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## Views and Opinions.

### Christianity as It Was.

I am asked by one of my readers if I can tell him exactly what are the "Blue Laws" about which we are hearing so much in connection with the agitation conducted by religious cranks in the United States. These survivals of the Stone Age are at present working for all they are worth to get the States run on what they declare to be Christian lines. They are not only opposed to anyone drinking and smoking, but there are to be no games of any kind on Sunday and only a limited amount during the rest of the week; cinema shows are to be closed as instruments of the devil, and above all, "blaspheming" of religion will be prohibited, by which is meant that no one will be allowed to write or speak in a way that does not please a particularly detestable type of American Puritanism. If these people have their way it should settle America's immigration question. She will no longer have to think of how to keep people out, but how to keep them in. But what, after all, were the Blue laws? In 1781 a Rev. Samuel Peters published a *History of Connecticut*, in which he gave what purported to be a code of laws set up in that State. They were of a ridiculously intolerant character, and his account of these laws were shown to be misleading. But there were a set of laws dealing with religion that were in force in the State of Connecticut, as well as in other States, or colonies, which are known as the "Blue Laws." And these laws are the more instructive because they were the creation of men who had gone to America, in the main, in the name of religious liberty, and as a protest against persecution at home. That is, professedly. Actually, with rare individual exceptions, there was a very common agreement as to the right of the State to persecute in matters of religion. There was only one question at issue, and that was which party should do the persecuting. Then as now, Christians were only able to agree upon what was wrong. Upon what was right they showed endless differences.

### The "Blue Laws."

The "Blue Laws" of Connecticut—in the main they represent the laws of the other colonies—were printed in 1673. They are quite biblical in tone, and fairly represent what the laws of a genuine Christian community ought to be, and what they have always been to the extent to which Christians have been per-

mitted to have their own way. The death penalty is very prominent, noticeably in connection with religious offences, and in each case the biblical warranty for the punishment is indicated. Thus, If any man or woman shall have or worship any other god but the true God, he shall be put to death. If any man or woman be a witch, they shall be put to death. Anyone behaving contemptuously towards "the word preached, or the messengers thereof.....shall pay five pounds to the public, or stand two hours openly upon a block or stool.....with a paper fixed on his breast written with capital letters, An Open and Obstinate contemner of God's Holy Ordinances." There are fines for anyone who is absent from Church on public fast days and on Sundays. If any person shall profane the Sabbath by travel, playing, or shall keep out of the meeting house, he is to be fined or to sit in the stocks. No Quakers or heretics are to be permitted to live in the colony. There was five pounds fine for anyone giving any "necessary entertainment" to such, and no one was permitted to keep any books or manuscripts belonging to them, or to hold any discourse with them. It should be noted, to the credit of the colony, that there was a law against the making or publishing of any lie. For this the penalty was five shillings. The difference between this and the punishment for heresy, staying away from Church, or speaking disrespectfully of the parson is very significant and throws a strong light on the Christian scale of moral values. And it should be noted that it was these people who had been shrieking against the tyranny of the Church in this country. And it was of these people that our prominent men at the recent "Mayflower" celebrations were writing and speaking, and praising them as having laid the foundation of American freedom and enlightenment. Thus is history written by Christians for Christians.

### Sunday as It Was. \* \* \*

The present agitation in America is concentrating on the restoration of the Puritan Sunday; if that is gained, all else may be expected to follow. What the "Day of Rest" was like when these sad-faced and miserable minded people had their way is hardly conceivable to anyone living to-day, but one can safely say that if a similar state of things could be shown to exist to-day in Russia it would be pointed to as an intolerable tyranny. An interesting picture of the times was drawn some years ago by Alice Morse Earle in a work entitled *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, and from that I take most of the details that follow, although it should be borne in mind that in this respect New England is typical of the bulk of the other colonies. Gloomy as was the Sabbath among the Puritans in this country, it was still more gloomy in America. Here there were the traditions of a more human day of rest, and some degree of pleasure was left in many quarters. But in a new country the kill-joys had it all their own way. Legally, everyone was compelled to attend Church. And once in there was no escape. The doors were locked, and at Salem three constables were placed "to keep ye doores fast and suffer none to go out before ye whole exercise be ended." Even a quiet snooze during service was pro-



hibited. An official "awakener," armed with a long knobbed staff, was there to rap over the head or the knuckles anyone who availed themselves of nature's last refuge against dreary sermons. In some towns it was ordered that "a cage be made or some other means be invented for such as sleepe on the Lord's Daie." And he must have been a man of more than usual courage who, being reprimanded by the preacher for sleeping, answered, "Mind your own business, and go on with your sermon." For the boys, who were kept in a group by themselves, special men were told off to watch them, and were ordered to "use such raps and blows" as seemed in their discretion necessary.

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#### The Joys of Religion.

Playing on Sunday was, of course, forbidden, as it is to-day by our own councils, and there were various cases of young men and others being brought before magistrates charged with that serious offence. Sometimes the charge was that they "sported and played, and by indecent gestures and wry faces caused laughter and misbehaviour in the beholders." Tabatha Morgan was charged with laughing and playing on the Lord's Day, and fined three shillings and sixpence. Deborah Bangs was fined five shillings for a similar offence. In another case, "His Majesties Tithing man entered complaint against Jona and Susan Smith, that on the Lord's Day, during Divine Service, they did smile." A wicked fisherman was fined for catching eels on Sunday. Two sweethearts, John Lewis and Sarah Chapman were fined for sitting together on the Lord's Day under an apple tree in Goodman Chapman's orchard." Perhaps they also did smile. Elizabeth Eddy was fined ten shillings for hanging out clothes. A citizen of Wareham was fined five shillings for pulling apples. Much more serious was the offence of Captain Kemble, of Boston. He was guilty of kissing his wife "publicly" on the doorstep of his own office on the Sabbath. His only excuse was that he had just returned from a three years' voyage. We have had complaints in our own day that undue attention to sports on Saturday leads to people staying away from Church on Sunday. The New Englanders were quite alive to this aspect of the matter, so they solemnly decreed that all labour was to cease at three o'clock on Saturday, and the rest of the day was to be spent in "Catechising and preparacion for the Sabbath such as the Ministers shall direct." The Master of a vessel, who had just landed in Boston, was followed to his lodgings by a constable and dragged off to prison. His offence was that he had walked about after sunset on Saturday. Providence also endorsed these regulations. The next day his child fell into an open well and was drowned, and the father "in open congregation did acknowledge the righteous hand of God for his profaning his holy day." Religion appears to breed the same mixture of cowardice and egotism in all ages. One would have thought better of the father if he had had the manliness to stand up and give the Lord a good rating for his behaviour. But camels and Christians both kneel to be burdened.

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#### What of the Future?

There are just a few indications of better things on the part of both ministers and laity, but deplorably few. We read of a Mistress Oliver who was forced to stand with a cleft stick on her tongue for "reproaching the elders." One raises one's hat to Mistress Oliver, as also to the New Haven man who said, "I would rather hear my dog bark than Mr. Bellamy preach," to Philip Ratcliffe, who was whipped for speaking against the Churches, and to William Hawes and his son for saying that such as sing in the congregation were "fooles." All these paid for their

open speech, but in a Christian community honesty and independence have always been expensive luxuries. But there are indications of better things with even the ministers. To the credit of their humanity it must be said that they sometimes got the better of their religion. We read of jollifications in connection with ordinations, and although there were complaints from certain straight-laced laymen of the intemperance of some of the gatherings, these did something, in the eye of the historian, to redeem their character. Thus, when we read that out of a bill of £5 9s. 8d. for entertaining ministers at a Hartford ordination, £2 18s. 10d. was for wine and toddy, one feels that to be the healthiest bit of human nature in the whole proceeding. As with Presbyterianism in Scotland, the pleasure of getting drunk was probably the chief thing that helped to keep a little human feeling alive in the midst of such a dreary and inhuman religion. How much the world has moved since the days when these unlovely people had it all their own way, may be realized from the fact that the reading of their rule now appears to be in the nature of a burlesque. But events show that we have not developed so far as to quite preclude the possibility of a return. Many a cultured Roman some two thousand years ago might have laughed at the idea of the world being overcome by a deluge of ignorant superstition such as was represented by primitive Christianity. But the deluge came, and the savage was enthroned for centuries. And wide-spread as is our culture, solidly based as it appears to be, there is always at least the possibility that the choked fires of superstition may break through the veneer of culture which the world has and submerge all civilization in its flow. It is against that danger we must guard; it is against the age-long enemy, Superstition, that Freethought holds the pass.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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### Sabbatarianism.

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SUNDAY, the people's holiday, is older than history, but the Christian Sabbath, as a day of compulsory worship and rest, is of a comparatively recent origin. It is true that Constantine, the first Roman emperor to become a Christian, issued an edict forbidding town people to engage in any work or business on the venerable day of the sun, but that law was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, as nobody liked it, and in the ninth century it was formally repealed. In the thirteenth century the clergy made a desperate attempt to establish Sabbatarianism. They fraudulently produced a parchment which, they alleged, had been written by God, and in which God was represented as threatening to kill the people three times over if they neglected to observe the Lord's Day and the festivals of his saints. But the attempt, and many subsequent attempts, to rob the people of their weekly holiday failed. The bulk of the population of Christendom continued to work and amuse themselves on Sunday almost as on other days. When the Protestant Reformation commenced the Reformers were practically unanimous in their opposition to the Sabbatarian heresy. Luther, Melancthon, Erasmus, Zwingli, and Calvin were emphatic Anti-Sabbatarians. "Christians," said Calvin, "should have nothing to do with a superstitious observance of days." And yet Sabbatarianism is a Protestant product. In this country it arose under Puritanism, and prevailed in all parts of it. Of course, the Puritans had a perfect right to observe Sunday according to their own convictions. They were free to go without fire and hot meals, to stay away from places of amusement, to abstain from dancing, laughing, and even smiling on the Lord's Day, and to devote every moment of it to devout



meditation, Bible study, and church attendance; and this freedom they both claimed and practised to the full. But they wickedly ignored the fact that the same liberty belonged, as an inalienable right, to all others, even to those who totally differed from them. Consequently, all places of entertainment and amusement, museums, art galleries, and such like were closed on the Lord's Day; and if any theatres, for example, were opened and admitted persons by payment of money, or by tickets sold for money, they were deemed disorderly houses, the keepers of which had to forfeit £200 each for every Sunday they were so kept open; the managers or masters of ceremony £100, and every door-keeper or servant £50. All Sunday travelling was forbidden. All the people had to be in their own homes or lodgings before midnight on Saturday night and remain in them till midnight on Sunday night. Such was the law, and every transgressor was fined twenty shillings, or, in default of payment, set publicly in the stocks for two hours.

Even to utter a word against such rigid Sabbatarianism amounted to a crime. In 1661 a London Baptist minister was hanged and quartered, his heart taken out and burned, his quarters affixed to the gates of the city, and his head stuck on the top of a pole and set opposite his place of worship in Whitechapel simply for denouncing the law on Sunday observance. In Scotland the Christian Sabbath was a greater tyranny still. Once some fishermen were sufficiently ungodly to rescue a shipwrecked crew on the Sabbath, and for that heinous offence they were forced to do considerable penance. It was in Scotland that King Charles I. was publicly rebuked for laughing on the Lord's Day. That was upwards of two hundred years ago; but the present writer was privately whipped for the same crime less than seventy years ago.

For two hundred years the Puritan Sabbath reigned supreme in this country, and on its thigh was a two-edged sword. Even seventy years ago, in some parts of the country, the people groaned under the awful pressure of its iron heel; and in some remote corners it still exercises its iniquitous sway. But it is passing. The Christian Sabbath is visibly declining. Year after year, with the utmost regularity, the complaint reaches us that the majority of people instead of repairing to the sanctuaries for the worship of God devote the sacred day to sleeping, golfing, motoring, fishing, or mountain climbing. Naturally, there is, especially among Nonconformists, much lamentation and mourning because of this rapidly increasing Secularization of the Lord's Day. We are solemnly assured that our national greatness is the outcome of our national day of rest. At the present time the Nonconformists, especially the Wesleyans, are doing their utmost to resist the movement which makes for Sunday games, and they are doing it ostensibly in defence of morality and all the higher human interests. In their estimation, what they call Sabbath desecration is bound to result in national decadence. The Catholic Church does not share this narrow Sabbatarian spirit, and the same thing is true of the Anglican Church, particularly of the Catholic or High Church party therein. To the *Evening Standard* for March 12 Dean Inge contributed a remarkable article, on the subject, in which he relates exceedingly awkward facts for our surviving Sabbatarians. He begins thus:—

In the Cambridge manuscript of the New Testament, usually called Codex Bezae, which ranks fifth in importance among the manuscripts containing the original Greek text, there is a curious insertion after Luke vi. 4. It runs as follows: "On the same day he saw a man working on the Sabbath day, and said to him: Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed; but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed and a transgressor of the law."

It is well-known that the Gospel Jesus was denounced by orthodox Jews as a Sabbath-breaker. His teaching was that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Paul was also a vigorous anti-Sabbatarian, his belief being that all days are alike. The truth is that there is no trace of Sabbatarianism in the New Testament. Dean Inge frankly recognizes this fact, but the Sabbatarians never do. The Dean says most emphatically that,—

Sunday is shown by its history to be a human, not a Divine institution. It is not the Jewish Sabbath transferred. Its objects are, first, devotion, then rest. The Puritan "Sabbath" can claim no authority, though many have no doubt found it good for their soul's health. The weekly day of rest, though established by the Church, is now firmly established on grounds which have nothing to do with religion.

Of course being a clergyman the Dean believes that Sunday would prove most beneficial if spent as a day of "quiet recollection and communion with God," and he naturally regrets that public worship, which in his opinion gives the best opportunity for such exercises, "should have gone so much out of fashion." Nevertheless, Dr. Inge is a broad-minded man, and having put in his plea for public worship, he proceeds thus:—

With some there is a real need of rest; though now that working hours are so much shortened, there is seldom any necessity for spending half the day in mere sloth. Others, if they only knew it, need a breath of country air, and a sight of the green fields. Nobody can object to the bicycling clubs which exist to gratify this desire in company. Others need opportunities for seeing their friends, and for getting to know their young children, of whom the working man can see but little on week-days. Others need to read books. There is no reason why they should be religious books. A few may want violent exercise; and the clergy ought not to frown on Sunday games for those who cannot play them on other days.

The dwindling number of Sabbatarians in our midst ought to take the Dean's words seriously to heart, and bear in mind that their bigoted views on Sunday observance have no Scriptural warrant whatever, and are certainly not supported by rational considerations of any kind. Dr. Inge inserts the following amusing incident:—

Prince Bismarck has recorded that he was once whistling in London on Sunday, and that he was reprimanded for it. He adds that he was so much disgusted that he took the next train for Edinburgh. He has never boasted of his success as a Sunday whistler in the Scottish capital.

We have so far outgrown the past that no visitor to London to-day would be reprimanded for whistling on Sunday; and the present opposition to Sunday games and the opening of places of amusement is due to the fear of competition more than to anything else; and it is this fear of competition that accounts for the fact that Nonconformists are more opposed to a Free Sunday than the Anglicans. Competition would undoubtedly injure the former far more seriously than the latter.

J. T. LLOYD.

Be studious in your profession, and you will be learned. Be industrious and frugal, and you will be rich. Be sober and temperate, and you will be healthy. Be in general virtuous, and you will be happy; at least you will, by such conduct, stand the best chance for such consequences.

He that for giving a draught of water to a thirsty person should expect to be paid with a good plantation, would be modest in his demand compared with those who think that they *deserve* heaven for the little good they do on earth.—*Benjamin Franklin* (1706-1790).



## Brock's Fireworks.

Talk about it as we like, a man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion.—O. W. Holmes.  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.  
—Shakespeare.

MR. A. CLUTTON BROCK is a popular entertainer. He supplies paradoxical fireworks to the dull and deadly *Times Literary Supplement*, and enlivens the decorous pages of the *Manchester Guardian*. He takes cultured views of everything, but nothing ever tempts him to disappoint the fine expectations of the church-wardens, Nonconformist preachers, Bible-Class leaders, and Sunday-school teachers, who buy these political organs as the best intellectual answer they are able to find to the prayer for "grace, wisdom, and understanding."

In pursuit of his mission as an apostle of culture, Mr. Brock lately had his say upon hymns, and this is how he skates over the thin ice of a dangerous literary subject:—

Many people, half unconsciously, believe that hymns are inspired, at least if they are in *Hymns, Ancient and Modern*. No one, of course, could think most of them inspired poetically, but their matter, if not their manner, is above criticism, probably because they are assumed to versify something or other in the Bible. So they are sung with fervour, and their sentiments sink into the mind and are accepted as the sentiments of a minor prophet rather than of a minor poet.

Mr. Brock might be better employed than in writing such beautiful nonsense. Recognizing that all who run can read, the Christian Churches have circulated an hymnology, and provided nothing to read which is beyond the reach of the dullest and stupidest of their congregations. We raise our hats to the clergy as smart men of business, but our admiration is diluted by the thought that, after all, they have "roped in" their congregations because they have never been able to rise above their level of intelligence. Clerical culture is a sham and a make-believe, and is not real culture at all. The women in the pews may not be better informed than the men in the pulpits, but outside the standard of culture has been raised of late years with disastrous effects on the Churches. *Punch*, some time ago, hit this off in an excellent cartoon which depicted the Rev. Robert Elsmere on his knees before the sceptical squire, saying, "Pray, pray, don't mention the name of another foreign author, or I shall resign my living."

Despite Mr. Brock's protestations, it is very doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the usual music-hall song, which might well make an educated man ashamed of his own species. This may well appear a grave indictment, but the hymns which are regarded as being eminently suited for public worship are not only unrhythmical and nonsensical, but actually stereotype a lower form of culture which ought to be repressed and not perpetuated. Under the soporific influence of religion, the pious public has been far too ready to accept bombast and bleat as the fine gold of poetry, and has hailed hysteria in adjectives as the quintessence of reverence.

The hymns used by Churchmen and Nonconformists alike are not really much better than those painfully familiar and disgraceful compositions which are used by Revivalists, Salvationists, and other howling Dervishes of our streets and open spaces. The charge of sentimentalism is not the only one that can be brought. Some hymns are brutal in tone and language, written in the worst possible taste, and are full of sanguinary details and a glowing satisfaction which is repulsive. "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel's veins" is a striking example which can be paralleled in scores of hymns.

There is a frankness of Materialism in some of these so-called "spiritual" songs, which is sufficient to make a sceptic smile. Such hymns as "Oh! for the pearly gates of heaven, Oh! for the golden floor" are sung in thousands of places of worship in Christian England, but they suggest the coon-songs of South Carolina. The world-famous "Rock of Ages" ought to send a University Extension examiner raving mad. It is a perfect Niagara of irrational images and misapplied metaphors, an unique example of how not to write such things. "Cleft rock," "riven side," "to thy cross I cling," and "to the fountain fly" are a few examples. The author was, indeed, intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity. Another popular favourite has upset even the Christians. The late Bishop Alexander, who was something of a poet, has said of this gem that "it combines every conceivable violation of every conceivable rule." "Onward Christian Soldiers," which is more popular than "Where do the Flies go in the Wintertime," is by no means above criticism. The last line of the chorus is commonplace in expression, and atrocious in rhyme.

The Church is notoriously weak among the upper and the working classes, and especially among men. Hence it is not surprising to find impassioned appeals to the British working-man. Listen to the honeyed tone of the clerical siren:—

Sons of Labour think of Jesus  
As you rest your homes within,  
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary  
In the stable of the inn.  
Think, now, in the sacred story  
Jesus took a humble grade,  
And the Lord of Life and Glory  
Worked with Joseph at his trade.

These few quotations, be it remembered, are from the most distinguished Christian collections, and they are by no means the worst of their class. If any reader wishes his raven hair turned white, and curled afterwards, let him turn to the back page of the *War Cry*, where he will find the work of bold, bad versifiers, strong in the Faith, but weak in their mother-tongue. The great uncivilized Christian public likes its hymns coloured and not plain. Mr. Clutton Brock is probably one of the few folk who knows and admires Milton's *Hymn on Christ's Nativity*, but the great unlettered Christian public esteems more highly "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," "The Glory Song," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and "The Bells of Hell go Ting-a-ling, a-ling."

To an outsider, hymns would suggest restraint, sobriety, the dignity of reverence; but things are not always what they seem. The Torrey and Alexander Mission, like the Moody and Sankey crusade, and the Billy Sunday revivals, amply prove the association of the Christian religion with other things than civilization. What is disturbing, these sacred showmen gauged their public to a nicety. Their audiences were, perhaps, better dressed and possessed more pence than those who listen spellbound to the trombones, tambourines, and tarradiddles of the Church and Salvation Armies, yet they sung hymns of the most rank and fulsome barbarity. Christian congregations seem quite unable to distinguish between poetry and doggerel, pathos and bathos, decency and indecency. Singing their delirious rhymes, they are intellectually on a level with barbarians. Savages do this one way, and the countrymen of Gipsy Smith and the Bishop of London another, but the nature of the act, and the results, are much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

There is no alleviation for the suffering of mankind except veracity of thought and action and the resolute facing of the world as it is.—T. H. Huxley.



## Was Jesus Christ Jesus Barabbas?

The Evangelists did not write to tell the story of Jesus, but to prove his divinity and messiahship. This didactic purpose is shown by the way they select, adapt and arrange their material. The latter is derived from tradition, except in the case of the fourth gospel, where it is largely due to the author's imagination. The reports used are of various type, origin, and date. Many bear the mark of a time when Jesus was far from being regarded as the Evangelists regard him; others evince the desire of particular parties to modify his teaching, and misrepresent his conduct, for the advantage of their own views and interests. A great deal of the accepted lore has received alterations, sometimes from the compilers themselves, sometimes from their authorities, sometimes from both these agents. Further changes, together with additions, and probably suppressions, would certainly occur during the relatively long period between the first appearance of the Gospels and the earliest traces of their text. Hence it is not surprising that these works are full of contradictions, and do not present either the outward or the inward life of Jesus in what could have been its actual order. The portrait offered satisfies only uncritical persons; while, among the opposite class, it causes many to despair of ascertaining the truth about his words, deeds, and sufferings, and makes some to doubt or even to deny his very existence. There is, however, a circumstance which gives inquirers a ray of hope. For, as we have said, the narratives in the Gospels often exhibit a process of development, and this fact renders it possible in many cases, by means of analysis and elimination, to discover primitive elements of a credible nature. To guide the search principles are necessary, the chief ones being as follows:—

(1) Wherever isolated precepts ascribed to Jesus contradict a mass of teaching, or a number of actions, equally attributed to him, such precepts must be regarded as unauthentic.

(2) The authenticity of a saying, or the historicity of a deed, is not discredited by there being only one report, provided the saying or the deed, agrees with others in the Gospels, or with the general tenor of the teaching and conduct of Jesus therein described; while *per contra*, a plurality of reports does not render a saying or a deed acceptable, if the one or the other lacks the congruity above specified. The same, of course, applies to improbabilities in connection with things that Jesus is alleged to have suffered.

(3) Wherever teaching or conduct attributed to Jesus obviously supports any of the doctrines invented by the Church, or solves any of its practical difficulties, it is open to the suspicion of being a timely fiction; while on the other hand alleged teaching or conduct of his at variance with ecclesiastical thought and needs has a corresponding degree of probability.

(4) Where any teaching of Jesus likely to cause offence occurs in one or more places without attenuation, but is elsewhere suppressed or given with restrictions, the historicity of the teaching, and the authenticity of the extreme form, are to be accepted, other things being equal.

(5) The student must be on his guard against a tendency that the Evangelists and their authorities have of narrating the fate of Jesus in such a way as to vindicate his conduct from possible objections, and to charge his misfortunes upon those most safely accusable.

Taking these simple rules for our guidance, let us attempt to construct a plausible and intelligible account of what Jesus thought and did and suffered. Forthwith the question arises, Does the reading of the Gospels produce any characteristic impression about

Jesus? We reply, Such an impression occurs, and this is, that his teaching and conduct were revolutionary, and naturally determined his fate. Here are some of the facts occasioning the above impression. The law of the Jews was thought by them to have been divinely given, yet, nevertheless, Jesus did not scruple to declare it imperfect (Matt. 5, 21, 27), and even to condemn it (Matt. 5, 33, 38, 43, 19, 7). In particular he undermined the great precept respecting the Sabbath by teaching that the day was made for man, and not man for the day (Mark. 2, 27); whereas the sacred writings declare that God instituted it for his own good pleasure and imposed its observance upon man as a duty (Ex. 20, 8). Moreover, not content with this destructive exegesis, he violated the traditional interpretation of the statute under circumstances of a provocative character. Again, he vituperated and ridiculed the Scribes and Pharisees, although the Scribes were the accredited exponents of the divine law, whilst the Pharisees spent their lives in meticulously fulfilling its ordinances; and both classes enjoyed universal respect. Besides assailing the national law, Jesus assailed the social order. He pronounced the poor blessed and the rich accursed (Luke 6, 20, 24). He bid his hearers to sell their goods and distribute the money (Luke 12, 33). Telling of a rich man and a beggar he said that after death the former was tormented and the latter comforted to make up for the inequality of their earthly lives (Luke 16, 19). He forbade treasurizing (Matt. 6, 19), and gave the instance of a farmer who died suddenly because he proposed to build larger barns (Luke 12, 16). Hence it is not strange to find that "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12, 39), "took him for a prophet" (Matt. 21, 46), and "hung upon him listening" (Luke 19, 48), while "the principal men of the people sought to destroy him" (Luke 19, 47), but "feared the multitudes" (Matt. 21, 46). The oratorical methods of Jesus agreed perfectly with his doctrines. They were those of the popular agitator. He seldom reasoned. He never qualified his statements. He denounced his opponents as if they were the offscouring of the earth. He appealed to prejudice. He excited the enmity of class. "I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. 10, 34), "I came to cast fire upon the earth" (Luke 12, 49), was his frank avowal. To his indigent disciples he promised that whosoever for his sake had "left houses and lands" should "receive a hundred fold now in this time houses and lands" (Mark 10, 20). At the end he told them to sell their clothes to buy swords (Luke 22, 36). These doctrines and methods indicate what he meant by "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God," the speedy advent of which he repeatedly foretold; and this indication is indeed greatly needed, for although he must have said much about the nature of the predicted constitution, his observations were so little to the taste of the Church, that all of them have been suppressed. The phrase "Kingdom of God" was evidently a political catchword of the day, which different leaders understood differently, just as a Gladstone, a Lloyd George, and a Lenin would do so as regards the formula "rights of man." Jesus doubtless took the expression to mean a social order of divine conception wherein all should be equal, and each would serve the common weal; this, of course, pre-supposing an inward as well as an outward change, and, therefore, the need of a call to repentance. The installation of the divine kingdom was connected with the advent of the Messiah, or "the coming Man," as the Baptist has it. Towards the end of his life, Jesus assumed this role. Previously he had rebuked madmen for attributing it to him; but still no doubt he cherished the thought of their being right. At last he asked his disciples what people were saying about his identity; and after they had reported various



surmises, he demanded what they themselves said of it; whereupon Simon Peter boldly replied, "Thou art the Christ." Thenceforth Jesus spake and acted as if this were his own belief. Both before and after posing as the Messiah, he seems to have thought that "the kingdom" could be established by natural means, such as persuasion, or perhaps force; nor does he appear to have altogether abandoned this opinion until his arrest. Nevertheless, for sometime previous thereunto he was obsessed by the fixed idea that God wished him to perish at the hands of the authorities with the design of raising him from the dead, taking him up to heaven, and then sending him back to earth, accompanied by a mighty host of angels, for the victorious establishment of "the Kingdom." In all probability he held this as a conviction and the other as a forlorn hope. Such wavering judgments are very common to men engaged in hazardous adventures. The sequel was exactly what might have been expected. Going to Jerusalem with his disciples for the Passover, Jesus procured an ass, and, amid the applause of the people, entered the city in the style of the Messianic King foretold by the prophet Zechariah. Some critics deny the possibility of this event, but to us it bears every mark of verisimilitude, even though Matthew says two beasts, an ass and her colt, were ridden simultaneously, and Mark declares the one beast in question had been hitherto unriden. On reaching the Temple with this enthusiastic throng, Jesus, as Matthew and Luke assert, proceeded to drive out the money changers and other traders from its precincts, thus causing a great commotion. For some days he taught in the Temple. Then, on the night of the Passover, after having eaten the festive meal with his disciples, he was arrested by order of the Jewish authorities, and taken to the house of the High Priest, Caiaphas. The accounts of the subsequent proceedings are contradictory, and contain many unacceptable statements. There is much probability, however, in Luke's assertion that Jesus was kept in guard for the night and insulted by his keepers; and, that in the morning he was briefly examined by the Jewish authorities, who, on hearing him claim to be the Messiah, declared further evidence unnecessary, and brought him before Pilate, the Roman governor, on the charge of agitation, saying, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judaea, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place." Henceforth, the truth appears to vanish. For the Evangelists all agree that, although Pilate, after examining Jesus, pronounced him to be perfectly innocent, yet, nevertheless, he ordered him to be scourged and crucified, pardoning in his stead a man named Barabbas, "one," says Luke, "who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder was cast into prison," or, as Mark has it, "bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder" (Luke 23, 19; Mark 15, 7). Thus, we are asked to believe that Pilate, after declaring one of his prisoners free from the charge of agitation, executed him instead of another who was known to be guilty of insurrection coupled with murder. Now, three reputable manuscripts, the Armenian Version, and one Syriac Version, read "Jesus Barabbas" in the text of *Matthew*. Hence it is very likely that Jesus called Christ and Jesus called Barabbas were one and the same person, and that the difference was invented to meet objection experienced by primitive Christians. The name "Barabbas" signified "Son of the father," which has the air of being a mocking allusion to the familiar references of Jesus to the fatherhood of God. Mark, Luke, Matthew, John, and certain apocryphal evangelists exemplify a progressive tendency of the early Church to represent Pilate as exculpating Jesus in every possible way. This fact alone suffices to discredit the present tradition. What then took place?

Probably, Jesus, or some of his more violent disciples, committed at, or just before the Passover, a breach of the peace occasioning bloodshed, with the result that he, as leader, was arrested, condemned, and crucified. The Jewish authorities rejected his Messianic claim, and disliked his revolutionary teaching; hence, so far from making any effort to save him, they would naturally assist his ruin; perhaps, also, desiring at the moment to win favour with their masters, the Romans. The affair was probably of small proportions, and this, together with its being one of many like disturbances, explains why it came to be neglected by the accredited historians of the age, or even escaped their notice. Afterwards it would be too late to ascertain the real facts.<sup>1</sup>

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

### Quotes.

- "THERE is a fountain filled with blood,"  
By which my sins are gushed away;  
My soul, which was as black as mud,  
Is whiter now than china clay!
- "I'm standing on redemption ground,"  
A place where Justice holds her scales—  
Where counterpoise is never found,  
Except by precious blood and nails!
- "I do believe! I will believe!"  
Though Doubt demands my sober thought!  
And what if I myself deceive—  
Was it the *truth* I really sought?
- "O God, our help in ages past,"  
Dispel those truths which faith denies,  
And give mine eyes the upward cast—  
To glory mansions in the skies!
- "I'll have no other argument"  
Than that which Dogma bids me view;  
By which I see creeds have been sent  
By men who thought for me and you.
- "Oh for a thousand tongues to sing,"  
That Reason's voice might truly drown!  
Then Argument would fail to sling  
His weighty stone to get me down!
- "I feel like singing all the time,"  
That Reason might well lose his chance  
Of analyzing pious rhyme,  
Which tends to check my thoughts' advance.
- "Then in a nobler, sweeter song"  
I'll hum and hum, until my brain  
Shall cease to know the right from wrong  
Concerning truths against the grain.

J. F. CORDON.

### EPIGRAMS.

- Cautious stupidity is always in the right.  
We see more of the world by travel, more of human nature by remaining at home.
- We grow learned, not wise, by too long a continuance at college.
- To imitate nature was found to be the surest way of imitating antiquity.
- The true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.—*Goldsmith*.

<sup>1</sup> The Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, in his fine works *The Historical Jesus* and *The Jesus Problem*, argues that Jesus Christ is an invented incarnation of Jesus Barabbas, a Saviour God, mythically evolved from Joshua, and honoured by an obscure Jewish sect in the first century. We think, however, that our theory is more in accordance with the historical and psychological probabilities of the case. Mr. R. makes the pregnant suggestion that the surviving reference of *Josephus* to Jesus Christ, which is obviously interpolated, may have been substituted for some disadvantageous account of him. If correct, this agrees admirably with our own explanation.



## Acid Drops.

When will people who have to speak on matters of reform, and who have something intelligent to say, cease to spoil the effect of what they do say by giving vent to a lot of rubbish that one can only explain on the ground of their deeply seated fear of religious prejudice? Thus, Dr. Marie Stopes, who is busying herself with matters concerning the relations of the sexes, rightly remarked on the absurdity of the Bishops discussing married life, and electing to the chair "the unmarried, ascetic Bishop of London," and we can also sympathise with her when she said that it was "an act of impertinence to elect a man of that character to deal with the problem of the sexes." It was, but then the Bishops must pay some regard to Christian tradition, and that has always been opposed to all the things for which Dr. Stopes appears to be fighting.

But it is curious, after saying this, to find Dr. Stopes remarking that the ideal of the Churches was "a weak, under-sexed, over-neurotic, over-intellectual person," and to add "We have been dominated too long by this pseudo-Christianity of the Churches, which is really pagan." And that makes one open one's eyes. For Dr. Stopes must know that this was not a pagan ideal at all but a typical Christian one. And when she sneers at the Bishops for placing a celibate in charge of a discussion on the married relations, we would seriously ask her whether that is really more absurd than going to the celibate New Testament Jesus for advice on the same topic? The Bishop of London might plead that he was imitating Jesus, but there is no excuse whatever for Dr. Stopes calling the ascetic ideal pagan. It is thoroughly Christian. We can only account for her remark on the ground that so many of the remarks of pseudo-reformers may be explained. She has courage up to a point, but when she finds herself in conflict with Christian prejudice then she wilts, and lets loose a flood of absolute nonsense in the hope of disarming the opposition of the Christian. And the best of it, or the worst of it is that the opposition is not avoided, it is rather encouraged. And we venture to say that until reformers have the moral courage to clear their minds of this fear of the Churches, and to cleanse their mouths of the cant they have picked up from the more accommodating of the clergy, what they do will always be less effective than it otherwise might be.

About £25,000 has been subscribed for the restoration of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The poor curates and church workers will sigh that stones should be so dear, and flesh and blood so cheap.

Some corpses appear to be very lively. An official form recording an alarm of fire in London read as follows: "Called to Bow Churchyard by inmate."

On promising to take a course in the "English Classics," a man charged at Thames Police Court was discharged. Suppose that man selects the Bible and starts his studies with one of the "cursing Psalms."

A site at Golder's Green has been bought from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a new Jewish synagogue. A few centuries ago Ecclesiastics would have seen the Jews cremated first.

It is always a good thing to catch a glimpse of ourselves as we appear to other people, and to forward the good work we have much pleasure in reprinting the following from the last issue of the *Buddhist Review* :—

An old Buddhist Thera said, some years before the late war, speaking almost prophetically :—

"You have your railways, your telegraphs, and can even, so I have heard, transmit messages through the medium of the ether, you have your steamships, your great machines, your wonderful chemistry, your researches into the properties of matter, your medical science, your innumerable books, and your increase of

knowledge resulting from all; but you have not, even yet, the wisdom of the Eastern peoples you despise.

"In what, tell me, has the West surpassed the East? In moral precept or practice? Whatever you have of philosophy was known in the East when the peoples of the West were but savages. Your religion, like your philosophy, was borrowed from the East, through the ancients or otherwise, and has suffered in the process. Who being familiar, as you must be, with the conditions of a great European city, can truthfully say that its moral level is higher than that of the Orient? The advance of the West is solely due to mechanical invention. You have arrived at no higher conceptions or theories as regards human life and its duties than had the ancients. At a period when the West was sunk in utter barbarism, the East was in the enjoyment of a high civilization, and its thinkers had reached a level of intellect to which the West is only now beginning to attain.

"And what, after all, have your inventions and machines given you?—An accession of general happiness?—Any small cessation of sorrow even?—Is there less poverty, less misery than before? Is it not true that, with all your increase of wealth, far beyond the increase of your population, and with the pride of wealth, you are even more restless and discontented than before? What is it that drives you here, urging you, ever restless, through these countries, but desire, the desire for yet more wealth which, when acquired, gives you no satisfaction? You profess to give us, what?—A form of civilization that we do not need, a religion that is more needed with you than with us.

"Is it not true that your most marvellous discoveries and inventions are applied to the ends of wholesale murder and destruction; that Europe is an armed camp ready to tear down in ruin all that years of patient toil have built up?—To what end, then, your civilization? And what value has your religion, which seeks to sanctify these things, as a moral factor, as an influence for the uplifting of humanity?"

There is hardly a line in the above that one could successfully challenge as misrepresenting the general tendency of Western civilization under Christian influences. So soon as a new scientific discovery is made it is at once exploited in the interests of warfare, or to further the thinly disguised piracy which takes place under the name of national or Imperial expansion. And when we put on one side all the fine phrases with which these movements are "rationalized," the broad fact remains that for at least three hundred years the movements of the inhabitants of Europe have been little less than so many piratical enterprises. They have gone all over the world, stealing, murdering, and annexing. And always with the sickening cant of religion on their lips. And they have done this so persistently and so consistently that, to-day, the hardest thing in the world is to get the mass of English, French, Germans, Italians and others to think of any other state of things as being possible. True these people did not invent piracy, but they made it permanent, they "rationalized it," that is, they invented plausible names and excuses for impulses they lacked the moral courage to openly avow.

Christ Church Hall, Bromley, Kent, has been purchased and altered into a private house. The stained glass windows and pulpit have been kept intact as ornaments. This is a "conversion" which will not be appreciated by pious folk.

The latest wills include those of Canon Cole, of Lincoln, for fifty years rector of Donnington, £15,898, and the Rev. W. H. Wayne, Willey Rectory, Salop, £23,839. Neither of these gentlemen could boast, while alive, of the blessings of poverty.

Danish scientists assert that a skeleton found in South Jutland is six thousand years old. The clergy should investigate: It might be poor old Adam's grandfather.

Over 1,000 persons were on board the steamer *Hongmoh* which was wrecked at Iamoch Island, off Swatow. Over 200 were rescued by two British vessels, but the remainder were drowned by a kindly Providence.



The *Record*, the organ of evangelical Anglicanism, urges English churchmen to "unite with their Irish brethren" in "the fellowship of prayer" for Ireland. Such a plea for fraternity in March, 1921, is itself an illuminating comment on "spiritual values" as assessed by the Christian conscience. According to the *Catholic Times*, however, England, the oppressor of Ireland, is "the stronghold of Satan," and in the same month of March special prayers were to be offered up for her conversion. We should like our contemporary to tell us which country to-day is the stronghold of "the faith once delivered to the saints," and to enlighten us on its treatment of subject races. Anyone who had mingled much with the Czechs and the Italians of the Trentino, when they were subject to the rule of devout Austria, will have a vivid recollection of their estimate of its blessings. In equally devout Hungary the Croats and Slovaks manifested about the same spirit of attachment to their Magyar overlords. Germany found Catholic prelates quite ready to assure the Poles in Posen that Prussia conferred very real benefits on those who could appreciate her organizing genius. And Germany, after all, was one third Catholic. The Centre party long held the balance of power in the Reichstag, and its motto was consistently "support in return for concessions." How much did its attitude during the years preceding the war contribute to the promotion of international goodwill, and what protest did it make against "frightfulness" in France and Belgium? August Bebel once remarked that "the Hohenzollerns never change." But long before the great Socialist's time *semper cadem* had come to be regarded as accurately expressing the will and policy of Rome.

We are all familiar with the legend stuck up on gates in suburbia "No circulars, no hawkers," a Maidenhead resident has gone one better. He has put up the notice "No hawkers, no parsons." That is distinctly refreshing, and may have the tendency to keep some of these gentry away from where they are not wanted.

The Bishop of Norwich says that "We should regard Sunday as a day when we can do honour to our intelligence by reading good books." Unfortunately, the best of the "good books" states that woman was made from a man's "rib"; that a whale had a lodging house in its "tum-tum"; and other stories that strain the "intelligence" very sharply.

We have often pointed out the distinction between the knowledge of a number of facts that go to make up a scientific generalization, and an appreciation of scientific method or the capacity for scientific thinking. The former is common and is of comparatively small importance. The latter is all-important. That is why we have so many so-called scientific teachers whose work consists in loading people's minds with more or less useless facts, but which leaves them without the least taste of capacity for scientific reasoning. And all the time the truth is that a man may have a very good knowledge of what are called scientific facts—the age of the world, the biologic record, the evolutionary sequence, etc.—and yet remain as great a fool at the end as he was at the beginning and continue a prey to the most stupid of superstitions.

A striking illustration of the distinction between the two types was offered the other day by Professor Maunder of Greenwich. He delivered an address at the Victoria Institute and attempted to explain away the story of Joshua making the sun stand still. According to Professor Maunder what Joshua really said was, "Sun, be thou dumb," and by accident or design a cloud gathered over the sun, or a hailstorm arose and that enabled the tired Israelites to recover their strength and to beat their enemies. That is quite as good an explanation as many others that we have come across, but it serves to show how easily a man may become a teacher of science and yet have a mind that is little removed from that of the ordinary man in the street.

What has been said may serve to answer a correspon-

dent who puts to us the very familiar query as to how we can explain the fact of so many eminent men accepting the truth of Spiritualism if it is really delusion. When Dr. Johnson was asked to explain how he came to put something in his dictionary—or was it that he omitted something?—his answer was "pure ignorance." And that is the real answer to the question put to us. Most of these men are dealing with a department in which they are no better authorities than the most ignorant among us, and the tests they impose in order to prevent delusion or imposture are of the most amusing and the most ineffective character. Anyone who deals with Spiritualism, with the necessary first hand acquaintance with it, and with the necessary knowledge of all that is involved, is not at all puzzled as to the kind of phenomena he is witnessing. It is essentially a problem for the mental pathologist, and the theory on the one hand that it is all true, and the counter hypothesis that it is all trickery, are equally wide of the truth. The first plays on the ignorance of one class, and the other satisfies only those who know nothing of the subject. The dispute resembles the point as to whether a man suffering from an epileptic fit is attempting to impose on the bystanders, or whether he is really possessed of a devil. All the time the true explanation lies outside both theories.

A leading article in the *Christian World* hopes that the Churches will learn a lesson from the war in the use of propaganda. We think that the art of war propaganda is quite suited to the Churches. Bearing in mind that the government war propaganda in each country consisted in telling the people exactly what the governments wanted them to believe, and suppressing all truth that would be in the slightest degree inconvenient, we cannot conceive anything better adapted to the normal policy of the Churches. But the Churches do themselves an injustice in assuming that in this direction government propaganda can teach them anything. It is a policy that they have all practised for centuries. Indeed, we should be inclined to say that no people who had not had their critical faculties weakened by generations of Christian teaching could have shown themselves so abnormally credulous, and so uncritical in their reception of the information served out to them as were the people during the war. In this respect the government was only following the example set by the Churches.

### A Terrible Question.

THE minister at the Sunday meeting for men only (discussion allowed) was discoursing intimately and enthusiastically about the Bible. At the close of his friendly talk questions were invited (with tacit understanding, no doubt, these would be reverent, etc). A quite well-bred gentleman got up, one somewhat unfamiliar with our English tongue, and not bitterly opposed to the Church, and asked the minister what he thought would be the bodily or other form we would have in the immortal state referred to? The poor parson, when the question was put, being, one would suppose quite honest and quite unguarded, acted as a rat might when the door of the wire trap has fallen behind him and he finds he is a prisoner. He could only say very lamely: "Well, I just lately gave a course of addresses on that very subject, but *forget at the moment the exact lines I took!*" which only made matters worse, and made one pity him from the bottom of the heart. He went on talking for a while, saying nothing in particular, or getting deeper in the mire, and all the while one kept thinking and would fain have said: "Why the devil don't you say you don't know and have done with it," for to this complexion must all preachers come at last, but having taken, like a certain lady of our acquaintance, the wrong turning early in life, have walked so far it would be supremely difficult, if not impossible, to move back, and so they pass on to their destruction. What desperate shifts some poor human beings are put to to save face or fortune are only too well exemplified in the case of the clergy, many of whom are most excellent fellows but who fear the sun and remain in the shadow of their holy upas tree where we must sorrowfully leave them.

A. M. O. S.



## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements

April 3, Huddersfield; April 24, South Shields; May 1, Failsworth.

## 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.

H. RAWSON.—Sorry we cannot see our way to publish the chapter in *Theism or Atheism* to which you refer as a separate pamphlet. As to printing the book at a shilling, or less, that could only be done if some wealthy person were willing to stand the loss incurred. It is quite impossible so far as we are concerned. An analysis of the design argument by Mr. Cohen already exists in his pamphlet *Deity and Design*.

J. ROBINSON.—The wording was Richard in the letter received here. We now note that the name should have been Michael, not Richard, Stitt.

A. PETERS.—Will answer your query next week. We have not arranged anything further for the Rhondda district this year.

J. R. DUNCAN.—We do not know the work you name. The title does not strike us as a very attractive one.

G. O. W.—Sorry to hear of your brother's death. Under any circumstances it means a break that cannot but affect one.

D. RICHARDS.—You will find all the arguments against Theism stated as clearly as is within our power in *Theism or Atheism*. We have placed the P. O. to your credit until we hear further from you. There is no need to send a P. O. for any purpose such as the one you write on.

Y. D. DELL.—Next week.

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

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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. 6.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

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## Sugar Plums.

To-day (April 3) Mr. Cohen lectures in Victoria Hall, Huddersfield. In the afternoon at 3 his subject is "Do the Dead live?" In the evening at 6.30 his subject will be "What is the Use of Christianity?" The meetings have been well advertised, and as there have not been any lectures in Huddersfield for some time there will doubtless be many present to whom a Freethought lecture will be something of a novelty. Arrangements have been made to provide refreshments for those coming from a distance. As we said last week we hope this visit will initiate a regular propaganda in the town, and Mr. Cohen will be glad to have a word with those who are ready to settle down seriously to work.

We are pleased to learn that the Freethinkers at Ton Pentre are following up Mr. Cohen's recent visit with one from Mr. Lloyd. Mr. Lloyd will lecture there, afternoon and evening, in the Workman's Hall, on April 10. We hope to hear of crowded meetings, and the weather is sufficiently fine to induce Freethinkers who live at a distance to make a day of it.

We referred last week to a measure that was being put through Parliament designed to take away from citizens the protection of the High Courts, to hold the trials of cited persons in private, and to commit them to prison on the signed order of one of the members of the tribunals which the Bill set up. Now we have to congratulate the House of Lords on having introduced and carried several amendments that do to some extent safeguard the liberty of the subject. In fact, it seems that the House of Lords is the only thing that stands between the people and absolute tyranny. The House of Commons will pass anything and agree to anything. And where freedom is concerned the members have no interest whatever. The "other House" has some lingering respect for constitutional rights and liberties. The House of Commons has none whatever. It is the most reactionary assembly since the days of the Stuarts.

Some while ago we had the pleasure of noticing a little volume of verse entitled *Lillygay*, issued by the Vine Press, Steyning, which our friend Mr. Victor Neuberg runs for his own amusement and the delight of book lovers. We have before us another volume from this private press. It is a book of verse by Mr. Neuberg, and is called *Swift Wings: Songs in Sussex* (6s. net). We commend in Mr. Neuberg a rapturous exaltation of imagination, a command of varied rhythms and a facility and felicity of phrase. What he wants, if we may say so, is artistic concentration. We quote a sonnet to Richard Jefferies which will interest those of our readers who share our admiration for that good Freethinker. This sonnet is something of a curiosity. We never remember coming across one with the octave constructed on practically one rhyme-sound. English poets found the Italian form of a couple of rhyme-sounds too exacting; but Mr. Neuberg takes his courage in both hands and creates a new form, a sort of poetic "sport," an organism outside the time of literary evolution.

RICHARD JEFFERIES.

A hapless Greek, loathing Art's usurpature  
Of beauty in the world; who loved the lure  
Of fields and hills and seas, with eyes too pure  
To bear our hideous mask, flat in inflature  
Of folly and filth. His was the candidature  
For the old life, when the world's heart beat sure  
Against the sunny sky, in the mature  
Worship of Beauty, soul and veil of nature.  
Bitter our world was to him, who loved still  
The golden world of old, the mystic Hill  
Of Olympus, navel of the Ægean sea,  
What was his portion in our baser part?  
Death. And what slew him? This: he broke  
his heart  
Against the eternal rock of Ecstasy.

Last week, in reply to a correspondent who said he had been unable to purchase a copy of Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism*, we said that it was a pamphlet that should be kept constantly on sale. We were under the impression that it was not in print, having probably been misled by seeing a advertised list of Bradlaugh's pamphlets which did not contain the "Plea." Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner now writes us that the pamphlet is not out of print, but that there is an ample stock in hand. We are glad to hear it, and if Mrs. Bonner will inform us as to the publishers we shall be pleased to make the information public. If we had the means we would keep the works of all the old Freethinkers on sale. It would be one way of conferring on them the immortality they have so well earned.

Notwithstanding the holiday exodus from London, the attendance at Friars Hall last Sunday to hear Mr. A. B. Moss lecture on "Freethought in the Churches" was excellent. The speaker's vigorous indictment of the



number of so-called "advanced" thinkers on religion, both inside and outside the Churches, who lack the moral courage to avow their real opinions, was evidently appreciated by the audience. There was also a general expression of regret that this address concluded the series of lectures in Friars Hall for the present season.

## The Origin of Christianity.

### XI.

(Continued from page 199.)

It is the unavoidable fate of a spurious historical work of any length to be involved in contradictions.—*Henstenberg, "Dissertation on the Pentateuch."*

PONTIUS PILATE, the Roman governor of Judea, is represented in the Gospels as a flabby invertebrate individual, weakly delivering up a man in whom he can find no fault at the demand of the Jewish priests. According to John, when Pilate asks the reason of Jesus being brought before him,—

he is curtly informed that if Jesus had not been a malefactor he would not have been brought at all, an answer which we may safely say no Roman governor would be likely to put up with, and which would certainly have tended to defeat the purpose of the accusers.

Matthew relates that Pilate, seeing—

that all his efforts to rescue Jesus were useless, calls for water, and going through a symbolical ceremony which was not Roman, and which for a Roman would have neither force nor meaning, solemnly pronounces wholly innocent a person whom he immediately proceeds to scourge, and then deliver over to suffer crucifixion, a penalty which could only be inflicted by Roman officers.....it seems impossible to believe that a Roman governor could pour such complete contempt on Roman judicial processes.<sup>1</sup>

As the author of *The Gospel History* points out:—

The Pilate of history is the exact opposite of the Pilate of the Gospels. Philo says of him: "Pilate was of a violent and obstinate disposition which could not lend itself to please the Jews." Josephus says, "Between the people and the procurator there existed on either side nothing but hatred, contempt, menaces, and insults." He adds: "The Jews said that it was a settled design of Pontius Pilate to abolish the Jewish law." Such is the man who is represented in the Gospels as sacrificing his own convictions and the honour of the Roman name, and allowing a judicial murder to take place in order "to content the people."<sup>2</sup>

Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, is represented in the Gospels as the independent leader of the priests and scribes, whereas, in fact, he was a mere tool in the hands of the Roman governor. Josephus tells that no less than four high priests were successively deprived of their office on account of their hostility to the Romans, but Josephus, surnamed Caiaphas, that is, "the support" of the Romans, held the office of high priest for eleven years in succession until A.D. 37, when he was deposed by Vitellius, who wished to render himself popular with the Jews.

The Caiaphas of the Gospels resembles the Caiaphas of history as little as Pilate does. In the Gospels he is represented as acting in concert with his father-in-law, Annas, and with the chief priests and scribes, and never as acting under the orders of Pilate. The fact, however, is that at this period the authority of the high priest had been all but abolished in consequence of the action of the Roman procurator. Matters had come to such a pass that the room in the temple to which the high priest retired on the Day of Atonement, and which was formerly called

the Council Chamber, was then called the servant's cell. The Talmud (Talmud Baba, treatise Yoma) says: "The reason of this was that the dignity of high priest was conferred for money."<sup>3</sup>

A very different character to the Caiaphas of the Gospel story. Then there is the story of the Jewish priests giving money to the Roman guard to say that the body of Jesus was stolen from the tomb while they slept! The writer of this evidently did not know that the penalty for a Roman soldier sleeping at his post was death. To go to their officers with a tale like that would bring upon them a painful and ignominious death.

The story of the trial of Christ, as given in the Gospels, is plainly apocryphal. As the Rev. Dr. Giles observes:—

That the particulars of this trial are of a legendary character and will not bear a close examination must be evident to all who are acquainted with Roman history.<sup>4</sup>

The learned Jew, Rabbi Wise, who has made a detailed study of this trial, declares:—

No one point in the whole trial agrees with Jewish law and custom. It is impossible to save it. It must be given up as a transparent and unskilled invention of a Gentile Christian of the second century, who knew nothing of Jewish law and custom, and was ignorant of the state of civilization in Palestine in the time of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Austin Bierbower, a lawyer, in his very able essay, *Was Christ Crucified?* (p. 7) says:—

In the first place, the preliminary examination of Jesus before trial by Annas or Caiaphas was illegal, it being the right of the accused to be free from any personal investigation whatever until brought for trial before his congregated brethren (Salvador's *Institutions*, 1,366). The Jewish law, instead of providing for a preliminary examination, as some modern States do, expressly prohibited it.

If, as John states, Jesus was first sent to Annas and by him examined, then sent to Caiaphas and tried by the Sanhedrim, "there is a greater difficulty, inasmuch as the whole trial would, on that supposition, be contrary to Jewish law and Jewish custom." Moreover, continues the same writer:—

In the next place the trial could not, according to Jewish law, have taken place at night, as related by Matthew and Mark. Capital trials, says the Mishna (*De Synedrus*, iv. 1), are commenced only in the daytime, and must also be concluded only in the day. They may be concluded in the same day if there is a sentence of acquittal, but must be postponed to a second day if there is to be a condemnation. Here, however, the trial appears, according to two Gospels, not only to have been held at night, but to have been commenced and ended on the same day (or night rather) without any intermission, both of which were illegal.<sup>6</sup>

There are other legal difficulties, says Mr. Bierbower.

One is that Jesus was questioned in his own case, which is not permitted in Jewish law. For the Jews could not even plead guilty. "Our law," says Maimonides, "condemns no one to death upon his own confession." Nor could the judges make any judicial use whatever of his testimony. "It is a fundamental principle with us," says Martemore, "that no one can damage himself by what he says in judgment." And yet Matthew represents the high priest as not only questioning Jesus but persisting in his efforts to get him to testify.<sup>7</sup>

And when Jesus in answer to his questions admitted that he was the Christ, the Son of God, the high priest said: "What further need have we of witnesses?"

<sup>1</sup> *The Gospel History*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Dr. Giles, *Christian Records*, 1877, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Wise, *Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Austin Bierbower, *Was Christ Crucified?* p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Scott, *English Life of Jesus*, pp. 294-297.

<sup>7</sup> *The Gospel History*, pp. 138-139.



The Sanhedrim, before which, according to Gospels, Jesus appeared, was the highest court of the Jews; it consisted of twenty-four priests, twenty-four scribes, and twenty-four elders, seventy-two in all of the most learned, upright, and trustworthy men of the nation. They were "required to be married, above thirty years of age, well instructed in the law, and of good report among the people." \* And yet it is of this council that Matthew says: "Now the chief priest and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put him to death."

As Mr. Bierbower remarks:—

This is all the more strange since in the administration of the Jewish laws the judges were understood to have somewhat the character of the advocates of the prisoner, like our judges, advocate at a court-martial, and to be charged with preventing any undue influence from prevailing against him. Even if the judges were corrupt enough to do what is here charged, it is hardly credible that they would have deemed it safe to do so, and especially that so many would do so, the whole Sanhedrim. †

(To be Continued.) W. MANN.

## A Dynamic Book.

### I.

LIFE is given to man for a brief space and he then goes to the earth's bosom. His immortality exists in his children, or the influence that he has generated round him, and Time, the great winnower, separates the chaff from the grain, his good deeds from the bad, and the universal mind remembers the best, just as the individual mind prefers to remember the pleasant. We believe it was Walt Whitman who desired immortality to enable him to read all the best books in the world; this, surely, no small praise to the human hands and brains that gave the world of their best.

A serious reader's path is beset by many difficulties unless he is fortunate in the choice of friends and counsellors. He will eat much chaff; he will be led from one commentary to another so that, for his sins, he may spend his life in reading sign-posts. Flaubert was a closed book to us and might still have been so but for the insistence in the writings of Mr. Ezra Pound. This American man of letters is a modern force not to be ignored; he is, like the perfect man, a citizen of the world, and a Freethinker. What is more, he does not conceal the fact. With open admiration he wrote of *Madame Bovary*, *Salammô*, and *The Temptation of St. Antony*. In reading this trio, it seemed that chance had arranged them in order, had cunningly placed them to give us the vigorous shock in the last book that is peculiar to the mind in contact with genius. In *The Temptation of St. Antony*, Flaubert reviews all the religions of the world. With directness Flaubert plunges into his subject. In a few words the Hermit's cell is brought before our eyes. Communing with himself, St. Antony recounts his life up to the time of his seclusion among the mountains. All his disciples have left him, Hilarion with the rest. A flock of birds in flight arrest the saint's attention. He looks at them wistfully, and longs to go with them. For consolation he opens the Bible: it is only to alight on an account of slaughter and carnage by the Jews. From this he turns the pages to a description of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, and then continues to muse on his former days. Then he had temptations; penitent women wished to end their days with him; disputants tied his tongue, and barked at him like hyenas. Even the Bible inspires him to be reproachful; he has eaten so little that the passage tell-

ing Peter to kill and eat makes him resentful; later on he curses the jackals for having taken some of his slender store of coarse bread, and then, after experiencing voluptuous visions he swoons on the floor of his cell. Thus ends the first chapter. Read slowly, it gives a realistic picture of a mind struggling to retain a creed against the powers of hunger and thirst and self-imposed discomfort. It throws a sickly light on the body torturing by the devout who seek to render their human dwelling place as uncomfortable as possible. Extremities meet; laughter lives next door to tears. Hunger, privation, misery of body and mind will produce exquisite dreams. Solitude along with these conditions is not the atmosphere to produce Plato's *Republic*, Montaigne's *Essays*, or the plays of Shakespeare. These conditions add little or nothing to human knowledge in their revelations. One head more or less to a dragon, two or four wings to a horse, a man's head with a bird's body and a fish's tail, all these add to the sum of the grotesque; but starving and scourging oneself to reveal this is futile. Our unemployed might support fasting for the devout if they could be assured of receiving the benefit of pious abstinence, and as unemployment is caused by the war, and the clergy supported Mars, our pious brethren have a glorious chance now of a mighty spiritual and physical gesture of repentance or contrition. We know that they will not make it. Those of them who are not slandering workmen, are now busy howling about their poverty. We should imagine that the latter condition was a matter for praise and thanks to God; but perhaps we are foolish and make the mistake of expecting them to practise what they preach.

In the second chapter, the Devil appears in the cell, carrying under his wings the Seven Deadly Sins. St. Antony recovers from his swoon to discover the horrible reality of his cell. He is hungry and thirsty. Food, drink, and gold appear, only to vanish when he attempts to touch them. In an agony of disappointment he exclaims, "Once more I have been deceived. Why these things? They arise from the revolts of the flesh," and, in desperation, he scourges himself with a bundle of cords with iron nails at the end of them. The Queen of Sheba then appears to him. She has brought him her wedding presents—she would make him her husband. At this point we begin to experience a sense of pity for the saintly hermit. His teeth chatter. "If," says the Queen, "you placed your finger on my shoulder, it would be like a stream of fire in your veins. The possession of the least part of my body will fill you with a joy more vehement than the conquest of an Empire." Antony makes the sign of the cross, and Flaubert in this scene, has taken the universal idea of asceticism and applied it in a particular manner. There is a feeling of brutality, of strength, of confidence, of more qualities than we need enumerate in this incident; we are in touch with a master mind; the artist's pen becomes Prospero's staff, and the Queen of Sheba may appear to us as the last word in sensuality, sensuousness, nature adorned by art, woman as a huntress of men, the life force expressed through femininity, or what you will. From a consideration of this aspect of the flesh we may arrive at several important conclusions that present the extreme forms of Christianity in a ludicrous and pathetic light. Firstly, that Christians should adopt the method satirically suggested by Mr. Bernard Shaw for the extermination of the late belligerent nation that gave to the world Goethe, Kant, Hegel, Schiller, and the Christmas tree, not to mention modern court figures with names and lives as interesting as a piece of string. Secondly, that, failing this method, and in the certainty of not supplying the Devil with material for temptation, Christians should decline to give hostages to fortune. Thirdly,

\* The Oxford Helps to the Study of the Bible, p. 7.

† Bierbower, *Was Christ Crucified?* p. 9.



the second failing, united prayers should be made for the race to gradually become one sex. Fourthly, every saint born of woman may experience the bliss, or sorrow, of denial of the flesh through one fact alone, that he had a mother. To continue the list of these conclusions seems like walking in treacle. It is not for us to portray the saint as a child of three months refusing to take its natural sustenance.

The third chapter of this book entirely consists of an argument between St. Antony and Hilarion; when the Queen of Sheba has departed, the disciple appears as a child, having white hair and a prodigiously large head. We hope that we shall be pardoned for the following lengthy quotation, but the indictment of St. Antony by Hilarion would lose its vigour by paraphrase:—

Hilarion: All the deadly sins have arrived. But their miserable snares are of no avail against a saint like you!

Antony: Oh! no! no! Every minute I give way! Would that I were one of those whose souls are always intrepid and their minds firm—like the great Athanasius, for example!

H.: He was unlawfully ordained by seven bishops!

A.: What does it matter? If his virtue.....

H.: Come, now! A haughty, cruel man, always mixed up in intrigues, and finally exiled for being a monopolist.

A.: Calumny!

H.: You will not deny that he tried to corrupt Eustatius, the treasurer of the bounties?

A.: So it is stated, and I admit it.

H.: He burned, for revenge, the house of Arsenius.

A.: Alas!

H.: At the Council of Nicæa, he said, speaking of Jesus, "The man of the Lord."

A.: Ah! that is a blasphemy!

H.: So limited is he, too, that he acknowledges he knows nothing as to the nature of the Word.

A.: (smiling with pleasure) In fact, he has not a very lofty intellect.

H.: If they had put you in his place, it would have been a great satisfaction for your brethren, as well as yourself. This life, apart from others, is a bad thing.

A.: On the contrary! Man, being a spirit, should withdraw himself from perishable things. All action degrades him. I would like not to cling to the earth—even with the soles of my feet.

H.: Hypocrite! who plunges himself into solitude to free himself the better from the outbreak of his lusts. You deprive yourself of meat, of wine, of stoves, of slaves, and of honours; but how you let your imagination offer you banquets, perfumes, naked women, and applauding crowds! Your chastity is but a more subtle kind of corruption, and your contempt for the world is but the impotence of your hatred against it! This is the reason that persons like you are so lugubrious, or perhaps it is because you lack faith. The possession of the truth gives joy. Was Jesus sad? He used to go about surrounded by friends; He rested under the shade of the olive, entered the house of the publican, multiplied the cups, pardoned the fallen woman, healing all sorrows. As for you, you have no pity, save for your own wretchedness. You are so much swayed by a kind of remorse, and by a ferocious insanity, that you would repulse the caress of a dog or the smile of a child.

Hilarious' vehemence moves him to tell Antony to shake the vermin off his rags and get rid of his filth.

Readers may weigh well the effect of two thousand years' of teaching that man is a fallen creature. It is true that the teaching has not been continuous, it has encountered vicissitudes necessarily attending a doctrine in conflict with common sense, but there is no doubt that this teaching has created a repression in the universal consciousness, causing melancholia, suicide, and pitiful examples of men and women making their minds and bodies fit a creed. Witness

the outbreak of crude and revolting talk during the war. There was nothing supernatural in the war; yet it caused the grosser kind of Christians to deliver themselves in the language of Revelations. The war to them provided a means for the repressed to escape from its dungeon of their consciousness; they were automatically psycho-analysed, and some of us were not surprised at the dragons and basilisks that came to light in this manner. From the general to the particular, St. Antony, as an illustration of extreme Christianity, offers us an example of what strange phantoms exist in a mind ill-balanced through systematic flagellation, fasting, and violation of simple natural living. If the whole design of life is individual salvation, and it finds favour with the Christian God, then the world is a menagerie, and selfishness wears a halo. We shall see in the concluding article on Chapters iv. to viii. what Flaubert has to say in respect to the tangle called life—this life that is fascinating, terrible, humorous, tragic—explanations do not explain it, we neither wish for it nor desire to give it up, and science, philosophy and art play sugary music for us until the ring of the curfew bell.

WILLIAM REPTON.

(To be concluded.)

## Disturbing Elements.

It was the mirk and dismal midnight of the year and the members of the Topics Club—the dwindling faithful few—were seated in the dingy little hall in intimate and amicable converse round a good fire. Just prior to the start of the business of the evening, like a squall from the sea that was moaning and fretting outside, the Disturbing Element crept in, and even it was welcomed as an addition to a sadly diminished gathering. It turned out to be a "Hat Night," and one of the questions drawn was: "What are the so-called 'Higher Things' the clergy speak so much about?" no one seemed to understand the question, and when it was explained, by the Disturbing Element, no one seemed to agree with it at all. It was an excellent opportunity for psychological study, for there were Christians, half Christians, and Freethinkers present.

Mr. Macsiccar, with whom the Disturbing Element was very friendly, outwardly, but inwardly the absolute antipodes, was oracular, dogmatic, and scornful, wittily and scathingly impatient of this intrusive and insistent cold draught from the outer seas. It had found its way there of set purpose to upset the meeting—which by the way was not true—He had met it before. He had read the *Freethinker*, it seemed about a hundred years before, and like all people of sense had set it down for the cheap, dirty, rotten rag it was.

The worthy gentleman's taste in speaking no doubt faithfully reflected his taste in literature.

Mr. Muldoon, a solid pillar of the Labour movement, student of Rationalism, and Humanist, was, for so buirdly a chiel, disappointingly mild and timid, all too sheeplike for a man of sense, seeming to stand in awe of the Macsiccar, and others of that ilk, confessing afterwards, even, that the Disturbing Element was the "b—y limit!" Certainly draughts are disagreeable to all, though wholesome at times, in the inner precinct of complacent psychology.

Mr. Sweetman was the suave sleek Benjamin Franklin, having fallen away from the fashionable faith, and prospering in the world, and being inclined to a refined Spiritualism, if that cult admits of qualification.

Captain Seaman, just home from his little coaster, was silent and saturnine, in normal times a kindly, agreeable, generous, if pious person, mostly silent in this breeze, but probably thinking unlawful things!



Mr. Greensheaf, the youthful chairman, dropped some grains of sense, if barely ripe.

Mr. Van Holland was amiably unintelligible.

Mr. Hopstream, a clever little scholarly person, though confessedly far from orthodox, sided with the Macsiccar, if less intolerantly in his opinion of the *Freethinker*, which journal he had sampled (gratis!) for some months. So the craft securely stuck in the ancient muddy deposit of conventional superstition weathers every storm; or as Dryden says:—

How easy 'tis when destiny proves kind  
With full spread sails to run before the wind;  
But they who 'gainst stiff gales careering go  
Must be at once resolved and skilful too.

Others sided with the others, more or less, and the door was effectually closed against the Disturbing Element. Still the ozone had got in, and though the members of the Club were thankless at the moment, they may yet develop a greater fondness for fresh air. Who knows?

Fresh air, of course, especially in the winter season, when the days are slowly getting longer and colder—as we say in Scotland: as the day lengthens the cold strengthens—is apt to be raw and crude. It is not quite so easy a thing to be a Freethought advocate as some good people imagine, or rather it is easy, must be easy; but how acquire the skill, say of the Editor of this journal for instance, which makes it so easy to him, or seem easy? Something also has to be said for the tendency of the Topics Club, steering its way amid the fogs and darkness of centuries of superstition, supposing these at last in its proper native elements.

There is another little hall near by, sometime tenanted by those men of mystery, the local Masons—not the material but the esoteric craft—later by a Trade Union, now used as a social centre for members of the Catholic Church. In a dusty press in this hall lay some dusty books, mute but potential, not a disturbing, merely, but an explosive element, and the members of the Church, and the holy father himself, unconscious of their, and his, and the Churches danger, let them lie till lately, and some may be there still. Here in the old days men like J. M. Robertson and Joseph McCabe lectured to a very respectable Rationalist Society, but one sparsely attended, and of course foredoomed to failure; nevertheless, a gallant and praiseworthy local effort made by some choice spirits of those days.

The little Rationalist Association is gone with the winds of yesterday, but what it stood for endures, and as if by "God's blessing" pervades the present and confidently anticipates, nay, possesses the future, for it not only flows with the stream of progress, it is that stream. It is the veriest truism that the Church's strength is founded on its and the people's ignorance of the matter and spirit of those little books, now restored to circulation, resurrected from the tomb of twenty years. There are pathos and comedy in this little sidelight on human and intellectual history. Had the visiting priest been aware of the presence and contents of those books there would certainly have been a hasty bonfire in the backyard. As for the caretaker of the hall, he was so good a Catholic, and so little curious, he allowed the noxious volumes to be carried away, never even having read their titles. Perhaps even had he read their contents his inner glimmering of reason would have remained immune within the surrounding incrustation formed by the teaching of holy Mother Church. The Catholic Church is wise in its generation, but its wisdom cannot avail it for its ultimate Salvation—as a Church. The end is by no means yet, but the end is inevitable, and before the end of man.

It ought to be mentioned that the granite block in

the little hall, the symbol of the Masons, was no stumbling block to the Churchmen; it was to them a companionable mystery, but none to the geologist and the Atheist. But to the latter also a symbol, the symbol of the solidity of matter, the extent of time, of truth in the testimony of the rocks. Once, rather scoffingly, the writer referred to this unhewn stone, and meeting the baleful eye of a devotee, he knew he had disturbed "another religion." A. MILLAR.

## Pages From Voltaire.

How far we ought to impose upon the People.

It is a question of importance, although little enough regarded, how far people, *i.e.*, nine-tenths of the human kind ought to be treated like apes. The deceiving parties have never carefully examined this question. For fear of going wrong in their calculation they have heaped up all the visionary notions they could in the heads of the party deceived.

The good people, who sometimes read *Virgil*, or the *Provincial Letters*,<sup>1</sup> do not know that there are twenty times more copies of the *Almanac of Liège* and of the *Courier Boiteux* printed than all the ancient and modern books together. None has more respect than myself for the illustrious authors of those Almanacs, and their brethren. I know that ever since the times of the ancient Chaldeans there have been fixed and stated days for taking physic, clipping our nails, giving battle and chopping wood. I know that the best part of the revenue of an illustrious Academy consists in the sale of these kind of almanacs. May I ask, with all submission, and a becoming diffidence of my own judgment, what harm it would do to the world were some powerful astrologer to assure the peasants and the good inhabitants of little villages that they might safely clip their nails when they please, provided it be done with good intention? The people, I shall be told, would not buy the almanacs of this new astrologer. On the contrary I will venture to say that there would be found among your great geniuses many who would make a merit of following this novelty. Should it be objected that these geniuses would form factions, and kindle a civil war, I have nothing further to say on the subject, but willingly give up, for the sake of peace, my too dangerous opinion.

Everybody knows the king of Boutan. He is one of the greatest princes in the world. He tramples under his feet the throne of the earth. His shoes (if he has any) are provided with sceptres instead of buckles. He adores the Devil, as is well-known, and all his courtiers follow his example. One day, he sends for a famous sculptor of my country, and orders him to make a handsome statue of Beelzebub. The sculptor succeeds to admiration, never was there such a handsome devil. But, unhappily, our Praxiteles had given only five clutches to his animal, whereas the Boutaniers always gave him six. This capital blunder of our artist was aggravated by the grand master of the ceremonies to the Devil, with all the zeal of a man justly jealous of his master's rights, and of the sacred and immemorial custom of the kingdom of Boutan. He insisted that our sculptor should atone for his crime by the loss of his head. The sculptor answered that his five clutches were exactly equal in weight to six ordinary clutches; and the king of Boutan, who was a prince of great clemency, granted a pardon. From that time the people of Boutan are undeceived with regard to the Devil's six clutches.

The same day his majesty needed to let blood. A surgeon of Gascony, who had come to his court in a ship belonging to our East-India Company, was

<sup>1</sup> The *Provincial Letters* of Pascal.



appointed to take from him five ounces of his precious blood. The astrologer of that quarter cried out, that the king would be in danger of losing his life, if he opened a vein while the heavens were in their present state. The Gascon might have told him, that the only question was the state of the king's health; but he prudently wasted a few minutes; and then taking an Almanac in his hand, "You were quite right!" said he to the astrologer of the quarter, "the king would have died had he been bled at the moment you mentioned: the heavens have since changed their aspect; and now is the favourable moment." The astrologer assented to the truth of the surgeon's observation. The king was cured; and by degrees it became an established custom among the Boutaniers to bleed their kings whenever it was necessary.

A blustering Dominican at Rome said to an English philosopher, "You are a dog; you say it is the earth that turns round, never reflecting that Joshua made the sun to stand still." "Well! my reverend father," replied the other, "and since that time the sun hasn't moved an inch." The dog and the Dominican embraced each other; and even the Italians were, at last, convinced that the earth turns round.

An augur and a senator, in the time of Cæsar, were lamenting the declining state of the republic. "The times, indeed, are very bad," said the senator; "we have reason to tremble for the liberties of Rome." "Ah!" said the augur, "that is not the greatest evil; the people now begin to lose that respect which they once had for our order; we seem barely to be tolerated; we cease to be necessary. Some generals have the assurance to give battle without consulting us; and to complete our misfortunes, those who sell us the sacred pullets begin to reason." "Well, and why don't you reason likewise?" replied the senator, "and since the dealers in pullets in the time of Cæsar are more knowing than they were in the time of Numa, ought not your modern augurs to be better philosophers than those who lived in former ages?"

*Englised by* GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

**Obituary.**

We regret to announce the death of Charles Durrant at the age of 77, after a short illness, on Saturday last at the Hampstead Infirmary. A member of the Society since November, 1881, he was an active propagandist for many years and strove valiantly in the cause of Freethought and Free Speech.—H. B. S.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.**

*President:*

**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

*Secretary:*

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

**Principles and Objects.**

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

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

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

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend

material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

**Membership.**

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

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

Name.....

Address .....

Occupation .....

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

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

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

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

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

**LONDON.**

**INDOOR.**

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Shaller, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9): 7, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. A. B. Moss, A Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

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