

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### *An Adventurous Preacher.*

There are compliments that carry with them an implied insult, just as there are intended insults that convey an unintentional compliment. An illustration of the first is given when a Freethinker is told that he is quite a Christian, or that he is behaving in quite a Christian manner. No doubt the Christian who uses the expression means well, but it is quite certain that to the Freethinker, with his conception of what Christianity is, and with his knowledge of Christian history, the testimonial is not of the highest order. To be “as good as a Christian” does not, as things go, prove that one has reached almost inconceivable levels of moral excellence. Naturally these unintended insults do not occur between members of different camps or parties. They may take place with members of the same camp. Of this kind an example was given in the course of some editorial notes in the *Christian World* for October 4. “It was,” says that journal, “a brave plea for courage that Rev. Arthur Pringle made in his sermon before the Congregational Union on Monday.” Mr. Pringle may well deserve the compliment paid to him, but in that case it is certain that the editor could not have conveyed in a single sentence a more complete and a more deadly indictment of Christianity.

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### *Should the Parson Tell?*

What was the deed of “derring do” which called forth so hearty an expression of admiration? It was this. Mr. Pringle, like so many other preachers, is alarmed at the number of people who are cutting themselves adrift from the Churches, and with the usual shallowness of the Christian “thinker” he assumes that this is solely because they are not satisfied with certain orthodox presentations of Christianity. And belonging to the order of preachers who believe in modifying their preaching from time to time so that it may please a changing public taste, he advised them to tell their congregations the truth about such matters as the belief in the Second Advent, the inspiration of the Bible, certain doctrines of the Atonement, etc. This is what the *Christian World* calls a brave plea for courage. Preachers must enlighten their congregations on—the very things they are supposed to have the whole truth and nothing but the truth! Now that

is a very pretty picture, and as an indictment of the Christian Church really goes as far as anything that we have said in these columns. These men who pride themselves as standing on so high an ethical pedestal, who assure the community that without them we should undergo a marked and rapid deterioration, are advised to tell their congregations the truth about Christianity, *because they will lose clients if they do not*. And in a gathering of clergymen a Christian journal asserts that a man displays rare courage when he dares advise his brother clergymen to tell the truth about their religion. If he had said, “My dear brethren in the Lord, you know that we are all more or less liars together. We are teaching our congregation things which we know to be false. They are finding us out and we are losing our clients. Therefore, let us be wise and tell the truth before we lose all chance of regaining some of what we have lost,” he could not have told the ministers present that they had been lying to the people and as they were being found out, it might pay better to now tell a little of the truth in a plainer manner.

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### *The Character of the Clergy.*

Was ever a greater indictment framed against any body of men? Let it be remembered that these men stand as the representatives of a Church that has claimed to know the whole truth about religion. Because their claim has been admitted they have been allowed a privileged position in the State, their teachings have been forced upon children in the nation’s schools, men and women have been imprisoned, boycotted, and socially ostracized for denying the truth of these teachings, science has been denounced because it contradicted them, and in a thousand and one ways this religion has acted as an obstructive and a tyrannical force. And yet not only is it now admitted that the larger part of these teachings are false, but it is considered an example of rare courage for one of their number to advise the others that they really ought to tell something of the truth to their congregations, because it no longer pays to go on telling the old-fashioned lies. Moreover, these truths are only to be told inside the churches long after they have been generally accepted outside. And Mr. Pringle, solely on account of his daring to give his brother ministers the advice to tell the truth, is cited as an example of rare courage—in a clerical assembly—by one of our leading Christian newspapers. I do not know anything that could better show up the real character of the present day clergy than that.

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### *Will They Tell the Truth?*

So much for Mr. Pringle’s brother workers in the Lord’s vineyard. What about Mr. Pringle himself? He advises them to tell their congregations the truth. But what kind of truth? And how much of it are they to be told. How much will Mr. Pringle tell his congregation? Of course he will talk with an air of great liberality about the out-of-dateness of certain theories of the atonement, or of inspiration, and he will dismiss as absurd the belief in the second advent, upon

the truth of which the primitive Christians were quite certain. But these things are after all only upon the surface. Will he tell his congregation that science now knows—not merely suspects—how fundamental religious ideas came into existence? Will he tell them that all investigation proves that the human race began to believe in a God and a soul because they misread and misinterpreted some of the commonest facts of human experience? Will he tell them that we can trace from the blunder made by primitive mankind every God the world has known? Will he tell them that Gods and ghosts and angels and devils belong to the same order of ideas that once filled the world with witches and wizards, and that the belief in God rests upon no other and no better foundation? Of course, it may be replied that Mr. Pringle does not believe this to be so, and therefore we must not expect him to say these things to his congregation. Granted, but we can put the same point in another way. When he talks to his congregation will he tell the people that at its best the hypothesis of God is of doubtful value as an explanation of anything. That everything that Christians believe to be explainable on the theory of the existence of a God, science is able to deal with in a far more satisfactory way, and without the slightest reference to the existence of a deity? We all know that he will not do so. His rare courage will not take him thus far. He will, in short, behave exactly as his brother ministers behave. Just as they do not expose the absurdity of the belief in a second advent, or in inspiration, for fear of losing their followers, so Mr. Pringle will stop short of telling his followers what is known concerning the origin of the belief in God and a soul. In other words he is acting exactly as the people he lectures are acting. In substance, in principle, there is not the least difference between them. He only differs as to the number of the old stories it is safe to tell, of the number of falsehoods it is safe to still parade as truth. They may be more ignorant than he is, but that is no impeachment of their honesty. He may know more than them, but nowadays doubts as to the honesty of a clergyman increase as we have reason to suspect him of being endowed with intelligence.

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#### Why We Disbelieve.

A final word on another point. Mr. Pringle, we are told, "pointed his moral by reference to the statue of Bradlaugh in Northampton. Bradlaugh rejected religion and God because his soul revolted against old-fashioned views of literal inspiration and representations of the character of God that offended his intellectual and his moral sense." Now Mr. Pringle is quite at liberty to depict his brother clergy in any guise he pleases; but we strongly object to his dragging great Freethinkers down to their level. Personally, I should think very little of Bradlaugh's Freethought if it were based on nothing better, or more intellectual, or nobler, than a dissatisfaction with certain old-fashioned views of inspiration and the like. It is true that disgust with certain established teachings may often set a man questioning accepted doctrines, but it requires small intelligence to get thus far. When he directed attention to the matter Bradlaugh rejected religion and God because he realized that the whole belief in God, and every system of religion was based upon delusion and maintained by ignorance and fraud. Mr. Pringle's statement represents a common state of mind among Christians, particularly those of the professional variety, but it is quite wrong. All it does is to prove the fact that Christians have not yet got to the point of realizing what Freethought is. And if it will help them I may insist that we Freethinkers are not what we are because the views of God's char-

acter put forward are unworthy of him. All I have come across about gods shows that the best of them are poor things, mere caricatures of the humanity they are supposed to be above. Nor are Atheists anxious to purify religion, or to get a truer doctrine of religion. So long as religion is honest it is intolerable. Our aim is not to purify religion, but to let mankind realize what is its true nature and what a worthless thing it is. Freethinkers are what they are because they know religion. Mr. Pringle knows nothing of Freethought, and, I imagine, very little about religion. For to know religion is to reject it. His talk is that of the preacher of religion who sees the age drifting away from his control, and is anxious at any price to retain the old forms, even though they may be emptied of all meaning in the statement and robbed of all honesty in the profession.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "Are God and Nature Then At Strife?"

"S. B. K." addressed the following problem to the column set apart for the correspondence of the Rev. Prof. Smith, D.D., in the *British Weekly* for October 4, 1923: "Could you suggest the Christian attitude with regard to the appalling earthquake in Japan? Any consideration that would lessen the strain on the faith of Christians in God's providence and goodness would be welcomed and would be a relief to doubt. Can the "desolations" (Ps. xlvii, 8) and the "tender mercies" (Ps. xlv, 9) be compatible? The terrible war we could think of as not an act of God but caused by the greed, envy, and hate of men. But this —?" This is on the whole one of the most ancient and difficult problems which supernaturalists have ever had to discuss and seek to solve. Professor Smith admits its ancientness and supreme difficulty. He says:—

This is an ancient problem. In times of seeming security it is forgotten, but with the occurrence of any startling catastrophe like the plague at Athens in 430 B.C., or that of London in 1665, the volcanic eruption which overwhelmed Pompeii and Herculaneum in A.D. 79, the earthquake and tidal wave at Lisbon in 1755, or this in Japan, it reasserts itself, impelling the inconsiderate either to abandon faith in a divine government of the world, or tempting, in the oblivion of the past, to prophetic anticipation of the world's imminent dissolution.

It is a remarkable trait of the Professor's character that he must belittle his opponents either intellectually, or morally or both. Here, they who regard earthquakes, thunderstorms, plagues, as acts of God are described as "the inconsiderate." We met a Japanese gentleman the other day who is a deeply convinced Freethinker, and who said that this tragic calamity had converted multitudes to our cause, and brought to a definite decision in our favour those who had long stood hesitating on the border line. According to Dr. Smith all those people were "inconsiderate" members of the community, and their example should not be followed by the rest of the Japanese.

What Dr. Smith cries for is a sane attitude on the whole subject:—

It will help us toward it, if we recall the solutions which have been proposed in the course of history, (1) In primitive ages the theory was that the gods were cruel or at best capricious, and that man, as the Greek proverb put it, was "the plaything."

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the Gods,  
They kill us for their sport.

(2) The progress of intelligence left Polytheism behind, but still the problem remained as expressed by that question of Epicurus which Boëthius quotes: *Sig idem Deus, incuist, est, unde mala, bona vero unde,*

*il non est?* "If God is, whence the evil things? but whence the good if he is not?" And hence arose the Zoroastrian heresies of Marcionism that there are two Gods, one good and the other evil, equally strong and eternally opposed. (3) The devastation of the Great War could be explained as wrought by the evil passions of wicked men; but here we are confronted by a like devastation which is plainly "an act of God," the Creator who ordained the forces of Nature and works through them, and the inference seems inevitable that, if there be a God, he is no beneficent Creator, no loving Father, but a monster, "red in tooth and claw with ravine." Such a God would be a fiend, and no wonder though some are disposed to turn rather to Atheism and conclude that there is no God, nothing but the play of blind, unconscious, natural forces.

Professor Smith has stated the case for Atheism with amazing accuracy and lucidity. He expresses "the idea that underlies the modern antithesis of God and Nature, and that moves us, in view of the pitilessness of natural forces and their apparent disregard of moral distinctions, to ask with Tennyson, 'Are God and Nature then at strife?'" If the Christian God exists the Bible assures us that he is directly responsible for everything that happens, that his will is supreme and has its way everywhere. He sitteth as king for ever. At bottom, then, it is he who doeth all things in the realms of Nature and Grace. All Christians do not accept this view. Many there are who believe and teach that God has nothing whatever to do with the workings of natural forces.

Having dealt with and wholly rejected all anti-theological theories, Dr. Smith says:—

What then shall we say? It seems to me that what confronts us here is a simple and solemn exemplification of a stern yet salutary phase of the providential order. Have you not observed how largely the incalculable factor operates in mundane affairs?

That extract could not possibly have been more unintelligible and absurd than it is. What are we to understand by "a simple and solemn exemplification of a stern yet salutary phase of the providential order?" If it means the method by which God governs the world we can only characterize it as horribly wicked if the destruction of Japan is an exemplification of its working. Why did the providential order require the death of seven hundred thousand people in a few hours, and the devastation of two most important and rich towns in the land? It was "a simple and incalculable factor," the Professor tells us, and the following are the exemplifications he supplies:—

A lad starts his career with high ambition and earnest endeavour, and when he is carrying all before him, an incurable malady blasts his prospect. A merchant by dint of energy, enterprise, and shrewd calculation amasses a fortune, and suddenly it is swept away by some incalculable turn of affairs—a financial crisis on the other side of the world. A scholar plans a great work, and in the midst of his studies his mind gives way, and he passes the rest of his days in a madhouse.

Such incidents as those related by the divine may and do often occur, but the doctor might easily eliminate the incalculable factor from most of them. Take the merchant, for example, could any man faithfully follow the moral and social teaching of the Gospel and amass a fortune, and then after suddenly losing it, win it back again? There can be no honest riches, for every rich man has become so as the result of grinding the faces of his workers. In any case, the incidents mentioned by Dr. Smith do not belong to the same class of events as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, thunderstorms, and the like, which are all known as "acts of God," in the doing of which man has absolutely nothing to do. If God exists and is the Governor

of the world they are indeed his acts, for which he alone is responsible. But if God does not exist, and the universe is not governed by a living and infinitely intelligent being, such occurrences are due to a natural order of things in which man is of no more account or greater value than a bar of iron or any of the *amœbæ*. And when at last Professor Smith comes to regard the earthquake from a purely religious sense he says:—

And so to my thinking is it with these natural catastrophes. They are examples of the operation of the incalculable factor; and this means that God has reserved to himself the ultimate disposal of our lives. Men and nations forget this, and ever and anon, when they are living securely, he lets loose the incalculable forces that we may learn how truly dependent we are on him. And who will deny that the lesson is greatly needed in these days? We have been boasting of the marvellous triumphs of science, and speculating on the stupendous machinery which another war will bring into play; and here is revealed to us God's awful reserve of elemental forces which in a moment could reduce the world's fortresses and armaments to smoking ruins. "Be still," he is saying, "and know that I am God."

This is the conclusion of Dr. Smith's astounding article on the awful catastrophe that has befallen Japan. It contains not one word of sympathy with the painfully stricken nation. Not in history has any nation suffered on so colossal a scale, and yet here is a man of the Christian God who ignores sympathy where that sweet grace is most needed. God has smitten Japan so heavily in order to teach the rest of mankind two great lessons. The first of those lessons is that "God has reserved to himself the ultimate disposal of our lives." Why was such a lesson needed? Do we not all know that some day we must die? Surely the Japanese disaster was not required to teach us at such a cost what we already knew quite as well as we do now. The second lesson which the Japanese catastrophe is intended to teach us is that God can kill as many in a few hours as the world's largest armies could not do in less than four or five years. Again, why were the Japanese chosen to teach this horrible lesson too? Is the Professor's mind so poisoned against the Japanese simply because they are not Christians, and does he imagine that his God is against them for the same reason?

We love the Japanese and our deepest sympathy is theirs in their present indescribable distress; but we are as certain as we can be of anything under the sun, that Professor Smith's God, with whose doings he imagines himself so familiar, does not, never did, and never will exist. It is well known that Japan is very largely a Freethinking nation, and that many of them are appreciative readers of this journal. It is also well known that his article was not written for the good of the Japanese, but for the narrow-minded and prejudiced British Christians. The God he paints in such repellent colours is a being under notice to quit, and the more intelligent in all communities have already disowned him.

J. T. LLOYD.

#### INTEGRITY.

Let us be true!  
Our cause is holy and our purpose pure;  
Let us be sure  
The means we choose hide not our aim from view!  
Let us be true!  
Our hope cannot consent to doubtful deeds;  
Our strong will need  
None but clean hands our righteous work to do.  
Let us be true!  
Thought, word, and deed, even as our cause, is pure;  
And so endure  
Firm to the end whatever fate ensue!

—W. J. Linton.

## Literature at Nurse.

The "Zolaism" of the Bible is far more pernicious than the "Zolaism" of fiction. —G. W. Foote.

Hebrew mythology contains things which are both insulting and injurious. —J. A. Froude.

SOME time since a number of headmasters of public schools, mostly clergymen, issued a strongly worded circular letter to parents of scholars warning them against the danger of certain books, magazines, and other publications, and adding that "too little care is exercised to exclude them from the lives of the young." Coupled with the recrudescence of the boycott at the municipal and circulating libraries, this astute clerical move should be watched closely. The recent outbreak has been occasioned by the boycotting of certain novels and books of memoirs. The novels are the work of minor novelists, and the memoirs hardly more scandalous than is usual in such publications; but the principal at stake is a large and important one.

The publishers of these banned books know that the boycott is erratic. It sometimes happens that, for example, "Smith" bans a book which "Mudie," or another library stocks. Similarly, in the municipal libraries books are prohibited at one place and accepted at another, and the enterprising publishers reap the benefit in the long run. The boycott, however, in the case of Freethought literature is complete, or nearly so. In well nigh every instance Freethought books are banned, and it is almost as rare to find such works in these institutions as it is to find snow in harvest.

In an era of cheap publishing, the power of the libraries diminished, but a new and important factor has now restored the former position once occupied by the libraries. The prices of all books has been very greatly affected by the world-war; and it is very unlikely that they will again be so cheap as in 1914. Even novels have suffered with volumes of more serious import, and the prices of this kind of book ranges from seven shillings and sixpence. Works on other subjects are proportionately dearer. This really results in the readers being driven to the libraries, for, obviously, people cannot buy books in such quantities if prices are so high.

The boycott presses most heavily on Freethought publishers. This is largely owing to the presence of the clergy, and their satellites, on the library committees. They have rare noses for heresy, and very powerful reasons for watchfulness. We have seen lists of purchases for libraries, including such orders as Thomas Hardy's books, except *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure*; Hall Caine's novels, except *The White Prophet*; Swinburne's poetry, "Selections only," and so forth. Imagine the situation. A municipal library, professing to cater for the intellectual needs of 100,000 people, and refusing to supply Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, or Blatchford's *God and My Neighbour*, while rejoinders to each of these books are on the shelves of the library. Think of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* being excluded from the shelves on the grounds of heresy, and Bernard Shaw's books and Wells's novels being boycotted. So far as our knowledge goes, there are but few exceptions to this disgraceful state of affairs in the whole country, from John O'Groats to Land's End.

The power of the libraries is enormous. They make or mar authors. Even as great a writer as George Meredith had his public recognition delayed for years by their action. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, the finest love story in our language, was banned on account of its alleged out-spokenness. Subsequent books of Meredith were looked at askance. Among living writers, George Moore has suffered most, for, since *A Mummer's Wife* was tabooed, most of his books

have figured in the *Index Expurgatorius*. Authors have themselves been hampered in their choice of subject by these prejudices for innocuous books. That is one of the reasons why smooth tales of love have figured so largely in British fiction. Writers are under no illusions in these matters. Recall Thackeray's words in the preface to *Pendennis*, where he apologises for being unable to follow in the footsteps of Henry Fielding. Authors may bow the knee in the House of Grundy, but they know full well what they are doing. When Emile Zola visited England he was fêted by his fellow craftsmen, the while his books were barred from all libraries, and his English publisher was actually in prison for daring to print the works of a master of European reputation.

The result of this rigorous censorship of intellectual works is that the libraries are too largely purveyors of sentimental pap for intellectual infants. It is, surely, high time that such a censorship should be questioned, for it is out of touch with the age in which we live. In this instance, as in so many others, clericalism is the real enemy. Doubtless, in time, Democrats will yet discover, like Red Riding Hood, that the Church is not a gentle grandmother but a greedy wolf.

MIMNERMUS.

## John (Lord) Morley as a Freethinker.

### III.

(Concluded from page 630.)

ANOTHER strong passage of condemnation is directed by Mr. Morley against hypocritical unbelievers:—

We all of us know men who deliberately reject the entire Christian system, and still think it compatible with uprightness to summon their whole establishments round them at morning and evening, and on their knees to offer up elaborately formulated prayers, which have just as much meaning to them as the entrails of the sacrificial victim had to an infidel haruspex. We see the same men diligently attending religious services; uttering assents to confessions of which they really reject every syllable; kneeling, rising, bowing, with deceptive solemnity; even partaking of the sacrament with a consummate devoutness that is very edifying to all who are not in the secret, and who do not know that they are acting a part, and making a mock both of their own reason and their own probity, merely to please persons whose delusions they pity and despise from the bottom of their hearts.

Some persons say we should leave theology alone, and go on with the pursuit of science, the practice of art, and the solution of social problems. But theology cannot be left alone. It is mixed up with all the most profound, and therefore the most important, questions in politics and sociology. It *must* be reckoned with. Further, if it be *not* reckoned with, and confronted boldly, the priests are left in full control of the popular mind. Religious heterodoxy, when it justifies quietude, is really animated (in Mr. Morley's opinion) by "a desire to find a fair reason for the comforts of silence and reserve." An honourable man cannot exert a more useful influence than that of "a protester against what he counts false opinions, in the most decisive and important of all regions of thought."

Surely, if anyone is persuaded, whether rightly or wrongly, that his fellows are expending the best part of their imaginations and feelings on a dream and a delusion, and that by so doing moreover they are retarding to an indefinite degree the wider spread of light and happiness, then nothing he can tell them about chemistry or psychology or history can in his eyes be comparable in importance to the duty of telling them this.

Mr. Morley is Pagan enough to see in veracity the root of all other positive virtues. "They who tamper with veracity," he says, "from whatever motive, are tampering with the vital force of human progress." The so-called comforts and delights of the religious imagination are dearly purchased at the cost of that love of truth on which depends our increase of light and happiness. "We have to fight and do life-long battle against the forces of darkness, and anything that turns the edge of reason blunts the surest and most potent of our weapons."

Of the hypocrites who sacrifice truth for convenience, and teach a lie for the sake of a living, Mr. Morley pens a terrible passage, which has less the note of denunciation than of doom:—

It is no light thing to have secured a livelihood on condition of going through life masked and gagged. To be compelled, week after week, and year after year, to recite the symbols of ancient faith and lift up his voice in the echoes of old hopes, with the blighting thought in his soul that the faith is a lie, and the hope no more than the folly of the crowd; to read hundreds of times in a twelvemonth with solemn unction as the inspired word of the Supreme what to him are meaningless as the Abracadabras of the conjurer in a booth; to go on to the end of his days administering to simple folk holy rites of commemoration and solace, when he has in his mind at each phrase what dupes are these simple folk and how wearisomely counterfeit their rites; and to know through all that this is really to be the one business of his prostituted life, that so dreary and hateful a piece of play-acting will make the desperate retrospect of his last hours—of a truth here is the very abomination of desolation of the human spirit indeed.

Mr. Morley turns casuist (not in the bad sense) in discussing how far Freethinkers should keep silent in the domestic sphere. Briefly put, his view is that there should be no obtrusion, but no concealment. Before marriage a man is bound to let his opinions be known to the woman he seeks to wed; if his opinions change afterwards, it is at his peril if he plays the hypocrite. His wife has no vested interest in his insincerity. If he is weak enough to make-believe—he cannot really deceive her—he must not make the maxims of his own feebleness a rule for stronger and braver spirits. "It is a poor saying, that the world is to become void of spiritual sincerity, because Xanthippe has a turn for respectable theology."

Freethinkers are bound to save their children from the mischiefs of theology. Hand over your children to the priest, said Clifford, and he will make them enemies of the human race. There are Freethinking parents who let their children have a measure of religious education, from a fear that they would otherwise be ostracised and persecuted. Mr. Morley doubts, however, if the young would be "excluded from the companionship of their equals in age, merely because they had not been trained in some of the conventional shibboleths." For the rest he writes as follows:—

I have heard of a more interesting reason; namely, that the historic position of the young, relatively to the time in which they are placed, is in some sort falsified, unless they have gone through a training in the current beliefs of their age; unless they have undergone that, they miss, as it were, some of the normal antecedents. I do not think this plea will hold good. However desirable it may be that the young should know all sorts of erroneous beliefs and opinions as products of the past, it can hardly be in any degree desirable that they should take them for truths. If there were no other objection, there would be this, that the disturbance and waste of force involved in shaking off in their riper years the erroneous opinions which had been instilled into them in childhood, would more than counterbalance any advantages, whatever their precise nature may

be, to be derived from having shared in their own proper persons the ungrounded notions of others.

Before closing this brief, and doubtless very imperfect account of Mr. Morley's views on religion, we feel bound to refer to his remarks on Deism in the monograph on Voltaire. Deism, it may be observed, is the creed of those who reject Revelation yet believe in God. Historically it was an inevitable stage of transition; although, by the way, it must not be assumed that the Deists who opposed Christianity were in all cases so very much in love with the modicum of theology which they felt it prudent to allow, or which they were not prepared to deny. Regarded in itself, however, Deism is the theology of comfortable sceptics. "It is a creed," as Mr. Morley says, "which is specially adapted for, and has been generally seized by, those with whom the world has gone very well, owing to their own laudable exertion, or who are inclined to believe that the existing ordering of society is fundamentally the best possible. It is the superlative decoration of optimism." It will never do for the masses who "dwell in dens and whose lives are bitter." It is too cold to be a rival to the popular faith. "The common people," Mr. Morley says, "are wont to crave a revelation, or else they find Atheism a rather better synthesis than any other." "The bare deistic idea," he continues, "of a being endowed at once with sovereign power and sovereign clemency, with might that cannot be resisted and justice that cannot be impugned, who loves man with infinite tenderness, yet sends him no word of comfort and gives him no way of deliverance, is too hard a thing for those who have to endure the hardships of the brutes, but yet preserve the intelligence of men." Deism is to Mr. Morley only a "fair word of emptiness." Nay, it is not only a "cold and cheerless" but a "radically depraving conception." Now this is a very decisive rejection of Deism; on the other hand, it is obvious that Mr. Morley rejects the Christian revelation; it does not admit of a doubt, therefore, that he belongs to the school of Naturalism. All that man knows, or can know, is of Nature; this life is the only one we are sure of living; and making the most of it for ourselves and others is at once our wisdom and our duty.

Religion, however, is not a word of which Mr. Morley will allow the theologians a monopoly. We may leave certain great questions open, like Voltaire, or put them aside, like Comte, yet "be counted to have a religion." Mr. Morley may be right in this respect; but, without arguing whether he is so or not, we may remark that such a use of the word "religion" is contrary to custom and liable to misconception.

Sin itself is not a foreign idea to Mr. Morley. He regards it not as a violation of some divine order, but as "the infringement of the inner spiritual law which humanity is constantly perfecting for its own guidance and advantage." Practically the sinner is guilty of "weakening and corrupting the future of his brothers." And if the old legends disappear, the just man, the friend of his species, will have no cause for dejection. "A man will be already in no mean paradise," Mr. Morley exclaims, "if at the hour of sunset a good hope can fall upon him like harmonies of music, that the earth shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive a constant augmentation, and each good cause yet find worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men for ever."

We have written enough to show that Mr. Morley is a Freethinker. Those who wish to make fuller acquaintance with him in this capacity may read his works for themselves. They will not regret the time bestowed upon the undertaking. G. W. FOOTE.

## Correspondence.

## RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Sir Oliver Lodge's insinuation that Freethinkers deny "the existence of any Designing and Guiding Mind" is characteristic. What Freethinkers deny is first, that there has ever been proof or even evidence of such "Mind," and second, the warrant for the persistent statements on the part of theologians and spiritualists that they know such "Designing and Guiding Mind," does actually exist. Sir Oliver is one of the latter, and his *Man and the Universe*, with its question-begging epithets scattered throughout a jumble of absurd analogies and false conclusions drawn from the wildest assumptions is a standing advertisement of the desperate straits to which "wobblers" between orthodox Christianity and Freethought are driven. One example will suffice. Sir Oliver Lodge swallows telepathy—for which there is not a tittle of scientific evidence—without raising an eyebrow. But he is doubtful whether consciousness has its seat in the brain. And he argues that since an electric charge, while seeming to be in the conductor, is in reality in the space around it, so consciousness may be "a faint echo in space or in other bodies."

JAVALI.

SIR,—I am puzzled from time to time, but not enlightened, by the utterances of certain scientists, particularly the one of Birmingham and spiritistic fame, when they enter into the domain of theology. They always appear to me to be intellectually dishonest, wilfully and deliberately so. It is as if, say, an electrical engineer, because of his abilities in that branch of learning, is presumed to have a knowledge of all that has been, and all that will be, and in particular of the continuity of individual life after the death of the human body. What I cannot understand is that these men, with profound knowledge in their own particular branch of scientific investigation, will presume to express opinions on the unknown and unknowable, and on mythological questions. I cannot believe that they do not possess the intelligence of ordinary men, and that their practical knowledge of human affairs and of the forces of Nature is limited within their own narrow sphere of investigation. I can quite understand a professional man, say a doctor of medicine, being a worshipper or allied to some Church in one capacity or another when he has his practice to build up to earn his living, or in other words, perhaps, to "make money." He panders to the popular prejudices, and of necessity remains discreet.

It will be a misfortune if scientists are found to be in the same position. Scientists more than any other group of men must remain true to themselves, true to their investigations, and true to the community if they are to retain the confidence of the intelligent plain man. They will no more retain that confidence than does the pious law judge, or do pious magistrates, when they elect to mix up the Christian superstition with the administration of justice. I have a suspicion that some of the scientists are under the control of Church Bishops, and that they are not free to state the naked facts of their investigation, and particularly so when the scientist and the bishop are inhabitants of the same city. It will be an evil day when ordinary men are led to doubt the sincerity of scientists. It always appears to me to be incongruous when newspapers report that certain priests preached the congress sermon at the meeting of the British Association. I presume these preachers know as much of science as the plain man in the street does, and their presence at such gatherings can only confirm what your journal has often said, *viz.*, that Christianity seizes on anything and everything to keep itself alive. Underlying all this is the vested interest of the Church in sterling money.

The doctrine of zeal for the salvation of souls, in my opinion, is a sham and a fraud, and the sooner the British Association rids itself of these false trappings the sooner it will secure the confidence of the unlearned. If the British Association desires to show the nation how to live, how to act honestly so that the latter may evolve wholesome conditions it will have to discard obsolete and worn-out doctrines bearing the obvious marks of falsity.

SINE CERE.

## THE DOUGLAS SCHEME.

SIR,—I venture to submit to Mr. Cutner that Sir William Beveridge has recently provided him and other disciples of Malthus with the practical refutation of the theory he is looking for. I invite Mr. Cutner to demonstrate that the poverty of the people in the past has been due to over population; I suggest to him the verdict of science and history is that it has always been and is due to-day to the stupidity and inhumanity of man and not to the niggardliness of Nature. The evidence that Sir William Beveridge has produced in answer to Professor Keynes is so conclusive as to remove Malthusianism from practical consideration. At least one of the checks that Malthus cites as keeping the balance between subsistence and population is discredited for war destroys more subsistence than population. Why suppose that population will increase indefinitely. I suggest we do not know enough of biologic laws to pronounce dogmatically. The lesson of the past is the difficulty of maintaining population; the more highly civilized people become the less their power of procreation. Mental energy appears to draw from sexual, and in the case of intellectual women is at the expense of other organs. Why trouble about anything, Mr. Cutner? Why advocate Freethought if the end is slow starvation? Dr. Stopes, etc., have anticipated the objection of Mr. Cutner to the Douglas scheme.

M. BARNARD.

## "THE DEVIL'S CHAPLIN."

SIR,—Obviously I cannot go any further into the question of the *Diegesis* if Mr. Aldred insists on quoting from memory. I read the book carefully before writing my last letter, and as far as I am concerned there is an end of the matter.

On the historicity of Jesus, Mr. Aldred, quoting again from memory, says, "Taylor actually attacked the finished Christ myth, the half if not completely deified saviour of the sixth century." My reading of Taylor is that he attacked the Jesus of the Gospels and as he quotes Christian authorities before the sixth century, I must record again my entire disagreement with Mr. Aldred. I note, however, he would like a "friendly discussion" with "a fellow Freethinker as to whether a person called Jesus Christ ever did live." If he means me, I wish to say that I always enjoy a debate, but frankly this one would be, for me, utterly futile. The only Jesus I know anything about is the Jesus of the Gospels. Why should I waste my time trying to prove (for that is what it would mean) that a Jesus Christ emanating from Mr. Aldred's vivid imagination never existed?

The exact quotation from his pamphlet is:—

We cannot honestly acclaim him as a Scientific Communist or Socialist, although we believe he was a Communist and an Anarch.

Another quotation is:—

Wheresoever Christ utters a bold, revolutionary, anti-property declamation or maxim, it is Christ—the original Jesus—who is speaking.

Now I understand that Mr. Aldred is a Communist and an Anarch. So naturally Jesus must be the same, and if the Gospels record anything contrary to these creeds, they are bound to be forgeries. Bethlehem, as the birthplace of Jesus, is a forgery because Mr. Aldred says so. He plumps for Nazareth, but how would he answer the fine article on Nazareth by Canon Cheyne in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*? I am rather curious to know. In his pamphlet *The Rebel and His Disciples*, Mr. Aldred makes all sorts of statements in support of his Jesus, but of authorities, not a word. He even wants our toast to be "To Christ and the Common People!"

Of course, Mr. Aldred has a right to believe what he likes but he knows as well as I do that his excessive adoration and adulation of Jesus—even his Jesus—will not do much for the progress of Freethought. My own toast would be "To Humanity!"—for that is Atheism.

H. CUTNER.

## PERSONALITY.

SIR,—May I suggest to "Elementary Student" that "personality," "ego," or "self" is pure myth, an indefinable abstraction and, as such, non-existent. The

concrete reality that does exist is a person or body, but even this exists only in the sense that a river or whirlwind does, for it is in constant change, and the body of to-day is not quite the same as the body of yesterday was or the body of to-morrow will be, and is utterly different from the body of fifty years ago. The average man of sixty, if confronted with his former person of twenty would, I think, after a few minutes' conversation, be itching to kick his erstwhile corpus out of the house. The phenomenon of memory gives a plausible colouring to "personality." But we do not remember past events so much as remember that we remember them. It will assist one to conceive how, for instance, an old man remembers incidents of his youthful career, despite the many changes in the composition of his brain cells, if we imagine—as did Tyndall—the atoms that go whispering their secrets to the atoms that come. A very legitimate analogy will render easier of comprehension the fictitiousness of "personality." Let us assume that "Elementary Student" purchased a bicycle ten years ago. The second year he buys new tyres, the third year new pedals. Later on he wants a new saddle, chain, fork, and so he goes on exchanging worn out parts for new until, by the tenth year, not a particle of the original machine is left. Yet he probably would still affectionately allude to it as "my old bike." Another equally legitimate and perhaps more helpful analogy is that of a lake. Fed by one stream and giving exit to another stream the lake has been in existence, possibly under the same name, for thousands of years and is, *apparently*, the same piece of water. Yet a little reflection convinces us that its intrinsic identity of structure has changed hundreds of times. The Pythagoreans were the first to stress this important universal principle of change. All is flowing, said Heraclitus of Ephesus. Particles of matter are perpetually escaping and giving place to others which will fly off in their turn, and this imperceptible motion is every instant altering the qualities of all living beings and transforming them into other beings which retain only an apparent conformity with the former. Even Lord Haldane—who certainly cannot be accused of leanings to materialism—admits the non-existence of the *ego*. He says in his *Pathway to Reality* :—

Your Ego comes to disclose itself as a mere asymptotic regress towards a notional pure subject of knowledge..... a thinker without thoughts, an abstraction, nothing at all.

JAVALI.

### A Slave Praying.

KNEEL down!—  
Kneel out the Sabbath in Prayer!  
Bow down!—  
Picture of pious polluted misere!

Don't think  
O'er the rotting rags that you wear;  
Don't think!  
And when the Respectable leeringly stare,  
Just shrink!

Bow down,  
Poor symbol of the proles who sink and sink  
Right down  
To where the doomed and damned writhe and stink  
Till they drown!

Don't dare  
To search the starving soul of a pious clown!  
Don't swear  
At the criminal class who drove you down;  
Soon you'll wear  
Wonderful wings and a celestial crown : —  
Live on air!

The Sabbath of sinful silence is here,  
Gather fear! —  
Slink to the Mission, shrink in the Church,  
And smirch,  
And smear,  
What is left of your manhood, in Prayer.

C. B. WARWICK.

### Acid Drops.

Lord Leverhulme, whose chief claim to public recognition appears to be that he has made a fortune out of soap, delivered an address the other day at the Red Triangle Hut, New Ferry, on "Character." It is probable that had the day been an ordinary one Lord Leverhulme might have given a more sensible address than he did. Being Sunday it had to be of a religious character, and it is impossible to be truly religious nowadays without saying something silly. It was Heine who said that the most stupid Englishman would say something sensible on politics, but the most sensible Briton would say something stupid the moment he got on religion. Heine would have underlined his generalization had he known Lord Leverhulme.

People, said this Lord of Soap "might rail against the Bible, but if any country, nation, or community, thought that they could subsist without it, or any man thought he could get from life the greatest amount of happiness without it, they would find themselves each year more grievously mistaken." The clergy present must have beamed their approval, but there must also have been some among his audience who were capable of pointing out what undiluted rubbish this was. After all, there have been nations that subsisted without the Bible, and there are millions of people to-day who are living comfortable, useful, and happy lives without it. It is true they do not all sell soap, and they have not all made fortunes, but they are happy and comfortable without the Bible, and Lord Leverhulme knows it. For if we are rightly informed his own opinions about the Bible and about Christianity are anything but orthodox. But a fortune and title are terrible handicaps in this country.

Had Lord Leverhulme been speaking anywhere but to a Christian gathering, he would have been more careful about the truth, and more liberal with common-sense. "German scientists," he said, "considered the idea of revolutionizing the system of morality by abolishing Christianity and denying the existence of God." Really, any man who takes that tone to-day deserves to be hissed off a public platform. To say that this was the aim of Germany, and that this led to the war, is nothing less than a lie, and to-day it must be a deliberate falsehood. The mass of the Germans were and are religious. The overwhelming majority of the military leaders and the rulers of Germany were quite good Christians, and every Christian soldier went into battle with "God With Us" on his cap. Really, it takes a very strong character to be proof against the demoralizing influence of Christianity. Lord Leverhulme is evidence of that.

Finally, if we may bring forward a point that should appeal to Lord Leverhulme, if the Christian Church had had its way, there would have been no fortunes made out of soap. Whatever cleansing power the Christian Church possessed it did not run in the direction of soap and water. Under Christian rule the very memory of the universally used—by all classes of the population—Roman baths died out. Sanitation disappeared with washing. People grew more filthy as they grew more pious, and the Church with the book without which no nation and no individual—at least so says Lord Leverhulme—can flourish, grew fat on the dirt and ignorance and misery it created and perpetuated. A soap trust in the truly Christian ages would have been impossible, and Lord Leverhulme might have reflected that but for the growth of the non-Christian and anti-Christian feeling he affects to despise Port Sunlight would never have existed, he would never have made a fortune selling soap, and without the fortune it is possible that he would not have been asked to philosophize at a Christian Sunday afternoon meeting.

Two ministers were found dead recently. The Rev. M. R. Owen was found hanging in his room at the Grosvenor Hotel, Wrexham; and the Rev. H. Rodger, of Bourne-

mouth, was found dead hanging in his own home. No moral whatever, but if they had been wicked Atheists it would have been accepted as a mark of Divine displeasure.

The Bishop of Woolwich voiced "Christian Socialism" at the Church Congress, and the next day the *Daily Mail* described his speech as "poisonous tomfoolery." Our own objection to "Christian Socialism" lies deeper. It is simply that it is neither Christian, nor Socialism.

Mrs. Paget, wife of Bishop Chester, suggests that a great part of the Marriage Service in the Church Prayer Book is superfluous and ought to be omitted. And the dear ladies are the last hope of the clergy. "It is too deep for tears."

The Archbishops' Committee on "Music in Worship" declares that "the function of the organ is to be an adornment and not a necessity." Judging by the salaries paid, this is true also of the unhappy organists.

A new film bears the entrancing title, "Adam's Rib." It should prove useful for Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings.

When men talk of the sadness of parting with old beliefs I fancy that all that is there is the sadness of getting out of touch with old friends. Our mental development has not yet reached the stage of mutual toleration where widely differing opinions can be held generally without sundering friendships. It is the social break that is felt, not the personally mental one. There cannot be a break with old beliefs since there is no actual parting with them, there is an outgrowing, and then to retain the belief would be painful if not impossible.

In a recent issue of the *Evening Standard* we noted a leaderette on treatment by prayer. A Christian Scientist had died under "treatment," and a relative explained that certain healers attended and prayed over the woman. Whereupon the *Evening Standard* suggests that the law should deal sternly with these people. But why? It is one of the plainest teachings of the New Testament that the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and if it is good in the New Testament why are people to be punished because they are honest enough to carry it out? Moreover, every clergyman in the country is committed to the teaching that prayer shall and can save the sick. What is to be done with them? Are they to be prosecuted? Probably the *Evening Standard* would reply that the clergy do not practise on sick people, and these other people do. We agree that this is a distinction, but it amounts to saying that what these people are denounced for is being honest enough to put into practice what they profess to believe. We also agree that they who believe in the power of prayer to cure sickness are victims of superstition, but in a Christian country that is inevitable.

After all, it is a bit cowardly to go for a few people who believe in the power of prayer and all the time remain silent concerning the large number of professional practitioners in the pulpit. But that is our Press all over. If a superstition is established, if it is taken up by society, if belief in it is made one of the means of getting on or of achieving a large circulation, it will exploit that superstition as well as it may. But if a superstition of the same quality is practised by an unfashionable few, these same papers become aggressively rationalistic. It is a poor game, played by a poor Press.

There is not and there never was a true Christianity. Christianity has always been whatever one chose to make it so long as it was not made wholly sane and completely sensible—and then it ceased to be Christianity at all.

In the whole of its history the Church has never found a man or woman so mentally incapable as to be unable to repeat its creed and to say, "I believe."

The majority of Christians, male and female, who have given their hearts to Jesus would never have done so had some particular member of the opposite sex shown any marked anxiety to become possessed of that organ.

Take away from some people their knowledge of God and you rob them of all the knowledge they possess.

The weak point in any nation is its military strength. Nations do not go to war because they are strong, but because they are not strong enough.

The late Bishop of Chelmsford left an estate valued at £32,000. In his will he explains that the £32,000 is largely the result of insurances effected on behalf of loved ones for whom he could not make provision. We honour the sentiment which made the Bishop think of those dependent upon him, but it is not quite Christian. What had become of his trust in the Lord? Or his faith in the advice of Jesus to take no thought for the morrow? Every man of common-sense will say that the Bishop acted quite rightly in thinking of the future of his family. But when he arrives in heaven? What is to happen then? What will happen to the Bishop who cannot trust the Lord?

What courage it does take to be a parson nowadays! A speaker at the Congregational Union urged his hearers to be honest and admit that the Church had often lost in its conflicts with science. Wonderful! The Church has been losing in its conflicts with science ever since the days of Bruno, and now a preacher urges his audience to be honest and admit what can no longer be denied. Really, these parsons are the last word in intellectual fatuity. If they don't get the contempt of all sensible folk, they at least deserve it.

A Church periodical pleads for prettier places of worship. The writer must have noticed some of the tin tabernacles, with sixpenny bells in the trumpery steeples.

Canon de Candole says, "We no longer believe that the Bible record of creation is scientific." If he had said that in an age of faith, De Candole would have been set alight.

A religious contemporary asks its readers' advice on the great question: "How to sing hymns." We suggest that they listen to the mellifluous sounds of the milkmen who parade the streets.

The following from *Radio Times* for October 5 will be of interest to our readers:—

DEAR SIRS,—Kindly drop the sky pilots overboard. Sunday's drivel was the limit. If you cannot do without them, I suggest letting them open the evening at 8 p.m.; then those who do not want to hear could easily avoid this; but for them to be in the middle of the programme is not agreeable.

London, S.W.

Yours faithfully,

A. M.

[We leave the comment on this to individual "listeners."—ED. R. T.]

We hope that all of our friends who are users of wireless sets will write and let the Broadcasting Company know what is thought of the unspeakably stupid drivel that is passed over the wireless on Sunday evenings. These sermons are so stupid as almost to lead to the belief that the B.B.C. select parsons who will exhibit in the clearest manner the intellectual poverty of the Churches.

## Our Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £414 3s. 6d. J. A. Reid, 3s.; G. Smith, £3 3s.; T. Saunders, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 5s.; G. G., 10s.; H. Latimer Voight, £1 1s.; Swansea Branch N.S.S., £1; H. H. Woolley, 10s.; E. Pinder, 10s.; H. Prosser, 5s.; Swansea, £1 1s.; E. Kirton, 5s.; J. Bingham, 5s.; J. Griffiths (Swansea), £2; S. Hicks, £1; R. Mayer, £1; J. Duncan, 5s.; C. Riglin, 2s. 6d.; W. Macfarlane, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Side, £1 1s.; A. E. Hambrook, 10s.; S. Butler, 10s. 6d.; J. Jones, 5s.; T. & F. White, 10s.; Mr. P. Rudd, £1 1s.; Mrs. C. Rudd, £1 1s.; C. Rudd, £1 1s.; J. Nayler, 2s. 6d.; E. Parker, 5s.; W. H. Porter, 10s. 6d.; W. Nelson, £2 2s.; Mrs. B. Siger, 5s.; A. C. Rosetti, 10s. 6d.; P. & P., 10s.; Grateful Freethinker, 2s. 6d.; W. Leat, 2s. 6d.; W. M., 5s.; K. J., 2s. 6d.; W. A. Holroyd, 2s. 6d.

Per H. Bayford, Manchester: F. E. Wallis, 5s.; S. Cohen, 5s.; Ingham, 2s. 6d.; F. E. M., £1; O. Friedman, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Mapp and family, 5s.; T. F. Greenwell, 2s. 6d.; Miss Brown, 2s. 6d.; H. Black, 10s.; T. Shedlock, 5s. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey, £1; J. W. Grattan, 5s.

Total, £442 16s. 6d.

We shall be obliged if subscribers will point out any omissions or inaccuracies that appear.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## 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.**

J. DUNCAN.—Thanks for good wishes. We are very proud of the staunch supporters we have north of the Tweed. Scotsmen do not rush at one, but they are the firmest of friends when one has gained their confidence and esteem.

H. PINDER.—Your good wishes are expected, but are none the less welcome on that account. We shall keep the Sustentation Fund open long enough to give all who wish to do so a chance of subscribing, but we do not like to keep such appeals open longer than is necessary.

JAVALI.—We have a great deal of respect for the intellectual capacity of Swedenborg, but the one to whom we referred was Spinoza. His principal work is the *Ethics*, of which there is a good translation in both English and French. But for a good study of Spinoza Sir Frederick Pollock's still holds front rank. Substantially Spinoza's system was Atheistic.

J. ROSS.—Your essay is interesting, but not quite up to standard. Thanks for sending.

W. A. HOLROYD.—Please let us know the amount of the remittance.

G. W. BATE.—We are much obliged for your efforts in attempting to counteract the effects of the Christian crusade. Those milk-and-water Freethinkers who say that the Churches will empty themselves are living in a fool's paradise. With such a mentality one wonders how on earth they ever came to give up belief in orthodoxy. That type are among the best friends the Churches have. We are sending you on a parcel for distribution.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges a parcel from unknown friend.

A. B. MOSS.—Forty-eight years' service in the cause of Freethought is one of which any man may well be proud. We hope to congratulate you when your jubilee arrives. We are certain that no one has served the Cause with greater devotion than yourself.

W. H. PORTER.—We are flattered to know that in your opinion the country could better spare any paper than it could do without the *Freethinker*.

R. MAYER.—You will see the correction has been made. Thanks.

R. CRANK.—The price of the *Truthseeker* is five dollars yearly. The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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

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

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

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the 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 at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

## Sugar Plums.

The Manchester Branch opened its winter campaign on Sunday last with two lectures from Mr. Cohen in the Pendleton Town Hall. The meetings may be pronounced a complete success. There were good gatherings both in the afternoon and evening, and the audiences appeared to enjoy the lecturer's handling of the bigots on the Salford Council. As the reply was given in the Corporation's own building, a little sauce was added to the dish. Mr. Black occupied the chair on both occasions, and the proceedings were enlivened by a very fine instrumental music by Messrs. Smith, Sowerbutt, and Pachner. For this the Branch had to thank Mr. Rees who very kindly brought these gentlemen along. The performance was of a very high order, and we shall hope to hear that these gentlemen will oblige on future occasions.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (October 14) in Glasgow. By some oversight on the part of those responsible we have not—up to the time of going to press—been favoured with details concerning the meetings. We can only assume that they will be, as usual, in the City Hall Saloon at 11.30, and in the large City Hall at 6.30. Mr. Cohen's subjects are: Morning, "Are We Civilized?"; evening, "What the World Owes to Christianity." There will, no doubt, be the usual good meetings, and we hope to hear that a large number of Christians are present.

Among the letters received from subscribers to the Sustentation Fund we greatly appreciate one from yet another member of the Side family. Mr. H. W. Side, writing on behalf of himself and wife, thanks us for the chance given to help the Cause, and adds, "The best threepenn'orth on the stalls' should be your slogan when the first advertisement of the *Freethinker* appears. Before that day dawns more prejudices have to be broken down. When we think what the leaders of the movement have achieved during the past half-century we can afford to be optimistic regarding the future." If all families were as united in their unwavering support of Freethought as the members of the Side family, we should make much more rapid progress than we are making, gratifying as that is.

The Freethought Social at the Food Reform Café on the 4th instant was a very pleasant function, and all present appeared to enjoy themselves to the utmost. Mr. Ratcliffe acted as M.C., and the speeches were limited to a very few remarks from the President. There was an excellent vocal and instrumental programme, and with

dancing and conversation three hours passed very rapidly indeed. There will be more of these functions during the winter.

The Swansea Branch is commencing its winter work with a musical lecture by Mr. Walter Hampson, better known as "Casey." The subject will be "Art and the Artizan," and the gathering will be in the Elysium, High Street, at 6.30. Tickets are 6d. and 1s. each. We hope to hear that there has been good meetings and a fine start given to the season's work.

Arising out of a recent meeting a discussion has been arranged between Mr. F. Shaller and the Rev. J. Merrin, Vicar of Stratford Parish Church. The meeting will be held on Sunday, October 15, at 3.15 in the Church Institute, 27 Romford Road, Stratford. There should be a number of East London Freethinkers present. Admission is free.

Mr. V. J. Hands will give the first lecture of the season for the Leeds Branch on Sunday next. To-day the Branch leads off with a concert at 19 Leatherhead Row, at 7 o'clock.

Now that the shorter days have come Mr. Corrigan, who has been holding some very successful week-night meetings at Clapham Common, has been compelled to suspend them till next season. But for this month he will lecture every Sunday morning in the same place at 11.15. South London friends will please note.

The North London Branch opened its winter season on Sunday last with an open discussion on the limits of parental authority in matters of religion. The discussion was opened by Miss Vance and led to an interesting evening. To-day (October 14) Mr. Ratcliffe is to open a discussion on "Is Capitalism Played Out?" Full information will be found in our lecture guide column.

## American Religion.

### II.

(Concluded from page 614.)

Religion, like family estate, passes with its encumbrances from parents to children. Few men in the world would have a God had not pains been taken in infancy to give them one. Each would receive from his parents and teachers the God whom they received from theirs; but each, agreeably to his disposition, would arrange, modify, and paint him in his own manner.

Divines act very wisely in teaching men their religious principles before they are capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, or their left hand from their right. It would be as difficult to instil into the mind of a man, forty years old, the extravagant notions that are given us of the divinity, as to eradicate them from the mind of him who had imbibed them from infancy.—*Curé Meslier (D'Holbach), "Good Sense,"* pars. 32-35.

If, as Professor Bateson suggests, this American outbreak against Evolution is just what we may expect when democracy throws "off authority and has begun to judge for itself on questions beyond its mental range," would it not be as well if the Professor and his colleagues started a popular propaganda to enlighten the masses upon these matters, instead of standing aloof in philosophic calm and suggesting that it is perhaps of no "prime importance that the people of Kentucky or even of 'Main Street' should be rightly instructed in evolutionary philosophy." If this attitude is to be maintained then the masses never will be instructed, and if, as Professor Bateson hints, the Evolutionists may some day share the fate of the Clerk of Chatham by being hanged with their ink-horns about their necks; then the historian of the future will have to record that they were largely responsible for

their own fate by their callous indifference to the education of the masses. The only enlightenment the masses have received upon this subject has been from the Secularistic Press, maintained now, as ever, by poor men, without hope of reward, and at a loss of time, money, and often reputation. The fruit of which we now see in the anxiety of the leading officials of the Church to absolve themselves from all responsibility for the scientific accuracy of the Bible. In spite of poverty, ostracism, and persecution, the poor despised Secularist has succeeded in bringing the Church to its knees in this matter, and the Professor may sleep easy in his bed, for there is not the slightest chance of his sharing the fate of the Clerk of Chatham, in this country at any rate; and in any case it would not be an ink-horn but a typewriter to-day.

We may also point out that in the recent outbreak in America, it was not a case, as Professor Bateson would have us believe, of democracy throwing "off authority" and beginning "to judge for itself on questions beyond its mental range." On the contrary Mr. Bryan and his friends were only defending what they had been taught by *authority*—the authority of the Church.

In many of its manifestations, American religion is often a puzzle to an Englishman. To the pious it often appears vulgar, offensive, and needlessly profane. Take the performance of "Billy Sunday," the converted baseball player, the most popular religious revivalist in the States. Here is a description of his address to an audience of ten thousand in New York City:—

He bangs the desk, slaps and claps his hands, dances about, and roars. He leans over the edge of the platform, bent forward, his left leg raised high in the air behind—obviously a practised and favourite attitude. He puts his hands behind his neck and strains back. He suddenly strains forward, bobbing and jerking vigorously until his head gets nearly to his knees. He jabs with his forefingers as if he had a bar-tender or an ethical culture man (he hates both) at the point of his knife. But his favourite dance is to whirl away to the side of the platform and end with a mighty throw; a deliberate imitation of throwing a baseball. At other times he catches an imaginary ball. The sweat pours from him. His handkerchief is soon limp. He wrings it, he opens and flaps it, he goes on mopping and coughing.<sup>1</sup>

All his discourses are garnished with the latest baseball slang and would be, in part, unintelligible to the ordinary Englishman. The effect of Billy Sunday's discourses upon an English clergyman, the Rev. Dr. Aked, who left here to become the Rockefeller pastor in New York, may be judged from the following protest which he made in 1915. He says:—

I do not know of any consideration in the world which would induce me to become a party to the buffoonery and blasphemy of a "Billy Sunday Mission."... The injury done by the presentation of such a loathsome gospel, such a frightful God, such a grotesque Christ, such a fantastic Heaven, such an impossible Hell, must out-measure and out-weight beyond all calculation the good obtained by these results.

When, a few years ago, there was some talk of Billy Sunday paying us a visit, the religious Press made it perfectly clear that they had no use for his methods over here. They knew that he would do a great deal more harm by his music-hall buffoonery than he would do good.

We remember, many years ago, hearing a choir of negroes known as the "Jubilee Singers." They claimed to have been slaves, or the descendants of slaves born in America. One of them sang a hymn

<sup>1</sup> *The Literary Guide*, June, 1917.

entitled, "Marching Into Heaven Just Like John," and the singer pranced up and down the platform in illustration of the words. It struck us as the most revolting and degrading religious performance we had ever seen, and the other hymns were of a similar character. Yet the mass of the American public seem to appreciate these things, and they flock in their thousands to hear Billy Sunday wherever he appears. Evidently the gap between the intelligentsias and the masses is a good deal wider in the States than it is in this country.

And yet, and this is where the puzzling part comes in, along with their simple, childlike, and implicit faith, there seems to run a total lack of reverence and awe which we usually associate with these qualities. For instance, no British film company would dream of taking for a subject an escaped convict, stealing a clergyman's clothes, taking his place at the Church where he is expected, and delivering a comic sermon on the subject of David and Goliath. Yet this is the subject of the latest Charlie Chaplin film, "The Pilgrim." And the great comedian's dumb show delivery of the story of David and Goliath, is one of the funniest and cleverest things ever done on the film.

American popular religion seems, to an Englishman, shallow, childish, and profane, and popular American freethought of to-day—we are not speaking of the past—may be suited to American audiences, but it would be quite useless over here, it partakes too much of the character of the daily Press.

We are too apt to think of the Americans as the lineal descendants of the English colonists who left these shores a long time ago, and who have preserved intact our manners and customs, and modes of thought. This is quite wrong. It is true that the President and his Cabinet all bear English names, but they are far from being representative of the population:—

Germany, Scandinavia, and S.E. Europe have contributed very largely to form the American nation. Among the foreign-born white population at present the Germans are as many as those from the British Isles. In certain cities there are quarters where English is not heard. Only a few years ago it was ascertained that 80 per cent of the inhabitants of New York were foreign born.<sup>2</sup>

And these emigrants are not selected from the upper intellectual and educated classes, but from those on the lowest scale, mostly agricultural labourers. Of the 2,185,283 inhabitants of Chicago, in 1910, only 445,139 or a fifth part, were of American birth and descent, the chief other nationalities being: German, 501,832; Austro-Hungarian, 265,948; Irish, 204,821, and Russian, 184,757. Many of them, no doubt, comprising undesirables who have left their country for their country's good, owing to the activities of the police; this is no doubt responsible for the facts stated in the report just issued by the special committee appointed by the American Bar Association, that in 1922, there were 7,850 murders and 6,790 cases of "unjustifiable homicide," in the United States. In 1921 there were 260 murders committed in New York alone, and 137 in Chicago, compared with 63 murders in the whole of England and Wales during the same period. The burglaries committed in the two countries show a similar disproportion.

There are also twelve million negroes in the States, who, having dragged religious ideas down to their own level, have, by their example, contributed to that lack of awe and reverence which is such a conspicuous feature in American popular religion. Added to which the high speed at which the average American lives in his search for the dollar, does not allow of much time

being devoted to intellectual matters. Taking all these things into consideration, it would be foolish to expect any high degree of mental activity or intellectuality in American religion, and this explains the recent outburst against scientific evolution, which the clergy of this country, after vainly trying to crush, have now taken to their bosom.

W. MANN.

## War: A Retrospect.

We fought at Armageddon for the freedom of mankind,  
I fought and you fought, and here our bones lie strewn;  
The flesh is stripped from us, and the chains are left behind,  
And the freedom that we fought for is an unremembered tune.

*How vividly it all comes back to me!* Scenes and incidents that I thought I had long since forgotten, nightmare memories that creep from out the past like fearful shapes and cast their sinister shadows 'twixt me and the living present. How slight a thing is consciousness compared with the vast field of the subconscious! Small wonder that man has ever been a prey to countless hopes and fears. Small wonder that ill-balanced minds—lacking the healthy corrective afforded by a study of the natural sciences, and given to a morbid introspection—have peopled the world with devils, gods, and ghosts. What mighty forces are opposed to the freethinker in his attempts to rationalize life and free his fellows from the shackles of superstition—forces operating from without and from within.

How easily, too, is the mind of man prompted to flights of fancy, or to excursions into the almost forgotten past! Searching amongst some papers I had inadvertently happened upon an old field postcard, and instantly I was back again on the rain and blood-sodden fields of Flanders. I saw—as though it were but yesterday—the charred and shell-torn ground. In my nostrils was the stench of the bodies of the decomposing dead, the acrid smell of burnt powder, and the sickly odour of the tear-gas. I heard the plaintive cries for stretcher-bearers, and felt again the creepy sensation I used to experience when the shrapnel whined overhead and descended with increasing velocity till it buried itself with a thud in the ground near by.

Slowly—as objects become gradually visible to the sentry at break of day—my thoughts took definite shape. I was at Devil's Wood, and the night attack had begun (that ghastly night early in the Somme offensive when, a battalion of a thousand strong, we left seven hundred dead upon the field), I felt myself impelled forward by I know not what, my feet stumbling over the broken ground, my eyes endeavouring to pierce the enveloping darkness, and my tongue clinging to the roof of my mouth. Again I felt the impact of a shell bursting near me, saw the blinding flash, followed by intense darkness; felt again the fear at my heart when I thought I was blind, and almost found myself again shrieking (mistakenly as it happened) as I did on that dread night in July: "I'm hit! I'm hit!" *And I thought I had forgotten.*

What pen can paint the horrors of the Flanders mud? That oozy sucking slime that dragged at weary limbs already overburdened by the weight of kit and ammunition; that reduced the strongest men to a condition of weak and childish impotence. A hellish and unforgettable experience, my masters, to see weak tears roll down the cheeks of men and hear them babble foolishly (like children in the dark, to scare away imaginary bogeys) of home and friends, and pray they'd

"Never know

The hell where youth and laughter go."

<sup>2</sup> *Universal Encyclopædia*, Art. "United States."

One often wonders what has become of they who shared the horrors of those never-to-be-forgotten days. Gregory, the young and enthusiastic barrister; Brown, the one-time window cleaner. One's thoughts involuntarily fly to those who fell. Simpson, the gambler and drunkard; Williams, the devout Christian who would sooner miss a meal than divine service, whose faith could move mountains, but who fell, nevertheless, with his sightless eyes turned upward to heaven and the blood trickling slowly from his nostrils, whilst a grey-haired mother prayed for his return.

'Tis a strange and dismal world. One would think that the lessons of the past few years would have taught mankind a sorely-needed lesson. But hardly has the sound of guns died away before the Christian nations are once more preparing for war. If this mad folly is not stopped then civilization will go up in a cloud of dust and smoke and man will slink back in a welter of blood to barbarism. How pleasant it is to turn from this sorry spectacle of the world's folly and lose oneself in contemplating the joys that lie within our reach; to turn one's back upon the horrors of the past and thrill with happiness at the pleasant joyousness of human companionship, the prattle of babes, the laughter of children who know not war, and "the wind on the heath, brother." VINCENT J. HANDS.

### Leisure Hours.

OPTIMISTIC students of the New Economics will probably expect nothing short of the millennium from the introduction of the Douglas proposals, but even the pessimist will admit that there must follow, not only an all round increase of wealth, but an all round increase of leisure.

The immediate effect of the adoption of the scheme will be an increase in the effective demand for goods and services sufficient in all probability to absorb all the present unemployed—in so far as they are still employable—into industrial undertakings.

This effect, however, will be comparatively temporary, and, as time proceeds and the scheme develops, a state of affairs will be brought about under which there will be a large increase of what may be termed the leisured class. Doubtless there will always be a considerable number of individuals whose energies will be fully absorbed by industrial work, either because they like the work or for other reasons, but, generally speaking, the community will be found in the enjoyment of an amount of leisure beyond anything experienced to-day except in the case of that busy fraternity known as the idle rich.

The social effects of such leisure are bound to be considerable, and there are not wanting among us prophets who foretell dire results.

Any sudden and radical change in the environment and conditions of a community must necessarily produce a state of instability under which deplorable results in some directions will be inevitable. But the change from the present working conditions to comparative leisure would, under the Douglas scheme, be gradual, and would probably be spread over a period of at least ten years. Even so, however, the change will be sufficiently rapid and considerable to call for a careful estimate of the effects, physical and moral, which will follow. Human life entails a more or less continuous production of nervous energy, accompanied by a more or less continuous expenditure of it, and the aim of the moralist should be so to arrange conditions that the expenditure shall be in directions which tend to the general good of the community. At present human energy is largely expended in industrial labour, often irksome and monotonous, and at times brutalizing. Under conditions of increased

wealth, bringing about a higher standard of living, we may expect a considerably increased production of nervous energy, and, if its expenditure should take anti-social directions, the results may be serious.

It may at once be freely admitted that a worker who finds himself able to "knock-off" at noon, and free to spend the remainder of each day as he pleases, may possibly choose to spend that time in profligate and dissolute ways. The percentage of folk who would choose such ways would probably be small, but even were it large the remedy must be found in other means than the restriction of leisure.

With a margin of economic independence, small at first but steadily growing, the ordinary worker, whether by hand or brain, will have a choice of occupations for his leisure hours which will leave small incentive or excuse for dissipation in any form. The march of applied science brings an almost endless variety of pastimes within the reach of persons so placed, whether they incline toward horticulture or house-decoration, poultry-breeding or cabinet-making, photography or wireless, or even worshipping strange gods and writing bad verses for their parish magazine.

Those folk who look askance at anything less than hard work, and who point warning fingers to the *panem et circenses* of the later days of the Roman Empire, are surely unnecessarily pessimistic. The conditions are not fairly comparable. The citizen of Rome, in receipt of doles, contributed nothing toward the production of goods and services; these were received as tribute from vassal States. Under the leisurely conditions possible as a result of the adoption of social credit principles the citizen will contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the production of the goods and the rendering of the services which he requires, but his control of the forces of Nature and his application of his heritage of scientific discovery will result in this contribution being a comparatively small one.

One of the first results which may fairly be expected from the increased leisure and wealth of the community will be a marked forward movement in education. It will be possible then for youths and maidens to remain at school long enough to obtain some knowledge and appreciation of history and literature and the application of the scientific method, for it is the empty and unappreciative mind which is liable to abuse the gift of leisure. Indeed, we may look forward, after perhaps a rather "ugly month" of versification and daubing, to another golden age of the arts and literature.

In such an age of leisure it is to be hoped that little will be heard of the "dignity of labour," as applied to mere toil, but we may expect an enhanced dignity due to a new orientation to labour. To-day, men will undergo enormous labours and submit to most rigorous physical training in order to win a place in a football team; and few despots ever wielded the power over men's lives and actions that is unquestionably held by the trainer of a racing-boat's crew. But if men are honoured to-day for undergoing such discipline and expending their energies so prodigally in pursuits which are of small direct benefit to the community, may not the men of to-morrow receive equal honour for the expenditure of equal energy and skill in enterprises of great and lasting benefit to humanity?

When the future London street urchin shall impressively point out a passer-by to his pal with the information, "That's one of the chaps who built the new Charing Cross Bridge," then the time will not be far distant when remarkably competent selection committees will be required to pick the teams for electrifying South Wales from the Severn tides, or building the Sydney North Shore Bridge.

But of the many beneficial results which may be

expected as a consequence of increased leisure and wealth there are two worthy of special notice, one sociological and one religious. The first has reference to the population problem. Numerous social reformers have been, and are, gravely concerned over the fecundity of the poorer, more ignorant, and generally undesirable sections of the community in comparison with the increasing sterility of the well-to-do, educated and progressive members. This comparative sterility is attributed by many persons to means entirely within the control of the parties concerned, such as the use of contraceptives, but Mr. Charles E. Pell, in his work on *The Law of Births and Deaths*, has shown that this increasing sterility is a natural accompaniment of a higher standard of living. He tells us that:—

.....the main effects of advancing civilization and increasing prosperity are cerebral development, with ever increasing nervous energy, high feeding and diminished physical labour. The human race is tending more and more to resemble the highly bred race-horse, and to be subject to a similar condition of feeding and training. So if sterility appears in the race-horse in spite of the effects of careful selection, what shall we expect in the human species when the same tendencies and conditions are reproduced in a highly accentuated form?

If the author's contentions are correct, and they are set out with a cogency of argument and a wealth of evidence that carry conviction, then a marked result which may be expected from the increased wealth and leisure, and the higher standard of living, consequent upon the adoption of social credit principles, will be a falling off in both the death-rate and the birth-rate of the less desirable sections of the community. The fall in the death-rate must, however, soon reach a minimum figure, while the fall in the birth-rate amongst all classes may continue steadily. This must bring about a reduction in population which will, at first, be no great evil, except in the eyes of those militarist gentry who regard humanity in the mass as cannon-fodder.

However, long before the decrease in population becomes a serious matter, the well-endowed scientific investigation of the causes of sterility, and the measures for dealing with them, will have proceeded to considerable lengths. Even now, according to Mr. Pell, signs are not wanting that the problem of birth-control in its widest sense—positive as well as negative—is nearer solution by physiological methods than is generally realized.

With the advent of such natural control the continuation of the race will more and more be undertaken only by those who regard the rearing of the next generation as a trust for which the highest general fitness is essential.

The connection between Douglas economics and the evolution of the Superman is thus seen to be closer than might appear at first sight, and the point may be commended to the Fabian Society for their earnest consideration.

The second result has reference to man's so-called need for religion. Those good folk who still hold that the curse of Adam must apply for all time, and that only if man earn his bread by arduous toil can he be kept from utter mischief and moral ruin, have much in common with those clerical gentlemen who regard mankind in the abstract as a somewhat spiritless beast of burden, and assume that, unless he be enticed from behind with a heavenly carrot and prodded from behind with the fear of hell, there is—morally speaking—no getting a move on him. The clergy do not, of course, state their view in these terms (only a wretched Freethinker would express himself so crudely), but the whole conception is still fairly widespread, and is fostered by the economic conditions accompanying our capitalist-financial system.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has told us that the freedom of the wage-earning classes to-day—their freedom to choose where they shall live, what pursuits they shall engage in, the conditions under which they shall rear their families, and other matters of vital concern—is almost negligible. And it is the lack of this freedom, quite as much as lack of actual purchasing-power, which forms the basis of the so-called unrest of these days.

It is this lack of freedom for the masses, this inability to escape from conditions which they rightly repudiate, which provides the black army with a handle which they have been by no means slow to turn to account. For any body of people which feels that the betterment of its social conditions is beyond its control—that life on this earth has little to offer—is far more likely to listen to tales of a life beyond, in which the conditions will be reversed, than would be the case with a people so placed that what Professor Soddy has termed "the enabling requisites of life" were easily obtained, leaving them free to exercise considerable control over their various undertakings, and to gain such mastery over the forces of their environment that the affairs of this world offered them a full and cultured life in the best sense of the terms.

The clergy, with some notable exceptions, have consistently fostered the view that the conditions, often deplorable, of human life must be accepted as beyond remedy by unassisted mankind, and that man must not only look to superhuman and supernatural powers to bring about anything approaching a golden age on this planet in the future, but, in the immediate present, must make the best he can of his unsatisfactory conditions, and fix his attention on a future life and a beneficent Deity for the balancing of his account.

It is high time that the overdraft which the gods have been allowed upon this account should be called in. Very few of the sons of men have as yet been able to say with W. E. Henley:—

I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul.

but by the full co-operative use of the community's credit it should be possible for individuals to attain to the realization of this.

And with this must come also the realization of the magnitude of the part played by man in his upward struggle and the paucity and insignificance of the part played by the gods. The gods feed on poverty and ignorance and distress; a wealthy, cultured and self-reliant people will depose and bury them.

A. W. COLEMAN.

## Letter to Aunt Muriel.

### II.

I OFTEN hear you laugh, Aunt, at the Roman Catholic; but between his creed and yours.

"What makes the mighty differ?"

Two-thirds of your Prayer Book are taken from the Roman Ritual, and all the dates in the Church Year—all spurious—from the Roman Calendar. Your cardinal doctrines come from Rome; the miraculous conception, vicarious punishment. You accept vicarious punishment, Aunt Muriel, in all its iniquity; but the miraculous conception, except when you gabble it over in the Creed, you never mention. Yet there it is, plank and plump, and Rome fairly revels in it. Is it the pigeon in the business that you object to?—pigeon, paraclyte dove, or whatever you like to call it? But if you accept vicarious punishment, you must take the miraculous conception with it; and if the Church had brought a donkey into operation instead of a dove, you would have had to swallow him.



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