

The

# FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN ·· EDITOR 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

Vol. LI.—No. 36

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1931

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>The Medicine Man.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	551
<i>Trombones and Tambourines.—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	562
<i>Christianity and Paganism.—W. Mann</i> . . . . .	563
<i>Cooper.—Alan Handsacre</i> . . . . .	565
<i>Your Gramophone.—Bay</i> . . . . .	567
<i>Kings, Priests and Gods.—(Late) J. M. Wheeler</i> . . . . .	570
<i>A World Without Money.—Ignotus</i> . . . . .	571
<i>The Unknown.—Medicus</i> . . . . .	572
<i>Ireland's Diminished Population.—R. B. Kerr</i> . . . . .	573

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

Views and Opinions.

The Medicine Man.

A FEW weeks ago I was dealing with the superstition of the ethically noble Jesus Christ, who in some unexplained way is assumed to have exerted an enormous influence for good on the life of modern Europe. That, as I pointed out, is no more than an attempt to "rationalize" the fear that so many people have of making a clean break with established customs and beliefs. But in sober truth the ethical Jesus is only part of another and wider superstition, namely, that Christianity, however much below the level of the highest culture to-day it may be, yet represents a decided advance on the religions of the world at the time of its appearance. Evidence on behalf of this usually takes the form of selections embracing the very best form of Christian religious teaching, and contrasting it with the very lowest survivals of superstition in the pagan world. By this method one can, of course, prove almost anything. An English writer who contrasts the best of English life with the worst of French life is easily able to prove our superiority. On the other hand any French writer endowed with the same squint-eyed capacity finds no difficulty in proving the vast inferiority of British to French life. So far as Christianity is concerned it is only the persistent reiteration of this superstition, with the continuous suppression of all evidence to the contrary that has firmly established the quite unwarranted belief that Christianity was in any direction an advance upon the better forms of either Pagan ethics or Pagan religion.

\* \* \*

The Claims of the Priests.

A concrete instance of this particular superstition appeared the other day in an article by that well-known Nonconformist writer, Dr. W. B. Selbie. It is something to the good that to genuinely cultured

people a priest has come to mean anything but an example of man at his best. The stupid claims made on behalf of a genuine priesthood, the bigotry and intolerance that has characterized the Christian clergy whenever and wherever it has not been strongly controlled by a developed social sense, has made even many Christians ashamed of an order that is so vital a part of historic Christianity. So in dealing with the priesthood, we have the following citation approvingly given of its character at a time when it had Europe well under its control:—

They asserted, and they made the world believe them, that they were a supernatural order trusted with the keys of heaven and hell. The future fate of every soul depended on their absolution. They only could bind and loose. They only could bring down Christ from heaven into the Sacrament. They were a peculiar priesthood, amenable to no laws but their own, while the laity were amenable to theirs, and as long as this belief subsisted they were shielded by an enchanted atmosphere. By them kings reigned; all power was derived from God, and they were God's earthly representatives, and in the confidence of this assumed authority they had raised a superstructure of intolerable and irresponsible tyranny. They were men, and they might commit crimes, but they could not be punished by any secular law. They were tempted like others to vicious pleasures, but vice did not impair either their rights or their powers.

Now that is not at all a bad or untruthful picture of the Christian priesthood at its best—and worst. Moreover, as I recently pointed out when dealing with the Church in Spain, the claims made are those that the Church makes on behalf of its priests to-day. In Spain the Church claims of the new Republic very many of the things set forth in the above quotation, while the power to "bind and loose" in the next world is one of the qualities attributed to the priest by all fervent believers. The case of the Protestant minister is not quite so gross; he is only a pale copy of the Roman priest, but it is quite obvious that his position and his pretensions rest upon traditions established by the older form of the priesthood. The prestige, the position, and the privileges of the Protestant minister are all due to the survival of primitive beliefs, much as the glamour that at present gathers round anyone called a king owes its existence to the primitive belief in the actual super-humanity of the primitive priest-king. The average Protestant does not ascribe to his minister the miraculous powers which the Roman Catholic gives to his priest, but the general estimation in which he is held, and the privileges he enjoys indicate that he is a lineal descendant of the primitive article.

\* \* \*

A Case of Retrogression.

Where Dr. Selbie is clearly wrong is in regarding the Christian priesthood as something imposed on and displacing the purity of primitive Christianity. As a



matter of fact the typical Christian priest is only one illustration of the general retrogression involved in the Christian religion. From the outset it stood in the same relation to the best religious developments of the time that the Salvation Army stands to the higher forms of current Christianity. The chief historical distinction here is that with the decay of the Roman civilization the essential features of Christianity were able to develop with little to check them, while now present-day culture forces Christian teachers to adapt their religion to a more socialized and better educated public opinion. Illustrations of what has been said may be found, in the earlier period, of the revival and elaboration of the crude doctrine of hell, of the miraculous power of the clergy, of the doctrine of demonism, and in the supplanting of ethics by theology.

In the case of the priest the retrogression is quite clear. As a religious figure the medicine-man is a very ancient and a very important one. His importance is entirely due to the qualities which Dr. Selbie gives to the Roman Catholic priest in the heyday of his power. They have supernatural power, or at least influence with supernatural powers, they influence man's life for better or worse, they make their own laws, and they lay down laws for others. And when Dr. Selbie says of the Catholic priesthood that it was "sheltered by an enchanted atmosphere," and that upon this there was raised "a superstructure of intolerable and irresponsible tyranny," he is saying what is absolutely true of every priesthood the world has known. In every country the secular state has sooner or later to face the tyranny of the priesthood and do what it could to restrain it. Kingdon Clifford said with absolute truth that "If there is one lesson which history forces upon us in every page, it is this: 'Keep your children away from the priest or he will make them the enemies of mankind.'"

\* \* \*

#### The Survival of the Savage.

But Dr. Selbie stops too soon. As a Protestant minister he is concerned only with pointing out the evil of the Roman Catholic priesthood and its claims. But what it is important to realize is that what is true of the Roman priest is true of the Protestant parson, so far as opportunities admit of its truth. It is the priestly tradition that is harmful, and it is harmful to the extent to which the priest is able to run true to type. It is not because I am fond of calling names that I constantly insist that the modern priest or parson is the direct descendant of the primitive medicine-man, and that the Cardinal or the Archbishop in their robes, and the parson with his distinctive dress is the lineal and modern representative of the primitive medicine-man in his paint and feathers. I insist upon this because it is only by appreciating that truth that one can hope to understand the position of the minister of religion in modern life. The vogue of the parson, whether he be Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, or any one of the other varieties of the species represents the persistence of the savage in a modified form. No one can pretend for a moment that the parsonry exists in modern society because its members are conspicuous for their intelligence, their strength of character, or their influence for good on the life of a nation. On the contrary, they are universally the enemies of genuinely progressive ideas. In every country in the world the growth of the influence of the clergy in social and political affairs is watched with suspicion by every reformer and every friend of progressive ideas. One looks in vain for any justification of the position of the clergy in their ability or social utility.

That is why I insist so strongly on the fact that the priest stands to the body politic as vestigial organs do

to the animal structure. It is the only consideration which enables us to understand the colossal impertinence of a number of men, dressed in more or less fantastic uniforms, telling us in the name of God how we should spend our lives in this world, and what is to be our destiny in some fancied next one. And it is the only consideration that will explain why so large a proportion of the population submit to such an absurdity. They have not yet outgrown the feelings and ideas in the long childhood of the race. The Medicine-man has become the priest, the priest has become modified into the preacher; the forest clearing has developed into the cathedral, the tom-tom into the organ, the chanting savages into the choir, the group of savages performing the magical dance into the Church procession, but the essential thing is there, and the appeal to the primitive state of mind is still being made. It is a commonplace that the savage lies within us all, covered with but a thin veneer of civilization. In the field of religion it is hardly covered. It is so evident that no scientific student can question its presence, and no scientific sociologist can doubt its evil activity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Trombones and Tambourines.

"John P.

Robinson, he

Sez they didn't know everything in Judee."—Lowell.

"Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

Swinburne.

We are told by a distinguished metaphysician that literature is but a branch of social science, that he is greatest among authors who appeals to the widest circle of readers. If this were true, then were the hymn-writers the princes of poets. Is there a church or chapel where their effusions are not sung? Is there a tin-tabernacle, or mission-tent, from John O'Cross to Land's End but derives consolation from the lit of the hymns? We trow not! Recognising that all who run can read, the Christian Churches have circulated a poetic literature, and provided nothing to read which is beyond the understanding of the most ignorant and stupidest of their congregations. We raise our hats to the clergy as very astute men of business; but our admiration is diluted by the thought that, after all, they have roped in the congregations because they have never been able to rise above their modest level of intelligence. Clerical culture is so largely taken for granted, whereas the truth is that some people in the pews are often better informed than the men in the pulpits. *Punch* once hit this off with an excellent picture, which depicted a parson on his knees before a sceptical member of his congregation, saying: "Pray, don't mention the name of another Freethought writer, or I shall have to resign my living."

It is very doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered real literature than the usual music-hall song, about which the dear clergy are so highly indignant. This may well appear a grave indictment, but the hymns which are regarded as being eminently suited for public worship are far too frequently antiquated, barbarous, and even nonsensical. Under the soporific influence of superstition, the public has been far too ready to accept bombast and bleat as the fine gold of poetry, and has hailed hysteria in adjectives as the quintessence of reverence and religion.

The hymns used by church-people and chapel-goers alike are not really much better than those painfully familiar and disgraceful compositions which are used



by Salvationists, Revivalists, and other howling Derivatives of our streets and open spaces. The charge of sentimentalism is not the only one that can be brought. Some hymns are brutal in tone and language, written in the worst possible taste, and are full of sanguinary details and a glowing satisfaction which should be repulsive to a sensitive mind. The familiar: "There is a fountain filled with blood," is but one of very many hymns which seem more suited to the dusky denizens of the cotton-fields of Carolina, U.S.A., than to the better schooled inhabitants of Britain.

If we turn to the purely literary aspect of those hymns we find some of them almost beneath criticism. "The Rock of Ages," for example, is a perfect medley of irrational images and misapplied metaphors. "Cleft rock," "riven side," "to thy cross I cling," and "to the fountain fly," indicates how the confused imagery drowns the sense in the veriest verbiage.

There is an innocent frankness in some of these hymns which is sufficient to make one doubt the soundness of national education. Think of the hundreds of thousands who have sung, or shouted:—

"Oh! for the pearly gates of heaven,  
Oh! for the golden floor."

These quotation and references, be it remembered, are associated with the most distinguished Christian collections, and they are by no means the worst of their kind. If any reader wishes to pursue the matter further, let him turn to the pages of the *War Cry*, where he will find the work of bold versifiers, strong in the faith delivered to the saints, but woefully weak in their mother-tongue.

The blunt truth is that the enormous popularity of certain hymns is due to the music. People will sing any rubbish so long as it is mated to a lively tune. Lewis Carroll's advice to speakers, "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves," is commonly inverted when applied to "hymn-writing." Such hymns as have a slight claim to literary merit are little esteemed by the pious public compared with "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," "The Glory Song," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and so on.

To an outsider hymns would suggest restraint, sobriety, the dignity of reverence, but the Aimee McPherson Mission, like the Billy Sunday revivals and the Gipsy Smith meetings, amply prove the association of the Christian Religion with hysteria, theatricality, and vulgarity. What is more, these business-like evangelists gauged their public to a nicety. Their audiences were, perhaps, better dressed than those who listen to the trombones and tambourines of the Church and Salvation Army, yet they sing hymns of the most rank and fulsome sentimentality. Christian congregations, indeed, seem quite unable to distinguish between poetry and doggerel, pathos and bathos, culture and barbarism. Singing their delirious rhymes, they are intellectually on a level with their coloured brethren in the southern states of America. The black folks do this one way, and the countrymen of Gipsy Smith and the Archbishop of Canterbury another, but the nature of the act, and the result, are much the same. This matter of questionable hymns is not a trifling one. Too many of these sacred songs show quite clearly that men and women may be converted to the Christian Religion who have never been converted to civilization. The barbarian is still a very considerable factor in Christian congregations.

MIMNERMUS.

No man lives without jostling and being jostled; in all ways he has to elbow himself through the world, giving and receiving offence.—*Carlyle*.

## Christianity and Paganism.

(Continued from page 548.)

GIBBON commences his wonderful history with these words: "In the second century of the Christian Æra, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour . . . During a happy period of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design of this and of the two succeeding chapters, to describe the prosperous condition of their Empire." And afterwards its decline and fall.

If ever there was a Golden Age it existed under the rule of the Pagan emperors during the first two centuries of our era, and before the establishment of Christianity. The overthrow of the Pagan empire was the signal for the relapse of civilization into barbarism for a thousand years. "The reigns of Hadrian and Antonius Pius," says Gibbon, "offer the fair prospect of universal peace. The Roman name was revered among the most remote nations of the earth. The fiercest barbarians frequently submitted their differences to the arbitration of the emperor."<sup>5</sup> Of the two Antonines (Antonius Pius, and Marcus Aurelius) he says. "Their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government."<sup>6</sup> Yet how many Christian emperors and kings have ruled since then! Gibbon declares:—

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom.<sup>7</sup>

Since Gibbon wrote, more than 150 years ago, our knowledge of the vast extent and civilization of the Roman empire has enormously increased. Take our own country, for instance. Not a year passes but fresh discoveries of Roman remains, or the excavation of known ones, is recorded by the various archaeological societies and associations. London itself is of purely Roman origin, it occupied more than 320 acres, which makes it, says Mr. Collingwood: "not only one of the largest towns of the Roman Empire, but gives it a population large in proportion to its size, for almost the whole area was covered with buildings."<sup>8</sup> Silchester was 100 acres in extent; Cirencester covered 240 acres and possessed "a great town hall 320 by 70 feet." Viroconium was 170 acres in extent, with walls "three or four miles long." Mr. Collingwood, further tells us that: "Merely to enumerate the sites of Romano-British remains, with a word on each, would take more space than the whole of this book, for the cities amount to many hundreds." (p. 42.) And further:—

The better villas of the Romanized British gentry were far in advance of anything that the Middle Ages could show, and were equal to the finest Elizabethan and Jacobean mansions in everything but their baths, in which they immeasurably outstripped not only them, but all their successors down to the present day; for the bath-room of a modern gentleman's house is as inferior in comfort and efficiency to the baths of an ancient Briton in A.D. 300, as his

<sup>5</sup> Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Bury's edition. Vol. I., p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. I., p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. I., p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> R. G. Collingwood. *Roman Britain*. p. 45.



roads and carts were inferior to our railways. (Collingwood: *Roman Britain*, pp. 63-4.)

Still more amazing discoveries have been made in Northern Africa. Since the French have occupied Tunisia they have discovered the sites of former Roman cities and towns, whose very existence has hitherto been unsuspected, in districts that are now sterile deserts. The "splendid work of French savants," says Professor Reid, in his valuable work on Roman Municipalities, "who are exploring the antiquities of Northern Africa is constantly adding to knowledge. It is probable that in the fourth century the number of towns in Tunisia with Roman municipal institutions was between three and four hundred."<sup>9</sup>

He continues:—

In some parts the cities lay so close together that they might be said to have jostled one another. The territory attached to each must have been very small, and the splendour of the communities in evidence of the extraordinary wealth which was extracted from the earth. The towns were, as the remains show, no mean places, but rich in great edifices, temples, theatres, amphitheatres, baths, porticoes, triumphal arches, libraries, council houses and other public buildings.<sup>10</sup>

Yet so waste and desolate has the region become, that when the French savants were exploring the site they were greatly hampered by the necessity of carrying with them over a great distance supplies not only of food but of water.

It was, naturally, taken for granted that the climate had undergone a serious change; but the investigations of the French engineers proved that this solution was quite wrong. "Wherever the Romans went," says Prof. Reid, "their engineers employed every possible device to catch and store all the water that flowed down valleys, many of them dry for a great part of the year, or fell from the sky." (p. 290.) Huge reservoirs were constructed and aqueducts built to convey the water to the cities and towns where it was distributed freely in the streets from fountains, and laid on to houses.

Of the Roman Empire as a whole, says Prof. Reid, who is Professor of Ancient History at Cambridge University:—

Inscriptions and other memorials, from every region of the Roman dominions have been already unearthed in number almost beyond counting, and more are being disclosed daily. These have been eagerly studied by a host of scholars. Already the gain to our knowledge of the ancient world under Roman rule has been immense. Daylight has been let in on vast tracts in the provincial life of the empire, of which hardly a pale reflection is presented to us in literature. . . . The task of portraying the Roman empire in its entire history has become titanic, and it is scarcely possible to conceive that a future Gibbon will arise able to cope with it, and to draw and tint the vast picture by his single genius. That Colossus who bestrid the ancient Roman world, Theodore Mommsen, was and will remain the last man whose capacity and knowledge were equal to so great an enterprise. And even that limited section of the picture with which we are now concerned, the municipal side of the mighty imperial fabric, already needs for its perfection a mastery of detail which could only be the fruit of a life's devotion. (J. S. Reid: *The Municipalities of the Roman Empire*. p. 3.)

Such was the vastness and grandeur of the Roman Empire immediately preceding the rise of Christianity to power.

Before Gibbon, the vast period traversed by his history was a chaos, and he happened, fortunately, to start on his task just at the right time. As Mr.

<sup>9</sup> J. S. Reid: *The Municipalities of the Roman Empire*.

p. 259.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 270.

Lytton Strachey observes: "He brought order out of the enormous chaos of his subject—a truly stupendous achievement! With characteristic good fortune, indeed, the material with which he had to cope was still just not too voluminous to be digested by a single extremely competent mind. In the following century even a Gibbon would have collapsed under the accumulated mass of knowledge at his disposal."<sup>11</sup>

Most of the provinces of which the Empire consisted had been acquired under the Republic. Not on any preconceived plan, but by force of circumstances. For instance the conquest of Britain was forced upon Rome because revolting Gauls, when defeated, crossed over to Britain to recuperate and raise fresh armies, it was a recruiting ground for the enemies of Rome. Across the frontiers of the Empire the barbarians were ever on the watch to pounce on any weak or undefended territory. As Sir C. P. Lucas truly observes in his book comparing the British and Roman Empires:—

With the Romans military considerations were paramount. This does not mean that their Empire was purely the outcome of deliberate conquest and annexation on a preconceived plan. They were drawn on in the path of Empire, as we have been drawn on, by force of circumstances. Nor again does it mean that all the Provinces were simply held down by military garrisons. On the contrary, in the Provinces not on the frontiers of the Empire, after the time of Augustus, as a rule no legions were quartered. (Sir C. P. Lucas: *Greater Rome and Greater Britain*. p. 59.)

Nor could it be maintained, says the same writer that the Empire was created by commerce; "on the contrary, commerce was created by the Roman Empire, by the Pax Romana, the peace which was established by the strong hand of the Romans and their legionaries." (p. 73.)

The latest researches bear out in every detail Gibbon's description of the might and prosperity of the Pagan Roman Empire, and the contentment and happiness of its inhabitants. We shall next show the part played by Christianity in the downfall of this greatest experiment in State organization.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## A Hymn for Sunday.

(With apologies to the Hymn for Saturday in Hymns A. & M.)

Now the busy week is done,  
Now our rest time is begun,  
Extra long in bed we stay,  
On the first—our one free day,  
Day of all the week the best  
When the weariest can rest.

What though noisy church clocks chime,  
Still impervious to time,  
Late the coffee, late the tub,  
Late the paper, late the grub,  
Now our only interest  
Is to have a good day's rest.

Sabbath time for those who pray  
Makes their most laborious day,  
We who work from nine to six  
Sorrow for them in that fix,  
We can idle, we can play,  
Carelessly for one whole day.

In the days that are to come—  
Six more days of work and home,  
We can think in our employ  
We at least have one alloy,  
Of our Sunday's quiet possess  
We can tackle all the rest.

A.H.

<sup>11</sup> Lytton Strachey: *Portraits in Miniature*. p. 161.



## Cowper.

(On a Visit to Olney, June 11, 1931).

AN Editor friend of mine, perhaps ironically, asked me to go to Olney to "cover" the Cowper Bi-Centenary celebrations there, June 11-13. Having discharged my duty faithfully so far as the "news value" of this occasion was concerned (which, I may add, was not a great matter) I am free to give some impressions of these events which, like most things that are worth while are not "news," or, at least, not only news.

I will confess to having gone to Olney drawn by the strange spectacle of Dean Inge and John Masefield—the Poet Laureate, no less—as the star turns at these meetings. Between Inge's theology and Masefield's poetry and Cowper's variety of those things there could be, I had thought, little harmony. And, whether justly or not the reader must judge. I still think there is a great gulf fixed between them, and that it is not bridged by the mere circumstance that they are all three Christians.

I will begin with Masefield for he, at least, appeared somewhat conscious that his presence and participation in these evangelical revels might need explanation. He admitted that Cowper has not been much read of late, and suggested that a new vogue for him might be the result of a recent study of him, entitled *The Stricken Deer*, by Lord David Cecil. How many of his psalm-singing auditors had read that book, and to what effect it will move the general reader, was left for us to guess. Masefield gave his own reason for reading Cowper. Here it is. "We read him for the tranquil pleasure of conversing with a very good, upright, playful pious intellect, with the shadow of his affliction always close at hand." And again, "We are still aloft in the explosion of the French Revolution, and we can only see the little world in which Cowper moved through writers such as himself." Again, and to make quite sure there should be no mistake, Masefield said "Cowper's attitude to life and literature was to look for all things that were stable; well ordered, well reasoned and complete. He shrank from unrest and instability." One other quotation must be added to complete the Poet Laureate's "tribute." He observed that Cowper's best poetry—his hymns—suffered by being taught to children as a task and so were sometimes hated. Among the eighteenth century poets Mr. Masefield thought Cowper, who followed mainly their style and form—the heroic couplet, and blank verse, after Milton's—had not the mastery of Pope of his medium; nor the vigour of Dryden; nor the descriptive power of Thomson's "Seasons." His *Elegy* could not be compared with that by Thomas Gray; nor his placidity with the fiery passion of Blake, yet "in his tenderness of feeling and expression, Cowper was a great poet."

The opinion of Cowper which may be come to by Mr. Masefield's somewhat guarded praise does not, I fear, when it is analysed, greatly differ in character (much as it differs in terms) from the opinion of Hazlitt, no mean judge of men and poets. This is what he thought of Cowper's placidity and love of order. "You are dissatisfied with the finicalness of the private gentleman who does not care whether he completes his work or not, and, in whatever he does, is evidently more solicitous to please himself than the public. There is an effeminacy about him which shrinks from and repels common and hearty sympathy. With all his boasted simplicity and love of the country he seldom launches out into a general description of nature: he looks at her over his clipped hedges, and from his well swept garden walks . . .

he shakes hands with nature with a pair of fashionable gloves on . . . He has some of the sickly sensibility and pampered refinement of Pope: but then Pope prided himself on them, whereas Cowper affects to be all simplicity and plainness. (*Lectures on the English Poets*. Everyman Edn., p. 92.) It is not for me to say more in reply to Mr. Masefield than Hazlitt says in these characteristically blunt lines.

I come now to the Dean of St. Pauls, who, possibly having heard that he is known as "the gloomy Dean," took for his text in Olney Church the words "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Dean Inge, unlike Mr. Masefield, did not try to minimise Cowper's obvious faults from the point of view of to-day. But he did most astonishingly say that "he wanted to vindicate the glories of English sacred poetry," and although he was dealing with the eighteenth century, had to bring in Newman and Keble by way of illustration. "The eighteenth century," he said "was the golden age of hymn writing." Further, he said: "Poetry could interpret spiritual truth better than creed or dogma." Whether to give point to this or not is open to question, but Dean Inge quoted, or rather read his three favourite hymns of Cowper's. But if he really wanted a sample of lines or real lyric beauty he would have quoted John Newton's lines—(not quoted now perhaps because, possibly unconsciously they seem to give expression to a more recent and tricky way of explaining the miracles) or the alleged feeding of the five thousand:—

"Full soon celestially fed  
Their rustic fare they take;  
T'was Springtime when he blest the bread,  
T'was harvest when he brake."

This is true poetry, whatever it may be theologically. It is miles ahead of "God moves in a mysterious way," and of Topladys "Rock of Ages," which Dean Inge also favours. Of Dr. Isaac Watts, who, not without some reason, has been called the father of English hymnology, and it said to have "lifted it from obscurity to fame." Dr. Inge spoke only in contempt and rebuke. How could he defend in these days a hymn writer who dared to write of that deity now everywhere questioned and questionable:—

"Life, Death, and Hell, and world's unknown  
Hang on his firm decree;  
He sits on no precarious throne  
Nor borrows leave to be."

Yet Dr. Watts was representative of what is now held out to be the best poetry of England in the eighteenth century! "The best of our poetry," said Dean Inge, "is often definitely religious in its aim." Is it? If we take the eighteenth century, which is the relevant period, and if we take the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*, which is impartial, authentic, and not too rigidly chronological, we find that there are 130 poets whose works are laid under contribution, and that it is simply not true that they are "often" (if by often is meant in many or most cases) "definitely religious in their aim." I have ventured to pick a few of these poets at random as being more characteristic of the period than the minority of hymn writers here included. First are a couple of verses from Matthew Prior (1664-1721) "Jimmy the Just":—

"His religion so well with her learning did suite,  
That in Practise sincere and in controveerse mute,  
She shew'd she knew better to live than dispute.

So notions and modes she referred to the schools,  
And in matters of Conscience adhered to two rules—  
To advise with no Bigots and jest with no fools."

We will quote also from John Cuninghams (1729-1773) *The Miller*:—



"On Sunday bedecked in his homespun array  
At church he's the loudest to chaunt and to pray;  
He sits at a dinner of plain English food,  
Though simple the pudding his appetite's good.

At night when the priest and Exciseman are gone,  
He quaffs at the ale-house with Robert and John;  
Then reels to his pillow and dreams of no ill,  
No monarch more bless' than the man of the mill."

And what about Crabbe's inimitable description of the village parson of his day (1783):—

"A jovial yank, who thinks his Sunday's task  
As much as God or Man can fairly ask,  
The rest he gives to love's and labour's light  
To fields the morning and to feasts the night;  
None better skilled the noisy pack to drive  
To urge their chace, to cheer them or to chide,  
A sportsman keen he hunts through all the day  
And, skilled at whist, devotes the nights to play."

Crabbe, we may remark, was like Dean Inge a parson and a realist.

Dean Inge is not the first to suggest that Cowper has been the victim of biased detractors. Those persons are dealt with very fiercely by Mr. J. C. Bailey in his introduction to a well known edition of the *Poems*. Yet he admits that "Cowper lived in a dull and obscure country town, among old maids and dissenting clergymen, and knew nothing of the command minds of the day." And then Mr. Bailey, wishing to have his cake after he has eaten it, adds, "If Cowper disappears he will do so not by the merit of others but by the faults of his own."

"Calvinism," said Dean Inge, "is, in essence a man's creed," but added, very deliberately, that it was not to be considered responsible for Cowper's melancholia, although in the next sentence, he added that we must not forget the effect on Cowper's mind "of the doctrine of reprobation." Let us see what a more impartial authority says on the subject of the connection between Cowper's melancholic mania and his religion. In the *Outline of Literature* (Edited by John Drinkwater) we read "Cowper suffered from hysteria, and was for a while shut up in a private asylum. After his recovery (italics own) religion became an obsession with him and coloured the rest of his life, sometimes obviously affording him comfort, and at other times filling him with hopeless despair."

Both Dean Inge and Mr. Masefield used the word joy or joyous in connexion with Cowper, and apparently deliberately used it even, in the case of the Dean, giving it a Biblical basis. But if John Gilpin is a specimen of this harmless quality at its most innocent and best, there are other examples on record that are not so unreservedly pleasant to read. I will give one example from some *Unpublished Pieces* which Mr. Thomas Wright, Cowper's biographer, has chosen to give to the world. One would hardly think the lines here quoted were written by a participant in the "glorious age of English hymnology":—

To a Young Lady (Miss Anne Green)  
With a present of two coxcombs.

"Two powdered Coxcombs wait at your command  
And what is strange, both dried by Nature's hand,  
Like other fops they dread a sudden shower,  
And seek a shelter in your closest lower.  
Showy, like them, like them they yield no fruit  
But then to make amends they both are mute."

(Mr. Wright, for reason best known to himself, puts at the foot of this piece an explanation that coxcombs are "flowers, of course"!)

I will make no comment upon this, nor upon other lines in the same book that suggest that Cowper sometimes had some transient reflections as to fickleness and unchastity which called for forgiveness, at any rate he asks for forgiveness for such in one of these verses. This, of course, is only to prove that he was not, as his pious defenders and apologists seem to

argue, unconscious that there are relations between the sexes which are not of an exclusively platonic character.

It is left to a clergyman, the author of a very weighty volume (in more senses than one) namely Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, to put an end to this legend of the eighteenth century having been "the golden age" of hymn-writing. For obvious reasons there were few vernacular hymns much before the seventeenth century for, before the reformation the liturgical hymns in Latin were the order of the day, and, although many of them now find a place in Protestant hymn books, they were not likely to be much translated for congregational use by the puritans. Nor are the Roman Catholics of to-day more given to the hymnological cult in the vernacular, as anyone can see who will look at the English hymns in the book in common use among them to-day, which contains a larger percentage of doggerell than anything since Tate and Brady. Julian's *Dictionary* says that until the Olney hymns (1779) few contributions of value were made to English hymnology. From 1801-1820 they were a little more noticeable, and then came the "pictorial" versions of the psalms and other Scriptural passages and afterwards the flood of what were the predecessors of the modern hymn books of which it is correct to say that, especially in so far as they are of literary merit, they belong to the nineteenth and not to the eighteenth century.

The Bi-Centenary of Cowper's birth was honoured by the oratory of Dean Inge and Mr. Masefield. The poor school children of Olney and Weston Underwood were marched into the Market Place, bedecked with the colours of Cowper's archery club, to sing with rapt and unsmiling faces of those "unfathomable mires of never failing skill." No wonder they looked so serious. With an eye to publicity, John Gilpin (or somebody representing him set out, not for the Bell at Edmonton, but along the High Street at Olney—as long and straight and monotonous as the Lords Day beloved of Cowper's devotees—and finished up after some artificial duplications of the accidents in the original, at the fair in aid of the repairs to the roof of the church in which Cowper worshipped when John Newton was a curate. Mr. Thomas Wright (who wears the habitments of an evangelical clergyman of the eighteenth century, and has done all he can both for Cowper and for Olney) and in addition to being Founder and Secretary of the Cowper Society and Head of the Cowper School and Museum, is also an owner of property there, and the author of a number of works on Cowper and his circle, and therefore not so wholly disinterested in bringing visitors to Olney, as his undoubted devotion to Cowper might suggest.

All these circumstances and efforts notwithstanding the facts are that what Cowper stood for belongs to the past, and what Dean Inge stands for belongs to the present. What Mr. Masefield stands for, unless we do him an injustice, belongs to some extent to the future. Neither of Cowper's outstanding qualities has literary "prettiness," nor will his versified poetry be more than a matter of passing interest in the future, for they are less than that to most people to-day.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Heresy is the last and best thought. It is the perpetual New World, the unknown sea, toward which the brave sail. It is the eternal horizon of progress.

R. G. INGERSOLL.

Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting, experiment uncertain, and judgment difficult.—*Hippocrates*.



## Your Gramophone.

SINCE the coming of the gramophone the ordinary lover of music has been able to have his favourites on tap as it were. This has been all to the good, but often-times the gramophile after hearing a piece played wishes to know something about it and about its composer.

There is a whole library of books on music, but one book which I myself consult a great deal, and which should be on every shelf is *How Music Grew*, by Bauer and Peyser, published by Putnam's at 18s.

This is divided into sections Babyhood of Music; Childhood of Music; Music Comes of Age, and Music Has Grown Up, and the sections are further sub-divided, while a copious index enables quick reference to be made to any of the 600 pages.

For instance, suppose you have listened and been entranced by H.M.V. C. 2092, "Tales of Hoffman Selection," played by the Band of H.M. Coldstream Guards, or by H.M.V. 2208 "From Offenbach's Sample Box," played by Marek Weber and his Orchestra, you will want to know something about Offenbach. Possibly you are a newcomer to music, and all you know about Offenbach is that he wrote a Barcarolle.

Well, turn to page 335 of the book mentioned and you will find that Offenbach sometimes wore a yellow waistcoat and trousers, sky blue coat, grey gloves, a green hat and a red sunshine. Then you read on to learn that he died before his "Tales of Hoffman" was publicly played.

This is very brief information, but it gives an added charm to the two new records.

Opera lovers have not so many chances of hearing Strauss's "Night in Venice," as they have of hearing "Die Fledermaus," but there is little doubt that this will soon be just as popular. No one with an ear for music can resist the magic of this opera, of which H.M.V. C. 2280 gives an excellent pot pourri.

One of the most popular of all operas is Bizet's "Carmen," and many records of this opera in part or in full have been issued. The latest is H.M.V. B 3623, which is the Symphony Orchestra's rendering of the prelude to Acts 1 and 4. I tried this record on a friend who rarely allows himself to be moved to appreciation, and he was profuse in his praise.

The same orchestra in the "Don Juan" overture on H.M.V. B 3769 deserves mention for this lesser known opera of Mozart ought really to be played much more than it is in England. Yet Mozart was not thirty-six years of age when he died. Play this record and then marvel.

It has been said that H.M.V. B 3700 you may dine to such music as only the wealthiest can afford. The band is the Cedric Sharpe Sextet, playing Drigo's "Valse Bluettes" and "Les Tresors de Columbine."

Moszkowski (pronounced Moshkofski), the famous nineteenth century pianist wrote a great deal, but nothing so good as his "From Foreign Lands," now issued on two H.M.V. records B 3624 and 3625. In the first section the music is suffused with the warmth of the sun of Italy, in the second, the rich sentimentalism of Germany is captured, in the third, one hears the heavy indolence of Spain, and in the fourth, the sudden alternations of sadness and gaiety of Hungary. Further comment is unnecessary after mentioning that the record is by the Berlin State Opera Orchestra.

These records of national music are well worth collecting for they reveal national characteristics much more vividly than volumes of description. For instance, H.M.V. D 1939 and 1940 contain Edward German's Welsh Rhapsody, which is not a mere pot pourri of Welsh songs, although here and there one can recognize traces of popular tunes. But it is a chunk of Welsh life filled with the gladness of the Welsh, although here and there the brooding melancholy of the Celt shows itself.

Just a word about two lighter records. "One Little Raindrop," which doesn't make a shower, is well sung by Frank Crumit on H.M.V. B. 3833, and one would like to commend its philosophy to gloomy Christians. On the other side Crumit and Julia Sanderson make a duet "Would You Like to Take a Walk?" which haunts one. Christians may also be annoyed at the sentiment of

"The White Horse Inn," sung by Stuart Robertson and male chorus on H.M.V. B 3853, but those who like a good song will get this record, especially as the other side contains the popular "Betty Co-ed." The two best records have been left until last.

The first of these is Lily Pons singing the mad scene from Lucia di Lammermoor on H.M.V. DB 1504. This scene is the most famous in the world for coloratura sopranos and Lily Pons takes the dizziest notes in this acrobatic song without a trace of effort. Donizetti has been accused of writing musical fireworks, but Lily Pons turns what might be an ineffective exaggeration into a flawless work of art.

The other record is one done by that great Russian bass Chaliapine. The record is H.M.V. DB 1511, and on one side is "Merry Butterweek," and on the other "Trepak" (Songs of Death).

The dramatic and somewhat gruesome "Trepak" contrasts vividly with the jolly "Butterweek," and Chaliapine sings them both with his usual superb power.

BAY.

## Acid Drops.

We see that part of the service at Salisbury Cathedral was recently performed by means of gramophone records. That strikes us as an excellent idea, and might even be introduced in the interests of economy. The prayers might all be ground out in this way, and the service, and salaries, of large numbers of clergy eliminated. The B.B.C. might also follow the same plan, always taking care that it keeps to the standard of its present sermons and sees that nothing in the shape of an intelligent address is permitted to come through. In the case of prayers we are quite sure that, provided the records were good ones, the Lord would never discover the difference. Further economies might be effected by numbering the records, and then one might merely announce through a loud speaker the number of the prayer that was being offered. And if anyone questions the efficacy of gramophone prayers we are quite willing to make it a test question by guaranteeing to get the same results, say, on the weather by means of gramophone that one gets through a real live parson.

There is only one really serious objection to gramophone services. This is the number of the clergy that might be displaced. As things stand at present it is unquestionable that religious services retain in the Church a number of people whose foolishness might do considerably more harm if they were let loose in the world than they do at present when confined to church or chapel. After all, once a man is born he must live—in spite of some people questioning the necessity. And without question the pulpit does at the moment serve as a kind of safety valve for silliness, that would do still greater injury if it were added to the existing stupidity at large in social and political life. The pulpit does at present provide the least harmful avenue of employment for men of the mental type from which the present day clergy are drawn.

Last week we chronicled the important news that in the eyes of the Roman Church, anyone who ate meat on a Friday was committing a deadly sin, and if he died before absolution he would go to hell. This week we have to record that by the decree of the Papal Congregation, anyone who goes through the civil marriage ceremony commits a "public sin." On the other side of the road the Bishop of London solemnly prohibits the performance of a marriage which the law declares to be perfectly legal. And this, although he is a paid official of the State Church. Really the antics of these medicine-men is an insult to a civilized intelligence. But perhaps their defence would be that they are not catering for the civilized intelligence, but for a lot of semi-savages. To that there is no reply, for no genuinely civilized person bothers with them.

A clever and agreeable contributor to the *Manchester Guardian*, "Artifex," has in an article which appeared



on August 26, given a striking, and for him unusual example of the pot calling the kettle black. A pamphlet by Mr. H. T. Floyd, entitled *Intolerance sets "Artifex"* going on the theme of "Historical Perspective." He says: Anyone might suppose after reading Mr. Floyd's pamphlet that the churches alone were barbarous and cruel," and, we are reminded that "we need historical perspective in our judgments." We do indeed. It is the usefulness of Mr. Floyd's lecture that it proves, by a learned and effective array of evidence, that the churches, Catholic and Protestant, in the old world and the new, were intolerant. Implicit in this conclusion, which "Artifex" does not dispute, is another to which he does not refer, namely, that this intolerance, although differing in various ages in kind, was and is an essential implication of Christian belief. This is commonly ignored by the popular histories (especially those in use in the schools). And it is this, and not anything so absurd as that "the churches alone have been cruel and barbarous," that Mr. Floyd, whose booklet is anything but "straw that has been raked over many times before," so commonly demonstrates. It is necessary for an impartial view of human history to bear that in mind, and also that, where, and in so far as intolerance has declared (even in the churches themselves) this has been due to the growth of knowledge and the pressure of humanistic effects and principles, and not to the abandonment by Christians of the doctrines essential to their faith. "The Baptists have never persecuted," said Mr. Spurgeon. (Loud Cheers.) "They have never had the opportunity."

"Are the English Naturally Irreligious?" What a shocking question! It is asked, however, by the *Methodist Times*, which, in a leader, refers to Dr. G. F. Renier's book on *The English; Are they Human*, in which that writer says "the profound difference between religion in England and abroad is that to foreigners religion is a thing that matters. They either accept it wholeheartedly and regulate their lives in accordance with the supposed requirements of the after-life, or they reject it entirely. The English are fundamentally indifferent to religion, and to such a degree that they are prepared to ignore its essence while upholding its externals." There is much shrewdness and some truth in this diagnosis. What is the *Methodist Times* reply? "The deepest strata of the English variety of human nature is rooted in a fine and persistent ethical and spiritual consciousness," and "the English nation will live only, as she has lived, if she retains her genius and understanding of the deep things of God." This is drivel. Dr. Renier, too polite to say that hypocrisy is the prime feature of English piety, lets it down lighter than the author of such a meaningless rigmarole of words as we have just quoted deserves. The "deep things of God" are responsible for the Blasphemy Law, the "Sunday Performances Bill," and, no doubt, for the *Methodist Times*. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Surprising as it may seem to the reader, it is a tenet, if not a doctrine, of the Roman Catholic religion, that "faith is an act of the intelligent under the command and direction of the will." To bolster this up, and also to expound afresh the scholastic philosophy, of which St. Thomas Aquinas, was the master (as he is still the master of Catholic writers.) Father M. C. D'Arcy has written a book on *The Nature of Belief*. He is disturbed by the present unbelief, and by the fact that for more than a century the inhibitions and prohibitions of religion have been increasingly questioned and abandoned. Not content with the ample evidence that is available in contemporary journalism and literature that the standards of religion are no longer taken for granted as all that can be desired. Father D'Arcy actually propounds the extraordinary view that the treatment meted out to Byron and Shelley by the pictists of their day that "belief and standards of conduct counted for something in their time." But what more adequate argument against accepting those standards could there be than that they were sufficient, even as held by the very anæmic anglicans of their day, to boycott two poets whose works and whose lives compare very favourably with those of their more orthodox contemporaries? "Faith"—that is the acceptance of supernatural religion on the authority of

Rome—is, according to Father D'Arcy, a "free, rational and supernatural acceptance of "all that God has revealed," including, of course, the infallibility of the Pope. And this, forsooth, is "philosophy"!

The animal world, says Sir Arthur Thompson, is full of intelligence, but so far as is known no animal has reason. The next item of information is that armaments are still costing the British taxpayer £200 a minute— from which one might be permitted to infer that man has still to learn how to use reason advantageously. After 1900 years of Christian instruction, he appears still to be without that knowledge.

Apropos of this country's economic crisis and the new "National Cabinet," the *Methodist Times* declares that prayers will be helpful. "The new Government will need our prayers." Our friend also adds:—

The churches throughout Great Britain must play their part in the crisis. It can be a very great part. This is a moment to disprove the age-worn contention that religion is a mere soporific. All churches should be thrown open for intercession and meditation.

Telling God the Father what he is already aware of, and asking him to do something to help his human creatures seems very much like reproaching "Our Father" for not having already done something. And what are we to think of a Father God who wants to be asked? In any case, "Prevention is better than cure," and a God who would prevent an economic crisis would be more useful than one who has to be asked to supply a remedy to a crisis he has presumably allowed to materialize.

### Fifty Years Ago.

MR. BRADLAUGH'S attempt to enter the House of Commons and take his seat, despite the frowns of the press, turned out to be the very best course he could pursue. It brought his question prominently to the front, forced it into all the papers, caused the House to discuss it, and made it the theme of universal conversation for many days. It is greatly to be deplored that he was subjected to such brutal violence, but the spectacle of a duly elected and qualified Member of Parliament thrust out from the approaches to his seat as though he were an intrusive drunken brawler, has done to make the Tories and bigots, not ashamed of themselves, for they are utterly shameless, but objects of abhorrence and disgust to the general body of Englishmen.

Recrimination is of little use now. What is the sequel to be? The Speaker has at last done the only sensible thing in his whole treatment of Mr. Bradlaugh, in telling the House that its exclusion resolution was only sessional; and Mr. Gladstone has intimated that the Government will do in the next session what it might well have done in the last, namely, protect Mr. Bradlaugh when he goes up again to take his seat. It is, therefore, to be hoped that the fight is virtually over, and that the member for Northampton will be allowed peacefully to enter the House, where he will, of course, avail himself of all reasonable opportunities to introduce a Bill for abolishing the compulsory oath.

Meanwhile Mr. Bradlaugh's litigation remains. What the result will be we cannot predict, but we are certain that his pursuers will find it hard to run him down. Mr. Bradlaugh's friends are loyally supporting him with their subscriptions as well as their sympathy, and he will not lack funds to fight with. Mr. Newdegate apparently begins to find the expenses of prosecution heavy, and his admirers are going to get up a subscription to meet the cost of an action which he had not the courage to bring himself. But setting what Mr. Swinburne would call such a carrion soul aside, it must be allowed that Mr. Bradlaugh has acted splendidly throughout this struggle, and evinced so much courage, energy, patience, and skill, as to justify the expectation of a brilliant Parliamentary career.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. E. PARIENTE writes that in giving the address of the Grand Orient of France, we omitted the name of the town. We felt that something was wanting, but the error was not ours. We copied the address as sent. The full address is, M. Canwell, 24 bis Rue Kleber, Argenteuil, près Paris, France.

J. E. LAUDERDALE.—Pleased to have your testimony to the value of Mr. Brighton's open-air meetings.

J. BLUNDELL.—Exposures of the faked spirit messages, etc., are quite ineffective with certain types of mind. These get what they want because they want what they get.

W. REPTON.—Too late for correction, already inserted.

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

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

We repeat our announcement of last week regarding the absence of the editor from London. Mr. Cohen and Mr. MacLaren are attending the International Freethought Congress at Berlin, and that will make it impossible for him to deal with his personal correspondence in time for the issue of September 6. Letters that contain private matter should be marked personal.

Apropos of the Stockport Council of the *Freethinker*, Mr. H. James suggests that other towns should make application for the *Freethinker* to be in the public libraries. It would at least make the bigotry plain and advertise the paper. He also suggests the formation of a "Young Freethinker League," for the younger readers of the paper. That idea is a good one, and if it could be brought into existence we should be pleased to do anything we could to assist.

By the way, one correspondent writes expressing the opinion that we are probably wrong in calling attention to the action of the Stockport Library Committee, since it may lead other libraries, in which this paper is displayed to follow suit. We do not agree. It is a cowardly policy to refrain from exposing bigotry in action because of some imagined loss. Intolerance should be exposed and fought wherever and when ever it is encountered. This is not only the right policy, in the long run it is the only profitable one.

Letters continue to appear in the Stockport papers with regard to the Council's ban on the *Freethinker*. Some of these are by Christians who see the mistake the Council has made. "Churchman" writes, for example:—

As a Churchman and a member of the C.M.S. I am in favour of the *Freethinker* being placed on the tables of

the news-rooms in our library. I and many of our members cannot see why this paper should be denied access to the readers . . . In my opinion the action of the Library Committee is not in agreement with the majority of religious people in Stockport, and I should like them to gracefully climb down by acknowledging their error and accepting the *Freethinker*.

We are pleased to see letters of this kind. We hope that other Christians will pay heed to such expressions of opinion.

Under the will of the late R. Bulman—following the death of his widow—the National Secular Society and Bartholomew's Hospital, who are the two residuary legatees, receive the sum of £6,473 8s. each. Mr. Bulman was a very old reader of the *Freethinker*, and a great admirer of its past and present editor.

A meeting to inaugurate a Branch of the National Secular Society at Wembley will be held to-day, Sunday, September 6, at Zealley's Cafe, 100 High Road, Wembley (near L.M.S. and Bakerloo Station) at 7.30 p.m. The energy and enthusiasm with which the preliminaries have been dealt with augurs well, and it is hoped all saints in the district will make a point of being present. We understand the prospects are exceedingly good.

The *Sunday Express* says the clergymen, representing all denominations, are to have put before them an exhibition of scenes that have been banned from films during the past two years on account of their indecency, to be followed by a discussion as to whether the film censors, "as guardians of the morals of cinema audiences" have acted wisely and well. The proposal is enough to make one gasp. Why a body of parsons should be treated as though they are the final court of appeal in such matters is proof of how much we have to do before the people have outgrown the spirit of the Stone Age and the Medicine-man. On matters of sane morals a body of parsons is just about the last court to which we should dream of appealing with the least prospect of getting a sane and healthy judgment.

But there will be no scarcity of parsons for such a purpose. We expect that all invited will attend, and those who are not will be green with envy. Fancy, a body of parsons invited to look at a series of indecent pictures! And in the interests of morality, too! Why it will be better than prowling round questionable quarters here or abroad, also in the name of morality. But if this thing has to be done, we have a suggestion to make. There must be about forty thousand parsons in the country. Why not hold such shows quarterly and admit the parsons at a guinea each. A scheme of that kind ought to bring at least seventy or eighty thousand pounds per year, and the proceeds could be given for the relief of the unemployed.

A special and urgent meeting of the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. will be held in the Reception Room, City Hall, Albion Street, on Sunday, September 6 at 3 p.m. There is very important business to be considered, involving the future of the Branch, and every member is urged to be present. We understand that there is great need for the Branch to receive greater financial support than has been given it of late if the usual propaganda is to be maintained, and in spite of the state of trade on the Clyde there are plenty of Freethinkers in Glasgow to see that all that is needed is forthcoming. We hope this will turn out to be the case.

Mr. G. Whitehead reports large and enthusiastic meetings in Bolton, also the disposal of much literature. We hope to hear the local Branch will follow up the good work, especially as there appears to be some promising speaking talent available.

Mr. G. Whitehead is now in the Manchester district, and details of lectures will be found in the Lecture Notices column. The Manchester Branch N.S.S. will cooperate at all meetings, and, of course, local saints are expected to give support.



## Kings, Priests, and Gods.

GENERATION plays an important part in the life of early tribes. Those with strongest regard for leaders of ability succeed best in battle. Respect for the chief is, in fact, its binding principle, its religion. "Who is your God?" says W. G. Palgrave, "was asked of an Arab. 'It was Faolee,' answered the man, naming a powerful provincial governor of those lands, lately deceased; 'but since his death, I really do not know who is God at this present moment.'"

The same traveller, in his *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia* (i. 32), gives the following account of the Bedouin notions of deity: "What will you do on coming into God's presence for a judgment after so graceless a life?" said I one day to a spirited young Sheerarat, whose long matted love-locks, and some pretensions to dandihood—for the desert has its dandies too—amid all his ragged accoutrements, accorded very well with his conversation which was nowise of the most edifying description. 'What will we do?' was his unhesitating answer; 'why, we will go up to God and salute him, and if he proves hospitable (gives us meat and tobacco) we will stay with him; if otherwise, we will mount our horses and ride off.' This is a fair specimen of Bedouin ideas touching another world, and were I not afraid of an indictment for profaneness, I might relate fifty similar anecdotes at least."

In the early mythology of all nations we find chiefs ascribing their origin to gods, usually deified ancestors; heroes of high renown were credited with supernatural lineage. What Grote says in his *History of Greece* is applicable to every nation: "The mythical age was peopled with a mingled aggregation of Gods, heroes and men, so confounded together that it was often impossible to distinguish to what class any individual belonged."

In Peru a dead king was immediately regarded as a god, and had his sacrifices, statues, etc. In Mexico the people of Cholula considered Quetzalcoatl (feathered serpent) "to be the principal god," and they said that Quetzalcoatl, though he was a native of Tula, came from that place to people the provinces of Tlaxcala, Huxotzingo and Cholula." Again, "Huitzilopochi (humming-bird), afterwards a supreme deity of the Aztecs, was originally a man whose apotheosis may clearly be traced." Polynesia supplies kindred illustrations. The Sandwich Islanders regarded the spirit of one of their ancient kings as a tutelar deity. In Tonga they hold "that there are other Hotooas or Gods—viz., the souls of all deceased nobles and Matabooles, who have a like power of dispensing good and evil, but in an inferior degree" (Herbert Spencer, *Data of Sociology*, p. 197). When the dead chief died his ghost became a god. Indeed ghosts and gods are undifferentiated.

Some are born gods, some achieve godhood, usually after death, and some have it thrust upon them. Thus sorcerers who have made a hit by predicting victory, or by performing cures of disease, have been acclaimed as deities. Dobrizhoffer mentions the case of an Indian sorcerer in Paraguay who was adored as a divine person by a lot of foolish women. The Indians of Tolteque worshipped an old Indian whom they had dressed up in a particular way and installed in a hut, where they offered sacrifices to him. His godship, who had no manner of work to do, was regaled on the

best, and willingly sustained the character he had been made to assume. "It was the custom," says Roger Williams (*Key*, iii.), "of the natives of New England, at the apprehension of any excellency in men and women, to cry out, 'Manitou!' which means 'he is a god!' They called the English 'gods.'" The man who is regarded with awe during life will be regarded with more awe after death, and the propitiation of his ghost may become an organised cult. A famous god among the Caribs was Boluto I, who was evidently an early priest and legislator. He is said to have established sorcery. Boluto II introduced medical knowledge and the burning of the dead. Boluto III brought music. This trinity was at the head of the Haytian pantheon. The Incas of Peru were living gods. Balboa says the Peruvians worshipped all their dead chiefs and offered them sacrifices at certain seasons of the year. The Mexicans in their great feast of the tenth month gave divine names to their dead chiefs and other famous persons who had died in war. Idols were made in the image of these persons and put with the other deities. Says Camargo, "They then call them Teotl so and so, meaning god or saint so and so."

M. Girard de Rialle (*La Mythologie Comparée*, i. 182) says "Dans l'Ousambara on allait plus loin, on appelait le roi *Zombi* (fétiche) et *Mouloungou* (dieu)." Gods grow mainly by bringing fortune in battle, or making some unexpected cure. Many a medicine-man and fakir has become a god by the administration of a powerful purgative, thus casting out demons. Success or benefit to the worshippers means fortune to the God. When one side is defeated in battle, the others may begin to believe in the god of the conquerors. Sir A. C. Lyall remarks that the earliest start of a first-rate god may have been exceedingly obscure. One of the largest fairs in Berar now gathers round the grave of an utterly insignificant hermit.

With the Malagasy, according to Ellis, not only is the king a god, but whatever is attractive or extraordinary goes by the same names: "Rice, money, thunder and lightning, and earthquakes are all called gods. Their ancestors and a deceased sovereign they designate in the same manner." A book, too, is a god; and "velvet is called by the singular epithet *Son of God*." Mr. Marshall, describing the holy milking priest of the Todas, thus gives part of a conversation with one, "'Is it true that Todas salute the sun?' I asked. 'Lschâhk!' he replied, 'those poor fellows do so; but me,' tapping his chest, 'I, a god! Why should I salute the Sun?' At the time I thought this a mere ebullition of vanity and pride, but I have since had opportunity of testing the truth of his speech. The *pâlâl* for the time being is not merely the casket containing divine attributes, but is *himself a god*." Sir Emerson Tennent records that when he asked a Buddhist ascetic if he worshipped the gods, he replied, "No! the gods worship me."

Of the Fijians, Williams says: "Indeed there is very little difference between a chief of high rank and one of the second order of deities. The former regards himself very much as a god, and is often spoken of as such by his people, and, on some occasions, claims for himself publicly the right of divinity." Describing the sacredness of the King of Tahiti, Ellis says that instead of saying the torches were burning in the palace, they would observe the lightning was flashing in the clouds of heaven. Bastian tells us that the King of Benin is not only the representative of god on earth.



but god himself; and is worshipped by his subjects in both natures.

"I am a god," said the Fijian Tuikilakila. In Peru Huayna Ccapac "was worshipped of his subjects for a god, being yet alive." When dead the Incas were immediately regarded as gods, and had sacrifices, statues, etc. In Loango where the king is god "they believe he can give rain when he has a mind. In December, the people gather to beg it of him, everyone bringing his present." Odin, says Spencer (sec. 198), was manifestly a medicine-man. The Rev. R. Moffat, the famous missionary (M. L., 68), writes: "Uhlanga is used by the Kaffirs to denote a Supreme Being, but from what I know of the tribes, I perfectly agree with the Rev. S. Kay, that Uhlanga is the name of the oldest of their kings, and Mr. Pringle expressed himself doubtful whether the god Uhlanga be not merely a deified chief like Thor and Woden of our Teutonic ancestors." The head of a family after death becomes its divine protector, and as he is all in all to them, the dead chief takes the same position over the tribe. Often the priest takes the place of the invisible deity. He is god to them as every Catholic priest is to the penitent in confession. A Brahman signs himself "daib" or god, and others "das," worshipper or slave.

"A young Comanche medicine-man pretended to bring the dead to life. He also ascended to the clouds far beyond the sun" (Dorman, 367). Among the Zapotecs, the wedding-day had to be fixed by the priest. He was called Wiyatal, and was looked upon as a god whom the earth was not worthy to hold or the light to shine upon. He profaned his sanctity if he so much as touched the ground with his foot. The most powerful lords never entered his presence save with eyes lowered and feet bared. Continence was imposed upon the Zapotec priests, but this high pontiff was an exception, because no one could furnish him with a worthy successor, who must be of his own generating. On certain days in each year the high priest became drunk, and while in this state one of the most beautiful virgins consecrated to the service of the gods was brought to him, and if the result of this holy debauch proved to be a male infant it inherited his position (Bancroft, ii. 142-43).

(Late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

## A World Without Money.

The Church is now faced with the staggering proposition that the ethics of Freethought are superior to the ethics of Christianity. It is faced with it; but it will not face up to it. On the contrary. It does not even admit the possibility of any truth in it! The Church rests upon traditionalism; and refuses to concede the most important effects of the truths revealed by Science.

The best informed Humanists recognize and realize that the Christian conception of life is limited and low. But the curse of custom and sentimentality is such that comparatively few testify to this recognition and realization. "The World," which Christian preachers mendaciously affect to deprecate and denounce is too much with them. Life for the many may remain sordid, benighted and poor; but what matters it when the magnates of Ecclesiasticism and their wealthy constituents rule the roost?

It appears that the governments of the world are

controlled and dictated to by eight mighty financiers, and the editor pertinently suggested that when another war comes along it should be fought out among these eight alone. And if the multi-millionaires exercise great influence over members of Governments, we are not far wrong in supposing that they exercise an equal, if not greater, influence over the members of the ecclesiastical corporations.

In these columns the present writer recently referred to an inter-denominational religious conference held at Edinburgh in the last week of June. It is now explained by the Secretary of this Conference in an article in the August number of the official organ of the Church of Scotland, *Life and Work*, that sixty-three denominations and religious societies of sixteen countries were represented at the Conference by 349 delegates. Despite fairly good reports in the Scotch daily press, the Conference has come and gone without causing more than a ripple or two. The great body of people was clearly indifferent. The Secretary pointed out that: "Contrasted with the World Conference on Church Finance, staged (good word "staged") in Glasgow in 1928, dealing primarily with methods of ingathering of funds, the 1931 Conference was outstanding in its insistence throughout on the supreme value of consecrated personality, and the individual realization of man's responsibility to God for all that he has and is." The concluding words suggest that any Christian worth while has attained a considerable degree of worldly success and material prosperity. But there is nothing really new in this statement of the declared objects of Church leaders. *Mutatis mutandis* they simply repeat the published aims of the church leaders of Victorian days. Finance, it will be noted, continues to be the very important consideration. And it is clearly implied that the God of the Christians is the giver of every good and perfect gift possessed and enjoyed by his favoured worshippers. Mr. G. K. Chesterton is a distributist, and the head of a League for better distribution. How does he reconcile his position with a belief in a God who devised and arranged the existing system of distribution and allocation of private property? And what is to be done about the unbeliever who happens to have a substantial fortune? Is he to be taxed for the upkeep of priests and clerics willy-nilly, while he holds Churches to be factories of falsehoods and superstition, and priests and clerics to be batteners and parasites upon the rest of the population?

As the writer has insisted in these columns before, the Christian thinks in centuries—the Atheist in æons. The Christian conception of life is limited and foreshortened. The Christian cannot see beyond the end of his own precious nose, or higher than the spire of his favourite meeting house. He accepts the main existing systems political, economic and ecclesiastical as ordained of God. A world for example without money would be far beyond his priest-made notions. There is nothing big or far-reaching in the Christian's thoughts of the world's future. And this is consistent with the basic part of his faith; for after all this present life is (in theory) for him a thing subordinate and subsidiary. He is (in theory) but a stranger—a temporary sojourner and pilgrim here. For Heaven is his home!

This wonderful Conference seems to have directed all its energies to the task of seeking to define the position and duty of the believer *with property*. No message of hope or comfort can be gleaned from the flood of oratory for the believer *without property*. Well, what about it? And what about *him*? The fact is that particularly in the four principal towns of Scotland (and we may conclude in most of the cities in other Christian countries) the percentage of believers *without property* has dwindled to a very small



figure. The believers *with properly* are adopting a policy of solidarity and consolidation as against these horrible Communists, Atheists and Humanists. These supernaturalistic supermen (unconscious of their littleness) believe that they have as believers in this God "who supplies all *their need*," a commission from him to strengthen the institutions by which the wily priests and clerics continue to exist. It is finally the economic order and its preservation that are at the back of their minds. If a wealthy Christian were stripped of his wealth and his broadcloth; and if he were kicked about in the gutter for a bit—finally landing in a "model" lodging house or Salvation Army hostel—it might be discovered whether there was any manhood—otherwise capacity for independent thought and rebellion in *him*. But the "originals" among the "bourgeoisie in broadcloth with their air of unctuous recitude" (which came under the satirical lash of Robert Louis Stevenson) are exceedingly few and far between. What is, is ordained of *their* God. It is useless kicking against the pricks, you blasted proletarian rabble! God's in his Heaven: All's right with the world. Every prospect pleases, and you, you smelly riff-raff, are the only vile thing on the landscape!

That is the thought which is not expressed. Actions and policies are more eloquent than words and manifestoes. The impecunious rebel is a danger with his ideas; and must be boycotted, ignored, suppressed. The impecunious, whining serf *without ideas*, who embraces the superstition that is dictated by the priests of the big communions of the "faithful" is patronized and petted, put into a job, provided with sops like public reading rooms and public recreation grounds, and equipped with maudlin "literature" for distribution among his social equals.

The game is easy to be understood by observant persons. In 1887 an American Socialist, a disinterested and humanistic thinker and a scientific prophet, drew a picture of a world emancipated from individualistic sordidness—of a world in which the "system" of economic muddle, scramble and grab was abolished, and men and women of all classes lived in social unity. Education in the true and highest sense was the possession of all and *money had disappeared*! A central executive regulated the distribution of the goods of the earth; and each one did his share of work according to his capacity. Can we not see signs of mankind moving in the direction of an international fraternal fellowship?

IGNOTUS.

### The Unknown.

It is impossible to pass over Mr. Fraser's article in the *Freethinker* of August 23. He is undoubtedly an authority on points of logic, and an analytical thinker of more than ordinary pretensions, but it would appear that on this occasion he has left himself open to strong criticism.

He set out to arrive at a satisfactory definition of religion, and adopted as his method the survey of as many as possible of the various meanings that have been given to the term. While none will deny the obvious claims of sheer usage in determining the meaning of words, it is by no means safe to accept this as the sole guide in framing a definition. Mr. Fraser, to commence with, has not confined himself merely to current usage; he takes us back to Kant, St. James and Cicero, in the course of his survey. Thus he introduces, if only by implication, the important element of historical significance in determining meaning; yet he does not apply the historical method in the same way as Mr. Chapman Cohen did in writing his *Materialism Re-stated*. Whereas Mr. Cohen attempted to interpret meaning according to the historical setting in

which he found the subject of his enquiry to have originated, and the evolutionary stages through which it had passed, Mr. Fraser is historical only in so far as he includes bygone personages among his enunciators of definitions. Thus Mr. Cohen, working always on the firm ground of historical fact, could extract from the pabulum of past events, the conceptions which grew in it, rejecting those, whatever their authority, which departed in essence from the evolutionary sequence of thought. The cardinal virtue of such a method I imagine to depend on this: that the real meaning of a thing, the real force it exercises in our thoughts, never does entirely escape from its evolutionary origins; and spurious definitions applied often enough for the purpose of drawing red herrings across the public field of vision, succeed only in confusing essential issues and disguising essential meanings. But with Mr. Fraser the case is different. The mere fact that a definition has been advanced by a reputable person entails its inclusion in our enquiry, and, vitiating the list from which we are to work out a greatest common denominator, may compel us to follow what is really a false scent. That such can actually happen is, I think, evinced by Mr. Fraser's ultimate finding. His common denominator is taken outside the anthropological conceptions of Sir J. G. Fraser and Professor Tylor, and comes to rest finally in the mere idea of the unknown. But the illuminating fact is that Mr. Fraser does not quite call it the unknown. He gives it a capital letter, a modification which should provide him with much food for thought. If that capital letter be replaced by a small, the definition becomes entirely inadequate. I suggest to him that the real meaning of religion centres round the capital letter.

To say that the religionist believes in the unknown and the Atheist does not, is, I admit, a mis-statement of fact. The difference between them concerns not so much the *field* of experience as the *interpretation* of it. When Mr. Fraser adds to his "Unknown," the "varieties of conduct, based upon the supposed nature . . . of that which is believed in," he is on a hot scent, which unfortunately he abandons. The truth is, of course, that no one believes in the absolutely unknown, except abstractly; and this abstract conception, which amounts merely to an admission of unexplored possibility, can have no relation to any sort of conduct. The "Unknown" of Mr. Fraser's religion is in reality the partly known; the partly seen spirit of the primitive savage; the partly glimpsed source of the mystic's vision, the partly felt presence at Bishop Barnes' communion service, the partly understood purpose of a divine governance of the world, the partly revealed hand of the author of earthquakes, storms and the catastrophies that frown upon evil-doing, and so forth. It is really quite a simple matter. The religionist forms, however vaguely, however emotionally, a theory of the unknown, based upon just so much of it as he thinks he has actually known. The scientist does precisely the same thing. One of the stock criticisms of the scientist is to the effect that he models his unknown too faithfully upon the known part. His reply, of course, is that if he does otherwise, he is modelling upon precisely nothing at all; and that, in any case, the method has "worked" better than any method hitherto employed. The scientist of to-day will offer you "scientific data"; the religionist will offer "religious experience." Both are talking about the known; what else can they start from? But each will give you a different theory of the ulterior "unknown." And when discussion follows you will find that one of the cardinal differences between the two unknowns is that the scientist spells the word with a small "u," the religionist feels he must have a capital.

What then is the "secret of the capital"? I think that it is just what you would expect on looking at the letter, on observing its size, and remembering its individuality. It is firstly Power, and secondly Personality. And that is where it may be that Mr. Fraser has allowed a medley of definitions to lead him away from essentials. "Unknown" if you will; but more than this, unknown Power whose manifestations have persuaded primitive folk, and others after them, to ascribe to it Personal attributes. Such a conception of religion does not accord with the Bishop of Manchester's "Attitude towards Reality," but then why should it? If we were compelled



to take such as this into account among our definitions we should be the victims of any clever apologia that might from time to time issue from a hard pressed Church. The conception accords with historical fact, with anthropological science; and, if we are to progress in the quality and accuracy of our thinking, we *must* ask what Mr. Fraser does not ask, namely, what *ought* religion to mean.

Mr. Cohen is constantly pointing out that contemporary churchmen are for ever issuing definitions to meet current expansions of thought, and then, once they have converted us to the new view, reverting in their "conduct based upon the supposed nature of that which is believed in" to the primitive, the essential, and, may I add, the inescapable meaning of religion. When they cease to do this, what they stand for will cease to be religion. To speak otherwise is playing with words: and, what is more serious, it is playing with progress. If it were not, we should not object to giving an old word a new meaning. But with the position as it is, we must, in framing definitions, be true to something more than a list of aphorisms. We must be true to history, to the tendency of things, and the intellectual interests of mankind.

MEDICUS.

### Ireland's Diminished Population.

In your issue of August 23, the writer of "Acid Drops" calls in question the statement in the *New Generation* that "late marriage and emigration" have "diminished poverty" in Ireland. As I was the author of the said statement, I will give you my reasons.

The first question is whether poverty has been diminished in Ireland—I mean in an exceptional degree. In every European country poverty has been diminished during the last century, and it is therefore necessary to show that the diminution has been exceptionally great in Ireland.

Until 1841 the population of Ireland was rapidly increasing, and in that year it was over eight millions. Then it suddenly turned round and began decreasing, and has been doing so ever since, until now it is less than four millions. This is a phenomenon entirely without parallel in the history of the world, and I therefore propose to make my examination cover the ninety years in question.

What was the condition of Ireland in 1841? Stephen Gwynn, speaking of the peasantry, says: "The Irish of this class could hardly be said to be clad; they wore rags pinned together. Their diet was exclusively vegetarian, except that in the eighteenth century and perhaps during the continuance of the war, they had milk with their potatoes. From 1820 onwards milk was beyond their means. Their diet was practically limited to one article of food, the potato." (*History of Ireland*, p. 428.)

Justin McCarthy says: "In the southern and western provinces a large proportion of the peasantry actually lived on the potato and the potato alone. In these districts whole generations grew up, lived, married, and passed away, without having ever tasted flesh meat." (*A Short History*, p. 74.)

Sir James O'Connor says: "Nearly three and a half millions of the people lived in mud cabins, badly thatched with straw, having each but one room, and often without either a window or a chimney." (*History of Ireland*, Vol. I., p. 282.)

What is the condition of Ireland to-day? I quote from Sir James O'Connor's *History* :—

In 1914, Ireland was a wealthy country, with the wealth well distributed amongst the various classes of the community . . . Ireland was probably the richest agricultural country in the world in proportion to its population . . . The standard of living had risen. In certain respects, the Irish people have a superfine taste in food. Few Irishmen will look at margarine . . . Irish Catholics being obliged to eat fish once a week, have no relish for it that day or any other day . . . Vast quantities of tea, and that of a very expensive kind, are consumed.

He sums up as follows :—

The pleasant, lotus-eating valley of the Liffey attracts

poor as well as rich. But, with the exception of Dublin and of the congested districts of the West, the people are well fed, well clad, and reasonably well housed.

The available statistics entirely support the above statements. For many years after the war, the International Labour Office issued figures every three months, giving the purchasing power of wages in a number of capital cities. Dublin usually stood above any Continental capital except Copenhagen. The number of passenger motor-cars is a good test. According to the *New York World Almanac* for 1930, the Irish Free State has more cars in proportion to population than any Continental country except Denmark, France, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium.

Most remarkable of all, it is not industry and hard work that have brought about the above results. The charm of Ireland still is, as it has always been, the total absence of hurry and bustle. Sir James O'Connor admits that French peasants are "far superior in self-denial, frugality, and industry to the farmers of Ireland." Last year I was talking to a young lady from the country districts of Galway, and she said she was pretty sure that in her neighbourhood nobody got up before half past seven, even in summer. She admitted, however, that her own observation did not go for much, as she never got down till half past nine, although she was ahead of all the rest of her family.

What is the cause of this extraordinary change, which has probably never been equalled in the same time in any other country? Only two explanations have ever been put forward: First, the Land Acts, which changed the Irish peasant from a tenant at will into a proprietor, with absolute security of tenure; Secondly, the reduction of population. Undoubtedly the first cause has had a considerable effect, but it cannot possibly be more than a partial cause. Over most of Continental Europe the peasants, or a large portion of them, own their own land, yet their condition is by no means as good as that of the Irish peasant, although they work much harder. Moreover, Sir James O'Connor brings ample evidence to show that there was already a great improvement before any land legislation was passed.

The only remaining explanation is the reduction of population. Sir James O'Connor, by far the best equipped historian Ireland has ever possessed, has no doubt whatever that that is the real explanation. He says :—

A small agricultural country, which chooses to multiply its population, is faced with two alternatives—emigration or starvation. The choice is inexorable . . . The cause of nine-tenths of the terrible sufferings which the people endured, culminating in the famine, was that they multiplied very rapidly and would not be allowed to emigrate.

Sir James O'Connor also says :—

Emigration has been condemned by the Irish zealot and the Irish economist as if it were an evil worse than all the plagues of Egypt. In truth it was a blessing to those that went as well as to those that stayed behind; it made existence tolerable to all. Little by little it helped to establish some kind of a reasonable ratio between the population and the land.

Sir James gives statistics which prove this contention to the hilt. He shows that before the famine the plots of land were too small to be any good under any conceivable system of land tenure. By halving her population, Ireland has doubled the size of her holdings, and thus made a decent standard of life possible. To quote a letter which Sir James wrote to the *Times* on March 17, 1928 :—

The real problem of Ireland always has been the population problem. For a time it was solved, in a fashion that proved disastrous, by the formation of great agricultural slums—in 1841, out of a total of 685,000 farms, 300,000 were of less than five acres in extent, and 250,000 were from five to fifteen acres. The famine of 1847 took a dreadful toll of a people who were so congested that, making allowance for waste land, the population density was 400 per square mile.

To the above I have only to add that emigration alone could never have sufficed unless the system of late marriage had gone along with it. The Irish family per



married woman is the largest in Europe, yet Ireland has long had one of the lowest birth rates in Europe. Before the war the Irish birthrate was lower than that of any country except France. This was brought about by the extraordinarily low marriage rate, which is lower in Ireland than in any other European country. The people marry late, many emigrate before marrying, and many become nuns or old maids. The late marriages cause a long interval between successive generations. By a combination of these different methods the population of Ireland has been halved, while that of all other countries has been greatly increased.

It will please you to know that all this has been done in the teeth of bitter opposition from the priests. Sir James O'Connor, although a good Catholic, says:—

In two matters in particular was the priests' teaching of serious political and economic consequence. In the interest of sexual morality, they rather favoured early marriages; in the interest of the faith, they opposed emigration. They thereby accentuated the greatest of Ireland's social evils—over-population . . . There is, in my opinion, no more doubt of the sincerity of their motives than of those of Hannah More, when she preached submission to the ills of the industrial revolution, on the ground that the things of the next world were the only things that mattered, while those of this world mattered not at all.

I need hardly say that I do not approve of the method taken by the Irish people to get out of their troubles.

As I am the editor of a birth control paper, it is obvious what method I should have suggested. None the less it is well worth noting that the Irish people have succeeded in enormously improving their condition, and that they have done it mainly by reducing their numbers.

R. B. KERR.

#### GOD'S FOOLS.

Give me the boy whose ambitions are few, if he's honest, straightforward and truthful; he's too quiet to be Leader (for what can one do 'gainst a mob of dare-divs, strong and youthful?). Yet he's unalloyed metal, and so far from a prig that for laurels and plaudits and up-to-date audits he don't care, and won't care, a fig!

And give me the fellow whose friendships are few, the chap who cares nothing for scandal: he may be a milk-sop and lack derring-do, and to rakes hold up never a candle, but he's modest and open, and clean as new paint, as he stakes without fear, "Now you people, look here: that's me, as I be!—or I bain't!"

Then give me the wife whose diversions are few, and whose talk is not all clothes and money; who don't cause a stab when the story's half through by revealing an asp 'neath the honey; she's not tuppenny-coloured, but just penny-plain; and oh! her pure heart of her true soul a part: though herself, she's yourself—o'er again!

J. M. STUART YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

#### ACADEMY CINEMA, Oxford Street,

(Opposite Waring & Gillows). Regent 436r.

Sunday, September 6, for one week

First Presentation in England of a new Polish Synchronised Film

"WARSAW."

Special Music and Folk Songs.

This week

Feyder's Version "CARMEN," and "Q SHIPS."

## UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to:

**J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks**

ESTABLISHED NEARLY FORTY YEARS.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mrs. E. Grout—"What did Jesus Teach?"

FINSBURY PARK N.S.S.—11.15, Mr. L. Ebury—A Lecture. FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrock Road, North End Road): Saturday, at 7.30, Mr. F. Day and Mr. E. Bryant. *Freethinker* and other literature on sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—Every Tuesday evening at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury will lecture outside Hampstead Heath Station, L.M.S., South End Road. Every Thursday evening at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury will lecture at Arlington Road.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. Le Maine—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, Sunday, at 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury; Wednesday, September 9, at Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury; Friday, September 11, at Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mrs. E. Grout—"What did Jesus Teach?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt, A. D. McLaren, B. A. Le Maine and E. C. Saphin. Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Thursday, at 7.0, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and J. Darby; every Friday, at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.30, Messrs. Bryant and C. Tuson.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson—"The Sociology of Sir Arthur Keith."

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON.—Saturday, September 5, at 6.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Saturday, September 5, at 8.0, inside the Level, Messrs. Keys and Byrne.

BURNLEY MARKET GROUND.—Sunday, September 6, at 8.0, Debate—"Does Christianity Make any Useful Contribution to Social Life?" *Affir.*: Mr. Ransome; *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton.

DURHAM (Market Place)—Tuesday, September 8, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, at Queen's Drive (opposite Baths), Messrs. Jackson, Shortt and Tissyman; Monday, at Beaumont Street, Messrs. Jackson and Wollen; Tuesday, at Edge Hill Lamp, Messrs. Little and Sherwin; Wednesday, at Waste Ground adjoining Old Swan Library, Messrs. Little and Shortt; Thursday, at corner of High Park Street and Park Road, Messrs. Jackson and Tissyman. All at 7.30. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at all meetings.

LUMB-IN-ROSENDALE.—Thursday, September 10, at 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market)—Wednesday, September 9, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market)—Sunday, September 6, at 7.15—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND (near Boilermakers Hall)—Sunday, September 6, at 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

TODMORDEN.—Monday, September 7, at 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

WHEATLEY LANE.—Tuesday, September 8, at 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD'S meetings are as follows: Manchester and Salford, Thursday, September 3, Sidney Street, All Saints; Friday and Saturday, September 4 and 5, Devonshire Street, All Saints; Sunday, September 6, Stevenson Square, at 3.0 and 7.0; Monday till Friday, September 7-11 at Junction of Longworthy Road and Liverpool Street, Salford. All evening meetings except Sunday at 7.30.

#### INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, September 6, at 7.0 p.m. (prompt), at Beechcroft Settlement, Wharfedale Lane, Birkenhead, General Meeting, with address on "The Evolution of the Idea of God." Literature and current *Freethinkers* on sale.



# Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

**Christianity and Progress.**  
Price 2d., postage ½d.

**The Philosophy of Secularism.**  
Price 2d., postage ½d.

**Bible and Beer.**  
Price 2d., postage ½d.

**Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary.**  
Vol. I., 128 pp., with Fine Cover Portrait,  
and Preface by CHAPMAN COHEN.  
Price 6d., postage 1d.

**The Jewish Life of Christ.**  
*Being the Sepher Toldoth Jeshu, or Book of  
the Generation of Jesus. With an Historical  
Preface and Voluminous Notes.* By G. W.  
FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER.  
Price 6d., postage ½d.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

**God and Man.**  
*An Essay in Common Sense and Natural  
Morality.*  
Price 2d., postage ½d.

**Woman and Christianity.**  
*The Subjection and Exploitation of a Sex.*  
Price 1s., postage 1d.

**Socialism and the Churches.**  
Price 3d., postage ½d.

**Creed and Character.**  
*The Influence of Religion on Racial Life.*  
Price 4d., postage 1d. Published at 6d.

**Blasphemy.**  
*A Plea for Religious Equality.*  
Price 3d., postage 1d.

**Does Man Survive Death?**  
*Is the Belief Reasonable? Verbatim Report  
of a Discussion between HORACE LEAF and  
CHAPMAN COHEN.*  
Price 4d., postage ½d. Published at 7d.

# BUDDHA The Atheist

By "UPASAKA"

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price ONE SHILLING. Postage 1d.

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

## Works by C. R. Boyd Freeman.

- BY THOR NO! A Novel, 6s. Postage 3d.
- TOWARDS THE ANSWER. A Study of the Riddle of  
the Universe, 3s. 6d. Postage 2d.
- PRIESTCRAFT. A Study of the Exploitation of the  
Religious Sentiment. 6s. cloth, Postage 3d.; 1s. 6d.  
paper, Postage 2d.
- FRANK WORDS TO THE FREE CHURCHES. 1s.  
Postage 1d.

# THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

R. H. ROSETTI, 62 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON,  
E.C.

## PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes super-natural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

## MEMBERSHIP.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation .....

Dated this.....day of.....19.....

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

## An Easy Outline of Psycho-Analysis

— BY —

GEORGE WHITEHEAD

Published at 2s. 6d. Offered at 1s. 6d.

Postage Three-half-pence.



A RATIONALIST PRESS BOOK (2)

## THE MARTYRDOM OF MAN

"I give to universal history a strange but true title," wrote Winwood Reade in 1872—"The Martyrdom of Man. In each generation the human race has been tortured that their children might profit by their woes. Our own prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past."

With brilliant pen he sketched the long struggle upwards from the beginnings of civilization on the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile; he described the epic conflicts of Greek and Persian, Roman and Carthaginian; he depicted the Phœnician galleys hugging the coasts of the Mediterranean, and the ships of the desert padding softly across the Sahara.

Then, turning to the world of religion, he wrote of Moses and the Prophets of Israel, Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity; with deft touch he brought Mahomet on to the stage, and told of the fiery onset, the missionary fervour, of the Moslem cohorts.

In his next chapter, "Liberty," we are charmed by pen-pictures of the Castle, the Town, the Church; we note the achievements of Arabian culture in Spain; we accompany the dauntless Portuguese in their epoch-making voyages, and follow with horrified gaze the bloodstained path of the slavers through the jungles of the "Dark Continent."

And at last, despite the long agony of the uncounted and uncountable centuries, Reade displays to our dazzled vision a world made free by mechanical power, aerial transport, and synthetic chemistry—a world made one in the Religion of Reason and Love.

507 pp.; leather, 4s. 6d. net, by post 4s. 10d.;  
cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.

(Full particulars of the Rationalist Press Association Limited, complete catalogue, and specimen copy of the "Literary Guide" free on application.)

London: WATTS & CO., Johnson's Court, Fleet St., E.C.4

*A Question of the Day.*

## Socialism and the Churches

By CHAPMAN COHEN

PRICE · THREEPENCE. Postage ½d.

## SEX and RELIGION

BY

GEORGE WHITEHEAD

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price - 9d. Postage 1d.

## The Foundations of Religion

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Paper - - - - - Ninepence

Postage 1d.

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

Second Edition in Three Months.

## GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

EDDINGTON, JEANS, HUXLEY & EINSTEIN

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington

Mr. Chapman Cohen is a philosophical critic of brilliant intellectual gifts. His book *God and the Universe* is the best, and perhaps the only serious attempt to winnow the scientific work of Eddington, Jeans, Huxley, and Einstein from its pseudo-philosophical accretions. Such criticism, coming as it does from the foremost Freethinker in the country, is particularly refreshing.—*The Sunday Referee*.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited)

Paper 2s Postage 2d.

Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

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

## War, Civilization and the Churches

By CHAPMAN COHEN

A BOOK THAT NONE SHOULD MISS

160 Pages. Paper 2s. Cloth 3s.

Postage—Paper 2d., Cloth 3d.

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

A Daring Book.

## THE BIBLE UNMASKED

— BY —

JOSEPH LEWIS

This book is handsomely produced and is now in its ninth edition. Arrangements are being made for its translation into various languages. The Bible is dealt with "faithfully," and in reading it many Christians will for the first time be reading the Bible, instead of seeing in it only what their religious teachers wish them to see. No greater calamity ever fell upon Western civilization than the acceptance of the Bible as the revealed word of God, and anything that tends to weaken its influence is helping the cause of human development.

Price—5s. post free.