

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. 47

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1921.

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Armistice Day Reflections.—The Editor</i> - - -	737
<i>"Footnotes to Life."—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - -	739
<i>The Wonder of Wilde.—Mimmermus</i> - - -	740
<i>A Terrible Superstition.—W. Mann</i> - - -	741
<i>A Glimpse of Eternity.—Jonathan Hornblower</i> - - -	744
<i>A New Trial of Theism.—Arthur B. Moss</i> - - -	746
<i>Selfishness.—G. O. W.</i> - - -	747
<i>Book Chat.—George Underwood</i> - - -	748
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Armistice Day Reflections.

Within the past few days there have occurred two events that may well be counted the concern of everyone. One had reference to the past, the other, we hope, will have a vital bearing on the future. The anniversary of the armistice of 1918 is a commemoration that concerns us all, for in one way or another we were, as a result of the war, all fellow mourners and fellow sufferers. Even from a general point of view some of our saddest and sweetest memories are concerned with the dead, and it is only fitting that as a community we should display a sense of the many ties that bind us to those who are gone. Ancestor worship is one of the earliest forms of religion, and sublimated into a ceremony which shall express our sense of the continuity of human history it may well be one of the latest. And there is at least a bettering in the way of the expression of national remembrance in the fact that we have chosen to honour the "common" man in this way, instead of the successful general. The ceremonial burying of an unknown soldier is, again, one of those happy inspirations that goes some distance towards divesting the war of its sordid memories and brutalizing consequences. It is human to honour the dead, it is healthy, and it is almost spontaneous. One would like to believe that we were as ready to learn from the deaths that the ceremony of November the eleventh commemorated what they had to teach in the way of warning and counsel. For if we do not learn aright the meaning of those four years of war, the deaths which occurred, and which robbed the future of some of its most promising material, are as barren of good result as though the victims of the great struggle had been killed in some gigantic gladiatorial combat for the mere amusement of the spectators.

* * *

Limitation of Armaments

The other event to which I have referred is the opening of the Washington Conference on the subject of the world's armaments. This may be taken to be one of the consequences of the war, since it is being rapidly driven home to the minds of people that either civilization must crush war or war will crush civilization. Whether a sufficient number realize this fact is a matter of some doubt. We do hear much of "the crushing burden of armaments," but one often wonders whether those who use the phrase have much

more in mind than the mere cost of keeping up a too large army or navy. To such the question is one of cash not culture, and the soldier strutting about our streets and figuring at large in our public life is quite a desirable figure, provided the annual bill for his upkeep is not too great. If the Washington Conference moves along that line, and results in a mere limitation of armaments, it is certain that it will be ridiculously ineffective. That simply enables countries to get ready for war on the most economical lines. Whether nations have a small army or a large one will have no bearing on the creation or the preventing of war. An agreed limitation of arms means that we can all prepare without too much of a strain on our financial resources, and we have seen that once war is declared it is easy enough to increase an army a hundredfold. So to get ready for war "on the cheap" is as sure and as comfortable a way of precipitating disaster as any other. For armies and navies are kept for use, not for ornament. No people would be so stupid as to subject themselves to the strain of keeping an army in being if they did not believe that there was some likelihood of its being used. Nor would the members of an army feel flattered if they were assured they were destined to no other use than to decorate a Lord Mayor's show. Even to themselves they must feel they will be used one day. "The Day" must be the unspoken belief in the heart of an army, as it must be the conviction in the mind of the people who support it. For stupid though the mass may be, it is not quite so stupid as deliberately to keep in existence an army which it believes will never be needed.

* * *

The Test of the Revolver.

So if the nations of the world are to learn the real lesson of the "great war," and if they who paid their reverence to the dead on November 11 have really read aright the lesson of the four years of slaughter with its millions of dead, they will insist on something a little more practical and sensible than a mere limitation of armaments. They will realize that the only way in which war can be ended is for nations of the world to put behind them all ideas of conquest and to abolish their armies altogether, retaining at most a police force among them. It is only by nations putting it out of their power to wage war that war will be stopped. We see this quite plainly in private warfare. Long ago it was seen that so long as men carried revolvers and swords so long would they settle their differences by using them. And where revolvers are the persuaders in fashion it is a case of who gets the first shot that settles the dispute. Moreover, there is exactly the same reason given by Smith for the carrying of a pistol that is now given by a particular nation for the maintenance of an army—because Jones has one. Well, we have abolished the carrying of pistols, and society is the better for their abolition. Reasonable people are no longer annoyed by the armed bully relying upon his superior skill with sword or pistol. He must justify himself before a higher and a better tribunal. Is there any valid reason why nations should not do between them what most of them have agreed to do

within their own borders? Is it inevitable that nations should perpetually deal with each other on the level of the savage?

* * *

Effective Disarmament.

But even total disarmament will give no absolute guarantee against war. If the armies and the navies of the world were abolished, the world, in the present state of our scientific knowledge and mechanical efficiency, might very soon put itself on a war level. It would take but a little while to transform chemical laboratories into manufactories of death-dealing concoctions. Aeroplanes could as easily drop bombs as carry letters. And with no battleships on the seas it would take but a little while to press our merchant vessels into the service of war. Physical disarmament is only a preliminary, though a necessary, step. The really effective disarmament must be of another kind. It involves not the mere abandonment of warlike instruments but the creation of a positive hostility to war as an institution. We have to create a revulsion against war. And is that altogether impossible? If we are to believe some of our leaders it is. There is not a nation that is not maintaining a larger army than it did in 1914, not one that is not making preparations for new wars. Directly after the armistice Marshal Foch laughed at the notion of the war ending war, and said that France would have to keep ready for future conflicts. Our own government posted the walls of the country with pictures representing the care-free life of the well fed, well paid soldier, and contrasting it with the tame and precariously paid life of the artisan. General Wilson talks freely of the next war, and Lord Haig, in his address as Rector of St. Andrews, said that as all the seeds of conflict are present we must prepare for war, and so favours a twelve months' military service for every man. All this shows how little we have profited from the war. We are keeping the war-spirit alive in the very act of honouring men who died in a war that was claimed to have as one of its objects the ending of all war. If the Washington Conference cannot remedy this state of things, if it cannot give a better and a healthier tone to the public mind, then, indeed, might one ask what is the lesson which the world learned from its four years of carnage?

* * *

Why Not a Peace Propaganda?

During the war every country engaged kept up a vigorous propaganda in order to keep the war-spirit alive. Our own government spent unrecorded sums of money in this particular work, it utilized every method possible—pictorial designs, skeleton articles and sermons supplied free to papers and parsons, it paid a host of newspaper writers and casual journalists to help at the work of keeping the "will to war" strong. Is it quite impossible for the governments of the world to emulate this war-time activity in the interests of enduring peace? And if this were done is there any doubt but that there might soon be a very drastic and definite alteration of the public attitude on the question of war and peace? I am not suggesting that one country should show sufficient courage and intelligence to lead the way, and so probably force imitation, but only that the representatives of the various nations at Washington should make a serious and concerted effort to educate their peoples in the ways of peace such as they made to educate them in the art of war. Let them brand war as a crime whenever it occurs, and treat as international criminals those who bring it about, or who seek to bring it about. And if the Bishop of Exeter is right in his view that any government is warranted in killing those who attempt to disturb the public order, there is a plain method marked out as to the way in which these international disturbers should

be treated. Let us seriously take war as an impeachment of our civilization instead of glorifying it as a school of virtue and an indication of national virility. We can see that war holds no place in the school, that the soldier is kept in the background as at best an evil necessity. We can make the peaceful side of life more prominent than it is in all our public functions. And if in addition to this there is carried on a vigorous publicity campaign, such as was carried on during the war, how long would it be before the peoples of the world awakened to a sense of the realities of the position?

* * *

A Changed Point of View.

Now in all this there is nothing "utopian," nothing "quixotic," nothing that is not within our capacity to accomplish if politicians and others will only come down from the clouds and deal with facts—particularly the facts of human nature. It is, indeed, only what has taken place in other directions. We have to go back but a very few centuries to find the trade of the Inquisitor and the witch-finder flourishing. And we shall find them defended by every one of the arguments that are used to defend war to-day. The witch-finder and the Inquisitor were in deadly earnest, they believed, and the population supported them in believing, that they were combating a very grave social danger. And they had in the Church the most powerful and the most effective publicity bureau ever established. To-day the witch-finder would be considered a savage or insane, and the Inquisitor a throw-back to barbarism. And all this has been accomplished by the persistent educating of the people by a comparatively small body of ardent propagandists. Witch and heretic burning does not flourish to-day, not because the burning of a few score of heretics or old women would be too expensive, but because the whole thing has become supremely ridiculous. We make witch and heretic burning almost an impossibility because we have radically changed the attitude of the public mind with regard to them. And that is precisely what we must do with regard to war. We must create the same moral and mental revulsion against war that now exists against burning a man for a difference of opinion, or an old woman for intercourse with the devil. We must paint war as the stupid, vulgar, cowardly, criminal thing it is. Unless we can get that type of mind normally at work the situation is, indeed, hopeless.

* * *

Honouring the Dead.

It is eminently fitting that the nation should bear in mind its dead. Still more fitting is it that we should bethink ourselves of what they died for, and ask whether we have really grasped the lesson their death should teach us. To multitudes of the young men who fought in the war the conflict carried with it the consolation that from all the horror and filth and brutality of it there would spring the determination that nothing like it should occur again. They went out with the message ringing in their ears that it was a war to end war, that "never again" should the sword threaten civilization. That is really the work they were told they were doing, the conflict itself was to be no more than a stage in the process. Will anyone say that the object for which these men fought and died was accomplished? Are we really paying the memories of these men genuine respect when we use them as a means of building up bigger and larger armaments and talk lightly of getting ready for the next war? Or are we exploiting their deaths in the name of the very thing they believed they were destroying? Writing early in 1915 I said that the people of this country would ultimately have to make up their minds as to whether they really hated German militarism, or were merely jealous of it. And that

seems to me to be the crucial question to-day. Only to-day it is a question that faces not this country alone; it fronts the whole of civilization.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Footnotes To Life."

SUCH is the title of a book by the Rev. Frank Crane, D.D., of New York, published by John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, at the price of six shillings. In many respects it is a remarkable volume, with its 237 pages, and its 209 short articles dealing, directly or indirectly, with various aspects of human life. It is exceedingly well written, and contains many articles of deep interest and considerable value, but Free-thinkers will find in it not a few highly debatable points. The first paragraph in the article on superstition, for example, deserves commendation:—

A superstition is a kind of spiritual blood-poison. It is a toxic idea, a septic conception, that is liable at any time to throw the whole mind into fever. Sometimes it produces a panic of the reasoning faculties, which may be called paralysis of the intelligence (p. 50).

Dr. Crane is wholly mistaken, however, when he declares that the connection between superstition and religion is only apparent and not real. In our judgment, on the contrary, the two terms are synonymous. The belief in the supernatural is essentially superstitious. The American divine is fully justified in asserting that "the core of any superstition is ignorance," and in the further affirmation that "this is also true of religion." Some one says that "religion is the feeling which falls upon a man in the presence of the unknown." Is it true to say that man is ever in the presence of the unknown? By the unknown is usually understood the spiritual world and its denizens, but surely no one can be described as living in the presence of such a world. Thousands do live in the presence of the belief in it, but that is a radically different thing. God, for example, is a being in whose presence it is utterly impossible to dwell, because he is not an objective reality but a creation of the theological imagination. In order to make this vitally important point emphatic, we will quote the passage in which Dr. Crane distinguishes between superstition and religion:

While religious emotion springs from the infinite realm of nescience which naturally lies outside the bounds of the human mind, superstition has to do with ignorance of common and near-by things about which we might know the truth if we would. Therefore, to tremble with awe at Deity, which word stands for the wide and metaphysic potencies of the universe, is ennobling to a man, is the source of morals, and makes him humble and brave; but to have a fear for the number Thirteen, or Fridays, or the New Moon, does nothing but debauch and devitalize the mind, and render a man less than a dog (p. 51).

The last clause in that extract is certainly a gross exaggeration. We have met several people who have a fear for the number thirteen, whose minds are by no means debauched and devitalized, and who are not rendered less than dogs by the silly superstition. On the other hand, it has been our misfortune to come into contact with both men and women whom the fear of God rendered insane, one woman having to spend the closing years of her life in a lunatic asylum. A man of our acquaintance was so affected by repeated attendances at Evan Roberts's revival services that his friends were sadly compelled to send him into an institution where he remained for six months. Is it not a fact that it would be extremely difficult to name a dozen people of whom it could truthfully be averred that they have been ennobled in character and conduct, and made

humble and brave as the direct result of "trembling with awe at Deity?" Of course, it is absolutely undeniable that multitudes of believers in God are most estimable in almost every respect, but that their nobility is the outcome of their faith is open to question. Is it not conceivable that they would have been equally deserving of our esteem even if they had no supernatural belief at all?

Are we to infer that Dr. Crane does not believe in a personal God? When he tells us that the word Deity "stands for the wide and metaphysic potencies of the universe," are we not justified in calling him a Pantheist? The notorious Bishop Samuel Wordsworth, in a violent attack upon *Essays and Reviews*, characterized Pantheism as nothing "but a tricked out Atheism," and he was undoubtedly correct. Pantheism is most assuredly the direct negation of Theism in all its forms. George Meredith was an avowed Freethinker who did not believe in a personal God, and yet in his exquisite ode entitled, "France, 1870," when describing Strength, he says:—

Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.

Does this Doctor of Divinity agree with the Secularist poet in rejecting the Divine personality, and in naming the wide potencies of the universe Gods? Is he prepared to say of Strength, meaning thereby the highest moral excellence, humility, and courage, in Meredith's words,—

Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born,
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape?

The truth is that to him Deity is not a word which "stands for the wide and metaphysic potencies of the universe," but which distinctly stands for a Supreme Being. In the article entitled "Why I believe in God," he indulges in the following language:—

I cannot think about mankind and the universe without recognizing some one mind that manages them, any more than the chemist can get along without his idea of an atom, or a physicist without the idea of force. Force, atom, and God are speculations, but they are necessary, we cannot think without them (p. 142).

It is perfectly true that a theologian cannot think without God, but myriads of other people can, and do. The overwhelming majority of scientists manage to get along quite satisfactorily without the God-idea. To them such an idea is not a necessity of thought. Neither is it to them an emotional, or a moral, necessity, as our American Doctor of Divinity claims that it is to him. Of course, Dr. Crane admits that God is only a speculation, but he seems to believe in him as firmly as the physicist believes in matter and force. It is easy enough for a divine to exclaim that "God is the most rational explanation of the world," or that "nothing but a vast Person can explain so vast a world," but it is supremely difficult to think about the human race, its history and present position, and believe that it has been and is under the management of a Deity of infinite wisdom, justice, and love. It is mainly this difficulty that accounts for the active existence of so many Atheists in the world.

Dr. Crane often uses language which only a Pantheist can consistently employ, as already pointed out, but in his adherence to the doctrine of the personality of God he never wavers. His belief in the efficacy of prayer would be simply absurd if he did not regard God as an infinite person. The first paragraph in the article on "Prayers" shows clearly that there are thousands of people round about him whom he does not understand in the least:—

If a man who has lost touch entirely with churches, who has formed his life with interests that entirely

exclude the religious feeling, who feels that there are insuperable obstacles, mental and instinctive, to his entering into the current of conventional religious ideas and ways, if such a man would go into the woods and pray, it would do him good (p. 210).

Such a man would surely be an Atheist, otherwise his interests would not "entirely exclude the religious feeling"; but could anything be more preposterous than to expect such a man to engage in prayer? To what or whom can he pray who is also wholly without God? Dr. Crane seems to entertain the opinion that the man, though utterly devoid of the religious feeling, is not wholly ignorant of God. He says:—

If he could brush aside all he has ever heard or been taught about God, and if he could approach the God-idea anew, naively, merely stirring to lift his spirit into communion with the infinite Spirit, he would get something that would definitely enrich his life.

The theologian's "if" is very discreetly introduced. If the man described acted so and so; but he never will so act. His constitution renders it impossible for him to comply with the conditions laid down.

Footnotes to Life is a bright and joyous book. Many will read it with intense pleasure, and stripped of its theology the perusal of it would prove decidedly profitable. Unfortunately, theology vitiates almost every page. It was a theologian who made it "in the full joy of Self-Expression." J. T. LLOYD.

The Wonder of Wilde.

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
 Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
 Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
 That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers
 Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears.
 —Swinburne.

THERE has been a distinct revival of interest in the works of Oscar Wilde, and, doubtless, this circumstance is largely owing to the issue of a dainty pocket edition of his writings at a modest price by the house of Methuen. Curiously, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a most characteristic book, is issued separately, although it appears uniform with the rest of the series.

Wilde incorporated the most unusual side of his talent in *Dorian Gray*. Walter Pater, in his review, observed that it was the work of a clever talker. The truth is that Wilde's literary outfit was not large, but he displayed all his goods in the window. He was neither an original writer nor a deep thinker, but he had unusual gifts of freshness of expression, and he absorbed other men's thoughts like a sponge. The device of all his plays is actually common-place, and it is the brilliant and witty conversations which help so materially their success. Wilde owed a great debt to his predecessors, from Sheridan to Sardou. An exception must be made, however, in the case of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which is a little masterpiece; and in *Salome* Wilde was fortunate enough to add a play to the repertoire of Europe, an achievement far beyond the reach of most dramatists.

Wilde's prose is Asiatic. It has none of Matthew Arnold's superb restraint, nor the elegance of Stevenson, but it is eminently readable. There are, indeed, purple patches, but they are so happily done that one forgives the heightened colour. That overloaded Oriental manner was, however, singularly effective in *Salome*, though Gustave Flaubert and the Bible were drawn upon in almost every page. In prose and verse Wilde is most effective when he is most personal. For this reason *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* must always command readers. Wilde himself considered his personality far more remarkable than anything he had written. It was an amazing and a truthful criticism.

It was the tragedy of Wilde's own life that gave permanence to his writings. It is true that his plays received a warmer welcome in Paris and Berlin than in London, and his poems achieved "the glory of a fifth edition" during his life. His earlier work was, however, but the outcome of a brilliant intellect. It was suffering that added the necessary human note. In *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* he wrote straight from the heart, and often with eyes full of tears. *The Ballad* is full of a haunting beauty of expression, but it is also a complete and crushing exposure of our fiendish penal system which is so unworthy of a nation pretending to civilization. Listen to these lines upon a prisoner condemned to death:—

I never saw a man who looked
 With such a wistful eye
 Upon that little tent of blue
 Which prisoners call the sky,
 And at every drifting cloud that went
 With shills of silver by.

Then read this uncanny passage:—

It is good to dance to violins
 When Love and Life are fair;
 To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
 So delicate and rare;
 But it is not sweet with nimble feet
 To dance upon the air.

Stanza after stanza has its haunting refrain:—

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
 By each let this be heard,
 Some do it with a bitter look,
 Some with a flattering word,
 The coward does it with a kiss
 The brave man with a sword.

The same mastery of language is apparent in *The Harlot's House*:—

Then suddenly the tune went false,
 The dancers wearied of the waltz,
 The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl,
 And down the long and silent street,
 The dawn with silver-sandalled feet,
 Crept like a frightened girl.

Years before Rudyard Kipling was heard of, Wilde sang of the burden of empire:—

For not in quiet English fields
 Are these our brothers laid to rest,
 Where we might deck their broken shields
 With all the flowers the dead love best.

For some are by the Delhi walls,
 And many in the Afghan land,
 And many where the Ganges falls
 Through seven mouths of shifting sand.

And some in Russian waters lie,
 And others in the seas which are
 The portals to the East, or by
 The wind-swept heights of Trafalgar.

De Profundis was actually written in prison. The book is pathetic throughout, but some passages are unforgettable:—

Everything about my tragedy has been hideous, mean, repellent, lacking in style; our very dress makes us grotesque. We are the zanies of sorrow. We are clowns whose hearts are broken. We are specially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. On November 13, 1895, I was brought down here from London. From two-o'clock till half past two on that day I had to stand on the centre platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress, and handcuffed, for the world to look at. I had been out of the hospital ward without a moment's notice being given to me. Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain surrounded by a jeering mob To those who are in prison tears are a part of every day's experience. A day in prison on which

one does not weep is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy.

This pathos is almost unexpected from a writer whose earlier language was a craft as much as an art, and related to carpets and wall-papers, and not to life itself with its burdens of sorrow and death. The great river of life had flowed quietly past the poet while he languidly watched its ripples, and repeated: "Experience, the name we give to our mistakes," or, "Sleep, like all wholesome things, is a habit," or, "Merely to look at the world will always be lovely." How little did he then realize that one day he would be struggling for existence in the same river, and that art and æsthetics are but sorry substitutes for human love and sympathy. He was like poor Heinrich Heine, who dragged his paralysed limbs to the Louvre to see once more the Venus de Milo before sinking helpless on his mattress-grave, and, falling at her feet, seemed to hear her say that she could not lift him up because she had no arms.

MIMNERMUS.

A Terrible Superstition.

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

—Exodus, xxii. 18.

They brought to him (Jesus) a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out the dumb spake.

—Matthew ix. 32, 33.

Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine.

—Mark v. 13.

Show them (the witches) no mercy.....I would burn them myself, as we read in the Law (of Moses) that the priests led the way in stoning the evil doer. Martin Luther.—Hartmann Grisar, "Luther," Vol. V. p. 294.

Most of the men of learning in Europe have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it.....the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible.

—John Wesley Journal, May 25, 1768.

No chapter in the history of mankind is more heart-rending than that dealing with the history of witchcraft. The frightful cruelty and injustice inflicted under the influence of this belief are alone sufficient to demonstrate that there is no friendly power presiding over and governing the course of events in the world.

Although Christianity did not invent witchcraft it assumed the belief—a belief which is held by most savage and uncivilized peoples. The Old Testament enacted laws against the practice, and Jesus is represented in the Gospels as holding arguments, and being tempted by the Devil, also with casting devils out of men and women. But the history of Greece and Rome may be searched in vain for any record of witch-hunting, or of the savage and revolting cruelty which accompanied the witch-hunting crusade in Europe. In fact, as Mr. E. S. Withington, in his very valuable study of the "Witch-Mania,"¹ points out, the procedure recommended by Popes Clement V and Boniface VIII, "swept away at a stroke all the safeguards which the lawyers of pagan Rome and the ruder justice of ancient Gaul and Germany had placed around accused persons" (p. 201).

Nor was there any difference of belief between Catholics and Protestants as to the crime of witchcraft; as the same writer observes: "As soon as the Reformation was established Protestants vied with Catholics as witch-hunters" (p. 195). Luther himself, who carried through life the superstitions imbibed during his peasant childhood, had no doubts upon the

subject. He himself saw at Dessau a child who had no human parents, "but had proceeded from the Devil," and declared, "If I had the ordering of things here, I would have that child thrown into the Moldau, at the risk of being held its murderer."²

Luther was on perfectly familiar terms with the Devil; he told Dr. Jonas and Michael Coelius that while saying his prayers "at his open window, he had seen the Devil, who hindered him in all his labours, squatting on the fountain and making faces at him. But God would prove stronger than Satan, that he knew well."³ Another account says that Satan made an obscene gesture, "jeering at him, insinuating that all his efforts would come to nought."⁴ Luther also tells us: "When I wake in the night, the Devil immediately comes to me and disputes with me"; he also informs us that the best way of getting rid of the Devil "is to rail at and mock him. He cannot bear scorn."⁵ Luther declared that "What the Devil himself is unable to do, that he does by means of old hags," and again, "the Devil has great power through the sorceresses."⁶ Luther regarded sorcery as *lèse majesté*, says Grisar, "a crime whereby the Divine Majesty is insulted in the worst possible ways," Luther declaring: "Hence it is rightly punished by bodily pains and death."⁷

Grisar says the literature upon the subject,—

which soon assumed huge proportions and of which by far the greater part emanated from the Protestant writers, appealed constantly to Luther, and reproduced his theories and stories, and likewise his demands that measures should be taken for the punishment of witches.....Holy Scripture and Luther were, as a rule, appealed to by the witch-zealots on the Protestant side.⁸

"Thus," says Grisar, "the making of this regrettable mania was in great part Luther's doing" (v. p. 296). Grisar also cites Janssen who, in his monumental *History of the German People*, declares that "Through Luther and his followers belief in the power and influence of the Devil, who was active in all men, and who exercised his arts especially through witches and sorcerers, received an impetus and spread in a manner never known before."

It would not be true to say that the men who consigned witches to the torture and the flames were bad men who delighted in torture for torture's sake. As Mr. Withington remarks:—

Men are never more cruel and unjust than when they are in a fright. The witch-hunters, most of them at least were pious and conscientious men. They appeal to God, the Church, and the Bible at every step. Nicholas Remy, for instance, after torturing and burning over eight hundred of his fellow creatures, retired from the work thinking he had done God and man a good service. But one thing troubled his conscience. He had spared the lives of certain young children, and merely ordered them to be scourged naked three times round the place where their parents were burning. He is convinced that this was wrong, and that they will all grow up into witches and sorcerers. Besides, if God sent two she-bears to slay the forty and two children who mocked Elisha, of how much greater punishment are those worthy who have done despite to God, His mother, the saints, and the Catholic religion? He hopes his sinful clemency will not become a precedent—a fear which was quite unnecessary, for scores of children under twelve were burnt for witchcraft, and the one plea which even then respited the most atrocious murderers did not always avail a witch, since it was

² Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 325.

³ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, VI. p. 132.

⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵ Michelet, *Life of Luther*, pp. 330-332.

⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, V. p. 291.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹ Contributed to *Studies in the History and Method of Science*. Edited by Charles Singer.

believed that her future child, if not the actual offspring of the devil, would infallibly belong to his kingdom.*

Almost all the victims of the witch mania were executed on their own confession, extorted in the vast majority of instances by torture, or the fear of torture.

"As to the torture itself," says the same writer,— it combined all that the ferocity of savages and the ingenuity of civilized man had till then invented. Besides the ordinary rack, thumb-screws, and leg-crushers or Spanish boots, there were spiked wheels over which the victims were drawn with weights on their feet; boiling oil was poured on their legs, burning sulphur dropped on their bodies, and lighted candles held beneath their armpits. At Bamberg they were fed on salt fish and allowed no water, and then bathed in scalding water and quicklime. At Lindheim they were fixed to a revolving table and whirled round until they vomited and became unconscious, and on recovery remained in so dazed a state that they were ready to confess anything. At Neisse they were fastened naked in a chair "with 150 finger-long spikes in it" and kept there for hours. And so effective were these tortures that nine out of ten innocent persons preferred to die as confessed sorcerers rather than undergo a repetition of them (p. 204).

Anything might start a witch hunt. A plague of flies or caterpillars, a tempest. If the winter was prolonged more than usual. The prolonged winter of 1586 in Savoy resulted in the burning of one hundred and thirteen women and two men, who confessed, after torture, that it was due to their incantations. And once started, the witch-hunt increased like an avalanche, for the victims were tortured until they confessed who their accomplices were, and these in turn were tortured to reveal theirs. Peter Binsfeld, suffragan Bishop of Treves, "is said to have burnt no fewer than 6,500 persons, and to have so desolated his diocese that in many villages round Treves there was scarcely a woman left."¹⁰

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

Congratulations to America. By making its proposals for partial disarmament publicly it has quite taken the wind out of the sails of the almost criminal back-stair and bat-eyed European diplomacy. The world at large now knows exactly what was proposed, and it will also know with whom rests the responsibility if the intolerable burden of war-like preparations is not diminished. The form of the American proposal is the nearest approach to international honesty that we have seen for many years, and all real lovers of peace and progress will watch results with the greatest interest.

Meanwhile, it may be noted as one indication of the net influence of Christianity on the Church burdened countries of Europe, that the first serious doubt in connection with the acceptance of the proposals arises in connection with their effect on those firms engaged in the manufacture of armaments. More than sixteen centuries of official Christianity has left the world with the trade in international slaughter so much a national industry that the proposal to limit armaments is likely to be resisted on the ground that it will interfere with employment and commercial security! And the Christians have the impertinence to call Mohammedanism a religion of the sword! We should like to know what religion has been responsible for more bloodshed, or has used the sword more lavishly than has Christianity?

The Bishop of Exeter has issued a very important contribution towards the peace of the world. He declares that

* *Studies in the History and Method of Science*, pp. 200-1.
¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

when the order of the country is threatened we must use strong measures, and these include the right to kill. He says, "Order demands that the people who break it shall be punished severely. Justice demands that the guilty people only shall be punished. But remember everyone is guilty in the eyes of God who means to do a crime, even if he does not succeed in doing it." So he proceeds to argue that as we were justified in killing Germans, we are justified in killing Irish if they threaten the social order. Still, out of the kindness of his episcopal heart, he trusts that "as few Irishmen as is necessary will be killed to uphold the British Empire." Nothing could be kinder, or clearer, or more Christian.

The rule is simple enough for a child to understand. A government may kill anyone who disturbs the social order. It is to be hoped that as few as possible will be killed, and that only the guilty ones will be shot. But in any case, as those who wished to upset the social order are guilty, we may assume that all who are shot are guilty. It is simplicity itself. The government must decide who is disturbing the social order, and when they have decided they must shoot. Of course, there might be inconvenient applications of the rule. Thus, the majority of Christians would probably agree that the ideas of Free-thinkers if carried out would seriously disturb the social order. Therefore, the way to deal with them is to shoot. A government might quite easily find that any sort of opposition to its rule is a threat to the social order. Therefore, shoot. Any attempt to reform the land laws might quite easily become a threat to the social order. So might the attempt to establish a republic, or the advocacy of Socialism, or an extreme individualism. In fact, it is difficult to say what might not threaten the social order, since it is only by some alteration in the social order that any drastic reform can be brought about. And for all these things the Bishop of Exeter's remedy is the rifle. And yet there are some who doubt the social utility of the Christian Church! But to doubt it is clearly a threat at the social order.

It is the boast of the Roman Catholic Church that it never changes. It is a pleasant illusion. The first film of the Pope ever taken has been screened at the Westminster Cathedral Hall. As it shows Papa kneeling in prayer surrounded by priests, Mr. Charles Chaplin need not lie awake at night in fear of a serious rival.

Providence is said to count the hairs of people's heads. Of their bodies the same thoughtfulness is not manifest. There were 991 persons killed, and 25,933 injured on railways in the United Kingdom during 1920.

Despite the loud-mouthed protests of a mere handful of fanatics, the secularization of Sunday goes on apace. The naughty Sunday papers unconsciously help the process, for pious folk are intrigued into buying the papers because the editors print fifty-line sermons and religious paragraphs. Of course, the dear editors do not care a button that the theology is sandwiched between reports of divorce cases and the latest escapades of film and stage favourites. In a recent issue of the *Weekly Dispatch* an article on "Child Prayer Fantasies" was in the next column to an article on "Kisses Analysed."

The Rev. W. J. S. Weir, Director of Sunday Schools for the Bishop of London, quotes an amusing rendering of part of the "Lord's Prayer" given by a child. "Our Father in charge of heaven, Harold be thy name." This is not so funny as the childish account of the legend of the raising of Jairus's daughter, rendered by a London schoolboy: "Then came Our Saviour, followed by the men carrying the beer" (instead of bier).

The "Old, old story of Jesus" does not head the bill at the churches as it used to do. A free cinema show was among the attractions at a provincial church. The programme included Continental travel films, the killing of a whale, and some pictures of aeroplanes. These do not appear to be "sacred" subjects, unless, of course, the whale was Jonah's landlord.

There really ought to be an enquiry as to the nature of the germ that attacks the official mind. For one can only explain its vagaries on the ground that immediately a man is appointed to office he becomes subject to the ravages of a germ that robs him of common-sense. Thus, in order to test the truth of allegations that have been made against the Borstal Institution at Portland, the Home Secretary announces that he will spend a week-end in the prison, submitting to all the prison regulations as to diet, etc. There is something hopeless about a mind which imagines that by going to a prison for a couple of days, announcing beforehand that the visit is intended, a fair opinion can be formed as to the conduct of the officials on ordinary occasions, and the general effect on character of a term of imprisonment. Naturally, the officials will be on their best behaviour, the food will not affect the Home Secretary for a day or two, and he will return deciding that all is for the best. Sheer stupidity could hardly go further.

Meanwhile, the great evil of prison life, the deadly, brain destroying monotony of prison life remains, and the absurdity of testing this by a couple of days prepared residence is too obvious for comment. If the Home Secretary is really desirous of finding out things we suggest that he should disguise himself, without announcing it, then proceed to get locked up for about a month, and never reveal his identity till he comes out. Or if he wishes to test its influence on boys, let him adopt the same policy with one of his sons, or the son of one of his friends, if he cannot supply one. But, as we said, what really strikes us is the incapacity of the official mind exhibited. And it helps to explain the muddle which we are in, and the small amount of genuine intelligence required for a successful political career.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been delivering himself of some more remarkable information about the next world. He told an audience at Nottingham the other day that he had each a copy of the material body, even to the smallest hair of the head. What we should like to know is what happens when a man becomes bald-headed early in life? His friends would know him as one minus hair, and to meet him with a well covered poll would be likely to disguise him beyond recognition. And what becomes of the copy with hair during all the years that there is a copy of him without? Evidently he must have two copies—something like the showman who exhibited the two skeletons of George Washington, one when he was a boy and the other when he was a man.

Continuing, Sir Arthur said that when a smile passes over the face of a dying man he is recognizing the faces of friends who are waiting to welcome him. We do not know about that, but we do know that some people have professed to see Jesus waiting for them. Others have seen awaiting them the galaxies of Mohammedan Houris that have been promised them. And others have died shrieking that they saw awaiting them the traditional devil with fork and horns. What does Sir Arthur make of that we wonder, and how does he differentiate the one case from the other. Sir Arthur was, by the way, very strong on what he calls "etheric material." What does he imagine the ether to be? Quite evidently he thinks it is a substance which we know as we know a piece of lead. We seriously advise those who talk of the ether in this way to get a scientific text book and find out what is the part played by the conception of "ether" in science.

Lieut-Colonel J. T. C. Broadbent, speaking on behalf of foreign missions, is reported by the *Leeds Mercury* to have said that the vast majority of the people of India were living in a state of "abysmal beastliness. Nothing but Christ and Christianity would raise them out of it." If that is true it is a pretty compliment to pay England for its control of India. If it is not true it says little for Lieut-Colonel Broadbent. For our own part we take it that it is just one of those ill-considered falsehoods which supporters of foreign missions indulge in. To get people to contribute, the people to whom these missionaries go

must be depicted as little better than savages, otherwise the funds are apt to languish. And we are not surprised that intelligent inhabitants of India resent this description of themselves. It is an insult to the Hindoos, and it is an ill-compliment to pay this county. In more than one way these missionary movements are a nuisance and a danger.

The *Cambrian Daily Leader* is angry that there should be a book-shop in Swansea which "features anti-Christian publications." We are very glad to answer for the accuracy of the charge, and to point out the very useful service that our friend Mr. Dupree has done the cause in this direction. No. 50 Alexandria Road has a good display in literature of works on all sorts of advanced subjects, social and religious, and it is a good thing for the town that this should be so. It is an educational institution of the best kind. We do not know what the *Cambrian Leader* would like to do about the matter, but we do know that we should like to see a similar shop opened in every town and city in the kingdom. And we believe that if this were done these shops could be made to pay their way. We seriously commend this idea to friends all over the country. Mainly its realization is a matter of finance, and we would, if we had the funds at our disposal, subsidize a few shops as a means of putting the plan into operation. Unfortunately, we cannot do this, but if there are any newsagents who are prepared to make a display of Freethought works we, on our side, are prepared to do what we can to see that they do not lose by the experiment. We shall be pleased to hear from anyone who has ideas on this subject. It is one of tremendous importance to the progress of our ideas.

We see that a daily paper protests against teachers dropping "revolutionary lessons into children's ears." We should be more impressed by the protest if there was also a complaint when the schools are used to instill into the children ideas that are not merely of a decided reactionary character, but which anyone with a moderate degree of up-to-date information knows is actually false. There is, indeed, far too much attention paid to cramming the heads of children with cut and dried specifics rather than subjecting the child to a genuine mental training. And whether a child repeats things that are true or things that are false, they are likely to be of little real use to it so long as they are repeated with about as much intelligence as would be displayed by a phonograph. Unfortunately, the evil of the religious example does not end with religion, and having seen the Churches busily engaged in cramming children with their particular dogmas, many who call themselves reformers feel that the right course for them to pursue is to follow the same plan, with the substitution of new dogmas for the ones rejected. And in either case the real training of the child is overlooked.

It would, perhaps, be as well for all to remember when dealing with children that "dogma" does not necessarily mean a false teaching, but one that is imposed by authority. The fault of a dogma is that it does not usually supply those to whom it is offered with the possibility of its rejection.

We pointed out last week the fact of how the religious question aggravates the trouble in Ireland, and serves as one of the chief obstacles to a settlement. We have the same thing illustrated wherever we look. Newspapers the other day reported that there has been street fighting between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, with the usual accompaniment of bomb throwing. This is only what we expected from the fantastical attempt to found a Jewish State. If the Jews carry their religion and the native Christians and Mohammedans retain theirs conflict is inevitable. And if they forget their religion, or outgrow it, the expressed reason for a Jewish State disappears. For the whole trouble is created by the fact that the Jews are Jews and the Christians are Christians. If they can both forget that fact we should be in sight of peace so far as the Jewish question is concerned. We have the same lesson in all directions—religion wherever found, under whatever conditions it is found, is a general nuisance.

How absurd people can be when they step outside the beaten track of their lives was illustrated the other day by Dr. A. T. Schofield, described in the newspaper report as "a Harley Street specialist." He is reported as saying, in the course of a lecture at the Institute of Hygiene, that the cause of a decline in morality was the loss of the Bible in the schools. But we do not know that there has been a decline in morality—apart from the consequences of the war. And it is news that the Bible is not in the schools. It was certainly there a few days ago, and we have not heard of its removal. We would advise Dr. Schofield to stick to his last. Such utterances are not likely to enhance his reputation among possible patients. But one hopes that he is more rational in his judgment of physical disorders than he appears to be with moral and social ones.

The Rev. A. D. Belden, a Nonconformist minister of Westcliffe-on-Sea, writing on the delightful subject of "Hell," says "the subject is anything but an Aunt Sally, involving as it does the character of Almighty God." Brother Belden should remember that civilized people cannot worry their heads about gods who toast their enemies. They leave such spiritual ideals to the dusky believers in the South Sea Islands, and other resorts of the educated.

A gigantic apple show has been held at the Crystal Palace and the illustrated papers have published alluring pictures of pippins and desert fruit. What we missed in the catalogue was a mention of the famous apple that so upset the harmony of the Garden of Eden, the fruit that "brought death into the world, and all our woe."

The roof of Boulogne Cathedral collapsed recently, carrying with it several of the arches. Presumably, it was early closing day with Providence.

There is a certain ill-balanced individual in London at present known as Pastor Stephen Jeffreys, who is said to be working all the usual marvels in connection with a mission where people as ill-balanced as himself are being cured of their ailments. These stories turn out, on investigation, to be as soundly based as stories of this type are. And Pastor Jeffreys' calibre is seen in the fact that he regards "the recent peculiar movements of the moon" as indications of the second coming of Jesus. And when he comes, or before he comes, anti-Christ will appear, and he will have a liaison with the Jews, whose occupation of Palestine is a remarkable fulfilment of biblical prophecy. But there has been no Jewish "occupation" of Palestine. There has only been an emigration of some Jews there, which is a very different thing. And when the conception of the foundation of a Jewish state has played its part in the game of international politics that will be heard of no more. Neither have there been any "peculiar movements of the moon" recently. The moon is behaving as it has always behaved, and the reports concerning it were based upon the ignorance of newspaper men and of the general public, who came across some items of information which they ought to have known long ago, and thought it was a brand new discovery. So much for this new mouthpiece of God!

There has been a little trouble in connection with the appointment of one of the Baillies in the Aberdeen Town Council. It was moved that the existing treasurer, Mr. Young, be appointed. Treasurer Young declined on the ground that he could not take the oath of allegiance, and he was not a Christian and not a church-goer. We presume that the first objection means that Treasurer Young is a republican and cannot take the oath of allegiance to the king, and that being a Freethinker he will not go to the official church parades. From all of which it appears that Treasurer Young is a very conscientious man, and of the type that should be in the public service. It is a pity that the oath of loyalty to a person is not wiped away as being unworthy of to-day. We presume that when in America a man takes office he does not swear loyalty to President Harding, or some other President, but only to

the constitution of the country. And that is all that should be demanded of anyone. It is time that the divine right of kings, and its pale survivals, were dropped altogether.

A Glimpse of Eternity.

HE was a nice old man, so old, that the ticking of a clock, the ebb and flow of the tide, the birth and death of civilizations, and the age of a star, seemed to him in periods of time, oh dear me, how shall I describe it? Time seemed to him as one who mounts the stairs in the dark and puts his foot on one that is not there. Time seemed to him as nothing; the Persian Empire rose and fell whilst he was stroking his beard. Man rose from all fours out of the mud, and from then until he could cleave the clouds with aeroplanes, the old man, who was the master of time, took this period to flick a little star dust off his eyebrows.

He had often sat on the rim of the sky in contemplation. How people had slandered him! How they had called him Love, Beauty, Fire, Wrath, Essence, One of Three, and I know not what. Some of those who professed to love him showed it by siding with those who squeeze the sweat from human skin by invisible hands, and they and their breed had built a book about him, as a child would make a toy house with little wooden bricks.

On the end of its tail a comet had carried for him a big copy of this book, and one night, whilst controlling the traffic in the Milky Way, he read it. Do not question my veracity—in one night he read it—because a moment ago to him meant the time from when the ancient Briton caught his dinner up to the time when you could buy a rabbit in a tin from Australia. The further away the nearer, as it were. When he had closed the book and put it away in a case with others received in the same manner, he laughed gently. I cannot describe his laughter. It was like the sound of water falling in a wood in Spring; it was like sweet music heard when we enter the gates of sleep, it was sensible laughter—but this does not complete the description.

To think that they think this of me, he mused. To think that I specially made that, he said, pointing to a bright speck no different from the other specks—what self-esteem they have! In laying the special authorship to me, do they not flatter themselves? And they call themselves meek and humble, and their humility hopes to win—that which I have now! If they are humble and meek they should desire nothing. Their humility is concealed envy. They say that I opened a shop, and keep an account of all my customers; that the shop will one day be closed and a reckoning made of Everyman. This is too bad. Worse, they say I never laugh. How could they be so ill-informed?

He rested his head on his hand, and another civilization was born and tottered to its grave. No beginning, he murmured, for I know not how I came here; no end, for the system is perfect. Their salvation lies in individual perfection, for I am helpless in the matter. I who know not who I am, how can they know me? And he laughed again. Gentle, tolerant, wise laughter—another star was born—it was the soul of Epictetus and it joined the other stars in their singing, and I shall not denounce you as a heretic if you disagree with me about this matter. For there is plenty of room on the earth for the snow and rain to fall—plenty of room, too, for justice and equity to sweeten the journey of the human race, children of chance, heirs and spendthrifts, drunkards and kill-joys. There is plenty of room on earth for individual perfection—what is beyond the rim of the sky can bide our time,—

For love we Earth, then serve we all;
Her mystic secret then is ours:
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

JONATHAN HORNBLLOWER.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements

November 20, Liverpool; November 27, Ton Pentre; December 4, Friars Hall, London; December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green; January 8, Stratford Town Hall; January 15, Swansea; January 29, Stockport; February 5, Birmingham; February 19, Glasgow; March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

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

A. PAULTON (Leeds.) We share your feelings with regard to the idiotic paragraphs that fill the newspapers concerning the doings of royalty. But we do not think it is the fault of the royal family so much as the people themselves. There must be a certain unhealthy appetite for reading that the Queen kissed her son when he was leaving home, and similar stupid items of news. What on earth should a mother do on such an occasion? It would seem as though these people are generally surprised to find kings and queens acting like ordinary human beings. Presumably, they have not yet quite outgrown the superstition that royalties are not of the same blood as other folk. There is a lot to be done before the mass of folk are really civilized.

J. HANDS.—There are many Freethinkers in and around Malvern, but it is a difficult matter to get them to join together for work. That is chiefly why the burden is so heavy on those who do the work. Still, we must all keep pegging away.

J. N.—We did not mean that we had any fund set on one side from which to supply copies of the paper to those who are temporarily unable to purchase. But we always do our best to see that no one misses the paper from that cause. Perhaps things will brighten presently.

A. A. MCKELLAN.—No report of the discussion will appear other than that which has appeared in the local press. Glad you find the *Grammar of Freethought* so satisfactory. It was intended to serve as a handbook, and we are gratified to find that it is achieving the purpose for which it was written.

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

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

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (November 20) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Picton Lecture Hall, Liverpool. The Picton is one of the best known lecture halls in the city and we are hoping for the co-operation of every Freethinker in Liverpool in making the meeting known among their friends. It is an expensive experiment, and from that point of view alone all

the help that can be given will be needed. But apart from that aspect of the matter the occasion offers a splendid opportunity for introducing newcomers to these meetings, and in the present collapse of the Churches this should not be a matter of great difficulty.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd visits Leicester to-day (November 20) and will lecture in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, at 6.30. Admission is free, and we have no doubt there will be the usual good attendance to listen to what is certain to be an interesting lecture.

A friend writes us that after making a tour of a lot of shops in Birmingham there was not one of them that had a spare copy of the *Freethinker* for sale. Presumably, they took it to order only. We do not know what we can do in the matter, except to again urge on our friends the importance of their bringing pressure to bear upon their agents to display the paper. It is supplied to the trade on sale or return, so that there is no reason for them to refuse to show it. We feel sure that if the matter were only taken up seriously enough some breach would be made in the bigotry which prevents this journal getting the publicity which it deserves.

Just as we finish writing the above a letter reaches us from a Malvern reader informing us that the Public Library Committee has refused to place a copy of the *Freethinker* on the Library table on the ground that they do not accept literature of a controversial character. We wonder if that rule is rigorously carried out? If it is we have no special cause for complaint. But the reply seems another reason for seeing that the number of our readers in the Malvern district is increased.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures to-day (November 20) in the Rusholme Public Hall, Manchester. His subject in the afternoon at 3 will be "Three Great Pioneers—Paine, Shelley, Bradlaugh," and in the evening at 6.30, "Fairy Tales of Christianity." We hope Manchester friends will be present in force. Tea will be provided for all coming from a distance.

We are asked to announce that the Malthusian League is opening a Child Welfare Centre and Maternity Clinic at 153a East Street (corner of Soth Street), Walworth, where advice on the subject of birth control will be given free. All enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary of the League, 124 Victoria Street, S.W. 1.

Next week we are issuing two pamphlets which we think will be found very useful for propaganda purposes. One is a reprint of Mr. Mangassarian's *Martyrdom of Hypatia*, which has long been out of print, the other a pamphlet by G. W. Foote on *Who was the Father of Jesus?* Both pamphlets run to sixteen pages and are published at one penny each. It would be impossible to issue them at this price but for the kindness of a friend who has assisted in the cost of producing what he believes to be useful propagandist literature. We hope that all who can will take advantage of the occasion by purchasing extra copies for distribution. In order to help we will send parcels of 250 copies for 15s. carriage paid. This is a chance to do a little useful work at a moderate expenditure.

I have heard those who knew Lyell only slightly, speak of his manners as cold and reserved. His complete absorption in his scientific work, coupled with extreme short-sightedness, almost in the end amounting to blindness, may have permitted those having but a casual acquaintance with him to accept such a view. But those privileged to know him intimately recognized the nobleness of his character and can realize the justice and force of Hooker's words when he heard of his death: "My loved, my best friend, for well nigh forty years of my life. The most generous sharer of my own and my family's hopes, joys and sorrows, whose affection for me was truly that of a father and brother combined."—J. W. Judd, "*Darwin and Geology*."

A New Trial of Theism.

FOR hundreds of years theologians have been arguing about the existence of a Being called God, and been offering what they consider evidence of his existence. Yet they have signally failed to satisfy a large number of the most intelligent persons in every civilized country in the world. From the time of Lucretius down to the present day there have been philosophers and thinkers who have believed in the eternity and infinity of the Nature by which we are surrounded, and of which we all have some knowledge. The Theist, however, believes that in addition to the Nature we all know there exists a God who is the creator and preserver of all that is. It is interesting to note, however, how from time to time these theologians vary in their methods and form of presenting their arguments, and how, of course, Freethinkers have to be prepared to meet them on their own ground.

Recently I have been re-reading portions of the masterly work of the late George Jacob Holyoake entitled *The Trial of Theism*, and comparing it in some of its methods with the later work of the editor of this journal entitled *Theism or Atheism?* in order to see how far later knowledge has furnished the Freethinker with better materials for answering the Theist of to-day. The first thing to be remembered is that the latest edition of Mr. Holyoake's work was published in 1877, only a few years after Darwin had issued his great work, *The Descent of Man*. Consequently, the great doctrine of Evolution was practically unknown in Mr. Holyoake's day.

He combats with rare skill, however, all the arguments put forward for the existence of God by theologians of his day, but the importance of the primitive origin of the idea of God does not appear to have impressed his mind as the most momentous problem of them all. On the other hand, Mr. Cohen tackles the question of "What is God" at the very outset, and follows it by a masterly examination of "The Origin of the Idea of God." On the first point Mr. Cohen asks: "Is the belief in God, as we are so often assured, one of the most important questions that can engage the attention of man?" And he answers thus:—

Under certain conditions one can conceive a rational answer in the affirmative. Where the mental and social conditions are such that men seriously believe the incidents of natural forces on mankind to be determined by the direct action of "God" one can appreciate right belief concerning him being treated as of first rate importance. In such circumstances wrong ideas are the equivalent of disaster.

And then he goes on to show that we are not in that condition to-day. "It is, indeed," he says,—

common ground with all educated men and women that natural happenings are independent of divine control to at least the extent that natural forces affect all alike, and without the least reference to religious beliefs. Fire burns and water drowns, foods sustain and poisons kill, no matter what our opinions on theology may be. In an earthquake or a war there is no observable relation between casualties and religious opinions. We are, in fact, told by theologians that it is folly to expect there should be. A particular providence is no longer in fashion; God, we are told, works only through general laws, and that is only another way of saying that our opinions about God have no direct or observable influence on our well being. It is a tacit admission that human welfare depends upon our knowledge and manipulation of the forces by which we are surrounded. There may be a God behind these forces, but that neither determines the extent of them nor our power to manipulate them. The belief in God becomes a matter of, at best, secondary importance, and quite probably of no importance whatever (*Theism or Atheism?* p. 31).

This is a ground of argument which, I believe, has never been advanced by a prominent exponent of Free-thought before, and it is one which is calculated to upset the equilibrium of the ordinary theologian at the outset. Fancy anyone having the temerity to assert that the belief in God, at best, is not only of secondary importance, and may, when the matter has been thoroughly examined, be of no importance whatever! Preposterous! I can imagine many theological controversialists exclaiming. But the worst of it is, for them, Mr. Cohen proceeds to prove his assertion.

Listen to this, and consider it well. "Certainly," says Mr. Cohen,—

conditions were never before so favourable for the delivery of a considered judgment on the question of the belief in God. On the one side we have from natural science an account of the universe which rules the operations of Deity out of court. And on the other side we have a knowledge of the mode of origin of the belief which should leave us in no doubt as to its real value.

Mr. Holyoake, in a chapter on "Phases of Theism," points out that Theism as we know it to-day is not an old, but a comparatively new phase of belief. "It is not of primeval origin, but a comparatively modern growth. It came by elaboration, not by revelation." And then he gives a long and extremely interesting quotation from the *Times*, April 17, 1857, from an article on "Buddhist Pilgrims," on the origin of the belief in God, or gods, in primitive minds arising from an—

ineradicable feeling of dependence and reliance upon some higher power (the power of nature) a consciousness of bondage, from which the very name of religion was derived. The presence of that power was felt everywhere, and nowhere more clearly and strongly than in the rising and setting of the sun, in the change of day and night, of spring and winter, of birth and death.....Something divine was discovered in everything that moved and lived. Names were stammered forth in anxious haste (it is still the case) and no single name could fully express what lay hidden in the human mind and wanted expression,—the idea of an absolute and perfect and supreme and immortal being (*Trial of Theism*, pp. 44, 45).

From this Mr. Holyoake goes on to show that the beginning of the belief in God or gods was Fetichism. "In its simplest form," as Professor Newman said:—

Fetichism ascribes divine virtue to some common object—to a stone, a beast, a tree, or a scrap of writing. Any of these may be made a god, an amulet, or a talisman; or may vary from one character to the other (*The Soul*, Chapter I, Sec. 1).

Mr. Cohen deals with the question of "The Origin of the Idea of God" from the latest data. He advances the evidence put forward by Miss Kingsley in her *West African Studies*, also from quotations from Tylor on *Ancestor Worship*, with further references from Mr. W. Crookes and Sir A. C. Lyall and others. And he sums up his conclusions on this branch of the subject in the following very pregnant sentences:—

The gods are, then, ultimately deified ghosts. They are born of misinterpreted subjective and objective experiences. This is among the surest and most firmly established results of modern investigation. It matters not what modifications later knowledge may demand; it will only mean a change of form, not of substance. On any scientific theory we are bound to explain the origin of the gods in terms of human error. And no subsequent development can alter its character. We may trace the various stages of a universal delusion, but nothing can convert a delusion into a reality (*Theism or Atheism?* p. 16).

Mr. Cohen in subsequent chapters deals with such important subjects as "Have we a Religious Sense?" the argument from existence, from causation, from design, but one of his finest examples of logical reasoning may be found in his chapter on "God and Evolu-

tion," when he deals with the different aspects of the "Problem of Evil" as viewed by the Christian, and by the Freethinker who has a full knowledge of the doctrine of evolution.

For many years George Jacob Holyoake's masterpiece, *The Trial of Theism*, was considered by competent critics as a perfect armoury of argument against the Theist, and so, indeed, it still is—in fact, it is quite a classic. Then followed Bradlaugh's powerful pamphlet entitled *A Plea for Atheism*, which won favour among the more aggressive section of Freethought controversialists; but to-day I cannot help thinking that with the later knowledge which science reveals on the evolutionary side of the problem of life, the student cannot do better than consult the well informed work on *Theism or Atheism?* by Mr. Chapman Cohen, which may be regarded, in the strictest sense, as "A New Trial of Theism."
ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Selfishness.

The time to be happy is now; the place to be happy is here; the way to be happy is to try to make others happy.
—R. G. Ingersoll.

SELFISHNESS has a bad name. Almost everybody tries to make it appear that he is not selfish. Most persons would consider it a libel to be charged with selfishness. They think their conduct is more or less disgraceful unless it can be shown that they act for the welfare and happiness of others at the expense of themselves. But no one ever does anything voluntarily except for his own happiness. Indeed, it is impossible, except under physical compulsion, to act except from a selfish motive, but most people do not understand this and are more or less ashamed of it. It is not a question of what one wishes to do, but of what one must do. We can no more help acting selfishly than we can help breathing. And it is a good thing that we cannot, for it is hard to see how society could hold together unless we were all supremely selfish, and it will be better still when all people become enlightened enough to throw off the mask, plainly admit their selfishness and act on a truthful basis.

Most people who try to be what is called good really think they try to be unselfish, and really wish to be so. Such people are sincere enough, but they are ignorant. They do not understand themselves. They are blinded by superstition, so much so that they cannot clearly see the actual quality of their own motives. They think that they act for the happiness of others when in reality they act always for their own happiness. They are not intentional deceivers of others. They deceive themselves simply because they do not study themselves closely, for if they did, and honestly wished to discover the truth, they could not help seeing that they are wholly selfish in all that they do.

But there are some persons who are downright hypocrites in this matter. They do not deceive themselves. They pretend to act unselfishly when they know very well that they are moved by purely selfish motives. They wish to enjoy a reputation for piety, or generosity, or self-denial, and they gratify their desire by doing something that they think will appear to be unselfish.

In the case of many persons who give largely to the Church, or for charitable purposes, taking pains that it shall be widely known; or of persons who give to beggars only when other people are looking on, you have downright hypocrites, who know that they are selfish, but hope that others will give them credit for benevolence.

I believe that this will be a much better world to live in when all persons come to understand that we are all entirely selfish, that it is fortunate for society that we are, and that it will be much better all round when

we all admit this important truth. How much better it would be for a man to understand that when he gives money to a beggar the act is just as selfish as if he had spent it on beer or tobacco. There would be no danger then of his becoming a self-righteous prig, on the basis of a lie.

How much better it would be if when a man gives money to a church or a college he would append to his deed of gift these words: "Let no one think of me as other than I am. I care nothing for the Church, nothing for the cause of education, except as means of pleasurable sensations to myself. I give this money because, for reasons of my own, I get happiness by doing so."

If people would be truthful there would not be so many heroes, saints, and statues in the world; but neither would there be so much sham and self-righteousness, and we should all learn to respect ourselves and each other more. The doctrine that unselfishness is a virtue does not make anybody less selfish, but it does turn men's selfishness into unfortunate and sometimes odious channels. Thus, a monk, who lives in a cell on bread and water, wearing a hair shirt, is just as selfish as "a man about town," since the monk finds his happiness in self-mortification, but the wretched doctrine of self-denial has caused his selfishness to express itself by self-deception and turned him into a useless, and perhaps odious, member of society. Whenever you find a doctrine that is pre-eminently false and specially injurious, you may take it for granted that it has its roots in the Church, or the State, or both, and will be strenuously advocated by the parsons and the politicians. This is specially true of self-denial. The motto of the Church in all ages has been, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy might, heart and strength, and thy neighbours as thyself." Nobody ever did this, or can do it, and nobody ever tried to do it except under a bribe to his selfishness in the form of a promise of future everlasting happiness. This is the theory of the Church—that God should be loved for his own sake, and that you should hate yourself because you love God, and that you should love your neighbour, and, indeed, your enemy, for God's sake. For the Lord thy God is a jealous God, and so infinitely selfish that he condemns to eternal torture anybody in the universe who does not love him above everything and everybody else. This doctrine of complete self-denial reaches its climax in the absurd and debasing Christian hymn:—

Oh! to be nothing, nothing;
Only to lie at his feet,
A broken and empty vessel
For the Master's use complete.

When you get into that condition—no brains, no will and no desires—you are, indeed, a perfect Christian. It follows naturally that the only way in which you can become entirely pleasing to God is to meekly obey the clergy, who are God's agents, and this explains why the Church teaches that it is wicked to be selfish. Unless the people can be made to find happiness by giving up their wealth, their wills and their opinions to the clergy, what would become of the parsons? People necessarily seek their own happiness. The clergy know this, and so they teach that the way to be happy is to be as submissive as possible to the direction of the Church. The theory on which the State works is precisely analogous, and the one should be as hateful as the other, but unfortunately both are highly popular.

The theory of the rulers is that the imaginary political person called the State is supreme in society, just as the imaginary theological person called God is in the universe, and hence the individual must be wholly subservient to the State; and as the State has no existence apart from the office holders, it follows that the most virtuous citizen is he who submits most

abjectly to the political rulers. What follows? As the highest virtue known to the Church is piety, or slavery to the clergy, so the highest virtue known to the State is patriotism, or slavery to the rulers. As the greatest offence known to the Church is Atheism, or rebellion against the rule of the clergy, so the foulest crime known to the State is treason, or rebellion against the rule of the politicians. The clergy teach you that you are indebted to God for everything that you are and have, and that therefore you should not complain if you are stricken by disease or poverty. Consequently, you find people meekly enduring every form of injustice and misery, indeed, actually thanking God that they are not better off.

The politicians teach you that you are indebted to the State for the preservation of your life, your liberty, and your property, and, consequently, you find people meekly submitting to taxation and conscription, happy and thankful that they are robbed and killed and wounded for the benefit of their rulers.

The false doctrine of unselfishness is the bulwark of every form of tyranny, and men will never be free and happy and generally wealthy until they come to understand that each person is necessarily and supremely selfish and should admit it, and seek to gratify himself, not by giving up his rights or his goods, but by holding on to everything he has and grasping for everything he should have, unless he finds that by voluntarily giving up things or rights he thereby increases his happiness here and now in this world. If a man finds his happiness in living poorly in order that his priest may live well, or in paying taxes in order that his rulers may be wealthy, or in dying in battle that one set of rulers may put down another set; if he finds his happiness in rigid economy in order that his wife and children may have every enjoyment, or in risking his life to save another life—let him do any of these things, but let him not do them with the false idea that he is under any obligations to God, the State or his fellow-men, and let him not prate of piety, patriotism, morality or duty, but let him admit that he does them for the plain, honest reason that he loves himself, and thus finds his own happiness.

Men muddle themselves with such words as right and wrong, morality, duty and virtue; they say "You ought to do this and not do that," but there are no such things or obligations as these. Men find their happiness in pursuing a certain line of conduct for themselves and in relation to each other, and when by the experience of ages it becomes certain that one line of conduct produces more particular and general happiness than another they say that one is right and another wrong; in course of time a recognition of these results becomes unconscious, automatic, like breathing, and some parson or politician tells them that this inherited, unconscious recognition is the "voice of God in the soul," the intuitional recognition of the "moral law," "conscience," and thus the masses become enslaved to their spiritual and political rulers by such chimeras as piety, patriotism, duty, morality, and the like. For, in my opinion, there is no "voice of God," no moral law, no being or thing from which an "ought" can spring.

The hope of the world is not in trying to stifle human selfishness but in teaching men to see that their happiness will be best attained by doing only those things which preserve their bodily health and their peace of mind, and which tend to increase their personal liberty, security and wealth. This will lead them to form and maintain relations with their fellows which are fair, kind and peaceable, but this fairness and gentleness in dealing with others will be not from love of them, but from love of one's self, since one cannot be free, secure, or truly enjoy his wealth unless every one else is free, secure and wealthy.

G. O. W.

Book Chat.

With the exception of the professional soldier, the patriotic profiteer, and the hired servants of the Prince of Peace, there are few people who are not convinced that war is a survival of primitive barbarism. But to those who have any doubt about it, or who have been deceived by the unreal distinction between offensive and defensive war, I wish to recommend *The Indictment of War* (C. W. Daniel, Ltd., 10s. 6d. net), an anthology of anti-militarist opinion and argument from Aristophanes to Mr. Zangwill. It is a handsome book of some five hundred pages, and the editors have done their work well. One advantage it has over similar compilations is that full references are given for each quotation, so that the reader who happens to be sceptical or curious can turn up the context without trouble. Another advantage is that the excerpts are not scrappy; for instance, there are six pages from Erasmus' *Antipolemus: or The Plea of Reason, Religion and Humanity against War*. The greatest of sixteenth century humanists had a reasoned and emotional objection to war, and he had also, which is much rarer, the courage to print precisely what he thought. I know no more complete and damning indictment of the criminal foolishness of the military spirit than his tractate *Querela Pacis* (1517), which was Englished in 1559 under the title of *The Complaint of Peace*, and reprinted five years ago in a cheap form by the Quaker publishers, Headley Bros. His diatribes against priests who sounded the trumpet of Mars, fathers in God who misnamed their blood-thirsty rage a zeal for law, order and religion; his bitter comments on the spectacle of white-haired and nerveless old men inciting the nations to mutual slaughter, are as withering as anything in Voltaire, and, it is sad to think, as true to-day as they were four hundred years ago.

If the reader turns to the index of names he will find, as he might have expected, that they are, for the greater part, the names of heretics, of those free or emancipated spirits who have discarded the official ethics and religion of their time. Foote is represented by passages from *The Shadow of the Sword*; Bradlaugh by two short quotations; Paine by well-known reflections from *The Rights of Man*, and James Thomson by a passage from an article on *War*, and a few lines from his poem "L'ancien Regime: or the Good Old Rule." So far so good, but it seems to me a pity that the editors did not include some paragraphs from the writings of Mr. J. M. Robertson, from, let me say, his pamphlet *The Blood Tax*, or his essay, *The Superstitions of Militarism* (in *Essays Towards Peace*, 1913), or from *Patriotism and Empire*. They seem also to be unaware of the importance from their point of view of M. Augustin Hamon's work. His *Psychologie du Militaire Professionnel* (1894) is a refreshingly wholehearted, if somewhat brutal and one-sided, attack on the militarist ideal. Again, the present editor of this paper has ever been consistent in his condemnation of war and its ally militarism. Surely he was entitled to figure in an anthology which claims to be all representative. However that may be, the work, on the whole, is as well done as it was worth doing, and the anthologists must not think me ungrateful if I exercise the critic's privilege of fault-finding.

There are, I imagine, few Freethinkers with a love of English letters who have not had occasion to be grateful to Messrs. Dent and Co. for their "Everyman" series. Books are dear enough nowadays, but a half-a-crown is not a ridiculously high price for a well-printed and carefully edited edition of an English classic. Lately there have been some additions to this valuable series, and I have before me two of the new volumes. *English Short Stories* is made up of thirty-six examples of the difficult and delightful art, designed to represent its development from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. Now, if we understand by development a slow but sure growing to perfection, each period adding something to what already existed, and that something constituting an advance towards organic unity, there is really no evidence of any such gradual development. In fact, it is not too much to say that it did not begin to act until it came to

us from France. The short story in prose might have flourished in English soil if Chaucer instead of telling his *Canterbury Tales* in verse had used the prose narrative-form perfected by Boccaccio. The truth of the matter is that we do not get any short story worth making a fuss over, anything so perfect as Dostoievsky's *Poor Folk* or Flaubert's *Un cœur simple*, until our story-writers went to French novelists for the technique of the thing, although it must be admitted that they might have learnt the grammar of their art from Poe or Bret Harte. It is my opinion that we did not come within sight of perfection until the beginning of the eighteen-nineties. It was then that development really began, the earlier efforts being either worthless, or negligible from the point of view of the evolution of the English short story.

It is this important period that is inadequately represented in the selection before me. There is nothing of Kipling, who is for us what Maupassant is for the French, nothing of Henry James, or Hubert Crackanthorpe, or Mr. Frederick Wedmore, whose "Chemist in the Suburbs" is the nearest approach to Turgueniev we have yet made, nothing of Mr. Conrad or Mr. Algernon Blackwood or Mr. Frank Harris. We are fobbed off with indifferent or bad stories by "Q," Mr. De la Mare, Mr. Hugh Walpole and Mr. Anthony Hope. Poor Stevenson is represented by "Markheim," which is not in the same street with his "Providence and the Guitar," and when we turn over the leaf we are switched on to a story called the "Veiled Portrait," by one, James M'Govan, a piece of North British sob-stuff that could be mistaken for tragic pathos only by the readers of the *Saltcoats Herald*. The puzzle for me is how he got into the same covers with R. L. S., Mr. Hardy and Mr. Galsworthy. It is the first time I ever heard of M'Govan, and I hope the last.

If I must confess to being put out of humour by the unfortunate selection of "English Short Stories," I am lucky in having another book in the same series to placate me. This is a generally excellent blank-verse translation of Lucretius by W. E. Leonard, of the University of Wisconsin. He succeeds in carrying over to the reader who has no Latin something of the Roman poet's wonderful fusion of intelligence and emotion, of scientific observation and vivid imagination. The Miltonic cast of the blank verse imparts an ample dignity which the intelligent reader misses in the more polished and rather laboured rhymed versions of Creech (1682), Mallock and some others. Dryden's vigorous rendering of isolated passages is, of course, an exception. It has Lucretian mass and momentum. Munro's prose version is invaluable for scholars, but even the most carefully elaborated prose cannot evoke the rhythmic music of fine verse. The problem for the translator is how to give the English reader an æsthetic pleasure similar in quality to that experienced by the contemporaries of Lucretius. Mr. Leonard has done a difficult piece of work extremely well.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Spinoza.

PURE spirit, like a solitary star
Brooding serenely in its cycle's prime,
To whose vast thought the generations climb,
Presentient, in their fevered way afar,
Of peace where you, and truth, and Nature are :
All-seeing, all-accepting heart, sublime
With amplitude of infinite space and time,
Speaking for Nature words oracular :
Tell of persistence through unending change,
Of thoughts immortal grasped by mortal soul ;
Uplift us, to our vision's narrow range
Add the perception of our ultimate goal,
Which is,—through paths however dark and strange,—
The Individual's one-ness with the Whole.

H. TRUCKELL.

Correspondence.

THE MYTH OF JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If Mr. Arch is satisfied with the report of someone who lived in the middle of the second century for something supposed to have been said 120 years earlier, in a document crammed with miracles obviously untrue, and admittedly interpolated and altered, then all I can say is that our ideas as to what constitutes evidence are so divergent that it is scarcely profitable to pursue the subject.

W. MANN.

AMONG MRS. EDDY'S FRIENDS.

SIR,—In his article "Among Mrs. Eddy's Friends," Mr. Gould writes : "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."

Suppose, for a moment, we allow that the baker's loaf becomes all that the Catholics claim for it; what does it do but make us into cannibals and god-eaters! Where do value and beauty come in? Perhaps Mr. Gould can inform us.

A. G. B.

THEISM.

SIR,—Mr. Jameson complains, in a letter to me, that I don't answer Mr. Cohen's arguments nor show where they are wrong, and says I might explain why I believe in God myself and why I think the conviction reliable.

His appeal makes it perfectly clear, after all that I have written, that both demands are impossible. The reasons I believe in God are (1) that without God the Universe and all human life are alike nonsense. (2) I cannot live on a negation, and I have no evidence that my readers believe anything except that my creed is all wrong. (3) By far the most important ground of my belief is experience. I have learnt what I might have known before, that to anyone who has not had the experience it cannot be explained any more than a sunset to a blind man. Further, that without (3) (1) and (2) convey no meaning, and certainly, even if understood, make no appeal. To know God is to enter a new kind of life which cannot be understood from any words unless it is tasted, and it cannot be tasted unless it is passionately desired. Nobody is really in love if he requires to have the lady explained before he makes his advances.

E. LYTTELTON.

Freethought on Tyneside.

Our work moves on apace. There is in the air some promise of further lecturing activity. The amount of work that an earnest pioneer is capable of is not always easily estimated, but when the spectre of disability, through illness, or any other cause, overtakes one, the gap presents itself at once. It is really a humorous situation to consider the apparently slender foundation of a movement such as ours. A few of us, in some cases miles apart, challenge the tremendous power of religion, organized and unorganized, and, in fact, any profession that is not properly based upon reason. Those of us who are blessed with the necessary strength of limb and buoyancy of spirit have been much occupied these last few days in visiting a few Trojans who have, for the moment, fallen by the way-side. War has left its usual legacy, and a recognition of this more than ever determines us to a firm decision that "War shall be no more." We were just wondering would it be possible to whisper into the ears of just a few women and men who would seriously take up the propagation of Freethought. It is an inspiring adage which says : "The more the merrier," but at this urgent hour we ask for "just a few." It clouds the thoughts of some of us to contemplate how even a little reticence might make the difference, "Freethought on Tyneside" being in full voice and speaking in a voice that is scarcely heard. But with all this the quiet laugh is irrepressible. We are the very dragon to the Church, and in our extremest weakness we are still of vast strength.

J. FOTHERGILL.

Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Mr. John Owen Restall, after a few hours' illness, at the age of sixty-eight years. He was held in high esteem by all who knew him. He was a convinced and enthusiastic Freethinker, his active connection with Secularism dating back to Mr. Bradlaugh's time, though latterly his deafness prevented him from taking any prominent part in the movement. He was a great lover of reading, and possessed a great number of books, pamphlets, and probably every number of the *Freethinker*. His cremation took place at Golder's Green on Thursday, November 10, when a secular service was conducted. We tender Mrs. Restall and family our sincere sympathy in the sad loss which they have sustained. J. T. L.

London Freethinkers will regret to hear of the death of Mr. Edward Bowman, for many years a prominent member of the Kingsland Branch and a Vice-President of the N.S.S. Mr. Bowman, who was in his sixty-eighth year, had been ill for some time and had gone to South-end hoping to benefit by the change. He unfortunately grew rapidly worse and died on the 2nd of this month. He was buried in the Borough Cemetery on Wednesday last in the presence of relatives and friends, who journeyed from London to pay their last tribute of respect and affection. Our well-known contributor, "Mimnermus," read the secular burial service. Mr. Bowman's amiable and cheery disposition endeared him to all who knew him. He leaves a widow, two sons and two daughters, all brought up as Freethinkers, to mourn his loss. To them we extend our heartfelt sympathy. K. B. K.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President :

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary :

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

Principles and Objects.

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

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

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

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

Membership.

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation

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

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

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

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

FULHAM AND WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (154 Goldhawk Road, W.): 7.30, Mr. H. E. Moore, B.A., "The Philosophy of Bergson."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Discussion: "Religion and the Social Problem," opened by Mr. Ernest Dales.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. N. G. Cooke, "Communism."

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, Mr. E. Burke, "The Essence of Buddhism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Price of Peace."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's): 7, Dr. H. De Carle Woodcock, "Disease and Social Life."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Modernism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Picton Lecture Hall, William Brown Street, Liverpool): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Eclipse of Christianity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, near Brick Villa Hotel): Mr. A. B. Moss, 3, "Three Great Pioneers—Paine, Shelley, Bradlaugh"; 6.30, "Fairy Tales of Christianity."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. 2. Bible and

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

THREE NEW LEAFLETS.

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

FREETHOUGHT POSTCARDS.—Picture Post-

cards of Bradlaugh, John Stuart Mill, Ferrer, Diderot, Paine, Darwin, Etienne Dolet, Hume, Gambetta, Galileo, Comte, and others for sale. Price twenty for one shilling, post free. Also list of books for sale, new and second-hand, on application. Lessons in French Conversation. Apply by letter, C. THOMAS, "Stamp Dept.," 2 Victoria Place, Barton Street, Birmingham.

MORALITY AS A RELIGION.

By W. R. Washington Sullivan. An enquiry as to the possibility of reconstructing Religion by shifting its basis, and an exposition of first principles. A splendid treatise. Published at 6/- net. Our price (new) 2/11 post free. Mention Offer 455.

1,000,000 Vols., (Second-hand and New) in stock. Catalogue 455 free: mention requirements or interests.

FOYLES, 121 Charing Cross Road, London.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

- No. 1. **What Will You Put in Its Place?**
- No. 2. **Dying Freethinkers.**
- No. 3. **The Beliefs of Unbelievers.**
- No. 4. **Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?**
- No. 5. **Does Man Desire God?**

Price 1s. 6d. per 100.
(Postage 3d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

The Parson and the Atheist.

A Friendly Discussion on
RELIGION AND LIFE.

BETWEEN

Rev. the Hon. EDWARD LYTTTELTON, D.D.
(Late Headmaster of Eton College)

AND

CHAPMAN COHEN
(President of the N. S. S.)

With Preface by Chapman Cohen and Appendix
by Dr. Lyttelton.

The Discussion ranges over a number of different topics—Historical, Ethical, and Religious—and should prove both interesting and useful to Christians and Freethinkers alike.

Well printed on good paper, with Coloured Wrapper,
144 pages.

Price **1s. 6d.**, postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

Modern Materialism.

A Candid Examination.

BY

WALTER MANN.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

CONTENTS :

Chapter I.—Modern Materialism. Chapter II.—Darwinian Evolution. Chapter III.—Auguste Comte and Positivism. Chapter IV.—Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy. Chapter V.—The Contribution of Kant. Chapter VI.—Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford open the Campaign. Chapter VII.—Buechner's "Force and Matter." Chapter VIII.—Atoms and the Ether. Chapter IX.—The Origin of Life. Chapter X.—Atheism and Agnosticism. Chapter XI.—The French Revolution and the Great War. Chapter XII.—The Advance of Materialism.

A careful and exhaustive examination of the meaning of Materialism and its present standing, together with its bearing on various aspects of life. A much needed work.

176 pages. Price **2s.** in neat Paper Cover, or strongly bound in Cloth **3s. 6d.** (postage 2d.).

Every reader of the *Freethinker* should send for a copy, or it can be ordered through any newsagent in the country.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.

For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians.

By **G. W. FOOTE** and **W. P. BALL.**

NEW EDITION.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

CONTENTS :

Part I.—Bible Contradictions. Part II.—Bible Absurdities. Part III.—Bible Atrocities. Part IV.—Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, Obscenities, Broken Promises, and Unfulfilled Prophecies.

Cloth Bound. Price **2s. 6d.** Postage 3d.

One of the most useful books ever published. Invaluable to Freethinkers answering Christians.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

The First and only Inter-University (left wing) Labour Paper.

THE FREE OXFORD AND NEW UNIVERSITY.

A Communist Journal of Youth

PRICE 3D. (POST FREE 4D.) PUBLISHED FORTNIGHTLY
IN TERM-TIME ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: 4/- POST FREE
(12 ISSUES DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR)

Founder and Editor:

ARTHUR E. E. READE.

(Formerly Managing Editor of *The New Oxford*, organ of the Oxford University Labour Club.)

Associate Editor:

CHARLES H. GRAY.

(Secretary of the University Socialist Federation; Vice-President of the Oxford University Socialist Society.)

Literary Editor:

ALAN PORTER, B.A.

(Joint Editor of *John Clare's Collected Works*, of *Oxford Poetry*, 1921, and of *The Queen's College Miscellany*.)

The Contents of each Issue regularly include:—

Three pages of well-informed and outspoken EDITORIAL NOTES constituting an incisive commentary and a revolutionary review of current affairs.

INDUSTRIAL NOTES from an expert Labour Correspondent in London.

A special leading article dealing in a thoughtful, provocative and original manner with some problem of Sociology from the point of view of Revolutionary Communist Youth.

JOTTINGS OF A JOURNALIST,
by "Commentator."

POETRY, SHORT STORIES, AND GENERAL ARTICLES
ON
Politics, Economics, Finance, Science, Eugenics, Philosophy and Life.

Recent or future Contributors include:—
EDWARD CARPENTER

C. H. NORMAN **A. E. COPPARD**
ARTHUR PONSONBY **EDGELL RICKWORD**
MAURICE H. DOBB **LOUIS GOLDING**

and **WILL HOPE** ("Espoir," the "Communist" Cartoonist).

Book Reviews and Literary Criticism

Reformist bourgeois tendencies in the University Labour Movement are constantly and mercilessly exposed and opposed by THE FREE OXFORD, which stands for the Revolutionary Working Class Movement.

SOME PRESS COMMENTS.

".....decidedly good reading.....well abreast of the intellectual currents of the times."—*The Freethinker*.
".....brilliant....."—*The Daily Herald*.

The first number of "The Free Oxford" was greeted by a howl of abuse in the Capitalist Press, from "The Morning Post" upwards.

66 Charing Cross Road, Cambridge Circus, London, W.C.2.

NOW READY.

A Grammar of Freethought.

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

CONTENTS:—

Chapter I.—Outgrowing the Gods. Chapter II.—Life and Mind. Chapter III.—What is Freethought? Chapter IV.—Rebellion and Reform. Chapter V.—The Struggle for the Child. Chapter VI.—The Nature of Religion. Chapter VII.—The Utility of Religion. Chapter VIII.—Freethought and God. Chapter IX.—Freethought and Death. Chapter X.—This World and the Next. Chapter XI.—Evolution. Chapter XII.—Darwinism and Design. Chapter XIII.—Ancient and Modern. Chapter XIV.—Morality Without God—I. Chapter XV.—Morality Without God—II. Chapter XVI.—Christianity and Morality. Chapter XVII.—Religion and Persecution. Chapter XVIII.—What is to follow Religion?

A Work that should be read by Freethinker and Christian alike.

Cloth Bound, with tasteful Cover Design.

PRICE FIVE SHILLINGS. By post 5s. 4d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

JESUS CHRIST: Man, God, or Myth?

With a Chapter on "Was Jesus a Socialist?"

By **GEORGE WHITEHEAD.**

Author of "The Psychology of the Woman Question," etc.

A Careful Examination of the Character and Teaching of the New Testament Jesus.

Well Printed on Good Paper. In Paper Covers, 2s., postage 2d.; Printed on Superior Paper and bound in Cloth, 3s. 6d., postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.

RELIGION AND SEX.

Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development.

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Systematic and Comprehensive Survey of the relations between the sexual instinct and morbid and abnormal mental states and the sense of religious exaltation and illumination. The ground covered ranges from the primitive culture stage to present-day revivalism and mysticism. The work is scientific in tone, but written in a style that will make it quite acceptable to the general reader, and should prove of interest no less to the Sociologist than to the Student of religion. It is a work that should be in the hands of all interested in Sociology, Religion, or Psychology.

Large 8vo, well printed on superior paper, cloth bound, and gilt lettered.

Price Six Shillings. Postage 9d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.

FRIARS HALL, 237 Blackfriars Road

(Four doors South of Blackfriars Bridge.)

(Under the Auspices of the National Secular Society.)

November 27. OPEN MEETING.

Addresses on the various aspects of Freethought by Messrs. A. D. McLAREN, A. B. MOSS, G. WHITEHEAD, etc.

December 4. CHAPMAN COHEN.

(President, N. S. S., and Editor of the "Freethinker.")

"The Eclipse of Christianity."

December 11. G. WHITEHEAD.

"Conscience and Free Will."

December 18. J. T. LLOYD.

"The Bankruptcy of the Christian Religion."

Doors open 6.30. Chair taken 7 p.m. All seats free. Opposition and Discussion Cordially Invited. Collection.

PAMPHLETS by GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

Man and His Gods. Price 2d., postage 1d.

The Superman; Essays in Social Idealism. Price 2d., postage 1d.

The Socialist Sunday-school Movement. Price 2d., postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C. 4.