

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LIX.—No. 40

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1939

PRICE THIREPENCE

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

Views and Opinions

Notes on the War

LIFE at the moment is too grim to be taken solemnly. Neglect of this truth is, I think, one of the blunders of our rulers. The insistence of our living in complete darkness is one of these mistakes. Of course, if the aim is to create fear in order to ensure unreasoning and unquestioning obedience, the policy is good enough, for if people fear enough they will obey without question. The Church found that out centuries ago, and disbelief in religion and a questioning of mere authority has usually accompanied either an increase of comfort and security or a state bordering on despair. But if the aim is to develop a people strong and self-confident, conscious of their own worth and the ability to think things out for themselves, then the nearer we continue to maintain normal conditions the better. There is just a little too much of the sheep about the general public at the moment.

As there is an element of humour about the present attack on the Nazi leaders, I think we will commence this week's notes with this. The condemnation of the gangsters in Germany is now complete in this country. But the gangsters are—the gangsters. They have never varied their conduct or the open confession of their plans. From the time when they climbed to power by setting fire to the German Houses of Parliament, in order to throw the blame on the Socialists and Communists, to be followed by pillage, murder, assassination—both at home and abroad—and rape—a feature that has been kept out of the British Press, save for a hint here and there, the German Fascists have acted true to type. In a way they have been not merely consistent, they have been, and are, liars but in that book which has been attributed to that religious fanatical fool Hitler, but which was written by Hess, lying was advertised as a part of the major policy of Fascism. They have lied about their ambitions in Europe and beyond, but all the time they had published to the world exactly what their aims were. Even a time table was published giving the

order of conquests—the Saar, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Memel, Danzig, the Corridor, Poland, and onward to annexations in the West, including France and the domination of Britain. Even the fact that the chief gangsters have deposited millions to their credit, in case the home regime should break up, has been in the air for years. The Fascists cannot claim originality for this, it has been the policy of the crowned heads of Europe for generations. Why then this surprise at what the gangsters have done and are doing? Hitler is the same Hitler of whom Dr. Buchman, the leader of those Christian exhibitionists, the Oxford Group, wrote, "Thank God for a man like Adolf Hitler." It is the same Hitler to whom the King, presumably at the request of the Government, sent birthday greetings, the same mob of unredeemed scoundrels with whom many of our leaders in society and newspapers were, until the outbreak of war, advocating a friendly, even a fraternal understanding. It is the same Hitler of whom that profound (yellow press) thinker, Lord Rothermere, said he saw in Hitler "one of the 'world's' greatest sociological reformers." It is the same Hitler of whom our Prime Minister, a little over a year ago, publicly proclaimed when flourishing that tragic piece of paper (or was it a conical paper) that he felt he could rely upon the honesty of Herr Hitler. The man must indeed be a dull dog who cannot get a laugh out of the outburst of indignation at the discovery of facts that have been broadcast to the world for years.

* * *

The Present in the Past

The war seems to be going on as well as could be expected—with the exception of poor, unfortunate Poland. And even Poland may have contributed very materially to the ultimate downfall of Fascism, and have shown us that there are still men and women who believe that even a comparative freedom is something worth dying for. As to ourselves it is well to bear in mind that at no time can we have war without paying a very big price for it, and I do not mean by that the mere list of killed and wounded. Poland should serve to dwell less heavily on that aspect. We think we have the right to say this because ever since the Versailles Treaty was put into operation, and the League of Nations was so managed that it could not operate as it should have done, we have pointed out that the world was riding to disaster.

The last war ended in an enormous outburst of nationalism. Not nationalism in the healthy sense of attachment to local culture, which might well exist side by side with a full recognition of an interdependence of peoples which would strengthen at once local attachments and cultural intercourse with a wider world, but a nationalism that was merely an exaggerated tribalism, expressed in a desire to build a Chinese wall round each group. It was not an unscalable wall, for it was one over which international

finance found it very easy to climb. But while the wall was too high for profitable *human* intercourse, it was not too high to throw eight millions of gold to Germany to which she had no moral claim—and a doubtful legal one—shortly before the present war broke out. We shall get all that gold back, with interest—in the shape of shells and air-raids.

This re-strengthened tribalism suited the larger nations because it enabled them to persist in a policy of overlordship, and a policy that could not but end in war. It needed no great wisdom to foresee this. The dispossessed nations would strive to recover what they had lost, the little nations would resist, the conquering "big fellows" would help the little ones to hold the dispossessed ones down. If after what was called the "great war"—merely because of its size, the conquerors had gone to work with the main idea of paving the road for another war they could not well have acted differently from what they did. And it must be remembered that we had an "Isolation" press (now rabidly a "collective one"), maintaining the idiotic policy that we had no right to concern ourselves with what other nations were doing, but had just to go on arming, arming, a policy that could have no justification unless we expected to go to war some day, in which case we would at once revert to the collective action that had been so strongly denounced. It is hard to believe that even the *Daily Mail* could have been so stupid as not to have realized this position. We do not believe in miracles either with regard to stupidity or intelligence.

So, at this early stage of the war, I would suggest that across the monolith in Whitehall, when November 11 comes, there might be inscribed, "Never again," for never again should there be a world-war fought, and a "peace" so conducted so as to lead to another catastrophe, while the children of the men who died were still living. Those fools who so confidently said there could never be another war because weapons had become so deadly, should have had their lesson. We ought to take pride in the fact that no danger can be so great that human nature, as a whole, will be afraid to face it. I would advocate that after the war there should be erected in every town and city in this country a monument to the mothers and children and old men and old women who died during what ought to be the last world-war. The soldiers are not the only ones who suffer from and during war. I think monuments of this kind would serve as a psychological preparation against war in the future. Then if we could, by almost a miracle, get into office "statesmen" of foresight and intelligence, we might reasonably settle down to a very long period of world-peace. Perhaps the only road to this last state would be the creation of a better educated and more mentally independent people than we have at present.

* * *

Law and Liberty

We ought to bear in mind that we are now living practically under martial law, and martial law is no law at all. It is government by decree, a feature that has of late years been growing at so rapid a rate that even the Lord Chief Justice has been driven publicly to protest against this curtailment of the liberty of the subject. We are now multiplying war-time decrees so rapidly, and with such an enormous number of officials, from A.R.P. Wardens and their underlings of sixteen onward, that if the increase continues we may be compelled to import subjects for them to rule. We have a Ministry of Information—which is a euphemistic way of describing the official withholding of information, and the danger of which was shown in the recent muddle of the holding up of newspapers that published news that was known even before the papers appeared.

According to Mr. Greenwood (House of Commons, September 13) individuals going home at night, and who had bought copies of the papers implicated, had the copies confiscated by policemen. If that be so there is something here that brings us into line with the Fascism against which we are fighting. It is a feature quite new to British law and custom. It is illegal even under existing conditions. There is no law, not even a rule, that will sanction the seizing of books or papers under such conditions. Books may be suppressed on the grounds that they contain indecencies, that they are libellous, or that they have infringed someone's copyright. But this applies to their sale or publication. The law does not include such books or papers in the possession of individuals, although, I imagine, "publication" would apply to displaying such books to others.

During the last war a number of books, pamphlets, and plays were suppressed. Some official had the impudence to advise, through the press, those who had copies of these things to hand them over to the police, to avoid prosecution. I had a number of these suppressed publications in my possession and wrote to the Home Secretary, I think, advising him of what I had stating that I had no intention whatever of handing them over to anyone. I still have these publications, less those that I have lost in the usual way—by lending them. Like Swift I have many friends who are bad arithmeticians, but are damned good book-keepers.

If this war is to be a long one, rules and regulations that have never been brought before Parliament will certainly multiply, and the people will have a long training in shrinking before a uniform and of blindly obeying an order. Much of this we must submit to for "the duration," but we should do so with a full sense that they are restrictions, and with the resolve to end them with the war. In this last task we must not look for getting much help from the political parties. For a long time, whether we are dealing with Labour or Conservative, the tendency has been in and out of Parliament in the direction of regimentation. The party issues orders, the members of the party obey. It is not their duty to question, and to rebel is to risk expulsion. The real inspiration to freedom, in the highest sense of the word must come from Freethinkers—again in the highest and broadest sense of the term. We must remember that if we are fighting against anything that warrants the sacrifices we are making, it is not merely against the obscenely brutal Fascist system. Even defeat of the brutality of German rule must be in our minds and purpose subservient to the maintenance of the freedom of the human mind. I would like to substitute "spirit" for "mind," but Christianity has so fouled this term that I must put up with the less elastic word.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Passing of Lucifer

(Prof. Sigmund Freud, obiit 23 September, 1939)

CONQUISTADOR of countries of the mind,
Bold mariner upon uncharted seas,
Your sails no longer fill; down drops the breeze;
Your barque, becalmed, life's tempests leave behind.
But your stout heart, I feel, was not resigned
To quit your quest, to rest in slippers-ease;
For even well-earned laurels cannot please
Light-bringers to the countries of the blind.

Truth was your lodestar (Science is but Truth),
While courage armed you in pursuit of fact,
Repugnant facts deep in the mind's recess;
To fantasy your science showed no ruth;
In the soul's darkness, where all light once lacked,
Your torch of knowledge made man's fears grow less.

BAYARD SIMMONS

The Minstrelsy of Militarism

These are the times that try men's souls.—*Paine*.
To produce as much happiness as we can, and to prevent as much misery, is the proper aim and end of true morality.—*Landor*.

What people read must always be a matter of interest to "Intellectuals," and, more so, in a time of stress and adversity. During the Great War, 1914-18, there was an outbreak of poetry, over six hundred volumes of original verse being published during the four years of war. Led by Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and William Watson, the younger poets began, in the accepted fashion, by imitating the veterans. Then they finally found their own methods of expression, which were of a highly original kind.

The determining factor in the transformation was that the young singers had actual, first-hand experience of war. Previously, most of the writers of war poems and war songs can never have seen a battle. It would almost appear that the less soldierly the poet himself the more martial his song. Recall, it was "the gentle Shakespeare" who gave us some perfect pictures of arms and the warrior, and Wordsworth the shy country recluse whom an ironic fate selected to express in flawless verse "what every man at arms would wish to be." Tennyson was working at his desk while the guns of the Crimean War imparted to his poetic work a seriousness which up to them had only been seen in the quiet reflective verses of "In Memoriam." A little later he was writing the stirring and unforgettable lines on "The Charge of the Light Brigade," which were quickly written under stress of great emotion. It was so much in demand among the soldiers at Sebastopol that Tennyson had the poem reprinted and sent to let them "know that those who sit at home love and honour them."

It was the sedentary Thomas Campbell who wrote "The Battle of the Baltic," and "The Mariners of England." With what consummate art does he describe a naval battle:—

When each gun,
From its adamant lips,
Spread a death-shade round the ships,
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

Yet Campbell himself was always unwell on his brief sea-trips, and he knew far more of drawing-rooms than he did of military matters. Assuredly, the poets of a later day cannot approach the artistic altitude of:—

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn.

Thackeray, who saw his own slice of life clearly, charged the poets with militarism, and with romancing about war:—

And ever since historian writ,
And ever since a bard did sing,
Doth each exalt, with all his wit,
The noble art of murdering.

Robert Burns dipped his pen in vitriol when he wrote those bitter lines on thanksgiving for victory:—

Ye hypocrites! Are these your pranks?
To murder men and give God thanks?
Desist for shame! Proceed no further!
God won't accept your thanks for murder.

Yet this does not represent Burns's entire views on war. He could hardly have written "Scots wha hae" if it did. Recall these sonorous lines:—

By oppression's woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins;

But they shall be free.
Lay the proud usurper low!
Tyrants fall in every foe
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die.

Walt Whitman saw war at close quarters during the Civil War in America, 1861-5, and there is an entire absence of false rhetoric and brazen bravado in his verse. It is well to quote his memorable lines:—

My enemy is dead; a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies white-faced and still in his coffin. I draw near,
Bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face of the coffin.

His touching tribute to the comrades of the Civil War lingers in the memory:—

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

It will be noted that the poet with war experience does not always sing of militarism in the same robust and vainglorious way as his stay-at-home brother of the pen. Generations ago, a brave and handsome poet sang of a soldier's honour in unforgettable language, addressed to his lady-love:—

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you, too, shall adore,
I could not love thee, dear, so much
Love I not honour more.

The first of all the marks of real love is seriousness, and Colonel Richard Lovelace, who wrote that perfect poem, lost his all in supporting the Cavalier Cause, and died a ruined man. War is a most terrible thing, but it does call forth the primal emotions of mankind, and gave occasion for:—

exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

It is partly redeemed by the superb courage which never sulimits. I like well the fine tribute to fallen soldiers written by Austin Dobson:—

O, Undistinguished Dead!
Whom the bent covers, or the rock-strewn steep
Shows to the stars, for you I mourn, I weep,
O, Undistinguished Dead!

None knows your name;
Blackened and blurred in the wild battle's brunt,
Hotly you fell, with all your wounds in front;
This is your fame!

The younger poets of the Great War period did one great service. They introduced a new spirit into their verse, and a much healthier one. Instead of writing Jingo verse sitting in a room in a shattered home, they sent home from the trenches and battleships verses in which they translated into music their actual experiences and their authentic emotions. Listen to these lines written by Robert Nichols, entitled "Battle":—

It is a mid-day; the deep trench glares—
A buzz and blaze of flies—
The hot wind puffs the giddy airs,
The great sun rakes the skies.

No sound in all the stagnant trench
Where forty standing men
Endure the sweat and grit and stench,

Like cattle in a pen.
From out a high cool cloud descends
An aeroplane's far moan;
The sun strikes down, the then cloud rends,
The black speck travels on.

And sweating, dizzied, isolate
In the hot trench beneath,
We bide the next shrewd move of fate
Be it of life or death.

The sea has its marvels like the air, and they also secured the attention of these young poets. Lieut. N. M. F. Corbett, in his "Naval Motley," refers to the submarine:—

Not yours to know delight
In the keen hard-fought fight,
The shock of battle and the battle's thunder;
But suddenly to feel
Deep, deep beneath the keel
The vital blow that rives the ship asunder.

But the most critical and original of all the younger singers was Siegfried Sassoon. To him the romance of war has no existence; he was obsessed by the horror and ugliness of fighting. In one poem, "Blighters," he contrasts the sentimentality of war-time London with the stern reality of the trenches in Flanders:—

The house is crammed: tier beyond tier they grin
And cackle at the show, while prancing ranks
Of harlots shrill the chorus, drunk with din,
We're sure the Kaiser loves the dear old tanks.

I'd like to see a tank come down the stalls,
Lurching to rag-time tunes, or "Home, sweet Home,"
And there'd be no more jokes in music-halls
To mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume.

This is not cynicism, but disillusionment, the disenchantment of a fine young man at finding himself in a cataclysm so vast and so overwhelming as to baffle him. Indeed, these young poets embodied in their verse the thoughts of the men who did the actual fighting. And this writing has its value, for no pictures, nor photographs, nor statues, nor novels, put these things so intimately and vividly before us. They were men who pursued art for art's sake:—

And never made a poorer song
That they might have a heavier purse.
Nor gave loud service to a cause
That they might have a troop of friends,
They kept Muses' sterner laws
And unrepenting faced their ends.

MIMNERMUS

The Current Growth of Superstition

IN an article on "Superstition is Returning" in *Discovery*, that excellent popular journal of knowledge, it is stated that "Old and young of the 1930's are in many cases becoming hag-ridden with superstition"—a fact which is obvious enough.

Useful information is given about the spread of astrology. Four out of eight London morning newspapers and about half of our provincial papers contain horoscopes or "readings," resulting in the circulation of such nonsense among ten million readers. In the United States the feature is still more prominent; there are more than a dozen magazines devoted to the subject; and not one wireless listener need pass a day without turning on an astrological forecast. In Canada the spread of the superstition became so serious that a Bill was passed banning astrological talks from the radio. And so on.

As is well known astrology is a very ancient belief

and practice, widespread in the early civilizations, especially in Babylonia. Though condemned by Hebrew spokesmen it continued in Christendom. And J. M. Robertson remarks in his *History of Freethought*, that "Nothing is more significant of the intellectual climate of the Renaissance than the persistence at all its stages of the belief in astrology, of which we find drogs even in Bacon."

As regards the fundamental nature and origin of astrology, Robertson postulates, not mere superstition, but a search for some principle of co-ordination in human affairs, because it subordinates Will to Cosmic Law. This seems to be highly questionable, as Will, whether of gods, demigods, angels or other transcendental entities, is surely involved in such alleged occurrences as the stopping and turning back of the sun, the movement of the Star in the East which "came and stood over where the young child was." Copernicus believed that the planets were propelled by angels.

In these days evidence opposed to astrological beliefs seems rather preposterously superfluous. But it may be useful to adduce two facts, viz. (1) that the position and movement of astronomical bodies are pure physical phenomena, and cannot have anything to do with the fate or fortune of people, and (2) that the predictions made, when not hopelessly vague, are so largely wrong and contradictory that they must be pure guesses. The writer of the article mentions two of these for the same day containing the following statements: "Cupid will find you to-day. You will not have far to go in search of happiness. Your purse will be a full one"; and, on the contrary, "Not much to rejoice about. . . . Don't count upon people keeping appointments or doing anything to schedule."

However, an article on the increase of superstition dealing only with astrology is very far from being enough, even if we omit all theological and allied or derivative beliefs. And one wonders whether the writer has seen that amazing magazine, *Prediction*. Here, in articles, notes or advertisements, we find astrology galore, extending to "racing astrology" and "planetary market forecasting" (although whether the former involves the drawing of horoscopes of horses as well as jockeys—as suggested in one of Aldous Huxley's novels—does not appear). Spiritism looms large. And here again we note the complete failure of vaticination. In one of the numbers of *Prediction* I have, it is stated, at the head of an article, "There will be peace in 1939"; and we are then told that this prediction was made by Abduhl Latif through his medium, Miss Nina Francis, at a seance held at her home in Sussex a month before the old year was ended. Abduhl—this "Great Sage," as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle called him—who was a physician in Persia in the twelfth century, is said to have said, ". . . in this incarnation, though I still do medical work as you know, I am here to help in political work between the nations. . . ." And after the positive statement that "not only will there be peace for you in Europe throughout 1939, but also through 1940, and for some time to come," he continued, "I want to assure you of that, as I have assured you of other things. . . . You have nothing to fear; I want again to assure you of that."

Among other absurdities we note matter on incarnation (presumably materialization) and mediumistic healing, palmistry, psychometry, psychosensics, clairvoyance, clairaudience and numerology. The last-named depends upon a "Fodic number" derived from the date of birth expressed in numerals. It seems to be an important branch of occultism, as there is a page article on the topic, a cover page is devoted to the offer of a free numerology chart, and the Editor

mentions his frequent broadcasts on the topic (though without saying where they were given). A garment or other article recently worn or used seems to be an important source of information about unknown and unseen persons. There are also offers for sale of charms, amulets and pieces of a wishing cork tree. And, being familiar with advertisements in our newspapers, we are not surprised to see purchasers' testimony to the advantage of possessing such articles.

It is rather surprising that (in the two copies of the paper to hand) there is no mention of dowsing for water, metals, treasure, etc. This would lend itself well to occult, say mediumistic, treatment. And it appears that at least one scientist has stated that there is probably "something in it." But most, if not all, Freethinkers will doubtless accept the verdict of an investigator of the subject: "Most scientific authorities regard this alleged power of 'dowsing' as a more or less unconscious delusion." And in the category of delusion they will place all the occult means of unveiling the future, of character and fortune-telling, of luck-bringing, and the like, as well as all of a religious kind, such as that of the end of the world.

J. REEVES

Jesus and His Women Friends

(Concluded from page 582)

CLEAR as it is that Matthew, Mark, and John record one and the same unction, equally clear is it that theirs is not the unction which Luke records. The difference of time is great, but the difference of circumstance is all but complete. Luke's account begins at the thirty-sixth verse of his twenty-second chapter, and continues for twenty-four verses until its end. Within this space only verses 37, 38, which describe the woman's conduct, and verses 44-46 which recapitulate her conduct have any resemblance whatever to the episode at Bethany. It is true that Luke, like Matthew, and Mark, names the host of Jesus "Simon," but unlike them he calls his Simon "a Pharisee," and not "the leper." As regards the behaviour attributed to the two women, that of the one described by Luke is far more impassioned than that of the one described by Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke's "sinner" washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, wipes them with her hair, anoints them, and covers them with kisses. Matthew and Mark's "woman" simply anoints Jesus upon his head; whilst John's "Mary" (who was evidently the same person) anoints the feet of Jesus, and wipes them with her hair. But the most striking difference between Luke and the other three evangelists on the present matter is, that the woman of whom they speak is not said to have needed any forgiveness, whereas the one of whom he speaks, is said to have received forgiveness because, although her sins were many, yet her love from the very moment of its inception had never lost its depth and continuity.

Analysis shows that Luke was either acquainted with Matthew's work, or with some source whence Matthew drew his material; and that he was well acquainted with Mark's work. Respectively to both these works, Luke differs on several occasions with every appearance of deliberation. John seems to have known what Matthew, Mark, and Luke had written; and to have used his discretion in accepting, rejecting, altering, or contradicting their statements. In the present case John agrees with Matthew and Mark against Luke as to the time and place of the anointing; but borrows from Luke some endearments employed by the anointress. The existence of a tradition that

Jesus was anointed by at least one woman is beyond doubt. But, whether his anointment by two women is referable to tradition or should be ascribed to fiction is dubitable. The story told by Matthew, Mark, and John is open to suspicion because it credits Jesus with a firm conviction of his approaching death at a time when he was taking measures for his acceptance by the people as the promised Messiah. Surely he would not have discouraged his supporters by uttering such a lugubrious presentiment! Luke's version as it now stands is objectionable because the last two verses teach the Pauline doctrine that Jesus is empowered to forgive sinners, and that faith in him brings the sinner forgiveness; whereas the incident itself does not illustrate this teaching. But, as I said before, the verses in question have the appearance of being a theological gloss added to the preceding narrative. The reader must form his own opinion regarding the probability or the improbability of the conduct which Luke attributes to Simon, to the woman, and to Jesus.

Besides the cases above-mentioned, the Gospels afford abundant evidence that Jesus possessed a strong attraction for women. The Synoptists name certain ones, who along with "many" others gave sustenance to him and his companions when in Galilee; and they say that this Galilean band and "many other women" accompanied him on his last journey to Jerusalem and witnessed his death. In view of these facts it is very remarkable that after a passing reference in the first chapter of *Acts*, the New Testament remains silent about the host of women who treated Jesus with such devotion. Strongest of all is the fact that, when the great apostle of the Gentiles enumerates with meticulous care in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, the persons who were said to have beheld his risen Lord, he never mentions any female witness, although the four Gospels lay such stress upon the female witnesses. His account shows that he was well acquainted with traditions about the Resurrection, which were similar to those subsequently recorded by the four evangelists, how then could he be ignorant of the tradition about the women's testimony which is reproduced so impressively in all the evangelical narratives? Did he not believe it? or, if he did believe it, what reason could he have for omitting to repeat it? Perhaps he feared that the testimony of the women might weaken the case, being taken for imaginative delusion; perhaps he may have thought that Jesus would suffer in reputation because of his having been so friendly with women.

PART SECOND

HOW JESUS GOT HIS WOMEN FRIENDS

I. Jesus was a celibate who appears to have preferred celibacy for religious reasons. He pronounced a lustful look at a woman to rank as an inward act of adultery (*Matt. v. 28*). He admitted that all men had not a sufficient gift of continency to abstain from marriage; but declared that some there were who made eunuchs of themselves "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." (*Matt. xix. 10-12*). Probably this referred to himself, and was figuratively intended. Such chaste men are very enticing to women, especially to those fond of experiments.

II. The personal appearance of Jesus is not described by the Evangelists, who, however, furnish many details which show him to have had a very neurotic temperament. He was testy, provoking, and vituperative. He could not bear contradiction, and demanded absolute confidence. Here are a few of many examples. He caused a tumult in the Synagogue at Nazareth by grossly insulting the congrega-

tion for questioning his credentials (*Luke* iv. 16-29); he poured out bitter curses upon the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because what they had seen of his doings did not win him their acceptance. (*Matthew* xi. 20-24); and he hurled slanderous abuse with offensive names at the religious authorities of his land because they declined to accept his extravagant pretensions. (*Matthew* xxiii. and refs.). He spoke harshly to his mother, and of her, without cause, as we have previously observed; and he once classed a woman as a dog, simply for being a Gentile (*Matthew* xv. 21-26). But men of that type are often charming to women whom they desire to captivate; and the favoured ones value the favour all the more for the fearsome reputation of the favourer. They feel "thrilled" by his "glamorous personality"! Being intensely affectible and responsive, woman yields most readily to suggestions physically transmitted. Hence, a glance, a pressure of the hand, an impassioned tone, an expressive gesture, have far more influence upon her conduct, than would ever be exerted by a calmly marshalled array of irrefragable arguments. No one, however, possesses this power of physical suggestion more fully than the neuropath, for his nervous intensity enables him to work upon the excitable nature of women, making them feel peculiarly happy when under his guidance.

III. It is a well established fact that many women confuse sensuality with religious sentiment. This is why leaders of religion,⁸ and particularly pulpit orators of the florid type, gain such multitudes of feminine admirers. The confusion referred to is strongly supported by the fascination which the vague and the mysterious exercise over a woman's mind; and by the firm belief that women have of being able to scan with intuitions of the heart tracks beyond the ken of reason. Here is indeed a "pathetic fallacy"! For, whilst it is true that we live by admiration, hope, and love; and that things dreamed of and divined, rather than the actual experiences of life, are the deepest sources of our happiness, it is, alas, no less true that the tendency to shape a world out of dreams and feelings often leads, not only to withering disappointments, but also to far worse calamities.

IV. The Gospels agree that, after his public appearance, Jesus led an indigent and precarious life. This, together with his personal qualities, and the circumstances attending his ministry, must have affected the heart and the imagination of the women who came under his influence. In love, as elsewhere, the victory is not always to the strong. Woman feels that she is weak and needs protection; hence, when she can be of assistance to the man who has attracted her, and, who, in the natural order of things, should shield her from adversity, then, sympathy and pride afford her peculiar delight; and she likewise feels for him the affection always experienced by the benevolent towards the objects of their benevolence.

The admiration, love, and loyalty that Jesus received from women, and the practical form in which they showed him these sentiments, must have far outweighed what he suffered from the fickleness of crowds, the misapprehension of disciples, and the cruelty of enemies. Recalling his hazardous career, his frustrated hopes, and his tragic end, even the

⁸ Origen (+253) a famous father of the Church, castrated himself, in order to maintain irreproachable intercourse with noble ladies who assiduously sought his company. St. Jerome (+420) left Rome because the devotion exhibited towards him by the noble ladies of his day was distasteful to their kinsfolk. John Wesley's wife was so jealous of her sisters in the Lord that she made his life burdensome. Schleiermacher, a German theologian of the first rank, had cause to regret his attractiveness for women.

severest of his critics could not begrudge him the sweet, consoling charm of female intercourse. "Great pains," said Bacon, "deserve to be paid with great pleasures."

C. CLAYTON DOVE

[On page 583 col. 1 for the adorning Mary read the adoring Mary.]

"How It strikes a Contemporary" (Still)

LIKE all challengers I claim the right of reply.

Certainly my article has justified itself since it has drawn so closely-reasoned an exposition from Mr. Cohen. At first he accurately recognized my position: namely that I was registering no more than the initial reaction of an outside mind—I hope a reasonable mind—to the *Freethinker*. But later he appears to treat me as though I were a self-appointed "Defender of the Faith," and to drag me on to a more important battleground: that of *Atheism* v. *Religion*. I protest. I am merely an enquirer; I specifically described myself as a Nicodemus—though by day not night.

Mr. Cohen and I are agreed in condemning efforts to silence the *Freethinker* or free-thought, except by the legitimate method of reasoning. We are also agreed that each side should study the other's case. Yet, a little later Mr. Cohen appears to quarrel with me for not being willing to suppress unbelief "as good Christians have always acted," and calls me "no theologian" for this. Let me be no theologian; that is unimportant. But surely Mr. Cohen should be with me all the way in my plea for a full and fair hearing for all forms of faith or unfaith. Essentially, I feel sure he is. For (as I pointed out) it is not from the free-thinking side that suppression has come.

Yet—let me hope I am wrong—I seem to detect a certain intolerance and even heresy-hunting in the *Freethinker*. For instance, in the suggestion that an Agnostic is a cowardly Atheist who does not proclaim himself as such through fear. Surely this is unjust and unreasonable. Obviously there are three plainly separate intellectual positions:—

1. I know there is a God (or anything else).
2. I know there is not.
3. I don't know whether there is or not; and I need more evidence.

For my part, the Agnostic position No. 3 seems as legitimate as either of the others.

Answering one of Mr. Cohen's points, I fear I still think that both Christ and St. Paul discussed unbelief. I agree with Mr. Cohen that they denounced it. But surely it is possible to do both; and I suggest they did. Mr. Cohen seems to think "discussion" and "denunciation" mutually exclusive terms. I should have thought "denunciation" was one form of discussion; perhaps the lowest form, but still a form. However, whether Christ and St. Paul discussed unbelief or not is a plain matter of fact. I must leave it to my readers who can verify from their Bibles whether Mr. Cohen or I is the more accurate on this point.

I think Mr. Cohen's comment on my paragraph regarding "free minds" both sound and just. Therefore I do not answer him on this point.

But I fear I must stick to my "baby" on the desert island instead of abandoning it, as Rousseau used to abandon his on people's doorsteps. Here I join issue with Mr. Cohen. He regards it as an error to assume

that persons are born Atheists or Theists. Put crudely like that, he may be right. But I still maintain that minds are born with an innate tendency to religion or Materialism. (By religion I do not mean a mere belief in "supernatural beings" as Mr. Cohen does, for irreligion can be a man's religion, as in Mr. Cohen's own case). By religion I mean a creed held with emotion in which one believes, and which is one's ultimate standard of values beyond one's own life; it may, or may not, include supernatural beings. I hope Mr. Cohen will not be too horrified if I say that he, with his earnest creed of Freethought is a highly-religious man. So, too is Bernard Shaw with his "Life-Force."

Like all religionists Mr. Cohen is unscrupulous at times. He is so when he gives my baby a nurse and instruction in religion. Leave the baby, alone, fairly to grow up (as I premised), not artificially tutored but open only to its own speculations and to the influence of Nature. I still maintain (in spite of Mr. Cohen) that the child would most probably postulate a Deity or Deities. Of evil type perhaps, but that is not the point. Have not all savages done so?

On this point Mr. Cohen takes me to task for what he calls a "leading question." I think not. He is mistaken too in thinking the prosecution may not ask leading questions. The rule is the same for both sides, prosecution and defence: both may lead at times; and leading questions are only objectionable when put to one's own witness, and even then only sometimes. How can my opponent object to my "leading" him?

Mr. Cohen and I really come to grips, I think, in my suggestion that the *Freethinker* ignores "the good in religion." Mr. Cohen will have it that there is no good in religion, and what I really mean is "the good associated with religion," when I speak of Milton's sonnet or Salisbury architecture. Not at all. I dissent strongly. It was religious fervour, not poetic capacity, that made Milton write his sublime poem, for when he wrote secular sonnets they were often mediocre or, at their best, never sublime as this one. It is his religious feeling that makes Mr. Cohen an admirable journalist on Freethought subjects, and I take leave to doubt if he would be half so admirable if he wrote on a purely technical subject from commercial motives. There is, it is true, "good associated with religion," but there is also, I submit, "good in religion" itself—even in religions accepted as false by Christian and Atheist alike.

I can explain Mr. Cohen (and in all seriousness, as he invites me to) as a most-deeply religious man. He himself with his white-hot convictions and downright force is a living example of my contention that there is good in religion itself. This religion of his distinguishes him sharply and absolutely from the really and truly irreligious who "care for none of these things." Also I call such men as Voltaire, Anatole France and Thomas Hardy religious men in the best and highest sense of the word; and now I think it is clear that Mr. Cohen and I, attach different meanings to the word "Religion." What does he make I wonder, of the religion of the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who in his wonderful *Meditations* makes it quite clear that his religion exists whether the supernatural gods exist or do not exist.

Perhaps I should add this. My chief criticism of the *Freethinker*, based on a very brief acquaintance with it was that it did not harmonize with my conception of Freethought—which is not merely freethinking about conventional religions or the religion of Christianity, but free-thinking upon all human activity and thought including politics, literature, science, and the rest. Too wide a field for a journal? I think not. In narrowing itself to free-thinking about

clergymen, the Bible, and organized Churches the *Freethinker* must disappoint many modern minds, and seem in this respect old-fashioned, even 1881-ish. There is relatively little interest to-day in any merely "religious" controversy (using that word in its narrow sense) to-day. Modern-minded folk think in a wider field. But since I wrote my first article I have seen other issues of the paper, and certainly the admirable article by "Minnernus" on "The Press" does something in the direction I have in mind.

C. G. L. DU CANN

Acid Drops

The Rev. John Bishop, B.A.—in a Sermon published in the *Christian World*—cheers up Christians by guaranteeing that:—

It is the will of God that His people should be victorious. He commands His Church to proclaim that victory to the world. But this is no new thing in history.

Exactly! Field-Marshal Goering has raved Mr. Bishop in declaring the unconquerable might of Germany over "insignificant little Poland." It is quite certain that Hitler's victory over Poland would be proclaimed as in accordance with "the will of God." We are tired of hearing that "it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of the little ones should perish"—and we see multitudes of little ones perishing before our eyes. Granting that all decent gods and men WILL only do good things for humanity, all we can do is to devise the best human machinery to achieve that "will." And if God "wills" his people shall conquer, why not let them do so quickly?

It seems remarkably easy to satisfy some people. We were assured by two Spiritualist organs, right up to the outbreak of hostilities, that "there will be no war." In the light of experience we assume that the organs of "prediction" and spirit revelation must have had some "mental reservation" in their oracular absurdities. These "reservations"—we suggest—involved the use of the future tense in their mystic pronouncement that there WILL BE no war. There may be their own famous "Armageddon" to-day, but there WILL BE peace—somewhere, some day—centuries hence maybe.

A characteristic paragraph from the *Catholic Universe*:—

At Aachen are preserved the cloak of Our Lady, the swaddling clothes of the Infant Jesus, the loin cloth of Jesus Christ and the cloth in which was wrapped St. John the Baptist's head. Their authenticity is doubtful, but certainly they are the centre of great local devotion and the city, one of the most Catholic in Germany, has been a centre of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages.

How deliciously simple-minded Catholics can be. Of course, "the authenticity is doubtful," but what of that? Aachen is near Cologne where the "smelly-water" used to come from—the famous "Eau." Incense, joss-sticks, perfumers, rose-leaves and the rest were pre-scientific methods of warding-off diseases whose presence was attested by nasty odours. The good smell conquered the bad smell and people died in the "sanctity of religion." It was cheaper—as well as pious—to perfume insanitary churches and houses than to instal drains. The atmosphere of Heaven must, we imagine, be laden with pestilences of all kinds if its drainage limitations are as God left his houses of prayer.

From the *Sheffield Telegraph* we gather that someone has been wondering why God allows certain things to happen. Canon T. G. Smith replies that it is not God's fault if the harvest fails, and we have failed "to yield obedience to the law of God conditioning the food supply." That leaves the question unanswered of why the

food supply was not "conditioned" in a better manner. But evidently the answer strikes the Canon as not being satisfactory, for he says in the same article that "The time is now fortunately approaching when we may look for our new bishop of Sheffield to be coming amongst us." But we doubt whether the Bishop will be able to give any better answer to the age-long question Why does not God manage things better? Man does at least try. The Christian God appears to sum up with an "If you won't manage things properly you can go to hell."

We note from a review of a book on *Pioneers of Religious Education*, by T. F. Kinloch, that according to the author, "It is practically impossible to teach religion in schools, but religious instruction must be practised in the home and in the Church, and in the school." "The religious instruction can be grafted on to what the child has." We agree with the quoted words, and the implication of what is said. If the child is to be taught religion, that is if it is to be made religious, the foundation must be laid in the home, and then the teacher has workable material. But there is nothing new in this. It is what has always been done. First the parent abuses its power over the child to twist its mind in the direction of religion, then the authority of the teacher is superimposed on that of the parent, and the result is that unless the child is fortunate enough to be saved by unexpected circumstances it grows up repeating like an educated parrot the stupidities of its parents and the hired instruction of the teacher. One day we hope that parents will be wise enough to recognize that they have responsibilities towards their children, and that one of these is not to take advantage of the dependence of the child by making it the repository of beliefs that educated men and women are rapidly getting ashamed of.

Underlying all that the clerics and their followers have to say about the war is in most cases an indictment against ourselves—mankind indiscriminately—German and English, soldiers and babies and all who suffer—it is a just reward for our wickedness. Canon S. C. Swann says:—

God remains the Supreme Truth. . . . No war can be God's will; it is a terrible thing, the result of SIN—as the Cross was.

It is a queer logic which punishes equally—often worse—the innocent victims of whatever "sin" other people have committed. What a God! Isn't it enough to provide eternal hell in another world, but a so-called Providence is vile enough to add misery and torture to human life here and now?

Already the legend—with the fish-like flavour—the "Grimm" fairy-tale of the Angels of Mons—shows signs of resurrection. The Dean of Winchester, Dr. Selwyn, preaching in his Cathedral almost as soon as war began, dragged out his appetizing hints of Hell from on high!—

In this great church we have a chapel of the GUARDIAN ANGELS. From the great screen St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Swithun as well as the other saints of Winchester. . . . I doubt not that they too, like the Angels, will be active in these months while Heaven and Earth seem reeling.

It must be a great change for all these stony-eyed images after centuries of lazy "rest," to be dragged out into a very busy life—on which side is not stated. In the spirit of Wellington reviewing his Hessian mercenaries, we hope these busybodies or busy spirits will favour our enemy and not interfere with our own side. We have quite sufficient "lords" of hosts—our final hope rests with common soldiers of the most irreverent and courageous type ever known.

Answers to prayers are already beginning to accumulate. God's caterpillars are appearing in East Cornwall. Millions are steadily eating acre after acre of cabbages and turnip-tops. Every day hundreds of thousands are born to help on the work of destruction. A farmer in

the St. Germans district showed a correspondent of the *Telegraph* a field containing thousands of savoy cabbages and winter greens. Not a single leaf remained intact. Every plant had been attacked, and in many cases only the skeleton outline of leaves remained.

Fortunately God helps those who help themselves. The children evacuated to the district are picking off the caterpillars as best as they can. Unfortunately the work has to be repeated each day, and it is a heart-breaking business. It appears the children think it "great fun," and in this way God's war on Man's food is resisted.

We are not blaming the King; his religion was picked out for him over two hundred years ago, and goes with the job. He is the head of the Christian religion as represented by the Established Church, and must play the game. So we find the *Christian Herald* gives us the customary Christian journalists' idea of "improving the occasion," which adds one more to our smiles. The journal mentioned devotes its front page to two pictures and a Hymn ("O God our help in ages past" of course). Both pictures represent King George—with a battleship on one side of him and a bombing plane on the other. His Majesty—undeterred by these frightful war-instruments—is addressing a radio audience begging them to "Stand calm, firm and united." But why the Hymn? It seems to us rank blasphemy to call to our aid radio, aeroplane and battleship while simultaneously swearing to God that we depend solely upon Him, assuring Him that

Sufficient is THINE ARM alone.

God's "arm" seems to need plenty of Woolwich "Arms" (and the men) to satisfy a Christian public.

Twenty Five Years Ago

SUCH prophecies take no account of all that war leaves behind it, and which act as a factor that makes for other wars. One need go no further back than the Franco-Prussian War for evidence of this. How much did the horrors of that campaign do to foster peace between France and Germany? How much did that war do to bring the two peoples together? It filled one with arrogance, it left the other with an open wound, and caused both to hate each other with an increased bitterness. And if, and when, the German-Austrian forces are defeated, there will still remain on one side the influence of the militarist element, and on the other hatred for defeat experienced. The militarist element will remain in each country—with the conqueror victory will be counted to his credit, with the conquered the need for more effective militarism will be argued. We shall have won because we were well prepared, they will have lost because they were ill-prepared. The moral will be drawn again, as it has been drawn before, that it is every nation's duty to so arm that it will have nothing to fear from others, and can bring others to terms if it so desires. It is almost certain that the rebuilding of shattered navies and the replacement of depleted armies will receive first attention when the war is over.

Fifty Years Ago

WHERE were the "weapons" and the "strategy" of your faith when it vainly hurled crusade after crusade, for three centuries, against the infidel Saracens? Where were the "weapons" and the "strategy" of your faith in the seventh and eighth centuries, when the successors of Mohammed swept Christianity out of Asia and Africa? Did not the Cross go down before the Crescent on a thousand battle-fields? And what has turned the tables? What has put the power of the sword into the hands of Christian nations? Is it not that Science which the Church fought tooth and nail, with the vigilance of a sleuth hound and the ferocity of a tiger?

The Freethinker, September 29, 1889

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FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

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To Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—E. Drabble, 2s. 3d.

J. SNAITH.—The copies must have been sent, but if you will forward the name and address again, we will repeat.

C. F. BUDGE.—Thanks, the book arrived quite safely. We agree with your summary of the situation. We have as much to dread from machinations at home as from the enemy abroad.

D. L. PEARCE.—Thanks for your very appreciative letter. We expect your efforts have had some success, even though it did not manifest itself in the way you desire.

W. MORGAN.—Received and shall appear at an early date.

H. ELMES.—We are dealing with the matter next week. We are not in the least alarmed, but we must be prepared.

CINE CERE.—Many thanks; papers being sent as requested. "BRIGHTON."—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

ROBERT ROSE.—Thanks for quotation and your trouble in the matter; we are sending same on to those interested.

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.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen would have been lecturing at Glasgow on October 1, and at Manchester on October 15. Both these lectures have had to be cancelled owing to the halls being taken over for war purposes by the authorities. Even if this had not happened it would have been useless expecting audiences to gather when it is such a positive danger to be out after nightfall. If the Government wishes the public to lose nerve and to become like so many frightened children, it will pursue the present policy to the bitter end. If it wishes the people to face the war as they should face it, with a stern resolve to see it through, the sooner we get back to something approaching normal life the better. But a population that is condemned to spend half its life in the dark, waiting for a destruction that does not arrive is something we shall have to pay very dearly for.

Mr. Cohen, by the way, takes this opportunity of thanking those, some of them complete strangers, who have written him offering a "refuge" away from London during the war. He cannot accept any of them. He has too many things that need attention in London. He

will continue to live his normal life so far as circumstances that he cannot control will permit

We do not see, however, why branches of the N.S.S. should suspend their propaganda altogether. The prohibition of public meetings in the open, at least after sunset is a reasonable police precaution, until we get some lights in the streets. But there is no reason why Branches should not arrange for Sunday afternoon meetings. With the evening meetings suspended, there should be no great difficulty in getting an audience.

We should like to hear from those of our readers who are now serving with any of the armed forces, and who have difficulty in obtaining their weekly copy. We will do whatever necessary to see that they are kept in touch with this journal, and through it with the Freethought movement. We are also ready to send specimen copies to any who are not readers, but who are likely to appreciate them. During the last war we sent out many thousands of copies to men serving at home and abroad, with the result that we acquired many new regular readers and also warm friends.

We would also remind all those men now serving, and who have allowed themselves to be entered under a religious denomination—owing to a mistake on their own part or on that of a military official—that by army regulations they are at liberty to have the description of themselves altered at any time. This is not a favour to be granted. It is a right to be claimed.

We welcome a letter in the *Times* by Mr. Stanley Bayliss, emphasizing the fact that if our claim that we are fighting for freedom of conscience is not a mere pretence, freedom should be given to all, whether Christian or non-Christian, Freethinker, Agnostic, or Atheist. For that reason he objects to the statement that the war in which Britain is engaged is a "Christian crusade." If that be so the only course for all non-Christians would be to stand apart from it. We may also add that we are calling from India on all kinds of non-Christians for help. It is too much for us to expect that our Christian papers and Christian preachers will deal honestly with the public in this matter, but we should like to have the opinion of an educated Hindoo or Mohammedan as to what he thinks when he is told that he is engaged in a "Christian" crusade.

We are pleased to see that a number of people are asking that Britain should lay down clearly what are our war aims. We agree with those who say that our war aims should be our peace aims, and that these should be stated without further delay. The British people will then know exactly what they are fighting for, and cannot be fobbed off with phrases that may mean anything or nothing in the mouths of politicians. We must have no repetition of the "Making the world safe for Democracy," a "Land fit for Heroes," etc., that we had during the last war. And even more important than our own people knowing exactly what we are fighting for, the German people will also know. If Hitler had a "fifth column" in this country—at present lying rather low—we have to-day a "fifth column" in Germany, and we should make as much use of it as we can.

The re-opening of cinemas on Sunday has led to the theatrical managers claiming that theatres should also be opened. We hope they will press their claim, and that they will succeed in their aim. We have no desire to act as a "profiteer" over the war, although we may take it that the clergy will use it to persuade as many weak-minded men as is possible to come back to the Churches. But we think we might well agitate for a little freedom at a time when so much of our freedom has been taken away. Let us put something on the liberty side of the ledger.

To those inadequately baked non-Christians who strive so hard to define religion that they may still come within the ranks of the "religious," we have much

pleasure in handing them this definition of Christianity given by the *Church Times* :—

The basis of Christianity is the assertion that Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate. The man who does not believe in this assertion is not a Christian even though he may sincerely attempt to follow the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.

That does make for clarity and will help to a right definition of religion in general.

A debate on the subject "That Roman Catholicism is a false religion," will be held at the "Welfare," Pyle, S. Wales, on Tuesday, October 3, between Father Vincent McNabb and Mr. Joseph McCabe. The debate will commence at 7 p.m., and admission is by ticket only. Tickets may be obtained from Mr. T. Wilkins, Pishgah St., and Mr. E. D. Evans, 10 Collwn Road, Pyle. No price is mentioned on the handbill received.

A Northampton paper points out that the statue of Bradlaugh, which stands in Abington Square, Northampton, has its finger pointing to a huge pile of sandbags protecting a building. It may be taken as the sarcastic comment on the nature of the civilization which for so many centuries has been dominated to so considerable an extent by the Christian Churches. It is quite certain that if organized Freethought had been for so long in the position the Churches have occupied, Christians would not have been slow in drawing the inevitable conclusion.

In the *Star* of September 5, there appeared the following :—

Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation within us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. It would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.

Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*.

Paine is always topical as he dealt with enduring issues.

Winnington Ingram appears determined that whether as Bishop or ex-Bishop, no other clergyman shall equal him in making statements that leave other pieces of pulpit foolishness far in the rear. His latest is that no astronomer can be an Atheist. We rather think we could cite many, ancient and modern, but it is hardly worth while entering into serious controversy with a man of his mental calibre. We merely cite him to prove that while intelligence may often suffer from advancing years, stupidity merely grows harder and more confident of its value. We hasten to say that this is a generalization that Winnington Ingram will have to get some kindly and more intelligent cleric to explain to him if he wishes to understand it.

The North London Branch N.S.S. will commence a series of indoor meetings with a debate on "Is Political Pacifism the way to Socialism?" in the Cricketers Arms, Inverness Street, Camden Town, N.W.1, this evening (October 1) at 7.30. The affirmative will be taken by W. Corbett, Branch Secretary P.P. Union, and the negative by F. A. Ridley. The Cricketers Arms is just by the C.T. Underground Station at Camden Town, and Marshall Roberts Stores. The difficulty of organizing indoor meetings will be readily understood, and the Branch deserves the support of all Freethinkers within reach of the hall. Further particulars may be had from Lecture Secretary, J. I. Lewis, 43 Princess Road, Regent's Park, N.W. 1.

It has been repeated often enough that vice leads to misery; will no man declare that misery leads to vice?

Landor

Planetary Influence

MAN came under planetary influence when the Lord, by casting down great stones from heaven, drew his attention to celestial phenomena.

Those great stones must have been very badly aimed. The Lord as an educationist proved a failure. No palpable hit could he be credited with!

So, man, left unconscious of a supreme deity, choose a planetary ruler for each day of the week—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn.

Though these planets are no longer regarded as gods, their influence is still considered vital on Stock Exchanges, Race Courses, etc. In *The Kabala of Numbers*, by Sepharial, Vol. II., Chap. vii., deals with the *Law of Periodicity*, and it shows how winners may be spotted; when and how money may be safely invested, etc. The amateur astrologer juggles with the numerical value of the planet in the ascendant. The values of these planets in the order given above are—5, 5, 1, 4, 9, 7, 3. These figures added together = 34, and 3+4=7, the mystic number! The root idea of this number lies in religious periodicity.

"Time passed on." As Artemus Ward observes, "It's a way time has. It passes on."

With the coming of a divine dictatorship! planetary influence on human life, and the weather, did not disappear. It remained operative, but under control.

For example, "Out of the South cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the North; he quieteth the earth by the South wind (the whirlwind?); fair weather cometh out of the North; by the breath of God frost is given: the breadth of the waters is straightened; also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them in the face of the world in the earth." (Job xxxvii.)

But having commanded them, how accommodate the prayerful? e.g., "Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (Jas. v. 17-18). The High Command would be suspended during that period. Wouldn't it? And while Elias was praying that it might not rain, if someone else prayed that it might, how could the deity oblige both? But he is omnipotent! "He transcends all the art and argument of the earth"! He gives not every man according to his deserving (as far as the weather is concerned) but graciously maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. v. 45). But why should he not have made the skin of the just waterproof, and the skin of the evil like unto blotting paper, and so, in reality, have done something worthy of his omnipotence?

But whether the weather be supernaturally controlled or not, Christ credited the Pharisees and Sadducees with being able to discern the face of the sky (Matt. xvi. 3). Coming weather cast its shadow before it! But this shadow, like all natural phenomena, does not make the same impression upon every observer. The forecasts of one district are often in flat contradiction to those of another—the new moon when in the shape of a boat—a mystic ark—is a sign of fine, dry weather in one district, while in another it denotes wet, stormy weather, notably in Liverpool, and other parts of England :—

The moon on its back, carries rain in its lap.

And in Scotland :—

The horny moon is on her back; mend your shoon and sort your thack.

Eyes had these observers, but they made poor use of them. In our latitude the crescent moon is on its back in Spring time, and upright in the Autumn.

Many people to-day still regard the planets as being the rulers of human destiny, and of the weather. The moon's influence was, and still is, great. She is yet Queen of Heaven, and, in parts of the world, she is still worshipped as of old (Jer. vii. 18; xlv. 17). Scattered throughout the literature of the world significant records of her influence may be found: A man may be a moon-calf, a moon-man, a moon-raker, a moon-shiner, a moon-siff, a mooner, or a moon-lighter. And he may be moon-blasted, moon-blind, moon-eyed, moon-faced, moon-like, moon-mad, moon-shaped, or moony. Small wonder is it that, in Byron's opinion—"The devil's in the mood for mischief . . . and then she looks so modest all the while."

Dr. Tylor tells us: "One of the most instructive astrological doctrines which has kept its place in modern popular philosophy, is that of the sympathy of growing and declining nature with the waxing and waning moon. (*Primitive Culture*, Vol. 1., 130, Ed. 1891). And he gives illustrations of it, such as—the custom of setting eggs under hens only when the moon is new; the objection of Orkney Islanders to marriage except under a growing moon, etc.

The notion that the weather changes with the moon's quarterings is yet common. And the day on which the New Moon appears has significance: if on Monday, we may expect fine weather; Wednesday or Friday, stormy; while:—

Saturday new and Sunday full
Never was good and never wull.

Tuesday and Thursday were too good to risk mentioning!

Sun and Moon were objects of worship. Ancient legends tell us some remarkable tales about them. The Moon as King of Night, and the Sun as Queen. Or, the Sun as King, Lord of Day, and the Moon as Queen of Heaven, or, as brother and sister. Cursed be he that calleth the moon she and the sun he, is suggestive.

In Africa Moon-worship is prominent in an immense district where Sun-worship is unknown. The Moon is Paradise to many—no mosquitoes there! To others the Sun is Heaven—the bright dwelling-place of departed chiefs and braves. To many, notably the followers of the Rev. Tobias Swinden, the Sun is Hell, and its dark spots the gatherings of damned souls! A dark spot—sun spot—scientists tell us measures from 10 times the diameter of the earth to 140,000 miles long; that the diameter of the sun is 864,000 miles; and that it is 500 times as large as all the other planets put together. But, what is one sun among so many? The luminous belt encircling our globe—the Milky Way—is made up of thousands of millions of suns, many of them very much larger than our sun. A brief note on size may be pertinent here:—

The Sun is 1,000,000 times larger than the earth.

Sirius, the Dog Star, the brightest fixed star (fixed-looking because, so far distant, movement cannot be observed) in the sky, about twelve times larger than the Sun, giving out fifty times as much light as that of our Sun, is a million times as far from us as the Sun.

Arcturus, diameter 48,000,000 miles, is 13,000 times larger than the Sun, and it sends out 1,000 times as much light as our Sun. And many such might be added.

And this on Astronomic distance:

Alpha Centauri, our nearest star, is 276,000 times farther from us than the Sun. It is approximately

twenty-five billion miles away, or, $4\frac{1}{3}$ light years. An aeroplane flying at an uninterrupted speed of 200 miles an hour would not reach it in 15,000,000 years. To simplify distance on paper. We invented a "light year," which, as a unit of measurement, has economized figures, and saved time. A "light year" is constituted thus: light flies at 186,000 miles a second, so, $186,000 \times 60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365 =$

5,865,696,000,000 miles a "light year."

Therefore, when we read of many stars being one, two, three, four, or five hundred thousand light years distant from us in space, we ought to feel "shut up in measureless content." Whitman expresses some such feeling in the lines:—

I do not want the constellations any nearer
I know they are very well where they are!

And possibly this same feeling lay behind:—

The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars.

The farthest nebula is:—

840,000,000,000,000,000 miles distant.

Now if God is omnipresent, what sort of diameter must he have? Or, is he like the original "darkness upon the face of the deep"? or, like the earth, "without form and void"? The latter would prove an easy fitting costume. And when studying humanity, through his almighty microscope, it would not get in his way. But the "ancient of days," judging him from Blake and Whitman, has now become indifferent, full of an:—

Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty
breadth of the universe.

Between the nearest star, and the most distant, lies a space of 815,000,000,000,000,000 miles. And this space is filled with thousands of millions of stars (what we call *stars*, are mostly suns). And these bodies have orbits of from 36,000,000 to 2,800,000,000 miles.

"To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things." Isaiah had a germ of Freethought in him. But had he lived in our day he would never have written: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, etc." To him any conception, that his fellows could have, belittled God. (Chap. xl).

The children of Israel were surrounded by Sun-worshippers. Denunciations of Sun-worship are given in Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3; Jer. xliii. 13; Ezek. viii. 16-18. While it seems to have been adopted by the rulers of Judah. (2 Kings xxiii. 5-19).

Job speaks of "Arcturus and his sons" (Job ix. 9, and xxxviii. 32), but Arcturus to-day stands in solitary grandeur in the sky, unaccompanied by any of his sons. The reason for this being that Job referred to Ursa Major—The Great Bear—and not to the star now named Arcturus.

The Sun and Moon dominate the lives of children. Children born during the day tread sun-paths, while those born during the night take moon-paths. What becomes of those born when the moon is off duty we are not told!

Much of the above may take the ear strangely. I hope, however, that no reader will wax so desperate with imagination as to become servile to all the skyey influences.

GEORGE WALLACE

What does it matter if one is violent? To be right, that is everything.—Victor Hugo.

Returning to Religion Under Duress

SECTARIANISM in the little Cheshire village of Thornton Village has resulted in the closing of a modern and well-equipped Council school. While the Church school, an old building with very inadequate accommodation, will remain open. To add to the absurdity of the position, children who have been attending the Council School will have to travel four miles by bus to the nearest senior school at New Ferry. The situation has aroused such feeling in the district that parents of the children concerned threatened to organize a scholars' strike. At the last moment, however, they decided to abandon it and let their children travel to New Ferry.

The more modern of the two schools, known as the Lever School, was built by the late Lord Leverhulme in order that Nonconformists of the district should have the choice of an undenominational school. The Lever School was subsequently taken over by the Cheshire Education Committee and worked on the lines of a Council School. Ten years ago an arrangement was made under which the Church School took all scholars up to eleven years of age and the Lever School all children from eleven to school-leaving age. There are 81 scholars at the Church School, but the attendance at the Lever School, which has accommodation for 150, has fallen to ten. The Education Committee has therefore decided to close the Lever School as the cost of maintaining it exceeded £600 a year, and arrangements have been made for the children to travel by bus to the nearest senior Council School at New Ferry—a distance of four miles.

The Church School is an old-fashioned building, with only three classrooms, and its accommodation is inadequate for its 81 pupils. The Lever School has light and airy classrooms, and has a laboratory, kitchen, sewing and music rooms, and is heated by a modern central heating system. The obvious common sense solution to the problem would be to transfer the scholars from the Church School to the Lever School. The Education Committee have no power to close the Church School, and although the chairman of the Committee has publicly stated that they would welcome any arrangement between the managers of the two schools for the use of the better building the managers of the Church School have made no move whatever either to close their school and allow the Education Committee to run it in the more modern building or to agree to transfer the school to the more modern building themselves.

In the words of a petition sent by the local Labour Party to the Board of Education, appealing to them to intervene in the dispute, "as a result of the Cheshire Education Committee's decision to close the school the parents of children . . . are in the position that they are forced to send their children to an old and out-of-date type of school building which must be very near the border line so far as (your) standards are concerned, while a perfectly modern school building is lying idle."

This matter has received publicity in the Press, especially locally, and several letters have appeared. I cannot hear that local Freethinkers have taken advantage to state their view of the case as citizens on behalf of Secular Education.

W. A. WILLIAMS

It is Christendom that is the matter with the world. The world is sick of Christendom. We must come out of Christendom into the Universe.

John Davidson

Rules for Editors

ONE cannot help smiling to think of the numberless folios which have been written on the art of politics. Mankind really seem to have imagined that it was extremely difficult in the precept as well as practice; and from CONFUCIUS to PLATO, from PLATO to JUSTINIAN, from MACHIAVEL to MONTESQUIEU, a thousand extravagant praises have been bestowed upon political scribblers. I cannot discover, for the life of me, what peculiar talent could have been found in such writers. Some of them may be allowed to possess a shade of imagination, but what are called your sound politicians must evidently be very inferior men, for they confess they have nothing to do with either enthusiasm or fancy; and what is genius without these qualities? Nay, they absolutely acknowledge that they estimate little but experience and mere matter of fact. I only wish that the newspaper politicians were confined to matter of fact for a few months, and we should soon see what would be the fate of political composition.

It has been said by philosophers, that the end of instruction is to elevate man to wisdom; but I think that he is a much nobler teacher who brings down wisdom to man. It would be much happier for the mind if it could be wise without exertion, and I really cannot see much art in this boasted ascension to knowledge. It is very well to go up the stairs of St. Paul's to examine the cross, but it would certainly be much better if one could whistle the cross down. For this reason, I have endeavoured to simplify the rules of newspaper politics, and instead of making my readers toil up a ladder, like GULLIVER, to read gigantic folios, have reduced science to the most inexcursive and unambitious comprehension.

1. OF POLITICAL ATTACHMENTS

You must absolutely be a party-man, or you are neither a true editor nor a true patriot. Patriotism consists in a love of one's country, and a love of one's country is certainly not a love of it considered in its earthly qualities, not a love of muddy Brentford or calcareous Margate, but an attachment to the best men in the country. Now the best citizen is he who would do most good to his fellow-citizens, and as every man must judge for himself, the best statesman is he who offers you the best place. It becomes you, therefore, to support him on every occasion, and particularly when he is wrong for who would expose the errors of his friend?

2. OF EDITORSHIP CONSIDERED ABSTRACTEDLY FROM PROPRIETORSHIP

If you are proprietor as well as editor of your paper, you have the truly English freedom of saying what you please for your patron: but if you are editor only, it becomes you to say every thing which the proprietors may dictate, and nothing to which they may object. This restriction may appear hard, but in difficult times you must be hardened to meet difficulties; you are the servant of the proprietors, and inclination must be sacrificed to duty. What is called spirit will not pay your bills. The man who digs for money must of necessity stoop very low to find it.

3. OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY

It is manifest, that every man who differs with your favourite leader must be miserably defective either in his head or his heart, but most likely in both. This is so self-evident, that it requires no argument. As to those insipid hypocrites, who pretend to be of no party, avoid them as so many newspaper outlaws, who are cut off from the social bustle of dispute. A

writer of no party must be of no feeling, or at any rate a gross libeller on the public, for he must either have no capability of attachment or he must plainly tell the public that there is not one of all their favourites who is worthy of entire co-operation. Give, therefore, no quarter to any writer of any party or of no party; if you wish to produce a revolution in political opinion, you must be strenuous and ardent. The principle of the lever has nothing to do with moving the human mind. You must oppose ponderousness to weight and rage to violence. The heaviness of some papers and the fury of others will afford you excellent examples. But above all, never lay yourself open to what is called conviction: you might as well open your waistcoat to receive a knock-down blow. A man shut his eyes to an ugly sight, and I should be glad to know why he may not shut them to an uncomfortable argument. Give all the blows you can and receive none: newspaper controversy is a true battle; the soldiers have no business to argue about reason, they must only do all the mischief possible. In fact, a playful moderation in politics is just as absurd as a remunerative whisper to a mob. I have heard of a lad who nibbed one of his long nails and wrote with it, and as he most probably wrote very badly, I dare say that from this circumstance a bad penman is said to write a fist. Now you must write with your fist, that is, you must always argue by personal attack. Would you attempt to conquer a prize-fighter by chucking him playfully under the chin? Then how would you conquer the *Belchers* and *Game Chickens* of newspaper controversy but by opposing to them the *Gulleys* and the *Gregsons*! Your sentences must be so many metaphorical bruises; if you cannot reach your adversary's head, aim directly at his heart, and in the intervals of the battle amuse yourself by calling him names. If a man could save his country by being vulgar, who would be a gentleman? The greatest reformers, such as LUTHER and CALVIN, have shown a very proper contempt for mere refinement. If LUTHER, in the gaiety of his ardour, calls CALVIN a *fool* and an *ass*, CALVIN, in his consistency of his argument, calls LUTHER a *hog*, *beast*, *wretch*, *madman*, and *devil*. I would recommend to you three exquisite sentences of the Genevese Doctor as a specimen of warrantable energy: he says to LUTHER, after a few convincing arguments, "Do you mind me, you dolt? Do you hear what I say, you madman? Do you listen to that you great beast?"* I will be judged by any body, whether, with the exception of a little want of Christian spirit, these figures of speech are not the exact models of a spirited disputation.

4. OF INVENTION IN NEWS

The art of newspaper politics certainly cannot rank among the polite arts, but nevertheless it requires almost as much fancy as poetry or painting. This is peculiarly apparent in the periodical accounts of battles. A skilful editor shall describe heroes, dispose of armies, and dispense victories and defeats with all the fire and invention of HOMER. If your favourite statesman is in office, it is your business to announce nothing but victories; if he is out, conquest must vanish with him. While you are in opposition, you must lament the total want of foresight in Ministers, their useless expeditions and senseless expenditure, and you must praise the French Emperor: while you are ministerial, you must insist and swear, not forgetting to stake the credit of your paper, that the country is in the best of all exquisite situations, that the expeditions will settle

the balance of the world, that the opposition is an infamous faction, and that NAPOLEON is a Corsican tyrant and usurper. If the enemy gains a decided victory, you will swear that the two armies parted, but certainly with an advantage on our side: if the two armies really part, you have nothing to do but to gain a victory. At the beginning of a campaign, however, you must always gain victories. It is an indisputable rule. If you hear, for instance, that the French and Russians are about to meet, be certain that the French are defeated with great slaughter, and announce the intelligence in capitals worthy of the occasion, as thus, DEFEAT AND SURRENDER OF THE WHOLE OF THE GRAND FRENCH ARMY. I need not tell you to use a smaller type when you are in opposition, that is, provided you are simple enough to say any thing to the credit of Ministers. At such a season, pomp is unsuitable both to a manly grief and to a proper enjoyment of victory. If you should be so bashful as to feel awkward, when the victories you have announced for the Ministry prove to be defeats, you have an excellent answer to all complaints in the reply of that admirable statesman STRATOCLES, who arrived at Athens from a naval defeat, put a chaplet on his head, and made all the citizens feast and sacrifice in honour of the glorious victory; and when the shattered fleet arrived two days after, and the people called upon him to answer for his imposture, cried out, "Why, you will not quarrel with me for having given you two days of jollity?" PLUTARCH calls this impudence; but it is evident, that he knew as little of true policy, as our newspaper politicians know of him.

5THLY AND LASTLY, OF EDITORIAL SENSIBILITY, OR OF BEING HAPPY TO HEAR AND SORRY TO STATE

Great geniuses are always men of great feeling. If you keep all your frowns and your terrors for your enemies and rivals, you must preserve all your smiles and tears for the interesting occurrences of the fashionable world. Home news is the most pathetic thing in the world, and an Editor never appears to such an advantage as when like HOMER's *Andromache*, he smiles and weeps at one instant. Thus, if in one paragraph you exclaim with vivacity, "We are happy to hear that the Duke of QUEENSBURY has recovered from his fit of the gout"—in the next you will probably observe with pathos, "We are sorry to state that serious apprehensions are entertained of the life of the illustrious Officer, who, after having dined very heartily on Thursday last, slipped down upon the ice as he was passing through King's Place." Again, if you very naturally rub your hands in another paragraph, and cry out "We are sincerely happy to hear that the Marchioness of S— was *not* thrown from her horse in the act of spurring the animal," you will have every reason to shake your heads in the next and exclaim "We are sincerely sorry to state that the Right Hon. Lord B. was thrown out of his curriole and terribly bruised. His legs were found to be quite black."

Thus then with talents for disputation, talents for fiction, and talents for weeping and smiling, no Editor need be afraid of being quite poor, provided he does not become an honest man.

LEIGH HUNT

(*The Examiner*, March 6, 1808)

There is always more to be taught of absolute, incontrovertible knowledge, open to its capacity, than any child can learn; there is no need to teach it anything doubtful. Better that it should be ignorant of a thousand truths, than have consecrated in its heart a single lie.—*Ruskin*

* This is quoted from memory, but it is not the smallest exaggeration.

Correspondence

WAR GODS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In the *Times* for Saturday, September 16, the Archbishop announces that "With the full approval of the King by an Order of His Majesty's Privy Council. . . . Sunday, October 1, has been appointed to be observed as a Day of National Prayer." The form to be used is shortly to be issued and, an observance of this kind is no new national departure; but this war-time approach to the God Almighty of the present day lacks the whole-hearted and consistent religious faith of the ancients in B.C. ages. In those days the gods came first, and their dates were considered before movements of their enemies. To give a few instances we read that after the battle of Marathon the Spartans delayed marching into Athens "until the full moon, because this was their religious custom." Also that owing to "celebrating a religious festival at which all (Spartan) citizens had to appear," only 300 could be sent to defend Leonidas at the pass of Thermopylea, where they ultimately perished with their leader, who had "no fear of death."

Also that it was the custom of the Spartans "before beginning a battle to offer sacrifice, and to wait for an omen, or sign from heaven." Compared with such faith—material though it was—of which there were probably countless instances, in the God Almighty of ancient days, our Day of National Prayer observed in comfortable and safeguarded surroundings pales like the vision of a dream.

MAUD SIMON

P.S.—It must, however, be noted that Marlborough's great victories were, if I remember rightly, preceded by Divine Service to his War God, held on the spot, and followed by ruthless campaigns.

CURRENCY AND WHEAT

SIR,—Mr. Kensett still labour under the confusion between currency (intrinsically valueless symbols of wealth). For he imagines that by exchanging notes for gold he succeeded in bridging the "unbridgeable gap" between the two, whereas all that he did was to swap one form of valueless symbol for another.

I never said that the Bank of England had "become the owner of the wealth of the land," nor did I say that "all wealth is now at the back of our currency." Mr. Kensett should not attribute to me, or imply that I made, statements which do not occur in my article.

Mr. Kensett "ventures to think it impossible" to hoard wheat to another's detriment. I carefully pointed out that "hoarding" was merely one form of "withholding from use." Has Mr. Kensett never heard of cornering the market, of embargoes, of refusal to plant crops, and even destroying it for various reasons? All of these actions constituted withholding from use to the detriment of some one or other section of the public.

C. S. FRASER

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INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Cricketers Arms, near Camden Town Tube Station): 7.30, Messrs. F. A. Ridley and Corbett (Peace Pledge Union)—"Is Political Pacifism the Way to Socialism?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, opposite Clapham Common Station): 12.0, Mr. F. A. Ridley—"Christianity and War."

COUNTRY

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