

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. 49

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1921.

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>The University of Death.—The Editor</i> - - -	769
<i>Religious Revivals.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - -	770
<i>Corybantic Christianity.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	771
<i>A Terrible Superstition.—W. Mann</i> - - -	772
<i>Pages from Voltaire.—George Underwood</i> - - -	774
<i>Another Blasphemy Prosecution.—Chapman Cohen</i> -	777
<i>Wat Tyler, or a Breath of Common Sense.—William Repton</i> - - -	779
<i>Constructive Secularism.—Bernard Moore</i> - - -	780
<i>Stands Scotland Where it Did?—A. M.</i> - - -	781
<i>The Freethought Movement in Japan.—Yoshiro Oyama</i>	781
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

The University of Death.

There was quite an interesting little leaderette in the *Daily Express* the other day. It was entitled "The University of Death," and we are a trifle self-conscious in praising it since it is only repeating what we said—some years after we first said it—as to the inescapable consequences of the war atmosphere on the rising generation. While all the daily press were creating and perpetuating that atmosphere of brutalization which is essential if a war fever it to be kept at full pressure, we were almost alone in our insistent protest against the hollow pretence of a "moral uplift," or that it had induced a higher note in the national life, just as we asserted over and over again that whatever our justification for entering the war, we must be prepared for that period of personal and national demoralization which wars always bring in their train. We did this in the face of a great deal of personal and epistolary opposition, but we felt that in the long run nothing would pay so well as the truth, and the evil would be the smaller if the country had the courage to face the cost of what it was doing. And if that plan had been pursued by others we are quite certain that we might have averted some of the ill-consequences of the war, and some of the evils of the "Peace." At any rate, we count it to the credit of the old *Freethinker* that it did not lose its head in a time of unparalleled national excitement, and it is all to the good that, even though late, other papers should now be echoing our teaching. But we are still face to face with the fact that our young men have been brought up in an unpromising environment, their most impressionable years have been passed in an inculcated atmosphere of hatred, taught to regard millions of their fellow creatures as so much vermin which it was their highest duty to kill, as the *Express* writer puts it, "taught to kill before they learned to shave." To be trained in the university of death is an ill preparation for the work of leading a healthy social life.

* * *

The Dead War Chief.

But it is a perpetual puzzle why those who see so much do not see more. That phrase, "The University of Death," is an excellent and an illuminating one, but it covers a much larger field than that of war. And even so, the *Express* appears to have glimpsed

only the obvious lesson of the influence of the war period on the boys—and girls—of the war years. But the very idea of war to-day is an illustration of the truth that the people as a whole are trained in a school of thought and feeling in which the chief rulers and teachers are the dead. It is really the dead who bid us take arms in our hands and spend a large part of our energies in preparing to kill or in killing each other. Putting on one side a small number of half-crazed militarists, there are none to-day in the civilized world who hold that war in itself is a benefit. At most they say it is a disagreeable necessity, and the preparation for it a necessary precaution against the other fellow. No one wants to go to war, but everyone is getting ready for it, and we are all so ashamed of it that when it does occur we each blame the other for commencing it. We have reached the point when the civilized mind is ashamed of war—when it is not actually in being—but we have with us those heritages from the past which surround war with a tinselled glory and a fictitious greatness. The better part of our nature, the more civilized part of our intelligence cries out against the existence of the monstrous figure of the soldier trampling down so much that civilization has slowly built up, but the cry of battle, the denunciation of the tribal outsider, the fact of war reawakens those primitive instincts and feelings which exist with all and which require so little to rouse them to activity. Whatever use war may have had in the course of social evolution it has none to-day. It is kept in being because of the state of fear in which the armed nations of the world exist, and because of those traditions and institutions that have been bequeathed us by the dead. It is part of the training given in the university of death.

* * *

The Ghost Behind the Judge.

In another part of this issue of the *Freethinker* we call the attention of our readers to a renewed attempt to enforce the scandalous and stupidly vindictive blasphemy laws. If ever there was an example of permitting the dead to rule the living it is here. Early in this year when the same defendant was being tried for the same offence before Mr. Justice Salter, the judge calmly informed the jury that the object of the blasphemy laws was to prevent a breach of the peace. The statement was either a woeful exhibition of ignorance or it was deliberately untrue. The object of the blasphemy laws is nothing of the kind. These laws have their origin in the fact that with primitive humanity it is believed that to offend the gods is to endanger the tribe. We see this idea running right through the Old and New Testaments, we see it in Church teaching, we see it also in the ignorant chatter of men like the Bishop of London, who so calmly informs us that certain ills are sent to us, as a nation, because some of us have fallen away from God. There is no other genuine basis for the law against blasphemy except that of protecting society against the anger of God because he is annoyed with the unbeliever. And imagine the character of a deity who is so contemptible as to punish the whole of society because some person does not believe he exists! It is

not the judge who sentences a man to imprisonment, it is not the present day legislator who frames a blasphemy law. The real maker and administrator of these laws is the savage cowering in his hut in ignorant terror of the gods that his own fear-stricken imagination has conjured into existence. We simply permit the dead to rule us, to paralyse our thinking, to turn us out graduates of the university of death, ready to fix round the limbs of the living the shackles forged by the dead.

* * *

A Day of the Dead.

Who is it decrees that we shall not open our places of amusement or instruction on one day out of seven? It is not the living man or woman. They, at best, are only the representatives of others, even though they may feel they are moved by their own initiative. They are unconscious graduates of the university of death. Centuries ago the ancients believed there were only seven planets, and to each one of these they gave a specific influence. To the planet Saturn they gave a malign influence that covered with disaster anything that was done on his day. People did not work on that day, neither did they play. All that could be done with safety was to praise the god whose evil influence was paramount. And in course of time, when the Christian Church—which almost invariably touched everything for the worse—combined the day of the Sun with the "Sabbath" of Saturn, the gloom of the day of Saturn became one of the characteristics of the "Day of Rest." So, again, it is not the living who say that one day out of seven we shall not do that which is quite legitimate and proper on other days. It is the ghost of these dead and gone Chaldeans who speak through them and who stand at the doors of our institutions and forbid entrance. And because we are foolish enough to train thousands of men in the University of Death we remain under the dominance of the cult of the dead, judging our necessities from their point of view instead of from that of our own needs and our own well-being.

* * *

The Rule of the Dead.

The whole field of our religious and social life illustrates the fact that we are all trained, more or less, in the University of Death. What is there behind the dress of the modern priest but the paint and feathers of the dead medicine-man? What, behind the incense that rises in the cathedral, but the smoke of the primitive sacrifice? When the Christian takes the sacrament, which by the magic of the priest has become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, what is he doing but carrying on the practice of his dead ancestor who killed and eat the god so that he might in this way absorb some of his qualities. And when we take our own children, and before they are able to defend themselves from us, cram into their minds these doctrines and beliefs which have come straight down to us from the brain of the savage, what are we doing, then, but forcing them through a veritable university of death where the real teachers, the only effective ones, are dead men? We enthrone corpses, gibber before ghosts, and then complain that our civilization is no better than it is. All over the world men cringe and cower before kings and institutions and Churches that owe their entire strength to the fact that they are incarnations of the past. The dead make our laws, they dictate our customs, they decree how we shall spend our lives. And we who talk so much of freedom have not the wit or the courage to shake off this rule of the dead, but give some of our best efforts toward seeing that nothing is done to disturb their domination. And yet it is not the past that calls for our consideration, but the present, and, still more, the future. For the past is dead and cannot be re-

called. Even the present is fleeting, gone before we have scarce the time to grasp it. It is the future, immediate and remote, that has its great call upon us, and it is this that we are sacrificing in our devotion to the cult of death. One day we shall, perhaps, learn that lesson, and when we do learn it, it will mean the disappearance of a thousand and one shams and superstitions. The University of Death is a magnificent phrase. It expresses one of the most pregnant of social facts, and I thank the writer, whoever he may be, for having coined it. CHAPMAN COHEN.

Religious Revivals.

THE so-called servants of Christ were never more actively loyal to their Master than they are just now. They publish books and pamphlets, deliver eloquent sermons and addresses, and come into personal contact with all sorts and conditions of people, in the hope of exalting the Saviour and winning converts to his faith. One of the chief obstacles to the success of their work is the kaleidoscopic character of theology. Scarcely any two divines are agreed as to the nature of the person of Jesus Christ. For some he is "perfect God and perfect man; of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." For others, he is a man only, but Divinely appointed to be God's revealer to the world. The orthodox firmly believe that he still lives and is present in the hearts of his people. Many Unitarians, on the other hand, look upon him as dead, and are able to adopt Matthew Arnold's touching words:—

Far hence he lies,
In the lorn Syrian town,
And on his grave with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

In consequence of this endless diversity of views as to Christ's person, we have a great many different versions of Christianity. Bishop Gore, who is a Catholic, and the Dean of Carlisle, a thoroughgoing Modernist, are as wide asunder as the poles in their conception of the Christian religion. Naturally, this seriously militates against the success of all kinds of Christian work. The man in the street is obviously bewildered and befogged by the numerous differences and divisions among Christian people; and a revival is predicted in vain. Though it does not come, revival is always spoken of as on the eve of arrival. Nearly fifteen years ago Dr. F. B. Meyer, speaking at Newcastle-on-Tyne, assured us that in a few months the whole country would be aflame with heavenly zeal and devotion, when the fishers of men would have their nets bursting with immortal souls crying out for salvation. That brilliant prophecy has remained unfulfilled to this day. The Rev. Hubert Brook, M.A., writing in the *Christian World* for November 24, informs us that "the watchmen are out on the ramparts and that as they look down at the Free Church shrines of village, town, and city, they tell us that the lamps of faith are burning with an intenser glow." He says:—

It is well-known that Dr. J. D. Jones is prominent among the watchmen, and on all hands he sees signs of the coming revival. Other observers tell the same story. Some prophesy a speedy stirring of the dry bones because they and all the saints desire it; others because their cyclical view of history leads them to expect that a period of stagnation will be followed by an outburst of spiritual enthusiasm. And all Christians must desire the new revival because without increased spiritual vitality, canalized into all the haunts of men, civilization can hardly recover its balance, and humanity cannot fulfil its high destiny.

From the Christian point of view that extract is perfectly true; but the Christian point of view is fundamentally false. Supernatural religion has never

done anything towards helping humanity to fulfil its high destiny in the world. Speaking generally, it has done the direct opposite. Countless number of times it has set mankind by the ears, and it is doing so to-day even within the Church itself. In a London Missionary Society advertisement we are told in capital letters that "one touch of Jesus makes the whole world kin"; but history flatly contradicts the statement.

Mr. Brook has recently devoted some months to visiting Congregational churches ranging from Hereford to Edinburgh, preaching in many of them, and listening to the preaching of his brethren in others. As an outcome of that experience he bears testimony to two facts. The first is that everywhere he found an intense longing for a new revival. Deacons and church members, as well as the ministers, are passionately praying and diligently working for its speedy advent. To Mr. Brook, of course, this is delightfully encouraging, though it does not seem to occur to him as passing strange that it should be necessary to pray and work for a revival of God's own work in the world. Why must he be repeatedly asked, coaxed, wheedled, cajoled to do what he exists for the sole purpose of doing? Doubtless Dr. Meyer has been earnestly praying for a revival ever since he prophesied that it was already knocking at the door, and would be upon up almost immediately, and it is equally certain that Dr. J. D. Jones and his confreres are similarly engaged. The astounding fact is that there should be the need to adopt such a course. Mr. Brook's second testimony is as follows:—

With all this (praying and toiling), however, I see few signs that any exceptional tidal wave is breaking, or is about to break, on the shores of our Free Church life. So far as one can see, the rushing mighty wind is not rising, and there is little sign that extraordinary billows of the spiritual sea are about to roll the world's lost boats into the spiritual harbours.

Such is the honest witness of a man who has had special opportunities to ascertain the truth. Evidently, Mr. Brook does not realize what his two testimonies signify. On the one hand, all the leaders of the Free Churches are confidently bombarding heaven in order to get a revival down, and everywhere they see signs of its coming. Mr. Brook is also a watchman, who has been on the ramparts for months, but as he looks down at the Free Church shrines of village, town, and city, he fails to discern the signs claimed to be visible to his brethren; and surely, as it appears to unbiased outsiders, Mr. Brook is right, though his being right may be used as an argument against the truth of his case. Let us see how he puts it. In the absence of any signs of the coming revival he ingeniously says:—

What then? Here is no cause for pessimism. The worst about a sudden tidal wave is that it smashes as well as saves. If a boat bearing many passengers were outside the bar, it would be far better for it to reach the safety of the harbour by quiet, ordinary rowing, than to be suddenly lifted up by a resistless wave, and dashed over the bar on to the shore. So with revivals. The best revivalist is the average preacher and pastor who, by his character, sincerity, preaching passion, and pastoral attention, quietly rows his beloved people into the harbour.

Now a revival, whether engineered by men who set themselves specially apart for that work, or by the ordinary pastor and his assistants, is distinctly a human product, brought about by purely human means. The peculiarity about it, however, is that it is regarded by all directly concerned in it as a Divine work. Those who conduct it proudly call themselves God's instruments. They say that in his unfathomable wisdom, God has seen fit, for reasons known to himself alone, to do his work through them. We cannot see any trace whatever of any wisdom in such an arrangement. To us it seems wholly incredible that

the Father of the race, whose very being is said to be love, and who has omnipotence at his command, should have chosen to have his work attempted by such shockingly poor, inefficient instruments. Upon the population at large they make no impression whatever. The masses are utterly untouched by them, with the result that God's work, so-called, is scandalously left undone. Surely, if God existed he would instantly dismiss his instruments and do the work himself. Can you fancy a God of love allowing the bulk of his children to go down to hell-fire simply because his instruments are completely incapable of persuading them to accept salvation? Is it not the recognition of this glaring incongruity that largely accounts for the rapidly growing number of Atheists in the world? It is perfectly amazing that clergymen can have the audacity to treat *their* work, so imperfectly, inefficiently, and often so bunglingly done, as God's.

In the same issue of the *Christian World* as contains Mr. Brook's article, Mr. J. Penne calls attention to a most important point in the following passage:—

"Don't you think, Cooke," said Robinson, "that you parsons are over-doing 'the world is very evil' stunt? Isn't there a danger of 'bearing' your market? If the poor old world is as black as you paint it, what have the Churches been doing, and what are they good for? Have you discovered, after nineteen hundred years, that faith has worked itself out, and is no longer leavening the lump?"

Robinson is a church member, and Cooke his minister. Robinson's point is that the Church is a failure, not because Christianity is not true, but because the pulpit is filled by kill-joys, who do not know what it is to be buoyant and joyous, and there is some ground for the observation; but the truth is that no amount of cheerfulness in the pulpit would enable it to triumph. What it lacks is knowledge, more than cheerfulness; appreciation of man's true nature and needs, not optimistic faith in God. What kills its power is its claim to be and do what it has never really been and done. What it needs is not revival but transformation; not a new lease of life on the old terms, but an entire change of heart and character, an unqualified abandonment of all supernatural claims, and the adoption of Humanism as its only Gospel. Modernism is a movement, however slight and slow, in the right direction.

J. T. LLOYD.

Corybantic Christianity.

The Salvation Army beats the big drum till it sounds like a German invasion. But it turns out to be only the awkward squad on a beanfeast. —G. W. Foote.

THE first Salvation Army, according to legend, was not a conspicuous success. It is said to have been "sold up," including its managing director, for thirty pieces of silver. Two thousand years later another Salvation Army was started by William Booth which proved so successful that it celebrated its jubilee amid the plaudits of the Press and the blessings of distinguished members of the Royal Family. At the jubilee celebrations much stress was laid on the social rather than the religious work of the Salvation Army. The Royal congratulations were fulsome, if not hysterical. King George referred to the Salvation Army's "mighty achievements," and of its "works of love and mercy"; whilst his Royal and Gracious Mamma dwelt on "the great and beneficent work for mankind" initiated by General Booth the First. The "glorious free press" of England, which is the meanest and most contemptible in the world, took up the Royal refrain, and columns of the most colossal silliness appeared in print concerning the Salvation Army and its so-called philanthropic work.

The plain, blunt truth is that the Salvation Army is the most reactionary religious body, save the Roman Catholic Church, in England. General Booth's trademark, "Blood and Fire," proves it beyond all dispute. It is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." In a country pretending to culture and civilization, the motto should be sufficient to make the bronze lions in Trafalgar Square roar in indignation. It means that all must wash in the blood of Christ or fall into the fire of everlasting hell. It may be Christian teaching; it may even be the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus; but most certainly it is not "great and beneficent work for mankind," as some titled and distinguished folk aver.

The value of the social work of the Salvation Army is exaggerated out of all proportion. Salvationists have all to be teetotallers? What real effect has that on the country's consumption of alcohol? Salvationists have all to be abstainers from tobacco. The sale of tobacco and cigarettes was never so great as during the past few years. As for the alleged restoration of tens of thousands of women and girls from lives of vice, it has not affected the condition of our towns, or the statistics of prostitution. Royal persons, and the sycophantic press-gang, may bless the Salvation Army "shelters" and the "beneficent work" at Hadleigh Farm Colony, but what have Trade Unionists to say about these matters? There is no "charity," Christian or otherwise, in the business-like Emigration Department of the Salvation Army. The emigrants pay their fares and the Army officials take an emigration agency's usual commission from the railway and shipping companies. The so-called "Suicide Bureau" of the Salvation Army is almost as farcical as the delightful "Suicide Club" described by Stevenson. It is supposed to have saved thousands from self-murder, but it does not appear to have affected in any way the statistics concerning suicide.

Flamboyant journalists claim that the Salvation Army took religion into the slums. Just so! And the slums are no better for it. Indeed, the whole country is seething with industrial unrest. Working men and women are no longer to be cajoled into giving other people money in order to fight an imaginary Devil. They are going to fight the greedy, and probably Christian, landlords, slum-owners, and profiteers. They have been lulled long enough with the lullaby that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." They have discovered that, in England, the earth belongs to the members of the House of Lords, a distinction with a big difference.

People have been hypnotized by the big drums, trumpets, and tambourines of the Salvation Army. Look at the figures concerning converts in any issue of the *War Cry*, and then add them together from the time this pious periodical first added to the gaiety of the nation, and disputed with *Punch* the position of a comic paper. The grand total amounts to millions, showing that the whole population has been converted to Christ. Despite the testimonials from Buckingham Palace, the thing is a silly jest.

It is a bad joke also for the Salvation Army to confine its energies to the working-classes. If its officials are really interested in social problems, let them go to Park Lane and the West-end of London, and tell the idle folk there that it is immoral to draw rent from slum property. Let them go to the colliery and railway magnates and tell them that men are exposed to death and mutilation in order to pay royalties and dividends to shareholders. Let them tell their Royal patrons that it is immoral that women should sew fashionable garments for sixpence each, and that little children should be half-starved and ragged. Two millions of men and women to-day are unable to find work to do, and are living from hand to mouth in the

richest country in the world. Endless repetitions of the "old, old story of Jesus and his love" will not help men and women in these serious times. England will never be civilized, in the true sense of the word, while it has a Christian majority. Nor will matters be improved whilst Royal persons and General Booth the Second stand in silent adoration before the highly-coloured lithograph of a Saviour who never lived.

MIMNERMUS.

A Terrible Superstition.

III.

(Concluded from page 763.)

Once in the clutches of the witch-hunters, the unfortunate victim was confronted by a series of dilemmas from which few escaped. A favourite beginning was to ask whether he believed in witchcraft. If he said "Yes," he evidently knew more of the subject; if "No," he was *ipso facto* a heretic and slanderer of the inquisition; if in confusion he tried to distinguish, he was *varius in confessionibus*, and a fit subject for immediate torture. If he confessed under torture, the matter was, of course, settled; if he endured manfully, it was evident that the devil must be aiding him. If a mark could be found on his body which was insensible and did not bleed when pricked, it was the devil's seal and a sure sign of guilt; but if there was none, his case was no better, for it was held that the devil only marked those whose fidelity he doubted, so that a suspected person who had no such mark was in all probability a specially eminent sorcerer. —E. T. Withington, "Dr. Weyer and the Witch Mania." Contributed to "*Studies in the History and Method of Science*." Edited by Charles Singer, 1917, p. 207.

CONSIDERING the methods of the witch-hunters, says Mr. Withington,—

It is thus not difficult to understand how, in the diocese of Como, witches were burnt for many years at an average rate of one hundred per annum; how in that of Strasburg 5,000 were burnt in twenty years, 1615-35; how in the small diocese of Neisse 1,000 suffered between 1640-50, inasmuch that they gave up the stake and pile as being too costly, and roasted them in a specially prepared oven; and how the Protestant jurist Benedict Carpzov could boast not only of having read the Bible through fifty-three times, but also of having passed 20,000 death sentences, chiefly on witches and sorcerers.

One of his victims, Dr. Viet Pratzel, for producing twenty mice by sleight of hand, was denounced, tortured, and burnt as a sorcerer, while his children were bled to death in a warm bath, lest they should acquire similar diabolical powers.

A similar unhappy fate befell the servant of a travelling dentist at Schwersenz in Poland, who left his assistant in the town to attract attention by conjuring tricks, while he went round the villages.

On his return next evening, he was horrified to see the body of the unfortunate man hanging on the town gallows, and was told on inquiry that he was an evident sorcerer who had made eggs, birds, and plants before everybody in the market-place. He had therefore been arrested, scourged, put on the rack, and otherwise tortured till he confessed he was in league with the devil. Whereupon the town council, "out of special grace and to save expense," had, instead of burning him, mercifully condemned him to be hanged. The dentist fled in terror to Breslau.¹

No one was safe from accusation, rich and poor, young and old were all liable, and all suffered. If the accused wished for legal defence he was not allowed to choose his defender, his advocate was chosen for him by the inquisitors, his judges! The advocate being warned that if he be found to be a protector of heretics, or a hinderer of the inquisition, he will render himself liable to prosecution. Under these

¹ *Studies in the History of Science*, pp. 205-6.

circumstances it is not surprising to find that very few cases were defended by an advocate.

Some of those who voluntarily confessed were certainly insane, or subject to hallucinations; although Mr. Withington says they seem to be fewer than we might have expected, although some people then, as now, suffered from the idea of being persecuted by unknown enemies, and the idea of being bewitched corresponded to the modern dread of some people of detectives, electric batteries, and telephones. Mr. Withington, however, gives one case of this kind. John Kuno Meisenbein, a youth of eighteen studying at the High School in Treves, voluntarily confessed to the authorities that his mother, brother, sister, and self were all in league with the devil. The mother, a woman of good position, escaped to Cologne, the son and daughter were arrested, strangled and burnt. John Kuno thereupon urged the judges to use all means to capture his mother, "that by punishment and momentary death in this world she might escape eternal damnation." Moved by this petition, which they described as "most creditable and merciful," the authorities at Cologne were communicated with and the unhappy woman arrested. She protested her innocence, "but when more severe tortures were employed," she made the usual admissions and was burnt alive, October 20, 1590. As a reward for his filial piety and repentance, they offered to behead John Kuno, but he protested that he was unworthy of such a favour, and was, therefore, strangled and burnt as usual. "He had a most edifying end," says the Bishop.

A man's wife and family were lawful witnesses against, but not for, the accused. Criminals and perjurers were allowed to give evidence if they showed zeal for the faith. Delation was not only encouraged but enforced; in some places boxes were put in the churches, into which an anonymous denunciation of his neighbour might be dropped.

If a confession could not be extracted by torture, which seldom failed, then the accused might still be condemned if the evidence was strong enough, or he might be kept in prison for months or years, when the *squalor carceris* may induce him to confess his crimes. What was meant by the *squalor carceris*, says Mr. Withington, may be seen from the following description by an eye-witness, Pretorius:—

Some [of the dungeons] are holes like cellars or wells, fifteen to thirty fathoms (?) deep with openings above, through which they let down the prisoners with ropes and draw them up when they will. Such prisons I have seen myself. Some sit in great cold, so that their feet are frost bitten or frozen off, and afterwards, if they escape, they are crippled for life. Some lie in continual darkness, so that they never see a ray of sunlight, and know not whether it be night or day. All of them have their limbs confined so that they can hardly move, and are in continual unrest, far more filthy and wretched than cattle. They are badly fed, cannot sleep in peace, have much anxiety, heavy thoughts, bad dreams. And since they cannot move hands or feet, they are plagued and bitten by lice, rats, and other vermin, besides being daily abused and threatened by gaolers and executioners. And since all this sometimes lasts months or years, such persons, though at first they be courageous, rational, strong, and patient, at length became weak, timid, hopeless, and if not quite, at least half idiotic and desperate. Yet all this was not considered torture, and if some poor wretch, after a year of it, went mad, or preferred a quick death to a slow one, her confession was described as being "entirely voluntary and without torture."²

As to the number of victims, says Mr. Withington, even sober historians, such as Soldan, speak of

millions, but even if we take the low estimate of three-quarters of a million, it will give a rate of ten executions daily for the two centuries 1500-1700; lists of many of these executions are still preserved. "At Würzburg the prince-bishop, Philip of Ehrenberg, is said to have burnt 900 in five years (1627-31), and we have lists of twenty-nine of the burnings, almost all of which include young children." Here are two of them:—

In the thirteenth burning, four persons: the old court smith, an old woman, a little girl of nine or ten years, a younger girl, her sister.

In the twentieth, six persons: Babelin Goebal, the prettiest girl in Würzburg; a student in the fifth form who knew many languages and was an excellent musician, instrumental and vocal; two boys from the new minster, twelve years old; Babel Stepper's daughter; the caretaker on the bridge.³

Some of them, we learn, before being burnt were "torn with red-hot pincers." At Nördlingen, says Mr. Withington,—

they had a special set of torture instruments which the Protestant town council lent to neighbouring district authorities, with the pious observation that "by these means, and more especially by the thumb-screw, God has often been graciously pleased to reveal the truth, if not at first, at any rate at last." (p. 213.)

It has been much disputed as to whether men or women are most sensitive to pain. Judging from appearances, the more muscular and firmer body of man would seem better adapted for bearing pain than the more soft and yielding flesh of women. Such, however, is not the case, and the records of these tortures seem to put the matter definitely beyond dispute. Mr. Withington says: "Men rarely held out long, but, did space permit, we might tell stories of many heroic women who endured ten, twenty, even fifty repetitions of torture, till they died on the rack or in the dungeon rather than falsely accuse themselves or their neighbours."⁴

If, as we are assured, every hair of our head is numbered, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without the regard of our heavenly father, why did not this heavenly father intervene on behalf of these innocent victims? Can anyone pretend that John Junius had done anything to deserve his agonizing tortures and terrible death? He was universally loved and honoured by his fellow citizens; the very friends who, under torture, denounced him, begged his pardon. "They said," he tells us, "they knew nothing of me but what was good and loving." Did the pretty girl student of Würzburg deserve her dreadful fate? Or the little children of nine to twelve years of age? What sort of a heavenly father is that who could look on unmoved at these unspeakable horrors for hundreds of years. If such a being exists he was either powerless to prevent these atrocities, or else he approved of them. In either case, what is the use of appealing to this helpless or malignant person for help when he denied it to these poor people in their extremity? If the devil governed the world his conduct would be quite in accord with this desertion of the helpless innocent.

We may congratulate ourselves that there is little to fear, in this age of science, from a revival of this superstition. We wish we were sure of this. We may live in an age of science, but the science is at present confined to a select minority. That is why the Spiritualist revival has made such headway. The Spiritualists have even gone back to a belief in fairies, and produce photographs of them. They appeal to the Bible account of the Witch of Endor who sum-

² *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 212

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

moned to her presence the disembodied spirits of the mighty dead, and if we are to believe that the Witch of Endor possessed this power, why should we deny this power to similar practitioners to-day, working in collusion as of old with the spirit of evil. Who shall say that it is impossible for some fanatical magnetic personality, another Evan Roberts, embued with this conviction, to revive this belief among the unscientific masses?

Sir James Frazer, the famous anthropologist, tells us that the researches carried out by folk-lorists among the less educated masses of Europe—

have revealed the astonishing, nay, alarming truth that a mass, if not a majority, of people in every civilized country is still living in a state of intellectual savagery, that, in fact, the smooth surface of cultured society is sapped and mined by superstition. Only those whose studies have led them to investigate the subject are aware of the depth to which the ground beneath our feet is thus honeycombed by unseen forces. We appear to be standing on a volcano which may at any moment break out in smoke and fire to spread ruin and devastation among the gardens and palaces of ancient culture wrought so laboriously by the hands of many generations (*Psyche's Task*, p. 170).

Sir Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge, who are so sedulously pushing the claims of Spiritualism, are under a heavy responsibility in this matter. Let them beware lest they pull the trigger to explode these underground forces.

W. MANN.

Pages From Voltaire.

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

Of three kinds of Government and a thousand ancient errors.

B.—Now let us come to the matter in hand. I must confess that a democratic form of government agrees with me well enough. I find that philosopher¹ in the wrong, who said to one who favoured a popular government: "Begin by applying the scheme to your own house, and you will soon repent." With his permission, a house and a city are two very different things. My house is mine; my children are mine; but by what right do my fellow-citizens belong to me? All those who have possessions in the same territory are equally entitled to maintain order in that territory. I am pleased when I see freemen themselves make the laws under which they live, as they have built the houses in which they live. It is a pleasure to me to see my mason, my carpenter, my blacksmith, who have helped me to build my dwelling, raise themselves above their business, and become better acquainted with the public interest, than the most insolent *giaour*² of Turkey. No labourer or artisan in a democracy needs fear vexation and contempt. No one is in the situation of the hatter who presented a request to a duke to be paid for his goods: "Have you had nothing at all on account, my good fellow?—I beg pardon, your grace, I received a cuff on the ear from your agent."

It is very agreeable not to be carried off to prison for being unable to pay to a man we know not a tax, the value, cause, and even existence of which are doubtful.

To be free, to have none but equals, is the true, the natural life of man. Every other is an unworthy artifice, a bad comedy, in which one man plays the part of master, another of slave, another parasite, and

another pimp. You must grant that men cannot drop below their natural state except by baseness and folly.

C.—That is obvious enough; for no one loses his liberty save him who does not know how to preserve it. There are two ways of losing it; the one is when fools are deceived by artful knaves, the other when the weak are subjugated by the strong. People tell you about certain conquerors, who when they subdued a nation, deprived every one of the vanquished of an eye. But there are people whose eyes are both put out like the old horses used to turn a mill. I wish to keep my eyes. I take it that the aristocratic state puts out one, but the monarchic two.

A.—You talk like a North Hollander, and I forgive you.

C.—For my part I prefer an aristocracy; the populace is unfit to govern. I cannot allow my wig-maker to be a legislator; I would rather go without a wig. Those only who have had a very good education are fitted to direct those who have had none. The Venetian government is the best and most ancient aristocracy in Europe. Next to it I would place the government of Germany.³ Let me be a Venetian noble or an Imperial count. I assure you I cannot live with real pleasure save upon one or other of these conditions.

A.—You are a wealthy aristocrat Mr. C., and I very much approve your way of thinking. I take it that you would be for the Turkish government if you were emperor of Constantinople. For my part, although I am only a member of the English parliament, I look upon my constitution as the best of any, and I shall quote in my support an indisputable witness, that of a Frenchman who, in a poem consecrated to truth and not to vain fictions, speaks thus of our government:—

Aux murs de Westminster on voit paraître ensemble
Trois pouvoirs étonnés du noeud qui les rassemble,
Les députés du peuple, et les grands, et le roi,
Divisés d'intérêt, réunis par la loi;
Tous trois membres sacrés de ce corps invincible,
Dangereux à lui-même, à ses voisins terrible.⁴

C.—*Dangereux à lui-même!* You have, then, very great abuses among you?

A.—Without doubt; abuses similar to those that happened to the Romans, to the Athenians, and always will happen among mankind. The height of human perfection is to have power and happiness with enormous abuses. It is dangerous to eat too much; nevertheless I would have my table plentifully and richly served.

B.—Shall we have the pleasure of minutely examining the governments of the earth, from the Chinese emperor Hiao, and the Hebrew nomads, down to the latest dissensions of Ragusa and Geneva?

A.—Heaven forbid! It would be as foolish as trying to balance my own accounts by examining the books of someone else. Many people who have been unable to rule a servant or a valet have tried to rule the universe with their pens. Would you have us waste our time by reading together the book of *Politics drawn from Holy Writ*, written by the Bishop of Meaux?⁵ How pleasing must be the politics of a wretched people who were sanguinary, though not warlike, usurers without commerce, robbers without the courage to keep their spoils, ever slaves and ever

¹ The monarchy of Frederick the Great.

² Voltaire, *Henriade*, Chant I., 313-318.

³ "In the English Parliament we behold working together three powers amazed at the bond by which they are united. The Commons, the Lords and the King, although divided by interests, are made one by the laws. They are the three sacred members of an unconquerable body. They are dangerous to themselves, but terrible to their neighbours."

⁴ Bossuet (Jacques-Bénigne), 1627-1704. He was for ten years tutor to the heir apparent to the French throne. Among other works he wrote *La Politique tirée de l'Écriture Sainte* for the instruction of this prince. His efforts, however, were rendered useless by the apathy and stubbornness of his pupil.

¹ Lycurgus.

² A Turkish officer.

in revolt, sold at market by Titus and by Adrian, like the animal they called unclean, but which was nevertheless more useful than they. I abandon to the declaimer Bossuet the politics of the petty rulers of Judah and Samaria; who were skilled only in assassination; beginning with David, who having taken up the trade of robber in order to become a king, assassinated Uriah as soon as he became master; and passing to Solomon the wise, who began his reign by assassinating his brother Adonijah at the foot of the altar. I am disgusted with the absurd pedantry which can consecrate the history of such a people to the instruction of youth.

I am not less disgusted with those books which repeat the fables of Herodotus and such writers concerning the ancient monarchies of Asia and the republics which have long since disappeared.

When they tell us that one Dido, alleged sister to Pygmalion (which are not Phœnician names), fled from Phœnicia to purchase as much land as could be contained in an ox's skin, and that by cutting this skin into strips she enclosed with them an immense territory within which she founded Carthage; when one after another of these romancing historians tell us about the oracles of Apollo accomplished, the ring of Gyges, the Ears of Smerdis, and the horse of Darius that made his master king of Persia; when they enlarge on the laws of Charondus; when they tell us that the tiny city of Sybaris sent three hundred thousand men into the field against the little town of Crotona which could arm no more than one hundred thousand men, we cannot help but put these stories in the same class with the wolf of Romulus and Remus, the Trojan horse and Jonah's whale.⁶

Let us, then, put on one side all the fictitious ancient history, and in respect to the modern, let each of us try to benefit by the errors of his own country and those of his neighbours; and the lesson will be long enough. But let us also note all the noble institutions of our modern nations, and that lesson also will be a long one.

B.—And what will it teach us?

A.—That life is the more supportable in proportion as all the laws of convention approximate to the laws of nature.

C.—Let us see, then, if you are right.

Englised by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Acid Drops.

Lecturing at St. Paul's Covent Garden, Dean Inge said that it is only true within certain limits that a clergyman is paid to say certain things and that if he cannot honestly say these things he should seek some other profession. But:—

we clergy are not cheapjacks paid to sell certain wares whatever we may think about the value of them. We are not hired advocates whose business it is to speak to our brief whether we believe in the righteousness of our cause or not. What would have been the result if all expression of free thought had been crushed out of the Church? The Church would now be committed to the belief that the sun goes round the earth; that heaven is a place over our heads which we might reach in an aeroplane if we knew the way; that hell is a place under our feet, and that, as the mediæval theologians suggested, volcanic eruptions are caused by overcrowding in the infernal regions. We should be committed to the belief that the world was created 6,000 years ago, and to many other things which no educated people can or do believe. I say quite deliberately that if all liberalism and all free thought had been crushed out of the Church there would be no room in the ministry except for fools, liars, and bigots.

⁶ Voltaire often mentions this *Whale*. But we are not told the name of the big fish that swallowed the little (or minor) prophet. (*Jonas*, II., 1. *Matthew* xii. 40.)

We do not at all understand what Dean Inge means when he says that the clergy are not hired advocates. Their creed is settled for them, and they promise to teach certain things on their ordination. If they believe these things no one can have any reasonable objection to their teaching them. But the open truth is that large numbers of the clergy no longer believe many of the articles of their faith, and while some say so, and still draw their salaries, others do not say so, and still preach them. And the ordinary person notices these things and draws the inevitable conclusion as to their intellectual honesty.

The rest of Dean Inge's statement is either fallacy or dishonesty. The Church did try as hard as it could to crush Freethinking, both inside and outside. Naturally, it did not quite succeed inside, and it met with still less success outside. In every organization, no matter how rigid, there is bound to be a certain movement of mind that will result in some questioning of accepted teaching. Not even the Roman Church could prevent that. And outside the Church the movement is likely to be more strenuous still. And in the course of time these two movements are certain to have an effect in forcing a modification of Church teaching. That is what has actually occurred. The Church, after fighting against heresy after heresy, has been forced to adopt it. But to pretend that because a heresy has arisen within the Church, and in the course of time the Church has been compelled to teach it, therefore, there is Freethought within the Church, is a fallacy so gross as to be quite unworthy of Dean Inge. Really, the people are not all fools, and one can only attribute the Dean's apparent assumption that they are to his continued acquaintance with Church congregations. If men like Dean Inge would engage in controversy with some really able non-Christian instead of confining their battling to those who already believe, the change of antagonist would have quite an educative effect. Perhaps Dean Inge would answer a straightforward question and tell us when and where any Christian Church has ever encouraged and initiated freedom of thinking in relation to religion.

Lady Angela Forbes, in her *Memories and Base Details*, has some caustic things to say concerning the Young Men's Christian Association's war work in France. She says: "What the Y.M.C.A. lacked in business capacity they did not even possess in Christian charity; and further proof of their antagonism was shown when a baker in the town told me that they had threatened to withdraw their patronage if he continued to supply me with bread." This is a delightful comment on the boasted liberality (in advertisements) of the Y.M.C.A.

National Opinion is a monthly publication whose aim seems to be to strengthen as far as possible God-and-king ideas in this country. The November issue contains a long article headed "Blasphemy," which denounces the Socialist Sunday-schools and points out the large part which anti-religious influences played in bringing about the revolution in Russia, Germany and Austria. It warns the public, very seriously—such warnings always are very serious—that similar influences are at work here.

Freethinkers have no need to shrink from looking these admonitions full in the face. It is the Christian who might, if he had any feeling of humanity in his breast, shudder at what organized religion had effected in those three countries in "the good old days." The Russian peasant, it is quite true, was the unspoiled child of religion. He couldn't read or write. But that was rather an advantage, the school would spoil him, unsettle his faith. He crossed himself every time he passed a church, bowed to the wayside shrines, and carried the little ikon round his neck. It was so touching, this picture of Holy Russia! It was the Russia of the Tzar and the Grand Duke Sergius and Rasputin, of Siberia and the knout. And Germany? Here, even the more fair-minded among the orthodox admit the marked change in the direction

of mental freedom since the disappearance of the old regime and the pressure of church and monarchy. A writer in the *Guardian* recently declared that the general atmosphere of freedom in the German schools now contrasts noticeably with the restraint of pre-war days. A recent visitor, giving his views in the *British Weekly* (November 3), says that the removal of the old restrictions has had very practical effects on the national mind. "I was particularly struck by the Republican police in their green uniforms, very different in type from the old *Schutzmann*." It was "the old *Schutzmann*" who wielded the powers organized by Church and State, and who earned for the fatherland the appellation "police-state." He instituted blasphemy proceedings against men like Clemen Taesker for saying in plain German what was said every day at the universities in academic German. As for Austria, she was regarded by many of the faithful as the brightest jewel in the Pope's tiara. We should like to know how many, even of the flock, among the Czechs and Croats and Italians of the Trentino, would like to see a restoration of the Dual Monarchy under the ultra-pious Habsburgs.

The late A. J. Harrison, of the Christian Evidence Society, in January, 1872 engaged in a two nights' debate with Bradlaugh on "What does Christian Theism teach?" Looking back over the verbatim report of such discussions of the time, one is impressed by the contrast between the attitude to the "inspired" record then and now. Mr. Harrison quoted copiously from the early books of the Old Testament, apparently accepting the whole story, including the special creation of man, as a revelation from God. How many men to-day of similar standing as scholars would do so? Yet our Christian Evidence infidel-slayers assure us that their work during the past half century has materially weakened the Free-thought cause. If anything should make an open-minded man or woman disgusted with the Christian religion and the "principles" which it breeds, it is a perusal of the Christian apologetics—often produced under the stimulus of substantial reward—of the past century and a half.

A writer in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, referring to the death of Dr. A. J. Harrison, says it was a splendid tonic for doubters to hear Dr. Harrison speak on unbelief. Well, we remember hearing Dr. Harrison in South Shields some twenty-five years ago, and while we went expecting to hear a man of real ability, we came away with a very different impression. He struck us as a man who had dipped into philosophic writings rather than studied, and to have but the flimsiest of grasp of really important questions of science. We remember saying at the time to a friend that both Bradlaugh and Foote must have had a very easy job. No doubt many of his religious followers thought him a great man, but then it takes very little to satisfy the ordinary religious crowd in this respect. And after all it was because Dr. Harrison met Bradlaugh and Foote that he is noticed to-day. It is the *Freethinker* that has given the Christian whatever immortality he has achieved.

The secretary of the Manchester City Football Club, Mr. J. E. Mamgall, says that eighty or ninety per cent. of the offences of bad language dealt with by the Lancashire Football Association are from Sunday-school Leagues, members of which must belong to some Sunday-school. The Association has dealt with between six and seven hundred cases this season. Now we wonder what some of our Christian friends will say to this? Those who know and understand the influence of Sunday-schools will not be at all surprised. But the others!

A Mr. R. G. Burton, of Manchester, lecturing for some Bible Association at Westhoughton, declared the Bible fixes the end of the present era at 1925 and after that no one will die. We are not overjoyed at the news—particularly when one bears in mind that, unless something happens between now and 1925 Mr. Burton will live for ever. And that is not the most cheerful of prospects.

We understand that Mr. Burton is in other respects quite sane.

We congratulate the ex-emperor Karl on the very good business outcome of his attempt to stir up trouble in his native state. He has been escorted to Madeira with all honour on a British battleship. All arrangements have been made for his residence in a very comfortable mansion, and the Allies are seeing that he is allowed about £15,000 per year to keep the wolf from the door. This king business is a strange affair. If an ordinary person tries to stir up a revolution he is shot out of hand. If an ex-king does it he is handsomely pensioned off. Who, then, blames them for trying it on? If he succeeds he wins. And if he fails he still wins. Really, what the world badly needs to learn is that kings are just human beings, and should be treated as such. At present we say they are human, and then fawn, and cringe, and act in such a way as to show that we are still under the dominance of the primitive notion that the king is related to the gods, and therefore must not be looked at in the same way as other humans are looked at. We are pleased to record that Karl has expressed himself as gratified at the arrangements made for his residence. He certainly has no ground for complaint at the size of his unemployment allowance.

Although the Bishop of London (income £10,000 yearly) continually asserts that the clergy are "starving," there is very little evidence of this dire state of affairs. There are 50,000 parsons in this country, and the only one we can trace as being actually "on tramp" is the Rev. D. Railton, of Margate. His martyrdom is more spectacular than real, for his "tramping" is being done in the leisure of his ministerial duties, and his clerical stipend is still being paid regularly. Brother Railton says that money can be got by begging, but no work is obtainable. He ought to know, for there are no beggars like the clergy.

The City of London Church of St. Katherine Coleman, Fenchurch Street, is now in process of demolition, the site having been sold for business purposes. The few worshippers will be transferred to the neighbouring Church of St. Clare, Hart Street. This shows the state of the Christian religion in the heart of London. There are about fifty City churches, with clerical incomes attached totalling about £50,000, and enough worshippers to fill half a dozen.

During the past week the Prayer-book Revision Committee met at Lambeth, the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding. We should like to know what the Crown Law Department thinks of this, if it thinks of it at all, because under the Acts, 1 Eliz. c.2. and 14 Car. II. c.4., it is a misdemeanour to say anything in derogation of the Book of Common Prayer.

The late Rev. A. W. Parke, of Wimborne, Dorset, left estate of the value of £39,191. As he disregarded Gospel teaching regarding the laying up of earthly treasure, we tremble for his future.

"Adam" and "Eve" will figure in a procession at Christmas at St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden. Perhaps the local clergy think that as "Adam" and his lady friend first advertised the apple the Covent Garden fruiterers might be interested.

The dead hand is a very important factor in the religious world. By the will of the late Mr. William Morton, of Moseley, Birmingham, he bequeathed £1,000 each to the Salvation Army, the Baptist Union, the Presbyterian Church of England, the Congregational Union, and other religious organizations.

Thirty persons were baptized by immersion in the river at Llanelly recently. As Ingersoll said, baptism is excellent with the addition of a little soap.

Another Blasphemy Prosecution

A FIGHTING FUND NEEDED.

IN last week's *Freethinker* it was stated that Mr. J. W. Gott had again been committed for trial at the December session of the Central Criminal Court on a charge of blasphemy. As all the information I had to go upon at the time of writing was a report of the police court proceedings in a newspaper of the same date as that on which the paragraph was written, I could state no more than the bald fact. That paragraph was written on Tuesday, and later in the day Mr. Gott called upon me with a request for the National Secular Society's intervention, and after ascertaining the facts I did not hesitate to advise the Society's Executive when it met on the Thursday following that in my opinion it was a case which they were in duty bound to defend. And I am pleased to say that the Executive fully endorsed my view. So also did the Board of the Secular Society, Limited, which happened to be holding a meeting on the same evening, and which promised the N. S. S. its fullest support in the matter. Mr. Gott has agreed to place himself unreservedly in the hands of the Society.

The facts of the case are as follows. On November 12 Mr. Gott was engaged with another man in selling at Stratford Broadway copies of the *Rib Tickler*, and also a paper devoted to birth control. The latter paper, I may say at once, is not connected with the case. After they had been selling for some time a police inspector came along with two men, and ordered them to take Mr. Gott and his assistant to the police station and charge them with obstruction. On the 14th they appeared at the West Ham Police Court to answer the charge, and the case was adjourned for a week. On the 21st, when Mr. Gott appeared to answer the charge of obstruction, the police informed the magistrate that on consideration they had decided to proceed with a charge of blasphemy against Mr. Gott, and the magistrate at once committed him for trial at the Central Criminal Court on December 6.

They are the bald facts to date. As to the substance of the charge. This is contained in the *Rib Tickler*. I have read through with the utmost care the number that Mr. Gott was selling, and I can recommend its defence with the utmost confidence to the Freethought Party. Up to the time of going to press I have only seen a copy of the police court proceedings, and the indictment, which will contain the words on which the prosecution bases its case, will not be available till a day or so before the Sessions open. But that will not delay the preparations for the defence, and I have already had two interviews with the solicitor, and the next step will be to brief counsel and discuss with him the best lines for the defence. The rest will be decided at the trial itself, and although the dice are heavily loaded against the defence in a blasphemy case I am hopeful. At any rate, nothing will be omitted that can be done to break down the operation of a law that should long since have been wiped off the statute books. I might say more about the case, but as I have no wish to land myself in for a charge of contempt of court, I desist. And that, as may be imagined, calls for no small measure of self control.

There is another matter of very great importance at this juncture. I feel certain that as the National Secular Society is taking up the case (this time it is a simple case of blasphemy, and nothing else) Freethinkers throughout the country would like the case fought in a manner that is befitting the importance of the issues involved and the dignity of the Society. And that involves expense. In order to brief a good

counsel, and meet all other charges connected with the trial, we must be prepared to face an expenditure of at least £150, and I do not think that our friends would consider it wise to use up the slender resources of the Society for general propaganda in meeting the costs of the trial. I am, therefore, at the request of the N. S. S. Executive opening a Fund for the purpose of meeting this expense which has been forced upon us by the bigots. I know that times are hard, but the urgency of the case will be obvious to all, and I need not stress the matter. And I dislike *begging* at any time. The generous mind gives promptly, and generosity adds to its graciousness by making the task of those who have to ask as easy as possible. I am, therefore, hopeful that in the next issue of this paper we shall be able to say that the money required has been subscribed. I shall be surprised if the greater part is not forthcoming.

Finally, we do not seek, it is no part of our policy to seek, these prosecutions. All the same, we are not in the least inclined to run away from them when they are forced upon us. The day we cease to be a fighting party we may as well cease to exist. The prosecution of necessity has the choice of the time of attack and the person whom they attack. All we can do is to resist, and, if possible, defeat the enemy. At all costs it is our duty to show the bigots that they cannot pursue their old game with impunity, and that we are not to be intimidated. Every inch of the ground on which we now stand has been won by the fighting and suffering of brave men and women in the past. They have often enough met with defeat, but their very defeat has held the germ of a future victory. And in fighting the blasphemy laws to-day, whether this particular battle brings victory or defeat, we know that it is bringing nearer the day when the Church-made crime of blasphemy will be wiped from the law books of every civilized country in the world.

All cheques and postal orders should be sent direct to me at the *Freethinker* office. All sums received will be acknowledged in these columns, and the total paid over to the National Secular Society. A statement of income and expenditure will be issued when the trial is over. The fight is of necessity a very short one, and I hope that the subscription list will disappear from these pages almost as soon as it appears. A single list might easily provide all that is required.

CHAPMAN COHEN.
President, N. S. S.

THE ULTIMACY OF NATURE.

They are real; there is something about them that forms a link with the facts of the sea, with the forces of the tides and winds, and the sunlight gleaming on the white crests of the waves. They speak to thoughts lurking in the mind; they float between life and death as with a billow on either hand; their anchors go down to the roots of existence. This is real work, real labour of man, to draw forth food from the deep as the plough draws it from the earth. It is in utter contrast to the artificial work—the feathers, the jewellery, the writing at desks of the town. The writings of a thousand clerks, the busy factory work, the trimmings and feathers, and counter-attendance do not touch the real. They are all artificial. For food you must still go to the earth and to the sea, as in primeval days. Where would your thousand clerks, your trimmers, and counter-salesmen be without a loaf of bread, without meat, without fish? The old brown sails and the nets, the anchors and tarry ropes, go straight to nature. You do not care for nature now? Well, all I can say is, you will have to go to nature one day—when you die; you will find nature very real then. I rede you to recognize the sunlight and the sea, the flowers and woods now.—
Richard Jefferies.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

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.

B. OLDS (Dunedin).—Our shop manager is writing you. We hope the outlook for free speech and a free press in New Zealand is not so black as you fear. One can only hope that the policy of the reactionists will excite an intelligent revolt on the part of all genuine lovers of freedom.

S. GROVE.—Pleased to know from your letter that you are still pegging away in the interests of the old Cause.

P. G. P. (Prescot).—We do not see how we can advise you without knowing the special points on which you desire advice. A glance down our advertising columns will tell you whether there are any of our publications that will give you what you need. If there is not, and you will let us know what it is you wish, we will do our best to help.

EDINA.—Sorry, we are unable to use the verses you were good enough to send.

W. J.—Certainly, the only way to appeal to Freethinkers is by reasoning, but if a man declines to do this what are we to do. The only thing is, then, to leave the matter to the judgment of others. The policy of the Press ignoring the *Freethinker* is a deliberate one. We saw the passage in the *Church Times* to which you refer. The other matter has been attended to.

JUST as we are going to press we are asked to announce that the next meeting of the Newcastle Branch will be held on Sunday, December 11, in the Trades Council's Rooms, 12a Clayton Street, at 3 p.m., when an address will be given by one of the members.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (December 4) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Friars Hall, Blackfriars Bridge Road, at 7 o'clock. The advertised subject is "The Eclipse of Christianity," but in view of the new Blasphemy trial he will take the occasion to deal with that subject also. We hope that all who can will make it a point to be present, and we should also like to see as many Christians there as possible. We are quite sure that there are a fairly large number of the more liberal type of Christian who will agree that it is time that these relics of mediæval intolerance were swept away. The hall is a few doors down the road, after crossing the bridge, on the left hand side—coming from the city.

There is no mistaking the continued enthusiasm of young Wales for Freethought. Mr. Cohen's two meetings at Ton Pentre on Sunday last were ample evidence of it. In the afternoon the large Workman's Hall was well filled, and in the evening every seat, upstairs and down, and nearly every inch of standing room was occupied. It was good to see the large number of keen-faced intelligent looking young men following every point of the lecture with interest and appreciation. There were representatives of the local clergy present at both meetings, but they remained perfectly quiet, although the sight of the audience must have filled them with misgivings. There were many requests for Mr. Cohen to come again, and invitations for him to visit other places. He may before the season is over.

Most of our readers will remember the case of Mr. John Breese, of Birmingham, who was ordered to stand down from the jury and kept in court the whole of the day for refusal to subscribe to an affirmation which called upon him to decide whether a prisoner's refusal to speak was due to an "act of God." The National Secular Society sent a strongly worded protest against the action of the Assistant Recorder on the ground that his action was entirely out of accord with the spirit of the Oaths Amendment Act, and asking that steps should be taken to prevent a recurrence of such an incident. A reply has now been received from the Home Secretary stating that he has no authority to issue directions to judges in the matter, but he has "asked His Majesty's judges to consider whether the form of oath at present used when a prisoner stands mute on arraignment should be altered." We hope that the judges will take the query as a positive suggestion, and act on it. But the form of the reply warrants the assumption that the Home Secretary is of opinion that the form should be altered so that the convictions of Freethinkers should be considered in this matter as in that of the oath. Those interested may be trusted to our not losing sight of the matter. If anything further can be done it will be done.

The *Manchester City News* gave a fair report of Mr. Moss's recent lectures in Manchester. We are pleased to see these amenities of the Press, and hope that other papers will copy the example set. Brief descriptive reports of Freethought lectures would not prove the least interesting of newspaper items.

One of our lady readers informs us that the other day she called in a bookseller's shop not more than ten minutes' walk from this office and asked for a copy of Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism?* She was informed that the book was out of print. That was, of course, a deliberate falsehood, and if one could expect a jury to give equal justice to a Freethinker, we fancy that the bookseller might lay himself open to an action for damages. It is one thing to decline to supply a book, and quite another to make a statement that inflicts a definite injury on both author and publisher. As it is, we mention this fact in order to drive home the lesson that the boycott is still active in the case of almost any work that makes a direct attack on Christianity, and to ask the assistance of our readers in breaking it down. And they can break it if they will.

There is no reason why anyone who wishes to purchase any of our publications through their newsagent or bookseller should not do so. They are supplied through the ordinary trade channels on the ordinary trade terms. More, we are willing to supply any reputable shopkeeper with any of our publications on sale or return, provided he is willing to display them in his window. The *Freethinker* is always supplied on that condition. Now we want our readers who do so order to insist on getting what they want, and to take no excuse. And if the order is not discharged then they should decline to deal with that particular person and carry their orders for all literature elsewhere. We do not like to use the weapon of boycott, but we are convinced that Freethinkers will never get justice at the hands of Christians till they make

themselves felt. There are quite enough to do this if they only will. We have submitted to the traditional right of the Christian to play the bigot long enough. Let us try making our strength felt in turn. We are certain that it will be an excellent plan of bringing bigots to some sort of an appreciation of the wisdom of fair play.

We hope to publish in the course of a week or so a critical review of Mr. Cohen's *Grammar of Freethought* from the pen of Mr. Belfort Bax. Mr. Bax wrote us expressing his intention of doing so, and enquired whether we objected to his stressing certain points on which he disagreed with the writer. Of course, we replied that we did not. This is the *Freethinker*, and what we like is not a hymn of praise, but a critical appreciation of anything we publish. We have no other object in writing or publishing than to get the right estimate of any problem dealt with, and calling attention to faults that are discriminatingly dealt with confers a favour upon all concerned. We believe it is a rule with some of the papers who depend upon advertisements never to say anything very drastic against the publications of any firm that advertises in their columns. But the *Freethinker* does not live on advertisements, and that appears to make a devil of a difference in the conduct of a paper.

The death of the veteran Socialist, H. M. Hyndman, removes from the arena of public life one of its outstanding characters. We are not concerned with his economic and political views except in so far as they may bear upon our movement. In the course of a long conversation with a member of the N. S. S. about eighteen months ago, he emphasized very strongly England's need of a national system of secular education, not only from the Socialist's standpoint, but to enable her to hold her own against other nations. He also mentioned that he wrote a series of articles in the Melbourne *Argus* fifty years ago urging the establishment of a system of secular education throughout Australia.

Owing to the very unfavourable weather—the fog was becoming particularly dense at about 7 p.m.—there was as large an attendance as could be expected at Friars Hall last Sunday to hear various aspects of our movement discussed by Messrs. Moss, McLaren, and Whitehead. Owing to the case pending against Mr. J. W. Gott, the subject of the blasphemy laws occupied a prominent place in the speakers' addresses. The feeling of the meeting was that in the interests of Freethought no stone should be left unturned to defeat the prosecution.

Henry Thomas Buckle, author of *The History of Civilization*, was born November 24, 1821, and his name is worth commemorating at a time when the nations are conferring to devise means for putting an end to human warfare. Buckle was a pronounced Freethinker. He saw intellectual progress as the outcome of the sceptical spirit, whose activities had always been retarded by interested authority.

"Viator" writes:—

I am glad to say that my newsagent displays the *Freethinker* quite conspicuously. She told me recently that a gentleman had called complaining of her displaying the large announcement bill of a certain newspaper. Her answer to the complaint was that the following week she would put out two of the said journal's bills. And she did! If trades people showed more of this spirit it would have a salutary effect on the petty tyrants of the various orthodoxies.

Mr. Lloyd had a good audience at Birmingham on Sunday last, and his vigorous lecturing was much appreciated by those who were present. We are very glad to learn that the Birmingham season is, from the point of view of audiences, turning out so well. From that of finance the Branch is not so flourishing as might be, but that is a matter which should be remedied by the local friends.

Wat Tyler, or a Breath of Common Sense.¹

The pale pathetic peoples still plod on
From hoodwinking to light. —Thomas Hardy.

THE only revolution worth considering in the present is a revolution in the mind. Not for nothing is the public subjected to the imbecilities of "Mutt and Jeff," the adventures of Oojah, records of the tour of Lord Northcliffe, newspaper attacks on retail prices charged by small shopkeepers, and other matters having as much relation to real life as a potato has with wireless telegraphy. If the public, and the elected leaders of Democracy prefer castor oil to thought, if they like it, then we must presume that they are the people who like that sort of thing. Power and privilege are not preserved these days by castles and vassals; our banks and newspapers have supplanted them. Demonstrations on a large or small scale are ineffective, bankers and newspapers have outlived their functions, and our special brand of English religion now appears in the body politic as an appendix awaiting the necessary operation. We are living in an age when the conflict between Dionysos and Apollo is becoming violent. The palsied hand of old age in the direction of world affairs will have to submit to the revivifying influence of youth, or new ideas, or we shall go down again into primeval darkness and old night.

As a welcome sign, as a light, somewhat obscured by the bat-eyed critics in the newspapers, we greet the appearance of *Wat Tyler*, a play of dramatic history by Mr. Halcott Glover. To judge by its reception at the "Old Vic," it is a play with a future. The audience has been steadily coached in Shakespeare, and it extended its most cordial approval. If we were to delegate our judgment we would rather trust it with the "Old Vic" audience than newspaper critics writing for papers that are bought for racing results and run as advertisement mediums for folding beds and houses to let. The play is necessarily insular in character, but the period imposes that defect. It has been necessary for a four years' war to teach some people geography, and, on the authority of Mr. Hilaire Belloc, our bright and breezy Premier neglected his lesson in that direction. But, the Poll Tax, and the Statute of Labour are matters of universal and eternal importance, and in the mechanical world we live in they apply to all nations from China to Peru. In other words, whether men are clothed in fourteenth or twentieth century costumes, the conflict endures between cunning and simplicity—between princes and priests and the hungry children of a nation. It would be a case for the N. S. P. C. C. if parents starved and neglected their children; are we so befuddled by the immensity of the question that we cannot see a nation as a family? If the income is insufficient to prevent some of the children from asking for painless extinction have we not one MAN in the United Kingdom who will demand to know to whom we are in pawn, and why? Dean Inge has killed the Church in a new preface to his *Outspoken Essays*; let him now take up Wat Tyler's hammer, and, for venting his spleen on the labourer in the past, having mistaken effect for cause, his sin shall be forgiven. Mankind is of more importance than the Church, and the rewards of social service are more real than those in that vast place called Heaven. With his hammer he could smash the golden, or paper calf, and go down to posterity in a cloud of glory.

As it was six hundred years ago, and the Golgotha

¹ *Wat Tyler*. A Play in Three Acts by Halcott Glover. Price 2s. 6d. The Bloomsbury Press, 4 Bloomsbury Place, W.C. 1.

called the Tower of London can now be viewed for sixpence, we presume that the Archbishop's head on the end of the pole signified that in someone's opinion he had been misbehaving himself. But lives then, as now, were lost over a bit of bread. One admires the courage of those who believed that a wafer was a wafer;—and yet a child could come to no other conclusion—it seems that age has an effect of addling the brains, especially in simple matters such as bread. In the complex matters of, say, putting up an umbrella when it rains, or going to sleep when tired, those who maintain that a wafer is a body of a living being are quite rational. Many people have lost their heads over religion. We wonder if this particular one has frightened the critics and been the cause of a rousing cheer of silence from the precious moulders of public opinion. Or, is it that these cuttle-fish have seen and heard something that their intelligence cannot comprehend?

When Thomas Paine wrote the *Rights of Man* he did not forget to honour the name of Wat Tyler. As depicted by Mr. Halcott Glover, the character is marked by downright common sense. Speaking to Jack Straw, the leader says: "My voice is no more than a chance trumpet picked up on the roadside." When our democratic leaders have digested that they may begin to wonder who they are, and whether they are not in a huge machine that has political opportunism in view, and a paradise of P.S.A. meetings waiting to be addressed. The blood-thirsty *Daily News'* critic, full of cocoa beans, wrote that it was a pity that the play did not include the slaying of Wat Tyler by Walworth; with all due respect to this critic we would suggest that he studies a Punch and Judy show behind the scenes, and remind him, in the words of Mr. John Francis Hope of the *New Age*, that the first murderer in the Bible was a vegetarian.

The author has made his play a futile struggle between religion and materialism. With the historical facts he could not do otherwise. Tyler won the people their charter, and, as we know, the nobles took revenge on the people. John Ball successfully stirred the emotions of the people by his preaching; Wat Tyler was the instrument of direction and Jack Straw was the loyal and obedient captain of an army possessed by an idea—a rare thing in history. John Ball may be personified as Emotionalism, Wat Tyler as Rationalism, and Jack Straw as Instinct—all three your perfect Free Thinker. Like the Superman, he is not born yet, but there are many ideals less worthy of cherishing. When he comes, if we may be prophetic, our world may not be as Mr. Bernard Shaw pleasantly defines it, a planet used as an asylum by the other worlds.

Mr. Halcott Glover has taken a bold step; he has dragged into the light facts that never reach children of all ages—one is almost led to think that nearly all historians were journalists. The stage has given forth the living word, and forty more plays of this kind performed throughout England might force our one and only Labour daily to publish serially *The Rights of Man* in preference to whimpering about brotherhood and giving tips for horse races. They might open the eyes of the public to the fact that a modern newspaper is an instrument of oppression—paid for; that only mental sloth, never quickened by priests, is responsible for the state we are in; that to think and reason distinguishes man from the beasts, and that people pay and pay dearly in life and in suffering for their delegation of thought. And then we should have the only revolution that matters. Our modern Wat Tylers and Jack Straws on the many-miled war fronts have seen enough of physical revolution—or, shall we say, blood letting? and the John Balls, though we flatter them to call them by that

name, enjoyed exemption. The New World, the New Age, will be fashioned by thought and not brutality, and Instinct, Emotionalism and Rationalism will be the corner stone. In the meantime, our thanks are due to Mr. Halcott Glover, a Son of the New Age, and in the direct line of descent from Shakespeare.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Constructive Secularism.

Error though blind herself, sometimes brings forth children that can see.

FREETHOUGHT is frequently reproached with having a purely destructive aim. Destruction, however, is but one phase of secular activity. There is no gainsaying the fact that theology is still deeply entrenched, there are so many metaphysical obstructions in the way of independent, rational, unfettered thinking that the main function of Secularism has, of necessity, been destructive criticism of theological dogma.

One is bound to remove the débris of an old structure before attempting to raise a new one. When once the site is cleared new foundations may be laid, and the work of construction may proceed.

Freethought is constructive inasmuch as it seeks to give all men scope to develop as free individuals, and thus to establish the only sound conditions under which personal, social, and universal morality may flourish.

Whenever and wherever the human mind makes an advance theology falls back. Especially is this to be noticed in the sphere of ethics and morality. Religion not being of a social nature is found more and more inadequate for the regulation of social relations. We are often told that where religion is absent morality cannot exist. The lives of many eminent Freethinkers are sufficient refutation of this absurd fallacy. The morality of humanity is entirely independent of theology. Morality is attainable irrespective of belief in the supernatural.

Religion attaches salvation to belief. Secularism seeks it in conduct, in character. It is of far greater importance to cultivate character than to inculcate a creed. For, what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, if thereby he lose his character? Knowledge has claims prior to those of Faith. Theology offers none but illusory solutions for the social problems of the present day, such, for example, as the relations between capital and labour, unemployment, housing, and the education and training of the young.

The scientific spirit is, at length, capable of completely replacing theology by a sane, sound, and secular morality. Freethinkers are profoundly convinced that on all social questions there is light and guidance to be found in secular truth. Moreover, secular knowledge is capable of being tested in this life, whereas, if a theological belief be wrong, we cannot discover the mistake until after we are dead.

Experience is the only reliable interpreter of the known; theology is the professed but fallible interpreter of the unknown.

It is the revolt of the intellect against obsolete methods of thought, and against the preponderating claim of religion upon society which has, in great measure, engendered much of the present social unrest. The clergy deplore the conditions, after having provoked them by their indifference to the real needs of our social life, with which, however, they are incompetent to deal by lack of suitable training and business capacity. It is not, then, to the theologians that we can look for measures of social betterment. The metaphysical system of morality is utterly discredited, and is not worth any consideration.

There is no longer any guidance possible, except that furnished by science, which will substitute sound

reasoning for the mysticism of the pulpit, aiming to establish social conditions of life in which men need be neither idle, depraved, nor poor.

Unfortunately, modern society is obsessed with the idea that humanity's outstanding need is to be "governed." It is nothing of the kind. What man needs more than anything else is to be "taught." "To know that we do not know is the beginning of wisdom." What we most need is knowledge not faith. We want more teachers and fewer preachers.

There are no perfect things, all have their good and bad sides. We do not criticize existing institutions and prejudices merely because of their drawbacks. We do not, in fact, wish to change the present state of affairs in a single day. What we seek to do is to modify it patiently and continuously, in accordance with demonstrable scientific conclusions, rejecting all turbulent agitation and violence, appealing not to force, but to reason and common-sense. Other methods can only revive a retrograde tendency calculated to obstruct the forward path of social and moral progress. In morals, as in other things, we are averse from all that is extreme and violent.

All durable measures of reform must, of necessity, rest on a pre-existing order, the spontaneous product of the past, developed in accordance with ascertainable laws. If this natural foundation be disregarded the projected structure will inevitably be short-lived.

Secularism, then, takes things as they are, the average morality in the lump, as practised by all people of common-sense, being recognized as the material on which it has to work. We accept the habits and prejudices peculiar to our generation. We take a pride in preserving, as well as increasing, the great moral heritage bequeathed by our ancestors, and regard it as our most precious treasure. While admitting, however, the immense value of our heritage from the past, we cannot rest content with the standards already attained. Moral ideas and prejudices need to be revised in the light of present scientific knowledge, believing, as we do, that Truth is the latest deduction from classified Science, and not a God-given revelation to be accepted regardless of time and change.

Here, then, lies the constructive work which Secularists have set themselves to do.

Freethought is steadily advancing to the peaceful conversion of hearts and minds, sustained by the memory of those who have preceded us; and enjoying, even now, a foretaste of that assured future when it will be possible for all men of good-will to say with noble Thomas Paine: "The whole world is my country, to do good is my religion."

BERNARD MOORE.

Stands Scotland Where it Did?

ONE must answer sadly the Shakespearian question in the affirmative (pardon the parlotage). Religion is still safe here, or at least, respect for its priests. At a West Coast Ratepayers' Meeting a clerical (Established Church) candidate for municipal honours declared himself opposed (of course) to Sunday music, and added that if returned to the Council there were "other things" he would "see stopped on the Sunday." Again, of course. He came there, not as a minister, but as a ratepayer, but the *ex cathedra* cultured tyranny of the black coat was all too evident in his opposition to Sunday music, etc., and which invited from a member of the audience the irrelevant and impertinent question that "brought down the house."

Previously, a candidate had said there was no need of Sunday music as the most beautiful and refined entertainment could be had in the churches; where-

upon someone shouted: "It is an entertainment!" But it was only a voice in the mob. Scotland stands where it did. The large town hall was crowded to suffocation, the passages filled, and hundreds left standing in the street. A quite Christian pandemonium ensued for the first half hour of the "proceedings." One says "Christian" because the same voices objected to the question finally put to the clerical candidate, and which was as follows: "The Rev. Mr.— has referred to the failure of the local creamery (Municipal), does he think that, considering the recent "great war," the no less great peace, and the present condition of the world, the Christian Church has been a success?" Platform and area were alike indignant at the question, and had the hall not been so packed the questioner might have been ejected, and probably abused in the process.

So Scotland stands much where it did; if not so godly as of yore, it still loves a "gentleman" or a lord. The "surgical operation" is still necessary in the Scottish skull. The question will put the cleric at the top of the poll, so said the one "Freethinking" Socialist, retiring councillor who saw his life's work and his votes in danger. The question itself remained unanswered, publicly, the minister bravely offering to answer it privately—in the manse! A. M.

The Freethought Movement in Japan.

THE letter which we give below was addressed to our veteran and scholarly fellow-worker in the cause of Freethought Mr. Eugène Hins, director of *La Pensée*, of Brussels. It is particularly interesting to English readers as coming from an inside worker, not a mere outside observer. Mr. Oyama, whose European culture is based apparently on English authors, for he writes in English not in French, is a militant Freethinker of great ability, both as a lecturer and a writer.

Yokohama,

October 21, 1921.

My dear friend and confrère in rationalism,

I am glad to be able to tell you that the Freethought movement in this country is rapidly gaining in importance and seriousness, and in spite of the pressure put upon it by our government, all our Freethought meetings are extremely successful. Everyone of our provincial newspapers are willing to print our articles on Freethought and Naturalistic Ethics. I sometimes translate articles from *La Pensée* and from *La Mouvance Naturelle*, and my versions are well received, and often reproduced by other papers. Even the Tokio (the capital of Japan) newspapers and reviews are interested in our movement and in our writings.

Some while ago I translated Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* for a Japanese magazine, and since then I have always proclaimed in my lectures that Paine is the greatest man America has ever known. I made him the subject of my last lecture, the first after the summer vacation of this year. This lecture was well received by my audience, who honoured the name of Thomas Paine.

However, I regret to have to tell you once more that our bureaucratic and despotic government is nuturing in its opposition to our progressive movement. On the other hand I am pleased to say that our different religions, Buddhism as well as Christianity, are in complete decadence, and exist only in name. We have also here a quite serious movement in favour of disarmament, the propagandists of which are very active.

Fraternally yours,

YOSHIRO OYAMA.

Correspondence.

THE MYTH OF JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Arch says that he made it clear that the verse he quoted "must have been written while original disciples of Jesus still lived, and, therefore, not in the middle of the second century." He may have done so to his own satisfaction, but certainly not to mine.

W. MANN.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 24.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Moss, Rosetti, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. Financial Report presented and adopted. New members were received for Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Stockport, and the Parent Society.

The principal business before the meeting was the consideration of the position of the Society in regard to another prosecution of Mr. J. W. Gott, to which the President called attention and read newspaper reports.

This being a charge of Blasphemy, clear of every other issue, the Society had no alternative but to take up the defence. Mr. Gott had been interviewed and also the Society's solicitor. After further discussion and explanations, it was agreed that the President's action be endorsed, and resolved:—

"That the Society undertake the defence of Mr. J. W. Gott against a charge of Blasphemy to be heard at the Central Criminal Court on the distinct understanding that Mr. Gott places himself unreservedly in the hands of the Executive in all matters connected with the conduct of the case and that the President be empowered to make the necessary legal arrangements."

It was also resolved that the Editor of the Freethinker be asked to open a fund in his paper towards defraying the expenses of the trial.

Reports were received, and applications from Glasgow, Newcastle and Swansea Branches dealt with. Ordinary routine business was transacted and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

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.

FRIARS HALL (237 Blackfriars Road): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Eclipse of Christianity."

FULHAM AND WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (154 Goldhawk Road, W.): 7.30, Mr. Eustace Steele, "The Key to the New World, Economic or Spiritual?"

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Maurice Maubery, "The Pioneer."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Debate: "Can Capitalism adapt itself to Future Economic and Social Life?" Affirmative, Mr. T. F. Palmer; Negative, Mr. F. R. Corrigan.

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. A. Hyatt, "A Night with Poets and Authors."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Chances of Peace."

COUNTRY. INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Mr. S. G. Service, "The Theory of Evolution and its Lesson."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, Youngman's): 7, Mr. Thomas A. Hand, "The Use of Libraries."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, "Essentials towards a Social Evolution."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, Manchester): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 3, "Is Religion a Social Necessity?" 6.30, "Nature, Man, and God." (Tea served as usual at small charge.)

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.

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.

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.

Two Great Freethinkers.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

BY
C. T. GORHAM.A Biographical Sketch of America's Greatest
Freethought Advocate. With Four Plates.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH

BY
The Right Hon. J. M. ROBERTSON.An Authoritative Life of one of the greatest Reformers
of the Nineteenth Century, and the only one now
obtainable. With Four Portraits.In Paper Covers, 2s. (postage 2d.). Cloth Bound,
3s. 6d. (postage 2½d.) each Volume.

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

JUST PUBLISHED.

WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JESUS?

By G. W. FOOTE.

Price One Penny, postage 1d.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA.

The Rise of Christianity on the Ruins of Ancient
Civilization.

By M. M. MANGASARIAN.

Price One Penny, postage 1d.

The two together, post free, 3d.

Both of these pamphlets are well calculated to do excellent
service as propagandist literature, and those requiring
quantities for that purpose will receive 250 assorted copies
for 15s., carriage free.

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

Determinism or Free-Will?

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

NEW EDITION Revised and Enlarged.

CONTENTS:

Chapter I.—The Question Stated. Chapter II.—
"Freedom" and "Will." Chapter III.—Conscious-
ness, Deliberation, and Choice. Chapter IV.—Some
Alleged Consequences of Determinism. Chapter V.—
Professor James on the "Dilemma of Determinism."
Chapter VI.—The Nature and Implications of Respon-
sibility. Chapter VII.—Determinism and Character.
Chapter VIII.—A Problem in Determinism. Chapter
IX.—Environment.

Well printed on good paper.

Price, Wrappers 1s. 9d., by post 1s. 11d.; or strongly
bound in Half-Cloth 2s. 6d., by post 2s. 9d.

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

THEISM OR ATHEISM?

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN.

CONTENTS:

PART I.—AN EXAMINATION OF THEISM.

Chapter I.—What is God? Chapter II.—The Origin of the
Idea of God. Chapter III.—Have we a Religious Sense?
Chapter IV.—The Argument from Existence. Chapter V.—
The Argument from Causation. Chapter VI.—The Argument
from Design. Chapter VII.—The Disharmonies of Nature.
Chapter VIII.—God and Evolution. Chapter IX.—The
Problem of Pain.

PART II.—SUBSTITUTES FOR ATHEISM.

Chapter X.—A Question of Prejudice. Chapter XI.—What
is Atheism? Chapter XII.—Spencer and the Unknowable.
Chapter XIII.—Agnosticism. Chapter XIV.—Atheism and
Morals. Chapter XV.—Atheism Inevitable.Bound in full Cloth, Gilt Lettered. Price 5s.
(Postage 3d.)

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

A Bomb for Believers.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS and
MYTHICAL CHRIST.

By GERALD MASSEY.

(Author of the "Book of the Beginnings"; "The Natural
Genesis"; "Ancient Egypt," etc.)A Demonstration of the Egyptian Origin of the Christian Myth.
Should be in the hands of every Freethinker.

With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price SIXPENCE. Postage 1½d.

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

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 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

Bargains in Books.

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM.

By PHYSICUS (G. J. Romanes).

Price 4s., postage 4d.

THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT.

By KARL PEARSON.

Essays in Freethought History and Sociology.
Published 10s. 6d. Price 5s. 6d., postage 7d.KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN
OF INDIVIDUALISM.

An Introduction to the Study of the Native Problem.

By DUDLEY KIDD.

Published 7s. 6d. Price 3s. 9d., postage 9d.

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

FRIARS HALL, 237 Blackfriars Road

(Four doors South of Blackfriars Bridge).

(Under the Auspices of the National Secular Society.)

- DECEMBER 4. CHAPMAN COHEN.**
 "The Eclipse of Christianity."
 (With special reference to the blasphemy prosecution.)
- „ 11. **G. WHITEHEAD.**
 "Conscience and Free Will."
- „ 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.

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.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FREETHINKERS

CONCERNING :

Withdrawal of children from religious instruction in public schools. The right to affirm. Religion in the Army and Navy. Church attendance in the Navy. Secular funerals. Civil marriages. The naming of infants, etc.

(Issued by the Executive of the National Secular Society)

Price **TWOPENCE**, post free.

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

GOD-EATING.

A Study in Christianity and Cannibalism.

By **J. T. LLOYD.**

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

A Valuable Study of the Central Doctrine of Christianity. Should be read by both Christians and Freethinkers.

In Coloured Wrapper. Price **6d.** Postage $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, 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.

THE "FREETHINKER."

THE *Freethinker* may be ordered from any newsagent in the United Kingdom, and is supplied by all the wholesale agents. It will be sent direct from the publishing office post free to any part of the world on the following terms:—

The United Kingdom—**One Year, 17s. 6d.**; **Six Months, 8s. 9d.**; **Three Months, 4s. 6d.**

Foreign and Colonial—**One Year, 15s.**; **Six Months, 7s. 6d.**; **Three Months, 3s. 9d.**

Anyone experiencing a difficulty in obtaining copies of the paper will confer a favour if they will write us, giving full particulars.