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PRICE TWOPENCE

The strength of a man's virtues must not be measured by his occasional efforts, but by his ordinary life.

—PASCAL.

The Savage in Our Midst.

THE other day the *Daily Telegraph* devoted a fair-sized paragraph to what it evidently considered an interesting, if not an important, item of news. One of the players in the Ladies' Golf Championship had lost her mascot, a model of a little black pig, which she carried for luck. And the writer went on to describe how the lady, in consequence, played much less skilfully than was her custom. That, of course, one can well believe. If she believed that the possession of the charm brought her "luck," its loss would ensure a certain loss of nerve. That everyone would admit, and I have no doubt the lady herself would admit that this was all there was to say about it. The power of "faith" is not a religious truth, but a psychological one.

Those who are not in the habit of carrying "mascots" or wearing charms have generally little conception of the vogue these things have. During the past two or three weeks I have marked three or four advertisements in widely circulated papers, offering for sale mascots of various kinds, and one advertisement assures possible purchasers that theirs is the genuine Eastern article which has brought luck to so many of its wearers, and is being worn by people in the highest ranks of society. The latter one can well believe. From an anthropological point of view, those who move in the higher social circles may be just as primitive as those in a lower stratum, and their beliefs equally crude. Again, one observes on the front of motor-cars miniature "teddy bears" or other articles that are supposed to exert some influence in securing good fortune. Charms are carried about on the person, or hung up in the house, and a real concern is often shown at their loss. People still talk about their lucky or unlucky days, while houses, years, or numbers are still credited with a baleful or favorable influence; and although, in the vast majority of cases, there will be disowned any real faith in the efficacy of these things, their vogue bears evidence to a huge, and often unsuspected, mass of primitive superstition still current.

In a lecture on *The Scope of Social Anthropology*, Professor Frazer well says:—

"In civilised society most educated people are not even aware of the extent to which.....relics of savage ignorance survive at their doors.....Systematic inquiries carried on among the less educated classes, and especially among the peasantry, of Europe have revealed the astonishing, nay, alarming, truth that a mass, if not the majority, of people in every civilised country is still living in a state of intellectual savagery; that, in fact, the smooth surface of cultured society is sapped and mined by superstition. Only those whose studies have led them to investigate the subject are aware of the depth to which the ground beneath our feet is thus as it were honeycombed by unseen forces. We appear to be standing on a volcano, which may at any moment break out in smoke and fire to spread ruin and devastation among the gardens and palaces of ancient culture wrought so laboriously by the hands of many generations."

Dr. Frazer had in mind, in writing the above, the more glaring examples of savage survivals, such as are found among the peasantry of Europe, but his observations apply to a much more extensive area. It applies to the "educated" classes as well as non-educated. The superstitions may not be as gross in the one case as in the other, but they are there; and, being there, form part of the "intellectual" savagery to which Professor Frazer refers. In the West End of London there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of fortune-tellers and professional "occultists." Their clientele is not made up of uneducated, but of educated people. Education does not always protect a man against superstition; often, it only provides him with specious excuses for its existence and its exercise. In the case of the savage or uneducated person, we see the superstition, so to speak, in the raw. In the case of the educated man, we have it glossed over with a number of scientific and philosophical terms. But it is the same thing at bottom. There is no vital distinction between the savage offering prayers to the tribal ghosts and the modern believer praying to his magnified, but still anthropomorphic, Deity. It is less brutal to hold a thanksgiving service after a successful war than to butcher one's prisoners in order to please a God who has delivered them into one's hands, but the mind that is capable of the one will be capable of the other, given a different social environment. The one who believes that a man is "divinely called" to officiate as a minister of religion is only perpetuating in a changed form the primitive belief that the tribal god enters and takes possession of the medicine-man in order to express his will. Taking the sacrament is just as much a savage custom as the primitive practice of god-eating. All these religious rites and ceremonies upon which so many dwell are as much evidence of the persistence of intellectual savagery as is the purchase of a charm to scare away a disease, or the wearing of a "mascot" to bring good luck. Animism may be expressed in scientific terms, just as a savage may wear clothes made by a West End tailor. But the language no more robs the idea of its animistic character than the mere wearing of clothes converts a savage into a civilised person.

Most people, when they come across accounts of admittedly superstitious customs or of savage survivals in our midst, smile pityingly, and then dismiss the subject from their minds. But the matter is of a far graver import than such people think. It is, from one point of view, amusing that a lady should be unable to play golf with her usual skill because she had lost a charm in the shape of a little black pig. From another point of view, and bearing in mind how widespread is the superstition, and noting also its connection with kindred superstitions, it is symptomatic of one of the dangers that front modern civilisation. Professor Frazer, in the lecture from which I have already quoted, says that "the community is really dominated by the will of an enlightened minority," and that "the higher human intelligence sways the lower, just as the intelligence of man gives him the mastery over the brutes." In a general way this is, I suppose, true. But the intelligence that sways a society need not be either "higher" or "enlightened" in a cultural sense. It needs only be strong, and strongly directed towards

a clearly perceived end. I do not think anyone will claim that the intelligence of the early Christians was higher or more enlightened than that of the writers and leaders of Pagan Roman society. The reverse of this was demonstrably the case. But Christianity eventually dominated that community, and brought Roman civilisation to ruin. And its success was mainly due to energetic but unenlightened intellects appealing for support to a mass of superstition current in Pagan society.

What has occurred once may occur again. Culture is wider, perhaps, to-day than in the days of the old Pagan Empire, and it is based on a more solid foundation of fact; but its greatest danger now, as then, comes from the presence in our midst of widespread superstition, to which the reactionist may at any time make a successful appeal. On a small scale this appeal is being constantly made, and with some amount of success. Local agitations may still be worked up in favor of a Sabbatarianism that is a living illustration of the survival of the savage principle of taboo. People may still be imprisoned for blasphemy; and a vast number of our fellow-countrymen still seriously believe that the nation would go to the dogs without an Established Church. And one can conceive—even though it is not immediately probable—a conjunction of circumstances that would induce a body of men like the clergy, whose influence is threatened by the advance of civilisation, making a final appeal to that floating mass of superstition that exists around us. Whether the appeal would be successful or not is another question; but the possibility of its being made is always with us, and while that is the case civilisation is indeed "standing on a volcano." Fortunately, the diversified character of modern culture has had the effect of withdrawing strong minds from the Churches to such an extent that its power for evil has been seriously curtailed. But the possibility of having at command, by means of an appeal to their ingrained superstitions, a vast mass of human material is one that may at any time appeal to one or more strong men greedy of power and unscrupulous as to the method by which they acquire it.

The pig-wearing golf-playing lady may, therefore, stand as symptomatic of an aspect of our civilisation that will not be without its significance to those who bear in mind the nature of the causes that determine social change. For whether its consequences be cataclysmic or not, some consequence all this survival of primitive superstition must have. You cannot have hundreds of thousands of people believing in luck and charms and magical formulæ, believing in angels and devils, and ever greedy after the supernatural—if only in the diluted form of "occult science" (whatever that may be)—without there being induced a more or less unsound conception of social life. By such minds scientific formulæ are accepted, but they are not assimilated. They become no organic part of the mental life. This type of mind becomes, too, a vast reservoir on which the reactionist will be always able to draw, and on which he is constantly drawing. It is the one real danger that threatens modern civilisation. So far as one can judge, ancient civilisations perished because they were overrun by a people of less culture. This was the danger that was ever before the rulers of old Rome, and against which they were constantly battling. But they overlooked the danger within, and in time that oversight proved fatal. So it is with ourselves. We are not to-day threatened by any barbarian invasion. We cannot be overrun by savages from without. We have a thousand-and-one safeguards against that. It is the savage in our midst that constitutes the danger, and how to civilise *him* is the great problem of the future.

C. COHEN.

Guessing is only fertile in proportion to the fertility of the experience it reproduces. If a man knows little, he can infer little.—George Henry Lewes.

Notes on Some May Meetings.

STRANGE admissions are being made just now by the leaders of various religious denominations. The Rev. Joseph Hocking, preaching at Barton-on-Trent a few Sundays ago, stated that "the majority of people are living in practical forgetfulness of God, which is evidenced in the general neglect of public worship, of prayer, of the religious services which nourish the life of the soul." He also said that "Sunday, as a Christian Sabbath, seems to be passing away." We all know how entirely true those admissions are, but although he made them quite frankly, Mr. Hocking very inconsistently contended that the Gospel *cannot* be treated lightly. Is it possible to forget God and neglect public worship without treating the Gospel lightly? Can people turn the Christian Sabbath into a holiday without showing disrespect for the message of the pulpit? The fact is that the Gospel not only can be, but actually is, treated with exceeding levity by an overwhelming majority of the people of this island. It is also admitted, not merely that the Church is being gradually shorn of its influence, but that the Gospel is losing its hold of the Church. A writer in the *Christian Commonwealth* for May 13, tells us that the supremacy of Jesus Christ in his own House is now at stake, which is equivalent to saying that the Church has deteriorated in quality. A layman, speaking on the subject of Religion and Business at the recent Presbyterian Synod, expressed the opinion that the people most difficult to manage are churchgoers and teetotalers. Principal Selbie, in his address from the Chair of the Congregational Union, deplored the deadness of the Church, declaring that what they needed was "a new sense of Christ's headship and of the reality of his presence, as well as a new idea of the Church and of their own responsibility to and for it."

Now, the curious thing is that, in spite of these grave admissions, some speakers at the May Meetings maintained that Christ is the King of the world, and that the body of which he is the head rules Christendom. Principal Forsyth, for example, asserted that the Church is the mother of modern Europe, and that historically the attitude of nation to Church was filial piety. Take the following extract:—

"The Church in its Calvinist, Puritan, and Independent forms was the mother of modern civil liberty. It was in a Church issue and a Church crisis in this land that modern democracy arose. And its worst perils are those that arise, not from being a son of the Church, but her prodigal. The Free Churches, as the legatees of Puritanism, saved the nation when the Anglican Church, which had so greatly blessed it, took a wrong path, and could save it in that crisis no more. If the Catholic Church created England, the Free Churches saved it.....The Church gives to the nations their object in life, their true destiny and moral selves."

That is what the Nonconformists call the highest of High Churchism; but it is so high that it never touches solid ground. It is simply a beautiful castle in the air. The Catholic Church did not create England, nor did the Free Churches save it. England became what it is very largely by setting itself in opposition to the voice of the Church. Modern civil liberty owes nothing to Christianity, though it must be confessed that Protestantism, by its powerful resistance to authority, has rendered an indirect service to the cause of freedom. Dr. Forsyth regards the Free Churches as "the legatees of Puritanism," forgetting that Puritanism was the sworn enemy of liberty and afforded no support whatever to the brotherhood of mankind. We are told on the best authority that the Puritan "loved all that were Godly, much misliking the wicked and profane." As John Richard Green says of him:—

"His bond to other men was not the sense of a common manhood, but a recognition of a brotherhood among the elect. Without the pale of the saints lay a world which was hateful to them, because it was the enemy of their God. It was this utter isolation from the 'ungodly' that explains the contrast which startled

us between the inner tenderness of the Puritans and the ruthfulness of so many of their actions" (*A Short History of the English People*, p. 466).

As a matter of fact, the brotherhood of mankind is not a Christian doctrine, any more than the universal Fatherhood of God. According to the teaching of the New Testament and the orthodox Church, mankind are not by nature children of God, but become such by a second birth, nor are they brothers and sisters until they are made Christians. The only brotherhood recognised by Christianity is that of the believers. To say that the Free Churches ever saved the nation is to utter a positive falsehood. The nation is still unsaved, or is in the slow process of self-salvation. The Bishop of Oxford knows quite as much about the nation as Dr. Forsyth, and will only smile disdainfully at the latter's egoistic claim.

Historically speaking, the State never was in love with the Church, though the latter made a long and resolute attempt to dominate the former. The State resented and finally successfully resisted the Church's domineering attitude; and the story of the gradual secularisation of politics is in reality the story of the Church's decreasing power and glory. When was the attitude of the nation to the Church that of filial piety? Certainly that is not its attitude to-day. In proportion as ignorance and superstition disappear, the Christian faith decays. The general neglect of public worship is sufficient evidence that the nation no longer loves its alleged mother. Its filial affection is conspicuous only by its absence. Now, the question naturally arises, why do the majority of people live in forgetfulness of God? Why do they neglect public worship, prayer, and the exercises which it is alleged nourish the soul? The true answer is that supernatural religion and natural knowledge cannot coexist. As light annihilates darkness, so intelligence displaces superstition, and sets man on his rightful throne. Christianity is dying because it is false. Had it been true, not even the gates of hell could have prevailed against it; but being false, not even the gates of heaven can prevent its dissolution. The disintegration of the Church proves the non-existence of the Christian God and the utter powerlessness of the loving Savior of the world. Professor Bartlet said that "every man and woman is raw material for the image of God," while the Bible assures us that man was created in that very image; but we are convinced that every human being is what heredity and environment have made him, and that improvement or salvation is not possible except by means of these two great laws. Dr. Bartlet said further that "the conscience of the average citizen and that of the true member of the Church are very different things in quality and in range"; but we vehemently deny the truth of the statement. The reverend gentleman must be woefully ignorant of the world if he verily believes that an average Christian is a better person than an average non-Christian. The superior conscience is that by which the best citizens are ever guided in their treatment of one another; and we are fully persuaded that the true member of the Church cannot help regarding and treating non-members as children of the Devil who richly deserve eternal damnation. The Nature of Things decrees that a believer can have no portion with an unbeliever, and that Christ can have no concord with Belial. We have renounced the belief in God, Christ, and Belial in order that we may consistently cherish the belief in the brotherhood of mankind. Christianity divides mankind into sheep and goats, placing the former on the right and the latter on the left hand of the God of love; and this false division has resulted in thousands of heartless persecutions and bloody wars.

Mr. Hocking spoke the truth when he told his Burton hearers that the general public no longer troubled itself about the supernatural, the followers of the Lamb being a miserable minority; but he was entirely mistaken when he stated that the people who give up religion "fail to find a true content" and are the victims of "a mighty famine." He no

doubt said that because he did not know any better; but he had no moral right to speak in the name of people concerning whose mental condition he was wholly ignorant. It is our solemn conviction that the intellectually emancipated are the happiest people on earth. They look at life from an intelligent and intelligible standpoint, and are never disturbed by supernatural hopes and fears. Neither God nor Devil causes them a moment's anxiety, and their sole object is to promote the wellbeing of society; and than this there can be no higher or nobler end.

J. T. LLOYD.

Primitive Man.—III.

(Continued from p. 315.)

"The mental condition of the lower forms of both races [Negro and Bantu] seems very near the other great borderline that separates man from the anthropoid apes, and I believe that if we had the material, or rather if we could understand it, we should find little or no gap existing in mental evolution in this old, undisturbed continent of Africa."—MISS KINGSLEY, *Travels in West Africa*, p. 312.

"Mankind, as it has been well said, advances in *echelons*; that is, the columns march not abreast of each other, but in a straggling line, all lagging in various degrees behind the leader. The image well describes the difference not only between peoples, but between individuals of the same people and the same generation. Just as one nation is continually outstripping some of its contemporaries, so within the same nation some men are constantly outpacing their fellows, and the foremost in the race are those who have thrown off the load of superstition which still burdens the backs and clogs the footsteps of the laggards."—PROFESSOR J. G. FRAZER, *Psyche's Task*, 169.

"He [the savage] is always suspicious, always in danger, always on the watch. He can depend on no one, and no one can depend upon him. He expects nothing from his neighbor, and does unto others as he believes that they would do unto him. Thus his life is one prolonged scene of selfishness and fear. Even in his religion, if he has any, he creates for himself a new source of terror, and peoples the world with invisible enemies."—SIR JOHN LUBBOCK, *Prehistoric Times* (1865), p. 484.

ALTHOUGH the savage is generally abominably cruel, he is not altogether consciously cruel, at least among the most primitive races. It is due in great measure to lack of sympathy and reasoning powers, just as a very young child will pull a kitten or a puppy about, causing pain through lacking the power of reflection. As Sir Richard Burton points out:—

"The cruelty of the negro is, like that of the school-boy, the blind impulse of rage combined with want of sympathy. Thus he thoughtlessly tortures and slays his prisoners, as the youth of England torment and kill cats. He fails in the domestication of the lower animals, because he is deficient in forbearance with them; in a short time his violence will permanently ruin the temper of a horse; and he will starve to death the English dog, for which, perhaps, he has paid a high price."*

In a footnote, the same writer adds:—

"Amongst the traders of the Bight of Biafra there are, I am glad to say, few men so base as to sell an English dog to a negro king or chief; and were a man to do so, he would be loudly blamed by his fellows."

The savage is also, like the child, a creature of impulse. Sir John Lubbock observes:—

"Some of the most brutal acts which have been recorded against them are to be regarded less as instances of deliberate cruelty than of childish thoughtlessness and impulsiveness. A striking instance of this is recorded by Bryon in his narrative of the 'Loss of the Wager.' A cacique of the Chonas, who was nominally a Christian, had been out with his wife to fish for sea-eggs, and having had little success, returned in a bad humor. 'A little boy of theirs, about three years old, whom they appeared to be dotingly fond of, watching for his father and mother's return, ran into the surf to meet them; the father handed a basket of eggs to the child, which being too heavy for him to carry, he let it fall, upon which the father jumped out of the canoe, and catching the boy in his arms, dashed him with the utmost violence against the stones. The

* Sir Richard Burton, *Mission to Gelele*, pp. 201-2.

poor little creature lay motionless and bleeding, and in that condition was taken up by the mother, but died soon after.'**

Mr. Wilfred Powell, who spent three years among the cannibals of New Britain, says:—

"The passion for killing is often so strong in them that I have been told by natives themselves not to walk in front of them when they are armed, lest this feeling should get the better of them, and they might do me an injury. Of course, this is not so strong a feeling with some as with others, but I believe it to be more or less natural to all, especially the wilder and more savage tribes. Moreover, from infancy they have been brought up to carrying arms and to consider every stranger as an enemy, either openly or covertly. A man without arms they despise and look down upon as being no warrior, and if he be a stranger, all the more do their feelings rise against him."†

In the matter of food, nothing comes amiss to the primitive savage. Major Tremearne, who, besides being a competent anthropologist, has acted as Political Officer in Nigeria, remarks:—

"Sir Harry Johnston says that in Liberia some women eat the lice out of each other's heads, that delicacy being the perquisite for doing duty as barber. I do not know if the same holds good in Northern Nigeria, but I should not be surprised to find that it does amongst the Yoruba people, for they will eat anything."‡

One day, when out with Ajai, a most faithful servant and a Yoruba man, the Major relates an amusing incident:—

"Suddenly Ajai made a dart at a large stone, rolled it over, and began cramming things into his mouth with evident satisfaction. I looked, and to my horror saw that he was eating live insects like cockroaches, and turning to the Mado(i)ki, expressed my opinion of Ajai in no polite terms. 'These Yorubawa,' said the great man, with a gesture of extreme disgust, 'would eat anything; I should not eat those cockroaches unless they were cooked'" (p. 243).

Mr. J. P. Thomson also notices the habit, among the natives of British New Guinea, of eating the vermin with which their woolly mops swarm, and observes: "This vile institution seems to exist in many parts of Polynesia, where the writer has observed the practice for many years."§

Charles Darwin, describing the disgusting appearance of the natives on the bleak and barren shores of Tierra del Fuego, who he found it difficult to "believe that they are fellow-creatures and inhabitants of the same world," describes them as feeding on putrid whales' blubber, and says:—

"It is certainly true that when pressed in winter by hunger they kill and devour their old women before they kill their dogs; the boy being asked by Mr. Low why they did this, answered, 'Doggies catch others, old women no.' This boy described the manner in which they are killed by being held over smoke and thus choked; he imitated their screams as a joke, and described the parts of their bodies which are considered best to eat."||

A good deal of cannibalism still goes on in New Guinea and some of the South Sea Islands. Mr. Decle observes that "A great deal of unsuspected cannibalism exists in Africa."

The Gallas, according to the testimony of a writer cited by Major Tremearne, "bury their dear ones in the stomach instead of in the ground." Many writers have exercised their ingenuity in devising reasons for this horrible custom, such as famine, sympathetic magic, religious ritual, etc. The truth is, they prefer it to all other food. Major Tremearne observes:—

"There is no doubt that a longing for the actual flavor of human meat is one of the principal causes, it being sometimes preferred 'high,' and being kept in water for the purpose, sometimes seasoned with lime

juice. Thus we are told of paddocks where 'human' cattle were kept and fattened for the market like stall-fed oxen, and when in good condition would fetch about twelve shillings each, and of the bodies of even the nearest and dearest being disinterred and bartered for others not coming within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity."*

Karl Lumboltz, who knew the Australian natives well, says:—

"The natives of Northern Queensland and of many other parts of Australia are cannibals. My people never made any secret of this, and in the evenings it was the leading topic of their conversation. The greatest delicacy known to the Australian native is human flesh. The very thought of it makes his eyes sparkle."†

As to the flavor of human flesh, it has often been compared to pork, but it is evident that this was a mere guess. Mr. Decle, while at Ujiji, eat human flesh two or three times, unknowingly, and found it delicious. It happened in this way. The Rinderpest had destroyed most of the cattle and run the price up until they were almost double the price of slaves. Therefore, there was a strong temptation to supply human flesh in place of animal. But, says Mr. Decle,—

"Some of the natives whom I had engaged at Ujiji had been assured by David that nothing could be hidden from me, and they determined to test my power; they accordingly supplied my cook with human food to see if I would find it out, and I confess that I ate it with great relish, unconscious of what it was. David found this out afterwards, but was afraid to tell me about it; however, to avoid a repetition of the experiment, he only brought meat from goats he saw killed himself. It was only afterwards that he told me about it. I then remembered eating a curry I thought excellent, and having brought to me some grilled bones that I enjoyed so much that I asked several times for more of them: these, it appears, were human ribs. So far as I can recollect they had but very little flesh on them, but this had a fine flavor of venison, with a salty taste, one of the reasons why cannibals greatly relish human flesh. I may add that cannibals seldom eat this meat without having kept it for a few days; usually they bury it, and when it is a point they feast on it."‡

Further revolting details of this disgusting practice may be read in Major Tremearne's book, but no doubt my readers are—to use a slang expression—"fed up" with the subject; at any rate, the present writer is, and concludes this portion of the study of Primitive Man with a sigh of relief. We shall next consider the intellectual powers, modes of thought, and powers of expression of Primitive Man.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

A Stormy Petrel.

GENERALLY there was trouble when he appeared on the scene. Had he come and gone without a discussion, the circumstance would have been regarded suspiciously, and there would have been inquiries concerning his health. Expecting an argument, his friends seemed to drift into conversation that asked for it. Unconsciously, maybe, they took the shortest possible tack into the stormy regions; and it was really wonderful how absolutely inevitable that storm was.

Often he would say, with a grin, that his friends were simply proving that mind controlled matter; that mind, in fact, put matter to the blush; and that if a religionist desired something very much he was certain to realise it without the assistance of God at all. It wasn't necessary in the least that God should exist that Christians should see him. It wasn't necessary that Christ should have died on the cross. Christians could see him there now. It wasn't essential that the spirit should be created a palpable entity; for Christians could feel it. That

* Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, p. 465.

† Wilfred Powell, F.R.G.S., *Wanderings in a Wild Country*, pp. 262-3.

‡ Major Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-Hunters of Nigeria* (1912), p. 243.

§ J. P. Thomson, *British New Guinea*, p. 68.

|| Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (Nelson's ed.), pp. 236-8.

Major Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-Hunters of Nigeria*, p. 183.

† Cited by Leo Frobenius in *The Childhood of Man*, p. 472.

‡ Lionel Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa*, pp. 311-2.

was enough. Their unconsciously expressed demand for an argument, he would say, was pretty similar, in many respects, to the mental attitude of religious fanatics when they wanted badly to see God, or be taken into the arms of Jesus, or feel the Holy Ghost in them, or any other of these religious hallucinations. And he would chuckle to himself.

The two favorite topics were Religion and Social Reform. Invariably they became inextricably interwoven as the discussion generated heat. Religion could not be kept apart from social life. Endeavor as he did to separate the two, he found that the task, in the circumstances, was hopelessly impossible. His opponents seemed quite incapable of examining religion on its own merits and demerits. All their lives it had been estimated the hub of their existence. Their morality had sprung from it; the well-being of their lives was the fruit of their religious principles; and their peace of mind had emanated from the love of God. If Christians would only live as Christians, there would be no need of social reform: that was their conviction; and they instanced their own lives as admirable proof of the idea.

So it was that his friends pulled him down from the intellectual plane into the social gutter; and he used the social ailments that have been chronic to humanity ever since one man discovered that his personal strength of body and brain gave him a power he could enjoy over his less efficient fellows—he used the degradations of humanity to confute their statements.

There were times when the argument terminated in maternal tears and much paternal advice; when the mother heart, poisoned by the vile fumes of religion, thought her son was lost for ever, and mourned as a woman does over her dead; pathetic times and tragic, for an unconquerable bitterness would engulf the son's mind, and his enmity towards Christianity surged and heaved, a storm-lashed ocean of anger under sad, gloomy skies. And the paternal advice, so futile in its well-meaning applications, so sincere in its triviality, so impossible of crystallisation, so full of vague incomprehensibilities, but engendered a despair that hung over the storm like spray-drenched air, damp and heavy.

Repeated renewals of the discussion, however, he told me, gradually wore thin the unpleasantness of the conclusions; and it became possible to enjoy an evening's sitting without suffering and mental anguish on either side. Perseverance and discretion, he said, had made their mark. Not that the minds he had influenced had changed their beliefs; they had not; but it was something to have achieved discussion lacking the tragic element, particularly when the people interested were as sincere as it was possible to be in their beliefs of God, and Christ, Holy Ghost, Spirit, and all the rest. It was something, even in these modern days, to break down the old barrier of religious intolerance. It was something, even assisted by the human blood-ties of relationship, to vanquish the dark and devilish belief of complete segregation, because of a mere difference of opinion, in minds trained from infancy in that doctrine. It was something to have destroyed the religious cancer that makes disbelief a horrible crime. But the memories of that maternal grief were not pleasant. They will always be bitter.

Occasionally, when the recollection burned in his sensitive mind, he would ascribe his hatred of Christianity to his mother's tears. "Had it not been for that," he would say, "I might have been easy on the matter. I might have been peacefully philosophical on the subject, content to let time scatter its dust on religious creeds. The quiet, calm methods, very gentlemanly and considerate, might have claimed my support. Instead of intellectual war it might have been intellectual wonder, and nothing more. But we must hate evil; and hatred is never complacent. Warfare is inevitable. With the sensitiveness to evil goes a relentless antagonism. It is war to the death. The man who hates evil best will fight evil best. He will never own defeat. Well, I

saw, in those tears, all the horrible crudeness of Religion, all its harshnesses, all its vile, anti-social qualities. The creed that can turn the mother-heart from her son, the creed that fills her eyes with tears, the creed that forces her to her knees in prayer for a lost child, is a despicable thing. It is criminal. It deserves more than contempt, more than mere censure, more than polite animosity. Sometimes, when the hatred overwhelms reason in me, I fancy it merits open rebellion, revolt in deeds as well as words. Scattered over the world there must be thousands, millions, of people who suffer in this ugly way from the results of Religion's bigotry. When I think of the miseries I have endured, and when my mind goes over Humanity, seeing countless thousands suffer, in the home quietness, from these atrocious tentacles of the octopus of Religion, arms that shoot out and suck joy from youth and love from age, there springs up in me an anger I can hardly quell. The tears are so real and so foolish, the sad thoughts so heavy and so silly, the condemnations so unjust, the woe so deep and so absurd, that the blood boils with wrath. And Religion is responsible for this, Religion alone. It would dominate the mother-heart. It would blast and sere the flowers of love, and cast them into the mire. People would not believe me; but it is true. For years the fondness, the natural fondness, was chilled in my veins. My parents were repugnant to me. I came near to hating them. Didn't my infidelity mean immorality? Didn't it mean present and future damnation? Wasn't I a social outcast? I had forsaken the faith of my fathers. Prematurely I had gone to hell. My mother believed all this nonsense. My father's beliefs struggled with common sense, with knowledge; and he endeavored to pour oil on the troubled waters by saying that I was passing through the valley of darkness to the land of light, and that the rays of God's love would be all the more brilliant because of the time of darkness and gloom. I would change, he thought. As I grew older I would see the error of my ways. I was the lost sheep on the mountain, and the good shepherd spared neither pains nor toil to rescue his wandering lamb. And he was always, always successful. For years I endured this, years of the misery of bitter thought. Is it any wonder I should hate Religion? Is it any wonder I should consider it the most disgusting sore on the social body? Is it any wonder I should bemoan my incapability to fight it as it should be fought? I hate Religion with a bitter hatred; and, if my hatred be uncanny in its intensity, remember I have seen my mother weep, not once, but dozens of times, because her son had strayed from the fold. However, the lamb has never returned, but the stormy petrel comes now oftener than before, and the storm always gives his visit a touch of mental life; but the ships are iron-built these days; they weather the storm bravely; there are no wrecks; for which let there be praise."

ROBERT MORELAND.

Concerning Souls.

FOR downright crudity, for absence of the saving grace of utility, there is no religion to equal the Christian one, which maintains an attitude of dignity upon a pile of absurdities. Though we may test it by contemporary religions, or by the newest of new religions, we find that it stands revealed in naked hypocrisy with its pitiful concept of God. "God as the deity of the sick, God as spider, God as spirit—is one of the most corrupt concepts of God that has ever been attained on earth." In this manner Nietzsche summed up the object of Christian veneration. As the Christians have sadly bungled their God-idea, so, in a similar manner, have they debased their ideas of the soul.

In the present age, when commercialism cuts at the root of culture, when Christian materialism (and there is truth in this paradox) has no broader vision

than that of interfering in prize-fights or transforming its places of worship into glorified music-halls, we cannot wonder that, as the God-idea is low so is its soul-idea on the same plane, and an insult to any person of average intelligence.

We have lately made the acquaintance of Plotinus through the good taste of Messrs. Bell & Sons, who are the publishers of his select works in Bohn's Popular Library, and our copy is liberally marked. Although personally we cannot see our way clear to even accept the Platonic idea of the soul, we were struck by its singular beauty and sublimity, and by its immeasurable superiority to the Christian conception.

Plotinus was an ardent disciple and interpreter of Plato, and, bearing in mind the arresting beauty of his philosophy, we are surprised that the early Christians did not crucify him and all those who were attracted by this good and noble man. We can only be truly thankful that the heavy-footed vandals were otherwise engaged, and so we are enabled to know one who soared as an eagle in the realms of speculative philosophy. It is chiefly in his discourses against the Gnostics that the striking contrast is seen between the Greek soul-idea and the Christian one. The former is achieved through laborious days of study and self-discipline; the latter can be claimed by any brutal murderer who uses to advantage the eleventh hour. By this remark we do not sit in judgment on murderers; we do at least say that if a soul is worthy of hostage in a murderer, it is also worthy of lodging in a guinea-pig. But even here we find ourselves face to face with an absurdity. The animal is denied it by Christians, and probably it has never committed any action more criminal than that of subsisting.

Plotinus was extremely reticent about his birth and parentage. One very striking aspect of this remarkable man's character was that *he was ashamed that his soul was in his body*. When we consider his anti-Christian idea of the soul, such an admission gives us an idea of the loftiness of his character, and we become impatient to know more of one who commenced his philosophy where the Christians finished. To those superior people called God's elect, we venture to think that this idea would cause many heartquakes. Man, in the image of his maker, deliberately stating that he is ashamed of his soul in body; this is blasphemy immortal and divine. But, nevertheless, it is leagues in advance of those crude doctrines used by Christians to frighten women and children. Furthermore, if the blood sacrifice was necessary to save that which is imperishable, the believers in this travesty of a religion would be too ignorant to behold the beauty of such a magnificent conception of the soul as that held by Plotinus.

The Gnostics, against whom Plotinus wrote, were a Christian sect, very active from the first to the sixth century. They held that Christ was of divine origin, and that knowledge instead of faith was the means of reaching heaven. This is an early example of Christian harmony. It is somewhat ironical, too, to find Plotinus at variance with them on the matter of the soul. Their soul-idea failed to satisfy one who had devoted his life to philosophy; he was constrained to shatter and remould it, and, greatest of all, to strip it of that doubly damned exclusiveness which claimed it for the few.

"Nor again is it fit to assert that the soul of the vilest man is immortal and divine." In these words he will not have the soul flung gratuitously to everybody if the Gnostics deny it to "all heaven and the stars that are there, though they consist of things far more beautiful and pure than anything terrestrial."

Poor fallen Gnostics! running round to tag the soul on human beings and forgetting such trifles as the stars. We do not think that the times have changed much. Any victim of the present system called civilisation, be he a murderer or a tyrant, if he can be led to see the error of his ways in time, may partake of glory everlasting. In a comparative

sense, the modern Christian and also the Gnostic sects aim at a popular basis for the exploitation of the soul-idea, and, of course, in this manner deliberately court failure. Lovers of animals cannot view with pleasure the prospect of their favorites being soulless; it remains now for some fierce aggressive and progressive branch of Christianity to take up this theory of souls for animals. We should imagine in this Christian country the idea might take root. One pleasing feature of this new departure would be easily observed; most animals in the present day, as far as beauty and fitness are concerned—but there, we think that readers will see our point. Christianity has accomplished so much for mankind that the horses one sees about are better fed and better cared for than the lambs of Christ. We really must return to Plotinus.

That there are many difficulties attendant to a proof of the soul no one will deny, and least of all, Freethinkers. If the proof did not rest on faith and assumption no one would care to disbelieve—Freethinkers included. But the conclusion we came to after reading Plotinus was this: that we, as Freethinkers, are unconsciously treading those paths which lead to harmony with the world, and, although our imperfect efforts meet with no degree of popular success, we must not relax them on that account. Wisdom, temperance, and fortitude were the three degrees whereby the soul, according to Plotinus, was purified. Who shall say that these are not part of the armory of Freethought? And, furthermore, we should be prepared to assert that, logically and by the *tu quoque* argument, we ought to be ready to burn those who do not think as we do.

In the sixteenth chapter against the Gnostics there is a passage of singular truth and beauty, "Again to despise the world, and the gods, and other beautiful natures that are in it, is not to become a good man." We cannot see anything here to run contrary to the principles of Freethought; in fact, we hesitate to call the soul supernatural, as postulated by Plotinus. It would seem that his acute mind had ransacked the whole of the world's philosophy and brought his theories to light, to enoble existence, and to satisfy intellect; and it was only natural that such theories should be antagonistic to the Christians.

We recall a particularly odious story in connection with a certain Biblical prophet called Elisha. This saint, hero, or fanatic was subjected to a little rude criticism from children, and, as a result, Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord, so that two she bears came out of the wood and tear forty and two of them. Chronology has it that this incident of love and tolerance must have happened about the year 896 B. C. At a later period, about two centuries previous to this, Plotinus must have lived. In his conclusion, "Against the Gnostics," he delivers these noble sentiments: "It is possible, therefore, not to be a lover of body, to become pure, to despise death, to have a knowledge of more excellent natures, and to make them the objects of pursuit." We are inclined to think that this kind, wise, and gracious philosopher who could set forth such sentiments, would stand as a God himself in comparison to Elisha, whom, it appears, had not the courage to curse in his own name—not even at children. The reader may say that the comparison is incongruous. So it is, and so it is intended to be. It is our candid and sincere belief that not one character in the Old Testament was worthy to sit at the feet of Plotinus. They all seemed to live in an atmosphere of blood and carnage and crudity that was repulsive, and in comparison, Greek thought seems to inhabit another world.

The book in question is dedicated by the translator as a tribute of the warmest gratitude to Meredith and his brother William, and we feel confident that every Freethinker, though he may refuse to surmount the difficulties of belief in a soul, will find in it much that is good and true, much gold and little dross, and its modest price will commend it to all.

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

Acid Drops

To be a "man of science" is no guarantee against talking nonsense, as we have often pointed out. And when he sets out to champion religion, nonsense is almost inevitable. From the summary of a paper by S. W. F. Barrett, read before the Congregational Union, we learn that—

"The foundations on which the materialistic school of thought rested its negative agnosticism had been rudely shaken, if not overthrown by recent discoveries of physical science. That school founded itself on the molecular hypothesis of matter. The atomic theory had been shattered. An atom of matter, though of inconceivable minuteness—at least 100 millions being found in the smallest point visible under microscopic power—was found to be a solar system in miniature, and it was a solar system in process of eruption. The atoms were neither solid, nor simple, nor immutable, nor immortal."

We are quoting from a summary only, but as it stands the comment is very largely nonsensical, and part of it is untrue as a mere statement of scientific fact.

It is quite a delusion to assume that Materialism as a philosophy is based upon the "molecular hypothesis of matter," or indeed upon any special theory of the nature of matter. Naturally, Materialists, in dealing with the problem of existence, took the conception of matter that was generally regarded as having the greatest scientific warranty. And when a more accurate knowledge showed the need for revising an accepted scientific formula, the Materialist had a full right to demand leave to reshape the presentation of his case so that it would harmonise with that revised formula. As a philosophy, Materialism is quite independent of any hypothesis concerning the nature of matter. Historically, it is a philosophy of nature that sets what one may call mechanical causation against supernaturalistic operations. Is nature, as a whole, such that phenomena occurring at any time are the exact and necessary equivalents of all that has preceded the appearance of such phenomena? If the answer be in the affirmative, the truth of Materialism is admitted. If in the negative, then supernaturalism takes rank as a probably truthful hypothesis. Naturalism *versus* spiritualism, mechanical causation *versus* supernaturalism—that is the essential issue between Materialism and its opponents.

Now, what discoveries in physical science have been made that tell against the materialistic philosophy? There are none. Every discovery goes to strengthen it, and as a matter of fact it is the accepted working creed of every scientific man, even of Professor Barrett himself. Professor Barrett says the atomic theory has been shattered. If that were true, it could not prove that Materialism was false. But it is not true. The atomic hypothesis is not shattered, and Professor Barrett ought to know better than to make such a statement. That the atom was solid, simple, and indestructible was not a part of the atomic theory. Professor Barrett must know that this is true; and his misleading a lot of clergymen gathered in congress is the more inexcusable because they have no desire to contradict him, and will utilise his opinion to propagate false notions. The ultimate and indestructible nature of the atom were deductions drawn from the atomic theory, but were no essential part of it. The atomic theory—and when a scientist uses that term he must mean Dalton's atomic theory—was an assertion of laws of definite, multiple, and equivalent proportions that are as true now as ever, and they form the basis of modern chemistry. The atom remains. Our conception of the nature of the atom is undergoing, or has undergone, a change. That is all that has occurred. To say that the atomic theory is shattered is simply untrue. Professor Barrett may say that before an assemblage of parsons; we question if he would dare to say it before a congress of chemists.

A few items from two days' announcements of latest wills: Rev. L. M. Seir, Somerset, £27,691. Rev. R. D. Plummer, Folkestone, £11,227. Rev. R. F. Thornhill, £15,000. Rev. R. Preston, Altrincham, £3,219. Rev. J. Ainsworth, Molesey, £2,573. Ven. W. Donne, Wakefield, £11,469.

The Rev. F. Dormer Pierce, vicar of St. John's Church, Southend-on-Sea, has been elected Chairman of the local branch of the London Christian Evidence Society. The other officials include a fried-fish merchant and a Church Army "captain." This trinity of Pierce and Plenty will hardly set the Thames Estuary on fire.

The very same men, says Mr. R. J. Campbell, "who in their private lives may be quite exemplary and even devoted to the church, are in their public capacity as administrators and diplomats, frankly immoral; their policy is dictated not by moral considerations, but with an eye to the main chance." We have often said the same thing, and the moral seems to us obvious. Mr. Campbell's moral is, of course, that the Church must exert power—which is absurd. Things being as Mr. Campbell says they are, what is needed is the recognition that devout religious belief has no necessary connection with right conduct. When that is generally recognised people will not find it so easy to salve their conscience with acts of devotion to a church, and religious belief will not be so freely utilised as an excuse for "unmoral" action. There will be no veil between a man's actions and their social consequences, and self-deception—rascality's most effective assistant—will not be easy. Mr. Campbell is merely emphasising the failure of religion as a moral force without the courage to admit the truth even to himself.

"It is sickening to read," says *Science-Grounded Religion*, a monthly Indian journal published at Lahore, "how, in spite of intellectual education and external civilisation of a high order, the West is going down and down in moral life." It then proceeds to give evidence from English preachers of the moral decadence of Western peoples, and concludes that the attention of Indian ethical reformers is sadly needed. It will be a shock to the complacency of Christians to learn that non-Christian people are struck by their need of moral reformation, and yet it is an old complaint. Japanese and Chinese have said much the same thing. We talk of our moral superiority, and repeat the talk so frequently that we have come to take it as an accepted fact. Educated non-Christians who study us at home come to quite a different conclusion. They admit that we are in front of them in scientific attainment and commercial prosperity, but in other directions they are as anxious to improve us as we are to improve them, and with as much justification.

Referring to a forthcoming novel by Miss Corelli, the devout *Daily Chronicle* says it cannot impart the plot, but readers are requested to "watch and pray." This is serious! One lady of the name of Mary has already been deified; we are not keen about a second.

Mr. Max Mayer, the Hatton Garden pearl specialist, says there are plenty of people rich enough to spend £300,000 on a necklace. Christians pretend to despise money, but they don't let the cash pass them by.

In the early years of Calvinistic rule, Geneva must have been a delightful place in which to live. The following is a pen-picture of the way in which the Consistory controlled life, and is taken from Mr. Hugh Reyburn's recently issued *John Calvin* :—

"The Consistory by no means confined its attention to those who were slack in their attendance at church. It looked after their behavior when they were there. Three men who had been laughing at church—one of them behind the shelter of his cap—were sent to prison. Others who criticised the sermon and said that the preachers of former days were better than those who filled the pulpits now were sharply advised not to absent themselves on that account. Others were dealt with for playing cards on Sunday evenings, for spending their time in taverns, for cursing and swearing, for attempting to commit suicide, for possessing a copy of the *Golden Legend*, for kneeling on a husband's grave and saying *Requiescat in pace*, for using money to get Masses sung, for fornication, for betrothing a daughter to a Papist, for getting a fortune told by a fortune-teller, for eating fish on Good Friday, for making a chalice and other instruments of idolatry, for singing obscene songs, for shaving the tonsure on a priest's head, for saying it was better to have a quartan fever than to let the ministers have charge of one's soul, for saying there is neither devil nor hell, and that if there is Election and Reprobation there is no condemnation for guilt, for saying there are people who get themselves adored and Calvin is one of them, for arranging a marriage between a woman of seventy and a man of twenty-five, for saying that if all who did not believe in Christ would be damned there would be lots of room in Paradise, and for arguing that men should not be put to death for religious opinions. These instances, taken from an extended period, give a fair idea of the matters which engaged the attention of the Consistory during the first years of its operations."

Principal Selbie, of Mansfield College, says that Christians everywhere are beginning to show they have some conscience in the matter of reunion; and show a desire to stand together and speak together with one voice and one mind. What a triumph for Christianity! What a proof of the

power of Christian love! After nineteen centuries Christian people are *beginning* to think it is time they left off fighting and began to agree together! Well, they never have agreed together, and we venture to prophesy that they never will. And some of the leaders are only anxious for agreement because they realise the increasing growth of an enemy that threatens *all* sections of the Christian faith. In face of a common enemy, they feel the need of mutual concord. The desire for union has nothing to do with a genuine agreement about matters of faith; it springs wholly from the perception of a danger that threatens to destroy them all.

The truth is that religious belief always makes more strongly for division than for union. Essentially religious belief involves a policy of exclusion. It unites a few who believe by excluding the majority who dissent. Each Church shuts out all who disagree with it, and thus proceeds on the direct opposite to social union, which, of necessity, aims at binding together diversified tastes and beliefs on the basis of common and fundamental needs. Hence, while social development makes for a greater union over a wider area, religious development makes for a greater division. Principal Selbie says that "to introduce methods of party politics into religious assemblies is a sheer desecration." Well, we are no lovers of party politics or of the methods of party politicians, but we may point out that in the past political assemblies will compare very favorably with religious assemblies, and also that the tone and character of political gatherings and political movements are invariably worsened by the introduction of religion. Will anyone say that our present House of Commons has been improved by the introduction of a number of religious Nonconformists? Does a religious discussion in the House make members more polite or more considerate to each other? And look at the Irish question! How much has religion improved the tone of politics there?

In the *Englishwoman* a Miss St. John complains that Mr. Israel Zangwill in his play, *The Melting Pot*, has slurred over the fact that the Jews were as bad as the Russians, for had they not killed Christ? This is as sensible as if present-day Suffragettes were made responsible for the behavior of Jael with her little hammer.

During a recent thunderstorm the House of Lords was considering a Bill for the prevention of floods. Why do not the Lords make use of the services of the Bishops, who have special forms of prayer for rain-making and dry weather?

"Learn how to laugh," says the *Christian Age*. Christians will take a lot of teaching, for their Deity is not exactly a Falstaff.

"People are always good-tempered when they are standing in front of a drop of something," said the Chairman of the Southport Licensing Bench. What, *always*? Even before communion port at a shilling a bottle?

Trombone-player Carlile says the duty of the Church is to prodigal sons, and not elder brothers, who are too difficult. Dear! Dear! Cannot the musician-evangelist try the inducement of the fatted calf?

"The horrible discovery by the Albanian gendarmerie, reported by Reuter, of two hundred half-carred bodies of Albanian peasants who had been captured by Hellenic 'sacred bands' and crucified within a Greek church, which had then been set on fire to conceal the deed, comes very near to being the most devilish exploit of the Balkan Christians in recent years. As the Greek recruiting agents have gathered the most desperate and lawless elements into the bands organised against Albania, all their proceedings have been savage in the extreme. Perhaps the Balkan Committee will now issue another pamphlet on Moslem wickedness and Christian virtues in the Near East."—*The Outlook*.

A poor woman at Wokingham killed her six year old child and then herself. In a letter to her husband she asked him "to lead a good life in Christ" and promised to wait "at the pearly gates" for him. The child, she said, she was going to take with her to "the better land." The case is a sad one, as the wife expressed affection for her "dear, loving husband." The only moral we desire to draw is that of wondering when Christians will drop the sickening cant about the strength and courage given by religion to those who believe in it.

In a recent leading article, the *Daily Sketch* describes the modern church services as "too often an ell-long sermon, with a few decorations." Once the Church's services were filled with eternal hell and no decorations.

"You can only get the public to move when you frighten them," says Dr. Edwards Jones. The clergy have known this elementary fact for thousands of years, but the hell-fire scare is nearly played out.

The Vicar of Mellor complains that visitors who came to the Choral Eucharist on Easter Day left at various times during the service. We expect they went because they had had enough, and the rational cure would seem to be shorter or more attractive services. But the vicar threatens pains and penalties for those who will not stay to the end. He says: "We must see that the law of the Church in this respect is observed in future. It is punishable by law to leave the church from the beginning of the service to the end." It may be so; but all the same we do not fear that many will be prosecuted for the offence. The Vicar of Mellor has the misfortune of being born too late. Somewhere about the fourteenth or fifteenth century is his proper period.

Rev. John Raper, curate, was on May 11 sued for damages for the seduction of a girl aged nineteen. The offence had been proceeding for about two years. The jury returned a verdict for the father for £400.

"It is an extraordinary thing that all the boys who come here for this kind of offence seem to be regular attendants at church and Sunday-school." The "here" referred to in the above sentence was the Liverpool Police-court, and the speaker was the magistrate, who ought to know what he was talking about. Two boys, sixteen years old, were charged with being found at night with burglars' tools in their possession. Hence the magistrate's comment. Had these two youngsters been in the habit of attending Free-thought meetings, the moral—to the religious world—would have been obvious. As they, and the majority of other youthful offenders at the same court, were regular attendants at church or chapel, the religionist fails to see any moral in the situation. And we do not think it necessary to provide our readers with one.

How little it takes to build up a reputation—with some people. A religious weekly we were glancing through refers to the "abounding humor" of Mr. Will Crooks. Here is the sample given. "You can call on the biggest blackguard you like and ask him if he wants to turn the Bible out of the schools, and he'll say, 'No, I may be a bad lot myself, but I want to give the children a chance.'" As Dominie Sampson would say, "Prodigious!" Consider the subtle humor of the remark! If it were not Mr. Crooks, we should call it sarcasm. For who but Mr. Crooks would consider the fondness of the "biggest blackguard" for the Bible a reason for keeping that book in the schools? The "biggest blackguard" had probably been brought up on the Bible himself. And the result was there in his black-guardism. At least, it had not saved his being a blackguard; and it is possible that his children would stand a better chance brought up on some other kind of literature.

One cannot expect a clergyman to read history accurately, and so one is not surprised to find the Rev. Dr. Forsyth declaring that "it was in a Church issue and a Church crisis in the land that modern democracy arose." Naturally, while the whole of a nation's life is dominated by a Church, any change must be connected more or less with the Church. And that is really all there is in Dr. Forsyth's generalisation. Modern democratic movements began in England in connection with a Church crisis because the power of the Church had to be broken before a democracy could arise. For the same reason the French Revolution also commenced with a Church crisis. In either case, had the dominant Church remained unconquered, genuine civil and political freedom would have been an impossibility. The lesson is not, as Dr. Forsyth thinks, that freedom is founded in religious belief, but that the power of religious belief must be broken before freedom can assert itself.

In a letter to his brother—a clergyman—written just before committing suicide, Mr. J. Lucas, ex-M.P. for Portsmouth, gave as the reason for his action the fact of his suffering from a malignant and incurable disease. He also said, "I trust to the mercy of Almighty God, who has blessed me so abundantly." With an incurable disease! Sounds like deliberate sarcasm.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £146 5s. Received since:—F. Akroyd, 13s.

MISS E. KIDD.—We regret we cannot afford further space to continue the controversy between yourself and Mr. Palmer. We have been compelled to decline the insertion of several letters for and against for the same reason. Letters addressed to Mr. Palmer, c/o this office, will be duly forwarded.

By a slip of the pen we wrote "Prince George of Wied" in our last week's paragraph on Albanian affairs. It should have read "Prince William of Wied."

S. BEARDALL.—Thanks for cuttings and good wishes for Mr. Foote's "speedy recovery." It is useless regretting what one cannot do; the main thing is that we can all do something to promote the interests of a cause that we have at heart, and you appear to be doing what you can in your own way. If every Freethinker did the same our movement would soon be "booming."

ATHEIST (Birmingham).—We really do not know how you managed to read into our reply the conviction that people cannot be good without theological beliefs. When we said that you cannot separate New Testament ethical teaching from New Testament theology, we meant that the former had no independent existence there, but was obviously based upon the theology taught. And that in the main has been the conviction of the Christian Churches until recent times.

J. KING.—(1) Pleased to have your appreciation of Mr. Cohen's reply to his clerical critic. The reverend gentleman has not accepted the offer for an exchange of articles, but he has written that he would like to see it accepted, although he fears to undertake it himself. Perhaps he will induce someone else to take advantage of the offer. (2) We do not know that we could do justice to our opinion of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in a sentence. Although this work was overshadowed by his *Wealth of Nations*, we are of opinion that the *Moral Sentiments* was by far the greater work. It was a valuable contribution to ethical philosophy, and will always repay careful study.

G. BEDBOROUGH.—The advertisement in the *Sunday Times* of "Bargains in Correct-made Lingerie" is, as you say, about "the limit." Still, it is only what is being done by religious labor homes in this country. Regular dealers are brought into competition with goods manufactured by underpaid labor, and the regular workers suffer in consequence. Sweating for "Christ's sake" is a well-established form of industry.

F. AKROYD.—Thanks for your good wishes for Mr. Foote. Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop 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 to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

The Coming Conference.

I BEG to remind the "saints" once more of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, which takes place on Whit-Sunday at the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place. The morning and afternoon meetings are purely for business and are confined to members of the N. S. S. The evening public meeting is open to all comers and every seat is free. I hope the "saints" will do their best to advertise this meeting, at which I am booked to take the chair. We cannot offer the "converted infidel" attraction, which is the essential basis of Mrs. Besant's appeal; but her audience in the same block of buildings will still leave some people who prefer Reason to Mysticism.

G. W. F.

Sugar Plums.

This is almost the last opportunity we shall have of calling attention to the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday. There will be a good list of speakers at the evening meeting—including Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Moss, Heaford, and Miss Kough. As admission will be free, this will be a good opportunity for Freethinkers to introduce their Christian friends. It is not often that so many of our leading speakers are to be heard at once, and the most should be made of the opportunity. Those who intend being present

at the Conference luncheon should notify Miss Vance at once.

The Secretary of the Edmonton Branch of the N. S. S. desires to thank those Freethinkers who supported the platform at Edmonton Green on Sunday last. Mr. Cohen had a very large meeting, and, with the exception of a few casual interruptions, good order was maintained. A Father Caverner appears to have been the centre of whatever disturbance there has been, and we are afraid that Secularists themselves have been partly to blame for this in making too much of him. We strongly advise them to continue with their propaganda, and ignore the reverend gentleman altogether. In the long run he will find his proper level, and the more thoughtful of the public will soon discover what that is. Meanwhile, those Freethinkers who are not otherwise engaged on Sunday evenings would do well to favor the meeting-place with their presence.

After twenty-four years' open-air lecturing, Mr. Cohen had decided on giving this form of propaganda a rest for awhile, but he has arranged to deliver a couple of lectures in Victoria Park to-day (May 24), afternoon and evening. Weather favorable, there will no doubt be a good rally of East End Freethinkers.

We have received, after considerable delay, a copy of the circular prepared and sent out by the Committee of the Ramsey Testimonial Fund. Only a few subscriptions are acknowledged on the circular, which was probably drafted at an early stage of the Committee's proceedings. We have before expressed the hope that Freethinkers who bear in mind Mr. Ramsey's many years' work for Freethought will subscribe as quickly and as liberally as possible, and we now repeat it. The treasurer of the fund is Mr. B. T. Hall, Club Union Buildings, 127 Clerkenwell-road, London, E.C. For the encouragement of others, we are ready to insert a list of subscriptions to date on receiving it from the official treasurer of the fund.

We are informed that our paragraph in the *Freethinker* for May 10 concerning lectures in Regent's Park was incorrect in one particular. "No regular Freethought meetings" should have read "no regular N. S. S. meetings."

More Notes.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING consists of a streak of genius in a loud and vulgar nature. The latter still subsists in full vigor; the former seems nearly played out. What has he done worth reading since his "Recessional," which, after all, was only imitation great work? "The Absent-Minded Beggar" with its "Pay, Pay, Pay!" refrain was a disgrace to the nation, and an insult to the Army. That Mr. Kipling thought it rather flattering to Mr. Thomas Atkins, and likely to raise money for him, only shows his sense of the fitness of things when he tries to be serious; perhaps one ought to say when he tries to be a serious patriot. Mounted on a political platform, he raves at the opposite party in the language of a barrack stable-yard. A few days ago at Tunbridge Wells he declared that the Government took up Home Rule for the sake of their official salaries, and nothing else. Now no Government in the world is quite as bad as that. Men's motives are very mixed, and no man would ever be in politics long enough to reach the post of Cabinet Minister if he had not some disinterested desire for the welfare of his fellow citizens. Even that charge against the Liberal Government (of course it never applies to a Conservative Government) does not satisfy Mr. Kipling. He charges the Liberal, Radical, and Socialist members of the House of Commons with "embezzling the public funds" in voting themselves £400. He hasn't heard, apparently, that the Tories, Unionists, Orangemen, and other members of other parties with fancy names, take the "embezzled" money just as cheerfully as the "thieves" who voted it. Neither has he heard that members of Parliament are paid all over the English-speaking world, to say nothing of most foreign lands. Mr. Kipling has made a lot of money by his books; probably hundreds of times more than Shakespeare

did; better writers than Mr. Kipling have died of starvation in England. His financial success depended on the fact that he found a popular craze ready to his hand and worked it for all it was worth. Upon this stroke of luck it is that he presumes to talk so insolently to some of his decided superiors. Pausing in his Tunbridge Wells speech to take a glass of water, he said "You've got to clear your mouth for such filth." Such are the manners of "the poet of Empire." * * *

Mr. Kipling, as I understand, is a professed Christian. He is one of those people who are rather for maintaining the Blasphemy Laws than for doing away with them. Freethinkers must be punished for not respecting the feelings of Christians. Had any Freethinker drunk cold water at a public meeting, on the ground that he had to wash his mouth out after talking about such "filthy" things as Christians and Christianity, Mr. Kipling would, we believe, have justified the blasphemous wretch's imprisonment. Thus it always was, and probably ever will be. Those who are quickest in demanding consideration for *their* feelings are slowest in showing consideration for the "feelings" of others.

* * *

I wonder if the picture of Mr. Kipling as a public speaker in Monday's *Daily Mirror* had any valid pretensions to accuracy. The front view made him look all mouth and spectacles below the eyebrows; and the cerebrum above the glasses looked worthy of an imbecile. Don't do it again, Mr. Kipling. Avoid being caricatured in that way. And by your friends, too!

* * *

Tennyson could write what is not very wisely called patriotic verse. The "Revenge," allowing for the defect of too much boasting put into the mouth of the hero, is a magnificent ballad; and the verse at the end, describing the great storm, moves like the rise and fall of the tempest-tossed Atlantic. Mr. Kipling never did work of that kind, but he gained a word of praise from Tennyson for his "English Flag." That was in 1881. His acknowledgment was about as good as it could be:—"When the private in the ranks is praised by the general, he cannot presume to thank him, but he fights the better next day." Mr. Kipling was "clothed and in his right mind" then. He might have been a better poet if he had preserved his modesty. It was well said by Longfellow in his sonnet to Tennyson that the latter was "not of the dancing dervishes of song." Unfortunately that fate overtook Mr. Kipling. And when he mounts partisan platforms he drops the song but wears the costume.

* * *

Shelley was a partisan—in a sense. He espoused the side of the people against their deceivers, oppressors, and exploiters. And what a gentleman he was! But he was a great poet.

* * *

The Christians worship the Bible. But worshipers seldom study their idol; if they do they become iconoclasts. "Money is the root of all evil" was quoted lately in the *Daily Mirror*. There is no such text in the Bible. It is "the love of money." If you want to know what the Bible says, ask a Freethinker.

* * *

"The King has been spending five days with his soldiers" a newspaper says. *His* soldiers! Another thing illustrates the superstition of monarchy. The same newspaper, on the same day, described Queen Alexandra as "a miracle of youth and beauty." I don't like discussing a lady's age, or appearance. But I was a schoolboy when Queen Alexandra and the late King Edward were married; and there is no miracle of youth and beauty about me. The author of the *Golden Bough* has shown that kingship, and all that flows from it, is one of the ancient devices for "gulling the mobs to keep them under." The kings ruled but the priests really governed.

The king was *their* man. When he wasn't he soon disappeared. Read the history of King Saul—then that of David.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Apologetics.

V.—PALEY'S EVIDENCES.

HAVING briefly noticed the so-called "apostolic fathers" and the apologetic work of Irenæus, I will now take two or three examples from the "Evidences" of Paley, in which the testimony of these early writers to the truth of Christianity are adduced. In Prop. I., chap. ix., sec. i., this well-known apologist makes the following confident assertion:—

"The four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present."

This proposition, Paley says, is proved by the "testimonies" which he brings forward from the writings of the following ancient Christians: Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, etc. The four canonical Gospels, as we have already seen, are named and quoted from by Irenæus (A. D. 185); it will therefore be unnecessary to notice the last three writers. It may also be admitted that these four Gospels were written between the years A. D. 185 and 155—and probably in the order Mark, Matthew, John, Luke. The evidence we require is of their existence in apostolic times—say, from A. D. 30 to 70. When it is borne in mind that the apostles were men when called to the apostleship in A. D. 28, we may take it that if they, or their colleagues, wrote anything at all, these writings would have been produced before A. D. 70, and have been known and named by all Christian writers after that date. I will now call Paley's witnesses in the order named, and for convenience will reply to each before he leaves the box.

I. Barnabas, whom Paley calls "the companion of Paul." In the Epistle ascribed to this individual are found the following quotations:—"as it is written, There are many called; few are chosen"—"he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"—"Give to every one that asks."

REPLY: The writer of this Epistle was not Paul's Jewish colleague, Barnabas. He was a Gentile Christian, who wrote in the reign of the emperor Hadrian. The first quotation is almost identical with Matt. xxii. 14—"For many are called, but few chosen." The second quotation reads:—

"But when he chose his apostles, who were to preach the gospel, [he did so] from among those who were sinners above all men, that he might show that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

There is nothing in the canonical Gospels which indicates that the apostles were greater sinners than other Jews of their time; neither is this saying employed in those Gospels in connection with the apostles. The quotation is thus given by the three Synoptists:—

Matt. ix. 13.—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark ii. 17.—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke v. 32.—"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Now, this saying was taken by Matthew, Mark, and Luke from a more primitive Gospel, and Barnabas does not give the name of any Gospel writer. In the third quotation Barnabas says:—

"Thou shalt not hesitate to give, nor murmur when thou givest. Give to every one that asks; so shalt thou know who is the good rewarder of thy gifts. Keep what thou hast received," etc. (par. xix.).

The nearest parallel to the foregoing in the canonical Gospels reads—

Matt. v. 42.—“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

I turn next to the “Shepherd,” written by Hermas in the second century, and there read:—

“Give to all the needy in simplicity, not hesitating as to whom you are to give. Give to all, for God wishes his gifts to be shared among all. They who have received will render an account to God, why and for what they had received,” etc.

Here it is quite clear that the third “quotation” of Barnabas was not taken from the canonical Matthew, where nothing is said of “not hesitating,” or of “receiving,” or of “gifts”—all three being found in the “Second Commandment” of the “Shepherd.” The other two quotations were derived from the primitive Gospel in use in Barnabas’s time.

II. Clement, bishop of Rome, of whom, Paley says, “ancient writers, without any doubt or scruple, assert to have been the Clement whom St. Paul mentions in Phil. iv. 3 as a fellow-worker.” This Clement says in his Epistle:—

“Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus.....for thus he said: Be pitiful that ye may be pitied; forgive that it may be forgiven to you; as ye do, so shall it be done to you; as ye give, so shall it be given to you; as ye judge, so shall it be judged to you; as ye show kindness, shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure ye mete, with the same shall it be measured to you.”

REPLY: Clement was an honored presbyter of the church at Rome in the second quarter of the second century. One of his duties was that of corresponding with other churches. His quotations were all made from the primitive Gospel. The parallel passages in our Gospels read as follows:—

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (v. 7)—“For if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (vi. 14)—“whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them” (vii. 12)—“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together” (Luke vi. 38)—“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (viii. 2)—“and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you” (viii. 2).

All the foregoing passages, save one, are in Matthew’s Gospel. One of Clement’s quotations—“as ye show kindness, shall kindness be shown to you”—is not in any of the canonical Gospels.

III. Hermas, who, according to Paley, was the Hermas named in Rom. xvi. 14. His “Shepherd,” Paley says, “contains tacit allusions to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John,” but without naming, or quoting from, any of them.

REPLY: This book of fabricated visions and revelations was written about A.D. 150. After reading it through carefully, I can find no allusions, tacit or otherwise, to any Gospel.

IV. According to Paley, “Ignatius, as testified by ancient Christian writers, became bishop of Antioch about thirty-seven years after Christ’s ascension..... In his Epistles are undoubted allusions to the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John.”

REPLY: Ignatius was bishop of Antioch for nine years, his career being cut short by martyrdom in A.D. 115. The Epistles which bear his name were forged about A.D. 150—160.

V. Polycarp, respecting whom Paley says:—

“Polycarp had been taught by the apostles; had conversed with many who had seen Christ; was also by apostles appointed bishop of Smyrna.....The Epistle of Polycarp contains nearly forty clear allusions to books of the New Testament—more especially to Matthew and Luke.”

REPLY: Polycarp suffered martyrdom in A.D. 155; that is to say, 187 years after the call of the apostles (A.D. 28). Paley has simply repeated the erroneous and misleading statements of Irenæus. Polycarp was a Pauline Christian, who thought more of Paul than of all the apostles lumped together. Though Irenæus says he was a disciple of the apostle John, and used to talk of “his familiar intercourse” with that apostle, Polycarp never once names this

beloved teacher, nor this teacher’s Gospel, in his Epistle; neither does he make any mention of the other apostles, or of Matthew, Mark, or Luke—or their Gospels. To make up for this remissness he quotes from Paul’s Epistles about twenty times, and in one place says: “For neither I, nor any such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul” (par. iii). But Polycarp does quote from a Gospel; he says, for instance:—

“Remember what the Lord said, teaching: ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven to you; be pitiful, that ye may be pitied; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.’” (par. ii).

This first saying is exactly the same as Matt. vii. 1, and the last (omitting one word) the same as Matt. vii. 21. Polycarp would thus appear to have been acquainted with Matthew’s Gospel, though the other two sayings are from a more primitive Gospel.

VI. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who, Paley says, “was a hearer of the apostle John, and a companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus attests.” The fact that Papias names the Gospels of Matthew and Mark “proves that these Gospels must have borne the names of these evangelists at that time, and probably long before.”

REPLY: Papias and Polycarp were certainly contemporaries; but it is very unlikely that one ever set eyes on the other. Papias was a hearer, not of the apostle John, but of a presbyter named John, connected with a neighboring church. Eusebius, who had read Papias’s book, comments upon the fraudulent statement of Irenæus, and says that it was disproved by what Papias said himself. Though this ancient bishop has named writings by Matthew and Mark, we have no evidence that he saw either; he was merely told of their existence by his friend the presbyter. Both were written in his day (A.D. 130—150), but were not yet known to all the churches. Papias’s book contained sayings from “unwritten tradition” and from the “Gospel according to the Hebrews.”

VII. Justin Martyr. Of this writer Paley says:—

“In Justin’s works, from which might be extracted almost a complete life of Christ, there are but two instances in which he refers to anything as said or done by Christ, which is not related in our present Gospels. One of these is a saying of Christ not met with in any book now extant—‘Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ has said, In whatsoever I shall find you, in the same I will also judge you.’ The other is a circumstance in Christ’s baptism—a fiery or luminous appearance upon the water, which is mentioned in the Gospel of the Hebrews.....All the references in Justin are made without mentioning the author, which prove that the four Gospels were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts then extant. But although Justin mentions not the author’s name, he calls the books ‘Memoirs composed by the Apostles.’”

REPLY: In his first Apology (par. 46) Justin states that the Christians of his day “say that Christ was born 150 years ago under Cyrenius.” According to this statement, Justin wrote in the year A.D. 166; for Quirinius or Cyrenius came into Judæa to superintend a registration for taxation in the year A.D. 6—and at no other time. At this date the canonical Gospels had all been written, though they might not yet have come into use in many of the churches. If at this time, as Paley states, they were “perfectly notorious,” it is strange indeed that Justin never once names one of them. Paley has given two statements of Justin, which are not found in our Gospels: to these I will now make some additions.

(1) and (2)—adduced by Paley as all that are given by Justin.

(3) Justin says: “For Joseph not being able to find a lodging in the village, lodged in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ” (Dialogue 78). In the *Protevangelium* it is recorded that, when near Bethlehem, Mary was taken in labor. “And Joseph found a cave there, and led her into it,” etc. In this cave Jesus was born.

(4) Justin says of John the Baptist: “He cried as

he sat by the river Jordan"—"while John still sat by the river Jordan" (Dial. 49 and 51).

(5) Justin says of the child Jesus: "For even at his birth he was in possession of his power" (Dial. 88). In the *Gospel of the Infancy* miracles are said to have been wrought by the babe Jesus soon after his birth.

(6) Justin says of the man Jesus: "For when he was among men, he was in the habit of working as a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes" (Dial. 88). In the *Gospel of Thomas* it is stated: "And his father was a carpenter, and at that time made ploughs and yokes."

(7) Respecting the teaching of Jesus, Justin says: "Brief and concise utterances fell from him, for he was no sophist" (1 Apol. 14). This statement clearly shows that Justin was not acquainted with the Fourth Gospel. Had he read the long rambling discourses there, he could not have made it.

(8) Justin says of Christ's miracles: "But though they saw such works they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call him a magician and a deceiver of the people" (Dial. 69). In the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate*, the Jews accused Jesus of working miracles by the aid of magic, after which "they say again, 'Did we not say that he was a magician?'"

(9) Justin says of the mockery at the trial: "For also they reviled him, and set him upon the judgment seat, and said 'Judge us'" (1 Apol. 35). No such proceedings are recorded in the canonical Gospels.

(10) Justin says: "And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*"—"And that he did these things, you can learn from the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*" (1 Apol. 35 and 48). Here we have two plain references to the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* or *Acts of Pilate*, which Justin cites as a proof of the actual occurrence of certain circumstances he had just mentioned—which circumstances are all found in the extant *Acts of Pilate*.

It is unnecessary to go further. Justin was acquainted with most of the alleged facts contained in the three Synoptical Gospels (and found also in the primitive Gospel), as well as with the stories in the apocryphal Gospels; but as he has never once named Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, or professed to draw anything from their Gospels, I can see no reason for gratuitously crediting him with a knowledge of them—though all four were in existence when he wrote.

Here I bring this inquiry to a close; for Paley's next witness, Hegesippus, wrote about A. D. 180.

Looking back now at Paley's opening statement—that "the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles" can be shown to have been in existence from the apostolic age—I can only say that such an assertion is truly apologetic. As a simple matter of fact, we have not a scrap of evidence which proves that any one of the five books named was written in apostolic times, or in any part of the first century. Like all modern Christian Evidencers, Paley appears to have had no idea that the Synoptical Gospels contain within themselves conclusive proof that all three were derived from pre-existing writings—whose originators are unknown.

ARRACADABRA.

Those Wasted Years.

WE met again after the lapse of nearly a quarter of a century. I was the speaker at a weekly Socialist meeting, he was one of the audience, and certainly about the last person of all my former acquaintances whom I would have expected to meet at such a place.

When last we parted on the shore (so to speak), the wild waves were saying something about the mysterious ways of God in planting his footsteps in the sea and riding upon the storm. We had both attended the same Bible class in that long ago, and doubtless considered ourselves very good Christians and firmly rooted in the faith.

The Bible class consisted of thirty or forty young men, and was connected with the Presbyterian

church of which I had previously been a Sunday-school scholar. We sat around a huge table circled by two rows of seats. The teacher was a Presbyterian elder, but scarcely a typical one, being of a strongly evangelical turn of mind. A schoolmaster by profession, he was one of the most narrow-minded and bigoted men it has ever been my misfortune to meet. I do not say this with any disrespect to his memory. He was naturally kind and genial, and was possessed of a sense of humor quite unusual in a Presbyterian elder. But anything in the shape of heresy or heterodoxy, or that did not agree with his own doctrinal views, seemed to shrivel up all that was human in him. I remember well one Sunday afternoon when the subject of conversation related to the life of the hereafter and the condition of the soul in the intermediate state. For some reason or other, he appealed to me for my views on the subject. I have never had much hesitancy at any time in stating my beliefs, and I replied that I was certainly of the opinion, as the Scriptures themselves state, that "the dead know not anything." The effect of this innocent reply was a display of Christian bigotry that I have never forgotten. Rising from his seat, with all the scorn he could command, this teacher warned the whole class to shun me as a viper. "I warn you all," he said, "to have no dealings with that fellow [mentioning me by name], not even to speak to him." Whether it was the magnanimity of my nature, or the passive effect produced by my religious teaching and environment, I can truthfully say that I did not then, or ever afterwards, feel the least resentment towards the perpetrator of such outrageous conduct. This same zealous servant of God, only a short time ago, on his way to conduct a Sunday morning service, without a word of divine warning, or the chance to bid farewell to those he loved, suddenly dropped down dead in the public street. Which is certainly not very convincing evidence that God's own people, as Christians delight to call themselves, are subjects of his especial care—especially when we set such a dreadful end against the fact that the Atheist is often allowed to die peacefully in his bed.

But to return to my friend. At the close of the meeting, our conversation turned upon the days when we both attended the Bible class, and the influences which had brought about our changed outlook upon life. I found that the evolution of his mind had progressed along lines very similar to my own. It was the utter failure of Christianity in the industrial world to secure anything like economic justice to the toiling masses that had first shaken his faith in the orthodox creed. The later realization of its failure in every other sphere of life to give a satisfactory answer to the many questions that present themselves to the thinking mind, led to its ultimate rejection. My friend had also come to see that religion, with its hope of a future recompense for the evils and miseries of the present life, was taught the people very largely for economic reasons. The contentment with the present unjust social conditions, which was taught by the Churches as a Christian virtue, was in reality the suppression of all that was noble and manly and dignified in human nature. If the social lot of the toiling masses was ever to be improved, it would not be by religion, but by the application of human thought and human effort. "And to think," he said, "of the years that we wasted sitting round the table of that Bible class, listening to talk which had no relation to any of the concerns of life."

Wasted years! Such was his verdict upon the time we spent listening to the childish fairy tales of a smiling face hiding behind a frowning providence, and a home beyond the skies, and the attempts of the teacher to produce something like theological order out of the chaos of inspired Scripture. My friend, as I afterwards learnt, was not by any means the only member of that class who had come to regard those years in the same light; and it would certainly be interesting to know how many retained the narrow creed they were then taught.

It may be that in the course of years some are dead and gone to glory; but others, I know for certain, went all to the dogs. While the present writer, sad to relate, became a contributor to the *Freethinker*.

It is surely a serious indictment of religion if it can be substantiated that it is responsible for the waste of so much valuable time. If time be the stuff that life is made of, it has robbed many of us of years of life. To sit in the Sunday-school year after year, singing "There is a happy land far, far away," when we should have been learning to appreciate and admire the many beauties and wonders of the visible world, is not only a waste of childhood's years, it is a sin against its future. To teach a child that man's chief end is to glorify God, and, by implication, that its duties to its parents, its relations, and society are of only secondary or minor importance, is to distort its views of life's claims and responsibilities. It is wasting the time that might otherwise be profitably used to inculcate practical truths which in after life would bear valuable fruit. What matters it that the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold, if want and poverty be the portion of so many here and now, and the wherewithal for present needs be a source of constant anxiety? What matters it that there are mansions above, if countless thousands are compelled to pass the only life they know in disreputable, unhealthy, and overcrowded hovels? Better to improve the life we know than wait for another that we know not of.

The history of Christianity, beginning with its suppression of Greek and Roman culture, and the subsequent long reign of ignorance and superstition; its insistence on the futility of moral effort in effecting any human improvement, and the absurd value it placed on *faith*, all bear witness to the sterility of religious teaching, and constitute a complete justification of its indictment as a time-waster. It has had the control of our intellectual and social life for twenty centuries, and all that it thought necessary to offer for our guidance was contentment with present conditions, no matter how unjust or oppressive, and the Bible, as containing all that it was necessary for man to know.

The few wasted years lamented by my friend are but a drop in the ocean of the centuries of wasted time and life for which Christianity is responsible. Fortunately, the steadily decreasing membership of the Churches is evidence that a growing number of people are finding a better use for their time than to dance attendance upon the preachers of a good time coming—when you're dead.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Priests Afraid of Ridicule.

WHEREVER the priests have the most power, religion has the least. Being neither appointed by the law of Nature, nor the law of Christ, they are only intruders into the affairs of religions; which is therefore under a usurpation, while it is under them. So that their foundation being false, they are in most countries reduced to support it by false facts and deceitful appearances. And as they are thus obliged to cover fraud with fraud, and support one violence by another, it is no wonder that we find it often so carefully hidden under inventions, and deformed by absurdities; and all those inventions and absurdities defended by cruelty and a strong hand.

This strange jumble of fictions they have the front to call by the holy name of *religion*, and gravely to create faith out of lies. And with the grovelling multitude, whose eyes are in the earth, all this passes off well enough. They have fearful hearts and simple heads, and so stand always prepared to be frightened or deluded at the priestly word of command. But because the craft lies subject to daily detection from rational and discerning men, its champions have raised loud cries and strong prejudices against the two principal weapons, by which their cause is most annoyed; I mean the weapons of reason and ridicule; the former of which discovers truth, and the latter exposes fraud.

What civil treatment these reverend seers afford to reason, I have shown elsewhere; and shall handle in this paper, the business of *ridicule*, which they always represent as impious and profane, whenever it meddles with the cassock;

and yet always exercise it according to their talents, without mercy, when the waggish grave creatures are pleased to be arch upon Dissenters or Freethinkers.

To them is no doubt owing, that frequent but false saying, now in the mouth of every ignorant; namely, that it is an easy matter to make a jest upon religion or the priesthood, which, whether they are aware of it or not, is saying that their religion and its priests are a jest. For he, upon whom the jest is made, does, in effect, make the jest; otherwise it is none. Religion and virtue cannot be ridiculed; and whoever attempts it, by showing himself a villain, raises horror instead of laughter, which is the end of ridicule. But the vending of grimace for religion, and setting up for piety without virtue, are the natural subjects of jeer and merriment.

Whoever fears ridicule, deserves ridicule. He is conscious of a weak side, and knows that he cannot stand a laugh. This is the case of sacred grimace, or gravity, which men of sense see to be only a studied restraint laid upon the muscles of the face, and the joints of the body, and teaching them to move, not by the impulses of nature, and the motions of the heart, but by design, either to attract admiration, or obtain credit, or gain followers. And therefore sacred grimace dreads men of sense. However, it is never to be set aside; for this same affected demureness, ridiculous as it is in itself, is a solemn bait to catch the mob, whose respect always follows their wonder. The vulgar are caught, like woodcocks, by the eyes, and led, like calves, by the ears; show and sound lead their fat heads captive. It is therefore no wonder, that in popish countries, a showy chancel, a curious tall steeple, gilded organs, and a delicate ring of bells, keep the many on the parson's side, make them all good churchmen; and always get the better of a plain religion, that has its abode only in the heart, and wants all the above-mentioned marks of the true church. Besides all this, there is more mirth and more holy days in their orthodox faith, than in the contrary scheme, which obliges men to earn heaven with the sweat of their brows, and take pains to be saved.

These, however, are but small instances of ridicule, taken from the force and grimace of an external religion. I shall here give instances much more considerable, as well as much more ridiculous. Do we not see the pretended successors of the apostles, at home and elsewhere, instead of making tents, or converting the world, living voluptuously, and promoting the excise? Do we not frequently see the ambassadors of God, sent to promote virtue and peace, and the observance of his laws, promoting strife, frequenting debauched houses, rooking after wealth, and plaguing and reviling their neighbors? Do we not see holy men, who have the call of the spirit, rioting in all the works of the flesh? Do they not buy livings with money, and then claim them by divine right? Do they not chop and jockey away poor parishes for such as are richer, and yet pretend to have upon their hands the cure of souls; though, by such vile bargaining, they show that they value as little those souls which they have just bought, as they do those which they have lately sold? Do not many of them, though they are void of all merit, yet demand great respect; and though ignorant, pretend to teach and to reveal God's will which is already revealed, and yet live as though there were no God? And do they not, without obeying God, set up to command men? Do they not seek honor from their cloth which yet they dishonor; and do they not for the blackest crimes claim sanctuary from the church, which church is the people, which people they abuse and deceive? Do they not pretend to mend others, but in truth more idle and proud than all others; two qualities neither suited to the welfare of religion nor of human society? Do they not flatter and support the worst of tyrants, plague and distress, and often destroy the best of kings; and in both cases, do they not belie the Holy Ghost, and pervert his meaning? Do they not pretend to be appointed for the good of mankind, and yet always make mankind, wherever they have power, thoroughly miserable, base, poor, ignorant, and wicked? And finally, do they not invent vile lies for vile ends, and then blasphemously make God Almighty to father them?

Here is such a motley mixture of opposite principles and practices, as will always render those who are chargeable with them, the contempt or abhorrence of all men who have eyes and understanding. Jest and scorn will subsist as long as their causes subsist; and clergymen, of all others, will be most exposed to them, while they continue to deserve them, because more modesty, truth, and consistency may be expected from them than from any others. It is but a piece of justice due to religion to ridicule those who, as far as they can, ridicule religion, though they set up for its defenders. Ridicule, when it has no longer matter to feed on, will die of itself; and the clergy, to avoid it, have no more to do but not to deserve it; but to go on complaining, without amendment, is to nourish railery and satire, by their own actions.—Thomas Gordon, "Independent Whig."

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