

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XL.—No. 3

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 1920

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>A Case of Libel.—The Editor</i>	33
<i>Are Parsons Necessary?—J. T. Lloyd</i>	34
<i>Breaking the Boycott.—Mimmermus</i>	35
<i>The Original Ten Commandments.—Henry Spence</i>	36
<i>Pages from Voltaire.—Geo. Underwood</i>	42
<i>The Age of Man.—Arthur B. Moss</i>	44
<i>Is the Sabbath Doomed?—Ignotus</i>	45
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

A Case of Libel.

Last week we were dealing with the curious decision of an American Board of Education to suspend the reading of the *Merchant of Venice* in its schools because the play was held to be an affront to Jews. As we discussed the value of the action then, there is no need to again deal with it. But the principle, if admitted in the case of the Jews, should in fairness be admitted in the case of others. No decent person wishes to place the Jew under a special disability—mentally and morally, one would have to work hard to get lower than anti-Semitism. But, on the other hand, no just-minded man wishes them to have special privileges. And there is something to be said on behalf of not permitting whole groups of people to be misrepresented under conditions where they are powerless to offer a defence. Decency and justice demands that. Yet there is at least one case in which not merely a group but practically the whole of the people of America and of Great Britain are libelled year in and year out with official sanction, and, apparently, without the majority of them being aware of it. Nor are we certain that the majority of them will feel grateful for our calling attention to the fact. On the principle that a man is not robbed if he is ignorant of his loss, they will say that if the people are not aware of the libel then no libel exists. But as we hold that robbery consists in taking unlawful possession, so we hold that misrepresentation and slander consists, not in our awareness of the fact, but in the utterance of the words themselves.

* * *

Do We Believe?

There is at least one book that really is a libel on the people of this country. We refer to the Bible. And it is quite easy to prove the statement. Suppose that a visitor from another planet made a tour of the schools, and knowing nothing about us except what he had gleaned from listening to religious lessons and reading the Bible, which he would be told was the "sacred" book of the country, immediately departed this planet. What kind of an impression of us would he take away, and what kind of a people would he imagine us to be? He would, probably, report that we were a people of incredible childishness in scientific matters; that we believed in the sudden creation

of the world from nothing, that the general belief was that some "God" created every species of animal exactly as it is now, that he made a man and a woman—the one from dust and the other from a bone—and that all men and women are descended from them; that he hung the stars in a solid sky to light up the night, and the sun to give light by day; that he suddenly confused the tongues of the people, and that all languages owe their origin to that miracle; that serpents and jackasses talk, that diseases may be laid upon people by divine order and cured by an act of faith, that children may be born without a father, that a man may walk on the water, that the dead may be raised, that people may be possessed of devils, and that these devils may be transferred to others at the word of command. He would further report that the people worship a God who can condemn the whole of the race because the first man and woman disobeyed his commands, who drowns the whole race, with the exception of a mere handful, who orders his followers when they capture a city to kill everything that breathes, except the young women whom they are to take to gratify their lusts, who causes a number of children to be devoured by bears because they called one of his followers "bald-head," who promises to punish the children for the faults of the parents, till the third and fourth generation, and who is depicted by his worshippers as vengeful, capricious, deceitful, cruel, bloodthirsty, and intolerant. And he would not unnaturally conclude, on the basis of the only knowledge possessed by him that we were a very childish, a very brutal, a very ignorant, and an altogether primitive type of human being. And his extra-planetary audience would heartily agree with him.

* * *

Are We to Blame?

Now, if ever there was a libel uttered against the British people this would be one. We are not so educated, nor so intelligent, nor so humane, as one would wish, but we are not really such fools, or such primitive ignoramuses as the ascription to us of these beliefs would make us appear. We do not believe these stories, we simply repeat them. We are much better informed than this recital of our beliefs would make it appear. We do not act as we should act if we really believed in these stories. We do not believe that the rainbow had its origin in a bargain between the Deity of an uncivilized Semitic tribe and his followers. Nor do we accept the moral standards implied in this Deity's dealings with men. The man who acted on that principle would soon find himself in prison. And if counsel for the defence were allowed to speak, he would urge that we did not make this Deity nor his standards of conduct, nor did we invent the accounts of the origin of things which the visitor found. We simply inherited them, and we are no more responsible for their existence than we are for the existence of a rudimentary tail or rudimentary ear muscles. Our responsibility consists in permitting these records to be read in schools, and so slandering ourselves and misleading children as to what

we really do believe. The straightforward course would be to say to the world that we decline to be judged by our religion, that we do not wish our moral standards to be criticized from the point of view of the Bible; and the only criticism that could be passed upon that would be, "If you do not believe in the God of the Bible, or in the teachings of the Bible, why not remove it from the schools, and retain there only those teachings in which you do believe?" Pity that religion and truthfulness have only a bowing acquaintance?

* * *

The Lie of Belief.

Emerson went to the root of the matter when he said that you must never judge a people by their religion. The only qualification needed is the introduction into the sentence of the word "civilized." For you can judge an uncivilized people by their religion. Between them and their god there is an agreement so close that one may say, given the god one may tell the character of the worshipper. That is because we are dealing with the conditions that give the gods their being. They are fashioned in the likeness of their worshippers, and reflect the social and ethical conditions that brought them into the world. There is all the connection that exists between the mould and the cast. But in civilized times gods are no longer born, they are only buried; and man's function in relation to them passes from that of a midwife to that of an undertaker. The gods come to civilized man from the past, they are fashioned in the likeness of the man of the past, the ethics of religion reflect the moral ideas and the social conditions of the past, and it is a gross libel upon the men and women of the present to pretend that the best of them are no better than the Bible Deity, although it may be admitted that the worst of them may feel that they are in congenial company. We can say of the art, the literature, the science of a country, that, given a knowledge of them and we know the people. And that is because these things spring from life, and are open to the modifying influences of developing life. But all religion belongs to a life that no longer has reality, and so, to exist, it becomes a stronghold of obscurantism, untruthfulness, and general hypocrisy. * * *

Progress and Religion.

There is no question but that if someone were to go into an assembly of educated men and women, and, without letting it be seen that the beliefs named were Christian beliefs, was to say that those present believed in the absurd stories that are to be found in the Bible between Genesis and Revelation, his hearers would say it was false, and treat the imputation as an insult. And false it would be, because they do not really believe such stories. It is a libel upon their intelligence to presume that they believe them. It is a slander upon their character to assume that their moral sense endorses the conduct of the God they are supposed to worship. The thoughts, the ideals, the feelings of civilized man reach forward to the future, but his gods are always reminiscent of the past. That is why, the world over, there is a never-ending conflict between the forces of progress and religion. There may be an occasional armistice, but there is no peace. Religion commences in a reflection of human nature, and the gods are man writ large. But it proceeds by an attempt to keep human nature down to its own level, and it ends by being left hopelessly in the rear; while man, with his face towards the rising sun of progress, discovers the gods to be but outgrown images of his own undeveloped self.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Are Parsons Necessary?

FOR months the Press has been full of the heart-rending lamentations of the clergy over the state of semi-starvation into which they have been thrown by the present enormously increased cost of living. Their complaint is undoubtedly well-founded. There are many clergymen whose salaries are not sufficient to enable them to pay their way. Some bishops there are who cannot make ends meet on a stipend of £10,000 a year, while numerous curates and Nonconformist ministers are expected to subsist on considerably less than £100. A little while ago one clergyman suggested a clerical strike as the best means of putting an end to the acute distress to which so many of his brethren are subjected, but he afterwards withdrew the suggestion on the ground that possibly the public would not seriously miss the ministrations of the pulpit and the altar. Since then, the *Sunday Pictorial* has opened its columns to a lively discussion of the questions, "Are the Parsons Necessary?" and "Why Parsons are Necessary?" Answering the latter question in the issue of January 4, a clergyman dwells on the "importance of the black-coated gang," because of the sacredness of the rites they have to perform. In his estimation, the priests are dedicated persons, set apart as mediators between God and mankind. And yet he makes the following significant admission:—

No doubt none would miss them, in the sense that we miss the miners and railway men when they strike. Is that the parson's fault? Is that a criticism on his office? No. It means simply that our bodies cannot do without coal, whereas we *think* our souls can do without sustenance.

In this clergyman's opinion, the Reformation "degraded the office of priest," and we agree with him. Unintentionally, the Reformation was a movement necessarily subversive of the supernatural claims of religion; and, naturally, by the eighteenth century the parson had lost caste to such an extent that he was permitted to dine with the family when, as Macaulay humorously puts it, he "might fill himself with the corned beef and carrots, but quitted his seat as soon as the tarts and cheesecakes made their appearance."

To the question, "Are the Parsons Necessary?" Mr. Francis Gribble returned a negative answer in the *Sunday Pictorial* for December 28; but his reply was based on the belief, not that their work was useless, but that laymen could do it equally well, if not better. The Dean of St. Paul's holds precisely the same view. In his recently published volume, entitled *Outspoken Essays*, Dr. Inge expresses the opinion that, in the days when most people could neither read nor write, the clerical profession was both necessary and useful, but he adds that "nowadays our best preachers and prophets are laymen." Mr. Gribble thinks that Messrs. Bottomley, Chesterton, Garvin, and Bernard Shaw would make capital preachers, and so they doubtless would. It is our conviction, however, that the clerical profession is not only unnecessary, but injurious, because its supreme mission consists in the perpetuation and propagation of a stupendous lie. As a character-forming profession it has always been a colossal failure. It has been in existence for nearly two thousand years; and yet, morally, the world is scarcely any better now than it was before Jesus was ever heard of. Preaching at Bishopsgate Chapel last week the Rev. Dr. Horton, as reported in the *Star* for January 6, said:—

Never in the history of the world were the lives of individuals more crooked than at the present time. There was never such a record in this country of

degraded and ruined lives, such as one could read in the papers any day. The appalling selfishness of all classes was producing an indifference to religious, civic, and national affairs, which must be dispelled at all costs if Britain is to continue.

A more scathing indictment of the clerical profession was never uttered by a member of it before, and the worst of it, from Dr. Horton's point of view, is that it is only too true. One wonders whether the reverend gentleman realized that his sermon showed the utter inefficiency and impotence of the order to which he belongs.

Now, why is the clerical profession such a notorious failure? Simply because there is no vital reality behind it. Mr. Gribble tells us that the real question is this:—

Has not the spread of education removed the need, not, indeed, for the work which it is the province of the clergy to do, but for the maintenance, at considerable expense, of a special class of men, attired in a special costume, for the purpose of doing that work? Could not the work—or the greater part of it—be carried on just as efficaciously by voluntary effort?

We maintain that the real question confronting us just now concerns, primarily, the nature of the work which the clergy claim to be theirs by Divine appointment. They declare that they have received from God "the ministry of reconciliation." Take the following:—

God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. v. 18—vi. 1).

Such is the clergy's own account of the supernatural character of their office. They are messengers from heaven, and the Gospel they preach is the power of God unto salvation. A distinguished Welsh divine once addressed a congregation of ignorant peasants thus: "There is very little earthly pomp and grandeur about our movements; and yet ours is the most august and exalted office in the Universe. We are ambassadors from the King of kings and Lord of Lords; and our message to you is, Believe in the Lamb slain for you and be saved." Those peasants took the preacher at his word, and treated him as more than half divine himself. To-day, however, there are peasants to whom a priest is "only a parasite layman, or a bureaucrat in a black coat." Even in the Catholic Church the priest no longer wields the tremendous power he did a hundred years ago. The people's eyes are being gradually opened to the fact that the men of God are very much like other men, after all, and that their pretensions resemble a house built on the sand. Carefully examined, their so-called messages from Christ are seen to be from no higher source than their own minds. The power of God affords no evidence whatever of its active presence in or out of the pulpit. The Gospel is solely at the mercy of its preachers, apart from whom even God can do nothing. The Saviour of the world is utterly powerless except in so far as he is supposed to work through his ambassadors. For the heathen world he can do nothing without missionaries from Christian countries. Even in our own country his very existence is wholly unrecognized by the majority of the people. Dr. Meade, a character in Dennis Hird's *Believing Bishop*, addressing his friend, the Warden of Muriel College, Oxford, who really believes the Gospel, says:—

I had not the faintest idea you believed in these things, that is in any real sense. For the last twenty years Christianity has had no more meaning to me than

Buddhism or Mohammedanism, and you are the first man in our set that I have found who attaches any real ordinary meaning to it. I thought the best of you only held it as some sort of mystery or organization. Good God! to suppose you can think that Christ is still alive! (p. 11).

The conclusion to which we are forced by the facts of history and experience is that parsons are not necessary for two reasons: first, because they fly under false colours; and second, because they mislead those who take them seriously. They speak in the name of a purely imaginary being, a being of whose objective existence they possess no evidence whatever, and of whom there are as many different and conflicting conceptions as there are ordained preachers of what is called his Gospel. This being the case it inevitably follows that believers are bound, if at all consistent, to cultivate other worldliness. They are exhorted to seek those things which are above, to set their affection on them, not on things on the earth; and they are forbidden to love the world or the things that are in the world. In many books of devotion they are urged to despise this world and concentrate their attention upon the next. And yet the next is merely a dream-world, and its affairs are but phantoms of the mind. Is it not self-evident that the preachers of such a Gospel do a grievous injury to those whom they induce to believe it? Are they not, as George Meredith called them, "sappers of our strength"? "The parsonry are irritating me fearfully, but a non-celibate clergy are a terrific power," he said. "They are interwound with the whole of the Middle Class like the poisonous ivy. Oh! for independence, that I might write my mind of these sappers of our strength." And their power for evil is in exact proportion to the orthodoxy and sincerity of their faith. The saintliness, which is their ideal of character, is only another name for heavenly-mindedness. The true Christian is a citizen of eternity, and simply a pilgrim in time. Robert Buchanan treats heaven as the City of Dream, while Earth is the only world known to us, and for which alone it is our duty to live.

J. T. LLOYD.

Breaking the Boycott.

The breaking down of the boycott is one of the tasks to which Freethinkers might well devote themselves in the coming year.—*Chapman Cohen.*

CHRISTIANS have ever been persecutors. Catholics with their closed Bible, and Protestants with their open Bible, have ever persecuted heretics and Freethinkers, especially the latter. The laws against heresy are now more honoured in the breach than the observance; but old Acts of Parliament still remain, and are occasionally used against obscure Freethinkers. It is true that some Christians advocate toleration, but they never make the slightest attempt to repeal the old, bad Acts of Parliament. Indeed, most Christians are so innocent that they are in a state of blissful ignorance that there is a fight for freedom still going on outside the limits of the "respectable" and commercial press, that is the press which only exists to make money for its proprietors, who care nothing for principle, but everything for "interest."

The "glorious free press" of England is a fraud, a delusion, and a snare. It is neither glorious nor free. It simply exists to make fat dividends for its owners, and, in the search for huge circulations, perverts and corrupts the public mind in any way suited to its peculiar interests. The only free press in England consists of a few journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of great principles. They have modest circulations, small revenue from advertisements, and

that they live is a tribute to the vital power of real convictions. Their worst trouble is that they are surrounded by an orthodox boycott which prevents them finding their way to many of their potential readers.

Among the real free press of England we include the *Freethinker*. For nearly forty years it has represented only mental liberty. It has made a purely intellectual appeal. It has never suggested that a Freethinker's wages would be raised so much as sixpence a week. All it has said is that the world will be better in many ways for Freethought, and that men will breathe easier without the dead-weight of Priestcraft.

Yet the *Freethinker* has had a stormy career. Its earlier years were as quiet as the battles of the Great War. Its first editor, G. W. Foote, was as familiar with the Law Courts as with his own office. For the orthodox were determined to crush the paper out of existence. They never succeeded, but they made things as difficult as possible by the use of the boycott. Newsagents refused to handle it; librarians turned it out of their buildings; editors refused its advertisements. The press did not devote a line to it. Sometimes this boycotting led to amusing and unforeseen results. At West Ham, some years ago, the *Freethinker* was turned out of the Public Library reading-rooms. The action led to so much resentment that it nearly resulted in a poll of the ratepayers as to the fate of this wicked publication. After a lengthy struggle, there was a victory for fair-play. But, during the interval, the *Freethinker* was kept behind a screen, and handed out when asked for, with strict instructions that it should not be left about to the danger of the public.

This boycott still persists largely in the press, booksellers' and newsagents' shops, and at the public and private libraries. With rare exceptions Freethought publications are ignored in the former and kept out of the latter. Hence, it becomes incumbent upon every Freethinker to assist in breaking down this boycott and to assist actively in the propagation of the literature of the movement. With this idea, Freethinkers should ask for Freethought publications at the libraries which they use, and see that they are supplied. An excellent beginning could be made with Mr. Cohen's new book, *Religion and Sex*, and with Vivian's *The Churches and Modern Thought*. In obdurate cases, the books might be presented to the library; but care must be taken that the volumes are not placed on a top shelf and forgotten. So far as pamphlets are concerned, it is better to hand or post them to likely readers. Orthodox persons are often interested in controversial literature, and such introduction often means that regular readers are obtained. Remembering that every pamphlet is a silent messenger for Freethought, it must be apparent that the added publicity must be all to the good.

With regard to the *Freethinker* itself, it is useful to order the paper with other publications, so that the tradesman is faced with the dilemma of accepting or refusing a good customer. In posting copies to people, it is always desirable to use envelopes, for, in these days of advertising, newspapers, like circulars, receive scant attention. Another useful suggestion is for Freethinkers to join in any likely discussion in local papers. These organs often give space to readers' opinions. Letters should be short, strictly to the point, courteous, and should be written clearly on one side of the paper only. Old numbers of the *Freethinker* should never be wasted, but should be left in trams, trains, or 'buses, or otherwise distributed. In order to prevent a commercial use of these copies, it is wise to clip a piece from one of the corners, so that they may not be used as newsagents' returns. If these few hints are acted upon, it should prove of benefit to the movement.

MIMNERMUS.

The Original Ten Commandments.

THE original version of the Ten Commandments is to be found in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus. The later amended version is to be found in the twentieth chapter of the same book, as well as in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. The original version is preceded by an account of the first visit of Moses to Mount Sinai, the idolatries of the Israelites, and the breaking of the first tables of stone. The later versions do not mention these incidents. Let us copy from the authorized version the first edition of the Hebrew Decalogue, omitting sundry rewards and punishments, and numbering the commandments in the same order as they are found in the thirty-fourth chapter.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

And the Lord descended into the cloud, and stood with him there.

And he said, Behold I make a covenant.

1. Thou shalt worship no other god.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. The feast of unleavened bread thou shalt keep.
4. All that openeth the matrix is mine.
5. Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.
6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven.

8. The sacrifice of the feast of the passover shall not be left unto the morning.

9. The firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God.

10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

The above is a true and faithful copy from the first to the twenty-eighth verse of the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus as ordered to be read in the Churches of this country.

There are several good and sufficient reasons for regarding this as the earliest original edition of the Hebrew Decalogue, and treating the usual Ten Commandments found in the twentieth chapter of Exodus and the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy as much later and amended versions. The definite pronouncement of the Bible itself, as quoted above, as to their being "the ten commandments," is not mentioned in the other editions.

Students of comparative religion have shown that the priests, in formulating the earliest decalogues, have done so on a strictly ritualistic basis. They are religious in the original sense of the word, for the word "religion" was first used, according to Professor Skeat, as meaning pious, fearing the gods. It had nothing to do with morality. God was looked upon as a great ruler who promulgated his imperial edicts to his servile subjects. This is why the first decalogues are only concerned with man's duty to God, but never mention the relations of man to man. It was centuries later, after the Jews had

"wept by the waters of Babylon," that "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt do no murder" were included in the Divine Commandments.

The most erudite Biblical critics regard the verses in the thirty-fourth chapter of the book of Exodus, which contain the above ten commandments, as the oldest extant part of the Bible. They call it "The Little Book of the Covenant," which is thought to have been written in Judæa in the ninth century B.C.

The edition found in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy was composed about 520 B.C. whilst the Jews were in exile. At least, this is the opinion one gathers from Professor Kennett's paper on *The Date of Deuteronomy*, published at Oxford, in 1906. On the other hand, the version of the Decalogue found in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, forms part of the so-called "Priestly Code," the third and last body of law in the Pentateuch.

The Priestly Code is believed to have been composed by Ezekiel whilst in captivity in Babylon in his first days of exile. The priests and prophets elaborated Ezekiel's rough outlines until they grew into the complete Levitical Law as set forth in the rest of the so-called Books of Moses. It is now believed by the best Biblical critics that when the Jews returned to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. a compiler, probably Ezra, joined together all the previous codes along with a history of the Jewish people from its origin to the destruction of the Holy City, and so gave us the Bible in its modern form from Genesis to the last Book of Kings.

Freethinkers who are anxious to pursue further this interesting question cannot do better than read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, the epoch-making work of Sir J. G. Frazer. In this noble book there is a learned chapter on the last of the original Ten Commandments: "Not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk."

The following extract from this chapter indicates clearly his well-considered and weighty judgment after a careful consideration of the first edition of the Hebrew Decalogue:—

Its difference from that version of the Decalogue with which we are familiar is sufficiently striking. Here morality is totally absent. The commandments without exception refer purely to matters of ritual. They are religious in the strict sense of the word, for they define with scrupulous, almost niggling, precision the proper relation of man to God. But of the relations of man to man, not a word. The attitude of God to man in these commandments is like that of a feudal lord to his vassals. He stipulates that they shall render him his dues to the utmost farthing, but what they do to each other, so long as they do not interfere with the payment of his feudal duties, is seemingly no concern of his.

How different from the six concluding commandments of the other version:

Honour thy father and mother.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbours.

HENRY SPENCE.

The wise Venetians have so slight an opinion of the politics of their Churchmen, that when anything of a considerable nature occurs to be debated in the Senate, before any suffrage passeth they cause proclamation to be made for all priests to depart, and the proper officer, with a loud and audible voice pronounceth these words, "Out Priests, out!"—*Sir Thomas Page Blount, "Essays on Several Subjects,"* 1694.

Correspondence.

RELIGION AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I see in the issue for January 4 you hazard the opinion that "in the waking world of 1920 the Churches, and the cause of religion generally, stand to lose heavily." But a contrary interpretation seems reasonable.

We Christians assume, of course, and many more Christians agree, that the teaching of Christianity about the conduct of life is lofty and true, but very difficult to practise. It is based on the belief that a Supreme Being is among us and in us, but is only revealed to those who seek Him. But for centuries the leading nations of the world have been seeking, as the *summum bonum*, material prosperity, generally money, in flat and persistent violation of Christianity's rule of life. The result is, the world is becoming an uninhabitable place. Is that evidence against his teaching or for it?

Certainly for it. We are learning, I trust, that prolonged disobedience to a law which claims to be divine, makes havoc of the world, and always has done so, and always will. Many of us wish it were not so, but so it is. Suppose now the contrary were the case, we should infer that it is expedient to disobey the Gospel precepts. As things are, we see on every side evidence that the Sermon on the Mount is the one charter of freedom and progress. The opposite aim, which Christianity called Mammon, is anyhow a failure.

Judging from your third paragraph, I should guess you were so keen after happenings in the world that, when we fail to secure it, you charge the believers in God with being tomfools. So we are; but it is because we don't translate our beliefs into practice.

You imply—showing herein a respect for the Gospel—that so soon as a true law of life was promulgated, it ought to have converted the world. We say that man refuses to be converted, and cannot be if he doesn't wish it, because his maker has endowed him with free-will. But the havoc which results from his non-conversion may help him to a right mind; it looks as if nothing else will.

E. LYTTLETON.

"AGNOSTIC" OR "ATHEIST"?

SIR,—From time to time readers of the *Freethinker* have their attention called to what, in the opinion of certain scribes, is an inconsistency on the part of a section of the Freethought party in the use of the term Agnostic as applied to themselves, the contention being that they are all Atheists; and I regret to notice a tone of asperity, which is regrettable, especially in the case of those whose watchword is "Freethought."

These writers contend that Agnostics are really Atheists who are afraid to wear their colours and, to use a current expression, "camouflage" their real principles to avoid the opprobrium which our kind Christian friends heap upon Atheists. This, I think, is unfair and unwarranted for the following reasons. The word "Agnostic" was coined not as an evasive substitute for "Atheist," but as expressing the logical conclusion that we know nothing that is behind "phenomena." The word "Atheist" is, I think, capable of two interpretations; it may mean "without God" in the sense that one does not know of the existence of a God; or, on the other hand, it may refer to those who prove to their own satisfaction that there is no God, and I opine that the former is more consistent with the principles of Freethought than the latter; indeed, although I have been a Freethinker for a great many years, it is only quite recently that I have come across any educated man who has had the temerity to debate that he *knows* that there is no God. It has been well said that the man who says "there is no God" is as unwise as he who says "there is a God," for neither can prove his case. I believe it is correct to say that the great leaders of Freethought took this position, including Voltaire, Ingersoll, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Charles Watts, Stewart Ross "Saladin," and many others in the past, not to mention by name living ones, among whom that courageous and gifted man who risked (and for the time lost) his means of living as a teacher under the School Board, is a shining light.

It is admitted in a recent issue of the *Freethinker* that owing to the use of the title "Agnostic" a great number of new adherents to the Cause have been obtained, and if my contention be right, we should be grateful to, and not disparage them by calling them cowards or hypocrites. There is, no doubt, a very general dislike to the term "Atheist," probably owing to the fact that in the past a certain class of doubtless well-intentioned propagandists caused considerable ill-feeling by vulgar and offensive language, thereby making enemies among their audience of many whose Christianity was not strong enough to resist reasoned appeals, but too strong to submit to being called "vulgar Atheists," a term much in vogue in those days.

To bring the question close home, look at the nomenclature of our Freethought periodicals and say why was not the *Freethinker* called "The Atheist"? Was Mr. Foote a coward? "Freethinker" is a title which might be that of a Christian paper; indeed, Christian friends of my own, on seeing it for the first time on my table, have asked if it were a "Church paper." Again, what was there to prevent Charles Watts and Stewart Ross from calling their publication "The Atheist's Review," instead of the *Secular Review*? The name was altered by the latter to the *Agnostic Journal*, and I know that there were Freethinkers who objected to the change on the ground that "so many clergymen took the *Secular Review* who would not like to see the *Agnostic Journal* so conspicuously displayed." Was Charles Bradlaugh a coward? He called his paper the *National Reformer*, a title much more political than theological. Then there are the *Truthseekers* (English and American). This title might well be adopted for a Christian paper. Then why has "Atheist" been ignored? Certainly not from cowardice on the part of those above mentioned. Surely the answer must be "from prudential motives." Those editors knew better than to scare away subscribers by the titles of their publications.

We are all familiar with the sarcasm "See how these Christians love one another"; shall we emulate them in their squabbles over "Tweedledum and Tweedledee"? Is it prudent or evidence of a fraternal feeling towards those who, like ourselves, risk the ostracism to which we are subjected, even by friends and relatives?

While writing I glance at the current number of the *Freethinker*, and my eye falls on an article signed "G. U.," who writes: "The Freethinker knows that your Agnostic has no sympathy for progressive Freethought"; and I ask, Could a Christian make a more insipid charge against us? Humbugs all, ah! Reverting to the charge of cowardice; would those contributors who, doubtless from excellent reasons, write pseudonyms, think it quite fair or generous to be called cowards who are afraid to sign their own names? Pray let us endeavour to set our Christian friends a better example than emulate their weaknesses.

J. KENNARD.

RELIGION IN THE ARMY.

SIR,—The remarks of Mr. Skilling in the *Freethinker* of January 4 and his steadfastness in sticking it prove what we Atheists can do if we have a mind. Moral courage and a certain amount of assertiveness is absolutely necessary to our cause every time and everywhere.

My own experience was very similar to Mr. Skilling, for it caused a shock at every aerodrome I served at. When asked my religion, I always replied "Atheist." The N.C.O. taking down particulars always gave a start, and repeated his question. My plan was to repeat my answer, and then commence spelling it for them. They invariably became impatient and said they knew how to spell it; then write it down, there's a good chap, said I; and a quiet insistence always did the job. One occasion there was a Sergeant-Major standing near, and a few minutes after he came along and asked me if I was the "— Atheist." I replied: "No, Sir; just Atheist, with no adjectives in front." Although under the influence of drink, he had sense enough to stop at that. That reminds me of the cursing habits of men in Khaki generally. It seems a habit, and gives one shocks. For instance, a young lad of eighteen was polishing and getting himself ready one Sunday for Church Parade when I arrived in with the news that owing to indisposition of the parson it was cancelled.

"What!" said the lad, "no — Church Parade" (using the foulest of oaths), and straightway he departed to the nearest village church, for he informed me that he wouldn't miss Church on Sunday morning on any account. The R.A.F., however, was not cursed with parsons like the rest of the services; being so new they hadn't had time to keep pace with its rapid growth. Such is the lack of moral courage, that many men I came across with no religious belief had put themselves down as C. of E. or R.C. "to save trouble," as they put it. My advice to them was to cultivate some backbone and individuality.

Curiously enough, I had more trouble at the Crystal Palace on being demobilized than anywhere else, for I was held up quite five minutes by a Sergeant who was anxious about the religion of each of us, getting free from a rotten system. I know not what the idea was, perhaps there was some "spiritual advice" behind it all. Anyway, the Sergeant was informed that "Atheist" was good enough for every place I had been to in the R.A.F., and it would have to be good enough for him.

With Mr. Skilling I sincerely hope that Mr. Skeate will insist on retaining, so to speak, the individuality of his departed son. Too long have we tolerated interference in such matters, and we are now up against it.

ANDREW HARVEY.

Acid Drops.

Everyone is crying out about the rising rates, and, with many districts paying between 15s. and 20s. in the pound, the outcry is understandable. But churches and chapels are still permitted to go rate-free, and other people, whether they will or no, are compelled to pay their share of the rates that these favoured buildings should pay. It is a form of endowment that should be abolished as soon as possible.

We suggest that here is a case in which the Labour Party might well do something. There are Labour majorities on many of the Councils in London and elsewhere, and in any case there is now a good Labour representation on nearly all. We suggest that, as a mere act of justice to all citizens, some of those who were returned in the Labour interest should move resolutions in favour of the taxation of churches and chapels on the same basis as all other buildings are taxed.

Cardinal Amette, Archbishop of Paris, called the Roman Catholic public to prayer for the cessation of the floods throughout France. Placed in a similar position, an uncivilized African medicine-man would have done the same.

Despite the clerical shouts of "starvation," some of them manage to put a little bit away for a rainy day. The late Rev. N. F. Nash, of Charlton Kings, Gloucester, left £33,177. The Rev. J. H. Bridgwater, of Old Charlton, left £5,497. Father Figgis, of Mirfield, Yorks, left £2,844.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has been complaining of unsightly war-memorials in his diocese, and says that they have been put up by people with "absolutely no knowledge of architecture." Why drag in architecture? There cannot be much art about a memorial composed of a few flower-pots and an ugly crucifix.

Some of the clergy have better heads for arithmetic than the bishops. The Rev. W. C. Buncher, for example, does not pretend that the more money he receives the poorer he gets. He asks bluntly for the raising of clerical fees, especially for weddings and funerals, in order to cope with the increased cost of living. If the reverend gentleman's demand is acceded to, the cost of dying will go up like the cost of living.

The Vicar of South Acton says that he could not get on in this life if he had not a sense of humour. We are inclined to agree with this. And for a man with a sense of humour,

we should think the Church an excellent place. As a joke, we can understand Christianity being maintained in a civilized country. It is when it is entertained seriously that one feels a little. But to one with a sense of humour, we admit there is something to be said on behalf of Christianity.

We are going ahead with the peace of the world. The *Hood*, our most recently launched battleship, cost six millions; it is the largest ship ever launched, and will cost £530,000 annually to keep in commission. With the cost of this single ship we could build about 10,000 comfortable houses, and with the expense of the upkeep present the country with about 800 annually. We suggest that a fitting use to make of the *Hood* would be to moor it off a populous part of the coast as a monument to the stupidity of a Government that has learned nothing, even from a war such as we have just passed through. It is enough to make one despair of human nature! And we think James Thomson ("B. V.") was right in saying that you cannot expect an enlightened Government with a people who are besotted with religion. When the Labour Party has learned that lesson, they will have made a real advance.

Meanwhile the stories of atrocities continue to come to hand, and each nation seems to have its own list. We prepared our list of German atrocities during the War, and the *Times* continues with its list of Bolshevik atrocities from people of greater or less repute. The Bolshevik publish lists of counter atrocities by the "Whites" which equal anything that is furnished from the opposite quarter. And now a lengthy report of Greek atrocities in Smyrna by the Italians and Greeks reach us from Lausanne, which contains detailed statement of the wholesale burning of villages, the violation of Mohammedan women, and the murder of Mohammedan villagers. And, thanks to the system of suppression and distortion of news set up by the War, and the terribly low state of the press of the country, no one is in a strong position to sift the truth from the mass of lies and exaggeration with which the country is flooded. That there have been "atrocities" no one of sense will doubt. That these have been all on one side no one of sense will believe. Soldiers know better, and civilians ought to know better. As no man is a hero to his valet, so every soldier is a hero to the country to which he belongs—at least—while a war is on. Perhaps in the course of the next twenty years we may begin to get the truth of the War that has just been brought to an end—or a pause.

The *Salt Lake Telegram* says that according to the report of the Rev. E. Blake, one of the secretaries of the Annual Convention of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that organization lost last year 60,000 members. If the children could only be rescued from the clutch of the priest, the power of the Church would soon be a thing of the past.

Ghosts generally exemplify the law of supply and demand—when the demand doesn't come from a critic, then they exemplify the law of diminishing returns. And one might guess that, with the boom in ghosts, there would come an increased supply. Among other stories with which our intellectual press—which could never spare space to report a Freethought meeting—fills its columns, there is a yarn of some ghostly appearances in Aberdeen. The floors heave and beds rock, and loud noises are heard during the night, in a certain house in the city. The papers seem to have overlooked the fact that the New Year is a season of rejoicing in Scotland—which has not yet gone "dry"—and heavings and knockings are not unusual in the Far North at such times. And we note that, as people are going to the house, the knockings are becoming fewer and fainter. If some of these ghosts who are so fond of moving furniture would lend a hand at moving goods from the docks, a good many merchants would indeed call them blessed.

The *South African Review* points out that there may be more in the English clergy coquetting with Spiritualism than meets the eye. It suggests that as the orthodox religion is

losing its hold on the people, directing their attention to another form of superstition may serve the purpose of keeping them off subjects of a "dangerous" character, such as social reforms. Heaven has usually played this part in the social economy, and our governing classes are quite cute enough to appreciate the value of religion in "keeping people in order."

The Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, has adopted a plan to get people to church that should prove successful. A pound of sugar is to be given to all who attend the Men's Bible Class. The result was a record attendance of 177 people. Now, if some church will follow suit here, we can promise that many will come. And why stop at sugar? Why not a bottle of whisky? The scheme opens up endless developments in detail.

One of our readers, who is a stone-cutter, tells us that he recently had to cut an inscription on a War memorial, which ran: "We asked of Thee life for him, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever." As a piece of humour, this would be hard to beat. If God smiles, he will certainly do so when the recording angel reports to him the inscription that has been written on that War memorial.

A correspondent in the *Daily News*, writing from a Y.M.C.A. Settlement, suggests that "the leading men in all the Churches" should combine to make a hymn-book acceptable to "all spiritually-minded and reasonable people." This is a large order, for there is little in common between Roman Catholics and Unitarians, to mention two extremes of the Christian Churches. And there are other "spiritually-minded" folk, such as Muggletonians and Latter-Day Saints.

A newspaper paragraph states that Canon Masterman, of Bow Church, Cheapside, London, has made an inquiry into clerical poverty. The Canon need not go beyond the City for examples. Fifty-five rectors and vicars divide among them about £45,000 a year, irrespective of their parsonages. The population of the City is only 26,000, a large proportion being Jews, who do not trouble the pew-openers in Christian churches.

The British Science Guild has published some figures dealing with the salaries paid to University professors and lecturers. They show that the average is only £600 a year, while in some cases it is only £300. Yet over £180,000 is divided annually amongst forty archbishops and bishops, who have seats in the House of Lords. This picture of the endowment of education and superstition is a grim commentary on our boasted civilization.

The late J. H. Bridgewater, of Old Charlton, left instructions that he was to be buried in cassock, surplice, hood, and scarf. It looks as if he intends to cut a brave show at the Day of Judgment. Most other people will be wearing their shirts.

St. Mary Abchurch, off Cannon Street, London, wants restoring, and an appeal is made for £5,000 for that purpose. Why should the clergy appeal to the public? Is the saint in a state of collapse as well as the church?

The *Evening News* of a recent date was horrified at the "abysmal" ignorance of a lady who did not know the name of the President of the United States. Shocking! But in the *Star* of the same date we noticed a paragraph informing the world that the Prince of Wales was improving in his golf play. So we are divided between horror at the ignorance of the lady who did not know the name of the President of the United States and awe at the type of mind which can think the proficiency of the Prince of Wales at golf an item worth recording or reading. Snobbery and flunkeyism seem to us to be at the root of both. Of late years the trivialities of court and aristocracy have not been so freely chronicled as was once the rule, but there is still plenty of it, and we think that avowedly radical papers might well set the example of a healthier tone.

Someone said that the Christian period would be known as the great lying era. We are inclined to think that it will have a competitor in the War period through which we have just passed. For example, we were treated for weeks to harrowing accounts of the bombardment of Rheims Cathedral, with stories of the deliberate attempts of the German gunners to destroy it; and we were shown pictures of the building which depicted nothing but a heap of ruins. Our publicity department saw that nothing was omitted. Now, a *Daily Herald* correspondent who has just visited Rheims writes that the Cathedral "still stands erect. Its twin towers overlook the city as before; the facade presents a battered but unbroken picture; you can walk all round it and find no great rents or gaps in the external walls. It is only when you enter that the building shows its scars.....There is an ugly gap in the roof and smaller holes here and there reveal the sky." So one wonders. Did God miraculously repair the Cathedral, or did he provide our propagandist department with a "vision," or did someone "fake" the pictures for the benefit of the public? Or is it another illustration of the general truth that you cannot run a war without lies, and if we have a war we must not expect to escape paying the price. And that leaves us wondering at the ease with which people can, not only lie to others, but lie to themselves.

Providence has been very busy in Mexico. There has been severe earthquake shocks, with much damage and loss of life. Crowds rushed to the churches and holy shrines, and one church steeple fell on the people who were praying in the building. That is the way in which "Providence" protects its own structures and rewards those who seek its protection.

Earthquakes, it will be remembered, are officially and legally described as "acts of God." And insurance companies will either decline to take the risk of such or demand a special premium. That too, is illuminating. For it means either that God is so careless in his acts or so indiscriminating in his judgments that it is risky to gamble on what he will do. And therefore we may well say, "Thank God that there are some things we can count on without considering the risk of divine interference."

"Unless a miracle is performed I see no hope for the missionary cause," said the Rev. W. Y. Fullerton at Queen's Hall, London. He added, "At present a missionary in India costs twice as much as before the War, and in China three times as much." He might have added that "rice-Christians" have also gone up in price, and that miracles do not happen.

Too engrossed in counting the hairs of peoples' heads, Providence overlooked the earthquake havoc in Mexico. At San Juan a church steeple collapsed on crowds of refugees praying in the sacred building, and many were killed.

A London newspaper advocates the use of "the cat" in the case of highway robbers. But why stop at robbers? It might be as usefully employed in waking up some editors to the responsibilities of their position.

We see that in Italy a marriage has been annulled on the ground of the wife's childlessness. The world seems to be having a general attack of insanity, and a writer in the *Daily Mirror* points out that we seem to be getting back to the Biblical Patriarchs who were able to "put away" their wives for this cause. We suppose that the Italian decision is due to the insane shriek that is going up from some of our "instructors" for more babies, as though the happiness of the world is to be secured by mere increase of population. When the sociology taught is at that primitive stage, one ceases to wonder at, but not to worry over, the existing state of things.

In the *Daily News* of a recent date there appeared an item of news that was both sad and amusing. A poor man who had recently left the Army became possessed of a peculiar

delusion. He had gone to get his fortune told at an automatic machine, and drew a card telling him to "Keep Watch." A second penny invested in an automatic machine at Cardiff delivered the same message. He had gone to the machines because he had doubts concerning his wife's fidelity during his absence in the Army, and the two messages confirmed his suspicions. Since then he had spent all his money on automatic machines, and had turned his wife and children out of doors. The wife was now applying for separation and a maintenance order.

Now, if this man had gone to a spiritualist medium, instead of to an automatic machine, his case would have been cited as an example of the "psychic wave" that is sweeping over society. And, certainly, if two mediums had given him the same message, we should have had that very credulous person, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, citing this as an example of occult power. As the poor man made the mistake of consulting an automatic machine he is called insane. And yet the messages delivered by mediums, and upon which much of the case for Spirit communication rests, is very often not a bit better or stronger than that upon which this poor man suspected his wife's fidelity. There is a state of expectancy, and a strained emotional state on the one side, and a general and vague statement on the other. Given a medium, designedly or unconsciously quick to take a "lead," and the result is not difficult to foresee.

A number of illustrated papers have reproduced spirit photographs recently. We hope this is not a breach of the Spirits Order.

An advertisement states that "the income of missionary societies in the United Kingdom is about £2,250,000." This modest sum is spent yearly in spreading the joyful news of "hell" among other races at a time when our own people have discarded it.

The latest stunt of the Young Men's Christian Association is to ask for a "generous gift" for the gravediggers in devastated France. After such frivolities as providing billiard tables for soldiers, this is quite a grave matter.

The *Sunday Pictorial* publishes an article on "Are the Parsons Necessary?" by Mr. Francis Gribble. Mr. Gribble only says what we have said over and over again, but it is good to see our teaching reproduced in the general press. Mr. Gribble points out that there is nothing the clergyman does that any ordinary man or woman could not do, and says that clerical labour is of all kinds of labour the one for which it would be easiest to improvise a substitute. The truth of the whole matter is that, unless we are benighted enough to attribute to the clergy some supernatural power, their retention as a special class in a civilized country is an insult to the educated intelligence. When the clergyman lays down his power as a rain-maker, or a charmer of disease, or the part of an ecclesiastical Old Moore, he loses all title to existence. The clergyman is dead, and all that is left is the man. And there should be plenty of ways to employ him without dressing him up in the present-day equivalent of the primitive medicine-man's uniform.

How You Can Help.

GET your newsagent to display a copy of this journal in a prominent position.

Show or hand your own copy of the paper to a friend who is not acquainted with it. It is surprising the number of new readers that can be made in this way.

If you do not file your copy, leave it in train or tram-car when read.

Send us on the name of anyone to whom you think that specimen copies of the *Freethinker* would be acceptable. We will see that they get them all right.

Send us any suggestions you have to offer as to the way in which our circulation may be increased.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 18, Abertillery; January 25, South Place, London; February 1, Stratford Town Hall; February 22, South Shields; February 26, Glasgow (Debate on Spiritualism); February 29, Glasgow; March 7, Leicester; March 14, Birmingham; March 21, Manchester; April 18, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

D. D. B.—Thanks for cutting, but we had already written a paragraph on the matter. Most of us have to accord our conduct with circumstances to some extent. And if all did as you do the world would be different from what it is.

A. D. E.—Our contributor did not mean that all the support given to Christianity came from the source he named. Having once been a sincere Christian himself he would know better than that. But that a deal of the support given to religion comes from the operation of the motive named you would, we think, agree.

J. C. C.—The Catholic Truth Society's pamphlet on *Holy Angels* is too rubbishy for extended notice in these columns. The undeveloped brain that would be interested in the subject would never read the *Freethinker*. It is chiefly interesting as showing the type of intelligence that was once very common. It will be useful for occasional reference.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Miss M. Rogerson, 10s.

E. A. MACDONALD.—Received and shall appear. You will understand our preference for a hopeful view of human nature. After all, the "Age of Reason" is only just beginning, and we have a very long past to fight.

J. COOPRR.—We cannot give the address of contributors without their permission; but we have sent on your letter to Mr. Scott, and he will probably reply to you.

J. BREESE.—We did not see the article, and it seems rather late now to notice it. Please give our regards to Mr. Walsh when you see him again.

MAJOR WARREN.—Thanks for interesting letter. Note on Ireland shall appear next week.

R. BELL.—Should be very glad to see Freethinkers in Stanley and district at work again.

H. W. B.—The books are of no commercial value, so far as we are aware. The object sent is not what you imagine. It is of marine origin.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Sorry your letter did not reach us in time to permit our calling attention to Mr. Willis's lecture last Sunday, and are the more pleased to learn that the attendance was a good one.

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, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

If the ignorance of nature gave birth to gods, the knowledge of nature is calculated to destroy them. As soon as man becomes instructed, his powers and his resources augment in proportion with his knowledge; the sciences, the protecting arts, industry, furnish him assistance; experience encourages him, and procures for him the means of resisting the efforts of many causes which cease to alarm him as soon as he obtains a knowledge of them. In a word his terrors dissipate themselves in the same proportion as his mind becomes enlightened. MAN INSTRUCTED CEASES TO BE SUPERSTITIOUS.—*System of Nature*, vol. iii. ch. i.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (January 18) at Abertillery, Mon. His subject in the afternoon, in the Tillery Institute, at 3, will be "How Christianity Began: a Study of Christian Origins." In the evening, at 7.30 the lecture will be on "Does Man Survive Death?" The evening meeting will be in the Gymnasium Hall, for the better accommodation of a larger audience. Local friends will please note. Next Sunday Mr. Cohen concludes the present course of lectures at South Place with an address on "A Freethinker's View of the League of Nations."

Mr. Lloyd had the full benefit of the gale on Sunday last at South Place, and this must have interfered with the meeting to some extent. But there was a good audience, nevertheless, and those present showed by their interest and applause their keen appreciation of the lecture. Mr. Lloyd, we are informed, was in excellent form, and delighted all present with his address.

The lecturer to-day (January 18) at South Place is Mr. W. H. Thresh. His subject is "The Solar System and its Origin." Those who were present at Mr. Thresh's last lecture at South Place will want no urging to attend again, and, we hope, will bring a friend with them.

Members' subscriptions to the N. S. S. are now due, and the Secretary informs us they are coming in rapidly. Those who have sent must exercise their patience over any delay in receiving acknowledgments. Both Miss Vance and Miss Kough are laid up with bad bronchial colds, and for a few days will be unable to keep pace with office work. But this need not stop those members who have not already remitted doing so before the month expires.

Ross's *Monthly* (Melbourne) reports that a petition was presented to the House of Representatives, asking that the Postal Act which makes the sending through the post of "blasphemous" matter an offence be abolished, and that the common law which "makes blasphemy an offence" be abolished. The petition was largely signed, but was refused.

The Prime Minister's Secretary, in reply to a question put to him, replied that blasphemy, being defined as

"a crime at the common law, as well as generally by statute, as tending to a breach of the peace, and being a public nuisance or destructive of the foundations of civil society," it is considered that the restriction placed upon the transmission of blasphemous matter through the post should not be removed.

The reply is what might have been expected, and it is characteristic of the bigotry and obscurantism that keeps such relics of the Dark Ages as blasphemy laws alive. For a public official to write in days such as these that he really believes an attack on religion threatens the foundation of civil society, or tends to a breach of the peace, is to label him as quite unfit to hold any office—except that of Prime Minister to a society of Yahoos. It would indicate a frame of mind that is rather difficult to conceive. Like many other people, the Australians seem to be living under the delusion that political liberty is the only thing worth bothering about. Whereas the truth is that there may exist along with a fairly generous measure of political freedom an equally generous measure of actual slavery, and, above all, a large degree of mental serfdom. The history and present condition of this country proves it pretty clearly.

Owing to the Stratford Town Hall being occupied for War purposes, it has not been possible to have lectures there for some time. That difficulty being removed, the N. S. S. Executive has arranged a couple of meetings for the evenings of Sunday, February 1 and 15. Mr. Cohen will be the first lecturer and Mr. Lloyd the second. We shall be glad if our friends in the district will see to it that the meetings are made well known and a full hall secured. Small slips advertising the meetings are ready, and we shall be

obliged if local Freethinkers will help in their distribution. A supply may be obtained from either the N. S. S. or the Freethinker office.

Those of our readers who require a good exposition of the Einstein Theory of Gravitation will find it in the current number of *Conquest* along with a number of other interesting scientific articles. The article is written by one of the members of the British Expedition that set out to prove the theory, and is as clear as it seems possible to make so difficult a subject. Luckily the Peace Treaty did not forbid Germans doing things of this kind. Perhaps it was overlooked. *Conquest* is a shilling monthly, published in Henrietta Street, W.C.

The *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* contains a very pleasant notice of *The Parson and the Atheist*. It remarks that a notable feature of the discussion is the ability and courtesy of the disputants, and says that it affords to all "the satisfaction of seeing a delicate discussion handled with tact, discretion, and knowledge, and not, as is too often the case, in a way to make the judicious grieve." We are pleased to say that the booklet is selling well, and finding its way into quarters where such literature does not readily find its way.

We are asked to announce that Mr. Joseph McCabe will lecture to-day (Jan. 18) in the Partick Burgh Hall; at 12, on "The Triumph of Secularism," and at 6.30, on "Sir A. Conan Doyle's Ghosts." Glasgow saints will please note. Judging from our own experience at Partick, there should be good meetings.

The debate between Mr. Cohen and Mr. Horace Leaf, on "Does Man Survive Death?" is now fixed for February 26. The discussion will take place in Glasgow, in the St. Andrews Hall, which is the largest and finest hall in Scotland. The seating capacity of the hall is 4,000, and a large audience is expected. The discussion is, we understand, already exciting much comment in the city.

Light, one of the organs of Spiritualism in this country, remarked that Mr. Horace Leaf was "arranging" a debate with Mr. Cohen. That is not quite accurate. Mr. Cohen does not "arrange" debates with anyone. The Glasgow Spiritualists approached the local Branch of the N. S. S. with an invitation, and Mr. Cohen agreed to debate at their request. All he stipulated was that the person with whom he debated should represent some organization. Mr. Leaf was said to be one of the best speakers and debaters on Spiritualism in the country, and so the matter was finally decided—and we hope will be agreeably concluded.

An Irish correspondent suggests that we might, say for March 17, publish an Irish number, in which special articles could appear giving an account of the spread of Freethought in Ireland, and of other matter suitable to the occasion. "Something," he says, "must be done over here. Science is a great thing, but it never creates a stir." The idea is a good one if it could be carried out. One difficulty would be to get the writers who are sufficiently conversant with Irish affairs, and sufficiently unprejudiced in their attitude, to make their articles of value. We should be glad to hear from some of our Irish readers on the subject. Our own impression is that Ireland is ready for a great forward movement, once the political situation is eased and the younger generation of Irishmen left free to deal with the Church. And when the advance does come, it will be on the lines of the Continental movement—there will be less timidity and less compromise than is the case in England. We may yet see an Irish office for the *Freethinker*.

We have had a complaint from a subscriber in Italy that he has not received a copy of this paper for nearly three months. We should be glad to learn if any other of our subscribers abroad have suffered in a similar manner. We thought that the postal censorship was about done with. But officialdom struggles hard to perpetuate itself, in this as in other directions.

Mr. W. H. Unthank writes correcting the translation of "Sinn Fein" as "Ourselves Alone." He says that the correct translation is "Ourselves," and is the Gaelic for self-determination. We register the correction, although our non-acquaintance with Gaelic prevents our passing an opinion on the matter.

Pages from Voltaire.

COUNT BOULAINVILLIER'S DINNER-PARTY.

(1767).

First Conversation. Before Dinner.

Abbe Couet.—Then it is your belief, Sir, that philosophy is quite as useful to the human race as is our Apostolic, Catholic, and Roman religion.

Count Boulainvilliers.—Philosophy embraces the whole universe, our religion dominates only a part of Europe: yet it has many enemies. But you must admit that philosophy is a thousand times more salutary than our religion, such as it has been practised for ages.

Couet.—You astonish me. What, then, do you understand by philosophy?

The Count.—I understand by it the enlightened love of wisdom, sustained by the love of the Eternal Being, the rewarder of virtue and the punisher of crime.

Couet.—Just so! But is not that precisely what our religion teaches?

The Count.—If that be the basis of our religion, we have nothing to argue about: I am a good Catholic, and you are a good philosopher, and neither of us is likely to go a step further than the other. Let us not dishonour our religious and holy philosophy by sophisms and absurdities which are an outrage upon our reason, or by an insensate avarice for the honours and wealth which corrupt all our virtues. Let us give ear to the truths and moderation of philosophy; and then this philosophy will adopt religion as a daughter.

Couet.—With your permission, I must object that your words smell somewhat of the stake.

The Count.—So long as you continue to talk about stakes, and use the argument of burning instead of that of reason you will have only hypocrites and fools for partisans. The opinion of one wise man is worth more than the smart fallacies of knaves, or the admonition of fools. You have asked me what I mean by philosophy; I ask you in return, what you mean by religion?

Couet.—It would take me a long time to explain to you all our dogmas.

The Count.—That itself is a presumption against you. You need *folios*; I want only four words: *Serve God, do good.*

Couet.—Our religion has never said anything contrary.

The Count.—I should be glad not to find contrary ideas in your books. Those cruel words: "Compel them to come in,"¹ words which you abuse in such a barbarous fashion; and these: "I came not to send peace, but a sword";² and, again: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen or a publican";³ and a hundred similar sayings all equally terrifying to the common sense of humanity. Could there be anything harder and more hateful than that other saying: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand"?⁴ In this manner do eternal wisdom and goodness speak to us?

The God of the whole universe who was made flesh in order to bring light and blessings to man, is it pos-

¹ Luke xiv. 23.

² Matthew x. 34.

³ Matthew xviii. 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii. 13.

sible that he could say: "I am sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel"?¹ that is, to the people of a tiny country some twenty leagues in extent. It is possible that this God to whom tribute money was to be paid, should have told his disciples that they must pay no tribute; that the kings² "take tribute only from strangers, and that the children are free"?

Count.—These sayings that scandalize you so much are to be explained by quite different passages.

The Count.—But what are we to think of a God who stands in need of a commentary, who is always making contradictory statements? What of a law-giver who has committed nothing to writing? What of your sacred books, the dates of whose authors are unknown, and who give the lie to each other on every page?

Count.—I must impress upon you that all things are harmonized. But you will at least admit that you have no fault to find with the Sermon on the Mount?

The Count.—Oh, certainly! We are told that Jesus said "whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire,"³ this, at least, has been accepted literally by your theologians. He says that he is come to fulfil the law of Moses,⁴ a dispensation hateful to you. He asks wherewith the earth shall be salted if the salt has lost its savour.⁵ He says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."⁶ I am aware, moreover, that he is made to exclaim that the grain of wheat is not quickened except it die;⁷ that the kingdom of heaven is a grain of mustard seed;⁸ that it is money put out at interest;⁹ that when a feast is made only the poor should be invited.¹⁰ It may be that these expressions had a respectable meaning in the language in which they are said to have been uttered; I am willing to adopt everything that inspires virtue; but I shall be glad to know what you think of another passage which is this: "It is God who has formed me; God is everywhere, and within me. Shall I dare to pollute him by criminal and base actions, by impure words and desires? In the hour of death, can I say to God: 'O my master and father! it was thy will that I should suffer, I have suffered with a will resigned. I have embraced poverty: thou has placed me in a humble position, and I have not wished for greatness; it is thy will that I should die, and dying I adore thee. I depart from this magnificent spectacle giving thanks to thee for granting me to behold the wonderful order in this thy ruling of the universe.'"

Count.—That is admirable; in what father of the Church did you find so divine a passage? Was it in Saint Cyprian, in St. Gregory of Nazianzen, or in Saint Cyril?

The Count.—No; these are the words of a Pagan slave, called Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius thought in a like manner with the Greek slave.

Count.—I remember that I read, in my youth, the moral precepts of the Pagan writers, which made a profound impression upon me. I even admit that the laws of Zaleucos, or of Charondas, the teachings of Confucius, the moral commandments of Zoroaster, the maxims of Pythagoras, appear to me to be dictated by wisdom for the happiness of the human race; it would appear that God deigned to honour these men with an intelligence brighter than that given to ordinary mortals, just as he gave more of harmony to Virgil, more of eloquence to Cicero, and more of wisdom to Archimedes, than to their contemporaries. I was impressed by the wonderful lessons in virtue bequeathed to us by antiquity. But to come to my point, all these men knew nothing at all of theology. They knew not the difference between

cherubim and seraphim, between efficient and sufficient grace; they knew not that God was dead; that, having been crucified for all men, he had yet been crucified only for a few. Ah! my dear sir, if Cicero, Epictetus, Cato, and Marcus Aurelius had known that the son was born of the father and yet not born of him; that the spirit was neither born nor created, but that he proceeds by inspiration sometimes from the father, sometimes from the son; that the son has all that belongs to the father except the paternity; if, I say, the ancients, our masters in all things, had known a hundred truths with this clearness and force—in fact, if they had been theologians—what blessings would not they have bestowed on mankind? Consubstantiation and transubstantiation, my dear sir, are noble conceptions. If only Scipio, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius had got to the bottom of these truths, they would have been Vicars-General to the Archbishop or syndics of the Sorbonne.

The Count.—So, so! But tell me frankly, between ourselves and in the sight of God, if you think that the souls of these great men are on the spit, toasted by devils for all eternity, while they await the arrival of their bodies, which are to be burnt for all time with them, simply because they could not be syndics of the Sorbonne or Vicars-General to an Archbishop?

Count.—You put me in a difficulty; for "outside the Church there is no salvation."

*Nul ne doit plaire au ciel que nous et nos amis.*¹ Whoever "neglects to hear the Church let him be to thee as an heathen or a publican." Scipio and Marcus Aurelius did not hear the Church; they did not recognize the Council of Trent; their souls will burn for ever, and when their bodies, scattered to the four elements, shall be brought together again, they will be burnt also. Nothing is clearer, nothing more fitting: there is no doubt about it.

On the other hand, it is very harsh to burn eternally Socrates, Aristides, Pythagoras, Epictetus, the Antonines, all those whose lives were pure and worthy of our imitation, and to grant eternal felicity to the soul and body of Ravaiillac,² who died a good Christian, absolved of all his sins, and provided with grace efficient and sufficient. I confess to some difficulty here, for, in fact, I am the judge of all men; their eternal happiness or unhappiness depends on me. I should certainly have some repugnance in saving Ravaiillac and damning Scipio.

There is, however, one thing that consoles me; it is that we other theologians can get our friends out of hell if we have a mind to. We read in the *Acts* of Saint Thecla, a great theologian, a disciple of Saint Paul, who disguised herself as a man in order to follow him, that she delivered from hell her friend Falconilla, who had the misfortune to die a Pagan.³

The great St. John of Damascus tells us that the great Saint Macarius, the same who obtained from God by fervent prayer the death of Arius, one day questioned in a cemetery the skull of a Pagan on this very subject. The skull replied that the prayers of the theologians lessened the sufferings of the damned.⁴

As a matter of fact, we know without a shadow of a doubt that Pope Gregory the Great delivered from hell the soul of the Emperor Trajan. These are striking examples of God's mercy.

The Count.—You are an amusing fellow. Oblige me, then, and deliver from hell, by your holy prayers, the

¹ None is pleasing in the sight of heaven but us and our friends.

² A Jesuit who murdered Henry IV., the most enlightened monarch Europe has ever seen.

³ John of Damascus. *Orat. de iis qui in pace dormierunt*, p. 585.

⁴ In Grabe. *Spicilegium*, vol. i.

¹ Matthew xv. 24.

² *Ibid.*, xvii. 24-26.

³ *Ibid.*, v. 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 3.

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 36.

⁸ Luke xiii. 19.

⁹ Matthew xxv. 27.

¹⁰ Luke xiv. 12.

great Henry IV., who died without the sacrament, like a Pagan, and put him in heaven with Ravallac, who made a good confession; but, for my part, I find it difficult to imagine how they could exist in the same place, and how they would regard each other.

The Countess of Boulainwilliers.—Dinner is getting cold; here is Mr. Freret, who has just arrived. Please let us sit down at once, and after dinner you shall deliver from hell whom you like.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

The Age of Man.

IN the bright summer days of this year of grace I passed a good deal of my leisure time in visiting our splendid parks in South London. I love to sit beneath the trees and listen to the songs of the birds, or to wander through the Old English Garden in Peckham Rye Park and admire the flowers in all their bloom and glory, or to study the foliage of the trees in the Grand Avenue. And when I want a change I wander off to Dulwich Park, and watch the youths at sport on the lake, in the cricket field, or out in the open at all sorts of games. On a Saturday afternoon I enjoy nothing better than to lie on the grass at the top of one of the hills in Greenwich Park, and watch from a distance the winding river as it ebbs and flows, and the ships and other river craft as they make either for the open sea or for their destination at one of the great wharves on the river bank below Tower Bridge.

But if I want the company of my fellows—if I prefer to talk or discuss on the various problems that interest the serious man of intelligence—I make my way to the top of a hill in a park not far from Brockley, where I invariably find a group of "old pensioners," who are only too anxious to listen to conversation on any topic of social, political, or scientific interest.

Many a time I have delivered a *Freethought Sermon on this Mount*.

One fine summer's morning, when the "old pensioners" were wasting a good deal of time in discussions on various trite phases of the late War, one of them, who was an old soldier and had played a part in the Crimean campaign, ventured the remark that he did not think that war would ever be done away with. Wars were always taking place in some part of the world or other; and if we went back as far as history would take us, we should still find that there were wars going on among the various races of mankind.

"Take, for instance, the Bible," he said; "and if we went carefully through the Old Testament, we should find plenty of wars recorded therein."

"Yes," I replied; "man is a savage animal, and although we were now living in what is called a civilized age, when a war broke out all the savage and barbarous qualities of man's nature were aroused, and he acted like the wild beast from which he had descended; and once the blood lust had taken possession of him, there was no crime too horrible for him to commit, no torture too dreadful for him to inflict upon his foe."

"Do you really think, then, that man has been developed from the wild beast?" said one grave and reverend Signior, an "old pensioner" who does not often venture a remark, but, when he does, says something worth the saying.

"Certainly I do. And I think I can prove it."

"Ah, but," said the old soldier, "the Bible says nothing about man being developed from the wild beast. It says that God created man in his own image; and though man has fallen from his high estate, and some-

times has acted with great cruelty, he has always remained a man. That's what I believe."

"Well, then, my friend, I am afraid that you know very little about the teachings of Darwin and Haeckel, or the doctrine of evolution, or else you wouldn't talk like that. How long do you think that man has been on this earth?"

"I don't know. The Bible doesn't give a date."

"No; but if you take the time of the alleged birth of Adam—I mean the alleged manufacture of Adam out of the dust of the earth—down to the time of Noah, and then again from Noah down to the alleged birth of Jesus, you will find that it comes, roughly speaking, to about 4,000 years, and from the time of Jesus down to the present time, 1919, or, roughly, 2,000 years; that is, about 6,000 years since the creation of Adam—if the Bible story be true."

"And I think it is true," responded the old soldier.

"And I am sure it is not," I replied with great energy. "Why, the Chinese race has a history that goes back a great deal further than that—a history that shows they were in a fairly advanced stage of civilization 8,000 years ago."

"Look at that!" exclaimed one "old pensioner," in a tone of amazement and wonder.

"Yes; and I can tell you this," I continued, "that it has been proved man existed in this country—probably the latest peopled part of the earth—over two hundred thousand years ago."

"How has it been proved?" asked another "old pensioner," who had been an engine-driver for over thirty years of his life, and, though he knew a good deal about the power of steam, was not acquainted with those other branches of science that dealt with the evolution of man from lower forms of animal life. "How has it been proved? Tell me that."

"That is exactly what I was going to tell you when you interrupted. Have you ever read a pamphlet by Wm. Pengelly, F.R.S., on *The Time that has Elapsed since the Era of the Cave-Men of Devonshire?*"

"No."

"Well, that's the pamphlet that I propose to use in order to establish the fact that man existed in England over two hundred thousand years ago."

"Yes; and although I have never read the pamphlet," said another "old pensioner," "I am a Devonshire man, and I am old enough to have heard Wm. Pengelly, and I have been to Kent's Cavern in Devonshire, and I know that what he says is true, though I still call myself a Christian."

"But what does he say?" asked the old gentleman in the corner seat, who seemed to be very interested in the conversation.

"Well, it appears that somebody went down into Kent's Cavern some years ago and found beneath some stalagmite the remains of extinct animals, and also flint and bone implements. No doubt man made the bone implements. Among the things found was a bone needle, with a well-drilled eye in it, and I think it is reasonable to assume that it was made by man—none of the lower animals could have made it. On the boss of some of this stalagmite there is an inscription: 'Robert Hedges, of Ireland, 1688.' That's 231 years ago. There is also another of 1604. Now, how much carbonate of lime do you think has accumulated on these ancient inscriptions in 250 years? Wm. Pengelly—this man of science I am talking about, says, not more than a twentieth part of an inch. Now, if it has taken 250 years to form the twentieth part of an inch, it would take 5,000 years to form an inch, and you have sixty inches to account for, that is, sixty times 5,000—in other words 300,000 years. But I am only

claiming that man existed in Devonshire over 200,000 years ago, although I think there is evidence for a much longer period, for we find that man existed side by side with a number of extinct animals, such as the mammoth, the reindeer, and other animals that are extinct, so far as this country is concerned.

"But do scientific men accept that view to-day?" asked the inquisitive pensioner before mentioned.

"Certainly, and go a great deal further. A lot of evidence of the same nature in corroboration has been adduced from America and other parts of the world."

"Well, I never heard of this discovery before," said the old soldier. "I didn't think we could go further back than the Bible. Doesn't that say: 'In the beginning God created man—male and female?'"

"But I have already shown you that the Bible account of man's creation 'out of dust' doesn't take us back further than 6,000 years. Now, I want to tell you that scientific men claim that they have discovered the skull of a lowly form of man—probably one of the ape men that would take us back 500,000 years. And if you read Darwin you will find that he speaks of man being descended from the ape-like form."

"Oh, I can't believe that man has come from the monkey," cried one old pensioner, who was still clinging on to the narrow ledge of Christian dogma. "If we have come from the monkey, how is it that all the monkeys have not turned into men? that we have still plenty of monkeys living now?"

"Darwin does not say that we have come up direct from what you call the monkey (the Gibbon), but that the ape-like family went off into various branches, and that man descended from one of them. But as you are a Christian, perhaps, you had better read Professor Henry Drummond's work on *The Ascent of Man*. He certainly believed in the teaching of Darwin, and he claimed that we carry within our bodies the scaffolding, so to speak, of our early ancestry. And remember, Professor Drummond was a Christian."

"It's all very interesting, and, I daresay, all very true," said the old gentleman, who had had the privilege of hearing Wm. Pengelly; "but I don't think it destroys Christianity even if it is true."

"Oh! But it certainly disproves the story of man being made perfect and placed in the Garden of Eden. And if man did not fall in the garden through eating the forbidden fruit—a king pippin, perhaps—then there was no need for Jesus to come down and die for man as the result of a fall that never took place."

At this retort all the old pensioners laughed most heartily, and their Christian friend quietly collapsed.

"But now I want to take you one stage further. I want to tell you what a distinguished scientist, like Haeckel, says.

"Oh, a German!" exclaimed the old soldier.

"Yes; but there are good Germans as well as bad ones, just as there are bad Englishmen as well as good ones."

"I don't think that anyone who knows anything about evolution can deny that Haeckel was a great authority on the subject. Well, what did Haeckel say? He said that man was the last link in a great chain of development from the very lowest form of animal life up to man. He traced our development from the protoplasmic germ right up to man, through the fishes, the reptiles, to mammals, and then from the lower forms of mammalia up to man—through the ape-like form: 1, the lesser orang; 2, the great orang; 3, the chimpanzee; 4, the gorilla, then the lower forms of men. The Papuan, the Hottentot, the Caffre, Negro, Australian, Malay, Mengol, the Polar man, American, and Caucasian."

"Good God," exclaimed the old soldier, "have we descended from all that lot? Some of them are as bad as the monkey. For my part, I must stick to the old Bible story."

"What the dust man? Then I think your case is hopeless." With that I gathered up some of my papers and marched off in the direction of home.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Is the Sabbath Doomed?

CHURCH people are confronted with the increasing secularization of the Lord's Day, and some of them are naturally becoming genuinely alarmed. We read in the press, for example, that "Ministers and office-bearers of the Established Church, U.F. Church, Episcopal Church, Free Church, Baptist, Wesleyan, and other Churches held a meeting in Edinburgh to protest against the Sunday concert scheme in the Waverley Market," and as a result "a deputation was appointed to wait on the Town-Council to protest." Awful thing, this tide of Secularism! It seems to keep advancing in spite of all the King Canutes and Mrs. Partingtons.

The Scotch people made the initial blunder in failing more vigorously to protest years and years ago against the change of name from Sabbath to Sunday. "What's in a name?" one may ask. In many cases, "A very great deal" must be the emphatic answer. How can any nation expect a divine blessing to rest upon it when it has discarded the Bible name of the Lord's Day for a Pagan name? Surely it must be realized by intelligent minds, from the character of Jehovah as revealed in Holy Writ, that he is not likely to lift up the light of his countenance upon a community which fails to pay him due homage, not only in thoughts and actions, but in words also. How are these belated "protests" regarded at the Throne of Grace, we may ask? It is high time we understood that God is not to be bluffed, or hoodwinked, or belittled, and that the attempt to do either the one or the other will surely recoil upon the head of the attempter, be he plaintiff or be he defendant, be his name Pickwick, or Noakes, or Stoakes, or Styles, or Brown, or Thompson!

See what the Higher Criticism and coquetting with Paganism have done for Scotland! Secular concerts on Sabbath evenings with civic sanction! It is enough to make Boston of Etrick turn in his grave! Where once, on the first day of the week, naught was to be heard save the Psalms of David (without orchestral accompaniment), the eloquent and minatory periods of the man of God, and the groans of his auditors under conviction of sin, are now to be heard, if you please—God deliver us!—the strains of ungodly lute and fiddle, profane songs like "Tipperary" and "It's a long, long trail," and the unedifying laughter of jesters—blind, totally blind—to the sword hanging over their heads. No thought enters these vain secular heads of the Last Day, Judgment, and Eternity. Parents are to be found even in Edinburgh who do not check their offspring for whistling on the Sabbath day. Shall the ears of the Most High be defied and distressed by whistling?

Yea, verily, it is laid upon us to do more than merely protest. How shall we Scottish people, descendants of the Israel of God, stand before the judgment-seat of Christ unless we are able to show that we have so acted as to secure for ourselves the title to a mansion in the sky? Do we in our daily walk and conversation always reverently speak of the "Sabbath" instead of "Sunday"? Do we instruct our children to avoid the hidden snare in that heathen name "Sunday"? When we are writing

to persons who are not members of the Household of Faith, do we indite "Sabbath" instead of "Sunday"? Do we always avoid secular conversation and secular reading in our homes on the Sabbath day? Is the reference in talk to business on that blessed holy day something that we recoil from with horror in our hearts? Do we individually refrain from visiting neighbour's houses on the Sabbath, and do we teach our young people to follow our example? Is there ever a secular book, or newspaper, or magazine to be seen exposed in our dwelling on the Sabbath day? Woe unto us if we cannot honestly reply: "Never—never"! Do we on the second day of the week read journals which are produced on the first? Do we ever cast our earthly eyes on the Sabbath day in the direction of attractive secular pictures or other objects? It is high time we were all examining our conduct, and finding out how far we have contributed to the decadence of the Sabbath of our forefathers when nothing but two-hour sermons, one-hour prayers, and slowly-sung Psalms were their holy occupation.

The newspaper report to which we have alluded is headed "Sunday Concerts—Churches Up in Arms." But what use are our arms if they are merely paper protests? We must have power from on High and powers from Parliament. A comprehensive Act of Parliament restoring the Sabbath as it was in Scotland 200 years ago is what is needed. The clergy must be armed with powers to compel the laity to attend Church and to suppress all secular gatherings on the Sabbath. We must stir up our M.P.'s.—"the salvation of man and the Sabbath" must be our battle cry, and rather than see the Sabbath desecrated we must be prepared to *lay down our lives*. Armed with the sword of this spirit, we must be up and doing or we shall be undone.

IGNOTUS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JAN. 8.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Silverstein, and Miss Pitcher; Miss Kough acting for the Secretary, who was absent in consequence of illness.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Monthly financial statement presented and adopted.

New members were received for Birmingham, Manchester, and Rhondda Branches, and for the Parent Society—sixteen in all.

On the nomination of the North London Branch, Miss Kough was elected to fill the vacancy on the Executive caused by the resignation of Mr. Palmer.

The death of Mr. Victor Roger was formally reported by the President and reference made to his lifelong devotion to the Cause of Freethought, and a vote of condolence with his widow carried unanimously. It was also resolved that his Branch be invited to nominate a representative to fill the vacancy on the Executive caused by his death, until the Conference.

Replies from various Branches to the Organization Committee's inquiries were received and dealt with, and instructions given to the Secretary *re* future meetings at Newcastle and Rhondda Valley.

It was also reported that two lectures had been arranged at Stratford Town Hall for February 1 and 15.

Other matters of routine business were transacted, including the granting of a donation of £5 to the International Freethought Bureau, the issuing of a circular to Branches *re* the Annual Conference, etc., and the meeting adjourned until the third Thursday in February.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

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. Baker, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, H. J. Stenning, "The Social Reactions of the War."

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, Mr. A. Hyatt, "Christianism—The Idolatrous Worship of the Sun."

SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.): 3.30, Mr. W. H. Thresh, "The Solar System and Its Origin."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.2): 11, William T. Goode, "The Russian Situation as I saw it."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "How Christianity Began, A Study of Christian Origins"; 7.30 (Gymnasium Hall), "Does Man Survive Death?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Partick Burgh Halls): Mr. Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "The Triumph of Secularism"; 6.30, "Sir A. Conan Doyle's Ghosts." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Clarion Cafe, Gasgoine Street, Boar Lane, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. Fredk. Green, M.P., "The New Republic of Czechoslovakia."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (60 Alexandra Road, Swansea): 6.30, Special Branch Meeting. Important Business and Election of Officers for the Year.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents (God and the Air-Raid)*, Chapman Cohen. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the mean of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

A FIGHT FOR RIGHT.

A Verbatim Report of the Decision in the House of Lords
in re

Bowman and Others *v.* The Secular Society, Limited.

With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.

Price One Shilling. Postage 1½d.

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

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

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

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

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

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President :
CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary :
Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name.....

Address

Occupation

Dated this.....day of.....19.....

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

BIG PHOTOS FOR SMALL!

HAVE you a Photograph you would like enlarged? If so, please send me the Photo or Negative, stating the size you desire, and I will quote you a price by return. Photo returned post free if price not approved. Please mention this paper. Inquiries for all branches of photographic work esteemed. Note the address—H. THURLOW, Photographer, 40 Churston Avenue, Upton Park, London, E.

PRINTING.

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

Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

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

A Book that no Freethinker should Miss.

Religion and Sex.

Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development.

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Systematic and Comprehensive Survey of the relations between the sexual instinct and morbid and abnormal mental states and the sense of religious exaltation and illumination. The ground covered ranges from the primitive culture stage to present-day revivalism and mysticism. The work is scientific in tone, but written in a style that will make it quite acceptable to the general reader, and should prove of interest no less to the Sociologist than to the Student of religion. It is a work that should be in the hands of all interested in Sociology, Religion, or Psychology.

Large 8vo, well printed on superior paper, cloth bound, and gilt lettered.

Price Six Shillings.
(Postage 6d.)

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

The Parson and the Atheist.

A Friendly Discussion on
RELIGION AND LIFE.

BETWEEN
Rev. the Hon. EDWARD LYTTTELTON, D.D.
(Late Headmaster of Eton College)

AND
CHAPMAN COHEN
(President of the N. S. S.).

With Preface by Chapman Cohen and Appendix by Dr. Lyttelton.

The Discussion ranges over a number of different topics—
• Historical, Ethical, and Religious—and should prove both interesting and useful to Christians and Freethinkers alike.

Well printed on good paper, with Coloured Wrapper.
144 pages.

Price 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

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

The Metaphysics of Nature.

BY
CARVETH READ, M.A.

A Scientific and Philosophic Study.
Published 7s. 6d. net. **Price 3s. 6d., postage 6d.**

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

South Place Chapel, FINSBURY PAVEMENT, E.C.

JANUARY 18.

W. H. THRESH.

"The Solar System and Its Origin."

JANUARY 25.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"A Freethinker's View of the League of Nations."

Doors open 3 p.m. Chair taken 3.30. p.m.
Admission Free. Collection.
Questions and Discussion Cordially Invited.

Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

MY RESURRECTION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. Price 2d., postage 1d.
THE MOTHER OF GOD. With Preface. Price 2d.,
postage 1d.
THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. Price 2d.,
postage ½d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. Being the Sepher
Toldoth Jeshu, or Book of the Generation of Jesus.
With an Historical Preface and Voluminous Notes.
By G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER. Price 6d.,
postage 1d.

VOLTAIRE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY. Vol.
I., 128 pp., with Fine Cover Portrait, and Preface by
CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 3d., postage 1½d.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

DEITY AND DESIGN. Price 1d., postage ½d.
WAR AND CIVILIZATION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
RELIGION AND THE CHILD. Price 1d., postage ½d.
GOD AND MAN: An Essay in Common Sense and Natural
Morality. Price 3d., postage ½d.
CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY: With a Chapter on
Christianity and the Labour Movement. Price 1s.,
postage 1½d.
WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY: The Subjection and
Exploitation of a Sex. Price 1s., postage 1½d.
CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS. Price 1d.,
postage 1d.
SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES. Price 3d., post-
age 1d.
CREED AND CHARACTER. The Influence of Religion
on Racial Life. Price 7d., postage 1½d.

By J. T. LLOYD.

PRAYER: ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND FUTILITY.
Price 2d., postage 1d.

By WALTER MANN.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. Price 2d.,
postage ½d.
SCIENCE AND THE SOUL. With a Chapter on Infidel
Death-Beds. Price 7d., postage 1½d.

By MIMNERMUS.

FREETHOUGHT AND LITERATURE. Price 1d., post-
age ½d.

Pamphlets - continued.

By H. G. FARMER.

HERESY IN ART. The Religious Opinions of Famous
Artists and Musicians. Price 3d., postage ½d.

By A. MILLAR.

THE ROBES OF PAN: And Other Prose Fantasies.
Price 1s., postage 1½d.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON
SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage 1d.
LIVE TOPICS. Price 1d., postage ½d.
LIMITS OF TOLERATION. Price 1d., postage 1d.
CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. Price 1d., postage ½d.
FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH. Price 2d., postage 1d.

By D. HUME.

ESSAY ON SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage ½d.
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY. Price 1d., postage 1d.

*About 1d in the 1s. should be added on all Foreign and
Colonial Orders.*

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

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF HERBERT SPENCER.

BY

DAVID DUNCAN, LL.D.

With Seventeen Illustrations.

Published 15s. net. Price 4s. 6d. Postage 9d.

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

THE "FREETHINKER."

THE *Freethinker* may be ordered from any newsagent in
the United Kingdom, and is supplied by all the whole-
sale agents. It will be sent direct from the publishing
office post free to any part of the world on the following
terms:—One Year, 15s.; Six Months, 7s. 6d.; Three
Months, 3s. 9d.

Anyone experiencing a difficulty in obtaining copies
of the paper will confer a favour if they will write us,
giving full particulars.

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