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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.*

## Views and Opinions.

### Faith versus Fact.

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up." That is among the plainest and the most explicit of New Testament teachings. And it is in line with the whole body of teaching of both the Old and the New Testaments. Neither collection ever gives the slightest hint but that disease of all kinds is caused by supernatural power to be cured by the same agency. Jesus himself healed the sick by laying on of hands and by prayer. Peter's mother was cured by a touch, a servant was cured of palsy by a word. Paul cured fever by the laying on of hands, and Peter miraculously raised Dorcas from the dead. Jesus gave this power to his followers, and assured them they should be saved from the attacks of poisonous and deadly things by faith. Christian records of the mediæval period are full of accounts of the numbers who were healed of various diseases by the power of prayer. In the Church of England Prayer Book there is a special section which instructs the parson to assure the sick person that whatever the complaint may be he must not doubt but that it is of the Lord's sending. And there is a very large present day literature which tells of the power of prayer in various directions. That disease may be cured by prayer, that genuine Christians shall trust to prayer to cure them is among the oldest, the most fundamental, the best authenticated of Christian teachings. And in a country where Christianity is an established fact, where many millions of public money is spent on its upkeep, where Christianity is established in the schools, in the universities, in the courts, and where men may be sent to prison if they criticize Christianity as they would other subjects, a man has been sent to prison for six months because he was fool enough to carry out what all Christians profess to believe. If there is in this country a more colossal humbug, a more shameless hypocrisy than Christianity, will someone be good enough to give it a name?

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### Hypocrisy in Power.

A few days ago at the Central Criminal Court Henry Norman Purkiss and his wife were found guilty of the

manslaughter of their child, aged three years and three months, and the father was sentenced to six months imprisonment. Purkiss belonged to the "Peculiar People," and when his child was ill he turned to the New Testament and read its directions. He called in the elder, he and the parents prayed to the God whom Christians believe inspired the book, prayed with all the sincerity that loving parents were capable of, and the child died. There was no question of ill-treatment or neglect. Both parents were good people, they had given the child all the attention they believed necessary, the Recorder rightly said that this was the "awful tragedy" of the case. The sole offence of these people was that they trusted to the power of prayer and that the Lord would do something. But God did nothing. There is nothing unusual in that. No man or woman of common-sense ever really expects that God will do anything. The inactivity of God will surprise no sensible person. But there are others. There are quite fifty thousand parsons in the country who tell the people week in and week out that he will do something, who assure them that God does answer prayers, that the New Testament is the only safe guide we have. What were they doing? Out of the whole batch there is not one of them who has had the common decency to stand up in defence of this man. They have raised no protest against a man being sent to prison because he trusted in God to do something and to fulfil his promise and endorse the teachings of the Churches. They are silent, and their silence brands them as self-confessed humbugs. Again, I ask, is there a greater piece of humbug in this country than the Christian religion?

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### A Judicial Farce.

One cannot touch pitch and not be defiled. One cannot profess a belief in religion, in a civilized country, and not be open to the charge of being a humbug. In opening the case for the prosecution, Mr. Travers Humphreys said that the parents "were doing that which was in every degree right and proper in praying for the recovery of a sick child." Right and proper! Right for what? Proper for what? If it is right and proper to pray it must be because it is believed that some result will follow. And what other result could be hoped for but that the being to whom the prayer is addressed will answer it. People must surely pray for something, and not merely to exercise their lungs. The Recorder played the same tune as the Counsel. "Everyone," he said, "who denied the efficacy of faith in these days was a mere materialist," but it was said "by the Legislature that it was necessary for human agency to co-operate with Divine agency for the purpose of curing certain maladies." That is bad logic and worse law. The Legislature says nothing of the kind. The Act under which these people were prosecuted says nothing of the kind. It simply says that the parent may be charged with neglect of the child if he fails to provide it adequate food, clothing, and medical aid. It does not say he must co-operate with God to make the child better, it says simply that he must call in a doctor. The



Recorder must have known this. The Counsel must have known it. All their talk about it being right and proper to pray only amounted to saying, "You may pray, so long as you don't depend upon it. You may ask God to help so long as you don't depend upon his doing anything." It was an elaborate piece of hypocrisy. Parson, Counsel, and Judge, humbugs all, the moment religion is dragged in.

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#### The Silence of God.

So much for the parson, for the Christian Counsel, and the Christian Judge. None of them come decently out of the case. The only persons who come out of it with a stainless character and without a slur upon their honesty are the two people who stood before a Christian Judge and were condemned for carrying out a Christian teaching. And what of God? The prosecution drew attention to the fact that there was no question of the love of the parents for their child, of their deliberately neglecting it. Their crime, their folly, was that they trusted God. They had been taught that there was a God, that he wished them to pray and that he would answer their prayer. And they believed. And God, if there be a God, heard those poor parents praying, watched the child slowly strangling to death as the complaint approached its climax, heard and saw it all—and did nothing because they did not call in a doctor. Would any ordinary human being with the power to save a suffering child have refused to help? We know that he would not. Had human aid been asked it would have been given to the fullest extent, but God, the God whom we are told is the friend of little children, the father of us all, did nothing. He allowed the child to die, and he has allowed a man to go to prison branded with the crime of manslaughter for having trusted to him. The only possible excuse for such a God is that he does not exist.

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#### The Condemnation of Christianity.

It was not really Henry Norman Purkiss and his wife who were on trial at the Old Bailey. It was Christianity itself that was on trial, and it was Christianity that was condemned by the jury and sentenced by the Judge. If that child was really killed, it was Christianity that killed it. For it is a fundamental part of Christian theology that disease comes from God and may be cured by God. The Old Bible teaches it, the New Testament teaches it, Jesus Christ taught it, and all savages of the past and present teach it. Go among any race of savages and you can see a chapter of the New Testament being enacted from life. You will see them, when anyone is sick or insane or seized with epilepsy, calling in the elders of their church to get rid of the sickness with prayers and incantations. You will see the medicine man acting as did the Jesus of the New Testament, trying to cure the epileptic and the lunatic by driving the devils out of them. Right through Christian history the devil hunters were at work and the praying men have driven their business. When a member of the Royal Family is ill the clergy offer up prayers for their recovery. What do they expect will happen. If there is a recovery they will tell you that God effected the cure. Humbugs all. They know that God did nothing of the kind. They know that the very best medical skill and attention was present and did whatever was done. And yet when the men and women who are trained by them to believe in the power of prayer and the goodness of God trust to them to cure a suffering child, these men stand idly by while they are condemned as criminals. They have not even the manliness to say a word in defence of their dupes. Two years ago, in the same court, a man suffering from an incurable disease—a dying man as it turned out—was sentenced to nine months hard

labour for saying in plain language that Christianity was a lie and an organized hypocrisy. Henry Norman Purkiss was sentenced for being foolish enough to believe in the religion the other man was condemned for deriding. That is Christianity in 1923. Is it any wonder that it is beginning to stink in the nostrils of decent self-respecting men and women?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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### God's Existence Imaginary.

THE Rev. W. C. Williamson, D.D., an American Presbyterian divine, recently preached a remarkable sermon entitled "The Re-discovery of God," before the Presbyterian Synod of Iowa. Dr. Williamson is an extremely orthodox man. He begins by emphasizing the almost hopeless depravity of mankind. He even believes in the personality of the Devil, whom he describes as an exceptionally busy individual; "he always gets busy when the Church gets busy." Indeed, his Majesty of the lower regions is specially interested in the Church, particularly when it is full of zeal and earnest activity. "Of two churches, one having a fight, the other a revival of religion, genuine and true, the former he let alone, because he was not needed where a Church was quarrelling, but he must give his attention to every Church being visited by the Holy Ghost." Such a sermon as this, or such a journal as the *United Presbyterian* which published it, "would not have been called out had it not been for the present day wickedness and low state of religion, as accounted for by a lost sense of the presence of God, not only by the non-Christian world, but by the Church as well." At this point we are introduced to the real subject of the discourse thus:—

Many are the fools saying there is no God, or what is just as bad, that if there is a God, he is far above, out of sight, and giving himself no concern about the affairs of this world. Those who entertain such sentiments have little to restrain them from indulgence in the worst of crimes.

Here we pause in wonder at the preacher's amazing ignorance or stupid prejudice, or both combined. No one with an average knowledge of the world would even dream of saying that Atheism is conducive to crime. They are the fools, Dr. Williamson and his comrades, who believe in God and go about maligning those who do not. If such people only visited the prisons they would find that therein Atheists are conspicuous only by their absence.

Dr. Williamson's main thesis, however, is that the sense of God's existence and presence is an acquired sense. No one is born in possession of it. Every child must be carefully and continuously trained to acquire it, and yet in spite of the most faithful training some go through life without it. Furthermore, even those who have this sense at its strongest and intensest are liable to lose it at any time; and it is from such a loss, according to Dr. Williamson, the Church of to-day is so sadly suffering. He says:—

What is affirmed, as to the professed people of God, is that even with them there is a lost sense of the immanence of God in relation to his Church and the welfare of men. The wicked are wicked because God is not in their thought at all. The righteous are less righteous than they would be if the sense of his immediate and gracious presence were more fully realized.

Here again the preacher is at loggerheads with facts. The wickedest man the present writer ever met was distinguished for his piety, even whilst committing the vilest crimes; and even after their commission, and when he had fled from justice to another land, his



piety remained unbroken. After his flight one of the first things he did was to join the Church, in which he shone, especially at prayer-meetings, as a God-loving and Christ-serving member, his marvellous gift in prayer often moving people to tears. And there are thousands like him in Christendom. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that multitudes of Atheists are noted for purity and nobility of character, whose delight it is to serve the communities to which they belong.

These comments are merely by the way, the chief interest of the discourse being in the statement, frequently repeated, that the sense of God may be won and lost. Of course, Dr. Williamson firmly believes that God's presence is perpetual, only that through lack of faith many are unable to feel it. In illustration of this he tells the following story:—

A very busy mother went into her room one day at twilight to write a letter. She sat at her desk absorbed in filling page after page of note-paper. After some time she heard a sigh close at hand, and turning her head, she saw her little son cuddled up in an armchair. "Why, sonny, how long have you been there?" she asked. "All the time, mamma," he said, "but you have been too busy to notice me." Ask God how long he has been with us, and he will say, All the time; his presence undiscovered because even the Christian people have been too busy to notice the fact—busy with their own affairs, and losing sight of the presence of God.

This story does not illustrate the point at issue in the slightest degree. The mother and her son were physically present in the same room, and she did not see him simply because he was out of sight behind her back, but the moment he made the least noise she turned round and saw him. But God is not a physical being at all. In the first of the Anglican Articles of Religion we are assured that he is "without body, parts, or passions," and the Bible itself tells us more than once that "no man hath seen God at any time." And yet Dr. Williamson has the temerity to declare that such an absolutely invisible being, lacking "body, parts, or passions," has been with us all the time, although only a few have the courage to assert that they have seen him. As a matter of simple fact, nobody has ever seen him, or realized his presence in any other way than by faith. To unbelievers he never yields the least sign of his existence. He never takes any notice whatever of what they are or do. He is eternally silent and inactive, and not even Dr. Williamson, who talks so familiarly about him, can adduce even the ghost of a demonstration that he exists at all. He is a purely imaginary being, a figment of man's fancy, and this is really conceded by those who define faith as "sanctified imagination."

Far be it from us even to suggest that Dr. Williamson and those who agree with him are guilty of insincerity; but we do emphatically hold them guilty of confounding faith with knowledge and fancy with reality. This, however, does not mean that their Christian experience is unreal or hypocritical. What we maintain is that their experience is the offspring of their faith, and is real only as such. It is well known that novelists deal almost exclusively with fictitious characters, some good, and some bad. The noble characters we hold in reverence and love, and with these we often hold sweet communion, while we hate and despise the ignoble and wicked ones. All these characters, if well drawn, are quite real to us, but only as creations of a vivid imagination. So, likewise, God, Christ, angels, and the unseen world are doubtless perfectly real to honest Christians, and communion with them is exquisitely sweet; but our contention is that their existence and our fellowship with them are figments of the imagination, factors in human life which owe their existence alone to faith, while in the absence

of faith Christian experience speedily dies out. Neither God nor the Devil troubles unbelievers. Even Dr. Williamson makes the following admission and claim:—

It is but little we can do to bring the world to realize God's presence. The very best thing that can be done is for the people of God to bring themselves more fully under the consciousness of his presence everywhere. If the godless world can be made to believe in God and be restrained from evil thereby, it must be through the influences of godly people, living as they do, who say, "Thou God seest me."

It is perfectly true that but a little can be done to bring the world back to God, because the world is gradually finding out that God is of no account, and that the presence or absence of supernatural belief has no appreciable effect upon character. Thousands of believers lead shockingly selfish and corrupt lives, while unbelievers not a few are guided by the highest principles and purest motives, and set the very best example to all around them. We can go further still and confidently predict that humanity will derive great benefit from the complete disappearance of the belief in God and Providence. The truth is that mankind has hitherto neglected to work out its own salvation because of the conviction that God alone could do it. Trust in God has sadly hindered human progress, and there is no escape from the fact that during the last three or four hundred years the world has made greater advance towards truth, righteousness and freedom, though the Christian faith has been steadily declining, than it did during all the long Ages of Faith. This fact fully justifies the conviction that the entire passing of God from human life will be an incalculable boon. While heartily wishing one another a happy New Year, let us solemnly resolve to do our utmost to hasten the coming of that happy time.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Out-of-Date Hymns.

Talk about it as we like, a man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion. —O. W. Holmes.

SOME of the members of the Bath Education Committee have been objecting strongly to the use of out-of-date hymns. Special mention was made of the hymn, "All Things Bright and Beautiful," which was characterized as being unfit for the pupils in the public schools. The verse particularly objected to is as follows:—

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them, high or lowly,  
And ordered their estate.

This hymn occurs in "Hymns Ancient and Modern," and in other collections. "Hymns Ancient and Modern" occupies a peculiar position in Anglican circles, and it has been said that thousands of worshippers have been so hypnotized by long association with these hymns that they believe them to be inspired. This question of inspiration may be an open one, but it is quite certain that the Anglican clergy have provided nothing in the "Hymns, Ancient and Modern" which is beyond the mental reach of the dulllest and most stupid of their congregations. We raise our hats to the clergy as smart men of business, but our admiration is diluted by the thought that, after all, they have "roped in" their congregations because they have never been able to rise above their level of intelligence. Clerical culture is a sham and a make-believe, and is not real culture at all. The women in the pews may not be better informed than the petticoated priests in the pulpits, but outside the standard of culture has been raised of late years with



disastrous effects on the Church of England. *Punch* once hit this off in an excellent cartoon which depicted a parson on his knees before a scholarly sceptic, saying: "Pray, pray don't mention the name of another foreign author, or I shall resign my living."

So far as hymns are concerned, it is very doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the average music-hall song, which latter is sufficient to make an educated man ashamed of his own species. This may well appear a grave indictment, but the hymns which are regarded as being eminently suited for public worship are not only unrhythmical and nonsensical, but actually stereotype a lower form of culture which ought to be repressed and not perpetuated. Under the soporific influence of religion, the people in the pews have been far too ready to accept bombast and bleat as the gold of poetry, and have hailed hysteria in adjectives as the quintessence of inspiration and reverence.

The hymns used by Churchmen and Nonconformists are not really much better than those painfully familiar and disgraceful compositions which are used by Revivalists, Salvationists, and other howling Dervishes of our streets and open spaces. The charge of sentimentalism is not by any means the only one that can be brought. Most hymns are full of a Die Hard Toryism, but there are graver reasons for criticism. So many hymns are brutal in tone and language, written in the worst possible taste. These are full of sanguinary details and a savage exultation which is eminently repulsive. "There is a fountain filled with blood" is a striking example of what can be paralleled in scores of hymns from the most respectable collections.

There is also a childish frankness in some of these so-called "spiritual songs" which is sufficient to make a sceptic lift his eyebrows in astonishment. Such hymns as "Oh for the pearly gates of heaven, Oh for the golden floor," so suggestive of the melodies of South Carolina, are sung with a qualm in thousands of places of worship in Christian England. The popular "Rock of Ages" seems calculated to drive a decently educated person into a lunatic asylum. It is a perfect Niagara of irrational images and misspelled metaphors, a unique example of fatuous flap doodle. "Cleft rock," "riven side," "to thy Cross I cling," "to the fountain fly," are a few examples. The author was indeed intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity. "Onward Christian Soldiers," which is almost as popular as "Yes! We have no bananas," is by no means above criticism. The last line of the chorus is commonplace in expression, and atrocious in rhyme.

These few quotations, be it remembered, are from the most distinguished Christian collections, and they are by no means the worst of their kind. If any reader wishes his raven hair turned white and curled afterwards, let him glance at the back pages of the *War Cry*, where he will find the work of bold, bad versifiers, strong in the Faith delivered to the Saints, but weak in their mother tongue. The great mass of worshippers evidently like their hymns coloured and not plain. For one man who reads Milton's *Hymn on Christ's Nativity*, there are, probably, thousands, who enjoy "The Glory Song," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and "The Bells of Hell go Ting-a-ling."

To an outsider, hymns would suggest restraint, sobriety, the dignity of reverence, but things are not always what they seem. The Torrey and Alexander Crusade, and the Billy Sunday revivals, amply prove the association of the Christian religion with other things than civilization. What is disturbing, these sacred showmen gauged their pious public to a nicety. Their audiences were, perhaps, better dressed than

those who listen spellbound to the trombones, tambourines, and tarradiddles of the Church and Salvation Armies, yet they sung hymns of the most rank and fulsome barbarity. Christian congregations seem quite unable to distinguish between poetry and doggerel, pathos and bathos, decency and indecency. Singing their delirious rhymes, they are barbarians. Savages do this sort of thing one way, and the countrymen of Gipsy Smith and the Bishop of London another, but the nature of the act, and the results, are much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

## Drama and Dramatists.

THE difference between faith in God and faith in Man is so evident that, in this paper at least, the statement does not need defining. Supernatural religions, plain and fancy have had a long innings with mankind, but results are poor, disheartening, and at the same time a decided truth that something is and has been wrong in the direction of human affairs by organized religions. Emotions have been exploited in something the same way that clever men exploit a country—for the benefit of a few. That this state of affairs will have an end all men of good-will may hope; there is no human problem without a human solution.

Major Douglas—no, gentle reader, we are not going to write about economics—Major Douglas, we repeat, has been tried by a jury of Freethinkers, and he left the court, etc., duly claimed as an heretic. We now come to an heretic of another kind—superficially different, but quite the same. Major Douglas's challenge has not been taken up; Mr. Halcott Glover, the second offender, now challenges the Pay Box of the Commercial Theatre in his book *Drama and Mankind*.<sup>1</sup> We have not the least doubt that Mr. Glover is right in all his charges, and, if his play *Wat Tyler* proves him to be in direct line of descent from Shakespeare as a dramatist, that is not the only fact to recommend him to the attention of my readers.

It is a great source of irritation to find that few writers and dramatists are capable of looking at mankind as One Man. Swift divided religion into three brothers; Browning in *Cleon* has an echo of mankind as One Man, but many modern books and plays would have us believe that mankind is something to be approached in sections. This is but playing the tune called by the Gold-Bug, and, as all anti-human things do, it will perish.

*Punch* number one from this book: "It is high time the artist were put in his place.....As priest or prophet he is a humbug." Shades of *Quo Vadis*, *The Christian*, *ad nauseum*. The common man will not be preached at from the stage; he can get that for nothing at church—if he wants it. If the English drama came from the Church, the common man will not support the Church on the stage. This in an oblique manner disproves the argument of man being naturally religious.

"Leaving out commercially interested parties, both on the stage and in the auditorium, the audience is collaborating in the production of a work of art." We decline to indicate the relevance in this statement to the thesis of—the man we were not going to write about, but the assertion itself goes to prove that Mr. Glover does not intend to leave anybody out. He has no high-brow view of art—"Art is social, therefore sane, or it is nothing"; and the dramatist believes that we should come away from the theatre enlightened and encouraged. After a survey of our newspaper placards daily, it speaks well for the impenetrable sanity of the human race, and government control of

<sup>1</sup> *Drama and Mankind*, 8s. 6d. net, Messrs. Ernest Benn, Limited, 8 Bouverie Street, E.C.4.



them in the late war was ironic; the public knew more than appeared on the placards—and did not go mad. There is a positivism about the tone of this book that is badly wanted. As Blake wrote, "humility is only doubt"; prohibition, suppression, repression of all that is human betrays the mind of the agent and a denial of Mankind.

Of special application to Freethinkers will be the passage on page 36:—

I rest on the fact that I and the men about me are human, and that while we remain human it is, to say the least, waste of time to invent a new alphabet for every fresh utterance.

Memorandum for New Thought, New Religions—and Old Religions—and also for our flood of professors who, in six volumes, will succeed in making the simple obscure. Mr. Glover contends that the art of the dramatist is to make exalted thought intelligible to as many men as he can, and, although the obstacles are legion his courage is to be admired. The Church with its retinue of throw-outs of the intellectual world can never occupy the place of the stage, granting the truth of our dramatist's contention, and the myth makers, on the stage, now have an opportunity of directing the feet of Man in his grand march through the ages.

The author of this outspoken book is both wide and catholic in his views of the critics of humanity; Moses, Isaiah, Socrates, Christ, Rabelais, Cervantes and Nietzsche are all taken as examples of those who have made humanity. It would be possible for any man to take part of his moods or his life and say to himself that is the part derived from any of the historical figures mentioned, for there is a touch of them in all of us in a greater or lesser degree.

The test question for the great dead men is what have they done? Of the living great men, what can they do? Mr. Glover is a great lover of Dickens—and produces his reasons. Dickens made vice hideous, and achieved in some measure abolition of the horrors which he hated as a humanitarian. If our modern novelists desire fame let them make virtue attractive—and let them publish without coloured jackets.

There are many fine and noble passages in this book that should find a place on the Freethinker's book-shelf. Here is a man, and he has faith in his fellow-men. Man is the highest form we know; he is slowly casting his skin of Original Sin that has been wrapping his mental body for centuries. He is slowly framing his speech to repudiate the revilers of human nature—the black gowned figures of mystery mongers. He is patiently exploring the external world about him with the help of true scientists (we would not, for instance, confuse Professor Soddy with the inventor of poison-gas or tanks), and the sum total of his spiritual Odyssey is that life is a fact. Priests cannot help him, there is nothing above the sky to direct his steps—there is only the human knowledge handed down from past ages telling him that life for each and all of us is a brief stay at an inn on the roadside, and that it has only the value he cares to give it. When Man finds himself thoroughly he will bid a final farewell to all screech owls, big and little, and we incline to think that the Drama, on the lines indicated by Mr. Halcott Glover, will help him to do this. We conclude with one of our author's characteristic remarks:—

The theatre, then, is like to a good inn, a good public-house. Within it is converse, among the best that life has to offer. What nights among the gods are envisaged in the picture of the divine inn! The day's immediate work done, and the evening come when men assemble for a feast of the immortals! Such is the theatre of which we dream!

And such is the dream of all Men who have, like Pantagrue, knocked the cradle of Superstition into five hundred thousand pieces, WILLIAM REPTON.

## Tennyson To-day.

### II.

(Concluded from page 807.)

As the accepted prophet and teacher of the Victorian middle class, Tennyson delivered himself of many oracular poems dealing with the pressing questions of the day. Among which may be mentioned the movement for women's rights, the overture to which had been composed by Mary Wolstoncraft. To the industrial enigma, pressing for solution. To the military situation, and, above and before all, the religious problem.

To none of these questions did Tennyson attempt to penetrate to the roots. He only adopted weak and facile compromises to suit the convenience of the class to which he belonged. His settlement of the women's rights question, in *The Princess*, was in the following fashion:—

Man for the field and woman for the hearth;  
Man for the sword and for the needle she;  
Man with the head and woman with the heart;  
Man to command and woman to obey;  
All else confusion.

And if the woman questioned this arrangement, she was advised to repeat to herself: "I cannot understand; I love." The advice was not only silly, but it was highly exasperating to all intelligent women.

His rose-water prescriptions for the industrial evils by which he was surrounded were equally futile and exasperating to intelligent men seeking for reform. A ruthless acquisitive civilization had accumulated a vast material empire, which the mass of the people were exploited to maintain for the benefit of the upper classes. The Victorians prided themselves upon living in an age of progress and enlightenment. They took to themselves, in all seriousness Tennyson's line:—

I the heir of all the ages, foremost in the files of time.

Also the dictum:—

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mr. Fausset says:—

But beneath the veneer of middle-class cultivation the smoke-veiled world of industry spread further and further its tentacles over the green land, nourishing as never before the germs of those two fatal diseases of modern civilization, industrialism and militarism .....publicly he did little to oppose the play either of economic or of physical forces which, unrestrained, were leading straight to disaster, except to affirm the excellence and the comfort of virtue. The result of such idle high-mindedness was the catastrophe of savagery and folly which we have known, and the decimating of a generation, young in hope and generosity, which had of itself willed no such things.<sup>1</sup>

Tennyson had a profound distrust of democracy. He had written in the first *Locksley Hall*:—

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,  
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly dying fire.

The cry of the poor and exploited for reform found no echo in his poetry. He was incapable of Shelley's trumpet call to the proletariat in *The Masque of Anarchy*:—

Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fall'n on you;  
Ye are many—they are few.

As Mr. Fausset observes, "he was no Hood. The voices of the poor and the down-trodden did not tear at his heart." One remedy for the social evils he suggests in *The Princess*:—

Why should not these great Sirs  
Give up their parks some dozen times a year  
To let the people breathe?

<sup>1</sup> Fausset, *Tennyson*, pp. 301-302.



And concludes decisively that they should. The advice to Lady Clara Vere de Vere, to feed the beggars at her gate, and teach the orphan-boy to read, and the orphan-girl to sew, along with the example of Sir Aylmer Alymer's daughter—

who would visit bedridden women in their cottages and shows them how to grow mignonette, appeared to him to represent not only an elegant, but also a practical solution of our social difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

The fact is Tennyson's views on social questions never advanced beyond the views he had imbibed at Somerby Rectory, they are the views of the old landed aristocracy and the provincial squire :—

There is the instinctive distrust of the growing commercial aristocracy which is reflected in *Maud*; the instinctive worship of the older territorial aristocracy which we get in the *Lord of Burleigh* and other decorative poems. There is the same complacent confidence in the old order, the easy conviction that, provided the squire justified the privileges by fulfilling the duties of his position, all was really, and indeed gloriously, for the best.<sup>3</sup>

His patriotism, says Mr. Nicolson, degenerates "into arrant jingoism. For in such matters he was ignorant, fire-eating, and insular." The mere mention of the Channel tunnel would send him into a frenzy; and in the 'fifties he did his best to drive us into war with Napoleon III :—

Apart from what Swinburne called "his strident anti-Gallican cackle," Tennyson's interest in foreign countries and politics, unless there seemed some chance of a jolly good war, was at most apathetic..... he shared, of course, the current convictions of the white man's burden; he was convinced that subject races naturally preferred good British government to bad self-government.

But what Tennyson considered to be his greatest mission was the reconciliation of science and religion :—

His faith on analysis proves to be a restatement of the old belief in a Divine Providence, blindly held by the simple, with certain harmless scientific generalities grafted on to it.....*In Memoriam* consoled a wide audience which had begun secretly to fear that God was to be outlawed, not by laying the ghosts of their fear, but by insisting that man could and would not endure the loss of his God.....His sober faith in immortality springs from the same hungry egotism, not from vision. He claimed that unless man's soul were immortal, life was meaningless and intolerable, which proves how little he was prepared to sacrifice his identity, if the need arose, to those "nobler types" of the future, which, with all his professed belief in them, he should have been glad, if it were necessary, to serve.<sup>4</sup>

The unfathomable vistas of time and space which science was revealing, filled him with dismay. In the 'sixties he often used to visit Lockyer to look through the six-inch reflector, and saw :—

Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,  
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand  
His nothingness into man.

They filled him with a feeling akin to despair :—

Bright as with deathless hope—but however they sparkled and shone,  
The dark little worlds running round them were worlds of woe like our own.

He abandoned the Paleyan argument from design in Nature entirely, declaring that he found no trace of

God "in world or sun. Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye." But—

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,  
I heard a voice "believe no more,"  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part  
And like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

However much the wrathful testimony of the poet impressed the public and the Queen, who was so impressed by *In Memoriam* that she personally interfered in selecting Tennyson for the Laureateship; it only drew a tolerant smile from the scientists and philosophers, who found him more convincing when constructing the fabric of doubt than when he endeavoured to demolish the fabric with the tools of faith.

In the *Idylls* Tennyson drew, in the character of King Arthur, what he considered the ideal of manhood, in an ideal society of knights and fair ladies. The knights of the round table, however, resemble the real knights of the middle ages, about as much as Tupper resembled a Malay pirate. Arthur himself, the perfect man, would prove a perfect nuisance in real life, and it is no surprise that his Queen transfers her affections to Lancelot. In tracing the ruin of the "Round-table" to the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere, Tennyson is only exploiting his horror of all irregular sexual commerce. But, as Mr. Fausset remarks :—

Far from revealing how shameful is the sin of adultery by Lancelot's and Guinevere's guilty love, he has persuaded us that it can under certain conditions be more beautiful and true than matrimonial commonplace. Lancelot and Guinevere live more than any other characters in the poem; their humanity, rooted if it be in romantic dishonour, is at least positive.

For, he adds, it is impossible to sin against such a shadow as Arthur.

In 1866 Swinburne published his *Poems and Ballads*, which was received with indescribable enthusiasm by the younger generation, immediately all the sparkle went out of the Tennysonian jewels and the mediæval castles fell flat. And Tennyson was stirred to fury when he found the young men saying King Arthur was not blameless in the least—that he was not even "real."

The young men of 1880 were wrong—of course they were wrong—and, what was worse, they were un-English. Yes, that was it; the whole unhappy business was the fault of those fellows Bandelaire and Zola. The "poisonous honey" in which these young men dipped their impudent arrows had been "stolen from France." He had never liked the French. This proved that he had been right all along.....did it not all come over to our sweeter, simpler island from the fœtid, feminine banks of the Seine? Of course it did; and he would tell them so. After all, he was still the Poet Laureate of England. And so he told them<sup>5</sup> :—

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhymster,  
play your part,  
Paint the mortal shame of Nature with the living hues  
of Art.  
Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul pas-  
sions bare;  
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—  
naked—let them stare.

But then, had not Swinburne described the dying words of King Arthur as "the last deliberate snuffle of the 'blameless king,'" and as "the acme, the apogee, the culmination of all imaginable cant." But the young men only laughed louder at a poet's excitement.

W. MANN,

<sup>2</sup> Nicolson, *Tennyson*, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Fausset, *Tennyson*, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolson, *Tennyson*, p. 228.



## Acid Drops.

*Freethinker* readers will not find anything new to them in the following, but coming from so prominent a Christian as the Rev. Dr. Orchard it is worth quoting:—

Christianity has failed to save the world from war. In some senses Christianity has even intensified the menace of war. Remember all the most frightful wars of the world have been promoted by religion. Christendom itself converted the idea of moral defensive warfare into the possibility of aggression. It has given to war the new ideal. One has only to call a war a crusade or a holy war to secure still greater support. It has the effect of covering up the actual cause of war with great ideals; its predatory character is glossed over with chivalry; it is baptized into new life by being connected with the sacrifice of Calvary. We do not tell people that they have to murder someone. We tell them they have to lay down their lives in a glorious cause, and all the finest instincts of sacrifice and religion are therefore brought out to keep war going.

It would have been impossible for the late war to have been waged with such determination and at such length had it not been for the patronage given to it in all lands by the Christian Church.

This is exactly what we have often pointed out, and it is not the first time we have come across what reads like the very words of the *Freethinker* as though they were quite original. A good many writers in the ordinary Press find this journal "damned good to steal from," as Charles Lamb remarked in another connection and of a well-known writer. But we are content so long as we see our ideas making headway.

What Dr. Orchard must next recognize is that what Christianity has done for war it has done for other things. We have several times invited serious minded Christians to consider the significance of the fact that the most piratical nations in the world have taken so kindly to the Christian religion, and that it was warmly professed, and is still professed by those who are most unscrupulous in the exploitation of their fellows. It is idle to say that these men were hypocrites. That is not the truth. It is equally shallow to say that these men used Christianity as a cloak. The plain truth is that under cover of high motives Christianity offered an opportunity for the satisfaction of the lower qualities of human nature. It brutalized in the very act of claiming to improve.

Persecution is a standing illustration of the working of this principle. People of strong opinions are often prone to intolerance, but normally the play of one's sympathetic feelings, with the give and take of social existence, keeps this feeling in check. What Christianity did was to give intolerance the air of a religious and moral duty. The unbeliever was one who struck at the roots of the well-being of society, disintegrating it morally, beside endangering man's immortal welfare. In this way the weeding out of the heretic and of the unbeliever became a moral and a religious duty. Intolerance, instead of being checked was encouraged, and just as the Church gave to war an air of moral and religious idealism and so prevented men and women coming face to face with its ugliness, and its brutality, and its positive immorality, so it prevented people seeing the utterly indefensible nature of religious intolerance. One day we shall have the truth about Christianity generally taught, and then it will be recognized that the triumph of the Christian religion represents one of the most frightful disasters that ever happened to civilized mankind.

Contributions from Church of England worshippers during 1922 totalled over nine millions of pounds, a decrease of a quarter of a million on the previous year. This sum ought to be subject to the "amusement tax."

The Christian religion is safe for the present. The Bishop of Oxford has just confirmed 200 Eton boys in the college chapel. The boys had no choice in the matter.

At Walton Park Presbyterian Chapel the pulpit caught fire through some defect in the heating apparatus. Luckily, the medicine-man was not in the pulpit at the time.

Another echo of the late earthquake in Japan. From an American paper just to hand we see that the President of St. Paul's University, Tokio, Dr. Reifsnider, says that when the flames were creeping across the city towards the Christian institution of which he is the head, "we knelt to talk it out with God, and while we prayed the wind changed from east to west, and the flames returned in their tracks." We should not, of course, dream of suggesting that a Christian missionary was telling a lie, but all the same we should like a little independent testimony to the reality of this miracle. And we like that phrase "talk it out with God." They explained to him what was happening, or they asked him what the deuce he was doing, and when God saw what he was doing he turned the flames from threatening the Christian institution and let the fire return to the work of burning up the Japanese. One could not expect God to bother about them. But what a pity it is that Dr. Reifsnider did not "talk it out with God" before the earthquake started and get him to prevent it. That is the worst of these miracles. They invariably suggest more doubts than they remove.

A patient world, fed on statistics and the east wind of a post-war period is informed that there are 46,182 bell-ringers in the Church of England. A daily paper states that this is "interesting"; we should prefer to cite it as an extreme case demanding the immediate attention of the Inspector of Nuisances.

General Booth is a good Christian, and he and his institution are part and parcel of the old order of things. The General is now denouncing "money for nothing"—and, as usual, is shouting up the wrong chimney. When we see that balance sheet of the Salvation Army and the balance sheet of Big Banks, we shall be able to form an opinion on "money for nothing." In the meantime, it is safe to say that none of the flotsam and jetsam of mankind has had "money for nothing" from an institution that could not survive for a moment in any civilized country. It is probably the white man's burden disguised.

Another heresy case is attracting attention in America. This time it is the Rev. Dr. Leighton Parks, of St. Bartholomew's Church, one of the most fashionable churches in New York, who has created a sensation by denying the truth of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. It seems a little to make a fuss about anyway, and future and more civilized ages will—if they measure our culture by our established religion—think they are dealing with savages. Dr. Parks points out that the passage from Isaiah which is used as prophecy of a virgin birth does not mean virgin, but only a young woman, and that the genealogies in the Gospels are contradictory. But if anyone will take the trouble to consult Paine's *Age of Reason*, published about a hundred and thirty years ago, it will be found that advanced Christian scholarship, in the person of Dr. Parks, has just arrived where popular Freethought started over a century ago. There is really no other walk in life in which a man can gain the reputation of a daring thinker quite so cheaply as he can do in the Christian Church. A man only needs to have the courage to question whether the impossible ever happened or whether the obviously absurd can be reasonable, to be hailed as a monument of learning and a marvel of moral courage. In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king.

After all Dr. Parks takes the same ground that some of the daring Christian thinkers with us have taken. He says he does not believe in the historicity of the Virgin Birth. Why? So far as we can gather it is because the Bible has been wrongly translated. But what has that to do with it? Suppose the Bible had been correctly translated, would that have made the story the more



credible? Does an absurdity cease to be an absurdity because the Bible teaches it? Apparently some of these daring heretics are quite prepared to believe in the ridiculous if it can be shown the Bible teaches it. But it really does not matter whether the Bible teaches the Virgin Birth or not. We know that it never occurred because, so long as the words are honestly used, it could not have occurred. The beliefs of savages, to which class the Virgin Birth belongs, are not discredited because of some error on the part of some translator of primitive myths, but because we know the conditions under which these myths come into being, and because our knowledge of natural causation shows us that the actuality of these myths is an impossibility. Dr. Parks should take his courage in both hands and throw the whole bag of tricks—gods, devils, angels and demons—overboard. It is not of much use getting rid of it piecemeal. It is a reflection on the intelligence of the would-be reformer.

We do not think an apology is needed for returning to the subject of the Peculiar People. In some ways this is a test question so far as Christianity is concerned. Belief in the power of prayer to cure sickness is fundamental to Christian belief, and while the clergy remain quite silent when men and women are sent to prison for trusting to the power of Jesus to cure sickness, yet when there is some faith-healing mission at work these same parsons are found on public platforms testifying to the power of faith, and are ready with yards of more or less questionable evidence to prove that cures have been effected. All of which goes to prove that the clergy are quite ready to exploit any delusion that promises an immediate profit. But then when their dupes find themselves in a police court charged with manslaughter they remain quiet. Humbugs all.

Professor Frederick Soddy is none too optimistic regarding the next war. It is true that we are in a dangerous position. One way leads to the destruction of civilization, and the other leads to the New Age. The element of chance sports with the destiny of mankind, but it is quite probable that a declaration of war—or war without one—would produce an effect quite different from that which our brass hatted bipeds of destruction imagine. Those who would like the introduction of the new theory of relativity to the subject would quickly see that all parts of the countries engaged would be in the front line. And what would become of our dog-collared and pious recruiters and others whose patriotism was measured by the numbers of an audience? At that time, it will not be possible to have a flag-day in peace. As an alternative we can settle down to learn something from history, challenge a few more axioms, and let those who will, fight for the superstition of overseas trade, whilst their own countrymen starve at home.

The late Sir Frederick Treves said that "dying was easy" in the normal way; that mankind may receive its religion from the skilled physician instead of the cowardly priest, and a desire to meet friends from whom we have parted prematurely.

Mr. J. B. S. Haldane, a nephew of Lord Haldane, in his book, *Science and the Future*, will not give much comfort to the other-world mongers. He appears to get near the truth where he states:—

I suspect that man's desire for a future life is largely due to two causes, a feeling that most lives are incomplete, and a desire to meet friends from whom we have parted prematurely.

It is just possible that the Churches have misunderstood this craving for immortality because it brought grist to the mill. The discerning reader has here an example of the lion of science and the lamb of theology lying down together, and the fate of the Lady of Riga will instinctively be recalled.

The *Detroit Times* has a very cruel cut at the work of the missionaries in Africa. It says that there is great

difficulty experienced in converting tribes that are given to polygamy. But it adds that the missionaries find it easy to get the native to give up a wife or two when they happen to be old. Still, so long as the age of the repudiated wives are not mentioned in the reports, the fact that the wives are given up will be quite good enough to be cited at home as evidence of the godly influence of the missionaries.

All the same there is nothing in the Old or the New Testament to brand polygamy as at all wrongful. In the old Bible the favourites of God had more than one wife, and in the new the opposition is not to one wife but to any wife. It was singleness that was depicted as the happy state here and the angelic state hereafter. The only passage in the New Testament which advises one wife only is a specific one in relation to bishops. "Let the bishops have but one wife." And some of the greatest writers in Christian history have said that there is nothing in Christianity that is prohibitive of polygamy. Monogamy comes to us from the Greeks and Romans, not from the Jews or the Christians.

An amusing story of Calcraft, the hangman, is told in a new book, *Dramatic Days at the Old Bailey*. Calcraft used to wear a flower in his buttonhole when engaged on the business of jerking people to Jesus. When objections were raised to this levity, he said with dignity: "It is to cheer my client up. I am not an undertaker, and I decline to dress like one."

The Rev. Dr. Guthrie, of St. Mark's in the Boverie, New York, has discovered one way in which his church may be filled. Five beautiful girls were engaged to give an exhibition of dancing. The dancing was barefoot, and changing coloured lights were playing all the time the dancing was going on. Meantime the Mr. Guthrie read a libretto to illustrate the progress of the human soul. We are not surprised to learn that the church was crowded. We shall also be surprised if the parson does not quote the crowded church as proof of the thirst of the human soul for religion. All we can say is that we are willing to guarantee full houses in this country to any clergyman who will provide a free entertainment on the same scale. And if anyone cares to go better and provide free drinks, it will take a regiment of policemen to hold the crowd. Certainly man has an irrepressible craving for religion—of the right sort.

## How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.



### 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.

W. K. LINPENNY.—See "Acid Drops." It does take very little for a parson to create a sensation in the Church. The smallest amount of common-sense applied to religion does it. As you suggest, a course of the *Bible Handbook* would do them good.

E. A. PHIPSON.—Letter forwarded. It is always inadvisable to use a foreign word when an English equivalent can be found. We do not think that many of our readers object to an occasional article in a lighter vein. We fancy they enjoy it.

R. KENNEDY.—We do not know who acts as agent here for Upton Sinclair's *Profits on Religion*. We fancy it was published by the author at Passadena, U.S.A.

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

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

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

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

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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.

This is almost the last opportunity we shall have of reminding all and sundry of the Society's Annual Dinner on January 8. As before, the number of tickets will be limited, and it is necessary for those who wish to attend to write for tickets as early as possible. The secretary should know how many intend being present not later than January 5. If the function is to be successfully carried through, the caterers must know how many are to be provided for, and there are other reasons why the number should be known. Everything is confused when people come at the last moment and expect the arrangements to go with perfect smoothness. The dinner will be, as on the last occasion, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras. This is well served by tram, bus, and train, and those who live near a station of the Midland Railway may train it right to the hotel door. There will be the usual excellent concert, and speeches from the President and others. The annual dinner is always an enjoyable function, and this year it bids fair to be better than ever.

We have received several letters appreciative of Mr. George Underwood's ability as a literary critic, and with all of these we cordially agree. His articles were always welcome to *Freethinker* readers, and they had learned to value his judgments on books. Among the letters re-

ceived is a very warm eulogy of Underwood from our old friend Mr. Andrew Millar. Mr. Millar writes that he has lost one whom he felt as a personal friend, and who was always ready with advice and friendly criticism on men and books. In this direction Underwood was always ready and willing to give what help and advice was within his power. Very many people were under obligation to him in this direction, and some who are at present highly placed have received from him help of which the world knows nothing, and who have in no wise made known their indebtedness. Mr. Millar writes with all the warmth and affection that one would expect, and with him we shall miss George Underwood's articles in this journal.

Although the present issue of the *Freethinker* is not published earlier in the week than usual, yet it has to be made up ready for the press earlier. This will account for any shortage in the paragraph department, as well as for our not acknowledging letters received in time for notice during a normal week. But Christmas upsets many things besides digestions.

We hear from several of our friends that during 1924 they intend making a very serious effort to make the paper better known among their friends. One friend is guaranteeing his newsagent four extra copies weekly, and another three copies, taking all that are left unsold. That is a very practical form of help, but the best form of all, in our opinion, is a little personal expense. We must make a strenuous effort to get new readers during the coming year. That is the only way to permanently help the paper and the Cause it represents. There is a lot of unformed unbelief about, what is needed is a paper like the *Freethinker* to give it definite shape and direction.

Judging from the reports published in our contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker*, some of its friends appear to have made up their minds to a very effective form of advertising. Several gentlemen make it a point of taking it in turns to parade some of the principal thoroughfares in New York offering the paper for sale to the general public, at the same time exhibiting a placard indicating the character of the paper. Our occasional contributor, Mr. Howell S. England, a solicitor by profession, appears to be one of these volunteers, and we are very pleased to see that their efforts are meeting with considerable success. We confess that we should like to see something of the kind attempted in this country with the *Freethinker*. Our great difficulty has always been to overcome the very rigorous boycott, and if a few ladies and gentlemen took it into their heads to parade one of our principal thoroughfares displaying the paper, it would give the churches a shock such as they have not had for a long time.

Charlie Chaplin is of the opinion that the public does not know what it wants. In this respect he is a better critic of life than Mr. Arnold Bennett, from whose writings we are led to conclude that the public is a dustbin for novelists. With the specious excuse of "what the public wants," it is fobbed off with the sensational garbage of the Press, which ascends no higher than war, murder, political intrigue, and the vapourings and antics of people with time and money to spare on hunting, dog-shows, cat-shows, and general aimlessness. We refuse to believe that this is what the public wants to hear about, and Charlie Chaplin with his criticism is getting warm. A Yorkshire operative, on learning that Dr. L. P. Jacks, Principal of Manchester College, came from Oxford, said: "Make no mistake about it; we working men mean to have education, but we are not going to take it from you." The rejection of the common man from the banquet of life, by supercilious statesmen, politicians, priests, and our first-class and third-class society caste, is bringing an harvest that we wish the sowers joy in the reaping, particularly those liars of the first magnitude who have promised man a crown of gold in the next life for an empty stomach in this.



## Life Everlasting.

WHENEVER I lecture on "The Brain and the Soul" I always make a point of telling my audience that I am one of the few men who have no desire to live for ever and for ever. On one occasion a lady came to me after my lecture and said that she thought it was a pity I had no desire to live in the great hereafter, and that the thought that "when we were dead we were done for," as she put it, was a most dismal doctrine to propagate. In reply I told her that if I had an immortal soul I could not help living for ever, whether I liked it or not, but I assured her on the word of a sincere Secularist that after I had lived for a few thousand years I should get so weary that, like the wandering Jew, I should yearn to die and rest for ever after in undisturbed peace.

This question of the after life is always cropping up in one form or another. The orthodox Christian believes that when we die we have to wait till the judgment day before we make our reappearance. Then we all rise from the dead, not indeed with the same body we had on earth, but with a celestial body—whatever that may be—and we have to await our trial and sentence before we know whether we are destined for a happy future in the heavenly mansions above or for a devil of a time in warmer quarters in the infernal regions below. One sect of Christians that is making itself rather conspicuous at the present time believes that the possession of an immortal soul is a special gift from God, and only true believers who have been baptized in the faith ever receive this special endowment from the Lord. Other Christians, who are not so fortunate I suppose, come under the head of those mentioned by Thomas Paine in the *Age of Reason*, who are neither worth saving nor damning; they are simply allowed to drop; but whether they are disposed of before or after the Day of Judgment, we are absolutely unable to determine. But the great Trial will certainly occupy considerable time if all the people that have been born or lived in Christian countries since the alleged death of Jesus on the cross have got to come up for judgment. And if we are to be tried for all the offences we have committed during our career, and each of us has to give evidence against the other, some of the cases will occupy longer than the Tichborne trial, which ran into hundreds of days. Many Spiritualists, on the other hand, believe that soon after we are dead and our bodies committed to the earth, or cremated, our spirits begin to manifest their existence by appearing at seances at the request of spiritualistic mediums. Sometimes they come as materialized spirits and appear before believers like the ghost of Hamlet's father, clothed from head to foot in appropriate raiment. At other times they can be heard but not seen, although they can write messages or supply information that only intelligent creatures could convey from one to another. Many of these "ghosts" or "spirits" seem to spend a good deal of their time hovering about this earth waiting to get into communication with professional mediums.

A few weeks ago Miss Estelle Stead, the talented daughter of the late W. T. Stead, had reproduced a photo in the *Illustrated Herald* of a number of "spirits" of young soldiers whom she alleged appeared round the Cenotaph at the special service given in November last. All I could see was a number of smiling faces of youths who were supposed to be young soldiers who were killed in the Great War. But they did not appear to have any bodies, or at least I could not see any. Miss Stead said that many people would probably say that this photo of the "spirits" was a "fraud" and a deception; but she assured her readers that she believed it to be quite genuine, and she asked

others to believe it also. But what I wish to ask is: Why should anybody believe that such "spirit" photos are genuine, when most of us are aware that such pictures can be "faked"? And further that it is far more rational to believe that such photos should be "faked" than that the smiling faces of a number of young soldiers, who had been killed in the war, should appear around the Cenotaph on that particular occasion, and although unseen by their parents or friends in the crowd, could be seen by a Spiritualist photographer sufficiently well to be able to take a snapshot of them? Suppose also that these young soldiers' heads had bodies concealed behind the clouds or trees, or whatever it was on the picture, are we to suppose that "spirit" bodies do not require to be fed, and that the whole trunk is empty alike of food or organs, and that although these heads are intelligent and can talk like rational beings they have neither tongue with which to speak, nor brain to direct it?

Hamlet says that "Murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ." And "spirits" seem to have the same power without the necessary organs; at least so say the professional mediums. According to the ghost of Sir Oliver Lodge's dead son Raymond, the spirits smoke cigars and drink whisky and soda in the spirit world, so I suppose we may take it that there are cigar manufacturers and distillers up above? And if there are "spirits" employed in these occupations in the "spirit world," is it not fair to ask what other trades or occupations are carried on in that region? Setting aside the assertions of the "spiritists" for a while, let us turn to the ordinary Christian and ask what more rational theory does he give of the Great Hereafter than that of the modern Spiritualist? He still claims that there is a heaven above for all good and faithful believers in the Christian Creed, and that in heaven we shall meet our friends and those who were even more near and dear to us. But where is heaven? How far above the clouds are we to search for it, and in what direction? And what is the climate in that region? And further, what useful occupation can a being who possesses only a "spiritual body" engage in? No Christian can give a satisfactory answer to these questions. As far as we can ascertain the saved souls of Christians are engaged almost exclusively in singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" or some hymn in praise of the Christian God, which, however well sung, would become extremely monotonous after a few thousand years. Apparently there are no debating societies up above; no politics; no Parliaments; no mutual improvement societies. People who believe all they are told, do not need to discuss or dispute about anything. No wonder they sing:—

Oh that will be joyful  
When we meet to part no more.

But what about the unbelievers who go to the other place, whether it be called Hell or by any other name, so long as it is a place of torment, physical or mental? Again the poet says:—

There is nothing good nor bad but thinking makes it so.

And if the unbeliever is cast into Hell to be mentally or physically tortured, how can he feel pain if he has no physical organization, no nervous system, and no brain, but only a spiritual body of which we have no experience? And to those theologians who regard the idea of annihilation as repugnant to their feelings, let them reflect that at least the unbeliever has no dreams of hell flames to disturb his everlasting sleep. No! In the beautiful words of Col. Ingersoll in his masterly address on "What Must We Do to be Saved?" he said:—

Upon the shadowy shore of Death the sea of trouble  
casts no waves. Eyes that have been curtained by  
the everlasting dark will never know again the touch



of tears. Lips that have been touched by eternal silence will never utter another word of grief. Hearts of dust do not break; the dead do not weep; and I had rather think of those I have loved and those I have lost as having returned—as having become a part of the elemental wealth of the world. I would rather think of those as unconscious dust; I would rather think of them as gurgling in the stream, floating in the clouds, bursting in the foam of light upon the shores of worlds; I would rather think of them as inanimate and eternally unconscious, than to have a suspicion that their naked souls had been clutched by an orthodox god.

And that sentiment I should say would be endorsed by every Freethinker in this or any other civilized country in the world.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### God's Day.

The origin of a periodical day of rest from labour is simple and natural. It has everywhere been placed under the sanction of religion, but it arose from secular necessity. In the nomadic state, when men had little to do at ordinary times except watching their flocks and herds, the days passed in monotonous succession. Life was never laborious, and as human energies were not taxed there was no need for a period of recuperation. We may therefore rest assured that no Sabbatharian law was ever given by Moses to the Jews in the wilderness. Such a law first appears in a higher stage of civilization. When nomadic tribes settle down to agriculture and are welded into nations, chiefly by defensive war against predatory barbarians; above all, when slavery is introduced and masses of men are compelled to build and manufacture; the ruling and propertied classes soon perceive that a day of rest is absolutely requisite. Without it the labourer wears out too rapidly—like the horse, the ox, or any other beast of burden. The day is therefore decreed for economic reasons. It is only placed under the sanction of religion because, in a certain stage of human development, there is no other sanction available. Every change in social organization has then to be enforced as an edict of the gods. This is carried out by the priests, who have unquestioned authority over the multitude, and who, so long as their own privileges and emoluments are secured, are always ready to guard the interest of the temporal powers.

Such was the origin of the day of rest in Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere. But it was lost sight of in the course of time, even by the ruling classes themselves; and the theological fiction of a divine ordinance became the universally accepted explanation. This fiction is still current in Christendom. We are gravely asked to believe that men would work themselves to death, and civilized nations commit economical suicide, if they were not taught that a day of rest was commanded by Jehovah amidst the lightnings and thunders of Sinai. In the same way, we are asked to believe that theft and murder would be popular pastimes without the restraints of the supernatural decalogue fabled to have been received by Moses. As a matter of fact, the law against theft arose because men object to be robbed, and the law against murder because they object to be assassinated. Superstition does not invent social laws; it merely throws around them the glamour of a supernatural authority.

Priests have a manifest interest in maintaining this glamour. Accordingly we find that Nonconformists as well as Churchmen claim the day of rest as the Lord's Day—although its very name of Sunday betrays its Pagan origin. It is not merely a day of rest, they tell us; it is also a day of devotion. Labour is to be laid aside in order that the people may worship God. The

physical benefit of the institution is not denied; on the contrary, now that Democracy is decisively triumphing, the people are assured that Sunday can only be maintained under a religious sanction. In other words, religion and priests are as indispensable as ever to the welfare of mankind.

This theological fiction should be peremptorily dismissed. Whatever service it once rendered has been counterbalanced by its mischiefs. The rude labourer of former times—the slave or the serf—only wanted rest from toil. He had no conception of anything higher. But circumstances have changed. The labourer of to-day aspires to share in the highest blessings of civilization. His hours of daily work are shortened. The rest he requires he can obtain in bed. What he needs on Sunday is not *rest*, but *change*; true re-creation of his nature; and this is denied him by the laws that are based upon the very theological fiction which is pretended to be his most faithful friend.

The working classes at present are simply humbugged by the Churches. The day of rest is secure enough without lies or fictions. What the masses want is an opportunity to make use of it. Now this cannot be done if all rest on the same day. A minority must work on Sunday, and take their rest on some other day of the week. And really, when the non-sensical solemnity of Sunday is gone, any other day would be equally eligible.

Parsons work on Sunday; so do their servants, and all who are engaged about their gospel-shops. Why should it be so hard for a railway servant, a museum attendant, an art-gallery curator, or a librarian to work on Sunday? Let them rest some other day of the week as the parson does. They would be happy if they could have his "off days" even at the price of "Sunday labour."

Churches and chapels do not attract so many people as they did. There is every reason why priestly Protective laws should be broken down. It is a poor alternative to offer a working man—the church or the public-house; and they are now trying to shut the public-house and make it church or nothing. Other people should be consulted as well as mystery-men and their followers. Let us have freedom. Let the dwellers in crowded city streets, who work all day in close factories, be taken at cheap rates to the country or the seaside. Let them see the grand sweep of the sky. Let them feel the spring of the turf under their feet. Let them look out over the sea—the highway between continents—and take something of its power and poetry into their blood and brain. During the winter, or in summer if they feel inclined, let them visit the institutions of culture, behold the beautiful works of dead artists, study the relics of dead generations, feel the links that bind the past to the present, and imagine the links that will bind the present to the future. Let their pulses be stirred with noble music. Let the Sunday be their great day of freedom, culture, and humanity. As "God's Day" it is wasted. We must rescue it from the priests and make it "Man's Day."

G. W. FOOTE.

#### MR. GILBERT CANNON DISAPPOINTS.

The objects of his contempt are many, and it makes for his convenience that all are embodied in the British Empire. He rails at that institution, as you may see a small angry woman shriek after a large, dull, pre-occupied man. The crowd gather round and hinder the man from going his way, for that would mean the end of the entertainment. Not that they think the worse of him or the better of the woman for what she says. All that they are interested in is the quality of the invective, or, if they are more subtle, in the exhibition of passion. Mr. Cannon's invective is disappointing.—*Times Literary Supplement*.



## What I Want Next Christmas.

IF I had the power to produce exactly what I want for next Christmas, I would have all the kings and emperors resign and allow the people to govern themselves.

I would have all the nobility drop their titles and give their lands back to the people. I would have the Pope throw away his tiara, take off his sacred vestments, and admit that he is not acting for God—is not infallible—but is just an ordinary Italian. I would have all the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and clergymen admit that they know nothing about theology, nothing about hell or heaven, nothing about the destiny of the human race, nothing about devils or ghosts, gods or angels. I would have them tell all their "flocks" to think for themselves, to be manly men and womanly women, and to do all in their power to increase the sum of human happiness.

I would have all the professors in colleges, all the teachers in schools of every kind, including those in Sunday schools, agree that they would teach only what they know, that they would not palm off guesses as demonstrated truths.

I would like to see all the politicians changed to statesmen—to men who long to make their country great and free—to men who care more for public good than private gain—men who long to be of use.

I would like to see all the editors of papers and magazines agree to print the truth and nothing but the truth, to avoid all slander and misrepresentation, and to let the private affairs of the people alone.

I would like to see drunkenness and prohibition both abolished.

I would like to see corporal punishment done away with in every home, in every school, in every asylum, reformatory, and prison. Cruelty hardens and degrades, kindness reforms and ennobles.

I would like to see the millionaires unite and form a trust for the public good.

I would like to see a fair division of profits between capital and labour, so that the toiler could save enough to mingle a little June with the December of his life.

I would like to see an international court established in which to settle disputes between nations, so that armies could be disbanded and the great navies allowed to rust and rot in perfect peace.

I would like to see the whole world free—free from injustice—free from superstition.

This will do for next Christmas. The following Christmas I may want more.

INGERSOLL.

## Poems in Prose.

### WINDOWS.

He who looks in through an open window never sees so many things as he who looks at a closed window. There is no object more profound, more mysterious, more fruitful, more gloomy, more dazzling than a window lighted by a candle. What one can see in sunlight is always less interesting than what is going on behind the panes of a window. In this dark or luminous cavity life is lived, or dreamed, or suffered.

Over the roofs I can see a woman of middle age, poor, and already wrinkled, who is ever bending over some task, who never leaves her room. Out of her face, her dress, her attitude, out of nothing almost, I have made up this woman's story, or legend, shall I say? And sometimes I repeat it to myself with tears.

Had it been a poor old man I could have made up his just as well. And I go to bed proud to have lived and suffered in others as in myself. It may be you will say to me: "Are you sure this story is real?" Well! what does it matter if it is not real? What does any reality

outside of myself matter, if it has only helped me to live, to feel that I am, and what I am?

### THE INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE.

There is a marvellous country, a country of Cockaigne, they say, which I have dreamed of visiting with an old friend of mine. A strange country lost in the mists of our North, and one might name it the East in the West, China in Europe, so freely does a warm and capricious fancy blossom there, so patiently and obstinately has that fancy pictured it with a learned and delicate vegetation.

A real country of Cockaigne where all things are beautiful, rich, serene and honest; where luxury is reflected in order; where life is fat, and sweet to breathe; where confusion, tumult and the unexpected are excluded; where happiness is silence; where even cooking is poetic, rich, and at the same time stimulating; where all things, beloved, are made in your likeness.

You know that feverish malady which attacks us in these miserably cold countries, that home-sickness for unknown lands, that anguish of curiosity! There is a country made in your likeness where all things are beautiful, rich, serene and honest; where fantasy has built and decorated a China in the West; where life is sweet to breathe; where happiness is silence. It is there that we should live; it is there that we should die.

Yes, it is there that we should breathe, dream and lengthen out the hours by an infinity of sensations. A musician has written an *Invitation à la Valse*; who will write an *Invitation au Voyage* which we may offer to our beloved, to our chosen sister?

Yes, it is in this atmosphere that it would be good to live—for here the slower hours contain more thoughts, and the clocks strike the hours of happiness with a deeper and fuller solemnity.

On shining panels, or on gilded leather of a dark richness are hung pictures which reflect the serene, profound and devotional minds of the artists who painted them. The sunset rays which colour so richly the dining-room and drawing-room are filtered through radiant hangings, or through high leaded windows of many panes. The furniture is heavy, curious, and of strange shapes, armed with locks and secret places like refined souls. Mirrors, metals and hangings, goldsmiths' work and pottery, compose a mute, mysterious symphony for the eyes; and from all these things, from every corner, from the cracks of drawers and from the gold of the hangings, there exhales a singular perfume, an essence of Sumatra which is the innermost soul of the room.

A real country of Cockaigne, I assure you, where all is rich, clean and bright, like a clear conscience or a well-kept kitchen, like jewellery of gold, or brightly burnished plate. All the pleasures of the world have found their way into this place as to the house of a hard-working man who has put the whole world in his debt. A strange country, excelling others as *Art* excels *Nature*; where *Nature* is re-shaped by volcanoes, where it is corrected, embellished and renouled.

Let the alchemists of horticulture seek, and seek again to set ever further off the limits of their happiness! Let them offer prizes of sixty and a hundred florins to anyone who will solve their ambitious problems! For me, I have found my *black tulip*, and my *blue dahlia*!

Incomparable flowers, recaptured tulip, allegoric dahlia, it is here, is it not, in that beautiful country, so quiet, so full of dreams, that you should live and bloom? Would you not there be framed within your own image, and would you not see yourself reflected, as the mystics say, in your own "correspondence"?

Dreams, idle dreams! And the more delicate and ambitious the soul the more is it estranged from the things which are possible. Everyone of us carries with him his natural dose of opium ceaselessly secreted and renewed, and from birth to death, how many hours can we count of positive joy, of successful and definite activity? Shall we ever inhabit, shall we ever become a part of that picture which my mind has painted, and which was shaped in your likeness?

These treasures, this furniture, this luxury, this order, these odours, these miraculous flowers are *you*. And you, too, are these mighty rivers and peaceful canals. The great ships that float on them with their precious cargoes,



from whose decks come the monotonous chants of the singing sailors, these are my thoughts that slumber and stir upon your bosom. You lead them gently to that sea which is the infinite, reflecting the depths of the sky in the limpid water of your soul—and when, weary with the salt spray, and heavy with the spoils of the East, they return to the port which gave them birth, it is still my thoughts which return enriched from the infinite to you.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

## Correspondence.

### A DANGEROUS ILLUSION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the article "A Dangerous Illusion" in the *Freethinker* for December 16, Mr. H. T. Wilkins is mistaken in thinking that the "Indifference to religion on the part of the great majority of the population of London and the country" is not a "victory for Rationalism and Freethought over the forces of clerical obscurantism and superstition." It should be obvious that to ask the average man in the "train, tram, omnibus, or the bar of a public-house" if he is an Atheist, is to ask for trouble. Thanks to the clergy and a certain type of Christian Evidence lecturer the word "Atheism" has been covered with all sorts of ignorant calumny and has become synonymous with moral perversity and an excuse for evil living. Instead of asking the man in the street "Are you an Atheist?" your contributor should first ask him "What is Atheism?" he will then realize why the "man in the tram or public-house" exhibits such a "horrified gesture of hasty dissent." The bigots know the mischief of this word and that is why they use it. For this reason there are many who, although they are Atheist at heart, prefer to masquerade under the name of Rationalist, Sceptic, and Agnostic.

Your contributor asks, "Why have the Churches lost their hold on the majority?" The answer is simple. It is due to a steady decline of religious belief. And this decline of religious belief is largely the result of the work of militant Freethought. Scientific Freethought has dealt a resounding blow at the Church from which she will never recover. The increase in the falling off in Church and Chapel attendance is loudly lamented by the clergy. This is the fruits of Freethought propagandism and the steady growth of Secularism in this country. Can we not infer that those who live without religion do so because they do not believe in it, and the majority of those who do not believe in it cannot we set them down as Freethinkers?

We owe this silent growth of Secularism in our land to the self-sacrifice of brave men and women who have suffered persecution and imprisonment for opinions fearlessly expressed. Christianity is now completely on its defence. The clergy are trying their utmost to stem the swelling tide of unbelief. The last act of the drama began when Evolution was established as a fact, and it now remains for militant Freethought to carry on the splendid work of the past. Once we abolish religious teaching from the schools we shall not only kill religion but rid the country of one of the greatest superstitions that has ever dominated the mind of man.

LEONARD MASON.

### TENNYSON TO-DAY.—A CORRECTION.

SIR,—The quotation from Mr. Nicolson, in my article on "Tennyson To-day" (p. 807), reads: "It appears he was himself very sorely exposed to physical temptations." It should read: "It appears he was *not* himself, etc.," which is just the opposite.

W. MANN.

### HUMAN SYSTEMS.

SIR,—I wish here to repeat a small previous snarl as to the loose way poetry sometimes gets quoted in the *Freethinker*. To my thinking the conclusion of Fitzgerald's *Omar* is the most lyric outburst in the world's literature. As detached and perverted the stanza is reduced from the grandest denunciation of God and his universe penned to a sneer and a kick at human hucksters' stalls. This can only be shown by quoting the whole passage, but it is so beautiful that readers of the

*Freethinker* may perhaps condone this with two slight alterations—I think improvements in the final edition runs as follows:—

But ah! that Spring should perish with the rose  
That youth's sweet scented manuscript should close  
The nightingale that in the branches sung  
Ah! whence and whither come and gone—who knows?

Would but the desert of the fountain yield  
One glimpse, if dimly, yet indeed revealed  
To which the fainting traveller might spring  
As springs the trampled herbage of the field.

Would but some winged Angel e'er too late  
Arrest the yet unopened roll of Fate  
Or bid the Stern Recorder otherwise  
Enregister—or quite obliterate.

Ah! Love could you and I with *him* conspire  
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire  
Would we not shatter it to atoms—then  
*Re-build* it nearer to the Heart's desire.

Fitzgerald puts to *bits* and then. The other is surely better. The poet astronomer stands before and denounces the whole—his vast but still limited geocentric universe—but without the absurd and pernicious moral and religious rubbish deduced from it by Plato—with tears in his heart not merely breaking his shins over economic skittles. And how can you remould a thing when it has been broken to bits or atoms?

The new economics appeal to me. The ideas resemble those in Kropotkin's conquest of bread, only one would like a clear and plain exposition of them.

La Paz, B.C. Mexico.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

[Mr. Strickland has overlooked the fact that there are quite a number of versions of the Rubaiyat, and it is not possible to be certain whether a given quotation is correct or not unless the version is given at the same time.—EDITOR.]

### To Old J.

You one-time dreaded, tribal god  
That juggled with old Moses' rod,  
Through the late centuries you nod,  
Jehovah.

Your eyes are dim, your blood runs slow,  
And spent the arm that gave the blow  
That laid the proud of Egypt low,  
Jehovah.

Not now the waters stand up high  
And leave between the bottom dry  
Until your Chosen have passed by,  
Jehovah.

Not now on Sinai's top you come  
Rattling upon the thunder-drum,  
And hear the trembling vagrants hum  
Jehovah!

Nor now, when broken promise shakes  
The Hebrews' trust, and murmur wakes,  
You comfort them with fiery snakes,  
Jehovah.

Nor, when your high priest asks to see  
Your face, play solemn tweedle-dee,  
And show what may not mentioned be,<sup>1</sup>  
Jehovah.

Your Holy of Holies is a sham,  
And no one cares a twopenny damn  
For all your bouncing, big I AM,  
Jehovah.

You've had your day and worship; Fate  
Has clipt your beard; you're out of date;  
You've chalked your last chalk on your slate,  
Jehovah.

The Frenchman<sup>2</sup> laughed you out of time,  
The German<sup>3</sup> rang your burial chime,  
And here you're but a bug for rhyme,  
Jehovah.

H. BARBER.

<sup>1</sup> Very slightly varied.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus, chap. xxxiii. <sup>3</sup> Voltaire. <sup>4</sup> Heine.



### Some Church Statistics.

THE Council of Churches (Christian Protestant) of America  
Has made an official statement.  
Sixty millions of our people, it appears,  
Out of the one hundred and more millions now living in  
the United States of America  
Are as yet unchurched.

And this is in spite of the annual expenditure  
Of hundreds of millions of dollars  
For the enrichment of thousands of itinerant evangelists,  
like Billy Sunday,  
For house to house visitations,  
For free concerts, movies, dances and private theatricals  
in the churches,  
For excursions, summer camps, strawberry festivals,  
For so-called social uplift work in the slums of our cities,  
For Gideons who put Bibles in every bedroom of every  
hotel throughout the land,  
Not to mention the hundreds of thousands of preachers  
and Sunday school teachers  
Supported in the hundreds of thousands of  
Churches and Sunday-schools.

Why are these sixty millions still unchurched?

The Council of Churches (Christian Protestant) of America  
Cannot answer that question.

They have organized themselves like a mighty manufacturing trust,  
They have standardized their religion like Ford cars,  
They have bought the brainiest press agents obtainable,  
They are offering in every market-place  
Their standardized religion for the American millions,  
Prepared and financed by American millionaires  
And sixty per cent. of those same American millions  
Will have none of it.

Dearly beloved brethren, let us weep!

He was a shrewd one sure,  
Who, when he sought to put over upon the people  
His peculiar scheme of superstition, said,  
"Suffer little children to come unto me";  
For little children, with their immature minds,  
Dearly do love fables and fairy tales;

Mature men and women, with minds mature,  
Want facts.

Congratulations and all honour to the sixty millions of  
unchurched Americans;  
Sixty million men and women mentally emancipated,  
Understanding all religions, and as a necessary consequence,  
Believing none.

O what an army, powerful for progress,  
An army leading America onward, still onward, toward  
the light,  
The ever brightening light of natural knowledge and of  
common-sense.

Foreward march.  
Let all the world fall in and follow!

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.

Fools, peasants and savages believe that they are far removed from the animals; only the philosopher admits the relationship.—*Rivarol* (1754-1801).

Between a thinker and a learned man there is the same difference as between a book and a table of contents.—*Jean-Baptiste Say* (1767-1832).

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.  
INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—No meeting.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2) : 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Old Religions and the New."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13) : 7, Mr. H. C. White, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.  
INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street) : 6.30. For particulars see Saturday's *News* and *Citizen*.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Discussion Circle meets at the Labour Club, next door to Central Laundry, 6 Richmond Street on Friday, December 28, at 7.30.

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