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The aim of life is life itself.—GOETHE.

A Business Suggestion.

"FATHER" JAMES ADDERLEY, the well-known High Churchman and Christian Socialist, is entitled to our thanks. He did not mean to earn them, and will probably be annoyed to hear that he has done so; but we tender them all the same. The reverend gentleman has been speaking his mind freely in the *Daily News* on what he calls "The Civic Solution." He explains that he "could not sign the secular manifesto"—presumably the one issued by the Secular Education League; neither is he satisfied with Dr. Clifford's proposal to treat the Bible as "literature." He thinks the remedy lies in "an improved Cowper-Templeism." The syllabus of religious education in elementary State schools should be "taken out of the hands of municipal bigwigs and given to a committee of responsible religious leaders who will command respect." And this clerically concocted syllabus should be accepted by the local authorities as a State Religion for the schools; the most beautiful and satisfactory kind of State Religion—a State Religion designed by the Churches and humbly accepted and vigorously operated by the State.

This is a fine piece of clerical modesty, to begin with; but we shall see that the reverend gentleman improves upon it as he goes along. He lets the cat of his policy out of the bag of his trade with a vengeance before he finishes.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the last words quoted from "Father" Adderley's letter. There are "responsible religious leaders," but their responsibility is denominational; and they do "command respect," but only inside their own Churches. It is easy enough to say that these religious leaders should "be instructed to draw up a form of 'simple Bible teaching' which shall be acceptable to all parties," but how are they to do it? "Father" Adderley says he "cannot believe that this is impossible." We venture to say that it is impossible. Dr. Bourne (Catholic), Dr. Davidson (Anglican), and Dr. Clifford (Nonconformist) hold three very different views of the Bible. Each might call it "inspired," but they would split into three parties the moment they had to say *how* it is inspired. Moreover, they have very different doctrinal beliefs, and those beliefs would, consciously or unconsciously, govern their selection of Bible passages for reading. Which ever way it is regarded, an agreement between the leaders of rival Churches is absolutely hopeless. The only thing they ever really agree about is the robbery and oppression of unbelievers.

You can easily appoint a committee of religious leaders to draw up a form of Simple Bible Teaching that "shall be acceptable to all parties." That is merely a form of words, a pious hope, a cheerful opinion. How are you going to make the result acceptable to all parties? In other words, how are you going to induce all parties to accept it? We are perfectly satisfied that "Father" Adderley is indulging in an optimistic dream. The religious leaders of rival Churches never did agree, and never will agree

—except in hatred of their common enemy. On that point, indeed, their unanimity is wonderful. In everything else they maintain the historic harmony of the household of faith.

We beg our readers to observe that it does not cross "Father" Adderley's mind that any persons but his fellow Christians have any rights in the nation's schools. He takes it for granted that if Christians agree on what should be done, the matter is satisfactorily settled. All that non-Christians have to do is to acquiesce. The fact that they also are citizens, that they also pay rates and taxes, that they also contribute to the cost of public education, that they also send their own children to the State schools,—counts for nothing with this reverend gentleman. He belongs to the party of the upper dogs, and the under dogs may think themselves very lucky if they are not *bitten*. To be plundered and insulted is their natural portion. England is a free country—for Christians. Others only live in it on sufferance. This is "Father" Adderley's view. We may easily guess, therefore, what Christian Socialism would mean in England, with this reverend gentleman and his colleagues ruling the roost.

"Father" Adderley is good enough—that is, indiscreet enough—to state how, in his opinion, the committee of religious leaders should go to work in drawing up their plan of Simple Bible Teaching. Listen to this:—

"My instructions to the religious leaders would be to teach primarily the words of our Lord and selections from the prophets and Psalms. I would avoid teaching Old Testament stories, because explanations would be ruled out, without which they do positive harm, and breed atheists."

But why should Old Testament stories, without explanations, breed atheists? Is it not because as they stand, without being explained away, they are so often absurd and disgusting? "Father" Adderley is ashamed of them in their natural nakedness; and, if they cannot be dressed up to look more respectable, he would have them hidden away. Perhaps it may dawn upon him, in some cool moment of candid reflection, that the strong objection he himself has to certain Old Testament stories is entertained by other persons quite as honest as he is to a good deal more of the contents of the Bible. Amongst "the words of our Lord," for instance, are some horrible references to hell-fire and everlasting torment, which are calculated to darken and pervert the minds of those who can be induced to read them with approval.

We have now to quote the most unguarded sentence in "Father" Adderley's letter. It is startling in its frankness. One can hardly conceive a more injudicious confession:—

"Certainly as a parish priest of 21 years' standing I should be most grateful for my Sunday-school children to have these things drilled into their heads, so that I could have some foundation to go upon."

What could be plainer? The reverend gentleman wants the elementary schools to prepare children for his Sunday-school, where he finally prepares them for his church. Precisely. The clergy are after business in fighting for religious education in the schools. Their object is to breed customers for their various establishments. Simply this, and nothing more.

G. W. FOOTE.

What is the Use of Immortality?

EVER since the general election, Cabinet ministers have spent a portion of their time addressing chapel gatherings. Mr. Runciman, Mr. Birrell, Mr. Lloyd George, and others have varied their parliamentary labors with talks on religion in Nonconformist places of worship. The services of Cabinet ministers in the capacity of preachers may be among the many "demands" on the government made by Nonconformists; certainly a Cabinet minister in the pulpit is too great a draw in these days for the opportunity to be missed. And the typical religious mind being such a curious phenomenon, one would not be surprised to find that in some dim way the congregations feel their beliefs strengthened by finding them supported by highly placed members of parliament. Without it ever assuming the form of a distinct proposition, it may easily be felt that Mr. Lloyd George's familiarity with the finances of the country, Mr. Runciman's control of the education office, and Mr. Birrell's experience as secretary for Ireland, enables them to speak with an authoritative voice on the existence of God, the divinity of Jesus, or on the meaning of a future life.

Quite recently Mr. Birrell favored a Baptist audience with an address on immortality, and in the course of his speech raised a question that is deserving of a little notice. I gather from that address that Mr. Birrell's convictions as to the reality of a personal immortality are not of the strongest, nor apparently does he regard it, if true, as an unmixed blessing. At least, that is what one gathers from the following expression:—

"What do we want immortality for? Not surely to go on living the kind of life we are living here; not merely to prolong the somewhat tiresome entity we have here learnt to call 'myself.' Would it not be a relief to get finally quit of oneself, and be able to say, 'Thank God I shall never see that fellow again?' The immortality we pine for is not a continuance of doubt and confusion. It is the triumph of the spirit over the body, and complete unity of purpose and existence with the eternal."

The first part of Mr. Birrell's statement does raise a genuine problem. And, having raised a difficulty, Mr. Birrell buries it in a cloud of words. This is, of course, theologically correct, but hardly illuminating. What, for instance, is meant by the "triumph of the spirit over the body," or by "complete unity of purpose and existence with the eternal?" Unity of existence with the eternal would be achieved on the most materialistic of theories. But there is the word "purpose," and one can hardly predicate "purpose" without a continuance of personality. And the survival of personality does not mean the triumph of the spirit over the body, but the perpetuation of the body and of anything and everything else that goes to make up what we mean by "personality." For, after all, each person is to his fellows, so far as we know that person, a body. Anything else is a pure assumption. So that Mr. Birrell's meaning is by no means clear—it is not even clear that he understands himself what he means. But as he was speaking in a chapel, probably neither of these things were necessary.

Besides, one of the attractions of immortality is, so runs the argument, that we shall meet in the next world those to whom we have said good-bye in this sphere of existence. This is said to be great comfort religion offers to all in the face of death. But how is this going to happen unless the "tiresome entity" of each one is prolonged? As pure spirit, and released from all the conditioning limitations of physical organism and environment, we should not be able to distinguish between Shakespeare from Bill Sykes. I doubt if we should know a "pure spirit" even if we met one. And as to recognising any of our relations, or they us, once we have shed for good all those distinguishing marks that make up each one's personality, why, the thing seems a sheer impossibility.

One may readily grant that the prospect of a life beyond the grave, to those who think the matter out, does not offer unalloyed attractions. I remember being asked at the conclusion of a lecture by a troublesome member of the audience, whether it meant that when he was dead he was done with? I replied that I hoped so; and my reply had at least the merit of honesty. We all know people whose absence we prefer to their presence, and the prospect of running up against them throughout eternity is really not a pleasant prospect. An attempt to meet this difficulty is made by the theory that in heaven we shall meet only with our affinities and spend the time discussing subjects of mutual interest. Maybe; but if this transpires, the condition of things there must be entirely different to what they are here, and this being so it may also chance that what interests us here may quite fail to interest us there. Besides, it isn't the person who attracts us that causes the inconvenience, it is the person whom we attract that is the trouble. Only conceive Shakespeare being chased round heaven by every petty rhymster and third-rate actor who was anxious to make his acquaintance, and probably submit the spiritual MSS. of spectral plays and poems for his judgment! How he would long for annihilation, or for the old days on earth!

When Mr. Birrell asks, "What do we want immortality for?" and replies "Not surely to go on living the kind of life we are living here," he shows himself to be in a state of almost hopeless confusion. The kind of life we are living here is, taking people in the mass, exactly the kind of life people want to go on living. And if they could keep on living here, there is not one in a million that would exchange it for the New Jerusalem. The most religious prepare for their flight heavenward in a "If-I-must-I-must-but-I-would-rather-stay-where-I-am" kind of a spirit. Most people find this world sufficiently full of attractive and pleasant things to desire to live on if they could, and there is always the prospect of improvement. From the mere point of view of attractiveness this life can well hold its own against any other. To be one of the "angelic host" is only attractive in a hymn. Calm reflection shows, as someone has pointed out, that in heaven an angel is nobody in particular, all possibility of distinction and preference is there at an end. Besides, no one really thinks of the next life as being really different to this one. What they conceive is an existence in which the unpleasantness of the present is removed, leaving only the desirable behind. And this is merely carrying the conception of improvement beyond the grave.

Moreover, unless we do go on living in the next world substantially the same kind of life that we are living now, existence would be simply intolerable. For our whole nature has been fashioned for the kind of life we are living here, and can fit no other. Socially, our feelings have been developed by, and have direct reference to a gregarious human existence. Our likes and dislikes, our hatreds and affections, our sense of the beautiful, are all expressions of a particular organism living in a particular environment. Place the human organism in a new environment, remove or substantially change the nature of the organism, and all becomes chaos. Man, therefore, not only desires to go on living the same kind of life he is living, but it is the only kind of life it is possible for him to live. Thus, unless the immortality we are destined to is a practical continuation of this life, with death representing a transient slumber, we shall all be as much out of place as a fish on dry land. And if it is a mere continuation, if life remains substantially unaltered, then may we put Mr. Birrell's "What do we want immortality for?" from a new point of view. What is the use of it? Why could we not continue living here without this troublesome break we call death? No one really wants the next world, no one desires immortality; the utmost that is desired is continued existence; and that has reference to life here, not elsewhere.

Of course it may be said that man's nature points to a larger sphere of existence than this life offers; but this statement also, when analysed, is sheer nonsense. The only larger life that is indicated by individual capacity is the social life of which it forms a part, and to which it properly belongs. Man's feelings have mostly a dual aspect—one to himself as an individual, the other to the species to which he belongs. So long as we study him in his individual aspect only, we are naturally left with an unexplained residuum. Take him in relation to the species, and we have a full explanation of the larger capacity upon which so much is built. True, there remains unsatisfied desires and aspirations. But why should we assume that all our desires and aspirations must be gratified, or declare that the scheme of things is awry? And what, after all, are these larger aspirations but an ideal construction of a more perfect human society based upon a perception of the shortcomings of society as it exists at present? Surely it is the strangest of all philosophies which promises a satisfaction for our social aspirations under a new set of conditions where such aspirations are destitute of meaning or value.

The fundamental mistake made by all believers in immortality is their assuming that it adds to the value of life. So far as the belief in immortality affects the value of life at all, it detracts from, instead of adding to it. Weismann has shown how the evolution of higher forms of life became dependent upon the fact of death. Without it life would have become extinct before any very high stage had been reached. What is true of the physical structure of the organism is equally true of our interests and our feelings. The pursuit of knowledge, the zest for work, even the affection for family and friends, would lose their interest and their force with an existence to which no limit could be placed. All the better aspects of life would atrophy under such conditions; life itself would become too great a burden for anyone to bear. Our idea of the value of life is built up from life here, with all its limitations and drawbacks. Our imagination may continue this life beyond the grave, while divesting it of all those conditions that make life as we know it possible. A more sober and a more restrained outlook recognises the necessary limitations of existence, while also seeing, as an expression of those limitations, all that makes life really worth the living.

C. COHEN.

Protestantism and Scepticism.

ARCHDEACON PALEY, in his famous work, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*, pertinently asks, "In what way can a revelation be made but by miracles?" and correctly answers, "In none which we are able to conceive." Then in the true spirit of philosophy he adds: "Consequently, in whatever degree it is probable, or not very improbable, that a revelation should be communicated to mankind at all, in the same degree is it probable, or not very improbable, that miracles should be wrought." We are informed that Paley's whole argument is now obsolete, and that his great work possesses only a historical value. That is doubtless true; but why is it so? Paley's defence of Christianity is out of date simply because the Christianity believed in at the close of the eighteenth century is no longer in popular favor. Chameleon-like, Christianity has always endeavored to adapt itself to the requirements of time and place; and this has been specially true of it in its Protestant guise. A hundred years ago, the theological chasm between Protestantism and Catholicism was much smaller than it is to-day. From the Catholic point of view Paley's *Evidences* is almost as timely now as it was when it first appeared and brought its author so many substantial tokens of ecclesiastical appreciation; and there is still an insignificant remnant of Protestant theology that continues heroically loyal to the New Testament and the great Fathers. Speaking gener-

ally, however, Protestantism is so essentially time-serving that the apologetic methods of fifty years ago are now utterly valueless. When Matthew Arnold declared, in his own oracular style, that the proof from miracles was no longer rationally available, the theologians laughed him to scorn; but to-day the theologians themselves, Anglican as well as Nonconformist, make precisely the same declaration. The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are trotted out no more as unassailable proofs of the Deity of Jesus Christ, while some go the length of frankly admitting that Jesus and Christ are two entirely different personalities. The only Church whose theology is comparatively stationary is the Catholic.

What is the explanation of this theological contrast between Protestantism and Catholicism? It is to be found alone in the fact that the latter possesses a centre and bond of unity and the former does not. The Protestant Reformation unconsciously inaugurated a process of theological and ecclesiastical disintegration, a process which was materially aided and accelerated by the general revival of learning, by which it was preceded and accompanied, and with which it is at last becoming more and more identified. It is probable that very few, if any, Protestant divines would be prepared to endorse such a statement; but it is beyond doubt that Protestant history bears unequivocal witness to its truth. The rapid decay of supernatural belief in non-Catholic communities is one of the most significant signs of the times. Devoid of a central seat of authority to which obedience is compulsory, Protestantism is too weak, not only to arrest the growth and development of scientific enlightenment in the world at large, but even to protect itself against the transforming influence of the new spirit. The consequence is that the Christianity which it now professes is but the merest shadow of its former self. In the words of the Catholic Bishop of Salford, as reported in the *Herald*:—

"It was a pathetic and a sad sight to look round the literary, scientific, and intellectual world of the present, to read its writings, its discussions, and its arguments on this great fundamental question of faith [the resurrection of Christ], religion, and morality, and to see how complete was the disintegration of the whole system of Christian teaching."

To a Bishop the pathos and sadness of such a sight must be terribly depressing and cheek-blanching. Let us listen to Dr. Casartelli's explanation of so disturbing and distressing a fact:—

"Three centuries or more ago there was a leaven introduced into the religious world of a great part of Europe, known as the principle of private judgment, the principle that every man could in matters of faith and religion judge for himself of what was right and true, and that he should apply this private judgment to the texts of Holy Scripture, which he was to interpret for himself according to his own light, and according to what was supposed to be the personal and individual guidance of the Holy Ghost; that he was not to rely upon any special teaching of Pope, Episcopacy, or Church, or any definitions of dogma laid down by any authority. This appeared in the beginning to be a small principle—so it was, it was a little leaven, and it was a long time before it was seen what effects it was going to produce. It had worked now for three centuries throughout a great portion of the world, especially of Northern Europe, and had resulted in the complete disintegration of the whole system of Christian doctrine and Christian ethics. They were returning now to a position very little different from the highly developed intellectual position of the great Pagan religions of before the coming of our Lord."

That is a strictly accurate description of the leaven of Protestantism. The principle of private judgment is an axe laid unto the root of the huge tree of supernaturalism. Luther was totally blind when he advocated such a principle. All theologies must rest on some recognised central authority, or vanish. Divines are all professionals, working to order, and along carefully defined lines. Their one business is to guard and defend "the deposit" committed to their charge, neither adding to nor subtracting from it. No dogma is of private interpretation. As a

well-known ecclesiastic once said, theologians are Divinely appointed trustees of the "pattern" or "form of sound doctrine" originally received by a direct revelation from heaven. This "pattern" or "form" is deposited in the Church, and only the Church has a right to deal with it, to tell just exactly what it is, or to impart it to those wishing to possess it. This delegated duty the Catholic Church has for fifteen hundred years discharged through its official head, the Pope, whose claim is that he is the infallible mouthpiece of the Lord, and the custodian of the deposit. And as long as the people are willing to bow the knee of their reason to the Pope, the Catholic Church is absolutely safe.

Now, the keynote of Protestantism is intellectual freedom, though it has rarely in practice sung true to it. Nevertheless, intellectual freedom has always been the fundamental tone of the Protestant chord, the foundation fact or idea of the Protestant creed, and it is to this fact that we must attribute the permeation of the Protestant sects by modern scientific truths and by the results of literary criticism. Nominally, Luther erected his system of divinity on the impregnable rock of Holy Writ; but when the great reformer, in the name of his evangelical faith, called the epistle of James a bundle of straw, he made it possible for another to denounce and reject the epistle to the Romans as contrary to enlightened reason. Luther sat in judgment on his own seat of authority, and thereby entitled all others to do the same, if so directed by their individual prejudices or convictions. Well, the leaven of private judgment which the reformers dropped into the human meal of Northern Europe has been steadily working therein ever since, until by to-day it has "broken up the work that Christ came to do." As Dr. Casartelli is reported to have said in his Easter sermon,—

"It has eliminated the supernatural, it has eliminated the idea of the miraculous, and learned doctors and professors writing nowadays of Holy Scripture, of the life of Christ, of the development of the Christian Church, are almost unanimous in doing away with all that they might strictly call supernatural, and of all that was miraculous."

Allowing for some exaggeration in the right-reverend gentleman's animadversion, it must still be admitted that he is essentially in the right. Looking round upon the civilised and cultured world, we cannot resist the conclusion that in the Protestant camp "no two minds think alike, no two minds are agreed even on first principles." The whole drift is in the direction of complete and open scepticism, of intellectually satisfying and heart-nourishing Secularism.

To orthodox believers in all communions this growing tendency is the cause of inexpressible chagrin and alarm. Writing to the Duke of Argyll a few months before his death, Gladstone said: "It is very difficult to keep one's temper in dealing with Matthew Arnold when he touches on religious matters. His patronage of a Christianity fashioned by himself is to me more offensive and trying than rank unbelief." The great statesman, though a member of a Protestant Church, was in reality a genuine Catholic. He did not believe in the Protestant principle of private judgment, nor could he contain his anger against Arnold for honestly acting upon it. Gladstone knew, as the Church of Rome well knows, that once people begin to think for themselves, ninety-nine out of every hundred will avow themselves unbelievers in churches and creeds. There are multitudes of nominal believers who dare not use their private judgment, who deliberately refuse to listen to the voice of reason, in the certain conviction that the result would be the loss of their faith. They instinctively feel that reason and faith are mutual enemies, and that if they are to retain the latter they must suppress the former.

In the long run, however, we are confident that reason shall win the day. Already, in Russia, in Italy, and even in Spain, the Church is distinctly losing ground. Even in the Eternal City itself belief in and respect for it are surely dying out, and

a Freethought Congress can be held in peace and comfort. The clergy of all denominations aver that Atheism is largely a thing of the past, and that all heart the mass of the people are profoundly religious. But if unbelief is passing away, why are the churches and chapels emptying? Why are the very clergy, who make that assertion, bemoaning the absence of the crowds from their solemn assemblies? If science is becoming friendly to theology, why do the bulk of scientific people hold aloof from all theological movements? We believe that the Bishop of Salford is right in his estimate of the results of the Protestant Reformation, and we are persuaded further that his own Church is already being undermined by the same relentless foe of ignorance and superstition.

J. T. LLOYD.

Trained Dialecticians.

JOHN STUART MILL is reported to have said that a man need not have had a university education in order to tell the truth. It would seem, however, that a man requires a special training in order to tell lies properly, for in blunt English this is the meaning of a large part of modern apologetic. The *Methodist Times* recently discussed the ministerial value of a university degree, and expressed the opinion that some such badge would soon be indispensable to anyone seeking to enter the Church. Such training may, it is true, give professional advocates, who know or feel that all their efforts to shore up a tottering edifice are of as much avail as the ploughing of the air, greater facility in obscuring issues, or in avoiding, as far as possible, raising any issues at all; but shortsighted indeed must be the man who fails to see that this patchwork cannot much longer hold together. If all the M.A.'s and D.D.'s and LL.D.'s from all the universities in Great Britain, and from the five hundred degree-conferring institutions in the United States, assert that Jesus Christ turned water into wine and that he rose from the dead, the humblest student on earth is entitled to ask for the evidence. If they declare that the story of the Fall is not essential and that, since all revelation is progressive, it is idle to point to the atrocities committed by order of Jehovah, he is again entitled to reply, "Every Sunday you read from the book and ostensibly hold it out as the Word of God. Are you preaching from what is even partly false?" And when the M.A.'s speak of the "spiritual factors that make up the higher self," of "national righteousness," "the deepening of the individual consciousness," "the obligations of brotherhood," and a thousand and one other things, that may, as far as they have any definite meaning, be worthy of any man's highest effort, the humble student may still reply, "All this, it seems to me, can never atone for the dissemination of a lie." These vague phrases are, apparently, like honey in the mouths of the men of God; but they have really no more to do with the question of religion or Biblical inspiration than with Plato's *Republic* or *Apologia*. Indeed, had the men who translated our Bible rendered these two works into English, giving the translation the same touch of archaic diction, the same attractiveness of phrase, and then put them into the hands of children as divinely inspired books, *Peiraeus* would have been the blessed word instead of *Mesopotamia*, and paid advocates would be heard telling their flock, "Oh, if you have a soft spot in your heart at all the story of Socrates will find it out," and when criticism began its deadly work the same energy would have been exerted to save the remnants as is now exerted in the case of the Gospels—and it would have been equally successful.

To compare these M.A.'s and D.D.'s with the Paines and Hetheringtons and Carliles of popular Freethought is like comparing a Gladstone with an Abraham Lincoln. How many Oxonian alumni put together, and all streaming with the delicate aroma

of Hellenism and every other kind of "culchaw," would make one man like the railsplitter who said, when well advanced into manhood, "I have a notion I'd like to read a book on English grammar if I could get one"? And after all it's the popular advocate, the man of clear eyes and good plain Saxon, that the orthodox apologists hate and dread. Before him they "tremble like guilty things surprised." They will say, as the Rev. David Smith, D.D., said to a correspondent recently in the *British Weekly*, "such arguments are shallow enough to the trained scholar," and they will keep on saying it to the end. The apologist does not fear the honest doubter in whom "there lives more faith" than "in half the creeds"; he doesn't fear the reverent Agnostic. He has no need to: he knows that these men won't leave their books and pictures and their gilded evenings in Westendia to help to weaken a useful adjunct of privilege. He finds it much pleasanter to deal with one who talks about the Ultimate Reality, the Ontological Problem—in capital letters, of course—and other metaphysical abstractions, than to argue the point with the man who would tell Rev. Silvester Horne, M.A., and the others who declared that God destroyed Messina, and that their faith was strong enough to stand all such tests, that, in that case, they were all committing rank blasphemy in sending assistance to the victims.

Even the Unitarians occasionally show an animosity to the popular advocate of Freethought that is only one degree less bitter than that of the orthodox Christian. The Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A., LL.D., in his published sermon, *The Triumph of Faith*, speaks of the criticism that "began to play with piercing heat and vigor on the doctrinal schemes of English religion, and on the stories of the Old and the New Testament." This is not a very serious matter to the Unitarian peace of mind; but, dreadful to relate, "the Fatherhood of God, the immortality of men, the personal bond which knits together men and the Father, were either sadly doubted or denied with cruel joy." Cruel joy—that's the head and front of the offending. Don't show anything like enthusiasm in attacking what you believe to be false, and you won't incur the hostility of anyone. You may be convinced that belief in Providence and immortality is working incalculable harm in the minds of the masses, but don't shout your convictions "from the housetops." The Unitarian may denounce as most pernicious the teaching of the Calvinist—for which there is ample Scriptural support—that the only certain title possessed by many children the moment they enter the portals of life is the title to eternal damnation. That, of course, would only be righteous indignation.

It may be appropriate here to say a word about those superior persons who, though styling themselves opponents of supernaturalism, claim to be above all parties and movements working for the overthrow of superstition. They frequently say to us: "Oh, your societies and lecturers have not brought about the present spread of Freethought; general education and progress have done that." Probably there are few Freethinkers that have not heard some such statement from the superior man. Yet we insignificant workers may surely ask, Pray what constitutes general education and progress, and what is left of them after all the advocates and movements, to which you so strongly object, have been eliminated from any given period? The truth is, the popular advocates have made the academic advocates, and so far as Christianity, or what now passes for it, is more bearable to-day than it was a hundred, or fifty, or ten years ago, the result is due to the Freethought leaven that has been forced into it.

A. D. McLAREN.

I prefer Miranda to Caliban, but have not the slightest idea that either of them ever existed. So I prefer Jupiter to Jehovah, although perfectly satisfied that both are myths. —Ingersoll.

Acid Drops.

"Shakespeare's Birthday" was celebrated on April 23 at Southwark Cathedral. Theatrical stars were much in evidence, and Forbes Robertson delivered an address. Alfred Austin, poet laureate, also read a poem of his own concoction, which was the poorest stuff ever heard on such a subject. The last of seven stanzas was fearfully and wonderfully made:—

"Last to loved life removed, from world and stage,
Homeward he turned where rustic belfries chime,
Bequeathing his rich self, not of an age,
But for all space and time."

The awful cacophony of that first line! Let any elocutionist try to read the first five words, and see if he doesn't nearly break his jaws. And what is there peculiar about "rustic" belfries? Does our pious poet laureate imagine that Shakespeare settled down at Stratford-on-Avon for the sake of its church tower? Then there is that horrible plagiarism from Ben Jonson, who said that Shakespeare was "Not of an age, but for all time." Alfred Austin borrows that fine tribute, and adds "all space" on his own account—which is downright silliness. "All time" really means all time on this globe, but "all space" means the whole universe—as though Shakespeare's genius were famous in all the fifty million stars already photographed!

At the Shakespeare Commemoration Service in Southwark Cathedral on the 23rd inst., much was made of the fact that most of the poet's London life had been spent in that parish; and in a hymn specially composed for the occasion, the Rev. Canon Rawnsley said:—

"For here our Shakespeare moved,
This house of prayer he loved,
Here oft-time heard the sound
Of music from the ground
O'er Gower's grave uprising."

We should like to know what evidence Canon Rawnsley can offer that Shakespeare loved the parish Church of Southwark, or was in the habit of attending any other place of worship as a devout worshiper. The Church claims him, as she claims every other great man long dead; but on what ground does she do so? That great Shakespearean scholar, Professor Raleigh, says that "of the incidents of his life in London nothing is known." Yet the Church pretends to know much.

Christians are fond of saying that Freethinkers want to destroy the Bible. But they don't; they simply want Christians to read it. So little is the Bible read by orthodox people that they don't know what it contains; on the other hand, they believe all sorts of things to be in it which are not there. The Poplar Borough Council's Lady Health Visitor, reporting on a consultation with mothers respecting infants, says: "I was told a short time since that I did not know my Bible very well, or I should have known that, if a baby did not have thrush when it was born, it would when it died!" What a beautiful result of the "Simple Bible Teaching" which Dr. Clifford is dying to keep in our elementary schools!

Dr. Clifford's reply to Mr. G. K. Chesterton in the *Daily News* shows his case to be utterly hopeless. He either cannot or will not see any point at issue in the discussion. He simply repeats that the Bible can be used in the schools as literature, without paying the slightest heed to Mr. Chesterton's objections to the statement. He also assumes (once more) that while it would be very wrong to use the Bible in the schools from Dr. Davidson's or Dr. Bourne's point of view, it is quite right to use the Bible in the schools from Dr. Clifford's point of view—although they object to his policy just as strongly as he objects to theirs. Incidentally, however, the Commander-in-Chief of the forces of the Nonconformist Conscience discloses what he means by using the Bible as "literature." "Civilisation," he says, "has moral and Christian elements and factors within it," and therefore it is "a duty to prepare the young citizen for appreciating those elements and factors by the use of the Bible." Well, if this does not mean, in practice, the teaching of Christianity—what on earth does it mean?

"Carefully chosen portions of the Scriptures" should be used in the schools; but Dr. Clifford does not say who is to do the careful choosing. He has himself been asked to do a bit of careful choosing, and let people see the result. But he always winks the other eye. Some years ago we asked him to particularise. And what did he do? He sent us the old London School Board syllabus of religious instruction!

Rev. J. B. Figgis's letter appeared right under Dr. Clifford's, and the proximity seemed almost malicious. Mr. Figgis, speaking as a Nonconformist minister, and a supporter of "Simple Bible Teaching," denies that it means "mere ethical teaching." That is not what Nonconformists want. They want to see the children taught "the facts of the life and death and resurrection of Christ, and of other Bible narratives." This is naked Evangelicism. And the fact is that Nonconformists, who passionately resent the State's setting up a religion for adults, are trying to establish Evangelicism as the State religion in elementary schools. Is it possible for mental confusion and moral dishonesty to go further?

The Baptist Missionary Society is contemplating a translation of the Bible for the natives of the Congo. When it appears it may be read by the few natives whom Christian thieves and murderers have left alive in that part of Africa.

The serious decline in membership in the Wesleyan Methodist Church continues. There has been another decrease of 1,262 full members during the past year; the members on trial are 596 fewer than last year, and the members in junior classes 916 fewer. Yet collections go on merrily to pay for the conversion of the "heathen" in foreign lands.

The *Methodist Recorder* says that the official report of this shrinkage presents few mitigating features, but some consolation is derived from the consideration that London rather more than holds its own. This may be so, but it is easy to over-estimate the value of this. In London, for example, large sums of money are spent on elaborate missionary efforts, and the most popular preachers are engaged in the work. The work also tends to be less doctrinal in character and more of the pseudo-social and entertaining varieties. And all this means that the leakage is stopped by laying little emphasis upon what it should be the chief work of a Christian church to emphasise. Various reasons are being offered for this continuous decline, but the real one is, as usual, ignored. The whole temper of the age, the trend of modern thought, is dead against any form of doctrinal Christianity. Christianity can only live on in name, by unobtrusively dropping or slurring over all that is essentially and distinctively Christian. If the Methodist Church is to retain its strength, it will have to accomplish the trivial task of putting back the clock of progress for a couple of centuries. That is all.

The Baptist Church is another organisation that has to tell the same tale of declining membership. Last year, in spite of an expenditure of over two hundred thousand pounds on new buildings and improvements, the Church members showed a decline of 5,869, while there were 8,816 Sunday-school scholars less than in the previous year.

Most of the Nonconformist religious weeklies point out that the evil influence in present Turkish affairs is identical with the religious portion of the people. They appear the readier to proclaim this because the religion of Turkey is not Christianity. They are not frank enough to point out that the regenerative influences are mainly freethinking, for fear, presumably, that their readers might draw awkward conclusions. Dr. Clifford also joins in the chorus, and writes of the bad effect of "clericalism" in Turkey with an obvious eye on clericalism—that is the form of clericalism with which he disagrees—at home. He also writes of the "discipline and training, high ideals and courage and unselfish devotion" of the young Turks, and refers to their revolution as one of "the greatest marvels of the last hundred years." This, in view of the opinions of the reform party, is worth noting.

Apart from the interesting fact that these people, with their high ideals and their unselfish devotion to great issues, are neither Christian nor likely to become so, there is one question we venture to put to Dr. Clifford—not, however, with much hope of getting a straight answer. How does it happen that in every country, no matter what the particular creed may be, retrogressive forces are always allied with the extremely religious portion of the people? Religion and despotism, religion and the throne, religion and privilege, religion and vested interests, hang together in every country under the sun. This is a phenomenon so universal that it is not to be swept aside by the cheap and easy explanation that this is not true religion, but its caricature. This only covers another form of intolerance with a thin disguise of broadmindedness. And, after all, the anti-reform party in Turkey is doing exactly what the Nonconformists in this country claim to do. They are taking their stand on the Koran, exactly as certain Christians profess to take their

stand on the Bible. The truth lies much deeper than is indicated by an explanation which is really a cloak for a sectarian attack. The bottom fact is that religion, by its very nature, appeals to and depends upon a type of mind that is hostile to progress. Every religion belongs to the past, lives upon the past, appeals to the past, and fights to perpetuate the conditions that give it strength. The result is that all the sinister interests in a country look with confidence to religion for support against anything in the shape of reform. In a country like Turkey, or in countries where a religion like that of Roman Catholicism holds an obvious supremacy, the position is quite plain. In our own country, where the forms of religion are more diversified, the position is not quite so clear, but in its essentials it remains unaltered. The Roman Catholic priest is only wielding a power that all other religious leaders would wield if they could. Political circumstances in this country also act as a check upon religious bodies, and force upon them a certain deference to public opinion they would not otherwise manifest. But these circumstances should not blind us to the fact that religion, uncurbed by a strong and vigilant secular power, is one of the greatest disasters that can overtake the modern State.

When anyone (the *Manchester Guardian* says) enters the service of the Castle Line, founded by the late Sir Donald Currie, he is told, after he has signed his contract, that the Company has only one book of instructions, of which a copy is presented to him. It is a Bible. Well now, this is an excellent witness to Sir Donald's piety, but there is something odd about it for all that. No doubt the Bible is a good book for sky-pilots. It teaches the art of celestial navigation—for what it is worth. But who ever heard of its helping a sailor to navigate the seven seas? Fancy the captain of a Castle Liner sitting down in an emergency to find out what the Company's "book of instructions" had to say about it. He'd lose the ship before he found the way out of the difficulty. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the Company make sure of every employee's earthly efficiency before they present him with their heavenly "book of instructions."

We daresay the Newark magistrates are very good Christians, but they appear to have much to learn in common sense and common humanity. Having a wicked criminal before them in the shape of a schoolboy charged with stealing a shilling, which he divided with two "pals," they tried the case in private, under the new Children's Act, but as the case is pretty fully reported in the local *Herald* the loss of publicity is not very great. We see that the Bench ordered the boy to receive three strokes with a birch. This punishment, of course, had to be administered by the police on the boy's bare back. We suppose this is the Christian way of dealing with a small first offender, but it seems to us both foolish and inhuman. Why brand a child in that fashion? Was there no man with a sound head and heart on the bench, who could talk to the shivering culprit in a kind and wise fatherly way? What a satire on Christianity it is that after so many hundreds of years, Christians should still believe in the moral efficacy of beating children!

Dr. Horton once more makes an exhibition of his ignorance and bigotry. "The Voltaires, the Diderots, the Buckles, the Encyclopedists, and the Materialists," he exclaims, "what does man care for them?" "If they are remembered at all, they are remembered with a kind of contempt and depreciation." Dr. Horton ought to be ashamed of himself. Take Voltaire, and over against "the contempt and depreciation" of this parson, place the enthusiastic eulogies of Lord Holland, Lord Brougham, Victor Hugo, Ruskin, Lord Morley, and even of Macaulay and Carlyle. Morley's description of him is splendid: "Voltaire was the very eye of modern illumination." Who cares for the Hampstead oracle after that?

The Right Rev. J. J. Grimes, Roman Catholic Bishop of Christchurch, New Zealand, has an article on "Bad Books and Newspapers" in the *Catholic Times*. Amongst the publications that the reverend gentleman evidently wants to see suppressed are—"Newspapers and pamphlets whose anti-Christian and sickly pages either feed the cold pride of the intellect, inculcate a wretchedly empty sentimentality, and openly or secretly unfold the most wicked, irreligious principles." This is the malignant, designing way in which Bishop Grimes seeks to raise vulgar prejudice against writers who oppose his faith. Hence was right: "He who fights with priests must expect to have his good name blackened."

The late General Kuropatkin, whose book on the war was suppressed in Russia, but has just been published in this

country in an English translation, frankly admitted that "the principal thing that gave success to the Japanese was their high moral tone." Holy Russia was beaten in morals, as well as in everything else, by Heathen Japan. This ought to be published in every appeal made for Christian missionary work in Eastern Asia.

Conservatives in the neighborhood of Aldershot are circulating "A Prayer for Our Country, 1909," in which the Lord's attention is drawn to "the feeble position of our Navy, and the unsatisfactory standpoint of our Army." The *Daily News* calls this "blasphemous drivel." So it is. But the same may be said of most prayers.

It is astonishing how anxious the clergy are about the morals of "young people"—although they insist on the young people reading a book which contains some of the most gratuitously filthy passages that were ever printed. When the Free Church Council of Camberwell urged on the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the Free Library reading rooms, it was the "young people" that they were so anxious to protect against our "poison." In the same way, the clergy at Cheltenham (with a Colonel to help them) protest against Miss Maud Allen's appearance in their town in the interest of the "young people." We are glad to see these men of God—Anglican, Presbyterian, and Congregational—rapped over the knuckles in the local press. One correspondent says that the clergy are always advertising, and exciting curiosity about, performances they don't approve. Another says that they don't protest against comic operas. "I saw plenty of clergymen," he says, "at the 'Merry Widow.'" "This," he continues, "is the side of a clergyman's character I cannot understand. He will revel in choice extracts from Ovid and Horace, stand up in church and read a lesson from the Old Testament that makes a man sorry his wife and daughters are there to listen to it, yet he will lift up his voice against a piece of pure classic dancing."

Miss C. Brooks, lecture secretary of the Blackpool Socialist Party, who (with her mother and brother) is a devoted reader of the *Freethinker*, writes us that she (and they) were very glad to see the article on "Socialism and the Churches" in our columns. "I mean to show the article," she says, "to as many of my Socialist acquaintances as possible. I agree with every word of it. A Socialist parson, who is coming to speak on the sands for us, has sent us in as the subject of one lecture, 'The Lord's Prayer—the Christian's Aim in Life.'" I am anxious to hear how he will make a Socialist lecture of it." Naturally.

This lady, by the way, having enjoyed our Swinburne articles, says that she wishes his books were to be had in cheap editions. Of course they ought to be obtainable in a popular form and at a popular price. Swinburne's publishers are very much behind the age—at least as far as his works are concerned.

We are informed that the "Clarion" Club has been thrown out of the "Clarion" Café premises at Liverpool because many of its members were not complimentary to religion and parsons. A leaflet was distributed at the Hardie-Campbell meeting a short while ago, in which it was alleged that—"The twentieth-century parson has changed the surplice for the frock coat, but he only waits the opportunity to practise his dearly-beloved trinity—fire, wheel, and gibbet." This leaflet caused a lot of "feeling" amongst the Christian Socialists. Hence these tears. We hope Freethinking Socialists will lay to heart the moral.

"Should a Christian Girl Marry an Atheist?" is the heading of an article in the *Sunday Companion*. The writer says No—decidedly No. He evidently thinks the wife is more likely to become an Atheist than the husband is a Christian. In this he is probably right. With regard to the question itself, we have to say two things: (1) if a Christian girl is really in love with an Atheist, she will never trouble about the *Sunday Companion's* view of the matter; (2) that she might easily go farther and fare worse.

A writer in the *Saturday Review*, dealing with "the battle between Atheism and Catholicism" in Italy, agrees that "you will find among the middle-class young men of modern Italy thousands who can tell you all about Hercules or Mahomet, but who know nothing about Jesus Christ." Terrible! Especially for the Church and the priests.

Catholic Opinion approves the act of the Waterford Corporation in calling upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer

to tax "all eligible bachelors over the age of thirty-five." But what is an *eligible* bachelor? Fancy the poor Chancellor of the Exchequer having to decide such a question. It ought to be handed over to a committee of ladies; in fact, it would be a nice job for some of those who so frequently besiege the House of Commons. It seems odd, however, that a Catholic paper should support this proposal; or a Protestant paper either, for that matter; for the New Testament clearly teaches that celibacy is a higher state of existence than marriage. Bachelors and spinsters are a lot nearer heaven (according to Jesus and Paul) than married people. And the Catholic Church has its celibate priests, and monks and nuns. We suggest, then, that the taxing of bachelors should begin with the clergy.

We notice that *Catholic Opinion* speaks after its kind on the beatification of Joan of Arc. It pictures her surrounded by enemies and not allowed to "appeal to the Pope against the cruel sentence of death by fire." Not a word about the "cruel sentence" having been pronounced by Catholic priests and doctors. The petition against her was presented by the Bishop of Beauvais, who desired to have her tried by an ecclesiastical court for sorcery, impiety, idolatry, and magic. The University of Paris joined in the same request. Several bishops were appointed her judges, and only one of them—the Cardinal of Winchester—was an Englishman. These wretches sentenced her to be delivered over to the secular arm; that is, to be burnt alive. Afterwards, by way of mercy—the mercy of priests!—they altered her sentence to perpetual imprisonment, and to be fed as long as she lived on bread and water. Finally, they reverted to the original sentence, and she was burnt alive in the marketplace of Rouen, where the clergy stood by and saw her perish. Such are the facts. But the Church has always known how to pervert or deny them for its own advantage.

Joan of Arc's memory was under a cloud for centuries. And who was the first of the moderns who took up the gauntlet on her behalf? As far as we can ascertain, it was David Hume—the sceptic! In his *History of England* he branded her judges as bigots and murderers, and eulogised her as "this admirable heroine, to whom the more generous superstition of the ancients would have erected altars." The world owes a great intellectual debt to David Hume. For that fine sentence the world owes him a moral debt. Hats off to the great Freethinker and Humanitarian!

An inquest was held recently at the Upton Asylum on the death of an inmate, named Edw. Rigby, a boot repairer, who lived at 19 Market-street, Hoyle, and was forty years of age. What led to his death is told as follows in a local paper:—

"The widow, Harriet Rigby, said her husband had suffered severely with his liver, and for some time had been greatly troubled by bad trade. For four years he had been an atheist. On the evening of Saturday, March 14th, he commenced to talk about religion, which turn of events she thought very strange, and he was annoyed because she would not say her grace. Then he tried to make her say her prayers, and knelt by the fire, trying to convince her that there was a God. She thought he was going out of his mind, and tried to get him to bed, but he would not go. Then he said, 'As sure as I put my hand in the fire there is a God,' and I want to take you back to Him,' and suiting the word to the action he deliberately put his hand in the fire, holding it there and burning it badly. He also said, 'If you don't believe in God to-night, I will put the other hand in.' He then made her repeat the Apostles' Creed many times. Rigby did not complain of any pain from the burn, saying, 'I don't care as long as I bring you back to the God I brought you from.' Later, he said his hand was rather badly burnt, but he would not let her touch it or go for assistance, because if she did she would 'lose her faith in God.' She stayed with him until Wednesday, and then she went for Dr. Thompson, but her husband said he was not a Christian, and would not see him. Afterwards he saw Dr. Pierce. Rigby was removed to the asylum on the Thursday."

Dr. P. W. Powell testified that Rigby's left hand was extensively burnt, that lockjaw set in, and that he died of exhaustion, due to the disease. Rigby was suffering from mania, no doubt due to worry and his rundown state of health. The jury returned a verdict according to the medical evidence. It appears, then, that poor Rigby was an Atheist while his health was sound and his mind was clear; and that as his body and brain went wrong he lapsed back into religious superstition. His holding his hand in the fire is characteristic of the fanatical spirit. It feels little or no pain, and nothing can stop it but death.

Jesus Christ said, "Resist not evil"—"if one smite thee on the one cheek turn unto him the other also"—"if one take from thee thy coat let him have thy cloak also." But the Rev. B. M. Kitson, rector of Barnos, does not agree with

his Lord and Master. He had a tussle with a burglar one night, and the man has just gone into five years' penal servitude.

The *Catholic Herald* rejoices over the rebuke administered to Hoffmann, a Socialist member of the German Reichstag, the other day. Being an outspoken Atheist, he "forgot himself so far" as to speak of Christians as "the followers of the Nazarene." Whereupon the President called him to order, saying: "We forbid you to speak in such terms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And the majority of the House applauded. But, all the same, the "check" was on the President's side. What proper authority has he over the religious beliefs and expressions of the members in a political assembly? Besides, Hoffmann's phrase was perfectly correct.

Here is a fresh argument against Secular Education. Mr. George Radford, in the *Daily News*, argues that the Bible should be kept in the schools because "it appeals as nothing else can to the poorest intellect and the weakest will." We think this is quite true—as far as it goes. But it doesn't seem much of a certificate for the Blessed Book.

George Young, of 9 Brook-street, Williamstown, Penygraig, Rhondda Valley, is alleged to have been mortally wounded by his younger brother, Sidney Young, in a quarrel. The latter is under arrest. The mother, between her sobs, told an *Evening Express* representative that "the boys were the best of friends, attended church regularly, and read their Bibles." And much good it did them.

Rev. John Silvester Davies, of Adelaide House, Forty-hill, Enfield, left £35,069. Another proof of the text that "godliness is great gain."

"Take up thy cross and follow me," said Jesus. Rev. Charles Walter Payne Crawford, of Ardmillan, East Grinstead, Sussex, did so, we suppose,—and left £118,323. We shouldn't mind carrying a cross like that ourselves. We'd bear up under it somehow. And wouldn't we make Free-thought hum! The clergy would hate us worse than ever then.

Canon Banks told a dreadful story to the Salisbury Diocesan Synod. The Church of England had just missed a million of money. A very rich man was going to give that sum to the Church, but "owing to the lack of organisation and method in its financial affairs there was nobody to receive it, and consequently it went elsewhere." Fancy, money—all that money—going elsewhere! It is enough to send a whole battalion of the Black Army to the lunatic asylum.

Sir Frederick Wills, the Tobacco King, who died in February, left estate of the net value of £2,916,649. He was an extremely pious gentleman, and gave a good deal of money to religious objects. No one troubled about, or even noticed, the incongruity between his Christian profession and his worldly practice. To believe in the gospel of "blessed be ye poor" and "woe unto you rich," and at the same time to heap up a colossal fortune, seems quite the proper thing to do—if you can only do it.

There are two ways of minimising Swinburne's heresy. The first is to call it riotous, if musical, nonsense. That is the more orthodox method. The other is to say that he was a great poet who poured scorn on Christianity, but that he did not injure its essence. That is the method employed by papers like the *Edinburgh Evening News*. "Never," our contemporary says, "did the spirit of revolt break forth in such a consuming fire of scorn. Yet the scorn consumes nothing essential to Christianity. It may scorch externals, organisations, which grow old like all things human, vested interests, which may become a bondage. The soul of genuine Christianity remains unscathed." *Essential Christianity!* *Genuine Christianity!* Why these adjectives? Christianity ought to stand as a substantive. It appears that the only thing essential to Christianity is the name. The flag at the masthead is the great thing. Never mind the cargo in the hold. Change that as often as you like.

When the two latest Whitechapel murderers were sentenced to death, one exclaimed, "God curse everyone in this court," while the other cried, "Oh, mother, mother dear, help me. Set me free." Both utterances came from the depths—of nature and superstition. Man's cry for "Mother" in his trouble is so natural. It is said that even

the mighty Napoleon, at St. Helena, would sometimes in his disturbed sleep call upon "Ma mère." The caged eagle, in his misery, longed to lay his head on the bosom of his mother—the one woman he had always loved and revered—as he had done when a boy on the other island of Corsica. And that other cry to "God" from the prisoners' dock illustrates the truth that man always uses the name of his Deity in cursing his enemies. Even the vulgar swearing cockney says "Gawd blast yer," mechanically.

A working-man reader of the *Freethinker*, being an Atheist, and having a daughter eleven years of age, who keeps asking him questions "as to the Why and Wherefore of this planet and ourselves," thought the best way to answer her was (for a start) to give her Clodd's *Childhood of the World*; so he bought a copy, but before giving it to his daughter he thought he would look through it himself. To his astonishment, he found the book larded with pious expressions, which he says he was very far from expecting in a work written by a leading Rationalist. He copies out a number of these pious expressions, and we confess that they astonish us too; first, as being written at all by Mr. Clodd,—secondly, as being quite unnecessary (even if sincerely meant) in a scientific treatise. Our correspondent, who hails from Glasgow, where people are pretty thorough, one way or another, is quite indignant, and says some things which we won't quote. But he winds up satirically by saying that the *Childhood of the World* "ought to be put in all the Camberwell Free Libraries."

Can it be that Mr. Clodd wrote this little book a good many years ago, before he became a leading Rationalist, and forgot to bring it up to date in the 1904 edition?

A correspondent sends us a cutting from the *Chicago Daily News*, relating how the Rev. J. E. Snyder, of Christ Episcopal Church, one of the leading figures in evangelical work, started soul-saving amongst the female hands in a factory belonging to the Chicago Copy Company. The young women were ready for him. They bombarded him with questions, and gave him no opportunity for preaching. According to the newspaper report, they subjected him to a good quizzing. The reverend gentleman thought he did remarkably well, but he appears to have made a regular mess of it. One young woman asked him "Who made God?" Before he could start answering—which was probably lucky for him—another young woman asked him if God was responsible for sin. He replied, "No; Satan is responsible for sin." Another girl asked him "Who made Satan?" The reverend gentleman seems to have thought discretion the better part of valor at that point. He dodged the question, and came up smiling for the next. But we need not follow him farther. He was no match for a big band of young women all bent on business. In fact, he was much like a classic gentleman whose pieces were distributed on the Thracian mountains.

The Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus says that the question a woman asks her minister is not "What can I do to be saved?" but "What can I do for my hysteria?" We are pleased to hear that people are growing so intelligent. For in a very large number of cases the first question does indicate hysteria—or worse. There is nothing more unwholesome than the person who is always worrying round, concerned as to whether he or she is saved, or whether they stand any great chance of being lost. Morally sound people trouble as little about their salvation as does a healthy person about the state of his digestive organs. If Christians talked less about their soul's welfare, most of them would be better worth saving than they are under present circumstances. Of course, it suits clergymen that people should cultivate the feeling that they are spiritually diseased, because without this feeling their occupation would be gone. But at best the feeling is more or less hysterical in character, and at worst sheer hypocrisy. People who believe they are miserable sinners are usually the reverse, and those who say it without believing it find their hypocrisy no bar to their religious salvation.

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, says that religion "makes us at home in our Universe, as essentially a good Universe, ready to bless us as far as we will let it." The essential goodness of the Universe is a figment of the pious imagination. The Universe is neither good nor bad, but utterly indifferent. If we are to get a living from her, we must struggle against innumerable foes and gain partial victories over them. She never blesses us of her own accord; but she will destroy us the moment we cease to take care of ourselves. She has no more regard for us than for the worms beneath our feet.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, May 2, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool: at 3, "The Moral Failure of Christianity"; at 7, "A Searchlight on the Bible."

May 9, Aberdare.

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £175 7s. Received since.—Harry Organ, 2s.; "Firenze," per W. Heaford, 10s.; Dr. R. T. Nichols, £5; C. J., £1; M. Silberman, 19s.; D. D. B., £2 2s.; J. F. Williamson, 3s.; Ernest (Rotherhithe), 3s.; L. B. G., 1s.; A. F. Bullock, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Sproul, 5s.; F. M. A., 10s.; Joseph Bevins, £1.

W. H. B.—Let us hope better times are coming. We are still able to work hard.

JAS. THOMSON.—You are right; the cause progresses every way.

A. J. NOTLEY.—"The best of health" is the best of wishes.

A. MACDONALD.—See paragraph. Thanks.

H. STOKES.—Glad you "enjoyed immensely" our articles on Swinburne.

A. S. W. reads "the dear old *Freethinker* with avidity every week."

S. SALISBURY.—Pleased to hear from "an old convert" of ours, and thanks for good wishes.

DAVID ADAMSON.—The secret lies in the perversion of the child's mind. That is why the clergy fight, not for education, but for the control of education. Burns, from whom you quote that keen verse, quite understood it.

S. CURTIS.—Mr. Foote means to make an effort to lecture in the West, as far down as Plymouth, next season.

T. W. LAMBERT.—Shall be pleased to see Merthyr friends at Aberdare on May 9.

E. J. BARKERVILLE says his subscription is "small compared with the pleasure and instruction" he gets from the *Freethinker*.

T. FAWCETT.—We hope trade will revive, as predicted. Many of our friends are in too "low water" to subscribe as they wish to.

W. M. H. C. B.—*Bible Heroes* will be issued shortly. We note your wish for further articles by "Abracadabra." Glad you have found this journal so "valuable."

J. S.—The "Hamlet" soliloquy that Swinburne referred to occurs in Act iv, Scene 4, beginning "How all occasions do inform against me."

J. M. LAUDER.—A Glasgow doctor called Jamieson did, we believe, debate with Charles Watts. We never heard of his debating with Charles Bradlaugh. If he says that he debated in Glasgow with Colonel Ingersoll, he takes the cake from Ananias. Ingersoll never spoke on this side of the Atlantic.

JOHN GRANGE.—Pleased you regard the articles on Swinburne as worth all your subscription to Shilling Month. Your compliments are valued as coming from a good judge.

A. S. VICKERS.—We note your accidental running across Mr. Bates's meeting at Lincoln, and your appreciation of his ability and courage.

D. D. B.—We quite understand that the bigots would soon try to ruin you if they knew. You are right in helping Freethought as you can. Prudence is a virtue as well as courage. We only object to those who are all prudence.

E. KIRTON.—Many more, as you say, would respond if it were not for the trouble; but, as you also say, they might conquer their indolence now and then.

S. ROBERTS.—The President's Honorarium Fund is "open the whole year."

A. H. DEACON says: "I have been a constant reader of the *Freethinker* for about six years, and it is now my Thursday morning's first thought. I give my old copies to anyone who will read them. We have six regular readers of the paper in this village [Fleckney, near Leicester]."

UNCLE SAM.—The *Boston Investigator* was dropped some years ago. Mr. Washburn, who was editing it, now contributes to the *Truthseeker* (New York). Pleased you regard ours as the best Freethought paper you have ever seen.

HARRY ORGAN.—We hope the compliments are deserved, and shall be glad to see the good wishes realised.

W. P. SMITH.—The postcard idea is under consideration.

MAY CAPON.—There are no more facts than you have concerning Hypatia—though the Rev. Charles Kingsley wrote a well-known novel in which he made her figure, and called it after her name. Pleased to hear you enjoyed our St. James's Hall lectures so much. We can quite believe that you will "never become a Christian." Our experience is that women make constant Freethinkers. They very seldom "rat"—as the saying is. The only case of reversion we recollect is that of Mrs. Besant, and she did not go back to Christianity.

E. JACKSON reports that he has gained permission to place this journal on the reading-room table of the Mossley Labor Club, at his own expense. We thank him for his effort.

C. BERRY.—Never mind the size; the good will is the chief thing. Glad you think you owe us "a big debt for pleasures and benefits received through reading the *Freethinker*."

A. G. ROYSTON.—Shall be sent. Glad this journal has given you "so much pleasure and enlightenment." Also that you find the N. S. S. badge useful.

J. G. WALKER says: "I am a three and a-half years' reader of the *Freethinker* and I like it better every week." The rest of this correspondent's letter, *re* Clodd's book, is dealt with in another column.

K. C. C.—Quite right to make Shilling Month postal order payable to G. W. Foote.

C. J.—Acknowledged as per instructions. Thanks.

G. R. HARKER, sending 20, hopes the "5,000 shilling fund" will be completed.

H. LAKER.—You have ideas, but your verses are wanting in technical skill.

T. M. MOSLEY.—It is gratifying (in a way, of course) to hear that of all the advanced papers you take the *Freethinker* is the only one you read from cover to cover. Your arguments are sound enough. Certainly it must have been a deluded man who cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God asking himself why he had forsaken himself would be a pantomime. You will see what we have to say on your last point in due course. We note you agree that there is "too much Jesus" at Socialist meetings.

COUSIN JACKAY (Penzance) writes: "I owe you much, be good enough to accept a small instalment of the debt, as a contribution to your Shilling Month. Superstition is getting its back to the wall, here in the Far West; and saintly halos are only kept bright by a liberal application of Brass Polish. 'Sweet are the uses of advertisement.' Our local weekly has hit it with a current series entitled: 'Who's Who in Modern Methodism,' with a portrait and biographic credentials. Every portrait to date has the most seraphic smirk a cab-horse ever shied at!"

G. H. SOUTHERN.—We do intend to keep this journal "free from political matter." We are not allowing the discussion of Socialism, but the discussion of the policy and proceedings of Christians in general, and the Christian clergy in particular, in relation to it. You yourself fall into the very error you warn us against. You deprecate the discussion of Socialism in our columns—and quite rightly if we were allowing that; and then you go on to extol the superiority of Individualism. You see it requires a cool head to hold the reins in these matters—and we hope we have it.

NEW READER (Plymouth).—Pleased to hear that a "friend" introduced you to Freethought and this journal, and that you now value both. The Ingersoll "Life" is as beautiful as you say.

G. DAVEY.—We could have wished a more precise reference, but thanks for what you send. We are really glad that it was a woman—Mrs. Watts-Dunton—who protested most warmly against the man of God's action at Swinburne's funeral.

W. DODD.—Mr. Moss deserves all the praise you give him for his bold stand against the bigoted enemies of the *Freethinker* on the Camberwell Borough Council. Your suggestion shall be considered.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

F. E. HILL.—Shall be pleased to see the "strong contingent" from Cardiff at Aberdare.

H. W. S. MATTHEWS.—Pleased that you and your friend were so "delighted" with the "God and Humanity" lecture at St. James's Hall, and that your friend is now "an ardent reader of the *Freethinker*." Your suggestion may be useful on another occasion.

J. WILLIAMSON.—We have read your letter and enclosures with interest and amusement. Paper shall be sent as desired. Glad you find it "improves with age."

J. J. HANKS.—Thanks for cuttings.

Much correspondence, practically all Tuesday morning's, stands over till next week through sheer lack of space.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

"The enclosed cheque for £2 is a contribution to the *Freethinker*." Thus ran a brief note in an unknown hand "for Mr. G. Meredith." The cheque bore the unmistakable personal signature of Mr. George Meredith. We wrote to Mr. Meredith at once, pointing out that it was our custom to acknowledge all subscriptions in the *Freethinker* itself, either directly or by initials or pseudonym, according to instructions. Mr. Meredith replied himself on April 23 (the most sacred day in the English calendar—Shakespeare's birthday and deathday): "Dear Mr. Foote,—Gifts of money should be unsigned contributions. But, as a question of supporting your paper, my name is at your disposal." Coming from the man of all the living world whose genius and character we most revere, this little letter is far more valuable than the biggest subscription.

The special course of Sunday evening lectures at the beautiful new St. James's Hall, in Great Portland-street, London, W., has been a decided success. The audiences

continually improved, the last being more than 50 per cent. larger than the first. The body of the hall did not look so full, but that was owing to so many people showing a preference for the spacious balcony. Mr. Foote's last lecture was on "The Religion of Shakespeare." For over an hour and a half the audience listened with that breathless attention which is the highest compliment a speaker can receive. There was occasional laughter at jokes, and occasional applause, with a great outburst of enthusiastic cheering at the end, but the prevailing note was one of fascinated interest. Mr. F. A. Davies, the chairman, invited questions and discussion. Several questions were dealt with, and one lady spoke for ten minutes—very wide of the subject.

There is little room for doubt that if Mr. Foote could get a St. James's Hall, or one as good, for every Sunday night during the winter, he would succeed in crowding it. A large expenditure for rent and advertising would soon be covered by the payment for seats. Freethought and its leading speakers have never yet had a proper chance in London. The party must see that they have it in the early future.

Mr. Foote lectures for the newly reorganised Liverpool Branch to-day (May 2). He hopes to see at the Alexandra Hall a big rally of the local "saints" bent on union and harmony under the old flag, and on a vigorous fight against superstition beneath its folds. Mr. Foote's subjects will be: "The Moral Failure of Christianity" and "A Searchlight on the Bible." Alexandra Hall is not as large as the halls he has been lecturing in lately at Liverpool, so that those who want to secure seats at these lectures should provide themselves with tickets of admission (there can be no charge at the doors) forthwith. These are obtainable (1s. and 6d. each) of the Branch secretary, Mr. Chas. Daw, 57 Sunbury-road, Anfield; also of D. Spiers, 24 Kensington; T. Green, 202 Molyneux-road; G. Crooks, 153 Islington; D. Jones, 49 Grove-street; W. Johnson, 123 Empress-road; and J. Hammond, 99 Belmont-road.

Tea will be provided at the Alexandra Hall at 8d. per head for the accommodation of visitors from a distance. The function will take place between the afternoon and evening lectures.

The Liverpool Branch is having a public Dinner in honor of the N. S. S. President on the Saturday evening (May 1) at the Bee Hotel, St. John's-lane. Time, 6 o'clock. Tickets (2/3) are obtainable, if any are left, of the secretary, Mr. Chas. Daw, 57 Sunbury-road, Anfield.

The Bethnal Green Branch starts evening lectures, in addition to the afternoon lectures, to-day (May 2) in Victoria Park. Mr. Cohen is the lecturer. East London "saints" will please note.

The North London Branch begins outdoor propaganda to-day (May 2) at Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead. Mr. A. B. Moss opens the ball with an afternoon lecture at 3.30.

The secretary of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch asks us to announce that a public debate on Christianity v. Secularism, between the Rev. A. Graham Barton and Mr. C. Cohen, takes place in the Town Hall, Bishop Auckland, on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 4 and 5. Reserved seat tickets (1s.) can be had from Mr. H. B. Dodds, 243 Newcastle-street, Byker, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Friends going over from Newcastle should communicate with Mr. Dodds, with a view to getting cheap railway tickets for a party of not less than ten.

South Wales friends, who have been freely inquiring, are notified that Mr. Foote's lectures at Aberdare next Sunday (May 9) will be delivered in the New Public Hall. The afternoon subject (at 2.30) is "The Moral Failure of Christianity"—the evening subject (at 6.15) is "God and Humanity."

A correspondent writing from a place near Swansea informs us that he was introduced to the *Freethinker* a few weeks ago, and his great regret is that he did not know of it before. His verdict on the paper is "good intellectual food." He thinks he will be able to bring twenty-eight friends over to hear Mr. Foote lecture at Aberdare.

June 8 is the hundredth anniversary of Thomas Paine's death, and the National Secular Society is organising a centenary celebration at St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, London, W. The list of speakers is being made as representative as possible. It already includes Mr. Herbert

Burrows, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Other names will probably be announced next week. Mr. J. M. Robertson was invited, but he had a prior political engagement which he could not cancel.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held on Whit-Sunday at Liverpool. The business sessions, morning and afternoon, will take place in the Alexandra Hall. The evening public meeting will be held in the Tivoli Theatre. Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must be sent in to the general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C., by May 8 at the latest. The financial year closes on April 30. Branches of the N. S. S. should be making arrangements to be represented at the Conference. Individual members from any part of the country will also be very welcome.

Mr. Joseph Bates visited Kirton again on Tuesday, April 20, and the place was in an uproar. He spoke for nearly an hour amidst disorder and interruption. An egg (fortunately fresh) struck him full in the face. A stone struck the same mark. The dear good civilised Christians followed him to the station armed with sticks and other weapons, and had he not been protected by friends the consequences might have been serious. As it was, he was struck by an old bucket and some large stones. The Christites threatened to finish him next time. Thursday's meeting at Peterborough was spoiled by the rain. Boston audiences on Sunday were large and orderly, and the *Freethinker* went well.

Messrs. Whitehouse & Co., in subscribing to Shilling Month, refer to their advertisement which has been appearing in our columns. "We are pleased," they say, "with the venture. It has paid its way and shown a fair profit, and so far as the *Freethinker* is concerned we think that if the advertisement is followed up with reliable goods it cannot help but be a success. We think our name will be on its pages for a long time to come." This ought to encourage other business readers of the *Freethinker* to send us a trial advertisement. We are really surprised that more do not avail themselves of the "Business Cards" column.

Mr. Henry Jessop, writing on behalf of Messrs. George Jessop and Son, Ltd., of Batley, who have been advertising in our "Business Cards" column, says: "I am pleased to inform you that we are quite satisfied with the result of our advertisement in the *Freethinker*. We have secured a number of very good customers who are well pleased with clothing supplied. To me, sir, it is a real pleasure to trade with Freethinkers, and to know they are satisfied also. It is different with —." But we had better stop. What we want is to draw attention to the fact that good, honest advertisements in the *Freethinker* may pay.

Shilling Month.

FIFTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Figures after the names of subscribers indicate the number of shillings they send. No number means one shilling.

R. Gibbon, 4; J. Martin, 2; A. H. Deacon, 2; Whitehouse and Co., 10; Uncle Sam, 2½; Harry Organ; C. McKelvie, 3; W. P. Smith, 2; R. T. N., 10; Cousin Jacky, 2; Bishop of Ipswich; R. Wood, 2; Charles Berry; J. T. Horsman; G. White; J. Chapman; P. Fitzpatrick; H. R. F.; Constance; Atheist, 5; J. A. McCrorie; G. P. Harker, 20; C. J., 5; K. C. C., 10; Blackheath, 2; J. F. Williamson, 2; Hard Times; E. G., 20; W. M. H. C. B., 4; J. G. Dobson, 2; T. Fawcett; Ernest (Rotherhithe), 2; T. J. Thurlow, 2; T. G. Cripps; M. de Backer, 3; H. Good, 5; A. H., 2; E. S. Alderton; Com., 2; L. B. G.; Collection at Mr. Foote's last St. James's Hall Lecture, 34½; C. H., 2; S. Hicks, 5; C. Heaton (2nd sub.), 2; E. J. Baskerville, 5; T. W. Lambert, 2; G. Lambert; Rd. Harris; E. Kirton, 5; J. E. S., 2; A. S. V., 2; John Grange, 10; V. Whitty, 2; A. S. W.; H. Stokes, 3; A. J. Notley; Jos. Wilson; F. J. Voisey, 2; Jas. Thomson, 2; Two Devonport Dockyard Mon, 2; David Adamson, 6; S. Salisbury, 10; Atheist, 5; W. H. B., 2; Henry Jessop, 60; H. W. S. Matthews, 5; T. M. Brown, 2; David Wash, 3; F. C. W.; C. E. Watson; W. Horner, 2; Mrs. Fisher, 2; T. Fisher, 2; Mr. and Mrs. Simpson, 2½; Jas. Ralston, 2; Jas. Stewart; Mr. and Mrs. Sproul, 5; Jas. Railton, 2; J. Le Marguand and Friend, 2; J. Tomkins, 2; J. C. Banks, 5; G. Faulkner, 2; W. P. Britton and Wife, 5; W. Leach, 2; J. Hammond, 5; Joseph Bevius, 5; F. M. A., 10; A Few Stamford Friends, 8; W. Robertson, 2; William Horrocks, 20; J. Capon, junr., Wife, and Daughter, 10; T. W. Hicks, 4; W. Cromack, 2½; J. B. Palphreyman, 2½; H. Dawson, 2; H. B. W. S.; Jacob Primrose, 5.

Made in Heaven.

REFERENCE was made recently in "Acid Drops" to a Lenten Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishop of Galloway, in which he called upon the faithful to shun those who are guilty of "foul concubinage" by marrying outside the Catholic Church. To Free-thinkers, of course, such an insinuation of the immorality of marriage "outside the Church" would appeal principally perhaps to their sense of the ridiculous, mingled may be with a feeling of resentment at the presumptuous interference of the priest in social institutions. But what is to be said of the intellectual degradation of those to whom it was possible to address such a Letter, to whom it was as the voice of God himself? "Whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder." What incalculable havoc have some of these oft-quoted texts of Scripture, in the hands of the priest, played with social happiness and individual peace of mind.

Some few weeks ago we commented upon a novel of Mr. Joseph Hocking's, in which the Methodist novelist utterly repudiates the teaching of Scripture in this matter, and consummates a happy conjugal union between *atheism* and *faith*. We have since read with considerable interest Mrs. E. Temple Thurston's *Traffic*, a novel of Irish peasant life, which exhibits in marked contrast to Mr. Hocking's happy issue, the injurious and degrading result of the Church's teaching on marriage, as enforced upon the simple minded by the priest. And as a commentary on the Bishop of Galloway's Pastoral Letter, it may not be inopportune to notice the effect of priestly influence upon Irish life and character, as portrayed by Mrs. Thurston. Because, the history of the heroine, and the consequences of her adherence to the ruling of the priest in affairs of the heart is a sufficient condemnation of the Church's interference in social relationships.

Although legally, and to the villagers among whom she lives, the daughter of John Troy, an Irish peasant farmer, Nanno Troy is in reality the offspring of an English artist whom her mother had wished to entangle in the matrimonial bond. As she grows up the hereditary influence of her parentage shows itself in her physical form and bearing; while her conceptions of life's possibilities, from the woman's usual standpoint, is vastly superior to the ideas of her girl companions, whose notions of matrimony are limited to the low level of their social environment. But over and above all her ideal conceptions of life and affinity, dominating her views and aspirations, is the soul-killing teaching and influence of the Church, which she had been taught to accept without question.

A mental vista of better things than was likely to be her portion is awakened in her by the casual meeting with an English gentleman, who is spending a holiday with some Irish friends in the district. Mr. Jerningham, the gentleman in question, is depicted with gun in hand in the opening of a hedge, watching Nanno lead the cattle home of an evening; and the picture of the girl seems so much in unison with the natural surroundings as to suggest the possession of the artistic temperament. His conversation with her tends to confirm this impression, and excite an interest in her life and prospects. The interview gives Nanno a glimpse into a world in which she has neither part nor lot, but which she somehow feels Nature intended that she should move in and enjoy. The departure of Mr. Jerningham a few days later leaves her to the commonplace environment of her lot.

The man who is attracted by the two-hundred-pound dowry offered by her parents, and animated secondarily by an animal passion for her person, is a young farmer named Jamesy Ryan, who is said to be "typical of most Irish farming life." Nanno's spirited refusal to acquiesce in this "arrangement" brings out the worst features of her mother's coarse nature; and in order to break the girl's spirit, with brutal bluntness she tells her the circumstances of

her birth, and her charitable dependence on the man who is supposed to be her father. If her feelings towards her selected husband had only been those of indifference, the compulsion to marriage would not have been so distasteful to her, but she abhorred Jamesy for the evil of his nature. "To be the wife of Jamesy Ryan; to share his life, his fortune, his bed with him; both her body and mind shrank, like a frightened child, from the idea."

In her despair she goes to confession, and intimates her wish to become a nun. The priest, guessing that such a spasmodic desire was prompted by some unpleasant circumstance in her life, bids her go back to her parents—and her fate. In due time she is sacrificed to the avarice and lust of Mr. Jamesy Ryan. Says Mrs. Thurston:—

"Marriage in Ireland is a mercenary affair, and the solicitor is the most important factor concerned. Compared with a burial, a wedding in Ireland is as a rush-light to a bonfire. There is perhaps no country in the world where a sympathy with human nature is more wanting, more extinct. To an Irishman his women are little more than beasts of burden—cattle upon the land he loves."

All Nanno's fears are more than justified. Her lord and master, when once his animal passions have been gratified, spends the months in liquifying the marriage dowry at the public-house, and cultivating the intimacy of a voluptuous widow, of the name of Mrs. Doran, whom he shamelessly introduces into his own home. Quite unintentionally his wife discovers them misconducting themselves in the kitchen, and for thus "spying" upon him he so brutally ill-uses her that she is confined to bed for some weeks. When she sufficiently recovers, she again goes to confession, telling the priest of her husband's misconduct and her own wish to leave him. Again she hears the authoritative voice of the Church—

"Go back to your husband, Nanno, and God'll show you some way to do the right thing, the first moment ye enter the door."

It was these last words of the priest that brought her to her decision. "God would show her some way to do the right thing." Whether it was that the priest had forgotten to inform God of the circumstance, or whether after being told it had escaped His mind, certain it is that something went wrong with the fulfilment of the prognostication. How admirably God and the priest attended to the business in hand we will let Mrs. Thurston tell.

"Arrived at home the place seemed deserted. There was no light in the kitchen, and even the fire in the grate had died down to one little speck of red. The door was open; yet still she believed; waiting for the sign.

Silently she moved across to the fire, thinking that she might make it up for Jamesy's return; and then at that moment a sign was given—hurled at her by the force of God.

Her foot kicked against a chair, making a noise which however slight sounded disproportionately in the surrounding stillness. She heard the murmur of Jamesy's voice coming from the bedroom, the door of it opened stealthily, and Mrs. Doran, her hair scattered over her shoulders, stood peering into the uncertain light.

God had shown her the sign—that was all she could think—God had shown her the sign. With a cry that she smothered with her hand, she ran out of the room into the yard—out of the yard into the field, and on and on until she reached the night."

After the birth—and death—of her infant child, which took place in the maternity hospital at Cork, she finds her way to London and procures a situation as waitress in a restaurant. Her appearance is greatly in her favor, and she soon becomes an adept at her work. But the hand of fate—the subtle and disastrous influence of the priest—villain-like, still pursues her. Being sent by her employers to assist at a private dinner, it so happens that Mr. Jerningham is one of the guests. Learning from his hostess how she came to be officiating at her table, he seeks Nanno out and renews her acquaintance. Knowing nothing of her marriage and its results,

and being a bachelor of bohemian tendencies, he feels no compunction in trying to impart some joy and interest into her life; and she, feeling its loneliness, quietly accepts his attentions. She proves an agreeable companion in the little excursions he plans for her benefit, rising to the occasion as if to the manner born. And when ultimately Jerningham proposes marriage, she is compelled to tell him the sad story of her career. Nothing daunted, however, by the revelation, he gets the necessary advice with a view to procuring a divorce, regarding the cruelty and unfaithfulness of the husband as sufficient legal and moral grounds for such an action. But not so Nanno. Jerningham did not understand the insurmountable barrier that had blighted, and was to still further blight, her innocent life. The sub-title of the book is "The Story of a Faithful Woman"; but it was a faithfulness, not to the higher instincts and aspirations of her nature, but to the degrading and slavish domination of priestly ruling. Jerningham was the only man who had ever appealed to the ideal side of her life, and although not a woman of a strong emotional type, she knew that she could be happy with him. But—"There is no divorce in our Church. If I were to be divorced and marry again, the Church would close its doors behind me—I should be excommunicated,"—that was her invariable answer to all Mr. Jerningham's earnest and tender solicitations. He thinks that time will modify her views and enable her to see the matter in a reasonable light; and so he leaves her to think the subject over.

In the meantime, she goes again to confess to an English priest and ask for guidance. Again the answer: "Go back to your husband; or, if that is not feasible, bring him over to London, and thus shield yourself from temptation." And so James Ryan comes to London in obedience to the Church's dictation, to live upon the earnings of his wife, and squander in riotous living the proceeds of the sale of his farm. And then—more God-given signs—the same old cruelty and profligacy, until, owing to his outrageous conduct, the law relieves her of his presence.

Having to leave her situation owing to Nature's retribution for her obedience to the Church's mandate, she falls on evil days, until she is obliged to sell herself, body and soul, for bread on London streets, loathing both herself and the lustful beings with whom she cohabited. And she is eventually only saved from throwing herself and her dead baby over the parapet of one of London's bridges by the timely appearance of Mr. Jerningham.

Such is the life-story of Nanno Troy—it is impossible to think of her as Mrs. Ryan—a life blighted and ruined by the immoral and unsocial teaching of the Catholic Church. Foul concubinage! And such a union, condemned alike by humanity and reason, by morality and justice, is this Church's idea of the sanctity of the marriage-tie! Such a misalliance, so opposed to the dictates of ordinary common sense, is one of those irrevocable marriages said to be "made in heaven"!

Notwithstanding this effective portrayal of the result of priestly influence in human affairs, Mrs. Thurston, in the early part of her book, in reference to the mental subjection of the Irish Catholics and their dogged attachment to the superstitions of the Church, suggests that the usual conclusions of English people as to its cause—viz., priestcraft—is not the true solution of their degradation. We are able, however, to correct Mrs. Thurston by the testimony of an important authority. Mr. Michael J. F. McCarthy—himself an Irishman and a Catholic—in his *Priests and People in Ireland*, after examining all the alleged causes of Irish stagnation and social failure, attributes the condition of his fellow-countrymen solely to Priestcraft—the interference of the priest in the secular and social affairs of life; and the whole of Mr. McCarthy's valuable book goes to prove the truth of his contention. As he very clearly shows, the social and intellectual advance-

ment of European peoples has been in proportion to the decay of the power and influence of the priest. And it is not until this truth has been more fully recognised, and his usurped social power overthrown, that human rights and human liberties will be firmly and finally assured. It is to this end that the energies of Freethought are directed—the exposure of the supernatural, without which assumption the power of the priest could not be maintained.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Correspondence.

"SOCIALISM AND THE CHURCHES."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The article with the above heading that appears in the current issue of the *Freethinker* over the name of Julian St. Orey is descriptive of the position of a good many Freethinkers who are in the Socialist movement.

The ethics of Socialism were formulated by anti-religionists, and the movement up to a certain period existed on an entirely secular basis. It grew in strength and became respectable, and by so doing it increased in popularity.

Its popularity attracted the clergy, and they saw, if something was not done at once, they themselves would have no place to grind the theological axe; so they masqueraded as Socialists, were received with open arms, and sang "Love me and the world is mine."

It simply means that the great mass of Socialists, attempting to seek social emancipation before they have attained mental emancipation, have fallen victims to their own credulity. What is the history of the Churches but one long system of retrogression? And here, in the twentieth century, we have the spectacle of a secular movement being nobbled to use as a buttress to prop up an institution that has been a standing menace to progress for centuries. Thousands of Socialists to-day believe that the movement is safe under the wing of the Church, as they did in the days of the last Socialist movement; and what happened? It was suffocated. Socialism *plus* Christianity stands for nothing, is nothing; and that being so, why continue in the movement?

Mr. St. Orey asks a question that he says he has never got an answer to. Here it is, and the answer with it: "Why will not parsons and their followers help Socialism as men, not as religionists?" The reason is: Because they are religionists first and Socialists afterwards—and a very long way afterwards. But who says they have helped Socialism? They come on the Socialist platform, it is true, and the author of *God and My Neighbor* takes the chair for them; but who in the name of the seven plagues says they are helping Socialism?

They are helping themselves; and what are they helping themselves to? The Socialist movement. Opposite the house where this letter is being written there is a Wesleyan church with a placard outside bearing the subject for next Sunday's sermon, "The Only True Socialism." Does any Socialist imagine that it is the Socialism of Carl Marx, Belford Bax, or even Mr. Blatchford, that is to be preached? Not likely. It will be a hybrid production, containing so much "Sermon on the Mount," so much Land Nationalisation, with a dash of Old-Age Pensions thrown in; and it will be the only true Socialism.

To Freethinkers the position is this: How can we run with the hare and hunt with the hounds? Is the Socialism of the Churches likely to satisfy Freethinkers? It is not. And seeing that it is the only kind of Socialism that is likely to be propagated, is it not evident that, as Freethinkers, we could be better employed in the Freethought movement?

Our work is the emancipation of the mind. It is our first work; and when that is completed the rest will be easy.

April 16.

C. W. STRYING.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My comrade, Julian St. Orey, has my profound sympathy. Like himself I am a militant Atheist, and like him have, at times, to submit to listening to the idiotic babbling of my Christian comrades (*sic*), but never, be it understood, in silence. As a Socialist, I unhesitatingly avow that my party will never reach the ideal it conceives unless purged of the "poison of the crucifix." It is disgusting and humiliating in the extreme to watch the ridiculous antics of men like Keir Hardie and Snowden in their endeavors to acquire a bastard respectability. Hardie's utterances, both in and out of Parliament since the general election, have been painful to listen to or read. He has mouthed about Christ and his "old man" until one has wondered whether

Christ and he were Siamese twins. Both Hardie's parents were members of the Glasgow Branch of the National Secular Society, and the fact that their son develops, during the latter period of his life, a form of religious hysteria, is pregnant with meaning. The significance is obvious, and points to the fact that the man—promising to become a dangerous propagandist, and consequently a menace to the smug conditions of society—was promptly cajoled, flattered, and lured insidiously by the "priests of the bloody faith," until we find him securely Christianised—and muzzled. This fact ought to be apparent to all Socialists. Christianity has persistently and consistently attempted to destroy all effort for social progress. Throughout the history of every new thought, poetic expression, and scientific investigation, of every step towards political freedom, religious liberty, emancipation of woman and the liberty of the press, runs the trail of Christianity's barbarous bigotry and infinite malice. What guarantee have we, as Socialists, then, that Christianity, inasmuch as we recognise in it a powerful weapon of organised society, is acting in any other manner to-day? Certainly, its despotism is irretrievably gone, but all the old cunning, vicious and reptilian, and all the infernal treachery with which its record is saturated, still remains. If Christians are so cocksure that their dilapidated doctrine is sheer unadulterated Socialism, why do they not make some effort to have the Blasphemy Laws erased? I have looked in vain for a denunciation of these unjust and unjustifiable laws from a Christian Socialist. The fact is, that in entering the movement the Christian, whilst accepting the fundamental principal of rational Socialism, still retains his Christian characteristics—bias, bigotry, intolerance, and thickheadedness.

I am one of the few Socialists who advocate an entire repudiation of Christianity from the Socialist platform or press. We want no truck either with Christians or their ineffectual creeds. A Christian, as a Christian, cannot be trusted to deal with secular affairs. I cannot but look upon the patronage of Christian priests and parasites with suspicion. In the past, Christianity has been the harbinger of tyranny and oppression, its malignant form has overshadowed the grandest and noblest ideals of life, and strangled the possibilities latent in them. Assuredly the Socialist movement is in imminent danger of being overtaken by a like catastrophe. Let us, then, whilst there is daylight, work untiringly to throw upon the scrap-heap of oblivion the last vestiges of the detestable religion of Christianity.

JOHN S. CLARKE.

SOCIALISM AND CHRISTOLOGY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am pleased to see Mr. Orey's article in *Ours* of to-day. I have had something of his experiences. Obviously, the aim of the Church is to Christianise Socialism, or, as you have said, to "noble the movement." In my Saturday evenings' talks to those who attend our Market Cross Adult Bible Class, I have commented on the fact that, though "Socialism has nothing to do with Christianity," yet one may, from the I. L. P. platform, talk any amount of Christoology, flavored with a little Socialism according to the taste of the speaker. But one must not advocate that true liberty of thought and wider range of mental vision to be attained only outside Christian (?) organisations. The soporific twaddle of the beetles of the Most High—interspersed with Bible-banging for obvious reasons—certainly does not tend to intellectual development. Specimen products of Christian activities may be found among those who wait for the "second coming" and the poor deluded followers of the greatest showman on earth.

Twenty years ago I joined the I. L. P., and have been here eleven years. For some months I was one of the editors of our local Socialist papers, but my contributions had to be watered down so much to suit the palate of the pious Socialists that I resigned. Once only have I taken the chair at an I. L. P. lecture—Mr. J. McCabe being the speaker. Once only have I been asked to speak—the advertised speaker failing to appear—though I enjoy the doubtful distinction of being "The Market Cross Infidel Orator." But I have often been remonstrated with for "mixing up Atheism with Socialism," which, I may say, I have never done. I have often tried, however, to separate Socialist grain from the bitterness chaff. The measure of success may be gauged by the bitterness displayed by the "saved and sanctified." Then I have pointed out that Atheism and Socialism are already "mixed up." Socialism is distinctly Atheistic. One cannot be a real Socialist until he begin to doubt, think, question, reason; i.e., until he become a sceptic.

The person says "there can be no Socialism without Christianity." The Christians want Jesus at the helm, whilst I am opposed to his being on board; and hold that healthy, robust Atheism is essential to a sane Socialism.

April 16,

LO SCRITTORE.

PIOUS COUNTY COUNCILLORS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Those of your readers who are acquainted with the name of the Rev. A. J. Waldron, Vicar of Brixton, and Atheist-smasher in general, may be interested to hear that he has been adopted by the Dulwich Liberal and Radical Association as Progressive candidate for that Division at the next election for the London County Council.

As it is highly probable that this person will make determined efforts, if elected, to induce the London County Council to interfere seriously with the rights of freedom of expression hitherto enjoyed by Freethinkers in the open spaces under its control, I would suggest that the Freethinkers of Dulwich and contiguous localities should see to it that everything possible is done to keep the gentleman in question outside the Council Chamber.

T. JAMES FISHER.

The Fallacy of Christian Hope.

THE hope and belief of the English Christian is that after death he will still somehow exist as an individual, and somehow communicate in heaven, as an individual, with the friends and relations he loved on earth. His bugbear, and what he dreads above everything, is that these hopes should prove to be a delusion, and that, in the words of Plato's Socrates, "all eternity should be one long night." Indeed, the bulk of English Christians, if robbed of the consoling hope of a comfortable little family coterie upstairs, are indifferent whether there be any other sort of "immortality" or not. Hence, believing that Christianity guarantees this happy family reunion up above, they cling to their belief with a passionate fanaticism. Now without raising the question whether death be an evil or a good thing, I wish to point out that Christianity and Christ crucified give no sort of assurance that what they wish for will come about.

There are various phrases in the New Testament and pious Christian books to the effect that Christ "brought life and immortality to light," "was the firstfruits of them that slept," and "promised eternal life to them that believe." The promise given is of immortality and "eternal life." Now, immortality simply means the non-liability to have to die again; it is, therefore, quite as much an attribute of eternal death as of eternal life. On the other hand, "eternal life" does not exclude the possibility that "all eternity be one long night," because if temporal life does not exclude temporal slumber, eternal life cannot necessarily exclude eternal slumber.

In binding himself over to a belief in Christ and him crucified in the cross of Christ, in grumpiness, in patriotism, in the bestial injustice and brutalities of modern Western militarism, and in his cannibal God the Father that is its sheet anchor, the English Christian does indeed sell his soul for a mess of pottage—or, rather, not even that.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

SALVATION BY FAITH.

This view of the fate of the world as being at enmity with God, and of the duty of the Church to persuade as many as possible to believe something or other in order to secure salvation in a future and better world, has been held by sacerdotalists and non-sacerdotalists, Catholics and Protestants alike. It is still implied in most of our preaching and in the hymns we sing. I admit that there is a certain truth in it, the truth that man is constituted for immortality and ought not to live as if this world were all that mattered. But, on the whole, it has been thoroughly mischievous, and there is nothing which is acting as a greater hindrance to the spirituality and usefulness of the churches to-day.—*Rev. R. J. Campbell.*

Obituary.

ON Sunday, April 18, at Bath, Mr. Joseph Bullock died suddenly, and on the following Wednesday was laid to rest in the Public Cemetery. A Secular Service was read at the graveside by Mr. J. T. Lloyd. Mr. Bullock was a firm Freethinker, and brought up a family of Freethinkers. For fifty years he was in the service of the Gas Works, and he was held in high esteem by all who knew him. His unselfishness was a proverb in the town; and one who had known him for upwards of forty years said: "He may have been a Freethinker, as you say, but a better man I never met."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, Lectures.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road). 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, Arthur B. Moss, "A New Age of Reason."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, A. Hyatt, "There is Life in a Look at the Crucified One."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Spouters' Corner): 11, A. H. Smith, "Death's Message to the Atheist."

COUNTRY

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (Grand Theatre, Lesser Hall, Aberaman): 6.30, Geo. Garrett, "Should the National Secular Society Advocate Socialism?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Annual Business Meeting—Election of Office Bearers, etc.; 6.30, Social Meeting—Mill and Owen.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote, 3, "The Moral Failure of Christianity"; 7, "A Searchlight on the Bible."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Did Jesus Ever Exist?" 6.30, "Christian Europe and the War Scare." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7.30, Conference, etc.

OUTDOOR.

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Horsefair): B. G. Brown, "Religion and Science."

DALKEITH (High-street): Saturday, May 1, at 7.30, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

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BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S.: Bargate Green, Sunday, May 2, at 3.30, "The Philosophy of Life and Death."

SIBSEY: Wednesday, May 5, at 7.30, "Why I am an Atheist" (Alea est Jacta").

PETERBOROUGH: Market Place (near the Fountain), Thursday, May 6, at 3.30, "The Inutility of God."

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