

# 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. 34

SUNDAY, AUGUST 22, 1920

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Freethought on the Stage.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	529
<i>What is Materialism?—J. T. Lloyd</i> . . . . .	530
<i>"What About Hell?"—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	532
<i>The Bible and the Koran.—(The late) G. W. Foote</i> . . . . .	532
<i>From an Outpost.—Andrew Millar</i> . . . . .	534
<i>The New Humour and the Old Testament.</i> —George Underwood	538
<i>Woman and the Church.—Frances Prewett</i> . . . . .	540
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Freethought on the Stage.

Once upon a time the place of the Freethinker in fiction or on the stage was well defined and easily recognised. He served as the tragi-comic relief to the virtuous Christian. No matter how well he began he was certain to come to a bad end. Sooner or later he was unmasked as indulging in loose living, or deceiving people for the sake of gain—something quite unknown in Christian society—or assuming unbelief as a cloak for his rascality, and generally carrying out in practice the programme of villainy which Christians had kindly drawn up for his guidance. And after witnessing his downfall in the last act, or the last chapter, the Christian went home, or laid down his book, with a "Thank God, I'm a Christian!" and a befitting sense of his own moral superiority. I emphasise the moral superiority, because even in fiction and the drama it was very seldom that intellectual superiority was ascribed to the Christian. The Freethinker was always depicted as a rogue, but very seldom as a fool. Perhaps this was because those who wrote these things had no desire to incite the believer to travel along the dangerous road of intellectual competition. Perhaps it was because they wished to leave one field in which the fervent believer should hold an unchallengeable superiority. Foolishness has never been a bar to salvation. Even the devils in Christian iconography were always depicted with very wide-awake faces. And on the other hand, it is the angels who are so often drawn with countenances that express about as much intelligence as a carved turnip.

\* \* \*

### Driving it Home.

But persistent misrepresentation is only possible of the unknown. So long as a Freethinker was a comparative rarity it was possible for the Christian caricature to maintain currency. When he became better known the lie became more difficult to maintain. So the Freethinker gradually became a mis-

guided person, then one whose intellectual judgment had gone astray, and finally one for whose point of view something—if not much—might be said. "Blasphemy" became possible in high places, and "daring playwrights" and others began to express, with the air of desperate adventurers, opinions that were the A.B.C. of Freethought propaganda a century ago. An illustration of this has just occurred in a new play by Mr. Somerset Maughan, entitled "The Unknown." I have not had time to see the play, and am basing my comments on the newspaper reports. From these I gather that the play is concerned with the war and its effects on religious beliefs, and it says little for the intelligence of the average man and woman that it should have needed a war such as we have just passed through to suggest the question that has so startled writers on the public press. The kernel of the play is the disturbing effect of the war on religious beliefs, and amid talk of the blood and filth and littleness of the war a mother who has lost two sons drops what the *Evening Standard* calls a bomb-shell, in the question, "Who is going to forgive God?" The play, unlike the usual mamby-pamby attempts to veil the real issue by attacking the clergy, or what is called distortions of Christianity, goes straight to the root of the matter by asking, not whether God will forgive man for the war, but whether man can forgive God. That is putting the responsibility on the right shoulders—if there is a God, and we congratulate Mr. Maughan in having the courage to ask so straight a question. We have been asking the same question for years, we will not say without effect, for we venture to say that without our having asked it in these columns the public mind would not have been so well prepared for its being asked on the stage. All the same Mr. Maughan is to be congratulated on his courage in helping to bring the indictment home. It may do something to strip the disguise from the colossal humbug of Christian theism.

\* \* \*

### God's World.

Look at the position. Christian theists believe that God made all that is—not only the world as it is, but the forces that make and keep the world as it is. He made man with all his capacities and potentialities. He knew what man would do, and nothing occurs without his knowledge. He knew that when the pistol shot of the student at Sarajevo killed the archduke it would lead to war. A little exercise of his almighty power might have changed the mind of that student, or made his aim untrue, or deflected the bullet, or done one of a dozen other things that might have averted the catastrophe. But he let things go on in the world—his world—just as though he did not exist. He let the nations go to

war, he stood idly by while millions were killed or wounded, and a cunning clergy asked a befooled population to ask God to forgive them, and to thank him for his kindness and mercy! They were to ask to be forgiven for being what he had made them, to thank him for permitting kaisers and kings and governments to place the world into so helpless a muddle. These might at least plead that they were misled, or deceived, or mistaken, but who was to mislead, or to deceive God? If the Kaiser willed the war, God willed the Kaiser. The clergy were strenuous against forgiveness being extended to the Kaiser. Is there any greater reason for extending forgiveness to God? The Kaiser is in forced retirement in Holland; when will man have the sense, even the decency, to banish this heavenly Kaiser beyond the pale of civilisation?

\* \* \*

#### God and War.

Mr. Maughan told an interviewer that no one can fail to see that the ideas we have been brought up in about the loving mercy of God are rather shattered. But if the average man or woman had possessed a little more *human* imagination it would not have needed this war to have had that effect. All wars might have furnished the same lesson. The indictment of what the clergy facetiously call "Divine justice" is not greater in the case of a European war than it is in the case of any other war. It is not the number killed that makes the offence. The smoking out from the caves in which the Mashonas—men, women and children—had taken refuge was not a bit more morally justifiable than the use of poison gas by the German troops. The burning of a European city was not a less offence than the burning of a village of huts inhabited by savages—it only makes it doubtful as to which are the savages. The question of the moral guilt of war is not in the least degree affected by the number of troops engaged, or by the amount of money involved. God should have the same care for the inhabitants of central Africa as he is supposed to have for those of central London. If there is a God the world is his world from China to Peru. His loving kindness is over all, and it is exemplified in wars, and pestilences, and diseases, and calamities that some men at least do try to prevent or minimise. One comment on Mr. Maughan's play is that a belief in God "does not imply the touching confidence that it is or should be his purpose to make straight all the crooked places." But why not? Most men would if they could. If God is not there to help man will someone be good enough to tell me what he is there for? And is there any sense in our continuing to worship a God who does nothing but exist? The only way in which a God can justify his existence is that he does something. Apparently he is supported for the same reason that we pay an ex-Cabinet Minister a large pension, because he is believed to have once done something. We believe in God on account of his past, we are hopeful as to his future, but as to his present—well, the least said about that the better. The imbecility of mind that can tolerate that sort of belief helps one to understand why we have so many other imbecilities in our social and political life. They are perhaps there to keep "God" in countenance.

God and Nature.

The "Daily Express," dealing with the play, says "It is, fortunately for the human race, no more necessary to find war incompatible with a God-directed universe and the eternal verities than it is to find in pestilence and famine, in accident and death, in poverty and sickness and sorrow and injustice proof of a purely materialistic world." We agree, cordially. We have always said that if a man can reconcile the existence of God with the one he need not boggle at the other. For God's government—if there be a God—is all of a piece. It is seen everywhere or it is to be found nowhere. But it does not follow that because we find nature cruel or blind to human well being that we are therefore precluded from indicting God because he has arranged, or permits, things to be so. Granted that if there be a God, and that if he made nature, we should expect nature to reflect his character, and that if the evil in nature does not offend us then neither should the character of deity. But we are affronted that God being what he is said to be nature should be what it is. When Goethe said that if God is what he is said to be then the world is what he would have it be, he stated an unanswerable case against theism. And one may re-echo the words of Winwood Reade that if there be a day of judgment, it will not be man's place to kneel suing for mercy, his place will be that of an accuser charging his creator with gross bungling or culpable negligence. Man may forgive God in the end, but it will be an act of rare magnanimity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### What is Materialism?

THEOLOGIANS, generally, denounce Materialism as an evil without taking the trouble to define it. Preachers, in particular, are proverbially careless in their use of the term, though the natural inference from most of their utterances is that what they understand by it is exclusive devotion to the interests of the body, a Materialist being one who attends only to the necessities and comforts of the bodily life. Taken in this practical sense, Materialism is as objectionable and reprehensible to Secularists as it is to Christians, and probably the former are, on the whole, less prone to it than the latter. In our estimation, however, Materialism is a philosophical theory of the Universe. Historically it is one of three such theories, the other two being Idealism and Realism. Idealism, as formerly held, was the view that the only thing really existing was mind. The founder of this theory was Descartes, although he was by no means a consistent and thorough-going Idealist. He was a metaphysician who, by the grace of God, could perceive, or at least infer the existence of, extended substances. This was an utterly illogical position, which no self-respecting thinker could hold for long, as the Cartesian school soon realized. Berkeley maintains that nothing exists except as an object of thought. He contends "that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the earth, have not any subsistence without a mind—that their *being* is to be perceived or known." Realism, on the other hand, is the view that both mind and matter exist independently as separate entities.

Now, wherein does Materialism differ from those two theories? In the fact that it regards matter as the only existing substance. Even Tertullian, the famous divine,

was a Materialist. In his treatise *De Anima* he pretends to prove from the Bible that the soul is material. Indeed, he declares that nothing exists that is not of a material or corporeal nature, the soul simply being of a finer species of matter than the body. In every age from Democritus to our own day there have been great thinkers who, like Tyndall, discerned in matter "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life"; and yet some of us remember how Tyndall's bold statement of this theory in his Belfast address, forty-six years ago, threw the religious world into a state of the most frenzied consternation and resentment, and for nearly the rest of his life the great physicist was bitterly persecuted for it. But what are the objections to the acceptance of Materialism? Even Professor Peake admits that it possesses wonderful attractiveness for the scientists, but expresses a doubt "that it will permanently hold its ground." He says:—

Some, no doubt, accept it and cleave to it, but it is more likely to be a temporary stage of thought among those who are really concerned to think out the questions that are involved (*Christianity: Its Nature and its Truth*, p. 45.)

Dr. Peake asks, "how are we to account for the energy in the Universe"? Fundamentally, energy or force and matter are identical. Numerous as the forces of Nature are, at bottom they are all one and the same. Heat, light, sound, chemical action, electricity, and magnetism, it has been discovered, are but so many modes of motion. We speak of them as if they were distinct, separate forces, but in reality they are but so many varieties of one fundamental energy. As Moleschott says, "force is no impelling god, no entity separate from the material substratum; it is inseparable from matter, is one of its eternal indwelling properties." Or as S. Cornelius puts it: "We must hold firmly to the principle that matter and force are indivisibly joined together so that force without matter has no independent existence." Buchner, perhaps, expresses the unity of Nature more adequately still when he says that "force and matter are fundamentally the same thing, contemplated from different standpoints." The only pertinent question, therefore, is, not how we are to account for the energy in the Universe, but how we are to account for the Universe itself. By the Universe we understand, first of all, in Hugh Elliot's words, "a great system of matter and motion undergoing redistribution according to fixed sequences, which in the terminology of science are called laws." Matter is eternal and infinite, about which we know little more than the evident fact that its forms are perpetually changing, and that it is these endless changes of form that constitute history. These "sequences," or these "laws," are known to be physico-chemical in their nature; and the late Professor Henry Drummond, fairly orthodox theologian though he was, maintained firmly that these are the only laws in existence. He believed in two worlds, the natural and the spiritual, but stoutly contended that both are governed by the same laws, which are wholly natural. We agree with him as to the identity of the laws, but totally differ from him as to the objective reality of a spiritual world. The so-called spiritual world has never once demonstrated its own existence. We are told that the imagination is utterly baffled at the task of explaining "how the chasm is to be spanned which lies between dead matter and living consciousness"; but the theologian seems blind to the fact that the chasm he describes exists alone in his imagination. Nature does not recognize it at all, and consequently renders void all attempts to span it. It is unscientific to speak of "dead" matter; all matter is potentially alive and responds to appropriate stimuli. No true scientist ever dreams of contrasting "dead"

matter with "living" consciousness. Is not Professor Peake, for example, aware that some cerebral conditions invariably underlie every state of consciousness, and that this fact alone annihilates the chasm between the two? Dr. McDougall's *Body and Mind* is an exceedingly instructive book, but the author has already lived long enough to discard some of its theories; and it is certain that the objections he therein raises against the Automaton Theory are utterly futile. There is no evidence whatever that the appearance of consciousness in the course of the evolution of living organisms is "a distinct breach of continuity." Of what continuity, or in the continuity of what, can the emergence of consciousness be a breach? Indeed, it cannot be proved that consciousness ever did begin.

A fundamental error into which the opponents of Materialism usually fall is to imagine that, according to Materialism, the brain bears the same relation to thought or mind as the liver does to bile; or, in other words, that the brain secretes thought or mind as the liver secretes bile. Of course, the old school metaphysician regards thought as a product of the mind which employs the brain as its instrument, as the musician uses his violin or organ. The illustration is extremely unfortunate. There is absolutely no ground on which you can compare the mind to a musician playing upon his instrument, because after the musical instrument has been completely smashed the musician exists as before and can construct and play upon another instrument, while, on the contrary, if you destroy a man's brain the mind instantly ceases to be, or, at least, it gives no sign of its independent existence. Now, according to Materialism, mind is a purely metaphysical invention and has never justified the claims made on its behalf. Hugh Elliott says the mind is nothing but "neural activity," possessing no other existence whatever. Someone may object on the ground that Mr. Elliott also states that "matter is associated sensation"; but the objection falls to the ground when it is further declared that sensation is also nothing but "neural activity." Here we have the newest Idealism fully harmonized with the true doctrine of Materialism. This is how Mr. Elliott puts the case:—

Sensation is the only fundamental reality attainable and the only changes which it can undergo are by association of elementary sensations or groups of sensations with one another. From sensation with association is built up our conception of the Universe. The earliest product of associated sensation is matter, which is a generalization comprising a number of separate sensations commonly associated. Later products are the theories and principles of the various sciences. Mind is a name for certain elementary and associative processes occurring in the nervous system. All the processes and events occurring in Nature fit into the scheme of Materialism founded in physical and chemical laws. In other words, Materialism in the sense indicated is a true philosophy. There are no existences of spiritual character differing from matter. Mind and matter are equally real, but they are not made of different stuff. Mind is neural activity; matter is associated sensation (*Modern Science and Materialism*, pp. 209-10).

Our conclusion, therefore, is of an exclusively monistic character: *Nothing exists but matter, and all the experiences of life have a material basis.* As thus understood, Materialism, instead of excluding, includes Idealism. It was through not realizing this that Huxley rejected Materialism, regarding it as involving "grave philosophical error," while all the time using materialistic terminology. We know now that all matter, of whatever form, is in restless, orderly motion; or, in Dr. Chalmers Mitchell's words, "is motion itself, not the things moved." Then this great Zoologist adds that from our modern knowledge of matter the assumption is comparatively

easy that it is the ultimate reality, and that mind and consciousness are but "its most highly specialized qualities."

J. T. LLOYD.

## "What About Hell?"

The fear of hell's a hangman's whip  
To haul the wretch in order. —Burns.

A world in the hand is worth two in the bush.  
—Emerson.

After all, a book (the Bible) cannot make a stand against the wild, living intellect of man.—John Henry Newman.

IN search of a subject with which to enliven his readers during the dog-days, the editor of a London newspaper, the *Daily Graphic*, has discussed the warm and startling subject, "What About Hell?" The writer is quite frank, and says that "it is difficult to recall a sermon of recent date which has given utterance to the old idea of an everlasting punishment in hell-fire," and he admits that there is "increasing discontent" in the Church of England concerning such teaching. And he adds these words:—

And the war has helped. We simply refuse to think that any of the men who met a violent death in our defence have been condemned to Hell fire, no matter how ungodly they may have been.

The passage does credit to the writer's heart, if not to his head, for the religious propaganda amongst sailors and soldiers during the Great War bears directly upon this question. The numerous tracts, written especially to entrap the fighting men, show conclusively that Christians, like the Bourbons, "learn nothing and forget nothing." Most of them were written by men, not only ignorant of the very alphabet of science, but men who knew nothing of any other religions but their own. They assumed, blandly and blindly, not only that the Christian Bible was true, but that it contained all truth. The writers of these leaflets had never a shadow of suspicion that history contradicts it, science flouts it, morality disowns it. These fanatics, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, put forward the fabulous rubbish of twenty centuries earlier as being the highest expression of contemporary wisdom.

In controversy with Freethinkers, when defending their faith (and their living), the clergy act like cuttlefish, and raise a cloud of words by which they evade the dilemma of dogmas. When they are addressing Sunday-school children, haranguing village congregations, or talking to the so-called heathen, they forget all their lame apologetics, and rely upon unadulterated dogma. Here is a quotation from a tract, *What is There After Death?* widely circulated among the troops, which shows the Christian Religion in its most attractive guise:—

You will never forget in hell. The chords of memory will be swept to the awful wailing of the lost. You may think of your loved ones left on earth, and seek, as Dives did, to send a message to them. But no, the stern silence of eternity forbids.....Oh! poor lost souls in torment! The drop of water to cool your burning tongues can never be given.

Should it be urged that this is but the language of a mere tract-writer, let the leader turn to the addresses of the Rev. William Sunday, Doctor of Divinity. Here is an example of that sobriety of utterance which distinguishes Christian ministers from the unthinking herd around them:—

Why don't we evolute a little now? I don't believe my great-great-great grandfather was a monkey, sitting up a tree, shying cocoa-nuts with his tail across an alley at a neighbouring monk. I have too much respect for my ancestors. But if you think in that way, you can take your monkey-ancestors and go to hell.

Let there be no mistake about it. The best known and most popular Christian preachers from Charles Spurgeon to Billy Sunday have been men who imagined that the world's clock struck at Jerusalem two thousand years ago, and that it has never moved since. Spurgeon and Booth, Moody and Sankey, Torrey and Alexander, in spite of their great popularity, were half-educated men appealing to the ignorant.

Freethinkers who imagine that one of the oldest and most barbarous religious dogmas is losing its hold on the national mind because a few preachers in fashionable churches avoid the subject of eternal punishment, will do well to remember that, while the objectionable dogmas are still taught throughout the Christian world, the protests of the humanitarians are sought to be boycotted. Wherever the clergy retain their power they still preach a hell of literal fire. Roman Catholics everywhere have never damped a solitary spark of their fiery damnation. The Church of England, particularly the High Churchmen, who form the majority of that body, hold fast to brimstone. The Salvation Army, which caters for the least educated of the community, includes hell in its trade-mark, "Blood and Fire." In the United States and in Australia uncultured evangelists flame the fires of hell over two continents. It is worthy of the followers of a creed, who outraging the teaching of civilization, still pray for rain or fine weather, bless crops, and consecrate the standards of murder in every war.

When Mark Twain was asked to subscribe towards the rebuilding of a churchyard wall, the genial Freethinker replied: "I do not see the necessity. The folk in the graveyard can't get out, and the people outside don't want to get in." When the democracy is educated, it will not see the necessity of paying church rates to hear the worn-out repetitions of orthodoxy any more than it will pay to see the revolutions of Oriental praying-wheels. By directing men's thoughts to a to-morrow in heaven or hell, of eternal pleasure or eternal pain, the clergy deter millions from thinking of to-day. In plain English, the Democracy sells its splendid birthright for worthless paper promises on the Bank of Faith.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Bible and the Koran.

(Concluded from p. 522.)

WITH regard to the treatment of slaves, the Koran is superior to the Bible. In the Christian Scriptures, from the Mosaic Law to the epistle to Philemon, slavery is taken for granted as a permanent institution. "Servants, obey your masters," really means "Slaves, obey your owners." Saint Paul sent a runaway slave back to his master, enjoining the slave to be obedient, and the master to be kind. Mohammed took slavery for granted in precisely the same way. But he taught that the slave was, in a sense, a brother, that he was to be fed and clothed like his master, that he was not to be overworked or beaten, and that a man who ill-used his slave would not enter Paradise. When slaves desired their freedom, we read in the Koran, their masters are to give them a deed of manumission; and the Prophet adds: "Give them a portion of the wealth of God, which He hath given you." Mohammed, in the Koran, also tells his followers that they must not force their female slaves into sin. Compare this with the brutal treatment of female captives permitted under the Mosaic Law; women being captured, violated, and then (if the men did not care to keep them) turned out of doors, helpless and friendless, in a foreign land (Deut. xxi. 10, 14; xxiv. 1, 3; Numbers xxxi. 18, 35). A Hebrew master might also

beat his slave to death, provided that he did not kill him on the spot.

And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his money (Exodus xxi. 20, 21).

The penalty for the Hebrew master who killed his slave on the spot is not defined. Probably it was very slight, and seldom inflicted. Even in the eighteenth century, in Poland, a Christian country, if a gentleman killed a serf, the matter was settled by paying a fine of twelve shillings.

No doubt the Jews, in their later history, after the captivity, outgrew the Mosaic Law in the treatment of their slaves; but the institution was never abolished, and the causes of improvement were not religious, but social and political. Slavery in Mohammedan countries, however, seems to have always been of a comparatively mild type. "It is not the slavery of the field," says Mr. Ingram, "but of the household. The slave is a member of the family, and is, in general, treated with tenderness and affection."

It is worth noting that slavery was abolished in Turkey earlier than in the United States. When the Sultan, in 1846, issued a firman granting to Mohammed Ali the government of the conquered provinces in the Soudan, he declared the slave-trade to be "contrary to the laws of religion and justice." Firmans issued in 1857-8, prohibited the slave-traffic throughout the Ottoman dominions. The slaves in the Southern States were not liberated by Lincoln's proclamation till January 1, 1863. Slavery was not abolished in Brazil, another Christian country, till 1888. When we consider that less than a hundred years ago the African slave-trade was in full swing, with all its hellish horrors undiminished, and that the major part of the trade was carried on by Christian England, we can easily see what little right this country has to shriek out its moral indignation at the Mohammedans.

There is little in the Bible about children, and not much in the Koran. Mohammed did not teach, however, as Solomon is supposed to have done, that children should be beaten into sense and goodness. "He was very fond of children," says Deutsch, "and would stop them in the streets and pat their little heads. He never struck anyone in his life." One of his sayings in the Table-Talk is noble and pathetic: "Whoso comforteth a woman who has lost her child will be covered with a garment in Paradise." The strong man, said Mohammed, is not he who throws people down; he is strong who withholds himself from anger. A man who felt angry should sit down; and, if his anger did not depart, he should lie down. This is very quaint, yet perhaps very good advice.

Mohammed was asked what relation was most worthy of doing good to. He replied, "Your mother." This he repeated thrice. "After her," he added, "your father, and after him your other relations by propinquity." "The most valuable thing in the world," he said, "is a virtuous woman." The Koran allows polygamy as the Bible does, but it expressly limits the number of wives and concubines together to four (chap. iv.). Its laws of divorce are modelled on those of the Jews, although it guards the wife's property if she is not guilty of adultery. Sale remarked that the Mohammedans seldom proceed to the extremity of divorce, it being reckoned a disgrace to do so. Mohammed is reported to have said that divorce was lawful, but disliked by God. He was severe against that "foul thing" unchastity in both sexes alike. As a matter of fact, there is very little prostitution in Mohammedan

countries. Where it does exist, the people have generally been corrupted by contact with Christians.

The Bible teaches children to honour their fathers and their mothers, but it does not equal the tenderness of the Koran in the following passage:—

And kindness to your parents, whether one or both of them attain old age with thee; then say not to them "Fie!" neither reproach them; but speak to them generous words, and droop the wing of humility to them out of compassion, and say: "Lord, have compassion on them, like as they fostered me when I was little."

It is objected that the Paradise of the Koran is a sensual one, with its luscious food and drinks, and its dark-eyed amorous houris. But is there anything very spiritual in the Heaven of the Book of Revelation, with its golden floors and jewelled walls? A material Hell must be balanced by a material Heaven. Spiritualize the one, and you must spiritualize the other. Mohammedans of refinement explain the language of the Koran as allegorical, and the same has to be done with the language of the Bible before its future life can be made suitable to persons of any elevation of spirit. We have no doubt that Mohammed believed in a material Heaven and Hell, but so did the writers of the New Testament. His descriptions of Hell are tremendous; so far as they go, they are little inferior to those of Dante.

Mohammed insisted on faith as an essential virtue. But the Bible does the same. Those who believe will be saved, and those who disbelieve will be damned.

It must be said, however, that the Koran insists equally on good deeds. Paradise is not open to the believer unless his good works outweigh his evil works. It must be noted, too, that Mohammed made cleanliness a part of godliness. Bodily purity is a part of the Mohammedan faith. When water is not obtainable, or is too scarce for ablutions, the Moslems scour themselves with sand. Turkish baths come to us from Constantinople. Baths of any kind are very recent in Christian cities, but they abounded in the fine cities of the Moors in the south of Spain, before their civilization was drowned by the Christian Spaniards in a deluge of blood.

Christians who shut their eyes to the brutalities of the Old Testament, and ignore the fact that toleration is not taught even in the New Testament, object to the Koran because it enjoins war against infidels. Let us see what it actually says:—

Fight in the path of God with those who fight with you; but exceed not; verily, God loveth not those who exceed. And kill them wheresoever ye find them, and thrust them out from whence they thrust you out..... But if they desist, then verily God is forgiving and merciful. But fight them till there be no dissent, and the worship be only to God; but, if they desist, then let there be no hostility save against the transgressors.

This language is not too clear, but where it is clear it negatives the idea that Mohammedans are bound for ever to propagate their religion with the sword. It does not appear that the Koran authorizes them to commence hostilities. Besides, the forty-seventh chapter of the Koran was really directed against the Arabian idolators, who constantly harassed the Moslems. It is absurd to assert that Mohammed taught his followers to fight and kill Christians and Jews. He himself did not oppress the Christians who would live at peace with him; he readily granted (as Gibbon observes) the "security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship." Christian Churches were freely allowed in Mohammedan states, at a time when no Christian state would have tolerated a Mohammedan mosque.

Nor is it true that the Koran orders the massacre of women and children. Mohammed is represented as expressly saying in the Table-Talk: "Kill not the old men who cannot fight, nor young children, nor women."

Sale points out what small rights the Christians have to object to the Koran in this respect. The Jews were ordered by Jehovah to kill every male in some places, and every married woman, and to keep the virgins for themselves; in other places, they were to kill all, men, women, and children, and leave alive nothing that breathed. Jehovah was far more cruel and bloody than Allah. And as to holy wars, why, the Christians waged such against the Mohammedans for centuries, and only ceased when they were thoroughly exhausted.

There is a church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, which is in the Sultan's dominions. Greek and Latin Christians both worship in it, and a guard of Turkish soldiers stands between them to keep them from cutting each other's throats. What a picture! And what a sarcasm on the pretensions of Christianity!

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

---

### From an Outpost.

---

#### LETTER TO THE OFFICER COMMANDING.

MONSIEUR L'EDITEUR,—It is, of course, impossible for you to be over the whole field of battle, on so wide a front, and in such a long war. You have, so far as a man may, performed the impossible, and your orders of the day, issued weekly, especially the last received, dated August 1, —th year of conflict, was all that could be desired of direction and inspiration. Nevertheless, while never vanquished, the scattered forces of Free-thought are far from victorious, the setbacks often outnumbering the advances. This is all in the nature of things—in the human nature; it is a war conducted in the as yet dim and obscure tangled and savage region of psychology, where virgin paths have to be hewn, old roads cleared and surveyed, and some approach made to culture and civilization. The immediate work is the getting of recruits from amongst the cunning or timid savage or shrinking natives, many of whom are "educated" and impossible; most of whom are ignorant, superficial, effervescent, or indifferent; piously respectable, or respectably impious; all the qualities and variations of man, better known to yourself, perhaps, than to anyone. As you know, also, our enlistment is all on the voluntary system, and each soldier when enlisted, or as we call it emancipated, is left to "the freedom of his own will," just as the natives say their god has left them. Nevertheless they make good soldiers, but are too fond of the personal initiative of guerilla warfare, which is little better than a waste of energy, courage, and independence. There are Knoxes, Carlyles, and Cromwells among those dour old Hermit Crabs of the dugout, who dwell in the seclusion and superiority of their own right minds, sandbagged all round with the selectest literature of our common Cause, each man a world in himself, but mostly serenely oblivious of the outer actual world and the serried struggling lines of organized opinion—of both of which he may think himself the principal benefactor! whereas he is but a book-miser and thought-collector, gloating over the treasures, indeed, but in this regard useless treasures, of life and mind. In short, *mon Capitaine*, while I am not complaining of, but meeting just what one might expect, I feel that, in the words of the hymn,—

My flesh longs in a dry parched land  
Wherein no waters be.

The man who really wants our *War Cry* is as rare as the oasis in Sahara. As your faithful intelligence officer, I dare to tell you frankly that, while the world needs, it does not want, the *Freethinker*—which, by the way, while the most immediately disastrous, is the greatest compliment that could be paid to it. What then? Just this: Freethinkers, like poets, are born, they are not made. Let me give an instance: Arguing the other Sunday with an old Summer Evangelist, who always carries lovingly under his arm his last means of livelihood, a large Bible, he said, "I believe in the Book because I know what the Book has made of me." Whereupon, knowing a little, and guessing the rest, of what he was, I replied, "Well, Mr. P., I know nothing about your past or private life, but I think you will admit the Book has not done so much good for you after all!" I think the shaft went home, for the rest was silence.

On the other hand, a man may read, and even revere the *Freethinker* for a lifetime without much changing his inherited nature or even ideas. There is a something—differing in every individual—always growing up in the mind of man, something insusceptible to any special outside influence, making its predetermined, irresistible way. The thought falls on the virgin mental soil, or the hereditary soil is itself potential, the plant is produced, and will force its way, the kind or quality not predicable, only its force and direction certain. Or, as in an illustration with which I often please my fancy, take the ponderous slabs of "dull cold marble" where some Wolsey sleeps. The autumn wind sweeping across the quiet cemetery drops in the mouldering crevice the winged seed of the plane tree, which finds the rich and quiet soil below. It germinates in the spring—this seed of Freethought, if you like, but which might have been of something else—the tiny green leaves wave above the grey stone, their stem, but now could be pulped between finger and thumb. Summer succeeds summer, the plant swells and hardens, and, at last, pushes aside or uplifts the inanimate weight of stone, the sapling rends the sepulchre! Nothing can resist this natural process, nothing but the ape and saw of the executioner. Growth can be killed, it cannot be arrested, it is inevitable to life, it is life itself. And so the mind will grow; so Free-thought, in the free play of the mind, and sometimes sturdily in obstruction, will ultimately triumph. Meantime the tree is a tender shoot, but it must through, and seek the sun, even in a world of weeds that also seek the sun.

This, then, *mon cher general*, is an accurate, if incomplete, and by no means hopeless view of the situation in these remote and desert places, where, so far, I have just been holding my own. My immediate task would seem to be to *find*, not to *make*, the Freethinker. Somewhere in the world, in sufficient number, there exists the type of mind to which our paper would be a boon and a blessing. That may be the real hope of and justification for your gallant and unwavering campaign in those thorny and desolate regions of the mind. It is often difficult to *find* the fruitful Freethinker. It is still more difficult to *make* one out of the poor material we know. It seems to me a closing of our ranks is necessary, a more co-ordinate effort—that is, indeed, the need of all advanced movements. The fact remains that there are many Freethinkers, and, though they elude us at the moment, may be daily growing more. I salute you, M'sieur l'Editeur.

ANDREW MILLAR.

---

It is historically true that a large proportion of Infidels in all ages have been persons of distinguished integrity and honour.—*John Stuart Mill.*

## Acid Drops.

The *Daily Mirror* is publishing letters from prominent people on the significance of Mr. Maughan's play, *The Unknown*. We deal elsewhere with one aspect of that subject; and, in our opinion, the whole significance of the matter is that it is helping to pull the disguise from one of the most colossal of historic humbugs. The *Mirror* heads its column "Did the War Kill Men's Faith?" To that we feel inclined to say that it did not do that so much as it showed thousands the hollowness of their profession of belief. With multitudes real belief had gone long before the War, but they went on professing and putting up with all the old absurdities, until something happened to induce a little self-examination. And then the game was up.

We find this borne out by some of the contributors to the correspondence. Miss Tree, who was, we believe, responsible for the production of the play, said that what surprised her was that the most "daring" things were "accepted by the audience with comparatively faint hostility." As a matter of fact there was no hostility manifested at all—at least so we are informed. All that existed was a feeling of surprise that to an English audience so much of the truth should be told. And that was really the extent of the daring. Nothing new, nothing that has not been said in this journal at any time during the last forty years, only an echo of its mildest criticisms, but even that was enough to make English audiences wonder. For things have indeed changed when a little of the truth about religion can be permitted to appear on a stage in England—the world's stronghold of religious humbug. When Christians tell Freethinkers of the ineffectiveness of their propaganda it should be enough to point out that it has at least made a little of the truth possible before an English public.

Miss Viola Tree says she would not like to say that the War has weakened men's faith. Naturally, neither would many others like to say it. Whether they *think it* or not is quite another question. Prebendary Carlile thinks that discussion about religion is a good thing so long as it is conducted "in a reverent and Christian manner." Quite so. So long as you will discuss Christianity as a Christian it is all right. It always was. Lady Henry Somerset thinks so "profound" a subject should not be treated on the stage. But the profundity owes best part of its existence to the stupidity of those who believe in it. The statement that twice two are five, isn't profound because one can't make sense of it, it is simply stupid. The Christian doctrine of salvation isn't at all profound, it is sheer nonsense. The *Church Times* complains that in the play the Agnostic has the best of the dialogue and the argument, while the Vicar is a poor, simple sort of a creature. Well, what would you? Mr. Maughan naturally tried to make the characters in his play as life-like as possible. And to have given the Vicar the strongest argument would have been to have made the Freethinker a drivelling idiot. Finally, the *Daily Mirror* is inviting a number of parsons to see the play and to get their opinions of it. But does that really matter? Does anyone doubt as to what they will say? And will anyone, outside of a Mother's Meeting trouble about what they do say? They are not the jury, it is they who are on trial. And the *Mirror* is asking them to say whether they are guilty or not. Humbug dies very hard in this country, and this humbug about the clergy must be kept up to the very end. Why doesn't the *Mirror* follow the example of Mr. Maughan and tell the truth about the clergy? Mr. Maughan's audience has survived a little of the naked truth on the stage; the public might recover if it got a little more of it in a daily paper. One never knows.

We do not know what were the details of the charge of obtaining money—one of five charges—brought against Claude Henry Hammond, at Preston, but it was said to be so "harrowing" that details were prohibited. But our Christian readers will be interested to learn that Hammond was a very religious person, and promised, if let off, to lead

a new life, "with God's help." He has eighteen months in which to meditate on the beauties of his faith.

We do not know the Rev. Gilbert Muir, nor do we think much profit, intellectual or other, is to be gained from his acquaintance. But all sorts of things demand notice, from a flea at one end to a philosopher at the other, without any special reference to their intrinsic worth. So we place on record the following deliverance from Mr. Muir, with which he enlightened a meeting of the Easterbrook Brotherhood on August 1, and reported in the *Bradford Daily Telegraph* :—

If the unbeliever lived up to his creed the world would be unfit for residence. Had they considered how awful would be the result if the Bible and all that Bible meant to them were suddenly to be taken from them? He could imagine no greater catastrophe.

Now, all we are wondering about is what is this unbeliever's creed which, if lived up to, would make the world so fearsome a place? Mr. Muir is evidently one of those amiable Christians who can see no other purpose in being cleanly and honest except there be some sort of a reward in a life to come. There are, we have no doubt, some people who are the better for a policeman's eye being upon them, and whether that policeman is on earth or heaven is a mere matter of detail. On this point we cannot deny Mr. Muir's right to speak for himself. All we challenge is his speaking for other people.

We do not suppose that Mr. Muir ever reads anything so intelligently blasphemous as Ingersoll's lectures, so we beg to offer him an Ingersollian story. Said someone to the great American Freethinker: "Do you know, Colonel, that if I did not believe in a God I should commit every crime in the calendar." "Well, replied Ingersoll, "after a casual look at you, I should say you would." We leave Mr. Muir to draw the moral. Meanwhile we should be interested in learning what are the particular crimes that unbelievers are guilty of, and what are the offences which he thinks they ought to commit?

Two men were fined 12s. 6d. for playing nap in a churchyard at Coalville. Perhaps the fine was inflicted because they had outraged the proprieties. The proper place for a nap is inside the church, and if people are permitted to indulge in a nap outside, we shall soon have nothing but open-air services.

A press paragraph informs the public that during the Lambeth Conference the Bishop of London has been entertaining the Bishops in batches of eleven every two days. The same paragraph thinks that this should open the eyes of people who think that the Bishop is overpaid with ten thousand a year. But what we should like to know is on what grounds the people are asked to pay for the Bishop's hospitality? When we entertain friends, we do not pass the hat round to get the cost paid, and, if we did, should probably be told not to make a fool of ourself. It is also good to learn that the Bishop has quite captured the hearts of his visitors by the vigour with which he plays tennis. We are quite charmed to learn that these good Fathers in God have not neglected their pleasures while in London. We were afraid that the intellectual strain of the Conference might have had serious results. Still, we are pleased to learn that, out of his ten thousand a year, the Bishop has to pay for his own entertaining. It is fortunate that he has a fair sum invested in War bonds. That will help him to bear the strain on his purse.

St. Bartholomew's Church, Smithfield, is appealing for funds for a new organ. It is announced that each stop will cost £150. We suggest that one good general stop on the part of possible subscribers will be much cheaper, and we cordially commend it.

The Vicar of St. Luke's says he prefers "holy dirt" to an unholy upset. We presume the Vicar is a great lover of certain portions of his "sacred" book.

Mr. Henry Ainley declares that "After the Bible, it is always a case of Shakespeare first and the rest nowhere." But why drag in the Bible?

In an article on "Holiday Traffic," a daily paper stated that "a remarkable fact was the large number of clergymen who got away to the seaside." These are the men that the dear Bishop of London assured us were starving. We remember also that they "got away" during the Great War.

We have received a copy of *Practical Christianity*, a magazine described as issued "For officers of the fighting services." It is the organ of the Officer's Christian Union, and claims to be written by officers for officers. That is typically Christian, snobbish, and militaristic. It is not a magazine for the men of the fighting services—including officers, but for officers only. As they are forbidden to travel in third class carriages, so as to avoid mingling with the "common" soldier, so they must be saved in separate compartments. And when they die they will, presumably, travel to heaven by separate conveyance, enter at a gate marked "Officer's entrance," and proceed to a part of heaven from which privates are excluded, except to such as are admitted to polish up the officer-angel's halos and tune up his harp.

From other points of view it would be far from complimentary to the privates in the Army to assume that they move on the same mental level as those officers who are responsible for the magazines. For they move on a terribly low level. Their mentality appears scarcely higher than that of the Salvation Army. They have a firm faith in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; they have prepared a lantern lecture "on the fascinating subject of Biblical Prophecy and its Fulfilment in the War"; they believe the "Second Coming to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be an actual fact," etc. Perhaps the most kindly view to take of the matter is that the strain of the War has been too much for them, and that "Practical Christianity" is as symptomatic as shell-shock.

A woman complained to the Tottenham Magistrate the other day that she had been insulted. Someone had said she belonged to the Salvation Army. We consider the case proved.

One of the London dailies recently published a portrait of the Rev. F. Barry, who is one of the two clergymen in England who profess a desire to have their salaries reduced. That, we admit, is a sufficiently rare phenomenon to deserve a place in a more distinctive gallery than the columns of a newspaper. But Mr. Barry will find plenty of his clerical brethren who are quite ready to relieve him of his burden. And the command of Jesus was that his followers were to have no salaries at all.

Belfast has on some of its Tram tickets religious and other advertisements. A fourpenny one that has just been sent us by one of our readers bears, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The sender of the ticket tells us that being in Belfast, and uncertain what ticket to take, he was informed by the conductor, "You can buy a pram for a penny, or the 'Lord Jesus Christ' for fourpence." So our friend bought "the Lord Jesus Christ," if only as a curiosity. Our opinion is that if Ireland could dispose of the whole of its stock of that particular article it would find itself much better off. It would pay the country to give it away, or even pay for its exportation.

In a recent Spiritualistic book the author states that spirits wear soft collars in the next world. Some people have soft heads in this.

The late Rev. W. F. Newman, Vicar of Hockworthy, Devon, left estate to the value of £54,604. A touching example of clerical poverty!

Speaking of his opponents, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said that they included "the gentleman with such a deep respect for the Bible that he never looked at it." Capital!

A Correspondent writes:—

In the most crowded quarter of Chicago I have seen an evangelistic meeting in full swing inside a busy saloon! The two "trades" working quite smoothly under the same roof! On a disused swill counter the blatant distiller found a pulpit. I remember his address that evening began with "Shall I tell you how I found Christ in a beer saloon?" Looking in again later I observed the crowd dispersing and crossing over naturally as if from a free lunch counter to follow up the spiritual with the spirituous.

A few doors from this saloon, in the opaque window of a "coloured betheh" a scrawled notice catches the eye. As often as not it seems like "Jesus s(h)aves." The hall is among a hive of tonsorial artists.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer acknowledged the other day the handing over of war bonds to the value of £12,000 from one individual, and surrender to the value of £3,000 from another person. The gifts were to decrease the war burden of the nation. Now as the Church of England has three and a half millions, the Salvation Army half a million, and all the other Churches have also large sums invested, to say nothing of similar investments of clerics like the Bishop of London, we suggest that here is an example that they might well follow. Or if they do not surrender the capital they might at least decline to accept any interest, and so refrain from accepting even that form of profit from the war, and also refrain from acting as a burden on the people. But we are not sanguine that they will take this advice.

The Rev. John G. McKenzie, M.A., of Wolverhampton, is spoken of as a coming man among Congregational ministers. Therefore some importance attaches to an article by him, entitled "The Criterion of Progress," in the *Christian World* for August 12. According to him, the criterion of progress is to be found in the tolerances of an age as well as in its lofty utterances. Judged by this standard, the world, he contends, has made enormous progress since Christ came, and as the direct result of his advent. It is true that some progress, in this respect, has been made within the last two or three hundred years, a period during which Christendom has been perceptibly outgrowing Christianity. In proportion as the star of Bethel has been sinking, the star of humanity has been visibly rising.

Curiously enough, Mr. McKenzie tacitly admits this in a significant quotation from Bagshot, which we transcribe in full:—

There is not a Roman or a Greek, a schoolman or a pietist of mediæval times, a Catholic or a Protestant of the Age of the Reformation, a jurist, an historian, or poet of the Renaissance, who does not complacently accept moral assumptions which are repulsive to the modern mind.

That passage shatters the reverend gentleman's contentions to smithereens. Under Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, conduct quite as vile and repulsive, to say the least, as that of the Roman soldiers who, according to the Gospels, gambled at the crucifixion for the clothes of the victims, was freely tolerated in England without any serious protest. The horrible crimes perpetrated under the Spanish Inquisition were not only tolerated but approved by the Christian Church. The wholesale beheading and burning of heretics and unbelievers afforded amusement to the ignorant and prejudiced spectators.

The moral and social progress of the world under Christianity is an illusion; a vain dream indulged in by Christian apologists. Besides, Mr. McKenzie's estimate of the state of morality in Rome during the Republic and the Empire is belied by such impartial historians as Emil Reich, Dill and Boissier. The Romans were not famous for their moral tolerances.

There were 214 bishops at St. Paul's Cathedral at the close of the Lambeth Conference. Most certainly these 214 clergymen are not "starving."



### To Correspondents.

T. SIMPSON.—We were hoping that the worst of our troubles were over when the War came to an end. But conditions have grown much worse since then, and we are not sure they are at their worst now.

E. A. MACDONALD.—Sorry we are for the present out of advertising slips. We shall be reprinting either those or some that will serve the same purpose, and will send some along so soon as they are available. Pleased to have your appreciation of the Huxley articles.

J. S. PICKLE.—There is not the slightest need for apology, and our contributors are the last to object to their readers offering criticism of what is said before them. A man who can't stand criticism, should never write—or speak.

T. FISHER.—Received, and handed to Miss Vance. Glad to know that you are still pegging away. It is the only policy.

W. O. F.—We are writing this where we have no chance of reference, but we fancy the ban has now been removed. In any case it is legal in the Channel Islands. Pleased to hear from so old a supporter of the cause.

F. AKROYD.—We have only just received the address about which we enquired, and your letter sent us on July 3 has now been forwarded.

J. BREESE.—You will see we have dealt with the matter, and intend keeping our eye on it. Your suggestion is a good one, but we doubt if the Editor will act on it. Others might imitate your action. Hope all the family are well.

T. SMITH.—Mr. Cohen has not the time to deliver lectures to organisations that are not connected with the Freethought movement, save under special circumstances. You may be right in saying that some good would be done in this way, but it would be doing so much less for the cause in which his interest lies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.*

### Sugar Plums.

A new reader of the *Freethinker* sent his copies to one whose opinion he naturally valued and sends us the result. The recipient admires the "force of the arguments and the boldness of the assertions made," and admits that "it is cleverly edited," but—there is naturally a but to the comment. In this case it is not the unusual one that we are engaged in trying to destroy an edifice that has stood the test of time, and that if we take away the truths of Christianity, humanity "would be adrift on a raging sea without a compass." There is also the conviction that Freethinkers have nothing half so noble as Christianity on which to fasten their hopes. And, finally, there is expressed the conviction that Bradlaugh, though a great Freethinker, died "without leaving us one vital thought or one noble action for which we can bless his name."

Now, as this comes from one who could not, I think, be properly called a bigot, and who is, in addition, an educated man, one can only ascribe such a comment to the same

cause that Dr. Johnson ascribed a misleading definition in his dictionary—ignorance, that is, ignorance of what Freethought stands for and of what its influence has been and is, and of what the life of a man like Bradlaugh meant to the nation. The most important conclusion from the letter is the need for a more effective propaganda of our principles and a bolder one. Had the bulk of Freethinkers taken the stand they should have done, we are quite certain that a letter of this kind would be impossible at this time of day. There is no need to enter on any elaborate argument against the statements that we are helpless without Christianity, and that Freethought has nothing. Really, Freethought has all there is, and all that is of any value to decent people about Christianity no more belongs to it than the truths of astronomy belong to the astronomer royal. It is part of the case for Freethought that all that is of value springs from the social life of the race, and that it is quite independent of all religions. That is why we say that the letter proceeds in complete ignorance of what Freethought is.

As to Bradlaugh dying without leaving a vital thought or the memory of a noble action, that must be written in absolute ignorance of what Bradlaugh's life and work was. No one, not even a Christian who knew, could write in that strain otherwise. And we can only recommend here the life of Bradlaugh by his daughter. The teaching of Bradlaugh was an inspiration to clean and noble living while he was alive, and the memory of that influence has been a helpful inspiration to thousands since his death. And Bradlaugh is really too great a man to need a laboured defence at this time of day.

Those of our readers who have appreciatively read the articles appearing in these pages from the pen of Mr. G. E. Fussell will be pleased to learn that Messrs. Erskine MacDonald contemplate publishing a volume of essays and sketches by Mr. Fussell entitled "The Man and his Vision." If a sufficient number of subscribers are forthcoming the price will be 4s. net—5s. after publication. If enough subscribers are not found before publication the price would have to be higher. Those who value Mr. Fussell's work have it in their power, therefore, both to assist in getting the book published and to keep down prices. There is no need to send money at present. All that is required is a card to Messrs. Erskine MacDonald, Malory House, Featherstone Buildings, W.C.1. Subscribers will be advised when the book is ready for dispatch. We hope the orders will be sufficient to keep the price on the lower level.

### RELIGION AND INSANITY.

We frequently see persons in insane hospitals sent there in consequence of what are called *religious* mental disturbances. I confess that I think better of them than of many who hold the same notions, and keep their wits and appear to enjoy life very well, outside of the asylums. Any decent person ought to go mad if he really holds such and such opinions. It is very much to his discredit, in every point of view if he does not.....Anything that is brutal, cruel, heathenish, that makes life hopeless for the most of mankind, and perhaps for entire races—anything that assumes the necessity of the extermination of instincts which were given to be regulated—no matter by what name you call it—no matter whether a fakir, or a monk, or a deacon believes it—if received, ought to produce insanity in every well-regulated mind. I am very much ashamed of some people for retaining their reason when they know perfectly well that if they were not the most stupid or the most selfish of human beings, they would become *non-compos* at once.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

"Contempt and abhorrence" had in fact at all times constituted the common Christian temper towards every form of critical dissent from the body of received opinion; and only since the contempt and abhorrence have been in a large degree retorted on the bigots by instructed men has a better spirit prevailed.—*Rt. Hon. John M. Robertson.*

## The New Humour and the Old Testament.

ROUGHLY speaking it is possible to distinguish three ways in which your emancipated thinker may handle the history and legends, the myths and moral teaching of the *Old Testament*, such handling, of course, depending more or less upon the temperament of the writer. If he is solemn and terribly in earnest, without a spice of irony, sarcasm, or witty malice in his mental make-up, he will, like our well-meaning ethico-rationalist friends, give a wide berth to the cruder and more barbaric episodes, and fasten on to those that are more easily turned to moral edification. We all know and appreciate Mr. F. J. Gould's deft bowdlerizing of the old Hebrew stories for the benefit of youthful Rationalists who, I am given to understand, take to moral instruction as naturally as a duck takes to water. We all know, too, his engaging ingenuousness, his quite absolute sincerity of aim. Yet by treating these "revered" stories so seriously, I fancy he pays the believer too great a compliment. Really, the preposterous claims made for these Hebrew writings justify the critic in *not* handling them in quite the same way as he would any other collection of miscellaneous literary documents. He will approach them if he is witty, irreverent, and malicious, by the way of ridicule. He will develop the amusing possibilities of the Pentateuch, he will stress the hideous barbarities of the Hebrew nomads, the blood thirstiness of their tribal god or gods, the crimes—perjury, theft, adultery, murder, they ran easily through the whole gamut—of their heroes and kings, the filthy manners of their prophets whose imagination, as reflected in their metaphors, was even filthier than their manners. This was Voltaire's short and sharp way with "Holy Writ," and it has been so effective that devout Christians, or at least the more intelligent, have been glad to jettison a large portion of the word of God.

The method I have just described, which was that of the Voltairean Freethinkers and of their successors, the exponents of democratic Atheism in England, was the expression of a passionate hatred of the Judæo-Christian faith, which it denounced with the prophetic fervour and sincerity of a Proudhon or a Robert Owen. This solemn vituperation was, I imagine, less objectionable to believers than the delicate raillery and biting insinuation of a Renan. We know what Catholics in France thought of him, and what they think of his disciple in mockery, M. France. The art of the light attack has not wholly commended itself to our English Freethinkers, and it was a pleasure for me to come across the other day a new writer, Mr. L. Pearsall Smith who has been amusing himself by applying the humour of anachronism to some of the fictitious narratives of the *Old Testament*. I am afraid our Christian friends will not be pleased with his *Stories from the Old Testament* (Hogarth Press, 4s. 6d., net). If they read the preface last, as is my custom, they will be puzzled to see where the simple and reverent portrayal of the "hallowed incidents" comes in, and if they are intelligent enough to detect the note of irony and banter, they will know what to think of Mr. Smith's reverence, and the following passage with its slim humour will certainly confirm their dislike of the newest Oxford manner:—

"My debt to the great masters of Biblical study," remarks Mr. Smith, "is too immense to be acknowledged in detail. I should not, however, omit to mention the revered and famous names of Ewald and Eichhorn, and A. Bugg, and F. Pott, and Dean Farrar, of Kalisch and Nork and Noldeke; and I must express

my special obligations to Voltke's *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1866), Wellhausen's *Die Kleine Propheten* (1892), R. Weaver's *Complete View of Puseyism* (1843), *The Bible for Young People*, by Oort & Hooykaas (4 vols., 1873-9), Kuenen's papers on the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. Mrs. Sydney Buxton's *Side-lights upon Bible History* (1892), and *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scriptures*, by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. (1890).

Mr. Smith's retelling or re-interpreting of a few incidents in the lives of Old Testament worthies is quite up to the malicious humour of the delightful passage from his preface. For instance, he tells the story of David and Goliath in the painfully analytical style of Henry James. David has killed the giant, and is trudging homewards carrying the head by the tangled crop of hair. He goes over in his memory all the

events of this memorable day—"this crowded hour of glorious life," as he called it, in a phrase which at that date had not yet become hackneyed.....To think that only yesterday he had been tending his father's sheep and writing verses: trying, in fact, to see whether anything could still be made of the pastoral, hackneyed and effete as it was as a literary form.

He goes on to recall the whirl of wild events of which he could only remember the acts; "but not, as he tells us, the states of consciousness which accompanied them.....the only elements in the affair which had any real interest." Afterwards when he recovers the memory of sensations, he recalls how horribly frightened he was when Goliath began to curse him, and how immensely he was interested, as a literary man, in the giant's amazing vocabulary of vituperation:—

Again with a flicker and sudden buzz the screen of memory darkened; his recollection, not only of his feelings but of his own acts, now failed him, and failed him at the crisis and central act of the whole performance. What he had done himself he could not see—could only dimly see the giant suddenly assume a dazed expression, suddenly begin to gabble and totter, and then, after swaying to and fro for a moment, fall heavily to the earth. "I must have heaved a stone, and hit him," David reflected, "but I'm hanged if I can remember that part of it!" The next scene, however, came back to him vividly; the awkward feeling of self-consciousness with which he had stepped forward, and standing over the corpse, had cut off the giant's head. It had to be done; it was always done on these occasions; but he felt he was making a dismal botch of the disgusting business until there fell on his ears a tempest of applause and shouted bravos.....And yet, alas! the whole affair would only seem a dream, and a rather hackneyed one; a crude sign-painting, a picture clumsily worked in worsted on a fire screen; and all the events of the day appeared like a pantomime or a scene on the cinema—unreal and yet without surprise—with every development boringly obvious and foreseen from the very beginning.

Another delightfully malicious re-telling of a well-known Bible story is Mr. Smith's account of how David danced before the ark, and how his high-kicking performance gave rise to the first matrimonial tiff mentioned in Holy Writ. David had amused, but a little shocked his refined wife by recounting the popular story of the "distressing, funny and unmentionable affliction" which the presence of the Ark was supposed to have caused to the Philistines, which had induced them to get rid of it. He explains to her the political reasons for bringing the venerable box to Jerusalem. While he is away his wife amuses herself looking up the article *Ark* in the *Encyclopædia*:—

"Well," she reflects, "whether there are bones in it or fetiches, or, as Frazer suggests, snakes, David is quite right to bring it up to Jerusalem. It can't do any harm, and a king has to pay some respect to popular

feelings, however absurd he may think them." Just then a confused noise of shouts and trumpets reached her ears..... Good heavens! What was her horror when, in front of the uproarious crowd, she saw her own husband dancing in a state of furious excitement—and could she believe it?—he had thrown off his royal garments, and was leaping and gyrating in public with practically nothing on but a pair of white spats! The cultivated young Queen felt that she had never beheld so shocking a spectacle..... She despised David in her heart as the Bible tells us.

Mr. Smith has some ingeniously malign remarks on the reflections of Anglican commentators on this charming episode. Michal's scorning of her husband suggests to these devout souls a sad subject, the incompatibility of matrimony with the devout life. Their reflections on the nature of the saltatory performances of the sweet singer of Israel, its relative, if not quite absolute decency, the effect of climate on the religious emotions, are exceedingly helpful; as is also the warning that David's performance in a state of nature must be used to justify the semi-nude and sensual posturing of our modern ball-rooms.

The subtlest piece of writing in Mr. Smith's little book is his re-setting and re-interpretation of the Bathsheba incident. He imagines the man after God's own heart, the minor poet of Israel, a sort of Hebrew Arthur Symonds, as passing up and down the palace roof one hot, unhappy evening. He is suffering from what Pater and the old mystics would have called spiritual dryness. He tries to recover the old mood of emotional fervour and inspiration; but the moon, when he regards her, looks uncommonly like green cheese, and the stars of heaven like holes in the bottom of a sieve. He is possessed by the don't-care-a-damn feeling which all artistic natures know too well, when a vision from below meets his eyes.

It was for the Psalmist a sudden renewal of inspiration; it was the moon and the stars of night blazing up in the heavens like a great rekindled candelabra; it was the world reborn in splendour, the desert blossoming as the rose; and with it a magical flowering in his mind of all the lovelier images of the Hebrew imagination, drawn from the fauna and flora of the Holy Land—the return of spring with the blossoming of the almond and the voice of the turtle, the pomegranate trees growing green, and the willows by the river courses, the cloud of dew in the heat of harvest, and rain on the mown grass; fragrance borne in the night wind from the garden of spices, the coolness of fish-pools and mountain torrents, of a rock's shadow on a weary land, of orchards by the riverside, and cedar trees beside the waters. It was all this; and yet—oh, mystery of our earth-born human nature!—what the Psalmist saw on this occasion was only, as the Bible tells us in its bald way, a woman washing herself. It was simply a middle-aged gentleman taking a peep at a lady with her clothes off..... Each age and race has its own vision, its own iconography of passion, its own special way of experiencing the charm of what the Bible calls the "eternal feminine"; and there can be little doubt when David gazed on Bathsheba at her toilet, it was features of this kind which met his eyes—features which are familiar to us all, since they have been so elegantly adopted by Anglican divines to describe, in the enamoured eyes of the Saviour of the world, the charms of the Church of England.

"Behold thou art fair, my Love," says Christ to the Church. "Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead." "Stay me with flagons," cries the Established Church in ecstasy. "Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love!"

The story of Jonah is not quite up to the level of ironic humour which Mr. Smith has used for his trans-

figuration of other Hebrew stories. It may be that the original itself is a skit on the sort of prophet who made prophecy his business without any real vocation for it, and may be said to prefigure the awkward position of a man who, having taken up the work of his Lord, finds that his mind and heart are somewhere else. Anyhow, with any vehicle more delicate than broad farce, there is little fun to be got out of it. Mark Twain could have done it, but not Mr. Smith or his master in subtle humour, Mr. Max Beerbohm. The story of *Elisha and the Bears* however is pure Henry James. The prophet, as we are told, was an irascible old man, vain withal of his personal appearance, and he was not in the best of tempers when he was trudging the road from Jericho to Bethel. Although naturally of a kind heart, the taunts of the ill-mannered youngsters at this moment made him "see red," and he commanded two she-bears that he happened to meet to tear the children to pieces. But he soon recovered his good humour, and the regrettable little incident faded from his memory. He felt surprisingly energetic and fresh—quite twenty years younger. The old prophet had always kept up his interest in psychology and reflecting upon the sudden spiritual change which had come over him, he phrased the experience some what in this way:—

It is evidently true that the rousing of the fundamental impulses of our nature, the satisfaction of our primitive instincts, floods our nervous system with new life, as if we had tapped some store of vitality deep within us—for that is what they say our instincts are. In that case I ought to be grateful to those infants; they have really helped me in my mission. But then, what about the bears?

At this question Elisha pulled himself up, becoming aware that he had got into a very queer way of thinking, and not one at all consistent with his character as an Old Testament Prophet. "With all this psycho-analysis, what becomes," he pertinently asks himself, "of the plain laws of God and the Ten Commandments? Suppose these little boys had alleged that they had little anti-baldness complexes in their little insides, Œdipus complexes, quite beyond their control, against bald fathers?"

"Well, they ought to have tried that on the bears," he added, laughing; for Elisha, in spite of his quick temper, had a lot of fun in him.

Our ironist is seen at his very best in his re-interpretation of the story of Jezebel. She was a woman of refinement, with culture and artistic taste, forced to live with bloodthirsty devotees of a savage Monotheistic cult. She may have made away with a company or two of the Jahvist missionaries, who were intolerable nuisances, and, as Holy Writ tells us, she painted her face when she was no longer young. But what a contrast we have in the conduct of the spirited and noble old woman to the filthy hooliganism of her murderer! How deliberately did she adorn herself and come down to meet the murderer of her son! With what calm irony did she rebuke the vulgar upstart! "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?"

I have said enough, I imagine, to show that this little book is a gem of humour, irony, mordant insinuation, and brilliant raillery; and I have thought it best to let it speak for itself in quoted passages. It must commend itself to all Freethinkers who know, or would like to know, what the Oxford manner is at its best.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

The intellect of England for the last fifty years has, with few exceptions, renounced even what Dr. Arnold would have called Christianity.—*Alfred W. Benn.*

## Woman and the Church.

The Senate (at Paris) is being confronted with a proposition for the elimination of the article of the Civil Code, which sets forth that the husband owes protection to his wife—the wife, obedience to the husband.....The Senate's Committee has pronounced against this proposition, which, at any rate, is held up till the next Session of Parliament.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Was it not Herbert Spencer who declared that reforms were secured, less by making new Acts, than by repealing old laws, and thus setting the people free from the shackles of the past? The case cited above bears out his contention. The French Senate, in refusing to eliminate the article of the Civil Code enjoining obedience on the wife, is but carrying on the traditions of the Christian Church, which has invariably placed woman under the thumb of her master. Holy Writ abounds in texts, according powerful support to the course taken by the Senators.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands . . . even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." Thus Peter glorified his own sex, though the record of his life fails to provide adequate grounds on which he could claim predominance over his women-folk. He doubtless chose Sara as an exemplar of wifely obedience, because he had a fellow-feeling for Abraham's craven spirit, which sheltered behind a lie. But even in Peter's time loaning a wife was out of date. This, and similar practices could only be indulged in by "chosen" men, men "after God's own heart."

Peter, who probably never existed, according to Mr. J. R. Robertson, is credited with having had experience of married life. He was, one may guess, re-enforcing his mandate with a reference to the dim past, in the hope that an appeal to authority might carry more weight than his mere assertion. He doubtless knew from experience how difficult it was to manage these subordinate creatures. But Paul was a bachelor. Perhaps he had been jilted in his youth, and his self-love had never recovered from the shock, to judge from the outburst he indulges in, when writing to Timothy. "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." One notes the difference in tone between the married and the unmarried man. Evidently Paul had never attempted to put his arrogant pronouncement into practice, or he would have discovered its impossibility. Even when they were clothed with all the majesty of the law, in the sacred precincts of the Court, I have often witnessed the utter impotency of judges and magistrates to restrain a woman's tongue.

This unconverted Benedict seems to have been obsessed with God's unwisdom in giving woman the power of speech. "Let your women keep silence in the churches," he thunders. "It is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience." One wonders whether the early Christian women objected to his hectoring style, and treated him as the Suffragettes treated orators and politicians before the war. Or can it be—one asks with bated breath—that Paul was jealous of the eloquence of women and feared competition and in his own trade? He continues, "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." That settles it! Some woman had posed him with

a difficult question—probably her quick wit pierced the absurdities of the faith he was teaching—and he could not answer her. To avoid such awkward situations in the future, he declared the husband must solve the lady's theological difficulties. As few men could have been initiated into the mysteries of the Christian faith, Paul must have had less solicitude for the salvation of his feminine flock, than for his own peace of mind and outward dignity. Finally, this megalomaniac concludes his tirade by asserting, "The things that I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord." Has Miss Maude Royden ever studied her Bible?

Panic makes men cruel, and Paul feared women. Translated in terms of psycho-analysis, one might say that his obsession of sex, embodied in woman, had been driven down into his unconscious nature, from which it rose and made fierce assaults on his conscious self. Hence he always mentions woman in terms of contempt. Again and again, he insists that wives must submit themselves to the masculine yoke, "for the husband is the head of the wife." It is true that he sometimes adds a faint-hearted injunction to the men to love their wives, but he hastens to give such devotion an androcentric basis, for "he that loveth his wife, loveth himself," and he brazenly asserts that "neither was man created for the woman: but the woman for the man."

It is a common saying that women go to church to study the latest millinery, but if their holy services thus lend themselves to profane practices, it is due to Paul, who threatened women with shaven heads, if they did not cover their luxuriant locks at worship (I. Cor. xi. 6). Peter also is worried about woman's hair, and gives elaborate directions that no artificial wave was to be induced (I. Peter iii. 3).

All this sounds so trivial and bombastic that we might well be tempted to lay it aside of no account, proceeding as it does from the harsh acerbity of two old men, who snarled enviously at the feminine youth and beauty they could not enjoy. Unfortunately, they represented the spirit of the time and their writings, embodied in the sacred book of the Christians, have exercised an influence quite out of proportion to their value. The holy fathers of the church bettered their instruction. Listen to Chrysostom, of the golden tongue, "What is woman but an enemy of friendship, an unavoidable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable affliction, a constantly flowing source of tears, a wicked work of nature covered with a shining varnish?" And down through the Middle Ages the flow of invective swells and rages, the Church never pausing in the process of blackening and degrading woman. Bossuet takes up the same tale after the passing of centuries. "Let women consider their origin and not boast too much of their delicacy: let them remember they are, after all, only a supernumerary bone, in which there is no beauty but that which God wished to put into it."

And now the enlightened Senators of France uphold the law, declaring that woman owes obedience to man! At present the married woman has no rights over her own body. The husband in turning her adrift is within his legal rights, if she refuses to conform to his desires. She has no claim for maintenance upon him, though she may have sacrificed all possibilities of earning her living to marriage. She must submit to him, under threat of the

economic lash. That is the legal position. Fortunately, men are better than the laws they make, but to secure the individuality of woman legally, is a simple act of justice long over-due to her.

What is the psychological explanation of the refusal of these senators to grant women legal freedom? They are, according to the Paris correspondent of the *Telegraph*, "men of mature age who may be credited with a certain amount of matrimonial experience." If this be so, it is not probable any one of them singly could confront his wife and justify his action. The herd-mind influences men for the worse. Collectively, they have courage for deeds of which they would be incapable, if alone. The moral consciousness of the mob is lower than the individual, because responsibility is only assumed when acting on one's own initiative. This decision was probably determined by the working of the herd-mind.

But to probe deeper, what induced the mob-mind to reject this proposal? Although the majority of the Senators were probably Freethinkers, doubtless the dead hand of the past still gripped them tightly, and the Church unconsciously influenced their considerations. To openly reject the Church and her teachings is comparatively easy—to eradicate from the wild backwoods of one's nature, all that she has implanted for centuries, is more difficult. In despising this world and glorifying an ascetic celibate existence as the best preparation for the future life, the Church cast a slur on woman and her supreme function of motherhood. Men have misread nature. The Church has identified woman with evil, love with lust, and salvation with narrow self-seeking. She has defiled the well-spring of life. And she has tainted even the judgments of Freethinkers, who cannot entirely shake themselves free from her baleful influence. Never will woman take her rightful place in the world until men have learnt to read Life as she, the conscious source of Life, will interpret it to them. The Church has stood between Nature and her children, distorting their vision so that they have called their Mother hateful. When man sees woman and himself in their true perspective, as naturally complementary, not the hideous caricature the Church has drawn of superior and inferior, then he will reject as mutually degrading the idea that one should obey the other.

FRANCES PREWETT.

## Correspondence.

MR. SAFRONI-MIDDLETON.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am indebted to Mr. Symons for giving me an opportunity to recommend, in even stronger terms, the splendid work in romantic fiction of my good friend and fellow-freethinker, Mr. Safroni-Middleton. He is, I make bold to say, a creative artist of rare ability. He knows the South Sea Islanders better than did Melville, Stevenson or Louis Becke. He never thought of them as mere literary copy, or patronised them (in the manner of R. L. S.) as charming and curious, but inferior, specimens of humanity. He is an ingenuous pagan; a child of nature astray in a sophisticated money-making world. Yet it is just his simplicity of nature which, while it has placed him at the mercy of publishers, has given him an open passport to the hearts and minds of primitive peoples; or, rather, the remnant of them left over after the ravages of Christian civilization and syphilization. Like Melville before him, he has an amuse

and philosophic contempt for the gospel of natural depravity, the gospel of sin and work and obedience as preached by our missions to the heathen. For him, as for us, it is a virus that has worked more harm than the small pox, or even the elder sister of that disease. The effect of a grafting of Christian ideals on a heathen stock is wittily brought out by Mr. Middleton in his burlesque idyll in Byronic stanzas *Thakombau's Conversion*. This is a brilliant picture of the last phase of heathendom in Fiji.

But it is not my business now to lay stress on my friend's emancipation from the superstitions of Christianity. What I am concerned with is his power of projecting living and interesting human beings; of creating, by words, an atmosphere throbbing with light and colour, the warmth and exotic odours of tropic climes. In fact he has given a new lease of life to romantic fiction. I grant that, if Mr. Symons, as it would appear, knows nothing of Mr. Middleton's work except the earlier and somewhat inchoate book of impressions, he may consider my praise hyperbolic. But I ask him, and other literary freethinkers, to accept my estimate provisionally, and to check it by reading *Gabrielle of the Lagoons* and *South Sea Foam*. In the last-mentioned book he will find, if I am not much mistaken, a number of episodes, especially the one the story closes with, that places Mr. Middleton easily within the first rank of romantic writers. Other novelists, no doubt, may keep their writing at a better general artistic level, but the peculiarity of this writer is the ease with which he rises to the most incredibly difficult of situations. I cheerfully stake any reputation I may have as a critic of English letters on this judgment. In my opinion, anyone who reads the book once will make a habit of reading it.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

## MR. H. G. WELLS AND ATHEISM.

SIR,—I think it will be generally acknowledged that Freethinkers—whether they choose to label themselves Atheists or Agnostics—do not try to evade criticism (provided it be fair), nor shrink from controversy (be it ever so keen). We hold that spirited attack and dogged defence may be the clearest way to exhibit the strength of a sound position. Unfortunately (for us) there is another form of attack which does not proceed openly, but which seeks by innuendo to discredit our opinions by associating them with knavery. This method of innuendo is not confined to clerical or priest-ridden obscurantists, but appears in the most unexpected quarters. One recent example against which I wish to protest with indignation is supplied by Mr. H. G. Wells in the most recent instalment of his "Outline of History." In the course of a scathing indictment of the character of Napoleon (an indictment which seems to me too denunciatory to be historically valuable) Mr. Wells says, "He was, as few men are, or dare to be, a scoundrel, bright and complete. Most of us are constrained, more or less and now and then, to serve God or our fellow men, to do things disinterestedly, to behave decently when no one is watching. He was not so constrained." A few more sentences of the same tenor follow and then comes this, "His self-conceit and his instinctive and *fundamental atheism* made him at least magnificently direct." Mr. Wells, of course, knows perfectly well that Atheism as a considered opinion regarding the Universe is held by large numbers of thoughtful and well-regulated members of society in this country, on the Continent, and in America. It was the doctrine held by Charles Bradlaugh and George Jacob Holyoake—to mention only these. But Mr. Wells sharply dislikes Atheism, and accordingly he adopts the now threadbare expedient of insidiously suggesting that Atheism is intimately bound up with moral obliquity. Now, Sir, I call this mean and discreditable on the part of Mr. Wells. Surely the opprobrium which dissenters from the current creed have to endure from the ruling caste (lay and clerical) ought to be enough, without Mr. Wells joining in the hue and cry. Mr. Wells is himself a propagandist of unpopular doctrines, political and economic. He is a Socialist and a Republican, but would Mr. Wells regard with amiable feelings a writer who, let us say, abhorring Socialism, would subtly accuse its adherents of being traffickers in every kind of vileness? The ambiguity which many affect to find in the word Atheist will not avail a writer of Mr. Wells

equipment. The word "Theism" occurs frequently in most philosophic treatises, and the word "Atheism"—despite the slightly varying shades of meaning which different writers attach to it—is perfectly well understood as the negation of Theism. Mr. Wells' use of the word as synonymous with immorality will not stand the test either of etymology, nor of a decent regard for propriety in language.

HERBERT ARNISON.

**FREETHOUGHT AND ANTI-WAR PROPAGANDA.**

SIR,—In opposing the reckless folly of those who look upon "mailed fists," "knock-out blows," and such pernicious nonsense as aids to civilization, I find it quite possible to co-operate with The Fellowship of Reconciliation, 17, Lion Square, W.C.1, although this seems to be a Christian organization.

I am allowed to say at its open-air meetings "my friend who has just spoken has shown you the absurdity of war from the Christian point of view; I will now show you the absurdity of war from the point of view of an atheist.....et hoc genus omne."

I think Freethinker pacifists ought to know that this opportunity is open to them. The sinking of differences in a common work cannot prejudice, but, on the contrary, must rather help, our endeavour to show the Christians (upon suitable occasions), that war-fever is not the only kind of madness to which the poor scatter-brained human animal is subject, and by which his noble emotions are perverted into channels where they become active vices.

ROBERT HARDING.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.**

*President :*

**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

*Secretary :*

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

**Principles and Objects.**

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

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

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

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

**Membership.**

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

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

Name.....

Address .....

Occupation .....

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

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

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

**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.**

**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.15, Mr. A. D. McLaren, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain) : 6.30, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park) : 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.) : 7, Freethought Demonstration. Speakers: Messrs. H. Spence, B.Sc., Warner, H. Thurlow, Jun., and others.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Amersham. Conducted by Mr. W. T. Wixcey. Train from Baker Street, 10.27 to Amersham. Take return ticket to Chorley Wood (4s.). Pay excess to Amersham.

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

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S.—Ramble to Blanefield. Meet Killermont Car Terminus, 11.30 a.m. Bring rations.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds) : Every Sunday at 6.30.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**—You may look with confidence for our advertisement in each succeeding *Freethinker* whilst we have a business to advertise and there is a *Freethinker* to advertise in. This will be our contribution to the Cause, and will continue whether you support us or not. Others, no doubt, will follow our example, but as many will only advertise whilst they secure responses, it will be up to you to keep their advertisements in our paper by interesting yourselves in the wares they offer. This should be your unflinching donation to the journal which serves us so well. Ladies, please note, most lines we offered last week are still obtainable. Remember especially those Sheets at 24s. per pair: they are beauties.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

**WANTED,** by Young Man, near City, Residence and part Board.—A. J. S., c/o *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

**PIONEER LEAFLETS.**

By **CHAPMAN COHEN.**

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

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

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

**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.

### 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 1/2d.

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 1/2d.

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 1/2d.

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

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 1/2d.

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 1/2d.

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.

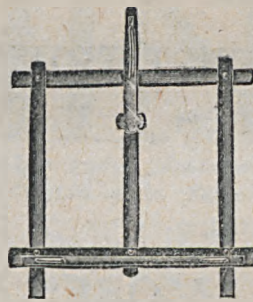
By D. HUME.

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.



AS FIXED.



AS IN USE.

### A Boon to Pianists and Singers.

A "C.W." Music Support attached to your Music Stand  
does away with the falling music sheet nuisance. Simple  
to fix and use. Obtainable at all Music Stores, or post free

FIVE SHILLINGS

From the Patentees

COLLINS & WHEATLEY,  
124 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.

### TO MANUFACTURERS.

AGENCY REQUIRED by a Fighting Atheist for  
the Union of South Africa and adjacent territories in the  
following lines:—

General Merchandise, Hardware,  
Fancy Goods, and Provisions.

Fifteen years experience as Salesman throughout every corner  
of South Africa.—J. L., c/o The Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon  
Street, E.C. 4.

### Gentlemen's High-Class Bespoke Tailoring.

Fit and Finish of the best, and Prices un-  
usually moderate.

Generous Patterns and Illustrated Self-  
Measurement Forms sent anywhere on  
application.

MACCONNELL & MABE,  
New Street, Bakewell.

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

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

Write to day for Catalogue. State wants.

Books Bought at Best Prices.

W. & G. FOYLE, Ltd., 121-5 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 2.  
Phone: Gerrard 8180.

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.

## 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.

## A BOOK FOR ALL TO READ.

**Determinism or Free-Will?**By **CHAPMAN COHEN.****NEW EDITION Revised and Enlarged.**

CONTENTS: Chapter I.—The Question Stated. Chapter II.—"Freedom" and "Will." Chapter III.—Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice. Chapter IV.—Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism. Chapter V.—Professor James on the "Dilemma of Determinism." Chapter VI.—The Nature and Implications of Responsibility. Chapter VII.—Determinism and Character. Chapter VIII.—A Problem in Determinism. Chapter IX.—Environment.

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.

**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.

**Population Question and Birth-Control.**

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

MALTHUSIAN LEAGUE,

48 BROADWAY, WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1.

A Book that no Freethinker should Miss.

**Religion and Sex.****Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development.**

BY

**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

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

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

Price **Six Shillings.**

(Postage 6d.)

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

**BUY DIRECT.****Bargains in LACE CURTAINS.****Choice Designs. Low Prices**

Write for Illustrated Booklet.

**The North Ayrshire  
Lace Curtain Co.,  
DARVEL, AYRSHIRE.****LELLEY'S RESTAURANT**

(Tram Terminus, Aldersgate)

4 GOSWELL ROAD.

Best and Cheapest Plain English Dinner in London. Cut from the Joint and Two Vegetables, 1s. 2d.

**A. BARTON, Proprietor.**

You may see the "FREETHINKER" here.

**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. FOOTB AND CO., LTD.), 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.