

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. 27

SUNDAY, JULY 4, 1920

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>A Carnival of Cant.—The Editor</i>	417
<i>The Alleged Evidence for the Supernatural.—J. T. Lloyd</i>	418
<i>Foote's Table-Talk.—Mimnermus</i>	420
<i>Science and the Occult.—W. Mann</i>	421
<i>Open Letter.—Andrew Millar</i>	422
<i>Fashionable Atheism.—Arthur B. Moss</i>	426
<i>Christian Infidelity in Politics.—Athos Zeno</i>	426
<i>Necessary Truths.—A. E. Maddock</i>	428
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letter to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

A Carnival of Cant.

The past few weeks have witnessed a batch of religious congresses. They are annual events, and the present series have been neither better nor worse than previous ones. The speakers have all talked as though the people outside were waiting for some sort of a lead from these clerical lights, and long practice has enabled them to talk up to the position. Perhaps they impose upon themselves as much as they impose upon other people. It may be also that these gatherings are protected from ridicule by their frequency. We neither laugh nor weep at things with which we are familiar. To arouse either grief or mirth there must be an element of the unexpected. And people are so used to the posing of the clergy that many are inclined to take them at their own valuation. Keep on assuring the public that you are a great man, and in time a reputation of greatness will be established. The belief will then encourage your complacency, and your complacency will strengthen the belief. Repetition is the secret of successful advertising, and no one realizes this with greater clearness than does the average parson. Acting upon it has made the fortune of many a quack and the reputation of scores of clergymen. Religious papers assure their thousands of readers that the influence of the clergy is vital to the nation. The same thing is repeated from thousands of pulpits. And although no one knows how or where or when this beneficent influence is exerted, a conviction is produced that it is there.

* * *

The Game of Pretence.

We must remember that these gatherings are not assemblages of mere citizens met to discuss subjects of general interest. They are meetings of men who claim to have a quite peculiar and authoritative voice in the direction of affairs. Otherwise the question might be raised as to the qualifications of these men for leadership. They are certainly not more able than other men. They are not better informed than other men. No one consults them on economics, on art, on literature, or on any other knowable topic in the belief that they are likely to have information that is denied others. Their claim to leadership is based solely upon the existence of a number of doctrines that very few heartily believe in,

and of which many are heartily ashamed. And this want of belief is as common with the clergy as it is with the laity. Church and Chapel are alike here. There is the same solemn pretence, and the same real scepticism of teachings which they place before their congregations as unquestionable truth. It is a game of humbug with both clergy and laity, but the rule of the game appears to be that each shall pretend the humbug is not there. The laity go on professing to believe in the honesty of the clergy; the clergy continue to act as though the laity had no doubt of their genuineness. Is it any wonder that there is a reflection of all this in the humbug and insincerity of our political life?

* * *

None Righteous, No, Not One!

Officially the clergy have certain specified doctrines to preach. How many preach them? Some of them openly discard them. They say that modern thought has placed these teachings in quite a new light, and they must no longer be forced upon people. We agree that they are false, but they are part of Christianity. That has not altered and cannot alter. Our opinion of a teaching may alter, but the teaching itself remains. Christianity is a revealed religion, and there has been no new revelation cancelling the old one. The trust deeds of the various Nonconformist Churches, and the articles of the Established Church tell us plainly enough what these teachings are. And in them you have all the teachings that characterize historic Christianity. There is the belief in the special inspiration of the Bible, in miracles, in heaven and hell, in damnation for unbelief, and in the miracle of grace. And when we find these doctrines openly denounced by clergymen who are drawing salaries for preaching them there is only one expression that properly describes their conduct. They are drawing money under false pretences, and their only apology is that they are all doing it. Some few years ago, when Mr. R. J. Campbell and Dr. Clifford were attacked for their inconsistency in preaching doctrines that were contrary to the trust deeds of their churches, the reply made was that all the churches were equally guilty, and that if all the churches preached the doctrines of their trust deeds they would be nearly all deserted. Both the charge and the reply were true; but the reply did not destroy the accusation, it merely illustrated it. It asked why one should be singled out for attack when they were all equally guilty. One can sympathize with the complaint. There is no special reason for attacking one or two; there is every reason for attacking the lot. The indictment should lack nothing on the score of comprehensiveness.

* * *

Honesty and Ignorance.

The peculiarity of the present position is that the greatest amount of honesty rests with the least enlightened. From time to time in these columns there are hard things said of certain types of evangelical and revivalistic preachers. They are often crude and uncultured, but they are at least honest, and their

Christianity is far nearer the genuine article than is that of the apologetic and liberal preacher. It is, indeed, one of the worst and, at the same time, one of the truest things that can be said about current Christianity that, while it fails to attract the better type of man, it demoralizes the best of those who enter its service. For no man can continue to follow the course of "trimming" old teachings in such a way as to make them congenial to modern taste without undergoing deterioration. The main effort of such a man is given to evading what he ought either boldly to preach or as boldly denounce. To anyone but a clergyman it would be clear that if there is no historic foundation for the Biblical stories, if God did not reveal himself to the Jews in a way in which he did not reveal himself to other people, if the miracles of the Bible are only mistaken interpretations of natural events, then there is no more reason to call the Bible inspired than there is to claim inspiration for *Jack and the Beanstalk*. As it is, the lives of thousands of clergymen appear to be spent in an attempt to discover by how many tricks of speech and subtleties of interpretation they can make the Bible and Christianity mean something which by no honest interpretation they can be made to mean. * * *

Are Christians Ashamed of Their Faith?

The educated layman is quite as much ashamed of genuine Christianity as is the better type of preacher. In actual life he no more attempts to regulate his life by the Bible than he does by the *Iliad*. He no more believes in the miracles of the Bible than he believes in the man in the moon; and he would as soon think of trying to walk across the Atlantic as he would of turning one cheek when the other was smitten, or trusting to meekness to secure possession of the earth. Educated people are so ashamed of genuine Christianity that they dislike to hear it mentioned. When the Freethinker does mention it, he is accused of misrepresenting Christianity. He takes the doctrines as orthodoxy has delivered them; he quotes from the Bible and from the official confessions of faith; the "advanced" Christian retorts that he is attacking a Christianity that is as dead as the dodo. We may readily admit that these doctrines do not represent the real beliefs of educated men and women, but they do represent the only authoritative Christianity the world has; and if Christians are sufficiently developed to be ashamed of them, it is a thousand pities they have not the moral courage to discard the name as they have already discarded the thing.

* * *

A Dead Creed.

It is a depressing situation. People cannot be honest to each other while they refrain from being honest to themselves. This cannot be, so long as they attempt to square the religious beliefs of savages with current scientific knowledge. You cannot be savages all day on Sunday and civilized men and women all the rest of the week without both sides suffering. Your savagery will not be so savage as it might be; your civilization will not be so complete as it might be. The inevitable outcome is an orgy of hypocrisy and a carnival of cant. We talk of our progress and our civilization; we prate of the virtue of honesty and of straightforward speech, and then proceed to contradict all we have said by professing to believe in a series of doctrines that were born in the minds of the cave-men and matured during the darkest period of European history. One congress of people solemnly discuss the present position of miracles; another debates on the question of the Virgin Birth, on the resurrection, etc. Such questions as these were really settled long ago. There exists no doubt about them in any really educated intelligence. We know that miracles

do not occur: even those who discuss their credibility know it. We know that the idea of God was born in the brain of the savage; we know that such things as miraculous births, god-men, and resurrected corpses belong to the region of myth. No one actually believes these things. If a test case were devised and applied, it would be found that these beliefs are already dead. What remains is a belief that these stories are still alive. And it is the pricking of that bubble that the clergy most dread.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Alleged Evidence for the Supernatural.

(Concluded from p. 404.)

As Mr. Orr says, it may be perfectly true that there are Christians who deeply regret that they cannot regain the simple and unclouded faith of their far-off childhood; but such people forget that the chief feature of that faith was its childishness, unreasonableness, or blindness, which, of course, deprived it of all evidential value. From the evidence of the child Mr. Orr turns to the witness of mystery. We all know that the Universe teems with wonders. We meet them in great abundance every day. They multiply in proportion to our growth in knowledge. It is also true that the known is an infinitesimally small region; but however small it is at any given time, it is undeniable that its boundaries are being constantly extended. It is not true, however, that the world is smaller to the Atheist than to the Theist, or less full of wonders. The Universe was quite as big and wonderful to Shelley, the Atheist, as to Wordsworth, the Christian. The dimensions of the world are exactly the same to all; but the more such a man as Darwin learned about its grandeur and majesty, the less grew his faith, until in the end he was forced to confess that he had no faith at all. Are we to infer from that result that Darwin, in his old age, could not have truthfully repeated Wordsworth's lines:—

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears?

The question is, however, in what sense do the so-called mysteries of the Universe bear witness to the supernatural? To this question Mr. Orr supplies no answer. He naively evades it thus:—

This element of mystery, while it perplexes the mind, offers to the soul an outlet for all its powers. That very region in which thought is baffled is for faith a place of life and freedom. It is in the realm of things invisible that the soul finds free play for its pent-up energies.

It is difficult to conceive how a man of education and culture could pen such a passage as the one just quoted. Mr. Orr evidently regards the soul as an independent entity, quite distinct from mind, just as mind is by many supposed to be a separate entity from the body. In what standard work on psychology subsequent to the year 1885 does he find support for such an absurd theory? Professor James Ward pronounces the duality of mind and matter a disastrous theory; but Mr. Orr seems to hold the tripartite view, which is more disastrous still. Mr. Orr appears to be on intimate terms with the soul, speaking of its life and experiences with the cocksureness of positive knowledge. And yet modern psychologists have completely abandoned the soul-theory, regarding it as "a wholly fictitious notion, generated by superstition and maintained by priests in order to strengthen their influence and to support the authority of the Church." But even on the assumption that the

soul exists and revels amongst the mysteries of the Universe, how can the mysteries it contemplates furnish any evidence whatever for the supernatural? What does the reverend gentleman mean by "the realm of things invisible"? I, a Materialist, ardently believe in many things that are invisible. Ideas, good and bad, are invisible, and the world is governed by them. The sentiments of honour, truth, duty, comradeship, and love are invisible, and yet most real in the generality of minds; but there is nothing supernatural about them. In Mr. Orr's vocabulary unseen and supernatural are synonymous terms, from which it follows that his invisible things are of necessity supernatural. Whatever they are—God, Christ, angels, the spiritual world—how can the mysteries of the Universe prove their existence? On this the only really important point the preacher is discreetly silent. His allusion to St. Paul's new conception of mystery throws no light whatever on this difficulty.

Now we approach what is termed "the evidence of the individual soul," or the soul's intuition, as it is called. We believe neither in the soul nor in intuitive knowledge. To say that "the soul establishes a direct, peculiar, and living touch with God" is to indulge in fiction, God and the soul being the creation of the human imagination; and the very phraseology tacitly gives the whole case away. Why is it that God never establishes a direct, peculiar, and living touch with man? Why is it that the initiative is always taken by man, never by the Deity? Is it not simply because God is not an objective reality, and exists only to those who believe in him? If God actually existed, Atheism would be impossible and Gospel preaching an absurdity. The only mission of the pulpit is to create and preserve the belief in him, which no one possesses naturally or keeps without unbroken effort. It is this that explains the necessity of daily imparting religious instruction to children, and the violent opposition of the Churches to the secular principle. It is this fact that also explains why the deaf and dumb have neither belief in nor experience of God until the Gospel is preached to them. Mr. Orr quotes the case of Helen Keller, who was deaf, dumb, and blind, and makes the following illuminating statement:—

The time came when it was resolved to try to convey to her the idea and the name of God. America's greatest preacher was entrusted with the task. Would he be able to bring home to this isolated life the truth and reality of the unseen?

That in Helen's case the task proved to be comparatively easy is of no evidential value, for we are informed by missionaries to deaf mutes that, as a rule, the work is not easy.

Mr. Orr's next appeal is to the consensus of religious experience. This is the most common and threadbare of all arguments, but of late the divines have come to regard it as the most cogent. Their claim is that in religious experience they receive and enjoy an *immediate* knowledge of the objective existence of God, Christ, and the unseen world. Christians are said to possess the power of seeing the invisible. They know that the hosts of the Lord are near them, and that these are stronger than all the might of this world. They meet together not just to name the name of God but to realize his presence, and they commune with him as a man communes with his friends. That such is their experience is indisputable, as many who are now Atheists well know; but the number of those to whom it comes is comparatively very small. The point, however, is that it is a genuine experience, whether those who enjoy it are many or few. Our only contention is that Christian experience, though in the overwhelming majority of instances sincere, is yet

evidentially valueless. Mr. Orr maintains that "the Church lives and grows in the sense of Christ's continual presence"; but that is no proof that Christ exists objectively; it only shows that the Church believes in his existence, and acts accordingly. If Christ really existed and mystically visited his disciples, he would be the same Being to all; but, as a matter of fact, there are almost as many different and conflicting conceptions of him as there are believers. To some he is God, and to others mere man, and to others still God-man. Some regard him as the propitiation for the world's sins, as the one who purchased his Father's mercy with his own precious blood, thereby meeting all the demands of eternal justice, whilst others look upon him as simply the revealer of God to mankind, and our Great Exemplar. Christians have communion not with an externally existing person who makes himself known to them, but with the object of their faith, whose existence is, of necessity, purely subjective, otherwise he would be and mean the same to all. Furthermore, the sense of God's or Christ's presence is in exact proportion to the strength and intensity of the belief in him. There are multitudes of professing Christians whose faith is so weak and perfunctory that it never yields them any ecstatic joy, or to whom religious experience is almost entirely unknown because they do not realize the presence of God. But to all alike God is precisely what their faith portrays him, whilst to those who have no faith he does not exist at all. It is this fact that makes it so very hard to be a Christian, for everything depends upon ourselves—nothing upon God. Does it not inevitably follow that Christian experience furnishes no evidence of the supernatural, but is exclusively the outcome of the belief in it, and corresponds in its joyousness, to the strength and intensity of that belief?

Our only possible conclusion, therefore, is that for the reality of the supernatural not a shred of evidence is obtainable, and that the natural alone "with which alone we have to deal," is real. Christianity has had its day, and the belief in it is fast becoming a thing of the past. The supernatural is being discredited in every direction, and the time has surely arrived to give Nature a fair chance. What right have we to go beyond the boundary of the sense-world? We prefer to limit ourselves to this present life, shutting out all thought of God, or spirit, or heaven, or eternity. We are fully persuaded that this is the wisest policy, and that practical loyalty to it will yield an abundant harvest of social peace and happiness.

J. T. LLOYD.

Corpus Christi.

ARUNDEL, JUNE, 1920.

A CANOPY of white and gold,
Beneath a sapphire sky;
Rose petals strewn before
The High Ambassador of Him
Whose voice is heard no more;
Gossamer sheen of fronded green,
And white-veiled girls with graceful mien;
The solemn chant of surpliced priests,
Senile, and blear of eye;
And lighted candles for the Lord,
Whose glory in the blue
Gleams like a golden sword;
A boy's voice clear, and strong,
That with the lark's doth vie;
A gaping, wide-eyed, curious throng—
The "dead Christ" passes by.

PERCY ALLOTT.

Foote's Table-Talk.

For proud and fiery and swift and bold—
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
Full billowed through his veins.

—James Thomson.

GEORGE WILLIAM FOOTE had genius. There is no other word to express his extraordinary abilities in so many directions. He could have done almost anything supremely well. Had he turned his talents to the legal profession, he must have "taken silk," and finally have reached the judicial bench. So swiftly and keenly did his brain operate, that he seemed to work by intuition, and professional lawyers were baffled by the accuracy of his decisions. When he founded the Secular Society, Limited, he said, "It will prove to be a Rock of Gibraltar," and years after, decision after decision in the the Law Courts proved the accuracy of his forecast. Even in politics he had the same X-ray instinct. Before the execution of Ferrer, he had divined the terrible issue, and he said so boldly at a public meeting at the Memorial Hall, London. In matters of this kind he had, doubtless, an invincible belief in his own judgment and magnificent courage. Odds against him always nerved him, and he never knew the meaning of fear. Ever a fighter, he was always in the forefront of the battle. By the camp-fire, and in the scant leisure of a busy life, he was a delightful companion, with a boy's zest for harmless pleasure. No wonder many loved him, and admired "this side idolatry" his great gifts.

He was a brilliant talker, and to listen to his conversation was to add to one's education. Few men so overpaid the smallest suggestion with such a wealth of principle. And he made his companions feel quite at home. You never felt as if you were piling up something upon the cold mass of information in his mind. You seemed to be tossing fuel into a glowing intelligence by which these enormous masses had long been fanned. One might fill a book with his happy *bon-mots*. Speaking of *Punch* one day, he said, "There is no blood in it since the great Leech dropped off." Referring to his friend Wheeler's excessive fondness for buying books on the barrows in Farringdon Road, he said: "Kind-hearted Joe! He can't bear to see a book in the rain." He never objected to a joke against himself. He laughed merrily when I told him that a waiter at one of our favourite restaurants had asked me if my friend "was on the music-halls."

In his lectures, no less than in his conversations, he gave his hearers the benefit of his vast knowledge, acquired during years of study, which his enemies would have us believe were spent in idle amusement, and in the sacrifice of duty to pleasure. After one of his lectures, an opponent referred to him as "a walking encyclopædia." "I wish I could have returned the compliment," said Foote, afterwards; "but I could hardly tell the man he was a volume bound in calf." His painstaking was unusual. I have known him to stop his work for a quarter of an hour to verify a quotation. "Accuracy is necessary," he said, smilingly, "even in a poor journalist."

His wit flashed out readily. I apologized to him once by saying that I could not find time to do something. "You have all the time there is, my boy," he replied. When some pound banknotes were handed to him very much the worse for wear, he said, "This is indeed filthy lucre." Once I rallied him on the length of his "Acid Drops," and suggested that they should be called "Acid Tablets." "Yes!" he said, "but your's ought to be entitled "Sulphuric Acid Drops." He wrote a beautifully clear handwriting, and when illness affected it, he

looked at me whimsically and said: "I shall never write so badly as Shakespeare"—alluding, of course, to the poet's handwriting. When he was too ill to walk, he used a bath-chair, but did not like it at first. "It is too much like a large perambulator," he said, "and suggests second childhood."

His life was a strenuous one, and even his holidays were concerned with Freethought. His trip to America and his journeys to Paris and Rome were happy experiences. He really enjoyed himself, and his record of his impressions reflected a buoyancy of spirit which resulted from these pleasant interludes. The gay freedom of the press in the States amused him, and he sent me copies of the American papers containing interviews with himself, with the humorous comment, "What do you think of the land of tall buildings and tall statements?" But he felt he was among friends—as indeed he was. When he first dined with Colonel Ingersoll, he was asked to take some oysters, but declined. "Not like oysters, Foote?" said the Colonel; "that's the only fault I find with you."

There was as much wit as wisdom in his lectures, and his readiness on the platform was extraordinary. Once, when he had been lecturing on "An Hour in Hell," a clergyman present complained of his cruel attack on religious belief. "I am not cruel," replied Foote; "if I took the audience to Hell, I brought them back again." At another lecture, entitled "After Death, what?" an opponent said bitterly that the lecturer had not told him what would happen after his (the speaker's) death. The chief looked at him blandly, and said: "Without being dogmatic, I should say a funeral." On one rare occasion a very severe snowstorm depleted his audience. When he rose to address them, he began: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name." At a lecture on "Penal Reform," a prison-chaplain complained that things were not so bad as they had been represented. He had had twenty years' experience of prisons. "Just so," retorted Foote, "but our friend has been on the right side of the door all the time." Once a flamboyant parson said that Foote's lecture was only suited to the tap-room of a public-house. "It may be so," replied Foote, crushingly, "I defer to his knowledge of such places." He bore no malice; it was foreign to his nature. After one of the stormiest debates he ever held he shook hands with his opponent in the ante room, and asked him with a winning smile, "How's the wife?"

It was not "roses all the way." Sometimes he received insulting letters and postcards. One pious scoundrel sent a number. The chief dropped them in the waste-paper basket. "I have been accused of all the crimes in the calendar," he remarked, "except murder. That is because these worthy folk couldn't find a corpse." Once he was stopped in the street by one of these creatures, and he told him to go away. "I'm damned if I do!" was the saucy reply. "You're damned if you don't," was the chief's stern rejoinder, and the creature slunk away.

Foote's last jest was one of his best. The day before his death the clock in his sick-room, being out of order, struck interminably. He turned his head slightly, and said, smilingly, "Is that time, or eternity?"

Those who only saw Foote clad "in complete steel" in the forefront of the battle for liberty, thought him harder and sterner than he was. It was because he was no less witty than wise that he was one of the most effective reformers of his generation.

MIMNERMUS.

Those who envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there is no other God.—William Blake.

Science and the Occult.

III.

(Continued from p. 405.)

In ordinary life the human mind is far too prone to accept the belief in a supernatural causation for any event of a curious or puzzling nature. It is an inherent weakness of mankind to have recourse to spiritual explanations where they are unjustified. History shows countless instances where occurrences believed to be spiritual in nature have turned out to be mechanistic only; it shows not a single instance of an occurrence which was believed to be mechanistic, but has turned out to be spiritual. This tendency to spiritualization of Nature is especially marked where the emotions are enlisted: for an individual in an emotional condition, an attitude of impassive agnosticism is all but impossible. In short, spiritualistic explanations find in the mind an undue facility, not warranted by objective facts.—Hugh Elliot, "The Quarterly Review," Jan., 1920; pp. 91-92.

We have seen how very fallible even the cleverest people are in observation. We should be entirely justified in attributing the wonders worked by the mediums to the defective observation of those who testify that they have seen the wonders performed. But we have more than surmise to work upon; we have positive proof that such is the case. The observations and experiments of Mr. Hodgson and Mr. Davey, says Professor Jastrow,—

throws a blinding light upon the entire field of the phenomena; accounting in large part for the vast aggregate of testimony in favour of miracles by actual witnesses, demonstrating the readiness with which we may unwittingly deceive ourselves by false observation and others by lapses of memory, as to what we actually witnessed.¹

Mr. Davey, who was an expert amateur conjurer and a member of the Society for Psychical Research, was himself deceived almost into becoming a Spiritualist. He was, in fact, so much deceived by the slate-writing of Eglington, in 1885-6, that he declared "the idea of trickery or jugglery in slate-writing communications is out of the question."² This was not surprising, as Professor Hoffman, the great conjurer, even after attending twelve *seances* of Eglington's, had been unable to see through Eglington's tricks, and was inclined to believe in his claim to occult powers.³

However, later on, Mr. Davey noticed suspicious movements on the part of Eglington—found out, in fact, that he was being tricked; and afterwards, with practice, succeeded in imitating Eglington's performance.

Having attained a proficiency by which, says Podmore, "he rivalled, if he did not actually surpass, the most astonishing feats recorded of Slade, Eglington, and all their tribe,"⁴ Mr. Davey now placed himself at the disposal of the Society for Psychical Research, and, adopting an assumed name, with Dr. Hodgson as "manager," gave exhibitions of spirit-writing. Mr. Davey received no payment for his sittings, and those who attended were allowed to draw their own conclusions as to whether the performances were mere conjuring or Spiritualism. In some cases they were definitely told beforehand that they were to witness simply a conjuring display.

Frank Podmore describes a *seance* given, not to himself; "believing," says Podmore, "though, I am satisfied, without justification, that I should detect the *modus operandi*—but to my brother."

We cannot do better than compare the account of

what Mr. A. Podmore says took place with the account of what Mr. F. Podmore actually saw:—

Mr. A. Podmore's Account.

Mr. F. Podmore's Account.

A few weeks ago Mr. D. gave a *seance*, and to the best of my recollection, the following was the result. Mr. D. gave me an ordinary school slate, which I held at one end, he at the other, with our left hands; he then produced a double slate, hinged and locked. Without removing my left hand, I unlocked the slate, and at Mr. D's direction placed three small pieces of chalk—red, green, and grey—inside. I then relocked the slate, placed the key in my pocket, and the slate on the table in such a position that I could easily watch both the slate in my left hand and the other on the table. After some few minutes, during which, to the best of my belief, I was attentively regarding both slates, Mr. D. whisked the first away, and showed me on the reverse a message written to myself. Almost immediately afterwards he asked me to unlock the second slate, and on doing so I found to my intense astonishment another message written on both the insides of the slate—the lines in alternative colours and the chalks apparently much worn by usage. My brother tells me that there was an interval of some two or three minutes during which my attention was called away, but I can only believe it on his word.

Mr. Davey allowed me to see exactly what was done, and this is what I saw. The "almost immediately" in the above account covered an interval of some minutes. During this interval, and, indeed, throughout the *seance*, Davey kept up a constant stream of chatter, on matters more or less germane to the business in hand. Mr. A. Podmore, absorbed by the conjurer's patter, fixed his eyes on Davey's face, and the latter took advantage of the opportunity to remove the locked slate under cover of a duster from under my brother's nose to the far end of the room, and there exchange it for a similar slate, with a previously prepared message, which was then placed by means of the same manœuvre with which the duster in the position originally occupied by the first slate. Then, and only then, the stream of talk slackened, and Mr. A. Podmore's attention became concentrated upon the slate, from which the sound of spirit-writing was now heard to proceed. To me the most surprising thing in the whole episode was Mr. A. Podmore's incredulity when told that his attention had been diverted from the slate for an appreciable period.

The italics in the above accounts show the divergence between what Mr. A. Podmore thought he saw and what actually took place. To which we may add the remark of Mr. F. Podmore, that "The 'sound of writing,' on which the Spiritualist writers lay so much stress..... took place after the whole trick was safely accomplished. But it served its purpose." That is, it led the sitter to believe that the message was actually written while he was looking on instead of being written beforehand.

Some twenty of these sittings are given at length in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (vol. iv.) in which Mr. Davey rivalled, if he did not actually surpass, the most astonishing feats recorded of Slade, Eglington, and all their tribe. Not only did he perform all the spirit-writing tricks, but he was equally successful in producing the phenomena of the dark *seance* says Podmore:—

He made a tumbler walk across the table under the full glare of the gas; and small pieces of chalk to move of themselves and describe geometrical figures at the inexpressed wish of the investigator. At his dark *seances* musical boxes floated round the room, raps were heard, cold hands felt; the figures of a woman and a bearded man in a turban mysteriously appeared and saluted the company. And of none of these marvels could the witnesses find any plausible explanation, so much so that more than one found himself forced to invoke the mysterious agency of magnetism, electricity, or pneumatics. For Mr. Davey enjoyed to the full that immunity from exposure which is claimed by Spiritualists, and regarded even by some conjurers, as evidence for the exercise by mediums of supernatural powers.¹

As the same writer further observes, the lesson to be learned from Mr. Davey's experiments is, the almost

¹ Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 155-6.

² Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 151.

³ Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., p. 216.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 219.

¹ Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., p. 222.

incredible shortcomings of the most trusted and least trustworthy of our senses—the sight:—

The untrained eye is no match for the trained hand of the conjurer. The kind of observation demanded of the investigators at a spiritualistic *seance*—an observation which is alive to the various artifices employed to distract it, and which, if not actually unremitting, is at least aware of its own lapses—is a quality not called for and not exercised in the investigations of the physical laboratory, and not to be acquired, even to a moderate extent, except by education of a very special kind. As we have seen, even professional conjurers may prove deficient in this special qualification. The labours of Mr. Davey and Dr. Hodgson should compel us to admit that no evidence for the so-called “physical” phenomena of Spiritualism can be regarded as satisfactory, which at any point depends upon continuous observation on the part of the investigator. It remains to add that Mr. Davey’s consummate art earned the last tribute that its admirers could bestow—he was claimed by Spiritualists as a renegade medium.¹

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the great naturalist, declaring—in a letter printed in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychological Research for March, 1891, “Unless all (Mr. Davey’s performances) can be so explained, many of us will be confirmed in our belief that Mr. Davey was really a medium as well as a conjurer, and that in imputing all his performances to ‘trick’ he was deceiving the Society and the public.”

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Open Letter.

FROM A FREETHINKER TO A CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

DEAR M.,—I feel proud as well as pleased to receive such a sweet and intimate letter from the cultured Headmaster of a public school. Yours is surely the most honourable, onerous, and useful of professions; and I have the greatest respect, reverence almost, for those fine and faithful men and women who earnestly and intelligently, according to their conscience and authority, teach the young idea how to shoot—especially in those immediate mundane and necessary matters of the actual here and now. As Geo. Eliot said, “you cannot mend your subtraction by doing your addition right”; so even an eternity of felicity beyond the tomb cannot atone for, but is merely the mockery of the present world of blunders, crimes, and misery. I can quite understand the comfort, hope, courage, peace, etc., you draw from what you conceive to be the ultimate Christian, or at least religious, verities; you feel, as it were, on a ship riding securely at anchor in the midst of raging seas. But, while your vessel is riding there secure, other navigators, as faithful and as skilful as yourself, are dashed to death, or exposed to the senseless fury of the elements, to the sufferings and privations grim old mother nature has so abundantly in store for good and bad alike.

What I do not like about nature is her impartiality or dislike, it does not matter, and nature does not care. As a man sows so shall he reap. So reads a popular dogma of the natural law; but, like most dogmas, or the curate’s egg, it is only good in parts; it does not cover the whole ground, or even a negligible part of it. It would be truer, more significant, to say, what *some* men sow other men must reap. In a word, the innocent must suffer for the guilty; which, after all, is the Christian idea of divine jurisdiction. Would the schoolmaster pick out his most loving and diligent little pupil

and cane him without mercy for the good of the other wicked little boys? Would the father (as in James Welsh’s *Underworld*) order his little boy to strip, and lash him with the pit belt simply because he (the father) was unhappy and in a temper? The blood of the ordinary human being boils at the thought. And yet by those stripes was the brutal father healed. He was immediately ashamed of himself. Nature has her own peculiar methods of creating the savage and the civilized. I wonder, now, are the score or so of “resplendent diplomats” who engineered the late World War ashamed of the seed they sowed, and the harvest others reaped. A still greater question: Is God ashamed of it? So far as the surviving soldiers are concerned, stupidity itself says: “Never again.” Not so the war lords, and by implication the Lord of Lords; already we are being prepared for the next war by the ministers of man, while the ministers of God are all, and only, concerned with that delectable “Above” which you refer to so gently and pleasantly in your charming note. You say:—

I enjoyed your recent article on “The Glen”—quite like your best. But, as a friend, might I suggest that when taking your *last* “look” next time you, turn your eyes *upwards*? I felt that you were, after all, missing something which is very satisfying.

No doubt, my dear sir, no doubt; as Burns said:—

A correspondence fixed wi’ heaven
Is sure a noble anchor.

But I am more concerned with the fact than with the feeling. You know how untrustworthy feeling may be, even in the mind and heart of the “magnificent Robert Burns.” It is the creature of heredity, environment, training, tradition, etc., part of our Spencerian “social legacy.” And, after all, I am not concerned with anyone’s subjective *beliefs*, but only with his *knowledge* of objective facts; and of the realm referred to even a great and good investigator like Spencer confessed his complete ignorance. And, then, it is a commonplace that altered beliefs (which really mean increased knowledge) produce altered emotions. I had no need to look upwards, except to see the beauty of the dappled skies, and wander fancy free in the limitless realm beyond; no need either for me to people the latter with the more or less august beings of imagination; no need to worry in the slightest about the “above.” But if I must postulate and personify a creator of, and dweller in, space, it is surely his concern to worry about me. He knows about it all; he knows, he knows; whereas, like Spencer, and like yourself, my good teacher, I *know* absolutely nothing. Underneath, or above, you may say are the everlasting arms. I for my part might say, and believe, and be content, as the poet Bryant put it, to—

so live, that when the summons comes to join the innumerable caravan, which moves to that mysterious realm, where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death, thou go not, like the quarry slave at night, scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

In a word, my dear sir, my happiness is here; and my faith and hope, while bounded, is not narrowed, but enlarged and ennobled to infinitude, by this life and this world. I repeat, I understand you perfectly, and sympathize with and respect you, for I too in my time have rested on those feathery clouds of a far felicity, but have found at last a more solid and satisfying, if more poignant, vantage ground or goal, and if I do not look upward, I look onward.

ANDREW MILLAR.

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 221-2.

Acid Drops.

Mr. F. C. Spurr tells a rather wonderful yarn about the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and Charles Bradlaugh. He says that Mr. Bradlaugh once challenged Mr. Hughes to a debate on Christianity. Mr. Hughes offered to debate on the following lines: Each side was to bring a hundred men and women, and to see how many had been saved by their belief in Christ or Atheism. Mr. Bradlaugh, says Mr. Spurr, declined. We should like to know Mr. Spurr's authority for the story. We do not recall having heard it before. We admit it is the kind of silly thing that a man such as Hugh Price Hughes would do, and it is the kind of idiotic thing which the average parson regards as proof. But we doubt the Bradlaugh part of the story. Mr. Spurr's story appears in the *Princes Street Magazine*, Northampton.

According to a provincial newspaper, the Catholic Confederation is to be represented at an "International Congress of Christian and Catholic Trade Unions" to be held in Holland. We wonder if this refers to trade-unions of priests, choristers, church-cleaners, vergers, ecclesiastical candle-makers, and similar associations, otherwise it is difficult to understand the term "Christian and Catholic"?

In an obituary notice of the late Rev. W. W. Wood, for forty-nine years rector of Easton, Suffolk, it was stated that "he was a great traveller in European countries," and that he went in for golf, shooting, and other sports. "Blessed be ye poor!"

At the Palestine Exhibition a good story was told. After General Allenby had entered Jerusalem, a Padre asked a sentry: "Where is the Mount of Olives?" "I don't know, sir," he replied; "but there is a pub. here somewhere."

We see that the body of Toplis, who was shot by a policeman when trying to escape arrest, was buried with the inscription on the coffin: "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Francis Percy Toplis, aged 23. Bless the Lord, O my soul." So that no one can say he was not buried in a good religious atmosphere. Had Toplis taken his own life, and been considered sane, the Church might have refused him a religious ceremony. But as he only took the lives of other people, there could be no such objection. But as God gave Toplis his "soul," it looks as though some explanation were needed why he did not give him a better outfit. And it seems quite useless to blame Toplis for acting up to the soul that God gave him. At the Day of Judgment, Toplis should be able to put up a good defence.

We reprint the following letter from the *Signs Magazine* (an American religious journal) for February this year:—

September ye 15, 1682

To ye aged and beloved

Mr. John Higginson.

There is now at sea a ship called the *Welcome* which has on board a hundred or more of the heretics and malignants called Quakers, with W. Penn, who is the chief scamp at head of them.

The general court has accordingly given secret orders to Master Malachai Huscott of the brig *Porpoise* to away lay the *Welcome* slyly as near the Cape of Cod as may be, and make captive the said Penn and his ungodly crew, so that the Lord may be glorified, and not mocked on the soil of this new country with the heathen worship of these people. Much spoil can be made by selling the whole lot to Barbados, where slaves fetch good prices in rum and sugar, and we shall not only do the Lord great service by punishing the wicked, but we shall make good for His minister and people.

COTTON MATHER.

We have never come across the letter before in our reading of the Rev. Cotton Mather, and some of the phrases make us a trifle suspicious of its genuineness. Still, it may be all right; and, after all, it certainly does not misrepresent the spirit of Mather. He was a bigoted, superstitious, narrow-

minded, and intolerant person, and a fair sample of those Puritans to fancy pictures of whom we are now being treated. And the villainy of the treatment of the Quakers by Mather and his associates can hardly be exaggerated. Had they done what they did in any other name than that of religion, there would have been no hesitation in marking them for what they were. But it was done in the name of Christ, and that excuses much.

Providence takes little care of the clerical caste. The Rev. G. H. Craven, of Stretford, Dilwyn, Herefordshire, was killed whilst cycling. He tried to avoid a passing vehicle, and was thrown off.

What is happening to the clergy? The Dean of Bangor, preaching at Bangor Cathedral, said, "The best thing to do with an old and dilapidated Bible is to burn it." And the dear Bishop of London is bent on demolishing nineteen City of London churches. Where do these ecclesiastics expect to spend eternity?

"I do not think there can be any clergyman who loathes asking for money more than I do," plaintively says the Rev. A. Cumming, Vicar of Addlestone. But why should Brother Cumming have to worry the people in the pews? Cannot he get on to the Great Trunk Call, and obtain a little on account from the Celestial Counting House?

Dean Inge questions whether the human race has made any progress since the days of the old-world Romans and Greeks. If he compares Plato with the present Bishop of London he is probably correct, but if he compares the British or American working-man with the slaves of the old-world he is entirely wrong.

In the thunderstorm which recently swept the country from Folkestone to Liverpool, a church and houses were set afire by lightning, and a number of persons were struck, two deaths taking place. Providence appears to have as little care for "God's house" as for his children.

The Rev. G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, better known to a profane world as "Woodbine Willie," says that "there is not a pin to choose between the Archbishop of Canterbury and a coal-heaver so far as sin is concerned. They sin in different ways, that's all." But, it seems to us, that if both go to Hades, the coalheaver should feel more at home than His Grace of Canterbury.

Apropos of Hospital Sunday, the *Church Times* remarks that the maintenance of hospitals is one way in which Christians fulfil the commands of Christ. Unfortunately, the *Church Times* omits to say how they were to obey and carry out the commands of Christ. He told them that they should cure the sick, "In my name," and what it meant to those who heard it is seen in the promise that the prayer of faith should cure the sick, and by the example of the Gospel Jesus who cured insanity and epilepsy by fasting and prayer. Now, if Christians could carry out their master's behest, it is puzzling to see what we want with hospitals at all. What we really need are churches and prayers. But to ask for money, to engage doctors, to buy medicine, and to purchase drugs, because Christ told them they could do all that was needed "In my name," and with the aid of prayer, has an aspect about it that is distinctly humorous.

It is almost a commonplace that one of the roots of the Irish difficulty is religion. This point is emphasized by Mr. Stephen Gwynne in an article in the *Observer* for June 27. He says:—

In Derry beyond question the true source of trouble is Protestant resentment at the capture of civic control by Catholics. You will be told—and truly—that the city and its enterprises have been built up by Protestants. All the capital and all the energy, you will be assured, have been provided by Protestants, who are now outnumbered by the less prosperous, less educated, who can only subsist in Derry because

Protestant-owned and created factories have given them a chance of livelihood. But you will not be told by these same informants how jealously Catholics are kept out from the more important positions. There is no room for Catholics at the top. A Catholic trying to establish a factory would almost certainly find it very difficult to get a site. Even in very petty matters there is an incredible boycott. One prosperous Catholic family has many sons, one of whom I knew when he was training for our commissions, and that is how our acquaintance began. Another brother sought to become a chemist, and applied to be taken into a well known shop in Derry. Immediately the question was raised, What is his religion? And the explanation followed that all the chemists in Derry had pledged themselves to employ no Catholic. I was told that the same principle extended to other trades.

Facts like this interpenetrate and disfigure the whole life of Ulster; they breed an ugly mentality. Every decent man is ashamed of them, but the mentality is there, poisoning both sides. In all the contests which arise over municipal and local government in Ulster, neither side will concede an inch. There is no spirit of accommodation—except possibly in the sphere of organized labour.

Perhaps the best comment on that, although it sounds sarcastic, is Mr. Lloyd George's statement in the course of an address in a Welsh chapel on the date on which the article was published. Mr. George informed the congregation that the only thing that would save the country was the "spirit of Calvary." We don't know what Mr. Lloyd George meant—probably he meant nothing at all; but they appear to be having a great deal of the spirit of Calvary at Derry, and the city is certainly none the better for it. But it is far from a promising sign when the leader of the country can enunciate such absolute nonsense with the air of giving the people valuable advice. And if he believes it himself, the prospect is the less pleasing. We wonder whether the Prime Minister would say the same thing in the House of Commons? We would suggest that he does so on the vote for the Army estimates.

The Gloomy Dean has observed that one cannot live in London without observing the "extraordinary prevalence of childish superstitions." Perhaps the Dean has noticed the howling dervishes, with their pianos and lady friends, who infest the street-corners on Sundays.

An enthusiastic Roman Catholic, writing in a London newspaper, says "Pope Benedict's existence has just been described to me by an intimate as the cruellest life on earth." Apparently, things have changed at the Vatican since Papa Borgia tucked up his petticoats and danced down the primrose path.

At the forthcoming Church Congress, Labour will be represented by Mr. Barnes, M.P., and the Rev. G. A. Studdart-Kennedy, better known as "Woodbine Willie." As "members' tickets" will be seven shillings and sixpence each, and tickets will be issued to "ladies and gentlemen," any unseemly inrush of working folk will be avoided.

There was a National Peace Congress in Glasgow the other day, and among the speakers was a Rev. A. H. Gray. In the course of his remarks this gentleman said that "militarist talk often and easily became Atheistic talk. He who thought in terms of guns could find no room in his scheme of things for God." We advise Mr. Gray to try again. And perhaps he would give us a few concrete examples of cases in which militaristic talk so easily becomes Atheistic talk. He certainly could not gather them from the last War, nor from any other war with which we are acquainted. No people have ever found religion in the way when they wished to make war; generally religious feelings have been appealed to in order to pursue the war, and not infrequently religion has been partly responsible for the existence of the war. And there has never been a religion that has done so much to keep war alive as Christianity has done. But perhaps Mr. Gray will oblige us with the data on which he based his remarks.

The most striking and significant feature of the red breeches debate in the House of Commons passed without

notice. So far as we observed, not one of the newspapers noticed the childish character of the whole proceeding, and the wholesale insult it offered to all who are in the Army. Soldiers were to be dressed in scarlet for two reasons. One that it attracted the notice of outsiders, the other that the soldiers preferred the more gaudy uniform. Could anything be worse? Are the public really such children that they are to be attracted to the Army only when it is dressed up in a pretty uniform? And is the type of mind which is attracted to the Army such that only the prospect of being dressed up in this same gaudy uniform will induce it to join? Are we seeking to enlist *men* of average intelligence, or are we seeking to enlist those who are mentally children, with no likelihood of their ever growing up? If an anti-militarist said what Mr. Churchill and his supporters imply, it would be charged against him that he was insulting the Army. But could anyone insult it more than this? And if the official view is the correct one, and this parade of feathers and cockades and shining buttons, with all the paraphernalia of a costly pantomime, are really necessary, what are we to think of the intelligence of the general public? No wonder the *Freethinker* hasn't the circulation it ought to have.

One of the members of the L.C.C. stated the other day that there were many houses in London unoccupied because people objected to live in a house numbered 13. He wished to know if the Council would not number them 12a. Now, it is our business to break down superstitions, and we are quite willing to live in number 13 in the thirteenth street form anywhere, on a thirteen years' agreement, and, if possible, with thirteen rooms, and thirteen fruit trees in the garden. And so as to make the experiment more decisive we would accept a motor car numbered 13. Of course, in consideration of the risks run the house must be rent free.

The London Missionary Society is advertising the following from Mr. Wells' *Outlines of History*:

Christianity has been described by modern writers as a slave religion. It was. It took the slave and the down-trodden, and it gave them hope and restored their self-respect.....so that they stood up for righteousness like men.

We have not read the *Outlines*, and so cannot say that the passage correctly represents Mr. Wells's meaning, but if it does all that one can say of it is that it is wildly inaccurate. The spread of Christianity among the lower classes, where it had converts, was inevitable for two reasons. First, the spread of a new religion is bound to be among the poorer classes because the wealthier classes are naturally concerned with the maintenance of the existing order. Secondly, Christianity was forced to gain the bulk of its converts from the poorer classes because it represented a retrogression in religion, and a revival of a more ignorant form of superstition than could attract the educated religionist of the time. Both these considerations should have been plain to Mr. Wells.

Those who have read Mr. Cohen's *Christianity and Slavery* will know what amount of truth there is in the claim that Christianity had any favourable influence in the direction of the abolition of slavery. The real distinction between Christian and Pagan slavery is, that while Paganism enslaved the body it left the mind free, and gave openings for the slave to obtain his freedom, and always encouraged the slave acquiring culture. Christianity sanctioned the slavery of the body, ordered the slave to obey the master, under penalty of damnation, and made slavery certain by destroying mental independence. To say that the slaves, or any other Christians stood up for righteousness, is to indulge in a play on the word. What the Christian stood for was religion, and a thing was only righteous so long as it came within the scope of his conception of religion. Righteousness in the purely ethical sense he was not concerned with. And it would be well if all writers would bear in mind the fact. Using this term in the modern sense when writing of people such as the primitive Christians they cannot help misleading their readers.

SPECIAL.

Until the end of July, and in order to bring the "Freethinker" into contact with a larger number of people, we are prepared to send this paper for thirteen weeks, post free, for 2s. 9d, on receiving names and addresses from any of our present subscribers. Subscribers are not limited to sending one address; they may send as many as they please. This offer applies only to those who are already subscribers, and is part of a general advertising scheme, having for its object the creation of a larger circulation and a more extended sphere of service. New readers who receive the paper for thirteen weeks are not likely to drop it afterwards.

To Correspondents.

- H. R. WRIGHT.—Received, and contents noted.
- J. WILLIAMS.—Pleased to learn that you are trying to get the paper well known in your district. When the summer is over we are minded to see what can be done, with the help of our friends, that a concerted effort is made to give the circulation of the paper a real lift forward. It is the only way by which to meet our expenses, quite apart from other reasons why the paper should reach a larger audience.
- J. H. JAMES.—We are very pleased to learn that you found the *Freethinker* useful for the purpose.
- D. MACCONNELL.—We never doubted but that as an advertising medium the *Freethinker* is not to be neglected, and we are pleased your experience has been so satisfactory.
- D. FROST.—The address of the Liverpool Branch Secretary is J. McKelvie, 21 Globe Road, Waterloo.
- W. WATSON.—All the books about which you enquire are out of print. We could insert an advertisement for you if you choose.
- 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 B. 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.

So many of our friends have taken advantage of our offer to send the *Freethinker* for thirteen weeks to new readers for the sum of 2s. 9d. including postage, that we have decided to keep the offer open during the whole of July. This is a very cheap way of introducing the paper to a friend, and we feel sure that many more will avail themselves of the opportunity. It is almost the only form of advertising we are able to afford at present—until that long-looked-for millionaire comes along, and then we shall see things.

Another advance in wages has been arranged for all engaged in the printing trades. The advance is to date back to the beginning of June, and it is to be given without pre-

judice to another application at an early date. This means a considerable advance in our weekly wages bill, and, to make things pleasanter, we have had our rates increased by about £40 per year. Altogether, printing is becoming one of the luxury trades, and soon a book will be one of those rarities which only wealthy people will be able to possess. There is also talk of another general increase in the price of papers to subscribers, and, in addition to about 450 papers that have raised their price to the public since January, the *Times Literary Supplement* has taken the step of raising its price to sixpence per copy. Others will follow suit.

When we advanced the price of the *Freethinker* at the beginning of this year, after keeping it unchanged during the War, we hoped that we had done with the Sustentation Fund. Since then there has been two advances in wages, and paper is now very much dearer than it was six months ago, besides being difficult to get. Altogether, the advantage gained by the rise in price of the *Freethinker* is now about gone, and we are afraid that it means yet one more call upon our friends. We do not doubt but that they will respond readily enough, but we wished to avoid it, and we are disappointed. So soon as one difficulty is overcome, another presents itself, and no one knows where the series will end. Certain publishers are threatening to stop issuing books until things are more settled, and we understand that many works are being held up. If the *Freethinker* were an ordinary paper, we might follow that example. But it is not; and so we must just take in another reef in our waistbelt and keep on. One day we shall get into smoother water—perhaps just before we are buried.

We have had printed a new supply of *Freethinker* posters, and shall be pleased to hear from anyone who can either display or get them displayed.

The Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S. is arranging a "Ramble" for Sunday, July 14, to the Wren's Nest. Train from No. 3 Platform, New Street Station, 9.30. Members and friends meet on Platform, 9.20. Tea will be provided by J. F. Flavell, Dudley Castle Grounds, but lunch should be carried by the ramblers. Cost of fares and tea, 3s. 3d. Those who intend coming would facilitate matters by notifying their intentions to J. Collier, 181 Frederick Road, Aston, Birmingham. All Freethinkers and friends are cordially invited.

We have arranged with Mr. T. Wright, of 12 North Broadway, Yonkers, New York, to act as an agent for the sale of all the Pioneer Press publications. We feel certain that there is a large public for our literature in the United States, and we hope to get other agents established both in America and elsewhere.

Sonnet:

On Finding a Fossil in my Garden.

A MILLION, or a hundred million years
 Are but as one to Nature; and as one
 The races of her children all are run;
 Nor in more tender tutelage appears
 Her last than first, learning through blood and tears.
 But now at last beneath the ageing sun
 A new thing, a portentous thing is done,
 Where Man his standard of revolt uprears,
 Her child and her accuser. Faintly yet
 Through the dim ages can his eye discern
 Beginnings, endings; visions that beget
 New thoughts of new immensities. We yearn
 For immortality? Our need is met
 In grasping infinite thoughts, living to learn!

H. TRUCKELL.

All are right while they seek; none are right when they begin to threaten.—*Alexandre Dumas (fils)*.

Fashionable Atheism.

In the *Star* on Wednesday last I noticed a rather sensational headline. First there was the title: "Is Atheism Declining?" followed by the words "No longer a fashion," says Dr. Guttery, who made this startling statement at a Methodist conference at Hull, and wound up by the emphatic and comforting declaration to a Christian minister that Atheism was "scarcely surviving," in other words, that Atheism is dead. How many times this belief has died during the last quarter of a century, according to Christian advocates, it would be difficult to estimate; but, at all events, it dies as frequently as they desire it for propagandist purposes, and comes to life again whenever they are hard up for funds, and desire the bogey of Atheism with which to frighten their credulous followers. But it is especially interesting to learn that "Atheism is no longer a fashion." It would be interesting to most Freethinkers to learn at what period in the history of the country it was fashionable to be an Atheist. During the past half century I have known personally most of the leading Atheists of this country, but I have never known a time when it has been popular or fashionable to be known as an Atheist. I have known the time when it has not only been unpopular but dangerous to be known by that designation; indeed, when an Atheist was an outlaw, a pariah—a man who was denied the ordinary rights of a citizen, and who was regarded by the ignorant and credulous as a menace and danger to society.

George Jacob Holyoake was an Atheist, but he had no particular liking for the term. Indeed, he coined the term *Cosmist* to explain more fully the position of the man who had given up belief in God. Atheism was purely a negative term. On the other hand, he said: "A Cosmist is one who believes in Nature, and studies the order of Nature. He endeavours to master the uses of Nature, and out of that mastery alone hopes to discover what the conduct of life should be. He considers that Nature is self-existent, self-active, the Eternal, the Infinite and material" (*Trial of Theism*, p. 62). And then he turns the tables on the Theist. "Theism," he says, "is Athaism to Nature." Charles Bradlaugh was a confirmed Atheist. He was not shocked nor insulted when people called him Atheist; he bore the title courageously and defiantly. Bradlaugh said: "Atheism properly understood is in no wise a cold barren negative; it is, on the contrary, a hearty, fruitful affirmation of all truth, and involves the positive assertion and action of highest humanity" (*Plea for Atheism*, p. 2).

George William Foote was an Atheist, and was not ashamed of the term; but he would have laughed consumedly if anybody had told him that Atheism would become popular and fashionable in his day. Indeed, part of the indictment for blasphemy against him was for ridiculing the monstrous conception of Deity as depicted in the Holy Bible. Charles Watts was an Atheist, but towards the end of his career he said that he preferred the term "Agnostic," invented by Professor Huxley, to express more accurately the mental attitude of the Freethinker towards the problem of pure Theism. Colonel Ingersoll, the famous American Freethought orator, was a disbeliever in all the gods that had ever been depicted by the imagination of men, but he preferred the term "Agnostic" to that of Atheist. On the other hand, Joseph Symes was a defiant Atheist, and used the term as a challenge to all his antagonists.

During the past fifty years, it is safe to say that Atheism as a philosophy was never popular, even among the masses; as to its ever being "a fashion," such an idea is monstrously absurd. Then, of course, there is

the present Editor of the *Freethinker*, Mr. Chapman Cohen. He is a pronounced Atheist, and so is Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and most of the talented writers on that journal. I don't suppose that any of them remember Atheism as a fashionable form of belief; but, fortunately, they are alive, and can speak for themselves. The other great Freethinkers I have mentioned have gone over to the majority, and only a few remain who remember their spoken or written utterances on the question. But this is certain—there are a larger number of Atheists to-day than there ever were in the history of the world, and people are beginning to understand the question of the origin and evolution of the God-idea. And yet there is so much hypocrisy in our daily life that it still requires great courage to proclaim oneself an Atheist. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was quite right when he said, "Not one man in ten thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist." And that statement is as true to-day as when it was first written.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Christian Infidelity in Politics.

THE weekly paper, the *British Citizen*, is the official organ of the "National Democratic and Labor Party." The present writer personally is not a member of that Party, but he reads the paper regularly, and often finds much of interest, sanely stated, in its columns on various political questions. Unfortunately (in some ways) the present penman gets his copies in batches of six or seven at one time, as he is out of reach of shop and mail for many weeks at a time. Therefore any criticism he might feel inclined to offer on anything appearing in its pages is likely to be somewhat belated. Still, there are points and questions at times, even in politics, that are of interest for longer than a week. And some of them, in British politics (especially), have an interest for the Atheist or Rationalist that is wider than the mere political point in itself. That often has no point at all.

Of course, the *Freethinker* takes up no official position in politics, *per se*. That is outside its sphere, beyond voicing a just and reasonable demand on such questions as "Secular Education," "Disestablishment," etc. In a general way, too, and without any reference to any particular Party, it can (and does) urge the need for dependence in politics on reason and knowledge rather than on passion, greed, and superstition (=ignorance). In this respect the *British Citizen* is generally more admirable than the average British political newspaper. Whether we agree with its opinions or no, we must admit that the bulk of its work is done in a very rational style. The main (if not the invariable) object with its writers appears to be convince by rational argument.

But even such a paper, which has, in large measure, succeeded in rising out of the bog of misrepresentation, known as British politics, seemingly can't see a religious, still more a Christian, reference, without refalling into that bog. In that way it fell in its slight editorial, and slighting notice of Haeckel's death. I write this at sea and without a newspaper file to which to refer, but I can practically guarantee the correctness of my quotation—both in substance and in form. It said: "He (Haeckel) as much as any German," was responsible for the War. Taken in a rational sense, that meant nothing against Haeckel as a Monist. But taken irrationally and without being shaken (as it would be in most cases) it implied that Haeckel, as a scientist, as a Monist, had been amongst the causes of the War. The criticisms of Mr. Cohen and Mr. McCabe against the infidelity of the orthodox British press were fully justified

here—as in other cases. The article went on to say (I won't say to argue), or to imply, that the German idea of Might being Right had a chief support in the Monism of the dead scientist. The reader was left in his (presumable) belief that the British Empire (as well as the British citizen) owed its might to its well-known Christian humility. That recalls the (to my mind) master stroke of sarcasm in English literature, where Mark Twain, after enumerating the British possessions on this earth, said: "Now I perceive that the British are mentioned in the Bible—'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.....'"

This King Charles' head of Christianity, obtrudes its horrible and unreasonable (as well as untruthful) self again in the *British Citizen* for May 6, 1920. It crops up, well nigh in every paragraph, in an article entitled, "Communism—Ancient and Modern." The thesis of the writer is that "Ancient Communism" as advertised 2,000 years ago by the primitive Christians—"was an ideal successfully attained, though only for a short period," that it "required a height of moral attainment that humanity in the bulk could not rise to," that it was based "on the highest conceptions of right and human relationship," that "the family is the great symbol of the 2,000 year old attempt," and that it was roughly and abruptly wrecked by the greed and lying of some of their number." Truly, a tall order. It may truthfully be described as a heap of nonsensical claims on behalf of the Uriah Heap of religions.

There was "communism" before the time of early Christianity, just as there were monks and nuns. That the early Christian ideal was *not* "successfully attained" is conclusively proved by the counter accusations and condemnations amongst these very same early Christians themselves. The statement that it was "based on the highest conceptions of right and human relationship" can only be described as shamelessly false. It was based *essentially* on the sincere belief in the end of the world coming very quickly, when Christ would come again to *reward* those who had believed on him. This is quite a low and selfish conception of human relationship. Much higher existed *before* the time of the reputed Christ of the Canonical Gospels. "He who believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he who believeth not, shall be damned," is almost the diametric opposite of a high ideal of human relationship. A writer who can make such ridiculously false statements about early Christianity is scarcely likely to be a safe guide in other social and political questions.

Then, again, to say that "the family is the great symbol of the 2,000 year old attempt" is emphatically to say the thing that is not. It may be true that "the home, the well-ordered and wholesome family, is the true example of what the nation should be"—and this quite irrespective of whether or no the family will persist in the future. But it is glaringly true that early Christianity did nothing for the family, just as it did nothing for a well-ordered and wholesome life. The teaching and the example of the Christ of the Canonical Gospels is all against a healthy, well-ordered life. That Christ (according to his own words) came not to bring peace, but a sword. He introduced hate, religious hate (the worst kind), into family life. He set the wife against the husband, the child against the parent. He disrupted the family. In the advocacy and almost apotheosis of celibacy which he made, and which his Church continued, there is the bitterest enemy possible of healthy, well-ordered family life. The Church of England's Marriage Service, degrading what *ought* to be the highest and the finest relation of man and woman, is a standing proof to this day of the Christian antagonism against that healthy family life. In heaven (after you die), when you

will (or may) enter into one of your Father's mansions, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Therefore an irrational ancient communism, based on the expected ending of this world, could never have the well-ordered, wholesome life of the family as its symbol.

The explanation of the end of this ancient communism is as false as the other statements. It was *not* "roughly and abruptly wrecked" *merely* "by the greed and lying of some of their number." Obviously, such a worse-than-primitive-communism couldn't last very long. And it didn't. Christ didn't come again. The end of the world didn't arrive. So these ancient communists of (nearly) 2,000 years ago saw less and less prospect of their selfish expectations of reward being realized. Naturally, their effort fizzled out (as hell-fire did later), and they had to return to individual hard work in *this* world again.

It is highly amusing to read Mr. A. W. Martin's statement that these folk "carried out in an infinitely better way than the French Revolutionists the idea of liberty, equality, fraternity." *Their* attempt petered out quickly. The French Revolution results persisted—spite of English opposition and misrepresentation; and, as Jaures eloquently pointed out, the subsequent progress of Western Europe towards liberty was founded upon that French Revolution.

Mr. Martin takes "Bolshevism" as the "modern communism," and compares it very unfavourably with early Christianity. As I know even less about "Bolshevism" in Russia than Mr. Martin knows about Christianity, I trouble not to criticize in that direction. Doubtless the truth will out some day. Only it *may* be remarked that, inasmuch as the "Bolshevists" appear to base their "communism" on *this* world, they are a leetle more sensible than the Christians, who based it on the next—that never came. They may persecute and punish their enemies here; they do not, like the early Christians, threaten their enemies with awful torture after death, through all eternity, worlds without end. So even the "Bolshevists" seem to have *some* good points not possessed by the early (or later) Christians.

Mr. Martin concludes, "A democratic ideal that began 2,000 years ago, and which the National Democratic and Labour Party is out to work for." In that case, that Party is out for national bankruptcy and universal misery, as an eminent bishop once declared. One hopes that saner counsels may prevail, sounder principles guide, and higher ideals obtain in this otherwise promising development towards a healthy and well-ordered democracy.

If not—well, Christianity will surely kill it, as it has already poisoned and killed so many promising political movements in Britain. In any case, the article is a fine instance of the obfuscating power of a belief in any form of the Christian religion. It all proves what a large amount of work Freethinkers still have to do ere superstition is finally driven out of British politics and progress towards democracy is based upon reason and knowledge alone. "What might be done if men were wise!" It is upon our philosophy that progress must be based; and—*la verite oblige*.

ATHOS ZENO.

So, when dark faith in faith's dark ages heard
Falsehood, and drank the poison of the Word,
Two shades misshapen came to monstrous birth,
A father fiend in heaven, a thrall on earth:
Man, meanest born of beasts that press the sod,
And die: the vilest of his creatures, God.
A judge unjust, a slave that praised his name,
Made life and death one fire of sin and shame.

—Swinburne.

Necessary Truths.

(Concluded from p. 413.)

This advance of intelligence takes place through the two well known mental processes of Association and Abstraction to which a brief reference must now be made. Though it is often convenient to regard these two great mental functions separately, they are really parts of one and the same process. Association is the clinging together in consciousness of perceptions which agree among themselves in some common element, and their consequent segregation from others which do not possess this element; while Abstraction is the drawing out or separating of this common element from the other elements of the associated group, and the cognition of it as a distinct concept. Hence Association and Abstraction must go hand in hand, and the second is impossible without the first, but Abstraction is the process with which we are here more immediately concerned, as it is the process pre-eminently involved in the formation of Necessary Truths, for all these irresistible concepts are invariably abstract concepts.

Abstraction is usually referred to as a mental process consciously performed by the individual, but it is evident that the neural structures and functions involved in the process must have been developed throughout the ancestral history, and it is this aspect of the question which has to be here considered. Like the instinctive faculties, the faculty of Abstraction is a product of age-long evolution, and indeed there is a close analogy between the two, for these ancestral products of Abstraction which we call innate ideas occupy a position in the sphere of the intellect very similar to that occupied by instinct in the sphere of the feelings. A peculiar quality of necessity and certitude characterises them both, and the fact of their gradual evolution is equally evident from observation; for just as instincts are seen to pass through stages of development, so the faculty of Abstraction is seen to do the like, since the lower races of men possess it in very small degree, whilst it is doubtful whether even the most intelligent of the lower animals possess it at all. Now, though Instinct is admitted by all modern biologists to be due to the existence of definite neural structures and functions imposed upon the race throughout its evolution, yet it can only be called forth in the individual by some actual experience of the outer world. For instance, the chick possesses an instinct which enables it to pick up grains of corn a few hours after it is hatched, but this instinct is not aroused till it actually sees the grains of corn. The visual image of the grains of corn on the retina of the chick's eye affords a stimulus which arouses the dormant, pre-formed instinct to activity, and once aroused it acts with perfect precision.

In a remarkably similar way does the faculty of Abstraction seem to act in the formation of an "intuitive" or "innate" conception, though the process operates, as it were, on a higher plane, this intellectual act of Abstraction taking the place of the mere act of perception which arouses an instinct. But just as the perception of an external stimulus can arouse an instinct, by a sudden flash, as it were, into instant and precise activity, so does the process of Abstraction seem to give the mind, as by a

sudden flash of intellectual light, the unerring cognition of a Necessary Truth. And just as the instinct, once aroused, needs no practice to make it more perfect, so the Necessary Truth, once realised, needs no further experience to strengthen the conviction with which it is held.

Let us take as an example some simple spatial relation which to our minds seems absolutely self-evident, such as the relation that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. Before the faculty of Abstraction is acquired the self-evidence of this spatial relation would not be apparent—this "necessary truth" would not be realised. The mind, let us say, of Palaeolithic Man in its converse with the external world would perhaps perceive the existence of innumerable lines of all sorts, straight and curved, long and short, parallel and intersecting. It might also perceive the existence of enclosed spaces of all sorts, spaces bounded by straight lines, by curved lines, or partly by one and partly by the other. This would be "experience," and this experience might go on for age after age, but as long as the power of Abstraction remained undeveloped the truth that two straight lines cannot enclose a space would never be realised, because the abstract ideas "straightness" and "enclosure of space" would not have been formed, and hence no relation between them could be cognized. But now suppose that in the course of ages the faculty of Abstraction becomes developed, and that this particular abstraction is made. Immediately, as by a flash of intuition, the relationship is perceived. The mind, now holding a clear idea of "straightness of lines," and a clear idea of "enclosure of space," sees by a necessary insight that the one is incompatible with the other. The necessary truth of the relationship is realised once for all, absolutely and universally.

How can we account for this necessary insight? Surely the explanation is the same as the one now generally accepted in the case of instinct. This necessity is due to the existence in the sub-conscious mind of some neural condition developed throughout past ages of organic evolution, conformably, it may also be, with the ultimate energy functions of inorganic matter, and in necessary conformity with the spatial relations of the external world. The "necessity of thought" is the natural counterpart and consequence of the "necessity of things." Thus we reach the conclusion that these *à priori* conceptions are not the *products of conscious experience*, however widely extended, but are *revealed through conscious experience* by means of the mental operation called Abstraction.

This article may fitly conclude with a few observations on the recent discovery by astronomers of the influence of gravitation on light, and the remarkable speculations regarding the nature of space to which that discovery appears to have given rise. The discovery itself seems to be fairly well established, but even if it were proved beyond all doubt it is difficult to see how a purely physical discovery of this sort, or, indeed, any new physical relationship whatever, could affect our conceptions as to the nature of space or time. The discussions on this subject are of a very abstruse character and are extremely difficult to follow, but it is noteworthy that the very language in which these recondite notions regarding four-dimensional space are expressed is constantly obliged to employ terms and expressions

proper to space of three dimensions. And this is not surprising, seeing that from the constitution of our minds we have to think in terms of three-dimensional space, whether any higher order of space may or may not exist. Nor is it quite correct to say that the new theory of space must falsify the fundamental axioms of Euclidean geometry, for whatever higher dimensional space may exist our three-dimensional space must also exist as the greater includes the less, and the axioms of three-dimensional geometry still remain true relatively to such space. This is readily seen when we consider space of two dimensions only in relation to that of three. Axioms true of space in two dimensions may not necessarily be true of space in three, such, for instance, as the statement that straight lines which are not parallel must intersect if produced indefinitely. This, though not true of space in general, is true of space in two dimensions; that is, it is true of straight lines in a plane, and not only is it thus true, but it is an axiomatic, a "necessary" truth which no considerations of higher dimensional space can ever upset. Again, the mathematical operation of finding an expression for the volume of a solid, such as a sphere, gives a beautiful illustration of the relationship between one order of space and another. The mathematician here has to deal with three variables, but he regards one of them as a constant while he integrates the function connecting the two others. Then, having evaluated this integral expressed as a function of two variables in a plane, he treats the remaining co-ordinate as a third variable, and performs a second integration to get the function giving the volume of the three-dimensional solid. Similarly, it would appear that any investigation into a hypothetical four-dimensional space would have to take cognizance of space such as we know it, and would have to take the relations of such space into account. Superimposed on these relations a fourth variable would have to be dealt with and a further integration would have to be performed, yielding results which would supplement and extend, but which surely could not falsify our present spatial conceptions.

To obtain a definite conception of super-dimensional space, if such exists, would almost seem to demand a higher order of intellectual faculty—a sort of "sixth sense" in the sphere of cognition. But, even so, this could never belie our present conceptions any more than one sense can belie another. The sense of sight was probably developed long ages after the sense of touch, and reveals a vastly different aspect of the external world to that revealed by mere contact, but so far from falsifying the perceptions given by touch it amplifies and confirms them. Truth is one and undivided, and it is impossible that one order of veracious knowledge can ever contradict another.

A. E. MADDOCK.

ADAM.

Fit sire was he of a selfish race,
 Who first to temptation yielded,
 Then to mend his case tried to heap disgrace
 On the woman he should have shielded.
 Say! comrade mine, the forbidden fruit
 We'd have plucked, that I well believe,
 But I trust we'd rather have suffered, mate,
 Than have laid the blame upon Eve.

—Adam Lindsay Gordon.

Correspondence.

THE (PROTESTANT) "CONFESSIONAL UNMASKED."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My relative, Miss Edith Phipson, has written a book, small but very cogent and exhaustive, on the misdeeds of the Catholic Church, and especially the evils of the confessional. In criticizing the copy she favoured me with, I informed her that there are far worse practices and institutions supported by Protestants than this, which, although like every human mode of action, liable to abuse, is in essence potentially capable of much good. How often should I have been glad, in my youthful days, or even later, to avail myself of the opportunity to unburden my soul and seek the advice of a learned and pious moralist, in private colloquy, such as other churches never, or only in exceptional cases, offer! The confessional box, too, apart from possible abuses due to frail human nature, surely is quite unexceptionable in its arrangements. The priest and penitent are absolutely separated by a partition, and can only communicate through a small wire screen, whereas a Protestant parson receives his patients in a private room at the vicarage without any restrictions. One may certainly be surprised at the load of guilt oppressing Catholic girls, considering the lengthy periods required to confess their delinquencies; but their romantic stories must be much more elaborate and interesting than those of apple-stealing, tying kettles to cats' tails, etc., related by the boys, and it would not be polite to cut them short.

There is, however, a class of Protestant officials who have infinitely more power and influence over our daughters than the most inquisitive priest, I mean the male teachers in our rapidly multiplying mixed schools, who have their pupils entirely under their observation, not for half an hour or so in a week, but throughout every working day for all the years of their school life, and are enabled and empowered, not only to watch every slightest movement, but to ply them with the most intimate questions, to compel their absolute obedience to any demand, under pain of scolding, abuse, and punishment (girls being commonly thrashed by these men at their mere caprice, without any opportunity of defence, explanation, or redress, while absolutely forbidden to "tell tales"), and to nurse, caress, and indulge in other familiarities with them, as the schools are secret and no one but teachers and children knows what goes on within their four walls.

Nor are these teachers under any sentimental obligations imposed by their position. Clergymen are at least, from respect to their cloth, under some amount of conscientious restrictions, and any violation of these would expose them to heavy ecclesiastical or legal penalties. But State schoolmasters are not required to make even an ostensible claim to good character or morals, their enormously influential post being secured merely by virtue of a perfunctory examination in book learning, while they are yet confirmed and justified in any attitude adopted towards their pupils, not only by their favourite privilege of being *in loco parentis*, which is held to justify all harshness, cruelty, inquisitiveness, or familiarity, but also by the impossibility of the children or their parents obtaining any protection or redress, since the whole educational body, with its enormously wealthy "National Union of Teachers," the officials of all ranks, including magistrates and judges, backed by the whole force of the Government, unite to suppress any complaint, appeal, or even inquiry on the part of aggrieved or outraged victims, who therefore have to submit in silence to any indignity, brutality, or indecency without daring to make any protest, which entails immediate threat or action for libel, and is almost never successful.

When in Germany a few years ago, I saw in a comic paper a representation of a proposed innovation in school arrangements, whereby each girl pupil was padlocked in a wooden box, with only her head and arms free, to protect her from the attentions of the male teachers. This cartoon might appositely be reproduced here in England.

Neither is there, in many schools, any protection of girls from the insults and assaults of foul-mouthed and lecherous

boys, no notice being taken of any complaints, which are only met by the usual injunction not to "tell tales," while these episodes are a positive source of amusement to the more salaciously minded teachers. The sanitary arrangements, too, are usually such as to facilitate and promote the grossest obscenities, and would not be tolerated for a moment in any other public building whatever. No wonder children are so precocious and vice among the young so widespread!

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY,
JUNE 24, 1920.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Kelf, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Rosetti, Samuels, Silverstein, Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

New members were accepted for Birmingham, Leeds, and West Ham Branches, and for the Parent Society (seventeen in all).

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the following Committees were elected: Benevolent Fund—Messrs. Kelf and Samuels and Miss Pitcher; Propaganda Committee: Messrs. Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, and Miss Pitcher.

Matters remitted from the Conference were discussed. It was reported that West Ham Branch had engaged a hall for meetings during the winter months, and it was resolved that a course of lectures, under the auspices of the Executive, be arranged at Stratford Town Hall in October, if possible.

Further discussion as to the representation of the Society at the forthcoming International Freethought Congress at Prague was adjourned, and the Secretary instructed to send the affiliation fee in the meantime.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

BLASPHEMERS.

The hackneyed and lavished title of Blasphemer—which, with Radical, Liberal, Jacobin, Reformer, etc., are the changes which the hirelings are daily ringing in the ears of those who will listen—should be welcome to all who recollect on whom it was originally bestowed. Socrates and Jesus Christ were put to death publicly as blasphemers, and so have been and may be many who dare to oppose the most notorious abuses of the name of God and the mind of man. But persecution is not refutation, nor even triumphs: the "wretched infidel," as he is called, is probably happier in his prison than the proudest of his assailants.—*Byron, Prefatory Note to "Don Juan."*

The Pines, Dec. 7, 1904.

Dear Cousin Sermonda,—I am delighted to hear of the advent of an adorable person, whose feet I long to kiss, and greatly honoured by the proposal that I shall stand sponsor to an angel from heaven. Only you see, as that is very truly my view of a new-born baby, it would be impossible for me to take any part, direct or indirect, in a religious ceremony which represents it as a "child of wrath"—words which seem to me the most horrible of all blasphemies—standing in need of human intervention to transmute it into "a child of grace." I fear I must shock, but I trust I may not offend you by the avowal of an opinion which I have often enough, and plainly, put forward in public. I am none the less gratified by your kindness in wishing to associate me in any way with a child of yours. If only the ceremony were secular it would be to me the very greatest pleasure as well as honour to take any part in welcoming the arrival on earth of a baby in whose eyes (I always think and maintain) we see all that we ever can see here of heaven.—Your affectionate cousin, A. C. SWINBURNE.—*Coulson Kernahan, "Swinburne as I Knew Him."*

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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "The *Mayflower* and the Pilgrim Fathers."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. Spence, B.Sc., "Man's Ancestry."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.30, Mrs. Rosetti; 7.30, A. D. Maclaren.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Baker, and Ratcliffe. Every Wednesday, 6.30, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

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

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (12A Clayton Street): 3, Members' Meeting.

PLYMOUTH AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Room No. 7, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): Thursday, July 8, at 8, Lecture and Discussion on Freethought. Plymouth and District Freethinkers please note.

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

PECULIAR PEOPLE.—Will any Reader kindly inform me of the names and addresses of some of the leaders of this Religious Body?—J. M., c/o Freethinker Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

90 MEN out of every 100 can be fitted perfectly with a GOVERNMENT SUIT, and the price is only 3 Guineas. Only fools are giving £6 10s. for the same thing. If you are an averagely built, sane man, write to us for particulars.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

A FIGHT FOR RIGHT.

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

Bowman and Others v. The Secular Society, Limited.

With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.

Price One Shilling. Postage 1½d.

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

Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

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

Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. Price 2d., postage 1d.
THE MOTHER OF GOD. With Preface. Price 2d.,
postage 1d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. Price 2d.,
postage 1d.

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 1 1/2d.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

DEITY AND DESIGN. Price 1d., postage 1/2d.
WAR AND CIVILIZATION. Price 1d., postage 1/2d.
RELIGION AND THE CHILD. Price 1d., postage 1/2d.
GOD AND MAN: An Essay in Common Sense and Natural
Morality. Price 3d., postage 1/2d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY: With a Chapter on
Christianity and the Labour Movement. Price 1s.,
postage 1 1/2d.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY: The Subjection and
Exploitation of a Sex. Price 1s., postage 1 1/2d.

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 1 1/2d.

By J. T. LLOYD.

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

By MIMNERMUS.

FREETHOUGHT AND LITERATURE. Price 1d., post-
age 1/2d.

By WALTER MANN.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. Price 2d.,
postage 1/2d.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL. With a Chapter on Infidel
Death-Beds. Price 7d., postage 1 1/2d.

By H. G. FARMER.

HERESY IN ART. The Religious Opinions of Famous
Artists and Musicians. Price 3d., postage 1/2d.

By A. MILLAR.

THE ROBES OF PAN: And Other Prose Fantasies.
Price 1s., postage 1 1/2d.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON
SUICIDE. Price 2d., postage 1d.

LIMITS OF TOLERATION. Price 1d., postage 1d.

CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. Price 1d., postage 1/2d.

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH. Price 2d., postage 1d.

By D. HUME.

ESSAY ON SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage 1/2d.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY. Price 1d., postage 1d.

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

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

Remainder Bargains for Freethinkers.

WAR AND THE IDEAL OF PEACE.

By G. H. RUTGERS MARSHALL.

Price 2s. 6d. Postage 6d.

THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF FREETHOUGHT.

Being a New Edition of the "Philosophy of Morals."

By Sir T. C. MORGAN.

Published at 5s. Price 2s. 6d. Postage 5d.

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

Fine Sepia-toned Photograph of

Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN.

Printed on Cream Carbon Bromide-de-Luxe.

Mounted on Art Mount, 11 by 8. A High Class
Production.

Price 2s. 3d., post free.

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

Annual Conference, N.S.S.

Portrait Group of Delegates and Visitors
to the Conference, 11 by 8, Sepia Toned,
post free, 2s. 3d.

Orders to be sent direct to—

H. IRVING,

48 Sheffield Road, Barnsley, Yorks.

All profits from sales will be handed over to
the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund.

Flowers of Freethought.

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

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

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

JUSTICE.

THE ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY.

The Paper defines the aims of the Party. It provides thoughtful
and well-written articles on the pressing questions of the day, and
it is not Bolshevistic.

It is certain that the changes which are so necessary to the
well-being of the Community can be brought about by means of
intelligent political action, and one of its main objects is to secure
that political action.

While the Paper is frankly propaganda, it has a wide outlook
and a wide appeal.

Take it at once, and you will wish you had done so before.

2d. Weekly, or from the Publishers,

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY PRESS,
37 & 38 Clerkenwell Green, E.C. 4.

A BOOK FOR ALL TO READ.

DETERMINISM

OR

FREE-WILL ?

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

NEW EDITION Revised and Enlarged.

Some Press Opinions of the 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.

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 FARRINGTON 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 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

New Pamphlets.

SOCIETY and SUPERSTITION

By ROBERT ARCH.

CONTENTS: What is a Freethinker?—Freethought, Ethics, and Politics.—Religious Education.—The Philosophy of the Future.

Price 6d., Postage 1d.

MISTAKES OF MOSES.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

32 pages. One Penny, postage ½d.

Should be circulated by the thousand. Issued for Propagandist purposes. 50 copies sent, post free, for 4s.

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

The Parson and the Atheist.

A Friendly Discussion on

RELIGION AND LIFE.

BETWEEN

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

AND

CHAPMAN COHEN

(President of the N. S. S.).

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

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

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

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

THE "FREETHINKER."

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

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

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