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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED • 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN • EDITOR 1881-1915 • G. W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

Vol. XLI.—No. 46

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1921.

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Words.

We are all acquainted with the old maxim that words are the counters of wise men and the money of fools. Unfortunately we do not so often recognize that it is a form of folly from which few are exempt, and which will overtake the wisest of us unless constant watchfulness is exercised. Thousands have laughed at the old woman who found so much comfort in that blessed word Mesopotamia, and had the old woman herself been on the scene and as alert as those who laughed, she might not have been long without detecting the beam in the eye of her critics. These mouth-filling, though benumbing, words are not confined to one department of thought, nor are they used only by one class of persons. They are found with all, with the theologian, with the philosopher, and with the scientist. One class may claim pre-eminence in this matter, but all have a claim to a share in the estate. The use of "blessed" words is so general that it is nearly lifted out of the category of an infirmity of thought and can almost claim to be called a mental characteristic. To take an example from no less a writer than Thomas Carlyle. Speaking of Sir Walter Scott he says, "No Scotchman of his time was more entirely Scotch than Sir Walter Scott, the good and the not so good, which all Scotchmen inherit, ran through every fibre of him." And on this amazing criticism another critic, Sir Leslie Stephen, comments approvingly: "Nothing more true; and the truth would be as strikingly appropriate if for Sir Walter Scott we substitute Thomas Carlyle." Here, obviously, the value of the judgment lies in its application to certain individuals, of whom Sir Walter Scott, and, to take Stephen's addition, Carlyle, are samples. But in what way is the statement true of Scotchmen and not equally true of Englishmen, or Zulus, in a word, of all men? Nay, is it not equally true of my dog or my cat, or of a flower or of a blade of grass? Do not all forms of life, animal and vegetable, inherit "the good and the not so good" of their predecessors? And as that is so obviously the case, it follows that whereas Carlyle obviously he was expressing an important truth, and Stephen thought it was profoundly true, he was really saying nothing at all. It is not that what he said was not true, but that it is so universally true its value diminishes almost to zero. It throws no more light on

the character of Scott than would the statement that he had a spinal column or walked on two feet. It was not a philosophical generalization, but the emptiest of platitudes. It illustrates the truth that the keenest of intellects are not quite proof against the narcotising effects of mere words.

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The Power of the Past.

Sometimes these thought-displacing words are such as were once alive with meaning, sometimes they are mere words, and never expressed anything more than the user's ignorant wonderment at strange sounds. Or, again, they may have had, and still have a very real meaning if people will only take the trouble to find out what they have in their minds when they use them. Age is not of necessity the enemy of clarity, but it is the friend of obscurity; for an established word comes to take itself for granted, so to speak. And, worse still, the majority take its meaning for granted and endow it with a power of self-expression which it does not and cannot possess. In using a word in common currency it hardly appears necessary to explain precisely what is meant by it. And it is but a short step from ceasing to explain to others what is meant by key words to ceasing to explain their meaning to oneself. And when one has reached that stage words do not express thought, nor even conceal thought, for that would imply a certain amount of deliberate thinking, so much as they usurp the place of thought. It saves the pain of mental strain. That is, perhaps, the reason why words play so great a part in all religions. It brings their users peace—the peace that comes to some from sheer mental vacuity, or absence of the necessity for intellectual exertion. To millions the "peace of God" means little more than this. It means that the repetition of a word or a formula takes the place of serious thinking.

* * *

Patriotism.

But it would be wrong to assume that it is only in connection with religion that words play the part indicated. They are as mischievously active in nearly all directions. To take an example from political life. During the whole of the war period we had dinged into our minds the importance of patriotism. And properly understood there is no objection to its receiving due emphasis. But it was obvious to anyone capable of intelligently observing events that they who used it, for the most part, had no clear conception of what they meant by it, and still less had they a clear idea of how it was to be carried into action. It never dawned upon these shrieking patriots that the essential question, the question that made patriotism itself of any real value, was not that a man should love his country, or do his duty to his country, but when was he doing either or both. Merely to shriek with the crowd, merely to obey the orders of governments, might be doing one's country not a service but the greatest of ill-services. If patriotism is to be taken to mean love of country then it has not unfrequently happened that the greatest of rebels have been the truest of patriots, and the least patriotic those who have held it to be their duty to see nothing but good in what the rulers of the day thought

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right. To take a crucial example, the genuine conscientious objector during the late war was not less patriotic than the man who volunteered for active service abroad, he simply believed that he was doing best his duty to his country by acting as he did. To do one's duty to one's country is, admittedly, an obligation that rests upon all. But to find when we are really doing it is no less a duty, and its discharge is dependent upon both serious and informed thinking. And for that very few have an inclination. The consequence is that we have mere words taking the place of thought, and a whole people made the tools of unscrupulous politicians and intriguing financiers by the crafty use of phrases that mean no more to the mass than the "Abracadabra" of the mediæval magician.

* * *

The Economic Bugbear.

Beware of those whose mouths are filled with formulæ, or who repeat the same phrases with "damnable iteration." For it will be usually found that they are their slaves and not their masters. If I had the training of young men I would mark all who used the same phrases more than a given number of times and make them use some equivalent expression in order to see how far they understood the customary one. Consider how frequently one hears that man's position and man's thinking are determined by economic forces, without a serious attempt having been made to determine just what these economic forces are and what is their nature. Now what would happen if one were to make a class of young men sit down and work out the nature of the forces, economic and others, that mould the life of the human group? I think it would be found that two quite distinct sets of forces had been confused. First, the merely biologic wants of all *animal* life, such as food and shelter, the bare necessities of animated existence; and next, the desires of the *human* group which by their persistence and integration gradually become established as wants that are as imperative, normally, as the animal need for food and shelter. In this instance the matter is a little complicated by the fact that the material form in which the desire is clothed accentuates the misleading connotations of the word "economic." And yet, if we once get rid of the tyranny of mere words it is not difficult to see that the impelling force at work among men to-day is not mere economic necessities so much as the operation of a certain number of desires which must, perforce, clothe themselves in material form. Thus, no man, or at least none worth calling men, would be content with a gratification of their merely animal needs. Merely to have enough food, and enough shelter, and enough clothing, irrespective of the form in which these things were supplied, would satisfy hardly anyone. We require to-day not merely enough food, but special kinds of food, and served in special ways. We want not merely clothing and shelter, but certain kinds of clothing and shelter. Our dress must not be a mere skin, or our house a mere hole in the ground if they are to give satisfaction. And in addition, we have quite a number of desires—books, pictures, amusements—none of which can by strict definition come under the head of economic necessities. We can live without them, but then life without them would to most be positively hateful, and, we should agree, ought to be unbearable. So that a careful analysis proves that our so-called economic necessities have for the greater and growing part their origin in a heightened psychological life. I do not mean by this that it is not possible to reduce man once more to an almost economic animal. That may be done, but it is at the cost of wiping out about all that we hold makes civilized man. Bodily disease may so degrade man as to reduce him to the level of an animal, and one may observe him being divested of all the higher mental and moral qualities.

And social disease may likewise degrade man to a corresponding extent. Make a man hungry enough and he will fight for food that would otherwise fill him with disgust. But that only means he has lost all that a truly human society has given him. But it does not require very close observation to perceive that, while the expression "economic forces" has its place and its use when properly and intelligently employed, it is with very many on the same level as those "blessed" words that take the place of exact thinking instead of expressing it.

* * *

The Tyranny of Speech.

There are a number of other expressions with which I might deal; at present I am only trying to drive home the lesson that the commoner a word becomes, and the more general its use, the greater the need for its careful supervision. A new word can, in this respect, be left to look after itself. It is not, to use an expression of Oliver Wendell Holmes, polarized. It has not gathered round itself a fixed and known meaning, and those who use it are compelled to consider its implications. But with established words or with words that have secured a wide currency the case is different. It is not that familiarity breeds contempt, it has quite the opposite effect with the mass, while to the perceiving few it makes them contemptible. People use these words as though in themselves they conveyed some potent spell. From being means to an end they become ends in themselves. They clog the machinery of thought when they should be an instrument for its clarification. And, after all, it is in clear thinking that the way of social salvation lies. Clear and informed thinking would have saved the world many of the disasters connected with the war, even if it had not saved the war itself; and it would certainly have saved the present troubles might be diminished, and some of them ended by that means. We are the slaves of things largely because we are the slaves of words by which those things are symbolized. There are very few chains that bind people to-day that do not rest on the tyranny exerted by words, and to break their domination is among the most pressing of social tasks.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sophistry.

IN Boswell's *Life* of Dr. Johnson we read of "Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter." To Johnson the Berkeleyan Idealism was obnoxious, and he lost his temper whenever it was mentioned. Boswell observed that though they were convinced of its falseness, it was impossible to refute it. Then he says: "I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it thus.'" On another occasion when a gentleman "thought fit to maintain Dr. Berkeley's ingenious philosophy, that nothing exists but as perceived by some mind; when the gentleman was going away Johnson said to him, 'Pray, sir, don't leave us; for we may perhaps forget to think of you, and then you will cease to exist.'" Thus Johnson accused Berkeley of employing sophistical arguments to establish his curious theory of matter. So, likewise, we charge theologians with resorting to sophistry in their attempts to prove their equally curious doctrines. Of this offence we find a signal instance in the *British Weekly* for November 3. In his Correspondence Column the Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D., deals with a supremely puzzling question, asked by "A. H." of Norway, namely, "When God himself in his Word prophesied (and thus foreordained) on

evil persons as Judas, the wilful king to come (Dan. xi. 3, 16, 36), and the like, can these people be responsible for their acts?" To a theologian no more difficult and perplexing question can be put, and Professor Smith simply evades it thus:—

Does it follow that because God "prophesied" the wickedness of those men he therefore "fore-ordained" it? Astronomers, for example, by their understanding of siderial laws, can tell to a moment when an eclipse will occur, but in predicting it they do not bring it to pass. They do not determine it, nor could they avert it if they would. Thus plainly there is a wide difference between fore-knowledge and fore-ordination.

If he had tried ever so hard the Professor could not have selected a more unfortunate illustration. Between God's fore-knowledge and that of astronomers there is no comparison whatever. Of this Dr. Smith is himself aware. He admits that it may be argued that in God fore-knowledge and fore-ordination are one. The following are his words:—

The Almighty Creator has no need of calculation. He has set the stars in their courses and they move by his decree. "They continue this day according to his ordinances; for all are his servants." And hence it would seem to follow that, since the children of men also are his creatures, it is because he has fore-ordained it that he fore-knows their wickedness, and the responsibility rests upon him and not upon them.

For whatsoever we perpetrate,
We do but row, we're steer'd by Fate.

He has created and placed us in the world to run the careers which he has ordained from all eternity. Whatever we do, the good and the evil alike, is his appointment, and we could not evade it though we would.

Dr. Smith records that view, of course, simply in order to repudiate it; and yet, surely, it is a view clearly taught in the Bible. In Exodus ix. 16, Jehovah addresses Pharaoh thus: "In very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, for to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." He had previously informed Moses that he would harden Pharaoh's heart, which, according to the story, he did with a vengeance. Fore-ordination is one of the great Pauline tenets. In the ninth chapter of Romans God is represented as making certain people vessels unto honour and others vessels unto dishonour, and horrible beyond description are the following words about their respective destinies:—

What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?

God is the Supreme Being whose will none can withstand, whose hand none can stay, and to whom none can say, What doest thou? Nevertheless, this plain teaching of his own text-book Professor Smith has the temerity deliberately even to deny. He confidently sets it aside because "there is a fallacy in it," that is, because it "ignores the essential fact that, while man, like the stars and every other natural thing, is indeed God's creature, he is at the same time a moral being; and this differentiates him from them."

We are now face to face with sophism in all its shamelessness. Man was not *made* a moral being, but *became* such by living a group-life. Morality means only the group-instinct in action. The divines call conscience the voice of God to be found in man alone; but the scientific and much truer definition of conscience is supplied by Professor Hudson in his excellent *Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, and is as follows: "Conscience, so far from being immediate and simple, is merely the organized registra-

tion in the modern civilized adult of his observations of the consequences of the actions of himself and others" (p. 84). In simpler words, Conscience is the moral sense engendered through countless ages of gregarious experience. All gregarious animals, however low down in the scale of existence, are moral beings. They are subject to the laws of the groups to which they belong, obedience to which is generally rewarded, and disobedience severely punished. The difference between human beings and ants or bees is merely one of degree, not at all of nature. Dr. Smith ignores the lower animals altogether, leaves them out in the cold as non-moral beings. What exactly he understands by the statement that "man possesses the perilous prerogative of self-determination, else he would not be man, made in the image of God," one cannot ascertain from his present article. He makes a long quotation from Milton's *Areopagitica* to the effect that when God gave Adam reason he gave him freedom to choose; and Dr. Smith adds that "by the very charter of his being man is not a puppet moved by an invisible hand." Who ever said that he was? No genuine Determinist was ever guilty of indulging in such a silly assertion. There is a sense in which man is self-controlled. Is he not in complete subjection to the law of his being? Has he ever succeeded in going clean against it? It is easy to declare that he has freedom to choose; but freedom to choose what? Has he ever been known to make a choice out of harmony with his character? Whatever motive leads to an act, is it not inevitably the only motive which at the time is an accurate expression of what the man is? Professor Smith observes:—

If he (man) be the victim of circumstances, the reason is that he has yielded to them instead of mastering them. The tragedy is that by yielding to them he becomes their slave; but the responsibility then rests upon himself. For had he chosen he could at the outset have mastered them, and he could master them even now if he would rally the moral forces within him and rely on the reinforcements of Divine grace. It is an evidence of our enslavement and the cowardice which it breeds, that we are so prone to disown our responsibility and cast the blame on predestination, heredity, or circumstances, knowing in our hearts all the while that it lies with ourselves and ourselves alone.

There is, of course, considerable truth in that extract, but it misses the only point of vital importance. *Why* does a man yield to circumstances instead of mastering them? Not because he has freedom to choose, but because he has not. He is what heredity and environment have made him, and he cannot help himself. "Had he chosen," the Professor says, "he could at the outset have mastered them"; but *why* did he not choose? The Free-will advocates are powerless to explain that *why*. That *why* floors the theologian entirely. Why did God's creature choose evil rather than good?

In his closing paragraph Dr. Smith reverts to the Norwegian's question, and it turns out the most sophistical of all the paragraphs:—

But, it may be asked, is not God responsible, inasmuch as fore-knowing the part which sinners by their own choice would play, he nevertheless brought them into the world? It is a sufficient answer that all down the ages man's wickedness has been overruled to beneficent issues. Without Judas, Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate, there would be no redeeming Cross. All unconsciously they were working out the world's redemption. Yet their guilt remains (*cf.* St. Matt. xxvi. 24).

Let us take the case of Judas. At the last supper Jesus said: "He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him; but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were

it for that man if he had not been born." Peter, in the first recorded Christian sermon ever preached, solemnly declared that Jesus "was delivered up by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God." The two statements are wholly irreconcilable. If God had fore-ordained that Judas should betray Jesus then Judas was God's servant, substantially helping him to carry into effect his redeeming purpose. In any case, God was truly responsible for what Judas was and did. He was God's creature, for whose character and deed his Maker alone could be held accountable. The very idea of a just and good God creating a being capable of becoming wicked, of his afterwards overruling his wickedness to beneficent ends, and of his finally casting him into hell-fire therein to burn for ever—such an idea can be legitimately used only as an irrefutable argument for Atheism. And curiously enough, despite what the wickedness of Judas, Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate is said to have been overruled to accomplish, the Cross has never served as a redeeming force in the world. Instead of that it has been the direct cause of myriads of acrid and tortuous disputes about purely imaginary realities, of cruel and often deadly persecution of heretical minorities, and of countless numbers of bloody and devastating wars. And after all, it is being discovered that, if this poor old world is ever to become better it must rely upon its own resources alone.

J. T. LLOYD.

Ninety, Not Out.

The task of the twentieth century is to discipline the chaotic activity of the nineteenth century. And it can only do this by becoming aware of the death-sentence to be passed on Western civilization if it neglects to organize a new social and spiritual discipline.—*Frederic Harrison.*

THOMAS CARLYLE'S affectionate tribute to Walter Savage Landor, "the unsubduable, old Roman," comes to mind on reading in the newspapers that Mr. Frederic Harrison, the well-known Positivist leader, who is over ninety years of age, has been lecturing on "Dante." Here he is, at an age when most men would be only concerned with slippered ease, discoursing on a literary subject, and doing so without repetition or staleness.

A man who has seen so much of the world as Frederic Harrison in travel, has been mixed up for seventy years with most of the developments of thought, politics, and religion, has enjoyed unusual scope for observation. Always of a serious turn of mind, his criticism of men and events is of unusual interest, and one can glean much that is of value from his published books and utterances. For example, what strikes the veteran is "how small a substantial change has been introduced even into superficial details of life" by modern inventions and improvements. To him our so-called progress is largely an illusion. He is as emphatic as John Ruskin in his denunciation of the hurry-scurry and haste of modern life, and regards it largely as a disease. He is very critical, too, of educational reforms. Public schools he says plainly are a failure, and the universities have lost their usefulness in specialization. He is, however, on less safe ground when he regards athletics as extravagant. Mr. Harrison himself, be it remembered, is not a milksop, for he has been a cricketer, and had his share of mountain climbing, both rare accomplishments in a reformer.

The veteran's judgments on men are as interesting as his criticisms of other matters. He speaks caustically of Thomas Carlyle as being "precisely like one of Shakespeare's fools," and of Frederick Denison Maurice's "muddle-headed and impotent mind." Of

Matthew Arnold he tells us: "Whether he was criticising poetry, manners, or the Bible, one imagined him writing from the library of the Athenæum Club." Thackeray, to him, was simply a "rebuker of snobs." He is far kinder in his remarks on Ruskin, who he says was a "fascinating genius in a magnanimous soul." He is unreserved in his admiration of Auguste Comte, whom he always regarded as his master, which is a real tribute to the profound influence exerted by the great French philosopher who was the apostle of the Religion of Humanity.

Mr. Harrison was presented with an illuminated address on his ninetieth birthday in commemoration of his lengthy service to his high ideals. It was happily done. We do well to doff our hats to the veterans of the Army of Human Liberators. There is something more, however, in those ninety years than the life of one individual. There is the summary of the biggest change that has ever come over the life of mankind during the lifetime of one man. The greatest change during the past century is due to the undoubted fact that Supernaturalism is played out, and men's minds are broadening. Men and women are no longer able to accept upon mere trust the religious, social, and theological ideas that satisfied their remote ancestors. Over the pulpits of the fast-emptying churches is inscribed, "To the glory of God." That is the voice of the past. Naturalism sounds the triumphant note of the future, "To the service of man." Based on fables, supported by brute force, trading on ignorance, the clergy now find the conscience of the race in revolt against their outworn ideals. Theology has long enough darkened the earth, and separated man from man. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which embraces the whole world in an ethical fraternity.

MIMNERMUS.

The Flight of Jesus.

HAVING dealt with the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, we may as well deal also with the Ascension, and get rid of this ridiculous story altogether.

It is pretended by modern Christians that Jesus rose from the dead with "a glorified body," with which "glorified body" he ascended into heaven. What they mean by this "glorified body" they are careful not to tell us. We can understand a heavy or a light body, a long or a short body, a lean or a fat body, a handsome or an ugly body. But what on earth is a glorified body? Nobody knows. The expression is simply used to bamboozle the readers who are puzzled by the contradictory stories of the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection.

At one time he is a pure ghost, entering a locked room—possibly through the keyhole; or suddenly appearing to two men along a lonely road, holding a conversation with them, and then as suddenly vanishing. At another time he is a solid reality of flesh and blood, and presumably bones; desiring his disciples to feel for themselves whether he is "a spirit" or a real man, and even sitting down with them to a supper of broiled fish and honeycomb. Now it is difficult to see how a body could appear and vanish, or go through a keyhole; and it is just as difficult to see how a spirit could eat a fish supper. So the subtle divines of the Christian superstition patch up a compromise. Jesus, they say, rose from the dead bodily, but his body was then glorified; a meaningless expression like the "presto" of the conjurer, yet sufficient to deceive and satisfy a crowd of listening dupes.

With this "glorified body" Jesus went up into heaven, where he now sitteth on the right hand of the Father; though his sitting at the right hand of a being

who has "neither *parts* nor passions," like the peace of God, passes all understanding.

The early Christians were obliged to round off the story of the Resurrection with that of the Ascension, for one lie naturally needs another to support it. Had they preached the Resurrection alone, their hearers would have asked to see their risen Saviour; but, with the additional story of the Ascension, they could silence all such inquisitive persons by saying that it was impossible to see him again as he had "gone up."

Having started the story, however, it is a pity that they could not agree about it. We mean from their own point of view. From our point of view, of course, their confusion is charming. According to the third Gospel, Jesus ascended from Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem, on the very day of the Resurrection, or at the latest the next morning. According to the second Gospel, which gives no particular time, he ascended from Galilee, which is at least sixty miles from Jerusalem. The Acts of the Apostles agrees with the Third Gospel as to the place, but differs very seriously as to the time; for, according to this book, Jesus spent forty days (off and on) with his disciples before bidding them adieu in this world for ever.

Another curious feature of the story is this. Jesus is said to have ascended in the presence of the eleven—Judas, the twelfth apostle, having first ratted and then committed suicide. Two of those eleven were Matthew and John, and their names are attached to the first and fourth Gospels. Yet in neither of these Gospels is the Ascension related. All the details are given in the second and third Gospels, whose writers were not present at the occurrence, nor were they even known at that time.

It is related in the Acts of the Apostles that Jesus took the eleven with him to the place of his ascent, that he there made a brief farewell speech to them, that he was then "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." They did not see him sail away, growing smaller and smaller as he went, until he faded into a scarce perceptible speck and was finally lost in space. A useful cloud came along and concealed him from their sight. All they knew, therefore, even according to the narrative, was that he was lost in a cloud—like everybody who has believed in the story ever since.

The one point of agreement amongst all these writers is the one that damns their whole story. During the whole period—whether twenty-four hours or forty days—between rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, Jesus skulked about like a thief in fear of the police. Not a single person outside his own set ever caught a glimpse of him. Now this circumstance is absolutely fatal. He was crucified *in public*, but he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven *in private*. Such a fact throws the allegation under the darkest and most sinister suspicion. Is it reasonable to suppose that the Saviour of the world, whose death was to redeem it, would be lifted up on the cross in the sight of all men, yet would carefully hide all the evidences of his resurrection and ascension? Would he not have established beyond cavil what was so necessary for all men to believe? Would he not have confronted the Roman governor in open court, and the Jewish Sanhedrin in full session, and demonstrated beyond a doubt that he was the very same person who had been sentenced and executed? Would he not then have announced the time and place of his ascent from earth to heaven? Would he not have allowed deputations from all parts of the Roman empire to witness the event? Would he not have taken his flight in the presence of a vast and mixed multitude, who might have returned to their several countries and given a full and faithful report of what they had seen to their fellow citizens, and by this means have handed down the incontestable fact to the remotest posterity?

That he did not do these things is a proof that he could not do them; in other words, the fact that the resurrection and ascension were both transacted with the most astonishing privacy is a sufficient proof that they are not history, but romance.

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

Principles and Politics.

IN the *Freethinker* of October 23 Mr. F. J. Gould, for whose kindly personality and work as an educationalist I have a great respect, sets forth, in his article entitled "Three Tempers," the Positivist view of human affairs. He would have us jettison "absolute codes" or "principles" as metaphysical rubbish, no less pernicious than the theological rubbish which they tend to supersede, and guide our conduct by the "love of humanity as a race," and the study of history and psychology.

I am not sure whether by postulating "love of humanity as a race" Mr. Gould does not let in at the back door one of those "absolute codes" he has so energetically expelled from the front door of his philosophic abode. It is not my purpose, however, to press this point, but to ask, in all seriousness, whether such extrusion of principle is possible or desirable.

I begin by noting Mr. Gould's opinion that "of all the million or so years that have passed since the human race may be said to have begun, the best year is 1921." Well, there is no accounting for tastes, though I am surprised. True, if I judged Mr. Gould by his article alone, I might not be so surprised. For if the emancipation of mankind from the thralldom of principle be the Positivist ideal, then, in the condition of public life to-day, we may almost see the "Positive Polity" in being. Whatever may be argued against our statesmen, they are at least commendably free from codes or principles. There are, I admit, exceptions. The Cecils are still in the "theological stage." Mr. Balfour and Lord Haldane are metaphysicians, and I suppose, rest under suspicion as such, though I think I should acquit them of intruding unduly in politics any principles derived from pure reason. For the most part, however, modern politicians come up to Positivist requirements. They "love humanity as a race." Many of them say so themselves. At all events, they love that portion of humanity which has votes; and in these democratic days the rest is not of much account. I do not know that they give much time to "studying the racial history," though we have a historian at the Board of Education, and one or two more in Parliament. But they certainly study psychology, in the most concrete and practical form. No Minister can hold office for long without doing that. So I think we can congratulate ourselves on our good fortune. "Yet, strange to relate, we are holding our noses," as Mr. G. K. Chesterton has observed. Evidently something is wrong somewhere.

What is wrong, I submit, in Mr. Gould's thesis is the contention that history and psychology can, between them, enable us to dispense with "absolute principle." I do not underrate either of these sciences. I should like to know more of both, and to see others know more. But history and psychology, like all sciences, serve the ends to which they may be put, and the study of *ends*—which, when we have determined them, become *principles*—is a discipline we cannot ignore.

"Principles," says Mr. Gould, "are not (like Plato's Ideas) a sort of divine beings that lead a separate existence." Granted with both hands! They are not separate from us, but implicit in our activities from day to day. As I have put it elsewhere, "the conception of good is differentiated at the outset from other conceptions as referring to something aimed at or

willed, and not necessarily to something *given* or *existing*. 'Good,' in fact, has no intelligible meaning apart from somebody's will and pleasure." The question then arises: whose will and pleasure determines the political end or good in reference to which policies or tendencies are to be judged? Obviously, not simply mine or Mr. Gould's. By what right should we dictate? Nor yet the will and pleasure of the ablest or cleverest; for why should I or another obey the ablest or cleverest to our own disadvantage? "The will of the majority," someone will say; and it sounds plausible. Certainly, in practice, we shall generally do well to defer to the will of the majority, or it may be unpleasant for us. But there is no question of right here, only expediency—the lesser of two evils; and sometimes not even the lesser. Has a majority the right to burn Mr. Gould or me at the stake, or to imprison Mr. Gould for blasphemy, or to take away my glass of beer? We have, evidently, to draw the line somewhere!

There is, in fact, no infallible authority in politics any more than in religion—not even "humanity." To the question of the Jesuit Suarez: "If the people are not sovereign, who is?" the obvious answer is: "In your sense of the word, nobody." We are forced, whether we like it or not, to reflect again on the purposes of common life, and derive therefrom a principle if we can.

Of the wills and pleasures of the individuals who compose society some are mutually contradictory, others are not. If we share Mr. Gould's estimable "love of humanity as a race" we shall agree that those individual needs which do not conflict should be satisfied, and shall only be sorry that the "cursed" nature of things does not permit us equally to satisfy those desires which *do* conflict! The satisfaction of those needs of every individual which do not conflict with the equal or greater needs of others we will name "the common good," and action, which furthers it, "moral." The furtherance of this we shall find job enough for any of us, and more than job enough for most.

But how do we know what needs are "equal" to or "greater" than others? This is not so hard as it looks at first sight. Most of us can take ourselves as fair samples of the race and ask our imagination what is our *own* greatest need. Not, observe, what we may want most at this instant, but what we could least afford to be without. We thus come to the elementary material necessities—food and drink, raiment, house-room, warmth. Assuming that we have these, we probably want sexual and other companionship, and then, if life is to be what we call "civilized," sundry other things: ordinary comfort, cheering surroundings, and the education that enables us to value and make the most of these. Finally, if we are so happy as to be sure of all this, we like delicate dishes, expensive wines, motor cars, fine arts, the latest literature, and all the rest of it!

By this process of reasoning—without appealing to any divine or human authority, other than the feelings of the average social human being—we have arrived at a pretty concrete conception of the end of common life. Some will claim that it is identical with "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," and Bentham may have *meant* something like it. But "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," with its arithmetical count of heads, does not adequately express the principle. The men who burnt heretics in the Middle Ages may have been backed by "the greatest number," so may the men who burn negroes in the Southern States of America to-day. But the heretic's or negro's need *not* to be roasted is a greater need than the need of the inquisitor or lyncher to roast him. (On the mediæval theory, that heresy meant

eternal torment to any professing it, it was necessary to punish exemplarily the heretical propagandist; but even on this showing burning alive is an unnecessary and atrocious cruelty.) A better definition than "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" is the motto of the French Revolution—"liberty, equality, and fraternity." It suffers, of course, from vagueness, but in the light of the foregoing argument its exegesis is not difficult. "Liberty," on our interpretation, means not mere abstract freedom or absence of restraint, but the opportunity of fulfilling one's will and pleasure where it does not conflict with the greater need of others. To secure such opportunity for all may involve, as a means, a good deal of restraint. "Equality" means that no one has a right to satisfy a lesser need at the expense of another's greater need. And "fraternity" means, not sentimental benevolence, or the unnatural growth of white wings on the human anatomy, but the practical recognition of this common good by all citizens, and especially by those whose privilege it is to lead and influence their fellows.

ROBERT ARCH.

Acid Drops.

November 11 is Armistice Day, and for some days the papers have been discussing how best to commemorate the occasion, and beseeching us to remember the sacrifice made by those who died during the "Great War." We agree that the day is worth commemorating, and also that we should remember what our soldiers died for. But how? There is the rub. Are we really remembering the sacrifice of the millions of young lives by proceeding with the competition in armaments? Is the world less militarised than it was in the pre-1914 period? Everyone knows that this is not the case. And was it for the world as it now is that so many young men laid down their lives? We may return to this subject next week; at present we say deliberately that the greatest dishonour that can be shown to the memory of "our glorious dead," will be shown by many of those who stand forward as their official mourners. Hundreds of thousands of these men went to their death feeling that they were helping to build a new world, and that it was really "a war to end war." Those who remained alive have managed to use their sacrifice to enthrone some of the greatest of the follies and iniquities that the war should have banished from civilized society forever.

The chief officials of the Council of the Evangelical Free Churches have issued a memorial asking for prayers on behalf of the Washington Conference on armaments, and adding that unless "Christian principles" prevail the increase of armaments will go on. But if prayer will do anything, why is there any need for a Conference at all? All that need be done is for all Christians to start praying, and we should see the Christian nations of the earth make up their minds to universal peace. And it might dawn upon the intellects of the Free Church Council that if the Christian nations had the will to peace war would be almost at an end. For it is the Christian nations that have been responsible for the race in armaments, and which have forced the non-Christian nations into the competition.

And even now, it will be noted there is little moral repugnance to war, neither is there any very strong intellectual perception of its intense stupidity. The Churches are still to the front in assisting all sorts of military displays, and still continue to give their blessings to all kinds of recent military enterprises. What is really at the bottom of their agitation is the fact that war is at present too expensive to be indulged in with impunity. In this matter the Churches have a very easy method of showing a genuine hostility to war, if they really feel it. Let them decline, as Churches, to have anything to do with military parades and warlike displays. Let them announce that whenever a war occurs, instead of spending

their time as hitherto in talking undiluted nonsense about the "moral uplift" created by war, they will hang their churches in black as a sign of national disaster, if not of national disgrace. In other words, let them publicly and officially decline to have anything to do with any of the causes that help to keep warfare alive, and we shall then credit them with devotion to principle instead of feeling that they are merely the exploiters of every passing phase of public opinion. There are enough Christians in the world to stop war if they will, for if the Christians say there shall be no war none others are strong enough to make it.

And if they can reach that stage, they may perhaps be inclined to pay attention to the advice of Thomas Paine, that the only way to prevent war is total disarmament. Partial disarmament is only a method of getting ready for war in the cheapest possible manner. If the world has not learned that lesson from the late war it has learned nothing. The way to guard against attack is to leave each one destitute of the means of making it. That has been insisted on in the case of the peace treaty with Germany. She has also been prohibited having military drill in schools, and this on the grounds that it must lead to militarism. And we see no reason why Germany should reap all the benefits from the war. The victors should get some benefit as well as the vanquished.

Children's little slips in Sunday-schools often make amusing reading. The Rev. W. J. S. Weir mentions "the only cat in the church" for "the Holy Catholic Church"; "Lead us not into Thames Station" for "lead us not into temptation"; "Thy rod and thy staff come for me," instead of "comfort me."

A sidelight on religious hypocrisy is shown by the statement in an illustrated paper that the collection bag at church is the "retreat for trouser buttons." That such a jest should be printed only shows that the hearts of some Christians are not so soft as their heads.

A former Roman Catholic orphanage at Hammersmith is now a soldiers' club. The orphans have the consolation that their former premises are frequented by men who, if not Catholics, behave like Romans.

What humbugs some journalists are! A London newspaper, giving an account of extensive floods, had the absurd headline in large type, "Rain as Noah knew it." We wonder if the scribe was "wet" when he wrote it.

A friend of ours of humorous turn recently applied for an insurance policy. A question was raised as to his health, and he was informed that he could only be accepted as a second class. He then wrote to the company pointing out that while not disputing the medical report he wished to point out that he prayed regularly for health and long life, as did the other members of his family. The reply of the company was curt, but to the point. It was that they could make no allowance for the circumstance which had been brought to their notice. Quite evidently prayer is not the sort of thing on which insurance companies are inclined to risk anything in the shape of solid cash.

At the Durham Diocesan Conference the Archdeacon of Auckland said that he would sooner be tried by a jury of laymen than by the clergy for any offence of which he might be accused. This is not a very strong compliment to either the sense of justice or intelligence of the clergy, but it is quite warranted. For the whole training of the clergy prevents their forming impartial judgments on matters that may come before them. The curious thing is that the very men whom the Archdeacon would not regard as fit to be trusted in deciding a question of evidence in this world are those whom we are expected to take as our guides concerning another world of which they know nothing at all.

In the *Illustrated London News* (October 29) Gilbert K. Chesterton reviews Mr. C. E. Baines' novel, *The Black Circle*, and assures us with more solemnity than we thought him capable of, that paganism is a very real danger, "far more formidable than an artificial thing like Atheism." "Scepticism is the real mark of the rustic: he is more really sceptical than a whole school of scientific professors." Paganism, Atheism, scepticism and science are subjects that all reviewers know something about. But most of them assure us that Atheism, so far from being "artificial," is the creed of the natural man evading the restraints of religion. G. K. C. writes according to his own book, but the book is too well thumb-leaved now to be really entertaining. Gilbert and Chesterton cannot keep up the fun like Gilbert and Sullivan.

The *Guardian* (October 28) gives a list of "Benefices Vacant," and their "values," which range from £55 to £644. A footnote appended notifies that "the values given are net values from *Crockford*." As we read the list and this explanatory note we imagined ourselves wading through the latest quotations in the *Statist*. It discloses very realistically the difference between "men of the world" and those who have chosen "the narrow way." No wonder there is a dearth of candidates for "holy orders."

A screen and altar-rails have been erected in Holy Trinity Church, Windsor, as a war memorial. This sort of thing represents the chief association of the Anglican Church with the Great War. The clergy of all denominations were exempted from military service, and, when acting as army chaplains, received officers' salary instead of the common "pay" of a common soldier. These gentlemen are all servants in the Master's vineyard. Those of them who are members of the national Church have special privileges. The owner of a "benefice" not exceeding £300 in annual value is exempt from payment of poor rates. The advowsons which confer the rights to these livings are bought and sold in the market, and even advertised, like the good-will of a public-house. Some of them are held by Roman Catholic peers. It is fitting that our spiritual guides should be antagonistic to "materialism," for "where there is no vision the people perish."

According to the *Glasgow Herald* (October 29) the Edinburgh magistrates refused an application from the Musical Director of the New Picture House for permission to conduct Sunday concerts. A similar application from the Central Picture House, Portobello, was also refused. This, surely, will delight the hearts of the elders of the kirk. Each of these magistrates should feel himself a brand new edition of "Holy Willie," and entitled to pray with the latter:—

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
When thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore thy sight,
For gifts and grace,
A burnin' an' a shinin' light
To a' this place!

In the meantime the people of Edinburgh will have to keep the Sawbath—and whatever else they can get hold of.

During a service in the new church at Koekelberg, Brussels, the roof fell in, causing two deaths and hundreds of injuries to the congregation. Apparently, Providence takes no notice of the alleged sacredness of a building, or the religious opinions of the persons in it.

At an inquest on a woman at Southport it was stated that the deceased had suffered from religious mania for years. She refused food, exclaiming, "More hell, more devils." What a comment on the consolations of religion!

Mr. Justice Phillimore is a very religious person, and we are not surprised to find that he is quite orthodox with regard to the question of crime and punishment. Speaking at a meeting of the Police Court Mission the

other day, he expressed the belief that prisons were places that ought to be uncomfortable, and that real criminals should meet with real punishment. There is a sense in which both expressions could be justified, but it is evident that what the speaker had in mind was the old and stupid notion that the chief thing one had to do with the criminal was to hurt him, and the graver the offence in the catalogue the more severe the hurting. That is a very simple remedy, and it is hardly less brutal, and hardly less morally criminal than the actions of the man who is receiving the treatment. Mere brutality towards the criminal never did, we believe, have any other effect than making the wrong-doer more cautious, or changing the direction of his wrong-doing. The essential problem that society has to face is the cure of the criminal, and we should like this Christian judge to tell us in what way he expects to make the criminal better by making him uncomfortable. If he knew anything of the consequences of prison treatment he would realize that nothing has done more to harden men and women in crime than the treatment they have received in prison. It does nothing to refine their character, it creates no genuine regret—save regret for being caught—and the release of the criminal leaves society face to face with exactly the problem that faced it before he was locked up. Collective brutality is not a whit more admirable than brutality exhibited in individual instances. With a less pious training Mr. Justice Phillimore might realize this.

According to Sir Donald Maclean four shillings out of every pound of income-tax revenue is required for current military and naval expenditure, and if we add the cost of past wars the total is twelve shillings. As this is a Christian country and cash is the great thing that appeals to the Christian conscience we should like to see that fact well driven home. And with all our professions of peace, and pleas of poverty in other directions, we have just ordered four battleships—of the value of which experts are highly doubtful, at a cost of nearly forty millions. That is three years after the war that was to end all war.

Sir Donald Maclean also said, with reference to the Washington Conference, that moral disarmament must precede material disarmament. And with that we quite agree. It is, indeed, only a repetition of what we have been saying for years. A friend of ours writes that our harping on militarism is "nauseous." Maybe, but the subject itself is a nauseous one, and we are quite convinced that no Freethought paper can do a better work than to keep hammering into the heads of the people the real nature of militarism and all its work. It is idle to say that people realize this; they do not. If they did, things would be very different from what they are. The war, with all its talk of being a war to end war, was scarce over before the government had placarded the walls of the country with posters pointing out the advantages of the life of a soldier as compared with that of a civilian, and inviting all young men to see the world for nothing—at the public expense. We wonder if a government could have ventured on that (in the circumstances) supreme impertinence if the public had really recognized the true character of militarism. The people are not sick of warfare; they are only sick of paying for it. But the glamour of a powerful army is still strong, and that is why we agree with Sir Donald Maclean that until there is created a strong moral disgust against militarism, and, we may add, an intellectual perception of its folly and stupidity and essential savagery, until we recognize that the typical militarist is only a glorified representative of a red Indian "brave," neither the Washington nor any other Conference will be more than discussions as to how nations can get ready for war in the most economical manner.

Henri Landru, who is being tried at the Versailles Assizes on the charge of murdering eleven women, was formerly an altar-server and sub-deacon at the Church of St. Louis-en-l'Île, Paris. He began his religious career as a choir-boy.

other day at the Court of Appeal a case was heard in which a naval officer had spent £6,000 in two years on articles of dress for his mistress. In another column of the same paper was a paragraph stating that poor sempstresses were paid sixpence each for sewing jumpers which were afterwards sold at from one to three guineas each. These things happen after two thousand years of the Religion of Love.

According to the *War Cry* four men knelt at the drum-head at an open-air meeting at Durham and confessed themselves Christians. At this alarming rate of progress, surely the conversion of the world cannot be long delayed.

"To give to people without asking their religion is a glorious English tradition," says Mr. G. K. Chesterton. This only shows that Mr. Chesterton has never met a district visitor, and is unaware of the manners and customs of pious folk when they donate coals and blankets.

From nearly every part of the English speaking world the cry of the Protestant churches is the same—meagre congregations and difficulty in securing young men for the ministry. The Bishop of Bunbury (W. Australia), addressing the Synod, said that there were very few young men in Australia "offering for what was considered to be a thankless and profitless job."

There were no new men coming on because all the training colleges were closed during the war. The Church had suffered severely in consequence. There would probably be a still greater shortage of clergy in future, because, he was afraid Australian parents discouraged or did not encourage their sons to enter the sacred ministry.

Parents nowadays do not encourage their sons to enter careers for which the latter have a marked aversion. Perhaps the attitude of the rising generation to the "sacred ministry" as a profession is one of the healthiest signs of the times.

While on his way to preach at a Hull mission the Rev. W. M. Hewitt, vicar of St. John's Church, Newington, was taken ill and died. Mr. Evan Davies died while attending service in Mount Zion Chapel, Swansea. Insurance companies please note.

Mr. Ernest Bevin, addressing a Labour meeting at Bristol, said that the great drapery establishments were among the largest manufactories of modern Magdalens. And, he might have added, so very many members of the drapery trade are very religious.

The Parish Church at Bodle Street, Sussex, was burned down after the harvest festival services. Providence appears to have been more than usually careless.

What a pretty kind of place a country would be if religious people could have their way! In this country we have the Bishop of London and others regretting that the war-time restrictions on what we shall eat and drink and what time we shall go to bed are not continued in the interests of religion and morality. These gentlemen cannot rid themselves of the ideal of the barracks as a place of residence and the drill sergeant as moral instructor. And in America, the place where religious cranks flourish with a fine profusion, we have it seriously advocated by a well-known publicist that people should be compelled by law to attend Church. He argues that religion is of primary public interest, and as the government compels us to certain other things which are considered of importance there is no reason why it should not compel us to get religion whether we desire it or not. The *Boston Sunday Herald* gives over a column to an interview with this gentleman, and it is perhaps symptomatic in view of the various attempts now being made to revive the "Blue Laws" or something analogous to them. We should imagine that if this sort of thing grows America will have no need to restrict the entrance of immigrants, it will have to be extra cautious to prevent its citizens escaping.

There are some grim contrasts in the newspapers. The

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements

November 13, Leicester; November 20, Liverpool; November 27, Ton Pentre; December 4, Friars Hall, London; December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green.

To Correspondents.

J. FOTHERGILL.—Letter received. We are pleased to learn that you think so highly of the *Grammar of Freethought*. Our aim is to provide a series of books that will provide something approaching an outline of the case for scientific Freethought. We hope to issue the work on a future life about the end of the year.

R. MAY.—We should like to issue a "very cheap edition" of some of the Freethought classics. But the only way in which that could be done would be by the aid of very heavy subsidies. We are doing what we can with a very limited capital, and as it is we think we can claim that we issue things at a lower price than any other publisher in the country.

T. MOSLEY.—Sorry we shall not see you at Leicester. However, shall look forward to a good time at Nottingham when we visit there. Thanks for reference.

C. T. SHAW.—Too late for this week. Will appear in next issue.

H. F.—You surely do not mean that Salvation does not imply the threat of hell-fire for the unbeliever?

W. J.—We have no time to attend church meetings to listen to sermons. If any of our readers will undertake the distribution of literature at the meeting you name we will supply it.

MR. C. CLAYTON DOVE writes:—"I wonder how many Irish Catholics are aware that in 1155 'Pope Adrian IV permitted Henry II to invade Ireland, on condition that he compelled every Irish family to pay a carolus to the holy see, and held it as a fief of the Church.' (Haydn's Dictionary of Dates, 1889, Art. Ireland.)"

JOHN R. DUNCAN (Rosyth).—*A Dictionary of Scientific Terms* by I. F. and W. D. Henderson (Oliver and Boyd) covers biology and embryology. Some of the popular encyclopaedias should also be useful.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (November 13) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. He will speak on "Free Speech and the Blasphemy Laws," which is a subject that should attract many who are not regular frequenters of the building. For, after all, speech is something in which all have an interest, whether they are aware of it or not, and free speech without free thought is not of very great service. Freethinkers should induce their Christian friends to come along. Seats are free.

There was a capital meeting at Swansea on Sunday last when Mr. Cohen lectured on "Free Speech and the

Blasphemy Laws." The large hall was well filled and the address was listened to with the closest attention throughout. The financial outcome of the meeting was not all that might be desired, but in the bad state of trade existing that is not surprising. It makes the burden heavier for those who have to bear it, but the headway made by our ideas is unmistakable.

When we come across "advanced" thinkers who appear to be impatient at the slow progress of Freethought, we cannot help feeling that they misunderstand the character of our movement. Perhaps they misunderstand their own character as well. A short course of study in the lives of Richard Carlile and Henry Hetherington should act as a bracing tonic to those querulous souls—if they possess such things. The "triumphant mother" of freedom, although she is always justified of her children in the long run, exacts unswerving devotion from every one of them. They find their satisfaction in welcoming her behests:—

Thou tarriest and I have not said thou art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

The Liverpool Branch has had a great difficulty in securing a suitable hall for either special lectures or for weekly meetings. It has, however, taken the well-known Picton Lecture Hall for an evening and Mr. Cohen will lecture there on November 20. We should like to ask all Freethinkers in the City of Liverpool to help in making this meeting well known. There will be the usual advertising, but there is no advertising so effective as personal endeavour. It might be possible to secure the hall for a course of lectures, but the possibility of that will be determined by the degree to which the effort is supported.

To-day (November 13) the speaker at the Picture House, Station Street, Birmingham, will be Mr. F. E. Willis. His subject is "The Waning Power of the Church." The lecture commences at 7, and we hope to hear of a crowded meeting.

We are informed that there was a large attendance of Birmingham members and friends on the occasion of the presentation to Mr. Fathers (late President of the Birmingham Branch) and his wife. The present President, Mr. F. E. Willis, made the presentation on behalf of the Branch, and was supported by Mr. E. Clifford Williams, both of whom paid a deserved tribute to Mr. Fathers for his lengthy service in the Freethought cause. The presentation took the form of an illuminated address and a smoker's cabinet to Mr. Fathers and an umbrella and hand-bag to his wife. Both spoke in acknowledgement, and expressed unabated interest in the Freethought cause.

In *The Evolution of Civilization* Mr. Joseph McCabe (Watts and Co., 3s. 6d.) provides a very readable and useful sketch of the course of civilization from the earliest times. It is an ambitious task to attempt a sketch of civilization from the brute man to our own stage of culture within the compass of 120 pages, but within the limits of his space the author does his work well. And if it induces a more detailed study of the various tendencies that have raised man to what he is we feel sure that Mr. McCabe will feel that he has worked to a good end. There is only one passage on which we feel inclined to think that Mr. McCabe has not said quite what he meant. He says that the gospel which Nietzsche puts into the mouth of Zarathustra is the exact opposite of the latter's teaching—that was intensely ethical and religious. To our mind Nietzsche was before all things a moralist, and no teacher was ever more deeply concerned with ethics than he was. This aspect of his teaching, it is true, has been very much overlooked, or at least under-emphasised, but it is the key-note of his work.

The *R. P. A. Annual* for 1922 reminds us that this year is drawing to a close, and we do not think that anyone would make a bad choice who decided to spend one or two of its last hours in the company of the *Annual*. There is a very varied dish for all palates. Professor Ray

Lankester leads off with a timely reminder that "superstition is still rampant and flourishing like an endemic disease, not only in the wilds of Africa and among the teeming millions of Asia, but here in the modern populations of Europe and America." And we agree with him that the great hope is the education that is to be administered to the new generation. Professor Keith follows with a defence of Darwinism and Darwin, and makes the somewhat questionable defence that there was no better Christian to be found in England in the nineteenth century than he. We should have thought that a truer defence of Darwin would be that he was not a Christian. We are not likely to make our enemies respect us while we make, as one of our chief assets to consideration, the claim that we are really wearing their armour. Free-thought is surely strong and good enough to stand by itself and of its own strength. Mr. McCabe supplies some informing calculations in support of his claim that England can no longer properly be called a Christian country. Earl Russell writes on the perplexities of bishops, with special reference to the question of divorce, and Mr. C. T. Gorham, Dr. Macleod Yearsley, Leonard Huxley and others offer their contributions to an interesting issue. The price of the *Annual* is one shilling.

The Curse of Christianity and "The Age of Lawlessness."

The morale of our industrial civilization has been shattered. Work for work's sake, as the most glorious privilege of human faculties (!) has gone. The aversion to work is the great evil of the world to-day.

With Watt's utilization of steam, man was enabled to multiply his powers a thousand fold. Man had suddenly become a super-man and the development of other powers minimized the necessity of his own physical exertion. The age of mechanical power has brought this question, "Has the increase in the potential of human power, through thermo-dynamics, been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the potential of human character?"

THE necessities of existence can be stated as bread, cheese, and ale—with an occasional onion for succulence; but to secure even that simple (if nourishing) diet is somewhat of a struggle at times—in *these* times. A Christian might say that I did not exercise my free-will wisely in my choice of parents. I did not start in life as the owner of shipping shares, mining royalties, land, wireless, or—oil. I was not even the dull son of a Cabinet Minister. Consequently, I have been compelled to labour hard to procure the sustenance hereinabove described. And my lot has led me in a line of labour that entails almost constant travelling. In one respect I may be called a follower of "Christ," for I can often say that I have nowhere to lay my shapely head. And, the farther I travel, the more clearly do I see that men and women are much the same all the wide world over. Christianity, too, wherever one may find it, is the same—only more so. Some brands are worse than others. So far as trouble is concerned it may be said with truth,—

Jesus shall *rain*, where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run.

Incidentally, had there been more *real* Christians floating around—able to do the same kind of things that "Christ" did—we should not have suffered from the drought of recent months, nor would the people in the States be painfully perspiring in their great drouth. A *genuine* Christian (by "Christ's" own test), miraculously producing strong liquor, could make a marriage feast in Connecticut a far greater success than ever was the fabled feast in Cana.

The foibles of a people are reflected in the Press that they support. Not only does a people get the Press that it deserves, but the Press, in its turn, largely produces the kind of clientele it desires. Thus, the orthodox press, and the people of America and Britain, are *complementary* to each other. By a rational standard neither is much of a *compliment* to the other.

When skimming the cream of the news from a local paper on the other side (much of the cream was sour milk), a headline struck me in the eye: "AGE IS ONE OF LAWLESSNESS." The print was as big and black as lawlessness has ever been. That is the diagrammatic method of modern journalism. (Where would they get a galley fit to hold the record of Christian lies when set up in similar style?) Further down the column the two quotations at the head of this article appealed to me. The Protestant Bishop of New York, while on a tour of Europe and the Arctic Circle (first-class), flew from Paris to London. On his return he said, "Every one should fly. The sensation is wonderful."

My first idea on reading the lurid lines was that that pessimistic, professional, paid agitator for the next world—Dean Inge—had flown to the States to cheer the people up. But 'twas not the birth-control and anti-prohibition, though ungenial, Dean who had uttered these ominous words. No! At the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association Mr. James M. Beck, Solicitor-General, had thus denounced and damned the times in which we live—or exist, as the case may be. When he was at it he might have utilized the words of Omnipotence (*filis*) to His contemporaries! "Generation of vipers," "Whited sepulchres," "Fools and blind," would have been quite appropriate.

The Dean must have been right when he once said that leadership in Christianity was passing to America. The "Christ" of the Canonical Gospels almost always had a grouch on—He was mostly moaning when not cursing. He is never said to smile—let alone to laugh. Therefore, the Christians who can moan the most (or worst) are likely to become the leaders. Shall there be no more cakes and ale? As it is, there is not even wine now to cheer the heart of man at a marriage feast.

This Christian denunciation was always common (in a double sense) from the reputed "Christ" of the Canonical Gospels, down to the very common denunciation of to-day. It has many faults. It is unbalanced, irrational, destructive in the worst sense, exaggerative almost to the verge of hysteria, largely untrue, and pessimistic in a deadly degree, in so far as it is an explicit phrasing of the failure of their Faith. Hence, they can offer no hope for the future. Beyond that it is generally the voice of a selfish few. Christianity has always been an appeal to utter selfishness—either in this world or "the next." The larger hope, the rational view, the saner spirit of constructive meliorism, here and now, is as foreign to the nature of Christianity to-day as it has ever been.

There is, moreover, one feature that is most important. That feature—that fact—these Christians seem incapable of seeing. Ponder this. *In so far as their tale of woe is true* OUR WOEFUL STATE IS THE DIRECT RESULT OF CHRISTIANISM!

I have before pointed out¹ that the hypocrisy which is the all-prevalent vice of the English speaking peoples is directly due to the influence of Christianity. When any society is thoroughly saturated, in all strata, with hypocrisy, no radical reform of any existent evils is likely to be effected. The river of reform and progress is damned at its source—by Christian influence.

Another insidious evil influence is the Christian faith in vicarious atonement and death-bed repentance. This belief is almost peculiar to the Christian religion, and its influence is, and has been, vicious in the extreme. You cannot go on preaching and preaching faith in a vicarious atonement—"salvation" by faith—for fifteen hundred odd years without injuring the people who are the victims. It operates unconsciously upon them, but achieves its dire results all the same.

That is not the least factor in "the prevalence of burglaries, hold-ups, thefts, murder, and graft."

¹ *Freethinker*, June 12, 1921.

Many a bad man, in his evil courses, has been unconsciously led on by this ugly faith. The more brutal a criminal has been the surer he is of "accepting Christ" before proceeding to the chair or the gallows—and thence to the bosoms of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, St. Peter, and St. George. In the magazine *Poetry* for August there is a poem describing a last letter that Lucrezia Borgia (the poisoner) is supposed to have written. It is a poetic fiction, but the underlying idea is truly Christian. One verse runs:—

The thought of death brings no regret, but pleasure;
And after the last sacrament great peace
Will be mine own—in overflowing measure,
If but your mercy marks my soul's release.
Though your sins be as scarlet, you can be washed
Whiter than snow, in the blood of the Lamb.

That immoral teaching has been practically universal in Christianity since the time of Constantine—counteracted only by the growing challenge of Freethought—of Atheism or Rationalism.

Much might be made of the terrible mental muddle Mr. James M. Beck gets involved in in his sociological and ethical ideas. But I must pass on. "Work for work's sake" far from being a "most glorious privilege" is the idea of a fool, or the forced habit of a slave. Even the "Christ" of the Canonical Gospels didn't practise that. He threw up his trade as soon as he could, and spent the rest of his life wandering about the country. His disciples are said to have done the same. When they *did* work at fishing they didn't do it for "work's sake," and they evaded as much of the work as possible—catching fish by miracle. The evil has been that many do the work while the few get the dollars. The burden of proof is now upon those who endeavour to maintain that this mal-distribution of material, intellectual and æsthetic, wealth has been ordained by an Omnipotent, Omniscient, Infinite, and Eternal "God."

It is a curious commentary, too, on the statement about aversion from work; that some five million or so men—workless—are clamouring for work in the United States.

The Solicitor-General says the age of mechanical power has brought a question. True, O Judge to be! But the question (sociologically) had already been formulated by one greater and clearer in thinking than he. I quote from memory, but the substance was, in effect, "It is to be questioned if all the labour-saving machinery has lightened the labour of a single toiler." There we are nearer the kernel of the question.

There is another heavy charge in the indictment against the Christian Churches (or the clergy, the paid officials thereof). They are responsible for this "lawlessness," by what may be termed their "last ditch preaching." To save their business (for to them it is a business), and earn their pay from the "tyrants," for years back they have libelled men and women. They have preached that only "Faith in Christ," or "Belief in God" will enable men and women to live decently and morally. Broadcast they have spread the idea that, when belief in "God" goes we shall be plunged into a sea of vice, lawlessness, and misery. They have built (or tried to build) their ethics (such as these are) upon a quicksand. Had they tried to teach a rational ethic—had they done more to base morality upon reason, knowledge, and social well-being—had they been more willing to aid in, and to extend, the grand work of F. J. Gould—our state to-day should be better than it is. The least educated man or woman has now at least a glimmering of the fact that there is something rotten in the state of Deism. This being so, the poisoned chalice of the Christian preacher, from which so oft they've quaffed, destroys their better sense. It has been instilled into them that if there be no "God" they needs must eat, drink, and be merry before they die. They see that

those "above" them—who are able to eat, drink, and be merry—do so. They realize that either there is no "God," or if one there be he counts for nothing. So they find means, by any means, to indulge their baser passions. Is it a wonder that they do?

The evils that afflict this "Age of Lawlessness" (so far as such an age it is) have been brought upon us by the curse of Christianity.

Happily, it is not all despair. The torch of reason is still held aloft amidst the Christian darkness. The storehouse of human knowledge is still available. The well of social life and well-being can still supply a healthful draught. An all-round Rationalism, our real hope and strength, can still teach us,—

.....how to knit again
This scatter'd corn into one mutual sheaf,
These broken limbs again into one body.

ATHOS ZENO.

Pages From Voltaire.

THE A. B. C.: OR CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN A. B. AND C.

*Of the different ways of losing and preserving
Liberty, and of Theocracy.*

B.—Mr. A., you seem to me to be a profound thinker, how do you imagine that all those governments were established, the names of which are so many as scarce to be retained, monarchic, despotic, tyrannic, oligarchic, aristocratic, democratic, anarchic, theocratic, diabolic, and others that are a mixture of all these?

C.—We all make our own fiction because we have no true history. Tell us, Mr. A., what is your particular fiction.

A.—Since you wish it, I will waste my time in talking to you, as you will yours in listening to me. First, I imagine two small neighbouring nations, made up each of something like one hundred families. These two nations are separated by a stream, and cultivate a fairly good soil, for their fixing on this spot is passably good proof of the land's fertility.

As each individual has received from nature two arms, two legs, and a head, it is extremely unlikely that the inhabitants of this little province should not at first have been equal. And as the two nations are separated by a small river its seems to me impossible that they should not be enemies, for there must have been some difference in pronouncing the same words. The dwellers on the south side of the river will most assuredly deride those of the north side, and such affronts are unpardonable. There is sure to be great emulation between the two villages, and some girl or woman will have been captured. The young men will sometimes fight with fists, staves and stones. Things thus far being tolerably equal on both sides he who passes for the strongest and ablest of the villagers of the north side says to his companions: "If you will follow me and do what I order, I will make you masters of the village on the south side." He speaks with so much assurance that he obtains their votes. "Until now," he says to them, "you have fought only in daylight, you must attack your enemies when they are asleep." This idea seems a great effort of genius to the northern mob; they attack the southern mob in the night, kill some of the sleepers, and maim others (as Ulysses and Rhesus did before them), carry off the girls and drive before them what remains of the cattle; after which the victorious brigade necessarily quarrel over a share of the spoils. It is only natural that they should put their trust in the chief whom they have chosen for this heroic expedition. They make him their captain and judge. The invention of surprising, killing and robbing the neighbours has impressed terror on the south, and respect on the north.

The new chief is a mighty man in the land; it is the custom to obey him and, even more, for him to command. I believe this may be the origin of monarchy.

C.—It is true that the great art of surprising, killing and robbing is a piece of heroism of the highest antiquity. I do not find any stratagem of war in Frontinus¹ comparable to that of the children of Jacob, who came, in fact, from the north, and who surprised, killed and robbed the Sechemites who dwelt in the south. It is a rare example of sound politics and sublime valour. For the son of the king of Sechem was violently enamoured of Dinah, the daughter of the patriarch Jacob. The age of the damsel being then six years at the most, she was already marriageable, and the two lovers having lain together, the sons of Jacob proposed to the king of Sechem, to the prince his son, and to all the Sechemites, that they should be circumcised in order that they might all be as one people. And on the third day after the circumcision of all the males of the Sechemites, when they were sore, two patriarchs, Simeon and Levi, alone surprised and killed all the Sechemites, and the ten other patriarchs robbed them.² This, however, does not square with your system, for it was the surprised, killed and robbed that had a king, while the assassins and robbers were without one.

A.—Apparently, the Sechemites had performed some such happy exploit formerly and their chief was become a monarch. I imagine that there have been robbers with chiefs, and other robbers without them. The Arabs of the desert were nearly always republican robbers, but the Persians and Medes were monarchic robbers. Without discussing with you the circumcising of the Sechemites, or the robberies of the Arabs, I have an idea that offensive warfare created the first kings and defensive the first republics.

A brigand like Dejojces³ (if he ever existed), or Cosroe named Cyrus, or Romulus the slayer of his brother, or Clovis, another murderer, Genseric, Attila, made themselves kings; the peoples who dwelt in caverns, islands, marshes, or mountains or rocks preserved their liberties, like the Swiss, the Grisons, the Venetians and the Genoese. We see that formerly the Tyrians, the Carthaginians and the Rhodians preserved theirs so long as they could not be attacked from the sea. The Greeks were for a long time free in their mountainous country; the Romans on their seven hills recovered their liberty and deprived many nations of theirs by surprising, killing and robbing them as we have said. In short, the earth is everywhere in the hands of the strongest and cleverest people.

In proportion, as understandings became refined, governments were treated like tapestries, in which the ground, the design and the colours are varied. Thus the monarchy of Spain is as different as is its climate from that of England. The Polish monarchy has nothing at all in common with the English form. The Venetian republic is different from the Dutch.

C.—All this is obvious; but, among so many forms of government, is it a fact that there has never been a theocracy?

A.—It is so much a fact that theocracy is still everywhere, and that from Japan to Rome you will be governed by laws emanating from God himself.

B.—But these laws are all different and contradictory. The human reason may very well be unable to understand how God came down to earth to ordain contrary propositions (*le pour et le contre*), to command the Egyptians and Jews never to eat pork after they had been circumcised, and to leave us at liberty in both the one case and the other. He could not

forbid the eel and the hare in Palestine, and permit the hare to be eaten in England, and command the use of the eel to papists on fast-days. I fear to look too closely into these matters, I might find too many contradictions.

A.—But don't you have your physicians prescribing contrary remedies for the same disorder? The one prescribes a cold bath, the other a hot one, this bleeds, another purges, and another kills. A newcomer poisons your son, and becomes the oracle of your grandson.

C.—That is curious. But putting aside Moses and other really inspired men, can you tell us who it was that was impudent enough to presume to make use of the authority of God?

A.—I imagine he was a mixture of fanaticism and knavery. Fraud alone was not enough; it fascinates, while fanaticism subjugates. It is not unlikely, says one of my friends, that this business began by dreams. A man of heated imagination dreams he sees his father and mother dying, they are both old and infirm, they die; the dream is fulfilled, and in this way he is persuaded that God spoke to him in a dream. If he be at all crafty and bold—no uncommon qualities—he sets about predicting in the name of God. He notices that in a particular war his countrymen are six to one; he foretells victory for them on condition that he takes a tenth of the spoil.

This is profitable business; one quack takes apprentices who have the same interests as himself. Their authority increases with their number. God reveals to them that the choicest cuts of mutton and beef, the fattest poultry, and the first running of the wine belong to them:—

The priests eat roast beef, and the people starve.

The king of the country at once makes a bargain with them, in order to be better obeyed by his people; but the monarch is soon the dupe of the bargain; the quacks use the power given them over the rabble to enslave the monarch himself. He becomes restive, and the priests depose him in the name of God. Samuel dethrones Saul, Gregory VII dethrones the emperor Henry IV, and deprives him of the right of sepulture. This diabolico-theocratic system endures until princes arise who are intelligent and courageous enough to cut the claws of the Samuels and Gregories. Such, it seems to me, is the history of mankind.

B.—There is no need of much reading to come to the conclusion that things must have taken this course. All you need do is to observe closely the populace of a country town in which there are two convents of monks, some enlightened magistrates, and a commandant who has a fund of common-sense. The people are always ready to crowd round the cordeliers and capuchins. The commandant wishes to restrain them. The magistrate, annoyed with the commandant, gives a judgment which has the effect of curbing a little of both the insolence of the monks and the credulity of the people. The bishop is even more angry that the magistrate should interfere in a divine piece of business. And the monks remain in power till a revolution shall abolish them.

Humani generis mores tibi nosse volenti
Sufficit una domus.⁴

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Nature proposes to herself no aim in her operations, and all final causes are nothing but pure fictions imagined by men.—*Spinoza*.

⁴ Juvenal, *Satiræ*, XIII., 159. f. Juvenal is referring to a Praefectus Urbi (chief magistrate of the city) in the time of Domitian of whom he says that in his house a friend might hear such a catalogue of crimes as would teach him a little more of human nature than he was yet acquainted with. Voltaire suggests that an examination of the priestly rabble would be equally instructive.

¹ Sextus Julius Frontinus, a Roman writer on the art of war, whose *Three books on Strategics*, together with a fourth book of examples, have come down to us.

² Genesis, xxxiv. 25 et seq.

³ Herodotus, Book I.

Among Mrs. Eddy's Friends.

Nor long ago my pilgrimage led me to the North country, and I was hospitably lodged by a family which was attached to a Church of Christ Scientist. One evening, when we had well eaten and drunk, and were gathered by a blazing fire, forgetful of the chill streets and lanes without, my friends expounded to me the faith as taught by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, of Boston, U.S.A. Very earnestly they impressed upon me the prime need for Right Thinking. By Right Thinking on Divine and Christian lines one might rise above all material disease and evil, and attain life and joy and immortality. Out of a volume of Mrs. Eddy's writings, nicely bound in leather, these ideas were recited to me, with a variety of comments.

As Right Thinking, in a strict sense, means the same thing as Free Thought, or Rationalism, I was not inclined to show hostility to it. Nevertheless, I urged that Right Thinking, by itself, would hardly suffice to evolve a happy world. For, said I, the root of action (good or bad) is not thinking, but feeling, and the root of good action is the fraternal sentiment which, at its best, is called "love." A man might be coached up with "right" thoughts, or he might, of his own accord, work out a "right" theory of social welfare, but if his heart were not inclined that way he might not contribute true benefit to the social life. Of course, "right" thinking was a noble aid to a mother's love, and to all other species of human goodwill, yet the basic factor was the benevolence, or impulse to co-operation. Hence, I thought the finest rule of life was that laid down by Auguste Comte, namely, "Act from affection, and think in order to act." This great maxim includes love as a principle, rationality as a means, and helpful conduct as an aim. I found, however, that my Scientist friends melted Thinking and Feeling into one, and they maintained that the "Right Thinking" necessarily carried with it the all-conquering love which would banish sin, sickness and death from our world of error and illusion. And the "Right Thinking" was all drawn from the Bible and Mrs. Eddy's illuminating pages. There are certainly too many books in the world, but to narrow down the vital literature to two sources appeared to me almost too economical. However, my fireside friends assured me they derived full satisfaction and spiritual restfulness from the Divine truth thus revealed.

Next morning I attended church with these faithful disciples, and paid careful heed to the passages read by two persons on the platform—a woman who read from the Bible, and a man who read explanations of Truth from Mrs. Eddy's treasury of thought. The result was that I formed a judgment as follows: That the religious system known as Christian Science was peculiarly adapted to a certain social class or caste: that it would naturally attract people who valued a settled feeling of comfort: that it tended in the direction of self-centredness (I do not mean selfishness): that it was old-fashioned in its philosophy, and that it was singularly defective in a sense of history and civics. Let me at once add to this somewhat severe judgment an assurance that I cheerfully recognized the excellent intentions of my Scientist friends, and that I was so far from entertaining prejudice, that I joined in the hymns at their church service, and appreciated the pleasant atmosphere of the celebration.

The well-known theory of Karl Marx which goes by the name of the "Materialist Basis of History" serves as a very useful key to many social facts, so long as it is not pushed to fanatical extremes. Marx affirmed that economic conditions notably influenced religious ideas and culture. A well-fed and well-housed class,

furnished with such a moderate education as twentieth century schools usually afford, may be expected to prefer an easy-going, agreeable doctrine which does not demand an out-of-date faith in miracles, or a painstaking study of social problems. For such a class (and a small proportion of the so-called "working-class" which inclines to adopt the religion of the bourgeois class) the Church of Christ Scientist offers a suitable rest-house and philosophy. On the same general ground it is understandable that a class which wishes to avoid the grimy and all-to-wretched questions of the Labour world and the slums should be drawn towards a kind of "Quietism" and self-centred cheerfulness. It is not exceedingly difficult, in a well-furnished villa, to dispense with many drugs and patent medicines and other artificial superfluities, and then to imagine that a Divine joy is sufficient to conquer discomfort and pain. One begins with a solid income, and then, without much sweating, finds, in Christian Science, a happy super-income of spiritual truth and holy pleasantness. I greatly fear that such a situation encourages Christian Scientists to repose within an inner temple, while some of their neighbours pursue the hard road of economic and political reorganization. This is not to imply disregard of the customary charities, "social welfare" enterprises, working lads' clubs, and the like. But he comprehends little of the modern world who fancies that such benevolent actions will lead to the profound social changes which this great age requires.

The Sunday morning readings to which I hearkened so closely struck me as old-fashioned in their mechanical division of life into the Material and the Spiritual, and their contempt for the Material. Really, I would sooner have the old Catholic doctrine which taught that a piece of bread could be blessed into the Body of God, for that was an attempt to give value and beauty to such a Material object as the baker's loaf. In the earth which grows our harvests, and in the wool or cotton of our garments, or in the clay and stone and wood of our houses I perceive a Material which is the basis of poetry, science and civilization. Civilization, indeed, has been man's efforts, during long ages, to utilize these Material things for the fine issues of social health and progress. I suppose the Christian Scientists would accept this statement, but if so, I cannot regard their disdainful references to "Matter" as justified. Their attitude is too much that of the cruder sort of Orientals who, failing to create a practical success out of the "Material" world, affect to despise it as an illusion, or it is a kind of survival of the faith which cuts up the universe into God's kingdom and the Devil's kingdom. As I watch the march of modern thought I think I see a tendency to unify experience, and to reckon social evolution, and the values of science and art, and the glorious work of search and discovery as all one living relation of man to his environment, without this cheap and ancient dividing of experience into Material and Spiritual. I do not object to the ordinary use of the terms Material and Spiritual to denote the vulgar or the finer aspects of life and manners, but I do strongly object to a solemn cutting up of the world into these two halves, one dismal and accursed, and the other suggestive of genteel society and Ella Wheeler Wilcox's books of poetry.

I know not whether Mrs. Eddy ever studied history (the history of slavery, for instance), or civics (the nature of democracy, for instance). I can assuredly state that there is precious little token in her writings of the historic and civic sense, which is so essential to modern education and efficiency. If the Church of Christ Scientist thinks history and civics unimportant, or if it thinks they are important and yet can be understood on a Bible-and-Eddy basis, I suppose there is small use in arguing the point. The story of Man is

immense in its length and contents, and it is the glory of our own age that we are beginning to learn the splendid interest of that story. I am sorry to say that the Church of Christ Scientist does not seem to possess that sense of the wonders of the human past which is indispensable to nobility of thought, and to confidence in the future development of humanity.

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

THE MYTH OF JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am glad that Mr. Mann has now offered an explanation of the text, "There be some of those that stand here, which shall not taste of death, etc." He says this "was inserted by a believer in the coming 'Kingdom of God' who wished to have the authority of the Gospels for the doctrine."

Let us assume this to be the case. It is then evident that the fabricator—whoever he was—thought that persons still lived who had been original followers of Jesus, otherwise the saying would have been too blatantly false to be worth fabricating—even by a Christian! If I wanted to father on someone a bogus prophecy that his hearers would live to see a Labour Government in England I should not father it on someone who lived a century ago, still less on someone who never lived at all, but on someone who flourished within living memory, and who *might* have uttered it. The fabricator of this Gospel saying, therefore, acted on the assumption that Jesus had existed within living memory, and the saying was fabricated (always assuming that it *was* fabricated) not later than, say, A.D. 80 or 85, showing that at that date there was a tradition of Jesus having existed within living memory.

I trust I have said enough to show that this text could *not* have been attributed to a mythical personage. I may add that I read Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Historical Jesus* to see if he had any answer to this difficulty, but found that he had none.

ROBERT ARCH.

FREETHOUGHT FELLOWSHIP.

SIR,—I am glad our good friend Mr. Andrew Millar has spoken on this important matter, and I would commend his contribution to all Freethinkers on Tyneside. The bonds of the proposed Fellowship are loose enough to suit the most fastidious as regards personal freedom. If we can only find "the one" who is more enthusiastic than the rest our position is assured. We will bring together our scattered forces, and his duties will be simple and irresponsible, while all the time I have considered such duties as arduous and responsible.

Mr. Millar's method of arranging lectures is certainly worth a trial. The local secretary, or enthusiast, would post card, or otherwise acquaint the members, and lay them under "strictly voluntary contributions." And if these should fail the local enthusiast is still free to proceed with his venture. The undying faith of Mr. Millar in the "local enthusiast" is admirable, but we must remember that it is a big risk for one who is without means. But with all this, the need for Fellowship is very urgent. Let us hope that at least some success will follow Mr. Millar's effort.

J. FOTHERGILL.

Christianity made the prevailing misery and oppression more tolerable by holding out the hopes of a future world. But thereby it tended to confirm the growing feeling of indifference; the political and social environment seemed an alien, unhomelike world; and this indifference, a natural outcome of the senility of the Empire, was as fatal in its effects as the actual risings of peasants. In a certain direct way, too, Christianity contributed to depopulation in the fourth and fifth centuries, namely, by the high value set on personal chastity and the ascetic spirit of monasticism, which discouraged marriage and caused large numbers to die without progeny.—J. B. Bury, "History of the later Roman Empire."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.45, Bazaar and Social.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Reginald Stamp, "The Revolutionary God."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Eating the God."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Will the World Disarm?"

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Picture House, Station Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, "The Waning Power of the Church."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Councillor J. S. Ratcliffe, "How to Solve the Housing Problem."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's): 7, Mr. J. Thornton, "Thomas Hardy: Novelist and Poet."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought, Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the Law."

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.

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