

# The FREETHINKER

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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Christianity and Politics.—The Editor</i> - - -	129
<i>"Gadarene Thinking."—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - -	130
<i>The Burden of Freethought.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	131
<i>What is the League Spirit?—F. J. Gould</i> - - -	132
<i>Concerning "The Cloth."—A. E. Maddock</i> - - -	133
<i>Freemasonry and Spiritualism.—Leonard Mason</i> - - -	138
<i>Eve and the Apple.—(The late) G. W. Foote</i> - - -	139
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Christianity and Politics.

There is no greater nation in the world than this one. Every patriotic Briton says so, and we thus have it on what one must regard as first-hand evidence. If outsiders said so the testimony might be regarded with suspicion, for one might doubt the extent of their knowledge. But when we say it ourselves, we must know what we are talking about. And as this is the greatest nation on the earth, so we are fortunate in possessing the purest and the best religion known to man. Again our evidence is first-hand. For it is Christians who tell us that Christianity is the finest religion in the world. And if they do not know, who does? And yet, somehow or the other, there is a strange conflict between theory and fact. For the same Briton who tells us that this is the finest nation in the world, and the same parson who tells us of the splendours and the uplifting power of Christianity are often full of lamentations concerning the misery, the vice, the destitution in this greatest of all nations, living under the best of all religions. Inside the churches we hear of the civilizing and humanizing influence of the Christian religion. Outside we hear the rumble of war, the quarrels that arise from the greed and brutality of those nurtured under the influence of Christianity, and the tramp of hundreds of thousands of men willing to work but unable to find the work to do—half starved in the midst of plenty, their own destitution mocked by an ostentatious display of wealth and comfort. In the best of all possible nations, dominated by the best of all possible religions, such things should not be.

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### The Disease that Kills Religion.

The worst of it is, from the standpoint of established Christianity, people are beginning to doubt whether, even if we happen to be living in the best possible country, that country possesses the best possible religion. It is dawning upon them that after all Christianity has had a tolerably lengthy innings. It has for many centuries wielded a power such as no other institution has had; it has taken charge of the people—rich and poor, governors and governed—from the cradle to the grave. It has taught them their place in this world and marked out their destiny in

the next. And some are daring enough to think and to say that in these circumstances Christianity cannot be held free of responsibility for the existing state of things. If we were dealing with a non-Christian country experiencing a similar state of affairs, and with a religion as long established and as powerful as Christianity has been, Christians would not have been slow to cast at least part of that blame on the dominant creed, and would have seen in its failure a reason for preaching the true gospel to them. How, then, shall Christianity escape condemnation? It cannot. If it is not positively responsible, then it must be negatively so. If it has not directly encouraged the evils that are, it has certainly not prevented their existence. It has not prevented poverty or crime, misery or destitution. It has paid lavish attention to men's souls in the next world and left unconsidered the situation of their bodies in this one. It has used charity as a means of palliating wrong, and taught the morality of contentment where it should have preached the ethic of revolt. And it is now experiencing the fate of all shams—it is being found out. And that is the disease that sooner or later kills all religions.

### The Will of God.

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But the clergy are not going under without a fight. And they have sung the song of the excellence of Christianity for so long it is difficult for them now to realize that it is losing its charm so rapidly and so completely. The Bishop of Manchester, for instance, recently told a representative of the *Observer* that "the Christian community has a definite social responsibility.....which has not been adequately discharged." And, presumably, in order to discharge that debt a "strong and representative Council" has been formed, with offices in London, in order to consider the social applications of Christianity. The impertinence of it! One would imagine that Christianity was something quite new, something just discovered, which the world had never heard of, but which it was hungering after with the intensity of a starving man for food. Further, this council is "looking for the Will of God." And to find it the council needs £6,000 immediately. Well, that seems rather cheap. Considering that these Christians have been spending nearly thirty millions a year teaching the will of God, that about three and a half millions is spent yearly carrying this same will of God to the "heathen," it does not seem much to ask for six thousand pounds to discover what the will of God really is. Most people would think that the sensible plan would be to first find out what was the will of God and then teach it. The clergy spend about nineteen centuries in telling the world what the will of God is, and then calmly ask for £6,000 to find out what the deuce is his will and what the dickens he wants! Besides, if there is a God worth bothering about might he not tell us what his will is without letting his representatives squeeze another £6,000 from people who have been paying heavily all along under the impression that they were being told what his will is by people who knew all about it?



### Christianity and Society.

But what *can* be meant by applied Christianity? On the face of it, it can only mean Christianity as taught in the New Testament and in the Creeds applied to political and social issues. And how do we stand there? In the field of politics there are questions of the State, of capital and labour, of poverty and wealth, of the application of knowledge to the affairs of life. And if we apply to Christianity what do we learn? Of the family nothing at all. Jesus was not concerned with the family. Neither is the New Testament as a whole. The other day Dr. Saleeby was writing in his usual vein, of race degeneration because there was not a sufficiently large birth rate—two questions of quite different import, the one having no connection with the other. But if Christianity had had its way that question would have been settled long since by the disappearance of the race altogether. And of the State, what can applied Christianity tell us there? Well, the message is plain enough. We are to obey the powers that be, for they are ordained of God, and to resist them is to merit damnation. In these days when monarchs are so quickly deposed, and others are forced to engage in huge advertising campaigns, and to be photographed doing the most commonplace things in order to prove that they are quite ordinary persons, to keep their thrones intact, we have no doubt but that the application of Christianity would give them considerable comfort. And what of the problem of the workman? Here again the New Testament is tolerably clear. Servants must obey their masters whether they are good or bad, and obedience to those who are bad is more commendable than when yielded to those who are good. They are to take no thought for the morrow, for their welfare is in the hands of their heavenly father, and if he looks after the birds of the air he will certainly look after the sons of men. The only unfortunate thing is that he does not look after the birds of the air any better than he does after men. They starve even as men starve, but not being endowed with "reason" they do not thank God for permitting them to starve.

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### Religion and Man.

The fact of the matter is that Christianity has no application to social life that is of value. To the early generations of Christians the vital message of Christianity was the approaching end of the world, and nothing would have surprised them more than to have been told that Christianity had any social application at all. And when that phase had been partly outgrown, thanks to the logic of events, the next outstanding fact was the work of each Christian to save his own soul and to shun social ties as much as possible so that it might be done with the greater certainty. It was this teaching which filled the deserts with monks, which threatened the very existence of the State and of the family, and which made for the darkness and the degradation of the Christian ages of the world. But sooner or later Christianity had to reckon with the facts of human nature, and it was this that forced the churches to socialize their message, at least to the extent of not removing itself beyond the region of rational human consideration. And even then the influence of the Church on human life was almost wholly bad. It showed itself able to live with, and to apologise for, some of the gravest evils that have afflicted human society. When slavery existed it was the Church which framed apologies for the slave owner, and at the same time made his "property" secure by preaching submission to the slave as the most sacred of duties. When autocracy established itself it was the Christian Church which erected the divine right of kings into a religious dogma, and so gave tyranny a security it would not otherwise have

had. It gave war a religious sanction, and the profession of arms almost the character of a religious vocation. And when, at the opening of the modern industrial era, the people were driven from the land in order that they might be forced into foul factories to labour, when little children of seven years of age were being crippled and killed to fill the pockets of their Christian employers, the Church stood by, preaching the holiness of submission, satisfied that they were getting a share of the money coined from the blood of men, women and children. It is not the Freethinker that questions the power of Christianity through the ages. On the contrary, he asserts it. He knows that it has been one of the most powerful of organizations. He knows its power and he knows its work in the past. And he is convinced that if half the time spent on theology had been spent on social questions a great many of our problems would exist to-day only as historical curiosities. And now we are to have a council to discuss the application of Christianity to social problems! If the people only had a sufficiently strong sense of humour the next few years would see the Christian Church laughed out of existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "Gadarene Thinking."

SUCH is the title of a remarkable discourse by T. Reaveley Glover, LL.D., D.D., which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* of February 2. It was delivered at the West London Mission, Kingsway Hall, and deals with various thoughts suggested by the request of the Gadarenes that Jesus should take his departure from their country. The story of the healing of a man "with an unclean spirit" and of the rushing of about two thousand swine into the sea is well known. Many, doubtless, remember the famous controversy about it between Gladstone and Huxley in the *Nineteenth Century*. Dr. Glover does not agree with Gladstone's views, nor yet wholly with Huxley's. He does not believe in demoniacal possession, nor does he believe that Jesus sent the evil spirits into the swine. In fact, he rejects the entire narrative except the portion recording the healing of the madman. The Gadarenes were firm believers in demoniacal possession:—

They knew the man had devils. They said it was the same devils that made the man mad, and that drove the pigs over the precipice. That extraordinary assumption has been thrown back into our story. You know how much controversy has raged about it. Now I want to say here how much some of us owe to the historical critics, who have taught us to read the Bible in what we think is the right way. They have cleared up no end of difficulties that stood between us and the Christian faith.....Of course, I do not believe for a moment that Jesus sent the devils into those pigs. I believe what happened was that the two things happened about the same time, and people said they must be connected.

As the story stands it was because they thought the two events were closely connected that the Gadarenes told Jesus to go away. The author of Mark's Gospel represents Jesus as permitting the devils to enter into the swine. The poor man had a legion of evil spirits within him, a sufficient number to take possession of two thousand pigs.

Dr. Glover's treatment of the miraculous is somewhat flippant. He asks: "Do you know what a miracle is, by the way? Well, if you do, I congratulate you. I don't." And yet, despite this self-confessed ignorance, he speaks rather contemptuously of people who share Matthew Arnold's conviction that "miracles do not count." Sarcastically he exclaims: "Miracles do not count. So let us close this Book, and have done



with that. What is the good of talking about Christianity if it is just the record of a lot of miracles? That is sheer nonsense. Matthew Arnold was not a fool. The proof from miracles was to him non-existent, and yet some of the finest chapters in *Literature and Dogma* show how wonderfully great and precious he believed Christianity to be. Dr. Glover, on the contrary, says, "The man is a fool to-day who says that Jesus did not heal that man, that he could not heal him." Is it not foolish to call a man a fool simply because he cannot agree with you in opinion? Unfortunately, Dr. Glover is exceedingly fond of applying that name to people who differ from him. He informs us that one of the things he has learned in life is "not to talk about the natural and the supernatural until you know exactly which is which, or whether they are not exactly the same thing." Is it not self-evident that the two cannot be exactly the same thing? If there is a supernatural, is it not bound to be beyond or above the powers and laws of Nature? Would not the conversion of a madman into a perfectly sane person in the twinkling of an eye be a supernatural act? Are not all theologians convinced that their God is a supernatural Being? Dr. Glover affirms that we are not here to guess, but "to find out what God did and what God does." We maintain, on the contrary, that it is impossible to find out what God *does* because we do not and cannot know that God *exists*. On this point Dr. Glover is as ignorant as we are. He has but faith; he cannot know. It is a delusion to say that the Universe is more interesting to believers than to unbelievers. To no one was the Universe more fascinating than to Charles Darwin; and yet the more he studied and the better he knew it the less God meant to him, and long before the end his belief in him died out. The preacher declares: "You are face to face with the works of God, and the thoughts of God. You find them out, instead of merely guessing at them." That is the language of faith, not of knowledge. The only works known to us are Nature's, and we do not believe in any other.

Dr. Glover states that the Christian life is summed up in the phrase, "I will hear what the Lord will speak." We are prepared to endorse the statement. The Christian is always listening, and sometimes imagines that he receives messages from the unseen world. But here again everything depends upon the strength and intensity of the faith. That is the Christian life; but the preacher is fundamentally mistaken when he adds, "That is the scientific life." He is guilty of misrepresenting the scientific method when he asserts that "the great discoveries in science come from giving up theories and getting down to facts." The truth is the very reverse of that statement. Scientific theories are based upon facts. Darwin and Wallace spent years in collecting and classifying the facts of natural history before they evolved, quite independently, their theory of evolution. Darwinism is but a theory, but it fits the ascertained facts better than any other theory that was ever formed. Now, we should like to know what are the facts which Dr. Glover urges his hearers to verify. He talks fluently about the works of God, but omits to tell us what they are.

He devotes a long paragraph to the proposition that evolution "proves that Jesus Christ will be superseded." He says:—

There are a lot of things to be asked before you can say that Jesus Christ is to be superseded. As an historian, one sees that he has not been superseded. Being an historian, and not a prophet, one has a preference for sticking to what one knows. I put it this way to you. If you think Jesus Christ can be superseded, it is up to you to do it. I think that is right. I think that is in the interest of this nation and of this world, if you have it in you or can see it

is in anybody to supersede Jesus Christ, for the world wants nothing so much to-day.

"The world wants nothing so much to-day" as to have Jesus Christ duly superseded. Surely that is a virtual admission that hitherto Jesus Christ has not done the best possible for the world. As an historian, Dr. Glover does not dwell on the triumphs of Jesus Christ in the world, because he cannot select a single period in Christian history when truth, righteousness, peace, and brotherhood reigned supreme in Christendom. It cannot be done. The failure of Jesus Christ to redeem the world is the most outstanding fact in its history. The preacher is careful not to appeal to the past. "They tell us Christianity has failed," he says; but, instead of proving by actual facts that it has not failed, he merely retorts, "If you know of something better, surely it is up to you to produce it." That is the feeblest and most useless argument that could be advanced. Our point is that Christianity is essentially false and has always been an obstacle to progress. Our aim is to get rid of it, to destroy it and so prevent it from making more mischief. We do not propose to produce another, even better, religion to take its place. It is a hindrance, a disease to be removed. Supernaturalism has made it impossible for Naturalism to have its way with us, and in consequence our nature has been warped. We have wasted our energies by getting ready to live in a purely imaginary world on the other side of death, instead of actually living in this.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Burden of Freethought.

Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth.  
—O. W. Holmes.

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

SOME years ago, Mr. Lloyd George, turning aside from the pettiness of party politics, related to an astonished audience the drawbacks of a political career. He spoke of the calumnies to which a politician was exposed, and, in characteristic fashion, explained the seamy side of politics. After describing the burdens of a politician's lot, he went on:—

Tradesmen have their worries and anxieties; but suppose that in addition to their ordinary troubles they found a constant mob of detractors standing outside their doors, some doing it for hate and others for hire, yelling into every customer's ears as he entered their shop, "You will be robbed and cheated at every turn if you do business with those fellows. They are all thieves, rogues, and liars." The whole time you are attending to your business you have to dodge bricks, clods, and worse hurled at your head. Most men would rather give up altogether than endure this, if they had to break stones for a living.

There is much sad truth in this frank avowal; but if there is sacrifice in the case of a prominent and popular politician, what is to be said in the case of leaders of a really unpopular movement, to whom sacrifice is a science and denial an art? Freethought is a far nobler and wider evangel than a purely political one. It has its roots in intellectual necessity, and, deeper still, in ethical right. It is based on the psychological law of human development. Perpetually reaffirmed from generation to generation by unnumbered examples of unselfish martyrdom, from the days of Hypatia to those of Ferrer, it is to-day changing the character and direction of the ideas of the civilized world.

The Freethought leaders are the most potent forces of progress. No other men are discussed so widely as these apostles of Liberty, but magnificent as is their life-work, the men themselves are greater. Hissed at by superior people, stoned and cursed by the ignorant, they eat the bitter bread of banishment. Perhaps the hardest which can be mentioned is that of seeing



charlatans ride by in their motors; or, in other words, to mark the success of humbug, whilst they find that intellectual honesty spells hardship.

Yet good and true men and women have had to submit to this. Richard Carlile, a paladin of progress, endured nearly ten years' imprisonment for championing the rights of free speech. Charles Southwell, the first Freethought editor, was imprisoned, and aged prematurely by his fight for Freedom. Charles Bradlaugh suffered defeat after defeat in a battle which lasted sixteen years which was Homeric in its intensity. His dying car never caught the echo of his triumphs, a tragic boon granted to Wolfe at Quebec, and to Nelson on the shot-riven *Victory*. Francisco Ferrer, fronting the rifles of his enemies, had to find his triumph in his own brain. George Foote had to listen to the mocking voice of the Catholic judge telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the service of the Devil. Yet, in their hours of apparent failure, these pioneers had really triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm, but not the pains of martyrdom; heroes without the laurels, conquerors without the jubilation of victory. Labouring not for themselves, but for new generations, for them was influence as far reaching as the utmost reach of the great wave whose crest they sometimes were.

When a politician carries on a campaign against the landed privileges of the aristocracy he encounters, necessarily, the resistance of only a portion of the community, whereas a Freethought leader, directing his personality against the 50,000 priests of this country, and their hundreds of thousands of satellites, has to bear the brunt of almost impossible odds. For no enmity is greater than religious hatred. The abuse directed against politicians is courtesy itself compared with the slings and arrows used against Freethought leaders. The politician can rely upon the support of half the newspapers of the country, but a leading Freethinker is certain to be attacked and insulted by Liberal, Tory, Socialist, and religious papers. Accused of almost every crime in the calendar, their actions constantly misrepresented, this well-nigh intolerable animosity is, in the last analysis, a tribute to the pioneers.

Yet the men against whom a hundred thousand pulpits and platforms fulminate abuse will have their reward in the coming time. Thanks to their courage and devotion heterodoxy is no longer the grave danger it once was to the citizen. They have forced attention to Freethought advocacy, organized its forces, and justified its rights to equal citizenship. Through the religious prejudices of our time they have knocked an opening large enough for heretics to pass through in future, and, in very many directions, our lives are easier because of their life-work. To-day reaction is apparent everywhere. Let to-morrow and all to-morrows find it becoming less so, and those who have done their duty be judged worthy successors of those past pioneers who, in the times of real peril, thrilled mankind, and raised with their swords the form of trampled Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee :

All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem :

In the core of one pearl all the shade and shine of the sea :

Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and—how far above them—

Truth, that's brighter than gem,

Trust, that's purer than pearl—

Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me

In the kiss of one girl.

—Robert Browning.

## What is the League Spirit?

IN print often, and, during the last twelve months up and down this country, in speeches also, I have earnestly supported the Covenant of the League of Nations, as first proposed by Woodrow Wilson in the Clock Hall at Paris, April, 1919, and since expressed in an organization of fifty-one nations. So careful am I to study the arguments against this institution that I think I could write out a startling list of accusations against the imperfections of the Covenant, and leave Mr. Lenin, of Moscow, very little to add. Nevertheless, I regard the League as a powerful and promising instrument of international co-operation; and, at the same time, I cheerfully appreciate the value of the recent Washington Conference. That Conference also had its defects. So be it. But, as I observe life, I fancy the only perfect institutions are those that cannot be got to work.

The Covenant of the League has, at any rate, one notable merit. It is, in the strictest sense of the term, "unsectarian." This term is frequently used to denote freedom from those frictions and jealousies which occur among various divisions of the Christian faith and practice. It may leave untouched the fact that Christianity is itself sectarian, just as Judaism is, or Unitarianism, or Buddhism, and the rest. But the Covenant, whether in its Preamble, or in its 26 Articles, is quite detached from all these creeds. Read the opening words:—

The High Contracting Parties,

In order to promote international co-operation, and to achieve international peace and security

by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,

by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and

by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another, agree to this Covenant of the League of Nations.

You will remark allusions to co-operation, peace, obligations, openness, justice, honour, and respect. These are ethical terms common to the sentiments of all races and nations. They are not specially Christian, nor Jewish, nor Chinese, nor Moslem. They are just human and humane. You may read all through the Covenant and you will not find a word that points to its creation by Christian minds and signatures. Or you may examine Articles 387 to 427, in the Treaty of Versailles, dealing with the Labour Office of the League. The Preamble to this group of Articles begins thus:—

Whereas the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice; and whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship, and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled, and an improvement of these conditions is urgently required.....

And so on. Not a word of this is Catholic, or Brahmanic, or Christian Scientist. When I visited Geneva last autumn, nothing pleased me more than an inspection of the Labour Office, with its numerous departments for agriculture, factories, etc. A Freethinker met me at the threshold, and showed me round. He was quite at home in the place, just as, I trust, a Jew or a Japanese felt at home; for the Office is for the world.

I do not know if these reflections will, to some readers, appear needless. But I am obliged to state that attempts are occasionally made to associate, in



the mind of the British public, the League of Nations and the peculiar and limited doctrine which we call Christianity. The following examples are cut from the Monthly Bulletin of a local branch of the League of Nations Union:—

Mrs. Weir's "At Home."—Held at "Purbeck," Hillcrest Road, on January 26. Miss Tynan gave an excellent address. The Vicar of Ealing presided and urged that the League of Nations spirit, which is the Christian spirit, should be inculcated in the minds of our children.

"The Opportunity of the Churches."—This is the title of a letter from the Rev. H. W. Fox, in which he shows clearly that the whole spirit of the Covenant of the League is "in the line of the divine purposes for the world as they are made known to us." Three Christian principles are enshrined in it—the duty of service, the promotion of fellowship and goodwill and the acceptance by the strong of responsibility for the welfare of the weak. Mr. Fox concludes as follows: "If organized Christianity were to bring to the League the whole force of its potential strength, by preaching and by prayer, no obstacle would hinder the advance of peace, no opposition would dare to raise its head."

Now, if a Confucian from China, or a Buddhist from Burma, or a Jain from Surat, or a Moslem from Medina, happened to pick up this gentle little Bulletin and read the paragraphs here cited, might he not reasonably conclude (supposing he was not able to consult the Covenant) that the Christians considered the League as intrinsically Christian, and that he was admitted as a sort of tolerated visitor from "foreign parts"? No doubt, if one were to put the question in this form to the Vicar of Ealing, or the Rev. H. W. Fox, each would hasten to reply that he meant to draw no invidious distinctions between one type of League membership and any other type. Quite so. All the same, people who use such tactless language as I have quoted must be treated as if they spoke from prejudice, even though they kneel before the altar of the Most High God, and swear that such a thing as prejudice never cast a shadow over their innocent souls.

I was talking, one evening, not long ago, with a Congregational minister, a most worthy and well-meaning young man, with whom I found common ground in our support of the League of Nations. He found I was a Positivist, and, instead of entering into controversy with me, he sought, good-humouredly enough, to prove to me how liberal his views were, and how his conception of God rose above the crude ideas of a generation since.

"Yes," I replied,—

I comprehend you, and I appreciate the progress you represent. But there is one difference between your position and mine. Your theology sets up a wall between you and all sorts of people who do not accept your creed. I have no theology. I perceive in all the old creeds, and in all the theologies, certain fundamental moral values, which are not, as I think, due to the God-doctrine at all, but to the spirit of humanity as such. Wherever in the world I go, I carry that thought with me. "The same heart beats in every human breast," as Matthew Arnold said. I can go into a church, a synagogue, or a temple, or a Secular Society meeting, and discover the same basic genius for morality. In that sense, I feel at home with all; and you do not, and cannot.

Such, I take it, is, or should be, the spirit of the League of Nations.

F. J. GOULD.

I choose the nobler part of Emerson, when, after various disenchantments, he exclaims, "I covet truth." The gladness of true heroism visits the heart of him who is really competent to say this.—John Tyndall.

## Concerning "The Cloth."

(A Satire.)

As the uniform gay of the Lancer  
Betokens the blood he may draw,  
As the Barrister's rig and the Judge's big wig  
Remind us how stuffy is Law,  
As the Sailorman's baggy blue trousers  
Speak of life where the blue ocean rolls,  
So the grab sacerdotal tells, blackly, the total  
Damnation of most of our souls.

In these immortal lines the poet has enshrined the great truth that a definite costume—a "uniform," by whomsoever worn—possesses a significance by no means to be ignored. People who wish to appear superior sometimes affect to despise the wearing of distinctive uniforms, orders, badges, and so on as being merely childish survivals from an unenlightened past, but this is a quite superficial way of looking at the matter. To those who take a deeper view, a uniform, a sign or badge definitely distinguishing the members of a certain order from all other persons, possesses a meaning which is closely related to the social significance of the order it marks, and derives therefrom a corresponding degree of importance and dignity. Hence, as the sacerdotal order is, theoretically at least, supposed to be endowed with attributes marking it off more definitely from other men than is the case with any other order, its distinctive garb would seem to be of correlatively greater import. Thus a clerical uniform should be more rigorously adopted and should command more attention and respect than any other uniform.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in these degenerate days. In the Middle Ages and up to the time of the Reformation in Europe a distinctive priestly garb was universal, and was treated with universal deference. And even now in Catholic countries there is no difficulty in distinguishing priests from other people in a crowded street; but in Protestant lands, such as Great Britain and most of North America, one may encounter dozens of ministers of religion in public without the least suspicion that they are other than just ordinary human beings.

I have not consulted universal history on this point, but I think I am fairly safe in stating that Protestant Christianity is the first and only variety of religion that fails to impose a distinctive costume on its ministers. Outside of Christendom the special priestly garb is universal, and the Nonconformists among us—Nonconformist in dress as well as in creed—might well take example in this matter from the immemorial East. There is, for instance, no fear of mistaking a Buddhist priest for any other sort of person when you meet him on the road. His saffron coloured robe arrests the attention half a mile away, giving him, in combination with his umbrella (also sometimes saffron coloured and always held carefully above his head, be it wet or fine, in gloom or shine) somewhat the appearance of a gigantic yellow mushroom. But though it may strike the unbeliever thus grotesquely, it is a sign to the faithful of sanctity and a life apart, and to see the more devout among them making humble obeisance to the holy man as he stalks sanctimoniously by impresses one with the undying strength of this strange veneration for things mystical and occult on which all religion lives.

How different it is in those Western lands where Protestantism prevails. Here the holy man—the man endowed with sacred and superhuman attributes—is often undistinguishable from the common herd, and gets jostled about on the pavement like any ordinary individual; whereas, if Christians had a due sense of the reality of their religion, respectful way should be made for him, and all traffic should be stopped when he wishes to cross the street. But, of course, this is



impracticable when the clergy themselves are often so unmindful of the dignity of their position as to go about in ordinary clothes.

It must be admitted that the High Church clergy of the Church of England have made a praiseworthy effort to improve matters in this respect by the adoption in daily life of that sober and comprehensive garment called a Cassock. But even among them the practice is not universal, for it often happens that in parishes where public opinion has not been sufficiently imbued with High Church ideas the cassock has to be introduced with much care and circumspection. In these cases the clergyman has to go slowly at first, and compromise matters by contenting himself with the black coat and the throttle-collar as modified insignia of his sacred office.

This is a truly deplorable state of things. Even putting the matter on the lowest ground, that of practical expediency, the general adoption of the cassock or some similar garment by the clergy has much to recommend it. The financial straits to which the clergy are reduced have lately been much referred to, and that pathetic figure "the poor curate" has been held up as a special object of our commiseration. The high cost of clothing is also well known, so it needs no great ratiocinative effort to arrive at the conclusion that for the poor curate, whether High, Low, or Broad, the use of the cassock would solve many a problem of frays and patches, and mitigate much habilatory stress. The cassock would do good service in concealing many a mark of time's relentless hand among the curate's other garments, and within its all-embracing protection it would matter not how worn or rusty might be the coat beneath. And even when the time should come for the cassock to be renewed, the chances are that the curate would not have to buy a new one. For here would be just the sort of opportunity prized by the young ladies of the parish who devote their energies to "Church Work." To provide the curate with a suit of secular garments would, of course, be out of the question, for, despite St. Paul's eloquent remarks in praise of Charity, there are occasions when the practice of that great virtue is forbidden by a still higher code—that of social "good form." But to provide the curate with an ecclesiastical vesture like a cassock, or a set of cassocks, sewn perhaps by the fair fingers of his female devotees, would be essentially a work of piety and religious zeal. So our poor curate would always present a dignified and respectable appearance in keeping with his high and holy office.

This brings us to the social aspect of the question. It may be asked, What about those social amenities which most curates—even the highest of them—are prone to cultivate? How would the habitual adoption of a clerical vesture affect the afternoon-tea frequenting curate or the lawn tennis playing curate? In respect of these problems the young ladies of the parish would probably have very decided opinions, and I can imagine a chorus of voices around the afternoon-tea table exclaiming, "Good gracious! How on earth could the poor dear man play tennis in a cassock?"

This certainly raises a serious question. I myself did once behold an archdeacon at a garden-party playing lawn tennis in his apron and gaiters, and observed that he did succeed in getting the ball over the net occasionally, but lawn tennis in a cassock would certainly present grave difficulties to a curate, however skilled he might be in the game. Even ladies now find that skirts barely reaching below the knee are necessary to the proper playing of lawn tennis, but a similar curtailment of the cassock seems somehow to suggest a degree of incongruity which places it outside the range of serious discussion. No. A compromise here seems impossible. If lawn tennis be played in

a cassock it must be *the* cassock, the whole cassock, and nothing but the cassock—that is, as an outer garment, of course.

The question, then, must be answered in an uncompromising negative—curates must give up lawn tennis. After all, what have the clergy to do with trivial amusements of this kind? Men who can daily perform stupendous miracles by merely muttering a few words from a certain book should rise superior to the puerile diversion of hitting a ball over a net. Men whose supreme business it is to point us to the eternal joys of heaven have surely no concern with the fleeting pastimes of earth. Looked at in this light the cassock, besides being a sign and symbol of things spiritual, is seen to be a barrier against too intimate a contact with things secular. We recognize it as a protective covering well adapted to keep its wearer "unspotted from the world."

Perhaps enough has been said to show that in every aspect of the question, spiritual, social, and economic, the adoption by the clergy of a specific "garb sacerdotal" is of the utmost importance. As colours, plumage and other superficial characters have played an important part in organic evolution, so in the future evolution of religion the "fittest to survive" will probably be the one which imposes on its clergy the use of a distinctive type of garment in correlation with the distinctive spiritual attributes they are supposed to possess.

A. E. MADDOCK.

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## Acid Drops.

The judges of the newly established International Court of Justice were all sworn in at the Hague on February 15. The swearing in took the following form: "I solemnly declare that I will exercise my powers and duties as judge honourably and faithfully, impartially and conscientiously." There was nothing of the "S'welp me God" element about it. God was let out altogether, and whatever may be the outcome of the International Court of Justice, it at least starts without staining itself with that primitive and barbaric appeal to "God." Civilized mankind should be above this meaningless appeal to a primitive tribal fetish. "Nothing," says the *Daily News*, "equalled the symbolic beauty of the world's judges in taking the oath"—and without the "S'welp me Gawd"! Now we should like to see the *Daily News* urging the abolition of the oath with our own judges, and in courts generally. Of course, it might lose the sale of a few copies daily in acting with such unusual courage, but it might be worth trying.

"Seven women live there, all holding different religious views," was the reason given by a Bow landlord for a frightful row in a house.

In a discussion at the National Assembly of the Church of England concerning the closing of Knutsford Training School, the Bishop of Truro said that he felt that £15,000 was too large a sum to be spent on seventy-five prospective parsons. His lordship never felt any qualms concerning the annual outlay of £180,000 on the Bench of Bishops.

The *Parents' Review* declares that "no book should be given to a young child to read that is morbid or self-conscious in tendency." This is a hard saying, for it rules out the Bible and all the rest of the "miserable sinner" literature.

They are having a revival at Bloomsbury Central Church, and we are not surprised to learn that numbers are coming forward professing salvation. They always do. They are the stock performers at all these revivals. They attend them for the purpose of going through an emotional debauch, just as a chronic drinker would attend



a place where free drinks were dispensed for the purpose of getting drunk. If there were fifty revivals within reasonable distance in the course of a year they would be converted fifty times annually. Each revival preacher knows these cases, but it is part of the business to pretend that they are real victories and that more souls are being saved. It is all part of the elaborate humbug that goes to make up modern Christianity.

That we are right in what we have just said is shown by the Rev. Thomas Phillips' remark that all sections of the Church were represented among these converts. Of course they were. But the important thing, one would imagine, is that those outside the Church should be represented. The important thing for Christianity, as a whole, is whether it is making headway against the forces outside the Church which are making for its disintegration. And that we know it is not doing. A revival is held, and the number of Christians is not greater at the end than at the beginning. Churches count their gains—when they can—and proclaim an advance, and all the time the total of Church members grows steadily less. The cards are shuffled and one player gets a few more court cards than he held in previous hands. But the total number of cards is never more than a given number, and often a few are lost in the shuffling. Providing the emotionally ill-balanced among Church attendants with an occasion for a religious orgie will not save the situation. It will only disgust the more intelligent among observers. But perhaps even that may give the Churches some consolation. For, thanks to the moral cowardice of the people, those who see what a humbug Christianity is do not always say so. They remain quiet for fear of loss of business or of social standing. And a man with intelligence inside the Churches just now is far more dangerous than he would be outside. He leaves the fools undisturbed to their folly.

The income of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for the past year was £318,465 as against £342,540 for 1920. This is only one of many societies working in furtherance of the Christian Superstition.

The ages of five people who died in St. Pancras during a recent week totalled 420 years. At that age the dear old Bible patriarchs were playing with marbles.

A curious sidelight on the sufferings of the clergy is given by Dean Inge in an article on clerical recruits. He says the ministerial career "is not so unattractive." "A young man of comparatively humble origin finds, when he is ordained, that he is admitted to the higher ranks of the professional class, a position which he could hardly have reached as a layman." Comment is superfluous!

Lord Coleridge, in a case before him the other day, expressed his surprise at the lack of ordinary intelligence displayed in some of the methods of the "Captains of Finance" who were before him. We are not surprised, for we were never impressed by the intelligence possessed by these same captains of finance. The intelligence of what is called the successful business man is, in our opinion, of neither a high nor an important character. We do not mean that a man of high intelligence may not be a successful business man, only that a man may make a great deal of money and still have a mind of a very commonplace character. One need only take a dozen of the great business men of Britain, some of whom have received titles, to realize this. One may almost say of them that they have made money because they have not had the brains to do anything else. A higher intelligence might well have regarded the spending of so much energy on the making of money as sheer waste of time. And it never dawns upon these money makers that the real man of ability does not often make money because he would think the time spent on its pursuit as not worth it.

We had examples of the amount of intelligence

possessed by the "men of business" during the war. They were given their chance, and we do not think the period of their rule can be matched for waste, incompetence, and down-right corruption. The bungling and corruption was such that its very extent prevented the complete exposure it deserved. Even in the direction in which one would have supposed business men to be alert, that of the indemnities and their consequence on the trade and well-being of the country, they showed themselves to be as ignorant as the most casual street corner shouter. The worst of it is that in virtue of having made money these men become the owners and controllers of newspapers, and so help to manufacture what is called "public opinion." They purchase titles, and so assume a place of social importance. And as, because they have made money, they are held up by a bought Press to an ignorant public as men of outstanding ability, the whole standard of mental worth is seriously lowered. Again we say, in order not to be misunderstood, the successful man of business may be a man of ability, but it by no means follows that he is such. If a man has ability money making is about as easy a game as there is, but the man of genuine ability will seldom spend himself on the task. His other and better interests in life absorb time and energy which the man of lower mental calibre gives so lavishly to the work. The danger to a country begins when these men assume leading and controlling places.

We are indebted to a *Daily News*' review of a work published on behalf of the "Student Movement" for the following quotation: "The value of our investments depends not upon the banks, but upon the strength of our Churches." We fancy that is the kind of praise that will not commend Christianity to every member of the community.

The Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society is advertising for information as to the whereabouts of Atheist Sunday-schools so that they may deal "with the Atheism taught in them." We would suggest that if they deal with the Atheism taught in the *Freethinker* and at Freethought lectures they will nip all Atheistic schools in the bud. But the day has gone by when Christians had the courage to deal with Atheism as it is taught by its responsible exponents. They tried that game and learned from bitter experience that all that was done was to widely advertise the weakness of the Theistic case.

Rev. B. G. Bourchier, Vicar of St. Jude on the Hill, does not believe in women preachers in the Church. He explains that he has the highest respect for women, but—"Hands off the Church." The priesthood, he says, is a vocation, not a profession, and she is made "incapable" by the will of God. And "against the bare idea of seeing her usurping an office plainly denied her by God, my whole soul revolts." So the blame lies with God. He called man, and did not call woman. That is quite biblical and quite Christian, but what a God! And what a vicar! And what a Church! And what a pack of savages we still are with all taboos and totems, and fetiches, and superstitions!

More than three times as many women died by their own hand in 1919 as in 1917. Providence doeth all things well!

The orthodoxy of the *Daily Telegraph*, like the language of its contributors, is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Recently a column article was printed on Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and the sapient writer declared that the queen came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Surely, the suggestion that Solly wrote the Proverbs should be left to junior members of the Salvation Army.

The Government was very kind to the clergy during the war. Not only were they exempted from military service,



but they received officers' pay for conducting services at the safe back of the front. In addition, they received, on retirement, a further gratuity of £50 for each completed year of service. Now, an Army Order states that this money is not subject to income tax.

A man who was summoned to attend the Grand Jury at Preston asked to be relieved on the ground that he believed in Jesus Christ, and he said "Judge not lest ye be judged." The Chairman imposed a fine of £5. Now we wonder whether he would also come under the category of what that delightful old person, the Lord Chief Justice, calls dangerous criminals? At any rate it is plain that if a man wishes to follow the New Testament he runs grave risks. If he believes in turning one cheek when the other is smitten, and there happens to be a war on, he will be sent to prison and deprived of some of his civil rights. If he takes no thought for the morrow, and trusts to his "Father in Heaven" to look after him, he will die of starvation, or be summoned for neglecting his family. If he believes that the prayer of faith will save the sick, and trusts to it, he will again be imprisoned if anyone belonging to him dies and he refuses to call in a doctor during that person's illness. And, on the other hand, if he says that all these things, and others in the New Testament, are downright nonsense, he may get a dose of imprisonment with hard labour.

We suppose the defence of the orthodox Christian would be that you are not supposed to practice these various teachings but only to believe them. To attempt to practice them is to expose to the world their impracticability and their falsity. The practicing Christian is, in a way, putting a quack remedy to the test of a scientific experiment. And no quack thing can be expected to stand that. And, quite naturally, when a professing Christian suddenly turns round and attempts to be a practicing one, the other Christians round on him for giving the game away. As the New Testament says, "All things are possible to those that believe"—except being honest, and practicing what one professes to believe.

A friend writes us from the States a two-fold grumble. He says that (1) we are not making progress, and the religious world ignores the Freethinkers (2) this is proved by the number of retrogressive Acts that have been passed in America, Britain, and the Colonies. He also suggests that there is great need of some enthusiastic Freethinking lawyers keeping an eye on all these Acts and keeping the public informed they are in line with the Constitution, and that as the belief in religion rests upon the belief that the clergy are well-meaning and honest men, we should aim specifically at destroying that. With regard to the latter point, we may say that we do not agree either that the belief in Christianity rests upon the good faith of the clergy or that they are all dishonest men. We have some of our own acquaintance who are as honest as we are, and our complaint is, not that they do not believe what they preach, but that they do. That is really the hardest thing that can be said of anyone to-day. There are dishonest ones, but they are among the more learned, men of the Dean Inge type who have far too much ability to believe what people think they believe, and which they encourage the people to think they do believe. Dishonesty with the clergy comes with ability.

Nor are we alarmed at the undoubted reaction that has set in these past few years. That is a normal consequence of the war. From the very outset of the war we warned our readers not to be misled by all the lies that were being told them about either the causes of the war, or its conduct, or its foretold consequences. We said quite plainly that if we won the war, we should begin to arm against some other enemy, real or imaginary, and that if we lost we should blame it on the fact that we were not militarized enough. Either way a victory would mean a victory for militarism. We also said that repressive laws once passed would be difficult to repeal, and events have quite justified

that. What we were afraid of was that the idea of force would be so driven into the minds of the people by the Government as a means of carrying on a lengthy war that it would become part of the public mentality. All we feared and foresaw has happened, and we must wait and work to get back to the old state of things. All we can hope is that people have learned the lesson. And yet we have our doubts. If another war were on we should doubtless have the same lies told, they would be as readily swallowed, and there would be the same consequences. The moral of it all is that a nation at war is a nation undergoing a steady process of brutalization and barbarization, and we cannot get over all that in a day.

We do not agree with the statement that the religious world feels it can ignore Freethought propaganda. It may sound paradoxical, but they really pay it more attention now by leaving it alone than they did when parsons rushed to do battle with prominent Freethinkers. Our friend is doubtless thinking of the days when leading Christians rushed forward to crush "Infidelity." That was because they did not understand the strength of the Freethought position. But they gained wisdom from experience. They found that against the Freethinker they simply had no case to put before the public. The more they attacked the more people came under the influence of Freethinking ideas. So the policy was changed for one of leaving Freethinkers severely alone. It at least guaranteed the minimum of damage to Christianity. And the attempt to meet that danger was by way of concession after concession until believers began to ask what it was that was left.

It has been the active work of the militant Freethought party that has really been responsible for seventy-five per cent. of the concessions made by the Churches. And how little they have ceased to fear Freethought is shown by the fact that it is the one force in the country with which reaction never seeks to make terms, and which is still held up as the great bogey to frighten the timid. When the public is to be warned off some political or social theory the great fall-back is that it teaches, or involves, Atheism. And when the timid and time-serving in advanced political and social parties go before the public, the one thing they seek to impress on the people is that their theory is quite respectably religious, and is not tainted with Atheism. We are not ignored, we are watched. The pretence that we are not is just part of the general policy of keeping the public unacquainted with the teachings of Freethought, which is the one enemy the forces of reaction dread, and the one enemy against which they can make no real headway.

The view of the sacredness of places of worship is not shared by Providence. Egham parish church has had the communion table rifled; two valuable vases have been stolen, and the offertory boxes emptied. In the vestry the robes of the clergy were arranged in fantastic positions by the thief or thieves.

Ernest Edward Black, an insurance agent, of Tregonissey, St. Austell, Cornwall, who has been sentenced to death for murdering his wife, was formerly a member of the church choir at St. Austell. Landru, "the French Bluebeard" was a sub-deacon in a Catholic church. Their careers do not reflect much credit on religion.

Camouflage is the order of the day with Christian denominations. In a Press paragraph it is stated that the Salvation Army is seeking to raise £150,000 for the maintenance of its slum, social, and rescue work throughout the world. What has happened to the "blood and fire" department?

The latest ban at Oxford University is on a lecture by Miss Maude Royden on "The Social Relation of the Sexes." Perhaps the University authorities considered that a maiden lady would have a mind untrammelled with a close acquaintance with this subject.



## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester; March 26, Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool.

## 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.

G. TREBELLS.—See "Acid Drops."

G. RICHARDS.—No, we never ask God anything. And, on the other hand, he never tells us anything. If he does what you say, he must be very busy, and as we are also busy, it may be a case of two busy persons respecting each other's time. We merely state facts.

T. HAMILTON (Glasgow).—"Freemasonry and Superstition" in this issue will be of interest to you. In Great Britain candidates for membership of the masonic lodges must affirm a belief in a Supreme Being. The Grand Orient of France does not require any declaration of this kind. We understand, also, that the Concordia Lodge, 8 Taviton Street, Gordon Square, London, exacts no declaration of belief in God or oath on the Bible. We appreciate your high opinion of the *Freethinker* and note your suggestion re publishing a list of N. S. S. Branches.

S. HAMILTON.—We note your hope that we will make this paper better and brighter. You do not seem to realize that our real aim is to make it as dull, as unreadable, and as depressing as possible. That is what an editor exists for.

H. BARBER.—Thanks for addresses. The *Blasphemy* pamphlet has been sent.

J. W. MALKINSON.—It is quite a good idea to get Adult Classes and similar institutions to take up with a discussion of the blasphemy laws. We hope all interested will note the suggestion.

OWING to Mr. Cohen's absence in Scotland over the week-end a number of letters are held over until our next issue.

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

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

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The *Pioneer Press*" and crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

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

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

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## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen's visit to Scotland was a complete success. The meetings were the largest and the most enthusiastic he has yet held. At Glasgow the hall was crowded, and the large City hall was well filled in the evening when the subject of the lecture was "The Other Side of Death." There was also an exceptionally good sale of literature, the whole of the large stock of Mr. Cohen's new work

being disposed of. At Motherwell on the Monday evening, thanks to the arrangements made by Mr. Higgins and our old friend Mr. Ralston, the hall was again crowded. Mr. Hale, the President of the Glasgow Branch, officiated as Chairman at all three meetings. Altogether, though a busy week-end, involving an all-night journey, with a day's work at the *Freethinker* office on the Tuesday, means something of a strain, the results quite justified the effort.

Next Sunday (March 5) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in Nottingham. In the afternoon at 2.30 he will speak before the Cosmopolitan Debating Society on "Blasphemy and the Blasphemy Laws." In the evening at 7 he will lecture in the Corn Exchange, Thurland Street, on "The Other Side of Death." It is some time since Mr. Cohen was in Nottingham, and we expect there will be a gathering of Freethinkers of Nottingham and district.

We have been waiting for some weeks in order to find time and space to give to "Keridon's" latest work, *Life, Mind and Knowledge* (3s. 6d.), the lengthy notice it deserves. And we have put it off so often that we are ashamed to look the book in the face. And even now all that we can do is to give the briefest of words to an essay that opens up wide fields of controversy and exposition. It will not be surprising to those who are acquainted with the quality of "Keridon's" work as it has appeared in these columns to be told that within the brief compass of about eighty pages he has provided his readers with enough concentrated material to make a very large volume. In fact, if we must find fault with the essay, it is in that direction that it will lie. There is an overbalance of ideas to a too great economy of matter. And that is apt to take for granted a too great power of concentration of mind on the part of the reader, and even a closer acquaintance with the subject than many readers will have. But for those who read for other purposes than that of amusement, there will be found on every page material for reflection which in its suggestiveness will provide for the note-taker the ground for matter much greater in bulk than the work from which the notes are taken.

We can only say now that the work is thoroughly and healthily mechanistic. "Keridon" has little sympathy with the metaphysician, much less, we fancy, than the species deserve. And he escapes what we may call the fallacy of the uninformed materialist in thinking that such phenomena as those of mind can be "explained" in terms of physics, or of chemistry, or even of biology. They are, as he points out, ultimate categories. But that does not mean that they are referable to some mysterious entity called mind, which while associated with "matter" has an independence of it. Mind is just one of nature's devices for enabling a form of life to develop and persist. And this is involved in the author's contention that the whole and sole meaning of mind is to be found in the structure and needs of the body. For mind is not only unthinkable apart from a body, but, so far as our knowledge of mind goes, it would be useless without one. Even Spiritualists and other believers in a future life have been driven to give the mind in the next world a body to get about with, and thus in the very act of proving the absurdities to which human reason will go, have also shown how impossible it is for anyone to be wholly and unbrokenly unreasonable. Apart from our suggesting to "Keridon" the extent to which his work would gain were it not so compressed, we think that in a future edition it might be as well to place more clearly before his readers the nature of causation. The language on page sixty must give rise to the idea that the writer holds the conception of cause and effect as distinct things. We do not think that is the case, as we believe he has in his mind the quite correct conception of an effect as the sum of all the conditions which express themselves in a given consequence. But the older form is more prevalent, and one wants to make the correct view the more definite for that reason. Apart from these minor criticisms we have nothing but praise for a clever essay on a much debated and abstruse subject.



We are asked to say that the N. S. S. badges in silver for which some members have written are not yet ready, but will be delivered as soon as they are received. This is entirely due to the delay by the manufacturers. When trade was good it was impossible to get orders fulfilled quickly because people were busy. Now one cannot get things done because people are not busy. We suppose it is part of the general rot caused by the war. For the time being we must, however, ask those who have written for the silver badges to be patient.

## Freemasonry and Superstition.

THE alluring prospects of becoming a member of a secret society have always appealed to the superstitious mind. Although we have been fighting the Church for many years there is yet another organization that has its ramifications in every corner of the globe. I refer to Freemasonry. Before a person can become a candidate for its so-called mysteries he has to publicly and solemnly affirm his belief and trust in God and the Bible. No Atheist is allowed to participate in their fraternity. There is an exception, however, in the case of the Grand Orient of France, and the Grand Lodge of Peru, who have discontinued to impose on their members the belief in God. The Grand Lodge of England, and of other countries, have accordingly broken off all fraternal relations with France and Peru.

The first paragraph in the book of Constitutions says:—

A mason is obliged by his tenure to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the art he will neither be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious libertine. He of all men should best understand that God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh to the heart.

The principal object in every masonic lodge is the Bible, which they call the Volume of the Sacred Law. It is called the first great, though emblematical, light in Freemasonry. On it all candidates take a solemn obligation to keep inviolate the secrets of the order. It is always open during lodge hours, and has its place on the master's pedestal. It is considered among masons to be the divine will of God as revealed to man. All the ceremonies are prefaced and terminated by prayer. Modern Freemasonry is the symbolic building of King Solomon's temple, and in the whole of its degrees there is little else but the praising of God, and the acceptance of the Bible as the unerring standard of truth and morality, and an effort to regulate their lives by the divine precepts it is supposed to contain. Why it is kept a secret, Freemasons themselves do not know, unless they are frightened at being laughed at for their superstitious beliefs. There is nothing secret about it. It is simply a benevolent society, whose principles are philanthropy, truth, and justice, and if it is out to do any good to the world it should not be kept a secret.

Under the Grand Lodge of England there are some 4,000 lodges and several million Freemasons who are doing more to foster superstition than all the churches. Where a man would not go to church he is always ready to attend his lodge and go through the same performances behind locked doors, guarded by a tyler with a drawn sword. The only difference is that after the lodge meeting they sit down to a sumptuous banquet with plenty of the "wine that cheereth the heart of God and man."

According to masonic tradition Freemasonry has its origin with the building of King Solomon's temple. But like Christianity and Judaism it really has its origin in Egypt, the cradle of superstition and pagan rites. It is nothing more or less than the

revival of ancient sun worship. The worshipful master sits in the east and represents the rising sun. The junior warden sits in the south and represents the sun at its meridian, and the senior warden has his chair in the west to represent the setting sun. No brother, for instance, is allowed to cross the centre of the lodge. He must follow the course of the sun, up the north, past the east, down the south side to the west. In all the pagan rites we can trace the same sun worship. Their chief officers were always placed in the east, west, and south, respectively, to represent the rising, setting, and meridian sun.

All masonic lodges are situated due east and west. Freemasons give three reasons for this. (1) The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. (2) Learning originated in the east and spread to the west. (3) Moses, by God's special command, caused a tabernacle to be erected due east and west, which was taken to be the model or ground work of King Solomon's temple, of which every lodge is a representation. When the sun rises in the east the master calls the brethren to labour; when it reaches its meridian at 12 noon the junior warden calls them to refreshment, and when the sun sets the senior warden closes the lodge. A Mason can only be initiated when the sun is at its meridian at 12 noon, but as the lodges are held in the evening Freemasons have a very ingenious way of explaining this seeming paradox. The sun being the centre of our system, and the earth constantly revolving around it on its own axis, and Freemasonry being universally spread over the whole of the globe, it necessarily follows that the sun must always be at its meridian with respect to Freemasonry. In nearly every lodge of the world the sun and moon are preserved as emblems of the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, who made the one to rule the day, and the other to govern the night. Fancy paying twenty guineas or more to be initiated into such crass superstition.

The first Grand Master of the order, according to masonic tradition, was our old friend King Solomon. We are told that the foundation of the society is the practice of every social and moral virtue. King Solomon was by no means a fit and proper person to carry out those precepts. He was a murderer, a polygamist, and a sensualist of the worst type. The Song of Solomon, to my mind, is the raving of a pervert. If the masters of masonic lodges, who represent King Solomon, would only read a little of his biblical history they would be heartily ashamed of themselves, and would vacate King Solomon's chair at the first opportunity.

The most deadly enemy of Freemasonry has been the Church of Rome. In April, 1738, Pope Clement XII issued against Freemasonry his famous bull, whose authority is still in existence. In the closing paragraph of the bull the Roman Pontiff enjoins "all bishops, superiors, and ordinaries, to punish the Freemasons with the penalties they deserve, as people suspected of heresy." The interpretation given by Cardinal Pirrao in his edict of publication in the following year says: "No person shall dare assemble at any lodge of the said society, nor be present at any of their meetings under the pain of death and the confiscation of their goods." The persecutions which followed the bull are another disgrace to the Roman Church. Another edict was issued in 1751 by Pope Benedict XIV, who then occupied the Papal chair, renewing the bull that had been fulminated by Clement. This, of course, renewed the persecutions, and even to this day Freemasonry is only carried on in Italy, Spain, and Portugal under the greatest secrecy.

If Freemasonry would only banish their superstitious beliefs and useless ritual, which do not go towards the making of a real mason any more than the attendance at church makes a good Christian, and



devote their energy to the religion of Humanity and universal Brotherhood, they would become a powerful agent for the benefit of mankind, instead of a superstitious and secret society for the worldly benefit of the few who are able to afford a heavy premium for initiation.

LEONARD MASON.

### Eve and the Apple.

CHRISTIANITY is based upon the story of the Fall. In Adam all sinned, as in Christ all must be saved. To this doctrine St. Paul gives his sanction, and they may be disregarded who, without any claim to inspiration, endeavour to explain the narrative as an allegory. If Adam did not really fall, he could not have been cursed for falling, and his posterity could neither have partaken in a sin which was never committed nor in a malediction which was never pronounced. Original sin is a false doctrine if our first parents did not transmit the germs of iniquity. If Adam did not fall there was no need for Christ to save us; if he did not set God and man at variance there was no necessity for an atonement; and so the Christian scheme would be a *fiasco* from beginning to end. No Garden of Eden, no Gethsemane! No Fall, no Redemption! No Adam, no Christ!

Mother Eve's curiosity was the cause of the first sin in this world. The whole human race was made liable to damnation through her partiality for fruit. Millions of souls now writhe in hell because she took a bite of an apple. How do we know it was an *apple*? The Bible does not say it was, or was not. We are left to our own opinions, and the apple is the general favourite. Milton calls it an apple,<sup>1</sup> and so does Byron,<sup>2</sup> and they represent the godly and satanic schools of poetry. Milton repeats the "apple" in *Paradise Regained*.<sup>3</sup> The forbidden fruit is also called an apple by the following writers: Hugh Latimer (*First Sermon on the Card*), Shakespeare (*Sonnet xciii.*), Middleton (*The Roaring Girl*, act iii., scene 2), Bunyan (*Pilgrim's Progress*, part ii., in Prudence's song), Defoe (*History of the Devil*), Thackeray (*The Four Georges*, p. 35), Tennyson (*Becket*, act iii., scene 1, Margaret's speech). These are very eminent writers, pious and profane; and as they all agree on the point, we may regard the question as settled. Anyone who wishes to argue that the forbidden fruit was not an apple, but something else (say the priapic nut that took the fancy of General Gordon), must please apply elsewhere. Our mind is made up on the pippin.

This forbidden apple, which "brought death into the world and all our woe," grew on the Tree of Knowledge, which God planted in the midst of the Garden of Eden, sternly ordering Adam and Eve not to eat of it on pain of death. They might eat the fruit of every other tree but this one. "See," said Jehovah, "what lovely pippins! Scarlet and dark gold on the sunny side, and on the shady side as soft and mellow as the amber tints of an autumn sunset. But don't touch them. They are my special preserve. If I find a single one missing, you'll wish you were never born."

Now the Lord must have been very simple to protect his pippins in this way. It was the height of absurdity, to tell a woman she might do everything but one thing, without expecting her to do it. Naturally she thought of nothing else. Had the Lord said nothing about the apples, or told her she *must* eat them, they might have been hanging on the tree to this very day.

But not only did the Lord allow Eve's curiosity to prompt her to "sin," he permitted the serpent "more subtle than any beast of the field" to egg her on. This wily creature is supposed to have been animated, on this occasion, by the Devil, although the text does not allude to such a circumstance. If it was the Devil, masquerading as a snake, what chance had the poor woman against his seductive wiles?

One day Adam went fishing or something, and Eve went off to look at the pippins. At the foot of the tree, or

somewhere handy, she saw "the old serpent," who saluted her with great civility. "Good day, ma'am," said he; and instead of running away from the talking snake, the lady joined in the conversation, and business began. Old Nick observed that the pippins looked lovely. She assented, but said she was afraid to touch them. "If I do," she said, "I shall die." "Who told you so?" asked Satan. "Why, HE," replied Mrs. Eve. "What He?" "Oh, the gentleman who made us." "Die!" laughed Old Nick, "tut, tut, ma'am, look at me; I've eaten bushels." Thereupon he plucked off one with his tail and held it out to her. The temptation was irresistible. Poor Eve took it, put her front teeth into it, found it nice, went off to find Adam, and they sat down together to apple luncheon.

Immediately she took the fruit, according to Milton, who is a kind of supplementary Bible to English Protestants,

Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,  
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe  
That all was lost.

What a rumpus about a trifle! It reminds us of the Jew who had a sneaking love for pork. One day he went into a restaurant and ordered sausages. As he was taking the first mouthful there was a loud clap of thunder. This was followed by another clap as he tried again, and then came a third. At last he threw down the knife and fork and made for the door, exclaiming, "What a frightful fuss about a little bit of pork."

Food reformers will have more sympathy with Eve than she found at the hands of Jehovah. She anticipated the modern view of the dietetic value of apples. Boys, at any rate, will bless the Mother of All. A world without apples, to a boy, is simply "beastly."

Eve's transgression, according to the learned Lightfoot, a great seventeenth century divine, occurred "about high noon, the time of eating." Perhaps he was there with a Benson's chronometer. The same authority informs us that Adam and Eve "did lie comfortless, till towards the cool of the day, or three o'clock afternoon." In that case it must have been in the spring of the year, for in the summer this is about the hottest part of the day.

According to Milton they were anything but "comfortless." The forbidden fruit inflamed their passions, and the poet gives a glowing description of their "amorous play." It is very beautiful, but very luscious. Oppressed with "dewy sleep" they sink into slumber; and when they awake, the intoxication being followed by satiety and shame, they upbraid each other, and indulge in all the acrimony of a domestic quarrel.

Milton also tells us what arts were used by Eve to overcome Adam's virtue. This is a point on which the Bible is silent. Perhaps the poor man thought it best to share her fortunes. We can understand his objection to be left alone with his menagerie.

What the Bible does not tell us, nor Milton either, is why the Devil tempted Eve instead of Adam. Peter calls the woman the "weaker vessel"—an astonishing statement for a married man. It is the opinion of a lady friend of ours that the Devil stormed the citadel first, knowing he could carry a poor outpost like Adam afterwards. Our own opinion is that the Devil knew his business. He acted like the parsons, who get hold of the women, and know the men will follow.

After eating the forbidden fruit Adam and Eve discovered that they were naked. So they "sewed figleaves together, and made themselves aprons." We are not told who gave them lessons in sewing, or where they found the needles. Dr. Thomas Burnet, whose mind was much exercised on this point, inquired, "Whence had they a needle, whence a thread, on the first day of their creation?" He could not answer the question nor can we. Maybe some of the female angels had attended a "garden party" in Eden, and carelessly left their needles and thread behind them. Perhaps the story is a reminiscence of primeval times. It is easy to see that the leaves of trees may have been the earliest covering of the sexual organs. The leaves of the Indian fig are still used for that purpose by the more barbarous races of Asia; the Chinese books say that such aprons were man's first covering; and the Spaniards found them worn by several of the American tribes.

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Lost*, bk. x.

<sup>2</sup> *Don Juan*, canto x., st. 1.

<sup>3</sup> bk. II.



A little later, God himself, who is everywhere, came into the Garden of Eden, for the purpose of taking a walk "in the cool of the day." Apparently he was holding a soliloquy, for Adam and Eve "heard his voice." Colenso, however, renders this part of the narrative differently from the Authorized Version—"And they had heard the sound of Jehovah Elohim walking in the garden in the breeze of the day." Delitzsch thinks they heard the sound of his footsteps, for God used to visit them in the form of a man. That Jehovah had feet we know,<sup>4</sup> and did he not show Moses his "back parts?"<sup>5</sup>

Although God is everywhere, Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden." But they were soon dragged forth to the light, and Adam, who seems to have been a silly fellow, explained that he had hidden himself because he was *naked*, as though the Lord had not seen him in that state before. "Naked!" cried Jehovah, fixing his terrible eye on the fig leaves, "who told you that? Have you been tasting my pipins?" "Oh Lord! yes," said Adam, "but it wasn't my fault, she made me do it."

What a hero was this "grand old gardener"—as Tennyson called him! Who does not share the sentiment of the Australian poet?

Fit sire was he of a selfish race,  
Who first to temptation yielded,  
Then to mend his case tried to heap disgrace  
On the woman he should have shielded.  
Say! comrade mine, the forbidden fruit  
We'd have plucked, that I well believe,  
But I trust we'd rather have suffered, mute,  
Than have laid the blame upon Eve.<sup>6</sup>

Jehovah turned fiercely upon the woman, asking her what she had done. Eve stammered her poor excuses. She admitted she took the first bite, but said a gentleman snake had tempted her. Had she been one of our smart modern ladies, say a fashionable American belle, she would have bridled up and let out in this style—

"Yes, I did eat the pippin, and I gave Adam a piece. Why did you dangle it in front of me all day long? I've simply had that pippin on the brain. Besides, I'm tired of this 'innocence.' It isn't even decent. Adam would look better in trousers. I'm sure I don't want to see his legs all day. As for me, I don't know which way to look. I'm going shopping this afternoon. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to treat a lady in this way. I'm sure you're old enough to know better."

With a flushed face, all cream and roses, and a Lady Teazle shake of the head, the woman would have been irresistible. Jehovah would have pulled out his cheque book, and begged a kiss. For Eve was very lovely, according to all the painters. It is related by some of the Rabbis that God was in love with his own handiwork, and regretted that he had promised her to Adam.

But the affair turned out otherwise. The Lord utterly lost his temper, and swore thirteen to the dozen. He cursed the serpent, cursed the man, cursed the woman, and cursed the very ground under their feet. It was a good, all-round level swear. No wonder Diderot said that the God of the Christians is a father who cares a lot for his apples and very little for his children.<sup>7</sup>

The serpent's curse does not concern us here. The woman's curse was that she should bring forth children in pain and sorrow, and that the man should rule over her. But woman must always have suffered to some extent during conception and delivery, and therefore Delitzsch infers that the curse produced a change in her physiological structure. It must also be observed that Jehovah's curse operates with great partiality. Savage women experience little pain or discomfort in parturition. They are often seen, an hour or two after confinement, going about as though nothing had happened. The pain seems to increase as society becomes more artificial and the nerves are more highly-strung. But all this, of course, is to be explained on natural grounds. It has nothing to do with the apples of Eden or the curse of Jehovah. Nor is the subordination of woman to be accounted for in that way. With a few exceptions, such as the case of bees,

the predominance of the male is the general law of the animal world.

Adam was doomed to till the ground, and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. This was no very terrible curse. Doing nothing is the hardest work in world—if you keep at it.

Orthodox Christianity teaches that the whole human race fell in Adam and Eve. They ate the apples, and we suffer the stomach-ache. Is this just? Would it find a place in human jurisprudence? Do we imprison the children of a man who commits a theft? Do we hang the children of a man who commits a murder? Is it not infamous to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children?

Not only sin, but death, was the result of eating that pippin. Milton sings:—

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world.

St. Paul also says that "by one man sin came into the world, and death by sin."<sup>8</sup>

This theory supposes that before the Fall the world was the scene of perfect peace. Birds lived on seeds and eschewed worms. Tigers grazed like oxen. The lion lay down with the lamb—and the lamb was outside.

Most of the carnivorous animals could not subsist on a vegetable diet; they must therefore have lived on flesh before the Fall, which involves *death*, or their natures must have undergone a radical change. The first supposition contradicts Scripture; the second contradicts Science.

Geology shows us that in the very earliest times animals died from the same causes that kill them now. Many were overwhelmed by floods and volcanoes, or engulfed by earthquakes; many died of old age or disease, for their bones are found distorted and carious, and their limbs twisted with pain; while the greater number were devoured in the struggle for existence. Death ruled universally before the human race made its appearance on the earth.

Adam was told that "in the day" he ate of the forbidden fruit he should "surely die." But he did not die. He lived to the remarkable age of nine hundred and thirty. We shall never live so long if we swear off apples altogether.

Some writers contend that man became *mortal*—that is, liable to death—after eating the pippin. But this is inconsistent with the text of Genesis. There is not the slightest hint that man was created *immortal*. On the contrary, he is driven forth from Eden lest he should "take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

Nor is it easy to find that Adam really *fell*. God himself says that "the man," having touched the forbidden fruit, is "become as one of us." That could scarcely be a fall which brought him nearer to God. The Ophites, a Gnostic sect, regarded the eating of the forbidden fruit as an elevation. Jehovah, in their opinion, was jealous of man, and wished to prevent the progress of knowledge: but the serpent, the agent of superior wisdom, taught man the course he should pursue.<sup>9</sup> Only in a religious sense, indeed, could it be pretended that man fell by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. It was impossible for the priests to deny that it makes men wise; their only resource was to declare that carnal wisdom is at enmity with God.

Before Adam and Eve went, the Lord took pity on their nakedness. The fig-leaves were a draughty suit, so he "made coats of skins, and clothed them." He was the first tailor; he was also the first butcher, and the first tanner. Fancy Jehovah sitting down, cross-legged, stitching the leather with needle and pack-thread! What must it have been to be there!

Here again, in the form of mythology, we have a reminiscence of primitive times. No doubt the skins of animals were the earliest durable dresses. According to Sanchoniatho, clothes were the invention of Ueous, who made them of the skins of wild beasts caught in the chase. The Chinese say that men covered themselves with grass till Tchun-fang taught them to use skins. The aborigines of New South Wales, the lowest of savages, were found

<sup>4</sup> Exodus, xxiv., 9, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus, xxxiii., 22, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Adam Lindsay Gordon, *The Old Leaven*.

<sup>7</sup> *Additlon aux Pensées Philosophiques*, xvi.

<sup>8</sup> Romans v., 12.

<sup>9</sup> Didron, *Christian Iconography*, vol. i., p. 190.



dressed in opossum or kangaroo skins, very neatly sewed together with the sinews of the otter.

To prevent Adam and Eve from returning the Lord "placed at the east of the Garden of Eden *cherubims*, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." It would have been more sensible if the Devil had been kept out in the first place. Jehovah acted like the man who locked the stable door when the horse had run away.

As the cherubic guard seems never to have been relieved, profane wits have speculated whether the Flood drowned them, and quenched the flaming sword with a great hiss. It is indeed curious to find these creatures in Genesis. Rabbi Simeon Ben Lachish admits that their name is Chaldean, and came to the Jews from Babylon.

Perhaps the reader would like to know what became of the Tree of Knowledge. A legend of the Middle Ages relates that Eve broke off a branch, when she plucked the forbidden fruit, and carried it with her from Paradise. Planted outside by her hand, it grew to a great tree, under which Abel was killed; afterwards it was used in building the holy of holies in Solomon's temple; and finally it yielded the beams of which the Cross was made. Another legend relates that God rooted it out, and flung it over the wall of Paradise. A thousand years afterwards it was found by Abraham in a good state of preservation. He planted it in his garden, and while doing so he was informed by a voice from heaven that this was the tree on whose wood the Redeemer should be crucified.

Poor Eve has had her praisers and her detractors. According to a Jewish legend she was the second wife of Adam. His first wife was called Lilith. She was a witch-woman, and, being supplanted by Eve, she transformed herself into a serpent, and destroyed her rival's happiness. There are some interesting notes on Lilith in Baring Gould.<sup>10</sup> A rational theory of the matter may be found in Gerald Massey.<sup>11</sup> Both the legend and the theory are to Eve's credit. Lilith became the paramour of Satan, and had his assistance in her seductive enterprise in Eden; a subject which is treated in a fine poem (*Eden Bower*) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

On the other hand, there is a dirty Jewish legend, mentioned by Bayle,<sup>12</sup> which represents Eve as being seduced by a lascivious monkey. Christian legends have been equally insulting. An early sect declared that Eve had Cain and Abel, not by her husband, but by a monstrous intercourse with the Devil.<sup>13</sup> It is fair to add, however, that the Greek Church pays honour to Eve as a saint, the nineteenth of November being the day of her commemoration.

Something similar to the Bible story of the Fall is found in the Chaldean cosmogony. But a close parallel exists in the mythology of Persia. It is rendered as follows by Kalisch:—

The first couple, the parents of the human race, Meshia and Meshiane, lived originally in purity and innocence. Perpetual happiness was promised them by Ormuzd, the creator of every good gift, if they persevered in their virtue. But an evil demon (Dev) was sent to them by Ahriman, the representative of everything noxious and sinful. He appeared unexpectedly in the form of a serpent, and gave them the fruit of a wonderful tree, Hom, which imparted immortality and had the power of restoring the dead to life. Thus evil inclinations entered their hearts; all their moral excellence was destroyed. Ahriman himself appeared under the form of the same reptile, and completed the work of seduction. They acknowledged him instead of Ormuzd as the creator of everything good; and the consequence was they forfeited for ever the eternal happiness for which they were destined.<sup>14</sup>

This legend is far older than the Book of Genesis, and as the Jewish historical books know nothing of the Fall, it is highly probable that the story was borrowed from the religion of Persia during the Captivity.

Legends of a golden age and the corruption of primitive innocence are common throughout the world. According to a Kamite legend, Isis and Osiris lived together in

Nysa or Paradise. They were perfectly happy until Osiris was seized with the desire to drink the water of immortality. He went in search of it and fell. The Chinese describe the first man as the true son of Tien, walking the fields in naked innocence. But gluttony, or lust, or the thirst after knowledge, led to his fall. In the golden age of the Greeks, according to Hesiod, the first man was wifeless and ignorant, but innocent and happy, until Prometheus taught him the use of fire, when Jupiter, in revenge, ordered Vulcan to form a woman of clay, and gave her, with her beauty and wickedness, to the man as a curse. According to the Lamaic faith, the earth produced a honey-sweet substance; some glutton ate of it, and the rest of mankind followed his evil example; thus they fell, and lost their stature and longevity. The Brahminic and Buddhist scriptures furnish similar stories. Even among the Iroquois, of North America, it was believed that the great mother lost paradise through being tempted with bear's grease.

In all these stories there is an attempt to explain sensuality, the excess of which was so injurious to the individual and pernicious to society. *Cherchez la femme* is still a proverb among civilized people. It has always suited man to lay the sin of his own passions on woman. It is the old, old story. Woe to the weak! Adam voices the egotism of the male—"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

## Correspondence.

THE LATE MR. EDWARD DAVIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your remarks of last week on Edward Davis, of Leyton, recalls to my mind the following event that happened in the days of School Boards many years ago. It was one of my numerous applications for promotion to a Headship to which I thought I was entitled, as far as efficiency and length of service were considered. A friend of mine happened to meet Mr. Davis, who was a prominent member of the Leyton School Board, and in the course of conversation incidentally mentioned my case. Davis apparently assented as far as efficiency and service were concerned. "But," he burst out, "see what horrible opinions he holds." Of course he holds "horrible opinions," for is he not a Freethinker?—added to which enormity he is not a Freemason, and consequently remains in the class-room even unto this day. A. G. B.

FREETHOUGHT DEBATING SOCIETY.

SIR,—Would it not be possible for the various Branches of the N. S. S. to form a debating society in their district in order to train and encourage young Freethinkers in the art of public speaking and debate? There is always plenty of room for new lecturers, and although there are many useful books on public speaking these are of no good unless one has practical experience.

I would suggest that each debating society formed should be under the guidance of an experienced debater, so as to afford every facility for learning the art of debate and platform speaking on Freethought subjects. Perhaps some of your readers may be able to offer a suggestion.

LEONARD MASON.

FREETHOUGHT AND THE STATE.

SIR,—From time to time of late years the *Freethinker* has been made the medium for the publication of the most extreme Socialistic doctrines; indeed, they cannot be called by that name, but are rank anarchy. I buy the paper not for political purposes, but as the organ of the National Secular Society, which includes all classes and all shades of political opinion. Take the article, "Mind your own business," in the current issue. We are told:—

"The State should not control currency" (money). What does the writer mean? Does he mean that any person should have the right to manufacture coin and paper money? If so, how much value does he think it would have in the eyes of the nations with whom we trade, and how should we check the issue of false money?

<sup>10</sup> *Legends of Old Testament Characters.*

<sup>11</sup> *Natural Genesis*, vol. ii., pp. 122, 123.

<sup>12</sup> *Dictionary, Adam.*

<sup>13</sup> *Calmet's Dictionary, Eve.*

<sup>14</sup> *Kalisch, Commentary on Genesis.*



"It (the State) should not establish a monopoly of the business of educating children." This is not a fact, there is no such monopoly; anyone can run a school so long as it is run on really educational lines—even Freethinkers. If he objects to compulsory education, I think very few who desire the education of the working classes will agree with him.

"State should not prevent people from assembling for any peaceable purpose." I am not aware that the State in this country does. I have addressed public meetings all my life, and in peace time the restrictions are nil.

No monopoly of carriage of letters. If there was not a strong feeling in favour of a State postal service this would speedily come to an end, but it has arisen through the agitation for such a service, which is able to deal not only with national but international letters. Would the return to a non-State service be of greater benefit to the country? And "The regulation of marriage should be no part of the business of the State." Now what does this mean? I have from time to time in recent years met people who call themselves Anarchists, who do not believe in legal marriages, who think people should mate and part like animals, and I will have nothing more to do with the Secular Society if it openly or covertly approves of any such doctrine.

If the above quotation means anything at all it means that the State should not institute Marriage Laws, that, in fact, marriages should cease to become legal contracts. Legal marriages are instituted to protect chiefly the children of the marriage and the mother, who is withdrawn during child-bearing from competitive industry. There is also a eugenic value, for (except in the lowest rank of human beings) the parentage is known and the inter-marriage of near relations is checked. In a State where people marry and part on impulse it would be difficult to check such undesirable marriages. If these things, which we are told are a mere fragment of the changes G. O. W. would make, were in force in this country for one year, we should find ourselves travelling rapidly in the direction now taken by Russia. No State currency, no compulsory education, anyone free to sell drink, or keep as many dogs as they like, no marriage laws, no State postal service. What a country!

The State should not have anything to do with religion, and it should leave people absolutely free to think their own thoughts on all things, but the very fact of establishing a State presupposes that we desire it to undertake certain duties on our behalf. Citizens could not establish their own sewage or water system. A village community might act for itself, a country of great cities cannot. I trust you can insert this my first letter after being a subscriber for nineteen years. BEATRICE A. BAYFIELD.

[It has always been the policy of the *Freethinker*, while holding itself aloof from all political parties, to give room from time to time to suitable articles dealing with the broader aspects of social questions. We are in no wise responsible for the opinions expressed—nor is the National Secular Society—beyond seeing that they are suitably expressed. And we believe that our readers generally appreciate the attitude thus taken. And no one of balanced mind is the worse for reading views from which they entirely dissent.—Editor.]

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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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Mr. F. Oke, "Feminist Movement."

FULHAM AND WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (West London Workers' Institute, 66 High Road, Chiswick): 7.30, Mr. Alex Gossip, "Liberty."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Social Gathering—Music and Dancing.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Councillor H. M. Tibbles, "The Servile State or Social Democracy."

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. R. H. Rosetti, "Nature, Man, and God."

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