

# THE FREETHINKER

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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Theism or Atheism?</i> —The Editor - - - -	577
<i>Wild Assumptions.</i> —J. T. Lloyd - - - -	579
<i>Chesterton the Crusader.</i> —Minnermus - - - -	580
<i>The Myth of Jesus.</i> —W. Mann - - - -	581
<i>Shaker Celibacy and Religion.</i> —Theodore Schroeder - - - -	582
<i>An Unhistorical Saviour-God.</i> —(The late) G. W. Foote - - - -	586
<i>Bible Art.</i> —Arthur B. Moss - - - -	587
<i>Natural History Notes.</i> —Sir W. W. Strickland - - - -	587
<i>The Slave and the Woman; or Happiness the Obverse</i> <i>Side of the Medal.</i> —G. E. Fussell - - - -	588
<i>The God who Made the Flies.</i> —J. E. S. - - - -	589
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### *Theism or Atheism?*

At the beginning of the present year, as readers of this journal are aware, I published a book, *Theism or Atheism? The Great Alternative*. It was a work I had for long contemplated, but having had less to do than has been the case in recent years, I had never found time to write it. It is, in fact, only the very busy man who can find time for extra work. The man with plenty of leisure has his time fully occupied—with the work he intends doing. But the book got itself written and printed, and from other points of view beside that of gratifying whatever vanity the author possesses, it appears to be serving the purpose it was intended to serve. This was to present in a clear and comprehensive form the case for Atheism, with an uncompromising criticism of the arguments advanced on behalf of Theism. Personally, I have been much gratified by the way in which the book has been received. It evidently gave Freethinkers what they wanted, and although it has been mildly criticised in various quarters, no thorough-going attack on it has been made. I wish there had been. There is nothing I like more than keen criticism, and I am sure that readers of this journal all enjoy it as much as I do. But the religious world has learned the lesson that it does not pay to meet the Freethinker who knows his case in open discussion. The better policy is silence. This may not settle the Freethinker, but it prevents many Christians having their eyes opened.

### A Friendly Critic.<sup>1</sup> \* \* \*

When Dr. Lyttelton said that he proposed criticizing *Theism or Atheism?* I was pleased because I am always interested in what people have to say against my work. The criticism of an opponent is nearly always educative, even when one does not agree with what is said. And with regard to Dr. Lyttelton one must at least pay him the compliment—the deserved compliment—that he has the courage to reply to the Freethinker in a Freethought journal instead of following the cowardly behaviour of his clerical brethren. But when that has been said I must confess that I should have been better pleased, and so, I think, would most of my readers, had Dr. Lyttelton met directly the arguments advanced in *Theism or Atheism?* rather than have taken the line

<sup>1</sup> See the *Freethinker* for August 14 and 28.

he did take. For the policy of that book was to take one by one the arguments advanced in support of Theism, to show that these would not stand critical examination, and then put before the reader a plain exposition of the Atheistic position. But Dr. Lyttelton nowhere deals with these things. He does tell us of certain aspects of the controversy between Freethinkers and Christians with which I do not deal. Naturally, I am not in the habit of mixing issues, preferring to keep the reader's attention to the central point of the argument. But in a book which I hope to publish in the course of a few weeks Dr. Lyttelton will find these other points dealt with, I hope, in an explicit manner. What I had to drive home in the book under discussion was the fact that the belief in God was primarily and essentially an inference which primitive man draws from his supposed knowledge of things; that this inference was based on a complete misunderstanding of natural phenomena; and that with the rise of a more accurate knowledge of nature this earlier explanation is wholly discredited. And it followed from this that (1) the belief in God exists among us as a survival from primitive savagery (2) that all the so-called arguments are no more than ingenious excuses for the perpetuation of the belief, and (3) that as the alleged suspensory attitude of Agnostics is both scientifically and philosophically unjustifiable, the only existing alternative is conscious Atheism. I flatter myself that this was made quite clear in my book, and I am pleased to know that most of those who have read it appear to have found the argument equally conclusive.

### Wonder and Religion. \* \* \*

What Dr. Lyttelton does is to point out certain dreadful consequences that must follow if my statements are true. And to that I may say at once that a scientific enquiry is not in the least concerned with consequences, but with truth. That is the first and the governing consideration, and the history of the world shows that mankind has never yet suffered from the truth, but only from lies which have been accepted as the truth. Whatever the truth is we are bound to face it sooner or later, and while I know of many truths that have proved harmful to institutions and to certain classes of people, I know of none that can be said to have ever injured the permanent interests of the race. First of all it is complained that I would eliminate wonder, and we shall be left with a "mechanical or materialistic view of things," which would mean an altogether poorer universe. I must confess that I do not place the same value on the quality of wonder that Dr. Lyttelton does, and it seems to me that he is confusing wonder with curiosity, and, in terms of value, with admiration. Let me explain. Wonder, as I understand the term, implies, essentially, astonishment, it is far removed from understanding, and although it may awaken curiosity does not of necessity imply it. Thus, when I wonder at the movements of a steam engine I am confessing that I do not know how its motions are produced. But when a friend with some mechanical knowledge points out the structure of the machine, and explains the action of steam on certain rods and valves, etc., I no longer wonder, I admire.

Wonder is essentially typical of non-understanding, and it is certainly curious that Dr. Lyttelton should have gone directly to this quality for support of the belief in God. But mere wonder, Aristotle to the contrary, would lead us nowhere. It ends in—wonder. The quality that leads to knowledge is curiosity, the desire to find out "how the wheels go round." Anyone who cares to watch two boys, the one full of wonder and the other full of curiosity will easily determine the respective value of these qualities. Now the progress of science does rob us of the open-mouthed quality of wonder, but it does intensify the fruitful quality of curiosity, and it intensifies our admiration of beauty and contrivance in all directions. I am, therefore, quite untouched by Dr. Lyttelton's doleful picture of the future when we have all become Atheists. The world does not afford less scope for curiosity, for admiration, and for work, as our knowledge grows, but more. Not that I think wonder will ever disappear. I merely say that it is the equivalent of an absence of knowledge, and that an absence of knowledge is the root of the God-idea, and I do not see that Dr. Lyttelton anywhere disputes that as a statement of fact.

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#### God and Humour.

I am not sure that I agree with the definition of humour "as a sense of incongruous emotions." There is a deal of humour, and most of the best humour, that has nothing incongruous about it; and I certainly cannot see how with the disappearance of the belief in God humour must die out. I admit that there is a humorous aspect to people believing in a god in a world such as this one, and with the knowledge that is at present available, and, further, that the element of the incongruous does bulk very largely in this case. But the humour here is enjoyed solely by the Atheist, and it cannot be that Dr. Lyttelton wishes to keep the belief in God alive in order that the Atheist's sense of humour may be kept active. And if Dr. Lyttelton really believes, with the writer quoted, that humour is a gift from God to man, we can only regard it as a contrivance of deity to get us to overlook his blunders—or his crimes. Nor do I know that humour is a quality that has been specially associated with religion, least of all with the Christian religion. We are told that Jesus wept, but never that he laughed. And, on the other hand, it has been the power of humour brought to bear on Christian beliefs by Freethinkers that has given the greatest offence to believers. So much so that even to-day there is a certain class of Freethinker who cannot touch Christianity except with a solemnity of behaviour that makes the really humorous critic smile despite himself. Of course, if the belief in God died the Freethinker would no longer be able to extract humour from that, but there would still be many healthier forms left.

#### Some Side Issues.

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There are some *obiter dicta*, which are, I think, worthy of a few words of criticism. I have already pointed out that I am not trying to construct a universe in which wonder and humour have no place, only striving to give the first its proper value, and leaving the latter to exercise itself on other objects than the belief in God—for we do not laugh at discarded deities, but only at enthroned ones. I should not define a mechanical view of the universe as one which *finds* a definable cause for every experience, but one which asserts that a cause is to be found in time. And even if God is put forward as a cause, that much is admitted. I do not think that I ever defined mind as a function of matter. I do define it as a function of a special organization, and I assert that we only know it as that. Does anyone know it in any other relation? If so, I have yet to come across him. I do not tell the believer that he

is a hopeless fool. That would be inexcusably rude, and it would be untrue. I merely say that, as a believer in Christianity he professes many foolish beliefs. That is a very different statement, and one which I think I can prove. And I have no doubt but that Dr. Lyttelton thinks some of my beliefs equally foolish. I agree that the Atheist and the Christian have many things in common. It is part of my thesis that, both being human beings, this must be so. But I do not agree that love and brotherhood are Christian or theistic. They are human, they are born of the association of men and women, and it is just one of the unfortunate incidents of human development that these fundamental social qualities should have become entangled with religious beliefs. But as I have often pointed out, this has also been the case with most of the other beliefs and feelings that mankind holds. Many of these have become quite dissociated from any kind of religious feeling; others are becoming, and all will ultimately be, separated. There are no such things as religious feelings, there are only feelings that have become associated with religion. There is no more need to associate love and brotherhood with God than there is to associate earthquakes with him. Both used to be so associated, but the one is now considered quite apart from his existence. Why not the other?

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#### Atheism Inevitable.

But the revealing part of Dr. Lyttelton's articles, the part which shows how far even the educated and cultured Christian world is from an understanding of the Atheistic position, is where he deals with the alleged Atheism of his university days. He says that there were then several able men "dabbling in Atheism of one sort or another," and that he made "a rather gallant attempt to become an Atheist," which didn't last long. Now I confess that I did not know there were several sorts of Atheism, any more than there are several degrees of being and not being. A thing either is or it is not, and a man either does or does not believe in a God. If he does he is a Theist, if he does not he is an Atheist. And, above all, a man cannot "make an attempt," gallant or otherwise, to be an Atheist. Atheism, as I have tried to show in my book, is something that one grows into, not something that one takes up with, on a sort of trial, and then rejects if it does not come up to expectations, as one might send back a badly fitting coat to a tailor. Atheism is essentially a frame of mind, a mental attitude, a conviction, and one does not adopt a conviction, one grows to it as a consequence of knowledge and reflection. You really can't become an Atheist as a man gets converted to Christianity. A man can go to a revival meeting and suddenly shout out "Glory, I have found Jesus!" because he develops a flood of feeling and is ignorant of both its origin and nature. But he cannot go to an Atheistic meeting and cry "Glory, I have become an Atheist!" because Atheism is the registration of a stage of mental development, and you can no more prevent its arrival—granted the preliminary stages—than you can help the growth of your hair, or prevent a knowledge of geometry convincing you of the truth of a proposition in Euclid. The nature of that growth I have traced in the book that Dr. Lyttelton has criticized, and I am convinced that it is a development to which, sooner or later, the race must come. And that is the final and sufficient reason why the Atheist is not at all puzzled by the "majority" who "profess a belief in God the Maker of the Universe." For he is familiar with the history of the belief; he has, in very many cases, held the belief himself, and knows, therefore, its mental value. The Theist offers no problem to the Atheist. It is the Atheist whom the Theist fails to understand. And when that understanding comes the end of his belief in God will not be far off. CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Wild Assumptions.

PROFESSOR VON HARNACK says that Christianity had to conquer, its victory from the very first being inevitable. By no means an orthodox Christian, in the Catholic sense no Christian at all, yet this eminent scholar maintains that "Christianity came forward with the spirit of *universalism*." He quotes the Gospel Jesus as predicting that "this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world," and Paul as declaring that the faith of the Roman converts "is proclaimed throughout the whole world;" but both statements were gross exaggerations, to say the least. In Acts xvii. 6, we are told that the Apostles had "turned the world upside down." Clement of Rome affirms that Paul "taught righteousness to all the world," and Ignatius, bishop of Antioch at the beginning of the second century, speaks of the bishops as having settled "in the utmost corners of the world." Hermas, one of the Apostolic Fathers, describes Christianity thus:—

This mighty tree which overshadows plains, mountains, and all the earth, is God's law given to the whole world; and this law is the Son of God preached to the ends of the earth.

Clement of Alexandria, who died about A.D. 220, makes the following statement:—

The word of our teacher did not remain in Judæa, as did philosophy in Greece, but was poured out over the whole universe, persuading Greeks, and barbarians alike in the various nations and villages and cities, winning over whole households, and bringing to the truth each individual of those who had believed; as well as not a few philosophers.

Similar exaggerated assertions are to be found in the writings of practically all the Church Fathers. Even Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (i. 3, 12), goes so far as to claim that "Christ has filled the whole world with his holy name." Of course, everybody who has any knowledge of history at all is fully aware how utterly fallacious and misleading such claims are; and yet scarcely any divines have the courage to find fault with them. As a matter of fact, it is customary with divines to indulge in entirely groundless assumptions. In the *Christian World Pulpit* for August 31 there appears a sermon entitled "The Crowning of Jesus," by A. T. S. James, M.A., M.Sc., in which it is simply taken for granted, without the slightest evidence, that to-day Christ "dominates the mind and moves the heart of nations." Curiously enough, Dr. Horton, in a recent discourse in the same journal, whilst asserting that Christianity "can in individual man transmute lead into gold," frankly admits that it "has not done this for peoples, for nations," thus giving Mr. James the lie direct. Dr. Holden also disagrees with him when he acknowledges that the mass of men have even ceased to think about God and Christ and a future life. And without a doubt the two doctors of divinity are right.

But let us be fair to Mr. James. Will he inform us which nation's mind and heart are dominated and moved by Jesus Christ? Where has he seen him crowned with glory and honour? Jesus is reported to have said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word." Can the reverend gentleman name a single nation whose attachment to the world's Saviour establishes its reality in a life modelled upon the Sermon on the Mount? If not, he has no right whatever to say that Christ "dominates the mind and moves the heart of nations." Such a statement is an absolutely unverified and unverifiable assumption, based on a mere dream of the fancy. Mr. James has no patience with those who regard Christ as a creation of the Church, or as like the mirage on the edge of the desert. He says:—

That is what we are asked to believe by clever men who are, I think, deceived by their own

brilliance. We are told that Jesus is but a dim, uncertain figure on the horizon of history, and that his existence has little to do with the Christ of the Apostles and of the Church, and that the Saviour, whom we see crowned with glory and honour, we have made for ourselves out of our own thoughts and aspirations. What nonsense it is. This is how the expert runs his idea to death. As if a tree can grow without a root! And the root of all that has happened since, in Christian faith and devotion, is the person of Jesus, and but for him none of it would have been. All that has come to pass since is the crowning of him with glory and honour.

"What nonsense it is" to talk like that at this time of day. Is Mr. James ignorant of the fact that some of the greatest scholars of the day, such as Professors Harnack, Schmiedel and Bacon are Liberal Christians, to whom the Gospels are largely legendary, and that the overwhelming majority of the men of science are out and out unbelievers in the supernatural? If he is, he has taken up the wrong profession; but if he is not, is he not guilty of blasphemy against the truth? In either case, is it not his own head that the cap of nonsense fits best? It is supreme arrogance on the part of any man to set himself up as an infallible teacher and guide, and to dub all who do not accept his dogmas utter fools. It is certainly not the way to secure converts.

Mr. James's sermon is a congeries of declamations, minus a single attempt to adduce evidence, or proof, or argument. He says that Christ "wears the crown in his own right because of what he is and what he did"; but he omits to tell us what he is or what he did. He also says that "the dying of Christ, which was thought to be the end of him, proved to be his coronation"; but what rendered his death a coronation? It is easy enough to characterize his death as "a culminating act of perfect sacrifice in a deed that awes us to silence and makes us fall down and worship"; but it is a most difficult task to justify such a characterization at the bars of reason and history, and it is a task which Mr. James does not even try to perform. He rather delights in sheer dogmatism, possibly because he realizes the literal impossibility of demonstrating the truth of his contentions. Christ is called the Prince of Peace, and yet Christendom has been a bloody battlefield in every age.

No Prince of Peace has ever occupied the world's throne. The world has always been and still is governed by brute force. There is no Christian country which can afford to dispense with its army and navy, and there is no city in Christendom which does not need to be safeguarded by a huge police force. And this state of things shows that Christ is as complete a failure as Saviour as he is as Prince. Wars prevail because humanity has not been redeemed by a supernatural Saviour, and in cities our houses must be locked and barred because honesty is not yet a victorious policy. Yes, admittedly, Christianity has turned out a colossal failure, which proves that it is not an infallible cure for the world's maladies. Dr. Horton pours heaps of ridicule upon the people who argue that because Christianity has failed it ought to be swept out of the way; but whilst admitting the failure the Hampstead divine declares that "the best we know is Christianity, much the best." We aver, on the contrary, that the moral and social failure of Christianity is due to the fact that it is not the best and ought to be disowned as such, and superseded by a better and truer device for the reorganization and ennoblement of society and for the deliverance of nations from selfish and ignoble aims and ideals. We are deeply convinced that Secularism is an immeasurably better system than Christianity. Such a suggestion drives Dr. Horton perfectly mad. He loses his temper and uses bad language when he hears of it, calling its advocates "blubbing children," and

"perfect fools." "Like absolute fools they say: 'Since Christianity has failed, we will try something else.'". For nineteen centuries Christianity has not succeeded in transforming the world, and yet Dr. Horton persists in regarding it as the best provision for human needs. We contend that it is not the best, that Buddha and Confucius did much more good in India and China and elsewhere than Christ ever did in Christendom, and that to-day Secularism, which is early Buddhism in modern phraseology, is vastly superior to Christianity, and if duly put on trial would result in the satisfactory solution of the problems which cause us so much loss and anguish at present.

It never occurs to Mr. James to face the facts at all. No reader of his discourse would imagine that the world is out of joint, and that nations are at variance with one another. Christ wears his crown and all is well with the world. He says:—

Christ has in himself the promise of final victory. The world changes, thought changes, kingdoms grow and then are as if they had never been. But his years never fail. His leaf does not wither. More things are done to-day for Christ's sake and in love for him than for all the other reasons men have. Christ grows upon us. I turn to the past and to the holy men of former time, and I inquire about the experience of their faith and love and who it was that brought them out of darkness and set their feet in a large place.

I asked them whence their victory came,  
They with united breath  
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to his death.

Mr. James is living in a fool's paradise. He is asleep and dreaming, and does not seem to realize that the mass of men and women everywhere are turning away from God and his Christ, most of whom, alas, have not found the true way of life, but are drifting aimlessly they know not whither. These are the people whom Secularism needs and seeks, and who by Secularism would be roused out of their present lethargy into a fresh and wholesomer interest in social and national reform.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Chesterton the Crusader.

Reason is a rebel unto faith.—*Sir Thomas Browne.*

The crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven.—*Shelley.*

MR. GILBERT K. CHESTERTON is one of the best known figures in the literary arena, and it is customary to refer to him as a very up-to-date journalist. Yet, it is as plain as a pikestaff that Chesterton does not represent contemporary thought. What he does represent is a reaction against the views current in the later years of the nineteenth century. He has attacked Woman's Suffrage; he dislikes Jews; he is never happier than when telling the working-man when and where he is wrong. The truth is, probably, that he is a Democrat who finds himself in the fold of the Catholic Church, and, being in Rome, does as the Romans do. He is not a hard-shell Tory, for his humour is continually coming to his rescue, but he has delighted the Tories more than the Intellectuals. His humour, too, is of the Peter Pan brand, that of the schoolboy who has never grown up, and the printed page remains to show his freakish, Puck-like prejudices and perversity. Quixote, democrat, Roman Catholic, humourist—he is one of the oddest human combinations.

In his *Victorian Age of Literature*, Chesterton used his strength tyrannously in the service of the most reactionary of the Churches. He has nothing but jibes and insults for the great "intellectuals." Ignoring the long series of masterpieces that has come from the

greatest of living English novelists, Chesterton says of Thomas Hardy that he is "a sort of village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." Swinburne, a poet of extraordinary genius, is accused of composing "a learned and sympathetic and indecent parody on the Litany of the Blessed Virgin," surely a most ironical suggestion in a Protestant country. In speaking of *Songs Before Sunrise* he belittles these superb lyrics by saying that they were songs before a sunrise that never arrived. According to Chesterton the great Victorians were "lame giants." Even robust Robert Browning is reproached for making "spluttering and spiteful puns" about Newman, Manning, and Wiseman. One of the most remarkable women of the century, Emily Bronte, is described as "unsociable as a storm at midnight." The only Free-thinker to whom Chesterton is decently civil is James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, who, he says, pontifically, "knew how to be democratic in the dark." As Chesterton spells the poet's name with a "p," the compliment is a doubtful one after all. And this is the man who challenges the dogmatism of the Agnostic; convicts science of irrationality, and who pretends to find liberty inside the barred cells of monasteries and nunneries.

Although he keeps his eyes on the path to Rome, and ensures, by a robustious piety, a hearty welcome in sheltered homes and country rectories, Chesterton has his good points. Compared with so many present-day writers, he is a jolly and breezy companion. He seems to say with Sir Toby Belch, "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" He displays more than a passing acquaintance with Freethought, and his writings are often barbed with iconoclastic jests, which must be as disconcerting to Christians as they are diverting to Freethinkers. Here is a pleasant diversion on the lack of authority in matters of religious belief:—

Of all conceivable forms of enlightenment the worst is what these people call the Inner Light. Anyone who knows anybody knows how it would work; anyone who knows anyone from the Higher Thought centre knows how it does work. That Jones shall worship the god within him turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in his street, but not the god within.

From his abundant mine of epigram and paradox he shovels out diamonds and rubbish with a good-humoured carelessness. Here are a few of his good things:—

"My country, right or wrong" is like saying, "My mother, drunk or sober."

Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.

What is the good of words if they are not important to quarrel over? If you called a woman a chimpanzee instead of an angel, wouldn't there be a quarrel about a word?

The newspapers which announce the giant gooseberry and the raining frogs are the modern representative of the popular tendency which produced the hydra, the were-wolf, and the dog-headed man.

What have we done, and where have we wandered, we that have produced sages who could have spoken with Socrates, and poets who could walk with Dante, that we should talk as if we had never done anything more intelligent than found colonies and kick niggers?

Gilbert Chesterton is such a boon companion, so fond of comradeship, so full of laughter, the joy of living, and the lust of argument, that the reader is content to regard him as a licensed jester. In his writings the cunning monologues are forgiven for the inevitable epigrams. Try as he will, he cannot keep humanity out of his books. His big, breezy nature refuses to be confined within the narrow limits of ecclesiasticism.

Let him write what he will, he is always sure of an audience.

Too much has been made of Chesterton's supposed likeness to Doctor Johnson. Thus, when someone said, "You cannot put the clock back," meaning that you cannot put events back, Chesterton answers triumphantly, "The reply is, you can put the clock back." Johnson was fond of verbal juggling as this. The fact is, Chesterton uses his gifts a little tyrannously. His sense of humour sometimes slumbers, especially when he elects to ascend the pulpit. "Mythology and newspapers cannot co-exist" is a lively and a true epigram. Did it never occur to him that in introducing superstition to a mixed audience he had done a rash thing? And if it had, would he have been better pleased at the knowledge that Chesterton in cap and bells cuts a much braver figure than Chesterton in a cassock? It is too late for a jocose apologist for mediævalism to be regarded seriously, although he loves—

To prove his doctrine orthodox  
By apostolic blows and knocks.

That Gilbert Chesterton should court approval as a modern Saint George attacking the dragon of Free-thought proves to what shifts the champions of Orthodoxy are reduced. Resplendent in motley, he attracts crowds by his high spirits and boyish wilfulness. Happily, he nullifies the effect of his own work by making his audience feel that nothing matters very much, and that religion is a joke played on the people.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Myth of Jesus.

### IX.

(Continued from page 550.)

Is it necessary to suppose a human and visible Founder (for Christianity) at all? A few years ago such a mere question would have been accounted rank blasphemy, and would only—if passed over—have been ignored on account of its supposed absurdity. To-day, however, owing to the enormous amount of work which has been done of late on the subject of Christian origins, the question takes on quite a different complexion.....

Personally I must say I think the "legendary" solution quite likely, and in some ways more satisfactory than the opposite one.—Dr. Edward Carpenter, "Pagan and Christian Creeds," p. 67.

THAT the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, as related in the Gospels, is a fiction is self-evident and has been many times pointed out. As Dr. Carpenter observes, the difficulties in the way of regarding the Gospel story as true are enormous:—

If anyone will read, for instance, in the four Gospels the events of the night preceding the crucifixion and reckon the time which they would necessarily have taken to enact—the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden, the betrayal by Judas, the haling before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and then Pilate in the Hall of Judgment (though courts for the trial of malefactors do not generally sit in the middle of the night), then—in Luke—the interposed visit to Herod, and the return to Pilate; Pilate's speeches and washing of hands before the crowd; then the scourging and the mocking and the arraying of Jesus in purple robe as a king; the preparation of a Cross and the long and painful journey to Golgotha; and finally the crucifixion at sunrise—he will see—as has often been pointed out—that the whole story is physically impossible. As a record or series of notes derived from the witnessing of a "mystery-play"—and such plays with very similar incidents were common enough in antiquity in connection with cults of a dying Saviour, it very likely is true (one can see the very dramatic character of the incidents: the washing of the hands, the threefold denial by Peter, the

purple robe and crown of thorns, and so forth); and as such it is now accepted by many well-qualified authorities.<sup>1</sup>

But probably the most popular of all these pagan Mysteries, at the beginning of the Christian era, in the Roman Empire, were those of Mithra. The cult of Mithra was especially popular with the Roman army, who have left monuments of it wherever they penetrated. In England they are to be found at Oxford, York, Chester, Chichester, as well as in several other places. They abound in France, Germany, Eastern Italy, and many Mediterranean ports. The similarity of the rites and ceremonies of Christianity to those of Mithraism was known and fully admitted by the early Christian fathers. Tertullian, writing in the second century, says:—

The devil, by the mysteries of his idols, imitates even the main parts of the divine mysteries. He also baptises his worshippers in water, and makes them believe that this purifies them of their crimes..... There Mithra sets his mark on the forehead of his soldiers; he celebrates the oblation of bread; he offers an image of the resurrection, and presents at once the crown and the sword; he limits his chief priest to a single marriage; he even has his virgins and his ascetics (*continentes*)."

Again, the devil "has gone about to apply to the worship of idols those very things in which consists the administration of Christ's sacraments."<sup>2</sup>

That the worship of Mithra existed long before the Christian era we know from the fact that the emblems of Mithra occupy a conspicuous position on the sculptured tablet above the tomb of Darius, the son of Hystaspes, 485 B.C., and Artaxerxes Mnemon, who died 358 years before Christ, placed an image of Mithra in the temple attached to the royal palace of Suza.<sup>3</sup> The discovery of tablets at the excavations at Boghaz Keui in Anatolia, Asia Minor, shows that Mithra was a god of the Mitannians or Hittites at some date earlier than 1500 B.C.<sup>4</sup>

The mysteries of Mithra were always held in a cave, or vault, in secrecy; so was the worship of the early Christians. In Rome the first Christians used the catacombs, not, as it is said, to avoid persecution, but in order to obtain the necessary secrecy to carry out their rites and sacraments.

The learned archæologist Lafarge, declares that both the "Gnostics and Manicheans derived their doctrine from Mithraism, which formed a half-way house between Paganism and Christianity."<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine tells us that in his time the priests of Mithras were in the habit of saying, "That One in the cap (*i.e.*, Mithras) is a Christian too!" During the reigns of the second Flavian emperors and before Constantine's pact with the Church, we hear of hymns sung by the legionaries which could be chanted in common by Christians, Mithraists, and the worshippers of that sun-god, the adoration of whom was hereditary or traditional in the Flavian House. The Mithraists also observed Sunday and kept sacred the 25th of December as the birthday of the Sun.<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of the Christian era this religion was the most widespread of all the religions in the Empire, and the most nearly universal religion of the Western world. Renan says: "We may say that if Christianity had been arrested in its growth by some mortal malady, the world would have been Mithraistic."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *Præscr.*, c. 40. Cited by Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 300.

<sup>4</sup> Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Vol. II., p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 256, n.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 261.

<sup>7</sup> Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 332.

The crucifix—the figure of a man nailed to a cross—is unknown to early Christian art. Dupuis says:—

The most ancient representation of the God of the Christians was the figure of a Lamb, sometimes attached to a vase reddened with his blood, sometimes lying down at the foot of a cross. That symbol subsisted as late as the year 620. The sixth synod of Constantinople ordained that instead of the ancient symbol, which was the Lamb, should be represented a man fastened upon a cross; which ordination was confirmed by the first Pope Adrian.<sup>1</sup>

As Dupuis was a sceptic it will be as well to quote the testimony of Christian believers. The Rev. J. P. Lundy, in his *Monumental Christianity* (p. 246), speaking of the crucifixion, says, "Its actual realistic representation never once occurs in the monuments of Christianity for more than six or seven centuries." And Mrs. Jameson, in her *History of Our Lord in Art* (Vol. II., p. 137), says: "The crucifixion is not one of the subjects of early Christianity." Mrs. Jameson says that the earliest known belongs to the ninth century, and adds: "There is one also of an extraordinary rude and fantastic character in a MSS. in the ancient library of St. Galle which is ascertained to be of the eighth century. At all events there seems no just ground at present for assigning an earlier date."

One of the earliest symbols of Christianity was the ram, and Mrs. Jameson says that in ancient art:—

Mercury attired as a shepherd, with a ram on his shoulder, borne in the same manner as in many of the Christian representations, was no unfrequent object, and in some instances led to a difficulty in distinguishing between the two (Vol. II., p. 340).

Apollo was known as the Good Shepherd. So was Tammuz, later known to the Greeks under the name of Adonis. Mr. Theo. G. Pinches gives a translation of an ancient Babylonian tablet belonging to the "oldest time"; it is a lamentation for Tammuz, commencing, "Shepherd, lord 'Tammuz,'" who, like Christ, was cut off in his early manhood. W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

## Shaker Celibacy and Religion.

As lust conceived by the fall  
Hath more or less affected all  
So we believe 'tis only this  
That keepeth souls from perfect bliss.

—From a Shaker Poem.

AMONG the English prophets, James Wardley (or Wardlaw) was destined to exert a greater influence upon American religious sentiment than any other. Wardley succumbed to the seductive argument of a few French innovators, who came to England proclaiming a general apostasy of the Christian Church, and insisting upon the necessity for new revelation. Always the new superenthusiasts proclaim the apostasy of their relatively unemotional co-religionists. Wardley's religious zeal was said to have been accompanied by polygamy. Mrs. Stanley, *née* Lee, one of Wardley's followers and later his successor in the prophetic office, was born, 1736, at Manchester, England. She was the daughter of a blacksmith, and one of eight children. During childhood she worked in a cotton factory, and did not learn to read or write.

W. H. Dixon spent some time among the Shakers of Mount Lebanon and obtained first hand information concerning Ann Lee. He describes her as "a wild creature from her birth, a prey to hysteria and convulsions; violent in her conduct, ambitious of notice,

and devoured by the lust for power,"<sup>1</sup> the compensations for a feeling of inferiority. An evolutionary psychologist might have added that she was content to satisfy her lust for power on the infantile level of phantasy and magic, rather than on the maturer level of practical achievement in the actual promotion of human well being or cultural development.

Her own followers state that "in childhood, she exhibited a bright, sagacious, and active genius. She was not addicted to play, like other children of her age, but was serious and thoughtful. She was early the subject of religious impressions, and was often favoured by heavenly visions."<sup>2</sup> Here are signs of precocity and subjectivity such as are a usual accompaniment of sexual precocity, and sexual shame.

She was an epileptic, and saw Christ come to her both physically and spiritually.<sup>3</sup> By her followers, she was considered a sort of female incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth, and her divine perfection was implied in the familiar appellation of: Ann the Word. She was the word made flesh. She was the woman, so they asserted, referred to by the Apostle as being "clothed with the sun, and moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Stanley at her death was succeeded by a niece, also known by the same name, Mother Ann Lee.

It is further stated that—

as she advanced in years she was strongly impressed with a sense of the deep depravity of human nature, and the odiousness of sin, especially the impure and indecent nature of sexual coition for mere gratification. To her mother she often expressed her feelings respecting these things and earnestly desired to be kept and preserved from sin, and from those abominations her soul so much abhorred.

These lines suggest a consciousness of need for protection from excessive sexual cravings. In these facts we see a sexual precocity and a resultant emotional conflict. This will usually express itself either in exhibitionism or in prudery, or a combination of both. Whenever charged with considerable emotional value, then prudery and theories of the sacredness or the spirituality of sex are always a mask for a shameful salacity. By way of emphasizing her sexuoeotional conflict it was even said that "she suffered most violent temptations" and "the agony of her soul was often so extreme as to occasion a perspiration of blood."

But notwithstanding her [occasional emotional] repugnance to the married state, through the importunities of her relations, she was induced to be married to Abraham Stanley, a blacksmith, by whom she had four children, all of which died in their infancy. She continued to reside at her father's house; but the convictions of her youth [in relation to sex] often returned upon her with much force, which at length brought her under excessive tribulation of soul, in which she sought earnestly for deliverance from bondage of [sexual] sin, and gave herself no rest, day or night, but often spent whole nights in labouring and crying to God to open some way of salvation.<sup>5</sup>

For the psychoanalyst these facts suggest a father-complex, with its incestuous erotic interest and the incest barrier, transferred from the father and operating toward her husband. Thus her childhood erotic conflicts furnish the foundation for the feeling of great sin, of shame, and of great inferiority. Against this there was a great need for compensatory exaltation. A suppressed erotism furnished the dynamic basis, and measured the corresponding need of a compensatory

<sup>1</sup> *New America*, 1867, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> F. W. Evans, *Shakers and Shakerism*, in *Biography*, fourth edition, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Mosheim, see Rev. xii., p. 40.

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

<sup>1</sup> Dupuis, *True Origin of the Christian Religion*, p. 41. Southwell's Edition.

<sup>2</sup> "A Myth of Old Babylon," *Knowledge*, March 1, 1895.

neutralizer for her fear, shame and inferiority feeling. This then is the preparation for the acceptance of any intellectualization of her feeling states that would answer these compensatory or neutralizing purposes.

At about this time, while in the midst of an intense mental struggle, rendered more acute by her unhappy marital experience, she came into contact with Jane and James Wardley. The Wardleys supplied Ann Lee with a verbal formula by which the feeling of inferiority, apparently due to sexmoral conflicts, could be converted into a corresponding compensatory exaltation which seemingly placed her as far above average humanity as formerly she had felt herself beneath it.

About this Quaker couple whom Ann Lee succeeded, Dixon writes:—

A poor woman, living at Bolton-on-the-Moors, a bleak and grimy town, in the most stony part of South Lancashire, announced that she had received a call from heaven to go about the streets of her native town and testify for the truth. Her name was Jane; her husband, James Wardley, a tailor, with gifts of speech, had become her first convert and expositor. These poor people had previously belonged to the Society of Friends; in which they had been forward in bringing testimony against oaths, against war, against formality in worship. Living in a hard and rocky district, in the midst of a coarse and brutal population, Jane had seen about her, from her youth upward, a careless church, a Papist gentry, a drunken and fanatical crowd. Going into the market place, she had declared to these people that the end of all things was at hand, that Christ was about to reign, that His second appearing would be in a woman's form, as had long ago been prefigured in the Psalms. Jane had never said that she herself was the female Christ; but she had acted as though she believed that all the powers of earth and heaven had been given into her hands; receiving converts in His name, confessing and remitting sins, holding communications with unseen spirits. It was assumed by her own people that she was filled by the Holy Ghost; and whatsoever thing she affirmed, in the power of her attendant spirits, had been received by her followers as the voice of God.\*

Ann Lee was twenty years of age when she joined the sect of Jane Wardley. F. W. Evans in his sympathetic biography of Ann Lee relates<sup>7</sup> that:—

The light of these people led them to an open confession of every sin they had committed, and to take up a full and final cross against everything they knew to be evil. This endowed them with great power over sin; and here Ann found that protection she had so long desired, and which corresponded with her faith at that time. She was baptized into the same Spirit, and by degrees travelled to the full knowledge and experience of all the spiritual truths of the society.

THEODORE SCHROEDER.

(From *The New York Medical Journal*, June, 1921.)

(To be Continued.)

POPE'S EPITAPH ON GAY.

Of manners gentle, of affections mild;  
In wit, a man; simplicity, a child:  
With native humour tempering virtuous rage,  
Form'd to delight at once and lash the age:  
Above temptation in a low estate,  
And uncorrupted, e'en among the great:  
A safe companion, and an easy friend,  
Unblamed through life, lamented in thy end.  
These are thy honours! Not that here thy bust  
Is mix'd with heroes, or with kings thy dust;  
But that the worthy and the good shall say,  
Striking their pensive bosoms—"Here lies Gay!"

\* Dixon, *New America*, p. 323.  
<sup>7</sup> F. W. Evans, p. 123.

Acid Drops.

The Congress of coloured people recently held in London is one of the most significant gatherings that have occurred for very many years. For more than five hundred years the Christian nations of the world have regarded the black people of Africa as objects of plunder or beasts of burden. This policy has not always been openly pursued; generally, it has been followed under the guise of concern for the spread of civilization or concern for the welfare of the black man's soul. The missionary has often been hailed as the fore-runner of the Empire, and he has deserved the title. He has served the exploiting enterprises with just that cover of morality and religion that will reconcile large numbers of people to almost any form of rascality. And it is not without significance that the era of our greatest commercial expansion coincided with the development of most of the great missionary agencies. The two things were, indeed, closely connected. And on a smaller scale most people at home would be greatly surprised if they knew the extent to which the missionary agencies were directly interested in various trading enterprises, and are thus directly concerned with the exploitation of the native races.

And now the millions of Africa are beginning to stir. They are demanding that they shall no longer be held as serfs—even religious serfs—in their own country. We imagine that this will not be to the benefit of the funds of the missionary societies, for the big subscribers are not likely to continue their subscriptions when these bodies fail to do the work for which they are largely maintained. And so far as the secular powers are concerned they are always "up against" the difficulty that if they continue a policy of suppression they are bound to incite revolt sooner or later, and if they play the part of educators, real educators, they arrive at the same result, even though by a pleasanter road. But the difficulty is to persuade the white man all over the world that the time is coming to an end when the coloured man will consent to be treated as an inferior species. The right of the white man to "wallop his own nigger" has for so long been taken for granted that it will be difficult to persuade him that that principle can no longer be applied.

The *Daily Chronicle* reports a case of a fire on a farm that resulted in the building being gutted although a Bible was unburned. The correspondent who sends us this cutting remarks that the farmer would have been better pleased to have lost his Bible and saved his farm. Of that we have not the least doubt, and we are quite sure that the insurance company would rather have had it so.

In the course of an interesting article on "Clerical Guinea-Pigs," a daily paper says the term is applied to a "non-attached priest who does Sunday duty," and that "the name arises from the two guineas a Sunday that is the recognized fee. In addition he receives travelling expenses and hospitality for the week-end." A correspondent wrote saying that the fees vary. "As a rule the lowest allowed by a bishop is £4 for week-ends and travelling expenses in addition; in some important parishes the fees allowed are six, and even seven, guineas per week." These facts form an interesting searchlight on the condition of the "starving" clergy.

Atherstone magistrates recently fined three youths £5 each for stealing apples. This heavy fine was imposed because the magistrates were determined to put a stop to garden robbing. In the celebrated case of "Adam" and "Eve" the sentence imposed was the damnation of the human race, and the death of the original sinners. In this instance the sentence was infernal, whilst the judge was heavenly.

Bobbed hair "is a sin against the body, a crime against society," declares the Rev. A. M. Mitchell, vicar of Burtonwood, Lanes. We wonder if the reverend gentleman would say the same sweet things concerning the priestly tonsure?

The *Church Times*, commenting on the last issued Year Book of the Church of England, is filled with gloomy feelings. It says:—

There is no possible ground for satisfaction. Evidently in religion things are going back. The supply of clergy is not only diminishing, it is almost disappearing. Ten years ago the number of deacons ordained in the year was six hundred and forty; last year it was a hundred and forty-eight.....most significant of all is the decline in the number of those confirmed. The total for the ten years, 1908-1917, shows, in comparison with the total of the previous ten years, a decrease of more than a half a million.....While the population has been increasing the number of confirmed has, however, been lessening. It is obvious that religion is losing its hold. People are coming to adopt more and more, often unconsciously, other philosophies of life. It is not only the war that accounts for this. The fall began years earlier.....We are losing ground not only relatively to the population, but absolutely. There is every reason for disquiet.

It would be idle to pretend that Freethought propaganda is alone responsible for this collapse of the Churches, but it is unquestionable that it may take a very large part of the credit for this state of affairs. They who leave the Churches as a consequence of our propaganda do not usually avow the cause of their retirement, and we are not in the habit of parading converts. But it may safely be said that but for our work the truth about religion would never dawn upon the minds of the mass of the people. Even the preaching of the "advanced" clergy is evidence to the same end. The little of the truth they let out is the very minimum they are obliged to admit. And it is only the A. B. C. of Freethought that they voice. Canon Barnes, and the Dean of Carlisle, and other "daring" preachers are only saying some of the mildest things that Freethinkers were saying a century ago. Their daring is the consequence of timid minds too faint to admit the whole of the truth, and without the courage of fighting to the last for orthodox and genuine Christianity.

But while it is all to the good to see this general collapse of orthodoxy, and to know that year by year large numbers of people are leaving the Churches for ever, it is to be regretted, from our point of view, that a larger number of them are not enrolled as active workers in the Freethought cause. We are not reaping the profit we ought to reap from the weakening of the Churches and the consequences of our own propaganda. We seriously invite the attention of Freethinkers all over the country to this fact. There was never a time when personal propaganda could be so successfully carried on as the present. Whole masses are ready for it if it is only brought before them in the right way. Disbelief in religion is not to-day the rare thing it once was; it is the characteristic of a very large number of thoughtful and educated minds. The Freethinker who approaches his friends or neighbours finds them already half prepared for the message he has to deliver, and it is his business to deliver it. If we are really to make the loss of the Church our gain we must all of us take this matter seriously in hand, and we should like Freethinkers all over the country to consider the matter seriously. We ought to have members being enrolled into the N. S. S. by the hundreds, and the sale of our literature should go up by leaps and bounds. Both results can be achieved if we seriously make up our minds that they shall be.

Dr. Jayne, Bishop of Chester from 1889 to 1919, has died. Many years ago he aroused much controversy by stating that working-men of Secularist opinions were specially prone to be cruel to their children. The Bishop also advocated flogging for criminals. It is curious to remember that the bishop was generally regarded as being advanced in his views.

Knocked down by a cyclist, Miss Jessie Ritchie, a Broadstairs religious worker, died from concussion. Had she been a sparrow doubtless Providence would have kept its august eyes on her.

Among recent wills are: Rev. A. F. Pope, of Tring, Herts, £28,028; Rev. J. Brodie, Tunbridge Wells, £6,999.

Yet the clergy pretend to follow in the footsteps of the Founder of Christianity, who is said to have lived and died a pauper, and who denounced riches.

The official report of the earthquake casualties in China last December fixes the deaths at 200,000. That is quite a pretty testimony to the fatherly care of God. As he knows when a sparrow falls to the ground one cannot assume that he was ignorant of the deaths of 200,000 people.

The *Leeds Mercury* for August 31 reports a case which is of interest to Freethinkers. In a case before the Scarborough Police Court, Mr. W. S. Rowntree presiding, six local tradesmen were summoned for exhibiting "profane postcards" for sale. A police witness said that he was told to purchase some postcards and bought two entitled "The Old Maid's Prayer" and "The Bachelor's Prayer." The last named one represented a man kneeling and offering up the prayer "Send a woman to share my lot." The Chief Constable said he saw the cards in a window and thought they were profane. The Bench found the cards were profane, but dismissed the case on payment of costs. The case strikes us as one of the most ridiculous we have heard of. The Chairman would have been well advised had he told the Chief Constable to mind his own business, or to resign his post and confine his energies to a Methodist Sunday-school. It is a pity that tradesmen when they are attacked by such pettifogging busybodies as this Chief Constable do not fight the case to a finish. It is almost unbelievable that a judge, with a genuine sense of public responsibility would encourage such prosecutions.

One of the morning papers reported that the public at Oxford Police Court the other day was highly amused at a Chinaman who took the oath by breaking a plate. We can imagine the sense of superiority felt by this Christian public on witnessing this ceremony, and yet we should dearly like to know in what way the Christian ceremony of taking the oath is intellectually more respectable. When the Christian solemnly swears "So help me God," what part does he imagine God takes in the proceedings. Quite clearly he does not *compel* the witness to tell the truth. Nor does he punish him for not telling it. And if it is held that he merely helps a witness to tell the truth, one can only say, judging from a large number of cases, his help is not worth much. It is highly amusing to see a Chinaman breaking a plate in the witness box, so it is to see a Christian performing his incantation in the same place. And whether it is the Chinese or the Christian Joss does not really appear to make any substantial difference.

Canon Newbolt, in a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, speaks of "loving kindness which watches over the ordered harmony of the universe." We wonder whether Canon Newbolt saw much of that loving kindness in the European war, or even in the present state of the world. If there is a God, we do not deny that he may be watching the course of events—even the deity, one would think, must try to fill up his time somehow. But that appears to be the end of his care. Or if he does anything at all, and again looking at the state of affairs, then we can only hope that he will for the future leave things quite alone. Next to there being no God to interfere with things is the God who does nothing at all. The Romans had an altar "To the God who takes no heed," and that is the least troublesome deity that is mentioned in all history.

The *Daily Express* declares that it is "the parson's job to cure the sick soul, as the doctor's is to cure the sick body." There is, however, no doubt that man has a body, but "the soul" is an open question.

The Bishop of St. Albans has defined a pessimist as "a man who wears a belt as well as braces." But such a man should feel optimistic. There would be room for pessimism if the man had but one button on his trousers, and that one hanging by a single thread.



### 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.

C. C. HILTON.—We are sending free copy to the Library. Hope it will do good.

A. JAGGER (S. Africa).—Thanks for good wishes, which we greatly appreciate.

H. TRUCKELL.—Very useful. Thanks for compliment. We hope the notes on Spiritualism will do as much good as you anticipate.

H. ELMES.—The fussy impertinence of some religious busybodies is almost beyond belief. What a horrible destiny to have to live forever in their company.

T. N.—We should be pleased to advise you on the matter of drawing up your will if you will let us have particulars.

R. R.—Pearson's *Grammar of Science* is now published by Murray in two volumes. We think the price is 21s.

A. THORN.—Thanks for birthday greetings. Pleased you like the articles on Spiritualism. We shall expand and print so soon as we can manage it. But we cannot do all we should like to do at once.

B. MOORE.—Thanks for MSS. Shall appear.

S. D. STEPHENSON.—The conception of evolution has quite put out of court what was known as the "a priori" argument for the existence of God." There were several replies to Gillespie, but we would advise you to study the matter in connection with a knowledge of evolutionary psychology.

W. J.—We note your desire, but we don't care to use any pressure to bring it about. Our columns are, of course, open.

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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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:—

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### Sugar Plums.

Mr. J. Fothergill, the Secretary of the South Shields Branch, has the arrangements well in hand for Mr. Cohen's forthcoming visit to the Tyneside district. Unfortunately, arrangements were made to have a lecture on the Sunday morning, at some distance from Newcastle, and then return to Newcastle for the afternoon and evening. But that is rather too much and that arrangement has had to be set on one side. As it is Mr. Cohen will be lecturing nearly every night in the week, with two lectures on each of the Sundays, and that with his other work is quite enough. Perhaps too much, but there is no need to go out of one's way to invite trouble. Perhaps the friends who wanted the Sunday morning lecture can

arrange for one of the week-nights. Mr. Cohen was sorry to disappoint them, but we are none of us getting younger, and there is a limit to the energy that one can safely expend.

We hear from Mr. W. H. Hunt, whose case has been many times mentioned in the *Freethinker*, that he has addressed a memorial to the Home Secretary on the subject of his dismissal, but that gentleman has declined to interfere in the matter. Mr. Hunt also complains that when we referred to his case we made use of the word Communism in connection therewith, and that would lead some to assume that he was a Communist. We think we made it perfectly clear that according to our information Mr. Hunt was not a Communist, although a man has a perfect right to hold that opinion if he sees fit. But we were bound to give the facts when we were writing on the matter, and it was in connection with his writing for Communist literature that the trouble occurred. Had we left that out everyone would have assumed that it was Freethought literature that had been written for.

Having aired a complaint, we are perhaps entitled to publish a compliment which we are sure that many of our readers will like to see. Mr. H. J. Wedlake, of South Tottenham, writes:—

I have just read your final article, "Views and Opinions," in the *Freethinker* and I cannot allow the occasion to pass without writing to thank you very sincerely for the great pleasure you have given in perusing your illuminating exposition of Spiritualism in connection with abnormal psychology. May I express the hope that some day you may feel inclined to write a book on psychology, including all its branches. Such a work would be of immense value written by one free from all religious prejudice and in a style such as is found in your *Determinism*. Students in training need very much a revision of definitions (e.g., consciousness, etc.). You could supply them with true, exact, and up-to-date material I am sure.

We are pleased to have the appreciation of our readers, and have for long had in view the writing of a general psychology. As a matter of fact we had an offer from one of our leading publishers for the MSS. but have not had time to write it. And now with the *Freethinker* and other party work on our hands we cannot say when it will get done. Freethought is a very imperious mistress to one who really gives oneself to her service. Perhaps if she had more servants the labour would be lighter.

The weather will of necessity soon bring to an end Mr. Whitehead's open-air propaganda, which is now being financed by the Executive. But he is open for engagements during the winter season, and Branches should make their own arrangements to that end. He is, we understand, already booked for one or two places in South Wales, and Freethinkers there may feel inclined to arrange a visit to other places. Letters can be addressed to him c/o this office.

We are asked to state that in connection with the Manchester Branch N. S. S. Mrs. Mapp is holding an American tea from 3 to 6 p.m. on Saturday the 17th inst. Members and friends invited to turn up in large numbers at 1 Leopold Avenue, Cavendish Road, West Didsbury. Take a Palatine Road car (4d.) from Piccadilly or Albert Square, and get off at terminus and turn to right down Lapwing Lane.

Our outdoor speakers report excellent progress during the summer campaign now drawing to a close. Last Sunday the exceptionally fine weather again attracted large crowds to the public parks, and Mr. A. D. McLaren had a first-class meeting in Victoria Park, the large proportion of young men and women being a noticeable feature of the audience. If our open-air campaigners will make a point of mentioning the *Freethinker* at their meetings they can help materially to make the paper known to large circles of readers and thus to some extent counteract the effects of the Press boycott of our work.

We are pleased to find *John o' London* recommending our issue of Volney to its readers as a "splendid edition."

We really think it is, and we hope that many of the readers of *John o' London* will take the hint.

We have received a copy of a new pamphlet by Mr. Frederick Verinder, Secretary of the League for the Taxation of Land Values, on "Is there a Cure for Unemployment?" Mr. Verinder's plan, which we agree would go a very long way towards removing the distress which now exists, is a freer access to the land, brought about by a proper system of land taxation. We strongly advise those who are interested in the land question, and all ought to be, to secure a copy of the pamphlet: It will cost them no more than threepence, with a penny extra for postage, and can be obtained from the office of the League, 376 Strand. We wish all those who set out to educate the public wrote with the clearness and precision that Mr. Verinder does.

## An Unhistorical Saviour-God.

### II.

(Continued from page 557.)

#### THE CRUCIFIXION FABLE.

THE Christians of this country have a strange way of celebrating the death of their Redeemer. They generally enjoy themselves as though it were the anniversary of a wedding. They eat and drink with extra vigour; indeed, they sometimes get drunk. They visit their friends, take week-end trips, scour the country on bicycles, and do all sorts of things that are very much out of harmony with the sad drama they say was enacted on Mount Calvary. For our part, we spend the time as merrily as they do, but for a different reason. It would never occur to us to attend an execution and laugh at the dying criminal; in the same spirit, we should treat the crucifixion of Jesus with all seriousness if we believed it really happened. But we do not. We regard the whole story, from beginning to end, as a dramatic fiction. And we feel sure that if all the early Christian writings were now extant we should be able to see exactly how it was developed. At any rate, the story of the crucifixion, as it has come down to us, bears every mark of a fable. There does not appear to be one historical characteristic in the entire narrative.

Jesus had to die somehow, or he could not be the Saviour. It was also necessary that he should die a violent death. A natural death, from fever or smallpox, would be too unromantic. Nor would it do for him to perish in a tumult, or by lynch law, or by the hand of a personal assassin. That would have been too undignified. The only possible alternative was a public execution, judicially ordered, and carried out by the civil authorities. And this is precisely what the fictionists adopted. In the next place, it was natural, in a dramatic composition, that every feature of the story should be wrought up to a high degree of interest and effectiveness. An ordinary arrest would never do. The Saviour had to be betrayed, and Judas was selected for the purpose. He took the constables to Jesus and pointed him out to them with a kiss. Now this is excellent. The dramatist knew what he was about. But his memory was not as good as his invention. He forgot that Jesus did not need identification, since he was about the best known man in Jerusalem, in consequence of the violent antics he had been playing there for several days. What should we think if we were told that the police wanted to arrest the late Charles Bradlaugh, and that they paid the treasurer of the National Secular Society thirty shillings to identify him by shaking hands with him? Should we not say it was too absurd for discussion? And are we not entitled to say the same of the arrest of Jesus?

Next let us take the incident of Peter's denial of his master. One of the twelve betrayed Jesus, and the other eleven forsook him and fled—in order that he might stand absolutely forlorn. But even this was not enough. Peter doubled back, got into the court, and

watched the examination. Why? Simply in order that he might be there at the psychological moment to deny his master. Thus the Saviour is first betrayed, then forsaken, and at last denied. Now we venture to say that dramas do not occur in actual life with such rounded completeness. They only occur in that way on the stage.

When Peter got outside, after denying his master, the cock was ready to crow at him. The rooster had been waiting to let fly. When he saw Peter he knew the critical moment had arrived. That is how the story goes. But if you go by the ordinary laws of probability the incident is simply incredible. Moreover, the rooster must have been placed there in readiness, for cocks were not allowed within the Holy City.

Let us now take the case of the two thieves between whom Jesus was crucified. Why were there two? Why not one or three, or any other number? Because two—neither more nor less than two—were wanted by the dramatist; one to rail at Jesus, and the other to acknowledge him as the Messiah. They are just like the "two murderers" in *Macbeth*. The number was determined by the playwright. According to the laws of probability, the odds were ever so many to one against precisely two thieves turning up to be executed at the same time as Jesus; and it was at least two to one against his being placed between them.

The spear-thrust in the side of Jesus is another dramatic incident. It is only mentioned in the fourth Gospel. Why? Because the writer of that Gospel, and that Gospel alone, brings in Thomas to doubt the resurrection after all the other disciples are convinced. Thomas demands not only ocular but tangible proof. Amongst other things he wishes to put his hand in the hole in the Saviour's side. John makes him put his hand there, and John prepares the hole for his doing it. The other Gospels are silent as to both incidents.

Jesus is brought before the high priest first. Why? Simply in order that the representative of Judaism—the old dispensation—might insult and reject him. This incident is demonstrably unhistorical. "The court of priests had no penal jurisdiction," as Rabbi Wise tells us, "except in the affairs of the temple service, and then over priests and Levites only."

The trial before Pilate is all drama. There is no history in it—nothing in keeping with what is known of Roman jurisprudence. It is not conceivable that a Roman governor, sitting as a magistrate, took domestic messages from his wife as to her dreams about the guilt or innocence of a prisoner he was trying. It is monstrous to suppose that he would "find no fault" in the prisoner and yet sentence him to execution; or that he would exculpate himself by washing his hands in public—an act that was meaningless to a Roman. All these things, and more, are pure inventions. The object of them is to divert blame from Pilate, who represents the Gentiles, and to throw all the guilt upon the Jews. "His blood be upon us and upon our children" was never cried by his countrymen against the seat of justice—which would have been no seat of justice in listening to them. This is the malignant cry of Christian bigotry; a pretence and a justification for hating and persecuting the Jews.

The more this Crucifixion story is examined the more dramatic and the less historical it appears. We could continue this examination at great length on the lines we have been pursuing, but we have said enough for any reader who will take the trouble to think the matter out for himself. What we desire to point out in conclusion is this. Christianity is said to be the only religion that enables a man to die with peace and comfort. Yet the last words of Christ himself were "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

(To be Continued.)

## Bible Art.

WHAT is Art? Emerson well expresses it in *Society and Solitude* when he says:—

The conscious utterance of thought by speech or action is art. From the first imitative babble of the child to the despotism of eloquence, from the first pile of toys or chip bridge to the masonry of the Minot Rock Lighthouse or the Pacific railroad, from the tattooing of the Owhyhees to the Vatican Gallery, from the simplest expedient of private prudence to the American Constitution, from its first to its last works, art is the spirit's voluntary use and combination of things to serve its end.....If we follow the popular distinction of works according to their aim, we should say the spirit, in its creation, aims at use or at beauty, and hence art divides itself into the useful and the fine arts. The useful arts comprehend not only those that be next to instinct, as agriculture, building, weaving, etc., but also navigation, practical chemistry and the construction of all the grand and delicate tools and instruments by which man serves himself, as language, the watch, the ship, the decimal cipher; and also the sciences, so far as they are made serviceable to political economy.

Further on Emerson endeavours to show how—

the laws of each art are convertible into the laws of every other. They are the re-appearance of one mind working in many materials to many temporary ends.

Raphael paints wisdom, Handel sings it, Phidias carves it, Shakespeare writes it, Wren builds it, Columbus sails it, Luther preaches it, Washington arms it, Watt mechanizes it.

Whether we accept Emerson's theory of "the re-appearance of one mind" or not we cannot fail to be impressed with the artistic halo which he flings round all forms of human life and effort. But, in this respect, the Biblical writers are singularly wanting. They were too much absorbed with religious emotion to take an interest in creating things of beauty in the world around them.

The result was, as Dr. Barrows, in his popular *Biblical Geography and Antiquities*, remarks with much simplicity:—

The Hebrews were not distinguished for their attainments in the arts and sciences, their energies being turned in another and a higher (!) direction .....In the peaceful arts they did not excel the neighbouring nations, and in some respects fell short of them.

Among the commandments alleged to have been given by Jahveh to Moses from Mount Sinai, the second runs as follows: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." This was scarcely the way to encourage sculpture or painting. And, as a matter of fact, the Jews never shone in that direction. The art galleries of the great European museums contain no Hebrew masterpieces. The Tabernacle, built on plans drawn by the Divine Hand, was a mean and primitive affair. Solomon's Temple was an undoubted improvement on the Tabernacle, but the artistic merit was altogether due to Hiram, a Gentile. The children of Israel had to import their art, as Solomon imported his apes and horses.

On one occasion Aaron the High Priest tried his hand on sculpture on a system that would astonish our Royal Academicians. Having, according to his own account, thrown a heap of golden jewels into the fire "there came out this calf" which he proceeded to reduce to more elegant proportions with a graving tool (Exodus xxxii.). We strongly suspect that the alleged reason given for Moses' destruction of the calf is not the correct one. His education had probably imbued him with some notion of artistic form, and he

was so disgusted with Aaron's amateur performance that he speedily consigned it to oblivion.

Music and singing were arts also cultivated by the Jews, or more correctly speaking performed on harps, cymbals, and lutes, especially upon days of public rejoicing. The following instructions given in the book of Numbers for the use of silver trumpets are interesting and precise. Here they are:—

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, make thee two trumpets of silver, of a whole piece shalt thou make them, that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation (Numbers x. 113).

There are many instances in the Bible of the employment of instrumental music, and among the most notable are when the walls of Jericho fell at the trumpet blast (Joshua vi.), and again when David had slain Goliath the children of Israel returned rejoicing at their victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel xviii. 6). That the Israelites often indulged in song is evidenced by the fact that they sang a hymn of triumph after their passage through the Red Sea (Exodus xv. 1, 22). And the women joined the warriors on their return from battle and sang the praises of David and Saul as an expression of joy at their achievements (1 Samuel xviii.). In my judgment, the most dramatic story in the Pentateuch is that of "Joseph the Dreamer," who is put into a pit by his jealous brothers and afterwards rescued by Reuben and sold to the Ishmaelites, who in their turn, dispose of him to Potiphar, an officer in the service of Pharaoh in Egypt. The story of Joseph being torn to pieces by wild beasts, the grief of the father at the supposed death of his favourite son, and Joseph's advancement in Egypt, and the visit of his brethren in search of food and their love for Benjamin put to the test, and the clever way in which the finale is brought about by Joseph (metaphorically) taking off his beard, and exclaiming, to their amazement, "Behold, it is I, Joseph, your long lost brother," form splendid material for a strong old-fashioned melodrama that would have been received with rapturous applause at most of the popular play-houses in London half a century ago, except that Biblical subjects were uniformly prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain at that period of the world's history. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Natural History Notes.

Some desultory Notes and Natural History speculations from Travancore. (Extracts of a letter from T. Padmanabha Pillai, Government Mycologist, Quilon).

WHEN I was in Travancore in 1907 this gentleman, who promises to become a Hindu Fabre, was a student in the Maharajah's High School. Among my numerous Tamil friends he was the most interested in my remarkable discovery that certain kinds of tropical—but not European—spiders have the strange faculty of changing the colour of their eyes, either of both simultaneously, or first of one and then of the other. The Hindus being spontaneously interested in natural history a large collection of Travancore spiders soon came to hand. I ought to have mentioned that the change of colour of the eyes is generally from gray-green to jet-black, or from various shades of fawn colour to black, or something very like it.

The fact was evident. Only the mechanism by which it was brought about was a puzzle. My theory, after careful observation of various kinds of these spiders and their changing eyes under a lens, that it was due to a globe, half black, half green or brown revolving round any axis was ridiculous. One day Padmanabha came with one of these spiders with

changing eyes and a transparent thorax. Behind the two giglamp eyes, which are placed facing straight forwards just like the lamps of an auto, anyone could see, looking at the semi-transparent thorax from above, two perfect cones, each one exactly behind the two eyes, so that these two eyes might be compared to two miniature butterfly nets, with the nets stretched out horizontally behind the two hoops and the two axes of the two nets, each a somewhat elongated cone, exactly parallel. All at once we observed that these two cones had the faculty, as T. P. put it, of "wagging," but only in a certain direction. They always wagged in the horizontal plane drawn through the horizontal diameter of the two giglamp eyes, *i.e.*, parallel to the surface of the earth. They only wagged inwards, *i.e.*, the tips of the cones could move and touch on the median parallel line exactly half way between them which divided the spider longitudinally into exactly two halves, but not outwards, *i.e.*, not beyond the axes of the two cones when these axes were parallel and exactly at right angles to the face of the spider.

All at once our Hindu friend had a flash of inspiration.

"I see it all," he said.

The tips of the cones are black, or very dark, say one-third of their length, the remainder of the cone between this and the giglamp outer eyes is a zone of green or fawn colour. When you are facing the eyes and they are parallel, as in the above, they appear black, or nearly so, as the case may be, because you look straight into the pit of the cone, but when the tips touch, your line of sight strikes the coloured zone and they appear green or fawn coloured, as the case may be. When the axis of one eye-cone remains parallel and the other touches it the first looks black or very dark, the other green or light fawn coloured.

Sections of the eyes of attis spiders confirmed this explanation.

In tropic lands life pullulates more abundant than about the poles, and in consequence the struggle for existence in tropic lands produces all sorts of forms and makeshifts to avoid foes and catch prey. As no attis spider that I am aware of in any part of Europe has the faculty of changing the colour of its eyes, even in the Mediterranean region, where a number of different species were caught and observed, it may be inferred that the faculty in the tropical attis spiders is of advantage to them in the struggle for existence. I will now let Padmanabha speak for himself.

Quilon, Travancore, July 4, 1921.

To-day also I got a fine specimen of attis spider very much like the first specimen I was fortunate enough to get years ago. The change of colour can be observed quite clearly without the aid of any lens. The specimen is just in front of me and I can now see the wonderful mechanism of its eyes as clearly as in the specimen we saw at Trivandrum. I am going to breed the attis spiders and study their habits, which may give a clue as to the exact nature of the wonderful colouration. Probably this may serve me as a thesis for a doctorate quite admirably. I feel sure that the moving mechanism is for enabling the animal to get a wider range or angle of vision without moving the unwieldy cephalothorax.<sup>1</sup> It is the colouration of the eyes that is perplexing. As these attis spiders live mostly on the tender leaves of plants they have to do with light filtered by the green leaves (? W. W. S.). It is just possible that the yellow portion of the eyes enables the spider to see things better in such light, and in open sunlight, on the other hand, the dark portion is of help. Anyway, it is very fascinating. Breeding these animals is quite easy.....By the way, I have been breeding a large number of mantes. The common Preying mantis (sic) is the most remarkable. [My impression is that the popular name is the

<sup>1</sup> This is strongly borne out by the fact that the spider cannot move the tips of the cones beyond their axes when parallel to the median parallel.—W. W. S.

"praying mantis," from the apparent devotional attitude of the animal; but we may, perhaps, consider the variation in the spelling to be a distinction without a difference. The insect is common in Italy and is there called "La Sposina," from its supposed resemblance to the unhappy Italian girls decked out in their gawdy finery just before they "take the veil."—W. W. S.]

I have noticed one specimen I had made a meal of five successive husbands,<sup>2</sup> one after the other. One morning when she was actually feeding on her husband, soon after the nuptial rites, at the termination of which the fellow made a frantic effort to escape the clutches of the virago of a wife, but ultimately paid his life blood for causing a new brood, I saw a number of young nuns from the Trevandrum Convent going about the natural history gallery of the Trevandrum Museum. I took the bevy of young nuns to see the wonderful and rare sight of a husband being eaten up alive! Their faces were perfect pictures—very ugly though—for a Böchu. They began telling the rosary and at the same time were in rapt attention, listening to every word I said about the husband eating tendencies of these devout-looking animals, and watching with interest the wonderful demonstration in front of them. Two of them blushed a bit, but that didn't improve their looks a bit. By the way, I had several broods from the eggs hatched out.

A set of eggs used to have thirty-six in number and hatched out in the course of nineteen days. The mother used to begin feeding on her progeny the very next day after the eggs were hatched out, and these poor little young ones could not possibly feed by themselves. I do not know what they used to do in nature for feeding while very young. [Evidently these insect "praying" mantes, like their Euro Christian equivalents, require quite a number of Shelleys and Menanders to improve their "morality."—W.W.S.] I found that they could easily recognize the tiny morsels of chopped grasshoppers I used to offer at the tip of a long needle. They used to come and dance about my hand and flick away wee bits of grasshopper I used to offer. After about a week they used to feed on one another very freely. I have noted in several broods that the female element was very much restricted and were very few in number. In fact, a brood of thirty-six young ones had rarely more than three females among them. [Are the males Freemasons then?—W. W. S.]

W. W. STRICKLAND.

### The Slave and the Woman; Or Happiness the Obverse Side of the Medal.

EVE in the fable entered the Garden of Eden to be a comfort to Adam in his loneliness. Apparently, she was successful in her mission, but she added to his tribulations by causing them both to be cast upon an inhospitable world outside the gates of Paradise.

Throughout the ages her daughters have followed her example as comforters to men; all her daughters have outrivalled Eve, some have even outdistanced her. Having selected a suitable male as the father of her prospective children, she "mothers" him in a most effective manner, assuaging all his tribulations, is a ready listener to all his braggadocio, and does her best to live up to his standards until he has fulfilled her perhaps unconscious desire, and she has obtained her children necessary to her existence.

The woman's function in the slave state of society which we term civilization has been extended. She not only serves a social purpose as far as the individual man is concerned, but she also serves a political purpose in supporting the system. At one time in the history of mankind the process was reversed; the

<sup>2</sup> See Remy de Gourmont's wonderful book on animal marriages.

woman's function was fulfilled when she had produced children. After that function had been fulfilled she was relegated to the more arduous work of agriculture, such as it was, and usefully employed upon other domestic duties.

Civilization has found that by reverting in part to the characteristics of the common mother and developing these characteristics, it can make full use of the distinction between the sexes. One of the best reasons for separate sex is that man, beset as he is by slave psychology to-day, is discontented, ambitious while he is single or uninterested in any individual woman, but so soon as he has been selected for the purposes of sex by a woman, he finds a solace for all his troubles which would not otherwise be possible. The little time that was devoted to other pursuits before his sex instinct had been aroused if the system left him any vitality at all, is demanded by the woman thereafter. His interests are narrowed down to a point. In compensation the woman, who invariably regards man as not yet adult, treats him to a process of mothering. She listens to his political discontent, the yearnings of his spirit, to his aspirations, and is to him a burnished bowl to receive these things. Really she has only one interest, although she may not be aware of it. That interest is sex, and man is necessary to her before she can fulfil her destiny.

Accordingly, she soothes him, offers him some compensation for all the limitations that the industrial system sets to his activities. In business as a factory hand, or to use a wider term, as manual worker, or on the other hand as black-coated worker, he feels himself to be but a cog in a machine to perform some small routine task, which holds no satisfaction, which gives him no delight, and which corrodes his soul. His woman, or rather the woman who has chosen him, offers a precious sense of individuality which is lacking in the other part of his life. With her he feels that he really is a man, that his activities are of some importance, that, at any rate, he is valuable to her. Truly that is so.

Then at a later stage comes matrimony, adding its responsibilities to the burden of the slave. Formerly his activities were limited by the fact that he had substance barely sufficient for one, now that substance has to be made sufficient for two, and no doubt for an increasing number. Formerly his daily routine task absorbed the greater portion of his vitality; now, with the additional burden of domesticity, all his vitality is absorbed. Discontent with his lot gives place to care. What had formerly been only inconvenience, a mere inability to satisfy some of his desires, now becomes a matter of pressing urgency. There is nothing with which he can satisfy his own desires, all is demanded by the necessities of others, and the compensation is lacking. The woman whose use for him has been fulfilled in the begetting of her children, now only sees his use in maintaining herself and these children. She is so busy with the cares for her household that she has little time for him. He cannot find the solace, the compensation for what is lacking in his life in her society. The house and her children demand that the extension of her function which the present social system has produced shall be regarded as fulfilled. He no longer has time for spiritual aspirations, he no longer has time for that divine discontent, and he has no vitality with which to assimilate ideas; he is fully occupied with his personal cares.

A slave before, he is doubly a slave now, and woman, the safety valve of society has once more done what she has been unconsciously instructed to do by racial inheritance, and consolidated the existing system.

Sex is nevertheless a fact and inescapable.

G. E. FUSSELL.

## The God Who Made the Flies.

THE God who made the flies  
Is very old and wise  
And lecherous. His keen  
Small lidless eyes obscene  
And treacherous. He loves  
Dark pestilential groves  
And festering swamps, where death  
Creeps, and his baleful breath  
Pervades the atmosphere:  
None ever cometh near  
But black and evil things,  
Whose iridescent wings  
Carry to lands of light  
The venom of His spite.

The God who made red war  
To wrack this tortured star  
Most bloody minded is:  
He uttereth rhapsodies  
O'er maimed and dead. His beard  
Is flame coloured, and smeared  
His cheeks with crimson. Hell  
Loveth His doings well.

The God who made the storm,  
To feed the white sea-worm  
With sea-tossed human flesh,  
He ravages afresh  
The hearts of wife and maid.  
His hand is never stayed.  
No little children's cries  
Softens His cold grey eyes.

The God who made disease  
Is jovial and obese.  
His pinguid belly shakes  
With laughter at our aches.  
He dearly loves to spy  
Bright fever's watery eye,  
And sedulously to seek  
For cancer's sallow cheek.

But He who made the flies  
Excels in cruelties.  
His base malignant mind  
Hath deviltry designed  
Of petty spitefulness.  
His clinging fell caress—  
More dread than honest blows—  
Not only mankind knows:  
But patient horses' eyes  
Suffer His infamies,  
While poor dumb tortured kine  
Browse in the hot sunshine.

J. E. S.

## Report of Lecturing Tours in Wales and Leeds.

August 26 to September 2 inclusive.

The last three meetings in Wales were seriously affected by the rain. Luckily, on the Sunday evening we were able to borrow a club room, where a very successful meeting was held, the audience, for once in a way, being apparently unanimous in its agreement with the points of the lecture.

From Monday to Friday I spoke in Victoria Square, Leeds, where meetings will be continued until Friday, September 9. Rather unfortunately the local Socialists were running a week's mission on the same pitch and the attention being divided the meetings suffered in consequence. Three of the five meetings were good, but the other two were not so good. Such is the fortune of war. At one meeting a curate told us that evolution contended that animals developed from plants and both came from the moon! He also admitted that although the Church had "failed in its duties" it must not be regarded as a failure! Being invited to explain these interesting statements from our platform he declined, refreshingly admitting he did not wish to make an ass of himself by speaking upon subjects he knew nothing about! Nor would he debate religion with us, being "only an ignorant curate"

unversed in the deeper aspects of his faith, whilst I was acclaimed as "an intellectual swordsman of the first rank!! I like Yorkshire curates! They have a correct perspective regarding mental values. The Welsh method is different. In Wales I was saluted as an "arch fiend from hell!" by one authority, whilst another, at the revival meeting held each evening to counteract my efforts, informed his audience that I had run away from my wife! One of my supporters hotly called him a liar, affirming that both my wife and child were present in the crowd!

Now these charges, as a modest bachelor, I find are embarrassing, but what shall be said of the defence except: God save me from my friends? Fitting me up with a wife and child to which I have been either false or faithful is even more damaging than a death-bed recantation. Friends and opponents please note: both statements are slightly exaggerated being, shall we say, somewhat premature.

GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

### National Secular Society.

#### REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 30.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Kelf, Lloyd, Moss, Quinton, and Rosetti; Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Birmingham, Newcastle, Upper Rhondda, Stockport, South London and North London, twenty-one in all.

The report of the Propagandist Committee was received recommending that: (1) All branches be requested to send a complete list of their arrangements for the Winter Session and to say in what way the Executive can best assist them.

(2) That a course of Sunday afternoon lectures during October be arranged for South Place, and a further course of Sunday evening lectures during December for Friars' Hall, provided that the two halls were available, and that in reference to the suggested Freethinker Fellowship Secretary should endeavour to obtain, through the medium of the *Freethinker* the exact amount of support the suggestion would be likely to receive, and, if the replies warranted, to call a meeting for the purpose of electing a provisional committee. The report was adopted unanimously.

The necessity for propaganda at Newcastle, South Shields, etc., was discussed, and on the motion of Mr. Kelf it was agreed that the President be asked to undertake a week's mission in that district on behalf of the Executive.

The Secretary reported that Mr. Whitehead was continuing to hold successful meetings on his second visit to South Wales and would visit Manchester, Stockport, Leeds, etc.

The meeting then adjourned.

F. M. VANCE.  
General Secretary.

If the Christian religion be as it is pretended, a restraint to the crimes of men—if it produces salutary effects on some individuals—can these advantages so rare, so inefficient, and doubtful, be compared with the evident and immense evils which this religion has produced on the earth? Can the prevention of a few trifling crimes, some conversions useless to society, some sterile and tardy repentances, enter into the balance against the perpetual dissensions, bloody wars, horrid massacres, persecutions and cruelties, of which the Christian religion has been a continual cause and pretext? For one secret sinful thought suppressed by it, there are even whole nations armed for reciprocal destruction; the hearts of millions of fanatics are inflamed; families and states are plunged into confusion; and the earth is bedewed with tears and blood. After this, let common sense decide the magnitude of the advantages which mankind derive from the *glad tidings* which Christians pretend to have received from their God.—*Christianity Unveiled.*

### 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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "Mr. G. B. Shaw's Pentateuch."

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Who Will Forgive God?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. F. Burke, A Lecture; 6, Mr. Corrigan, A Lecture; 7, Mr. Hyatt, A Lecture.

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 6, Members' Meeting; 7, Mr. Bert Bertnell, "Gems of Freethought Poetry."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock): 6.30, Arrangements for Mr. Cohen's Lecture Campaign, September 25 to October 2.

**PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS.** 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *Advice to Parents*, Ingersoll; *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d.

#### THREE NEW LEAFLETS.

1. *Do You Want the Truth?* C. Cohen; 7. *Does God Care?* W. Mann; 9. *Religion and Science*, A. D. McLaren. Each four pages. Price 1s. 6d. per hundred, postage 3d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N.S.S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

**HOSIERY.**—For Children's Hose, Vests, Combs, Jerseys; Ladies' Hose, Vests, Combs, Bodices; Men's Half Hose, Hose, Golf Hose, Shirts, Pants; Boys' Youths' and Men's Top Shirts. State colour, and whether cotton or wool. All goods Post Paid, and at latest retail prices. Send your orders to W. STURGESS, Kingston Cottages, Highfield Street, Fleckney, near Leicester.

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