

# The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XXXIX.—No. 47

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
Russia and the Church.—The Editor . . . . .	569
Samuel Butler.—J. T. Lloyd . . . . .	570
The Use and Misuse of Sunday.—Mimnermus . . . . .	571
Atheism and Agnosticism.—W. Mann . . . . .	572
"Freethinker" "Victory" Sustentation Fund . . . . .	575
George Eliot.—Geo. Underwood . . . . .	576
Freethought in Unusual Places.—G. E. Fussell . . . . .	577
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

## Views and Opinions.

### Russia and the Church.

In Christendom there are two things that are sacred. The one is money, the other is Christianity. The first is really worshipped. It is, indeed, the one sincerity about the modern Christian. In church and chapel the rich man is given the first place, and his opinions the most weighty consideration. Out of Church the sacredness of money is the one article of faith that the Christian illustrates in his everyday life. He measures his neighbours by the style of house they live in, or by their ability to keep a motor car, or by the number of servants they have. And when the Christian who owes his social position to his bank balance dies, the main question is, not what has he done, or what has he been, but how much has he left? "Blessed be ye poor," says the Christian; and having blessed them he considers that he has given them all they deserve, and proceeds to jump on them. "Woe unto ye rich," he also exclaims, and having expressed his sense of their horrible condition he benevolently sets to work to make their lives as comfortable as is possible. Look down the list of notables mentioned week after week in the press, and consider how many of them have a claim to notoriety other than a big bank balance. Nowhere in the world is money worshipped as it is in Christian countries; and as there is in these same countries no other force so powerful in the upholding of vested interests as Christianity, the attack on that religion is the one unforgivable crime. Hence the anxiety to see that whatever else the people lack there shall be no want of religion.

### Attacking the Bible.

So we felt that when the Russian revolution developed and the Christian Church was attacked the fat was in the fire. That was the crowning crime. "Atrocities" might be forgiven, excesses might be overlooked, but to disestablish Christianity, that was inexcusable. We had seen the same thing with the revolution in Portugal, and in France when the Church was disestablished, and our papers were vocal with the moral decline of the French people—until the War with Germany drove these same papers to grow almost hysterical over the virtues of our French Allies. And, now, when there is some prospect that the failure to crush the Soviet Government by force will be manifest in the world, great alarm

is felt in certain religious quarters lest peace should be made with people so hostile to an official Christianity as the Russian Government appears to be. For example, the *Christian World* for November 13 devotes one of its leading articles to warning Britons against making peace with a people so hostile to religion as are the Bolsheviks. It appears that, "For the Bolshevik no jeers are too bitter, no gibe too caustic to be flung at the Christian religion." It cites from a pamphlet which asserts that the destruction of religion is essential to the well-being of the working classes, and that so long as the belief in God continues progress will be retarded. These be terrible things to teach. We are convinced they are because we have ourselves taught that until religion is uprooted neither the working class nor any other class will ever realize their true welfare. The conclusion is still more terrifying. Here it is:—

Belief in God is merely a reflection of our vulgar worldly relations, and is tantamount to a belief in slavery. Those who believe in God are incapable of any struggle, for religion not only throws mankind into slavery, but keeps it there. Religion is like opium, it conjures up lovely dreams, but undermines and ruins those who indulge in it.

Which teachings may be right or wrong—personally we believe these concluding words to be substantially accurate, and in this we feel that all Freethinkers will agree with us. Religion is slavery, and slavery of the worst form. And of that slavery we know of no worse manifestation than Christianity.

\* \* \*

### Religious Liberty in Russia.

We are not concerned here with the political side of Bolshevism, but only with the attacks made upon it because of its disestablishment of religion. Of religion, be it observed, not merely of a Church, and the setting up of another in its place. And it is quite evident that this disestablishment of religion has not interfered with the practice of religionists. The *Christian World* has itself from time to time published reports of the activities of the various dissenting sects in Russia, who now enjoy much greater freedom than they did under the old order. Mr. Goode, the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, Mr. Arthur Ransome, and others have reported that the churches in Moscow and Petrograd are open and well attended. That is as it should be; so long as the people wish to attend church, no obstacle should be placed in their way. One is a bit surprised, therefore, at the statement that the circulation of the Bible has been prohibited in Petrograd, and would like to have authority for the statement. Intolerance breeds intolerance, and thus explains, although it does not excuse it. The surprising thing is that this same writer could so calmly bear the intolerance, brutality, drunkenness, and lechery of the old Russian Church, existing in a State whose security was not in danger, and his vehement indignation at alleged acts of intolerance in a struggle for existence against armed force and carefully engineered misrepresentations. Had the Bolsheviks committed all

their alleged excesses in the name of God, they might have been easily forgiven. Forgiveness would then have been a Christian duty. But to commit excesses in the attempt to found a State on a human basis, one in which religion had no place whatever, that was an offence quite beyond forgiveness—in either this world or the next.

\* \* \*

#### Religion and the Child.

But we have not yet done with the wickedness of the Bolshevik rulers. One of them is declared to have said of the Bible (we are quoting the summary given in the *C. W.*) that "no book was so full of absurd statement, cruelty, injustice, and immorality, and the man who reads it is filling his mind with ancient trash which has as much bearing upon the problems of to-day as the A B C book of an infant. It is full of a spurious morality, and the hopes it holds out of immortality are nauseous to all men and women of common sense." Furthermore, we are told that it is the avowed aim of one of the Ministers of "Cultus" to root out "the pernicious system of the Christian religion from the minds of the young." This is terrible; but there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country with similar ideas about the Bible who are allowed to live without grave danger to the peace of Europe. And why should not one of the officials say that he hoped to see the superstition of Christianity rooted out of the minds of children? Will the *Christian World* writer be good enough to tell us why it should ever be placed there? Or, assuming that the Bolshevik State was doing what it certainly should not do—that is, teaching children active opposition to Christianity—is that any worse than teaching them to actively support it? But we are really not satisfied that the views cited are official views, although they may be the views of officials. One might as well cite Mr. Balfour's writings on religion and philosophy as the official views of the British Government. The Bolshevik State has no right whatever to prevent the freest exercise of the Christian religion. If it does, it is only replacing one form of tyranny by another; and tyranny does not become tolerance when it is exercised against an opinion to which we are opposed. But in so far as it keeps the State absolutely apart from religion, so far as it organizes its life without regard to religion of any sort, it is acting in full accord with the most enlightened spirit of our time.

\* \* \*

#### A Sinister Alliance.

So we do not feel particularly outraged at the particulars disclosed by the *Christian World*—even accepting them at their face value. What is the exact truth about Russia we cannot say. The press is muzzled, soldiers are forbidden to speak, officials will not say. Meanwhile, not the least strange feature of the situation is the ease with which newspaper correspondents get into Russia and out again, with the evident desire of the Allies that they should not visit these people at all. And from the situation two things seem clear. The first is, that some lying of the very tallest order is going on. Our atrocity mills have been working at full pressure, and the most incredible stories have been accepted on the very slenderest of evidence. Secondly, the Soviet Government does appear to have made some attempt to reorganize Russian Society on something of a Communistic basis. That is a form of government to which many would object, ourselves among the number. But in this attempt to reorganize society, the Bolsheviks, in addition to the opposition they would have received in any case from the existing vested interests, disestablished religion. They have cleared religion out of the State

offices and out of the schools. They appear to be making a more serious attempt than is being made anywhere else in Europe to give to every child a good education, minus religion. And all the Churches everywhere are alarmed. They see the chance of killing two birds with one stone. By dwelling upon the evils of Bolshevism, and upon the way in which its leaders oppose religion, they can help the Church in Russia and discountenance Freethought at home. In this country one has only to label a thing as immoral, to not only stimulate the energies of its enemies, but to weaken also the activities of its friends. And they could count upon the silence of many of the home-bred heretics because of their fear of being associated with Bolshevism. Thus the two forces of vested interest and religion have been driven to a very close co-operation. They hang together for fear they shall hang separately. Tyranny may exist in the absence of religious help; but there is no other assistance that can so well perpetuate its being.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

---

## Samuel Butler.

---

### I.

Two men of genius bore the above name, the author of *Hudibras*, who lived in the seventeenth century, and the author of *Erewhon*, who died seventeen years ago. The latter was an eminent novelist, philosopher, scientist, and satirist, and is regarded by many as "the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century." But though he died so long ago his life has only just appeared under the following title: *Samuel Butler, Author of "Erewhon" (1835-1902): a Memoir.* By Henry Festing Jones. In two volumes. (Macmillan & Co., 42s.). This is one of the completest, at any rate, one of the longest biographies in our language. It has afforded the editor of the *British Weekly* a golden opportunity to give forcible expression to his strong dislike and disapproval of Samuel Butler both as a man and a writer. He praises the biographer, saying that he "has not written a great biography for the simple reason that he has not written the biography of a great man." Samuel Butler, Sir William informs us, was "a man of very moderate mark," who wrote nothing likely to live and said nothing worth remembering. Writing over his pen-name of "Claudius Clear" in the *British Weekly* for October 23, he admits that "in order to understand Mr. Festing Jones' work one must re-peruse *The Way of All Flesh*, and I have not been equal to the effort"; and yet he has devoted two long articles to a review of a work which he is not in a position to understand. According to him, *The Way of All Flesh* is "a book conspicuously destitute of the higher imagination, of poetry, and of idealism. Curiously enough he mentions a brilliant young novelist who "spoke in high praise of Butler's novel," saying "that it belonged to a ripe category of sound work which embodied the experience and reflection of many years." Mr. Bernard Shaw, in a charming review of the biography in the *Manchester Guardian* describes *The Way of All Flesh* as "one of the summits of human achievement in that kind, and there is nothing for it but to require from the reader of the memoir as a preliminary qualification that he shall read the autobiography in the novel."

Of course, many of the charges brought against Butler in the *British Weekly* are, unfortunately, only too true. For example, he was a notoriously vehement hater. As Mr. Shaw says:—

All through this memoir we find Butler "hating," on principle, everything that was not immediately congenial and easy to him at the very first taste. He "hated"

Plato, Euripides, Dante, Raphael, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Blake, Rossetti, Tennyson, Browning, Wagner, Ibsen, and in fact everyone who did not appeal to his palate instantly as a lollypop appeals to the palate of a child. The exception was Handel, because he had learned to like Handel's music in the days of his childish illusion; but I suspect that if he had never heard Handel's music until after he had set up his rule (in the art of life) he would have denounced him as a sanctimonious drum major, and classed him as one of the Seven Humbugs of Christendom.

It is true that these repeated denunciations of great men as impostors and humbugs are made with a tart humour which betrays a subconscious sense of their folly, and saves Butler from being classed as a vulgar niladmirarist; but the trick is none the less tiresome and even sinister because it is plain that Butler did seriously narrow his mind and paralyze his critical powers by refusing to take any trouble to find out what our greatest teachers were driving at, or to face the drudgery of learning their peculiar idiom.

The secret of the *British Weekly's* antipathy to Samuel Butler lies in the fact that he "set himself to the demolition of Christian belief." It attaches great importance to his stupendous and undisguised hatred of his parents. "Young Samuel," we are told, "was very nearly from the beginning at enmity with his father. According to him, his father was continually flogging him, flogging Latin into him, flogging hymns into him." Worse still, he seems to have hated his mother with equal bitterness. In fact he possessed and displayed a horribly "vindictive temper," with the result that it was practically impossible to live at peace with him. Evidently Claudius Clear has forgotten the utterly unlovable character of the parents as portrayed in *The Way of All Flesh*. Take the following sample of how the children were treated; it was a Sunday evening:—

In the course of the evening they came into the drawing-room, and as an especial treat, were to sing some hymns to me, instead of saying them, so that I might hear how nicely they sang. Ernest was to choose the first hymn, and he chose one about some people who were to come to the sunset tree. I am no botanist, and I do not know what kind of tree a sunset tree is, but the words began, "Come, come, come to the sunset tree, for the day is past and gone." The tune was rather pretty, and had taken Ernest's fancy, for he was unusually fond of music, and had a sweet little child's voice, which he liked using.

He was, however, very late in being able to sound a hard "c" or "k" and instead of saying "Come," he said, "Tum, tum, tum."

"Ernest," said Theobald, from the arm-chair in front of the fire, where he was sitting with his hands folded before him, "don't you think it would be very nice if you were to say 'Come' like other people, instead of 'tum'?"

"I do say tum," replied Ernest, meaning that he had said "come."

Theobald was always in a bad temper on Sunday evening. Whether it is that they are as much bored with the day as their neighbours, or whether they are tired, or whatever the cause may be, clergymen are seldom at their best on Sunday evening; I had already seen signs that evening that my host was cross, and was a little nervous at hearing Ernest say so promptly, "I say tum," when his papa had said he did not say it as he should.

Theobald noticed the fact that he was being contradicted in a moment. He got up from the arm-chair and went to the piano.

"No, Ernest, you don't," he said, "you say nothing of the kind, you say 'tum,' not 'come.' Now say 'Come' after me, as I do."

"Tum," said Ernest, at once; "is that better?" I have no doubt he thought it was, but it was not.

"Now, Ernest, you are not taking pains; you are not trying as you ought to do. It is high time you learned to say 'come,' why, Joey can say 'come,' can't you, Joey?"

"Yeth, I can," replied Joey, and he said something which was not far off "come."

"There, Ernest, do you hear that? There's no difficulty about it, nor shadow of difficulty. Now, take your own time, think about it, and say 'come' after me."

The boy remained silent a few seconds, and then said "tum" again.

I laughed, but Theobald turned to me impatiently and said, "Please do not laugh, Overton; it will make the boy think it does not matter, and it matters a great deal"; and then turning to Ernest he said, "Now, Ernest, I will give you one more chance, and if you don't say 'come,' I shall know that you are self-willed and naughty."

He looked very angry, and a shade came over Ernest's face, like that which comes upon the face of a puppy when it is being scolded without understanding why. The child saw well what was coming now. was frightened, and, of course, said "tum" once more.

"Very well, Ernest," said his father, clutching him angrily by the shoulder, "I have done my best to save you, but if you will have it so, you will"; and he lugged the little wretch, crying by anticipation, out of the room. A few minutes more and we could hear screams coming from the dining-room, and knew that poor Ernest was being beaten.

"I have sent him up to bed," said Theobald, as he returned to the drawing-room, "and now, Christina, I think we will have the servants in to prayers"; and he rang the bell for them, red-handed as he was (pp. 95-7).

Such was Butler's father, and his mother was not one whit better. They not only denied their children all the pleasures of life, but continually treated them with the utmost physical cruelty into the bargain. They regarded themselves as special favourites of Heaven, and it was in Heaven's name they said and did everything; but in reality they were "like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." They were plaster saints merely, whose inhumanity knew no bounds. No wonder Samuel learned to hate both them and the religion which they professed; and as Bernard Shaw points out, *The Way of All Flesh* was written on purpose to hold his father up to ridicule, because he wanted to illustrate the futility of the present system of education and the complete impotence of the Christian religion as a moralizing and uplifting agency.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Use and Misuse of Sunday.

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

It is over eighty years since that doughty Radical, Charles Dickens, published his *Sunday under Three Heads*, an eloquent plea for a brighter Sunday. In the dedication the great novelist scourged the then Bishop of London for his denunciation of the Sunday excursionist. Four generations later, owing to the mulish obstruction of the clergy, the question of Sunday recreation is still a live one, and is likely to continue being one. Despite all the efforts of progressive people, the fifty thousand clergy of this country, who evaded their responsibilities as citizens during the War, continue to challenge any attempt on the part of their fellow-citizens to lay out Sunday as they wish.

Few people realize what this clerical hold-up of Sunday means. Just think for a moment. It is one-seventh of a man's life—ten solid years of a man's life

who lives to be seventy years of age. And this time is monopolized by the clergy and the publicans, so that in so many parts of the country a decent citizen is faced one day in the week with the grim alternatives of spiritual or spirituous intoxication. In some favoured towns the unhappy citizen is graciously permitted by his pastors and masters to witness cinema shows, carefully censored so that he should not laugh overmuch; or to attend so-called "sacred concerts." What a boon! And on the Continent men have made Sunday a bright holiday, which lends colour to the whole of the week.

This filching of the working-man's Sunday is a big matter. Why is the British workman denied relaxation that his Continental brother has in abundance? The workman cares as little for the clergy as the clergy care for him. The workman, too, has reason to doubt the reality of any friendly feeling, for the clergy have not only restricted Sunday entertainments, but, through their representatives in the House of Lords, opposed so many measures of reform. The clergy are the most lugubrious members of the community, and they have succeeded in making Sunday the most lugubrious day of the week, and, incidentally, made Britain the laughing-stock of Europe.

The whole matter is a survival of Puritanical religious fanaticism. So bitter were the old Nonconformists that they unsheathed the sword rather than observe the more humane ideas of their opponents. By making the Bible a fetish, they made Sunday as gloomy as the Jewish Sabbath, which is an Oriental nightmare. Since then the Churchmen have come into line with the fancy religionists, and to-day the citizen is cheated of one-seventh of his life in the name of an Oriental superstition he either half-believes or detests.

There is no valid reason why Britishers should not enjoy themselves on Sunday. Even Catholics know that, and their priests countenance games for their parishioners. The Protestant bigots, however, have the power, and exercise it most tyrannously. For how much longer, we ask, is this five per cent. of the population to lord it over the remaining ninety-five per cent. of the country? The members of the wealthy governing classes have holiday all the days of the week, and all the weeks of the year, and all the years of their lives. Yet they claim the right to steal the Sundays of the working-man, in the name of a deity who is supposed to have been a working-man.

This restless, modern life makes greater demands than ever upon the individual. To make Sunday a real holiday, and not a day of unnecessary restraint or weary listlessness, must be all for the good of the nation. Let us therefore tell the clergy that we have done with them and their bigoted Sabbath Act of Charles the Second, and let them make room for better men. There are other folk in the world beside the clergy. We could manage to exist without parsons, but we must have workers—and workers must have relaxation.

MIMNERMUS.

When reason's voice,  
Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked  
The nations; and mankind perceives that vice  
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue  
Is peace, and happiness, and harmony;  
When man's maturer nature shall disdain  
The playthings of its childhood;—kingly glare  
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority  
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne  
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,  
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade  
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable  
As that of truth is now.

—Shelley.

## Atheism and Agnosticism.

### III.

(Concluded from p. 564.)

MR. BELFORT BAX, the well-known historian, publicist, and Socialist, who has never identified himself definitely with Freethought or Secular propaganda, gives an account of the origin of Agnosticism in his book of *Reminiscences* which bears out in every respect our contention. After observing that it is no longer necessary for the average society man to make any profession of belief, yet it was long before the profession of religious belief ceased to be regarded as a necessary badge of respectability. The problem then arose, says Mr. Bax, of how to keep the badge of respectability while getting rid of the obligation to profess any positive religious belief. To overcome the difficulty, proceeds Mr. Bax: "A new word was coined to this end by the late Professor Huxley.....To save his social and speculative respectability, the Atheist had now only to call himself an Agnostic and he was comparatively all right. A somewhat doubtful line of distinction was sought to be drawn between the alleged point of view of the despised and rejected Atheist and the relatively acceptable Agnostic. The Atheist, it was said, was a foolish, if not wicked person, who thought he could prove the non-existence of God. The Agnostic, on the other hand, was, whether one agreed with him or not, a decent and reasonable person, who did not deny the Theistic contention, but merely asserted the necessary absence of all proof of that contention as being deducible from the nature of human knowledge. The absence of any categorical denial on his part thus saved the situation as regards respectability for the happy Agnostic."<sup>1</sup> But, as Mr. Bax objects "Between the absence of all proof of an affirmative and the presence of the proof of a negative there may be a logical distinction, but it is without practical results," and he gives the following illustration: "The ordinary suburban resident believes in the possibility of the fall of aerolites, and he disbelieves in basilisks (let us say); in other words, he regards the latter as an absurdity or an impossibility. Nevertheless, if he is contemplating an evening stroll on Clapham Common, he will be just as little concerned with the undoubted possibility, albeit high improbability, of having his head smashed by the fall of an aerolite, as he would be with the absurdity or impossibility of his being scorched by the glance of a basilisk. For practical purposes there is thus no distinction between theoretical impossibility and theoretical possibility, when the probability falls below a certain standard. Hence, to come back to our original point, the Atheist's alleged belief that the non-existence of a deity can be demonstrated, and the Agnostic's admitted conviction that the nature of human knowledge precludes the possibility of any positive demonstration, or even probable proof, of his existence, amounts for practical purposes to precisely the same thing. Yet if the distinction commonly alleged between the Atheist and the Agnostic rests on what is little better than a logical quibble, it is not impossible perhaps, if we try, to discover a real distinction."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Bax finds this distinction in "the region of ethical sentiment." The Atheist objects to the Theist, that even if we grant the existence of a Creator:—

there is nothing in the nature of the ordering of this Universe that would entitle me to regard such a being as an object worthy of my worship. To any argument

<sup>1</sup> Belfort E. Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Middle and late Victorian*, 1918, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

based on the imperfections or positive evils of which the ordering of the world is full, you Theists of all sects and persuasions content yourselves with replying by vague assurance that, to use a vulgar metaphor, "it will all come out in the washing"—that all is meant for the best, and will ultimately turn out to be for the best. In fact, in your theology and ethics you accept the position of the confidence-trick man. Just as the former is willing to hand over his cash into the keeping of a person of whose *bona fides* he has no evidence, so you are prepared to pledge your faith and religious ideal on the unproven assumption that the author and providence of this Universe is ethically good, and that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Now, I am not prepared to do this. Nay, further, I find you are acting more foolishly even than the victim of the confidence-trick man. The latter is usually a plausible person, at least, and his victim has nothing definite on which to base his suspicions. The case with the creator and providence whose existence you assume is far otherwise. Here the horrors and evils present in the world of his supposed creation and ordering are very real, and obtrude themselves upon our notice. In the face of these facts my conscience will not allow me to regard the author or permitter (for that matter) of these things as worthy of my respect, not to say adoration. I am not to be beguiled by cheap references to the limitations of the human faculty, by tall talk about "wise purposes," "beneficent ends," etc., in excuse for the ways of your assumed deity.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, says the Atheist: "The distinction sought to be drawn between action and permission, to palliate from the Theistic point of view the evils of the world, is futile. If I permit a wrong to be perpetrated which I could prevent, I am at least passively guilty of the wrong." And further:—

The most pious *bourgeois* condemns the conduct of the little boy who steals money from the till in order to put it in the missionary-box, or of the gambler who cheats at cards in order to maintain his aged mother, yet conduct which he would reprove in the little boy or the cardsharper he condones in his God. That the end justifies the means may possibly in some cases be admitted as regards man, with his limited outlook and powers of action. But I submit that on any ethical basis it can never apply as an excuse for the *prima facie* evil acts of a being possessed of the power and knowledge assumed in the notion of God as the creator and providence of the world. For my conscience no amount of "wise purposes" or "beneficent ends" will exonerate the author of the world as it is. They are to me as the "good intentions" with which the road to Hell is said to be paved. The transparent sophistries of theologians in attempting the impossible task of justifying their divinity fills me with nothing but disgust and loathing.<sup>2</sup>

"Thus the Atheist," says Mr. Bax; and he adds: "This moral attitude might possibly be regarded as differentiating the conscientious Atheist from the mere Agnostic. According to this definition, the Atheist is essentially ethical and religious in his judgment, while the Agnostic need not be so."

Which sums up the situation so accurately that there is no need for further comment, and, coming as it does from one standing aloof from the rival camps of religion and popular Atheistic propaganda, it constitutes a valuable testimonial for the Atheist as against the Agnostic.

WALTER MANN.

And thus they cease not to demand of you the cause of the cause, until you take refuge in the will of God, that is to say, in the asylum of ignorance.—*Spinoza*.

<sup>1</sup> Belfort E. Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Middle and late Victorian*, 1918, pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup> B. E. Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 194.

## Acid Drops.

The *Daily Mail*, with its well-known interest in all that affects the religious—particularly the religious—welfare of the people, is wroth with the Bolsheviks because of their attitude towards Christianity. It admits that they tolerate all religions, and leave the Churches alone; but it complains, in its issue for November 13, that they regard all the Churches with contempt, and "do their utmost to convert the people to what they call reason." And their papers are filled with "blasphemous references to the Russian clergy." Well, it is something to learn that toleration is practised, and that the Bolsheviks only try to convert people to their views. That is certainly setting an example of liberality that the *Daily Mail* would do well to follow. For, like the rest of the Press in this country, the *Daily Mail* takes good care to play to the religious gallery, and to exclude other opinions from its columns. We are not accusing the *Mail* of having any religious opinions; it is purely a matter of business, and we daresay that, if it could be shown that Freethought would pay, it would be as ready to advocate that as anything else.

Meanwhile, we may congratulate ourselves that we did not yield to pressure and make ourselves ridiculous. When the atrocity campaign was at its height, we had many letters from timid Freethinkers urging us to publicly dissociate Freethought from the Russian movement for fear of the discredit it might suffer in the eyes of the people of Britain. We replied to most (privately) that while we were not concerned with the political aspects of Bolshevism, we were not inclined to back up wildly improbable stories for fear of losing caste with the "respectables." If Freethinkers cannot keep their heads in a crisis who shall? And if they are to subscribe to an outcry, merely because it is popular, what advantage to them is their Freethought? A little common sense and a modicum of courage were all that was needed.

When the villainous falsehood concerning the nationalizing of women in Russia was being circulated in Britain, and used by religionists to discredit Freethought (it received, it may be noted, the endorsement of our Government) we printed the Bolshevik marriage laws, which are substantially our own, with the elimination of the religious ceremony. Now, it is interesting to note that Mr. Dukes, who has been writing in the *Times* a series of anti-Bolshevik articles, prints the programme of the Centre Party in Russia (Anti-Bolshevik and in favour of intervention), and this embraces, among other things, the Bolshevik marriage laws as they stand, and the disestablishment of the Church. This, we should think, ought to kill that lie. But we have our doubts. A lie is not an easy thing to kill.

The poor clergy are still starving. To prevent cannibalism, the Bristol Diocesan Board has distributed £9,000 among the local parsons. The late Mrs. M. E. Walker, of St. Paul's Rectory, Silloth, Carlisle, died possessed of £21,465.

Providence must be feeling the ravages of age. Communion plate was stolen from Steeple Claydon Church, Bucks, and a collection-box from a neighbouring village, but no one was struck dead.

The higher clergy like their congregations to think that they are appointed by the Holy Ghost. The real solution is that the bishops of the Established Church are appointed by a Baptist Prime Minister, who is not a ghost, and is as holy as most politicians.

The Bishop of Bristol appears to have the same remarkable aptitude for figures as his brother Bishop of London. The former's income is £4,300, and this, he contends, only allows £166 for his family. It is fortunate the Bishop is not an ordinary man. Otherwise, his wife would want a lot of detail to explain how it was that he drew £86 weekly, and she had to run the family on a paltry sixty-three shillings.

Sir A. Conan Doyle declares that in the next world "every man or woman finds a soul mate sooner or later." Poor old Solomon will feel lonely.

A divorce has been granted to the wife of the ex-Rev. J. S. Smith, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, on the usual grounds. The restraints of religion are not conspicuous in this instance.

Among the signers of a widely circulated manifesto on the subject of British Help to Save Austrian Children is the name of one solitary bishop. There are forty bishops.

In the stomach of a bullock belonging to a Rugby farmer was found a golf ball. According to Holy Writ, in the stomach of a whale was found a live prophet, who was an uninvited guest in the whale's interior for three days and nights.

Nothing can cure the hypocrisy of the British press. A newspaper notes that M. Clemenceau when visiting Strassburg went to the cathedral. It adds that his opinions on religion are well known. That leaves the British public to assume anything. It would never have done to say outright that M. Clemenceau was an Atheist. The land that gave birth to Christian Socialism for Socialists who lacked courage, and Agnosticism for Atheists who feared the respectabilities and a thousand and one other compromises, remains true to itself.

It was surely a sign of the times that the King's message concerning the anniversary of Armistice Day made no mention of God or of prayer. But some attempt was made to get it in here and there. A Salvation Army band played hymns on the front of the Stock Exchange, and at the Mansion House "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" was sung. Anyone who could find blessings for which to thank God in the five years of War could find comfort in an earthquake. Friends of God would do well to leave him out of the picture. It may suggest inconvenient thoughts.

The Dean of Durham, as reported in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* of November 10, says that strikes which threaten the food, or gas, or coal of the community, are as immoral in the sight of God as the German invasion of France. We have not noticed the Dean of Durham equally emphatic concerning the conduct of those who so often bring strikes about, nor have we seen from him any repudiation of cutting off the food of a people by the new international method of a hunger blockade. But that is done in the name of God or morality, and it makes a world of difference.

Sir F. Maurice says the Church requires more propaganda in the press. This looks as if we may expect a return of the dear Angels of Mons, or a winking statue of some saint—in print.

The Bishop of London says that Christians "are not going to have people go to the theatres to hear things that degrade them." Remembering the contents of the Bible, the Bishop should be a good judge on this subject.

The clergy are altering their sails to suit the wind. The Rev. W. E. Orchard says "the Psalms are written for the proletariat, by the proletariat." He will tell us next that the cursing Psalms were written by Billingsgate fish porters.

The famous Chapel of St. George, Windsor Castle, is in a bad way, and the roof is in danger of falling. This is very impolite of St. George. A small miracle would prove acceptable to pious folk.

Criticizing the Church of England Enabling Bill, Mr. Hugh Edwards, M.P., described it as "disestablishment by bloodless surgery under the influence of twilight sleep." This is not a bad description of what happened to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

The Lord has been busy in South Africa. In Somerset, the drought has been so severe that large trees are dying. Services are being held for rain, and we are quite sure that sooner or later they will be answered. But it is interesting to note that the Europeans prayed inside the Dutch Reformed Church, while the coloured people prayed outside. It hardly needed the War to make the world safe for hypocrisy—to use Dr. E. J. Dillon's terse summing up of the result of the European War.

Wales has broken out again with another revival. And we don't know what it has done to deserve the infliction. The scene of the outbreak is Aberaman, South Wales; and, of course, numerous converts are reported. There are reports of healings, and also of visions. This is just what one would expect. What one would like explained is the substantial difference between the visions seen in ordinary dementia or those resulting from alcohol, and these visions that accompany religious outbursts. We are quite serious in the matter, and our columns are open to anyone who thinks he can establish a distinction. Collective hallucinations are also very common, and their occurrence goes a long way to explain the recurring waves of Spiritualism.

The Bishop of Manchester says that he finds it hard to believe that this is a Christian country when he finds that people prefer to stay in bed on Sunday morning to coming to Church. His Lordship should reflect that some allowance must be made for choice, and many prefer bed to sleep in. Besides, if the Bishop is in doubt whether this is a Christian country or not, he should reflect upon the number of prisons and workhouses we have, upon the size of our Army and Navy, upon the glorious War we have just finished, and any doubt as to our being a Christian country will be set at rest.

Some Christians no longer implicitly believe in Providence. To check collection-box robberies, Major Law, Chief Constable of Herefordshire, has invented a thief-proof offertory-box. The idea has been suggested to the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, who has so far not excommunicated the inventor.

The *Daily News* is getting quite bold for a Nonconformist periodical. Discussing the Drink question, it said: "not all the concentrated eloquence of Transatlantic evangelists will win approval in this country for the doctrine that a glass of beer is a pernicious thing in itself." What will Chadband and Stiggins say?

Prebendary Isaacs, late of Chiswick, complains that in that parish thousands of persons never go to church themselves, and care little about sending their children. The Prebendary would, we take it, excuse the parents not coming if they would send their children. For our part, we think that the Chiswick parents show a much greater conception of duty than do those who have no relish for church themselves, but who send their children, either to get them out of the way or to use their attendance at Church as a means of diverting the suspicion of their neighbours from their own heresy.

An appeal for £600,000 for the purpose of training returned Army officers for the Church is being made, and is signed by Field-Marshal Haig and nine other officers. We should have imagined that such a sum of money would have been better spent in training these officers for some useful work in the world. We should like much to interview these Army officers, whose experience at the Front has led them to think of entering the Church. It has been said for a long time that the Church only got the fool of the family. It looks as though we shall soon be able to substitute another word for family.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We see that the Commission that was appointed before the War to settle the land question in South Africa allotted 87 per cent. of the land to a million and a quarter of Europeans, and 12 per cent. for four and a half million natives. That is Scripture fulfilled.

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

November 23, Leicester; November 30, Birmingham; December 7, Sheffield; December 14, Liverpool; December 17 and 18, Belfast; December 21, Manchester.

**To Correspondents.**

**J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—November 23, Manchester; December 7, Swansea; December 21, Glasgow; December 22, Paisley.

Will the gentleman who asked Mr. Cohen for the exact reference for statement made in *Christianity and Slavery* please send on his address, and the reference shall be sent.

**L. SOMERTON LOVE.**—Letters received. We hope to publish some of your verses so soon as space permits. Pleased to know that you find the *Woman and Slavery* so useful. If we were a millionaire we would issue both as penny pamphlets.

**A. RUBIN (Johannesburg).**—We are pleased to learn that you are one of those to whom the *Freethinker* comes as a personal friend. Thanks for subscription to Fund. We are never likely to think less of a subscription because it is small. It is the spirit behind the help that is of vital importance. With regard to your other suggestion, we should be glad to publish an article on the modern apologies for Judaism if you care to send one along. As with Christianity, a great deal of whitewashing is going on. But there is only one way in which to purify a religion, and that is to kill it. There is, we are afraid, a more or less close agreement between reactionaries to day. The more need for courage on the part of genuine Freethinkers.

**C. T. SHAW.**—We do not know anything about the two mad parsons you name. Why not try and secure a hall in Wolverhampton? We would then run down and see what could be done.

**W. GORDON (Winnipeg).**—We are glad to hear that your plan of inducing a newsagent to take extra copies of the paper on the understanding that you would take back all that were unsold has resulted in all the copies ordered being disposed of. We note your observation that Winnipeg is a priest-ridden town. Unfortunately, we have many such in this country.

**H. L.**—We are always ready to quote special terms for our pamphlets for those who wish to use them for propaganda purposes.

**E. PINDER.**—Much obliged. Shall hope to have a word with you when we visit Leicester. We are quite well—too busy to be anything else. Illness is one of those luxuries we cannot afford.

**H. ELLIOT.**—Yes, we are still issuing the *Freethinker* posters, and shall be pleased to send them on to any who will display them.

**J. WILLIAMS.**—There is a hearty ring about your note that does one good. We hope to see you before the winter is over.

**A. VANDERHOUT.**—Thanks for circular. Will use it next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Verily there are rewards for our doing good to dumb animals, and giving them water to drink. An adulteress was forgiven who passed by a dog at a well; for the dog was holding out his tongue from thirst, which was near killing him; and the woman took off her boot, and tied it to the end of her garment, and drew water for the dog, and gave him to drink; and she was forgiven for that act.—*Mohammed.*

**"Freethinker"**

**"Victory" Sustentation Fund.**

**Tenth List of Subscriptions.**

Previously acknowledged, £330 os. 6d. A Rubin (Johannesburg), 2s. E. M. Ginders, 10s. Harold Eliot, 10s. A. K. Kemp, 4s. Mrs. C. M. Renton, £3. W. Hopper, £1. T. Mosley, 2s. J. Richards, 5s. T. W. Haughton, £2 2s. W. F. Ambrose (11th sub.), 2s. Anonymous, £5. Thomas Evans (Liverpool), 5s.

Per J. Williams (Rhonda): J. Adams, 10s. F. Cox, 10s. A. Morgan, 5s. J. Williams, 10s.

Per E. Pinder (Leicester): M. Hopkins, 5s. G. Martin, 2s. 6d. R. Wheatley, 2s. 6d. C. Pell, 2s. 6d. M. Marston, 1s. S. Woolley, 2s. 6d. G. H. Folwell, 5s. E. Pinder, 5s.

Total, £345 18s. 6d.

This Fund closes on December 14.

**Sugar Plums.**

We have decided to fix December 14 as the closing date for our Sustentation Fund. This means that all subscriptions to be included in that week's list must reach the office not later than December 9. After the Fund is closed we shall have to make a statement concerning the future of the *Freethinker*. We were in hopes that with the close of the War the cost of production would fall. Paper did fall in price, but it is now advancing again, and other expenses have increased since the Armistice. Now a new rise in wages is imminent, which may mean anything from £100 to £200 a year on the wages bill. There is no lack of excitement in editing a Freethought weekly.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (November 23) in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. The meeting commences at 6.30. Next Sunday (November 30) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall, Birmingham. This is one of the finest halls in the Midlands, and we have no doubt that there will be many present from the surrounding district. Admission is free.

In spite of the bitter wintry weather at South Shields, there was a good attendance at Mr. Cohen's meetings on Sunday last. Visitors were present from Newcastle and other places, and the Branch is determined to see what it can do to reawaken interest in the Movement on Tyneside. It is time that this was done; the public is ready, although a spirit of somnolence appears to have crept over some of the Tyneside Freethinkers. And really the only way in which Freethinkers can justify their existence is by working in some way to advance the common cause. Before commencing the lecture, Mr. Cohen had the pleasure of presenting to Mr. Ralph Chapman, on behalf of the Branch, a large framed portrait of Charles Bradlaugh, as a mark of appreciation of his thirty years' service as Secretary. There was no mistaking the esteem in which Mr. Chapman is held by the Shields and district Secularists, and we know of no man in the party who more richly deserves it. Another feature of the evening meeting was the delightful violin playing of Mr. J. Chapman, which was greatly appreciated by all present. It only remains to add that there was a good sale of literature, and we believe that several new members were made.

Mr. Lloyd will lecture to-day (Nov. 23) in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester. The lectures will be at 2 o'clock and 6.30. We hope that all friends in the district will do their best to induce one of their Christian acquaintances to attend one or both of these meetings. They could hardly introduce them to a lecturer better calculated to awaken an interest in Freethought. If Mr. Lloyd has the audience he deserves, many of his hearers will have to stand.

The Centenary of the birth of George Eliot occurs this week, November 22. But journalists are as sheep-like as

most other people, and because one or two wrote about her some time before the real date of the anniversary, all the others followed suit. We print this week the first of two articles on George Eliot from the able pen of Mr. Underwood, and we congratulate him on his avoidance of a discussion of the private relations between her and Lewes. The ascetic and pornographic taste of many writers have led them to dwell upon that as though it were of paramount importance. But with that the world has no vital concern. It is George Eliot the creative artist with whom the world is concerned, and if writers kept to that the tone of our literature would be healthier than it is.

A debate will take place to-day (November 23) between Mr. F. E. Willis and Mr. R. Skipp in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, on the subject: "That by Human Effort alone will the World be Made Sweeter and Purer." Mr. Willis will take the affirmative, and we have no doubt that in his hands the Secular view will be worthily upheld. Debates are not so common as they once were, and we expect to hear that this one has attracted a large audience. The discussion commences at 7 o'clock,

An address on "George Eliot, Novelist and Freethinker," will be delivered this evening (November 23) by Mr. T. F. Palmer at the St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., at 7.30. North London Freethinkers please note. It is certain that those who miss this Centenary address will have no opportunity of attending another.

On Monday next, November 24, at 8 o'clock, Mr. Joseph McCabe will begin a course of three lantern lectures at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on "The Evolution of Life and of Man." The object of the lectures is to popularize the teachings of science, and a reserved seat course ticket will be sent gratis to the head teachers of any school or educational centre in Westminster or the adjoining districts.

The *R.P.A. Annual* for 1920 (Watts & Co.; 1s.) is, as usual, full of interesting matter, but it strikes us as scarcely up to its usual level of excellence. It may be merely an impression, but there seems a note of hesitancy about many of the articles that robs them of some part of their forcefulness. There is one sentence in the opening article by Mr. Archer that no Atheist can allow to pass unchallenged. In the course of a curate's egg kind of an article he remarks: "It is true that we are driven by the constitution of our minds to conceive some sort of Creator." But that is precisely what the constitution of our minds does *not* force us to conceive. So far from our being forced to conceive a Creator, it is impossible for any such conception to exist. In using the term, we are juggling with words, and the passage as written is just pure nonsense. And it is difficult to see how any man who holds such views can properly call himself anything but a Theist. Professor Bury writes a very satisfactory article on "Playing for Safety," Mr. Edward Clodd a very informing one on "The Permanence of Sacred Places," and Dr. Ivor Tuckett subjects Mr. Archer to a well-merited criticism on the question of evidence for the "supernormal." Mr. Eden Phillpotts, Mr. McCabe, Mr. Whyte, Mr. Gorham, and others join in making a good number of the *Annual*.

We desire to call the attention of all Freethinkers in Glasgow and district to the advertisement of the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. on page 579 of this issue. The Branch feels that enough is not being done in the West of Scotland for the furtherance of Freethought, and in this we agree with them. The whole of Scotland is ripe for a strong and well-directed Freethought propaganda, and we hope that the efforts of our Glasgow friends will receive the help that should be given. The notion is to make Glasgow the centre of a number of local organizations, and we feel sure that there is scarcely a good-sized town in Scotland in which a Branch of the N.S.S. could not be established at the expense of a little earnest work on the part of local friends. We trust that they will see to it at once.

## George Eliot.

1819-1880.

WE have been accustomed for the last twenty years or so to hear the Victorian age maligned by every clever young gentleman who has elected to guide our steps through the difficult and devious ways of literary and philosophic rectitude. The Victorians, it is true, had it all their own way for a long time. Their individualism, we were told, had become irritatingly complacent; they had replaced the discredited dogmas of religion by the dogmas of science; the illusion of progress was raised by them to the position of an unassailable truth; moral action prompted by instinct or habit had given way to ethical theories. Their art was commonplace, esoteric, or vaporously sentimental; their poetry was tearful and pessimistic, as in Matthew Arnold, decorative and vapid, as in Tennyson, barbarous and platitudinous, as in Browning, and, as in Swinburne, spluttering, verbose, and violent. Their fiction was cynically drab or sentimentally rose-red—it was a social or ethical pamphlet instead of a vivid impression of life. Indeed, if we are disposed to take its critics seriously, the Victorian age was one to weep over or curse, just as it suits one's temperament. It will be remembered, however, that we had the same irrational dislike of the preceding age in the period known as the Romantic revolt (1790-1830), when the young bloods of the time made, as they thought, a clean sweep of the rationalistic eighteenth century. All such reactions are inevitable, and they have this good point: that, by a wilful exaggeration of defects, they help those who come later to see the discredited age in the light of truth. No one now needs to be told that the eighteenth century was not an intellectual and emotional desert. In the same way, it is reasonable to think that the Victorian age will be given its right place in the long and splendid progression of English philosophy, letters, and art; and on this, the birthday, a hundred years ago, of George Eliot, we shall attempt, in critical humility and with sincere admiration for her genius, to find out precisely what this great Victorian writer means for us alike as a thinker and as an artist.

### I.

Mary Ann Evans, like many other ardent and convinced Freethinker, was brought up in strictly orthodox surroundings. She knew religion, not from a mere interest in theological systems or in the origins of Christianity, not from the outside, but from within. It was not for her an æsthetic or historical object; rather it was a deep-felt need of her whole nature. It had gripped her, and had left its mark upon her intellectual nature. Unlike Renan or Heine, she could not play with religious ideas; her experience, like that of the Swiss Edmond Scherer, had been too poignant; and even when she had succeeded in discarding religious ideas, she still retained that profound seriousness which, I imagine, was largely due to her early preoccupations with religion. Her ultimate spiritual emancipation is to be credited to her education, which was remarkably good for the time, its admirable solidity serving to support her natural intellectual seriousness.

She was twenty-two when she was first introduced to scepticism through some Coventry friends—the Brays. Charles Bray, a ribbon manufacturer, was a proselytizing Monotheist, who had just written and published *The Philosophy of Necessity* (1841). Miss Evans was put up by her orthodox friends to convert the heretic to Tritheism. As Bray seems to have had little difficulty to bring her to his heterodox views, it seems not unlikely



that she had gone part of the way before she was introduced to the Coventry Socinians. Anyhow, she soon left her Unitarian friends far behind, and rejected their Theism with less difficulty than the orthodox Christianity of her youth. To occupy her leisure time she translated Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, spending two years of hard labour on her version, which is said to be a model of competent workmanship. She did not get much pleasure out of it, as she had left Strauss' position far behind, and it is amusing to find someone reporting that she used to work at it with a crucifix before her, whether as a consolation or a stimulus we are not told. However that may be, it did not prevent her from presenting to English readers the German critic's dissolving view of the Jesus of the Gospels. She seems to have been fairly happy in the society of the Brays and their Coventry friends, but she had no idea that she possessed any particular talent.

In 1851, when she was thirty-two, she was invited to join the *Westminster Review*, at that time an important organ of advanced thought, and counting among its contributors writers like Spencer, J. S. Mill, Grote, Lewes, and other vigorous and independent thinkers. Her work was soul-destroying drudgery; but she managed to stand it pretty well, analysing long-winded, bulky German volumes of philosophy and sociology, and writing an occasional article in the vitriolic style of the period. We can see that she had gone far since the Coventry days, for she now makes a version of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, and afterwards takes up Spinoza's *De Deo*. Her work on the *Westminster* brought her into touch with Spencer, who introduced her to the volatile and versatile Bohemian, George Henry Lewes, to whom she was not at first much attracted. She came to see the really amiable side of his nature, and a year or two afterwards took the step which horrified even some of her Freethinking friends, and, what was worse, confined her to the society of Lewes when what she needed was a more vitally artistic atmosphere. Lewes, was, of course, a Positivist with a hearty hatred of Christian morality. He was talking one day with some friends when one of them mentioned a noble act of renunciation which had not come to his notice, and exclaimed that Christ would have done the same thing. "He do it?" said Lewes, with withering scorn, "he would have told others to do it." It was not, as a French critic remarks, a Voltairean jeer, rather it was a humorous condemnation of the very spirit of Christianity, the condemnation of the spirit of faith by the spirit of action. We cannot imagine the sympathetic creator of so many types of religious aspiration expressing herself in this vigorous way, but she had her own manner of condemning the current religion, and it was not less effective if less startling:—

I have faith (she says) in the working out of higher possibilities than the Catholic or any other church has presented, and those who have strength to wait and endure are bound to accept no formula which their whole souls—their intellect as well as their emotions—do not embrace with entire reverence. The highest "calling and election" is to *do without opium* and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance.

In the letters which were arranged by her husband, Mr. Cross, whom she married after Lewes' death in 1878, and in the essays which she wrote for the *Westminster Review*, we get a fairly clear idea of her philosophy of life. The article called "Worldliness and Other-worldliness," a review of the life and work of Young, the writer of *Night Thoughts*, puts before us her conceptions of Christianity as ethically maleficent, and more especially the belief in another world, a belief which absolves us from doing what we ought to do in this.

The fundamental principle of her ethic, as of Spinoza's and Emerson's, was the inexorable law that a man reaps what he has sown. The essay on Dr. Cumming, a sort of Christian evidencer of the time, is, perhaps, energy wasted on an unworthy object, but it says some things about clerical incompetence, ignorance, prodigality of misstatement, exuberance of mendacity, and zeal *in majorem gloriam dei* which are unfortunately as true now as they were then. Her sympathetic treatment of religious character has hidden from some intellectual people the real nature of her philosophy, which is frankly opposed to the ethic of Christianity. A Catholic critic, Lord Acton, has to admit that her "teaching was the highest within the resources to which Atheism is restricted as the *Fiovetti* is the highest within the Christian limits." We disagree with him to the extent of setting the Victorian novelist and thinker above the mediæval saint.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

(To be concluded.)

## Freethought in Unusual Places.

### III.

#### THE ARTIST'S BIAS TOWARDS MYTHOLOGY.

THE creative artist looks upon the living face of man and depicts him as best he may, but always he is seeking in the real for the ideal. His distaste for the paucity of inspiration to be found in the deeds and faces of his fellows leads him necessarily to the consideration of the mythology of his compatriots in the search for ideal subjects. Be he writer, poet, or painter, he is faced with the same deathliness of the actual, and is consequently forced into the realm of pure imagination.

No part of the imaginative kingdom is more prolific in artistic subjects than that of religion, for that also is a purely emotional conception, and the artist by virtue of his very being is emotional. He, feeling and seeing with so much more intensity than his fellows, must needs apprehend the facile beauty of the de-corporealized more exquisitely than they. His deities are not so much matters of worship and respect as capable of beautiful depiction in whatever medium. Always they have nobler emotions than man, and the artist is therefore able to give them in his verse, prose, or picture a clothing of idealism which cannot be adapted to the everyday wear of ordinary men and women. Thus we have the Pheidian statues, the mediæval churches and paintings, the *Paradise Lost* of Milton, and the classical epics, together with the Arthurian cycle. Indeed, the beginning of art is the great legends of the race within which the art is executed, inasmuch as the legends provide the exceptional, the ideal, the wonder-worker for whom the artist is ever seeking.

And the artist finds his love not only in the good gods, but also in the bad. The legends of *Black Magic* are intensely interesting. The raising up of the Devil and the selling of a soul to him is a fascinating transaction. Moreover, the wondrous powers which he donates to his purchase are delirious in their conception. Such a one was Pope Joan, a mediæval heroine, who undoubtedly was of the Ehrnung type, and who, with the help of her unholy ally, changed temporarily the face of Christendom, theretofore vivid with light, to a seething mass of darkness and delusion, wherein witches and warlocks held sway until at last she died.

Equally instructive is the perfect knight, the Arthurian Sir Lancelot, who, while he was a pattern of all the virtues, held criminal conversation with the wife of his king and paragon, who was himself an incredible altruist and warrior. Just in the same way the fathers of the

race, the Adam and Eve of Milton, who, by the way, did more than anyone to make concrete our conception of the Hebraic story of creation, are ideal and marvellous, so that they must appeal to the artistic temperament for their very incredibility.

That quality of appeal to the artist is not of necessity the quality of truth, nor is it the quality of morality. The artist is concerned with beauty, and, providing that he can endow any conception with that quality, he is prepared to accept and use it without reference to anything else of whatever sort. It would be ineffectual, for instance, to state that the legends of great women, the beauties of all time, have not taken a serious hold upon the common mind. Cleopatra and her successors, wanton though they be, have had a very marked effect upon the average idea of beauty. On the other hand, the Immaculate Conception, an ideal of the birth of a God, which was attributed to the Virgin Mary, has supplied the common sense of beauty with many pictures of lovely women, who were often little more than artists' paramours, nursing in their arms the Holy Child.

Therein lies the secret. The artist, seeking expression of the beautiful, utilizes the religion of his time and its deities, saints, and evil ones; but, by his human portraiture of them, he brings them from the level of pure imagination into direct measure with man. Even supposing that he, being man, is able to endow them with ideal qualities, he is unable to give to the concrete effects the superhuman idealism of the vague and iridescent vision of the earlier dreamers, who have only outlined in filmy vapour the ideas, the emotions, which have led them to the conception of a high divinity.

In this crystallization of the longings of the human heart, which is unable to obtain an answer to its questionings, and which has therefore provided itself with answers, the artist has determined the effect by making it merely human. Before he did his fell and beautiful work upon the mythology of the race, it was in the realm of the abstract, and as such it was incomprehensible, indefinite, and satisfying to the vague desires. He, however, makes his story, such as the complete and detailed history of creation—in itself most beautiful—contained in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but absolutely controvertible, and quite incredible in the realm of reason; or he paints his picture of the Virgin Mother and the Holy Child, clothed in the garments of his day and in the flesh of his beautiful beloved, and destroys the illusion; or he writes his wonderful story of good and evil, his philosophy of human action, as that of the Pauline epistles or the legends of the Gospels; and behold! the average man, not knowing these things as of beauty alone, cannot give them credence in his world of fact.

And thus, in spite of the appearance of working towards the sustenance and stabilizing of belief, the artist, by his work on the conceptions of mythology, brings it to a definite place, which it continues to occupy by virtue of his talent for beauty, but not by virtue of its right of worship.

G. E. FUSSELL.

## Correspondence.

### HEAVEN'S LANGUAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. F. J. Gould's allusion to Esperanto in the *Freethinker* for November 9 suggests a few thoughts. The first, though not the most important, is that those who read the *Freethinker* are not in urgent need of a language for use in heaven. Readers of the *Freethinker* don't go there; any respectable theologian will tell you that. Whether it is worth

while for your readers to put in some spare time learning the language of the other place, and what that language is, I do not know. I believe some kind of "Evidence" lecturers speak it sometimes, though not with any high degree of purity or grammatical accuracy.

But what Mr. Gould's article suggests to me with greatest force is the question why on earth Secularists (*this-worldists*) should take so limp an interest in the international language question, of the development of which Esperanto is one phase—a question pre-eminently of this world, and of such far-reaching importance to this-worldism.

Mr. Gould will remember the International Congress of Freethinkers, many years ago, at the Hall of Science. At that Congress I heard the same speech delivered once in English, once in very bad French, and once in a language with which I have no acquaintance. Then I went out to get some refreshments, and, on reflection, was forced to admit to myself that "I could not stand another dose of that sort of thing."

I am an Esperanto diploma-holder. Personally, I regard Ido (simplified, not primitive, Esperanto) as the up-to-date endeavour towards the unattainable or perfect combination of maximum internationality with maximum regularity, simplicity, etc. Of these things it is for Freethinkers who are linguists to judge for themselves by patient examination of the details of the two systems.

But the one thing which, I confess, I cannot understand is how anyone can be a Freethinker without taking up the international language question at all.

If the North London Secular Society like to organize an Ido class right away, I shall be pleased to give instruction free of charge, and I am sure, should they prefer to learn Esperanto, my old friends and ex-colleagues the Esperantists would come forward with a similar offer.

ROBERT HARDING.

19 Prospero Road, Upper Holloway, N. 19.

## THE BIBLE.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. H. M. Brook, objects to my condemnation of the Bible because some of the "prophets" and Christ inveighed against the priests and politicians of their day. But I stated that the Bible contains some good things which should be treasured. Nevertheless, these good things can always be effectively countered by the vile things. For example: at the recent Coal Commission, when Mr. Smillie was examining the Duke of Northumberland, that arch-monopolist and wealthy idler, he quoted the passage, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof"; to which the Duke immediately retorted with, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's"—a passage that gives divine sanction to every form of legal plunder.

G. O. WARREN.

## THE JANUARIUS "LIQUIFACTION."

SIR,—A *Freethinker* writer the other week, speaking of the above Neapolitan wonder, says it is simply a liquid which, under influences of atmosphere, pressure, etc., assumes the appearance of blood. I neither deny nor agree with this, which is quite a possible explanation, whether one be a Freethinker, Protestant, or even Catholic. I am of opinion, however, that these matters must be strictly proved, and not rest on hypothesis. Therefore, I shall feel obliged if you will print this letter, and if your contributor will append a note to it. In that note, all I ask him to put is the name or chemical formula of which he speaks. Of course, the whole problem depends upon this; and I am unable to find a chemist who knows of the substance in question; so in my perplexity I ask you to print this note and your contributor's addendum.

J. W. POYNTER.

[The article in question was not by a *Freethinker* writer, but a translation of an article which appeared in one of our foreign exchanges. We do not know what formula the writer had in mind, but we believe there are several which will produce the effect named. The late Dr. Cumming, according to Brewer, used ether to produce the effect seen in the Roman Catholic "miracle."—ED.]

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

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

**LONDON.**  
**INDOOR.**

**METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY** (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Maurice Maubrey, "Death."

**NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.** (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, T. F. Palmer, "The Centenary of George Eliot—Novelist and Freethinker."

**SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.** (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, "The School, the Bible, and the Child."

**SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY** (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The New Barbarism."

**OUTDOOR.**

**HYDE PARK:** 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Baker, Ratcliffe, and Dales.

**COUNTRY.**  
**INDOOR.**

**BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.** (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Debate: "That on Human Effort alone will the World be made Sweeter and Purer." Affirmative, Mr. F. E. Willis; Negative, Mr. R. Skipp.

**LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY** (Clarion Cafe, Gasgoine Street, Boar Lane, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30. Mr. Lew Davis, "Historical Materialism."

**LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY** (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. Cohen, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation."

**MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S.** (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Small Hall, Ardwick): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Christianity in the Melting-Pot"; 6.30, "Dream Life and Real Life." (Musical Selections.)

**RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S.**—All Freethinkers in the neighbourhood of Pontypridd are kindly asked to meet at 4 St. Catherine Street at 2.30 to-day to arrange for Mr. Lloyd's lectures at Pontypridd on November 30.

**SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S.** (14 Hunter's Terrace): 6.30, Meeting of Members and Friends.

**Glasgow Secular Society.**

THE Members of this Branch of the N. S. S. believe that by greater cohesion on the part of the Freethinkers in the West of Scotland, an organized Secularist propaganda could be carried on.

Within a few miles of Glasgow are Airdrie (population 25,000), Coatbridge (45,000), Clydebank (45,000), Motherwell (40,000), Paisley (90,000), Wishaw (25,000). Beyond that small circle are Ayr, Dumbarton, Falkirk, Greenock, Kilmarnock, and others, ranging from 25,000 to 75,000 people.

All over that district the Religious Sectaries are lamenting the growing indifference, the non-Church-going, the Sabbath-breaking habits of the working people. "P.S.A.'s," "Brotherhoods," "Manly Meetings for Men," and other Agencies, are being tried to bring them back to the apron-strings of the true Mother Church.

The Churches are on their Trial. So are We.

Practically no effort is being made to guide the thoughts of these men and women, or their children, into Rational, Secularist channels.

As a preliminary step towards a wide propaganda, will Freethinkers in any town or hamlet in the West of Scotland communicate with—

Mr. F. LONSDALE,  
256 Calder Street, Govanhill, Glasgow.

It depends on You. Will You Help?

FOR SALE.—Complete *Freethinker*, Vol. i., No. 1 (1881), to date. Bound until 1916. These Volumes are very scarce, and comprise a valuable library of militant Freethought literature and history covering nearly forty years.—Write or call, *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

**BOOKS** ON ALL SUBJECTS for every need, every taste, & every pocket Sent on Approval.

SECOND-HAND AND NEW. 1,000,000 Volumes in Stock.

Write to-day for Catalogue No. 455. State Wants. Books Bought at Best Prices.

**W. & G. FOYLE, 121-5 Charing Cross Road, London, W.C. 2.**  
Phone: Gerrard 818u.

**F**REETHINKER with comfortable home and thriving business, seeks Young Lady of similar tastes as life partner.—M. N. D., *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

**A** FREETHINKER going abroad offers the following:—Sex Lore, 7s. 6d.; Man's Unconscious Conflict: Exposition of Psychoanalysis, 6s.; Mating and Marriage, 2s. 6d.; The Neurotic Constitution, 10s.; Sex and Society, 10s.; Married Love, 6s.; Biology of Sex, 5s.; Text-Book of Sex Education, 4s. 6d.; Woman: Past and Present, 4s.; Physiology and Psychology of Sex, 7s.; Arabian Nights Entertainments, 10s.; Wise Parenthood, 3s. 6d.; Loves Coming of Age, 3s. 6d.; Intermediate Sex, 3s. 6d.; How to Prevent Pregnancy, 2s. 6d.; English Life of Jesus, 4s.; Studies in Psychological Research, 5s.; Some Account of Church-Going, 4s.; Buckle and His Critics, 7s. 6d.; Free Review (7 vols.), £2. All post free.—W. HARRISON, 47 Jeffreys Road, Clapham, London, S.W. 4.

**RATIONALISTIC EDUCATION.**

**M**R. W. H. THRESH has re-opened School in temporary premises, and will be pleased to receive a few Day Scholars and Boarders. Next Term he will have accommodation, in a commodious house (not now available), for Forty Pupils. Freethinkers who wish to place their children in this school are asked to make their arrangements at once, as the success of the enterprise will depend upon the support of sympathisers. It will be remembered that Mr. Thresh conducted a similar school (closed by the War) for thirteen years in Southend-on-Sea.—Address W. H. THRESH, 23 Weston Road, Southend-on-Sea.

**PRINTING.**

Superior Workmanship, Quality, Value.  
**W. H. HEARSON,**  
The Library, **UTTOXETER.**

**PIONEER LEAFLETS.**  
By CHAPMAN COHEN.

- No. 1. What Will You Put in Its Place?
- No. 2. What is the Use of the Clergy?
- No. 3. Dying Freethinkers.
- No. 4. The Beliefs of Unbelievers.
- No. 5. Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?
- No. 6. Does Man Desire God?

Price 1s. 6d. per 100.  
(Postage 3d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

**Flowers of Freethought.**

BY  
**G. W. FOOTE.**

First Series, 216 pp. Cloth. Price 3s. net, postage 6d.  
Second Series, 302 pp. Cloth. Price 3s. net, postage 6d.

THE PIONEER PRESS 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

**Population Question and Birth-Control.**

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

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

**THREE GREAT BOOKS**

Which have already run into several editions, and are still selling rapidly.

**The World's Wonder Stories.** By ADAM GOWANS WHYTE. xix + 272 pp.; cloth, gilt top, 8s. 6d. net (inland postage 6d.). With many Illustrations and 32 Plates.

In this "delightful book," as the *Times* describes it, the door is opened on a realm of knowledge new to children, but as bright and enthralling as the kingdoms of fairy-tale and adventure. "The World's Wonder Stories" answers the eager curiosity of the child-mind about the story of the universe, the unfolding of living things, the upward march of the human race, and the how and why of many quaint customs and traditions. With its admirable subject-matter and its vivid, simple style, it forms an ideal book for children.

**Savage Survivals.** By J. HOWARD MOORE. 160 pp., with many Illustrations; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 9d.

Mr. Adam Gowans Whyte writes a Foreword to this book, which he ranks very highly. It contains a mass of information, conveyed in the simplest language and the brightest of styles, and it will be read with delight and profit by every one interested in the scientific study of human progress.

**The Origin of the World.** By R. McMILLAN. xvi + 139 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 9d.

Bishop W. M. Brown, D.D., of Galion, Ohio, U.S.A., recently paid the following remarkable tribute to this fascinating work:—

"I regard this book as being worth many times its weight in gold. I have read it five times, and am expecting to re-read a chapter almost every week during the rest of my life. It was written by an aged scientist for a young girl who desired to know about the origin of the world. Its exceptional value consists in the fact that it covers a very important, extensive, and difficult field of a scientific character in language which is free from technical terms. I regard it as being one of the most interesting and illuminating books that I have ever read. I wish that I had read such a book when I was young. It would have had a great and beneficial influence upon my life."

**Complete Catalogue and Copy of "Literary Guide" (16 pp. monthly, 3d.) free on receipt of post-card.**

LONDON: WATTS & CO., 17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4.

**A Pamphlet for the Times.**

JUST ISSUED.

**Socialism and The Churches.**

BY  
CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price Threepence. Postage One Penny.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

**Creed and Character**

The Influence of Religion on Racial Life.

BY  
CHAPMAN COHEN.

## CONTENTS:

Chapter I.—Religion and Race Survival. Chapter II.—Christianity and Social Life. Chapter III.—The Case of the Jew. Chapter IV.—A Lesson from Spain.

**A Useful Study of the Relations of Religion and Eugenics.**

In Neat Coloured Wrapper. Price 7d.  
(Postage 1½d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

**NEW PUBLICATIONS.**

**The R. P. A. Annual for 1920.** Containing contributions by Professor J. B. Bury, W. Ralph Hall Caine, A. St. John Adcock, Dr. Ivor Ll. Tuckett, Edward Clodd, William Archer, Eden Phillpotts, S. K. Ratcliffe, Joseph McCabe, Adam Gowans Whyte, Charles T. Gorham, and a Clergyman of the Church of England. 96 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; in paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2d.

**The Faith of an Agnostic; or, First Essays in Rationalism.** By Sir G. G. GREENWOOD. xv + 350 pp.; cloth, 12s. 6d. net, by post 13s.

**Christianity and Conduct; or, The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Morals.** By HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER. With Foreword by ADAM GOWANS WHYTE. 128 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 8d.

**A Plain Man's Plea for Rationalism.** By CHARLES T. GORHAM. 94 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 9d.; paper cover, 1s. 3d. net, by post 1s. 5d.

**Health and Honour: Sex Light for Younger Readers.** By F. J. GOULD. 72 pp., with Illustrations; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 9d.; in paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 8d.

**Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge.** By CHARLES A. MERCIER, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., etc., and some time Examiner in Psychology in the London University. 132 pp.; cloth 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.

**Does Man Survive Death?** By T. F. PALMER. 48 pp. and paper cover, 6d. net, by post 7d.

**SCIENCE AND THE SOUL.**

With a Chapter on Infidel Death-Beds.

BY  
WALTER MANN.

An examination of the attitude of Science, Religion, and Freethought towards death and a future life.

A handy Reference Work for Freethinkers, and an enlightening one for Christians.

Price Sevenpence. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

**A Freethought Classic.****Voltaire's  
Philosophical Dictionary.**

(Selected Articles Unabridged.)

Volume I, 128 pp., with Fine Cover Portrait and Preface by CHAPMAN COHEN.

The *Philosophical Dictionary* represents, perhaps, the most characteristic of Voltaire's works. It contains some of his deadliest writings against the Christian superstition; and, reading its pages, one can understand why the name of Voltaire roused so much hatred with the "friends of the night." No English version of the *Dictionary* is at present obtainable. The present edition aims at reproducing all those articles of interest to Freethinkers, and will be completed in three or four volumes.

Price 1s. 3d. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.