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

Views and Opinions.

Testing the Power of Faith.

CHRISTIANS are fond of telling us that Christianity is a religion of experience. It is not always quite clear what they mean by this. Often they tell us that we Freethinkers cannot believe Christianity because we have never experienced it. On the other hand the same people tell us that we cannot hope to experience Christianity without first of all believing in it. And we thus have to believe before we can experience, and experience before we believe. The argument seems a little confused. Others tell us we must test Christianity before passing judgment on it, and if we have never been Christians we ought to remain silent concerning it. That is very similar to telling an Alienist that he ought never to pass judgment on a patient until he himself has been insane. Others content themselves with telling us of the rapturous and peaceful state of mind Christianity has brought them, without appreciating the fact that the same might be said of many other things—both spiritual and spirituous. On the whole the Christian use of the argument from experience leaves us where we were. It is not that we object to the test of experience, but merely that there is no genuine test by which the Christian is content to abide. Let any Christian give us a real, a scientific method by which Christianity may be put to the test of experience, and the Freethinker will not merely be the first to agree to the application of the test, he will quite cheerfully abide by it.

Rival Witch Doctors.

Where his own religion is not concerned the Christian is ready to suggest a quite reasonable test of religious belief. For example. There is in West Africa a body called the Christian Council, presided over by the Bishop of Accra. This body of Christians

is annoyed at the success of native religious practitioners, witch-doctors. So the Bishops, who has taken to these people a Bible which teaches the reality of witchcraft, heir of a Church which has burned many hundreds of men and women for being witches or wizards, a believer in Jesus, who also believed in witchcraft, wishes to do away with his native competitors. Those learned in the history of witchcraft will remember that one power possessed by witches was that of turning themselves into animals or birds. Curiously enough I have never heard of any witch turning herself into a jackass. Perhaps it was held that with the Christian Church in existence no one could compete with it in the art of turning people into donkeys. It will be remembered that the first triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was on the back of an ass; and the Churches have had an affectionate attachment for asses ever since. So the Christian Council boldly challenges the believers in witchcraft to get their wizards to prove the truth of their belief. They offer a reward of £10 to any witch-doctor who can eat fruit while standing five yards away from it, take something out of a sealed box without breaking the seal, or transform himself into any beast, bird or creeping thing. The reward seems very little, but the Christian Council is evidently not very anxious to run risks. Perhaps the smallness of the reward is an indication that the Christian Council is half afraid there may be something in it, and that the native magicians might have the power they claim to have. Of course, the magicians, if they are up in Christian apologetics, might reply, as do Christians in this country to similar challenges, that miracles cannot be worked to order, and that even "Our Lord" could not work miracles where faith was lacking. I really do not see how any Christian preacher could reply to this defence—without abandoning the essence of the defence he puts up against the Freethinker. Not that any genuine Christian, either at home or abroad, is likely to notice the illogicality of the Christian attack or defence. There are harps and halos and golden seats in heaven, but there is no chair of logic. The African witch-doctor might well reply to the Christian one that the spirit could if it would, and that is all there is about it. Something like the:—

... old woman of Sydney  
 Who had a disease of the kidney,  
 She prayed to the Lord  
 That she might be restored,  
 An' he could if he would, but he didna'.

\* \* \*

Why Not a Test ?

Following the example of the Christian Council one might offer the same kind of challenge to our witch-doctors at home. If there is one clear test laid down in the New Testament it is the one Jesus offered his followers. In his name they were to do great

deeds. They should take up a deadly thing and it would not harm them, they might drink deadly poisons and they should remain unhurt. Now the *Freethinker* will offer considerably more than ten pounds to any Christian leader in this country who will undertake to drink a mixture of our preparing unharmed, and we will undertake that it shall do more than make him sick. That is a clear and a simple test. It is one of the indications that they are really the Lord's disciples. Or if they do not care for that test they may name any other example that will offer a clear and indisputable evidence of the truth of their belief. They might take the mortality among those who pray and those who "blaspheme"; the sickness with children who are baptized and those who are not; the quantity of fish caught by fishing nets that are blessed and by those that are un-blessed; the danger of fire in houses that are inhabited by Christians and in those inhabited by Atheists; the productivity of a garden that is cultivated on Sunday and those that are cultivated on week-days only. There are scores of ways in which the Christian religion can be put to the test, just as the Christian Council suggests putting the religion of the West African to the test. And it is really far more important that we should settle this question of the reliability of the Christian religion than we should decide whether, the religious beliefs of the West African are trustworthy. As it is, the West African is apt to ask himself the question on what ground is he to give up the witch-doctor who says he can work miracles to adopt a religion whose medicine-men present him with a book which makes substantially similar claims?

\* \* \*

#### A Dangerous Generalization!

In commenting on this queer case the *Daily Telegraph* says:—

The fear of mysterious wisdom and occult powers is a curse to mankind, and not only on the Gold Coast. And yet I have no hope that the failure of any magician to come up to the scratch with his miracle will destroy the faith in magic.

That, on the face of it, is a passage that is full of "horse sense." The mere failure of a witch-doctor to make his medicine work is, in the vast majority of cases, quite ineffective as a means of breaking down belief in these practitioners. Let us suppose that the test of the Christian Council was accepted by the African medicine-men, and that as a result they failed. Would that cure the West African of his belief in magic? It is very questionable, for the Christian Council has as an alternative to the belief displaced another belief of exactly the same fundamental character. The real argument of the Christian Council is that the gods of the African are not real, but that Christians have some real gods on hand who can work greater miracles than is claimed for the rival deities. That is a phenomenon we see occurring over and over again in our very midst. A Roman Catholic who learns to reject the frowsy saints and bogus miracles of his own creed often turns round and accepts the highly-venerated miracles of the Protestant regime. The man who gives up the belief in orthodox Christianity is found a slave to the superstitions of modern Spiritualism. The Christian who laughs at the miracles of Lourdes proclaims his belief in the power of God to cure disease through the exercise of faith. With vast numbers of people it is just a question of which superstition they accept, but some superstition they will have. It is the mentality, the mental outlook that matters. In the absence of an altered mental outlook the religious man returns to his superstition as, to use a biblical simile, a dog does to his vomit.

#### Fear of the Invisible.

I wonder whether the *Telegraph* writer sees or would admit the full implications of his statement that the fear of mysterious wisdom and occult powers is a curse to mankind, and not only on the Gold Coast. For the rule is of world-wide application. Over the whole of savage life there is no greater terror than is contained in the fears of mysterious and occult powers that are believed to dominate life. It lies at the root of all the horrible customs with which travellers have made us familiar. These initial terrors are perpetuated through the whole of civilization. It is the foundation of every priesthood in the world, and is active to-day from the Roman Catholic Cardinal to the fortune-teller battering upon the ignorance of his dupes. The recrudescence of this fear of mysterious and occult powers was chiefly responsible for the decline of the ancient civilizations and the triumph of the Christian Church. It is everywhere the spiritual lash that holds man in subjection. So long as man believes himself to be at the mercy of occult powers he is helpless. That is why the Churches—Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, dwell upon the importance of believing in "spiritual" existences and try to crush every attempt to weaken their influence. "The fear of mysterious wisdom and occult powers is a curse to mankind," is a golden sentence and might be taken as a motto by every reformer the world over. Embodied in "sacred" books or established priesthoods they sanction all villianies and every oppression. The world will never be completely free until it has altogether shaken of their influence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Fake of the Holy Fire.

"We are upon earth to learn what can be learnt upon earth, and not to speculate on what never can be."

Landor.

"Keep your face to the dawn knowing no difficulties."—Emerson.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—Shakespeare.

EASTER is the most solemn festival of the Christian Religion, and the Greek Church is the oldest of the great churches of Christendom. So venerable is it that the so-called Church of England is by comparison but a mushroom of yesterday. This Greek Church has always exercised enormous power in the East of Europe, much in the same way as the Roman Church has abused it in other parts of the Continent. Indeed, it may almost be said that these two great churches assisted materially to shape the religious destinies of the whole of Christendom, so widespread has been their influence throughout the centuries.

By common consent the most striking celebration in any Christian Church is the Easter festival at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, which is annually the scene of very strange religious happenings. The climax of these ceremonies is the appearance of what is known as the "Holy Fire," which is not only a relic of medievalism, but one of the biggest fakes that even the religions of the world can show.

The audacity of these priestly scoundrels is only matched by the credulity of the simple-minded worshippers. The belief is fostered that at a certain moment on Easter Eve fire descends from "heaven" to the "Holy Sepulchre," where it is received by the Greek Patriarch and passed by means of a lighted taper to the assembled congregation. Multitudes of Christians swarm into Jerusalem from all parts and fight their way into the church to attend this weird rite. Under the old Turkish Empire a strong force

of Mohammedan soldiers, with fixed bayonets, used to try and keep order, but hundreds of worshippers at different times have lost their lives in the frenzied scrimmage to light torches, candles, and tapers from this alleged "holy" fire.

This notorious example of priestcraft in practice in the twentieth century, is by no means an isolated case. The Romish Church is not one whit better than her Greek rival in this respect. The annual swindle of the alleged liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples is just as disgraceful a piece of priestly trickery as the fake of the "holy" fire at Jerusalem. Nor is this all of the sorry tale. Europe is filled with faked relics of "saints," and the number of surviving pieces of the crown of thorns alleged to have been worn by the founder of Christianity shows that this ornamentation must have been originally the size of Trafalgar Square, whilst the relics of the true cross joined together would make a structure as high as the Eiffel Tower.

Such trickery may move intellectuals to laughter, but the faithful it only confirms in their belief. Just as the secretary of the Christian Evidence Society compiles a list of a score or two of notoriety who attend church or chapel, and points to the quaint collection as a certain proof that the whale did swallow Jonah, and that a snake made speeches in the Garden of Eden, so the Continental Christian likes to think of the priests as large scale philanthropists, who produce relics on the mass-production system, with a fine sense of generosity, and not wholly, perhaps, without an idea that it will at least fill the collection boxes.

Few things short of an earthquake can shake the belief of those with the will to believe. It is hard for a man to believe wrong in his wife, or a woman to believe evil of her children. It is at once the strength and the weakness of human nature. But priests are as fully aware of this as scientists; so they carefully cultivate this will to believe. We plume ourselves on our science and common sense, but we quietly allow whole armies of priests to take a hand in the education of our children, so that the rising generation is prepared to defend with passion what logic and common sense had else abandoned as sheer intellectual lumber. Far too many heads of colleges are clergymen or ex-clergymen. In one Cambridge college there have been only three laymen in a century. And, remember, every priest who gets into such a position of influence cares less about real education than he does of the monstrous propaganda of the religion he professes.

Wherever the priest gets into a position of influence he leaves a trail of deception and disorder. In Rome he is playing at kingship with a territory four feet by six. In Malta and in Ireland the priest has stirred up trouble. In Russia and Spain a clash has occurred with the authorities. In France the Third Republic has had to fight for very life against the intrigues of Clericalism. And priests do it all with the vile pretence of furthering a religion of love, and of advocating the brotherhood of man. It is shameful humbug. Put them into a position of real power and there is no more heartless despot, no one with a more cynical contempt for the ordinary citizen.

So far from priests being the friends of mankind they are simply exploiters of suffering humanity. They divide men into "sheep" and "goats" into believers and unbelievers. They wish themselves to be regarded as a caste apart, holier than other men. They do not want people to have more freedom, they want them to have none. They do not want men to have too much happiness, because, they say, this is a sinful world, and true happiness is only to be found in an alleged post-mortem existence. They do not

wish men to be too well educated, for men will not kneel at the feet of other men who know less than themselves. All priestridden countries are countries with low-grade education and with a high percentage of actual illiterates and criminals.

The priestly mentality is almost pathological. They think that men should be threatened, bullied, tortured, murdered, if necessary, merely in order that they themselves should have a comfortable living. For insisting on the right of an unbeliever to sit in Parliament, Charles Bradlaugh was persecuted for thirteen years. For opening schools free from clerical control Francesco Ferrer was shot. That the one happened in England and the other in Spain makes no difference, for the mentality of priests is the same the world over. And their profession is as honest as fortune telling. Many a poor old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a factory girl, after promising her a handsome husband and half a dozen children, but these men-of-god are allowed to take millions of money for promises of good fortune in the "beautiful land above."

This happens in the twentieth century when people have access to newspapers and books. Just imagine the condition of affairs in medieval times, when the world was almost submerged in ignorance and superstition. Even to-day priests are men of limited education, except in rare instances. They may know the patter of their sorry profession, but theology is the most useless piece of knowledge ever associated with education. Theology, however liberal and advanced it may be, has not yet reached the level of Freethought, nor can it ever do so until it ceases to be theology, and becomes simply the religion of humanity which Auguste Comte foreshadowed. For any purpose connected with the real welfare of the people, the Christian Religion might as well be dead and buried—as it will be when the people are sufficiently educated to perceive how they have been hoodwinked. Freedom is the greatest asset of humanity. Since history began, priestcraft has been its age-long and most determined enemy. There's an Easter egg for Christians!

MIMNERMUS.

## An Overlooked Instance of Design

(Concluded from page 164.)

AN Akida [Ruler] on the Kilombero River, East Africa, says Mr. Puxley, the Big Game Hunter, "told me that during the rains the loss of a postboy through crocodiles was almost a weekly occurrence." Describing the fierce methods of the beasts of prey, Mr. Puxley observes: "The normal processes of Nature make man's inhumanity to man seem kindly acts of benevolence. It is not a good world." (p. 57.)

Mr. Denis Lyell, in his book: *The Hunting Spoor of Central Africa* (1929) (p. 166), says that crocodiles abound in most of the bigger rivers and lakes of Africa, and advises: "Never bathe in any river, especially if it is at all muddy, as a ravenous croc. may slip up quietly, and either seize the person in his jaws, or with a swirl of his tail bring him within reach of the same deadly trap. . . . Thousands of Africans are taken and eaten annually by crocodiles." Mr. Lyell himself, had a very narrow escape of sharing the same horrible fate.

Besides Africa, these reptiles abound in America, India, Australia, Borneo, and most tropical countries. Some naturalists distinguish between the Crocodile

<sup>3</sup> F. L. Puxley: *African Game Trails* (1929). p. 56.

and the Alligator, but Sir Samuel Baker observes: "In America this reptile is generally known as the alligator, and some persons pretend to define the peculiarity which distinguishes that variety from the crocodile, but I regard the distinction in the same light as that between the leopard and the panther, the difference existing merely in a name."<sup>6</sup> Sir Samuel says that when he was in command of the Khedive's expedition: "our losses through crocodiles were very distressing, all of which were terrible examples of the ferocity, combined with the cunning which characterizes this useless scourge." (pp. 260-261.) He lost so many men, that he made a point of shooting every crocodile he was, and slaughtered a vast number.

Many animals, and insects are a danger, or a nuisance to man, yet sometimes, have some value in the economy of Nature, if it is only to prey on other vermin which would otherwise over-run the country; but nobody has ever discovered any use or virtue in the Crocodile. All hunters, and travellers, speak of it with horror and disgust. "The only feeling aroused in me by the crocodile is one of loathing," says Mr. Cherry Kearton. "The very sight of him makes me shudder."<sup>7</sup> The Crocodile will attack the largest and most formidable land animals, even the Buffalo and the Rhinoceros; another survival from prehistoric times, then may be seen an illustration of Tennyson's vivid "Dragons of the prime, that tare each other in their slime." His strength is enormous, says Mr. Kearton:—

A few years ago three observers saw a rhino come down to a river to drink. No sooner had he put his mouth to the water than he was seized by a crocodile, which began slowly but surely to drag him into the river. Imagine that struggle! The weight of a rhino is close upon two tons, and he is amongst the most powerful of wild creatures: yet even with the frantic strength born of terror he was no match for the crocodile, and in a very few minutes he was pulled under water. (p. 119.)

The weapons of the crocodile are the teeth of his great jaws, which close upon each other with the precision of a rat-trap, and his enormously powerful tail. Often, says Mr. Kearton: "He will lie apparently asleep upon a bank until some unsuspecting creature comes near. Then, instantly, the tail will be lifted and swung round to knock the victim at one blow into the river, where as it struggles the crocodile will seize it and drag it under water." And all is soon over. For, as Mr. Kearton further observes:—

Neither animal nor man when caught by the crocodile has the slightest chance of escape, and all is over in a few seconds. A man may foolishly be cooling his fingers over the side of a boat, a dog may be swimming, or an animal may be drinking—then a scream, a yell, a cry—a splash—a swift swirl of water—and finally silence while the crocodile drags his victim to the bottom or under some bank, there to eat him at leisure. (Kearton: *In the Land of the Lion*. p. 121.)

No sensible person would cross a river in Central Africa except by boat. "The fact he cannot be seen is no proof of his absence, for they can remain under water for long periods." And even when they are floating on the surface, they "are not very easily distinguished. Lying in the water with just a few inches of head showing, they look exactly like floating logs, and many an animal—and even many a man—has been deceived with fatal results." They

have "good eyesight and exceptional powers of hearing," says Mr. Kearton, who himself narrowly escaped providing a meal for one of these reptiles. Warned by a movement, he leapt to one side, while the crocodile's jaws clashed within six inches of his legs.

Mr. W. S. Chadwick, in his book *Hunters and Hunted*, classes the crocodile and the hyena together, and under the title, "A Beastly Brotherhood," devotes a chapter to them. Mr. Chadwick says he once saw a crocodile attack and actually overcome a buffalo bull; there was a lightning-swirl of waters, and the bull jerked his head up with the crocodile fastened to his nose. He shot both of them, and observes: "On looking at the nose I found that the crocodile's tremendous grip had crushed the bone to pulp, the flesh—like that on the foreleg—being torn clean away. It seemed inconceivable that such deadly power and ferocity could develop in a creature which—perhaps a hundred and fifty years ago—had emerged from an egg." (p. 115.) He also found native bangles in two he shot.

The old supporters of the Design Argument used to hold forth the wonderful design exhibited in the body of man. They could have held forth quite as eloquently upon the design in the crocodile, for Mr. Boulenger, of the Zoological Gardens, says of the crocodiles and alligators:—

They are indeed fitted admirably for an aquatic life, for apart from possessing webbed feet and a compressed tail adapted for propulsion in the water, their eyes, nostrils and ears are situated right on the top of their heads with the result that these organs are able to function when the reptiles are floating about with only upper part of their heads exposed. Further the nostrils and ears are furnished with movable valves which close when the animals are submerged, thus preventing the inflow of water. The eyes in addition to a pair of eyelids, are protected by transparent discs, whilst the very broad tongue is so attached that it forms a valve to prevent the water rushing down the throat when the mouth is open. (E. G. Boulenger: *A Naturalist at the Zoo*. pp. 79-80.)

The teeth of the crocodile are especially adapted for seizing its prey, says Mr. Morewood Dowsett: "as they interlock, which gives them such a grip when once they take hold of anything. Through the top of the upper jaw there are two cavities into which the two longest teeth in the lower jaw rest when the mouth has closed upon any object. These are the teeth used for grabbing their victims, but there are the long, powerful sharp sixty-eight teeth which perfectly fit between the interstices and are ready to hold on to any living object until it is either killed, or the flesh is torn from its body." (Dowsett: *Big Game and Big Life* (1926) p. 148.) Unlike the teeth of the lion and the tiger, who die of starvation when they lose their teeth, through old age, the teeth of the crocodile are hollow, and new teeth grow up inside them to take their place, and this is probably the reason, says Sir Samuel Baker, why this reptile "surpasses all others in the duration of life."

The fore feet, says the same authority: "Some what resemble the form of a short human hand; these are armed with five long horny claws, sometimes measuring four inches, and are used for holding the prey whilst tearing it with the teeth." (Sir S. Baker: *Wild Beasts and their Ways*. p. 255.) Mr. Puleston says: "They have five claws on their front, and four on the hind foot. Why the Creator favoured the front foot I do not know." (F. Puleston: *African Drums* (1930) p. 250.) We submit this problem to the Christian Evidence Society for solution. Mr. Puleston's young brother was seized by the hand, which he was trailing in the water while

<sup>6</sup> Sir Samuel Barker: *Wild Beasts and their Ways* (1891). p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> Cherry Kearton: *In the Land of the Lion*. p. 117.

crossing an African River, and pulled out of the boat and killed by a crocodile. Mr. Puleston regards this reptile as: "The essence of all that is bloody, relentless, loathsome, cruel, heartless . . . the most cold-blooded, sickening animal on earth" and thinks "the emblem of mercilessness should be the figure of a crocodile." (p. 249.)

Evidently, this is the Divine idea of a living submarine. Supposing some living ruler were to construct a mechanical monstrosity like the Crocodile and let it loose he would earn the universal hatred of mankind.

W. MANN.

## A Tribute to Militant Freethought.

PROF. J. Y. SIMPSON, D.Sc., F.R.S.E., of Edinburgh, who is one of the most prominent laymen in the Church of Scotland contributes to the official organ of that Church *Life and Work*, for February, an article entitled: "Militant Atheism: Its Challenge to the World." Dr. Simpson writes as if the disbelievers in supernaturalism were only born yesterday, though, as he ought to know, there were militant Atheists long before Christianity was heard of. It is also implicit in the article that the only substantial body of Atheistic thought is to be found in Russia, which by its propaganda is influencing other nations. Dr. Simpson conveniently ignores the fact that there were in Britain and America Atheistic organizations long before the Russian Revolution. It is all part of a plan to continue the Christian boycott of Freethought opinion among English-speaking peoples. Atheism we are asked to suppose is the cult only of semi-savage, ignorant and tyrannical foreigners who are seeking to corrupt the minds of the young. But this view will not fit the facts. Dr. Simpson cannot and does not try to explain away the anti-God convictions of a number of well informed highly educated and capable thinkers in Britain. He simply writes as if they did not exist. And he furnishes no evidence of the lack of disinterestedness or learning on the part of the foreigners whom he attacks.

The real apprehension at the back of the mind of Dr. Simpson is the growth of hostility to religion in Britain itself. Dean Inge betrays the same apprehension in some of his utterances. No doubt Dr. Simpson would readily subscribe to the Dean's childish doctrine that Freethought is proof of a sort of sickness following unnatural causes! If there is anything more unnatural than another it is the superstition of Christianity. Dr. Simpson consoles himself with the belief that man is incurably religious. Primitive man was incurably religious in most cases—not usually from choice but from fear or necessity. Man is yet incurably religious no doubt so long as he prostitutes his reason from whatever cause. Religion as a communal thing has invariably co-operated with Governments to secure their authority and further their ends. And it has paid religion very handsomely to do so. What Freethinkers desire is that all such alliances should be broken down and each man left absolutely free to form his own individual opinions on any subject—including religion and its history.

Dr. Simpson affects to account for antagonism and indifferentism to religious creeds and religious systems by a confusion of thought which cannot distinguish between ecclesiasticism and religion. He does not offer to show wherein the distinction lies. But we may take it for granted that all Freethinkers would be content with the withdrawal of official re-

cognition of ecclesiasticism and to leave the future of religion to the liberating searchlights of Humanism and the operation of natural laws. Freethought can have no part or lot in compulsion or coercive measures. In the view of Freethinkers, any man can entertain, and is entitled to entertain, opinions and ideas which they themselves consider the most unfounded and fantastic; but they do protest most earnestly and most vehemently against the holders of any opinion being invested with authority by the secular government and forming corporations and institutions for the propagation of these opinions protected by privilege and endowed with funds drawn from taxation of the general community. Freethinkers will never participate in the persecution of the holders of any opinion or the believers of any creed. They depend upon men and women delivering themselves from the tyrannical superstition of Christianity by the acquisition of knowledge assimilated according to the dictates of common sense, fair dealing and mutual human aid and affection. They believe that the highest interests of Humanity are served, and its salvation achieved by allowing natural feelings, natural outlets through rational channels.

Dr. Simpson of course puts belief before knowledge. He is exceedingly ingenuous in his attitude to the present state of things in Russia. Many Christians like him are content to swallow all the stories retailed here about the bitter persecution of Christians in Russia. But surely all the leaders of the Soviet are not such impracticable fools as British Christians would have us suppose them to be. We know that the retrogressive Greek Church as the ally of Tsardom had much to do in crushing and debasing the common people of Russia. But the Soviet has *not* followed the policies of persecuting, crushing and debasing the sections of the population (religious or other) which do not subscribe to the Russian economic policy.

Every priest of the Greek Church, so far as authentic information is available, who has been arrested and punished by the Soviet has been guilty of seditious or treasonable conduct or acts. But he is not so arrested and punished because of his profession. A member of any other profession or occupation who schemes against the Government is dealt with in exactly the same way. It delights the heart of Dr. Simpson to know that when some such priest has been arrested and removed another steps into his place. This is one of the "very beautiful things" that in Dr. Simpson's view are "happening in Russia to-day." Dr. Simpson should provide himself with a copious supply of salt when priestly stories from Russia are dished up to him. Is any Government to tolerate subsversive agencies which aim at piercing its very vitals? What about Spain? Dr. Simpson seems to be impressed by the activities of the Godless in Russia, Germany, France and Japan, and naively concludes: "Something is wrong somewhere." And in his call to the Christian Churches everywhere he exclaims: "In view of such a world issue how parochial and pathetic do our Church divisions and sectarianisms appear!" We agree; but Dr. Simpson is only repeating what has been said very frequently of late by a number of his fellow-believers. Yet there is no great advance, unfortunately for them, in moving towards the Reunion of Christendom—at least among Protestants who are impressed by the cohesion of Rome and its growing power—because you cannot mix oil and water. You cannot implicitly obey an authority which you are entitled to question. And once sectarianism has got a hold, each sect is passionately sure of its own principles which if necessary it will defend with brickbats

and bombs. For as Artemus Ward aptly put it long ago: "There is no fite like a religious fite."

Dr. Simpson is unfortunately as vague and uncertain in his definition of "religion" as most of his fellow-believers. In his references to Russian Communism (which he is even fain to stamp as of the nature of a "religion"! ) he does not make clear that there can be no religion without a supernatural basis. Many modernists find vagueness very convenient these days. But anyone who professes to speak on behalf of a nationally established Christian Church in Britain must be clear and precise. Some foggy minds have come to regard the word "religion" as applying to any enthusiasm, or system of ethics, moral philosophy or code of morals. This convenient evasiveness accounts for a large number of half-baked adherents nominally within the pale of the Christian Churches. Divorced from belief in a supernatural and actually living Being, the word religion has no meaning at all by itself. It becomes merged in *anything* which *any* man or woman may formulate for what he or she believes, is the benefit of Humanity.

We as Freethinkers are convinced that the emancipation and elevation of Humanity are only to be achieved when ecclesiasticism has been abolished. Everyone individually may be just as religious in belief and in practice (which does not break the law) as he or she pleases. The bane of ecclesiasticism and clericalism once lifted human beings will be enabled to see things in their true proportion and perspective. And their natural and human feelings will not tolerate the barren legacies which 2,000 years of Christianity have bequeathed to the world—such as many millions of unemployed and depressed human beings whose existence is merely a living death!

IGNOTUS.

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### Time's Lesson.

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WEEP not, my pretty, but regard the flowers;  
They, too, know hardship, they, too, savor pain,  
Yet sit they silent through the fly-slow hours,  
Nor even of the robber bee complain;  
When he despoils them of their honey store,  
Their fragrant perfume they outpour the more.

Weep not, my pretty, but regard the trees,  
Which wild the winter wind did howl around;  
It was no gentle, perfume-laden breeze  
That drove their roots more deep into the ground:  
The tender saplings bend but not complain,  
The more they bend, more sturdy they remain.

Weep not, my pretty, but regard yon rose,  
The sweetest flower in all this fair domain;  
Yet of a knife that prunes and grafts it knows;  
It knows by now the real worth of pain:  
A stronger tree, a finer flower has come  
From aching wounds about which it is dumb.

So, little maid, I pray you not lament;  
The blow, though hard, is not too hard to bear:  
I see you shake your head in wild dissent:  
Well, well, old Time will make this lesson clear:  
*Through pain comes wisdom, by it all things rise:*  
Be, therefore, brave and dry those pretty eyes.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

### The Free State Elections.

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IN a previous article I made mention of the Coercion Act, drawing parallels of what would happen during the Eucharistic Congress. The article was a mild one, yet it raised a furore in official circles that left the writer really wondering as to what he really did write. The *Catholic Mind*, semi-official organ of the Church, reprinted the article without comment, though its caption implied that all those who opposed the Coercion Act were infidels, etc. Since then the elections have been held and the opponents of the Coercion Act have been given the responsibility of forming the new Government.

What is *now* the attitude of the Church? Is the Church raising its arms in holy horror? Is it urging the people to disobey the laws of the new Government? Remember that the people were told that those who were opposing the Coercion Act desired to bring about in Ireland a situation similar to that obtaining in Spain.

The *Irish Press*, the organ of Mr. Eamon De Valera, has been carrying reports of the various victory celebrations held throughout the country. It is very interesting to note that heading the majority of these processions were the clergy. Rome does not place all its eggs in one basket. The new Government is not anti-religious, if anything, it is more clerical in its outlook than the previous Government. It is a long way to Tipperary, but it is a longer way to intellectual freedom.

The defeat of the late Government Party has been a defeat of Protestantism in as much as it has strengthened the opposition to this religion.

A leading Protestant discussing the matter with the writer was of the opinion that they had been unwise to link themselves too much with the Catholic elements. "You know," he said, "the situation in Spain would never have arisen if there had been a strong Protestant group." The conclusion to be drawn is that it is easy to keep the people divided if you have divided religious interests.

The present Free State Government will make Ireland one hundred per cent Catholic in name, if not in deed. It will not make many advances to the Protestant elements. In a word Ireland is destined to be the land of one religion and the one religion over which a victory means that final victory to which all sane men and women cheerfully look forward to.

The future for Ireland does not look so promising. The dying embers of religious bigotry and intolerance are being slowly wafted into flame. The fires will burn in the South and the fires in the North will be rekindled. A people that is suffering from hunger and want may find their attention drawn away from their social needs, but history teaches us that the realities of life as they become more real have a tendency to thrust themselves before our eyes in such a manner that they cannot be ignored. The future in the Irish Free State may not be so promising, at least it will be interesting.

ERIN.

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### Acid Drops.

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Religious newspapers, as is usual at this time of the year, have been expatiating lengthily about the "meaning of the Cross." To-day, of course, the fact that there are millions of people concerning themselves about the "meaning of the Cross" indicates no more than that millions of people are in mental bondage still to pre-civilized conceptions and antiquated modes of thought. However, a pious contemporary asks, "Why did Christ die on the Cross?" and answers, "If it be said 'He died that we might be forgiven,' the question is insistent—what is the relation of Christ's death to the forgiveness of sins? We need hardly remind our readers that the question is one which has exercised the minds of Christians of all ages." Furthermore, we learn that the Church has never officially formulated an orthodox doctrine of the Atonement, but that there have been several theories. "When theologians proceed to dis-

cuss the question . . . their differences begin." Quite so; and it is almost needless to say that the discussions throughout the Christian age have led to squabbling, ill-feeling, and bloodshed. After noting this, we are almost persuaded that the Christian religion must have come from God. No human being could have invented so ingenious a creed which, while purporting to instruct men how to love one another, so completely succeeded in setting men hating, squabbling and fighting one another—which fact, we respectfully suggest, might be taken into account in all future discussion on "the meaning of the Cross."

It is comforting to hear that the 11 Cardinals, 500 Bishops, and hundreds of clerics, secular and regular, who are to visit Dublin for the Eucharistic Congress will have "ample if not very luxurious" provision made for their accommodation. The gentleman in purple and fine linen will evidently not be in the same plight as one for whom "there was no room in the Inn," and who "had not where to lay his head."

Seeking to encourage individuality of thought and action, a newspaper exclaims, "Let us have our own ideas about things." The suggestion is a good one. We hope it will be appreciated by our contemporary's many "stable companions," owned by a small group of Press magnates, whose aim appears to be to standardize certain narrow views and opinions all over the country. In these days of syndicated Press opinion, independent opinion is rapidly becoming a rarity, which all who appreciate the part played by the clash of ideas in assisting progress will deeply deplore. There is one thing might be added. The Press "bosses" have a good excuse to offer in defence of their principle of standardizing opinion and suppressing the contrary. It is a principle divinely inspired. It is the one which the Christian Church adopted and practised from the commencement of its rise to power.

The Wesleyan Committee on Sunday Questions has decided to acquaint the Home Secretary with the especial importance which the Church attaches to the following resolution of its Conference:—

That Sunday music-hall or variety entertainments, aviation meetings, travelling menageries or circuses, prize-fighting or boxing, greyhound racing, and other commercialized exhibitions or recreations be explicitly declared illegal, if it should be established that the existing legislation and the present amending measures are insufficient to effect this purpose.

The Wesleyan Conference, of course, objects to people being amused on Sunday, and it objects to anybody earning money on Sunday, except parsons. What the Conference seeks is the enforcement of old laws on the creation of new laws which will compel everyone else to conform to the narrow and bigotted views of Wesleyans. What an inspiring sort of religion these bigots believe in!

The Imperial Alliance for the Defence of Sunday announces another glorious victory. Hastings Town Council has rejected a motion for the playing of games in the public parks. This sort of victory, however, does nothing to help either religion or the churches. It merely exasperates the man-in-the-street and alienates him still further. The churches are very eager to capture the "outsider." But these petty interferences with other people's freedom and opportunity to enjoy Sunday as they please are a revelation of the truly pious spirit which is merely repellant to the "outsider" with his more tolerant views.

The Rev. Tydeman Chilvers, Spurgeon's present successor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, has been having a few rounds with his rev. brother, Dr. R. T. Glover. The latter, in an article to the *Times* wrote of Spurgeon in terms which, if they lacked reverence, did not lack truth. There is no doubt that in his fight against what he called "downgrade" theology, Spurgeon

lost the day. What is called "the simple gospel" is still in vogue at Newington Butts; but we fear the *Christian World* is right when it affirms that present-day Baptists include many modernists who, if Mr. Chilvers has his way, "cannot be numbered any longer with the evangelicals." There is good reason why such controversies as this should be regarded in nonconformist circles with disapprobation. It makes it hard for the looker-on to believe what the *Christian World* is so anxious to assure him, that "the Evangel is one, in whatever theological dialect it is preached." Christianity is the one thing in which when every essential element in it has been eliminated no change is effected!

Writing about the difference between the French and the British in regard to foreign affairs, "Candidus," of the *Daily Sketch*, after declaring that the French are realists and the British sentimentalists, adds the following:—

For some reason or other our politicians during the war chose to encourage the idea that we were fighting to save France and Belgium from Germany. Surely we were doing nothing of the kind . . . No one in France or Belgium believes that we fought for the sake of any other country but our own.

Seemingly it is thought that a little truth about the war may now be safely permitted to escape. We like that "For some reason or other." It is a usefully vague phrase for enabling specific reasons that might affront national self-esteem to be ignored. The dissemination of the lie about the British motive for going to war was part of the campaign—so enthusiastically championed by the parsons—to "moralize" war. Incidentally, the parsons' wholehearted acceptance of the lie, and their splendid invention of other pseudo-altruistic and ethical excuses for the war, were largely instrumental in the lie being accepted generally. What the parsons have now to explain is, how they failed—although (as they claim) under the direct inspiration of God—to detect the lie, and also why they gave false guidance to the nation. In light of these facts, the British public might well, we think, be very sceptical now as to the value of the parsons' advice and leadership in any national affair whatever.

In another article, "Candidus" writes about the "public-school type" of man. Its range of sympathies, he says, is limited. It is, however, extremely conscientious, has a fine sense of honour and of duty, and is usually well-mannered and tolerant. He adds: "But it certainly lacks variety and is too much standardized. That is why the type is deficient in originality and lacks intellectual curiosity." "Candidus" might well have suggested some explanation for the various phenomena mentioned. A possible explanation is that the public-school type is the product of the blend of two cultures—pagan and Christian. The pagan influence makes for urbanity and tolerance. The standardization and the lack of originality and intellectual curiosity is due to the Christian influence. For the influence of the Christian religion has always made for standardization in accordance with a narrow conception; and for antagonism to original thinking, and to freedom of thought and speech—as the Church's treatment of heretics and sceptics clearly shows. The quite natural result is discouragement of intellectual curiosity and mental fearlessness. If our analysis is accurate, may we suggest that the means by which the public-school type could be improved should be obvious?

Some of those bright young things who, in the near future are going to rule the world, have been asked by the *Daily Express* to give their opinions on religion and needless to say they have all been carefully selected from the "safe" side. Mr. H. W. (Bunny) Austin, for example, is quite a "whole-hogger," though, strange to say, he commences by sturdily throwing overboard the divinely-inspired apostles. "My belief," he tells us frankly and without a scrap of supporting evidence, "is that Christ has been wrongly represented."

Mr. (Bunny) Austin completely disagrees with the picture of Jesus as frail, weak, and a man of sorrows. He thinks Jesus was "magnificently built, tall and strong, and his mind even stronger than his body." In fact Jesus, had he lived now, would have been the champion tennis player of the world; and no doubt other writers will insist that he would have swum the Channel both ways in one go, flown round the world in record time, solo, in a Moth, beaten Campbell's records to a frazzle, knocked Carnera completely out in less than a round, and have been worth thousands of pounds in an exchange for a football cup tie.

Directly you begin to question the Gospels, you can let imagination run riot and Jesus can be anything you like. For the rest Mr. (Bunny) Austin can pile on typical religious nonsense by the column and the pity of it all is that anyone should think his opinions on religion worth anything whatever. We predict he will come in for some rude shocks on the question one day.

The long delay in returning the kidnapped Lindburgh baby is a matter for astonishment. Quite early in the history of that crime special prayer-meetings were held in a large number of Protestant churches, while Cardinal Hayes ordered prayers to be offered up to the Almighty in every Catholic church in his jurisdiction. Perhaps the noise of all this combined praying was not loud enough to arouse the Deity from his customary slumbers. And it should also be remembered that the country in which this kind of thing is possible is predominantly Christian.

It is a very sad world! Sometimes. Catholics blow the harp and play the trumpet with glee when someone famous in the literary or artistic world is "converted" to the one and only holy and true Church. But to leave the Church when once converted is tough luck and worse still when the Catholic convert exchanges the one true Church for the one and only true prophet. The *Universe* laments the passing over from Jesus and Mary to Mahomet and Allah of Princess Muda of Sarawak, and can only console itself with the original remark that human nature being what it is, these things will occasionally happen.

But we always understood that the gates of Hell couldn't prevail against Peter or the Rock or the Church or whatever it was and here is a veritable victory for Allah! Now *what* could it be that the Princess didn't like in Roman Catholicism seeing it came straight from Jesus? Perhaps Allah and Mahomet were even stronger than the gates of Hell.

The Rev. A. E. Baker of York has been delivering some interesting (or otherwise) sermons on the teaching of Jesus. He admits that "Our Lord's teaching about human life has an essentially 'otherworldly' emphasis." Of course. No one can read the supposed words of Jesus but must admit that this world did not matter very much to him. The whole emphasis of Christian teaching is what is going to happen when you get "translated". Heaven, with its harps, angels singing, and Paul possibly preaching, will be the good Christian's reward. The bad Christian will go to Hell and its delightful eternal fires. What a fate either way!

Mr. Baker also tells us what the teaching of Jesus is on "work and wages." This ought to bring our religious trade unionists and Labour people on his—Jesus's—track. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "That," says Mr. Baker—or Jesus, we are not clear which—"is your work." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." "That," says Mr. Baker—or Jesus, "is your wages." It would be interesting to know what the average missus of the average working man would say if he came home on Saturday with that tale. Would it buy the week's groceries, for instance? Oh, these dear clergy!

Mr. Godfrey Winn is another of the wonderful young people who are going to regenerate this terrible old world of ours. Naturally you can only do it if you believe, not only in Jesus, but in heaven and hell, and the devil and everything else you are required to believe in if you are really orthodox.

"I firmly believe," he says with genuine enthusiasm, "that one day and in another world from ours, there will come a reckoning, an hour of judgment, when rewards and punishments will be handed out with a scrupulous sense of justice for the manner in which we have lived our lives on this earth. Those of us who have really tried, however humbly, however unsuccessfully, to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ will be abundantly rewarded and welcomed by Our Lord in Paradise while those who have betrayed and denied Him, will have to stand for ever miserably outside the gates."

After reading that, can anyone say *our* work is done? That there is no more room for fighting Freethought? It is, of course, difficult to imagine anyone believing this kind of drivel, but perhaps there are more Godfrey Winn's than we like to think there are. But it is amusing to see the way in which our "great" national papers are striving to bring the "people" back to God. Fancy any sane person believing in Paradise or Hell because Mr. Godfrey Winn believes in them!

### Fifty Years Ago.

CHRISTIANITY is professedly based on the teachings of the Bible. Christians swallow the miscellaneous contents of that inspired volume as greedily as the hungry whale did poor Jonah. Moved by the spirit of cant and humbug, they proclaim from the house-tops the praises of the Jew book. It is in their eyes the paragon of virtue, the pink of purity, the quintessence of morality. But what are the facts? Every crime is sanctioned, all kinds of profligacy are consecrated, every violation of morality instigated, in the pages of that book, either by the mouth of Jehovah, or by the commandment of his priests and prophets. The villainies perpetrated on the Egyptians and Canaanites, the putrid abominations sanctioned with respect to the fair daughters of Midian, the filthy orders piled up in such nasty passages as Genesis xxxviii., 9; 2 Kings ix., 8; and xviii., 27, which are only specimens of others too numerous and indelicate to mention, abundantly prove this charge. If the Christians should ever venture to make it an article of faith to imitate in their daily lives every act of villainy and filthiness which God inspired the Jewish saints of old to commit, or winked at when committed, most of the virtues would be conspicuous by their absence, and earth would become a veritable pandemonium. The unwillingness of Christians to follow the footsteps of the friends of God, and to be in all things like unto them, demonstrates the real humbug of Christianity, and the practical scepticism of the "true believers" concerning the utility of walking by faith and not by sight. *Autres temps, autres mœurs.* Abraham to-day, must not lie, Jacob may not cheat, Moses may not murder, Samuel may not assassinate, David may not perpetrate the basest treachery, the grossest immorality, and most fiendish cruelty; the elect may not set every principle of morality, mercy, and justice at defiance in their dealings with the gentiles and unbelievers, if they hope to become the friends of God, to play the golden harp, and live in mansions in the sky. At any rate, if they choose to go in for these sort of things, they must duly repent before they die, and thus square the matter with God and cheat the devil out of his own—both of which are obligations which apparently did not devolve upon the saints under the old régime.

The "Freethinker," March 26, 1882.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- C. GREEN.—Your letter will appear in our next issue.
- H. MATTHEWS.—Mr. Cohen will not be speaking in London until the Autumn.
- S. MAYO.—You say you do not agree with the opinions expressed by some of our contributors. Neither do we. On the other hand we expect that some of our contributors do not agree with either of us. So there you are!
- G. BURGESS.—Glad to learn that the New Branch is attracting notice in the press. Persistency with reasonableness will tell in the long run.
- J. HILL.—Catalogue of our publications has been sent. 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, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- 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.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

## Sugar Plums.

There is very little news this week concerning the trouble at Birkenhead—at least it is not advisable to say much at present. All we need say is that proceedings are being taken, and that the principle agents in the affair may get the surprise of their lives. Mr. Cohen summoned a Special Executive Meeting last Tuesday evening, when the matter was fully discussed, the President's action in the matter endorsed, and a further course of action decided on. So much for the moment. The issue that is being raised may have important bearings in several directions.

Meantime we are taking what advantage we can of the agitation in Birkenhead. Arrangements are being made for a wide distribution of literature, and other steps will be taken so far as means—financial and others—permit. We must make our enemies pay for their bigotry.

The Manchester Branch brought its winter lecturing season to a successful close on Sunday last with the lectures from Mr. Cohen. In the afternoon the Chorlton Town Hall was well filled, and in the evening a large number had to be content with standing room only. Mr. Monks occupied the chair on both occasions, and it is to be hoped that his appeal for support from all sympathisers will meet with a satisfactory response. The Branch hopes to embark upon a more ambitious programme in the near future, and that ambition may meet with gratifying results if everyone will do what he or she can to secure success. On Saturday evening the Branch held a very successful Social and Whist-Drive. Mr. Cohen had intended to be present, but Society business kept him in Liverpool.

The financial year for the N.S.S. ends on March 31, and it is desirable that all subscriptions should be paid by then. Beyond the nominal amount fixed by the Society, the amount is left to the good will and means of members. The number of new members this year has been larger than usual, and there should be a more than corresponding increase in the income of the Society. This never equals the expenditure, but we should like to see it approximate more closely than it has done of recent years.

Arrangements for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. are proceeding, and Branch Secretaries are asked to see that all motions for the Agenda are in the General Secretary's hands by April 2. Motions may also be sent in by private members up to the same date. The Conference will be held at Manchester on Whit-Sunday, and it is hoped that all Branches will be well represented, and also that, as on previous occasions, members of the N.S.S. other than delegates, will be present in large numbers.

On Thursday, March 31, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will address the Tooting and District Co-operative Men's Guild, on "Freethought and Freethinkers." The meeting will be held in the Co-operative Hall, Upper Tooting, S.W.17, at 8 p.m. Admission is free, and open to non-members of the Guild.

Mr. Victor Webb, Evangelist, conducting a mission at the Albert Hall, was interrupted by Communists. He ejected the interrupters. Commenting *Observer* of the *Observer* says:—

Mr. Victor Webb, after personally ejecting some Communist disturbers from his Albert Hall meeting, returned to the platform and prayed to be forgiven "for dealing roughly with some human beings." In practising the turning of the other cheek it is always better to begin with some one of your own political convictions.

Glasgow saints are reminded of Mr. G. Whitehead's lecture on "The Evolution of Life from Microbe to Man," in the City (Saloon) Hall, Candleriggs, to-day, Sunday, at 6.30 p.m. The subject promises a very interesting evening, and an excellent opportunity for introducing orthodox friends.

Professor H. J. Laski will deliver the Twenty-third Conway Memorial Lecture on Wednesday, April 6, at 7 p.m., at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, his subject being "Nationalism and the Future of Civilization." Admission will be free.

Mr. Alan Handsacre's book, *The Revenues of Religion*, is expected to be on sale about April 21. The book has grown to larger proportions than was anticipated, and the price will therefore be 1s. 6d. paper and 2s. 6d. cloth. We think the work will adequately fill a gap in our propagandist literature, and will prove useful and informative to all.

The *Church Times* reviewer, we note, was not by any means as easily rushed off his feet as was the *Morning Post* over *The Religion of Scientists*. "It may well be asked what useful purpose is served by this method of collecting opinions," he says, and he continues, "obviously in the search for truth, there is no advantage to be gained by the mere counting of heads." The reviewer thinks, however, the book will be of "real value" to the clergy though it must be "ephemeral." But is not the whole point of the book its value to the public in general? Of value to "the clergy" means it is almost as dead as the proverbial doornail already.

## Masterpieces of Freethought.

### XII.

#### ANACALYPSIS.

By GODFREY HIGGINS.

### II.

(Concluded from page 187.)

As we have already pointed out, Higgins called himself a Christian, and therefore he believed there really was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, but the twenty years' labour on his *Anacalypsis* must have given him some sorry shocks. He simply could not believe in Mary—though his Jesus obviously had a mother. In quoting the Rev. Dr. Stukeley on Mary, Higgins adds: "Thus we see that the rev. and learned gentleman, Dr. Stukeley, has clearly made out that the story of Mary, the queen of heaven, the mother of Adni (Hebrew) or Adonis, or the Lord, as our book always renders the word, with her translation to heaven, etc., was an *old story* long before Jesus of Nazareth was born. After this, Stukeley observes, that Ariadne, the queen of heaven, has upon her head a crown of twelve stars. This is the case of the queen of heaven in almost every church on the Continent."

Note what Mr. J. M. Robertson has to say in *The Jesus Problem*: "The central mythological fact is that a Mother-Goddess, a "Madonna" nursing a child is one of the commonest objects of ancient worship throughout Asia and North Africa . . . Mary in the gospels, the virgin bearing her child on a journey, in a cave, is the analogue of a dozen ancient myths of the Divine child."

Over and over again you will find Higgins saying something the same as this throughout these two big volumes of the *Anacalypsis*. In their 1,400 odd pages of small type, hundreds of references to gods and goddesses will be found, all of which he claims to have checked from authoritative sources; it was no mean feat to compile his work even though it took him twenty years of hard research. He adds: "In the service of liturgy of the Carmelites, which I bought in Dublin at the Carmelite Monastery, the Virgin is called *STELLA MARIS*; that is, in fact—the star of the Sea—'Leucothea'—Venus rising from the sea."

And again: "Though there can be no doubt that the celestial virgin of the sphere was one original source whence the Madonna, Regina Coeli, and Mater Dei, were derived, yet the goddess Cybele was another. She was equally called the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Gods. As devotees now collect alms in the name of the Virgin, so they did in ancient times in the name of Cybele . . . Our Lady-day or the day of the Blessed Virgin of the Roman Church was heretofore dedicated to Cybele . . . It is also evident that the idea of Mary being the mother of God, arose from the Mai of India, the spouse of Brahme."

Higgins shows the connexion of a good deal of this matter with phallic worship and then observes ". . . the mysterious Maria or Maia—we may now ask ourselves whether we have not this word in *Mare*, the sea, and whether Maria was not the aria of M, that is the place of M, residence of the female generative organs." Thus from a totally different standpoint, Higgins arrives at very much the same conclusion as Robert Taylor with regard to the myth of Mary—though it is only fair to add, it is by no means certain either arrived at finality. A great deal may yet have to be delved into before we can ex-

plain the myth of Mary or Jesus, but the work of men like Godfrey Higgins and Robert Taylor—both fine scholars—must be taken into account. Whatever is the eventual truth Higgins devoted a good deal of his space to a discussion on Hebrew, Sanscrit, and other languages. Hebrew perplexed him a great deal as he was constantly finding in Hebrew roots extraordinary meanings more or less hidden from the profane. He never asked himself the question as to whether Biblical Hebrew was an artificial language; he took it for granted (like most investigators in the problem) that at one time the "Jews" spoke it and so one finds him devoting space and time in discussing what this word meant or what that word conveyed. He was forced, against his wish to admit that there may have been, or even that there actually was a "secret doctrine" in Hebrew after all. "There is something very curious," he says quite mystified, "about the Hebrew word Ab or Abe . . . Here the secret doctrine shews itself." Of course, he agreed with that great authority, Richard Payne Knight that many of the ancient religions did have their "mysteries," and it took him a tremendous amount of reading and investigation to learn that Judaism was no exception. He came across that wonderful word "Zohar"—"splendour," and learned that the Jews had a "Cabala," or "secret doctrine," and had he studied that with a Jewish initiate, he certainly would have been surprised how Hebrew letters and symbols and numbers could have formed the marvellous and mysterious conceptions found therein. He came to the conclusion that "old" Hebrew, the Samaritan and the Arabian were the same language; that Abraham was "Brahma"; that Hebrew and Sanscrit were children of a sixteen-letter parent, and that "the Brahmans had an exclusively sacred and unspoken language."

He should have gone further and admitted the same of the Jews. Throughout the work Higgins asks all sorts of questions without being able to give an answer. For example, he points out that no one seems to have mentioned Solomon's magnificent temple outside the Bible. Why did Herodotus not describe it seeing that no more inquisitive historian ever lived? He visited Babylon and Egypt and never a word about Solomon? I feel Higgins like many of us nowadays, wondered whether, after all, Solomon was not a myth, and that the reason Herodotus never said a word about Solomon or his temple was that neither ever existed. It is a question worth discussing anyway.

Higgins spent a great deal of his time discussing the connexion of the pagan fables of the sun-myth with the Hindu and the Christian religions, and shows how it is impossible to ignore the allegorical meanings attached to many of the stories and words used. A good many of these explanations of the origins of Christianity are nowadays discarded, but I am by no means sure with justification. It is true that quite a number of Rationalists insist on a real Jesus, and therefore on a real Mary. I never read the late Dr. Conybeare, for example, without feeling he never doubted for an instant the story of Jesus of Nazareth. He seems to me to have had in his mind's eye a Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Christ, who had a son called in his younger days Master Jesus Christ, and they all lived like any normal English family in a place called Nazareth, the father following the occupation of carpenter, with or without Trade Union sanction. The miracles were just playful additions to the story of the life of Jesus, written four authentic times by his enthusiastic followers, and need not seriously be believed in. Against that attitude of mind, one feels simply hopeless in discussion, and the best thing is to let such be-

lievers severely alone. Higgins, in spite of his belief in Jesus of Nazareth, did not believe the stories told of him in the numerous gospels. He did not believe in the crucifixion, and he quotes one of the Christian fathers who claimed that Jesus lived till he was fifty years of age. He also felt there was something extraordinary about the name Jesus and so devoted a long chapter to a discussion of the word and its connexion with the word Jehovah. I cannot, unfortunately give even a *précis* of it, but here is his conclusion:—

It is thus proved by fair deduction and logical reasoning on unquestionable authority that the God IVE, Jehovah, IE or Jah of Jews, the God El, the Apollo of Delphos, the Deus, the Jupiter, Jovis, Jovispater of the Latins, the god Mithra of the Persians, and all the gods of the heathens are identically the same person or being . . . one and the same; and this same being *the sun* or shekinah of the self-existent Being. In short that Jehovah was the sun; for if Jehovah was IAO and IAO was the sun, Jehovah must be the sun. Dr. Parkhurst admits that Jesus was Jehovah, but if Jesus was Jehovah and Jehovah the Sun, it follows that Jesus, that is the Romish Jesus, but not Jesus of Nazareth, must be the sun . . . Jesus being mistaken by the founders of the Roman Church for the God Sol or the sun, it follows that the rites, ceremonies and doctrines of the devotees of the God Sol or the sun may be expected to be found in their religion . . . most of the rites and doctrines of modern Christianity are nothing more than the rites and doctrines of the old religion collected by devotees of very weak and mean understandings and applied either to a real or to an imaginary personage. Which of these two is the truth it will be the final object of this work to determine. Space forbids (as usual) any more quotations. Indeed, it would be almost impossible to select anything further in any case so numerous are the passages I have marked. Higgins is packed with detail of great significance and suggestion; and in my opinion, he is still a force to be reckoned with in the elucidation of Christian and religious origins. The pity of it is that so few people can read his work because it is so expensive to buy and so scarce to find. But those of us who have done so can testify to the whole-hearted search for truth shown by its author, Godfrey Higgins. And can anything greater mark any work?

H. CUTNER.

### Anthropological Christianity.

"They relate that the sacred tree is cut on that day on which the sun comes to an apex of the equinoctial apsis; on the next day they go round with trumpets; on the third day the sacred ineffable fruits of the god Gallus are cut. After these are the Hilaria Feasts."—F. C. JULIANUS (Imperator), *De Matern Decorum*.

"Thammuz came next behind,  
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured  
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate,  
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,  
While smooth Adonis from his native rock  
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood  
Of Thammuz yearly wounded."

Milton, *P. L.*, i., 446.

It is said that when St. Augustine landed in England, he found the Britons observing Easter in the Asiatic way. There was nothing strange in this. If an intelligent Pagan were able to revisit "the glimpses of the moon" and observe our celebrations of Good Friday and Easter, he would smile when told that the observances were in celebration of a certain Jesus who was put to death in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago, and who, on the third day, rose again. "Why," he would say in astonishment, "is not this your Spring Festival such as has been ob-

served by every nation? How came you to hold the anniversary of a man's death on a movable date? The man who stole the saucepan and made a new lid for it took good care that the lid fitted. But the Christian lid, put on the old Pagan saucepan, does not fit. The fact that your Easter shifts according to the phases of the moon shows it is our astronomical festival. But you say it is not a man you celebrate, but a God. Of course it is; the great god of gods, the power of revivification symbolized in every tree, and in the visible luminary, the life-giving sun, who has now crossed the vernal equinox and rises again triumphant over winter and death. Have you never heard how we celebrated the resurrection of Adonis, even as the Syrians did that of Tammuz, the Egyptians of Osiris? Go, read in Theocritus how those delightful gossips, Gorgo and Praxinoe, babble at the festival of the god, how they listen to his dirge, and rejoice at the decorations." Matthew Arnold says: "Adonis was the sun in his summer and in his winter course, in his time of triumph and his time of defeat; but in his time of triumph still moving towards his defeat, in his time of defeat still returning towards his triumph. Thus he became the emblem of the power of life and the bloom of beauty, hastening inevitably to diminution and decay, yet in that very decay finding 'hope, and a renovation without end.'" <sup>1</sup> What does the name Easter tell us? What connexion has it with Jesus of Nazareth? According to Bede, and the best modern authorities, the word Easter is derived from Eostre, the Saxon goddess of the east, signifying the dawn and spring, whose festival our forefathers celebrated at this season. The Saxon *Oster* means "to rise." Throughout the pagan world the revivification of vegetation was celebrated with festivals, which symbolized the reproductive powers of nature. The time when the sun, passing over the vernal equinox, proclaims himself redeemer of the world from winter is naturally that of the feast of the Passover, not the mythical crossing of the Red Sea but the yearly passage of the world from the bonds of winter to the life and vigour of summer. At this season the Egyptians held a feast to Isis, and the palm was carried about as the symbol of reproductive power and triumph long ere Palm Sunday was supposed to signify the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem. Easter is probably allied to Ishtar, the Assyrian goddess of love and fecundity, who was said to have descended to hell. She is similar to the Phœnician Astarte and the Ashtoreth of the Zidonians for whom Solomon built the Mount of Corruption (2 Kings xxiii. 13) at Jerusalem. The Syrian God Tammuz or Adonis, was first mourned and then believed to have risen from the dead. The same fable was related of the Egyptian God Osiris. These gods all represented the reproductive power of nature, and were celebrated at spring festivals.

There is no trace of the celebration of Easter as a Christian festival in the New Testament (Acts xii. 4, is a translation; *Easter* should be *Passover*), or in the writings of the apostolic fathers. Early in the history of the Church we hear of two divisions of the original Salvation Army, who disputed for centuries about the time when Easter should be kept. Eastern churches, comprising many Judaizing Christians, kept the 14th of Nisan, the Jewish Passover, but the Western Church, composed mainly of Gentiles, on account of the connexion of the resurrection with the day of the Sun, kept always the first day of the week. At the end of the second century Pope Victor wrote an imperious letter to the Eastern Church commanding them to conform to the Western practice. They refused, and were stigmatized as heretics. Epiphani-

<sup>1</sup> *Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment: Essays in Criticism*, p. 196.

ius tells us: "Some began the festival before the week, some after the week, some at the beginning, some at the middle some at the end, thus creating a wonderful laborious confusion." At the Council of Nice, under Constantine, it was fixed as now on the first Sunday after the full moon happens upon or next after the vernal equinox. As the Egyptians excelled in astronomy, the Bishop of Alexandria was appointed to give notice of Easter Day to the Pope and other patriarchs. This, however, did not ensure uniformity. We learn from St. Ambrose (Epist. 23) that in 387 the churches of Gaul kept March 21, while those of Italy postponed it to March 28, and those of Egypt a week later still, to April 5. Similar discrepancies are mentioned by Gregory of Tours in the year 577; nor did they disappear till the eighth century.

The fact of Easter being a movable feast proves its astronomical origin, and the differences among early Christians show their ignorance of the date when their god-man is alleged to have burst the bonds of death. They have never even fixed the year of that extraordinary occurrence with any certainty. While the Gospels make Jesus prophesy that he would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, the narratives make him to have spent only one day and two nights. According to the Synoptics, the crucifixion took place on a Friday, the first day of the Passover, but according to the established principle of the Jewish calendar, the first day of the Passover never can fall on Friday. To make the crucifixion happen on the Passover is as improbable as to allege that an Irish Fenian was hanged on a Sunday. At that time there were no courts sitting, and certainly no execution could be permitted according to Jewish law. It is most unlikely that the Roman governor of Judea would so offend Jewish prejudice as to permit an execution at the time of the Paschal feast.

That the Western Church in early times celebrated the last supper on the one day and the resurrection on the next indicates that the Christian festival sprung from the old Pagan offerings of bread and wine to the sun-god being mixed up with the Jewish sacrifice of the Paschal lamb, and this may have led to the legend of the Lamb of God having been put to death at the time of the Passover, the period of the year when the representative sacrifice was offered to ensure the fertility of the soil.

It is difficult for Christians to realize how close was the resemblance which the rites adopted by the Church in honour of Christ's resurrection bore to those practised by the Greeks, Phœnicians, Syrians, Egyptians, Hindoos, and many other nations in honour of the god of resurrection, under the names of Adonis, Dionysos, Thammuz, Osiris, Krishna, etc. Godfrey Higgins in his *Anacalypsis* (ii. 106), says: "We have already seen that in Hindustan and Britain the procreative power of nature was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox by Phallic rites, Huli festivals, May poles, and April fools, and is even yet continued in these extreme points of East and West—of India and Britain—where the young girls, with their swains, little suspect the meaning of their innocent gambols—gambols which, if our devotees understood, they would view with horror. On the same day in Persia, the triumph of the Good over the Evil Principle took place—the triumph of Light over Darkness, of Oromasdes over Ahriman. At the same time, in Egypt, Phrygia, Syria, were celebrated the deaths and resurrections of Osiris, Atyr, and Adonis. In Palestine, again, we find, on the same day, the Jews celebrating their Passover, the passage of the equinox from the sign of the Bull to that of the Ram, and of the Sun from the in-

ferior to the superior hemisphere; and, to conclude all, on this day we Christians of Europe still continue to celebrate the victory of the god Sol, known to all nations above enumerated by his different names—by us 'The Lamb of God' which taketh away the sins of the world—on Easter Sunday, having risen to life and immortality, triumphing over the powers of hell and of darkness."

The ancient Christian year began with Easter. Religious worship was celebrated by night; and the vigils continued till cock-crowing announced the birth of the new sun. Then the stillness of the midnight vigils was broken by the joyful acclamation, "The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!" Easter day was celebrated with every demonstration of joy. In the Roman Catholic Church we may see more of the Pagan element. At cock-crowing tapers are lighted. St. Peter's at Rome is illuminated, and the vicar of Christ, his vestments blazing with gold, pronounces a blessing upon the world from a high balcony at mid-day. Eusebius, in the sixth book of his "Ecclesiastical History," chapter viii., tells us that on one occasion the early Christians were celebrating "the solemn vigils of Easter," when, to their dismay, they found that oil was wanted. Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, commanded water to be brought, and this he miraculously changed into oil in order that the celebration might be duly observed. This story shows that the early Christian Easter was quite similar to the Pagan solar festival.

The Spring equinox was observed among all the ancient nations of the East as the beginning of the new year, and as a season of rejoicing in honour of the sun-god, and of his return to clothe the earth with verdure, and "fill men's hearts with food and gladness." He appeared then to rise triumphant over darkness and death, and to bring back life and light to the world. Hence the fable of the sun dancing on Easter Day. The sun was said to dance because the chief or high priest who represented the sun actually did dance at this season. In Sussex Good Friday is still known as "Marble Day," because marbles were also played as a sun-charm, as also were shuttle-cocks.

A rare book entitled *Recreation for Ingenious Headpieces*, published in London in 1667, contains a ballad by Sir John Suckling, in which this belief is alluded to:—

"But Dick, she dances such a way!  
No sun upon an Easter Day,  
Is half so fine a sight."

Sir Thomas Browne says, "We shall not, I hope, disparage the resurrection of our Redeemer, if we say the sun doth not dance on Easter Day; and although we would willingly assent unto any sympathetic exaltation, yet we cannot conceive therein anything more than a tropical expression." In the early days of Christianity in Britain both ecclesiastics and laics used to play at ball in the churches at Eastertide. Chambers' *Book of Days* tells us how bishops and deans took the ball into the church, and at the commencement of the antiphon began to dance, throwing the ball to the choristers, after which they had refreshments, a gammon of bacon (said to be eaten in abhorrence of the Jews) being the standard dish. The Easter cakes, which in olden times the clergy presented to their parishioners, were, like Good Friday buns, also survivals of the solar warship, a sign of which so evidently remains in all our churches having their altars built to the east.

The Rev. T. D. Fosbrooke, in his *British Monachism*, thus naively describes the ball dance: "A ball not of size to be grasped by one hand only, being given out at Easter, the dean and his representative

began an antiphon suited to Easter Day; then, taking the ball in his left hand, he commenced a dance to the tune of the antiphon, the others dancing round hand in hand. At intervals the ball was bandied, or passed to each of the choristers. The organ played according to the dance and sport. The dancing and antiphon being concluded, the choir went to take refreshment. It was the privilege of the lord, or his *locum tenens*, to throw the ball; even the Archbishop did it." (p. 56.)

Among significant Easter customs was that of putting out all the church fires and re-lighting them on Easter morning from a flint. In parts of Ireland great preparations were made on Easter Eve to wind up the seven penitential weeks. The cottier's wife placed a fat hen and a piece of bacon in the pot about eight or nine o'clock. At midnight the monotonous silence would be suddenly broken by the clapping of hands, laughter and uproarious merriment, combined with the cry from lusty lungs of "Out with the Lent!" The merriment continued about four hours, when each family would retire, and before break of day rise to see the sun dance, a practice not confined to rustics.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded.)

### The Wood and the Trees.

Few persons are free from what the meticulous law of Evidence calls "unconscious bias." It is not only that:

"Our past deeds travel with us from afar, and what we have been makes us what we are"; but environment, early training, education and physical and mental qualities or defects as well as relationships and associations often seem to fight against a latent or later desire for complete liberty of judgment. If we recognize that, in fact, no human being is more detached and impartial than it is in human nature to be, we shall be slow to dogmatize about the dubious. Even so, it is observable that sectarianism of temper often survives emancipation of thought, and that dogmatism is not peculiar to divines, nor bigotry to believers.

To illustrate, and to reveal the *raison d'être* of this article. At a recent lecture by the Editor of this paper a questioner asserted—apropos of a reference by the lecturer to prevalent conditions in Italy and Russia—that "there is no more liberty in this country" than in those mentioned. Replying, and to the obvious surprise of the questioner and a few persons with him, Mr. Chapman Cohen said: "The Freethinker stands for Free-thought everywhere and for everyone. I would fight for that freedom for Christians not less than for others. The Freethinker who would not is hardly worth calling a Freethinker." Looking at the surprised faces of the questioner and his friends it was borne in upon us that a kind of orthodox rigidity is not uncommon in the most heterodox circles. Indeed that quality is one of the besetting sins of persons of one idea, whether the idea is that of some advanced cause or of a religious creed. It is, it seems, easy for a conviction to become an obsession. The bugbear of intolerance haunts the zealot, and is hard to beat off. Truth is greater than any single conception of it. "Truth shifts and changes like a cataract of diamonds; its aspect is never precisely the same at two successive moments. But error flows down the channel of history like some great stream of lava or infinitely lethargic glacier. It is the one relatively fixed thing in a world of chaos" (Mencken and Nathan's *The American Credo*.)

Freethought cannot be adequately conceived in that negative aspect which appears to be the only one seen by most of its enemies and by some of its professed friends. A broadcast sermon described an Atheist as "one who believes in nothing" which is not more fatuous and false than the suggestion that Atheism is merely anti-religion or anti-Christianity. There would be no danger of mere narrowness in Freethought if it was

recognized that, unlike many advanced movements, it has as its end not so much an immediate and attainable objective as the creation of a type of mind that will take many of such abjectives in its stride or make them unnecessary. For instance, there are people who have a religious passion for anti-vivisection or anti-vaccination—our views on these causes are irrelevant here—and give their particular interest a disproportionate place in their minds and activities. If, however an Act or Acts of Parliament were passed putting an end to all grievances with regard to these matters, these movements would be at an end, and the enthusiasm devoted to them would have to find new fields to conquer. But does anyone suppose that if Parliament repealed the Blasphemy Laws: Disestablished and Disendowed the Church; and Secularized the State these measures would put an end to Freethought or the need for its propagation, or make an end of superstition if, as Dean Inge says he believes, mankind is only now in its rattle and bottle stage? Secularism has indeed a practical programme for achievement; but that programme is a consequence of Freethought and not its cause or its end.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton has somewhere said that it is the trouble with modern thought that it is so far behind the times. This is not true of modern thought; but there is something in it as applied to some modern thinkers. It fails as an indictment of doctrine; but it might succeed, in some measure, as an impeachment of practice. Thus the itch for attaching labels to persons and things which seems to be an incurable complaint with some "advanced" persons does not produce anything but futile disputation. A label is invariably a limitation, and frequently a lie. If you think of the hard words handed about by those persons who specialize in being "Anti"—this, that, or the other, and of the amount of space devoted in the organs of advanced causes to the washing and mangling of controversial linen, generally about differences of a very minor character, between adherents of the same organization or cause you will not be inclined to dismiss these observations as superfluous. From the standpoint of individual thinking, as well as from that of organized propaganda, those people who cannot see the wood for the trees ultimately impair their own judgment by the very process which they apply to others.

We practice the temper which we hope is both clearly advocated and consistently maintained in this article by quoting a few lines from a Christian writer who was much better and bigger than his creed, viz., the late F. W. Robertson: "Enlarge your tastes that you may enlarge your hearts as well as your pleasure: feel all that is beautiful, love all that is good. Save yourself from all sectarianism: pledge yourself to no party: be a slave of no maxims: stand forth, unfettered and free, servant only to the truth."

ALAN HANDSACRE.

### Is War Useless?

IN your issue of March 13, the writer of "Acid Drops" speaks of "the senselessness and the uselessness of war." As this subject has hitherto been treated rhetorically rather than scientifically, I venture to make a few remarks.

It is estimated that man has existed for about a million years, and, so far as we can judge from the habits of the lowest savages, he has been always at war. Would your contributor assert that during the whole of that period war has been senseless or useless?

If he would, then he disapproves of the existence of most of the people now in the world, for nearly all of them owe their existence to war. Take the Angles and Saxons. Fifteen hundred years ago they lived on a small area of land at the mouth of the Elbe. From there they attacked England, and took it from the Welsh. Then they attacked North America, and took it from the French and the Red Indians. Then they attacked Australia, and took it from the Aborigines. Since then they have taken New Zealand from the Maoris, South Africa from the Kaffirs, and many other countries from their former inhabitants.

The English race now numbers well on for two hundred millions. Had it remained at the mouth of the

Elbe, it could not possibly have numbered more than five millions. Every inch that it has gained has been gained by war. If our own existence is useful to us, war must therefore have been useful to the English.

I need hardly labour the point, for even Norman Angell frankly admits all that I have hitherto said. In Chapter 4 of *The Great Illusion*, he gives many illustrations to show that war has been very useful in the past. What he does say is that war has become useless owing to changes which are "the work of the last forty years." In another place, he even mentions thirty years as the time within which war has become useless.

In a word, Sir Norman thinks that war has been useful for a million years. During all the time that Britain was grabbing a quarter of the world, he thinks war was useful. About 1880, however, Britain had grabbed all she could ever hope to grab, and exactly at that time war ceased to be useful. The popularity of *The Great Illusion* has given Englishmen the reputation of being devoid of the faintest gleam of humour, and in order to show that there is at least one person in England who possesses such a gleam, I beg to challenge Sir Norman's conclusion.

I maintain, for instance, that Japan could gain quite as much to-day by taking many of our colonies from us, as we ever gained by taking them from their former owners.

Japan has seventy million people on a group of islands not much larger than the British Isles, and of which only a fifth of the land is level enough for agriculture. As a result, her people have to live on a Spartan diet consisting almost wholly of rice, because animal food requires five times as much land as vegetable, and there is no room for it in Japan. Not only meat, but butter, milk, cheese, and eggs, are almost wholly unknown. Less than half the people ever taste fish. To get this simple diet they have to work perpetually, and wherever they go they are considered marvels of industry.

Not far from Japan are two gigantic islands. New Guinea and Borneo. They are four times as large as Japan, and have at least ten times as much level land. They have an abundant rainfall, are rich in coal and minerals, and their climate is admirably suited to the Japanese. At present they are owned by Britain and Holland, but, owing to the fact that they are far too hot for the Northern European, they are almost entirely unpopulated, and continue so from generation to generation.

If Japan could get these islands, it is obvious that she could gain all that Britain ever gained from America or Australia. What prevents her? Merely the British fleet. Let Japan sink the British navy in a battle off Singapore, and she can stretch out her hand and annex New Guinea and Borneo without another blow. With very few blows she could also annex Australia and New Zealand. Surely it is madness to say that Japan would find such a victory senseless or futile.

There are similar cases all over the world. At present the white race holds a ludicrously large portion of the world, and the British Empire holds a ridiculously large part of the land occupied by the white race. Half the population of the world lives in Japan, China, and India, and everybody with the smallest power of observation admits that the people of these countries are as able in mind and body as the white man. If the white man imagines that he can coop these people up for ever in half of Asia by merely quoting texts from Norman Angell, he is in for a big surprise.

If your contributor only means that there are wiser ways than war of settling these differences, he is right. We shall indeed be fools if we wait for the battle of Singapore. But the wise thing is not to say that war is futile, but to take immediate steps to remove the cause of war. These causes are two: pressure of population and unfair distribution of territory. Two remedies are therefore needed: universal birth-control and a fair distribution of land among the peoples of the world. There should be an international land court to transfer places like Borneo and New Guinea from the incompetent hands of Britain and Holland to nations that can make a proper use of them. When these things are done, war will end. Until they are done, it will go on.

R. B. KERR.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

OH COME ALL, YE FAITHFUL.

SIR,—One of the foremost of those daily affairs called newspapers—the *Daily Express* (circulation umpteen 1—0) recently published five articles contributed by some of the more notable members of the younger generation. These articles were headed, "My faith is this," and it is sufficient description to say that generally speaking the gist of them was, "I have found my God"—"Power of Prayer," "Bible the Book for the Bedside."—"Modern Miracles," etc.

Following the usual practice Mr. Jas. Douglas wound up the proceedings with one of his famous "summing-up" efforts, to the accompaniment of letters of praise for the various writers and much back-slapping all round.

Now in the same issue of the *Express*, which contained the article by Jas. Douglas, appeared a heart-breaking account of the sufferings of some poor peasant folk in Carpathia, who are in the grip of famine, one paragraph of which is all I need quote:—

"In the mountains parents cannot even afford to clothe their children with a shirt, and the little mites sit naked and shivering in miserable hovels, sharing the bare boards with calves and swine. The children are so undersized through lack of nourishment that six-years-olds present the appearance of babies."

Here, I think Mr. Douglas will admit, is material for a miracle on a large scale, if ever there was, here is a grand opportunity for the champions of prayer to show what they can do. I took the liberty of writing to the *Express* and pointing this out, but I'm afraid they know as well as I do how much use it would be to attempt to rectify the matter by the means they profess to believe in. Accounts of similar happenings in history supply the answer.

ALF. MOSS.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): 7.30, Messrs. F. Day and C. Tuson.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting will be held at White Stone Pond, Hampstead, near the Tube Station every Sunday morning at 11.30 a.m. Speaker to-day Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; at 3.30 and 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Hyatt, Tuson and Wood. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, W. Stephen Sanders—"The Roots of Civilization."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, Hall No. 5, near Clapham North Station, Underground): 7.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Freethought and Socialism."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, April 4, at 8.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren will read a paper on "What is the Meaning of *Faust*?"

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mr. J. H. Van Biene—"Ignoring the Obvious."

TOOTING AND DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MEN'S GUILD (Co-operative Hall, Upper Tooting Road, S.W.17, Thursday, March 31, at 8 p.m., Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Freethought and Freethinkers." Admission free.

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—First Ramble of Season on Good Friday to Ken Wood. Meet 11 a.m. at Hampstead Tube Station. Non-members welcomed.

### COUNTRY.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Saloon) Hall, Candleriggs (Entrance Door D.): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead (London)—"The Evolution of Life from Microbe to Man." Silver collection.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"What Must We Do to be Saved?"

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A Reply to Cardinal Manning

By Robert G. INGERSOLL

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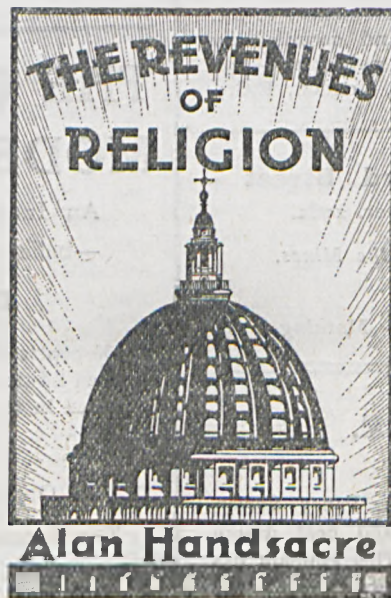
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