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## Views and Opinions.

### The Poor Clergy!

THERE is no doubt that the clergy have fallen on evil days. From being the most important body in the community they have sunk to almost the level of the least important. To-day, it cannot seriously be said that people look to them for guidance on any subject of any importance whatever. In the drama and in fiction they are depicted as either fools or gross sentimentalists. In the pulpit they are allowed a licence of language that would not be tolerated in many other walks in life, apparently on the principle that no one takes them very seriously, and, therefore, what they say will not matter very much. If they are not told frankly that they are preaching lies, it is often because no one expects them to preach the truth. They are paid to say certain things in certain ways, and there the matter appears to end. Naturally, under such conditions the type of man attracted to the pulpit becomes progressively poorer. The better class of character finds openings in other directions, and can expend their activities in ways that do not carry with them so obvious a sense of self-stultification. Life attacks religion in many ways, but in none more deadly than by robbing it of the better and leaving it only the inferior mental types. And from an intellectual point of view the worst that can be said of a clergyman to-day is not that he is a hypocrite, but that he has a genuine belief in the doctrines he is paid to preach. For that brands him as hopelessly behind the age, to be tolerated by the better informed, and to be looked up to only by fools. If a clergyman commands the respect of intelligent men to-day, it is on some other ground than that of his theology. And he would not have it the less if he were an ordinary citizen and had selected his profession in life instead of receiving a divine "call" to it.

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### An Unwilling Witness.

There is nothing new in our saying what has just been said. It has been said, in one way or another, often enough, but it is pleasing to have the same thing endorsed by so eminent a member of the clergy as Dean Inge. In an article on "The Future of the Clergy" which appeared in the *Evening Standard* for February 1, he says plainly:—

In almost all other callings there are more applicants for admission than there is room for; some selection can be exercised; the fittest are chosen, the less fit are

rejected. But for the ministry little or no sifting is possible; the Bishops have to take what they can get, and the standard of admission is, in consequence, deplorably low.

How then is the clergyman to improve his position? Dean Inge is not very hopeful at this point. The fact is, he says, there is no future for him at all. "Modern civilization no longer needs a clerical profession," and he adds that the clergy "can only bid for popularity by allying themselves with those who reject the fundamental principles and methods of Christianity." The most casual study of the tactics of the clergy will prove the truth of this. It is, indeed, not merely the fact that modern civilization has no use for the clerical profession, it is ceasing to have any use for those ideas for which the clergyman stands. It is outgrowing both him and his teaching. Dean Inge sees the consequence of this in the present position of the clergy; it is hardly understandable that so shrewd an observer should be quite blind to its cause. Perhaps it is that he does not like to let the whole of the cat out of the bag at once. He does not like to say quite frankly that the parson represents a decaying institution because he altogether depends upon obsolete ideas.

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### Labour and the Clergy.

What the Dean does is to point out that the clergy have two plans of overcoming the difficulties before them. One, he says, is "to try whether anything can be got out of the Labour Party by blacklegging against their own class." That is brutally frank, as is the advice which is given as suitable to an ambitious young clergyman, "Join the Labour Party and marry an heiress." It is, he remarks, "an easy road to promotion, as several have found already." We are greatly obliged to have this admission. It quite bears out what we have so often said, and we hope that those interested in the Labour movement will take due note. Of course, as Dean Inge says, many may think that their taking up with the Labour movement is the result of none but worthy motives, but it is quite clear that but for the falling state of the clerical market there would not be so much eagerness to take up with a movement which so far as it is intelligently directed makes for the destruction of the Christian Churches. What the clergy hope to gain by coquetting with the Labour movement is quite clear. What the Labour movement hopes to gain by pandering to the clergy is not quite so clear. The leaders cannot reasonably hope to "capture the Churches." The Churches are far more likely to capture them, and in many cases they appear to have done so. It would be foolish to think of a consciously organized conspiracy to this end; the truth would rather appear to be that the Churches are playing their old game of dominating a dangerous movement which they find they are unable to destroy, and once it has been rendered innocuous, or comparatively so, they will leave it again to take up with their historic work of protecting vested interests by the use of supernatural hopes and fears. One hopes that in this game they will, owing to changed conditions, fail, but the fact of their failure makes no difference to the nature

of the operations. At any rate, it is not by alliance with the "Black Army," or by enlisting the aid of superstition that any social movement is likely to produce its full measure of usefulness.

#### Medicine Men.

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The other plan indicated by Dean Inge is of a more legitimate, but a quite hopeless character. This is the magnification of the sacerdotal function of the priest. The clergy must convince the laity that they are exercising a special function in the community, that they are the possessors of special spiritual graces, in other words, that they really are God's representatives on earth. This is the theory of the Roman Catholic Church, "the most lucrative monopoly in existence." The English Church has the same theory; for the ordination of a clergyman endows him with special powers of a more or less supernatural kind, which are absent from ordinary people. And the Nonconformists have the remnants of this in the assumption that a minister is "called" to his work in a way that the bricklayer and the miner are not called to their occupations. The truth here is that the present day parson, to whatever Church he may belong, is the direct descendant of the primitive medicine man. He was what he was, and still is, because of some imagined supernatural endowment which the normal man lacked. He was the middle-man between man and his tribal gods. That was the only reason for the existence of the medicine man in the dawn of human history. It is the only reason for his existence to-day. The trail of the medicine man is over the whole of the species, from the performer in the depths of an African forest to one in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral. There is no difference in kind, there is only a difference in the cost of the performance and in the status of the actors.

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#### Civilization the Enemy.

But on this point Dean Inge is under no delusion. He sees that modern thought is dead against the only theory of a priesthood that can give it real power. As he puts it, "Our industrial civilization has produced an overwhelming prevalence of that anti-Christian spirit which is sometimes called materialism, but which I prefer to call secularism." But by whatever name it be called, and whatever view we may take as to its value, the fact remains. There is not a country in the civilized world in which the priesthood and religion are not declining in favour. This movement is so universal that it is not possible to attribute it to the vagaries of a people or to the work of individuals. The secularizing of life is a vital part of the whole process which we call civilization. Wherever knowledge grows religion declines. It is only incidentally a moral phenomenon, it is almost wholly an intellectual one. Religion has never found itself seriously threatened by epochs of immorality. It has never failed to weaken before an advance in knowledge. That is one reason why the Christian Church has always been more tolerant towards the loose liver than it has towards the heretic or the unbeliever. To the one it offered forgiveness and extended an almost boundless charity. To the other it breathed vengeance in this world and eternal damnation in the next. The Church has never failed to discriminate between its friends and its enemies. What a large number of its defenders have failed to observe is, that its real, its ultimate enemy is civilization itself. If it can control that it is all right; if it cannot it is doomed. Every invention, every discovery, every generalization, everything that gives man a greater knowledge of, and a more complete control over, natural forces inevitably makes for the disintegration of religious beliefs. I agree, therefore, with Dean Inge that the one thing that would restore the clergy—

honestly restore them—to a position of power and dignity would be the re-establishment of the sacerdotal theory; and I also agree with him that such a restoration is next to impossible. Nothing short of disaster to the whole of civilization could bring that to pass. The world moves forward at an irregular pace, and may at times appear to halt altogether. But it does move, and its movement is finally fatal to beliefs that took their rise in the ignorance of early mankind, and have been perpetuated by the folly of their descendants.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Abandonment of Hell.

WHETHER hell be conceived as a place or as a state beyond the tomb, Freethinkers have never believed in its existence. They have always regarded it as a very ingenious invention of the theologians, and as the best asset the Church possessed during the ages of ignorance and credulity. In orthodox Christian theology hell is the place of everlasting torment, into which, at death, impenitent souls are cast. To these, in the Day of Judgment, the Judge will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." Hell is "the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." "And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Now it was on such passages, which are so numerous in the New Testament, that the Church Fathers based their horrible and repulsive pictures of the torments of the damned. In his forty-third homily on *Matthew* Chrysostom, the most famous of the Greek Fathers, calls hell "a sea of fire, far greater and fiercer than the Red Sea, having waves of fire, of some strange and horrible fire." The golden mouthed preacher, who flourished in the fourth century, was by no means the first to portray hell in such ghastly hues. More than a century and a half earlier we find Tertullian defining hell as "the treasure house of fire," which he located in the interior of the earth, and whose flames issued from the mouths of volcanoes. In this lake of fire infants who died unbaptized had their portion. By the thirteenth century abodes in the invisible world had multiplied to five, which were:—

(1) Hell, the abode of those who died in mortal sin, without absolution, a place of endless suffering. The Schoolmen were unanimously of opinion that the instrument of their punishment was material fire.

(2) The *nimbus* of infants dying unbaptized. In this abode punishment consisted in banishment from the presence of God, not in any infliction of actual pain.

(3) The *limbus patrum*, where Old Testament saints were confined, no longer a place of punishment, but simply of rest.

(4) Purgatory, the abode of souls, neither unbelieving nor impenitent, but yet in a state neither bad enough for hell nor yet good enough for heaven. The inmates were doomed to punishments susceptible of remission.

(5) Heaven, the abode of souls, whose discipline in the flesh had sufficed to raise them above the need of any further purification after death, and also of souls released from the fires of Purgatory.

Such had been the evolution of Christian eschatology up to the time of Thomas Aquinas. As is well-known, in both the Roman and Greek Churches, penance is one of the most essential of the seven sacraments. Penance means the performance of some specific act of mortification, voluntarily undertaken, as an expression of sorrow for and reparation on account of sins, mortal and venial, committed after baptism. Reparation and austerities to be undertaken were at first determined by the con-

science of the penitent, but afterwards by the clergy. Church discipline has always been liable to be affected by various forms of corruption. When Christianity began to spread among Teutonic peoples, who had been for many generations accustomed to the payment of money as reparation for even the darkest crimes, the Church found it advantageous, in exceptional cases at first, but afterwards more and more regularly, to impose a monetary fine in lieu of the prescribed penance. In course of time, the Lord's Supper took the form of a sacrifice offered up to God, at which prayers for the dead were believed to be specially efficacious. Then there arose, in response to costly gifts from anxious friends, the custom of saying masses for the benefit of the departed, and, naturally, money poured copiously into the coffers of the Church. Masses, specially private masses, could be bought at a price, which were needed to enable docile believers to keep on the straight and narrow path laid down for them by the Church, and ultimately the purchase of passes became necessary in order to shorten the stay of their souls in purgatorial fires after death. As Professor Draper says:—

At the end of the thirteenth century a new kingdom was discovered, capable of yielding immense revenues. This was Purgatory. It was shown that the pope could empty it by his indulgences (*The Conflict between Religion and Science*, p. 278).

On this point Mr. McCabe, having been for years a Catholic priest, speaks with greater authority thus:—

Purgatory is the most lucrative doctrine ever revealed to the Church. From the days when Boniface VIII., murderer and adulterer and sceptic, piously permitted English and German Catholics to get the same indulgences as the Romans, if they paid into the treasury the price of a journey to Rome, it has yielded incalculable millions. In the saying of "masses" alone, it still brings the Catholic Church of America—I mean the United States, not Mexico or Chile—a sum of something like a million sterling a year. It yields the Catholic Church in England about a quarter of a million a year. (*The Popes and their Church*, p. 188.)

Now hell was an infinitely hotter place than Purgatory, and once in the grip of its flames there was no hope of ever getting out. At its very gate the voice of despair utters itself thus:—

All hope abandon ye who enter here.

From the twelfth century onwards the doctrine of hell occupied the supreme place in the minds of the populace. Even as held by the early Fathers the conception of hell was frightful to contemplate; but by the fourteenth century the Churches were crowded with pictures on the walls, and resounded with sermons from the pulpits, in which the horrors of hell were most luridly depicted. Occasionally, a saint was allowed to go down there to see it, and on his return to earth nothing pleased him better than to dwell on what he had witnessed and experienced. The ghastly glare of the flames had enabled him to see millions of lost souls writhing in the most terrific suffering, "their eyeballs rolling with unspeakable anguish, their limbs gashed and mutilated and quivering with pain, tortured by pangs that seemed ever keener by the recurrence, and shrieking in vain for mercy to an un pitying heaven." It never occurred to the simple-minded saint nor to his more ignorant and superstitious auditors how grotesquely absurd it was to picture immaterial souls undergoing indescribable torments in a huge lake of material fire; but a fact that cannot be gainsaid is that the fear of hell was the all-dominating passion of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The inevitable consequence was that rich and poor alike became the cringing slaves of a cruel priesthood. They invariably turned themselves inside out before God's representative at confession, whose pleasure it was to torture and

terrorize them into undertaking all sorts of austerity, the emphasis always being on the necessity of making the amplest reparation possible. Then was oracularly pronounced upon them the priestly absolution, which for the time being afforded them complete release from the awful dread of hell-fire. This abject confession followed by absolution, if the conditions were satisfactory, had to be repeated at least once a year to the end of life. Dean Milman refers to a most remarkable book, published early in the seventeenth century, *De Inferno*, by Antonio Rusca, and "dedicated with fearful simplicity to our Saviour." "It settles gravely, logically, as it would be supposed, authoritatively, and not without erudition, every question relating to Hell and its inhabitants, its place, extent, divisions, torments." Thus is fully justified the remark that the Church, during the Dark Ages, possessed no more valuable asset than the belief in and the fear of the loathsome torments of the damned in Gehenna.

As pointed out by Lecky, the time came when, under the subtle influence exerted by the revival of secular learning, operative chiefly outside the Church, the conception of hell began to undergo a change. The unbelievers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were rapidly multiplying and gaining more and more confidence and courage, which led them to make fun of the whole subject. The divines, too, realized the absurdity of the belief in corporal punishment for disembodied spirits. But Lecky is certainly mistaken when he says that, when he wrote his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, nearly sixty years ago, the revolting doctrine of hell had "virtually passed away," for I clearly remember that sixty-four and sixty-five years ago, young children brought up among the mountains of North Wales were being systematically frightened into belief and trust in Christ by the realistic descriptions of the indescribably horrible doom that awaited unbelievers after death. I have a distinct recollection of a dreadful discourse on the wrath to come to which I had the misfortune of listening as a boy of about ten, which made my nerves to tingle and my hair to stand on end, and which even now I cannot recall without a shudder.

To-day, however, especially among Protestants, the fear of hell is almost entirely a thing of the past. The Rev. Frank Leggatt, M.A., minister of George Street Congregational Church, Croydon, has just preached and published (*Christian World Pulpit*, February 2), a remarkable sermon on "Is God in Hell?" the implications of which, probably unsuspected by the preacher himself, deserve a careful and dispassionate examination.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be concluded.)

### Morning.

THE long low rays of morning dream  
Upon the tops of corn,  
And on the marge of clouds a stream  
Of crimson froth is born.

The river murmurs drowsily  
Its twilight tune of love,  
To rushes bending down to see  
Its lips in shadow move.

The air is quiet on my brow,  
And quiet in my hair;  
But ah! the world is speeding now  
To clamour and to care.

I would I were a bending rush,  
A beaming top of corn,  
And not a maiden in the flush  
Flung from a fleeting morn!

GEO. W. MURPHY.

## The British Barbarians.

Live as if to love and live were one. —Shelley.

At least we witness of thee, ere we die,  
That these things are not otherwise, but thus.  
—Swinburne.

MR. HENRY S. SALT'S *Seventy Years Among Savages* (Allen and Unwin, Ltd.), will flutter the doves of Orthodoxy. For it is not an account of missionary adventures among less civilized races, but an entertaining record of his sojourn among the British Barbarians at home. Mr. Salt is a humanitarian, a Vegetarian, and anti-militarist, as thorough a reformer as the poet Shelley, and he frankly regards other people as barbarians. He possesses, however, a delightful sense of humour, and is never in the least fanatical. Besides being an eloquent record of things seen and ideas urged over many decades, his book is singularly effective. Indeed, this eloquent appeal of one who has given a long life of service to humanity will not fall on deaf ears.

Brought up in a hot-bed of Toryism and Orthodoxy, in his youth intimately associated with influences which might have made him a hard-shell Conservative, Mr. Salt moved steadily towards light and liberty. Educated at Eton—he became one of the house-masters—and also at King's College, Cambridge University, it was not until he was over thirty years of age that he felt any serious concern as to the manners and customs of the British Barbarians. Then he began to be attracted by Socialism, Vegetarianism, Freethought and other advanced ideas, which led to his resignation and retirement to a freer life elsewhere. The parting scene with the headmaster of Eton, Dr. Warre, is a record to be treasured. Dr. Warre gravely remarked, "It's the Vegetarianism," and Mr. Salt adds, with a twinkle in his eye:—

When I told him that Socialism must also take its share of blame, as having been at least an auxiliary cause, he was really shocked. "Socialism!" he cried, in his hearty tones, "Then blow us up, blow us up? There's nothing left for it but that."

This, be it remembered, was the attitude of the educated headmaster of one of the foremost seats of learning in a so-called civilized country. Are you surprised that Mr. Salt regards his countrymen as graceful, easy-going barbarians, and that he says Eton's ideal is "brawn, not brains." There is, however, no bitterness in his criticism. Though he has ploughed a lonely furrow, he has never been morbid. Taking all things at their true worth, he has never been surprised by views he could not accept. He has merely acknowledged urbanely that they were so different from his own.

Later, Mr. Salt began his work for the Humanitarian League, with which his name will always be associated. During this period he met most of the reformers of his time, and there are pleasant recollections of George Meredith, Ouida, Swinburne, Bernard Shaw, and scores of other "intellectuals." He also did excellent work for the Shelley Society, and recalls with glee that many of the members were afraid of Atheism, and that when G. W. Foote gave an address before a very large audience on Shelley's irreligion, the respectable Committee, with a few exceptions, marked their disgust for the lecturer's views, which happened also to be Shelley's, by the child-like and innocent expedient of staying away. Mr. Salt also recalls the sensation caused by Bernard Shaw's avowal at a meeting of the same Society, "I, as a Socialist, an Atheist, and a Vegetarian." Then he adds: "We did not go for Shaw; perhaps we knew that he had studied the noble art of self-defence."

Then there was sad trouble on the same respectable Committee when another Atheist, Dr. Edward Aveling,

applied for membership, and it was only the magnificent despotism of the chairman, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, who threatened to resign if he were not admitted, that surmounted this difficulty. This spirit of mental cowardice is not dead yet by any means, and it is to Mr. Salt's credit that he can smile at it.

To woo the world with honeyed tongue is not Mr. Salt's way. Referring to the Humanitarian crusade, he says:—

It is a curious fact that while the National Secular Society includes among its immediate practical objects a more humane treatment of animals, and their legal protection against cruelty, the Labour Movement, like the Churches, has not cared to widen its outlook, even to the extent of demanding better conditions for the more highly organized domestic animals.

What the attitude of the clergy was is best shown by the story of the parson who bluntly ridiculed the humanitarian ideals: "One can't chuck a cat across the room," he said, "without some old woman making a fuss about it."

Mr. Salt has a sincere admiration for the work of the militant Freethinkers. Listen to this:—

Looking back over a large part of the League's work, I can think of no one who gave us more constant proofs of friendship than Mr. Foote; and his testimony was the more welcome because of the very high and rare intellectual powers that he wielded. Few men of his time combined in equal degree such gifts of brain and heart. All social reformers, whether they acknowledge it or not, owe a debt of gratitude to iconoclasts like Bradlaugh and Foote, who made free speech possible where it was hardly possible before.

In the closing pages, which touch the heart as well as the mind, Mr. Salt refers to his life-work as "the forlorn hope." It may be forlorn, but it is a real hope. To recall his own dauntless championship of unpopular causes is itself an inspiration to those who come after him. Mr. Salt's long and honourable career is a most weighty discourse on the indispensability of reformers, who, more even than the poets, are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind." MIMNERMUS.

## A Sociological Study of Religion.

### VI.

(Continued from page 92.)

TURNING our attention to the Semitic peoples, we find the same correspondence between economic and religious forms. In the Babylonia of Hammurabi, where the priesthood was intimately concerned with the commercial life of the community, religion never proclaimed the rights of the poor and humble; or exalted poverty above riches. The Phœnicians, who travelled far and wide as traders, necessarily became cosmopolitan in their views, and embraced any deity which the superstitiousness of mariners suggested might be of use to them. The history of the Hebrews shows even more clearly the influence of economic development upon religious evolution.

Israel.....was rich and prosperous; its market places were filled with industry and commerce; its fertile fields produced plentiful crops. Israel displayed the wealth and success of town life. On the other hand, Judah.....was poor; her land was meagre; besides Jerusalem she had no large towns; many of her people still wandered with their flocks. These two methods of life came into conflict in many ways, but especially in religion. Every old Canaanite town had for centuries its local town god, called its "baal" or "lord." The Hebrew townsmen found it very natural to worship the gods of their neighbours, the Canaanite townsmen. They were thus unfaithful to their old Hebrew God Yahveh. To some devout Hebrews, therefore, and especially to those in the South, the Canaanite gods seemed to be the protectors of the wealthy class

in the towns, with their luxury and injustice to the poor, while Yahveh appeared as the guardian of the simpler shepherd life of the desert, and, therefore, the protector of the poor and needy. (*Ancient Times, Breasted.*)

And so we had the rise of the prophets, with their bitter denunciation of those who "ground the faces of the poor," and "join house to house," and "lay field to field."

Passing now to the European cultures, we find that whilst the Greeks were still wanderers over the face of the earth, their chief deity was the great Sky-god, or "Rain-giver," or "Thunderbolt." Finally he became known to all by the same name, Zeus, which was simply the Greek form of an old word for "sky" in the language of the Indo-European people of whom they were a branch. But when they invaded the Aegean world, they found the Aegeans, a settled and, therefore, partly agricultural people, worshipping the great earth spirit, or Earth-Mother, who made the earth bring forth grain and fruit. When the Greeks became settled, and practised agriculture, they, too, adopted the Earth-Mother, who became one of the greatest goddesses in their pantheon.

Early Rome was a community of agricultural households. The household was the original political and religious unit; and religious rites were domestic in character. But the life of the Roman agriculturist could not be confined to his own household: in the tilling of fields and in the care of his cattle he met his neighbours, and common interest with them suggested common prayer and common thanksgiving. And so there sprang up the great series of agricultural festivals which formed the basis of the state-calendar.

Gradually, as the community grew.....there grew with it a sense of an organized state, as something more than the casual aggregation of households or clans (*gentes*). As the feeling of union became stronger, so did the necessity for common worship of the gods.....two of the older deities of the fields develops the notions of justice and war. Organization ensues, and the general conceptions of state-deities and state-ritual are made more definite and precise. (*The Religion of Ancient Rome, C. Bailey, M.A.*).

And again,—

The life of the early Roman in the fields, his activities, his hopes and fears, are reflected in the long list of agricultural festivals which constitute the greater part of the celebrations in the Calendar, and follow closely the seasons and occupations of the agricultural year.....The festivals divide themselves naturally into three groups; those of Spring, expressive of the hopes and fears for the growing crops and herds; those of Summer, the festivals of fulfilment, including the celebration of harvest; and those of Winter, the festivals of sowing, of social rejoicing, and in the later months of purificatory anticipation of the coming years.

The Celtic races also had their Mother-Earth, or Queen, or Long-lived one. "It is in the agricultural stage that she entered in Celtic lands, as she did in other countries, into her completest religious heritage." (*Celtic Religion, E. Anwyl, M.A.*).

It is hardly necessary to call the reader's attention to the many saints' days and festivals connected with agriculture and industry of Mediæval Europe. Let us pass on to consider the Reformation.

It is a fact, noticed by most historians, that Protestantism was successful in the northern countries where the new bourgeois or capitalist economy was ramifying. There is little doubt that the new pushful manufacturing and trading classes of those countries found that Catholicism had many disadvantages for them. In the first place, the innumerable holy days interrupted industry, to their detriment. In the second place, the priesthood was usually the supporter either of the

monarchy or the aristocracy;<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, were supporting a political organization which seriously hampered the development of the new industrial civilization. And, furthermore, the Church denounced the very basic principle of the new industrial order, usury, or interest on capital loaned out. Therefore, in those lands in which the new industrial order was successful, the Catholic Church had to go. Later still, in this country, when the king, no longer enjoying his divine right as ruler through God's vicegerent, the Pope enjoyed it as Head of the Church of England, another reformation became necessary, and resulted in the Great Rebellion, in which, almost without exception, the agricultural districts supported the king and the Anglican Church, and the urban and industrial districts supported the Independents and the various other dissenters.

Probably in the whole history of this country the great mass of the population were never better off as regards the material necessities and comforts of life than they were in the early 18th century. Whilst many of the amenities of existence of which the 19th century could boast had not yet come into existence, and whilst the total wealth—both absolutely and relatively—was less than it is to-day, the enormous disparities in wealth, and possibilities for attaining culture, etc., which are so marked a feature of our civilization, had not developed to anything like the extent that they exist at the present time. Modern finance and large-scale factory industry, with its necessary severing of the personal bonds between employer and employed; and its capacity for producing stupendous fortunes and slum cities, was still in the womb of time; the ties between the "squire" and the agricultural workers were still almost patriarchal. Such rude amenities as were to be enjoyed were less the monopoly of a small class than, for example, powerful motor-cars, and magnificent yachts are to-day, and finally, owing to the prevalence of home-industry, and the little development of the factory system, the average workman had a greater security than he has ever enjoyed since. Unemployment and starvation did not hang a perpetual menace over his head, as it does in the 20th century. In short, the worker was a member of a social organization which was able to guarantee him the opportunities for making a livelihood, and not—as he generally is to-day—a small cog in a vast industrial machine which grinds out profits, not for the community, but for a cosmopolitan few; and incidentally grinds out the lives of the human material that is put into it.

And because the early 18th century was a period of stable social organization, and able to give the average man a fair measure of economic security; and because the close of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century was a period of social transition, and of disruption of old social forms and institutions, and was unable to assure a modicum of security and material satisfaction to the great majority of the nation,<sup>2</sup> the theology of the former period was of a mild, self-satisfied order, which reflected the general contentment of the age; whilst that of the latter period produced the fiery religious revival associated with

<sup>1</sup> In this connection, it is interesting to note that in England where the old feudal order killed itself out in the War of the Roses, the Protestant faith was established; whereas in France where the feudal nobility still remained for generations more powerful than the new capitalist class, Protestantism did not establish itself.

<sup>2</sup> The period covered by the Industrial Revolution was not simply a time of rapid industrial expansion; fundamentally, it was a period of transition from one civilization to another; from one order of society able to give security to its members to another future order which will also be capable of giving security to its members. Without desiring to idealize the early 18th century, it seems accurate to say that, unlike the period which followed it, it was a time of social organization which succeeded in giving security to all. On the other hand, the Industrial Revolution destroyed this organization, without, replacing it by another equally effective.

Wesley. Of the former period Vida D. Scudder, in *Social Ideals in English Letters*, says,—

The Church had become a vast machine, for the patronage of morality and the promotion of her own Officers; those officers speak repeatedly with a candor unmistakable and refreshing, compared to the evasions not unknown to-day. How admirable an investment is religion! Such is the burden of their pleading. Sure gage of respectability here and comfort hereafter! To turn over the pages of their sermons is to feel the Sermon on the Mount receding into infinite space. Here is one of these excellent discourses headed "Of the Wisdom of Being Religious." We read and are almost won to so courteous and comforting gospel; though, perhaps, some troubling recollection drifts through our minds of a faith calling to sacrifice and ending in a Cross. Not this faith surely for—"The Principal Point of Wisdom in the Conduct of Human Life is so to use the Enjoyments of this present World as that they may not themselves shorten that Period wherein 'tis allowed us to enjoy them.....Temperance and Sobriety, the regular governing of our Appetites and Passions, the promoting Peace and Good Order in the World are, even without regard to any Arguments of Religion, the greatest Instances of human Wisdom; because they are the most effectual Means of preserving our Being and Well-being in the World; of prolonging the Period and enlarging the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. Religion has added Strength to these Considerations; and by annexing the Promise of God's immediate Blessing to the natural Tendency and Consequences of things, has made the Wisdom of choosing Virtue infinitely more conspicuous and the Folly of Vice more apparently absurd" (Clarke, *Sermons*, Vol. II., Sermon xvii.).

It would be wrong to disparage the kindly common sense and entire sincerity of 18th century religion; but one may be excused for finding in it few reminiscences of the Gospels.

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

## How the Vicar Woke Up.

THE Vicar had been frightfully busy; he walked home with a horrible burning sensation in his mind which prevented his thoughts from running as smoothly as usual. He seemed conscious of this, and endeavoured to collect the tangled ends of mental activity. His steps faltered at times, giving him the appearance of a drunken man. The Vicar was a good walker, and well-known locally for his aversion to pony-trap, cycle or motor car. Yet, to-night, a great flaming crimson mist swam before his burning eyes; could it be flu? He thought not, for his temperature seemed normal. He knew sufficient about medicine to realize that fever was invariably associated with an abnormal temperature.

### A Strange Memory.

No, it could not be flu; neither was it indigestion, a complaint from which he had never suffered. What was it?.....The Vicar cast his mind back many years; he recalled a small dirty street in Stepney, where, as a young curate, he had done his best to reduce the problem of evil to a minimum. Had he succeeded? Why was he thinking about Stepney to-night? Why had this sudden and most alarming spiritual fever come upon him? He searched within his heart for the answer, but no answer came. *God did not want him to know.* This much was obvious. The thought maddened him. Why did God not want him to know? The great crimson flare shone in upon his tortured mind causing intense discomfort, to say nothing of divine discontent. At length the Vicarage was in sight. What a relief!

### Back to the Old Home.

The Vicar crunched noisily up the winding gravel path, opened the neat little front door with a Yale key

and slipped into his study. It was but the work of a moment to switch on the electric light; and a second later he had applied a match to the small gas fire, which soon flung out a rosy and radiant heat. The Vicar sank back in his comfortable arm-chair and brushed his hand wearily across his brow. Already he felt the benefit of the gas fire, a mere material thing—physical heat—coke—chemicals—gaspipes—all horribly material!—the Vicar groaned.

### A Lucid Interval.

What was that? A sudden noise at the lattice window caused him to start. Bah! it was nothing—his nerves were in rags; he needed a tonic, a change of air, a rest, relaxation—an interval of sanity. He jumped to his feet and looked round the room. All seemed different. Could it be possible that this had been his study for six years; was it here, actually here, that he had written a thousand sermons; analysed the Holy Scriptures; interviewed an erring and recalcitrant humanity; censured men and women for their lack of decency and ignorance of God? Was it here, in this futile room, that he had developed the assurance that God was on his side?? Was it here, in this little, nay, infinitesimal corner of the earth that he had dared to presume—dared to imagine that the old black book was "Gospel"—impossible!

### Sordid Details.

He glanced at the sacred, oleographic reproductions of pious masterpieces. There they hung upon the chaste wallpaper. Had these frightful abortions anything to do with truth? Did that ghastly representation of the Crucifixion; the murdered Christ; the stark misery of heaven alone knows what—did *this* picture help? Had this morbid specimen of fanatical frightfulness assisted to produce the crimson flame that burnt and tortured his mind? What then was it that had filled his crowded brain with the diabolical desolation of a spiritual wilderness.....The room grew warm; the little gas fire was doing extremely well: there was a curious haze of heat that soothed the disturbed mentality of the Vicar. He slid wearily down into the arm chair and buried his face in his hands.

### Tongues of Fire.

Suddenly he realized why the crimson flame had eaten its way into his brain. No longer he doubted the cause, origin and purpose of the spiritual furnace which had overtaken him upon the moonlit road. How well he remembered now, in retrospect, the precise moment when the sullen fury had settled upon his soul.....He had closed the gate of the little Mission Hall; he had looked up at the new crescent moon; he had noted the fierce brilliance of the stars; he had produced his pipe—and *he had actually thought.* Yes, that was it; for two or three seconds—marvellous seconds, *he had actually used his brains;* then came the spiritual fever; the great glowing crimson fire in his mind; the poignant unrest.....How clear it all seemed. The Vicar crossed over to the window and flung it open. A great breeze seemed suddenly to blow across the world; it came in wildly dancing gales; it rocked the very heart of life; it caught hold of the Vicar's ego and played with it as a child plays with a ball. He stood up in front of the little gas fire and reached down his note book from the mantelshelf; then feverishly pulling out his fountain pen, he wrote in a steady hand: "God died to-night. No flowers by request."

ARTHUR F. THORN.

We shall hardly be far wrong if we say that the new interest in the future and the progress of the race has done a great deal to undermine unconsciously the old interest in a life beyond the grave; and it has dissolved the blighting doctrine of the radical corruption of man.—*J. B. Bury.*

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF ORDINARY MONTHLY MEETING OF THE  
EXECUTIVE HELD ON FEBRUARY 3.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the Chair. Also present: Messrs. Dobson (Birmingham), Moss, Quinton, Rosetti and Samuels; Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. New members were received for Fulham, Manchester, South London, West Ham and the Parent Society.

Permission was given for the formation of a new Branch at Fulham.

Various items of correspondence were dealt with and a grant of £10 made to the Barnsley Branch, as their recent venture, though eminently encouraging, had left a deficit.

It being reported that the attendance at Friars Hall showed an improvement, it was resolved to continue the experiment through March.

The report of the recent Social meeting at South Place was received and the usual Conference Circular to the Branches ordered to be sent out.

Mr. Cohen, as Editor of the *Freethinker*, was congratulated upon the success of his Sustentation Fund, and a cheque for the additional £25, promised by the Executive, if the sum appealed for was reached, ordered to be drawn. The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

N.B.—All members are reminded that outstanding subscriptions for 1921 should reach me in the course of the next few days or they will not be included in the Annual Balance Sheet.

REPORT OF SPECIAL EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON  
FEBRUARY 3, 1921.

This meeting was convened to consider the attitude of the Society in relation to the case of J. W. Gott, who had been brought before the Stipendiary Magistrate at the Birmingham Police Court on eleven charges in relation to the sale of literature, one being for unlawfully publishing a libel against the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion. The President, Mr. C. Cohen, said no official intimation had been received of the prosecution, but the Birmingham Branch had called attention to it by resolution, and members had written and forwarded newspaper cuttings. The Secretary, who had been instructed to make enquiries into the matter, then reported the details of the proceedings so far as they were procurable, the result being that Mr. Gott had been released on bail and the case remitted to the Birmingham Assizes, commencing in March.

After a full and lengthy discussion, it was resolved, unanimously:—

That this Executive, having had brought before it the fact of the prosecution of Mr. J. W. Gott on a charge of Blasphemy, decides to take whatever steps are possible to defeat the attempt to once more put the Blasphemy laws into operation.

Attention was called to the private appeals now being issued on behalf of Mr. Gott, and it was further resolved:—

That this Executive is willing to undertake the defence of Mr. J. W. Gott against the charge of Blasphemy on the condition that Mr. Gott allows his defence to rest with the N. S. S. and abides by its decision in the conduct of the case. Further, that the Society, being concerned only with the charge of Blasphemy, undertakes the full responsibility for the expenses of the defence, and any donations made towards meeting the costs should be remitted to the Secretary of the N. S. S. and will be duly acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

The Secretary was instructed to communicate these conditions to Mr. Gott, and the meeting closed.

There is no danger to a man that knows  
What life and death is: there's not any law  
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful  
That he should stoop to any other law.

—Chapman, "*Byron's Conspiracy*" (Act III., Sc. 3, ad finem).

## Acid Drops.

The London County Council has again refused to throw open the Parks for healthy and legitimate games on Sunday. It makes an exception in the case of Victoria and Battersea Parks, where it will permit boating. The reason given for these exceptions is that boating was permitted in these places before the L.C.C. took control. So that it seems a thing is right if it was done before the creation of the London County Council and wrong if one desires to do the same thing afterwards. The decision is just about as ridiculous as the Council's refusal to permit games on the great taboo day of the Nonconformist Conscience. We wonder how much longer people will permit the Council to shut them out of their own playgrounds in order to please a crowd what old Richard Baxter called "frozen and uncomfortable Christians."

Congratulations to the Rev. H. D. N. Paterson who has just been "presented" to the living of Hartlebury, near Kidderminster, with an income of about £1,300, with residence. Plenty of reason there for believing in Christianity! And also proof that the Lord does look after *some* of his followers.

The Church takes money by the bucketful but is chary of giving it away. A daily paper advertisement asks for "choir boys up to £15," and another "ad" offers situations to "earnest Churchwomen," the preliminary remuneration being "pocket money and outdoor uniform." Clearly, the clergy believe in the blessings of poverty—for other people.

Lord Clifford, of Chudleigh, has founded a new religion and already has eighty followers. Evidently Providence never meant Atheists to be lazy people.

The *New York Herald*, in a descriptive write-up of Mr. Harding, the American President-Elect, says, "There are three things in Mr. Harding's office which he values far above all others. One is an engraving of Lincoln, the second a portrait of Roosevelt, and the third a Bible." If the Bible is a family one, it will be useful for knocking down applicants for Government jobs—and journalists.

The Bishop of St. Albans says he sees no reason why people should not laugh in Church. We can assure him that a great many cannot help doing so.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton says "we never quite believe in religion until we can laugh about it." Just so. He might have added that one cannot quite disbelieve religion until one can laugh at it.

It is pretty obvious to all clear sighted men and women what is the main object of the clericals in coquetting with the Labour movement. Occasionally, some of the less discreet let the cat out of the bag, and when they do that, all who wish for a clear discussion of social questions, no matter what particular solution they favour, must feel themselves under an obligation to them. So we beg to thank the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference for a speech made by him at Stockton-on-Tees on January 25. In the course of that Address he said that "the Labour class was in the overwhelming majority, and at the moment was a grave menace to the social order." And that throws a flood of light on the next remark, that "It was up to the Church to get them into their buildings and infuse into them the spirit of early Methodism." That is quite understandable, and it is clear that if they can only get the working class seriously concerned about the supreme importance of the welfare of their souls in the next world, they can be more easily managed in this. It also explains why money is so readily forthcoming for the evangelizing of the people. It is about the best investment that can be made by all who are interested in keeping things as they are.

In a spiritualistic film, which is being advertised largely, one of the scenes depicts a dog "at evening prayers."

This must not be taken too seriously as a sample of canine intelligence. Perhaps the "how-wow" was only waiting for a biscuit.

Dr. Guttery, a former president of the National Free Church Council, left £1,868. He will go to the dreadful place he so often mentioned in his addresses.

Over 80,000 religious emblems and articles, and 120,000 vestments have been supplied to the ruined churches of France. The wax-doll manufacturers and dressmakers must have been busy.

A man over sixty years of age was charged at North London with stealing a prayer-book and twopence from St. John's Church, Hackney. We can understand the old boy annexing the coins, but what could he do with the book? A prayer barrel is marketable, but not a prayer book.

The Scottish Sabbath Protection Association hopes that the Council will this year prohibit Sunday music in the Glasgow Parks, and will also refuse halls for "irreligious purposes." The Glasgow folk will be much bigger fools than we take them to be if after having once had Sunday music they tolerate its prohibition. And as to halls, that only shows the need for more vigorous action on the part of those who are striving to civilize the members of the Scottish Churches. It would serve the Sabbath Protection Association right if for the next month its members were forced to listen to Jazz bands on half of the Sabbath and to Freethought lectures for the other half.

The Pope advises that the cure for the present ills of the world lies in men practising poverty, humility and self-sacrifice. From the wealthiest Church in the world preaching the most egotistical of religion, and teaching that without future rewards morality loses its meaning, this advice is rather good. Evidently, in the Pope's opinion, morality consists in taking an interest in the behaviour of other people.

How very carefully our delightful press glosses over the fact of the non-religion of famous men. We notice that Mr. George R. Sims, reviewing J. M. Robertson's *Life of Bradlaugh*, notes that Bradlaugh "was born before his time," quite a stupid expression in this connection. He was born at precisely the right time, at a moment when he was able to throw the weight of his personality into the work of destroying superstition. But all that Mr. Sims notes is that Bradlaugh administered the "knock-out" to Socialism whenever he met it on the platform. As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh's work in the political field was the least important of his activities. Anyone might have done what he did there. His great work, the work that places the future under an obligation to him, was his attack on the forces of superstition, involving as it did a fight for free speech and a free press. We might have spared Bradlaugh the politician. It was Bradlaugh the militant Atheist that gave such services to the people as very few others were capable of giving. And that is the Bradlaugh all Freethinkers should do their best to keep to the front.

The press notices of the reported death of Prince Kropotkin illustrated the same thing. Nearly all the papers avoided mentioning that he was an Atheist, and the *Daily Telegraph* informed its readers that in his earlier years he drifted towards Agnosticism. Kropotkin was a convinced Atheist, he was not at all the kind of man for indecisive opinions. And we can recall now, after the lapse of many years, the way in which he put on one side the idea of God as one that no man who had reached mental maturity would bother with. "The Great Lying Church" will have to look to its laurels if it does not wish to be eclipsed in history by the "Great Lying Press."

At Sotheby's Sale Rooms a Gothic letter Bible realized £225. Perhaps the customer did not realize that he could have purchased all the Sacred Books of the East for less money.

The Rev. Clarence May says that "if only the laity would expect the clergy to be human we should cease to be hypocrites and snobs." But men who wear petticoats must ever be a conundrum in a civilized country.

Members of the National Assembly of the Church of England are to discuss the question of the pay of the clergy. What will the poor, dear Church people say to the shocking case of forty bishops chasing £181,000 yearly, or to the awful example of fifty London vicars and rectors receiving £50,000 yearly, with residences?

Details of the theft of silver communion plate at St. Paul's Church, Westminster Bridge Road, South London, were given from the pulpit by the vicar. Did the vicar hope that the culprits were in the congregation, and that they would "hit the sawdust trail?"

We know very little of Sir Joseph Maclay the Shipping Controller, but the little we have gathered does not impress us with him as being more than one of those naturally insignificant persons, that having made money considers its possession proof of personal worth. From a paragraph in the *Glasgow Herald* we see that Sir Joseph recently spoke in the Plantation Parish Church, and after lamenting the fact that we heard more to-day at street corners of "the blatant talk of Atheists, Agnostics, and Freethinkers," said that he did not believe "there was such a man as an honest Atheist." The conjunction of the two sentences will give one a fair idea of how much mental capacity and education it takes to make a shipping controller. It is worth while we could introduce Sir Joseph to halls full of Atheists within a mile of the centre of the city of Glasgow. But we doubt if it would have much effect. So we will only advise Sir Joseph to stick to his shipping where evidently reading and education is not required, and to give the world fewer samples of his "blatant" Christianity.

The *Telegraph* of February 2 reports that a gathering of clergymen at Philadelphia, representing fifteen denominations, have held a meeting to decide what kind of dress women should wear. The skirt must not be more than 7½ inches from the ground, the neck must not be more than 3 inches deep and the dress "must not fit snugly anywhere." Well, that is quite the kind of conference which we should imagine a body of clergy would enjoy. It satisfies their distorted and partly suppressed sexuality. One can understand why Sidney Smith divided the people into three sexes—men, women, and clergymen.

The Sunday question is very much to the fore at present in Manchester, where the local governing body has got into its head that it is its duty to oppose anything that will act as a counter-attraction to the Churches. There is, we are glad to see, an organized fight going on for a free Sunday, and if it is properly conducted it is bound to win. We see from the *Manchester Guardian* that a meeting was recently held of representatives of the various Manchester Societies, including the local Branch of the N. S. S. The representatives formed themselves into a committee to work for "The abrogation of all existing laws interfering with the free use of Sunday for purposes of culture and recreation." It will be noted that the object of the committee is expressed in the words of one of the objects of the National Secular Society.

We said last week that it was the plums of a profession that made it attractive. So we hasten to point out that Canon Storr has been appointed to a "stall" in Westminster Abbey. As the stall is worth £1,000 a year, with a house in the cloisters, the manger cannot be described as empty. The Vicar of North Malvern has also been given a "stall" in Gloucester Cathedral, but that is worth only £450 with house. Still, as we understand there is practically no work attached to these posts, it all helps. We can understand why the Nonconformist ministers rail at the Establishment. Naturally, they would like a more equitable division of the spoils.



## Special.

In the *Freethinker* for January 30 it was mentioned that another "Blasphemy" prosecution was imminent. More was not said at the time as I did not wish to prejudice the decision of the Executive in any way, and as I had instructed the Secretary to call a meeting of that body, and the trial was not coming off till March, there was no need for instant action. The Executive duly met on February 3, and it is at its request that I am making the following statement.

The defendant in this instance is Mr. J. W. Gott. There are two charges brought against him. The first is concerned with sending through the post a certain "obscene" publication in the shape of a pamphlet entitled "How to Prevent Pregnancy." This is done, professedly, on behalf of Malthusian propaganda, and with that the National Secular Society has no immediate or necessary concern. That concerns rather the Malthusian League, but I understand that that body is not taking action. The second charge is that of "Blasphemy," and consists in sending by post copies of a publication called *The Rib Tickler*—which is made up of four pages of crude illustrations and poor jokes. It is a pity that these two charges are brought at the same time and against the same person, but we must take these things as they occur, and not as we would have them happen. Our concern is that someone is being charged with "bringing the Christian religion into contempt, although if anyone can bring it into greater contempt than it deserves I shall have to reverse my opinion about the non-occurrence of the miraculous.

Having fully discussed the matter, the Executive decided that it was its duty to take whatever steps were possible to defeat this new endeavour to put the Blasphemy laws in operation. It, however, followed its usual policy of doing this on the following conditions: (1) That the conduct of the defence was to be left in the hands of the Executive, and (2) that the Society makes itself responsible for the entire costs of the case; any appeal for funds that may be found necessary to be made in the name of the Executive, and the sums so collected to be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. It was, however, not thought likely that any such appeal would be necessary.

The decision of the Executive was communicated to Mr. Gott, but he has declined to leave the conduct of the blasphemy case in the hands of the Executive unless it undertook the defence of the other and unconnected charge. It is neither for me nor the Executive to deal with Mr. Gott's motive in thus declining to allow the case to be conducted by the Executive, particularly as he is not able to conduct his own defence. But the Executive was only following its usual policy, the policy pursued in the Boulter and other cases—the policy pursued in the Boulter and other cases—and, indeed, none other is consistent with the dignity and position of the society.

It should here be said that the decision of the Executive to defend the case was not based upon approval of Mr. Gott's methods of propaganda. It was solely a question of principle. It is our aim to break down the Blasphemy laws, and to that end resistance must be offered wherever it is possible. What surprises me is that even Christian bigotry should dignify the passages selected by the prosecution by the name of "Blasphemy." I have seen the passages, and find it difficult to conceive anyone with a sense of humour being amused by them, anyone with a sincere belief in religion being hurt by them, or anyone in the world being instructed by them. They are simply and irretrievably silly. And if occasion called for it, I should not hesitate to print the whole of the passages in the *Freethinker* and defy the authorities to prosecute. On any fair reading of the law they are not even "Blasphemous," and I say that, although a Christian judge and jury may decide otherwise.

Our concern is, however, that the authorities have chosen once more to raise the issue of "Blasphemy," and blasphemy in this country is an offence created by Christians for the purpose of oppressing and suppressing Freethinkers. It is, therefore, incumbent on the N. S. S. to do what it can to see that the interests of the Freethought cause is guarded. And while the Society will not be directly undertaking the defence, it will be legally represented at the trial, and any intervention that is possible in the interests of the cause will be made. This may serve our interests as well or even better than being concerned with the direct defence. And after all, it is the Cause, not the man that is the main thing.

Blasphemy cases are usually successful in securing a verdict for the prosecution. And as they are tried by a Christian judge and a Christian jury they very seldom result in a victory for the defence. But it is clear that they are becoming more and more ridiculous. In the old days, when the prosecution went for the leaders of the fighting Freethought party, there was at least a pretence of dignity in the legal proceedings and a semblance of courage in the attack. But it is long since the authorities dared to attack a responsible exponent of Freethought, or indict a reasoned attack on Christianity, no matter how distasteful the language was to the pious. The Blasphemy laws become more and more ridiculous, and one wonders how long it will be before the religious world realizes that when it dare not impeach the really effective attacks on religion, but can only spend its energies on persecuting a species of vulgarized Joe Millerism, it is time that laws against the free expression of religious criticism were wiped away altogether.

But the laws exist, and while they exist they are a potential danger to freedom of thought and of speech. They should be abolished as a mere survival from an age of barbarism. It is their abolition that the N. S. S. has in view, and so far as it may be done, the present case will be utilized to that end. For the present I cannot profitably say more. Readers will be kept informed of any change in the situation that may occur. The prosecution may be quite successful in its object, but we shall try to make the bigots pay as dearly as possible for their success, and it may be that even the knowledge that such laws exist may excite among the more decent minded a sense of shame at their being, and create a desire for their abolition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(President, National Secular Society.)

### C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 20, Workman's Hall, Ton Pentre; February 27, Friars Hall; March 6, Swansea; March 13, Leicester; March 20, Stratford Town Hall; March 27, Leeds.

### To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—R. D. Voss (Cape Town), 10s. 6d.; D. H. Kerr (Sydney), £5; T. Elliott, 5s. Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Luckens (Hobsonville, N. Z.), £1.

D. H. KERR.—Many thanks for good wishes. Hope you are well.

R. D. VOSS.—Received with thanks. Have handed your order to shop manager. We appreciate what you say, and know that it is intended.

C. B. and others who have written congratulating us on the success of our Sustentation Fund.—Thanks for congratulations. It was a success, and establishes a record in the manner in which our readers rallied round the paper. But we really never had any doubt but that they would respond.

It would have been less than they have deserved to have formed any other opinion.

W. J.—Are you really under the impression that because some were willing to face persecution for their faith that all Christians were similarly inclined? We thought our meaning as to the use and function of minorities was made clear in the article to which you refer.

A. JONES.—We don't know when we shall be in Manchester. It is not likely to be until the autumn.

E. H.—We have already said that we should welcome any thorough-going criticism of Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism*. The keener and the more informed the better. But we do not want a repetition of the arguments current in a Salvation Army experience meeting. Sometimes we feel inclined to show the Theist how to argue his case, and then prove to him that it will not hold water.

C. MARSHALL.—We shall issue a second volume of the *Philosophical Dictionary* as soon as possible. One has to go cautiously these days in the matter of printing.

G. W. WETHERELL (Victoria).—Pleased to hear from you. Our regards to yourself and wife. Wish you were near enough for one of our old-time talks.

J. KEY (Kenhardt).—The address you require is for the present P. O. Box 3474 Johannesburg.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

## Sugar Plums.

We had intended writing this week on the matter of the Freethought Fellowship. Several other things have, however, intervened, and the Fellowship business must stand over for a week or so. But it will be none the worse for the delay.

Next Sunday (February 20), Mr. Cohen will lecture, afternoon and evening, in the Workman's Hall, Ton Pentre, near Pontypridd. We have no doubt but that there will be many visitors from the surrounding districts, and Mr. Cohen will be pleased to meet all who are ready to do anything towards advancing the movement in South Wales.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd occupies the platform at Friars Hall this evening (February 13). His subject is "The Story of the Earth," and we trust that the hall will be well filled. Mr. Lloyd is spending the week in South Wales, after holding a very successful meeting on Sunday last at Swansea.

To-day (February 13), Mr. Joseph McCabe visits Glasgow and lectures for the local Branch of the N. S. S. in the City Hall Saloon at 12 and 6.30. His morning subject is "Can the Churches accept Evolution?" and at

6.30 G. H. Wells' "History of the World." Admission is free, and we hope to hear that the hall was crowded on both occasions.

We print in another part of this issue a letter from a firm that has now been advertising in these columns for some time. Apparently, it has not received the support from Freethinkers which it feels it ought to have received. We are glad to say that this is not the general experience of those who have used our columns, and we feel with the writers of the letter that there is no reason why Freethinkers should not make it a point of dealing with Freethinkers where possible. We have no desire to interfere between advertisers and their possible or actual customers. All we are concerned with is to see that the advertisements accepted are genuine business ones. That the buyer gets value for his money is a matter that lies between him and the seller. All the same, we think that more attention to this point by both buyers and sellers would be a means of providing the paper with a steady income which in these days of high prices would help to place things on a more satisfactory basis.

## The Origin of Christianity.

### V.

(Continued from page 86.)

The resemblances of this cult (Mithraism) to Christianity were so striking that St. Justin and Tertullian saw in it a Satanic plagiarism. Mithraism had baptism, the eucharist, the agapes, penitence, expiations, and anointings. Its chapels much resembled little churches. It created a bond of brotherhood among the initiated. We have said it twenty times, it was the great need of the age.....A lively piety was developed through these exercises. They believed in the immortality of the initiated, in a paradise for pure souls. The mystery of the supper, so like the Christian Supper, certain evening gatherings analogous to those of our pious congregations, in "caves" or "little oratories," a numerous clergy, to which women were admitted, some expiations by the sacrifice of bullocks, frightful, but thrilling, answered well to the aspirations of the Roman world towards a sort of materialistic religiosity. ....We may say that if Christianity had been arrested in its growth by some mortal malady, the world would have been Mithraistic. Renan.—*Marcus-Aurelius*, pp. 331-332, n.d.

THE attempt to trace the natural origin of Christianity from previously existing religions was, of course, violently resented by the Christian Churches. It is still resisted by the Roman Church and the Nonconformist sects. But the irresistible pressure of the facts revealed by antiquarian research, and the resurrection of the buried civilizations of the East by the spade of the Archæologist, where, as Gerald Massey remarks, in the ancient temples "all the time each nook and corner were darkly alive with the presence and the proofs of the earlier gods and the pre-Christian origins," so that "we see the strange sight to-day in Europe of 100,000,000 of pagans masquerading as Christians,"<sup>1</sup> has compelled Christian scholars to recognize that to deny or ignore these facts to-day is only to invite a charge of ignorance or bigoted stupidity. Thus it comes about that we find two Christian doctors of Divinity—Dr. Noakes Jackson—who is a Canon of the Established Church—and Dr. Kirsopp Lake, responsible for a work entitled *The Beginnings of Christianity*, published last year, in which we find the admission that in the Ophic and Eleusinian Mysteries, "as in the mysteries of Dionysus, Adonis, Attis, and Osiris, the story of a god who dies and lives again was made the warrant of man's hope" (p. 254). And again, dealing with the Mysteries of Persephone, the Kabeiroi, and of Bacchus, which the Christian Fathers with characteristic Christian charity, denounced as immoral, the same work observes:—

In all these mysteries, through rites of initiation and fixed celebrations, the devotees received the assur-

<sup>1</sup> *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*, pp. 22-23.

ance of security here and happiness hereafter. Although the mysteries may have been magical rather than ethical in intent, as early as the last part of the fifth century B.C., they had acquired a moral significance, as the song of the initiates in Aristophanes' *Frogs* shows: "For we alone have a sun and a holy light, we who are initiated and who live toward friends and strangers in dutiful and pious fashion." Our data are not sufficient to enable us to draw certain conclusions, but it is highly probable that ultimately all mysteries fostered morality.<sup>2</sup>

A yet more valuable work published in 1915, in two volumes, by the Cambridge University Press, is *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, by Mr. F. Legge, Foreign Secretary to the Society of Biblical Archaeology, a society famous in the past for its obstinate adherence to orthodox views. This is a very able and scholarly work, and gathers together practically all there is, of importance, to be known of the religions from which Christianity arose. In his "Introduction" Mr. Legge at once disposes of the Christian libels on pagan morality. He observes:—

The popular ideas on the subject are not only vague but erroneous. A general notion that, shortly before the coming of Christ the Pagans had tired of their old gods, and lost to all sense of decency, had given themselves up to an unbridled immorality founded on Atheistic ideas, is probably about as far as the man who has given no special study to the subject would venture to go. Such a view, founded, perhaps, on somewhat misty recollections of the Roman Satirists and a little second-hand knowledge of the denunciations of the early Christian writers, is almost the reverse of the truth. There has probably been no time in the history of mankind when all classes were more given up to thoughts of religion, or when they strained more fervently after high ethical ideals than in the six centuries which have been taken for the subject of this book.<sup>3</sup>

The six centuries commencing with the year 330 before Christ down to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the State by the Emperor Constantine in 330 after Christ.

The cause of this ignorance, he observes, is clear enough. The classical education "carefully left all such matters as the origins of Christianity on one side." And:—

Above all, what has been called the catastrophic view of the Christian religion was still in fashion. Although our spiritual pastors and masters were never tired of reminding us that God's ways were not as our ways, they invariably talked and wrote on the assumption that they were, and thought an Omnipotent Creator with eternity before Him must needs behave like a schoolboy in control of gunpowder for the first time. Hence, "the remarkable victory" which, in the words of Gibbon, the Christian faith obtained over "the established religions of the earth" was, in the view of the orthodox, chiefly due to the miraculous powers placed at the disposal of the Primitive Church, and it was considered impious to look further for the cause of the despotic rule which, in a comparatively brief space of time, it succeeded in establishing over the minds of men.<sup>4</sup>

But when the non-Christian faiths, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, came to be systematically studied instead of jeered at, says the same writer, and they were compared with Christianity, a great step in advance had been made, as "everyone will readily admit who can remember the horror with which any proposal to equate or even compare Christianity with any other religion was once received."<sup>5</sup>

Further on our author speaks of "the tissue of sophistries and misconceptions with which Mr. Glad-

stone" met the scientific arguments of Dr. Réville and Professor Huxley against the first chapters of Genesis.

Of course, the Church is not defeated. Oh no! It has merely evacuated the old fortresses to take up a stronger position elsewhere.

But to return to our origins. We have seen that the idea of a Saviour God, miraculously born, dying to save mankind, mourned by his followers, and then rising from the tomb, was a common and widely disseminated belief at the time of Christ, and had been in existence for ages before his time.

#### THE VIRGIN GODDESS.

The same may be said of the Virgin Mother of God. In Protestant countries not much devotion is wasted upon the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus, but among the Roman Catholics she occupies a very prominent position, and we must remember that Protestantism is a very late offspring of Catholicism. As Bossnet remarked, Protestantism is only a tributary, Catholicism is the great stream, and numbers a great majority over its rivals.

Isis, the Egyptian "Queen of Heaven," the Mother of the Egyptian Saviour Horus, was worshipped as a Virgin. Dr. Inman says, "the pure virginity of the celestial mother was a tenet of faith for two thousand years before the virgin now adored was born."<sup>6</sup>

In Mr. King's collection of ancient gems and signets is a beautiful sard representing Serapis and Isis, with the legend "Immaculate is Our Lady Isis."<sup>7</sup> At Alexandria, as recorded by Apuleius, more than a hundred years before Christ,—

"the morning opening of the temple" became an elaborate ceremony, in which the white curtains, which hid the statue of Isis from the gaze of the worshippers, were drawn back, and it was displayed blazing with actual robes, gems, and ornaments like a Madonna in Southern Europe at the present day.

After this—

the temple remained open for what may be called private worship, and that this took the form of meditation or silent adoration before the statue of Isis. Apuleius Lucius repeatedly speaks of the pleasure that he derived, even before his initiation, from the prolonged contemplation of the goddess's image.<sup>8</sup>

(To be Continued.) W. MANN.

## The New Thought.

THE Bible is a baneful book to those who believe that it was inspired by a god, because it teaches a number of doctrines and recognizes a number of social evils without protest that should no longer prevail. But to a person who is able to appreciate it as a record of the moral and social development of the Jews, and who regards it as a purely human book, the Bible is a safe and useful book.

We cannot elsewhere find the stories of such earnest men as we find in the Bible, unless we read the lives of men like Bruno, Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh and Kropotkin; that is, unless we read the story of the earnest Infidels of modern life. And this is so, because the great men of the Bible—Moses, Elijah, Paul and Jesus—were all Infidels in their day. And they were made Infidels just as Infidels are made to-day—by the disgusting rottenness of the Church and State.

Let me be clearly understood. The Bible men were all believers in a personal god, just as, a little less definitely, were Voltaire and Paine. They were not Agnostics or Atheists, as so many Infidels of to-day

<sup>2</sup> Jackson and Lake, *The Beginning of Christianity*, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, l. ii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, li.

<sup>6</sup> Inman, *Ancient Faiths*, Vol. I. p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Vol. I., p. 66-67.

are. But they were Infidels to the religion of their day, and if their lot had been cast with us, the chances are that they would have been Atheists. The Bible, then, is largely a record of the sayings and doings of a number of Infidels who were maltreated and sometimes killed by their own generation, and then honoured by succeeding generations; and that is the real reason why the Bible lives, and why it is likely to live long after the present organized impostures known as Episcopalianism, Methodism, Roman Catholicism, and all the rest are dead and gone.

I call all these sects organized impostures because they trade upon the name of Jesus but reject his moral teachings, and shall continue to do so until they allow their accredited ministers to preach the wickedness of land speculation and money juggling as freely as they now denounce the more vulgar forms of robbery and murder.

The organized Church of to-day is to us of the new thought what Pharaoh and his government were to Moses, and what the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of Jerusalem were to Jesus. And I am free to say that I get some good material for my opposition to the Church from the book that is so much revered but so little understood in the Church.

For example, here are two texts that seem to me peculiarly fitting to our case: "If ye should suffer for righteousness sake, blessed are ye," and again: "That by well doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness." Now observe: just as the early Christians stood to organized Judaism—which was a combination of Church and State—so we of the new religions and social thought stand to organized Christianity, including our public officials.

The application of these texts is exactly reversed. The Christians were then regarded as Infidels and disturbers of society, and were hounded down by Church and State. But now, the Christians constitute Church and State, and we of the new thought are hounded down by them, although we reflect the teaching and spirit of the reputed founder of the Church. I do not pretend that any of us Freethinkers, here in England, are suffering particularly for our opinions, but there are many persons harried, hunted and imprisoned in Ireland to-day for advocating just what we advocate—religious, political and industrial liberty—and these are our fellow members in the Church of Righteous Discontent. And Eugene Debs now lies in an American dungeon, guilty of nothing but the hatred of that tyranny which is exercised in the name of God.

Both Church and State regard these men as criminals, but what is the truth? It is that these men who lie buried in living graves, or actually under the sod, are the flower of the human race to-day. They are the only people on earth who are living above the thought of material enjoyment or the accumulation of wealth.

What I mean is that the thoughts that inspired the leaders of the French Commune of 1871 and now work in the best of the Irish Republicans, the Russian Bolsheviks, the American and German Socialists and Anarchists are the noblest and purest that are anywhere operative to-day. As a rule, these men discard religion, but it is not because they wish to escape the restraint incident to the fear of a God. It is because their idea of morality is much higher than any of the well-known gods has ever either taught or practised. They do not believe in the present laws of society, because no people with a decent sense of right and wrong can possibly live under such laws in peace and happiness.

And this new thought that has no place in it for an arbitrary, personal god—a god who has his pets, a god who backs up a hypocritical Church and a tyrannical State—or any religion that imposes the guesses and supposes and maybes of ignorant knaves upon the

human mind; that rejects anything that has ever been known as god, and any system of baseless speculation that has ever been known as religion, as well as anything that has ever been known as organized society; it is this new thought with which I am most in sympathy as being calculated to make us all better as individuals and to vastly increase the general happiness.

But this new thought the present Church cannot tolerate and the present State would certainly crush out if it could. In so far then as we are known to adopt this new thought, we shall be accused of looseness of living and of trying to make this world worse instead of better. Upon us, therefore, rests the heavy responsibility of putting to silence, as far as we can, these charges of bad living.

Why should men listen to us rather than to the parsons and priests and politicians unless we show them that our opinions are more conducive to high character than the conventional religious and social opinions around us, against which we protest? There is no reason at all why we should not lead better lives than the average Christian or the average politician. The average Christian will lie and steal in the way of business and thank the Lord right along for his prosperity. He will thrash his children and quarrel with his wife and never think of asking the Lord to forgive him because he does not look upon such things as sins. The average Christian will hand a beggar over to the police and pile up money as if it were the best thing in life, notwithstanding that his God tells him to give to the poor and to lay up treasure only in heaven. And there are also a good many Christians who know that there are other women in the world besides their own wives otherwise than by mere hearsay.

And as for politicians, no man of really high character can possibly be one, because the very word politics means a sacrifice of truth and a deviation from honesty for the sake of success at the polls.

If all these wickednesses were unusual it would not be fair to adduce them, but all the world knows that they are the rule rather than the exception. The average Christian and the average citizen-politician are by no means models of high-thinking or right living, and yet most of them denounce Freethinkers, Socialists and Anarchists as unfit for toleration in a Christian country.

Now the right way to silence such charges is to display a type of character that is unimpeachable, so that men will be forced to admit that we have won our right to freedom by showing that we use it only for good purposes.

I say that a belief in any kind of a god and the religious training of any kind of a Church are quite unnecessary for the development of a high moral character. Very well. That flatly contradicts the generally accepted opinions of men to-day. Therefore, it devolves upon me to prove it in my own person, and, as far as possible, in my own family.

I may not be able to develop a very high order of character, but if I preach a new thought I am bound to convince the world as much as I can that the tendency of this new thought is to make people better than the old thought can.

I say that society does not need guns, poison-gas, handcuffs, dungeons and scaffolds; that it would be much better off without these barbarisms. Very well. Then I must show people what I mean by never violating the rights of others and by being more ready to suffer wrong than to inflict it.

With regard to our relations with each other as industrial beings—producers, exchangers and consumers—I think we should take no more than we produce. The only righteous fruit of industry is wages. Whatsoever comes by rent, interest, profits or taxes is unearned, and, therefore, morally inde-

fensible. With regard to our relations to each other as men and women—sexual beings—it seems to me that the law of purity is plain. Intimacies that spring from love are right: those that spring from lust are wrong. The two great sexual evils are legal marriage without love and its counterpart promiscuity.

As to how we should treat ourselves, the principles seem to me to be equally plain. We are bound to conform to the laws of health. That means enough but not too much food, sleep, work and play. It means a very moderate use of intoxicating drinks and narcotics. It means no dissipation. The new thought teaches, what is so difficult for most people to understand, that we must be free even to do wrong: but the outcome of it is high rectitude, great purity, because, otherwise, society could not exist with freedom.

You are not asked to leave the old faith in order to be free from its moral restraints. You are asked to come into the new thought because by the only rational method—self-restraint under full freedom—it is here possible for you to rise to that splendour of moral character which only those can enjoy who have learned that the highest goodness and the greatest happiness, the intensest selfishness and the most complete unselfishness are one and the same.

G. O. W.

## Correspondence.

### THE PARADOX OF ART.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I share with many of your readers an undisguised interest in the pleasantly-phrased lucubrations of my friend Mr. William Repton. No small part of this interest, for me, at least, is that he frequently says things with which I disagree, and which would annoy me coming from another and less amiable dogmatist in the sphere of letters. In a recent article on "The Midsummer Night's Dream" he startled me by the following sentences:—

The roguishness of Puck with the lovers transcends the pillar of salt incident in the same degree as the moral of "The Golden Ass" transcends the parable of the Prodigal Son. The biblical tales are human, all to human, and lack the hall mark of genius. Viewed in the light of primitive people attempting to tell stories they are passable—as passable as some of our cheap novels whose coloured covers are their only recommendation. Can any creative artist be religious—in the Christian sense?

Now, I shall be obliged if he will tell me in what sense it is possible to speak of the moral of the bundle of milesian tales known to us as *The Golden Ass*. The obvious one is that if you inquire too closely into occult matters you may be metamorphosed from a thinking man into an unthinking ass. But that was not, I am sure, what my friend had in mind when he compares the story (or stories) to the parable of the Prodigal Son. He must have discovered some deeper significance in what for the non-moral man is merely an amusing picture of the less respectable aspects of Greek life in the second century. Emphatically I don't agree for a moment that the stories of primitive people are passable. For me there is not in the whole of literature a more beautiful and more moving story than that of Joseph and his brethren. It is not passable; it is perfect in its art and in its restrained pathos, as perfect as the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Then my friends asks: Can a creative artist be religious in the Christian sense? Why not in the Christian as in any other sense? What has religion to do with the power to represent the world as it appears to us? Why is the Renaissance brimful of life in the pages of Charles Reade, and without form and void, without sap and vigour in Mr. Joseph MacCabe's solitary adventure in the art of fiction. Why is Calderon more satisfying to the spiritual sense of the artist than Strindberg? Why is the devout Christian Elgar the greatest composer of the age, and Bantock, a Spencerian evolutionist, a mere subsidiary figure in English music? Will Mr. Repton tell me why a man ought to write fine fiction, poetry, or music because he is a Rationalist or Freethinker or whatsoever shade of heterodoxy he prefers?

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

### "POISONOUS IVY."

SIR,—In two places in the *Freethinker* of yesterday's date allusion is made to the poison of the "Ivy"; had it been "Tobacco" I should have agreed, but Ivy! From my own experience I know that the leaves of the Ivy are much relished by cattle; that the flowers are very much liked by bees, and that the berries are liked by birds; that the plant keeps buildings much drier than they would otherwise be: keeps them cooler in summer and warmer in winter; tends to preserve them and greatly adds to their beauty. In the *Edinburgh Medical Dictionary* it is stated that Baller says the leaves are recommended in Germany against the atrophy of young children.....That the berries, powdered, were mixed with vinegar and given as a medicine in the Plague of London, with advantage. And that from the stem of the tree a gum exudes which is said to possess corroborant, astringent and anti-spasmodic properties. *Roper's Medical Dictionary* gives the same information. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (10th Edition) says that the wood is used by leather cutters to sharpen their knives; that the trunk yields a resinous substance which is used for the relief of toothache; that the flowers afford a good supply of honey to bees; that the leaves are greedily eaten by horses, deer, cattle and sheep; that the berries are eaten by birds; that from all parts of the plant a balsamic bitter (*pederic acid*) may be obtained. That on buildings it promotes dryness and warmth, reduces to a minimum the corrosive action of the atmosphere, and is altogether as conservative as it is beautiful. Also that in the garden its uses are innumerable.

J. R. HOLMES.

### SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.

SIR,—I read with interest A. J. Marriott's recent letter on "Socialism and the teachings of Christ." Being engaged in "Socialist" propaganda I find myself at loggerheads with the "Come to Jesus" Socialist. These abound in the I. L. P. and are a perfect nuisance. The question of religion is always coming up in discussion, and while they say religion should never be introduced because it hurts the feelings of their Christian friends, they themselves have no scruples in hurting the feelings of the Atheist. That is my nine years' experience, so I carry on a merciless campaign against them, and refuse point blank to admit a Socialist can be a Christian. Turning to the "Revolutionary" Socialist, you find the same "funk" in dealing with religion. "Let it alone," "it is of no consequence," is their cry, but we find in actual life the adherents of Christianity exert a powerful influence against Socialist teaching, in refusing the use of halls, permission to show bills, reporting anyone suspected of Atheist leanings to the "boss," a boycott in the local press (this is an important part), and doing everything possible to hinder propaganda. To publicly proclaim oneself an Atheist and Socialist is simply "asking for it," and the only answer is an incessant and vigorous Freethought propaganda. The young workers are the best material. After being at work for some time, they take an intelligent interest in their surroundings. Local machinery can be explained to them, such as coal cutting machines, trailing cables, pumping plant, haulage gear, etc., pointing out that we owe all the wonderful appliances to Science and not to any God or cloud Phantom. (That is the kind of work I am at.) At the same time they should be told that, although the machines are socially produced and worked, they are privately owned, as well as the wealth made by them, and the great mass of the workers can only gain access to the means of life on the conditions laid down by those who own and control the machines. Only by getting control of the machinery of production and using it for the benefit of all can the working class hope for any improvement. In this way, a double edged propaganda can be carried on, and more good done by one who is in earnest than by any of the Labour "gramophones" who tour the country. My advice to A. J. Marriott is to carry on the good work, for the Socialist movement to-day is badly in need of a cleaning out of the Religious element.

A. G. STENHOUSE.

### THE FREETHINKER AND ADVERTISEMENTS.

SIR,—Many months ago we advertised in your columns that a regular weekly advertisement of ours would be our contribution to the Cause, whether our fellow Freethinkers

supported us or not. We have loyally adhered to our promise and have recently trebled our expenditure in this direction. Sentiment and devotion to ideals, however, do not mingle well with business success, and we have now reached a point at which we can continue *only with the real help of every good Freethinker*. With your permission, we therefore desire to make this special appeal to our fellow readers. We are in the happy position to be able, quite business like, to advertise continually, as we deal in goods that are necessities every day and always, at all times and all seasons. Other advertisers flare up for a week or two then vanish into darkness. We fervently hope it is because they have achieved their ends, but our minds misgive us, and we somehow think that with a little more encouragement from your readers most of them would be sharing your columns with us now. We shall not retire altogether, but it will be a bitter pill if neglect drives us to the deduction of our present advertising space. To support a Freethought firm merely because they are a Freethought firm is a sound, sane principle (there are, alas, so few of them, sir), but we have other recommendations besides the fact that we are Atheists. We have behind us six of the finest warehouses in Manchester, and are in a position to supply anything from a hundred guineas coat to a sixpenny handkerchief, and, in an overgrown village though we be, at a keener price than most city concerns sell. Remember some fraction of every shilling spent with us must go to the *Freethinker* to pay for our advertisements. Every purchase made from us is helping the paper, and the paper is in very truth the Cause itself. This is more than can be said of almost anything else you buy. Selfishness alone does not prompt this appeal—it is no mere advertising stunt. Make our advertising a success and our success will encourage others to help our paper in a very commendable way.

MACCONNELL AND MABE.

[We are obliged to hold over a number of letters owing to want of space. Those who wish their letters inserted will oblige by making them as brief as possible—the briefer the better.]

#### PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES FOR THE STUDENT OF HISTORY.

1. Whether, since we show an habitual indifference to the verifying of facts, and when we undertake that task find ourselves opposed by so many difficulties, it is reasonable to require more diligence and more success from others than from ourselves?

2. Whether, since we form false and imperfect notions with respect to what passes before our own eyes, we can expect to be better informed of what passes, or has passed, at great distances of time and place?

3. Whether, since we have more than one example of equivocal or false facts being handed down to posterity with all the credentials of truth, we have reason to suppose that men in former times were less daring, or more conscientious in their transactions?

4. Whether since in the midst of factions the historian is menaced by every party his writings offend, posterity, or the present age, can expect that he would make sacrifices that would be rewarded only by accusations of imprudence, or the barren honour of funeral pomp?

5. Whether, since it would be imprudent, and almost impossible, for any general to write his campaigns, any minister his negotiations, or any public man his memoirs, in the face of actors and witnesses who might contradict him, and ruin his reputation, posterity can expect, when those witnesses or actors are dead, and can no longer dispute the statement, that self-love, animosity, shame, distance of time, and defects of memory, should have permitted the real truth to be handed down with fidelity?

6. Whether, the pretended information and impartiality attributed to posterity, be not the deceitful consolation of innocence, or the seduction of flattery or fear?

7. Whether it be not true that posterity frequently collects and consecrates the depositions of the successful competitor, which silence the proofs on the part of his feeble and fallen opponents?

8. Whether, in morals, it be not as ridiculous to pretend that facts become clearer as they grow older, as it would be in physics to maintain that objects become more distinct in proportion as they remove further from us?—*Volney, Preface to "Lectures on History."*

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc

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

##### LONDON.

###### INDOOR.

FRIARS HALL (236 Blackfriars Road): 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "The Story of the Earth."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Ratcliffe, "Social Injustice—Secular Remedies."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. H. J. Beaney, "The League of Nations."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9): 7, Mr. A. Hyatt, "Christian Methods."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "A proper Self-Respect."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. T. Thurlow, jun., "Montaigne the Sceptic."

##### COUNTRY.

###### INDOOR.

ASSOCIATION OF ENGINEERING AND SHIPBUILDING DRAUGHTSMEN (Merseyside Branch): Thursday, February 17, G. G. Dobie, B.Sc., "Hydrophones." To be read by Mr. Redfern.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (City Hall Saloon): Mr. Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "Can the Churches accept Evolution?" ; 6.30, "H. G. Wells' History of the World." Collection.

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

**KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.**—A Lady (Freethinker) desires one or more Paying Guests. Comfortable bedrooms, dining room, and use of drawing room. Good cooking, electric light, garden. Near river. Good train, tram, and omnibus services to City. Recommended by N.S.S. officials.—Apply by letter to "W. H.", Chevy Chase, Durlston Road, Kingston-on-Thames.

**BARSAC**—Sound Dry Wine, 1917 vintage, 60s. per dozen bottles, delivered.—E. PARIENIE, 34 Rosemont Road, Richmond, Surrey. Agents wanted, good commission.

**SPIRIT TRADE, Glasgow.**—Secularist desires Situation; 45 years of age; 20 years experience; 15 years last employer. Urgent.—D. S. CURRIE, 5 Catherine Street, Glasgow.

**HAIRDRESSER, disengaged.**—First Class Gents, with good experience of Ladies' Trade. Country or seaside not objected to. Letters, J. D., 64 High Road, Wood Green, N 12.

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