

# THE FREETHINKER

▪ EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN ▪

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

Views and Opinions

Our Tailed Minds

I SET aside my illustrations of the way in which early religious training, co-operating with a mainly religious environment, leaves most of us with a mind muddled by religious thought forms, in order to examine the newspaper religion of two well-known novelists—Messrs J. B. Priestley and Dr. Cronin. I shall probably have to interrupt more than once what I have in mind to say—in order to deal with subjects that cannot be indefinitely postponed. But here, at least, is another instalment. And it is probable that the reader will follow the more clearly my line of argument if I indulge in some autobiographical notes. They will help towards the understanding of my method of approach.

The larger part of my experience in controversy has been spent in connexion with Freethought propaganda. I think my oldest friends would say that I ought to qualify this by the statement that long before I reached maturity I was usually engaged in controversy. But from the beginning of my "twenties," it is Freethought with which I have been mainly concerned, although I am glad to say that interest in other questions has never flagged; it is the Freethought Cause that has always claimed my first and constant adherence. Yet my introduction to the Freethought platform did not come through any association with the movement. Prior to my lecturing from that platform I had never attended a Freethought lecture; I had never given more than a casual glance at any of the current Freethought journals or pamphlets. But I was, I afterwards realized, helped by a rather peculiar set of circumstances. On the male side, I came of a very old family of English Jews; dating back, I believe, to the end of the seventeenth century, and when I came along the family religion had worn rather thin. In addition I was born in a midland town where very few Jews had settled. And I believe that this was wholly to the good so far as my mental development was concerned;

for while the Jewish home surroundings protected me against the influence of the Christian environment, the latter guarded me against the full influence of the Jewish home life. The result was that when I reached my teens I had nothing to give up. I had nothing to unlearn, and that gives one a fine start. I cannot remember ever having any religious belief, and was, so long as I can remember, able to view all religions, as an American writer once said of me, with the detached interest that a zoologist studies the specimens in a museum of natural history. I was always more concerned with finding out why men believed in religion than continuously trying to discover whether one religion contained more truth than another. I have never hunted up a religion, although I have often hunted one down. Science, philosophy, and history were my earliest loves, and my Freethought followed from my studies.

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Myself and Freethought

My introduction to the Freethought platform was quite accidental. It is curious that it should have been due to an invitation from a lecturer of the Christian Evidence Society. It was quite by chance that I went one Sunday for a walk in Victoria Park, and stopped to listen to a man speaking against Freethought. I am not quite sure if he was a member of the Christian Evidence Society, but I afterwards determined that he was fully qualified for the association. The Christian Evidence Society of to-day is a very pale lady-like sort of an organization to what it was in 1889. It had an army of out-door speakers, and among them were a number of as unscrupulous liars and foul-minded individuals as one could hope to meet. They appeared to dream of nothing but sexual vice, which they obligingly transferred to Freethinkers. Freethought speakers appeared to spend their time either in neglecting their own wives or in running away with the wives of other people. I never bothered much with either of these charges, and just remarked with regard to the last one, that while one must not expect a Freethinker to be quite immune to the influence of a Christian environment, seeing that running away with another man's wife is an expensive hobby, my puzzle was to find out where Freethought speakers got the money from. As a Christian expected the usual outburst of fiery indignation I seldom met with the statement twice from the same individual.

On this particular occasion the Christian speaker was being opposed by an old gentleman who suffered from an impediment in his speech. The lecturer amused himself, and the crowd, by mimicking him. After he had "replied" to his opponent the lecturer asked for other comments. I took advantage of the occasion to mount the platform and gave the speaker and audience a dressing-down for their behaviour. On a subsequent Sunday I again opposed the same

speaker. The next thing that happened was an invitation from the Secretary of the local Branch of the N.S.S. to give them a lecture or two. I agreed, and have been lecturing ever since. The first purely Freethought lecture I ever listened to was my own. And but for the invitation from the Christian Evidence speaker I might never have listened to that.

I think that what I have said will help to the understanding of my position. I had nothing to give up, and Christian doctrines and beliefs, as such, had no interest for me save so far as they served to throw light on various historic movements, or served as illustrations of abnormal or pathological psychology. This was a subject that always interested me, and it led to my spending some time investigating Spiritualism, and also saved my falling into the stupid error of labelling everything connected with Spiritualism as fraud. I knew better than to help Spiritualists in this way. To me religious beliefs have always been part and parcel of the mass of other beliefs connected with lucky days, magical potions, etc., and I could see no substantial distinction between the Christian God and the thousand and one gods who have been and still are worshipped.

The pre-evolutionary arguments for the existence of God—as stated by both Christian and pre-Christian theists—I knew by heart, and I very early recognized that all apologists could do was to offer these arguments in a slightly altered form with, so to speak, evolutionary trimmings. In this respect I must again count myself fortunate in being born in an era of evolution (1868), just when the hypothesis of evolution was beginning to control the stage. One thing that had always impressed me about evolution was the light it threw on the origin, nature, and function of religion in life. The date of my birth is a very important consideration. As I have already said, nothing is harder than to outgrow the influence of the education one gets and the impressions one forms in early years. A man, for example, may know all that the theory of evolution has to teach him, and yet go through life exhibiting in his thought the constraining and distorting influence of pre-evolutionary teaching.

A good example of this is seen in the case of Alexander Bain. Bain was a Freethinker, and in his day a law-giver in mental and moral science. He was intellectually upright, quietly brave, and forthright in speech. I owe much to him. Bain *knew* the theory of evolution thoroughly, but that knowledge was acquired too late for it to be completely woven into the texture of his thought. This was also the feature that struck me in many of the Freethought speakers with whom I came in contact, both personally and by reading their works. They were fine fighters, loyal to the core to what they believed, firm in their adherence to an unpopular cause, and, class for class, they were the superiors, in the extent of their reading and strength of character and intellect, to their Christian opponents. Yet they were often still under the influence of their early thinking. They often reminded me of a man who has learned French, but who still has to do all his thinking in English. There will always be some difference between his thought and that of a native Frenchman.

\* \* \*

#### Some Recollections

Now I have started I think I may as well finish this week's notes with a few reminiscences. I first met G. W. Foote about twelve months after I commenced lecturing. Like myself he was an omnivorous reader, but with a far finer literary taste than I possessed. For myself I think I can say with absolute truth that from the age of 14 to 35 I read everything I came across and on any subject. I was also favoured with a retentive memory, and in being an abnormally

rapid reader. On the intellectual side I think I came to know G. W. Foote as intimately as anyone did, probably more intimately than anyone else. I was surprised to learn his familiarity with philosophers in general, and with out-of-the-way ones in particular. I think he was equally surprised when he discovered that I had read all Fielding's plays, as well as many of the older theologians whose writings he prized. I think that without exception his was one of the finest brains that was ever placed at the service of Freethought. He was a man of tried courage, a master of every move on the public platform, a fine writer with an unerring literary taste, a contempt for much upon which the world places too great a value, widely read, and with the rare capacity for seeing good qualities in writers to whom he was completely opposed. To those who could appreciate properly his writings and his conversation, he displayed more than a knowledge of the subject with which he happened to be dealing, he showed understanding. There was nothing of the "mugger-up"—about Foote. Nothing of the man who looks up a subject in order to write about it, and who manages to impose upon those who are too ignorant to detect the shallowness of the writer or speaker. What he knew he took the pains to know thoroughly, and what he gave was the best of his store. Above all he was an uncompromising Atheist in his writings and speeches. Yet, in some respects, he formed for me an illustration of the unconscious influence of early religious beliefs on one who believed he had completely outgrown them.

We had been discussing the historical influence of Christianity, and something he had said caused me to remark, "I think you are at bottom afraid of Christianity." He laughed, "Well," I said, "in spite of your constant and unsparing attacks on Christianity you yet appear to regard it as something intrinsically great, something to be dreaded, and treated with the deference with which a mediæval Saint treated Satan. You despise Christianity as much as I do, but you appear to be somewhat afraid of it. You have not the easy-going contempt for it that I have; and I think the difference is due to the fact that you once believed in it and I never did. You have had the disease and the influence of it is still with you. I never had the complaint, and that makes a deal of difference."

I once had to express the same thing to the present Bishop of London, who was then at the head of Oxford House, Bethnal Green, and on several occasions he opposed me in Victoria Park. I think I was the only Freethought speaker he ever did oppose, although the frequency of his contests grew after he went "west," and he developed the number of his contests with East-End Atheists with a carelessness of truth characteristic of his type. On one of the occasions he opposed me, he reeled off the usual sickly sentimentalism about "Christian love," and accused me of hating Christianity. I denied that altogether, and explained to him that hatred was really a great passion, a manly and virile passion, and should be reserved for great things. I had a very hearty contempt for Christianity, as being the finest mechanism for covering the vilest feelings with a cloak of morality, that I had ever encountered. If Christianity improved, I might pay it the compliment of hating it.

I don't imagine for a moment that Ingram saw my point. Without exception I think he was the most foolish and the most genuinely ignorant man in a high position I have ever met. He was not then Bishop of London, but soon after he became Bishop of Stepney. He must have had good friends behind him who valued his particular brand of stupidity. Before he was thirty-six years of age he was given a sinecure at St. Paul's worth £1,000 a year and a house. A

little later he was given another sinecure of a second £1,000, and he held both at the same time. On the death of Bishop Creighton, the well-known historian, he was made Bishop of London with £10,000 a year. When he was appointed, the *Athenæum*, then the oldest and leading literary journal in this country, said the appointment of Ingram to such a post was an insult to the memory of Creighton. Creighton was a scholar and a man of ability. Ingram was neither. Still he got there. No wonder that he should once have explained that the world would have been a very different place for him but for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and friends in high places have meant much to Arthur Foley Winnington Ingram.

Next week I will get on with the job of tracing religious lingerings in the minds of those who consider themselves free from the influence of their early and formally discarded creeds.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Freethought Pantheon

"Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,  
For you a stately gallery maintain  
Of gay and tragic pictures."—*Wordsworth*.

"Though all else perish; ground 'neath iron war,  
The golden thought survives."—*Watson*.

To the meditative mind there is no better reading than a list of names of note. We can well understand the sober joy of the old-world scholars, who, taking their Bibles seriously, loved to grapple with the lengthy genealogies of Israel and Judah. Even a gazetteer is a mine of suggestion, and in a London directory you can lose yourself among the strange lanes from Pie Corner to Hanging Sword Alley. But a biographical dictionary, or an encyclopædia, is certain to make large inroads on our time. Take, for example, Joseph M. Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. In it there are thousands of entries, taken from all ages and all countries. That means thousands of names of interest, thousands of men and women who have played their part on life's stage, and who played it in a sufficiently remarkable manner to give their names a distinct interest to their descendants. We know of few more interesting occupations than the reading of such a book, and it is to be hoped that a new edition may be forthcoming. For it was issued half a century ago, and there is much new material to be added.

Such a book is informative, and turns the handles of many doors. We turn a page and encounter the name of Charles Bradlaugh, as brave as any soldier who ever drew a sword. He fought a Homeric fight for thirteen years against truly overwhelming odds, and his was the cool head and the calm judgment of the great captains of men. He gave his life for Liberty, and our children will remember something of this great Freethought leader when they have forgotten the names of his opponents. A few pages further and there is the name of Richard Carlile. What a brave spirit does it not conjure up! There flits into our memory the terrible martyrdom of this bravest of the brave soldiers of Liberty. Think of it! Carlile, his courageous wife, and his companions, divided among them sixty years' imprisonment, and heavy money fines. Further, we see the name of G. W. Foote, the Prince Rupert of the Army of Progress. He walks always as to the clash of martial music under the banner of Freedom. Without exploration we have found the magnetic name of George Jacob Holyoake, whose name is imperishably associated with the Freethought and Co-operative Movements. The name of Thomas Paine is homely, but what a puissant personality does it not recall? A

character of outstanding ability, a maker of nations, a writer whose virile books have survived the winnowing of many generations. Who can see the name of Robert Ingersoll without a quickening of the pulses? He comes riding down the wind like a knight in shining armour to attack the embattled hosts of superstition. And the solitary student, Charles Darwin, who shook the civilized world, and turned "Adam" and "Eve" and the talking serpent out of the fabled "Garden of Eden," not with a flaming sword, but with a scholar's knowledge and a steel pen. Here also is Shelley, the sweetest-souled poet of a thousand years of English literature. Christians sought to deprive him of his own children, and imprisoned men and women for selling his Atheistic *Queen Mab*. A sense of fellowship with the fled centuries invades us as we see the name of Giordano Bruno, one of the most fearless martyrs for Truth. And Time seems poised for a moment upon his outspread wings as we encounter the powerful personality of Lucretius, one of the earliest truthseekers, and one of the sublimest poets who ever attuned his lyre under the eagles of the Roman Cæsars.

The name of Edward Fitzgerald reminds us of the universality of Freethought. This East-Coast scholar turned the quatrains of the old freethinking Persian, Omar Khayyam, into a masterpiece of English poetry. "A planet larger than the sun which cast it" his friend Tennyson described it. There is a significant entry in the name of Catherine of Russia, who was a Freethinker in word and deed. When Denis Diderot was forced by dire poverty to sell his books, she bought them back for him and installed him as librarian. Another "Intellectual" was Frederick the Great. What must it have been to have been present at those festal nights at Frederick's palace when the nimble wit of Voltaire challenged the choicest brains of Europe? It must have been a rich memory and an abiding delight, like those ever-memorable nights at the "Mermaid," when Ben Jonson exchanged jests with the smiling Shakespeare. A more shadowy figure is that of kind Kit Marlowe, the Elizabethan dramatist, whose untimely death in a brawl prevented his trial for blasphemy. Richard Burton, the master of many languages, the translator of the *Arabian Nights*, and the bold traveller who penetrated to the Moslem "Holy of Holies" at Mecca at the peril of his life, is another of the glorious company.

French "Intellectuals" have ever been in the vanguard of progress. They are represented by a magnificent procession from Abelard to Emile Zola. And so we may continue to recite the names of these pioneers of progress, so utterly removed from the legendary Freethinking monsters of popular imagination which the clergy paint so vividly and so dishonestly. Names such as those we have quoted are but signposts to meet the reader, and direct him towards the wonderful university of Freethought. And, mind you, there are so many hundreds of such signposts. "Wonderful" is the only adjective which will serve for this maze of surprises; this patient account of the men and women who have cared, not for wealth and notoriety, but for intellectual honesty, written by a wise and careful scholar, who himself emptied many an inkpot in the service of a great cause. Some day, we hope that another hand will bring this dictionary up to date, for few works throw such illuminative rays upon the Freethought Movement throughout the world.

Here, under one roof, we may say, is the temple of Liberty and the House of Wisdom, compared with which churches and chapels are but mausoleums of departed ignorance. For each of these men and women were, in their individual way, apostles of

Freedom, and knight-errants of Liberty. From the dim twilight of the Ancient World when Lucretius and Lucian rolled their thunders against religion in their day, until near twenty centuries later Meredith and Swinburne rallied the soldiers of Freethought with the golden trumpets of their genius. Liberty never failed of her votaries. The bare records of the doings of these pioneers fascinate by reason of their simplicity. From Hypatia, murdered by a Christian rabble, to Ferrer, "butchered to make a 'Roman' holiday" they strike our imagination and hold our wonder in thrall. They are potent because of their sincerity. Who could fail to recognize the splendid courage which held so steadfastly to the last moment

"When the whole tragic tale hung on a broken blade.

This is but a little cloud of biological dust, and, if any apology is needed for such writing, we point to the fact that the interest of such a volume is perennial and inexhaustible. It reaches from the greatest names in history to hundreds of brave men and women whose achievements were less important, but, who, because they dedicated their lives to the service of intellectual liberty, helped to lay the deep foundations of the future greatness of the human race.

MIMNERMUS.

## Some Old Freethought Journals

### *The London Investigator*

ONE of the outstanding facts which distinguishes Victorian Freethought was the determination to produce a weekly or monthly journal which could appeal, not only to the more or less uneducated working men and women, but also to the more fortunate members of the community. This determination to produce articles which could not be impugned on the ground of insufficient scholarship is manifest in all the journals, which were, in most cases, edited by men without university qualifications. It was not the Mills, the Spencers, the Huxleys, who devoted themselves to the badly paid, and often thankless, duties of producing a Freethought journal, but men like Carlile, Hetherington, Robert Cooper, Bradlaugh, and Holyoake, born of working-class parents, and practically without any capital. It is not an easy job to produce a paper devoted to Freethought; but it was a far harder task seventy or eighty years ago when the poor really were poor, and were fighting hard for the elementary rights of justice. And looking through some of these old magazines I marvel more and more at the courage of those grand old fighters for liberty of thought. Nothing seemed to daunt them or damp their ardour. They were fighting the battle for reason, for the emancipation of man from the thralldom of supernaturalism and credulity, and they never dis- gused their enthusiasm or devotion to the cause.

Almost right through the nineteenth century there was some paper regularly appearing dealing with Freethought and Secularism. They never had a great circulation; indeed, I doubt whether any one of them paid its way. But they always had devoted readers who did their best to spread the gospel, and increase their circulation. The various Mechanics' Institutes, which were then springing up in many towns all over the country, had often a sprinkling of members with tendencies towards Secularism, and these did their best to arrange for lectures and debates. In spite of the fact that the average working-man of mid-Victorian times was nominally, if not staunchly, a Christian, heresy played a big part in the cultural development of the workers, and Freethought debates were usually packed with earnest and atten-

tive listeners. Many of these discussions were afterwards reprinted and enjoyed big circulations, proof enough of the interest they caused.

Of the better known speakers about eighty years ago, was Robert Cooper, whose untimely death deprived the movement of one of its best exponents all too early. He was born in 1819 and his *Holy Scriptures Analysed*, which he produced in his teens, had the honour of being denounced in the House of Lords by the Bishop of Exeter. Much influenced in his early days by Robert Owen, he was lecturing in his fifteenth year and continued to do so with great success after he settled permanently in London in the '50s. His *Infidel's Text Book* which appeared in 1845 he enlarged later as *The Bible and its Evidences*—a book I have always considered as one of the best I know against the Bible. But Cooper always hankered for a paper of his own, and it was in 1854 that he started the *London Investigator* as a monthly journal.

The first number was actually printed at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but the whole format was changed with the second number by using much smaller type and a different "make-up." From the outset Cooper stamped his individuality upon his journal, and gathered round him contributors who worthily upheld the traditions of militant Freethought. The leading article in the second number dealt with "The Philosophy of Volition"—well written, careful and full of apt quotations and cogent reasoning in favour of Determinism. One must, of course, have a sense of proportion, and make allowance for the state of knowledge of the time; it would not be fair to expect either Cooper or his contributors to write then as if they knew what later investigations into psychology and science would prove.

The then stormy petrel of both Freethought and Christianity, Joseph Barker, was at the time in America. Barker seemed to have a nasty habit of changing his views every few years, becoming in turn a violent Christian or a violent Freethinker whenever he felt like it. In 1854 he was attacking Christianity with the passionate fervour of a convinced heretic, and was meeting all and sundry in debate and attack. It must be confessed he did some excellent work as a Freethinker. His debates with William Cooke and Brewin Grant are models of heretical invective and are worth reading even at this day. Barker's speech in New York on Thomas Paine's birthday in 1854 is an excellent example of what he could do, and was well worth re-printing in the *London Investigator*. A year or so later his death was reported in New York, and Cooper wrote how he was overwhelmed with grief "on receipt of the startling and melancholy death of the ablest man who has risen from the working classes since the time of Cobbett." The report, however, was not confirmed and Barker lived to abjure his heresy and, like Thomas Cooper, go once again to the other side.

Apart from the many excellent articles which regularly appeared, the journal published from time to time details of the way in which there was always a difference of opinion on something or other, even among the leaders of Freethought. George Jacob Holyoake, for instance, had a most unhappy knack in those far-off days of interfering or disagreeing with other Secularist speakers and writers on the meaning and aims of Secularism. Cooper was an excellent exponent and worked hard to put ginger into a movement destined to form the common platform against Christianity. Holyoake attacked Cooper in his paper *The Reasoner*—an attack full of that queer petulance manifested so often later against both Foote and Bradlaugh. With all his fine qualities, Holyoake never was able to get away from a kind of shrill jealousy of other leaders, and it showed itself quite early in

his career. Cooper took very strong exception to the way in which Holyoake considered himself as the "big bug" of the Freethought movement in this country, and the way in which he would condescend to "notice" other workers.

In this connexion there is an interesting communication from Charles Bradlaugh writing to the paper (then *The Reasoner*), in 1858, about his *The Bible; What it is*. It appears that Bradlaugh before commencing to print the book, arranged with Holyoake, who was then publishing under the name of Holyoake & Co., to use this name "without risk of cost, and at full publishing profit." The work appeared in parts, but after the third number Holyoake declined to publish any more on the ground that "he would be identified with the book." He even went further, and actually refused to sell it—though he made Bradlaugh "pay full publisher's profit for each copy which had been sold." Holyoake was then publishing a "spiritual" commentary on the Bible, and also a spiritualist work entitled, *Divine Illumination Communicated from the Spirit Spheres*—with which, of course, he did not mind being "identified." In the end, that fine old Freethinker, Edward Truelove, undertook to publish Bradlaugh's book. The young "Iconoclast" was deeply hurt at the whole incident especially as he had long admired Holyoake "as a gentleman of considerable experience and talent." Bradlaugh was destined to be hurt more than once afterwards, and the "war" was carried on even after his death, as those who have read the privately distributed pamphlet, *The Warfare of Opinion*, will know to their regret.

But one cannot expect that even Freethinkers can always agree on methods of policy or on their vigorously expressed opinions.

H. CUTNER.

(To be continued)

## A Life's Last Phase

As an excuse for his somewhat pernicious activities, after achieving octogenarianism, our 82-years-old G.B.S. with great petulance, writes:—

"I am a victim of the work-craze! *Que voulez-vous?* If my work is cut off, I get miserably unhappy. I make resolutions to break myself of it; never to work after lunch; to work only two hours a day; but all in vain! Each day brings its opportunities and its temptations: the craving masters me every time. I dread a holiday, as much as I dread anything on earth!"

Yet rather than refuse to prune Frank Harris's book on Wilde of its lies and defamations, are there no more profitable avenues for Shaw's genius? No new poets to lift into the limelight? No struggling young actresses of the legitimate stage to make known to a talkie-blinded public? Without Shaw's perspicacity, and his very real financial help, when W. H. Davies was "down-and-out" in a cheap doss-house, and totally unknown as the great chronicler of Nature which he is, Davies might have perished, with half his songs unsung. There *must* be other literary craftsmen worthy of aid from G.B.S.; whereas Oscar Wilde's fame was assured *without* those false pictures painted by Harris!

Moreover, G.B.S., with all his ancient stubbornness, adds:—

"I still stick to my old proposal that everybody should be called on every five years or so to justify their existence. There are many people in the world who ought to be liquidated!"

Liquidated, forsooth!

Would not Shaw have "liquidated" Oscar, once the released prisoner (his glowing veins full of the rapture of release into a world "full of a number of things"), who refused to knuckle down and do a hard day's work, day by day and every day—the rather spending his hours, at the earliest rebuffs, in weeping, and self-slaughter by alcohol?

Liquidated!

G.B.S. can sentimentalize over the Frank Harris grotesque portrait—but not even Oscar's wit and humour (far finer and more rapier-like than his own) would have reconciled this iconoclastic fellow-Celt to kindly tolerance!

"I dread a holiday as much as I dread anything on earth!" he still cries.

"Yes, work, work, work!" is the Shavian slogan! But unobtrusively urges the Wildean philosophy: "Life is too complex a thing to be settled by hard and fast rules!" And it adds the rebuke: "A high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much either to one's health or one's happiness!"

Health and happiness first—"high" morality a long way after!

Moreover, to Oscar, "happiness" came from self-realization: not from the craze for production, no matter *what* is produced; inasmuch as (Oscar elaborates): "The function of the artist is to invent, to create, *not* to chronicle!"

If Frank Harris's book on Wilde is something beyond a lying chronicle in being an "invention," it is an "invention" quite outside the scope of honest art. Had G.B.S. seen more of Oscar, after his release from Reading Gaol, he might not readily have sponsored Harris's glaring fabrications.

However, this is not to be any item-by-item refutation of the thousand-and-one lies and misrepresentations of Harris's *Life and Confession of Oscar Wilde*. Robert Harborough Sherard has done that most thoroughly, in the three-hundred pages of his polemic book on George, Frank, and Oscar. Before describing very briefly the last phase of Oscar's Parisian Life, I would like to remark how much the Wildean philosophy differs from the Shavian; in spite of resemblances in epigrammatic technique. I need cite only one instance, as appropriate to this hour in Europe.

Both abominate War. Says Shaw: "In the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine."

Oscar's touch is lighter: "We will not go to war with France, because her prose is perfect!"

Like Shakespeare, Oscar was a great "purloiner." Shaw and Wilde could plagiarize each other with ease!

To pick epigrams from Wilde's plays, and find an earlier version of each of them is easy enough. "Experience is the name we give to our mistakes" has been said before, as far back as Seneca. But "What a pity it is that in life we only get our lessons, when they are no longer any use to us," is so peculiarly "Wildean" in its philosophy that nobody has ever said it—like *that*! It balances an even more profound flippancy.

"Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval. When we are happy, we are always good; but when we are good we are not always happy!"

This was a most brilliant anticipation of what psychologists have only recently made clear—that the smile makes the mood of happiness, not the happiness the smile. It goes down to the roots of the actor's need of working himself into a glow of energy, by some sort of violent exercise, before he rushes on to the stage to portray the jealousy-insane Othello. As our Oscar himself said: "An idea that is not

dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all!"

Come now to that fine little thought: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars!" It was supposedly Frederick Langbridge, a quite mediocre Victorian rhymist, who wrote:—

Two men look through their prison-bars,  
One sees mud, and one the stars!

R.L.S. also had the authorship of this couplet ascribed to him.

Oscar corresponded with Louis several times, and R.L.S. may have used it in one of his letters. But the lines are not to be found in any of Stevenson's books.

*Apropos* the couplet, and Oscar's epigram, a rather clever drawing-room story has grown into being. It is new enough to bear relating here.

Teacher was anxious to stimulate the imagination of her small-boys' class. They were much keener on football than on verse. She noticed one morning that the reading of the verse about prison-bars brought the light of appreciation into the eyes of Smith Minor, one of her stupid scholars.

"Ah, Johnny, she cried: "You like that couplet! What do the words 'One sees mud, and one the stars!' convey to your mind?"

"It must have been a most gorgeous scrum!" came little Smith's laconic reply.

Oscar could be at his best with children—especially boys of the sub-adolescent period. I remember Mrs. Wilde, whom I met only twice, as a pretty woman, but one whose intelligence was far below the standard of the soul-mate of so great a genius. She was domestic in her habits, also most evangelically religious. What a glorious missionary to the Africans of the West Coast, she would have made, to be sure!

Naturally Oscar chaffed her unmercifully, though in a way that could not wound. She blushed painfully whenever he said anything daring. "In this world," he would announce, "there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it. The last is much the worse. The punishment of the provincial Lord Mayor is that he is, simply *is*, Lord Mayor!"

Perhaps the greater part of her husband's persiflage passed over Mrs. Wilde's head. Le Gallienne relates a typical dinner party scene. The talk is of Religion, and the subject races of the world.

Suddenly Oscar turns with his accustomed gallantry to his wife.

"Missionaries, my dear, are the divinely-provided food for destitute and under-fed cannibals! Whenever they are on the brink of starvation, Heaven, in its infinite mercy, sends them a nice plump missionary!"

Obviously, Oscar did not believe a word of what he said. He was joking, in his inimitably Irish way; but Constance Wilde cried out pitifully, "Oh, Oscar, how can you? You cannot possibly be in earnest!"

I remember his telling me of the coarse way in which Harris would utter his heresies aloud, even in a crowded restaurant, so that neighbours should look round in silent protest. To show the opposite extreme of diffidence, he described a nervous young curate.

The youthful cleric had to discourse to a class, composed mainly of girls under age, upon the vicissitudes of Jonah in that minor prophet's unexpected contacts with the whale.

"For three days and three nights," began the curate, stammeringly aware of the rocks that lay ahead of him, "Jonah was in the . . ."

Blushing, stammering, looking about him fearfully, the young man paused. Then he started away again: "For three days and three nights Jonah was in the . . ."

Confusion clothing him like a garment, while he mopped his face with his handkerchief, he looked at the row of expectantly anxious faces before him. Then, gathering all his courage, he made a final noble effort: "And for three days and three nights Jonah was"—his voice rang out triumphantly—"in the *society* of the whale!"

"It is the duty of every father," Oscar often told his friend, "to tell stories to his children. I wrote my *Fairy Tales*" (*The Happy Prince* volume must have been in his mind) "for Cyril." He turned to his two listening boys, "Didn't I, Cyril?"

Little Cyril only disdainfully smiled! He asked his father whether he ever dreamed dreams? To which Oscar replied very gravely and with most solemn slowness; "Dream dreams, Cyril? Why, of course, and always, darling."

"What do you dream about?" demanded the child, lifting a scornful but interested face.

Oscar started extemporaneously to fashion one of his gorgeous tapestries, an echo of some of the fantastic word-weavings remembered from De Quincey's *Opium Eater*.

He told of dragons with scales of silver and gold, and great green eyes. He described the flames of scarlet coming from their great jaws; and then showed mighty eagles with four-fold wings and claws of gold; lions with yellow manes, and a vengeful roar like that of Niagara.

Cyril, utterly unimpressed, and looking at his father with those wide innocent eyes of the devoutly pure which he had inherited from his mother, broke into the monologue.

Said Cyril: "I—dream—of—Pigs!"

Oscar admitted unexpected defeat. He laughed and was silent.

On the really philosophic side, the side that has made Wilde's essays, poems, and plays so real to the Russian soul, sayings like these have gone very far:

"Discontent is the starting-point in every man's career. . . . To recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is like advising a man who is starving to eat less! . . . Philanthropic people lose all sense of humanity!"

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Nigeria.

(To be concluded)

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## Acid Drops

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"We encourage births where births are reasonable," said Lord Horder, speaking at a birth-control meeting at Caxton Hall, on December 1. "Nations may have opportune reasons for encouraging births at all costs. We are not yet, thank God, in an opportune position." God appears to have earned thanks rather late in the day, seeing that the growth of birth-control is almost wholly due to non-believers, and even now he has not convinced the vast majority of his followers of its reasonableness. Lord Horder is, we suppose, a great doctor, but what a pity it is that his mind is not of tougher and better texture. And there really is no pressing need for a man in his position insinuating that in spite of his belief in birth-control he believes in God—that is, no reason but the coercive power of his position, and the desire to avoid offence.

We mentioned in "Views and Opinions," last week, the interference of the Government with, among other things, the showing of films which might interfere with the policy of the Government. The question was raised in the House of Commons by Mr. Mander as to whether the Government had asked the American Ambassador for the removal of certain parts of news films on political grounds. Mr. Chamberlain replied:—

No, Sir, he did not.

Had it stopped there, and as one must not question the truthfulness of a Prime Minister, the conclusion was that there was no foundation for such a suggestion. But Mr. Mander reminded the Prime Minister that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had admitted having appealed to the Ambassador. Mr. Chamberlain again denied it. Still further pressed Mr. Chamberlain replied:—

The attention of the American Ambassador was drawn to certain items, and he was asked to look into it.

There are various ways of lying, so in the case of a Prime Minister one must assume that all the Chancellor did was to advise the American Ambassador to have a night out. A kind of, "Say old man, there's rather a good film on at ——. If you have time I advise you to go and have a look at it." But the idea of cutting out the objectionable news-item was never thought of. We presume that this kind of answer would also cover many other examples of Government interference with news and films that have lately come to light.

There is nothing like morality and religion for covering anything that is either rascally or idiotic. In the name of religion almost every possible villainy has been justified, and "morality" has covered almost as wide a field of the undesirable. The latest example of one of these narcotizing words comes from Japan, where the play of Hamlet has just been banned by the Osaka police because it is immoral. It seems that raping Chinese women and murdering old men and children, are quite bearable, but the moral line must be drawn somewhere, and it stops at "Hamlet." Nothing like a good dose of morality or religion, or both mixed, as a cover for scoundrelism.

It is very difficult to get Christians to play straight in any way where their religion is concerned. Put an ardent Christian in Parliament or on an administrative body, and he will straightway forget the duties properly attendant on his office, and by all sorts of underhand and unconfessed methods seek the advancement of Christianity and the particular sect to which he belongs. He says his first duty is to God, which is a roundabout way of saying that his last duty is to man and the men and women who have elected him. When not engaged in this he will create all sorts of movements, place them before the public on ethical or social grounds, and then utilize them for his own sectarian gratification. In business this kind of policy is called obtaining credit under false pretences. In religion it passes as a sense of duty to God.

A few weeks ago we said, in common with many papers, that one consequence of the Chamberlain bargain with Hitler, a bargain that was well parodied by the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, "The British Prime Minister will call on Hitler to-morrow, grimly determined not to hand over the title to Buckingham Palace, unless the Führer asks for it"—would be, apart from the immensely increased military strength, to give Germany a stranglehold on the trade of Eastern Europe. This has developed so rapidly, that in the House of Commons (November 30), Mr. Hudson, Secretary Overseas Trade Department, was compelled to warn Germany that unless this was relaxed Britain would be compelled to adopt very severe measures, and "beat Germany at her own game." That puts rather a different light on the strong desire of the German people (the *Government* of Germany, for no one else is allowed to express a desire) to live at peace with this country. We shall see what will happen. But, judging from the unceasing attacks on this country by the Government press, it looks as though even Mr. Chamberlain may be driven to make some retort in either speech or action. It is certain that the people will not stand many more Christmas gifts to Hitler.

Mr. A. J. Cummings is reminded by the shooting of the Roumanian Fascist chief, while trying to escape from the police, that some time ago in conversation with him the leader spoke quite calmly of his hoping to establish Fascism in Roumania, and in that case his first act would

be to massacre about half a million Jews. Some of the German papers, and there are none but Government papers in Germany, say that should any Nazi leader be killed by any Jew anywhere in the world, every Jew in Germany will be executed. While we are writing this the English papers are recording the arrival here of the first batch of Jewish children—on the understanding that they are not to be any charge upon British funds—who have been allowed to leave Germany. But true to their policy of murder and robbery on the grand scale, these children had taken from them by the Nazi authorities any little article of jewelry they possessed, and arrived here with not more than one mark in their possession (about one shilling and eightpence). These things together with many that are occurring should help us all to return thanks to Mr. Chamberlain for the encouragement he gave to the Nazi gang, and also for securing us a peaceful and happy Christmas. Probably when the Prime Minister visits Mussolini we shall have more blessings for which to be thankful.

We notice in a London shop-window in the centre of a display of Christmas Cards, a card displaying the Prime Minister as a centre, with the words surrounding him "Peace on Earth, Good Will towards Men." The publishers have not had the courage to add the customary *halo*.

We have often pointed out that a great many activities of Christian organizations, while professedly engaged in, what is on the face of it, social activities, are yet created and maintained for no other reason than as a method of retaining people in the different Churches. The Salvation Army, which while commending itself to the general public for another reason, has a religious object in view. The Boy Scout Movement is another which, under guise of training youth in habits of comradeship, is used to keep youth from leaving the Christian Church. This has again been plainly affirmed by Lord Somers, Chief Deputy Scout, who says that the belief in God as the foundation of morals is essential. In that case it would seem incumbent that all who do not believe that honesty, truthfulness, and the rest of the ordinary everyday virtues are dependent upon belief in God to leave the organization at once. Otherwise it is clear that among the virtues encouraged by the Scout movement are hypocrisy, humbug, and a practical denial of the value of the social virtues. We don't know anything about Lord Somers; he may be a quite suitable chief of the "Scout organization." But it almost is a step towards Hitlerism to find expressed such a statement as he fathers.

What we have said is enforced by a statement from a Scout official, which appears in the *News-Chronicle* for November 24, that:—

The message was thought to be necessary in the present troubled state of the world, and in view of the growing anti-God movement.

That seems to make it imperative upon all Freethought movements, whatever their specific names may be, to do their best to prevent boys and girls entering a movement of the Boy Scout kind. There may be a loss of respectability in their doing so, but there should be compensation in the growth of a comforting feeling of self-respect.

The vicar of St. Gabriel's, Aldersbrook, Wanstead (Rev. Cecil Clark) has disbanded the Sunday school as he "believes that Sunday schools were only invented because the clergy were not doing their job properly." He also thinks "children have enough of school during the week." Hark at the cheers going up from the children!—What? Silence?—Too true! Silence and despondency! For the deceitful parson intends the children in future to meet on Sundays in the church for catechism services! Poor deluded kids! To go from the gently-sizzling "frying-pan" of Sunday school hell to the "fire," which never quengeth, fed by orthodox church and catechism! But perhaps Wanstead parents are too kind to their children to let them blow the parson's bellows under the closer supervision the church would allow. What say you, children?

According to the *Listener*, one of the most popular of all the "entertainments" broadcast from earliest days has been "Murder in the Cathedral." After listening to several Sermons from several Cathedrals, we understand how easily temptation may arise—although the remedy strikes us as somewhat drastic.

The I.C.C. has decided to spend £900 on new Bibles, as those in use have been badly worn in schools. A bribe from the people who want votes to the people who want humanity at the expense of the children who want milk.

We have no special sympathy with the crowds of "Listeners-in," who bemoan their sad fate about the abominable programmes the B.B.C. has arranged for these people's so-called "entertainment" on December 25 and January 1. After all, these days ARE Sundays! If listeners refuse to protest effectually about the ordinary Sunday programmes—which are a disgrace to human intelligence—we can—as logicians—only deplore the lack of consistency shown by the public, as usual, in slanging the perpetrators of outrageously out-of-date fanatics merely because occasionally listeners want an exception to a weekly, or daily Rule, which prefers sermons and prayers to sanity and reasonableness.

From the *Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press* we learn that Lady Grace Pearson of Hollingbourne opened a Congregational Church bazaar at Canterbury, with a few appropriate remarks. Lady Grace was, as might be expected, brimful of good nature and Christian charity as became the occasion:—

Now more than ever did they need to show forbearance and tolerance towards other peoples; but the one thing they should not tolerate was the Anti-God movement, which was far more extensive and insidious than most people realized.

Lady Pearson knew of a better way than toleration. No feast of reason and flow of soul for her!

They could best counteract it by each in their own circle helping and supporting their own church in every possible way, such as by that bazaar.

And thus continue to keep in existence the conditions under which the belief in God flourishes, the manufacture of Lady Graces with bigoted and closed minds. We can, at any rate, agree wholeheartedly in this with Lady Pearson. Still, keeping back the Atlantic with Mrs. Partington's mop was a hopeful operation compared with the attempt to influence educated opinion on the existence of God by rolling-up the children of all ages to the Church Bazaar Bran Tub for a lucky dip.

Dr. B. O. F. Heywood, Bishop of Ely, must surely read the *Freethinker*, his sentiment echoing that we have expressed in several Acid Drops lately. The following, by the Bishop, might indeed be one of our own writings:—

Are we of the clergy sometimes content when Mrs. Smith is announced to keep her waiting on the mat, although when the Hon. Mrs. Smythe, who is going to open the bazaar, is announced, we nearly fall over the furniture in our eagerness to greet her?

But when Dr. Heywood describes Mr. N. Chamberlain as "the benefactor of the world," and blames the Government for "disendowing" the Church in some strange—but unexplained—way, he is far away from our fold.

The following advertisement appeared in the *Belfast News Letter*:—

Wanted, bright general for godly Ulster household of nine; wages £16; use of harmonium Sabbath afternoons.

Less than six-and-twopence a week confirms the "godly" nature of the employer. Religious tolerance will be tested, no doubt, when the household of nine have to listen to Bridget playing "Go labour on, Spend and be spent," or some such choice selection from the "Ancient and

Modern." Six-and-twopence a week with godliness and harmony thrown in is not so much, after all, for service and attendance on NINE people!

M.P.'s were to be "whipped" to church on St. Andrew's Day (November 30), so the *Evening Standard* diarist's readers were informed. "Normally about 50 members attend these crypt services," he adds; while at the weekly prayer meeting "the attendance ranges from two to a dozen." Making the maximum number of our legislators who believe in the power of prayer a miserable two per cent! The recall to religion doesn't seem to be much heeded at one of its leading centres, but we are without an estimate as to the number who bow the knee in the Upper House under the very eye of His Grace of Canterbury. The boosting of the Christian Host is rather like that of the Church Army, of which a dozen or so members may be frequently seen marching to and from the Marble Arch trumpeting: "Like a mighty army moves the church of God!"

Political and religious jargon usually lands the speaker into some unholy mess. "The world needs a new movement of moral disarmament," Mr. Frank Buchman, the Oxford Group Barnum, told the gathering in the National Trade Union Club, the other day. Certainly, this man is doing his best for "moral disarmament" as against the need for more moral or ethical armaments! We are told that Ben Tillett and Tom Mann "smiled approvingly" when the showman said, "We are fellow revolutionists." It may be; and would only add a further proof of the strangle-hold religion still has even over the more daring rebels in the workers' cause.

Missions and missionaries in Western Australia are to come under State regulations and licences in future. And not before time, as the reasons given by Mr. W. H. Kitson, Chief Secretary and Minister of Police is the Cabinet, prove. His charges include:—

Exploitation of the natives, intercourse between the staffs and inmates, impropriety, flogging, shooting, complete confinement and curtailment of freedom.

Also there have been forced marriages, expulsion for minor misdemeanours, the employment of irresponsible and unsuitable missionaries and workers, misuse of Government supplies, failure to give deserved attention to cases of sickness, accident, and disease, and floggings by doubled stockwhip.

In one case a mission realized £700 for dog scalps, but paid the Aboriginal collectors five shillings for the whole amount.

## Fifty Years Ago

WOMAN SUFFRAGE is just in principle, and Radicals cannot oppose it. We shall have to pass through a bad period, but it is inevitable. Men must pay the penalty for keeping women in childish ignorance and subjection. Nature exacts her debts to the last farthing. But when it is paid she smiles on us afresh. We shall find an ample compensation for our temporary loss in the elevation of women into loftier spheres of usefulness. They will look out beyond the home, which, sacred as it is, is yet too narrow for the growing spirit of humanity. When called upon to take a part in public life, they will acquire an earnest interest in public questions. This will both cultivate their intellects, and educate them in that wide principle of social justice, in which Mr. Herbert Spencer remarks that they are now deficient. Sharing thus in the higher affairs of society, their lives will be broader and deeper. They will become better companions for men, better wives, and, above all, better mothers. Their morality, which is now too much a hot-house product, will become more robust; and as they grow more thoughtful, and their horizon expands, they will become less superstitious, and less ductile in the hands of priests. Toryism will win at first by their enfranchisement, but Radicalism will win in the end.

*The Freethinker*, December 9, 1888.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4  
Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. G. Newlove, £1.

FAWCETT NEWALL.—The man who can write that Berkeley denied the existence of matter has either never read Berkeley, or proves himself unable to understand one of the clearest of English writers on philosophy. Berkeley's whole position—which includes, of course, the unwarranted conclusion which he deduced therefrom, rests entirely upon the absolute reality of "matter," and that "matter," as it is touched, tasted, seen, etc., is a real existence. Take away the reality of matter and Berkeley's whole system falls to the ground. What Berkeley protested against was the mysterious "substratum" which metaphysical Materialists held to be the real "matter," and which we have so often described as the ghost of a God, and which so many who imagine themselves to be Atheists and Materialists are still carrying round with them. We have dealt with this subject at some length in our *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*, and in the fourth volume of *Essays in Freethinking*. But why not read Berkeley for yourself? He is simplicity itself. All that is required is a little acquaintance with the history of philosophy and an average intelligence. There is really no excuse for misunderstanding Berkeley other than stupidity or the blind following of some blind guide. As to the power of "formal logic," very much depends upon the writer, and the particular examples given. We have never met a writer on formal logic who could not be found to give some grounds for suspecting the soundness of some of his conclusions, or the unwarrantability of some of his assumptions.

H. SPENCE.—Pleased to hear from you. Give our greetings to our mutual friend. We are fairly well, and, shall have to move with a little care for some time. But the conduct of a weekly paper and travelling about the country leaves one with little time for rest, particularly when one is not inclined that way. Your letter has to be held over until next week.

A. CHORLTON.—Mr. Cohen will be visiting Manchester early in January.

G. K. THORPE.—Many thanks for your efforts in trying to get the *Freethinker* in your local library.

"TAB CAN."—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

G. DENDAY.—If you read the *Freethinker* regularly, and make yourself acquainted with Freethought publications, this should serve as a much better guide of what to read than the possession of a set course of reading. What suits one palate and what appeals to one mind may have little effect on another.

J. WALTON.—We shall be pleased to hear from you so soon as your investigations are complete.

S. GORDON HOGG.—The document may be a fake. We are unable to express an opinion, but there is nothing in it that the gangsters of Germany have not expressed in their own journals, and it must be remembered that in Germany the only opinions allowed in the papers are the opinions of the Government.

W. W. SMITH.—Sorry we missed speaking to you at Leicester, but we had to hurry back the same evening. Must have a chat at some future time.

S. HALLAM & G.L.—We have no trace yet of those responsible for the outrage at the grave of Bradlaugh. The advertisement offering £100 for the detection of those responsible was offered to a Fascist paper, among other journals, and was declined. One could hardly expect common decency from such people, but one would also have thought that an outrage at a grave, a place which most people treat with respect, would have incited to a little professed indignation.

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

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

## Sugar Plums

It appears that those who intend subscribing to the Czech Fund have nearly all done so. In any case we do not care for long-drawn out subscription lists, and this fund will close on December 18.

There was a crowded meeting at the Monseigneur Picture Palace in Edinburgh, on Sunday last, and Mr. Cohen could not have asked for a more interested audience. The Edinburgh Branch appears to be doing excellent work, and deserves all the help that local Freethinkers can give. We hope this will result in awakening some of these local unbelievers to the need for their doing something to assist. Mr. Smithies occupied the chair with complete efficiency, and we trust that what he had to say will bear fruit in the near future.

Two useful pamphlets have just been issued by the Secular Society, Limited. The first is *Prayer: an Indictment*, by Mr. George Bedborough. The pamphlet is a very thorough one, and examines the question of prayer in a very witty and interesting manner; incidentally it casts some light on a number of other questions. It is an effort that reflects credit upon the author, and will be of great use in general propaganda.

The second pamphlet is a brief sketch of that brave old Freethinker, Peter Annet. Born in 1693, his life covers the early formative period of modern Freethought. Annet fought with the gloves off and did much to shake the Christian world out of the complacency that was a product of centuries of almost unquestioned rule. For publishing the *Free Enquirer* he was charged with committing blasphemy, sentenced to one month's imprisonment in Newgate, to stand twice in the pillory, a year's hard labour, and to find two sureties for his good behaviour. He was then nearly seventy years of age. The pamphlet is written by Miss Twynam, with whom it has been a labour of love. The only fault we have to find with it is its brevity, but it may serve the purpose of creating interest in these old Freethinkers who do much for human liberty. The price of this pamphlet, and that of Mr. Bedborough's is twopence, by post, twopence halfpenny.

Mr. Cohen has of late had to decline a number of invitations to lecture to outside organizations. He has never been in a hurry to accept such invitations, because he is as he has said scores of times, not a professional lecturer, and never has been, and it is only when the circumstances have made it advisable, in the interests of Freethought, to accept such invitations that he has done so. But at present he is under a promise—for health reasons—to do as little lecturing as possible. He is now lecturing less than usual, and it would be unfair to the Freethought movement for him to dissipate his energies in other directions. Next season he hopes to be able to do more on the platform.

The general British public has responded well to the appeal for help for German refugees, and particularly for the children. Hitler's cold-blooded scheme of degradation is one of the most frightful, and quite unapproachable manifestations of the quality of the German Gangsters. But while this help has been generously given by the public here, one or two other things should be remembered. First, there is no question now that the intensified brutality exhibited in Germany, and the further demands of both Germany and Italy, are part of the price the world is paying for the Chamberlain "Peace." Public charity is apt to be spasmodic in its response, and inevitably grows weaker as the situation it is intended to alleviate gets more settled. The ban on local councils giving a little help should be withdrawn, and the Government should also give a very tangible sign that it has more than a formal dislike to the Goering-Hitler brutalities. *It is the children that are suffering.*

Next it should be remembered, that more than Jews are involved. It is true that the Jews are the only ones who are condemned and persecuted *en bloc*, and for no other

reason than that they are Jews, but with allowance for certain circumstances the families of every one who is believed to dissent from the German terror suffer also. Anyone suspected of liberalism in any form, anyone suspected of disagreement with the insane theories of Goebbels and Streicher, is likely to be sent to a concentration camp and "shot while trying to escape," while his dependents are exposed to the brutality of Hitler's pets, the S.S. The Jewish question is only the widest aspect of a terror that affects all men and women in Germany who dare to assert their manhood or womanhood.

Of course there is the man, or woman, one meets at all times, who replies to the appeal for help, "Oh, we really can't help everybody!" Agreed, kind friend, but the question is not whether you can help *everybody*, but are you helping *anybody*, and is your "can't help everybody" a mere excuse for not helping anybody? One cannot fill every hungry mouth, but it is something if one manages to fill one hungry mouth here and there. And we could all—Government included—join in making Germany realize that while it continues along its present lines it is morally boycotted by all men and women who are worthy of the respect of their fellows. The "We can't help everybody" cry is a fine cover for not helping where all might help, or where the courage is lacking to say honestly, "I do not care; I do not feel in myself this persecution of children, and therefore I will do nothing. I will help neither with my cash nor even with my expressed sympathy." A little more honesty in even this direction would be advisable.

Hard and enthusiastic work by the local secretary of the Birmingham Branch, Mr. C. H. Smith, and wider advertising, resulted in a very definite improvement in the attendance in the Bristol Street Schools last Sunday. Extra seating accommodation had to be hurriedly provided. Mr. Rosetti's lecture was followed with evident interest, and time compelled a closure to the questions and discussion. The Branch officials were gratified and encouraged by the proceedings.

*A Plea for Rationalism* is the title of a thoughtful pamphlet by Lady Maud Simon, which is to be obtained from the author at 4 Surrenden Crescent, Brighton. Price, threepence. The pamphlet is a thoughtful statement of what Lady Simon takes to be the "Rationalist" position, with which most Freethinkers will be in general agreement. The main question on which discussion might arise is contained in the closing paragraph:—

The function of Rationalism, in its broad aspects as I see them, is not to sweep away the subjective or psychological side of religious faith—to do this is to reject Freethought in this relation—but to free such faith, where it exists, from fallacy.

But it is the false interpretation of psychological states which constitutes the very essence of religion. Christian and Atheist have to face exactly the same set of facts; the differences between the two arise from a different interpretation of the same set of facts. Interpreted in one way it stands for religion; in another way it stands for Atheism. There is no other issue before a modern scientific intelligence.

## Czecho Freethinkers' Relief Fund

Previously acknowledged, £175 7s. 4d.; Fred Hobday (omitted from previous list), 10s.; W. Kent, 5s.; J. Hewitt, 10s.; E. Havelock Wattson, 5s.; West London Branch (Ladies Committee), 10s. 6d.; W. R. Angell, 5s.; J. Hupp, 10s.; C. Bartram, 15s.; "No name enclosed," 10s. Total £179 7s. 10d.

*Correction.* Subscription from "W. A. Adamson" should have been "W. P. Adamson."

*We shall be obliged, if there is any inaccuracy in the above list, or if any subscription is not acknowledged; if those concerned will write at once.*

## Religion and the Industrial Revolution in England

### 2.—METHODISM

If, during the Industrial Revolution, religion was often the narcotic of the people, who drudged out their lives in poorly-paid labours, it was also, in many cases, a way of escape from the deadening effects of the new mechanical civilization, and a means to self-development and self-expression. As the Hammonds say in *The Town Labourer, 1760-1832*, "On this population, partly neglected, partly dragooned, by the Church, there descended a religion that happened to supply almost everything that is wanted. The Church offered no function to the poor man: his place was on a rude bench or mat, listening to sermons on the importance of the subordination of the lower classes to the grand family worshipping amid the spacious cushions of the squire's pew. The Chapel invited him to take a hand in the management of the affairs of his religious society: perhaps to help in choosing a minister, to feel that he had a share in its life, responsibility for its risks and undertakings, pride in its successes and reputation. As a mere exercise in self-government and social life, the Chapel occupied a central place in the affections and the thoughts of people who had very little to do with the government of anything else. . . . The men and women who were drawn into the brisk, alert, and ardent life of the new religion found plenty to occupy their minds, and to stimulate faculties and interests that were otherwise left neglected.

"For the Methodist movement carried the self-governing tradition of the old Nonconformist Chapel, which had shared in some degree the cold and calm philosophy of the Church, into a wider world and touched that world with a living passion. The old Jewish civilization became actual and vivid to the men and women who listened to the rhetoric of the new type of preacher. The Sunday-schools, that spread rapidly over the North of England and the industrial districts, were primarily institutions for interpreting this civilization to children brought up in factories and mines. . . . the great motive force in the founding and developing of these institutions had been the periodic Revival. A Revival fed the imagination of the new population on the exciting history of a fierce and warlike race living under conditions very unlike those of Manchester and Leeds, leaving a literature rich in metaphor and image, which awakened amid the bare and colourless life of the new civilization dreams and reveries and visions full of awe and splendour. It is significant that this religion spread quickly, and in its most extreme form, among the workers living in the deepest gloom, for the miners were particularly given to Methodism. Perhaps the very dangers of their employment prompted them to seek this special and miraculous sense of protection, just as the belief in the miraculous salvation of religion is particularly strong among the deep-sea fishermen of Brittany. This religion did for the working-class what Greek and Roman literature did for the ruling class: drawing aside the curtain from a remote and interesting world, seeming thus to make their own world more intelligible. How far either class understood the world into which it was thus introduced is, of course, open to question, but nobody would deny that the imagination received nourishment, and something of the education that comes with an escape from visible surroundings. For the miner or weaver, the Chapel with its summons to the emotions, its music and sing-

ing, took the place that theatres, picture galleries, operas, occupied in the lives of others."

Naturally enough, then, it was in the industrial districts that Methodism made its greatest progress. In 1824, the countries in which the Methodists were strongest were, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Durham, Staffordshire, Nottingham, Leicester, Cheshire, and Lancashire. In Yorkshire one person in twenty-three was a Methodist; in Lancashire, one in 51; in Surrey, only one in 249, and in Sussex, only one in 211.

Apparently Methodism affected different types in different ways. "Many magistrates wrote to the Home Office that it helped to make them [the workers] discontented and to strengthen the working-class organization." Nottinghamshire magistrates were so much alarmed by the popularity of ranters' meetings in 1817, that they took the advice of the law-officers about forbidding them. And many clerics of the Established Church regarded Methodist and Radical as synonyms. Others formed totally different ideas. Butterworth and Broughton both considered that it was unwise to disturb the Methodists: the later declaring that they had proved themselves "lovers of peace." On one occasion, when distress was very prevalent in a certain district, and yet there was no disorder, it was attributed to "the happy prevalence of the Principles of Methodism."

According to the Hammonds: "The official attitude of the Methodists' leaders seems to have been quite clearly conservative in the years of crisis, 1817 and 1819." They give in full the text of an address that had been adopted at a Conference of Methodist Ministers at Bristol, in August, 1819. This expresses sympathy with those who are suffering "from the pressure of the times"; and offers up prayers "that you may not be tempted above what you are able to bear." Those to whom the condolences are addressed are exhorted "*In patience possess ye your souls.*" It continues: "As many of you to whom this measure of national suffering has been appointed reside in places where attempts are made by 'unreasonable and wicked men,' to render the privation of the poor the instruments of their own designs against the peace and the Government of our beloved country, we are affectionately anxious to guard all of you against being led astray from your civil and religious duties by their dangerous artifices. Remember you are Christians, and are called by your profession to exemplify the power and influence of religion by your patience in suffering, and by '*living peaceably with all men.*' Remember that you belong to a Religious Society which has, from the beginning, explicitly recognized as high and essential parts of Christian duty, to '*Fear God and honour the King; to submit to magistrats for conscience sake, and not to speak evil of dignities.*' You are surrounded with persons to whom these duties are the objects of contempt and ridicule: show your regard for them because they are the doctrines of your Saviour."

Small wonder, in view of this address, that Cobbett and some working-class Reformers regarded the Methodists as their enemies. In summing up, J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond (*The Town Labourer, 1760-1832*), remark, "If we look into the life and teaching of this new religion, we can see that the whole spirit of its mission was unfavourable to the Democratic movement and the growth of the Trade Union spirit. The Methodist movement was a call for citizens, but for saints not for the vigorous, still less for the violent, redress of injustice, but for the ecstatic vision: the perfect peace of expectation. The brutal inequalities of life, the wrongs inflicted on man by man, the hardships of poverty and suffer-

ing, these vexations of a passing world were merely trials of faith for the true Christian, who could escape from them and sustain his soul with dreams of a noble and confidential companionship in this world and of radiant happiness hereafter."

W. H. MORRIS.

## Taboos

VISCOUNT AMBERLEY, in his able *Analysis of Religious Belief*, points out that everywhere the religious instinct leads to the consecration of certain actions, places, and things. If this instinct is analysed it is found at bottom to spring from fear. Certain places are to be dreaded as the abode of evil spirits—certain actions are calculated to propitiate them, and certain things are dangerous and are therefore tabooed.

From Polynesia was derived the word *taboo* or *tapu*, and the first conception of its importance as an element lying at the bottom of many of our religious and social conventions; though this is not as yet by any means sufficiently recognized.

The term *taboo* implies something sacred, reserved, prohibited by supernatural agents, the breaking of which prohibition will be visited by supernatural punishment. This notion is one of the most widely extended features of early religion. Holy places, holy persons, and holy things are all founded on this conception. W. Robertson Smith, in his *Religion of the Semites*, p. 142, says: "Rules of holiness in the sense just explained, i.e., a system of restrictions on man's arbitrary use of natural things enforced by the dread of supernatural penalties are found among the primitive peoples."

The holy ark of the North American Indians was deemed "so sacred and dangerous to be touched" that no one, except the war chief and his attendant will touch it "under the penalty of incurring great evil. Nor would the most inveterate enemy touch it in the woods for the very same reason."

In Numbers iv. 15, we read of the Jewish ark. "The sons of Koliath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die." In 2 Sam. vi. 6-7, we are told how the Lord smote Uzzah so that he died, simply for putting his hand on the ark to steady it. So the Lord punished the Philistines for keeping his ark, and smote fifty thousand and seventy men of Bethshemesh, "because they had looked into the ark of the Lord." (1 Sam. v., vi.)

Disease and death were so constantly thought of as the penalties of breaking taboo that cases are on record of those who, having unwittingly done this, have died of terror upon recognizing their error. Mr. Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*, instances a New Zealand chief, who left the remains of his dinner by the way-side. A slave ate it up without asking questions. Hardly had he finished when he was told the food was the chief's, and taboo. "No sooner did he hear the fatal news than he was seized by the most extraordinary convulsions and cramp in the stomach, which never ceased till he died, about sun-down the same day."

All the old temples had an adytum, sanctuary, or holy of holies—a place not open to the profane, but protected by rigid taboos. This was the case with the Jews. It was death to enter the holy places or even to make the holy oil of the priests. Even the name of the Lord was taboo, and to this day cannot be pronounced. Take off your sandals says God to Moses, for the place whereon you stand is taboo. The whole of Mount Horeb was taboo, and we continually read

<sup>1</sup> Adair. *History of the American Indians*, p. 162, sq.

of the holy mountain. The ideas of taboo and of holiness are admitted by Prof. Robertson Smith to be at bottom identical.

Some taboos are simply artful, as the prohibition of boats to South Pacific women, lest they should escape to other islands. When Tamelamela, the King of the Sandwich Islands, heard that diamonds had been found in the mountains near Honolulu, he at once declared the mountains taboo, in order that he might be the sole possessor.

In Hawaii the flesh of hogs, fowls, turtle, and several kinds of fish, cocoa nuts, and nearly everything offered in sacrifice, were reserved for gods and men, and could not, except in special cases, be consumed by women. Some taboos of animals being used for food seem to have been dictated by dread or aversion, but others had a foundation of prudence and forethought. Thus there is little doubt that the prohibition of the sacred cow in India has been the means of preserving that animal from extermination in times of famine.

Various reasons have been assigned for the taboos upon certain kinds of food found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. As we have these laws they seem to represent a rough attempt at classifying animals it was beneficial or hurtful to eat. Some ridiculous mistakes were made by the divine tabooist. The hare, a rodent, was declared to "chew the cud" (Lev. xi. 6; Deut. xiv. 7). The camel was excluded because it does not divide the hoof; yet in reality it has cloven feet. But doubtless it was seen it might be disastrous to kill the camel for food. We have quoted in these columns (*Freethinker*, October 19, 1890) Mr. Frazer's opinion that the pig was originally a sacred animal among the Jews.

The cause of the custom of tabooing certain kinds of food, which was in existence long before the Levitical laws were written, perhaps arose partly from reverence, partly from aversion. It may, too, have been connected with the totemism of early tribes. No less than one hundred and eighty Bible names have a zoological signification. Caleb, the dog tribe; Doeg, the fish tribe, may be instanced as specimens.

Touching the carcass of a dead animal was taboo, and the taboo was contagious. In Lev. xi. 21-25, we find rigorous laws on the subject. Whoever carries the carcass of an unclean animal must wash his garments. The objects upon which a carcass accidentally falls, must be washed, and left in water till the evening, and if of earthenware the defilement is supposed to enter into the pores, and the vessel, oven, or stove-range must be broken.

Touching a corpse was taboo among the Greeks,<sup>2</sup> Romans,<sup>3</sup> Hindoos,<sup>4</sup> Parsees,<sup>5</sup> and Phœnicians.<sup>6</sup> If a Jew touched a dead body—even a dead animal (Lev. xi. 39)—he became unclean, and if he purified not himself, "that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Num. xix. 13). So "those who have defiled themselves by touching a dead body are regarded by the Maoris as in a very dangerous state, and are sedulously shunned and isolated" (J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, Vol. I., p. 166). Doubtless it was felt that death was something which could communicate itself, as disease was seen to do.

When iron was first discovered it was invested with mystery and held as a charm. It was tabooed. The Jews would use no iron tools in building the temple or making an altar (Ex. xx. 25; 1 Kings vi. 7). Roman and Sabine priests might not be shaved with iron but only with bronze, as stone knives were used in circumcision (Ex. iv. 25; Josh. v. 8). To this day a

Hottentot priest never uses an iron knife, but always a sharp splint of quartz in sacrificing an animal or circumcizing a boy. In the boy's game of touch iron we may see a remnant of the old belief in its charm. When Scotch fishermen were at sea and one of them happened to take the name of God in vain, the first man who heard him called out "Cauld airn," at which every man of the crew grasped the nearest bit of iron and held it between his hand for a while.<sup>7</sup>

Women were especially tabooed after childbirth and during menstruation (Lev. xii. and xv.) Among the Indians of North America, women at this time are forbidden to touch men's utensils, which would be so defiled by their touch that their subsequent use would be attended with misfortune. They walk round the fields at night dragging their garments, this being considered a protection against vermin. Among the Eskimo of Alaska, no one will eat or drink from the same cup or dishes used by a woman at her confinement until it has been purified by certain incantations.

In the Church of England Service, what is now called the "Thanksgiving of Women after childbirth, commonly called the Churching of Women," was formerly known as *The Order of the Purification of Women*, and was read at the church door before the "unclean" creatures were permitted to enter the "holy" building. This should be known by all women who think it their duty to be "churched" after fulfilling the sacred office of motherhood.

In Hebrew the same word signifies at once a holy person, a harlot and sodomite—sacred prostitution having been common in ancient times (see *Freethinker*, June 10, 1888). Mr. Frazer, noticing that the rules of ceremonial purity observed by divine kings, priests, homicides, women in childbirths and so on, are in some respects alike, says: "To us these different classes of persons appear to differ totally in character and condition; some of them we should call holy, others we might pronounce unclean and polluted. But the savages make no such moral distinction between them, the conceptions of holiness and pollution are not yet differentiated in his mind. To him the common feature of all these persons is that they are dangerous and in danger, and the danger in which they stand and to which they expose others is what we should call spiritual or supernatural, that is, *imaginery*."<sup>8</sup>

Few would suspect it, but it is likely that the custom of wearing Sunday clothes comes from certain garments being tabooed in the holy places. Among the Maoris "A slave or other person would not enter a *wahi tapu*, or sacred place, without having first stripped off his clothes; for the clothes, having become sacred the instant they entered the precincts of the *wahi tapu*, would ever after be useless to him in the ordinary business of life."<sup>9</sup> According to the Rabbins, the handling of the Scriptures defiles the hands, that is, entails a washing of purification. This because the notions of holiness and uncleanness are alike merged in the earlier conception of taboo. Blood, the great defilement, is also the most holy thing. Just as with the Hindus to this day, the excrements of the cow are the great means of purification.

Dr. Kalisch says, "Next to sacrifices purifications were the most important of Hebrew Rituals."<sup>10</sup> The purpose was to remove the stain of contact either with the holy or unclean taboos. A holy, or taboo, water—or, as it is called in the Authorized Version, "water of separation"—was prepared. First, an unblemished

<sup>2</sup> Eurip. *Alcest.* 100.

<sup>3</sup> Virgil *Æn.*, vi., 221; Tacit. *Annal.*, 162.

<sup>4</sup> Mann, v. 58, 62, 71-79.

<sup>5</sup> *Vendid* iii., 25-27. <sup>6</sup> Lucien *Dea Syr.*, 523.

<sup>7</sup> B. J. Guthrie, *Old Scottish Custom*, p. 149. Charles Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland*, iii., 218.

<sup>8</sup> *Golden Bough*, Vol. I., p. 171.

<sup>9</sup> Shortland's *Southern Districts of New Zealand*, p. 293, sq.

<sup>10</sup> *Leviticus*, pt. ii., p. 187.

red heifer was slain by the son of the high priest outside the camp, burnt, and the ashes mingled with spring water, which was supposed to have a magical effect in removing impurity when the tabooed person was sprinkled with it on the third and again on the seventh day. It was called a "purification for sin" (Num. xix. 9), and was doubtless as good as the blood of the Lamb, if not equal to Pears' soap.

In the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Mr. J. G. Frazer says: "Amongst the Jews the vow of the Nazarite (Num. vi. 1-21) presents the closest resemblance to the Palynesian taboo. The meaning of the word Nazarite is 'one separated or consecrated,' and this is precisely the meaning of taboo. It is the head of the Nazarite that is especially consecrated, and so it was in the taboo. The Nazarite might not partake of certain meats and drinks, nor shave his head, nor touch a dead body—all rules of taboo." Mr. Frazer points out other particulars in the mode of terminating the vow. Secondly that some of the rules of Sabbath observance are identical with the rules of strict taboo; such are the prohibitions to do any work, to kindle a fire in the house, to cook food and to go out of doors.

We still have some remnant of the Sabbath taboo, and many a child's life is made miserable by being checked for doing what is tabooed on the Lord's Day. Other taboos abound. We must not, for instance, question the sacred books, the sacred character of Jesus, or the existence of the divine being. These subjects are tabooed. For reverence is a virtue much esteemed by solemn humbugs.

(Reprinted) J. M. WHEELER.

## A Christian Contemporary

MANY of us are familiar with the Catholic and Protestant journals of our day. It is part of our work as propagandists to know the principles and study the tactics of our enemies. A dull task—but occasionally amusing and even entertaining. These Christian contemporaries are numerous. We propose to-day to analyse a single issue of one of several Fundamentalist organs—the *Christian Herald*.

The *Christian Herald* was born seventy-two years ago without arousing any special excitement amongst the churches. Its real popularity among the pious was when it became the Herald of Prophecy. From a close study of the ravings of such authorities as Daniel, Ezekiel and the author of the Book of Revelation, it deduced with fatuous logic the Coming of the Four and Twenty Beasts, full of eyes without and within, so successfully that hundreds of thousands of Christians bought and loved the journal.

The Rev. M. Baxter made every believer tremble when he took in hand those mysterious FIGURES, consisting mainly of multiples of seven. It seemed so simple. As Napoleon had evidently been Anti-Christ in and before 1815, obviously Christ Himself was Coming in Person in 1877. Nothing could be more ghastly and alarming to true believers than the fact that their Heavenly Father—the God who is "Love"—was about to arrive on the earth where He is supposed always to be present. "Prepare to Meet Thy God" was a shock to them all. A visit (or "visitation") of God was always regarded as a calamity. But the man—or even the editor, of a Christian journal—who KNEW the exact date these horrors would happen was a made man.

Alas, the prophetic side of the paper is in eclipse. We see just one solitary announcement that those who seek predictions of the old sort must pay twopence extra and buy "The Prophetic News." The only

literal predictions still appearing in the *Christian Herald* are the ordinary ones seen in most newspapers—in the advertisements of optimistic nostrums guaranteeing that "after a few doses a new health force will be created within the patient; his liver will work properly, piles disappear, rheumatism simply fade away," etc., etc.

In the number of the *Christian Herald* we are considering there is one of a "Series of Articles in Answer to the Modern Atheist." The editor says that "G. W. Foote and others challenged the Christian Church." So here comes a belated reply. There is a genuine ring of honesty in the thick-type announcement that "the modern materialist wants us to believe that man came from monkeys." We must leave these fundamentalists to fight out their battle with their more scholastic rivals in their own church.

There is less honesty and probably more acceptability in ALL the churches in regard to the *Christian Herald's* childish lie:

Modern Materialism despises love and exalts hate. The challenge of the present hour is—shall love or hate rule the world?

Here perhaps more than anywhere modern Materialism opposes the very essence of Christianity. Our holy religion is based on love. God is love.

On another page is "An Open Letter to the Bible Critic." It heralds a severe attack on the views of well-known clergymen. While we sympathize with the author's indignation we note the exemplary love these Christians bear one another. "Let God" (i.e., OUR view of God) "be true and every man" (i.e., all OTHER Christians) "a liar" is stated to be the right "attitude" to adopt in this controversy. The *Christian Herald* may however be reassured on one point. We are not flattered by the idea that the Modernist

presents the sorry spectacle of the religious leader providing arguments for the Atheist to use against the Christian faith.

We were beginning to imagine that "Christian lies of dying horrors" had ceased to serve the Christian purpose. The *Christian Herald* undeceives us. On page 224 that innocent journal unearths a new lie for the glory of God:—

### HUXLEY'S DEATHBED

A recent newspaper cutting referred to a striking story in an anonymous book of memoirs published not long ago. The writer met the woman who nursed the great Agnostic Professor T. H. Huxley, grandfather of Aldous and Julian, through his last illness. She said that as he lay dying the great sceptic suddenly looked up at some sight invisible to mortal eyes, and staring for a while whispered at last: "So it is true."

Dr. Herbert Locker's Sermon "A Clarion Call" might be described as "A Cry of Despair." Dr. Locker admits that "it is becoming increasingly difficult to influence men and women for the Lord Jesus." We hope the "difficult" will become the "impossible."

A "Friendly Challenge" is issued by the *Christian Herald's* "Prayer Circle." It is a sort of Prayer Publicity column. Post Cards sent to the editor at his request give God some "solicited" but pseudonymous "testimonials" to His excellent attention to Prayer. "H.M." writes: "My little girl had fluid in her lung." Two months of prayer (plus hospital treatment for over four months, and an operation) almost cured her. "I.F.S." says, rather mincingly, that his prayer has been answered—"God has opened the way . . . and we are now man and wife." And another tribute is given by "K.E.T.," who "asked that I might be helped in an exam. I was sitting for." While "K.E.T." naturally "thanks God" for His

making her "pass," we imagine the unsuccessful competitors may consider they were cheated—by God.

There is, of course, a Serial Story. In this instalment the hero inherits £70,000, presumably for believing the Bible—a big bribe, but then the qualifying condition was no easy one for an intelligent "hero."

"Advice to Correspondents" omits the questions asked. If we may judge by the "Answers" the questions were pretty "hot." The editor is not too polite in the first answer: "I am quite convinced that Our Lord's Temptations were genuine," nor in his laconic second answer: "Little is to be gained by such an academic argument as you suggest." We imagine that "G.P.R. (Worthing)" are the initials of a 1938 Ananias, to whom the editor replies: "We have no right to give the Lord one tenth of our income: it is the privilege of the Christian to give EVERYTHING to the Lord."

A picture on another page shows Samson resting cosily on Delilah's lap, while she gives the signal to a pair of "barberous" scoundrels armed to the teeth with non-safety razors. She seems to be announcing to them that her husband is ready to be the "Next one for a Shave and Haircut."

Lest one should imagine that the whole of the pages are of too serious a character, we find a Puzzle Page including a "Biblical Pictorial Cross-Word Puzzle." Even here, however, the CLUES direct the competitor thus: "If you cannot guess the right word, turn up the Bible references given; in these you will find the missing words."

The sub-title of the journal we have been studying is "Signs of the Times." With the addition of a prefatory word: VESTIGIAL, the title might stand.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### Are We Civilized?

How this is the veneer of civilization was strikingly shown at Bradford, the other day, when five "mediums" pretended to search for the person responsible for the fatal outrage on the poor child, Phyllis Hirst. Let the *Daily Mail* (November 8) correspondent repeat his story:—

Under a blood-red moon in eclipse, five mediums—four women and one man—held a mass seance in "Murder Lane" here last night from 10 o'clock until midnight. They staggered up and down the lane supporting themselves with one hand against the wall under which the body of eight-years-old Phyllis Hirst was found a week ago. While they moaned and gabbled in high-pitched voices their followers . . . more than 100 men and women, sang hymns.

From a meeting of the Laburnum Spiritualists' Society in a tiny upstairs room went Mrs. Creasy Hockley, 49-years-old leader, escorted by a dozen members.

When she reached the lane she was handed a tiny woollen glove . . . that had been worn by the dead girl. She held the glove in her right hand, turned her face towards the moon, and, moaning at every step, wandered down the lane and into fields beyond the church.

Mrs. Crazy—sorry, Creasy Hockley told the journalist that her

"guide"—Rufus, a Kafir 600 years dead—had pointed out to her the way to go. "I am convinced that the child was killed in a house about a mile from the lane and some distance from her home, . . . Phyllis has been with me and told me. . ."

Another woman . . . plodded like a robot towards a stonemason's yard opening from the lane. There she beat with clenched fists on a padlocked wooden gate. Two young men sprang over the wall, lifted the gate bodily from its hinges, and she passed through . . . into the tiny garden of a neighbouring house. There she screamed and collapsed.

Closely following her, a Halifax medium, red-faced Marcellus Stewart, made his way into the yard, scanned the ground by torch, and after poking about among piles

of masonry also fell prostrate with a piercing cry of: "The child was laid here." Police and detectives mingled with the crowd.

"Veneer of civilization" we were writing, but there seems to be not even a veneer in all the foregoing. It was sheer, revolting barbarism. Not primitiveness "naked and unashamed," but barbarism *clothed and shamed* by an assumption of civilization. "Rufus" may have wished to instruct white folk in the Kafir rites of "Smelling-out," but had a Zulu witch-doctor of these days witnessed the Yorkshire craziness, he would have laughed in derision at futile frenzies so crude and in-artistic compared with his own. The term "hard-headed" applied to Yorkshire people must be changed to *soft-headed* if the state of ignorance described is common. Meanwhile, a Kafir envoy should be invited to Bradford in order to improve on "Rufus's" methods, and enlighten the local folk on African native rites and customs. Perhaps this Christian country should consider an exchange of missionaries, and settle a few Bantu mission stations throughout Britain.

D.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON

##### OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.30, A Lecture. Weather permitting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond) : 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Collins, Tuson and Mrs. N. Buxton.

##### INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4) : 7.30, Debate—"That the Present Abortion Law be Relaxed." *Affir.*: Mrs. Janet Chance (President, Abortion Law Reform Association). *Neg.*: Mr. R. Flaxman.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.) : 11.0, Moritz J. Bonn, D.Sc.—"The Problems of Appeasement."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, Debate—"That Science Negatives the Idea of God." *Affir.*: E. Bryant, N.S.S. *Neg.*: B. Fuller.

#### COUNTRY

##### OUTDOOR

BLYTH (Fountain) : 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton. NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

##### INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, C. Owen, B.A. (Birkenhead)—"Does Toleration Impede Progress?"

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Hall, Market Hall, Blackburn) : 7.30, Wednesday, December 14, Mr. J. Clarke (Blackburn)—"Russia Since 1917." Literature for sale.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Kirkgate) : 7.15, Mr. J. W. Singleton—"Modern Science and Christianity."

BURNLEY (St. James' Hall) : 8.0, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton. A Lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. Horsfall—"The Cycle of Life."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh) : 7.0, Dr. J. Dunlop—"Materialism in Practice in the U.S.S.R."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Mr. Arthur Copeland—"From Church Organist to Atheist."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mrs. M. Saran—"The Moral Basis of Politics."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Miss Dora Seed (Liverpool)—"In Defence of Dustmen."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church) : 7.0, Mr. C. H. Black (Manchester)—"Freethought and the World To-day."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Labour Hall, Newport Road) : 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (Jubilee Hall) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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