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## Views and Opinions.

### Spiritualism.

Some time ago I wrote a series of notes on the question of a future life without dealing with the question of Spiritualism. At least, the subject was not directly discussed, although much of what was then said with regard to a future life in general applied also to that particular form of it known as Spiritualism. I am returning to the subject now, partly to keep a promise that I would do so, and partly because the subject of Spiritualism opens some important aspects of historical and psychological enquiry not necessarily connected with the belief in immortality as held by the orthodox creeds. To begin with, the Spiritualist stands alone among the believers in a future life in claiming that his case rests upon observed and verifiable facts. Certainly the array of eminent men who at one time or another have given the Spiritualistic theory a more or less qualified support is very striking, and if that kind of testimony were enough to establish the truth of a theory Spiritualism would stand a fair chance of being accepted as true. But one remembers that there is not a falsity on the face of the earth that has not had the support of eminent men. Indeed, without it a false belief would stand very little chance of ever being established. Eminent men testified to the truth of a flat earth, to the movement of the sun round the earth, to the reality of witchcraft, etc. There is nothing in the history of science that would lead one to accept the testimony of a great man on any subject as of necessity final, and when the great man happens to be dealing with something that is outside his special province, then his evidence is still less conclusive. So the appeal to great names leaves the genuine Freethinker quite cold. If authority could establish anything the world would hold but one absurdity in each department, for no second one would have stood the slightest chance of ever getting established.

### A Bad Ancestry.

On the general claims of Spiritualism there are two or three preliminary observations that may be made. The first is that if existence beyond the grave be a fact, and if there are actually means of communication between the dead and ourselves, one would have imagined that, considering the many thousands of generations during which the human race has existed,

and the myriads of millions of human beings who have died, the fact of a future life should by now be so firmly established as to be beyond the possibility of question. If Spiritualism be true we are dealing with an ever present fact, and with permanent qualities of human nature. But instead of finding this constant fact and these permanent qualities generally recognized, what we find is that the vogue of Spiritualism ebbs and flows, attracting general attention at one moment, and sinking into the quietude of a religious organization the next. This is a phenomenon, on the face of it, in far greater consonance with the existence of an epidemic illusion than aught else. Second, although what is called Modern Spiritualism dates from only the middle of the nineteenth century, Spiritualism as connoting certain observed phenomena has a much older history, and does, indeed, connect directly with what we know of savage practices. But we know the facts upon which the beliefs of savages are built, and all of these facts we are now able to explain without the slightest reference to the supernatural or to the belief in a future life. And when we find an unbroken chain between the beliefs of the savage and those of the modern Spiritualist, when we bear in mind the fact that in the history of the race the first explanation of the unusual or the abnormal has always been in terms of the supernatural or the "spiritual," even excluding all question of deliberate fraud, one is no more inclined to accept at its face value the Spiritualistic explanation of what takes place at a modern seance than one is compelled to take the visions of a mediæval monk as proof of his intercourse with a ghostly world. As Mr. Podmore remarks of the celebrated Mrs. Piper, that her mediumship would have been more convincing had it "come to us out of the blue, instead of trailing behind her a nebulous ancestry of magnetic somnambulism, witch-ridden children, and ecstatic nuns," so he says with equal truth of Spiritualism in general:—

We have still to deal with the same protean figures—vengeful human ghosts, familiar spirits, shaman or wizard, angels from the abyss, devils released from Jewish or mediæval hells, oracles of Olympian deities, spirits of angels and prophets, spirits of earth, air, and fire, spirits of the damned, spirits on furlough from purgatory, spirits floating in a Swedenborgian limbo, ghosts of fleas and archangels, decaying astral shells, spirits of the seven celestial spheres, spirits clothed in luminiferous ether—they have been with us since the first syllable of recorded time, and generation after generation they have shaped themselves to suit the changing fashion of the hour, the hidden or hinted hopes of those who put their trust in them (*The Newer Spiritualism*, pp. 296-7).

### As You Like It.

I wish to stress this aspect of the matter because it throws a very strong light upon what I believe to lie at the root of the observed phenomena. I am convinced that at the foundation of the belief in Spiritualism—and on which tricksters of all kinds have plied their trade—there exists a misunderstanding of abnormal states of mind, varying from the very mildest forms of



automatism on the one hand to pronounced pathological states on the other. In no other way can we account for the fact that the next world—about which, if the communications are genuine, there should certainly be some uniformity in the information supplied by those who allege they are living in it—is described by these alleged spirits in such contradictory terms, but always in agreement with the environment in which we ourselves are living. On the Continent it is common for the spirits to assure us that re-incarnation is a fact. In England the information is to the contrary. In Italy it is not unusual for the spirits to profess Atheism; in England a wishy-washy Theism is the rule. The spirit world is all round us, or above the earth, or in the milky way. It is a real and tangible existence to one spirit; it is a creation of the mind to another. The spirits have a vocal language as we have; they have no vocal language, but communicate by a species of celestial telepathy. Spirits grow, or do not grow, or, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us, they grow both older and younger till they all stop at about thirty years of age, which, curiously enough, is the age at which most of us would like to stop if we could manage it. There is simply no limit to the variety and contradictoriness of the information given to the living by the dead. And one may readily excuse the spirits being unable to decipher the contents of a sealed letter when they cannot make up their minds as to the character of the world in which they claim to be living. All this is puzzling enough so long as we attempt to treat it as a description of an actual place, but it becomes understandable, in both its contemporary and historic relations, when we come to regard it from the proper point of view.

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#### The Question of Fraud.

But while to take these alleged spiritual communications at their face value is absurd, it is equally ridiculous to accept the theory that Spiritualism is no more than the product of deliberate and conscious trickery, the outcome of vulgar tricksters and clever conjurers. That is quite unsatisfactory to anyone who approaches the subject with a first-hand knowledge, and with the necessary acquaintance with abnormal psychology. That there is trickery connected with Spiritualism is so patent that not even its avowed defenders dispute it. But the nature of that trickery is quite another question, and one to which few of those who delight in showing how the trickery is effected appear to have paid much attention. After all, when we have a species of happenings that goes back generation after generation from ourselves to the primitive savage, there must be something more in it than deliberate and conscious trickery. If mere trickery can be carried on generation after generation, and over so wide an area, practically co-extensive with the human race, the fact of trickery strikes one as being slightly more wonderful than the alleged reality. On the other hand, the fact that all the fundamental phenomena of Spiritualism, trance-mediumship, automatic writing, crystal-gazing, etc., can be seen under conditions where there is not the slightest suggestion of spirit agency, is enough to prove the needlessness of that theory. In short, the assertion that in Spiritualism we have proof of a future state of existence, and the assertion that the phenomena which are commonly known under the name of Spiritualism are nothing but the outcome of mere trickery, both strike one as being elaborate efforts in misdirection, and both exhibit the same want of acquaintance with the actual nature of the facts. Spiritualists know that the theory of fraud will not cover the experience they have in their own homes, and often in their own persons; but those who approach the subject from a genuinely scientific point of view know that there is with Spiritualism no greater

evidence of the existence of a future life than there is proof of a hell or a heaven in the visions of a mediæval monk.

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#### Evolution and the Supernatural.

The present position with regard to Spiritualism may be illustrated by noting what has taken place in the history of religion. To begin with we have the savage's conviction of intercourse with gods and ghosts, based on no better foundation than his ignorance of the meaning of natural processes. Then we have that belief organized into the religions of the world, and we have the continuous interpretation of human feeling and experience in terms of supernaturalism. Finally, we have a number of unscrupulous practitioners deliberately pretending to receive commissions from the spiritual world, with no other object than that of deceiving the people, and just as "mediums" have often enough been provided with all the material of the conjuror's cabinet, so we have with religions, winking Madonnas and bleeding statues as concrete evidence of supernaturalism. Now, it was a matter of comparative ease to declare the religious idea to be false, and to prove that it was based on a delusion. But much more than that was needed to make the case against religion complete. Merely to say of a man or woman during adolescence that there was here no basis for belief in the action of God was not enough. It left the person chiefly concerned unconvinced. The feelings remained and were so far real. To one ignorant of the effects of fasting, or other forms of self-abuse in breeding illusions, it was folly to denounce the resulting visions as sheer imposture. The evidence for the belief was there before the eyes of the religious believer. If he believed that a man could get into touch with a supernatural world, there was his own misunderstood experience to support his opinion. If he believed that spirits could take possession of the human body, there were before him the facts of epilepsy or insanity. Religion has lived through the ages, not in virtue of deliberate imposture, although there has been plenty of that mixed up with it, but because in the absence of adequate knowledge there was what appeared to be strong evidence of its truth. This is substantially the position of Spiritualism to-day. There is trickery, conscious and unconscious, in plenty. There is self-deception galore, and we are faced with faked spirit photographs, and all the paraphernalia of deliberate deception. But for one who is converted to Spiritualism by these methods there are a dozen brought to believe in communications with the dead through happenings in their own family circle, and their experience calls for quite a different kind of explanation. And it is these cases that provide the foundation for the business of the professional trickster just as it was the ignorance of the people that provided the material on which the Churches of the world have worked. Naturally so. It cannot be the many that deceive the few, it must always be the few that deceive the many. We have to do with Spiritualism what we have been able to do with religion—that is, not merely to say that it is false, but to show why people have believed it to be true, what are the facts, real and assumed, upon which it has built, and, finally, to show that so far as they are genuine facts we no more need a spiritual world to explain them than we need the demons of the New Testament to explain the ravings of a lunatic or the struggles of an epileptic.

(To be Continued.) CHAPMAN COHEN.

I have been recently examining all the known superstitions of the world, and do not find in our particular superstition (Christianity) one redeeming feature. They are all alike, founded upon fables and mythologies.

—Thomas Jefferson.



## Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery.

THE story is related in John viii. 1-11, and in the Revised Version it is placed within brackets because most of the ancient authorities omit it. Why it was omitted is wholly immaterial to our present purpose; nor are we directly interested in the story itself. Its moral teaching is delightfully wholesome. There is in it a tacit condemnation of the Jewish law which ordered the putting to death of the woman taken in adultery, while it allowed the man, equally, possibly more guilty, to go scot-free. As the story stands in John's Gospel the Scribes and Pharisees brought the woman to Jesus in the hope of ensnaring him politically. Setting her in the midst, they said: "Master, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such; what then sayest thou of her?" Pretending to take no notice of their appeal, as if he had not heard it, Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground; but as they continued asking him, he lifted himself up and said unto them, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last, and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was in the midst." This was a glorious triumph for the teacher. If the incident ever happened, the concluding words of Jesus explain its omission by the ancient authorities:

And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way; from henceforth sin no more.

That ethic was too high for most of the ancient authorities, and consequently the alleged incident was not inserted in the canonical Gospels.

Now, some divines raise the question, Was the woman taken in adultery saved? She was dragged to Jesus, probably against her will, and it is not on record that she confessed her sin, or asked to be forgiven. Her accusers, like the cowards they were, slunk away shamefacedly, not one of them daring to fling a stone at her. As she stood alone before him uncondemned, all Jesus said to her was: "Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way, and sin no more." One divine exclaims:

Certainly, she got all she needed—pardon for her past, and grace for the future, too; for the Lord bade her "go and sin no more," and his commands are always promises. If evidence be required, it is just this—that the Lord's supreme concern in every instance was the salvation of sinners, and he would not have let that poor woman go had he not been satisfied of her penitence and faith.

We now approach a much more difficult and complex question, namely, on what condition does God save sinners? Take the case of the woman taken in adultery and compare it with that of the Prodigal Son. The latter, we are assured, was forgiven because he arose in the far country and returned to his father self-accused and penitent, passionately beseeching to be restored to favour, even if only as a hired servant, while the former never came to Jesus of her own free-will at all. Face to face with this difficulty one theologian asks, "Is it exactly true that one has always to come to him of one's own free-will?" According to him, among the most precious things in Holy Scripture are its seeming contradictions. Here is a most conspicuous example. We read (Isaiah lv. 6): "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near," and in the same book (lxv. 1) we also read: "I am found of them that sought me not." Admitting, even glorying in that contradiction, our

divine deduces therefrom the following principle, quoting Pascal: "We would not be seeking him unless he had already found us." If this is true, it is God alone who is responsible for our being in a lost condition. Are we not being taught that, in its inception, grace is, in the old phrase, "prevenient?" Prevenient grace is defined as "grace preceding repentance and conversion, and predisposing the recipient to a religious life before any proper inclination thereto on his own part." St. Bernard declares: "Without God's grace, prevenient, attendant, co-operant, we can do nothing good. God's grace prevents us that we may begin the good; it co-operates with us, that we may perform the good." The Gospel Jesus is made to say: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which sent me, draw him" (John vi. 44); but a little further on in the same document he contradicts himself: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (xii. 32). In any case, man is not responsible for his destiny, nor can he modify it in the least degree. If he goes to hell, he will do so because the Father has not drawn him to the Saviour. Whether it be the Father or the Son who draws, the drawing hitherto has been a total failure. And yet our divine has the temerity to put the case thus:—

None of us would ever have thought of the Saviour unless the Saviour had first thought of us and drawn us to himself by manifold constraints, sometimes stern and painful, but ever gracious and merciful. His love is always beforehand with us. We would never have found him if he had not sought us, and our seeking him is an evidence that he has already found us. This is the most precious of evangelical truths; it is the very heart of the blessed Gospel; and it would banish all our misgivings and doubts and fears if only we would grasp it and lay it home to our hearts.

Our divine is, indeed, wholeheartedly evangelical, and in this he has the full support of most parts of the Bible; but the quintessence of evangelicalism is the absolute sovereignty of God. We are his subjects, and he does what he likes with us. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. ix. 20-23)? From that view of the Divine sovereignty the only logical doctrine of salvation is thus stated: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." This was known in the mediæval ages as Augustinianism, and in the modern Protestant worlds as Calvinism; and of all theological schemes ever elaborated it is the most logical and self-consistent. Like all other metaphysical systems it is now melting away in the crucible of natural knowledge. It does not fit the facts of actual life at any points. Indeed, universal history entirely belies it. Even the very existence of God is held in serious doubt by a vast majority of thoughtful people. Nothing has ever happened that cannot be satisfactorily explained as a purely natural occurrence. For a rapidly multiplying number even the Gospel Jesus is losing his reputation as the Saviour of the world. A few reactionaries like Dr. R. J. Campbell are labouring assiduously to re-establish evangelical orthodoxy. Dr. Campbell's *Life of Christ*, just issued, is a desperate attempt to re-introduce the miraculous in all its ancient splendour, but the reverend gentleman only succeeds in making himself look ridiculous. This quondam champion of the New Theology, who used to call his orthodox brethren "liars," now irrationally ascribes disease to Satanic agency, and pronounces demoniacal possession a verit-



able fact. Indeed, he goes so far as to express his belief that the "wise men" of to-day, so far from demonstrating that epilepsy has been mistakenly described by the Church as demoniacal possession, are themselves mistaking demoniacal possession for epilepsy. Fortunately, however, the reactionaries are few and far between, the trend of intelligent thought being towards Rationalism, and in many instances towards Atheism.

Supernaturalism has never been at so low an ebb as it is just now. It is being repudiated simply because it has never done anything to justify the belief in it. It is its utter inefficiency that is its severest condemnation. Curiously enough there is no trace whatever of it in the story of the woman taken in adultery. Neither God nor a hereafter is so much as mentioned in it. Evangelicalism is conspicuous only by its absence. And what has Evangelicalism accomplished in the world? Beyond inducing a state of emotional inebriation, yielding much selfish enjoyment for ardent believers, practically nothing.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Fooling Round Shakespeare.

Others abide our question—Thou art free.

Matthew Arnold on Shakespeare.

SINCE poor, mad Delia Bacon fumbled at midnight among the graves at Stratford-on-Avon, there has been no more preposterous theory started concerning the great dramatist than that which is introduced in a play on Shakespeare, written by Messrs. H. F. Rubinstein and Clifford Bax. There are some stupidities so absurd that they can only be attacked by the weapon of ridicule. We deliver ourselves bound hand and foot if we take stupid people seriously. It is not helpful to argue in all seriousness, for it helps them and does not assist us. It is wiser, though not easier, to laugh. This country is full of earnest persons who ought to be assisted to make themselves ridiculous. Instead of which, we often do our best to make them dignified. It is, after all, best to fall back on our sense of humour when we hear the cry of the crank or the squeal of the faddist.

The world has long agreed to regard Shakespeare as the greatest of all writers; as head and shoulders above even Homer and Dante. His writings prove him to have been among the sanest of men. But Messrs. Rubinstein and Bax pretend that Shakespeare was a sentimental lunatic, a man of overpowering sensuality. Indeed, so keen are these two writers to make their case good that they go so far as to allege that the poet's light of love was "Rosaline." This charming creature comes, like the poultry, coloured ribbons, and rabbits from a conjurer's hat, from the sonnets, and to give some kind of substance they have dressed up "the dark lady" of those poems with clothes borrowed from the plays. "Rosaline's" character is drawn as that of an accomplished and imperious wanton, who was worshipped by Shakespeare, now in the seventy-seventh heaven of delight, now in the lowest hell of jealousy, rage, and humiliation. With a mind racked by sensuality, Shakespeare becomes a despairing lover, and touches the fringes of tragedy.

It will be seen that our writers' language is coloured, not plain, and rivals the brush of the pantomime scene painter when it is dipped in crimson lake. Indeed, the ordinary reader, being an instructed citizen of a highly educated nation, will realize that Messrs. Rubinstein's and Bax's observations, like Rudolphe in Theophile Gautier's story, lack *le sens commun*, though, like the famous Rudolphe, they make up for the want by most brilliant qualities. Professor Pollard, for instance, who writes the preface for the new play, says plainly that he neither agreed with it when he first

read the manuscript, nor does he agree with it now; which tribute is the quaintest of testimonials, solicited or otherwise.

In the old cookery books when a recipe for rabbit-pie was given, the instruction started with the words, "First catch your hare." In the new play "the dark lady" of the sonnets is christened "Rosaline." This, however, is simply because the authors wish it so, and even in the initial stages of an inquiry we see clearly the warping of the judgment. Mr. Frank Harris, years ago, identified the "dark lady" with Mary Fitton, the actress, but, unfortunately for him, the portraits of Mary at Arbury show her as possessing a fair complexion, brown hair and grey eyes. Mr. Harris's second line of defence was the alleged animalism of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. These two poems, by the way, are not carnal writing in the sense that the *Song of Solomon* is so. These two verse narratives are elaborated with a cool, steady attention to detail which proves that the poet was thinking more of his verse than his subject. William Hazlitt, an acute critic, described these two particular poems as "a couple of ice-houses," and the author of the *Liber Amoris* was at least as trustworthy a guide as Mr. Harris.

Scandal seldom fails to make itself felt, nor does it often vanish entirely from the memories of men, and it is singular that the name of Mary Fitton and "Rosaline" were never identified with that of Shakespeare until three centuries after the great dramatist's death. It must be remembered that Shakespeare's career in London was known in Stratford. His marriage and his after life in his native town were patent to all. His wife lived with him, and was buried beside him. No breath of scandal has spread its corrosive influence over his wedded life, and the utmost indefiniteness surrounds all the accusations brought against his moral character.

Shakespeare's bust is one of the most interesting of the poet's memorials. The face is full, ample, rounded and healthy looking. It is bland, cheerful, ripe, massive, and English. Haydon, the painter, and Chantrey, the sculptor, both agree in saying that the bust appears to have been done from a cast taken after death. Yet, in an instant, as if at the touch of an enchanter's wand, this greatest of men is to be transformed into a very Caliban, and his works turned into a terrible treatise on corruption, a sickening and repellent Psychopathia Sexualis. The life of William Shakespeare, forsooth, is to be regarded as a story of lust and morbid deviations. John Calvin was a Merry Andrew compared to the author of such a theory, and Calvin's light-hearted jest was that the human heart is evil, happiness a temptation, and the flesh a snare of the Devil.

In his slavery to an obsession Mr. Harris, indeed, would have us believe that Shakespeare was an erotic maniac, and that the mind which created *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*, was a continuous prey to sexual impulses. The comic spirit comes to our aid, and instantly the burden of the accusation falls from our shoulders. The mind's eye roves down the ages, and sees the forms of the kings of thought, and of the man who was knightliest of them all. "Oh, justice! thou art fled to brute beasts, and men have lost their reason" if the greatest man of all this world is but a satyr and a moral degenerate.

Shakespeare's humour is one manifestation of his veracity; and who that looks honestly at the world can help seeing its absurdities? Shakespeare saw them, as he saw so much else; but he could scarce have imagined that anyone would have thought that he was a poor artist bewildered by his ambitions and ruined by his passions. It is too amazing. It is Lucifer, star of the morning, hurled from heaven, and nuzzling with ignoble and superb stupidity among the litter and abominations of the gutter.

MIMNERMUS.



## The Myth of Jesus.

### IV.

(Continued from page 459.)

Woman is still prostrate on her knees before an error, because she has been told that somebody has died for it on the cross. Is the cross, then, an argument?—*Nietzsche, "The Anti-Christ,"* p. 330.

No soul that lived, loved, wrought and died,  
Is this their carrion crucified?  
—*Swinburne, "Before a Crucifix."*

LET us trace the origin of the Messiah idea among the Israelites. It will be remembered that it is recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis that God promised Abraham—a wandering Sheik—that his descendants should be, for number, as the stars in heaven, and as the sand on the seashore, and should possess the gate of their enemies. In their aspirations after wealth and world power the Israelites appear to have been the Germans of the ancient world. But as time rolled on and these magnificent prophecies failed to materialise the idea began to arise, or was adopted from a similar belief current among the Babylonians, that a deliverer, or Messiah, would appear and lead the nation to victory over its enemies and inaugurate an everlasting reign of peace and prosperity, at least, for the Jews. This belief still finds utterance in the daily prayer of every orthodox Jew. As a learned writer observes:—

200 B.C. onwards, Judaism produced a series of books, visions of the future and of the end (always regarded as near), clothed in symbolic language, attributed to some great name in the past, and having as their main theme the triumph of the cause of God by a series of catastrophic interventions which were to bring the world's history to a close and usher in a final golden age.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important of these books was the *Book of Enoch*, which, says Mr. Legge,—

deals at great length with that Messianic hope which had for two centuries been dangled by the prophets before Israel, and which, thanks to the materialistic sense in which it was interpreted by the vast majority of Jews, was to lead directly to their extermination as a nation. *The Book of Enoch* and its many successors and imitators are full of predictions of the coming of a Messiah, who should lead the chosen race to the conquest of the world, and, what was to them probably an even more alluring prospect, to the overthrow and enslavement of all the other people.<sup>2</sup>

There was no reason whatever, apart from their religion, why the Jews, after being conquered by the Romans, should not have settled down in peace and become a part of the Empire. Other nations much greater and more powerful did so. As the historian Gibbon observes:—

The vanquished nations, blended into one great people, resigned the hope, nay, even the wish, of resuming their independence, and scarcely considered their own existence as distinct from the existence of Rome.<sup>3</sup>

And again:—

The Roman name was revered among the most remote nations of the earth. The fiercest barbarians frequently submitted their differences to the arbitration of the emperor, and we are informed by a contemporary historian that he had seen ambassadors, who were refused the honour which they came to solicit, of being admitted into the rank of subjects.<sup>4</sup>

But relying upon the compact with Jehovah, and the scripture promises of a coming Messiah, the Jews rose again and again in futile revolt against the might of Rome, until at last, wearied with the intractability of the Jews, whom they regarded as enemies of the human race, the Roman army, under Titus, stormed Jerusalem and laid it utterly waste, along with the Temple, the centre of the national worship, carrying away the remnant of the inhabitants who escaped the slaughter as captives.

It might be thought that now at last the nation would realize the worthlessness of the promises and prophecies they had hitherto relied upon and recognize their fatal character, but the religious mind is impervious to facts, and the orthodox Jews, especially those in Palestine, still clung tenaciously to the old belief. But among the Jews outside of Palestine, especially in the Greek speaking oriental cities, where there was more freedom of expression, opinion began to change; it was said that the Messiah had appeared in Palestine, that he had gathered disciples and taught for a certain time, and then been crucified by the Romans at the instigation of the high priests; that afterward he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, from whence he would shortly descend again to earth to reward his followers and cast his enemies to perdition.

Paul was one of the first and most influential teachers of this new Gospel. What did Paul know about this new Messiah? Very little, he had never seen or heard Jesus. In fact, when he first heard the story he regarded it as flat blasphemy and became a great persecutor of those who believed in it. He was converted by a vision while journeying on the road to Damascus, a light shone about him and a voice from heaven announced that the owner of it was that very Jesus whose followers Paul was so zealously persecuting. From that moment Paul became as zealous a disciple of the new faith as he had before been a persecutor. Why Jesus did not perform the same miracle on all the opponents of Christianity scripture does not inform us. But the point to be noted here is that Paul never saw Jesus in the flesh, all he saw was a vision.

Now it is to be noted that several of the so-called heretical sects, some of which were earlier than the orthodox party, declared that Jesus never really appeared in the flesh. Mr. Legge, in his learned and able work, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, says:—

Simon, according to Hippolytus, said that Jesus only appeared on earth as a man, but was not really one, and seemed to have suffered in Judæa, although he had not really done so. Basilides, the Egyptian, the leader of another sect, held, according to Irenæus, that the body of Jesus was a phantasm and had no real existence, Simon of Cyrene having been crucified in his stead; while Hippolytus, who seems to have drawn his account of Basilides' teaching from a different source from that used by his predecessor, makes him say that only the body of Jesus suffered and relapsed into "formlessness," but that His soul returned into the different world whence it was drawn. Saturninus, another heresiarch, held, according to both authors, to the phantasmal theory of Jesus' body, which attained such popularity among other Gnostic sects that "Docetism," as the opinion was called, came to be looked upon by later writers as one of the marks of heresy, and Hippolytus imagines that there were in existence sects who attached such importance to this point that they called themselves simply Docetics. Valentinus, from whose teaching, as we shall see, the principal system of the *Pistis Sophia* was probably derived, also adhered to this Docetic theory, and said that the body of Jesus was not made of human flesh, but was constructed "with unspeakable art" so as to resemble it, the dove-like form which had descended into it at His baptism, leaving it before the crucifixion (Vol. II., pp. 16-7).

The distinction between the heretics and the orthodox

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, April, 1921, p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Vol. I., p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1912, Vol. I., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 8.



is purely artificial; all these sects were contending for supremacy; in the end, the sect which taught that Jesus was a real man triumphed over the sects who taught that Jesus was not a real man, because the sect who taught that Jesus was a real man of flesh and blood became more popular than the ones which taught that he was a mere phantasm, and in time became powerful enough to crush their opponents, describe them as heretics, destroy their writings, and instal the believers in the real existence of Jesus as the orthodox. If either of the other sects had triumphed, of course they would have been the orthodox party.

The heretics had their own Gospels, but the orthodox party took such vigorous measures to suppress them that none of the really important ones have survived.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

## Pages From Voltaire.

### ON FANATICISM.

GEOMETRY has not always the property of bestowing a just way of thinking on those who cultivate the science. Over what precipices may a man not fall who depends on those guides of reason? A famous Protestant, who was reckoned one of the first mathematicians of his age, and who followed in the steps of Newton, Leibnitz and Bernoulli, took it into his head, some years ago, to draw some very strange conclusions. It has been said, that with one grain of faith a man might remove mountains. This person by an analysis wholly geometrical, says to himself, "I have many grains of faith, therefore I ought to do something more wonderful than removing mountains." This was he who made his appearance in London in 1707, together with a number of learned persons, and some of them even sensible men. He announced publicly that he would raise a dead man to life in any churchyard they should think proper. Their reasoning was always guided by synthesis. They argued in this way: 'The true disciples must certainly work miracles, and we are the true disciples; therefore, we can do anything we please. Simple saints of the Church of Rome, who were wholly ignorant of geometry, have raised a great number of dead; therefore, *a fortiori*, we who are the reformers of the reformed must certainly be able to raise whom we please.

It is impossible to answer such arguments, they are all in accordance with the strictest rules of scholastic philosophy. Here then we have what has deluged antiquity with prodigies. Hence we may account for the temple of Æsculapius being always hung with votive tablets, and every pillar of it decorated with the crutches of the lame, and the pictures of cures performed, with the images of little children in fever, as large as life. In short, everything was miraculous.

In fact, our famous Protestant geometrician I have just mentioned was so much in earnest that he positively assured the public he would raise the dead, and this plausible proposal made such an impression on the public that Queen Anne was obliged to appoint a day, an hour, and a churchyard, at the option of the adept, where he might perform his miracle in a dignified manner in the presence of the magistracy. Our geometrical apostle made choice of St. Paul's Cathedral to exhibit his holy art. The populace lined the place, while soldiers were in position to keep both the dead and living in order. The magistrates took their seats, and the recorder wrote every circumstance of the transactions in the public archives. One cannot be too exact, or use too many precautions where miracles are concerned. A body was therefore taken

up in the presence of the saint, such as he was pleased to direct. He prayed, fell on his knees, made a thousand holy contortions in which he was followed by his companions—but in vain; the corpse gave not the smallest sign of life, so that they were forced to carry him back to his hole, and content themselves with some slight punishment of the raiser of the departed, and his disciples. I have since seen one of these poor fellows; he owned to me that one of them must have been tainted with a little matter of venial sin, which the departed had discovered, and that had it not been for this the resurrection had most certainly taken place.

If it were lawful to blaze abroad anything to the discredit of those to whom the public owes the greatest and sincerest respect, I should now be tempted to say that Newton, the great Newton himself, has discovered in the Revelation that the pope is anti-Christ, with much more of the same kind of rubbish. I verily think I should call him an Arian in good earnest. I am sensible this weakness of Newton is to that of our other geometricians as a unit is to an infinite number. There is certainly no kind of comparison. But what a wretched set of beings the human species must be, when such a man as the immortal Newton could persuade himself he saw the present history of Europe in the Apocalypse!

It would appear that superstition is an epidemical kind of disorder, and one from which the brightest minds and even the most liberal of thinkers are not wholly immune. There are, in Turkey, persons of extreme good sense, who would suffer impaling alive for certain opinions of *Abubekr*. These principles are admitted to be just, their other arguments are certainly very conclusive. The Navaricians, the Radarists and the Jabarists damn each other mutually by mere subtle and cobweb arguments; they all of them draw very plausible conclusions, though none of them have the courage to examine the principles on which these arguments are founded.

A report is spread abroad in the world that there is a giant seventy feet high; immediately, the doctors in a body examine what the colour of his hair ought to be, with the dimensions of his thumb, and the breadth of his nails. There is nothing but outcries, intrigues and disputes. They who maintain that the little finger of the giant is no more than six inches in diameter condemn to the flame such as assert that the little finger is a foot thick. "But, for heaven's sake, gentlemen, are you certain that such a monster exists?" says a bystander with great modesty. "What a blasphemous doubt!" cry all the disputants. "What an impious absurdity!" Thus they come to a pious conclusion to stone this bystander. And when they have murdered him in the most orthodox and edifying manner possible, they fall together by the ears, according to custom, about the mystery of the nails and the little finger. *Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.*

But surely, if there be anything with which metaphysics have nothing to do, and where a plain man, without skill to walk in the arduous paths of abstruse reasoning, may yet find himself at home, it is religion. For the object of religion is *conduct*; and conduct is really, however men may overlay it with philosophical disquisitions, the simplest thing in the world. That is to say, it is the simplest thing in the world as far as *understanding* is concerned; as regards *doing*, it is the hardest thing in the world.—*Matthew Arnold.*

All faiths are, to their own believers, just,  
For none believe because they will, but must.  
By education most have been misled:  
We so believe because we are so bred.  
The priest continues what the nurse began,  
And thus the boy imposes on the man.

—*Dryden.*



## Acid Drops.

A deputation waited on the Home Secretary the other day to ask for the release of those who are at present in prison for offences committed under "Dora" and the Emergency Powers Act. The Home Secretary refused to do anything of the kind on the ground that if it were done people would break the law when a special set of conditions existed in the hope that they would be released when the emergency had passed. And that strikes us as terrorism thinly disguised. He not only wishes to punish men and women for offences committed at a time when in special circumstances feeling runs high, but he wishes to impress others that if they offend there will be no leniency shown, even after the special state of affairs has ended. Why not shoot them out of hand? That *might* be still more effective.

The Home Secretary indignantly denied that these men were imprisoned for an expression of opinion. But that is sheer nonsense. They were imprisoned for that and nothing else. The charge brought against them in the courts stated as much. Or if it is said that the opinions expressed were such as would lead to a breach of the peace, the untruthfulness of the Home Secretary's statement is still clear. We have ourselves given illustrations in these columns from time to time of the nature of the offences committed. In one case a policeman arrested a man who was duly sentenced for making "untrue and extravagant statements"—a charge which, if impartially enforced, would imprison the whole of the Cabinet, from the Prime Minister downward. And we have no hesitation in saying that under such powers as the government took to itself anyone who expressed an opinion that did not please the authorities might be imprisoned—if it were safe to do so.

The truth is that, for the last seven years the government of this country has been plainly out for the control of opinion. The war gave it its first chance and the state of demoralization left by the war gave it its second. It made it an offence to express certain opinions, even in private conversation, and thus brought back one of the worst aspects of the Inquisition. It raided men's houses and made it an offence to be even in possession of certain documents and publications. It broke up printing presses and so reintroduced a greater tyranny of the press than this country had known since the early seventeenth century. And it reintroduced the Star Chamber by taking the power to imprison a man on a mere order of the Home Secretary and without any public statement of the alleged offence. It has behaved like a band of anarchists in its defiance of constitutional rights and precedents, and has gone far towards destroying confidence in the impartiality of the Courts, of which Englishmen were always, and with justice, so proud.

And the most serious feature of all this was not the loss of our liberties, but the ease with which they were lost, and the apparent lack of sense, so far as the mass of the people are concerned, that we had lost anything at all. And that really suggests that except as a figure of speech it might be queried whether we ever really possessed these liberties. What we mean is this. Freedom is ultimately a personal matter, and unless a people individually feel the reality and the need of freedom they neither have it in fact, nor is it difficult to rob them of even the mere form of liberty. When the government came to deal with the drink question during the war it will be remembered that a "No Treating Order" was passed. But it became a dead letter at once. People would submit to regulations as to hours of sale, because that was a matter they were already familiar with. But the right of one man to "treat" another was one that was so widely felt that everyone spontaneously ignored it, and it was dead almost as soon as it was born. And one cannot avoid the conviction that if the British people as a whole set any real store on freedom, not a tenth part of the government interference that has taken place would have been tolerated.

And that finally suggests the truth that we have still a great deal to do before we can really and accurately call the British people free. Authority, whether it be the authority of State or Church, will always fight to keep itself in being, and will always resent criticism as an attack upon the well-being of the State. That was the essential ground on which the Church strove to suppress freedom of thought, and it is the ground on which the modern State makes the same attempt. And what we have to grasp is the fact that the State may be as great an enemy of freedom of thought as was ever the Church, with the further fact that the only way to make liberty secure is to make it a personal conviction and a personal possession. In this work we shall get very little help from any of the political parties, Conservative, Liberal, Labour, or Socialist. There are varying degrees of coercion behind them all. The Freethinker will, as usual, have to walk a lonely road, holding aloft a banner that political opportunism, of all shades, and religious bigotry, are only too ready to trail in the dust.

Providence does not appear to have any special regard for the alleged sacredness of the priestly calling. A burglar entered St. Andrew's Vicarage, Lincoln, and stole money and a watch. Before leaving, the unwelcome visitor made tea for himself.

The Secretary of the Treasury stated in Parliament that the British Ambassador at Paris receives yearly £2,500 and £14,000 for expenses; the Ambassador at Washington £2,500 and £17,500. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland receives £20,000 and extras. No mention was made of the salaries of the chief ecclesiastics, such as "Canterbury," £15,000; "York," £10,000; "London," £10,000, or that the Bishops share about £200,000 annually.

We do not gamble on the weather, and so it may be that by the time this is in the hands of our readers we may be getting plenty of rain. All the same, it is remarkable that we have not had something like a general petition from all Christians for rain to their rain-making deity. In primitive times rain-making was one of the functions of the priests, and if they did not make it they were likely to get into trouble with their followers. Even the gods themselves were not exempt from criticism, and a god who did not attend to his part of the business and send rain when it was wanted was likely to find himself deposed. But they were the days when people really expected their gods to do something, and stood up to them when they fell short in their obligations. Nowadays, piety seems to be shown by imbecility and subserviency, and the less the gods do the more the really pious person squirms before them.

It is true there are prayers for rain in the prayer book of the established Churches, and all the other Churches say they believe in them. But if there is no answer to their prayers they believe in them just the same. They say God will send the rain in his own good time. And as he will, presumably, do that in any case, one is left wondering what is the use of praying, anyway?

So we are open to prove that the prayers of an Atheist are quite as effective as are the prayers of a Christian. And in this office we have prayed for rain. And we venture to believe that after that the rain will come. And when it comes we shall have as good a proof of answer to prayer as anyone has ever yet given. For we have always believed that if you pray for the right sort of thing, in the right sort of way, and *give it time*, the prayer will be answered. Those who believe otherwise do not understand the mechanism of prayer.

There is, according to the *Star*, a London milkman who has put the question of prayer to a practical test. He was in doubt as to whether he should raise the price of his milk or not. So he took the question to the Lord in prayer, with the result that whatever other milkmen may do he has resolved to raise the price of his milk by one penny per quart. It is quite evident that prayer is



answered—and that it pays. The only other consideration that suggests itself is that in many directions tradesmen have raised their prices without praying. Evidently, then, prayer is not altogether indispensable, even here.

The Duke of Rutland gained the name of "rainmaker" when three years ago he appealed to the bishops to have special prayers offered for rain. Questioned by a journalist, recently, concerning the drought, the duke said that "he was going about with few clothes and no hope." It looks as if one believer had lost his faith in rain-making, if not in religion.

The Bill for the amendment of the Deceased Wife's Sister Act, making valid marriage between a man and his deceased brother's widow, has been passed by the Houses of Parliament. This will mean another alteration in the Church of England Prayer Book, and is directly contrary to ecclesiastical law.

The Bishop of Ripon says that the marriage of the Prince of Wales will entail alterations in the Church of England Prayer Book. What a searchlight this throws on the real value of religion when individual members of one family are thus selected for special honour.

The *Evening Standard* (July 14) announced that the Bishop of Woolwich would conduct five meetings for men in the Borough Market, beginning on Monday, 18th inst. "The bishop invites questions and discussion, and says that opposition will be respected." From the *Christian World* we learn that the Revs. R. C. Gillie, Thomas Phillips, S. W. Hughes, S. Maurice Watts, F. C. Spurr, and others, described as "prominent men," had accepted the invitation of the Christian Evidence Forward Movement "to come out into the open" in Hyde Park and combat the opposition always to be found there. An Anglican Church in the Marylebone Road is also holding open-air meetings during the summer months, and inviting questions and discussion.

These are signs of the times. The Churches invite discussion when they cannot stifle it. At present they are face to face with science, the Higher Criticism, and competitors in the shape of moving pictures and Sunday concerts and excursions. Intellectually, the Churches represent only the dregs of the community in every European country. As far as the masses are concerned, if we except the Salvation Army, hell-fire and a personal devil have disappeared from the creed of modern Protentantism, and it is impossible to find a satisfactory substitute for them. "A kirk wi'out a de'il is no worth a damn!" exclaimed an old Scottish elder to his "meenister" who had dropped hell and the devil, and thereby succeeded in emptying the church.

A chick has been hatched at Uxbridge with four wings, two heads, and another with four legs. Christian Evidence lecturers kindly note.

From the chancel steps of St. Saviour's Church, Paddington, Lord Phillimore addressed a congregation on the needs of the poor clergy. We wonder if he mentioned that the Bench of Bishops absorbed annually nearly £200,000, and that the bachelor Bishop of London alone receives sufficient money to keep thirty ordinary families in comfort.

"You have been endowed by Providence with considerable ability, which had you turned it to good account might have placed you in a very different position," said the Recorder in sentencing, at the Old Bailey, a man to five years' penal servitude. That is just like Providence, which gives a man ability without at the same time giving him the sense or the character to use it properly. We know many quite nice people who are born fools, and some quite smart ones who are born rogues. And one would like to know what kind of respect can one have for Providence after managing things in this way? Even

the Recorder, as an instrument of Providence, seems to leave something to be desired. For with a little more common-sense he might refrain from using these stupid pious phrases which invariably betray a complete absence of thinking. For it is certain that no one who realized the implication of what he was saying would use such an expression. But we suppose that if everyone stopped to think whether there was any sense or not in the religious phrases they used religion would soon be as dead as a door-nail.

Fifteen persons have been picked up in seven days in London suffering from starvation. The Thames Embankment is, we read in the Press, presenting a worse picture of homeless starving people than it did before the war. This serves as a pretty comment on the attitude of the clergy now and during the war. Then they were praising the men as saints, joining in the promises of politicians that there were to be no more wars, and that the welfare of the soldiers would be the first charge on the income of the nation. And the Bishop of London said that those who were killed going over the top were booked straight for heaven. Now his Lordship finds it more convenient to devote his energies to the drink question and similar safe topics, and the rest of the clergy are equally silent. We suppose that one day it will dawn upon the people that the clergy represent, in the main, a force of active anaesthetists which the government uses in its own interests.

The Rev. R. F. Horton says that Ireland's demand for self determination is quite Christian and is in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel. That will come as news to many. So far as we are aware, the extent to which the New Testament has favoured self determination is to advise all, on peril of eternal damnation, to obey the powers that be, for they are ordained of God. It never seems to strike Dr. Horton that what Ireland appears to be suffering from is just too much Christianity. If it had less it would be better off, and if it had none at all there would be far more hopes of the people settling down peaceably together. If the Protestants could forget their Protestantism and the Catholics their Catholicism there would be nothing to prevent the whole of the Irish people settling down to an agreement as to what they really desire, and if that were done the government would not be able to stand out for long against the united claim of the whole of the Irish people.

Do the economics of Jesus include reservoirs for water? Taking no thought for the morrow would have made us a very thirsty nation at present. We throw out the subject to those moulders of opinion, *i.e.*, the newspapers, "Are reservoirs blasphemous?" O ye of little faith!

Will there be united prayers for rain when the wind is in the right direction? Remembering our superior "tonnage" of explosives in the great war, and the happy synchronization of prayer, we have no doubt that this experience will be utilized by the Churches—same dog, same piece of string.

Here is a new pilgrim's progress. Early in September the Bishop of Southwark will start a pleasant pilgrimage in his diocese, travelling through the valley of the Thames. Truly, the way of the Cross is hard.

We have been saying for years that there is no other day in the week that is nearly so demoralizing as Sunday. And as it is a question of time for the Christian to repeat what the Freethinker has already said, we are not surprised to find Father Degen, of Coalville, asserting that "More vicious conduct takes place on Sunday evenings than at any other time. And no wonder! For does not the rigid Sabbatarianism of England impose upon them complete abstinence from laudable and honest pastimes?" And Christian England has been pursuing this path of demoralization for three hundred years! Man usually pays for his blunders, but he has not payed so heavily for any other blunder as he has for that of creating God.



### 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.

J. FOTHERCILL.—Have booked South Shields for October 2. Please write on other matters as early as possible.

M. BEESLEY.—A very creditable letter for a boy of thirteen, and indicates an unusual capacity for sustained thinking for one of that age. We congratulate you.

TAB CAN.—We do not know the author of the lines "And his hopes and fears are lies and lies." Perhaps one of our readers may be better informed.

"UNORTHODOX."—You evidently overlooked our note of a week or two ago that we were of opinion that the correspondence had better cease. Neither side appears to be getting any "forrader," and when that is the case it is time for it to stop.

W. H. WISE.—The idea running through your verses is a good one, but the verses themselves are rather too rough hewn for use and would be better if much compressed.

H. MORRIS.—Mr. Mann's *Modern Materialism* will be published shortly. The price will be 2s. in paper, and 3s. 6d. in cloth. Mr. Cohen has dealt with the evolutionary conception of deity in his *Theism or Atheism*. We fancy you will find there all you need for meeting the arguments of your Theistic friends. Pleased you like Volney's *Ruins* so much. Evidently the desire for the work is larger than we had thought.

G. GILETTI (Beira, Portuguese E. Africa).—Thanks. The cuttings have not yet come to hand. We agree, the English Sunday is a deadly affliction to those who have been used to spending the first day of the week under Continental conditions.

T. BENNETT.—Yes, Mr. Whitehead evidently stirred up things in the district, and we hope he will be equally successful during his forthcoming visit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Two registered letters from Beira, Portuguese E. Africa, addressed to the *Freethinker* have been stolen. The postman came with them while the office was closed and foolishly handed them to some unknown person who pretended to belong to the office. The letters were delivered on July 19. We shall be obliged if the senders will inform us as to the nature of the contents of the packets.

Miss Massey writes us apropos of our issue of her father's *Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*:—

I think the form in which you have issued it infinitely preferable to that of its first appearance. I should like to see the others treated in the same way. I wish it all success—for your sake as well as my father's. I must also thank you for your kind and appreciative preface. May I point out one little error. You speak of my father's widow and daughter. My father left four daughters—myself (I put myself first because I arrived first), my own sister (who is in my charge whilst I live), and two step-sisters, one of whom died of tuberculosis. I have now lost three half-sisters and a half-brother, all as dear to me as if they had been the children of my own mother as well as of my father. I think our family history has been one long series of tragedies, and it often seems marvellous to me how my father (who was devotedly attached to his children) could have struggled on and completed his work in spite of all there was to crush him, never wavering in his conviction that he must do it whatever the cost.

We are glad to have done something to bring one of Massey's writings before new readers, and should be pleased to bring others if the sale of the *Historical Jesus* warrants it. It is certainly a pamphlet that every Freethinker should read. When the trade conditions improve we may suggest a scheme by which a steady output of desirable publications may be maintained.

Mr. Ralph Hall Caine is a regular and well-known contributor to the *Isle of Man Press*, and in the *Island papers* he keeps up a continuous warfare in favour of freedom of thought, and, among other things, is constantly fighting in favour of a free Sunday. We believe that his efforts in this direction have met with considerable success, and visitors to the *Island* have much to thank him for while they are enjoying their Sunday in a little more of a civilized manner than the Sabbatarians of the place would permit had they their way. Mr. Caine evidently does not mean his attack on Sabbatarianism to cease, and in a booklet dealing with the history and archæology of the *Isle of Man* he includes one essay on "The Aftermath of Sabbatarianism," and another on "Making sense out of Song," which also deals with the question of Sunday entertainments. We should hardly think that the clergy of the *Island* look very kindly on Mr. Caine, but his ceaseless conflicts with them on various matters in the press leads one to believe that he is not troubled much on that account.

There has been a great deal of talk lately in the religious press about the evil teaching that is carried on in Socialist Sunday-schools. Mr. George Whitehead now sends us a copy of his *The Socialist Sunday-school Movement*, and *A Lesson in Socialism*; from Jack London's "White Fang." Both pamphlets were written several years ago, and strike us as being quite pleasing introductions to a study of sociology and of social evolution. There is little that is specifically Socialist in them, and much that every child should know and become familiar with. And they are written in Mr. Whitehead's usual easy and pleasing manner. The price of the pamphlets is twopence each.

We are pleased to note the following from *The Two Worlds*:—

Students of the history of religions are placed under a debt of gratitude to the Pioneer Press for the publication of Volney's great work, *Ruins of Empires*.....Gerald Massey, Godfrey Higgins, Flinders Petrie, J. G. Frazer, and recently J. M. Robertson, have all dealt with phrases of the same subject, but each has been indebted to Volney and Dupuis.....The author traces in fascinating fashion the origin and development of the basic ideas out of which modern religious systems have developed, and a careful study of such a volume is likely to exterminate narrow creedalism and religious bigotry. Every student should read Volney's *Ruins*, to which is added *The Law of Nature*, crown 8vo. cloth, 236 pp., with astronomical map.

Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a crime.

—Thomas Paine.



## Utopia.

In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution, abolishes at one stroke of the sword the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel.

—P. J. Proudhon.

WHERE is Utopia? It is just beyond where we live. We live in the Land of Practicality which was in many ways the Utopia of our grandfathers, and still more of our great grandfathers.

We live in the Land of Practicality where men talk to each other across continents and oceans; where you can fly from London to Paris and back comfortably in an afternoon. Such is our Land of Practicality, but in the wildest dream of an Arabian night it was never pictured. If some idealist of only two hundred years ago had declared that some day men would get to the world in which we live he would have been derided as a crank far more crazy than Eugene Debs or Thomas L. M'Cready.

Why is there any such place as Utopia? Simply because people will not move forward more quickly. They go on inch by inch. Anybody can easily see that the road grows better every step, and the few who forge ahead call back that the country is better further on, but the masses stupidly refuse to budge until literally driven onward another inch by circumstances.

Let me say plainly what I mean.

There is no such place as Utopia; no Land of Impracticability. Nothing is impracticable that falls within the limits of human power to accomplish. Utopia is not a country into which we cannot go. It is a country into which we will not go. Anything that is right can be done, and it can be done now. Most people have a habit of saying of some simple measure that some intelligent person proposes: "Yes, that would be grand, and it is quite right that it should be done, but it is not for now. We shall never see it done, but perhaps in a couple of hundred years or so?" This is the reason why things are not done that should be done. What the majority of people regard as hopeless for them will surely not be done in their time. But there is not a scheme of social regeneration proposed by any of the advanced thinkers of this fermenting age that is impracticable, and the most radical of them all is the most practicable of all, because it is the rightest of all, and for that reason the simplest of all. Some of these schemes are better than others, but they are all possible, all practicable.

The Single Tax is quite practicable. There is no difficulty in shifting taxes from material things on to the value of the land that each person owns or occupies.

Complete State Socialism is practicable. All forms of industry can be run by the State, just as the carrying of letters and parcels is now. The State can certainly work the mines and the railways just as well as it can manage the Army and Navy.

Anarchism is quite practicable. The use of violence to compel men to do what we think right has been proved by experience to be utterly useless and productive of nothing but harm. Soldiers, police judges, lawyers, gaolers and hangmen are, therefore, entirely superfluous. Some of them are ornamental and some rather interesting, but there is no need for them, unless barnacles are useful to a ship. Kings, presidents, governors, mayors, legislatures, police and military make up a great army that stands in the way of the human race, right across the path of progress, an army fringed in black by the sombre robes and gloomy faces of the officials of the great religious machine. We have all been trained to think that we could not do without them, but we would be infinitely better off without them than with them.

I have repeatedly pointed out that there can be no true freedom as long as vacant land is held out of use, and have demanded the immediate abolition of any ownership of land apart from its productive use. I am told that such a demand is impracticable. But it is not. The freedom for use of vacant land is not something that cannot be accomplished; it is only something that the majority of people do not wish to be accomplished. If those who now own vacant land were wise enough to give it up, or even to put it up to public auction, the thing would be done. The only difficulty is that they do not wish to do it. They prefer that millions of persons should die of slow starvation every year rather than lose a few pounds, notwithstanding the easy knowledge that the general liberation of vacant land would enrich those who gave it up.

If I say there is no need that the government should interfere with trade by prescribing what kind of money shall be used, it is called an impracticable dream. But it is nothing of the kind. If the government would take its hands off and allow persons to make their own bargains, collect their own debts and take care of their own property and virtue, the people would be much better off than they are. The really impracticable idea is in imagining that we can prevent people from being swindled by entrusting the control of our currency to the directors of the Bank of England; that we can prevent them from cheating each other by enacting laws for the collection of debts; that we can make them virtuous by prescribing how they shall marry; that we can keep them sober by directing just at what particular hours they must stop drinking. All this is the real impracticable folly.

Do you point to the criminal classes and say that we have not yet arrived at the time when we can dispense with severe restrictive laws? I point to the criminal classes and tell you that these are the necessary products of our foolish and wicked legislation in defence of vested interests. We restrict people in the use of land, and curtail the amount of money in circulation; we tax them upon nearly everything they use to support all sorts of military and other schemes of which they may not approve; we drive them to drink and then despise and maltreat them for getting drunk; we push them into crime and then imprison and kill them because they are criminals; we drive into marriage those who ought never to be married and then set up a sanctimonious whine about the increasing number of divorces. Our present social system is more like a game of "Pigs in Clover" than anything else. We are constantly trying to make people do what they should not do and trying to prevent them from doing what they should do; but we cannot succeed in doing either, and what most persons call Utopian dreams are only the sayings of rational men who understand our present folly and impracticability and show us the right road out of our difficulties.

Criminals, indeed! If I had £100 in my pocket I would rather meet a pickpocket than a Sunday-school superintendent with shares of something or other to sell. And I would risk my life among highwaymen as soon as I would become a miner or a railway shunter, working for respectable business men who have made up their minds that men are cheaper than scientific safety appliances. Government by violence necessary to suppress criminals! Why, the chief use of such government is to defend and maintain the real and greatest of criminals.

Where, then, is Utopia? It is just beyond where we are. How can we reach Utopia? By cultivating the habit of thinking that whatever is right is practicable; by ceasing to think and say that right things can be done in two hundred years, but not now. Right things can be done now by me and you, at least, and others will follow our example. In Utopia there will be no church but the brotherhood of men. We can



live in the spirit of that brotherhood now. In Utopia no one will hold vacant land out of use. No one will say that because other people do wrong—because the system is wrong—it is right for him to do wrong. We can free ourselves from the crime of owning vacant land now.

In Utopia no able-bodied person will be so dishonourable as to enjoy the services of others without rendering them some adequate service in return. We can be sure that we take nothing that we do not earn now. In Utopia there will be no drunkards, no libertines of either sex. We can live always temperately and in moral purity now. In Utopia there will be mostly high thinking and plain living. We can live that way now. In Utopia work will be pleasant and healthful because congenial and free from drudgery. Unfortunately, we cannot actualize that now. Man is the one animal condemned to heavy and unwholesome toil in order to earn a precarious living, or else to the foul dishonour of living on the labour of others. But we can dream of and long for a far better state of society, and tell others of our dreams and longings. We can say to every intelligent person we meet: "See! Yonder is Utopia, and we can reach it tomorrow, if we will!"

G. O. W.

## The Faithful Malefactor.

### II.

(Continued from page 477.)

A WRITER with these tendencies, however, is as unfit to take up history as a soft-hearted man is to go in for surgery; his own fine qualities lead him astray and make him useless, or worse. There are persons inclined to believe a tale because it is nice, just as there are others inclined to believe a tale because it is nasty; indeed, the nicer or the nastier the tale is, the more inclined are the respective parties to believe it. An honest man can hardly say which of these sets commits the greater folly. The niceness or the nastiness of a tale has nothing whatever to do with its credibility, for this is determined by totally different factors, such as the category of the incident, the consistency of the narrative, the nature of the external evidence, affirmative, or contradictory, and the trustworthiness or otherwise of the narrator and his sources. We should not have detained the reader on this point had it not been that religious teachers are accustomed to tell the young and the ignorant—their easy and habitual prey—that moral beauty, in the case of Biblical narratives, sufficiently attests truth, which is nothing more or less than a very mean and despicable falsehood, such as in business matters throws hosts of tricksters into jail. As to the beautiful stories which Luke contributes, several of them are obviously nothing but pure inventions, examples being, the visit of the angel to Mary, the apparition of the angels to the shepherds, and the presence of the angel strengthening Jesus in the garden. It is doubtful, however, whether Luke invented these and other attractive incidents himself. Perhaps they were already extant, and he merely gathered them together; we think this was the case with the greater part. Character is evinced equally by selection and by invention. The cock in the fable of *Æsop* prefers a barley-corn to a pearl; the merchant in the parable of Jesus takes a different view. Luke may have prized highly what Mark esteemed lightly. They were certainly unlike in temperament, genius, and culture. Probably, however, Luke had access to a quantity of material that Mark never saw. We are able, in some measure, to appreciate his critical ability by studying the deviations that he makes from the account which Mark supplies, and by comparing his

efforts with those of Matthew, who also handled the same narrative independently. Some of his changes seem of indisputable value. Here are three of the latter:—

(1) Luke omits to state that the kiss which Judas gave to Jesus was a prearranged sign; an improbable fact which Mark affirms and Matthew repeats.

(2) Luke says that Jesus was kept in guard the night of his arrest, and insulted by the menials to whom he was entrusted, whereas Mark, followed by Matthew, says that Jesus was tried at once on being arrested, despite the inconvenient hour, and that they who insulted him were his own judges. This change does away with the second council of the Jewish authorities, an event attested by Mark and Matthew, though the necessity for it is the reverse of obvious.

(3) Luke makes Pilate say of Jesus, "nothing worthy of death hath been done by him; I will, therefore, chastise him and release him"; and he omits all reference to Jesus having been scourged, simply declaring that the Jews refused the offer which Pilate made. Mark, however, followed by Matthew, says nothing about the aforesaid proposal, but declares that Pilate, though convinced of the entire innocence of Jesus, and well inclined towards him, nevertheless had him scourged before the crucifixion, a piece of cruelty which his good will to the prisoner might surely have caused him to dispense with.

But the most important point of the difference in question is, that the verdict which Luke here ascribes to Pilate proves him to have thought Jesus worthy of chastisement but not of death, the former opinion being a primitive trait totally suppressed by the other evangelists, and elsewhere obscured by Luke himself.

These instances show that Luke had critical aptitude. As to his judgment in the case which forms the subject of the present essay, there are at least three points which support it.

(1) The use of the name *Jesus* instead of *Lord* in the apostrophe, as given by the judiciously chosen text of the Revisers, is very remarkable. For there is no doubt that Jesus was "Jesus" to his contemporaries, except, perhaps, at one or two supreme moments. The title "Lord" which Luke himself is so fond of giving him, suggests the reverence of a period when idealisation had begun its work. But in this story the man calls him "Jesus" and not "Lord," or even "Master," which is certainly a note of antiquity highly favourable to the trustworthiness of the narrative.

(2) The fact that the man does not fix his faith upon the person of Jesus or upon the sacrifice of Jesus, but only regards him as about to bring in the kingdom of heaven, clearly shows that the story was not invented under Pauline influence, but presupposes a source free from the belief that Jesus, though undoubtedly the Messiah, was likewise the sin-offering for the world, the slain lamb by whose blood believers would be redeemed and sanctified. Compare the account, for example, with that of the Philippian Jailor (Acts xvi. 31), or with the similitude which the author of the fourth Gospel puts into the mouth of Jesus in reference to the Brazen Serpent (Acts iii. 14, 15). Here Paul's doctrine of justification by faith as the only means of safety is at the bottom of both narratives, but it is altogether absent in the case which Luke records, a thing remarkable, indeed, as he is said to have been the author of Acts, and one who accompanied Paul with love and docility.

(3) The words, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," look as if they belonged to a period when the doctrine that Jesus at his death descended into hell had not yet been thought of.

This curious tenet entered the Creeds at a comparatively late date, but from very early times it prevailed throughout the Church. The first Epistle of Peter, doubtless a spurious work, but still referable to the



days of Luke, says that Jesus when dead in the flesh, but alive in the spirit, preached in the latter to the imprisoned ones who had been incredulous while Noah was building his Ark (iii. 18, 19); and again, it declares that the Gospel was "preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (iv. 1).

*The Shepherd of Hermas*, which appeared at the end of the first century, or early in the second, actually makes the apostles follow their Lord's example and go down to evangelise in the shades below (B. 3, Sim. 9). But there is no trace of such a doctrine in the present episode, or in any of its attendant circumstances. On the showing of all the Synoptics Jesus died at the turn of the ninth hour. Hence, as the Jewish day ended at the twelfth hour, which coincided with sunset, there would only be a space of about three hours from the death of Jesus to the end of the day. Thus there does not seem to have been over much time for him to have descended into hell to preach to the imprisoned spirits, and then to have joined the man with whom he had promised to be in Paradise before the close of the day.

*The Gospel of Nicodemus*, previously quoted, says that when Jesus returned from below at the head of a joyous and triumphant host of patriarchs and prophets whom he had released from their dismal abode, he found the man already in Paradise, though he had had some difficulty about getting admitted by Michael the doorkeeper, having come in a very sorry state with his cross on his shoulder. The fourth Gospel says that soldiers were sent by Pilate to break the legs of Jesus and of the other two to produce death, but that only the legs of the two were broken as Jesus was found to be already dead; albeit, for wantonness, or from some other cause, one of the band pierced Jesus on the side with his spear, letting out blood and water. If Jesus really were dead, he might have preceded his fellow sufferer into Paradise, and, after meeting him there, have descended into hell, but we think this explanation likely to be condemned by the proper authorities on the score of novelty. In passing be it observed that certain of the Fathers believed the man to have received baptism by being sprinkled with the water and the blood bursting forth from the riven side of Jesus, because without baptism it would have been impossible for him to enter Paradise and there was no other means of having the rite administered. To return. It must frankly be confessed that the narrative before us gives no trace whatever of any design on the part of Jesus to go down into Hell, Hades, or the underworld, but rather the contrary, for it shows that his mind was altogether filled with the hope of reaching Paradise, which, according to the experience of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. xxii. 14), and the current belief of the day, was in quite the opposite direction, namely, up above; indeed, it is very likely that the author of Hebrews referred to this hope when he said that Jesus, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (2 Cor. xxii. 2).

These facts, however, indicate that the present narrative is of very early origin, and enjoyed sufficient authority to be preserved even at a time when it might well have been seen to conflict with a popular dogma like that of the descent into hell.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be Concluded.)

Away forever with the creeds and books and forms and laws and religions that take from the soul liberty and reason. Down with the idea that thought is dangerous! Perish the infamous doctrine that man can have property in man! Let us resent with indignation every effort to put a chain upon our minds. If there is no God, certainly we should not bow and cringe and crawl. If there is a God, there should be no slaves.—*Ingersoll*.

## The Death of the Gods.

CREATION WITHOUT A CREATOR.

KARYOKINESIS IN ARTIFICIAL CELLS.

A LABORATORY experiment is sufficient to effect the death of the Gods so much exploited by Fanaticism.

The mystery of creation no longer exists for the conscience that is free. Readers of *L'Idée Libre* know that without the help of a creator I have manufactured artificial cells capable of reproduction. (I shall send microscopical preparations, at an early date, to the Academy of Sciences.)

In a capillary tube some chloride of calcium is diffused in a solution of bifluoride of potassium, obtainable according to my technique (C. R. Acad. Sc. Paris, May 19, 1919, and June 2, 1920). At temperatures of 20 to 30 degrees periodical precipitates are formed with a wave-like structure which slowly transform into globules. At the points where these waves are linear one may observe nuclei dividing by the complicated process of Karyokinesis so often posited as a proof of vital force.

The details of this division may be found in almost any biological treatise, but the phenomena consist essentially in an equal division of all the elements of the cell. The directive spheres separate, producing the achromatic spindle; the filament of the nucleus divides into chromosomes.

Now, in my artificial cells one finds the achromatic spindle, the polar bodies, the minute barrel-like figure, the chromosomes or fragments of the filament oriented in two rows and intensely coloured.

Briefly, these artificial nuclei are exactly like the natural ones, and the chromosomes have also to undergo a longitudinal, equitative segmentation in order to produce two nuclei, two cells identical with the first.

Is this fact not equivalent to the reproduction of the great phenomenon of Heredity?

Let us go on perfecting the technique and multiplying such cells until organisms be ultimately produced capable of living in a suitable environment. We have mastered the first essential.

The Gods are dead.

In the first days of life upon the earth, when its crust cooled sufficiently, such infiltrations must have occurred in the siliceous rocks, in agate or chalcedony, and *Protozoa* (primordial living organisms) resulting the long cycle of secular chemical and morphological evolution commenced that was to end eventually in the coming of *Pithecanthropus* and Man.

These cells of the laboratory are destined to constitute a new reign, and their evolution doubtlessly reserves some extraordinary surprises. The superannuated idea of a "Creator" is definitely annihilated by these results, which may be duplicated by all observers who follow the lines I have indicated elsewhere.

The multiplication of artificial cells deprived of albumen and diastase and free from the conditions set down by the traditional school destroys also the famous dogma of Virchow: "Omnis cellula a cellula, omne vivum ex ovo." (Every cell comes from another cell, all life comes from an egg.)

I insist, then, on the ideas that I have developed in my previous articles in *L'Idée Libre*: Everything comes from the Cosmos, all is a "cycle"; there is no definite boundary line between life and death, between dead and living matter, between the organic and the inorganic world.

We must boldly propagate the new philosophy from now onward. In order to rout the forces of religious fanaticism we must, in our next World's Congress, study and adopt the means of spreading and popularizing it in all directions. The war has demonstrated the failure of Catholic civilization; it has brought us face to face with the frightful problems of food famine and moral and intellectual regression. Experimental science alone, by its ever renewed conquests, shows the road of deliverance to the society of to-morrow.

DR. A. I. HERRERA.

Director of Biological Studies (Mexico).

Translated from *L'Idée Libre*, June, 1921, by J. Haining.



## Correspondence.

70,000 MEN KILLED IN A CENSUS.  
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In connection with the present British census of 1921 it is well to remember what took place as the result of a certain census which took place in Palestine in the reign of King David of Israel about 1017 B.C. The Bible tells us that on that occasion God was so offended because David had numbered the people that as a punishment He sent a pestilence upon Israel and killed 70,000 (seventy thousand) men, and also sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But after the angel had begun to destroy God repented, altered his mind, and decided not to thoroughly destroy it after all. Let the Bible speak for itself. Here are the actual words, *viz.*, "So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it, and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld and he repented him of the evil and said to the angel that destroyed 'it is enough, stay now thine hand.' And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (1 Chron. xxi. 14, 15).

Now the question arises, what great crime or offence was there in numbering the people? Naturally, the king or government would like to know what was about the population of the country, and even the people might like to know themselves. And even if it were a great offence, why should the punishment be inflicted on 70,000 of the innocent subjects instead of on David himself, who caused the census to be taken? Even David, cruel and hard-hearted as he was in many of his ways, felt sorry for the people, and had to remonstrate with God for inflicting the punishment on the people instead of on himself (1 Chron. xxi. 17).

Some may say that this is an old story, legend, or tradition, handed down in the ancient manuscript, instead of actual fact. But it is given in the Bible as actual history. There is no getting away from that. If legend, then the same might be said about three-fourths of the marvellous incidents we read of in the Bible. And then where are we? We have, as it were, nothing definite, no certain ground to stand on. It is stories like the one mentioned which cause thousands to lose faith in the Bible. They cannot continue any longer to look upon it as the "Word of God." (MRS.) M. ROGERS.

## FREETHINKER FELLOWSHIP.

SIR,—I am glad to see Mr. Aldwinckle asking once more, Is there to be a Freethinker Fellowship? Pity he should need to ask! The apathy of such as are labelled Christians appears to be matched by that of so-called Freethinkers. I don't remember the correspondence columns of the *Freethinker* running wild with letters upon the subject of the Fellowship since Mr. Aldwinckle published the draft of his scheme. Your attitude to the proposal discountenanced the payment of a fee. If I recollect rightly, Mr. Aldwinckle meant the fee to replace the Sustentation Fund. I know you do not relish the idea of a Sustentation Fund, naturally preferring the paper paying its way commercially. If such a prosperous state of things existed the necessity of a Fellowship might not have struck Mr. Aldwinckle. The very fact that you were in a tight corner—and even to-day are not coming up the straight an easy winner—is the reason, I take it, of Mr. Aldwinckle's call to Freethinkers to band themselves together; to inscribe their names on a roll pledged to support the *Freethinker* with all their power.

Mr. Aldwinckle wants deeds not words. The roll could be printed with addresses in the columns of the paper every week. Every man and woman so tabulated would be willing to pay a set fee, or a contribution according to their means. The latter procedure differs nothing from the Sustentation Fund, but whatever you call it, Fellowship Fund or Sustentation Fund, while the *Freethinker* is losing money, the loss must be made good; and all who don't imagine organized Freethought to be something free of L. S. D. ought to be ready to fall in.

The main item of the proposal, if it can be considered more important than helping the most courageous journal in the world over the rocky steps, is the bond the Fellowship is calculated to create between its members.

I count some of the happiest hours of my life in the friendships I have made through the *Freethinker*. It would be splendid for all of us to be able, with the aid of a published roll, to pick up with a "saint" in any town we happened to drop in. The man who hasn't any time to spare from business for such a jolly relaxation of this nature is on his way to petrification. H. IRVING.

SIR,—Mr. A. Aldwinckle's letter in the *Freethinker* of July 17, has struck the right note. We need to foster the Spirit of Fraternity among Freethinkers.

Some time back, in a letter to the Editor which was duly published, I called upon Freethinkers to spread the Freemasonry of Freethought, and in order to "practise what I preached" placed myself at the disposal of any Freethinker that might pass this Island, offering my services as far as my humble position would permit. I hoped this would induce Freethinkers in other parts of the world (as well as in Britain) to do likewise—but I was doomed to disappointment.

As Mr. Aldwinckle points out, the Christian, wherever he be, finds friends. The Mason likewise (although I think he is wrong in stating that "he may be.....Mohammedan, Buddhist," for I do not see how they could join the "Anglo-Saxon" Masonry). As a "Latin" Mason, I can add personal testimony to his statement regarding them.

Being far away, I cannot help in the work of organizing a "Brotherhood of the Freethinkers of the British Empire," and can only place my services here at the disposal of whoever may take up the work of organizing it.

ALFRED H. PALMER.

## DR. LYTTTELTON'S CHALLENGE.

SIR,—Dr. Lyttelton's contention is, I understand, that man is born into this world, and suffers in order to train his character for a spiritual existence in heaven; but does this apply to the lower animals? Do they not suffer pain and misery, and is not terrible cruelty often perpetrated on them by man? What recompense have they for their sufferings? Is it not saner to believe that there is no other ruler than Nature which is the insensate power which produces consciousness and intellect in man, and is the inexorable ruler of the illimitable Universe?

ELIZABETH FREED.

SIR,—I regret to gather from Dr. Lyttelton's letter in your issue of 17th inst. that it is his intention "to forbear any more challenges in print"; his letters have differed so from other theological controversialists with whom I have had the misfortune of crossing pens. Dr. Lyttelton is invariably courteous.

He corrected me rightly for assuming he called the hell of eternal fires "a monstrous perversion, etc.," I accept his correction that his denunciation was confined to the doctrine of "honest unbelievers being predestined to eternal fire." I have never liked the phrase "honest unbeliever," whoever uses it; it is on a par with the equivocation "dishonest believer"; in the latter case, I prefer "hypocrite."

However, one must appreciate Dr. Lyttelton's candour in not denying hell, even though he does not say whether there are any flames left in his variety. I have noted that he stresses the point that though the Bible texts *re* hell fire are still there, they are, with others, "weighed together," presumably, to justify the present day interpretations of more humane and enlightened clerics.

It is one of the "beauties" of the Bible, and doubtless proof of its inspiration (certainly its adaptability), that no matter what doctrine needs proofs texts can be found to prove it! We are now one further step forward, for where two texts contradict each other the procedure is to blend them together! The result is a religious seidlitz powder, and cures dogmatic congestion.

Who can deny that theology is a "progressive" science (!) Dr. Lyttelton somewhat distorts a phrase of mine into "Mr. King pities me for having theological bias." I regret he should so interpret what I said. I expressed no emotion whatever when I stated the obvious fact that he displays such bias; the fact that he now says his bias "gets stronger every day" is only the same as my present expression that my anti-theological bias also "gets stronger every day."

Dr. Lyttelton then gives two "facts" he thinks ex-



plain our opposition: (1) Most Atheists assume all unhappiness in this world is a proof that God is not good. (2) That we exist to have our characters trained.

"Fact" (1) begs the whole question: Atheists criticize the religious idea of God (or Gods) and the alleged goodness (or badness) of such an idea; if such God (or Gods) exist, and if certain world conditions co-exist with implied or expressed permission of such God (or Gods), then, obviously, the goodness or badness of such God (or Gods) must be judged by the conditions resulting from their action or their apathy. As Touchstone said: "much virtue in IF."

As for "Fact" (2), I repudiate as fundamentally unjust the idea that living creatures are given existence to be trained to gratify the selfish whim of an alleged creator.

Dr. Lyttelton's idea of a God as expressed in "Fact" (2) makes his deity into a kind of performing animal trainer; most certainly the cruelties of life far outweigh those used by any of the animal trainers whose methods have been the subject of certain recent agitations. I never can follow theological defenders' libels of their own particular deities! they bring far graver charges against God or Gods than any unbeliever.

However, that the human character IS trained by the exigencies of existence is obvious enough without introducing the question of God; it is also true that what helps one type to develop on socially noble lines may demoralize another type, just as species of animals are improved or destroyed; even belief in a God or Gods has differing effects according to the type influenced; one becomes a saint, another a rabid persecuting reactionary.

Despite all, Life goes on notwithstanding that the fashion in gods and goddesses changes with changing knowledge; all Life's creatures are born of Mother Nature, to whose bosom they are, by Death the great consoler, ultimately restored.

W. J. KING.

SIR,—Allow me to acknowledge that part of Dr. Lyttelton's letter which refers to me, in your issue of the 17th, and to say that to answer my question and Mr. Arch's would not involve an argument on the eternity of matter. All we want to know is, how Dr. Lyttelton would state his challenge to those of us who hold the eternity of the Universe, and that Jesus never existed at all. I should like this answered in the *Freethinker* before Dr. Lyttelton bids us farewell, because the original challenge appeared therein. And I think Dr. Lyttelton underestimates the uses of argument. It surely goes a long way towards understanding, by removing misconceptions on either side, and suggesting new points of view.

It is kind of Dr. Lyttelton to offer to answer questions privately; personally, I would rather see him answer Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism*. Why should those who profess to have a sure and certain conviction of God leave the impression that such a book is unanswerable?

W. JAMESON.

## 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): 8, Mr. Ernest Daley, "The Importance of Atheism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No Service.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. W. H. Thresh, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Evolution or Creation?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6.15, Mr. F. Shaller, Lectures.

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