

# 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. 6

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1920

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>A Call to Prayer.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	81
<i>The Sovereignty of God.—J. T. Lloyd</i> . . . . .	82
<i>Blind Leaders of the Blind.—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	83
<i>God in Belfast Abattoir.—J. Effel</i> . . . . .	84
<i>The Gentleman Usher's Gifts.—F. J. Gould</i> . . . . .	85
<i>Spiritualism.—E. J. D.</i> . . . . .	90
<i>Early Christian Frauds —Abracadabra</i> . . . . .	91
<i>Human Nature.—H. C. Mellor</i> . . . . .	92
<i>Book Chat.—P. S.</i> . . . . .	93
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### A Call to Prayer.

It is not often that a call to prayer comes from an avowed Atheist, but we are making that call in all seriousness. It is a thoroughly religious appeal to say: "Let us Pray." And we venture to echo that appeal. Let us pray, by all means—pray in the proper way and for the proper things. For it is only by praying that we can tell whether it is of any consequence whether we pray or not. If there is any good in prayer let us all be in it. No one wants to be out of a good thing—least of all the Atheist. His objection to prayers is not that he doesn't want the good that prayer is said to achieve, but that he cannot see that the alleged good results from it. And the only way to decide the matter is to test it. Let us pray, but let it be under conditions that will, so far as is possible, eliminate all doubt on the matter. It is, after all, a matter of evidence, quite as much so as is the question of whether the queer ghosts of Sir Oliver Lodge and others are genuine existences or not. And, indeed, believers assure us that there is ample evidence of answers to prayers. If there is a God that is as it should be. If God exists he should be engaged in doing something more useful than merely existing, which, in itself, is not a dignified occupation. So, by all means, let us pray. We are issuing the invitation quite seriously. Let us pray—and see what happens.

\* \* \*

### Mixing the Issues.

Now, Christians are very often engaged in prayer, and every now and again there are public invitations made to the whole nation to engage in an united service of prayer. But the prayers we are asked to offer are of so vague a character that not alone are we puzzled to know how or where we are to look for an answer, but if there is a God he might be excused answering on the ground that the petitions were so vague that he was not certain what it was that we wanted. Or even if they are answered, it is impossible for us to recognize the answer. For example, when we pray for a sick man to recover and, at the same time, call in a doctor. How can one tell whether the man recovers as a result of the medical attention, or as the consequence of God's interference with the course of the disease? During the War

there were on several occasions organized prayers for the victory of the Allies. But we went on sending out men, and munitions, and blockading, just as though we had not prayed at all. And when the Allies won we thanked the men and their leaders, just as though they had done the trick and we had never prayed for help. True, we thanked God at the same time, but we had confused the issue. We should have left the job to God, and then have seen what happened—that is, if we were really desirous of seeing whether God did or did not answer prayers. For no one denies that God can win a war—providing he has enough men, and guns, and skill, on the same side. The real question is, Can he do it alone? And if he cannot, then it seems that he has as much cause to thank us as we have to thank him. The effort is mutual and the thanks should be distributed.

\* \* \*

### A Suggested Test.

Many years ago a well-known physician suggested that a practical test should be made of the value of prayer. His proposal was that in certain hospitals two wards should be set on one side as tests. In the one the recovery of people from a disease, the mortality of which was fairly well known, should be made "the object of special prayer by the whole body of the faithful." In the other ward the patients should receive the medical treatment usual in such cases. At the end of five years the results could be compared. Now, this was a perfectly fair test; it is the test we adopt in all matters where we are desirous of arriving at a reasonable judgment; but instead of its being adopted by the religious world, the author of the suggestion was forced to protest against the abuse he experienced from the body of believers. Yet one of the plainest promises in the New Testament is that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." All that Sir Henry Thompson suggested was that there should be no mistake that the Lord had raised him up. It is this confusion that one wishes to avoid. And surely, if there are really answers to prayer, some such test ought to be devised. And a single decisive test would silence the outcries of the sceptic for ever. Therefore, we say, let us pray.

\* \* \*

### Doubtful Cases.

At present no one can be sure that prayers are answered. The cases are so peculiar. The English Church, in common with other Churches, pray that the Sovereign may be granted long life. Yet Sir Francis Galton showed that kings and queens had a lower life average than any of the professional or leisured classes. Prayers are offered in Parliament that our legislators may be dowered with wisdom. The result certainly offers no clear proof that prayers are of use—unless it is said that they would be more foolish without the prayers than they are with them. There are prayers for a good harvest, but when the harvest is a bad one we blame the land, or the weather, or the farmer, and behave generally as though our prayers were without value. Certainly those who pray accompany their petitions with "Thy will be

done," but that, one may suppose, will be the case whether we give our consent or not. And if God's will is to be executed whether we pray or not, then our prayers seem reduced to an empty formality. For unless God does something as a consequence of our praying that he would not have done had we not prayed, there seems little use in our praying at all. Moreover, there is a very practical side to this question. At present insurance offices make no allowances for prayer. They want as big a premium on the life of a man whose life is prayed for as for one who is left without that protection. The insurance on a church stipulates for a lightning conductor, but not for regular prayers. And yet, if a difference could be established, a lowering of the premiums would at once follow. And while there is so much talk of the poverty of the clergy, we offer the suggestion as a probable method of economy.

Looking for Trouble. \* \* \*

There was never a time when a good, straight, unmistakable answer to prayer would do as much service to religion as it would just now. The servants of the Lord have fallen upon evil times. Their doctrines are openly derided, their status is being undermined, their faith in Providence is being challenged. Even the universality of the practice of prayer is being urged against a belief in its efficacy. For people say that prayers have been offered for things exactly in proportion to our ignorance of the means by which these things were produced. People prayed for the removal of an eclipse or a comet, but only so long as astronomical knowledge was in its infancy. They pray for rain only when the wind is in the right direction, for recovery from a fever, but not for the restoration of a lost limb. And people ask, Why this discrimination? Why is God believed to answer one set of prayers in one age and not to answer them in another? Does the difference lie in him or in us? Or is it all "us" and no "him"? Is "him" only another name for the ignorance of "us"? It would almost seem as though that were the true answer to the question. If one generation after another the classes of things concerning which God responds to prayer get smaller and smaller, where is the process to stop? Or why should it stop anywhere? Is the real answer that what a man prays for depends upon the state of his intelligence, and the quantity and quality of his knowledge? The less he knows, the more things there are that he believes he can pray for; the more he knows, the less numerous his petitions. There is only one way to settle the question. Let the religious leaders of the country decide on a test case, or a series of test cases, and abide the result. Surely God will not leave them in the lurch! More; the unbeliever himself has a claim on God. Lord, remove thou my unbelief! And only the Lord can do it. No one else can, and many have tried. It is his business to do it. No one wants to be damned of malice aforethought. All we want is proof. That is why we say, "Let us pray." And all the Churches do is to spell the last word of the request in a sinister manner.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### IDEAL LIFE.

Everyone has within him, and revealed to him sometimes, an ideal of what he might be. It is the very spirit and true person of our conscience. It tends always to square us with our circumstance; to make our duties co-extensive with our opportunities; or it conjures us to abdicate from the midst of powers whose beneficence we are incompetent to fulfil. The grandest health streams through this part of us, and arrives in our minds, and in our bodies, in exact proportion to the fidelity of our lives—*Garth Wilkinson.*

## The Sovereignty of God.

THE Rev. Raymond Calkins, D.D., is a well-known American divine, to whose sermons the religious press gives great prominence. One of his discourses appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for January 28, taken over from the *American Christian Advocate*. The subject is "The Sovereignty of God," which is said to be the whole theme of the Bible from cover to cover. Curiously enough, Dr. Calkins admits that the Bible conception of God has lost its hold upon Christendom, and the object of his sermon is to revive the belief in it. Even his own Church seems to have renounced its faith in it, for he asks, "Would it not be well if we could recover that old doctrine of God and make it a part of our lives?" It was the Puritans' creed, in their loyalty to which they endured cruel persecution, and became themselves notorious persecutors. Its advocates are generally called Calvinists, and Dr. Calkins maintains that "it was the vital truth on which all of our modern liberties were founded; the vital truth for which Calvinism stood, and the central doctrine of the Calvinistic system."

That there was much that was stern and hard and repulsive, even in the Calvinistic creed, I grant, and that some of its repulsiveness was due to the pitiless and remorseless logic with which the doctrine of God's sovereignty was pushed, so that man became more or less a helpless puppet, and God an infinite and irresponsible tyrant, saving some and damning others of his mere good pleasure. But when we speak in scorn and contempt of Calvinism, we show ourselves both ignorant and foolish, for we forget that at bottom its creed was both sublime in itself and absolutely essential to human happiness and human progress.

At present, however, this vital truth is in eclipse, and many do "speak of it in scorn and contempt." Though declared to be the stuff of which heroes and prophets are made, it is now definitely rejected as a most dangerous heresy; but Dr. Calkins says that it must be revived. It is still retained as "a primal article in our creeds, but to a large extent it has passed out of the category of effective beliefs. It has ceased to be an energizing faith. It is not to-day a force in our lives." The reverend gentleman is convinced that it cannot be well with us until we rediscover and vitalize it. Without it our national life lacks its root inspiration, and our industrial and social life is full of disorder and strife.

Now, it is perfectly true that under Calvinism there have been men and women of the highest and noblest character; but it is not true that Calvinism produced them. They would have appeared and flourished equally well under any other creed, or under no religious creed whatever. Dr. Calkins regards William the Silent, Admiral Coligny, and Oliver Cromwell as ideal characters; but he does not mention the fact that they were fighters. John Knox and Jonathan Edwards were ardent Presbyterians, but neither was a social reformer, although Edwards was an intellectual giant. "It takes a great creed," the reverend gentleman avers, "to make a great man"; but, surely, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God cannot honestly be looked upon as great. No one who is acquainted with the early history of New England would dream of describing it as an ideal country. The people were profoundly religious; but Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* proves conclusively that many of their laws and practices were hateful and odious in the extreme. The treatment of poor Hester Prynne was unspeakably cruel and despicable; but she was continually assured that it was God's method of punishing her. Dr. Calkins says:—

When the Pilgrims and Puritans took possession of this American continent, it was not for themselves; it

was primarily for God and for all the children of God. This is ultimate and true Americanism that from its birth hour has said, "In the beginning, God." That idea has underlain the most significant epochs of our national history.....Underlying all this august conception of the mission of the American Commonwealth lies the conception of that Commonwealth as the servant of the Most High God. It is that conception of the State which is on trial to-day.

The Calvinistic doctrine of God is fatally self-contradictory. Sovereignty means the exercise of supreme power; dominion: sway; supremacy. God is defined as an infinitely just, holy, loving, and powerful Being, who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. As we read the history of the world it is irresistibly borne in upon us that there is no evidence whatever of the active existence of such a Being. Has Dr. Calkins the temerity to assert that such a Being has exercised supreme power even in the American Commonwealth? Does it not strike him as laughably absurd to believe in the sovereignty of God in the history of his own land? He says:—

Everybody realizes that the times are out of joint, but not everybody realizes why. Disorder, lawlessness, domestic strife, gruesome municipal riots, race wars, lynchings, outbursts of primitive savagery that seem incredible in our American Continent, supposedly safe, religious, law-abiding—these have all shocked men into a seriousness which they have never known. What is the matter? What is the remedy? What the cause? What the cure?

Fancy a believer in the absolute sovereignty of Almighty God giving such a doleful account of the state of things in his beloved America! Is it any wonder that people find it impossible to cherish such a contemptible faith? If God exists, it is incontrovertible that he does not exercise sovereign power over mankind. He does not do according to his will in any State on earth. Of course, the only rational inference from such a fact is that he does not exist. Atheism is a logical necessity.

Dr. Calkins repeatedly declares that we need to revive the belief in the Divine sovereignty. If God did exist he would exercise his sovereignty over the world whether we believed in him or not. Our belief or unbelief would have no effect upon his activity. To the reverend gentleman it is the doctrine that matters. He tells us that the old creed "made God a reality and not a fiction, and his commandments binding law and not debatable propositions." He wants the old Puritanism back again. "We feel like inscribing on our banners," he exclaims, "what the Breton peasants put on their banners after the Revolution: 'Give us back our God.'" Nothing can be more utterly irrational than such a statement. If God exists, nobody can take him away, and it is wholly immaterial to him whether we believe in him or not. Rather, if he did exist and govern the world, unbelief would be impossible.

Many of Dr. Calkins' statements show that his treatment of unbelief is both ignorant and foolish. He says:—

While the soul's need of God is not the loudest, it is the highest of which we are capable. In the long run it remains a fact that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, but the man himself craves God as the centre and source of his being. By an immutable fact of Nature we "belong" to God, and until we know we are living as his children we are like lost and masterless creatures and our life lacks its centre, its meaning, and its value.

That is a gross misrepresentation of which the reverend gentleman ought to be heartily ashamed. It is simply not true that the man himself craves God. As a matter of fact, belief in God comes as the result of long and

laborious teaching in early childhood. In the absence of such teaching it never comes at all; and there are instances of the utter failure of the most careful and diligent training to produce it. No one believes in God naturally, and the natural tendency of the belief is to die out. That is why there are so many clergymen among us. Children brought up in Atheistic homes generally turn out Atheists. Dr. Calkins is entirely mistaken when he represents Atheists as lost and masterless creatures whose life lacks its centre, its meaning, and its value. In reality, their life is fuller and richer than that of believers, its centre, its meaning, and its value being within and for itself. The reverend gentleman is prejudiced against them, as well as ignorant of their experience.

The conclusion to which we inevitably come is that what humanity needs more than anything else is belief, not in the sovereignty of God, but in the sovereign rights of human reason; not in the existence of a Divine will which is never done, but in the duty of educating and ennobling man's will so that the doing of it shall make for the uplifting and happiness of the race.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Blind Leaders of the Blind.

There is no darkness but ignorance.—*Shakespeare.*

The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies.

—*Lucretius.*

CONSIDERABLE interest has been aroused by the appearance of bold posters at the London and suburban railway stations stating that the bishops refuse to open the box containing Joanna Southcott's writings. The editor's of the illustrated papers, ever on the look-out for the very latest sensation, have published pictures of the sealed box containing the prophecies of Miss Joanna Southcott, the prophetess of Exeter, which that lady directed was to be opened a hundred years after her death, which took place in 1814. Unfortunately, "the best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley," and the World-War upset the projected plans of the divine Joanna. To-day the box remains unopened, and the hard-hearted bishops refuse to respect the wishes of a lady who never figured on their subscription-lists, and who had the audacity to start a fancy religion of her own.

We, who are not numbered among the elect of any religion, may take an interest in the audacious Joanna. For, unlike the dear bishops, we have no fear of a rival evangel. From her birth in Devonshire to her death in Manchester Street, London, Joanna's career presents the familiar features of the fanatic's progress. She was but one prophetess among many in those far-off days, when the leaders of the French Revolution, and Napoleon particularly, were each, in turn, identified as the "beast" in the Revelation of St. John the Divine. Joanna had an extra dose of fanaticism, and made more noise in the world than some of her male rivals.

The life-story of Joanna Southcott throws a flood of light upon religious origins. A maid-of-all-work, she declared that she possessed supernatural power, and wrote and dictated prophecies in poor language and worse rhyme. Originally a Methodist, her views were coloured by her early theological training. She suffered from religious mania, and gave herself out as the woman referred to in Revelation, predicting that she would give birth to the Messiah. Great preparations were made by her followers for the event, but the prophetess died of the mundane disease of dropsy two months after the time predicted.

Like so many religious leaders, Joanna Southcott had keen business instincts. She specialized in passports to

heaven, which she called "seals," and actually persuaded very large numbers of people, otherwise sane, to purchase them. Before she died she left plenteous examples of her artful prophecies, of her long-winded wranglings with "Old Nick," and of the intolerable verse that flowed from her saintly pen, that not even divine inspiration could make graceful or grammatical.

Curiously, at the very time when the Joanna Southcott advertisements are staring from the walls, Dr. Williams has presented a set of books relating to the Muggletonian sect to the London Library. This brings to light a strange body of Commonwealth days, long supposed to have been extinct, and so described in all the books of reference. There was no allusion to the Muggletonians in the famous page of fancy religions, which for long was an amusing and interesting feature of *Whittaker's Almanac*. And the obese and impartial Post Office Directory never so much as mentioned the sect. Yet for years the Muggletonians held meetings in the heart of the City of London, and in Derbyshire there is a respectable, if not respected, body of worshippers.

This strange sect was founded by Ludovick Muggleton, a tailor, in the seventeenth century. His followers regard him as the last of "God's" prophets. Their church meetings are marked by an absence of ordinary ecclesiastical ritual. They have no preachers, and believe prayer to be a mark of weakness. "God" they believe to be a being uninfluenced by human petition, and one who lives in regal state. According to the Muggletonian faith, there is no Devil. Heaven is an infinite abode of light. Hell will be this earth when the elect are removed. Angels are the only beings of pure reason; and the soul is a component part of the body, dying with it, and will be raised with it.

Another twopenny Messiah was the half-pay naval lieutenant, Richard Brothers, who had his portrait engraved with rays of light descending on his crazy head. He was as ambitious as the ex-Kaiser, and he declared modestly that he was the King of Jerusalem and the Ruler of the World. The message fell on stony ground, and neither the Sultan of Turkey nor the other crowned heads made any attempt at abdication. Messiah Brothers then made a beginning. With his own sacred hand, he wrote a letter to King George the Fourth, asking him courteously to deliver up his crown, and order the Houses of Parliament to meet for receiving the Messianic message. The result was sudden, but unexpected. Men in uniform called on the Messiah and led him away into that house of bondage where so many sons and daughters of "God" have suffered restraint at the hands of unbelieving and sceptical doctors.

These are three notorious cases. Admittedly, these three portentous prophets were insane. Their success, as prophets, depended altogether upon the soothing fact that a large number of their followers were credulous to the verge of foolishness.

MIMNERMUS.

BARNSELY BRANCH N.S.S.—Last Tuesday's meeting was well attended. Mr. Bayfield gave an address based on the second chapter of Mr. Ed. Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution*. The discussion was of an animated character, and ended by Mr. Hillaby offering to negative the question: "Was Christianity Responsible for the Decline of Literature During the Dark Ages?" at the next meeting, February 10. All our meetings are graced by the attendance of a fair number of ladies. The lending library was started at the above meeting. May I correct a mistake in the last Report? Our subscription is 4s. per annum, but for those living in out districts who are not able to participate in all the benefits we have set the subscription as low as 2s. 6d. We want all *Freethinker* readers in the district to join us.—H. IRVING, 48 Sheffield Road.

## God in Belfast Abattoir.

A MEETING was held recently in Belfast to discuss humane methods of slaughtering animals intended for food. After other speakers had given their views, Dr. R. G. Mercer-Clements said:—

There was one method which he learned to abhor on his visits to the abattoir. They were all willing to accord to every man the right to worship at whatever shrine he preferred, but, if in the pursuit of that belief, cruelty was inflicted on animals, then it behoved them as citizens to enter their protest. He admired the ancient faith of the Hebrews, but they were living in the twentieth century, and should adopt twentieth century methods. In conclusion, the doctor said he had watched animals being killed according to the rites of the Jewish faith, and the average time it took eight beasts to die, while they were bleeding to death, was fifteen minutes. It was time for the members of the Corporation to go down to the abattoir, and see the Jewish method of killing animals. *It was not humane, and therefore it could not be religious.*

I quote from a report in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, but the italics are mine. Assuming that it is necessary to kill animals for food, the advisability of slaughtering them as swiftly and as painlessly as possible cannot be called in question, however much we may argue about the rival claims of different methods. That a poor beast should welter in its own blood for a quarter of an hour before expiring to satisfy some Jewish fetish is abhorrent to everyone possessed of feeling, and I should certainly join in a protest of citizens against such barbarity. But I fear Dr. Mercer-Clements and other religious citizens would soon dissociate themselves from me when I pushed my protest a little further. Reminding them again that we lived in the twentieth century, I would ask why we should be dominated by ideas which might have been current in the fourteenth? I have no respect for the ancient Jewish faith or the modern Christian faith, or any faith whatever that will not stand the test of my reason, and which is manifestly a survival of ignorant times. One does not expect a doctor to use the medical knowledge of centuries ago in his practice to-day. Certainly let men be as foolish as they are ignorant, and worship at any shrine they like; but it has always been "in the pursuit of that belief" that cruelty has been inflicted; and when Dr. Mercer-Clements says that an action was not humane, and therefore could not be religious, he is stating exactly what is contrary to fact, for cruelty seems a necessary ingredient of religion, whose history is a catalogue of fearful horrors, of crimes against humanity, of inquisition, massacre, *auto-da-fe*, crusade, and mission. Cruelties of every conceivable, and inconceivable, degree of fiendishness have been perpetrated in the name of God, and the Christian who views with horror the bullock-killing methods of Belfast butchers (whether Jewish or Christian), and is blind to the stupendous cruelties practised on human beings by religious peoples with the sanction of the Churches, is either singularly stupid or possessed of an extraordinary stock of hypocrisy.

I loathe the thought of killing animals, and for that reason have frequently gone for a year on a non-flesh diet. But I must confess that I am fond of a good steak. Still, if I had to kill a bullock to get beef, I'd be a lifelong vegetarian. I do not defend what I consider to be an immoral position; I only state my personal aversion to the taking of life. But then, I am an Atheist and a humanitarian, and am consistent in my opposition to cruelty. If I could not cut a pig's throat to satisfy my taste for pork, I certainly would not stick a bayonet

in a German, whose corpse would make no appeal to my palate; but since when have Christians been squeamish about the shedding of blood? The rack, the wheel, thumbscrews, dungeons, torture-chambers, are all peculiarly religious, and are not aggressively humane. Have not all wars had the sanction of organized religions, and have not the Christian peoples been the participants in the bloodiest wars on record?

Let us clear our minds of cant, and get back our sense of proportion. There is precious little humanity anywhere, but *what little is noticeable is outside the Churches*. The impudent theological assertion that humanitarianism and religion are practically synonymous is a complete inversion of the facts. That lie has lived long enough; it must now be poleaxed. Witch-burning, slavery, flogging, child-labour, have always been pleasing to the men of God, who have always fought hard against the legal repeal of iniquities. We need not go outside the Belfast clergy for a glaring instance of Christian indifference to humanity. Some time ago, when the workers of a large firm here were on strike, the disclosures regarding the low wages paid—particularly to the girls—came as a shock to the general public. But, although countless appeals were made by the simple-minded strikers, who confused humanity and Christianity, *not one clergyman of Belfast took a stand against the Christian employers*, whose dividends were swollen by the unpaid labour of poor girls. Well, if ministers of the Gospel, with their eyes open, can countenance conditions that inevitably make for the lifelong degradation of women, they need not shed tears over the death throes of bullocks.

But to the student, and particularly to the Bible student, there is nothing incongruous in the wholesale shedding of blood and the love of God. The Bible God fairly revels in blood, and his followers have never had any fine feelings on the subject. In the name of all that's logical why should Christians be humane? The God whom they profess to love is the most bloodthirsty monster imaginable. Not virtue or humanity but blackguardism, incest, and murder, with plenty of blood are what delights this good God of love.

In the first place we read in the "good book" that "God created the beasts of the earth after his kind..... and God saw that it was good." So when Jehovah designed animals that could live only by preying upon other animals for food, and then said that this universal gladiatorial show of the animal world was "very good," it is presumptuous of believers to criticize the methods of Belfast butchers. Not for animal alone is the abattoir of the Almighty, for sweet to the nostrils of God is the sanguinal savour of the shambles of man. He always did love a human sacrifice. Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Jephthah burnt his only daughter to satisfy the delicate feelings of God. Then when David, the man after God's own heart, asked why there was a famine in the land year after year, the humane, kind-hearted God answered: "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." Therefore, seven innocent men had to be hanged to satisfy the justice of God.

For further delightful incidents in the early career of the Great Pacifist, readers are referred to the pages of Holy Writ. "Saul's bloody house" (the language is God's not mine) couldn't compare with Egypt after the tender ministrations of the merciful Creator, for we read:—

All the waters that were in the river were turned to blood; And the fish that were in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river: and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, and that with the blood of the slain and the captives.

What matter, then, in the sight of God that an animal takes a quarter of an hour to die when treated by a Jewish butcher who himself was a victim in childhood to God's lust for blood? I fear Dr. Mercer-Clements is not a good Christian, for the orthodox believer doesn't bother his head about distinctions of pole-axe and pistol. He was reared on the blood and loves it. He is washed in the blood, saved by the blood, the cleansing blood. Doctor, stick to the Blood, if you would be a Christian, for blood and God gang aye thegither. But when you talk of humanity and religion, it makes one wonder where you graduated.

We, who are Atheists, who disbelieve in all religions, are perpetually reminded of the relentless and remorseless warfare "the law of the jungle" in nature "red in tooth and claw." We cannot control earthquakes, tame rattlesnakes, subdue sharks, or alter the nature of a hawk. But, if we are limited, we need not be impotent. I will join with Christians in any protest involving the humane treatment of animals, but, I must point out that, while one is free to speak publicly of animals killed for food and deprecate their short agony, if I were to talk of men tied to cart-wheels, of heroes hanging on barbed wire for hours before dying, of the thousand and one horrors of war—*cruel, brutal, and altogether unnecessary war* in this twentieth century, I would soon find myself subject to the ministrations of the humane prison chaplain.

J. EFFEL.

### The Gentleman Usher's Gifts.

MANY gifts have been offered to Heaven, but Heaven does not appear to be in the habit of giving receipts. As the world becomes more business-like, the omission to give proper receipts has been noticed, and the practice of giving presents to Divinity, though still in vogue, has markedly declined. From a recent newspaper, however, I learned that British Royalty still keeps up the custom. On Twelfth Day (that is, twelfth day after Christmas), some of us celebrate the Festival of the Appearing, or Epiphany, of the child Jesus to the Wise Men from the East. This is the time when our Royalty lays gold, frankincense, and myrrh before the Lord of Heaven in the Chapel Royal in St. James's Palace. Here, according to the *Morning Post*:—

The Royal gift of gold, frankincense, and myrrh is made by two officers of the Royal Household, who present the gifts in a gold embroidered red bag. Up to 1758 the reigning Sovereign, attended by Knights of the three great Orders, made the presentation in person, but George II. deputed the duty to a Gentleman Usher, and since then neither King nor Queen has taken part in the ceremony.

Through our Government, and as a people, we are now spending at such an enormous rate, that I am not inclined to cavil at this modest annual tribute on January 6. It is a very small affair in our gigantic national account. And it is a symbol of the trifling attention paid by humanity to the Above compared with the amount in times now happily past. No historian can ever compute, and no imagination can ever adequately conceive, the mass of human sacrifice, animal sacrifice, oblations of flour, oil, and fruit, and libations of wine lavished upon the appetites of the Hebrew Yahweh and the innumerable Gods of the five continents.

The human race has many faults, but, on a broad view of history, we cannot libel it by saying it is miserly

and mean. It is a very generous race. With a most lavish hand it has scattered riches at the threshold of God. The dearest has not been withheld. The ancient tale of Jephthah sacrificing his daughter on the altar of Yahweh is a type of uncountable treasures—from heart's blood to gold and frankincense—poured into God's lap, that is, God's invisible lap, and rewarded only by God's eternal silence. Young Milton (he was only fifteen years of age at the time) wrote his poem of appreciation of Providence:—

Let us with a gladsome mind  
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;  
For his mercies aye endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

All living creatures he doth feed  
And with full hand supplies their need,  
For his mercies aye endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

And so on. For my part, I am more struck by the kindness of man to his gods, continued in the face of extraordinary rebuffs of fate, and overwhelming misfortunes, famines, and miseries. Through a hundred thousand years (if one may thus loosely name the duration), and ever since primitive man first trembled at the thunder, or the rustling of leaves by night, we have incessantly given and given, and admired and adored the Heavenly Powers.

I confess that, from one point of view, it is very natural, for us in 1920, to class this generosity as the result of illusion and superstition. Assuredly, I cordially side with those who want all this free gift of humanity to Heaven to cease. Even the Gentleman Usher's quite moderate fee on Twelfth Day will have to go, and (like donors who fall off from a charitable fund) we must intimate to the Above that "we very much regret we cannot see our way to continue our subscription, and beg to remain,—obediently," etc.

Yes, I agree with that. But I cannot altogether see eye to eye with those observers who find, in the records of religious sacrifices and obligations, nought but a melancholy story of error and waste. At the bottom of our hearts, we all love a Prodigal Son more than a miserly skinflint. There is, to my mind, something almost mysteriously grand in the manner in which mankind has showered its gold, frankincense, myrrh, and the rest, upon the unresponsive gods. It has been what the French call a fine gesture. The memory of it (for it will be but a memory some day, and the sooner the better) will always constitute one of the marvels, worthy of a certain kind of reverence, of human evolution. But it also constituted a foretoken of a far nobler generosity yet to be realized. If man could so richly serve his God, how much more richly he can, and some day will, serve his fellow-man!

I said "some day, will." Yes. But if you look round the many-coloured, and many-sided life of To-day, you will see proofs enough (except for a mere cynic) of the contemporary spirit of service of man by man. If you could witness and reckon up all the sacrifices and acts of devotion realized in all the households, all the villages and fields, all the crowded towns and markets, all the danger-spots and scenes of imminent peril all over the globe in one single span between a sunrise and a sunset, you would, in a transport of conviction, declare your unshakable Faith in Humanity!

F. J. GOULD.

When shall the saner, softer politics  
Whereof we dream, have play in each proud land,  
And patriotism, grown God-like, scorn to stand,  
Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and seas?

—Thomas Hardy.

## Acid Drops.

The Edmonton local Council was in want of a stable in which to shelter two of its ambulance horses. As the Vicar of Edmonton had a vacant stable they applied to him. This being a work of mercy, the Vicar was quite agreeable if the Council would pay him £1 rent per week. One of the Councillors suggested that the Vicar should be summoned for profiteering. That is not likely to happen, but as the Vicar's church pays no rates, and it may be that the Vicar himself is also freed from that obligation, we suggest that the Council might turn its attention to that matter, and agitate for all churches and chapels to pay their share of taxation and not saddle the ratepayers with a portion of their upkeep. Here is a chance for some of the Labour members to distinguish themselves.

The Vicar of St. Andrew's, West Kensington, also has a song to sing O, and it is in the now usual strain, "There is a widespread outward indifference to religion," etc. "Outward indifference" is rather good, since it suggests that the people are not really giving up Christianity; they are only pretending, because they do not like to let people know that they believe in Christianity. Perhaps this is because the wicked Freethinkers will persecute them. We shouldn't be at all surprised. Still, we congratulate the Vicar on the phrase.

Writing of the Salvation Army, the *Daily News*, in a leading article says: "The type of mentality to which they appealed is no doubt rarer than it was." As Shakespeare says: "For this relief much thanks."

Providence is said to count the hairs of our heads, but we are not told for what special purpose the unusual census is taken. Anyhow, Providence does not appear to worry how the owners of the hair live. In London alone over 20,000 people exist five in a room.

The Rev. J. C. B. Sanders has been found guilty of selling church plate, and deprived of his living by the Bishop of Exeter. Comment is unnecessary.

Prebendary Gough has been lecturing under the auspices of the World's Evangelical Alliance on the subject of "Bolshevism and Christianity," and the addresses have been illustrated with limelight pictures of alleged Bolshevist horrors. The reverend lecturer has the consolation of knowing that his limelight pictures are as true as the Gospels, but not more so.

The *Daily News* of January 31 reports the case of two seamen who received six months' imprisonment for "having in their possession" Bolshevik literature. We have no detailed report of the case, but if that is the extent of the liberty we have won from the War, it hardly seems worth the getting. Hitherto it was only for circulating literature that one could be punished. If it is to extend to merely having it in one's possession, then we have no hesitation in saying that a more intolerable state of things could not exist. It is the method of the Christian Church in its worst day and at its worst moment. We have no doubt but that many people have in their possession literature that would land them in prison. We know that we have; and we should be rather interested in seeing the Government start a prosecution on that ground. Indeed, we made a point of saving copies of as many of the things suppressed by the Government during the War as we could get, and we have them yet.

A deputation from "various Churches assembled at Caxton Hall" is to wait on the Prime Minister to protest against the "cruelty and oppression" to which Christians are subjected by the Rumanian Government. "Christians" here means those belonging to certain Christian sects, the Rumanians themselves being very fervent Christians. The truth about the Balkans in this connection is that if fitness for self-determination is made to rest upon an enlightened conception of freedom—to which we should only assent with very

great reservations—the Balkan States are far behind such a country as India. They are very Christian, therefore only semi-civilized, and their main conception of freedom is the liberty to oppress someone else. Of course, we had to praise them as enlightened peoples during the War, but there is no reason why the farce should be kept up now. As in Ireland, the disappearance of Christianity would go a long way towards settling the Balkan Question.

The following from a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* is worth noting:—

We cannot justly accuse the Turks of having taught cruelty to the peoples of the Balkans. They were cruel before he came. The history of the later Byzantines shows what manner of men, women, and eunuchs they were—nose cutters, blinders, mutilators..... Monarchs of neighbouring states—Christian but less polished were known to their subjects as “the strangler,” “the Impaler”; another local prince drank from the gold-mounted skull of an imperial enemy; a fourth cut off the hands of his living enemies.

Other people never have had anything to teach Christians in the way of cruelty. But the informing part of the passage cited is that the people to whom reference is made were the product of the first deliberately-founded Christian State. When Byzantium became the modern Constantinople, founded by the first Christian Emperor, and with the Church in power from the outset, there was a chance of showing the world what a Christian city might become. And it did. It became a by-word in after centuries for all that was morally rotten and intellectually corrupt. Its Christian character it retained to the end until it fell into the hands of the Turk. And we do not think that anyone will question that whatever Constantinople subsequently became it was a change from disease to health when it passed from the hands of the Christian to those of the Mohammedan. Unfortunately for the world Christians are as ignorant of the history of the Church as they are of the nature of their religion.

The editor of the *Leeds Mercury* seems to be under the impression that Freethinkers want people to give up reading the Bible. That is certainly not the case. What we want them to do is to understand it. And they can't do that so long as they accept the Christian view of it.

The *Weekly Dispatch* is publishing a mass of rubbish purporting to be spirit messages received by an English Vicar, and of which, as is now usual, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says he has never seen anything like it. In advertising the nonsense, the *Dispatch* says that the script has all the characteristics of writings of this kind—“there is no stopping to think.” That certainly explains a lot. If there were any stopping to think on the part of the people we should not have newspapers filled with this kind of thing.

The Bishop of Birmingham says, “in four years of ministering to the wounded I never heard them ‘curse God and die’ which some would have thought a likely utterance.” The charming fiction is, however, not unknown in tracts and religious publications.

A writer in a daily paper calls for a censorship of “morbid hymns.” By the time the hymns are purged of all objectionable features, there will be no Christians left to sing them.

The Dean of Rochester is shortly going to Jerusalem. It is pleasant to find one parson who is not “starving.”

A begging campaign is to be conducted by the Young Men's Christian Association at Monte Carlo, where many generous patrons of the organization are passing the winter. These beggars are not absent-minded, for the Riviera is delightful in winter.

“The Bible is a portrait gallery of dreamers” declared the Rev. G. E. Mitchell at West Ealing. A chamber of horrors would be a better description.

We were pleased to notice in the course of a recent article in the *Nation* reviewing a work on the history of London, the statement that the Romans were “the greatest colonizers, and, on the whole, the wisest administrators that the world ever had.” We think that this is no more than the truth, although it is a truth not generally recognized. No nation in the world has ever so well understood the art of governing people as did the Romans, and of making the name of Rome, and the name of Roman citizenship valuable to all. It is not possible for one to think of Rome having an Ireland or an India on its hands after having been so long in supreme control. Mainly, we think, that is because citizenship was a more real thing with them than it is with us. The distinction of colour had little or no political significance. Toleration was the key-note of Roman government, and the line of the Roman Emperors, with all their faults, will well compare with the line of monarchs which Christian rule gave the world.

Largely, the fault of the common misconception of Roman life is due to Christian influences. No greater disaster has ever overtaken the world than the triumph of the Christian Church. And to hide the fact of the disaster it became the policy of the Christian writers to so blacken the character of everything called Pagan that even Christianity would appear white in consequence and by contrast. And ever since Christians have seen to it that they have kept a fairly complete control of the channels of education. To obtain a public man must write in the line of the Christian tradition, and the tradition has now been accepted as a settled and established fact. Gibbon was the first to break the spell, some few others have followed of late years, but it still remains true that a history of the Roman people has yet to be written. When that is done we shall begin to have some real conception of how much the world lost by Christianity establishing itself as the ruler of the world on the ruins of the wrecked Roman civilization.

The history of Rome has been given to the modern world by a Church that has had every inducement for misrepresentation, and which for lying and deliberate fraud stands in advance of almost anything that the world has seen. Where Christians lied so heartily about each other, it was hardly to be expected that they would not lie with at least equal heartiness about a common enemy, and where the lying might be done with absolute impunity. And if an absurd lie such as the Russian nationalizing of women can be set going to-day by our press, and accepted by numbers of people, how much easier was it for the Church to lie to a people whose minds had already been drugged with the poison of Christianity. There is hardly any phase of human life that Christianity has touched without effecting demoralization, but its influence on all that pertains to the higher mental life has been simply disastrous.

It is quite evident that the Churches are using the fantastical Bolshevik stories afloat as a means of working up an anti-Freethought feeling. This is not only so in this country, where certain papers are so continually assuring us that the Bolsheviks are making war on the Churches, notwithstanding the evidence of reputable witnesses to the effect that the Churches are open as usual in Russia, and that freedom of worship is the rule. But it is also the same in America. Thus, a friend sends us a copy of the *Evening Tribune* (San Diego, Cal.), which contains a full-page illustration of a Bolshevik with one foot on the Bible and the other crushing a Church, and letterpress informing the world that Churches have been turned into dance-halls, marriage abolished, women nationalized, etc. One is simply left amazed at the unending credulity and stupidity of men, and reminded that we have not moved so very far from the days of the French Revolution when exactly the same charges were brought against the French, and they were depicted drinking the blood of babies and eating human flesh; the credulity of Christian feeling was exploited then as is being exploited now. And when it comes to telling lies about one's opponents, it takes a lot to beat the convinced religionist. It should be said that the figure in the picture referred to is holding aloft a couple of cards on which are inscribed “Atheism” and

"There is no God." Again, a repetition of the legends afloat during the French Revolution.

The *Daily Express* thinks it very "disheartening" to find the Church sharing the wave of crime that is sweeping over the country. It points out that "too many clergymen have appeared in the courts recently. Too many scandals have lowered respect for the parson's uniform." We sympathize with the cry of our contemporary's distress. But is there any reason for assuming that the clergy are ever better than any other class in the community with an environment of an equal character. We do not make a speciality of cataloguing clerical crime, but if we did so it would be found that the clergy generally contributed their share to the list of offences. We do not suppose that the clergy are worse than others in the community, but it is really time we cured ourselves of the superstition of believing that they are better. They are not. And the assumption that they are is pure superstition. It is as much that as is ascribing to them special powers of working miracles or of curing disease.

There is very urgent need for smart sub-editors on some papers. A daily paper, criticizing fiercely Lenin's speeches, said: "it is the eloquence that may be heard in Broadmoor—full of vituperation, empty of thought." This is the unkindest cut of all! The only official speaker at Broadmoor is the chaplain.

At Wormington, Essex, three new bells in St. Andrew's Church have been erected as a war-memorial. A Calvary is to be placed at St. Michael's, Highgate, for the same purpose.

Providence is said to take an interest in the fall of the sparrows. It is very careless of human life. In the recent Mexican earthquake between two and three thousand persons lost their lives, and one child was the sole survivor of the village.

A friend from Scotland sends us a copy of an appeal for funds on behalf of the starving children of Europe. It is in connection with a service at Hillhead Parish Church, and there is the reservation on the notice to the effect that the children of Germans are to be excluded. That is Christianity in operation. The starvation of German children is of no account. Though what they had to do with the War we are puzzled to see. And imagine the man who can give towards the relief of starving children, but with the proviso that if the child happens to be of German parents it must go on starving. Christian love, like Christian truth and Christian peace, passes all understanding.

The *Two Worlds* offers a very telling retort to the Christian cry of "Fraud" in connection with Spiritualism. It says: "In all our annals we have never produced an E. T. Hooley, a Jabez Balfour, or a Rev. Smyth-Piggot, and in the denunciation of these the Church only moved after the law and public opinion had forced them." We consider the *Two Worlds'* list a very modest one. It might easily have published a couple of columns of names. For the greatest fraud in history, the Church that has forged and lied beyond all other practices, that has connived at barbarity after barbarity, to accuse others of fraudulent practices is, indeed, a case of "Pot calling kettle black."

Some extensive thefts of hats have been made from the Midland Railway Station, and eventually T. S. Matcham was charged with the thefts. In defence it was urged that the prisoner came from a Christian home; he had been engaged in Church Army work, and had been employed as a special constable during the War. In spite of these many virtues, the Luton Magistrate sentenced him to six months' imprisonment. Mr. Matcham was very foolish. With his bringing up, he should have started in business as a Christian philanthropist. He would have found it more profitable than slineag hats; many would have called him blessed, and he would have gone his way in the odour of sanctity.

The Board of the Luton Modern (Secondary) School for Boys had before it the other day the question of providing Scripture teaching. From a report in the *Luton News* for January 22, we see that there were some differences of opinion as to its advisability, although it was eventually decided to agree with the proposal that the teaching should be given. But the discussion was noteworthy as bringing from the Headmaster the following declaration:—

I am not in favour of introducing Scripture teaching because I am very much afraid of introducing hypocrisy. My experience of the teaching in boys' schools is that it has done more harm than good. There is the fact that some who are teaching it are not doing so from conviction, but simply because they are more or less compelled.

If all teachers were to speak out, we feel sure that this opinion would be generally endorsed. As things are, we congratulate the Headmaster on having the courage to say what he did. Perhaps it will lead to others speaking with equal vigour.

"A Nation in Arms" is the exultant manner in which the *Morning Post* heads its account of Mr. Churchill's new Army proposals. We are to have a much larger Army for foreign service, and although the question of an invasion of the country is set on one side, we are to have a territorial force of 345,000 men, the officers of which are to be ready for foreign service. Mr. Churchill explains that our boundaries are greater, which means that we have taken more land, and that therefore we need a large Army, and that must be created on the basis of readiness to serve in any part of the globe. So much for the War that was to end war, and a militarism that was only maintained because of the menace of Germany. We are not surprised at so conservative a writer as Mr. Garvin, of the *Observer*, pointing out, in its issue for January 25, that the need of Europe was to shake off the clutches of militarism, and addressing our militarists as follows:—

Whether in France or Britain, or in any other country, the militarists who pose as superior realists are the vaguest dwellers in cloudland.....Their instinct would pile up debts, perpetuate slaughter, throw away victory by its abuse, after the manner of the German Junkers, and bring even worse and wider social convulsions than we have seen after Armageddon. In civil politics they are ignorant, incompetent, and egregious.....The sooner all concerned learn this lesson the better.

The Mayor of Woolwich is evidently a very accommodating gentleman. Last week we cited some very stupid remarks made by him at a Christian Sunday-school, in praise of foreign missions, which were intended to encourage the children to give their pence to the missionaries. Now, we see that the same Mayor has been addressing the Socialist Sunday-school, and on this occasion he informed the scholars that "After 2,000 years the Church had missed its mark.....The Church had failed.....and was as Pagan as ever." And yet it was this Church which had missed the mark, failed, and was as Pagan as ever, that the Mayor was praising a week before for teaching the natives all that was good and unselfish. A very accommodating gentleman is the Mayor of Woolwich. And so impartial. He gives them all a turn. And if he damns a church one week he praises it the next, so when election time comes round he may fairly expect both parties to vote for him.

## 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.



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

February 15, Plymouth; 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.**

**J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—February 15, Stratford Town Hall; February 22, Manchester; February 29, Porth, Glam.; March 7, Birmingham; March 21, Abertillery.

**D. H. KERR.**—We are obliged for your good wishes and generous support.

**T. K. SCOTT.**—Sorry, but the point of your "Letter from the Spirit World" does not seem quite clear.

**F. R. FALLOWS.**—We are sending on the copies of the *Freethinker* for thirteen weeks free to the address given. The pamphlet by Mr. Pengelly is now out of print and could only be purchased second hand.

**G. YARROW.**—The Maynooth Mission promising people masses after they are dead strikes one as a cheap and inexpensive method of paying for favours received. But why on earth can't the mission use its influence with the supernatural to get the money it needs. When money is required these people always adopt the most commonplace methods.

**H. R. MORTIMER (Bengal).**—We do not see material for profitable comment on the theory put forward by the "Empire" writer that many ships at sea owe their disappearance to supernatural agency. Some people have a perfect mania for the supernatural. Perhaps Sir Arthur Conan Doyle might consider it worth investigating. His appetite in this direction seems insatiable.

**"CHEMIST."**—Certainly six columns of advertisements of Church services in Glasgow would lead one to assume that Christianity was going strong there if one did not know the facts. Sir William Treloar used to say that the time to spend money on advertising was when trade was bad. Perhaps that is the case with the churches.

**N. J. EVANS.**—We agree that when it comes to lying some of the American papers are hard to beat. Still, our own papers are doing very well. They are not going to be beaten without a struggle.

**J. F. LITTLER.**—We have read your letter with great interest. We have no doubt but you have chosen the better part. In the long run nothing will so repay a man as the consciousness that he has lived his own life, and has travelled a road chosen by himself.

**E. M.**—We are obliged for your having secured us two new readers. There are plenty of new readers just round the corner if our friends will only get there quickly to secure them.

**R. LAWSON.**—It is very hard to say. We should divide people into three classes. There are those who will sell their principles for any advantage the sale may bring them. There are others who will sell themselves within the limits of their principles, and who, while not professing anything they do not believe, will suppress a little here and trim a little there—the kind of person who would lecture on Freethought in the nineteenth century and never mention Bradlaugh. And there is a third class who will state their case let the consequences be what they will.

**CONSTANT READER.**—Quite an interesting piece of information, which we will reserve for future use.

**E. RATTRAY.**—There was no report taken of Mr. Cohen's address on the League of Nations, so there will be no possibility of reprinting. Your offer to contribute towards the cost of reprinting it is very generous, but we cannot see our way clear to accepting it. Thanks all the same.

**G. GROVE.**—Who was the bishop who said that he would "like to burn Mr. Cohen and throw his ashes down Ludgate Hill"? This is the first we have heard about it, and we consider it the best compliment to the value of our work that we have yet had. And we hope that we shall never do anything that will lead that bishop—whoever he is—to change his opinion about us.

**G. S. STEARMAN.**—We are afraid we do not agree with your criticism of the idea of a League of Nations. So long as we are all living in the same world, we must either agree to fight out our differences on the level of brute force or we must agree to settle them in some other way. The idea of the League provides a method of settling differences between groups in something of the way in which in civilized society differences are now settled between individuals.

**C. F. POPE.**—The idea of the Church being able to make a valuable contribution to the reconstruction of the world is simply farcical. Considering that it has had greater power than almost

any other single institution, the state of the world is an adequate answer to all such verbiage. Those who are ready to give the Church a new lease of power deserve all that happens. The pity is that others would have to suffer as well.

**"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.**—D. H. Kerr, £5; D. Stickells, 3s. 6d.

**N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.**—Miss Vance acknowledges:—F. Collins, 2s. 6d.

**C. RUDD.**—We are pleased that you and your brother felt repaid for coming so long a journey to attend the lecture. Thanks for cuttings.

**C. S. GOULDING.**—There is no society in your town, but why not try to form one?

**MRS. L. BELL AND W. BINDON.**—We are sending on literature for distribution. We hope that it will do good.

**D. STICKELLS.**—Our experience of sending free copies of this paper has been different from yours. We have made many new subscribers in that way, and, until we are able to afford more elaborate advertisement, we shall not abandon the method. You must remember that our potential public is a special one. Lines shall appear as soon as possible.

We are obliged to hold over some letters, and replies to others, owing to pressure on our space.

*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.*

**Sugar Plums.**

After considerable delay, the new edition of Mr. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* is now ready. It is well printed on good paper—which itself is something nowadays—and is to be had in either paper wrappers at 1s. 9d. or in half-cloth at 2s. 6d. Those who have experience in present-day printing will realize that only a large sale will justify publishing at these prices. But we are not dubious as to the demand for the book. Probably no work ever issued that bore the name of an avowed and well-known Atheist on its title-page ever achieved the same standing outside the ranks of fighting Freethinkers that this one did. It has been generally accepted as a standard book on the topic in Britain and the colonies and America the work has established itself.

We may add that the success of the book was due as much to what it did not, as to what it did, say. The subject had been so overlaid with quite unnecessary, and often irrelevant, material, that the student coming fresh to the question could not see the wood for the trees. Writers seemed to follow one another more or less blindly, without taking the trouble to think the matter out for themselves, with the consequence that, along with a great parade of learning, they gave their readers very little information of a serviceable kind. Mr. Cohen explains, in a new preface he has written, that he had a very tempting offer from a well-known firm of publishers to enlarge the book (which would have meant "padding" it) so that it might be sold at 6s or 7s. 6d., and so yield a good profit to the publisher. The offer was declined, and the general public gained by the refusal,

There was a very large audience at Stratford Town Hall on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's address. The hall is a handsome one, and, being well lit, with all the seats filled, presented a pleasant spectacle from the platform. The lecture was followed with the closest attention and marked appreciation. At the close there was a little opposition from a gentleman who was ready to vouch for a great revival of religion in France, and for the immorality that would follow the growth of Freethought in this country. The audience took the statements at their proper value. Mr. Rosetti filled the chair with marked efficiency, and made a strong appeal for members—with what success we know not. But we are informed that there was a record collection and a good sale of literature. Next Sunday (Feb. 15) Mr. Lloyd lectures there, and we hope that East London friends will see that the hall is again well filled.

Mr. Clifford Williams lectures in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, to-day (Feb. 8) at 7, on "Free Will v. Necessity." We hope that Birmingham friends will see that the Theatre is well filled for the occasion. Mr. Williams' address is certain to be both interesting and informing, and it is not every speaker of whom one could feel certain of *both* these things.

Manchester friends will please note that Mr. W. H. Thresh lectures to-day (Feb. 8) in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick. The meetings are at 3 and 6.30. Those who have attended Mr. Thresh's previous lectures will need no urging to go again. All that is necessary is to remind them to take along a friend with them.

The arrangements are now complete for the Glasgow debate on Spiritualism between Mr. Cohen and Mr. Horace Leaf. Mr. Leaf is, we understand, about the best speaker and debater on the Spiritualist platform, so that we shall have the best case made out on that side. The debate is fixed for Thursday, February 26, in St. Andrew's Hall, which is the largest hall in Scotland. But, large as it is, we are advised that those who wish to be present should make it a point of securing their tickets as early as possible. These are 1s. and 2s. each, and may be obtained from Messrs. Patterson & Sons, Buchanan Street; the Reformers' Book-stall, Bothwell Street; and from any member of the Committee of the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists and the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. In this debate Mr. Leaf represents the former organization, and Mr. Cohen the latter. Councillor Rosslyn Mitchell, LL.B., will preside over the debate. It need hardly be said that Mr. Leaf will open the debate and Mr. Cohen will reply. There will be at least three speeches from each disputant. The doors will open at 6.45, and there will be an organ recital commencing at 7.

In the course of a lengthy and appreciative review of Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, Mr. Havelock Ellis writes in the *Observer* :—

Mr. Cohen's strength lies in his resolve to apply common sense and intelligence to some of the deepest and most vital problems of human life. It is just because they are deep and vital that these problems become overlaid by tradition from a past which is no longer living. Even those who think it is daring to disturb such traditions may well be grateful to Mr. Cohen for enabling them to face naked and living realities which, rightly seen, must always be more beautiful and more satisfying than any survivals of a dead past.

We are glad to say that the demand for the book, both in this country and abroad, continues steadily. Those who wish for a copy of the book at its present price would be well advised to secure it at once. It will, we take it, be impossible to reprint without an advance in price.

Unless things alter it looks as though books will soon become the privilege of the very wealthy. We speak feelingly, because we are one of the sufferers from present prices. We were looking down a list of new publications the other day, some of which we felt we ought to get, but the very cheapest on the list was 10s. 6d., and the prices ranged upward to 30s. So we were obliged to content

ourselves with imagining that we had them, and as that does away with limitations, we made out a very big order indeed. But the worst of it is that one feels that such very high prices are quite unnecessary. Notwithstanding the high price of printing, there is really no need to charge from 10s. 6d. to 21s. for from 200 to 400 pages of spaced matter. But we suppose that publishers are human and cannot resist the temptation to exploit the market. And when an author has a certain public, the publisher seems to work on the principle of putting an extravagant price on the small number he knows will be purchased, and netting his profit with the minimum of trouble. He would say in defence that his business is to make money not to merely stock people's houses. We suppose he is right, but folk like ourselves have to suffer.

## Spiritualism.

### II.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, THE CODEX ALEXANDRINUS,  
AND MRS. SPENCER.

IN my last article I tried to give an illustration of the sort of evidence which is still being produced in order to persuade people to accept the doctrines of Spiritualism. We saw how Slade managed to deceive a few half-blind old men, and how, when confronted by persons having some knowledge of trickery, each step in his adroit manipulations was able to be observed. This week I shall give the readers of the *Freethinker* some further specimens of arguments and statements recently made by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the pages of the public press. The reason I select Sir Arthur is not that I have any personal bias against him, but because he is continually going about the country giving lectures to large audiences in an endeavour to convert them to the spiritualistic hypothesis. I do not know what sort of arguments and examples he makes use of when on tour, but I do know what he says in his books and articles, where one would expect that a man of his reputation would be especially careful to verify every statement that he might feel himself called upon to make.

Firstly, let us glance at what Sir Arthur calls "the supreme moment" of his spiritual experience. At Portsmouth he was present at some *seances* conducted by a Welsh medium, and it was at one of these sittings that he declares that he heard the voice of his son speaking to him. He describes it thus :—

There came a voice in the darkness, a whispered voice, saying, "Jean, it is I." My wife felt a hand upon her head, and cried, "It is Kingsley." I heard the word "Father." I said, "Dear boy, is that you?" I had the sense of a face very near my own, and of breathing. Then the clear voice came again with an intensity and note very distinctive of my son, "Forgive me!".....A large strong hand then rested upon my head, it was gently bent forward, and I felt and heard a kiss just above my brow. "Tell me, dear, are you happy?" I cried. There was silence, and I feared he was gone. Then on a sighing note came the words, "Yes, I am so happy."

We have here an absolutely typical example of a "direct voice" manifestation, and there are one or two points in connection with it which are specially remarkable. A whisper in the darkness, a hand placed on Lady Doyle's head, and the conclusion is immediately reached that "it is Kingsley." The voice says "Father," and Sir Arthur asks whether it is his son, and then the voice (which presumably has suddenly become clear) enunciates the phrase, "Forgive me." A hand is then placed upon the head of Sir Arthur, he is kissed, and then in answer to a question comes a sighing voice which says,

"Yes, I am so happy." That is all; yet it is quite sufficient to convince Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that he has met and conversed with the spirit of his son, just as similar experiences have convinced the Rev. Walter Wynn, who is now preaching Spiritualism, instead of assuring us, as he used to do, that the Germans are the direct descendants of the Assyrians, and that Jesus Christ is probably coming to the earth in person before 1934!

I do not know how many of my readers would be convinced of the identity of their loved ones by a dozen half-whispered words in the dark, but we must remember that Spiritualists, like all religious people, are peculiar, and what is certainty to them is very much the reverse to other people. For instance, our distinguished novelist is very interested in spirit photography. In a recent letter to the *Daily Express*, he explains how a psychograph is perhaps a better word than a photograph, since the former is essentially different, being "rather a transference by abnormal means of something which exists elsewhere." As an example, he says that Professor Henslow in the same way "obtained a reproduction of a page of the Codex Alexandrinus,<sup>1</sup> a document which never left the British Museum."

If this means anything at all, it means that fraud was here impossible, since the source from which the psychograph was derived remained locked up during the whole time that the experiment was made. But Sir Arthur has, unfortunately, forgotten a very material fact, namely, that a *facsimile* of the codex has been published in four volumes! Another interesting point is that in Prof. Henslow's illustration of the psychograph, as reproduced in his recent book on Spiritualism, it is fairly clear that it is *not* an exact facsimile at all, but simply a fairly close copy of the original. As this copy could have been made just as easily from the published facsimile as from the MS. itself; what becomes of Sir Arthur's learned statements concerning "a document which never left the British Museum"?

We will now pass on to another specimen of Sir Arthur's attempts to convert us to the marvels and miracles of modern Spiritualism. In the *Daily Mail* of December 16, 1919, he was waxing eloquent over a wonderful picture by the Hon. Mrs. Victor Spencer. The picture itself was of a head of Jesus, and Sir Arthur went on to say that he thought it was "the finest head of the Founder of Christianity that has ever been conceived," it being painted by a lady who had "no power of artistic expression in her normal condition." This statement, coming from so remarkable a figure in our public life, naturally excited a good deal of interest, and was, as usual, hailed by the Spiritualistic fraternity as another great triumph for their cause. Although, in this case, trance control was not actually specified, it was easy to confuse the position, such paintings being often executed by mediums when supposed to be controlled by a spirit desirous of giving once again his artistic genius some expression upon the canvas. In the present case, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's description did not quite fit the facts, for it so happened that the Hon. Victor Spencer, husband of the lady artist, wrote to the press explaining the whole story to the great discomfiture of the Spiritualists. Far from having "no power of artistic expression in her normal condition," as stated by Sir Arthur, Mrs. Spencer had been interested in art since her childhood, and, during 1914, had executed some five or six oil paintings, pastels, and drawings. According to her husband, Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest and most important MSS. of the Bible in Greek. Sir Arthur says a *page* was obtained. As a matter of fact, Professor Henslow's photograph shows barely *six lines*, a page being composed of *double columns of about fifty lines each!*

Spencer declares that "all her pictures are painted in a perfectly normal manner, and she is disgusted at having psychic power attributed to her."

Such are the facts concerning a lady whose picture of Christ has been trumpeted abroad as a remarkable example of the power of psychic inspiration when applied to painting. The origin of Sir Arthur's story is perfectly clear. Mrs. Spencer's mother-in-law had apparently said during an interview that the picture had been painted upside down (!), and her only explanation of this remarkable feat was that "aid" had been given the painter in producing it. Without consulting the artist, Sir Arthur at once dresses up the story into what we have seen, and it would have doubtless passed as correct for some time had not Mrs. Spencer's husband seen the account, and immediately sent off his crushing exposure to the press. It is from sources like these that the wonderful stories of Spiritualistic marvels are concocted and once pronounced by the high priests of the cult, they become stereotyped articles of faith which it is a waste of time to attempt to shake. One feels almost inclined to say half despairingly: *Populus vult decipi: decipiatur.*

E. J. D.

## Early Christian Frauds.

### II.

(Continued from p. 75.)

THE question of chief importance in connection with the writing and publishing of lying histories of Christ by the early Christians is the alleged priority of the four canonical Gospels. It is this question, therefore, that I shall first endeavour to elucidate.

Irenæus, it will be remembered, is the earliest writer who names the Gospels; though it may be conceded that when he wrote (about A.D. 185) they had all been in existence some twenty or thirty years—some of them longer. This bishop, speaking of the Marcosians, says (*Heresies*, i. 20):—

Amongst other things, they bring forward that false and wicked story which relates that our Lord, when he was a boy learning his letters, on the teacher saying to him, as is usual, Pronounce "Alpha," replied "Alpha." But when, again, the teacher bade him say "Beta," the Lord replied: Do thou first tell me what "Alpha" is, and then I will tell thee what "Beta" is. This they expound as meaning that he alone knew the unknown, which he revealed under its type "Alpha."

This story may be false, and even wicked; it is certainly very silly; with these matters we are not concerned. It is, however, perfectly clear that the anecdote was in existence in very early times. It is also evident that the heretical Marcosians were not the inventors of the story; they merely selected it from a Gospel in circulation in their days; and, assuming it to be true, gave it a mystic or symbolical interpretation.

The story is found in the extant Gospel of Thomas, in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and in the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, and is slightly different in each, as well as in each of the forms of those Gospels. In some accounts the Greek letters are given, in others the Hebrew, though it is admitted that all were derived from the same document. The story in the Gospel of the Infancy (par. 49) reads:—

Therefore they took him to another and a more learned master, who, when he saw him, said: Say "Aleph." And when he had said "Aleph," the master ordered him to pronounce "Beth." And the Lord Jesus answered him, and said: First tell me the meaning of the letter "Aleph," and then I will pronounce "Beth."

In the Gospel of Thomas (par. 14) the boy Jesus says to his schoolmaster:—

If thou art really a teacher, and art well acquainted with the letters, tell me the power of the "Alpha," and I will tell thee the power of the "Beta."

Irenæus is thus a witness to the existence both of the canonical and uncanonical Gospels. But all the writings in which the foregoing story is found contain accounts of the working of a number of senseless miracles by the boy Jesus between his infancy and his twelfth year. In considering the authorship of these stories, it must be borne in mind that the Ebionites, as well as most of the Gnostic sects, held Jesus to have been a mere man, the son of Joseph, with no power to work miracles until the spirit of God descended upon him at his baptism, when about thirty years of age. We may safely say, then, that the authors of this class of writings did not belong to the sects named. The writers, beyond all doubt, were orthodox Christians who believed Jesus to be the son of God and possessed of supernatural powers from his birth.

From Irenæus we go back to the time of Justin, who wrote about A.D. 150. In the writings of this ancient apologist we find a considerable number of references to matters now contained in the three Synoptical Gospels, besides many quotations, chiefly sayings attributed to Christ, similar to those in the Sermon on the Mount. Modern apologists tell us that these were all made from the canonical Gospels, though most of the quotations are shorter than, and vary more or less from, the parallel passages in our present text. This circumstance they endeavour to account for by asserting that the writer quoted "freely from memory." The following is a short example:—

JUSTIN.

MATT. v. 39-40.

This is what he says: But *whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* And if any man would go to law with thee, and *take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.* (1 Apol. 16).

From the foregoing example it will be seen that the words italicized in Matthew's version represent Justin's text, which is undoubtedly a more primitive one. Justin's introductory sentence, "*This is what he says,*" leaves no doubt as to his having copied the words from a Gospel in use in his time. All his quotations and extracts, he says, were taken from the "Memorabilia of the Apostles"—that is to say, from Memoirs or histories supposed to have been written by apostles. Justin refers to these Memoirs no less than ten times, but he never once names a Gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John—the latter Gospels being apparently unknown to him. We will now look at some of this credulous Father's references and quotations.

1. Speaking of the birth of Christ, Justin says (Dial. 78):—

For Joseph, not being able to find a lodging in the village, lodged in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ, etc.

If Justin's Memoirs were identical with our present Gospels, as modern apologists contend, how is it that there is no mention of this circumstance in any of them? Mark and John say nothing about the birth; Luke states that Joseph and Mary took up their lodging in the stable of the inn at Bethlehem (ii. 6-7); according to Matthew, Christ's parents lodged in a "house" (ii. 11). It is quite certain that Justin did not take his account from the canonical Gospels, and, this being the case, we have to look for the circumstance named in one of those called uncanonical.

In the Protevangelium it is related that when the parents of Jesus were within three miles of Bethlehem,

Mary was taken in labour, whereupon Joseph lifted her down from the ass upon which she was riding, "and he found a cave there, and led her into it," etc. In this cave Jesus is stated to have been born. Justin's statement respecting this matter proves conclusively that writings of the character of the Protevangelium were in circulation in his day.

2. Justin, in giving a symbolical interpretation to various matters recorded in the Old Testament, says (Dial. 42):—

Moreover, the prescription that twelve bells be attached to the robe of the high priest, which hung down to the feet, was a symbol of the twelve Apostles, who depend on the power of Christ.

With Justin's system of misrepresentation we are not now concerned. The only point to be noticed is that he mentions "twelve" as the number of bells worn on the high priest's robe. Now, no particular number is anywhere prescribed in the Old Testament, the only place where a command about bells is given being Exodus xxviii. 33-34. Justin must, therefore, have drawn his information from some other source. The most probable is the Protevangelium, in which it is stated (par. 8):—

And the high priest went in, taking the robe with the *twelve bells* into the Holy of Holies, etc.

There can be little doubt, then, that some such history as the Protevangelium formed part of Justin's "Memorabilia of the Apostles."

3. Speaking of Jesus when a child, Justin says (Dial. 88):—

For even *at his birth* he was in possession of his power.

This statement is a proof of the existence of another class of apocryphal writings in Justin's time. The Gospel of Thomas contains accounts of a number of miracles alleged to have been performed by the boy Jesus from his fifth to his twelfth year. The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy goes even farther, and relates several miraculous performances by the child Jesus shortly after his birth. The latter work, as we now have it, is a translation from the Syriac, and states itself to be a compilation from older sources. Justin's statement leaves no room for doubt that a primitive version of this Gospel was also included in the Memoirs.

(To be continued.) ABRACADABRA.

## Human Nature.

Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade  
Of that which once was great is passed away.

—Wordsworth.

WE are told that it is human nature to venerate the glories of the past. That may be. I don't know. The fundamental point is to discover what constitutes *human nature*. Any proposition that does not exactly coincide with the existing order of things is summarily disposed of as not being in accordance with *human nature*. This is a presumption of a standard set of ideas or principles held in common by the whole human race.

At the same time (by measuring all things by this rule) it presupposes that immutability of this *human nature*. This is stagnancy. It is the high road to putrefaction. To set up *human nature* as the measure of all things is to degenerate rational man to the bundle of instincts of irrational animals.

If a prophet had arisen a hundred years ago and had cried out in the market-places, "Men shall fly across the Atlantic in a day," what do you think would have happened?

He'd have been laughed at, and some bright spirit, more blatant than the rest, would have mouthed the

general sentiment, "*Impossible! It isn't human nature.*" To-day they tell us, "It isn't human nature for man to exist without belief in a supreme being. He must have something to venerate." To-morrow folk will smile at the folly, and, haply, will think with gratitude of the little band that dared to laugh at the idea of the immutability of petrified custom.

One can well understand why the Church should dig itself in behind *human nature*. What is more natural than that one chimera should hide itself behind another, in the belief that two impostors are stronger than one? These gentlemen-adventurers in black will tell you that Christianity gives expression to all that is best in human nature, to all the nobler instincts of man. That sounds very well. The words swell like the tones of an organ, and the resemblance goes even deeper, for both are *wind*.

Unfortunately, the nobler instincts of man do not exist, for man has no *instincts*. If he had had an instinct for truth, religion would long ago have ceased to bewilder him with its juggling with words and to mesmerize him with its conjuring with consecrated persiflage. There lies at once the strength and weakness of the Church. It plays upon the credulity that is the heritage of a primitive superstition. There lies the secret of its hold on the masses, and there the reason why it crumbles (like a mummy in the light of day) when it emerges into the sunlight of Reason. It is apposite that it should have been Milton the Puritan who wrote in his *Samson Agonistes* :—

Apt words have power to 'suage  
The tumours of a troubled mind.

Words are all right in their way, but a little experience is worth a thousand dictionaries. This settling of doubts by the immediate application of poultices of words is one of the lines in which Bible-punchers are past-masters. Their indoctrinated belief that man cannot bear suffering without divine sustenance is one of their strong points. And that's where experience comes in. How do they know that one can't bear his burdens of sorrow on his own back? They haven't tried it. I have, and I know. And so they go on erecting imposing edifices on quicksands of words. From *human nature* they pass to *morality*. This is where they shine. They make public morality the special invention of their creed. It's their own particular present to humanity.

The special invention of my sainted aunt! Morality is as old as animate existence. As has been amply demonstrated by innumerable scientists and brilliantly summarized by Kropotkin in his *Modern Science and Anarchism*, morality is the bond of union between the individuals of all species; in man it is but a heritage from the period before he evolved into his present form.

But, alas, as Darwin says: "Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge," and the empty rumblings of sanctified ignorance have drowned the voice of truth. And so the social morality of Nature is crushed by the *morality* of the fear of God.

Thus we have descended from the true morality which was ere God began. Here only are we inferior to the beasts of whom Walt Whitman says :—

They do not sweat and whine about their condition ;  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins ;  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God.

Until we shake off the bonds of God we must be slaves. Spontaneous goodness must remain stifled beneath the gag of ritual. A hierarchy of impostors has made man less than the dust, has stolen his birthright, and has given him a mess of pottage. And he is satisfied, for he does not know all that birthright means. But we who know; can we rest while the chains still hang heavy upon us? Shall we not rise up against

them? Shall we not fight? For, as Carlyle says, "What is the use of health, or of life, if not to do some work therewith?"

And if we fail to-day—at least, 'tis something to have tried. Others shall conquer to-morrow.

H. C. MELLOR.

### Book Chat.

*Revivals, Sex, and Holy Ghost; a Description of the Psychic Erotism of a Negro Revival*, gives a striking illustration of an aspect of religion that is dealt with by Mr. Cohen in his *Religion and Sex*. The author, Mr. Theodore Schroeder, well known in American and British Freethought circles, describes his own experiences with a revival conducted by a preacher who was described as "The Coloured Billy Sunday." The result is a document which is full of significance to those who are not led away by the modern ethical gloss that is placed upon religion, but who realize that the study of religion, when pursued in a scientific spirit opens up many concealed chapters in human motive, besides throwing light upon many obscure questions in psychology and sociology.

Mr. Schroeder went quite openly to this "Coloured Billy Sunday" and informed him that his object in visiting the meeting was that of a scientific observer, and that he was convinced that the "religious experience" of these meetings was essentially a sexual ecstasy. The preacher assured him that there was no connection between the two, but welcomed him to the meeting despite his belief. Mr. Schroeder was the only white person among about 500 negroes.

The services lasted from 8 p.m. till midnight. The preacher exhorted, sang, clapped his hands, the audience singing, laughing, replying, as they felt impelled. Then the preacher's movements became more violent :—

His handclapping became more frequent and more violent. Also he oftener indulged in stamping and more frequent in higher jumping. Then he seemed almost to lose control of his voice. His exclamations became ejaculatory, spasmodic, and, at times, mere repetitions of one or a few words..... Frenzy and the Holy Ghost operate much alike..... Shrieks from the audience broke in; many jumped high from the floor; one stood upon a chair and gesticulated wildly; arms flew through the air; chairs were tipped over; there was great commotion in every part of the Church. Pandemonium reigned. The "Holy Spirit" seized several sisters and threw them to the ground. Others were impelled to sit on the lap of their neighbours. Of all this the parson seemed to be wholly oblivious. He, too, had passed into a world of rapturous phantasy so thoroughly obsessing that he appeared wholly unconcerned, and probably was inhibited from becoming conscious of all that was happening. The Pentecostal service was on and the Holy Ghost was busy, very busy, intensely, absorbingly busy; and that was all that mattered.

We have space for only two or three of Mr. Schroeder's experiences, which are not essentially different from those that might be seen in the more extravagant revivals that take place in this country. Mr. Schroeder says :—

Not far from me was a young man who gave signs of coming under the influence of "the spirit." The semi-official male attendant grabbed her arms from behind so she could injure no one with her elbows or fists, as she twisted back and forth convulsively. Her eyes were shut, the man pulled her arms straight at an angle of 45 degrees to her body. She yielded to his greater strength, or responded to an opportunity for satisfying a personal impulse. At anyrate she dropped her head on to his chest and neck, then rested quietly, almost in his embrace..... At my left a woman of about fifty gave signs of restlessness and great excitement. Now she got up to testify for Jesus and with majestic stride, rhythmically responsive to singing, her head high up and bent back as far as possible..... she proceeded in a shrieking, excited voice to "bear her testimony." Twice she went across the floor and back, her voice and gait growing more uncertain. As she approached the seat the second time she shrieked at her loudest: "I am with God and Jesus is in me," and so she half fell and half placed herself in her chair. Now for the first time her head dropped to the front. She brought her arms forward as if to embrace some visible being, then folded them tightly over her breasts, gave her body a few vigorous wiggles, and the Holy Ghost had flown. In a few minutes she resumed her former attitude,

beat time mildly when the singing was on, and otherwise seemed quite unconscious about her surroundings.

Mr. Schroeder gives many more cases, and there is no escaping their general character. There is not a skilled physician who could mistake them. They are really studies in sexual psychology, a field on which the new Psychoanalysis has thrown so much light. And here, if anywhere, it is true that we must use the abnormal to throw light on the normal, and *vice versa*. Christian mystics of a more normal kind, says Mr. Schroeder,

will necessarily disparage all excesses such as I have described as being manifestations of the abnormal. They believe in only "sane mysticism" in "normal religion," in that "sweet calm communion with God".....which "giveth a peace that passeth all understanding.".....And yet when the divine rapture is over with, one cannot readily distinguish most of those who have gone through the above described experience from the average of negroes who have never been so favoured. Neither can any mystic point out an essential and fundamental difference in the psychologic quality (as distinguished from quantity and intensiveness) between the abnormal and the "normal sane" sort of religious experience. There is an obvious difference in the intensity of that which is experienced, accompanied by an obvious difference in the degree to which the "abnormal" are for the time being obsessed by their subjective states, and correspondingly inhibited from guidance in conduct by a consciousness of the environment.....There are also varying degrees of psycho-genetic consciousness, each in turn accompanied by varying degrees of shame or by an attendant degree of inferiority. All these factors necessarily operate in some way to check the more extravagant manifestation of impulsive tendencies.....Religion, as personal experience fades out, merges into pure secularism, when our libido is unrepressed through wholesome and continuous normal and self-satisfying self-expression. Then we only entertain more or less scientific opinions about subjects of religion, and we no longer have a religion of personal experience.

Mr. Schroeder's study appears in the July (1919) number of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. At present, in the number of scientific journals, America seems to be well ahead of this country.

P. S.

## Correspondence.

PROF. ZOLLNER AND SLADE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I see that your contributor, E. J. D., accounts for the remarkable phenomena examined in the case of Mr. Slade by Zollner and his friends, by the assertion that Zollner was ill, that Fechner was blind, and that Weber and Scheibner were imbeciles. I have not yet found out what form of paresis I am myself suffering from, but as our opponents invariably affix some bodily affliction upon everyone who believes the evidence in favour of psychic force, I have only to wait my turn.

As a matter of fact, I have always, perhaps unjustly, regarded Slade as one of those mediums who were morally weak if they were psychically strong, and who wanted very careful watching, as they might be tempted where psychic power fails, and it is notoriously intermittent, to substitute fraud. That he had psychic power in a very high degree is evident to anyone who reads the evidence. Bellachini, the well-known German conjurer (Court conjurer at Berlin), deposes upon oath at the very time of the Zollner experiments:—

These phenomena with Mr. Slade have been examined by me with the minutest observation, and I have not in the smallest degree found anything to be produced by means of conjuring or by mechanical apparatus. Any explanation of the experiments which took place under the circumstances and conditions then obtaining by any reference to conjuring is absolutely impossible.

I suppose we shall now hear that Bellachini had a cataract in both eyes and was a congenital idiot.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

## AGNOSTIC OR ATHEIST?

SIR,—The admirable letter of Mr. Fred. Collins answers this question so clearly that no further explanation seems

necessary. Suffice it to say that Agnosticism was invented by Huxley in 1869, and defined to mean—

That a man shall not say he knows or believes what he has no scientific ground for professing to know or believe.

After all, why bother about mere labels? To me, the beauty of Freethought is that it has no iron-bound creed, and gives every man perfect freedom to form his own opinions on any subject whatever, insisting also that he shall not deny the same freedom to others. It is, therefore, a mode of thought whose principles may be summed up as follows: Freethought, Free Speech, Free Press, and Free Discussion.

In his *Lay Sermons*, Huxley gives the following description of a liberal education, which is so true and beautiful that it should hang conspicuously in every home and school:—

That man I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in his youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold logic engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of Art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself.

G. O. WARREN.

## 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. Samuels, "Bible Studies."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Fred Montague, "Science, God, and Energy."

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. E. C. Saphin, "The Founding of the Christian Church." Music from 6.30 to 7.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, William Platt, "The Poet as Humanist."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. E. Clifford Williams, "Free-Will v. Necessity."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templars Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Mr. G. Scott, "Life After Death." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Policy of Violence and Terrorism in Politics."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street): Mr. W. H. Thresh, 3, "The Marriage Customs of Plants"; 6.30, "The Search for a Soul."

## 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.

**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.

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.

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

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

A COURSE OF  
**LANTERN LECTURES**

WILL BE DELIVERED BY

**JOSEPH McCABE**

ON

**THE EVOLUTION OF LIFE AND OF MAN**

IN THE

Hall of the Northern Polytechnic Institute  
 (Near Holloway Tube Station).

ON

WEDNESDAYS, FEBRUARY 11, 18, and 25, 1920  
 at 8 sharp.

Tickets may be obtained of the Secretary, Herald League,  
 318 Green Lanes, Manor House, Finsbury Park, N.4. For  
 single lectures, 1s. and 6d.; Course Tickets of four lectures,  
 3s. and 1s. 6d. respectively. A limited number of Balcony  
 Seats free.

**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 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

**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.

**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.

READY FEBRUARY 10.

THE BOOK THAT HIT THE MARK!

# Determinism or Free-Will?

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

NEW EDITION REVISED AND ENLARGED.

## Some Press Opinions of First Edition.

"Far and away the best exposition of the Determinist position in a small compass."—*Literary World*.

"Mr. Cohen's book is a masterpiece in its way, by reason of its conciseness and fine literary style."

*Birmingham Gazette.*

"The author states his case well."—*Athenæum*.

"A very able and clear discussion of a problem which calls for, but seldom gets, the most severely lucid handling. Mr. Cohen is careful to argue his definitions down to bedrock."—*Morning Leader*.

"A thoroughly sound and very able exposition of the Determinist, that is to say, the scientific position in this matter."—*Positivist Review*.

"A clear and concise exposition of the Determinist philosophy.....The need for such a work, one that should be popular in tone, without being superficial in character, has long been felt by both the general reader and the student of philosophy."—*Harrogate Guardian*.

"A defence of Determinism written with ability."—*Times*.

"Mr. Cohen has written just the book that Rationalists have long been inquiring for."—*Literary Guide*.

"Mr. Chapman Cohen never wastes phrases, and is scrupulously careful in the choice of words.....There is probably no better popular summary than this of Mr. Cohen's."—*Ethical World*.

Well printed on good paper. Price, Wrappers **1s. 9d.**, by post 1s. 11d.; or strongly bound in Half-Cloth **2s. 6d.**, by post 2s. 9d.

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

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

## Town Hall, Stratford. Sunday Evening Lecture.

FEBRUARY 15.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Religion and Morals in the Light of Science."

Doors open at 6.30.

Admission Free.

Chair taken at 7.

Collection.

Questions and Discussion Cordially Invited.

## 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.