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Views and Opinions.

The Prevalence of Superstition.

The other day the *Daily Telegraph* published a leading article on “The Necessity for Superstition.” It was a bad title because all that the writer appears to have had in mind was the prevalence of superstition with both educated and uneducated people. And in the end he quite failed to see the wood for the trees. For the conclusion of his article is that “It is our nature to crave belief in something we do not understand,” and that is not merely a repetition of the fact to be explained, but it is distinctly false. We do not crave belief in something we do not understand, for the sufficient reason that we cannot believe something we do not understand. If I do not understand a proposition I cannot believe it because I do not know what it is I am expected to believe. To offer me a proposition, the terms of which arouse no mental representation of what is involved, is exactly equal to talking in a language I do not understand. To say I believe in twice two equalling five is not affirming a belief, it is merely making use of nonsensical language. If we know what two is we must believe that twice that sum equals four, and if we do not know what two is we cannot believe anything about it. Our minds remain a blank. When a man believes that thirteen is an unlucky number or that it is unfortunate to spill salt, he is not believing something he does not understand, he does understand that there is some connection between these things and misfortune. And that is all he believes about it. He does not understand the machinery of the process, that is, he cannot tell you how thirteen at table will lead to the death of someone, and about that part of the proposition he has no belief whatever. But belief must rest upon something positive, it cannot stand for sheer mental vacuity. It is a great pity that all our journalists are not compelled to take a course in elementary psychology before inflicting their wisdom on the public. They would then not talk nearly so much about mystery, and their reasoning would be much less mysterious.

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The Veneer of Civilization.

We are not at all inclined to quarrel with the statement that superstition is very prevalent. We have

dwelt too often on that fact, and on the grave social dangers it foreshadows to take up a contrary position. Nor need the prevalence of superstition cause very great surprise. The duration of what by way of courtesy we call civilization represents but a fraction of the time during which man has existed and of the time during which he was under the domination of the most degrading superstitions. Even so terrible a superstition as witchcraft may be found as a universally accepted fact less than four centuries ago. And that was a belief that carried with it a whole host of minor superstitions. A people who could believe that an old woman might stir up a storm, or infect cattle with disease, ride through the air on a broomstick, or cause a man's death by sticking pins in a wax effigy of him, simply could have had no comprehension of what we mean when we speak about natural law. The belief implies a mental outlook entirely different from that which characterizes the educated mind of to-day. Thus, behind the thin veneer of civilization we have the unnumbered generations of uncivilized life; the savage is the parent of us all, and we do not put off the savage merely because we walk down Oxford Street in the fashionable dress of a twentieth century Englishman. We may be as primitive in our mental outlook dressed in a silk hat as in a covering of paint and feathers. As a matter of fact many of us are.

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The Perpetuation of Superstition.

The savage is the parent of us all. That is a consideration that cannot be too often impressed upon people. But this does not mean that we are born with certain savage ideas that will find expression. The notion that ideas are inherited is wholly absurd, although it is one that is widely assumed in popular literature. There is no mechanism in the human structure that can transmit ideas from an individual to his descendants. What is inherited is the capacity for acquiring ideas, which is a very different thing. How the savage affects us is not by way of individual heredity, but by that of the institutions we have inherited from him and which keep his modes of thinking alive. Practically all our principal institutions were born and elaborated under the dominating influence of superstition. This remains true even where the institution is in itself a good and a useful one. No one has anything to say against the institution of marriage, but its rational treatment and consideration is prevented because of the superstitions that have accompanied it. The day of rest is a wholly admirable thing, but it is robbed of much of its usefulness because of the savage taboo that has become entangled with it. In a court of law we still retain the oath, and that is a superstition of the most primitive character. It belongs to the same class of customs as trial by ordeal; it is, in fact, a form of trial by ordeal. It embodies the belief that the tribal deity will, when his name is taken in vain, in some way or other punish the offender. Yet we have grave and reverend judges assisting at this absurdity without any apparent realization of the truth that it is not a bit more intellectually respectable than testing the truthfulness of

a witness by asking him to walk blindfold over red-hot ploughshares. The savage may sit as securely enthroned on the judicial bench as in the prisoner's dock. Perhaps more securely, for it is not altogether unknown for the man in the dock to be sentenced to punishment because he has the ill-fortune to be just a degree further removed from the savage than is the judge.

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#### Priest and King.

Sociology is full of illustrations of the way in which our institutions, more because of the form in which they are cast than for any other reason, perpetuate superstition. Take the fact of so primitive a superstition as kingship. It is, apparently, very hard to make even educated people really feel that a king is quite the same as other people. Intellectually they know it to be so, but emotionally they are in the grip of one of the oldest of social superstitions. It is thought worthy of being chronicled that a queen stops to pat a baby or that a king behaves as an ordinary man would when passing through a street. And this carries us back a long way in the history of man. Priest and king come originally from the same root. The king-priest, or the priest-king is the magic worker, the one who has chief influence with the tribal deities, whose very existence is bound up with the welfare of the tribe. And at the root of this conviction lies the fundamental weakness of primitive humanity—an ignorance of the nature of causation. Instead of seeking the meanings of natural happenings and the nature of social changes in the play of knowable and determinable forces, primitive humanity looks for an explanation in the caprices of supernatural beings. It is in this atmosphere that the idea of kingship is born and matured, and quite naturally we have in the mental attitude adopted towards the modern occupant of a throne something in the nature of a throw-back to this primitive type. The whole atmosphere of a court is monstrously primitive, and the ceremonial mummerly, the parading of men and women in pantomimic costumes are all eloquent of a primitive state of things. The costume is not a bit more civilized than the paint and feathers, the heraldic design not a bit more civilized than the animal totem from which it is descended. And the real objection to kingship in modern society is not that the king is a bad man, or a stupid man, or that the institution is costly. The essential harm done by it is that it is a buttress of a number of other institutions and frames of mind that keep civilization at a lower level than it otherwise might be. It sustains forms of thinking that are quite useless and may be dangerous.

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#### A Question of Environment.

The question of the development of a generation of healthily-minded people is ultimately that of securing an environment that will make for a healthily sane life. The old tag about the minds of people existing in so many water-tight compartments may be admitted as a mere figure of speech, but as a statement of sober fact it is wholly misleading. One might as well say that the body functions in water-tight compartments, and that when one has typhoid all that need be bothered about is that part of the body immediately affected. It is the whole mental outlook that matters, and a mind that has been accustomed from childhood to yield to certain superstitions cannot avoid showing their influence in moments of stress and danger. And it is these times that are of importance. When there is no stress there is time for the more rational view of things to make itself felt, and the superstition remains dormant. But in a moment of stress, the very time when there is the greatest need for the coolest judgment, it is then that

superstition works its chief ill. Thus, it took four years of war, and three years of a peace that has been as bad as many a war, to teach a moderate number of people in this country that the ills from which we have suffered and are still suffering are neither specifically British, nor French, nor German, but European, a fact which, if recognized at the beginning of the war, might have saved the world incalculable evil, even if it might not have prevented the war occurring. And, if we really desire to see the people—not merely the uneducated but the educated—less superstitious than they are, the remedy lies in our hands. It can be done, and done more rapidly than many think. For what each generation becomes in its general intellectual outlines is mainly determined by the kind of institutions, by the nature of the environment, amid which it is reared. Accustom the developing mind of each to a thoroughly civilized view of life, and the next two or three generations would show as great a distance from the present as the present does from the primitive Britons. But continue to maintain thousands of churches, with thousands of trained men bent upon impressing the community with completely savage views of life, maintain also a number of institutions that are saturated with a primitive view of life, and the result will be a perpetuation of superstitions more or less stupid and more or less harmful. Human capacity is great in its potentialities for either good or evil. We can direct it for good if we will; we can also direct it for evil if we choose. And in terms of our choice we shall reap the reward of our wisdom or pay the price of our folly.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### “The Meaning and Purpose of the Incarnation.”

SUCH is the title of a sermon which Dean Inge preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on Christmas morning, and which appears in the *Christian World Pulpit* of January 5. The Dean never speaks without saying something worthy of notice, and as the Incarnation is a fundamental Christian doctrine his utterance regarding it demands special attention. We reject this dogma for three cogent reasons; first, because we do not believe there is a God to become incarnate; second, because of the lack of evidence of the alleged event; and third, because the alleged event has borne no wholesome fruit in history. But Dr. Inge, one of the ablest men in the Anglican Church, does believe in God and the Incarnation, and we are anxious seriously to consider his discourse. He says:—

Both the introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel contemplate Christ, not as the Babe of Bethlehem, but as the eternal Son of the eternal Father, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, through whom also he made the world, as the Word or Reason of God, who was in the beginning with God, without whom nothing has come or ever will come into being; who is the light shining in darkness, the light of men, who became flesh and tabernacled among us.

He throws the responsibility for that conception of Christ upon the unknown authors of Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel without telling us whether he accepts it as literally true or not. He does tell us, however, that all Christmas carols, even the one in St. Luke's Gospel, and modern versions of it, “are but accessories to the tremendous fact that the Son of God became man for our sake.” In many of his recent utterances the Dean has treated some of the Gospel facts upon which Christianity is supposed to rest rather slightly, as if they were, at best, but symbols. In his *Outspoken Essays* (p. 123), for example, he alludes to

the distinction often made between "truths of faith" and "truths of fact." Truths of faith, it is contended, have a representative, symbolic character, and are only degraded by being placed in the same category as physical phenomena. The Dean himself frankly admits "that to most educated men the miraculous element in Christianity seems to float between earth and heaven, no longer essentially connected with either." We should like to know whether he regards the Incarnation as a truth of faith or as a truth of fact, or as both. From the sermon now before us one would certainly infer that he treats it as a truth of fact as well as of faith. He goes to the length of declaring that, in his opinion, the Incarnation would have taken place even if mankind had not sinned, and that it "was always a part of the eternal counsels of God."

As a matter of fact, Dr. Inge takes scarcely any notice at all of man's sinfulness and lostness through his covenantal connection with Adam. According to him, the necessity for the Incarnation lay in God's gracious desire to make an objective manifestation of himself to man, to correspond to the subjective manifestation made in him at his creation. The Son of God became man in order that in him mankind might see "the revelation of a perfect humanity." "This objective revelation," the Dean says, "could be made only in a Divine-human life actually lived." Christ, then, "is God's revelation to us of himself in us, and us in himself. He is God our holiness, our righteousness, our life. He was, as man, holy with the same holiness, and made holy by the same means with us." Then the Dean observes that "he is not a mere example, because being Divine he can give us power to be conformed to his likeness." The lesson from this conception is that "we are called to re-enact in our own experience the whole process of the Incarnation, the new birth, the spiritual death, and resurrection." Such are the meaning and purpose of the Incarnation.

Now, surveying Europe during all the Christian centuries we discover that the objective revelation of God in the Incarnation has been fully as abortive as the subjective revelation made at the creation had been in all the ages before Christ. In the sermon under review the Dean dwells exclusively upon what the Incarnation is capable of effecting, and not at all upon what it has actually achieved. What has Christianity done in the world? It brought into being and has loyally maintained the most selfish, powerful, and tyrannical institution the world has ever seen. In the Catholic Church no such thing as private judgment is allowed, and the penalty meted out to anyone bold enough to claim and venture to exercise it was imprisonment and death. In his Essay on "Institutionalism and Mysticism," Dean Inge says:—

Theoretically it is admitted by Roman casuists that an immoral order ought not to be obeyed; but it is not for a layman to pronounce immoral any order received from a priest; if the order is really immoral, "obedience" exonerates him who executes it, and in all other cases disobedience is a deadly sin. The result of this submission of private judgment is that the voice of conscience is often stifled, and unscrupulous policies are carried through by Churchmen which secular public opinion would have condemned decisively and rejected. The persecution of Dreyfus is a recent and strong instance. If all France had been Catholic the victim of this shocking injustice would certainly have died in prison (*Outspoken Essays*, p. 240).

The cruel murder of Francisco Ferrer, in Spain, is a more recent and stronger instance of the same dreadful truth. Curiously enough, he who dared most in the defence of Dreyfus was the famous novelist and Free-thinker, Emile Zola, who in consequence had to flee his country. Many may be prepared to acknowledge

this sad truth about the Catholic Church, who yet most emphatically deny it as regards Protestantism; but Dean Inge has the hardihood to employ the following strong language:—

Organized religion has been a failure ever since the first concordat between Church and State under Constantine the Great. The Church of England in its corporate capacity has never seemed to respect anything but organized force. In the sixteenth century it proclaimed Henry VIII the Supreme Head of the Church; in the seventeenth century it passionately upheld the "right divine of kings to govern wrong"; in the eighteenth and nineteenth it was the obsequious supporter of the squirearchy and plutocracy; and now it grovels before the working-man, and supports every scheme of plundering the minority (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

Does it not inevitably follow that since organized religion has been a failure throughout its history, the alleged incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is the most stupendous farce in the world? Aware that such an objection might easily be raised the Dean shelters himself behind a fanciful distinction between ecclesiasticism, theology, and religion, but he cannot be ignorant of the fact that organized Christianity is the only Christianity of which Europe has ever had experience. There are numerous versions of it on trial just now, but they are all organized in some branch or other of the Church, and the Dean himself is a dignitary of a Church in which religion is very highly organized. As Professor Bacon points out, the Gospel of Jesus was suppressed and superseded by the Gospel about Jesus initiated by the apostle Paul; but the former religion became distinctly organized at Jerusalem, Antioch, and other centres. No religion ever flourished in an unorganized state. Consequently, the failure of organized religion signifies the failure of the only Christianity recognized by the world.

Dean Inge is convinced that men are "turning with passionate desire to the Christmas promise, and to him who, as was said the other day, irreverently, but not without real respect, is the only Person who has come out with intellectual credit from this horrible business—Jesus Christ." "This horrible business" means the depressing experiences of the last seven years, the great war and its aftermath; but what are the signs that people are coming back to Christ? A revival may probably come and cause a tremendous stir in certain districts, but the fact remains that no revival has ever been of permanent benefit to religion. It is science that is destined to triumph among all classes of the people. It is science that has the key with which to unlock the mysteries of Nature and of life, and that can set our feet upon the solid rock of truth. It is in the light of scientific knowledge that social and economic problems can be satisfactorily and permanently solved. A revival of interest in religion will divert men's minds from the things of this world to an all-absorbing interest in and devotion to the imaginary things said to be above. The Church has always opposed social reforms until they became realities. Even Dean Inge, good and great as he is, seems incapable of doing justice to the working-man. On many occasions he has spoken of him in a most disrespectful and insulting manner, thereby proving himself to be an unworthy representative of his own Lord and Master. "But," as Harnack says, "the Gospel is not one of social improvement, but of spiritual redemption." What this world needs is not spiritual redemption, but social regeneration along sane, just, and wholesome lines, and this can be effected only by a secular system of education. It is the science of sociology, not the doctrines of grace which the masses of our people ought to study and master, for with a fairly full understanding of it they will be more competent to face and settle the numerous questions which puzzle and perplex

them just now. It is knowledge, practical wisdom, not supernatural belief, this-worldliness, not other-worldliness, that can alone transform the world.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Factory of Fables.

Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end.  
—Thomas Carlyle.

Mythology and newspapers cannot co-exist.  
—Mr. A. G. Gardiner, former editor, "Daily News."

THE REV. W. J. STUART WEIR, Assistant Director, the Bishop of London's Sunday-school Council, has been writing on "Child Views of Bible Stories" in a weekly newspaper. In the course of the article the reverend gentleman freely admitted the very great and obvious difficulties that face the school teacher and the child when they read the Bible. He gave an illustration of these difficulties which is worth quoting:—

"And did God drown the horses too?" asked a boy of his teacher in a London Sunday-school recently. The teacher had been recounting the story of the crossing of the Red Sea and the Egyptian pursuit. "Yes," answered the teacher reluctantly—she told me she was not prepared to start theological hares she could not well hunt home. "Well," continued her pupil relentlessly, "I call it rotten of Him—that had done nothing wrong, anyhow."

"Strangely enough," adds the Rev. Mr. Weir, "the difficulties arising out of the Bible for the children of to-day would seem to be concerned not with matters of fact, but with matters of morality." This is a remarkably frank admission to come from a clergyman, but the question of the use of the Bible in schools is not to be so lightly dismissed.

The fact is that in this country education has been hampered by the desire of the clergy, of whom there are 50,000, to ally religious teaching with the ordinary school curriculum. This desire has been further complicated by the dissensions among the clergy themselves. The teachings of the Established Church are considered by the Nonconformists to be wrong and harmful, whilst the instruction given by Dissenters is pronounced by Churchmen to be heretical and dangerous. Roman Catholics, in their turn, consider that Anglicans and Free Churchmen are alike so monstrous that they provide their own schools. Churchmen and Nonconformists, however, agree that the Bible be read in the schools, but that no theological doctrines be taught. This is what is called "the compromise," and although it satisfies most of the clergy, who use it as the thin edge of the wedge, it still impedes education and fetters progress. For the clergy realize that so long as their fetish book is forced upon the children of this country their own position as a clerical caste is quite safe.

There are grave reasons, however, why the Bible should have no official place in the school programme. Its educational teaching is absolutely out of date, and comes to us "like the horns of Elfland faintly blowing." What do our kindergarten teachers, for instance, make of such Biblical advice as "a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding"; "Thou shalt beat him with a rod"; "Chasten thy son, and let not thy soul spare for his crying"? Such Bible injunctions may receive the blessings and approbation of 50,000 clergymen, but they remain the essence of barbarism, and their application merits the attention of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

This is not all. Large parts of the Bible are really unfit for children. If it were an ordinary volume instead of a fetish-book it would be pilloried as immoral,

and excluded from every school and every home in the country. For in its so-called sacred pages may be found plain, unvarnished accounts of rape, sodomy, unnatural vice, and all manner of ancient Eastern "frightfulness," written with all the love of detail peculiar to all Oriental writers. The florid, heated rhetoric of the Bible leaves nothing to the imagination, and the least lettered juvenile can appreciate its glowing periods. Oriental nastiness begins where Occidental pornography stops, and the ordinary sex-novel is a model of purity and restraint compared with the lusciousness of the Bible. No modern novelist would dare for a moment to imitate such writing, for he would be imprisoned and his books destroyed. Yet the 50,000 clergy of this country force the Bible, which contains all this abomination, into the hands of millions of children, knowing all the time that they dare not read the work in all its completeness to a mixed audience of adults.

Nor is this all! Bible chronology is simple nonsense. Only grossly ignorant, or mentally feeble, persons can believe that the universe was created six thousand years ago; that Adam, Noah, and Methuselah lived near a thousand years; and that Melchisadech had neither beginning nor ending of days. Philology gets no countenance from the blunders of the building of the Tower of Babel, nor from the pious perversions of the tongues of flame at Pentecost. The mistakes of Moses would strain the credulity of a Gold Coast negro to breaking point. In sober truth, there is neither history nor science worth troubling with in the sacred volume. The atmosphere throughout is that of the *Arabian Nights* and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. In the sacred pages a snake talks, a whale has a boarding-house in his stomach, a pigeon acts as a co-respondent, and a donkey makes speeches. In the Bible you will find fiery chariots, unicorns, dragons, flaming horses, giants, satyrs, cocatrice, and many other ancient marvels which, found in another book, would only excite derision.

Concerning medicine, we find the long-discredited notion of demoniacal possession being the cause of disease. Fevers are rebuked, leprosy cured by a fig-pultice, and blindness removed by expectoration. Some divinely favoured persons die twice, and others, still more favoured, never troubled the undertaker at all. Witchcraft is still insisted upon as being true long after it has been discarded by every nation with the slightest pretence to civilization.

As for ethics, the least said the better. The lives and actions of the Patriarchs, and of the kings of Israel and Judah, and other Bible heroes, are only paralleled in the *Newgate Calendar*. Some of the over-praised Psalms are a further proof that ancient theological ideas are, fortunately, not our ideals. In short, the Holy Bible, from the page describing Adam and Eve starting life at full age until the Second Person of the Undivided Trinity ascends into the ether like an aeroplane, is a salmagundi of unrestrained Oriental imagination. The book is inconsistent with common-sense and ascertained knowledge, and, sooner or later, it will have to be so regarded in spite of the 50,000 priests in this country. For Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing the little children from the absurdities, immoralities, and barbarities of uncivilized times perpetrated by this fetish-book.

MIMNERMUS.

"Over the beautiful portal of a churchyard in England were written the words 'This is none other than the Gate of Heaven.' In a stormy season the custodian put on the gatepost the notice that 'Owing to the inclemency of the weather this gate is closed until further notice.'" —(Professor G. M. Wrong, *United States and Canada; a Political Study*, 1921; p. 13.)

## Joy Philosophy.

Now by two-headed Janus,  
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time.

THERE is probably no sphere of human activity which has been so productive of strange, weird, and fantastic aberrations of intellect as the sphere of religion.

The outstanding characteristic of modern times, common to all classes of the community, seems to be a craving credulity. No sooner is one superstition exposed and run to earth than another springs into being to take its place. As Lord Bacon says: "The greatest vicissitude of things amongst men is the vicissitude of sects and religions."

It is curious that most "freak religions" originate in the land of the "Stars and Stripes"; and one can hardly avoid the suspicion that the cult of the supernatural and the occult is deliberately exploited as a source of income.

The watchword of America to-day is "Efficiency." "Get on or get out." We are told in large capitals that "*The industrial struggle which is about to be precipitated in America will be fought out on a basis of efficiency, still better efficiency, but universally efficiency.*"

In no branch of enterprise is Yankee "efficiency" more conspicuous than in advertising. They have reduced it to a science. They have cultivated it as a fine art. A glance at any American magazine will convince anyone that Brother Jonathan is far ahead of John Bull in the artistic production of his "boosting stunts." Moreover, Jonathan knows his public, he has the public "sized up" to a nicety, and his overwhelming desire and ambition appears to be to place within the reach of everyone the means of acquiring the special American brand of "Efficiency."

Accordingly, he has put upon the market an immense number of books and pamphlets containing the lore and magic of all peoples, nations, and languages, arranged to meet the needs of all classes from the "soda jerker" and "counter-jumper" to the society lady and the millionaire. These publications are intended to instruct all and sundry, exactly how to elevate themselves by mental machinery. These works are all Theistic in tone, and refer frequently, in large capitals, to the *One*, the *All*, the only *Power*, the divine *Source*, and so forth.

Here, for example, is an attractive volume, bound in purple silk cloth, with gold title, priced at one dollar. It bears the seductive title, *Joy Philosophy*.

The authoress, we are informed, "stands alone." "No writer of the century has achieved such insight into the deepest problems." The book is written, we are told, to "arouse within you the joy of living in consciousness with your Limitless Self, which is *my* Self too. Health, happiness and success to you, my readers."

Now, that is really very sweet of the dear lady. We can all do with a good dose of health, we can enjoy a spell of happiness, and a long run of success will not come amiss these hard times.

All these blessings are obtainable, the kind lady tells us, by repeating a series of weird incantations, which are here quoted *in extenso* (all in large capitals):—

I am omnipotent, omniscient, all pervading.  
I am power, I am wisdom, I am love,  
I am what I desire to be.

"When you have that tired and unsuccessful feeling, just rise into the realm *I Am*, and by imagination and affirmation pump yourself full of *I Am God*."

The authoress has surely "let the cat out of the bag"; unwittingly, of course.

In order to dissipate the apparent egotism of the above litany the lady explains: "When I say I am

power, I lean to God, the only Power. When I say I am wisdom, I call God. When I say I am Love, I reckon myself nothing and God *All*, for God is Love. So I say, Stop, and pump yourself full of *I Am God*."

We are next enlightened on "The Law of Being." Our lady philosopher dogmatizes as follows: "God is Love. God, or Love, is the Law of every being. By love every being was created; by love he is held together, by love he grows."

We are then conducted through mazes of metaphorical confusion, in manner following:—

The soul-centre of being manifests as the "solar plexus," a great ganglion back of the stomach, from which nerves radiate to even the backwoods neighbourhoods of the body. The solar plexus is the powerhouse of the individual. God or love is the *Power*.

The solar plexus draws its power from the Great Unseen. The intangible becomes tangible at the solar centre; the hitherto undirected power of space and eternity here begins to be directed; the uncontrolled comes under control, the unexpressed begins here to *ex-press*.....*Great* power depends, primarily, upon a free solar plexus. *Great* power can never be expressed under a tight corset, which binds and packs the solar plexus.

A lesson on right breathing follows: "If you feel fear clutch your solar plexus.....Well, then, just breathe. By using the chest and abdominal muscles properly you can shake out the kinks of that paralyzed solar plexus and *let in power*."

After practising this sort of thing some time, "You will have taught your solar plexus to *stay open* and *let in power*."

Evidence of "spiritual growth" is determined in this interesting fashion:—

When you arrive at this stage you will wake some morning to find yourself making more money. When you find yourself approaching the \$5,000 a year mark, you will find yourself wanting \$10,000. Just rejoice in this evidence of spiritual growth, enlarge your operations, and go in to win on a larger scale. *Get busy with life*.

Thus it is that our American cousins teach "Efficiency." The motto of the Yankee "Uplifter" might well be that cynical jest of Ouida's: "There is nothing that you may not get people to believe, if you will only tell it to them loud enough and often enough."

Another book, priced at \$1.50, is entitled *How to Live Forever*. It essays to teach how man may possess "eternal health and immortal youth." *Practical Methods for Self Development* tells "How to free your soul," "How to grow spiritual consciousness," "How to treat *Bugs* and *People*."

In a press notice of this publication we are advised: "If you would be greater, wiser, more attractive, more beautiful, study this book. If you would get broader, deeper, higher views of Life and Man, study this book."

When fifty professional "Uplifters" are all clamouring, "My System is the Best," the one who can impress the public mind with the most cogent reasons will capture the trade. As every Britisher knows, "The Almighty Dollar" appeals to every true American. We find, therefore, that all these publications bait their book with dollars sooner or later.

*How to Promote Yourself* is the alluring title of a pamphlet which explains that "Your wants are impressed on the *Divine Mind* only by your Faith. A doubt cuts the connection."

Evidently, this will not be of use to Freethinkers. Here is another pamphlet, stated to be in its thirtieth edition, *Dollars Want Me*. It declares:—

That each individual has the ability so to radiate his mental forces that he can cause the Dollars to feel him, love him, seek him, and thus draw, at will,

all things needed for his unfoldment from the Universal Supply.

*What Are Dollars?* enquires the author, and replies:—

Dollars are manifestations of the *One Infinite Substance*.....They have no power till you give them power. Make them feel this through your thought-vibrations as you feel the importance of your work. They will then come to you to be used.

*What is Poverty?* :—

Poverty is a mental condition. It can be cured only by Affirmations of Power to cure.....I *Am* a part of the *One*, and, in the *One*, I possess all. Affirm this and patiently wait for the manifestation.

"Thus do men play fools with the true, and the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds and mock us."

It is to be noted that all these "freak religions" claim to be based on "Christian Truth," they are one and all a conglomeration of the five M's: myth, magic, mystery, metaphysics, and miracle. "It is," says Chadband, "the ray of rays, the sun of suns, the moon of moons, the star of stars. It is the light of Terewth," and so say all professional "Uplifters." "Superstition," says *Punch*, "would soon die out if so many old women wouldn't act as nurses to keep it alive."

Religion is a paying proposition; "godliness is great gain." In an age of competitive commercialism, quacks and charlatans will ply their unholy trade just as long as they can find dupes with dollars. "When money speaks, the Truth keeps silent."

How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!  
How pleasant it is to have money.

BERNARD MOORE.

### Acid Drops.

Does God take notice of prayers? Sometimes it looks as though he does. For instance. An old lady of 76, Miss Guthrie, living at Lewisham, was saying her prayers before going down to breakfast. She was found kneeling by her bedside, dead. The evidence given at the inquest showed that "in the unfortunate position of leaning against the bed she was unable to respire, and died from suffocation." So it looks as though God does attend when we are praying. All the same it is detestable taking advantage of a woman who is trustful enough to pray to him.

Why, in the name of all that is sensible, people when they want to talk to God must go down on their knees is more than one can see. If we want to talk to a god, or to anyone else the only decent attitude is to stand up. To grovel on one's knees is the attitude of a slave. And a God who was worth bothering about would much rather that one stood up and talked to him like a man than in any other attitude. One could understand going down by the side of a bed and whispering through the bed-clothes if God was under the bed, but that is surely not what prayerful people believe. The whole attitude is suggestive of the frame of mind that really lies at the root of religion. It is that of a slave crouching before a tyrant. We do not suppose that all those who pray realize this, but neither does a dog when it turns round on a hearth-rug before lying down realize that it is repeating the habit formed by its savage ancestor centuries ago before it made its bed on the prairie grass.

Policemen appear to be somewhat arbitrary in the matter of ethics. A Blackpool police superintendent has dubbed carol-singing "immoral." Perhaps there is a little excuse in this instance. To sing "Christians, Awake," for example, in the Whitechapel district of London would almost be a crime.

Tempestuous weather marked the passing of the old year. Gales of hurricane velocity swept over all parts of

the country, causing loss of life and property. At Battersea a chimney was blown down, killing two persons and injuring several others. The finger of Providence may be traced in these matters.

Edward O'Connor, recently executed at Winson Green Gaol, Birmingham, for murder of his son, died quite reconciled to his fate. Before execution he sent a letter to his wife from which we take the following:—

Well, Lizzie, by the time you get my letter I shall have gone to my Maker. As I have made my peace with God and all the wrong I have done and caused in the family, I ask and I believe you have all forgiven me in your prayers, as I now forgive you all the wrong that has been brought against me. It is God's will that I should leave this world of trials. I am reconciled to that fate. I know the children are in good hands, and one thing I am certain they will stick to their church and faith. That is a proud consolation that has helped me through those many trying weeks of waiting. I have a favourite hymn I like, and it was sung at mass this morning.....I shall remember you, Lizzie, my wife, and I ask, sometimes remember me in your prayers, and by my fervent prayers I hope I have obtained that Crown of Glory by asking, "Oh, Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." I shall be praying for you, and some day, please God, we may meet in that joyous abode.

Quite an edifying letter and a very pious death. Thanks to committing a murder O'Connor has had plenty of time to make his peace with God, and dies assured of a good place in heaven. Had he not murdered his son he might have died without any such assurance and without a priest being told off for his benefit. What a fortunate man is O'Connor! And what a religion to offer a man! To make sure of heaven commit a murder. That is the real moral of the position. But Justice Avory says you must not treat religion with contempt. Contempt in relation to such a religion is a too dignified term.

We are not greatly surprised at the practical breakdown of the Disarmament Conference at Washington, although we had hoped for the best. There were far too many soldiers, sailors and ancient politicians there for it to succeed. And what it wanted was men with courage and vision. The conferencers, for the most part, had neither. The militarists were, as usual, living in a panic of fear—either of the people they had fought, or those whom they thought they might have to fight—and the ancient politicians could only bring to the task the ideas and the outlook of a dead world. Now, if a Conference could be called made up of men under forty, or forty-five at the outside, and if all diplomatists were rigorously excluded something useful might be done. But while the old men and the militarists have the game in hand very little can be effected.

For the rest, we think that France has had a good many things said against her that are hardly deserved. She requires an enormous fleet of submarines, and England wants to know whom she wants them against. We do not believe they are wanted against anybody in particular. She is simply frightened, as are the rest, and requires them for "protection" against anybody that she needs protecting against. And it is much the same story all round. Each of the nations is willing to give up anything it thinks it can do without so long as it will leave it in a position to "protect" itself when necessary. Not one of them can trust the other, and none of them have the courage to see that the only adequate form of protection is that pointed out by Paine. When these nations have the courage to scrap all their armaments they will have secured the only real form of protection possible. And if two or three of the "Great Powers" had the courage to lead the way, and establish an international force for merely police duties, the trick would be done.

We are not at all impressed by the talk of branding submarine warfare as piracy. That is all very well in times of peace, but when war occurs it will be a different thing. There are a thousand and one possibilities of a genuine mistake being made at sea, and about as many

of a mistake being made when it suits the game that is being played. And when we find in Egypt a notice issued that if a crowd of unarmed civilians refuse to disperse they will be bombed from aeroplanes, it is hardly likely that a nation at death grips will be bound down by rules made during peace concerning submarine warfare. What these warlike people need is intelligence and courage.

In the course of a review of Mr. Cohen's *Grammar of Freethought* a writer in *Light*, who says he has found in it "much to interest and something to admire," falls foul of the author's statement that a man living on a desert island would find morality meaningless. What Mr. Cohen says is that all moral obligations imply a relation. One must be honest, or loyal, or truthful, or kind, in relation to some one. *Light* differs and says that the man on a desert island would still be part of the spiritual community of life, which strikes us as saying the same thing in another way. For it is in relation to these assumed spiritual beings that *Light* finds the condition of morality after all.

*Light* says that to the author "life is all a physical question." And that is not true, and that does not represent the author's position. Mr. Cohen is a thoroughgoing Materialist, but it does not at all follow that he regards all questions as physical ones. Whether we care to call a given phenomenon or a given group of phenomena physical, or chemical, or biological, or psychological, is, ultimately, a question of classification, or, to use the philosophical term, categories. And the relations between men which determine the existence of morality are not physical, but psychological. Physical contiguity merely supplies the conditions for the psychological phenomena. *Light* illustrates a very common confusion concerning the nature of Materialism, one from which many self-styled Materialists themselves are not quite free. So soon as other matters are out of the way, Mr. Cohen will write some articles on this subject. He has often been asked to do so, and he may as well write on that as on anything else.

Under the heading of "Ecclesiastical News" the *Times* the other day reported a new Diocesan plan for helping the clergy. We were under the impression that the clergy were pretty good at helping themselves.

Mr. Hugh Herring, a well-known Lincolnshire conjuror, has just been ordained. He will now be able to offer his congregation an explanation of some of the biblical miracles, with practical illustrations.

A Chinese general seriously suggests that war might be stopped if a nation sent out to meet the enemy encountered first, children who would let the enemy see what would be their plight if their elders were killed, then fathers who would plead for their children, then the newly married, followed by workmen who would explain the horrors of war, and so on. He is convinced that if the enemy realized all this the soldiers would all go home. Well, well, that might do for a heathen nation such as China, but we are sure it would be ineffective where the Christian nations are concerned. They would be more inclined to use the sufferings of the children, the aged, and the mass of the people to compel the other side to give in. The general has evidently been paying too much attention to the Chinese classics and not enough to the literature of the Christian world.

There are Christians and Christians. That is, there are Christians who we should say are better than their creed and there are others who are as bad—in our opinion it is hardly possible for them to be worse. A peculiarly unpleasant specimen of the latter class is a writer in the *Christian* for December 29, a copy of which has just reached us. In the course of a comment on the blasphemy case the writer quite endorses Justice Avory's sentence

on J. W. Gott—the only paper we have seen that does endorse it—and towards the end of the paragraph it says :

Christianity does not require "rescuing," but youths and maidens need protecting against foul-mouthed men, who with the instinct of dogs, are ever in search of unsavoury things, which they create when they cannot discover them. We have no wish to see the old Blasphemy laws revived and applied to persons who have no intention of blaspheming. But such men as the one sent to gaol by Mr. Justice Avory deserve nothing but segregation from the rest of their fellows. Certain it is that some others deserve his fate.

We do not know who the writer of the paragraph is, but we have no hesitation in saying that only a coarse-minded evangelical ruffian with no concern for either truth or justice could have written it. The insinuation that the prosecution was to protect youths and maidens against something foul and unsavoury is just a lie, without a single extenuating circumstance. And we would challenge a committee of reputable Christians to find a single line in Mr. Gott's indictment that could be called foul or indecent. Even Justice Avory, in passing a sentence that has roused general indignation, dared not use those terms. We say without hesitation that girls and boys in Sunday-schools find more filth and foulness in certain parts of the Bible in the course of a single month than they could discover in "blasphemous" writings in a lifetime.

As to the *Christian* drawing a distinction between those who do not intend to blaspheme and those who do so without the intention, we beg to inform all and sundry that for more than thirty years we have been committing the technical offence of blasphemy, that is, we have been ridiculing religion and bringing Christianity and the Holy Scriptures into contempt, and intend to continue doing so. Yet we have never been prosecuted for blasphemy and do not anticipate any such attack. These Christian bigots are just as cowardly as they are narrow-minded. They attack when they think they can do so safely. And then they expect decent men and women not to hold their religion up to contempt! As though there are words in the English language strong enough to exhaust the contempt of a healthy mind for so contemptible a creed.

There seems to be a dead set being made against the Grand Jury system in many quarters, and it is hard to see, with regard to some of them, on what ground. Judges we can understand. They have a natural dislike to a body which is not under their eye, and which comes between them and the cases to be tried. The remark of some of these that now there is a court of criminal appeal there is no need for a Grand Jury shows a complete misunderstanding of the position. A court of criminal appeal cannot take the place of a Grand Jury since it has to do with errors in law. And even if the judges who have condemned the Grand Jury system were right in their remarks, the case for a Grand Jury would still remain strong. Over and over again in the course of our history a Grand Jury has played the important part of standing between the executive and the people so as to prevent either the operation of an unjust law or the unjust application of a law that is otherwise just. And it does this by simply declining to permit the trial to go forward. And, of course, judges do not like this. They insist that a jury must apply the law whether they consider the law right or wrong. That is the purely legal view of the matter, and the quite stupid view of the matter. The sensible and the enlightened view is to prevent injustice whether it is legal or not. For our part we should be very sorry to see the Grand Jury abolished. It may be useless in nine cases out of ten, but it is the tenth case that is important.

At a service at which her father was presiding a four-year-old child was choked by a sweet. The little girl was one of the congregation at Hope Baptist Chapel, Caeron, Maesteg. There is no moral of importance, but had the child's father been a Freethinker we wonder what pious journalists would have said.

Dr. Graham, a Scottish Bishop Auxiliary, has been letting himself go on the subject of feminine dress. "Women," he declares, "require adequate clothing to preserve their continence, to protect virtue, to control evil passions, to remove temptation." This is delightful—in Scotland. Why does not the bishop have something to say concerning male attire. Some Scotchmen wear kilts instead of trousers.

At a recent meeting of the St. Pancras Board of Guardians a recommendation was received from the House Committee urging the abolition of the office of lay reader at the Institution. The reader had been carrying out this service for sixteen years, and the office cost £220 a year. The chaplain declared that a lay reader was not required.

MR. STOCKEN said that they had practically a similar case at the Highgate Hospital. It was cruel after these men had worked paid for a number of years, whether they were required or not, to dismiss them.

MISS VANCE—Is there not a certain amount of cruelty to the ratepayers in paying £220 a year for an office that is not wanted!

The Board decided to discontinue the office. It would be interesting to know how many similar offices in London, or elsewhere, are "not required."

The whole subject of the relationship of the cleric to the public, and the public purse, would come more prominently into the daylight if the rate-payers had a little more of what the Scotch call "spunk." Between 1916-1918 the tithes went up about 33 per cent., when the Government stepped in and fixed the amount at a definite sum by the Tithe Act of 1918. By 10 and 11 Geo. V c. 22 the owners of a benefice not exceeding £300 per annum are exempt from payment of poor-rate, and where the benefice exceeds £300 but not £500 per annum they pay only half the poor-rate. We are aware, of course, that certain historical grounds can be given for some of the apparent anomalies associated with the Establishment, but the whole question will probably soon give rise to some acute discussion. That stage would have arisen long ago if the Nonconformists had stood to their guns. But, as a well-known politician once remarked, there are "hereditary Nonconformists whose God is respectability and whose goal a baronetcy."

The Nonconformist conscience is one of the most interesting entities in England to-day. It came to terms with "the world" long ago and appears to suffer little remorse as a result of the bargain. For the members of the Free (!) Churches, as for the prelate of the Establishment, damnation to-day consists in commanding only a small bank balance. One recalls gratefully W. T. Stead's denunciations of certain Yankee revivalists for their foul libels on Ingersoll, and his general attitude to the blasphemy laws. But over the portal of every Free Church to-day one reads the word "Ichabod," and the same may be said of the entire Christian world-view.

On the last day of the old year the violent gale destroyed a house at Battersea, killing two of the occupants and injuring five others. In Glasgow on new year's day a tenement collapsed and six people were injured. In the districts round Sale, Cheshire, the advent of 1922 was greeted with heavy rains, "extensive tracts of country being flooded." Yet it is reported that in some counties water is still being carted to the villages for domestic use. "I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, saith the Lord."

The *Manchester Guardian* (January 2) contained a brief item of news that was full of pathos, appearing as it did amid the mass of reflections and anticipations which this month always brings in its train. A trawler foundered on the coast of the Orkneys, and nine men who put off on a raft to the rescue were drawn under by the suction of the foundering vessel. They were all drowned. That is the whole story. There were no names given, and no leading articles about "the unknown grave." They are reserved

for the seekers after real glory, whether at the cannon's mouth or at revivalist meetings.

Two items of news in the Press of the past few days should not be overlooked at a time when men are being imprisoned for bringing "the holy Scriptures" into contempt. One is the report of the death of a "peculiar saint," to quote the words of the *Daily Chronicle*. Deceased was a prominent member of the denomination known as the Peculiar People, and had endured six months' serious illness, resolutely refusing medical aid. "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Where their children are concerned, however, "peculiar" parents stand a chance of getting nine months where Mr. Gott is if they fail to call in a doctor. The second item is from Leeds. A member of a religious organization, "The Leeds Brotherhood," has been sentenced to thirteen days' imprisonment because on religious grounds he refused to send his child to school. "Be not fashioned according to this world." It is as unsafe to believe too much Bible as to believe too little.

There has been going on a discussion between Canon Peter Green and a Mr. Major on the question of the Resurrection which appears likely to end in a trial for heresy. If it does we wonder what will happen? By law the Ecclesiastical Courts can sentence Mr. Major, if he is proved guilty, to six months' imprisonment. But if they did so sentence him they would, presumably, have to call on the civil powers to carry it out, and the question is, would they do it? What would actually happen we expect would be that the Court would satisfy itself with condemning the doctrine as heretical, and Mr. Major would, metaphorically, put his fingers to his nose, and there the matter would end. In the case of a clergyman they could deprive him of his living, in the case of a layman they are practically powerless.

Consider the whole dispute. Mr. Major wrote that, "At the resurrection the soul shed its physical integument for ever." What a soul looks like without its "physical integument" we have not the remotest idea, but that is of small importance in a theological enquiry. Canon Green holds that Christ rose from the dead in a way that cannot be said to be true of ordinary people, and Mr. Major appears to believe that the resurrection of Christ involves no more than the doctrine of human immortality. So these two gentlemen, each considering himself quite civilized—because he does not go naked and live in a cave—go along disputing on a question which, when we strip it of a mass of semi-philosophic verbiage, is mentally on the level of the cave men. If Canon Green and Mr. Major were to carry their dispute to central Africa the only danger they would run with a committee of natives adjudicating would be that some of them might have enough common sense to put rather awkward questions to the disputants. Otherwise they would be in complete "spiritual" sympathy with both of them. The solemn absurdity of it all!

Any intelligent inquirer reading the newspaper reports of the heresy charge against Rev. H. D. A. Major, Principle of Ripon Hall, Oxford, is not likely to be greatly perturbed over the question, What is to be put in the place of Christianity? Mr. Major's heresy, apparently, consists in the declaration of his belief that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a spiritual, not a physical event. That such a subject should absorb columns of space in our newspapers, which suppress all items of news bearing in the direction of Freethought, is a sufficient indication of the enlightened state of public opinion in England. Even the *Yorkshire Post* (January 3) asks, "Is the matter really of so much importance to anybody on earth as to merit the expenditure of time and money which the ecclesiastical inquiry will involve?"

"I am trying by a series of lantern-lectures to woo a few parishioners from the fireside," says a Broadstairs vicar. The audiences should be invited to sing "Lead Kindly Light"!

**WHY NOT HAND THIS COPY TO A LIKELY**



## Blasphemy Defence Fund.

THERE is nothing further to report this week in connection with the blasphemy case. Next week we shall be able to announce the result of the Appeal, which is expected to be heard on January 16. This makes it rather awkward for us as it will mean an all-night journey from Swansea in order to be present at the trial. Again, every care is being taken with the matter, and we are having a final consultation with Counsel so soon as this issue of the *Freethinker* is out of the way.

We have received a letter from Mr. Gott from Wormwood Scrubs. He writes in excellent spirits, and it is evident that whatever be the consequence of the Appeal he will not be unduly depressed. He writes:—

I am glad now that I put my defence into the hands of the N. S. S. and that friends are giving you such fine support in all that you are doing. You have already done all that one can think possible up to going to the Appeal Court. What will happen there none can tell until after the Appeal has been heard. Personally, the only thing that I hope for is a result which will be most helpful to you in the still greater effort of bringing about the repeal of the blasphemy laws. I am glad that you have taken that matter in hand, because it is a simple matter of justice so long withheld from Freethinkers. I am also sure that the time was never more favourable than the present for achieving that end. Public opinion has turned our way tremendously during recent years. An early General Election will give a further chance for publicity. You are far too keen a fighter to miss any of these chances. I give you thanks and wish you luck.

With regard to the Fund. The total to date is acknowledged below, which is not yet what the expected cost of the three trials will be. Still, we dislike Funds being continued indefinitely, and have decided to close the list on January 29. By that time all who intend contributing will have done so.

The following is a list of subscriptions to date:—

Previously acknowledged, £396 8s. 6d. A. J. Leaker, 2s. 6d.; J. M. Gimson, £2 2s.; A. J. Marriott, 2s. 6d.; G. Hogg, 2s. 6d.; Joida, 2s. 6d.; Miss M. Rogerson, 10s.; W. Petherbridge (per B. Dupree), 5s.; T. H. E., £2; N. Richardson, 12s.; W. S. Hurstleigh, 10s.; W. Shelley, 2s.; C. Butcher, £2; L. M., 3s.; M. Driscoll, 2s. 6d.; W. Collins, 4s.; G. Scott, 3s.; R. Bedford, 5s.; H. R. C., 5s.; Vera, £1; J. Stansfield, 2s. 6d.; H. J. Wilson, 2s. 6d.; J. Taylor, £1; A. Goodman, £1; H. Evetts, 5s.; Thos. D. Drewry, 2s.; Stockport Branch, 10s.; R. J. T., 10s.; G. B. Baillie, 5s.; J. Effel, 4s.; A. D. Thompson (further donation), 5s.; Edward Haining, 5s.; F. Goulding, 1s.; H. Tucker, 10s.; S. Cohen, 10s.

Per A. Vanderhout—R. K. Gunn, 5s.; W. Smith, 10s.; A. Friend, 5s.; C. Fletcher, 2s. 6d.; F. Edwards, 2s. 6d.; G. Smith, 2s. 6d.; R. Garcia, 2s. 6d.; Friend, 2s. 6d.; H. Wheatley, 2s. 6d.; F. Holdsworth, 2s. 6d.; W. Galloway, 2s. 6d.; W. Andrews, 2s. 6d.; F. Howell, 2s. 6d.; D. Aberdeen, 8s.; Vic. Collins, 10s.; J. Oliver, 2s. 6d.; T. Oliver, 2s. 6d.; L. Starns, 5s.; H. Edwards, 2s. 6d.; A. Vanderhout, 10s.

(Correction.—The £2 acknowledged from G. E. Webb on December 25 should have been £1 2s. 6d. The total has been altered accordingly.)

Total—£416 19s. 6d.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The early Christian converts were those who had little to part with, whose experiences of life were hard already, and who found the hardness of their lot made more bearable by the knowledge that want and sorrow were no evils, and might be actually good for them. Intellectually they were called on to believe nothing which in itself was difficult. Such men knew nothing of science or of laws of nature. The world as they knew it was a world already full of signs and wonders. There was nothing wonderful in the coming to earth of a Son of God, for the Jews had been told to expect him; and the Gentiles believed that he had come in the person of Augustus Cæsar.—James Anthony Froude.

## O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 15, Swansea; January 22, Stratford Town Hall; January 29, Stockport; February 5, Birmingham; February 19, Glasgow; March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester.

## To Correspondents.

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

A. YARDLEY.—We should like to be in a position to supply all the Free Libraries with copies of Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism?* and *Grammar of Freethought* but we simply cannot afford it. We do distribute a considerable quantity of literature during the year, and also many public libraries with free copies of the *Freethinker*, but we cannot do more in that direction than we are doing at present.

B. C. SAPHIN.—We agree with you that the bigots will do their best to shout us down if we give them the chance. They will find it much easier to make the attempt than to achieve success.

W. CHALLIS.—Glad you find the *Freethinker* a "weekly tonic," and wish you could persuade another thousand people to feel they need it. It would make a world of difference to our peace of mind.

F. DAVIES.—Sorry your obituary notice did not reach us in time for insertion in last week's issue.

W. RHODES.—Some years ago we had a large stock of the pamphlets you name, but they are now all cleared out.

S. HAMILTON.—You have indulged yourself in a good grumble against a number of people and things, so that you should rest easier for some time to come.

E. A. PHIPSON.—Certainly Freethought embraces the whole of life, but it does not follow that we have room in the small space at our disposal to deal with it all. This journal exists for a specific purpose, and there are other journals which also have their special part to play. We are not at all convinced that we should aid our circulation by opening our columns to every subject that some of our readers may happen to be interested in.

T. H. E.—Glad to hear from you, and shall be equally pleased to see you whenever you have the time. It is unfortunate that so many people are so busy getting a living that they have no time left to live. We know in your case in which direction your deeper interests lie.

G. SCOTT.—Sorry to learn that you have sickness in the house. There is nothing more worrying than that. We are a great believer in the Emersonian "Give me health and a day and I am monarch of the world." We hope you will soon banish the unwelcome visitor.

W. COLLINS.—Distributing two extra copies of the *Freethinker* weekly is a very important piece of propaganda. Pleased to learn that you have written your member re the blasphemy laws, and to know that you intend moving a resolution at your trades union meeting. Hope both moves will do good. We must keep the ball rolling. Don't hesitate to write when you feel inclined.

LAW STUDENT.—We think our contention that the only form of Christianity actually protected by law is the established religion is quite sound. It is certainly open to the courts to accept any and every form of belief as Christian which happens to call itself so. Neither is it possible for a court to transform itself into a Church Council and determine what is genuine and what is spurious Christianity. Consequently, if the issue is pressed home, the only form of Christianity positively known to the courts, and which is protected by the blasphemy laws, is that established by law. And, of course, so far as any Church holds doctrines and teachings similar to the Church of England ones they also are protected. But the sectarian character of the blasphemy laws remain.

H. DAWSON.—Seven members are necessary to form a Branch of the N. S. S., and advertising bills for the South Place meeting are being sent.

J. TAYLOR.—Pleased to have your appreciation of what we are doing, and of "the high standard of the *Freethinker*."

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

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

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

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

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### Sugar Plums.

We hope that our London readers are keeping well in mind the meeting for the repeal of the blasphemy laws which will be held at South Place on Wednesday evening, January 18. Everyone should make an effort to be present and to do what they can to induce outsiders to be present also. If Freethinkers do not show themselves in earnest in this matter we can hardly expect others to do so. The full programme of speakers—so far as it is known at the time of going to press—appears on the back page of this issue. Those who can spare the time might make it a point of securing a supply of advertisement slips and circulate them in likely quarters. We must make this the beginning of a systematic agitation that shall effect the repeal of laws that disgrace the name of a civilized country.

There are also printed a number of posters, and all who can exhibit one of these should write at once to the General Secretary saying how many they can display. We can also do with a few more stewards, and those who will be at liberty on the 18th will oblige by sending in their names.

In view of this agitation Mr. Cohen has written a pamphlet dealing with the question under the title of *Blasphemy: A Plea for Religious Equality*. That is now in the press and will be issued within the next week—if the printers do not hang us up. It consists of a plain statement of the law, with a historical review of its changes, and a summary of the arguments in favour of abolition. The pamphlet will be sold at threepence, and in order to assist its circulation the Pioneer Press will send six copies and upwards post free. This is done to encourage our readers to circulate the pamphlet among those who would not otherwise see it. It should be sent to liberal-minded clergymen, members of local bodies, etc., and an attempt made to get their attitude with reference to the abolition of the blasphemy laws. All this will be of great service, and we hope to see our offer taken advantage of by a large number of our readers. A large edition of the pamphlet is being printed and we should like to see it exhausted as soon as possible. We should like to send the pamphlet round to all the clergy and others ourselves if we could afford it, but that is beyond our means. We give our work, which must stand for our contribution to the cause.

To-day (January 15) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Elysium, High Street, Swansea, at 7 on "The Foundations of Faith." Admission is free, with reserved seats at 1s. and 6d. We have no doubt but that there will be the usual good attendance.

Stratford Town Hall was filled on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's address on "Free Speech and the Blas-

phemy law." The lecture was followed throughout with the closest attention, and, apparently, whole-hearted approval. It is interesting to note that among the audience was Inspector Elphick, who was responsible for the recent blasphemy prosecution, the issue of which will, for the moment, be decided on the 16th in the Court of Appeal. Mr. Cohen dealt firmly and faithfully with the Inspector, and it is to be hoped that he went away to reflect carefully upon the hornet's nest he has stirred up. Whether he will be moved to initiate new prosecutions, or decide that the matter had best be left alone, and the gods left to defend their own honour remains to be seen. In either case we await the issue without any very serious alarm.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti occupied the chair, and gave the right tone to the meeting in his opening remarks. At the end of the meeting he also proposed a resolution calling the attention of the Home Secretary to the sentence on J. W. Gott, and asking for his release and the repeal of the Blasphemy laws. This was seconded by Councillors Anderson and Allison, two members of the West Ham Town Council, and carried without a single dissentient vote. So there can be no opinion of what one large meeting of West Ham residents thinks of the prosecution. We doubt whether Inspector Elphick could get a unanimous vote in favour of the prosecution in any meeting in West Ham. In fact, we are sure he could not, and we invite him or his friends to try.

The lecturer at Stratford Town Hall this evening (January 15) is Mr. J. T. Lloyd. His subject is "The Story of the Earth," and we hope that East London Freethinkers and others will see that the hall is crowded. Trams and 'buses will put visitors from all parts of London down outside the door of the Town Hall, and Stratford Station (G.E.R.) is within five minutes' walk. The present is a good opportunity to bring along a Christian friend to hear the horrible blasphemy a man like Mr. Lloyd is capable of. Perhaps Inspector Elphick may repeat his visit.

This year our Belgian contemporary, *La Pensée*, returns to its pre-war size, and the old aggressive policy, to some extent interfered with by the war, will be resumed. Dr. Eugène Hins, who founded the journal in 1905, has just entered his eighty-second year, and his advanced age obliges him to hand over the general control of the paper to younger colleagues. The veteran Freethinker has indeed earned a rest. His active work in the cause of human emancipation goes back to the year 1866, and his services to Freethought in Belgium have reacted favourably upon the whole of Europe. To Dr. Hins we offer our tribute of recognition, to his successors our best wishes for the future.

Mr. Charles Baker writes from South Africa:—

You are doing splendid work against heavy odds, but it is telling with much greater effect than many think. Isolated Freethinkers like myself always pass their papers on. I do this with both the *Freethinker* and the *Literary Guide*. A lady friend of mine, who was formerly a nurse in the Joburg General Hospital, was asked by one of the medical men if she read the *Freethinker*. If we were not so isolated it would be comparatively easy to advance the circulation of Freethought literature. But except in the towns we can only get at people through the post. The churches in South Africa are, I am glad to say, far less supported than they are in Europe, and the majority take but little interest in religion. Very few attend church regularly.

The plight of the Christian Church seems much the same all over the world.

On Saturday (January 14) at 6.30 p.m. the Manchester Branch will hold a social evening. There will be whist, dancing, and musical items. Fancy dress is optional. No charge will be made for admission, but a collection will be taken to defray expenses. On Sunday afternoon (January 15) Mr. R. Nest, L.D.S., of Llanelly, will speak on "The Basis of Morality," and in the evening on "The New Morality."

## Dating Church Holy-Days.

It is reported that the change of the date of the Church holy-day known as Easter Day is under contemplation by the Vatican. This would involve an entire revision of the ecclesiastical calendar, since Easter being a movable feast, must necessarily exert an influence on other important days of religious commemoration, as, for instance, Good Friday, which is always the Friday preceding the day that Christianity has set apart for the celebration of the supposed resurrection of Jesus, in bodily form, from the sepulchre.

The rule for determining the date when Easter is to be observed, according to ecclesiastical usage, is as follows: Easter Day—on which the rest depend—is always the First Sunday following the Full Moon next after the Twenty-first of March; and if the full moon happens upon a Sunday, Easter Day is the Sunday after. According to this method of determining Easter, the day may vary in its date from March 22 to April 25. To have an important Christian feast day depend upon phases of the moon, seems most extraordinary to the rational mind, especially in view of the denunciation uttered by the prophet Isaiah, who said: "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them."

But we of to-day are acquainted with certain facts which, seemingly, were unknown to the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, namely, that Judaism, and afterwards Christianity, was a solar religion; that is, that it looked to the movements of the heavenly bodies, to the signs of the Zodiac, not only to determine the nature of its God, but the times when he was to be remembered by fast or festival, as was the case with all religions that had as their chief divinity a Sun-God. For from the fact that the present date of observing Easter is due wholly to the phases of the moon, it is perfectly obvious that there must be some sort of connection between Christianity and astronomy, the Church itself acting as the arbiter in the case.

But the connection between the movements of the heavenly bodies and the religion of Jesus is even more strongly emphasized by the further fact that the date for keeping Easter in the early Church was made to synchronize with the Jewish feast of the Passover, which was, and is still, a celebration ascertained by the moon's phases. Easter became a movable feast solely because the Passover was of that character. The resurrection had no date of its own; but as it was supposed to have occurred about the time of the Hebrew Passover, the primitive Church followed the method for determining Easter adopted by the Jews for settling the date of the Passover festival.

This proves beyond controversy the close alliance that existed at first between so-named Christianity and formal Judaism. The original religion of the cross was solely a sect of Judaism. Jesus came to bring about the fulfilment of the Law. There is nothing whatever to show that he contemplated the formation of a new religious society. He never gave up the worship of the temple or the synagogue. His great idea of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, was a purely Jewish idea, foretold by the prophets, and well understood by the men of his day. Jesus' purpose was to rejuvenate and purify his own religion and not to set up a new one. The reformation upon which he insisted died with him; and his efforts to restore the ancient faith, cleansing it of all impurities, failed signally, and in its place was built up by a wholly different person, Paul, a philosopher of the University of Tarsus, the religion which is known everywhere to-day as Christianity. Now the word Christ is a title, not a name; so that

what men call Christianity was constructed upon a man's title, and not upon his true name. There is no religion anywhere called Jesusism; but there ought to be if Jesus had any true followers. Jesus has been a dead issue among the great majority of Christians for many centuries; it is Paul's Christos who has taken his place; and if it be a question as to whether there ever was such a being as Jesus, there is still greater doubt as to whether there ever was a being known only by his title.

If the Vatican decided to give the feast of Easter a fixed date, thereby abandoning the old Jewish usage for determining religious celebrations, and the Protestant world refuses to change its custom at the bidding of the Bishop of Rome, we shall have three dates upon which to keep "a demonstrated fact," that of the Roman Church, that of Protestantism and that of the Greek Church—you pay your money, and you take your choice. Of course, no one questions the right of the papal organization to give a particular date to Easter, seeing it has no knowledge whatever regarding the certitude of Jesus' resurrection. It gave a date to his birth, after several had been tried unsuccessfully; and to make Jesus rise from the dead at any other season of the year than the spring, thus eliminating the fact of the vernal equinox, is really of no consequence whatever, for there is not a single feature or incident associated by believers with the life and deeds of Jesus to which an undoubted date can be honestly attached.

It is argued by certain religionists that it does not matter at all as to the date when a particular fact is commemorated so long as it is observed in the spirit of the event of which the day is a memorial. Owing to the change from "old style" to the "new style" method of dating, which came about from the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in place of the Julian Calendar, men tell us that our dates for civil festivals do not indicate the exact day of the occurrence named. But here an important distinction is to be borne in mind. If a fact of history can be verified in connection with a certain date and other dates having a bearing upon that fact, it is, of course, of little consequence whether the commemoration be held on the exact days of its occurrence or at some other time. Civil commemorations are frequently postponed or their date changed for pressing reasons; but this is never done because of ignorance of the real date, but because certain conditions, existing at the time, seem to warrant the change.

This is not true of any religious commemoration. There is not a single true date in connection with primitive Christianity. All is guess-work. Primitive Christianity has no history in a correct sense; how then, is it possible for one conscientiously to observe a supposed fact in the life of Jesus on any date, not being able to authenticate the fact with a truly historic date? The American government could rightly declare the twenty-fifth of December as Independence Day were it so minded, but the mind of no one would be disturbed by the change, for it is a well-known fact that the independence of the United States was declared on the fourth of July, and not on the twenty-fifth of December. The difference appears in this, that the civil event is a fact of history which no sane person would deny, no matter what time it be celebrated; while the record of the doings of Jesus and his followers, not being facts of history, never having acquired a certain date, cannot, it would seem, be shifted about without detriment to the cause which he is supposed to represent.

There is no denying the truth, however sanguine anyone may be for the final triumph of Christianity, that as concerning the details of the life of Jesus and that of his immediate disciples, there is not an assured date to be found anywhere, no matter how hard men

may try in their investigations. This is exactly the condition of things that pre-eminently ought not to exist. If there is any history that should stand the closest scrutiny of the most exacting mind it is that having to do with God's revelation to the human race. But when we turn to that revelation either as made known in the Bible or declared by the Church, we find a growing uncertainty verging into chaos. It is all mystery where it is not all confusion; and nothing tends to edification or to mental enrichment.

What the Vatican conference will accomplish in its purpose to alter the date for the celebration of Easter, no one can say; but one thing is certain, it will not establish any additional confidence in the truth of the Christian religion or of the claims of the papacy; for a Church that can make and unmake holy days of commemoration at will is too vacillating to be of any benefit to mankind at any stage of its earthly progress.

—*Truthseeker*, New York.

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## Religion and Music.

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(BEING NOTES FROM A LECTURE GIVEN AT THE  
SECULAR HALL, LEICESTER.)

A FRIEND of mine, who holds very advanced views upon religious questions, was for many years a member of a church choir, and when I taxed him with holding views opposed to the Church's teaching he confessed that *he only attended church for the sake of the music*. I believe his case to be by no means an uncommon one.

Nearly everyone loves music; it affords a common meeting ground for more people than does any other art, and the various religious bodies (from the Church down to the Boy's Brigade and the blood and thunder brigade—the Salvation Army) have not been slow to recognize this fact, and have used it to further the interests of their particular creed.

In the early days of musical development the only opening for a musician was through the Church. Concerts and the opera as we have them to-day were unknown in those days, the only music outside the Church being that performed by the little bands of strolling players, and the Church authorities took good care to see that these poor wandering minstrels were kept outside the pale of respectability. Because of this we find many of the early musical geniuses devoting a great deal of their time to composing music for the Church. The fact that men like John Sebastian Bach and the great Handel wrote so much sacred music was no indication that they held any particular religious views.

Religious enthusiasts may claim that the Church rendered a service to mankind in thus taking music under its wing, but when we remember that, until quite recent days, if a sacred composition departed from certain conventional forms it was condemned by high dignitaries of the Church, we can, with truth, say that, instead of encouraging the development of music, the Church has rather hindered its progress.

I hope to see the time when the beautiful buildings monopolized by the Church are put to a better use than is the case at present. Instead of keeping them empty for six days a week in order to drone a few hymns and listen to a couple of drowsy sermons on a Sunday, the churches might be turned into hives of education and entertainment throughout the week. Why should they not be fitted up with stages and screens for the presentation of good, uplifting plays and educative films? Why not hold whist drives and decorous dances in the churches?

If the idea of a whist drive in a church seems incongruous to the religious mind, I can only say that

there is nothing half as incongruous in this as there was in holding recruiting meetings under the guise of religious services and turning nearly every pulpit into a "gospel of hate" shop, as was done during the war. But I digress!

Although many of the great composers were practically forced into the Church in order to get a living, we find that they went, not to God, but to the common people, or to the sounds and solitudes of nature for inspiration in their work. Pious verses have inspired very little truly great music, many of the world's greatest masterpieces being founded on simple folk songs.

May I suggest, in conclusion, that our Secular Societies should take a leaf out of the Church's book by recognizing the human need for music and, by making music an integral part of their Sunday gatherings, attract people who at present attend church for the sake of the music, although they do not necessarily agree with the Church's teaching?

FRED HOBDAV.

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## The "New Statesman" and the Blasphemy Prosecution.

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"We hope that the attention of the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor will be called to the savage sentence of nine months' hard labour inflicted on one John William Gott at the Central Criminal Court last week for the crime of blasphemy. As is usual in such cases, the defendant is an uneducated man, using language coarse and foul—sometimes what the police call "obscene"—and of bad character in their eyes. But he was not charged with ignorance, coarseness of speech or even obscenity. He was indicted for uttering blasphemies against the Christian religion. The jury disagreed, but the Crown persisted in prosecuting, and when a verdict was obtained from a second jury, it was accompanied by a recommendation to mercy on the ground that the defendant did not realize the gravity of his offence. Upon this, the police inspector deposed that he was a "Socialist and Atheist of the worst type"—whatever that may be, and Mr. Justice Avory passed sentence of nine months' imprisonment. The climax was reached when a man in the body of the Court, with some recollection of the teachings of the Founder of the religion which the judge was vindicating, exclaimed "Seventy times seven"—to be then and there fined £5 for contempt of Court! When will judges remember that they are not warranted in punishing as blasphemy bad language or coarseness, when the same statements made with the grace of a Matthew Arnold are legally authorized even to be endowed? Will one of the bishops, perhaps, come to the rescue of Christianity by asking a question in the House of Lords?"

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## CHRIST'S NOTHING.

As the origin, so also do the life and works of Jesus Christ rest upon pure nothing. His kingdom was not of this world—the other is nothing. He fed the souls of all mankind with love, and love has proved itself to be—nothing. He fed the bodies of five thousand hearers with a few loaves of bread, which were as good as—nothing. He lived forty days in the wilderness upon—nothing. He wore a coat without a seam, consequently sewed with—nothing. He ordered the evil spirits to go into the swine and the swine perceived—nothing. He made the dead live again and the lame walk with—nothing. He died on the cross for—nothing. He was laid in a grave, and when it was opened again, there was found—nothing. He passed into hell, into purgatory, into heaven, and into other regions of nothing, and continues to live as the universal, immortal nothing. Through his inexhaustible legacy of nothing, every good-for-nothing peasant, every brutish glutton, every disgusting hypocrite called priest, becomes a holy man through—nothing.—*Karl Heinzen*.

Lord Halsbury.<sup>1</sup>

DIED DECEMBER 11, 1921: AGE 98.

The last of the Tories. —Lord Chancellor.

They whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
Burn to the socket. —Wordsworth.

His light out.....and plaudits.....

And what had he done?

When the rage of the rabble ran high  
For a foolish creed that was laugh'd to scorn,  
And the yell was "Blasphemy"!  
From under the cloak of the bigots he struck  
At men of light and of aim,  
Whose laugh bade wake to a sleeping world.  
Like a coward he struck. Ah! shame!

There were post and pay and a pension for't.  
And little, it seem'd, did he lack  
While he heard the Lords, and glanced at the clock,  
With his rump on the Chancellor's Sack.  
Once he said something wise on "a sort of a war,"  
And scratch'd his legal ear  
When the laugh went round; but for all he drew  
That solid ten thousand a year.

Creeds with their rabble rage and pass:  
The rabble are ever the same;  
But this one! to yoke with the slaves and the brutes!  
Ah! cover his old corpse in shame!  
Did decency ask (was it thus with himself  
He paltered, himself to deceive?)  
The jail-walls should answer our laughter at what  
The void, babbling rabble believe!

H. BARBER.

Correspondence.

THE LATE H. M. HYNDMAN AND  
SECULAR EDUCATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My attention has been called to a correspondence in the *Freethinker* under the above title. I must thank my husband's close friend "Robert Arch" heartily for his valuable letters, but I think I may now come forward as something of a final authority.

Hyndman's great fight for secular education in Australia took place during his visit there in 1869-1870, when he wrote a series of leaders on the subject in the Melbourne *Argus*. His uncompromising principles and skilful tactics gained the victory, and won for Australians the excellent scheme of education which they have now enjoyed for fifty years.

During the General Election of 1880 Hyndman stood, as he said, "in an impulsive way" for Marylebone, being an independent candidate. His domestic policy was one of advanced social reform, his foreign policy strong opposition to Gladstone's powerful support of Russia. He considered then, and afterwards, that Nonconformists and other Liberals used the cry for the disestablishment of the State Church as a means to side-track pressing demands for social reform—whence, naturally, he was "opposed to disestablishment." Except where they touched public education he was simply contemptuous of these sectarian matters.

From its earliest days English Social Democracy has steadily advocated good, free, compulsory, secular education—so far in this sect-ridden country with little result.

I understand, although I have not Mr. A. G. B.'s letters by me, that he claims to have known Hyndman "from forty years ago until the end." How does this come about? During my very close companionship of nearly eight years with my husband all his friends and even acquaintances of long or short standing were mine. I feel sure that the personality of Mr. A. G. B., as conveyed in his letters, could not have escaped my notice, and I shall be greatly obliged to this writer if he will discard

<sup>1</sup> Was prosecuting counsel at the trial when Mr. Foote, Editor of the *Freethinker*, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for blasphemy.

his anonymity. A person who could have been in touch with Hyndman for forty years, without gaining—in spite of differences of opinion—a deep and sincere respect for him is a mental phenomenon that deserves note.

Mr. A. J. Marriott, who writes on the same subject, is better known to me, and the type of misrepresentation which calls a disclaimer of interest in disestablishment a "manifesto in favour of the Church of England" is quite familiar. I must, however, earnestly beg him to state at once what "other charges of the same sort" were made against Hyndman. Trivial though these questions of religious or secular hatred are, when compared with great material, political and economic issues, they do, like race-hatred, distract many people from the real business of life, and cannot therefore be lightly dismissed.

ROSALIND TRAVERS HYNDMAN.

SIR,—If Mr. Arch is satisfied with his statement I am well content to leave it, with mine of January 1, to the judgment of our readers. As to the *Reminiscences*, Mr. Arch has the advantage of me. I have not read the book. So I leave him to his suspicions.

I should like to make a remark about the use of the word "religion" mentioned by Mr. Bax in his interesting and informing review of your excellent *Grammar of Free-thought*. The reviewer admits the popular conception of the word. In my opinion, religion has been, through the ages, so intimately united with theology that it would be a pity to divorce them and marry it to Socialism or to any high and noble aspirations of humanity. Shelley, in *Queen Mab*, says:—

Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,  
Who peoplest earth with demons, hell with men,  
And heaven with slaves.

A. G. B.

"OUR HEAVENLY FATHER."

SIR,—I write this in Dominica, in the British Lesser Antilles, lying within sight of the French colony of Martinique, where, at 8.10 a.m. on May 8, 1902, the most appalling and destructive volcanic eruption yet known in these parts wiped out the fine tropical city of St. Pierre, with a loss of over 30,000 human lives, including, as subsequent statistics proved, no less than 18,000 "little children," whose "friend above the bright blue sky" is, according to the words of their spiritual guides, also the original creator of volcanoes and the controller (teleologically) of the same. This sad reminiscence was awakened in my mind on perusing among your always palatable "Acid Drops" of October 2 last, an allusion to the professional dictum of the Rev. B. West Taylor, preaching in the cause of suffering childhood, that "God is the friend of little children," and that in Russia they are daily "passing over in their thousands to Him." In the same column, on the 16th idem, the *Freethinker* also reproduces the statement of a London physician that this summer has been "the most fatal for young children for many years," the acid droppist pertinently adding: "What a comment on the hymn There's a friend for little children up above the bright blue sky."

Sir, the philosophy of the "Heavenly Father" theory does not teach men, or little children, that the universal and continual suffering which really constitutes the martyrdom of our race is the work of some malignant and powerful being, and that the said "Heavenly Father," all loving kindness and benevolent solicitude for the very sparrows and tomtits, is, for some inscrutable reason powerless to protect his loved creatures, a proposition which might or might not explain away the obvious juxtaposition of the woes of the world and a merciful but limited liability kind of creator. No, Sir, the theologian gives you clearly to understand that he expounds the attributes of the Almighty, supremely powerful, omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent, the Great First Cause, and absolute maker of all things, material and immaterial, good and evil, and that it is this self-same "Heavenly Father" who befriends the little children above the bright blue sky and blasts them to death with a West Indian volcano, providentially starves them in Russia, and spirits them untimely out of this wicked world through the providential dispensation of summer fatalities in Merry England. So be it, and such is the theme of our latter-day deism.

It is noteworthy in this connection to remember some of Jehovah's godly exploits and the striking coincidences they have involved, such as would justify any fetish-worshipper among the "heathen" in regarding them as mighty protests against his adoration by his own creature Man. The cathedrals of Lima, in Peru, of Caracas, in Venezuela, and of St. Pierre, in Martinique, were respectively destroyed by seismic disturbances, and so was Lisbon, at an earlier date, and it is remarkable that while the worshippers within the walls of all these sacred edifices, reared and lavishly embellished "to the glory of God," suffered sudden death or more or less bodily harm, three of these four awful visitations occurred on Church festival days, set apart and sanctified for the special and spectacular rites of adoration which distinguish the Christian cult, and on which occasions the above-mentioned temples of "Our Lord" were crowded with more or less devout Catholics and perhaps more or less pronounced hypocrites, loudly chanting the praises of "Our Heavenly Father," only to realize, before they were many hours older, the cruel weight of his paternal hand. In effect, Lisbon suffered on All Saints' Day, November 1, 1755; Caracas, on Easter Day, March 26, 1812; and St. Pierre, on Ascension Day, May 8, 1902. Can there be more convincing proofs than these few, out of countless others, of the utter absurdity of the theory of divine benevolence, or of the soundness of that of Nature's insensible and mechanical action? And in the face of the intelligible lessons of science, the source of all real knowledge and virtue, can religious cant and false doctrine appear more silly than in all this pulpit prating about a supposititious protector of helpless infants, tortured and done to death in a world which is represented as created and governed by the said fictitious nonentity?

F. STERNS FADELLE.

Cliff House, Charlotteville, Dominica, B.W.I.

### Obituary.

#### THE BURIAL OF MR. GEORGE WHITE.

At the Harton Churchyard, South Shields, on January 2, we sadly carried out our last duties to our late friend. There were a good number of Secularists present, including visitors from Newcastle, Whitley Bay, Seaton Delaval and other outlying districts. The service by Austin Holyoake was quietly read by Mr. J. Fothergill, which was very attentively listened to by a large number of people, many of whom had not before heard a secular burial service. Its beauty and fitness was much commented on. In our inmost hearts we can endorse all that was said by our respected President, Mr. Cohen, last week. Secularism has, indeed, lost a sterling supporter, both locally and nationally. That we grieve much we do not deny; still, it is a pleasing thought that some of us have been privileged to know and work with one of nature's very finest gentlemen well into the fourth decade. But we sorrowfully must tie up our sheaf of years, which we, preferably, would have added to indefinitely. Thus we leave our dear departed comrade, and with a few simple words from the Master say, "He sleeps well."

RALPH CHAPMAN.

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### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (JOHNSON'S DANCING Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Debate—"Christianity," Mr. Mills v. Mr. Ratcliffe.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. E. B. Turner, "Sex Relationship."

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, "Christmas Carols."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Hon. Bertrand Russell, F.R.S., "Chinese Civilization and the West."

STRATFORD (Town Hall): 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "The Story of the Earth."

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, North Saloon): Mr. George Whitehead, 11.30, "An Examination of the Idea of God." (Corporation Hall, Tobago Street): 6.30, "A Criticism of Jesus."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, Youngman's): 7, Mr. J. Nichol, "Delusions."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock): 6.30, "The Blasphemy Case." All members and friends are urgently requested to attend.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Elysium, High Street, Swansea): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Foundations of Faith."

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