute creation feels because it is its nature, because nature has given it organs of feeling, because love, the principle of nature, has ordered it thus for all time.

A.—Very well, then! This eternal principle has so ordered things that when I possess a well-constituted head, when my brain is neither too humid nor too dry, I am able to think, and it has my heartfelt thanks for the arrangements.

C.—But how do thoughts come into your head?

A.—Let me say once again, that I know nothing about it. Some sixty years ago when his countrymen had not as yet learnt to think, a philosopher was persecuted for saying that the difficulty is not so much to know how matter thinks, as to know how a brain, of any sort at all, is capable of thinking. I am of this philosopher's opinion, and risking the persecution of fools, I declare that I am completely ignorant of the first principles of things.

B.—You are certainly amazingly ignorant; I suppose we are so too.

A.—I don't think you are far wrong.

B.—Why argue, then? How can we know what is right or wrong if we do not know what the soul is?

A.—Ah! there is a world of difference; we know nothing of the principle of thought, but we are well aware of our interest. It is obvious that it is our interest to act well towards others just as it is their interest to act well towards us, so that everyone on this ball of mud which we call the earth, may have as little unhappiness as possible during the brief space of time allotted to us by the Being of beings for vegetating, feeling, and thinking.

Englished by GEO. UNDERWOOD.

The manufacture of sins is so easy a manufacture, that I am convinced men could readily be persuaded that it was wicked to use the left leg as much as the right; whole congregations would only permit themselves to hop; and would consider that, when they walked in the ordinary fashion, they were committing a deadly sin.—*Helps.*

## Correspondence.

### RELIGION IN THE ARMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Being an ex-soldier, and having read a letter in your columns taken from the *Sunday Mail* (Glasgow), touching on service men and their beliefs, I desire to say a few words on the subject.

I am by no means a well-educated man, but what I am going to say I've actually seen, and I think you will agree there is no wonder common-sense young men have turned aside from the rubbish they were taught at school.

When under heavy shell fire you would see men get well under cover and put their steel helmet at the best angle for protection from splinters. In the case of a gas attack, they would instantly place on their gas masks, and when expecting an enemy infantry attack they would pay special attention to their rifles. The aforementioned things they knew to be their salvation, and never once in all my active service did I see a man resort to prayer for a defensive measure. Not only that, men were liable to severe punishment if they in any way neglected to take proper care of their equipment, and even the Army authorities don't consider it an offence to lose or misplace a Bible. Another little instance I shall never forget occurred on the Ancre front about December 16. I was doing battalion runner, and was taking a message to Brigade H.Q. I had to pass through some heavy shelling, and when I had got nicely through it, I met the Padre of our brigade coming up. He knew the shells were dropping where he would have to pass, but what did he do? not pray to God for protection. No! but instead he asked my advice. I told him to wait until the shelling ceased if he wished to see Blighty again. Needless to say he took my advice. On another occasion I remember a preacher at a certain Y.M.C.A. hut complain to the camp commandant of the gambling that was indulged in near by. He said the crown and anchor boards kept the men from attending his service. I ask, Why did he complain to the camp com.? Had he for one brief moment lost faith in his God?

JOSEPH WORLEY  
(Late York and Lancasters).

### THE SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH.

SIR,—The year is past middle life, and we have rested long. We are on our trial. We are left to keep things going without the persistent activity of our late Secretary, Mr. R. Chapman, who has been compelled to withdraw, for a while only, we hope, owing to poor health. Thirty-three years is no mean record, even though it be in "the best of causes." How shall we honour him? I would respectfully suggest to all concerned that we combine as soon as possible, and arrange a good winter's work. There is much to do, and the time is now opportune; but our members and friends are scattered far and wide. The local members feel that a course of lectures should be arranged for the season that is close upon us. Might I hope that all who are willing to help in any way will communicate with me? My address is 3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock, South Shields. There is some difficulty about a meeting-place, which we hope to overcome soon.

J. FOTHERGILL, Secretary.

### MILITARISM.

SIR,—No one admires more than I do your insistent and trenchant attacks on militarism; but, you will agree with me, I think, that to point out an evil, which after all is obvious enough to most people, is something of minor importance compared with the more difficult task of finding a remedy for the evil.

A little while ago I noticed that, at a Conference held recently, a member of the N. S. S. contended that the abolition of religious teaching is the chief remedy for militarism; yet it would not be difficult to recall to memory the names of many Atheists whose jingoistic patriotism during the War was worthy of the Bishop of London.

War, I take it, is the result of economic conditions only, and religion, indeed all our ideas, are mere reflections of the material world.



Therefore, I put it to you that if we would relieve humanity of obnoxious ideas (such, for instance, as war or religion) we must alter the conditions which make possible war and its attendant evils—militarism and navalism.

I would suggest that what we really need is a good deal more action, and a good deal less theorizing.

NAT. STREIMER.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

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

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