

# THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

Challenging God.

Does a man who has "whole-heartedly" believed in religion at an early period of his life—particularly a religion such as Christianity, in which the element of fear plays so large a part—ever completely shake off its influence? I am convinced that complete liberation seldom occurs. Such a man may perceive the complete intellectual worthlessness of religion; he may have a full knowledge of the origin of religion in helplessness and ignorance, and be quite convinced that no other basis for it exists or can exist. But in the deeper currents of feeling, in the manifestation of predominantly emotional states, he will be found yielding an unconscious recognition to the power of his early fears. To use a very hackneyed but useful phrase, he does not believe in religion, but he is afraid of it. And in such cases what is manifested is not the fear that one may have in facing an overwhelmingly superior physical force, but the fear of too greatly outraging a long established taboo.

I am trying to express the psychological analogue of what takes place in the sphere of physical disease. There are diseases which a person may acquire in early years, and from which he may, as it is said, effect an apparently complete recovery. But the recovery is only partial. Some modification of structure, of functional attitude has been effected, and, in relation to that or to some other or later disease, the organic balance has been altered. On a psycho-physiological level we had the discovery made during the war that the vast majority of cases of so-called shell-shock were due to early experiences and not to the war. The war was only the occasion for an expression of the injury received years before.

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The "Old Old Story."

Looking over a mass of Bradlaugh literature I have been struck with the seriousness with which even such a character as the great Iconoclast took the famous "Watch story." It was said that at some lecture or

meeting Bradlaugh pulled out his watch and dared God to prove his existence by striking him dead in three minutes. For years Bradlaugh tracked down this story, accurately described those who told it as liars and slanderers, demanded apologies, and threatened and instituted legal actions to protect his character against this "defamation." This resentment was not expressed against the implied slander on his intelligence, but against an attack on his character. The Christian liar said to his hearers, "I will show you the kind of person we have to deal with by . . .," etc., etc. The Atheist said, in effect, "I am not that kind of person. I do not challenge the deity to demonstrate his existence by striking me dead. I say I have no belief in his existence, and am willing at any time to put forward reasons for my disbelief. But I will not affront religious feeling by challenging God to prove his existence in that way." In the result the denial did not prevent the ordinary Christian liar repeating the lie, but it did help to strengthen the religious belief that whether one is praising or criticizing a deity one must approach him, or it, with a degree of caution that one need not exhibit towards other subjects.

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The Appeal to God.

Now, in substance, the watch story is as old as religion, and is embedded and expressed in all genuine religion to-day. And it was the religionist who began it. Early religion is a mass of organized fear. As nothing can come without the co-operation of the gods their action is seen in both good and evil. Driven to desperation by hard strokes of fate here and there a desperate man may have defied the gods to "do their damndest," and take the consequences. And religionists have always asserted that when ill happened to man it was either due to God's desire to "try him," or to God's intention to punish him for his ill-deeds. Quite obviously, if there is a God, and if he does anything at all, his providence must be exhibited in this world and in relation to man. People do pray to God for a safe journey or for recovery from illness; and they do think that an escape from a railway disaster or from an earthquake is something for which to thank God. Common expressions, apart from formal expressions of belief in sermons and confessions of faith, all move on the lines of the watch-story. What else is the significance of such phrases as "I wonder God does not strike him dead," or "It is God's judgment on him."

The appeal to God is also seen in trial by ordeal. The innocence or guilt of men and women was for ages decided by their walking over red-hot bars, or swearing on holy relics, or by other tests, all of which implied the direct action of deity. It is seen in the New Testament where Jesus promised his followers that "In my name" they should drink deadly things un-

harmful. It is in the old Bible in the challenge of Elijah to the prophets of Baal, and in the story of the children who were devoured by bears because they mocked the prophet of God. It is with us to-day in the legal oath, and in the belief of some stupid coroners and magistrates that a man who does not believe in God cannot be trusted to speak the truth. One of Bradlaugh's greatest fights was against this particular superstition.

It was thus the religious world which set the example of challenging God to do things. Believers began to grow angry when unbelievers took them at their word and decided to test the question. This is not the only case in which a thing is either criminal or praiseworthy as it is used for an established belief or against it.

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#### Why Not?

In all seriousness why should not an Atheist ask the Christian for a decisive test as to his belief? The Christian is fond of arguing that experience—individual experience—is the real test of Christianity. Christian literature is full of stories in which God has blessed men believing in him, and punished others for disobeying him. These vary from the boy who was drowned because he played games on Sunday, to the Bishop of London who believed that the allies won the war because they were fighting on God's side. In another direction Professor Tyndall offered to equip a ward in a hospital with the newest scientific appliances, and test it against another ward which used only the power of prayer. Why then should not an Atheist test the power of God with a watch and three minutes? It is to be noted that the Atheist takes all the risks; he does not ask God to show that he exists by killing his own followers, although there are more religious people than there are Atheists, and they could on the whole be better spared. The Christian is asked to risk nothing—except the substantiality of his belief.

Why, then, should not the Atheist challenge God to this test if he is so inclined? On the face of it there is no more in it than in an Atheist who is ill saying to a Christian, "You say that I can only be cured by the grace of God. I do not believe it, and therefore in declining I am challenging him to do what he likes." It is no more than John Stuart Mill did in his famous statement that if God would send him to hell for not believing certain things "Then to hell I will go." I agree that the Atheist is taking no great risk; it is something like a man challenging the Matterhorn to fall on him because he does not believe in the historicity of William Tell. As a test of Christian belief the watch test is as good as any that has been placed before the public, and quite as legitimate.

The Atheist cannot argue that religious questions ought to be treated with greater "reverence" than others. Surely it is part of our case against the common law of blasphemy that religion should be treated exactly as are other subjects. Had Bradlaugh agreed to treat religion as a subject apart he would never have had much of the trouble he experienced. Ought we to adapt our speech to the feeling of Christians whenever we are speaking on religion? That may be a good "safety first" device, and there are occasions when it is useless or suicidal to act otherwise. But it is surely part of our case that no Christian is justified in feeling hurt because an Atheist ridicules something which is to him ridiculous, or denounces something which seems to him bad. Rules of public order and decency must always exist, but to claim special rules for religion is something that all Freethinkers should resist.

#### The Survival of the Primitive.

I see no other explanation of the phenomenon we have been considering than the workings of the primitive religious virus. I quite agree with those who say that this challenging of God is, under given circumstances, a poor display. It does not require courage for a man who is a convinced Atheist to challenge God to strike him dead. It does not require courage for a man to defy a God in whose belief he has no existence. It is impossible for his challenge to be either accepted or acted on. But I am not interested in the repudiation of a lie; it is the indignation with which such a charge is received that provides the interesting circumstance. And the way in which it is faced is a tacit admission that "reverence" ought to exist in some degree with all who handle religion, whether they believe in it or not.

Fear of the Gods, the belief that the Gods are beings whom it is dangerous to offend is one of the oldest phases of human mentality. From the earliest times the gods have been credited with a peculiar *Mana* which it is dangerous to encounter. The names of the gods had to be uttered with great ceremony, and often at great risk to the user. Their service has been surrounded with great solemnity, and their altars could only be approached with profound respect. For thousands of generations this peculiar atmosphere has accompanied the belief in God; it is guarded by law and custom—the latter the hardest of the two to break. The feelings thus developed are amongst the deepest in our nature, and it is not displaced easily or quickly. The poison is there, and it can only be completely eliminated when mankind has made for itself an environment to which the idea of God is foreign. We all have tailed bodies, and to use an expression of Winwood Reade's, we have also tailed minds. Millions of people have to-day outgrown, intellectually, the belief in a God, but the primitive fear still lingers, enforced by survivals in science and philosophy. The primitive is always with us, and it manifests its presence in a thousand and one ways.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### The Puzzle of the Press.

"Stuffing the ears of men with false reports."

*Shakespeare.*

THE Press Combines of to-day and their blatant newspapers are among the most valued and constant allies of the Churches. Liberal and Labour papers, even more than those of a Conservative hue, both in what they print, and in what they suppress or distort, do more for the Christian religion in this country than most of its professional advocates are able or competent to accomplish. The *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*—and most of the bigger Conservative papers in the provinces—still treat religion with favour, but they do not turn every clerical mountebank into a first-page news story, give more space to some cock and bull story about faith-healing or "splash" a rush of converts to an itinerant missionary's penitent form at the expense of reporting the serious proceedings of political, scientific and literary persons and societies.

The Tory papers appear to take it for granted that the State Church is a branch of the Civil Service, and should therefore be treated with respect. Free-thought, on the other hand, is regarded as being respectable if professed in the upper circles of society, otherwise it is a vulgar affair and unsuited to their chaste columns. The more popular "dailies" seem to think that any form of religion is far better than none. A man may be a decent citizen if he worships

a stuffed owl in the privacy of his own back garden, but he must be an ogre if his bookshelves are ornamented with Chapman Cohen's awful books. Christadelphianism, Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, Spiritualism, Christian Science, any charlatanism with a veneer of religiosity, must, if necessity, be preferable to what is now called "Anti-Godism," but which used to be known as Atheism.

For example, the *News-Chronicle* (London) is a Liberal newspaper with great traditions, yet its editor is willing to challenge the verdict of the Intellectuals by publishing actual rubbish. The editor often expresses his severe disapprobation of frivolity and sensationalism in the newspaper press, yet he is himself open to the soft impeachment, and not entirely unconscious of a desire "to tickle the ears of the groundlings." In a leading article on Russia (March 16) he is sponsor to the following invective:—

It is a kind of grotesque tragedy that the pioneers of the millennium in Russia should have taken up with a form of Materialism which was exploded in Western Europe a generation ago. The Anti-God Movement in Russia is simply a crude adaptation of Haeckel's philosophy which hardly any self-respecting scientist will consent to-day to take very seriously.

What can one say of writing such as this? It is worthy of a parish magazine, but the *News-Chronicle* purports to be a great national newspaper. There are many journalists for whom the inscription "Died of humbug" is good, and good enough. But the man who occupies the seat formerly used by Charles Dickens; the man who writes for the newspaper which numbered Harriet Martineau among its contributors, should not be one of them.

The cut-throat competition between established newspapers serves to emphasize the struggle for existence of the small and select circle of advanced publications. If editors, who swim with the tide, find it hard to make headway, it only shows the enormous difficulties that have to be contended against by those who battle against the tide of ignorance and superstition. By a strange anomaly the cheapening of the cost of papers has been accompanied by an increase in the cost of production. It is this increase which has placed nearly all papers at the absolute mercy of the advertisers. While the price of newspapers remains low, the cost of production is colossal. Apart from the costly machinery capable of printing millions of newspapers in the shortest possible time, circulation and distribution and organization are very expensive. A few carts were sufficient for a newspaper a generation ago, but nowadays distribution alone costs a small fortune.

All this commercialism results in the diminishing of the power of the editor, and the growing tyranny of the advertisement manager. This is an unmitigated evil. It means that everything is sacrificed to huge circulations. Sensation is the aim and "news" stories the end of most journalistic effort.

The "glorious free press" is a bad joke. Editors move along the line of least resistance. Freethinkers are not ignored, but they are invariably subjected to insolence and wilful misrepresentation. The liberal and democratic London *Echo* throughout the whole of its career always insulted the memory of a great man by dubbing him "Tom" Paine. It was equivalent to deriding another great man as "Bill" Gladstone. When Gerald Massey died the press referred to him as a "Christian Socialist." He was neither the one nor the other, but he spent the greater part of a long life in attacking the Christian Religion. Anatole France was a Freethinker, but a daily paper hood-

winked its readers by suggesting that, although Anatole France had been called a Pagan, he was haunted by the preoccupation of Christ. Recently when John M. Robertson died nearly all the obituary notices emphasized his devotion to politics and Shakespearean literature, and forgot his contribution to Freethought.

Anti-clericalism is and long has been a definite movement in European politics, but most British journals write as if the Russians were the first to attack Priestcraft.

Let there be no mistake on this point. To give them their due the writers of this trash do not all believe it. It is not due to fanaticism or ignorance, but is simply the demand of the combines for a "safe" policy. It is, in the last analysis, a matter of business. Journalists know better than that Freethinkers are microcephalous idiots, but their masters wish to curry favour with the clergy and their congregations. The result is that the readers of newspapers are kept in blissful ignorance of the intellectual ferment that goes on outside the narrow limits of the daily press and if the press of to-day does much to degrade the intellectual currency we must not place the blame upon the working journalist who is often compelled to sacrifice his personal principles in order to dispose of his professional services. The same man may serve successively on papers of all parties, and, so far as his own opinions are concerned, may, and often does, maintain them faithfully, even if he does not mention them at the office. It is however in the manipulation of "news" much more than in dealing with matter itself controversial—whether political or religious—that the most evil is done, and where the decent journalist is forced by economic considerations to handle "stunts" which he knows are not straight. There are some few newspapers which stand out from the general ruck, but, taken by and large, it must be admitted that modern journalism has fallen from the high estate and esteem which it held and enjoyed when papers were organs of opinion and not the mouthpieces of vested interests and profit-seeking trusts.

MIMNERMUS.

## Great Victorians.

THE present century has witnessed a revision of the reputations of many of the great men and women, glorified during the Victorian era. They have, to use an American term, been debunked.

The late Lytton Strachey's witty and caustic *Eminent Victorians* (1818) and *Queen Victoria* (1921) are outstanding examples. Other reputations to suffer a slump are those of Carlyle, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Ruskin. As for the painters whose works were considered immortal contributions to art for the most part, to mention their names is to provoke a smile. Pictures which have changed hands for several thousands of pounds, have recently, realized less than a five-pound note in the sale rooms.

It is true, as apologists for the Victorian era are not slow to point out to Freethinkers, that such men as Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Swinburne, were Victorians. True, they lived in that era, but they were not of it. Their works were feared and hated by the vast majority of the people, led by the Churches, and were considered to be inspired by Satan.

In a recently published book entitled *The Great Victorians*, edited by H. J. Massingham and Hugh Massingham, an effort has been made to restore some of these humpty-dumptys to their position on the wall. The editors have collected a good many essays on prominent Victorians, written by popular writers of to-day.

Mr. H. J. Massingham, by the way, was editor of that organ of Nonconformity *The Daily News*, now merged in the *News-Chronicle*. Mr. Massingham himself contributes an essay on Professor Thomas Huxley, by far the most vigorous in the book. He is a true survivor from Victorian times (he was born in 1860) and his sentences have the authentic ring of the hatred with which the Victorians regarded Huxley's materialism. He pays tribute to Huxley's unequalled powers of exposition: "so lucid an intellect, encyclopædically equipped. . . Its cutting edge went through Victorian sentimentality and make-believe as though they were soft cheese." (p. 254.) Huxley, says Mr. Massingham, was "Darwin's Grand Elucidator," and "The new method of verification by logic and evidence was indeed a destroying angel in the dark corners where the grubs of inertia, pretension, and traditionalism thrived." Of Huxley's assault on the Bible, says Mr. Massingham:—

When Huxley returned from the crusades of the new religion, faith in the Hebrew cosmogony and in all the magical apparatus of the sacred books had henceforward to part company with reason. The scientific method blew the miraculous element in the Scriptures into dust so long as the apostle of the new faith demanded the verdict of evidence to justify our belief in it.

Of Gladstone's pitiable defence of Genesis, he says: "Poor Gladstone's rhetoric was burst like a paper bag." So far we can agree. But it is when Mr. Massingham comes to deal with Huxley's Materialism, that life and thought are natural not spiritual products, that he loses all self-control and empties the vials of his wrath in terms more appropriate to the columns of that modern mouthpiece of the Middle Ages, the Catholic weekly paper the *Universe*, than from the pen of an ex-editor of a great London Newspaper. "What Huxley did," we are told, "in his sacred office of propagating the scientific method was to substitute one set of fantastic beliefs for another." And further, of "the incalculable mischief that it did. . . He, the father, brought despair upon all the children of the new century. . . The evil that a man of Huxley's calibre left to live after him will never be calculated." (p. 263.) And, finally, concludes that: "it would undoubtedly have been better and happier for mankind if he had never been born." (p. 264.)

No better testimony could be given to the power and prevalence of present-day Materialism, than his bitter screed, conceived in fear and hatred, against Huxley its great progenitor.

Thomas Carlyle, another writer greatly revered by the Victorians, but whose stock has since undergone a great slump, is dealt with by Mr. A. Wyatt Tilby, who observes of Carlyle: "the whole world was for him a stage set for action, and God Himself became a God of Action a kind of super He-Man using lesser human heroes of His as his chosen instruments in that endless and therefore ineffective warfare against sin and suffering and evil which an ethical God of Action must be presumed to maintain." (p. 132.) This point of view, says Mr. Tilby, is untenable, "the facts are against it, as they are against all such methods of explaining the problem of evil."

And further, continues Mr. Tilby:—

"God is all-powerful and all-loving—and the world is what it is! How are you going to explain that?" said the great Lord Salisbury once, to the confusion of complacent orthodoxy. Carlyle had never been orthodox, but there survives a curious confession that, towards the end, his own God of Action had been weighed in the balance and

found wanting. "God does nothing," he said with a cry of pain shortly before his death.

It looks as if he saw, too late, that the moral foundations on which he had built his philosophy were insufficient to support the facts of life. (pp. 132-133.)

Carlyle, with his Great Man theory of Government, did a great deal of harm. It is thoroughly anti-democratic and a joy to all tyrants, conservatives, and Fascists.

Now that belief in the literal truth of the Bible, in its science and history, has been exploded we are assured by many eminent Christians that this does not matter in the least. That it was not written to teach how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven. That its inspiration consists in its supreme and incomparable literary qualities. The Bible is, like the curate's egg, "Good—in parts." Some parts are as wearisome as a genealogical tree; others, as dry as an auctioneer's catalogue. Much of the very finest of its literature is the work of unbelievers, as Dr. Dillon, the learned orientalist, has shown in his book *The Sceptics of the Old Testament* (1895.)

It is, to say the least, very doubtful if God would inspire unbelievers to contribute the finest passages to his holy book. Unless, indeed, he found the believers, at that early period, too stupid and unintelligent for the purpose. However that may be, we are continually being assured that to acquire a good literary style, we cannot do better than study the Bible. Now, strange as it may appear in connexion with an inspired book, the study of the Bible can be overdone, even to the extent of wrecking a literary gift altogether; and Mr. Wilenski who contributes the essay on John Ruskin, declares, without any qualification whatever, that the study of the Bible acted as a drug and destroyed his natural gifts of expression. "The trouble was," says Mr. Wilenski, "he was the victim of a vice. He was addicted from childhood onwards to a drug which he was forced to take in daily doses in the nursery until he acquired the taste for it." The drug, he continues:—

The drug, of course, was the emotive language of the Bible. Ruskin, as everyone knows, was made to read the Bible aloud every day in childhood and early youth. He was started at the beginning, taken through to the end, and then taken back again: He was also made to memorize long sections of the text. This continued till he went to Oxford. (p. 452.)

Ruskin became thoroughly obsessed with the "rhythm, the sonority, the obscurity, the archaisms, and awful associations of this living text within his brain." And "the remembered language continually intervened between the thought and its expression, and often side-tracked the thought itself." (p. 453.) Ruskin struggled to use language as a means for precise communication of his thoughts:—

Again and again he began by making sentences in which the words exactly represent the thought; and then some remembered emotive words and phrases would rise to his mind's surface, and he would take first one sip of the fatal drug, and then another, till, finally, he would abandon the hard task of precise externalization of thought, and yield to the pleasure of making "some sort of melodious noise about it." Again and again a paragraph begins as precise writing and ends as emotive rhetoric recalling the Bible. In book after book the words on the first few pages have no power themselves, but submissively obey the thought; then gradually the words become more Biblical, and so emotive, till, in the end, the thought is dancing to their tune. (p. 453.)

If the Bible had been inspired by evil spirits, and certainly, some parts of it seem to support that view, it could scarcely have had a worse effect upon Ruskin.

## The Causes of the Crucifixion.

(Concluded from page 205.)

THE teaching of Jesus displays its character in its effects, for we are told that "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark xii. 39), "took him for a prophet" (Matt. xxi. 46), and "hung upon him listening" (Luke xix. 40); whilst "the principal men of the people sought to destroy him" (Luke xix. 47), but "feared the multitudes" (Matt. xxi. 46).

With such strong evidence adducible in support of the accusation, and with such bitter and skilful accusers, it is surprising to learn from Matthew (xxvii. 23), Mark (xv. 12), and Luke (xxii. 22), that Pilate, after hearing the case against Jesus, exclaimed, "Why what evil hath he done?"; and it is no less strange to hear Matthew say Pilate called Jesus a "righteous man" (xxvii. 24), and Luke (xxiii. 15), and John (xviii. 38; xix. 6), declare that he twice pronounced him guiltless. But the mystery deepens when we find that this pronouncement, which amounts to a verdict of acquittal, did not suffice to secure the release of the accused; and that the judge, after declaring him perfectly innocent, made his discharge optional. For, Matthew, Mark, and John, agree that Pilate, wishing to save Jesus, asked the public if he should free him in accordance with the custom of liberating a prisoner at the feast by popular suffrage; and that, instead of Jesus, a certain Barabbas was chosen. Matthew says Pilate named Jesus and Barabbas for choice; whilst Mark and John declare that he named Jesus only, and the electors named Barabbas. As regards Luke, he affirms that Pilate, speaking of Jesus said, "Behold nothing worthy of death hath been done by him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him"; and that upon this the release of Barabbas was demanded in preference. Here Luke is certainly preserving an older tradition than the one he previously uses; and in so doing, he reveals an important fact, to wit, that Pilate thought Jesus worthy of chastisement, but not of capital punishment. Moreover, after recording the demand for Barabbas, he makes Pilate utter the same sentence again, thus repeating the earlier tradition which is so much more probable than the later one. With respect to the choosing of Barabbas, there is a singular and very suggestive point. The four Evangelists speak repeatedly of the power which Jesus had over the crowd. Only two days before his death, as we learn from Matthew (xxvi. 25), and Mark (xiv. 12), the Jewish authorities were fearing to proceed against him at the feast "because of the people"; and it was about that time, when Luke affirms, "the principal men" sought the destruction of Jesus, but could not attain it, for the throng constantly hanging on his lips. (xix. 47). Yet Matthew (xxvii. 20), and Mark (xv. 11) say that the multitudes demanded Barabbas instead of Jesus, and did this at the instigation of his enemies and theirs, the ruling class.

Imagine a colliery crowd in Durham turning round on their most popular leader simply to please the bishop and the sheriffs! We believe that the multitudes, without any prompting whatsoever, did vociferate for the release of Barabbas, because, in our opinion, Barabbas and Jesus were one and the same person. "Barabbas" means "son of the father," and re-echoes the familiar allusions of Jesus to the fatherhood of God. There would be an invincible tendency in the early Church to modify details in the trial of Jesus, partly to support certain doctrines and partly to gain the Roman favour. The modifications would originate in districts remote from the scene of the occurrence. They may be noted freely in the

evangelical narratives and the apocryphal accounts. In the present case, the first effort would be to distinguish between Barabbas and Jesus. Matthew offers the earliest surviving traces of the process. In his text, some ancient manuscripts, and also the Armenian Version and the Syriac Version, for "Barabbas," have "Jesus the Barabbas." A Vatican MS. discovered by Birch, which is dated 949, and numbered 354, has the same variation; and on the margin of this document a note, referable either to Anastasius, Bishop of Antioch, or to Chrysostom, declares that in the most ancient MSS. the passage was as follows:—

Tina thelete apo ton duo apoluso umin, I E ton Barabban, e IE ton legomonon XE.

The truth of this reading will be evident to all who take it with the context thus:—

And they had then a notable prisoner called [Jesus the] Barabbas. When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate asked them saying, Whom will ye that I release unto you? [Jesus the] Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? And they said Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ? (Matt. xxvii. 16, 17, 21, 22.)

Here, two men with the same name are contrasted, and, to mark the difference between them, a distinguishing by-name is applied in each case. The other three Gospels have not a trace of this verbal antithesis; and, what is more, the writers seem to have gone out of their way to avoid it.\*

Mark (xv. 8) says the multitude came to Pilate, asking him to follow his wonted practice, and subsequently demanding the release of Barabbas. In Luke (xxiv. 19, 20) Cleopas terms Jesus "a prophet mighty in deed and word," and says "the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him." This throws the whole responsibility upon the Jewish authorities, and frees the common people entirely.

John's account (xviii. 19; xix. 10) does the same thing throughout by its implications; whilst in Luke's main report, the complicity of the people is introduced quite casually by the words kai ton laon which look like an after-thought.

Thus the story of the two candidates is unhistorical; and it becomes reducible to the fact that Pilate having examined the prisoner, Jesus Barabbas, alias Jesus Christ, proposed to release him after chastisement, whereupon the people demanded him to be released with impunity in virtue of the privilege they had of getting a prisoner released at the feast; and that Pilate would have consented but for the violent opposition of the Jewish authorities, who raising the protest, "If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend" (John xix. 12), finally persuaded him to inflict death. The fact that Barabbas, an acknowledged offender, was the same person as Jesus, gives further explanation why Pilate thought Jesus worthy of chastisement. This makes it interesting to know how "Barabbas" had offended. Matthew simply terms him "a notable prisoner." (xxvii. 16). Mark describes him as "lying bound with them who had made

\* Robertson (*The Jesus Problem*) identifies Christ with Barabbas, but regards him as a mythical incarnation of an ancient deity, and says that Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, tells how a personage named Karabbas figured in derision of Herod Agrippa (38-45) "as a mock king with a crown, sceptre and robe" (p. 33), which appears to be a re-echo of the insults inflicted upon Jesus shortly before his crucifixion (A.D. 30). In a footnote Mr. Robertson adds, "An overwhelming case for the reading 'Jesus (the) Barabbas' is established by E. B. Nicholson, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews* 1879, pp. 141-2." (p. 33.)

insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder." (xv. 7.) Luke introduces him as "one who for a certain insurrection made in the city and for murder was cast into prison." (xxii. 19.) Here the most primitive and also the most plausible account is that of Mark. This Luke adopts but misunderstands. Mark represents the man as connected with a band of insurgents, some of whom, not necessarily himself, "had committed murder"; Luke takes him for a murderer. As for John, he roundly calls Barabbas "a thief" (xviii. 40), but this appears to be one of the guesses in which his book abounds. Since Pilate thought Jesus, though worthy of chastisement, yet unworthy of death, and since he tolerated the demand for the release of "Barabbas," the offence involved cannot have been of extreme gravity. In all likelihood, some among the more advanced followers of Jesus had taken part in a rising where slaughter occurred; and this circumstance determined the Jewish authorities to precipitate his arrest. Pilate knowing that Jesus had not shared in the bloodshed, judged him unfit for the cross, but still believing his teaching to have had a disturbing effect, he considered him amenable to the rod. In exceeding his own sentence by crucifying Jesus to please the Jewish authorities, Pilate was unquestionably at fault. But, as his desire to save the prisoner has certainly been exaggerated by the Evangelists, his conduct is less unnatural than it appears at first sight. Moreover, believing that Jesus had been indiscreet, he might think it better to let him suffer for his indiscretion as an example to other firebrands.

There is reason to suppose that the murderous insurrectionaries were punished at the same time and in the same way. For, all the Evangelists agree that along with Jesus, two other men were crucified. Matthew (xxvii. 38) and Mark (xv. 27) call them "robbers"; but Luke (xxiii. 33) "malefactors." Matthew and Mark add that these two "reviled" Jesus; but Luke says that one having acted thus, the other rebuked him saying they suffered "justly," whereas their companion had done nothing "amiss," after which he said, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," whereupon Jesus replied, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." As the man did not ask forgiveness and Jesus did not offer pardon; the one was not conscious of sin, and the other did not regard him as a sinner.

"Justly" must therefore be understood in the sense of legally. Moreover, the request of the man, and the reply of Jesus, show their previous intimacy. The trustful follower approaches the trusted leader, and the trusted leader welcomes the trustful follower. As we take it, both these "malefactors" were disciples of Jesus, but the one, believing him to possess only natural resources, thought he had failed; whereas the other, crediting him with divine assistance, thought he would succeed in spite of his present failure.

In brief, our theory is that the revolutionary doctrines of Jesus made him odious to the Jewish authorities, who disliking his views, and fearing he might compromise their political interests, handed him over to the Romans on the charge of seditious teaching; the immediate occasion of his arrest being some act of violence committed by one or other of his wilder adherents. Pilate who did not think the offence merited capital punishment proposed a milder penalty. The common people demanded release; their betters, crucifixion. Pilate yielded; Jesus was crucified.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Rome would bleed to death if she sacrificed her little finger.—George Tyrrell.

## "Whom They Ignorantly Worship."

"The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone."

"No religion," according to Hastings,\* "can rival Christianity in the multiplicity of its images." There is a distinction, albeit, a somewhat fine one, to be drawn between images and idols. Images may be (a) representative or (b) magical. Idols, *i.e.*, conscious and animated images, include fetishes, talismen, and material objects "endowed with marvellous properties," either by their nature, or by reason of some process or rite, or because of assumed supernatural qualities or powers. It is possible that there were idolators before there were gods. In its simplest form the image was a natural association of a natural object with human features which it resembled. Many peoples thus worshipped rocks having a likeness of men. The development of image worship, like its origin, was mundane. Images representing superhuman beings might be made according to the artist's taste or by special order; but it "was the popular voice alone that ratified and sanctioned his work." Images were made by supposed divine command.

Corinth had two much venerated statues of Dionysus. European images of the Virgin often claimed origins reminiscent of the Buddhist legend that the portrait of Maitreya, the future Buddha, was drawn by an artist temporarily transported to Paradise where Maitreya was awaiting his descent to earth. The photograph of Jesus Christ, supposed to be based on the impression left on the handkerchief which St. Veronica gave him on his way to Calvary is not far from the same category. It was not thought by the Pagans, and it is not Catholic teaching, that reverence of worship is due to images in and for themselves. "The last upholders of Paganism met the taunts of the Christians with the reply that they did not worship the bronze, gold or silver of the statues, but the divinities that had passed into them on consecration." Thus we see that "idolatry"—in the sense in which it is described in the lines of the popular hymn quoted above—was "neither a general nor a primitive fact." Caesar and Tacitus assert that there were "neither temples nor images among the Teutons." It is to be observed that, even to-day, idolatry is almost unknown among peoples "on the lowest rungs of the social ladder—Bushmen, Hottentots, Feugians, Eskimos, Akkas, etc." Idolatry comes with civilization. "In the case of the aborigines of the New World, while idolatry flourished in the civilized States of Mexico, Peru, and Central America, it was rarely encountered" among the savages of that Continent. "Idolatry is a step in religious evolution."

"From the time of its first appearance onwards, man appeals to art—however rudimentary it may be—to aid him in giving material shape to his religious ideal." Man made God in his own image, in his own mind, and then made such efforts as he could to give that image material shape. The idea of God was the idea of man. The "heathen," when he "bows down to wood and stone," performs exactly the same act as a Catholic who bows down to the Blessed Sacrament or as a Protestant who kneels in prayer. Language has been said to be the ritual of thought; imagery, and idols, charms, scepters, relics, the ritual of thoughts of God or gods. There is no analogy whatever between idolatry and that respect paid by men to men in artistic representations of them in pictures or sculpture. Idolatry begins when man tries to make an image of the unknown.

In all religions that ever were or are this is the God whom men worship. St. Paul unconsciously declared the identity of his God with all the gods of all time when (according to Acts xvii. 22-23) he said to the men of Athens: "I found an Altar with this inscription, *To the Unknown God* . . . Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." And all who do worship gods "ignorantly worship" them, whether with the aid of altars, images, idols or rituals or without them.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

\* Facts and quoted passages from *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII., pp. 110-159 (1914).

## Acid Drops.

The agitation against Tithes grows apace, and the National Farmers Union is now demanding a sub-committee of the House of Commons to go into the matter. The protesting farmers have a battle hymn which goes to the tune of the "Old Hundredth," and of which a sample verse is:—

"God save us from these raiding priests  
Who seize our crops and steal our beasts,  
Who pray 'give us our daily bread'  
And take it from our mouths instead."

The Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty say that they regard the whole agitation as "factious"; but was there ever an agitation for the righting of some notorious wrong that was not "factious" in the eyes of those who profited by its perpetuation? The *Sunday Dispatch* accurately describes tithe as "one of the last vestiges of the temporal power of the Church." The major and most outrageous of these survivals is the continuance at this time of day of the Established Church as such. Queen Anne Bounty says that tithe is a small fraction of the revenues from agricultural production, and that only seven-tenths of the land pays tithe; but, in this country, the whole adult population is taxed or rated, directly or indirectly, for the upkeep of the established religion. The farmers are not worse off than the slum dwellers on whose misery and squalor the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and their dependent clerics are content to batten.

At St. Thomas's Church, Regent Street, a few minutes from Piccadilly, a devoted Rector ministers to 834 parishioners for the paltry remuneration of £800 a year, less than a pound per head per annum. A row is going on in the Parish over something which, according to the Rector is "of a private nature," and last Sunday he preached (on the feeding of the five thousand) to two dozen persons, one dozen being the choir. The subject may have been suggested by the reflection that perhaps what was done with loaves and fishes might be done with church attendance. The curate—it is obviously impossible to work such a parish without one—has resigned, and so have the Parochial Council. The Curate assisted the Rector at the service—the row notwithstanding. He may have done this to remind those present that, few as they were in number, they involved the labours of two gentlemen, both of whom we hope were solaced as they contemplated the empty pews by the assurance that when "two or three are gathered together" God "is in the midst of them." And those present visible and invisible, numbered  $12 + 12 + 2 + 1 = 27$ .

The *Church Times*, in a recent leader, argued for the necessity of consulting clergymen as being specialists in religion in the same way that we consult specialists on other subjects. The analogy is false. The parson is more like the chemist than the doctor. He sells prescriptions for profit. He understands the terminology in which they are expressed, but he is quite incompetent to diagnose the conditions for which they are prescribed, and, even if he is not without some knowledge of medical practice, he is bound not to treat a single patient under the pretence that he is a qualified medical practitioner. The average clergyman knows no more about the scientific diagnosis of religion than the average chemist knows about the apparatus and results of pathological research. The chemist at least has to pass an examination in dispensing; but no theological course includes modern science. Yet the most reliable information about religion has been obtained not by or from theologians, but by lay scientists who have approached the study of religion as a part of the total evolution of man, and applied to that investigation the same principles and tests which are indispensable to accurate observation, impartial enquiry, and assured results.

The Bishop of Truro, Dr. Frere, held an inquiry last week in the parish of Warleggan (Bodmin). There has been a prolonged quarrel between the Rector, Rev. F. W.

Densham, and the parishioners. It was alleged that he had celebrated Holy Communion wearing black cotton gloves and with a dirty altar-cloth. It was also alleged (by the Rector) that the Secretary of the Parochial Council had threatened to kill him. Not being quite sure as to how far he might rely on the Lord, the Rector reported this matter to the police. The proceedings at the Inquiry were stormy and accrimonious. The Bishop was asked to remove the Rector "as he is no use to us." His Lordship said he "could not do that." And the Inquiry closed. Behold, "how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The *Sunday Graphic* thanks God that "to-day the Church is threatened and challenged." It tells the old tale that "Christianity has never been tried," and that, although "in the eyes of the outside world" it has failed, all will be well if the individual Christian will "buckle on his armour and go forth to fight in the only sort of conflict that should be conceivable to him, a spiritual conflict." The conflicts, like that mentioned in the last paragraph, which engage Christians are certainly not of a "spiritual character"; and when it comes to "buckling on his armour" he always buckles it on to fight for "patriotism," for "his own country"—in short for anything except against the only enemies of mankind that are worth fighting, War, Poverty, Ignorance and Superstition. The *Sunday Graphic* is as antedeluvian in its piety as it is up to date in its pictures.

The *Listener* prints an article by Professor Julian Huxley, on "What do we know about Immortality?" The concluding paragraph, although lacking originality, is worth quoting. It is in the following terms:—

If we do not know anything about survival, we do not know, and there for the moment is an end of it. We can make every effort to find out, and some day perhaps we shall know something. Meanwhile we can bravely accept our ignorance. Some theologians, including St. Paul, have stated that if there is no life after death, we have no motive against mere self-indulgence. This is to take a low and also a false view of human nature. Facing ignorance and overcoming fear, men and women can still find enjoyment and interest for themselves in this world, and can attempt to transform it in the direction of something better, for the benefit of others now and in time to come. If they do this, and if there is another world after death, their existence in that other world would take care of itself.

If the official organ of the B.B.C. does not object to this description of the Orthodox Christian view as "a low and also a false one," why will it not allow anyone to put the case against what is "low and false" from the microphone unless it has been pruned of the very essentials of that case?

Among the Rhymes of the Times in the *Evening News* is the following on Mr. Rockefeller's statement that "his gold came from God."

"Not on one tree grew all those fruits of toil,  
God sent the gold; the Devil sent the oil."

This may be satire, but if it is not we are at a loss to know what it means. What would appear to be the writer's point was put much more trenchantly by G. W. Foote in his debate with Dr. Warschauer when the latter, dealing with the origin of evil, talked of roses and weeds. "Yes," said Foote, "man plants the roses—and God sends the weeds."

The *Evening News* rhymers has other lines to the effect that:—

"Once the Word of God, like that of Marx  
Was preached by agitators in the Parks."

They are both still preached in the parks, but the preachers of the "gospel" are not generally referred to in respectable journals as "agitators." Our own experience of them would suggest that they are less agitators than prevaricators.

A question has been asked in Parliament as to a statue outside the headquarters of the B.B.C., which according to the questioner (Mr. Mitcheson, M.P.) is "objectionable to public morals and decency." The Home Secretary replying said "I am not the official arbiter of public taste or morals, and I have no control over the decoration of private buildings unless they violate the law." We are glad to know that the Home Secretary does not claim for himself what the B.B.C. claims for itself. While the former, a Minister of the Crown, is "not an arbiter of taste and morals," the B.B.C. not only claims to be both, but sticks it out that it is an accurate judge of them except (Mr. Mitcheson might say), when the decoration of its own premises is concerned.

The writer of the essay on Montaigne in a recent number of the *Times Literary Supplement* gives him almost as high a place in literature as Shakespeare. "The Essays," he says, "are wonderful. They and the plays of Shakespeare complement one another. They are the imperishable monuments of the high Renaissance in Europe." We call attention to this because, at the same time, no secret is made of the fact that Montaigne was a complete sceptic with regard to religion—as was, indeed, Shakespeare. "Verily," says the writer, "there is no criticism of revealed religion more devastating than Montaigne's apparent acceptance of it. He is ceremonious to Christianity because it means absolutely nothing to him . . . Montaigne turns away from Christianity as a flower turns to the sun." It is not altogether a remarkable fact that so many of the world's greatest men reject Christianity.

The *Church Times* is very anxious that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope should join hands and make this a Holy year "of devotion to the mysteries of redemption, the Passion and the Resurrection of our Saviour." But why not rope in all the Christian sects too, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Plymouth Brethren, the Christian Scientists, the Mormons, the Muggletonians, the Piggotites, the Southcottians and all the other 500 odd believers in the Cross? Why confine the Holy Year to mere Anglo and Roman Catholics? We always understood that all believers were brothers-in-Christ, but one has only to read the various Christian journals to see how bitterly they all wrangle among themselves, quite in the fashion of the hectic days of Arius and Athanasius.

The way this wrangling is "gently" admitted can be seen by the speech of the Archbishop of York at a meeting of yet another Christian organization called "the Westminster Group." He said (as reported in the *Church Times*) that "in the hundred years since Keble preached his famous sermon, the life of the Church, in a rather conspicuous degree, has consisted of the interaction of different currents of thought and feeling and different modes of interpretation of the one Gospel." This means "wrangling" pure and simple, and it cannot be squared with the statement made in and out of season by all the Churches and Chapels that Christ's Gospel is so simple that the veriest child can understand and follow it. His Grace, it need hardly be added, finished his pious exhortations for "Unity" by appealing "to Churchpeople to stand together against the forces of Secularism and Materialism." So Secularism and Materialism, though always "in the last ditch" seem as strong as ever!

A *Church Times* reviewer does not like a new "Bowdlerized" Bible which has just been published for 7s. 6d. (Why pay 7s. 6d. when anyone can bowdlerize a penny Bible taken from any old market stall, just as easily?) He quotes parts to show how the deleted passages are necessary to keep Faith going strong and points out that the Grand Old Book was not written only for drawing rooms. It certainly was not, but does our reviewer imagine for a moment that the Authorized Version as printed to-day is not bowdlerized? He ought to know that a genuine, up-to-date translation simply

would not be allowed to be published. Even the original Hebrew has been euphemized. But the fatal blot on this new "Bowdlerized" Bible is that many allusions to Bible absurdities and stupid miracles are dropped, and the reviewer does not like it. Well, it is getting the thin edge of the wedge in, and we so welcome it with all our heart.

How pernicious and obstructive religion has been to education in this country is illustrated by a fact about the National Education League which was campaigning in the 60's and 70's of last century. Speaking at the first London meeting of that League (December 15, 1869) Sir Charles Dilke declared that "what we know as the religious difficulty has disappeared." There was, he added, "now no kind of fear that this movement of ours will be broken up, as in old times less comprehensive associations were destroyed by the devil of ignorance in the gait of religious truth."

Sir Charles must have felt he was a little over-confident for, at the end of this speech he says, "I will only ask you once again, not to let our proceedings, either tonight or in the future be disgraced by the resurrection of the religious difficulty. Whatever be our creed, here, at least, education is our religion, and I know no better form of public expression which the love of mankind can take. For all ages the wise have recognized that the mission of the leader is divine, and it will not be less holy when it is for ever freed from the turmoil of theological strife."

Alas for this optimism and these fine sentiments the New Year saw the surrender to religion in the Act of 1870, and from that time down to the surrender of a Labour Government in 1930, the progress of national education in this country has been held up and "disgraced by the resurrection of the religious difficulty," and, we may add by the ascension and triumphal reign of political cowardice and opportunism.

### Fifty Years Ago.

It is not for us to play the Pharisee and say that we are better than other men. We only say that we are no worse. Our honour and our honesty are unimpeached. What have we done to be classed with thieves and felons, and dragged from our homes and submitted to the indignities of a life so loathsome and hideous that it is even revolting to the spirits of the men who have to exercise authority within the precincts of the gaol? You know we have done nothing to merit such a punishment. Therefore you ought to return a verdict of Not Guilty against us, because the prosecution have not given you sufficient evidence as to the fact; because whatever shred there is to gain from the decisions of judges in the past must be treated as obsolete, as the London magistrate treated the law of maintenance. On the ground that we have done nothing, as the indictment states, against the peace; on the ground that our proceedings have led to no tumult in the streets, no interference with the liberty of any man, his person or property; on the ground, gentlemen, that no evidence has been tendered to you of any malice in our case; that there is no wicked motive animating anything we have done; on the ground, if you are Christians, that the founder of your own creed was murdered on a very similar charge to that of which we stand accused now; and lastly, on the ground that you should in this third quarter of the nineteenth century, assert once and for ever the great principle of the absolute freedom of each man, unless he trench on the equal freedom of another, to assert the great principle of the liberty of the press, liberty of the platform, liberty of free thought and liberty of free speech. (Mr. Foote at the Old Bailey.)

The "Freethinker," April 1, 1883.

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ONE of our New Zealand Readers asks us for the name of the poem containing the following lines:—

"The Gods are dead, Pan and Apollo, Zeus too  
Even Jesus Christ hangs cold upon the tree."

Can any reader assist, please?

A.J.—You will find what you want in our issues from October-November, 1924.

S.V.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops."

K.E.—Yes, an Abbess is described as "a wife of Jesus Christ for ever." The actual words in the Roman Pontifical (on the taking the veil) are "et te Christo Jesu sponsam perpetualiter subdidisse," i.e., "humbly with thy whole heart submitting thyself as a wife to Jesus Christ for ever."

I.F.—Sorry. Too long, and, we think, too obvious.

P.O.N.—By Ivan Powell Meredith. Long out of print.

A. RADLEY.—We do not think that Sir Reginald Craddock's Blasphemy Bill is likely to become law, but it is symptomatic of the mental calibre of some of the Members of the House of Commons.

C. NEWALL AND T. NEVETTS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. BARTON.—Information not yet to hand, but will let you know as soon as possible.

N. LAWSON.—No prosecution under the statute law against blasphemy is known. All prosecutions for blasphemy have been under the common law.

R. HARDING.—The letter is a marvel of stupidity, and indicative of the quality of many of the religious lectures broadcast by the B.B.C.

S.T.—Thanks for new subscriber. Hope other readers will follow your example.

W. J. MILES (Sydney).—Pleased you so highly value our article on John M. Robertson. We have no doubt you prize his letter to you just three days before his death.

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.

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. Roseth, 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.

The Glasgow Secular Society brought its session to a close on Sunday last with a lecture from Mr. Cohen on "Charles Bradlaugh." Mr. Cohen spoke in the large McLellan Galleries to a "full house," and for over an hour and a quarter to an enthusiastic audience. Mr. McEwan occupied the chair. There was, we understand, a good sale of literature.

On Sunday morning Mr. Cohen paid a visit to an old friend, Mr. Robert Parker, who lies in hospital awaiting an operation. Mr. Parker is seventy-three, a very old member of the Glasgow Branch, and was looking very bright and cheerful, with a copy of the *Freethinker* lying by his bedside. We hope soon to hear the news that the operation was successful, and that this old stalwart is well on the road to recovery.

The Glasgow Branch has in view an extensive and intensive programme for the summer months and for next winter. The first of these out-door meetings will be held to-day (April 2), at West Regent Street, at 7.0 For the autumn and winter, a larger and better hall has been taken for weekly lectures, and a good programme of speakers is being arranged. "Bradlaugh Year" is inspiring something like a revival of Freethought activity, and we hope that Glasgow Freethinkers will do their utmost to give the Branch full support both morally and financially. If sufficient support is forthcoming the Branch will extend its activities into the surrounding districts.

The Northern Branches of the N.S.S. have been holding periodical meetings of delegates and friends to consider ways and means of conducting their propaganda. Some very successful meetings have been held, and one will be held at the Co-operative Hall, Whitehall Road, Gateshead, on Sunday, April 9, at 3.0. There will also be a public meeting at 7.0, at which Messrs. Brighton, Bradford and Flanders will speak. Tea will also be provided for those attending both meetings. Those wishing to partake of this should write to Mr. J. G. Bartram, 107 Morley Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, so that arrangements may be made.

We were looking at Lytton's famous play *Money*, the other day, and came across the following passage put in the mouth of Graves. It was written in 1840, and can be compared with what is thought of our national newspapers to-day:—

Ay—read the newspapers!—they'll tell you what this world is made of. Daily calendars of roguery and woe! Here, advertisements from quacks, money-lenders, cheap warehouses and spotted boys with two heads. So much for dupes and imposters! Turn to the other column—police reports, bankruptcies, swindling, forgery, and a biographical sketch of the snub-nosed man who murdered his own little cherubs at Pentonville. Do you fancy these but exceptions to the general virtue and health of the nation? Turn to the leading articles, and your hair will stand on end at the horrible wickedness or melancholy idiotism of that half the population who think differently from yourself. In my day I have seen already eighteen crises, six annihilations of agriculture and commerce, from overthrows of the Church and three last, final, awful irremediable destructions of the entire constitution. And that's a newspaper!

So things don't change much after all!

We again solicit from those of our readers who possess them votes for election to Royal Hospital for Incurables on behalf of Miss F. I. Brooks, of 76 Hawthorne Road, Hornsey, N.S. We made this appeal last year, and we believe that united effort of those whom we may interest will secure election this time. The election takes place in May, and the case of Miss Brooks is a very deserving one. The votes are cumulative, and Miss Brooks has already a goodly number to her credit.

It is expected that the legalizing of the sale of beer in the United States will react injuriously on the profits of the Racketeers. We suggest that our own Government might employ some of the leaders of this movement. One or two of them on every Council in the country to supervise the administration of the Sunday Cinema Act would be useful. The principle is identical with that put into operation by the Chicago gangsters—authority to levy any sized "rake-off" from those engaged in a legitimate occupation, the amount of the levy to be determined by the local gang that administer the Act.

The *Literary Guide* for April complains that "nowadays Freethinkers are not as active as they might be in supporting propaganda initiated by their societies." The basis of the complaint is that an appeal for help in circulating two pamphlets on Sunday Games and Sunday Cinemas brought few applications for copies. Very largely this complaint of the inactivity of Freethinkers is a very old one, and applies to all propaganda whether religious, anti-religious or political. Mankind is generally very indolent, particularly where intellectual issues are concerned, and it is only on occasions that mass-enthusiasm can be evoked. The history of progress would tell a very different story were it otherwise.

For ourselves we do not find the Freethought Party irresponsive to appeals for co-operation, although we should be pleased to see still greater activity than exists. But justice requires the testimony that every demand upon the Party we have made during the past eighteen years has met with a generous and prompt response. In the case of a four-page leaflet issued by the National Secular Society on *The Rule of the Sabbatarian*, issued before the Government passed its Sunday Racketeering Act, 200,000 were put into circulation in a few weeks. Applications came from all over the country, including some from Cinema proprietors, and we continued to receive applications long after the supply was exhausted. The Freethought Movement is still as strong and as vital as ever.

## The Bradlaugh Centenary Commemoration Fund.

### FOURTH LIST OF DONATIONS.

AMOUNT previously acknowledged, £367 1s. 6d.; Dr. G. Saunders, £20; W. Fisher, £5 5s.; J.W.F., £5; Robert Gladstone, £5; A. Williams, £5; R. A. Price, £2 2s.; Mrs. E. Adams, £2 2s.; F. G. Squire, £2 2s.; F. A. & E. A. Hornibrook, £2 2s.; Max L. Samuel, £2 2s.; Mr. & Mrs. G. Royle, £2 2s.; Miss C. L. Thomson, £2 2s.; The Misses C. & M. Fellows, £2 2s.; R. Dodd, Junr., £2; T. Griffith and Family, £1 11s. 6d.; G. J. Finch, £1 1s.; Saul Crown, £1 1s.; Dr. B. Dunlop, £1 1s.; E. Whitehorn, £1 1s.; G. A. Crosland, £1 1s.; W. E. Hicks, £1 1s.; H. W. Preston, £1 1s.; M. Michaelson, £1 1s.; Mr. & Mrs. Fairhall, £1 1s.; W. C. Johnson, £1 1s.; H. J. Toser, £1 1s.; H. J. Channon, £1 1s.; T. J. Capp, £1 1s.; J. P. G. Ballachey, £1 1s.; Sir John Hammerton, £1 1s.; H. J. Sayer, £1 1s.; W. L. English, £1 1s.; W. Angus, £1 1s.; A. F. Ohrlly (Mrs.), £1 1s.; A. G. Henderson, £1 1s.; Mrs. C. Butcher, £1 1s.; Jos. Harrison, £1 1s.; M. W. McLean, £1 1s.; W. T. Keeling, £1 1s.; Col. W. G. Yate, £1; R. B. Kerr, £1; J. Burns, £1; A. F. Bullock, £1; A. W. Coleman, £1; Miss D. Coleman, £1; F. Gibson, £1; Miss G. M. Watts, 10s. 6d.; E. R. Pease, 10s. 6d.; T. Owen, 10s. 6d.; J. Marsh, 10s.; W. E. Meads, 10s.; R. B. Harrison, 10s.; Mrs. Edward Clodd, 10s.; A. J. Boyd, 10s.; T. W. Bennett, 10s.; C. Bunnin, 10s.; Miss K. H. Gordon, 10s.; W. Mortimer, 10s.; C. H. Smith, 10s.; A. W. E. Standley, 10s.; E. H. Smith, 10s.; A. Andrews, 10s.; Mr. & Mrs. Doran, 7s. 6d.; R. Jackson, 5s.; C. W. Styring, 5s.; J. Richards, 5s.; F. Skidmore, 5s.; T. McGregor Tait, 5s.; G. H., 5s.; W. S. Desborough, 5s.; Mrs. Eva E. Stevens, 5s.; M. Ridan, 5s.; C. R. Lee, 5s.; G. Wilson, 2s. 6d.; A. T. Stevens, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. L. Shearer, 2s. 6d.; F. J. Dunstan, 2s. 6d.; F. W. Harris, 2s. 6d.; G. C. Elliott, 2s. 6d.; Miss R. L. Virgin, 1s.

Total ... £471 13 0

All subscriptions to be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer, Bradlaugh Centenary Fund, Mr. F. C. C. Watts, 38, Cursitor Street, London, E.C.4.

## Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes

### VII.—"A PROLONGED AND DISCREDITABLE CONFLICT."

MR A. G. GARDINER in his *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (2 Vols., 1923), thus describes the controversy over the Parliamentary Oath. He adds that "in these more tolerant days it is difficult to understand" that controversy and its bitterness. There is here an interesting letter written by Harcourt to Mr. Gladstone on the eve of the famous debate about affirmation. It throws some light on the position in the Cabinet at the time. Home Office, June 25. "I had a long talk with Labouchere last night. He will try to persuade Bradlaugh not to present himself to-day so that if the motion to rescind the Resolution is brought on there may be behind it the fear of the scandal of his reappearance, which would actuate many in their vote. The more I think of it the more convinced I feel that it would be most disastrous if you were driven into taking the initiative against Bradlaugh. Your situation hitherto has been impregnable, and I cannot see what further right or power the Opposition have now than before of casting on you the responsibility of action. If the motion is made that he be excluded from the precincts of the House he will be finally done for. There will no longer be any method by which he can vindicate his right, for, as I said last night, there is no legal remedy. His only chance is in the appeal to public opinion involved in his imprisonment. If he is snuffed out in any other way I do not see what further resource remains to him. If the Tories are once assured that Bradlaugh can no longer intrude himself upon the House they will never rescind the Resolution—in fact the situation will be exactly what they would most desire, and they will certainly not help us out of the scrape." Mr. Gladstone, as Bradlaugh himself recognized (and has been shown here already), stood out not only against the Tories but against some of his own Cabinet, (Vol II., p. 371.)

In the *Life of Sir Charles Dilke* (Gwynn and Tuckwell, 2 Vols., 1917) there is a note of Dilke's interview with Mr. Gladstone. (March 5, 1883). Sir Charles saw Mr. Gladstone who was singularly quiet, hardly saying anything at all. He did however say that Bradlaugh "was a stone round their necks," which, in a Parliamentary sense, he was. "Despite one of Mr. Gladstone's greatest speeches the Government was again beaten when they proposed to let him (Bradlaugh) affirm." (Vol. II., p. 521.)

It will come as a surprise to some people to find Dilke's biographers recording that he took little or no part in "this once famous struggle." They say: "He supported Mr. Gladstone in favour of allowing affirmation, but he did so without heartiness, disliking 'the trade of living on blatant Atheism,' and finding in himself tendencies which led him to fear he was 'clerically minded.' He had always an extreme dislike of talk or writing which offended legitimate susceptibilities." It may be that Mr. Gwynn and Miss Tuckwell have not contemplated the possibility of some of their readers being acquainted with Dilke's speeches about the Monarchy, which certainly did not show much tenderness to the most lofty susceptibilities. This, however, is by the way.

A.C.W.

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile.

Shakespeare.

## The Dawn of the Healing Art.

WHEN compared with the vast periods that have vanished since human emergence from lower animal forms, the most ancient civilizations seem almost modern. Just as Babylonia, Egypt and Greece inherited the rudiments of culture from Stone Age predecessors, so must we acknowledge our indebtedness to civilized antiquity in turn. In medical science Egypt made many advances, subsequently extended by the Greeks. Yet, largely as a consequence of the overthrow of Pagan science, and the triumph of the Church, the mass of people in Europe remained until recently very little superior to savages in their attitude towards the medical art.

Even in the most enlightened communities a small percentage only of the population ever really think for themselves, while countless millions of backward races regard every innovator with aversion, and tenaciously cling to the charms, amulets, and magical incantations which are their only weapons against the sinister activities of Nature. So in times of sickness and misfortune, unsophisticated savages supplicate their gods instead of the physician.

Nor is this all. Catholic Europe still preserves her cure shrines such as Lourdes, while both in the Eastern and the Western world a powerful cult has arisen which disdains the services of materialistic medical science. For according to so-called Christian Science, when the mind of man becomes suffused with a realization of the divine omnipresence and omnipotence, this not merely prevents but cures bodily disease.

This theory is only a refinement of primitive superstition. That faith may influence functional ailments is not disputed, whether it be faith in the doctor with the good bedside manner, or some holy well in Wales. But that any organic disease is ever amenable to spiritual or mental treatment has never been demonstrated. Nor can credulity replace the operating surgeon's art.

Among admittedly barbarous peoples who retain beliefs descending from primitive times, the spirits of the dead, disease-demons and sorcerers are the causes of disease and death. Against these evil agents early man extensively utilized the powers of magic. These practices persisted with the ignorant throughout ancient civilized centuries, were adopted by the Christian Church as part of her teaching, and still linger among the peasantry in many European lands.

So early as the Neolithic Period, trephining was common, as the numerous perforated skulls dating from that era testify. Broca supposed that these prehistoric operations consisted in scraping the skull. Osler, however, concluded that the openings were made by "a series of perforations made in a circle by flint implements, and a round piece of skull in this way removed; traces of these drill-holes have been found. The operation was done for epilepsy, infantile convulsions, headache and various cerebral diseases believed to be due to confined demons, to whom the hole gave a ready method of escape." (*The Evolution of Modern Medicine*, p. 8.)

Trephining is still in use among savages, and with the Kabyle it is comparatively common. Prehistoric shepherds also trephined their sheep as a cure for staggers. Thus it seems that this "modern" surgical operation may boast a very respectable antiquity.

Civilization appears to have been cradled on the banks of the Nile, and in Egypt, the first physician, Imhotep, whose fame and name survive, flourished in the reign of Zoser. In his *Ancient Egyptians*, Breasted tells us that: "In priestly wisdom, in magic, in the formulation of wise proverbs, in medi-

cine and architecture, this remarkable figure of Zoser's reign left so notable a reputation that his name was never forgotten, and 2,500 years after his death he had become a God of Medicine, in whom the Greeks, who called him Imouthes, recognized their own Æsculapius."

Despite the material magnificence of the Egyptian civilization the medical profession for centuries continued in bondage to religion. Priest and physician seemed permanently inseparable until, at long last, there emerged a distinct class of medical practitioners who were not associated with sacerdotal colleges.

To the Egyptian, disease and death resulted from the incursions of evil spirits, and neither was therefore inevitable. The angry and malignant ghosts of the dead or other harmful spirits having entered the body of their victim made him sicken and die. In the words of the Egyptologist, Maspero, the disease-carrying spirits as soon as they invade the body, then their "evil influence breaks the bones, sucks out the marrow, drinks the blood, gnaws the intestines and the heart and devours the flesh. The invalid perishes according to the progress of this destructive work; and death speedily ensues unless the evil genius can be driven out of it before it has committed irreparable damage. Whoever treats a sick person has therefore two important duties to perform. He must first discover the nature of the spirit in possession, and, if necessary, its name, and then attack it, drive it out, or even destroy it."

Cleanliness of one's person, pure air, the medicines and other accessories of contemporary practice were manifestly impotent in circumstances such as these. Medical ministrations might lessen pain, but magical ceremonies were imperative to eject the demon occasioning the disease if the patient were to be saved. Yet, despite these erroneous ideas, substantial progress was made in Egypt on empirical lines, and the ancient records, ranging, as they do, through thousands of years, show that the physicians were familiar with the use of emetics, purgatives, bleeding and other medicaments. An elaborate pharmacopœia was also in use. And, as Egyptian greatness neared its end, specialists were everywhere in evidence. The Greek traveller and historian Herodotus was impressed by the imposing army of physicians he saw in Egypt who were devoted to special branches of their art. "One," he notes, "treats only the diseases of the eye, another those of the head, the teeth, the abdomen, or the internal organs."

It is gratifying to relate that the ancient Egyptians were scrupulously clean in their lives. The law ordained the cleanliness of human habitations, city streets, and public buildings. In contrast to certain Christian saints, the Egyptian priests were noted for their ceaseless ablutions and the spotless purity of their robes.

With communities of the lower culture the organs, secretions and discharges of animals are employed for medicinal purposes. Indeed, this practice dates back to prehistoric times although the papyri of old Egypt contain its earliest known records. Among the ingredients mentioned are dung, urine, saliva, dried and powdered parts of the body, snakes and worms. We may smile, but as Sir William Osler reminds us, "The Royal Pharmacopœia" of Moses Charras (London ed., 1678), the most scientific work of its day, is full of organotherapy and directions for the preparation of medicines from the most loathsome excretions."

Recent studies of mummy remains have revealed some of the diseases of ancient Egypt. Osteo-arthritis was evidently a common malady as is demonstrated by the researches of Wood

Jones, Elliot Smith and other authorities. Nor was this disease confined to the human population as it was widespread among the sacred animals of the temples. The presence of syphilis, tuberculosis, and some other maladies has not been conclusively determined. As illustrating the influence of hoary Egypt or later Greece we may mention that many of the drugs utilized in Hellas originated in the Land of the Nile. Also the medical ethics of the Greeks came from the Egyptian physicians, while some of the practical devices of medicine such as surgical appliances are traceable to the same source.

T. F. PALMER.

## Christianity and War.

ONE of the most curious products, in the intellectual sphere, under the influence of Christianity, is the theologian who is capable of proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace and then proceeding to discuss the "Ethics of War" from a Christian standpoint.

Obviously, if Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, and also the divine messenger concerning the way of salvation; if he is a God capable of telling us just what we should do, no Christian has a right to ask whether war is justifiable or not. There is, in the nature of the case, only one attitude towards war for the Christian. That is, that war is always, under all circumstances, entirely wrong. Otherwise, Jesus Christ is not the Prince of Peace, any more than any other advocate of peace; nor is Christianity a religion of peace, in any special sense.

This is not comprehended by the average Christian, because he fails to realize that his religion is not a clear-cut revelation of the right way of living. It is often in conflict with the facts of life; frequently self-contradictory; and possesses a text-book from which almost anything can be proved. In fact, on the question of peace we have Jesus Christ represented as saying: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword," etc. (Matt. x. 34-37.)

Yet, in view of this we have a Christian writer on "Social Aspects of Christian Morality," Dr. W. S. Bruce, D.D., saying: "It is passing strange that after so many centuries of Christian teaching it should still be possible for Christian nations to go to war." (p. 303.)

This would be so if Christianity were what it is claimed to be, and if it had the power to transform men and women into something other than what they are. As it is, the going to war by Christian nations simply proves that Christian teaching is no more powerful, on this question, than other teachings; and, Christian men and women are not necessarily better than other people.

Not only so, the blood-bespattered history of Christian nations proves the ease with which followers of Jesus Christ have been able to set aside their boasted teachings of peace and goodwill to all men.

Dr. Bruce is an example of the curious products to which reference has been made; or, it would be "passing strange" to find him, as an educated man, talking in the above manner, after the long history of warfare which lies to the credit of Christian peoples.

It is doubtful whether savages and barbarians have out-done Christians in treating war as if it were one of the most manly, delightful, and entertaining occupations in which to pass the time. If, since the advent of Christianity, getting to heaven has depended upon bloodshed, the place should be well inhabited by Christians at the present moment. No religionists

could have more faithfully carried out the teaching concerning the value of shedding blood for the remission of sins. While the sinning, on the part of Christians, has evidently kept well ahead of the bloodshed or that would long since have ceased to be of any avail.

As an indication of the way in which Christians treat anything which affects the practical side of their lives, we may take the following from "Social Aspects of Christian Morality." On p. 303, Dr. Bruce speaks of, "the love of man which is breathed throughout the whole Bible," while on p. 308 he says "the wars of the Judges were characterized by extravagant cruelties. The imprecatory Psalms breathe this same spirit." The learned theologian might have gone on pointing out the very numerous warfares and cruelties recorded in the Bible, but for us the above passages from his book form a sufficient illustration of the effect which a Christian upbringing has upon the mind.

Facing the facts where the believer's own religion and his Bible are concerned becomes well nigh impossible. The habit of trying to rationalize about awkward facts, in the form of explanations which are nothing more than excuses, becomes highly developed.

Comprehensive statements concerning the "whole Bible," its "uplifting power," the "greatness of Christ," and the "all-embracing love of God," are made, even when details to the contrary are being enumerated.

This habit of mind is fatal to right thinking on all subjects, and it is small wonder that Christians can talk about their religion being *the* religion of peace, and at the same time seek to justify war as if it were an essential part of the plan of Providence in which they believe.

Hence, arguments which belong to the natural man can be brought into service by the Christian along with high sounding phrases about the divinity of the Christian life. It is claimed that in some way or other a Christian body of men forming a Government must be superior to any other body of men in that position; but a Christian theologian can put forward the following when required, even in the quietude of his study, to justify his fellow believers with regard to war.

"A Government is bound to defend its territory and people from external as well as internal foes. It is in this obligation that the justification of war is found."

So says Dr. Bruce, D.D., in *Social Aspects of Christian Morality*, p. 305; but in so doing he is just giving utterance to what might be said by any ordinary member of society. Thus, even though he does not intend to do so, the doctor brings Christian thought into it place as a natural product which belongs to the normal evolution of mankind.

After all, Christianity is not able to influence men and women in a divine manner, concerning war, and Christians have to think on the same lines as other people when sense is required. No objection can be taken to the above justification of going to war, if human history is accepted as an entirely natural process, and it is insisted that the defensive shall only be taken up after every attempt to settle the dispute, by methods other than warfare, has been made. Unfortunately, the plea of going to war simply in self-defence is often nothing more than an excuse for an unjustifiable act; but there is something gained when an attempted justification is put forward on natural grounds. Then reason can be opposed to reason, or unreason; whereas the introduction of the Divine Plan argument leads to confusion of thought and the possibility of justifying anything.

The cant of Christianity lies in its claim to being a religion of peace in an especial way, with an almighty God working behind the scenes for the desired objective, during long centuries, and frequently allowing men to call each other brothers in Christ, while engaged in blowing one another to pieces. After which gentle performance, each nation of brothers proceeds to justify its action as part of a Divine Plan, in-as-much as the Lord had found it needful to castigate those on the other side for their "exceeding wickedness."

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be concluded.)

## Current Religious Propaganda.

### I.

Of this activity one line is that of eulogy of the ancient Hebrews, their religion and literature, considered mainly as precursors of Christianity. The practice was evidently initiated by some archæologists and historians of the older school; it is met with in a variety of extant books on ancient history, and other works purporting to be such; and it has been a marked feature of a talk lately given on the wireless.

Rationalists, though of course free from racial as from religious antagonism, and fully appreciative of the good points of the Hebrew race, and of the great achievements of some of its members, must deplore what is called their "religious interpretation of history," not only because it is a vacuous, superstitious notion, forming one of the most serious obstacles to the advance of rational thought and practice, but also because it has added so seriously to the volume of suffering, both of Hebrews and Gentiles, during the last two thousand years.

The chief characteristics of the old Hebrews are well known to students of ancient history. They include intense egoism, exclusiveness and brutality, leading to the notion that they were "the Chosen People," commanded by Jahweh to exterminate all who resisted their appropriation of "the Promised Land," in combination with overwhelming theological obsession, leading to the ferocious persecution and massacre of people who refused to forsake their own religion and adopt the cult of Jahweh. The introduction into the world of the last-mentioned feature is referred to by Lecky (*History of Rationalism*): "The Levitical Code was the first code of religious persecution to appear among mankind."

The explanation of the relative primitivism of the Hebrews obviously lies in the fact that they were actual barbarians when (about 1450 B.C. and onwards) they drifted into Palestine, and that it was not until four or five centuries later that they reached a condition of incipient civilization—following the adoption of the mode of life of the Canaanites (who had been civilized, with writing, for some 1500 years) and other peoples with whom they came in contact.

It is true that by a striking coincidence the barbarian Greeks conquered a civilized (Ægean) area and developed their civilization at approximately the same time. The "nimble-witted Greeks," however, in the course of a few centuries hit upon the way of rational inquiry, instead of becoming religious bigots; and among them, as among the Romans until Christianity appeared, anything like systematic persecution was unknown.

It is interesting also to contrast the Hebrew attitude towards other religions with that of the contemporary Persians. Their (Zoroastrian) system was exclusive in a national sense, the people believing that all members of the community would be saved, while "they rejoiced in the idea that non-Persians were debarred from Paradise and doomed to hell." (Jevons, *Comparative Religion*). But we do not hear of Cyrus, after his conquest of Babylonia, resorting to religious massacre like that to which the Hebrews subjected the Canaanites, nor of any attempt to compel the Hebrews or others to adopt the Persian religion. On the contrary, he granted to the captive Jews the privilege of returning to Palestine, and

according to the Old Testament narrative, encouraged them to rebuild the Temple of Jahweh at Jerusalem.

The absorption by Christianity of the calamitous Hebrew features cited, along with the (originally Persian) Devil and Hell, led easily to the medieval development of crass superstition, and the recrudescence of religious war and massacre, the Inquisition, with witch-burning and like horrors. Not the least among the social effects was the aggravation of the primitive and early superstitious fear—of the disorderly activities of gods, demons, witches and the rest of the genus, including apprehension of the end of the world—from which, as Roman writers have told us, the minds of men had been to some extent released by the evidence of natural cosmic order supplied by Greek astronomy.

Another Hebrew characteristic was lack of intellectuality. "Literature," writes Breasted (*Ancient Times*), "remained the only art the Hebrews possessed." Though, as is well known, there was in the ancient world in general a good deal of appreciation of learning, the Hebrews neglected and expressed much contempt for real, natural knowledge and thought; and among them the idea of wisdom was degraded from one much like our own to a religious one—"the fear of the Lord" (art. "Wisdom," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*). To this was added by Christianity the cult of "The Child," not as a being to be cared for and educated, but one who could in some occult way arrive at truths "hidden from the wise."

These things largely explain the anti-intellectualism of Christianity, which, beginning with purblind contempt for and condemnation of classical science and literature, culminated in the *Index Expurgatorius*—which still flourishes, if not quite so luxuriantly as in the last and some earlier centuries. The inspiring evolutionary conclusions of the Greeks and the Romans, including the strikingly accurate sketches of the rise of man from a lowly, primitive condition, which appear in the writings of Horace, Lucretius and others, were swamped in the age-old legends of the creation of man in a perfect condition, of his fall and destruction, together with such ancient figments as virgin birth, the god-man, resurrection, atonement, redemption, and so forth. Thus was re-established in the West, and maintained for a thousand years, a condition of general intellectual puerility and darkness.

It is now necessary to insist on the peril to intellectual and moral progress of indiscriminate eulogy of the ancient Hebrews and their literature. It is equally necessary to point out that the Bible, though of great value to students of the history of ideas (including, of course, Rationalists), is not a suitable book to read indiscriminately, whether in school or in the home.

J. REEVES.

## Sin and Such.

*Sin and Such*, by Jack Woodford is described by the publishers as "a satiric and outspoken story of a Casanova," but it is more than that, it is a challenge to all smugness and convention which seeks to treat sex as an evil, and which imagines that sex is a synonym for sin.

*Sin and Such* is published by the Palais Royal Press of Paris, at 16s. 6d., and it is a beautiful story admirably told, of a man of the world, who takes women as he wants them, but he meets a girl who offers herself, but whom he refuses to accept although he loves her, and her vision fills his every moment. The story has a tragic, but not a futile, ending, and all those who care for fiction will want to read and possess this significant book, which is as a breath of fresh air after much that is being published to-day.

Arnold Codchaux has an aunt who tries to convert him to The Truth, which is Mental Myopia. She asks Arnold if he doesn't believe there is a God and that people should turn to him and he replies: "I'm afraid to think much about the matter, when I recall how many men have been tortured and murdered to the tune, in a manner of speaking, of Onward Christian Soldiers; a great many of the disgraceful total of them in our own generation. Better

no beliefs at all than beliefs that lead to bloodshed and unhappiness everywhere."

The heroine, Alice, confesses that her people were pious, so pious that they made her want to sin like hell, and she left them and went to Chicago. As soon as she reached Chicago she lost all desire to be bad, and found work at last as a story-writer for the popular magazines. She tells Arnold that there are all sorts of tricks of the trade, one being that a story-writer must never let a divorced woman marry again because the editor says that all his Catholic readers would write to him complaining of indecency, but it was quite all right to let a divorced woman live with other men. Another point she mentions is that . . . but here are her own words:—

Naturally you'd think it worse to say "For God's Sake," when delineating an average American ordinary conversation, than to say "For Christ's Sake," since according to the Christian superstition, Christ was only the son and God the father, but as a matter of fact, you can have a character say "For God's sake," in almost any magazine, but if you say "For Christ's sake," they'll blue pencil it piously every time.

These are but a few of the gibes at religion to be found in the book, and although these will make the book appeal to Freethinkers, it should be read by Christians as well, for it will perhaps give them a glimpse of the way in which non-believers look at religion.

CALE.

## Correspondence.

### INTELLECTUAL CRIME.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On the question of intellectual crime an ounce of criticism from you is worth a ton of that ordinarily met with.

The approval of my book expressed in your review of March 12, is therefore a great encouragement to me; and I am very ready also to take my medicine at your hands.

You question my use of the words "agnosticism," and "religion." I am an Atheist; but I use the word Agnostic in relation to the question: What is the ultimate origin of the universe? Some say God: I remain Agnostic. Is not that a justifiable use of the word?

As to religion; you consider it pandering to the adversary to allow him to use the word in the sense of an emotional attitude to the world and to join him in doing so. I find in practice that this is so common that I have begun to use the word "supernaturalism" in place of "religion," thinking to clear the issue. But your warning has sunk in and I shall not forget it.

You will agree that it is of vital importance that we Rationalists should make clear the emotional and idealistic side of our way of thought. The fact that it is as plain as a pikestaff to all thinking people does not enable the supernaturalist always to see it; but that does not justify, I admit, any "muddying the clear stream of thought."

JANET CHANCE.

[We greatly appreciate the way in which Mrs. Chance has taken our friendly criticism. Her question concerning Agnosticism is too wide to admit of a curt reply. As soon as possible we will deal with the whole subject of Agnosticism and kindred terms. Clarification in this direction is sadly needed.—EDITOR.]

### "THE FOOL HATH SAID."

SIR,—Dr. Alington complains that in those lines which you published ("Methinks the title picked by Eton's Head") I criticized his book when I had not read it. But what I wrote did not purport to be a criticism of his book; it was unmistakably a comment on the title, and on nothing but the title, "The Fool Hath Said." When a theistic writer thus makes play with an old text which carries one obvious meaning, and a meaning necessarily offensive to Freethinkers, he must not expect to have his book read before objection is raised to the seeming rudeness of the title. If he does not mean what he appears to mean, it is for himself to offer explanation.

H.S.S.

## Obituary.

JAMES BIDDICK.

ON Thursday, March 23, the remains of James Biddick were interred at the Chelmsford Borough Cemetery. While on a visit to friends at Chelmsford he was taken ill and died on March 19, in his eighty-fourth year. A convinced Freethinker for many years, having no use for religion in any form, he lived a perfectly secular life to the end. His wish for a Secular Funeral was duly honoured by the surviving members of the family, and an address was read at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY (Caxton Hall, Council Chamber, Caxton Street, Victoria Street, S.W.1): 7.0, Saturday, April 1, A Social. Tickets (including light Refreshments) 2s. 6d. each.

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 3, Mr. P. Goldman—"Freethought and Socialism."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.): 7.0, Thos. A. Jackson—"The League of Militant Atheists."

#### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, April 2, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

ASHINGTON AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S., Wednesday, April 5, Mr. J. R. Donald—"Human Suggestibility."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Some Teaching" of Charles Bradlaugh."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall): Sunday, April 9, 6.30, Annual General Meeting. For Members only.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.15, Mr. F. Davies—"Morality and Right."

#### OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 7.0, R. Buntin—A Lecture.

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