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To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the same as the Spirit of Evil; and to pictures of the latter it has appended a tail to represent the note of interrogation.
—AMBROSE BIERCE.

Torpedoing the Sermon on the Mount.

QUITE a pretty and instructive little quarrel has been going on concerning the value of Christian teaching. There is nothing startlingly new in people quarrelling on this topic—that has always been with us. Nor is there anything new in the fact that the disputants engaged all make profession of some sort of Christianity. That, too, is a common phenomenon. Indeed, one may say that people quarrel over Christianity because they believe in it; and the more fervent their belief, the more venomous their disputes. In the early centuries, Christians very soon excited the attention of their Pagan contemporaries by the ferocity of their discussions; and as time passed this ferocity increased rather than diminished. As Christians, they were convinced that of all things in the world the most valuable was Christianity. But there the agreement stopped. As to what Christianity meant in theory, or how they were to apply it in practice, nothing like agreement has ever been reached. And one may safely say that agreement on this point never will be reached until people have ceased to believe in it.

The particular quarrel I have in mind began with an address by Rev. the Hon. Edward Lyttelton, headmaster of Eton, and an article by Mr. Bertrand Russell in the *International Journal of Ethics*. Mr. Lyttelton is, by his profession, bound to stand by the value and sanity of Christian teaching, and Mr. Russell—whose Christianity is not of a very robust order—apparently attaches some value to the principle of non-resistance, provided people only have the courage to practise it. To both these gentlemen one part of Christian teaching is crystal clear. We are commanded to love our enemies, to do good to those that despitefully use us, to turn one cheek when the other is smitten, to return good for evil. The teaching is perfectly clear, and it would seem that, in calling attention to the duty of a professedly Christian people practising these teachings, Mr. Lyttelton was only doing his duty as a Christian. And a Christian people ought to thank him for reminding them of their duty whenever they seemed inclined to disregard it. And, of course, what holds good of Dr. Lyttelton holds with almost equal force of Mr. Russell.

Now, said Dr. Lyttelton, "if we were going to act as a Christian nation, we were bound to apply the principle of Christian charity;" and he adds, that if the result of this War is to teach sixty millions of people to hate us, the War will have been an entire failure. And he suggests that when we force Germany to give up something for the sake of the peace of Europe, such as the compulsory internationalisation of the Kiel Canal, we should accompany this with a spontaneous offer on our part to Lyttelton, "England came forward and offered to give up something for a reason which she was

trying to enforce on others, she would be charged in perfect truth with the most consummate hypocrisy."

Mr. Bertrand Russell's championship of the Christian teaching of love and non-resistance moves on different lines. He says:—

"We cannot destroy Germany even by a complete military victory, nor, conversely, could Germany destroy England even if our Navy were sunk and London occupied by the Prussians. English civilisation, the English language, English manufacturers would still exist, and as a matter of practical politics it would be totally impossible for Germany to establish a tyranny in this country. If the Germans, instead of being resisted by force of arms, had been passively permitted to establish themselves wherever they pleased, the halo of glory and courage surrounding the brutality of military success would have been absent, and public opinion in Germany itself would have rendered any oppression impossible."

Now, it will be observed that neither Mr. Russell nor Mr. Lyttelton are doing any more than putting Christian teaching to the test of practice. But, alas for the poor teaching, it has been met with general condemnation, and from Christians! The *Daily Telegraph* called Mr. Lyttelton's address "Amazing." Other papers went further, and used more drastic language. The religious editor of *John Bull* suggested that something very terrible ought to be done to men who talk in this fashion. Clergymen by the dozen wrote to various papers, for fear that the general public should get it into their heads that they intended to practice Christianity, and advised Dr. Lyttelton to mend his ways. The *Daily Mirror*, in a leading article, said quite plainly that "if we applied Christianity, all that would really result would be for the people who applied it to be swiftly wiped out. Their world would come to an end at once."

That is at least plain, but it sets one wondering. For the statement does not appear in a wicked Freethought paper. It is not an expression of opinion from a Freethought journalist. It appears in a "respectable" daily paper, one that caters for the huge public which prefers to have its information dished up in a pictorial manner because it involves less mental effort to grasp it. And the *Daily Mirror* journalist writes in this way because he knows it is the way that his public wish him to write. There is no doubt of that. We have also many, many thousands of Churches and parsons devoted to Christianity. Ever since the War began, a large portion of the press has been filled with talk of the Christian ideals that inspired England to enter on the War, and the Christian principles for which we are fighting, and now a popular daily paper says—with the full approval of its readers—that if people applied Christianity to practice, they would be swiftly wiped out, and it more than hints that it would be a good job too.

Not so many people have fallen foul of Mr. Russell, but this, I fancy, is due to the fact that not so many people read the *International Journal of Ethics*. But one journalist has written a lengthy reply, and that is Mr. Harold Spender, Editor of the *Westminster Gazette*. He does not say that a people who applied Christian teaching would be blotted out, but he brushes that teaching on one side as irrelevant. He does not believe in overcoming Germany by a

policy of non-resistance, but points out—we believe quite properly that:—

"To get to the ethical roots of the matter we must begin by acknowledging that there are certain things for which men care more than they care for their lives. This is the guiding motive of wars for principles and wars of self-defence, and even though moral standards vary and the principles of one generation may seem superstitious to the next, that is still the greatest fact about human nature, and it must be rated as of the highest ethical value."

But evidently these things for which people care, and for which they will fight, are not contained in the Sermon on the Mount. "Men fight," says Mr. Spender, "for their soil, or their homes," through "affection, loyalty, and a sense of human worth and dignity."

Now here, I repeat, is a remarkable state of affairs. On the one side we have two men pleading for an application to current affairs of one of the oldest and least doubtful of Christian doctrines. On the other hand we have a people professedly Christian, maintaining a huge priesthood for the preaching of Christianity; maintaining, also, laws that make it a criminal offence to attack Christianity—save in a manner that shall be agreeable to Christians—and yet we have these people denouncing as insane, or unpatriotic, or even criminal, the suggestion that the War offers us a splendid opportunity for putting Christianity into practice.

What does it all mean? For my own part, the meaning of the situation is quite clear. To begin with, I agree—without any sacrifice of consistency—with both sides. I agree with Dr. Lyttelton that a nation of Christians ought to practise Christian teachings. And I agree with Dr. Lyttelton's critics that no nation of human beings can do so without their society coming to an end. This is not a paradox; it is a statement of sober fact. You cannot preach an impossible doctrine without exposing yourself to the charge of hypocrisy, and you obviously cannot practise it without committing suicide. Anyone may believe that faith will enable him to swallow poison without harmful results; and if he stops there, nothing will follow. But it is quite clear that Nature sets a very sharp limit to the reduction of this theory to practice. Overcoming evil by turning one cheek when the other is smitten is the kind of teaching that appeals to a certain kind of human nature, but its practice—even on a limited scale—is only made possible by the vicarious use of the very instrument employed. Quakers, for instance, have preached the policy of non-resistance, but it has been in a society, the collective force of which, guaranteed them security of life and property.

In the second place, the explanation of the situation lies in the fact that Christianity was never intended for social use at all. Its preachings were for a select few, gathered together for a special purpose and to live a special life. It never contemplated a perpetual human society which of necessity includes all kinds of characters, good and bad, lovable and hateful. Like all religious sects, it began with the principle of selection and exclusion. And so long as a teaching is intended for a select few, its followers may escape the charges of hypocrisy and inconsistency, because it will exclude all those who disagree with it. But when Christianity became the governing religion of a whole social group, a very different state of affairs arose. For a human society cannot be exclusive; it must be inclusive. It contains all kinds and classes, and its practice must conform to human nature in general. This is why, on anything like a general scale, the practice of Christianity has always been a sheer impossibility. There resulted what has been called "corruptions of Christianity." But they were not "corruptions" in any real sense; they were mainly modifications necessary in order to make an impossibilist teaching decently observable. Dr. Lyttelton is quite right in saying that we ought—as Christians—to overcome the Germans by love. His critics are equally right in pointing to the insanity of such teaching. And between them they succeed in demonstrating that

the right policy for sensible men and women is to leave Christianity alone, and regulate human society in the light of reason and experience. C. COHEN.

Intellect versus Intuition.

IN this time of war the divines are fully aware that the facts testify, with no uncertain sound, against their much-vaunted creed, and they flee to intuition as the only tolerably safe city of refuge. In an article in the *Christian World* for April 8, the Rev. Herbert Brook, M.A., quotes a saying of a corporal in Kitchener's Army which he eulogises as highly appropriate to the present situation. The saying is as follows: "When you come to look at it there doesn't seem to be such a thing as Providence, but we know there is." Mr. Brook then says:—

"What an opportunity for preaching Christ and his Gospel there is among the men who are going out to fight for honor and homeland! The great majority of these men know, as our friend the corporal does, that the oft-proclaimed truths of Christianity are facts. No argument is needed to convince them. All that is needed is a powerful appeal to touch and stir them. Religious knowledge is there. The testimony of the soul—call it intuition or what you will—regarding the great facts of religion and faith is clear, immediate, pronounced. Let us assume the existence of that testimony. Let us appeal to it."

The following is another sample:—

"In all our preaching we must assume that our congregations have an intimate, direct knowledge of the central realities of religion, and not waste too much time in arguing about the existence of God and in trying to square this dreadful War with God's beneficence and love. The great mass of men and women know, like our friend the corporal, with a certainty no argument can shake or create, that God exists, that his providence still rules over all, that immortality is a fact, and that no blame lies at the Divine door for the dreadful slaughter that now disgraces Europe. Let us appeal to that certainty by proclaiming, not arguing about, our own certainty as never before. One triumphant assertion, based on intuition, is worth ten arguments worked out by intellect. The profound depths men know God."

The first thing to be noted is the undoubted fact that in asserting the well-nigh universality of religious knowledge, Mr. Brook only betrays his own lack of natural knowledge. We are absolutely sure that the number of people who possess Christian certainty in any congregation is extremely small. It is an inexcusable mistake to imagine that the great mass of men and women are firm believers in God and immortality. We know that they are not. We were once on terms of intimacy with a military officer of an exceptionally religious turn of mind, who yet did not dare to read a sceptical book or article, or listen to an anti-religious conversation, for fear of losing his faith. As a matter of fact, religion to him was almost an exclusively emotional affair, whilst of positive belief he had practically none. If you talk to the man in the street, you will soon learn that, although he thinks vaguely that "there is something or someone somewhere," he is to all intents and purposes an Atheist. He has absolutely no religious knowledge. Indeed, God is the least real of beings even to the majority of those who are constantly using his name. Mr. Brook asserts that "the great mass of men and women know, with a certainty no argument can shake or create, that immortality is a fact"; but no assertion could be further from the truth, as the reverend gentleman ought to know. Principal George Adam Smith gives it the lie direct when he frankly admits that "in the thinking of civilised men there has been for years a steady ebb from the shores of another life" (*Mormon Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 209).

Mr. Brook's assertiveness is without bounds. His whole article is but a series of baseless assumptions. He alludes to "the testimony of the soul," ignoring

the incontrovertible fact that both the soul and its testimony are merely metaphysical hypotheses insusceptible of verification. He practically admits this by urging his brethren to assume their existence, and on that assumption to make their supreme appeal to the testimony. He asserts that "the profound deeps in men know God"; but he makes no effort whatever to demonstrate the truth of the assertion. He assumes that "God's providence still rules over all"; but he discourages any attempt to square this dreadful War with it, conscious, no doubt, of the utter impracticability of the task. He adopts his friend the corporal's saying, "When you look at it there doesn't seem to be such a thing as Providence, but we know there is." That is a fair specimen of a Christian's frame of mind. Facts do not count unless they are favorable. As a rule, they are of a most damaging character, in which case the theologian's attitude to them is identical with that of a well-known member of the House of Lords to certain "consequences," when he angrily exclaimed, "Damn the consequences." In Mr. Brook's eyes swearing is a sin in which he cannot indulge, but he is not above exhorting himself and others not to "waste too much time in trying to square this dreadful War with God's beneficent providence and love." The slaughter is of such a character and on such a scale that it "disgraces Europe"; but we are assured that "no blame lies at the Divine door." Mark the glaring contradiction between the statement that God's beneficent providence "still rules over all" and the assertion that "no blame lies at the Divine door for the dreadful slaughter that now disgraces Europe." God's beneficent providence and love still rule over all, whilst the unspeakable horrors of the War cease neither day nor night, and yet no blame lies at the door of the ruling power. If a man can really believe that, there is nothing he cannot believe, nor should we be surprised at anything he might say. Accuracy is a virtue to which he cannot possibly rise. "It used to be said," Mr. Brook tells us, "that the earthquake at Lisbon created more Atheists than all the arguments of Voltaire." Of course, the arguments of Voltaire created no Atheists at all, for the simple reason that Voltaire preached Deism to the end of his life. Now, according to Mr. Brook's doctrine, the earthquake at Lisbon and the War belong to the same category, both being permitted under a beneficent providence that "rules over all." Our divine clearly admits that the former made numerous Atheists, but, "believe me," he says, "this War has created practically none." We could introduce him to multitudes of men and women in London alone whom the War has robbed of their faith in God. It is to them wholly inconceivable that such a horrible catastrophe could occur under the eyes of an almighty and all-loving Sovereign, and they have ceased to believe that such a Sovereign exists.

Nothing is easier than to disparage what is contemptuously called the "cocksure intellect." We agree with Mr. Brook when he declares that the reason is not a "successful explorer in Eternity's vast unknown spaces"; but we venture to suggest that "eternity" is a term to which the human mind is incapable of attaching any intelligible meaning whatever. Its "vast unknown spaces," about which the reverend gentleman is so cocksure, are not objects of human exploration, and we fearlessly affirm that Mr. Brook is incapable of imparting the slightest information concerning them. "That human and yet all-powerful intuition some people call 'faith' is a metaphysical illusion, in which theologians take refuge when harassed and hard pressed by unwelcome and hostile facts. When asked "What proof is there that God's beneficent providence rules over all?" they answer, "We know it by direct intuition." If you confront them with the facts, with the wrongs, injustice, cruelty, suffering, and sorrow which prevail upon the earth, and ask them how they reconcile these with their belief in a beneficent Divine providence, they are hopelessly puzzled and fall back upon

intuition, saying, "We assume that God loves and cares for all his children, and in this assumption we rejoice, because we have an inward perception of its truth; and, knowing it to be true, we know that God is not to blame." With such people it is impossible to argue, because they hold the intellect in derision, and are not amenable to the laws of thought. In so far as they are sincere, they are self-deceived, and we regard them as objects of pity. Their beliefs can neither be proved nor yet disproved. Science does not touch them at any point, though the scientific mind realises the absurdity of believing in the absence of evidence, and specially against evidence. If intuition is synonymous with faith, as Mr. Brook states, we are logically impelled to pronounce all religious intuitions wholly false. If we trace their evolution and see how they arose, and what their original forms were, their falseness will be self-evident. The God Mr. Brook believes in and preaches is a product of evolution, and the very fact that he has developed is sufficient evidence of his unreality, save as a human conception with a history.

To identify faith with knowledge is to reach the summit of irrationality. Very few theologians even are guilty of such a folly. Tennyson admits that Christians have but faith, and that for an obvious reason they cannot know. Mr. Brook, however, claims that he knows God, immortality, and the unseen world to be veritable facts. We are bold enough to assure him that he is entirely mistaken. He merely imagines that they are facts, and imagination is not the faculty of knowledge. It is through the intellect alone that all knowledge is acquired; and it is undeniable that in proportion as knowledge thrives, intuitions decline. The intuitionists themselves have already surrendered and completely disowned many aspirations they once ardently cherished, and we are confident that the time is coming when the intellect shall dethrone intuition, and reign supreme as the lord of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Celestial Plant.

"O tea! thou soft, sober, sage, and venerable liquid."

—COLLEY CIBBER.

"The cups

That cheer, but not inebriate."

—COWPER.

THE prohibition of vodka in Russia, and absinthe in France, together with the talk of boycotting alcohol in this country, lends interest to tea, that world-renowned non-alcoholic beverage, which may almost be said to be in everybody's mouth.

Of the many pleasant things that flatter the taste, tea is one of the most universally popular. Talk of the famed Falernian wine, the nectar and ambrosia of the gods, what are they in comparison with the drink which refreshes alike the duchess and the docker's wife. Its influence upon social habits is also a beneficent one. No one will deny its power to quench the thirst, and soothe the nervous system, thus putting persons on better terms with themselves and with everybody else.

If coffee is the favorite drink of the sterner sex, tea may be said to claim the fairer part of the human family. Yet we are hardly safe in thus dividing these drinks among the sexes, for Dr. Johnson was a champion among tea drinkers, while Voltaire was noted for his fondness for coffee. Leigh Hunt, it is true, preferred coffee to tea, for the taste, but tea for a constancy. He was more fortunate than Robert Louis Stevenson, who, in his *Amateur Emigrant*, tells us:—

"At breakfast we had a choice between tea and coffee for beverage; a choice not easy to make, the two were so surprisingly alike. I found that I could sleep after the coffee and lay awake after the tea, which is proof conclusive of some chemical disparity, and even by the palate I could distinguish a smack of snuff in the former from a flavor of boiling and dish cloths in the second."

Tea and coffee are natural allies, but they are also rivals. As against alcoholic drinking in any form

they are combined. It is after alcohol has been driven away that the battle begins. Taking the world through, the verdict seems in favor of tea. Two of the largest countries in the world, China and Russia, are tea drinkers. In most parts of Central Asia the tea-urn is forever steaming. On the other hand, the Arab and the Turk, and with them the western part of the Mohammedan world, are coffee drinkers. The decision of Europe is not absolute on either side. It seems to be determined by chance. The nations which can get good coffee, drink coffee; and those who can get good tea, drink tea. Those which can get both, drink both. England has the choice of both, but her preference is for tea. This is partly balanced by the United States, the chief coffee-consuming country. But victory is determined by the Australians, who are the greatest tea drinkers in the world. They drink it generally, cold, and always abominably strong.

Superstition sheds its radiance over the origin of alcohol, and Bacchus is numbered among the gods. It is, therefore, only fitting that tea should also have a mythological origin. According to Oriental tradition, Prince Darma went on a pilgrimage to China, vowing he would not rest by the way. Being overtaken by fatigue, he slept. On waking, he was so angry, that he cut off his eyelids, and threw them on the ground. They sprung up as tea shrubs, and hence tea is before you. The Chinese, when any procession in honor of any popular idol takes place, arrange tables by the wayside. Each has a vase of flowers, lighted candles, fruit, and cups of tea.

Tea drinking, certainly, "keeps the palace of the soul" serene; but it inspires speech, and talk sometimes ends in scandal. Coffee has often been coupled with pistols; and tea, although a more domestic drink, has also warlike associations. Tea took a prominent part in the American Revolution, and the Boston tea-party caused Yankees and Britishers to boil over for many a long year.

But the celestial plant has other and better associations. Does it not remind us of Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, Lady Wortley Montaigne's tea-table, Horace Walpole, and the *Spectator*. That most genial of parsons, Sydney Smith, once exclaimed, "What would the world do without tea?"—

"Though all unknown to Greek and Roman song,
The paler Hyson and the dark Souchong,
Though black nor green the warbled praises share,
Of knightly troubadour, or gay trouvère,
Yet scorn not thou, as alien quite to numbers,
That friend to prattle, and that foe to slumbers,
Which Kien Long—imperial poet—praised
So high, that cent per cent its price was raised;
Which Pope himself would sometimes condescend
To place, commodious, at a couplet's end;
Which the sweet bard of Olney did not spurn,
Who sung the music of the hissing urn."

Prior to the Restoration, beer was the staple drink. On its introduction to this country, tea was quite beyond the means of ordinary folk. It became rapidly cheaper and in daily use among the better-class in London, though not in the country. Thus, in Congreve's *Way of the World*, Mrs. Millamant claims to be "Sole empress of my tea-table." Her lover readily consents to her drinking tea if she agrees to banish strong drinks from her tea-table, which shows that the love of tea was yet more fashionable than real.

It might be thought that by the middle of the eighteenth century tea was universally used in this country. This was by no means the case. It was still a fashionable drink, and it had now become greatly in use by women. Men drank little of it, countrymen and working men not all. Its use was not so far general as to stop the discussion which still continued as to its virtues. In the year 1749 it was ten shillings a pound. So well-known a preacher as John Wesley set his face and the whole force of his authority against tea drinking. In his *Letter to a Friend, concerning Tea*, he says that tea "unstrings the nerves" and leaves the unhappy user "near the chambers of death." A hundred years later, by the irony of events, Nonconformist women became

great users of tea, and Dickens and other writers made merry over their tea drinking propensities. Celestial origin, the tea-plant may become yet more heavenly. Should alcohol be prohibited, Freethinkers may live to see the time when the "blood of the lamb" will be perpetuated in the Communion Services by cups of tea.

MIMNERMUS.

Charles Bradlaugh as I Knew Him.

SOMEONE has said that to judge a great man fairly you must judge him at a distance, not taking all his actions in detail, but considering them as a whole, and in that way forming a correct estimate of his character and his ideals. And in my judgment that is the only way to fairly judge any man, great or small, wise or foolish, philosopher or ordinary man of the world.

I never knew a man whose greatness was written more indelibly upon his countenance than it was on that of Charles Bradlaugh. His great figure, his massive head, his searching eyes, his strong mouth, all gave evidence of the wonderful personality of the man.

When I first saw Charles Bradlaugh in 1874, just after his return from America, he was one of the most commanding figures then before the British public. He had stirred up the political and religious world to an extraordinary degree by the boldness of his attacks on prevailing opinions; and his lectures on much-needed political reforms, and his exposure of the follies of the Christian superstition, attracted enormous audiences to the Hall of Science in the City-road, to hear this great orator, who was going to revolutionise the world of thought. Never shall I forget the first time I saw Charles Bradlaugh, with majestic stride, he marched through the Hall and mounted the platform, preceded by W. J. Ransom, who acted as chairman. The audience cheered vigorously from the moment the lecturer made his appearance until he had taken his place by the side of the table, which was laden heavily with books from which he quoted from time to time as he proceeded with his discourse.

At that time Mr. Bradlaugh was in his fortieth year of age, and, though it is a good many years ago, I remember him as though it were yesterday. A tall, commanding figure, slightly over six feet in height, with clean-shaven face, and long dark hair, in the professional style, like a great artist or musician, he wore a black frock coat, an open waistcoat, and a black bow. When he commenced his lecture, he spoke in a low, tremulous voice, but with great fluency and precision; and as he proceeded with his discourse, his voice became strong and powerful. His style was chiefly argumentative, but he had a ready wit and a dry humor that were extremely taking; he would smile or give a merry twinkle of the eye when he was about to make a joke, then he would gradually work up to a passage of great power and pathos. When he resumed his seat, the audience was surprised that the time had passed so quickly, and sorry that the lecture was over; but they had listened to a discourse of an hour's duration. In the succeeding years I heard Mr. Bradlaugh lecture many times in fact, when he occupied the platform. I was a regular habitué at the Hall of Science.

I heard him on the authorship and authenticity of the Bible. I heard him criticise the absurd stories of Genesis and Exodus, and was convulsed with laughter over the ludicrous position in which he placed some of the learned Biblical commentators. I heard him on the problem of the existence of God in lectures and debates; and, finally, I heard him on "What did Jesus Teach?" On all these questions he showed himself to be a master of his subject. His mind was a perfect logical machine. He seemed to speak in syllogisms, and his power of analysis was truly wonderful. But when he turned

upon his opponents and exposed the shams and delusions of their beliefs, his passionate eloquence and biting sarcasm, and logical reasoning combined to make the case against the Christian superstition quite overwhelming. On one occasion I went down to Deptford to hear him lecture on "The Limits of Human Thought: What Can a Man Think?" The very title was enough to frighten the ordinary man in the street away. It looked as though Bradlaugh was going to solve a metaphysical problem that nobody else had ever attempted to tackle. But the people came in their hundreds nevertheless, and the hall was filled to its utmost capacity, though the people of Deptford were not noted for their intellectual capacity. Mrs. Besant occupied the chair, and the object of Mr. Bradlaugh, in his address, was to prove that the word God had no definite meaning, and that if God was infinite, he was unthinkable, as all human thought was conditioned and finite. During Mr. Bradlaugh's address, a gentleman who looked like a coal-heaver, with a dirty face and a manner that showed that he was not quite sober, interrupted several times, and Mr. Bradlaugh called upon Mr. Ramsey, who was among the audience, to keep the gentleman in order; Mr. Ramsey went up to him and looked at him, but as the man was over six feet high, he did not take any further action. A little later on, when Mr. Bradlaugh was working out his metaphysical problem in quite an interesting way, the drunken coal-heaver, who was apparently an earnest Christian, interrupted again. Mr. Bradlaugh then warned him that if he interrupted again he should come down from the platform and turn him out. Only a few moments elapsed and the man interrupted again, whereupon Mr. Bradlaugh leapt from the platform, went up to him as though he were going to remonstrate with him, then taking him fiercely by the throat, he pulled the man on to his back, and carried him through the hall and flung him into the street. Then Mr. Bradlaugh returned and finished his lecture. I got out of the hall with the crowd, and as I came along I saw the man standing by the door, threatening that he would put a knife into the lecturer as he came out. I stood by the man watching, ready to give Mr. Bradlaugh warning in case he tried to put his threat into execution, but when Mr. Bradlaugh appeared with Mrs. Besant by his side, he gave the man a fierce look that seemed to hypnotise him, and passed on unmolested. One other incident. Mr. Bradlaugh was not a man who might be easily approached, especially by a man of my nervous temperament; but I remember how pleased I was when, on one occasion, he asked me to speak at the evening meeting at the close of a National Secular Society Conference at the Hall of Science. He humorously asked me to let off a few "rhetorical fireworks," and I remember that declaration that Christianity was dead, and that it was our duty to clear away the debris, and sow the seeds of Freethought. When it came to Mr. Bradlaugh's turn to speak, he fixed on that passage in my speech in which I referred to the death of Christianity, and made one of the most marvellous orations I have ever heard, in which he said that no man ever lived to see a religion die; and as I walked home that night I felt proud that an ill-considered sentence of mine had sown forth such a masterly reply from one of the greatest orators this country has ever produced. I heard Mr. Bradlaugh in debate several times—twice with the Rev. Brewin Grant, once with Mr. Frank Hugh O'Donnell, M.P., once with the Rev. Dr. McCann, and twice with Mr. H. M. Hyndman on "Socialism"; but of these, the two most memorable to me were those with the Rev. Brewin Grant. The first of these took place at the Bow and Bromley Institute; it was a six nights' debate, and the excitement grew so intense that on the fifth night the North London Railway Co., to whom the hall belonged, put an end to all discussion by closing the hall just as the people were assembling to go in. The fact was that the Rev. Brewin Grant had a very

elementary knowledge of the art of debate. He considered that his main duty was to abuse his opponent, to tell a lot of palpable lies, and fling about all kinds of opprobrious charges—sometimes in his last speech, when Mr. Bradlaugh had no opportunity of reply. To see Mr. Bradlaugh suffering under such irritation was "a sight for the gods," and to listen to his passionate eloquence in reply, was something never to be forgotten. But at the second debate, which took place at the South Place Institute, Brewin Grant was, if possible, more insulting than ever. He made all kinds of lying charges, until Bradlaugh, stung to the quick, referred to his opponent as "this thing here—the representative of God on earth." At one time the excitement had reached such a pitch that I should not have been surprised if Mr. Bradlaugh had caught his opponent by the throat and flung him among the audience. But Bradlaugh showed wonderful restraint. I had seen Salvini, the great Italian tragedian, in the third act of *Othello*, catch hold of Iago by the throat, and, in a paroxysm of passion, throw him to the ground and put his foot on him. Metaphorically, Bradlaugh did the same with Brewin Grant. As far as argument was concerned, he literally tore him to pieces—to tatters, to very fragments. Yes, in those days we lived. We not only saw drama on the stage, but when we saw Bradlaugh in debate we witnessed tragedy of the best kind. I could go on relating my recollections of those great days "until my eyelids will no longer wag." But enough. I must reserve something for another day.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Superman.

NIETZSCHE dead has become respectable in a degree, for in the *Bockman* for March we find an article about him by George Sampson. Hail, thou most chaste and holy dwelling for the faded black poppies of Nonconformist patronage! A dead lion can do no harm; let us in safety examine the brute's teeth, measure his mane, and take his length from tip to tail. Let us see how the sixpenny edition de luxe of Nonconformity can wrestle with the lion's carcase. Under the heading of "News Notes," we are informed that "Mr. George Sampson, who writes the brilliant [blessed word] article, finds much that is good in the sombre German's philosophy." O thanks! But beware; do not let this outburst of approval take too great a hold upon you. "For ourselves, we subscribe to very little of the Nietzschean gospel." That is true blue; and so, once again, thanks! Therefore, reader, you who con the pages of the *Freethinker*, approach the brilliant article after leaving your sandals on the doorstep of the temple where wine and roses are not, and where more sins shall be invented in five minutes than a year of fasting and prayer will remove.

Nay, good friend, thou shalt not enter this temple until thou hast had more of this cold douche to cool thine ardor for the brilliant article. The writer of "News Notes" will see to all that. He says, "The humanising influence of Elia, one of the gentlest and weakest of men, has been, and will be, of more potent service to civilisation than the passing influence of a Bismarck. The real gods walk among us like men—they can afford to do so. And, after all, Christ conquered more of the world by dying for it than any bullying superman ever has done by fire and slaughter." So there you are; as Bottom says, you will see, it will all come pat.

It was an unfortunate reference to make to the name of Bismarck. His name is not merely a military symbol—we wish it were; but, on taking a rapid survey of all that religion fights for, we are compelled to admit that the jack-boot sounds round the Blasphemy Laws, it is heard in the whisperings that so and so is an Atheist, and it positively thumps in the vicinity of Christian charity. Let no Christian speak of Bismarck whilst the rattle of the rifle is heard round Ferrer's ghost.

We have hardly the patience, at this time of day, to comment upon the reference to Christ conquering more of the world by dying for it. The world at present is in disorder; and Christians insult their Christ by bringing his name in any so-called victory. Brazen, brazen are their faces, and they should make room for men of action to get matters settled as speedily as possible—and take the advice of Free-thinkers—carry their Christ from the market-place, so that we may at least respect them, and teach them how to protect one of their gods.

So much, gentle reader, for the chastening advice of the "News Notes." Tarry awhile, be not impatient, we are approaching the brilliant article: "Nietzsche is the Mesopotamia of the moment—the 'blessed word' that symbolises our moral indignation." If by our moral indignation the writer means the holy spleen of those nourished on the yeasty rubbish supplied by half-baked journalists, we say amen! On the other hand, if he means thinkers who do not require a portrait gallery with their intellectual sustenance, then we say, the name of Nietzsche symbolises nothing of the kind. We are not anxious to find a scapegoat, and our search is fruitless in the pages of the poet philosopher—so we laugh. Yea, it shall be golden laughter; for a dreary creed of dead saints fades into nothingness at the coming of Nietzsche. Hear him, ye heirs of freedom, ye inheritors of the treasures of boundless Shelley, of the fiery Byron, and of that singer of intellectual liberty, Swinburne—"For once more will I go into men: amongst them will my sun set; in dying will I give them my choicest gift! From the sun did I learn this, when it goeth down, the exuberant one: gold doth in it pour into the sea, out of inexhaustible riches—so that the poorest fisherman roweth even with golden oars!"

If one can read that without a glow of enthusiasm he is indeed lost to the beauty of language and the richness of an idea; in other words, the writer of it becomes the Mesopotamia of the moment, and the object of moral indignation, that peculiar product of Christian humility. In this quotation we cannot resist the inclination to compare the Pagan idea with that of the Christian. Sun worship and blood worship—Apollo or Christ. Having little or no interest in Christ, Nietzsche's sympathies were bound to rest with Apollo, for great poets and great philosophers do not weep near the cross, nor are they prepared to make monetary profit out of a man's agony. Once again, let us protect Christ from his followers or parasites. What is a parasite? Nietzsche shall reply: "Still more repugnant to me, however, are all lickspittles; and the most repugnant animal of man that I found, did I christen 'parasite'; it would not love, and would yet live by love."

In the article under consideration, it is delightful to note the Janus attitude of the writer. He says, whilst exonerating Nietzsche, "We shall find that this supposed apologist for 'frightfulness' was, in fact, a sickly, old-maidish, classical scholar, torturing himself into chronic headache and insomnia by the misuse of his half-blind eyes, until paralysis, the punishment of such excesses, struck him down and left him to expire, like Swift, a driveller and a show." True blue again; yea, true to type are they who can afford the luxury of one man dying to save their precious souls, which, in many cases are not worth damning. Nietzsche was old-maidish, Nietzsche apparently enjoyed the experience of torturing himself, Nietzsche expired a driveller; yet, my distracted readers, in the writer's own words, "Nietzsche, it may be said at once, is the most dangerous foe that Christianity has had to face in these latter days." Take your choice. If old maids are dangerous to Christianity, then Christianity is in a bad way. If drivellers are also dangerous, then Christianity is in a worse condition than we suspected; but as all this domestic matter about Nietzsche is dished up to make a review, then let the friends of decency speak out.

No one who is a searcher for truth, in this short life of ours, is interested in the details of an artist's

life; they will leave all that to the Paul Pys of history—to reviewers or bookmakers. We thank whatever gods may be for the pure gold that is given us in the form of Nietzsche's works, and, whilst we shall bark at a dead lion, we shall smile. The editors of gold explains many things. As if to imply that readers of the article were unable to imagine Nietzsche expiring to the sound of a scratching pen, there is a reproduction of him on his deathbed. Peeping Tom shall have his fill. If the ministers of his curiosity cannot kill the spirit of Nietzsche, they shall show him passing away. So much for good taste in the Augean stables of literature. Very good the gods walk among us like men—they can afford to do so. Thanks, and again thanks; we thought they flew in the air; but, confidence for confidence, we know of one superman who wears braces to keep his trousers up, and he has been seen playing "Nuts in May" with little children. He hopes shortly, to publish a photograph of a reviewer trying to walk gracefully, with bare feet, on the back of a hedgehog, to be entitled, "Nietzsche being reviewed for Christians."

CHRISTOPHER GALE

The Bantam Breed.

(Dedicated to our new Bantam Battalions.)

AN aged Bantam, undismayed
By Death's impending stroke—
Whose heart no phantom fear obeyed
Whose spirit nothing broke—
This counsel gave his grandson, who
Had yet his spurs to grow:
"Whenever Fate treads hard on you,
Just cock your tail and crow."

While thus the grandsire spake, there rolled
Grim pictures through his brain,
Realities of yore, that told
Of hate, and love, and pain;
Of tortured hours, false friends, and all
The thousand forms of woe—
The tests that on a bantam call
To cock his tail and crow.

"Give ear, young fledgling, while I've time
And strength wherewith to tell
The way to make your life sublime,
And instantly expel
All craven dread, all trembling doubt,
All shrinking from the foe:
With comb erect, and chest thrown out,
Just cock your tail and crow.

"Be bold in danger, fierce in fight;
Keep sovereign self-control
When Hope succumbs to Hatred's blight,
Or Envy takes its toll.
Let every stroke from Fortune's lash
Leave you in *status quo*,
And when your world seems gone to smash,
Just cock your tail and crow.

"Yes, yes, I know I'm weak and ill
In body, but that's all;
In spirit I'm unconquered still,
And shall be, while I crawl.
When I collapse, don't help me rise,
But watch me while I show
The way a dying bantam tries
To cock his tail and crow.

"For shame! soft chick, don't cry for me,
For every maudlin tear
Puts faintness where there ought to be
A soul devoid of fear.
Be calm, I say, esteem the debt
To ancestors you owe;
In trouble, you must ne'er forget
To cock your tail and crow."

The dying bantam's glassy gaze
Foretells the coming swoon;
A quiver through his body plays,
And stillness follows soon—
As though his gallant heart had burst,
But ere his life outflows,
By one prodigious effort, first
He cocks his tail and crows.

C. DEANE

Acid Drops.

A correspondent, and sturdy supporter of the *Freethinker*, recently sent a copy of this paper to the Dean of Manchester, accompanied by a letter. The Dean courteously acknowledged the receipt of both, and admitted that he felt deeply "the apparent failure, not indeed of Jesus Christ and his religion, but, as I think, of the Christian Churches or institutions at the present time." This is a very common form of apology, but it is quite fallacious. It really evades the point at issue. Let us suppose, for instance, that the countries engaged in the present War were Mohammedan, or professed some other religion. Would not the Dean be the first to point out that the state of those countries were proofs of the failure of Mohammedanism—or whatever religion they professed? This really is the argument that Christians are constantly using. It has been their stock argument against Turkey for years. And if it is of any force when applied to non-Christian countries, it must be equally valid when applied to Christian ones. If, on the other hand, the present state of European nations is to be explained in terms of social forces, why not the phenomena of other countries as well? In that case we leave religion on one side as a factor of hardly any importance, either negative or positive.

But, as a matter of fact, the failure of the Christian Churches is really the failure of "Jesus Christ and his religion." What else can it be? These Churches are the organised and official representatives of that religion; it is their claim that they exist to save man and to purify society. And if they become corrupt, if their influence is either positively evil or negatively ineffective, what, in the name of all that is reasonable, is this but the failure of "Jesus Christ and his religion?" That religion came to save the world, to inaugurate a reign of peace and brotherhood. Obviously, it has failed to do this. And with the Churches a failure, with the Christian nations of Europe dying at each other's throats, if these things do not mark the failure of Christianity, what do they signify? A thing is a failure when it fails to accomplish what is claimed for it. And that rule holds good, whether of religions or patent medicines.

The Bishop of Norwich, writing in that deeply religious publication, the *Daily Mail*, says, "If God himself chose the way of the Cross to accomplish his work, shall not we be ready to follow his footsteps?" It is an open question whether Christ died on the Cross, but there can be no doubt that the bishops live on it.

"Has Christianity Failed?" is a question that Bishop Welldon discussed in the *Daily Mail* recently, and, of course, the Bishop thinks that it has not done so. Doubtless, he has noticed that his salary reached him with the customary promptitude.

What emotionalists Christian preachers are! The Rev. F. B. Meyer has been telling the readers of the *Daily Mail* that Christian liberty and progress "have resulted from the crucifixion of Dantes and Miltons, of Livingstones and Mazzinis." These men were not crucified, although the Church Party would have liked to kill Milton, and Joseph Mazzini was a Freethinker. As for "Dantes," was Brother Meyer thinking of the hero of "Monte-Cristo"?

Mr. Hilaire Belloc and other hot-headed religionists who are asserting constantly that the Germans are Atheists, should note that the Kaiser's Government is spending the enormous annual amount of £75,000 for the propagation of "culture" in foreign lands, including the up-keep of Christian missions in Peking, Shanghai, Teheran, and other places.

No one can beat Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, for cocksureness of that peculiar quality that comes very near impertinence. Thus, in a recent lecture on "The Intellectual Side of Religion," he says:—

"I do not, myself, know of any first-class intellect in the history of the world that does not know God, perhaps because the intelligence that does not know God is crippled, cramped, and cannot be first-class."
That is quite in Dr. Horton's style, and, truly, a man who once proposed ostracising from human society those who did not believe in immortality, is capable of anything. We suppose that it would be useless citing Shelley, or Swinburne, or Meredith, or Darwin, or Spencer, or Huxley, as first-class intellects, because Dr. Horton would reply that he does not know them as such, and, therefore, they are disqualified. He

would probably regard Billy Sunday, or General Booth, or Harold Begbie as their superiors. Curiously, Dr. Horton cites Kant as a first-class intellect that knew God. But Kant showed that, by every possible rule of reason, we did not know God, and could not know God. To the world of "pure reason" God did not exist. He recreated him in the world of "practical reason"—a kind of ethical bogey to soothe old women and scarify potential criminals.

The secularisation of religion goes on apace, but Freethinkers will learn with some surprise how complete it is in some quarters. In an interview with Mr. A. K. Yapp, secretary of the General Council of the Young Men's Christian Association, published in the *Daily Chronicle*, he refers to the refreshment huts provided by that organisation for the use of soldiers. He adds: "Among the Indian troops we are doing a very successful work—entirely on social lines. We do not touch religion at all in this connection."

Thirty soldiers in camp at Romford advertised for a parrot, for use as a pet. We hope they got one which does not use naughty swear words.

Some of the clergy are advocating the use of prayer as a preventive against bullets on the battlefield. They might as well try to tempt an earthquake with a penny bun.

The churches in the City of London were supposed to be the worst attended in England, but their record has been beaten. Canon Boyd, Rector of Cliffe, Kent, says that on his first appearance at that place there were three officiating ministers and only one person in the congregation.

A writer in *T. P.'s Weekly* has been girding at alien books. The most widely circulated alien book is the Bible, and it is the most mischievous.

Freethought papers criticised the theological opinions of the German Kaiser a quarter of a century ago, but orthodox papers have only recently ventured to pluck up sufficient courage for the purpose. And, curiously, one of the critics is our humorous contemporary, *London Opinion*, who hits off cleverly the Kaiser's fondness for religious speech in a cartoon, headed "The Kaiser's Ally Kicks," with the wording: "Satan (to Kaiser): 'Stop calling me God. I detest the word.'"

Mr. Eden Phillpotts, the well-known novelist, recently presented a stick, which had belonged to Blackmore, the author of *Lorna Doone*, to be sold for the benefit of the British Red Cross Fund. The stick was returned with the intimation that it had "no commercial value." If it had been a toenail of one of the twelve disciples, or a portion of the crown of thorns, the fund might have anticipated a permanent income.

The Bishop of Zanzibar became famous as a merciless critic of the Scheme of Federation in the resolutions adopted at the Kikuyu Conference of African missionaries held nearly two years ago. He then figured as a champion of Anglican orthodoxy and exclusiveness. He violently denounced the Bishop of Uganda for having partaken of the Lord's Supper in company with representatives of Nonconformity; and many remember the terrible storm to which his outbursts of denunciation gave rise throughout the Church at home. After a short interval of rest, he has returned to the war-path once more. In the *Church Times* recently, his lordship declares that "from this day forward there is no Communion in Sacred Things between Ourselves and the Right Reverend John, Lord Bishop of Hereford, nor between Ourselves and any priest within his jurisdiction who shall make known his approval of the false doctrine now officially authorised within the Diocese of Hereford."

What has the Bishop of Hereford done to deserve this drastic excommunication? He has simply preferred to a canonry in his Cathedral a priest who does not quite come up to the standard of orthodoxy laid down by "Frank Zanzibar." The *Church Times* informs us that Dr. Weston does his duty in thus judging a fellow-Bishop, but admits that the judgment, of course, is not final. Dr. Percival has the satisfaction of knowing that if he repents and turns over a new leaf, he will be restored into "Communion in Sacred Things" with his infallible brother of Zanzibar. Behold, how fervently the Lord's servants love one another!

The newspapers say that the Pope has ordered his tomb. His Holiness had better order another for the Christian religion.

"Banning of spirits" read a newspaper poster this week. What a pity it did not refer to ghosts, for the clergy would soon find themselves unemployed.

It is neither polite nor truthful of the Dean of St. Paul's to assert that "many scientific men deceive themselves when they say they want no philosophy, and that they are content with what they can verify scientifically and inductively." The reverend gentleman's ignorance of scientific men disqualifies him for making such a statement. Modern scientists do not admit the existence of the unknowable. To them Nature is knowable, and they seek to know her by observing and experimenting upon her processes. The unknowable is merely a philosophical hypothesis, the verification of which is absolutely impossible. There is no such thing as philosophical knowledge, and this is why scientists, as such, want no philosophy. Their search is for facts, though having discovered them, they may find a philosophy upon them.

"Do young men go to church?" A provincial periodical asks the question. Some of them do, Mr. Editor, but more wait outside for the girls to come out.

"Three Weeks in Champagne" was a headline in a daily paper. This looks as if someone had been attempting to lower the vinous records of Lot and Noah.

According to Prebendary Webster, Rector of All Souls', London, the War has converted our soldiers into shining saints. They kneel in prayer on the battle-line, though some of them never prayed in days of peace at home. "and some, indeed, are so conscious of the presence of God that they are afraid to return to England—afraid to face the apathy and the ungodliness of the homes they left behind." More than that, they "are listening to God's call and obeying it," by killing as many of his German children as they possibly can. What arrant nonsense these men of God do talk! Our only comfort is that even those who are foolish enough to listen to them seldom take them seriously.

The clergy are agitating themselves over the suggestion that no alcohol should be consumed until the end of the War. Communion services will be less popular if temperance drinks are substituted. Just imagine a Scotch elder confronted with a dose of lemon-squash!

The average liar who lolls on his cushion at church on Sunday, and confesses himself a miserable sinner, would start a libel action if called one on a weekday.

It is useless, says Canon Carnegie, for Christians "to talk now of love and peace and forgiveness." But surely not more useless now than on other occasions. So far as we have observed, it always is useless for Christians to prattle these amiable commonplaces. Christian love is at best a very doubtful quantity, and in talking about it Christians are apt to lose sight of another very important element—justice. In social life, philanthropy and vague talk about brotherhood serves mainly to gloss over the many injustices perpetrated, and to make those just bearable that would otherwise be intolerable. What society really needs is intelligence, and a keen sense of justice. Given these, and we might give love and peace and forgiveness—as represented by Christian preaching—a lengthy holiday.

A clergyman pleads in the Agony Column of the *Times* for prayers and gifts from the public to assist him in his parish work. Presumably, prayers without the cash would not meet the difficulty.

Dr. Ryle, the Dean of Westminster, preaching at Westminster Abbey, said "Germany was materialistic to the backbone," and added that at a German University, where he studied, "outside the Catholics, there was not a single professor who believed in God or man's survival after death." Perhaps the married professors were more religious.

Rev. J. H. Jowett, late of this country, but now of the United States, has joined in the request of a number of New York ministers to Billy Sunday to visit that city for a series of meetings. Dr. Jowett is generally put forward as a cultured

preacher, but this move certainly does not reflect much credit on the English preacher. Sunday has the language of a costermonger, the rapacity of a shady financier, and the literary honesty of a professional plagiarist. For weeks past the New York *Truthseeker* has been printing passages after passage from Ingersoll's writings which Sunday has been putting forward as his own. And this wholesale theft has been accompanied by denunciations of Ingersoll and all other Freethinkers. The great American Freethinker is not the only one who is pilfered from in this way. The fact is, that whenever one finds Sunday using a respectable sentence, one may be pretty sure it is stolen from someone. Curiously, the *Christian World* cites as one of Sunday's epigrams, "Against stupidity even the gods are powerless." That is at least as old as Aristophanes. The *Christian World* really ought to have known better than to have credited Sunday with that.

Referring to clerical outbursts on the War, the *Times* says "we are not in the mood to have texts hurled at us by men who seem to us no better than ourselves." It looks as if the editor of the *Times* had been reading the police reports.

In a leading article in the *Times* on preachers at Easter tide, that famous journal discusses the reasonableness of the Christian doctrine of loving our enemies. It is highly significant that the article is headed, "A Fond Impossibility."

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, writing in the *Sunday Pictorial* says "If man would pierce the shrouded purposes of the Infinite he must go by way of Calvary." Some, however, like the bishops and leading Free Church ministers, prefer to take the journey in their motors.

We have not recorded lately the money left behind them by clergymen recently defunct, but that is not because there has been nothing to record. Here are two or three, for instance:—Rev. T. W. Church, of Kidderminster, £5,000; Rev. A. N. Bates, of Leicester, £17,000; Rev. F. H. Woods, of Bainton, Yorks, £8 239; Rev. W. Y. Faussett, of Cheddale, £12,861. Nothing very colossal, but far more than most workers in really useful movements are able to leave.

The German mind, says Rev. Dr. Lyttelton, headmaster of Eton, "is a national mind in revolt from Christianity." We are tempted to reply that Dr. Lyttelton's mind is a mind in revolt from common sense. There is, of course, a great deal of Freethought in Germany, as in every other European country, but the overwhelming majority of the people are religious, and Christian. One of the sickening features of the Kaiser's utterances during the War has been his fervent appeals to religious feeling and religious belief. And even though one were to make the quite unjustifiable assumption that these sentiments were insincere, the fact of their being made is proof of the religious feelings of those to whom they are directed. The truth of the matter is, that only a people who have been narcotised by religion for generations could have been misled as the German people appear to have been. It is simply inconceivable, that were the peoples of Europe predominantly Freethinking, that they would be in the position they are in to-day.

What the *Northampton Herald* calls "a curious incident" occurred in connection with the restoration of the tower of St. Giles' Church. The Vicar proposed a resolution thanking Almighty God for the successful restoration of the tower. Councillor John Wood thereupon very rightly said that the resolution seemed out of place when they could not send the Almighty a copy, nor the Council get a reply. Evidently many other Councillors felt the same way, as the resolution was finally placed on the minutes without being seconded.

Rev. James Edward Hands, who was recently fined by a Bow-street magistrate on the charge that some houses owned by him were used for improper purposes, hardly bettered his case by appealing against the decision. The appeal was heard at the London Sessions on April 9, and dismissed. The Chairman, in dismissing the appeal, said, "Many of the justices have expressed their regret at what they consider the inadequacy of the sentence."

To those who thoroughly examine the history of modern times, it is evident that historians are privileged liars, who lend their pens to popular beliefs, exactly as most of the newspapers of the day express nothing but the opinions of their readers.—Balzac.

NOTICE.

The business of the "FREETHINKER" and of THE PIONEER PRESS, formerly of 2 Newcastle-st., has been transferred to 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Previously acknowledged, £21 5s. 7d. Received since:—W. H. Harrap, 5s.; E. Kirton, 5s.; W. H. Hepworth and Y. V. Butler, £1; W. Wells, 10s. *Per Miss Vance*: P. C. Harding, 2s. 6d.

W. YOUNG.—We saw the article to which you refer. We have an idea that it is part of a deliberate policy, and when the right moment arrives may write very definitely about it.

J. A. T. JORISSEN (Trompsburg, S.A.). Remittance to hand, and instructions noted. Your letter is evidence that you still retain your admiration for this paper.

M. THIASK.—(1) There are some letters we receive with which we feel "bored," but they must be of a different type to yours. We are always interested in well-written letters from readers who have something to say and know how to say it, and in your case both qualifications apply. (2) The Rochester poem you cite is a very good one. (3) We do not recall your particular Paine portrait; but as it is an engraving, there will probably be more in existence. (4) Are you not unduly diffident about your ability to help Freethought? It appears to us that you do help it, and very effectively. After all, we cannot all work in the same groove. There are many ways in which one can advance a cause one believes in, and to do whatever comes to hand is the only sensible and profitable plan.

E. KIRTON.—We are afraid that the War is affecting all movements more or less, but there is no use in complaining. We must each do the best we can under the circumstance. And, after all, the War cannot last for ever.

B. YOUNG.—It has been pointed out scores of times that Mr. Bradlaugh never refused to take the oath in the House of Commons. He simply claimed to affirm, as he was advised he had a right to do. When this was not permitted, he asked to be permitted to take the oath. It was over his right to take the oath that the constitutional struggle arose.

W. H. HARRAP.—Thanks for letter and various enclosures. The statement "God does nothing now," is attributed to Carlyle. We do not know of any cheap editions of Voltaire in English—2s. or 2s. 6d. There has been nothing like a complete translation since the eighteenth century. We are obliged to you for efforts in circulating the paper.

E. RAGERT.—Sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Moffat. Probably you are right, that the long cycle-ride from Scotland to Yeovil was too much for a man of his age. At seventy, even though one feels perfectly well, it is wise to be cautious. Still, it was a remarkable performance, and Mr. Moffat appears to have presented a fine combination of both physical and mental vigor. For other matter, see "Sugar Plums."

W. MATHER.—See "Sugar Plums."

H. SILVERSTEIN.—Quite right so far as the official visit was concerned; but we believe there was an earlier, and unofficial, one.

M. CLARK.—We quite agree with what you say; but the preaching of the glories of another life and of the watchful care of a Heavenly Father has been a very effective bar to the watchfulness of a real glory to life on earth.

J. BOSCE.—Why on earth shouldn't you make yourself known to Mr. Foote, or any other Freethought speaker whose meetings you attend? A speaker cannot go hunting round the audience after some person who would like to speak with him, but there is no reason whatever why he should not come forward and make himself known. We are very glad to learn that your wife shares your view, and that your son bids fair to do useful work for Freethought.

J. McNICOLL (Falkland Island).—Pleased to hear from a Freethinker who was a witness of the engagement between the German and British ships. The "act of Providence" is very funny.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 62 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 62 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing offices 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.

Sugar Plums.

Several of our readers have written concerning unacknowledged subscriptions to the Honorarium Fund. We have explained the situation before, but we must repeat this in order to prevent possible misapprehensions. Since the beginning of Mr. Foote's illness, the editorial responsibility for the paper has rested with Mr. Cohen. To avoid further delay, he adopted the plan of acknowledging all contributions to the Honorarium Fund from a given date—March 15. Since that date—all contributions received have been duly acknowledged, week by week, and paid over to Mr. Foote. Contributions sent before March 15 must wait for acknowledgement until Mr. Foote is able to return to the office, when a full list from January 1 will be published. We hope this explanation will make the position clear to those who subscribed to the fund early in the year, as well as to others.

Our readers will, we are sure, be glad to see Mr. Walter Mann's pen busy again in these columns. It is some months since he wrote his last *Freethinker* article, but this long silence has not been due to any fault of his own or to a weakening of interest in Freethought. Since the outbreak of the War, Mr. Mann has been very busy in other directions, and has had little or no time for literary labors. With a little more leisure before him he returns to his Freethought work. He tells us that he would rather write for the *Freethinker* than for any other paper in the world. We appreciate the compliment; so we feel certain will our readers. It is one of the pleasantest aspects of our work to observe the extent to which the *Freethinker* grips the personal interest of both contributors and subscribers.

Whit-Sunday will soon be here, and with it the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society. This year, for reasons given in this column two or three weeks ago, it has been decided to hold the Conference in London, and the Queen's (Minor) Hall has been secured for this purpose. Both the business meetings (morning and afternoon) and the public meeting (evening) will be held in the same hall, which is easily reached from all parts of London. We hope Branches of the N. S. S. will bear in mind that all motions for the Conference Agenda should reach the Secretary not later than April 23. Arrangements are also in hand for a Conference luncheon, but this can only be done satisfactorily if visitors and delegates will acquaint the N. S. S. Secretary in good time. The earlier the better.

This year's Conference occurs at rather a critical period in the history of the N. S. S. and of the English Freethought movement generally. For that reason we hope that there will be a good attendance of members and delegates. Every Branch in the United Kingdom should make an effort to send at least one delegate—and we hope that most will send more than one. It is practically the only opportunity that Freethinkers from different parts of the country have of meeting each other, and there is nothing like personal intercourse for keeping alive the consciousness of a common interest in a great cause.

We regret to hear, just as we are on the point of closing these columns, of the death of Emma Bradlaugh, the youngest and sole surviving sister of Charles Bradlaugh. She died on Thursday, April 1, at the age of seventy-six.

The Annual Meeting of the South Shields Branch is arranged to take place to-day (April 18) at 34 James Mather-terrace (off Ocean-road, facing the Council Schools). A larger district meeting had been planned, in the form of a local conference or symposium of Tyneside Freethinkers upon the question of the organisation and prospects of the party, but a postponement is unavoidable. All the same, any member of the N. S. S. or other well-wisher of the movement will be welcome at this gathering. We are pleased to see that the Tyneside Freethinkers are alive to the necessity of energetic propaganda, and hope that more will be heard on the matter.

An Easy Way to Convert Freethinkers.

"Priestcraft has shown itself so ingenious in inventing fictitious death-beds and dying words for great freethinkers—Voltaire, Thomas Paine, and others.....Even were such inventions true, even were any of the alleged death-bed recantations genuine, what would they amount to? So far as the real man and his thought are concerned, they amount to nothing. They would only mean that so long as he was sound he was liberal, when unsound credulous. Freedom got his health, dogma his disease. Stories of death-bed conversions, says Heine, belong to the department of pathology. 'After all, they only prove that it is impossible to convert the freethinkers so long as they move about under God's open sky, in the enjoyment of their healthy senses, and in the full possession of their reasoning faculty.'—MONCURE D. CONWAY, *Lessons for the Day* (1908), p. 90.

"The theologians have insisted that crimes against men were, and are, as nothing compared with crimes against God. That, while kings and priests did nothing worse than to make their fellows wretched, that so long as they only butchered and burnt the innocent and helpless, God would maintain the strictest neutrality—but when some honest man, some great and tender soul, expressed a doubt as to the truth of the scriptures, or prayed to the wrong God, or to the right one by the wrong name, then the real God leaped like a wounded tiger upon his victim, and from his quivering flesh tore his wretched soul.....All kinds of criminals, except infidels, meet death with reasonable serenity. As a rule, there is nothing in the death of a pirate to cast any discredit on his profession. The murderer upon the scaffold, with a priest on either side, smilingly exhorts the multitude to meet him in heaven. The man who has succeeded in making his home a hell meets death without a quiver, provided he has never expressed any doubts as to the divinity of Christ or the eternal 'procession' of the Holy Ghost."—COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL, *Oration on Voltaire* (1892), pp. 23-24.

THE average Christian, brought up from childhood to believe in God and a future life, has had these beliefs so insistently drilled into him that they have become part of the texture of his thought. He cannot believe that anyone can doubt of these things unless out of mere bravado, or unless he wishes to lead an immoral life.

In fact, most Christians believe that the idea of God is innate—that is, born in them—because they cannot remember the time when they did not hold it. It is this frame of mind that has given rise to all the fables about "infidel death-beds." Most people, as Mr. Bernard Shaw truly remarked, believe in God because they are afraid that he would strike them dead if they did not; and they attribute the same belief to the Atheist. They cannot believe that the Atheist, when at last brought face to face with death, can retain the bravado by which he defied the Almighty during his health and strength. That he must quail at the idea of entering into the presence of the stern Judge whose existence he denied, but of whose existence, the Christian thinks, he inwardly has no doubts.

They cannot understand that the Atheist has no more belief in the existence of an almighty, all-benevolent God than he has in the myths of Osiris or Jupiter. As we have pointed out in previous articles, the idea of God is not innate, and as a matter of fact the majority of the world's inhabitants have no such belief.

However, the continuous exposure from the Secular platform and press of the falsity of the death-bed fables of Voltaire and Thomas Paine have discouraged the production of this form of Christian "frightfulness." The cries of terror—or cursing and blasphemies—are discreetly abandoned; they did good work in their time, but by now they have acquired "an ancient and fish-like smell." It is only claimed now, that in the last hours the unbeliever turned to Jesus or became reconciled to the Church.

The latest victim of this itch for converting opponents into supporters is the late George Gissing, the novelist; but, fortunately, his lifelong friend and fellow-novelist, Mr. Morley Roberts, has exposed the fraud and stated the true facts of the case in his *Life of George Gissing*, published under the title of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, to avoid giving offence to Gissing's friends and relatives. Even the names of Gissing's friends are disguised in this book; for instance, his friend Mr. H. G. Wells, the author, appears under the title of Mr. Rivers.

George Gissing died on December 28, 1903, at St. Christophe (at the foot of the Pyrenees, not far from Bayonne), where he was then residing. No sooner was he dead than "some theological buzzards," says Mr. Morley Roberts, "dropped out of the sky upon Maitland's [Gissing's] corpse."* Shortly after the funeral, someone, says Mr. Roberts,

"sent me a paragraph published in a religious paper which claimed Maitland as a disciple of the Church. For it said that he had died 'in the fear of God's holy name, and with the comfort and strength of the Catholic faith.' When some men die there are for ever crows and vultures about. Although I was very loath to say anything which would raise an angry discussion, I felt that this could not be passed by, and that he would not have wished it to be passed by. Had he not written of a certain character in one of his books 'that he should be buried as a son of the Church, to which he had never belonged, was a matter of indignation'? That others felt as I did is proved by a letter I got from his friend Edmund Roden, who wrote me: 'You have seen the report that the ecclesiastical buzzards have got hold of Henry Maitland *in articulo mortis* and dragged him into the fold.'

"My own views upon religion did not matter. They were stronger and more pronounced, and, it may be more atheistical than his own. Nevertheless I knew what he felt about these things, and in consequence wrote the following letter to the Editor of the paper which had claimed him for the Church: 'My attention has been drawn to a statement in your columns that Henry Maitland died in communion with the Church of England, and I shall be much obliged if you will give me this contradiction the same publicity you granted, without investigation, to the calumny. I was intimate with Maitland for thirty years, and had every opportunity of noting his attitude towards all theological speculation. He not only accepted none of the dogmas formulated in the creeds and articles of the Church of England, but he considered it impossible that any Church's definition of the undefinable could have any significance for an intelligent man. During the whole of our long intimacy I never knew him to waver from that point of view. What communication may have reached you from one who visited Maitland during his illness I do not know. But I presume you do not maintain that a change in his theological standpoint can reasonably be inferred from any words which he may have been induced to speak in a condition in which, according to the law of every civilised country, he would have been incompetent to sign a codicil to his will. The attempt to draw such a deduction will seem dishonest to every fair-minded man; and I rely upon your courtesy to publish this vindication of the memory of an honest and consistent thinker which you have, however unintentionally aspersed.'

"Of course, this letter was refused publication. The Editor answered it in a note in which he maintained the position that the paper had taken up, stating that he was thoroughly satisfied with the sources of his information. Naturally enough, I knew what those sources were, and I wrote a letter in anger to the chaplain of St. Pée, which, I fear, was full of very gross insults" (pp. 284-5-6).

Mr. Morley Roberts was Gissing's earliest and most intimate friend. The acquaintance formed at Owen's College, Manchester, was continued in spite of the catastrophe which ended his college career, cut him off from society, and laid the foundation for his usually chequered and unhappy career. Therefore Mr. Roberts is in the very best position to make an authoritative statement as to Gissing's views on religion, and he emphatically declares:—

"Truly speaking, he had no religion.....If I ever endeavored to inveigle him into a discussion or an argument upon any metaphysical subject, he grew visibly uneasy. He declined to argue, or even to discuss; and though I know that in later life he admitted that a little immortality was possible, I defy anyone to bring a little of evidence to show that he ever went further. This attitude to all forms of religious and metaphysical thought was very curious to me. It was, indeed, almost inexplicable, as I have an extreme pleasure in speculative inquiry of all kinds. The truth is that on this side of his nature he was absolutely wanting. Such things interested him no more than music interests a tone-deaf man who cannot distinguish a shriek of a tom-cat from the sound of a violin. If I did try to speak of

* Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, p. 302.

things, he listened with an air of outraged and sublime patience which must have been obvious to anyone but a bore. Whether his philosophy was sad or not, he would not have it disturbed. His real interest in religion seemed to lie in his notion that it was a curious form of delusion almost ineradicable from the human mind. There is a theory, very popular among votaries of the creeds, which takes the form of denying that anyone can really be an atheist. This is certainly not true, but it helps one to understand the theological mind, which has an imperative desire to lay hold of something like an inclusive hypothesis to rest on. So far as Maitland was concerned, there was no more necessity to have a hypothesis about God than there was to have one about quaternions, and quaternions certainly did not interest him. He shrugged his shoulders and put these matters aside, for in many things he had none of the weaknesses of humanity, though in others he had more than his share" (pp. 115-116).

Mr. Roberts remarks one curious exception to this attitude of Gissing's towards religion:—

"The one book that he did read, which is in itself essentially a disturbing book to many people, and apparently read with some pleasure, was the earliest volume of Dr. Frazer's *Golden Bough*; but it is a curious thing that what interested him, and indeed actually pleased him, was Frazer's side attacks upon the dogmas of Christianity. He said: 'The curious thing about Frazer's book is, that in illustrating the old religious usages connected with tree-worship and so on, he throws light upon every dogma of Christianity. This by implication; he never does so expressly. Edmund Roden has just pointed this out to the Folk-lore Society, with the odd result that Gladstone wrote at once, resigning membership'" (p. 121).

I do not know who the name Edmund Roden conceals, but I suspect it to be Mr. Edward Clodd. But to return to Gissing's pretended reconciliation to the Church. Seeing his protest refused in the columns of the pious periodical in which the slander appeared, Mr. Roberts wrote to a London daily as follows:—

"As the intimate friend of Henry Maitland for thirty years, I beg to state definitely that he had not the slightest intellectual sympathy with any creed whatsoever. From his early youth he had none, save for reasons other than intellectual. He inclined to a vague and nebulous Positivism. His mental attitude towards all theological explanations was more than critical; it was absolutely indifferent. He could hardly understand how anyone in the full possession of his faculties could subscribe to any formulated doctrines. No more than John Stuart Mill or Herbert Spencer could he have entered into communion with any Church" (p. 287).

Mr. Roberts explains that "his temporary Positivist pose, which was entirely due to his gratitude to Harold Edgeworth for helping him." And when, in later years, Mr. Roberts called Gissing's attention to the fact

"that he had once dated his letters according to the Positivist Calendar he seemed a little disturbed and shocked. Still, it was very natural that, when exposed to Positivist influences, he should have become a Positivist; for among the people of that odd faith, if faith it can be called, he found both kindness and intellectual recognition. But when his mind became clearer and calmer, and something of the storm and stress had passed by, he was aware that his attitude had been somewhat pathologic, and did not like to recall it" (p. 122).

This became very much clearer both to Gissing and to Mr. Roberts, says the author, when another friend of theirs, "a learned and very odd German, under in the same curious religious way." This German came to absolute destitution, so that at last he found it impossible to keep a collie dog which he had taught several peculiar tricks. Gissing told Mr. Roberts of this case, and introduced him to the German—whose name was Schmidt—and, after hearing his story, Mr. Roberts found a home for the dog with his own people. He proceeds:—

"Soon after this, Schmidt fell into even grimmer poverty, and was rescued from the deepest gulf by some religious body analogous in those days to the Salvation Army of the present time. Of this Maitland knew nothing, until one day, going down the Strand, he found his friend giving away religious pamphlets at the door

of Exeter Hall. When he told me this, he said he went next day to see the man in his single-room lodging, and found him sitting at the table with several open Bibles spread out before him. He explained that he was making a commentary on the Bible at the instigation of one of his new friends, and he added: 'Here, *here*, is henceforth my life's work.' Shortly after this, I believe through Harold Edgeworth or someone else to whom Maitland appealed, the poor German was given work in some quasi-public institution, and, with better fare and more ease, his brain recovered. He never mentioned religion again. It was thus that Maitland himself recovered from similar but less serious influences in somewhat similar conditions. For some weeks in 1885, I was myself exposed to such influences in Chicago, in even bitterer conditions than those from which Schmidt and Maitland had suffered, but not for one moment did I alter my opinions" (pp. 123-24).

Such is Christian charity. "We give you this bread in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But we expect you to come and bend the knee in our tabernacle."

Mr. Roberts got into communication with the nurse who attended upon Gissing, and through her with Mrs. Maitland, who state that on Monday, December 21, the two doctors who held a consultation agreed that it was impossible for the patient to live through the night, although in fact he did not die till nearly a week later. On Thursday, the 24th, the English chaplain was called in, "not for any religious reasons, or because Maitland had called for him, but simply because Thérèse thought that he might find some pleasure in seeing an English face." Which he did.

"At this moment the young doctor came in and told the clergyman privately that Maitland had no chance whatever, and that it was a wonder that he was still alive. It is quite certain that there was no religious conversation between the clergyman and the patient at this time."

The nurse arrived at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. "The clergyman simply peeped in at the door to say good-bye, for at the time Mr. Rivers [Mr. Wells] was in charge of the bedroom. The chaplain did not see Maitland again until the day I myself came to St. Christophe, when all was over" (pp. 288-9). Mr. Roberts concludes:—

"The chaplain complicated matters in no small degree before he retired from the scene, by declaring most disingenuously that he had not written the notice which appeared in print. Now, this was perfectly true. He did not write. He had asked a friend of his to do so. When he learnt the truth, this friend very much regretted having undertaken the task. I understand that though the Editor refused to withdraw this statement, the authorities of the paper wrote to the chaplain in no pleased spirit after they had received my somewhat severely phrased communication. It is a sad and disagreeable subject, and I am glad to leave it" (pp. 289-90).

The reader must not forget that everywhere the name of Maitland stands for Gissing in this article, as in the book. As an admirer, of many years' standing, of Gissing's work, this biography, apart from the matter of this article, proved of absorbing interest to me. In the light of this book, Gissing stands forth as one of the most pathetic figures of our time. Misfortune dogged his footsteps from beginning to end. As Mr. Morley Roberts remarks: "He who desired to be a Bentley or a Porson wrote bitterly about the slums of Tottenham-court-road. With Porson, he damned the nature of things, and wrote beautifully about them." It also explains the fact—which many people complain of—that "Almost every sympathetic character in all his best books was for him like the starling in the cage of Sterne—the starling that cried, 'I can't get out! I can't get out!'" This was just the condition in which Gissing found himself all his life, largely—it must be admitted through his own fault, or, as Mr. Morley Roberts puts it, through his own nature, which "was for ever thrusting him into positions to which he was not equal. His disposition, his very heredity, seemed to have invited trouble."

Our thanks are due to Mr. Morley Roberts for this deeply interesting and valuable "human document,"

the lesson of which is, that the easiest way to convert Freethinkers is to wait until they are dead. But even then one has to be very careful.

W. MANN.

Religion and the Masses.

WHAT is the attitude of the working-classes of England and Wales towards religion? This question is often debated by those who have some interest in the matter, and answered more or less to their own satisfaction, but conclusive evidence is lacking.

Here is scope for a comprehensive inquiry on broad lines. The inquiry should not be conducted by the Churches; they have a bias in one direction. Dr. Browne, the retiring Bishop of Bristol, informs us that the masses are not alienated from the Church, though the last Free Church Congress lamented the failure of Christianity to reach the people. The Roman Catholic Church avoids a definite statement, but goes steadily on trying to reach the proletariat, probably with more success than Anglicanism or Nonconformity, but no certain conclusion can be drawn from existing data.

Neither should the question be answered by the protagonists of Freethought. Whatever else they may be able to do, the great controversialists are not capable of estimating accurately and judging correctly the feelings of the workers toward Christianity. The difficulties of answering the question are further aggravated by this—that the popular regard has several aspects. Christianity itself: modern expositions of it by the Churches, and the paid exponents and avowed supporters of religion, each strike the common mind with different sensations. The average man is apt to judge causes by effects, and as he watches the professional religionist and regular church-goer, listens to what they say, sees their actions, and deals with them in secular affairs, so he will judge of their religion. Consciously or unconsciously, the working-classes believe one Biblical sentence, "By their fruits shall ye know them." Is it possible to measure the popular estimate of the fruits put forth for their delectation?

So here is a field of inquiry open to anyone who wants a big piece of research; an inquiry which has never yet been fully made, but only touched upon in a prefatory manner.

Without placing too much reliance on figures, statistics would be helpful in this quest. Three sets of such are necessary, with the denominations given separately:—

1. The avowed membership of all religious bodies.
2. The number of communicants per Sunday, and,
3. The Church attendance each Sunday. The two latter should be averaged for twelve months.

Additional figures for Sunday-schools, week-day services, Bible-classes, prayer-meetings, etc., would be useful.

Had we these numbers accurate and indisputable, interesting comparisons might be drawn, and researches into the hold of religion upon the populace facilitated.

The available figures are interesting.

The number of Roman Catholics is estimated only, varying from four millions to six and a half millions for the British Isles. As there are over three millions in Ireland, and nearly half a million in Scotland, something over two millions seems a safe conclusion for England and Wales.

That is six or seven per cent. of a population of thirty-six millions. At Easter, 1912, the Church of England had about two and a half million communicants. To communicate at Easter is compulsory, according to the Prayer Book, so that may be taken as the maximum number of Church-people. At other times there is only a fraction of that total communicating.

Two and a half millions is about seven per cent. of the people. The membership of Nonconformist bodies ranges from less than half a million each of Wesleyan Methodists and Congregationalists down to Disciples of Christ, two thousand.

The total is somewhat over two millions, about six per cent. of the inhabitants of England and Wales.

Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Dissenters together total barely seven millions, hardly twenty per cent. The larger religious bodies in England and Wales number a dozen, beside a host of smaller ones. Those people who cannot find a form of Christianity to satisfy themselves must be hard to please, and should stay away from worship altogether, as the majority do now.

Perfectly correct statistics of membership, communicants, attendance at places of worship, and subsidiary organisations, have yet to be forthcoming, and till they are, no very definite conclusions can be drawn. Various Year Books, and Reports of religious bodies, give divergent figures, with frequently wide discrepancies. There are some notable features about the existing figures. One has already been stated—that the number of avowed Christians in England and Wales does not exceed twenty per cent. of the population. Also, most religious bodies report a decrease of membership per annum for several years past. The number of Churches in proportion to population gets less. In 1851, there was a place of worship to every 520 persons; in 1911, one to 722 persons.

Another fact revealed is rather amusing. It is the great excess of accommodation over membership. Some of the sects have sittings for four or five times their present membership. Comparatively few of God's houses ever fill. Do they ever hope to do so?

The Brotherhood movement contains six hundred thousand men, but that cannot be taken as much gain to the Churches. Prominent leaders of religion admit that the Brotherhoods bring no increase of membership or attendance at service. Rather the reverse. There are numbers of good souls who hesitate about whole-hearted adherence, who will not enrol themselves as members of any sect, but do not like to desert Christianity altogether. Religiously, they are sitting on the fence. To many such the Brotherhood offers a way of escape, and a balm for uneasy conscience. The Brotherhood meeting is not too religious. It makes little demand upon its attendants. It is pleasanter, and usually more exciting than ordinary services. There, one sometimes hears good speakers, laymen who make a more ethical and moral than religious appeal. It is musical in a loud, vigorous way, therein rivalling the Salvation Army. So, many make a truce with God, and escape further religious observance by being "brothers."

There are no authoritative statistics for the Salvation Army, but estimates vary from fifty thousand to one hundred thousand. This religio-military force flourishes upon its music and its large (perhaps inflated) credit for social service.

Who are the people that go to Church? They are not predominantly of the laboring class, and those who are workers are not of the industrial type. At Church one finds the upper and middle classes; the aristocracy in decreasing numbers, and chiefly the bourgeois. The trading, commercial classes, those whose aim in life is to be respectable, the inhabitants of our suburbs and small towns, are the attendants at worship, and with them are semi-dependants—clerks, shop assistants, domestics, out-door servants, teachers, and all of that sort. The workers of the swarming hives of mills and factories, railways, docks, and mines, are conspicuously absent. The majority of worshipers are women and children. Whether the men think that they can worship vicariously, or that it is unnecessary, or that the gates of Heaven open to men without question is uncertain. but for some reason men do not attend public worship. The reasons why people go to Church would form a good subject for the speculation of the curious. Custom, habit, social values, music, a popular preacher, to see and display fine clothes, to pass

away the time, all count in addition to a desire to worship God and to thank him for his goodness.

It is generally admitted that the denizens of the towns, especially the industrial centres, do not go to religious services, but it is supposed that people in the country do. This is a mistake. The working people of the rural districts are more pagan than their city brothers. Country residents are less influenced by religious efforts than the urban dwellers. Sunday work makes a big difference. On farms and estates a large amount of Sunday labor has to be done, and this militates against Church-going, and induces disregard for the Sabbath. The countryman does a lot of work for himself on Sunday too, and with the necessity for rest and domestic amenities, make the agricultural laborer less religious even than the townsman. In villages and country towns there is some amount of formal religion displayed, but in the absolute country none. Isolation from human society, and contiguity to nature, are not favorable to organised Christianity.

Neither existing statistics nor the statements of religious leaders are satisfactory indications of the attitude of the masses towards religion. One needs to get amongst them, to understand their idiosyncrasies, to hear their conversations, and to study the details of their private lives to see if they are affected much by religious emotions. Their feelings toward Christianity can only be gauged by careful observation, and cannot be deduced by syllogism. Tendencies, hints, and small revelations have to be noted, and deductions made from data which would look of doubtful value in print, and would not be accepted in a law court.

It must be remembered that the working classes are extremely reserved. It is difficult to estimate their actual position in regard to any matter, even the most material, and when it is a subject like Christianity the difficulty is increased tenfold. Only a person with deep sympathy and intimacy with the toiling masses can form a true idea of their sentiments toward a controversial subject.

Against this lack of articulate expression must be set the power of religious bodies to demonstrate themselves. They have occupied the field for centuries, and periodicals, speakers and preachers, and every advantage that a party or propaganda can have. Thus the professors of spiritual things are able to expound doctrines, creeds, and dogmas, and get them accepted as truth and inspiration. Very few of those who cry aloud with tongue and pen at all represent the opinions of the ordinary men and women, and particularly is this so in regard to Christianity. Anyone who claims to speak for the working classes is apt to be taken at his own valuation, and amorphous, that lie at the back of the common mind, we should have very different statements on many disputed points.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

(To be concluded.)

Faces in the Fire.

O, ye wise Greeks and noble Romans of the *Freethinker*! I am reading the "one and only" at the midnight hour, when ghosts should be about; but they are all gone, melted into air—into thin air. I sigh, and smile, and lay the paper down, and light my pipe, and look at the dying fire; and, lo, an ashen face is grinning at me through the bars, an ashen face with bulging eyes, prominent but weak proboscis, and huge dim mouth askew in reflex and unmeaning grin. The ember cools, the flakes keep falling, the figure shrinks and rustles in the grate, and drops away. The thud sounds loudly in the silent night. 'Tis thus, though not so easily, the gods are passing to the ashbins of the past; but history remains, and humankind. How many forms and fancies and reflection in the firelight's fading glow! There some grave and reverend seigneur; Dick Turpin there, with cornered hat; or there Napoleon's, cocked across his gloomy brows; the Kaiser's, spiked, above his spiked moustache;

with there some reverend sage, with face of deep repose, with kinglets for a footstool, for kingdom all the world of man and mind. These, with all the variations of the imagined and the real, rudely shaped in the consuming carbon, refined in the pensive recreating mind; firelight forms of romance and chivalry, of folly and futility, of blank idiocy, of might and majesty, of wit and wisdom; world without end of dream and fancy and delight from the rich storehouse of memory and meditation. The world without is varied, rich, and wonderful enough, yet 'tis but a barren expanse without its complementary psychology, that vaster realm where few as yet—for fear of ghosts—have dared to tread.

Ye noble Greeks and Romans, writers and readers of the *Freethinker*, again I salute thee, not with the servile gesture of the bond, but with the loving artless impulse of the free.

Have just read Sainte-Beuve by "Mimnermus." Is not "M." himself a chief of critics? I need say no more. I read his short, vital, illuminating essays with unalloyed delight.

Lloyd on Maxim. Cohen on popular Pemberton. You are all great—greater than ever. The Pemberton species reminds me of the fascinating atmosphere of *Dead Man's Rock*, by "Q.," which I first spelled out in Pitman's shorthand characters.

And just a word about the humble sorrow at the bottom of my own heart—is it too insignificant to mention? or is it forgotten?—my parody on Horace Smith's "Mummy," a pertinent address to the "Almighty." I, too, am in search of enthusiasms. How much damping these survive! My love to the "Old Pilot"—may he soon be at the helm again!—with complete confidence in the present navigator.

A. MILLAR.

PIOUS OPTIMISM.

How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence! It is the most utter falsehood and a crime against the human race. Even in my brief time I have been contemporary with events of the most horrible character; as when the mothers in the Balkans cast their own children from the train to perish in the snow; as when the *Princess Alice* foundered, and six hundred human beings were smothered in foul water; as when the hetacomb of two thousand maidens were burned in the church at Santiago; as when the miserable creatures tore at the walls of the Vienna theatre. Consider only the fates which overtake the little children. Human suffering is so great, so endless, so awful, that I can hardly write of it. I could never go into hospitals and face it, as some do, lest my mind should be temporarily overcome. The whole and the worst the worst pessimist can say is far beneath the least particle of the truth, so immense is the misery of man. It is the duty of all rational beings to acknowledge the truth. There is not the least trace of directing intelligence in human affairs. This is a foundation of hope, because, if the present condition of things were ordered by a superior power, there would be no possibility of improving it for the better in the spite of that power. Acknowledging that no such direction exists, all things become at once plastic to our will.—*Richard Jefferies*

Truth and the feeling of integrity

Are of the heart's own essence—should they call

For sufferings, none repents the sacrifice.

Oh, happy he, whom Truth accompanies

In all his walks—from outward cumbrance free—

Pure of all soil—dwelling within the heart,

Light to his steps and guidance: oracle

To lead or to mislead, none doth he seek;

Consults no casuist, but an honest conscience;

Of sacrifices recks not, and repents not.

—Goethe (*Faustus* in "Faust").

Obituary.

I hear from Mr. Hubert J. Moffat of the death of Mr. James Moffat, of Yeovil, a veteran Freethinker, and a very old friend of my own and the Freethought movement. He was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, of which he had a file in the house. The funeral took place at Golder's Green quite recently. His favorite lines were Omar Khayyam's:—

"And when the angel (death) with darker draught

Draws up to thee, take that, and do not shrink."

Mr. Moffat's sons carried out his exact wishes, and the cremation took place at Golder's Green. An old friend made some kind remarks, which was the only ceremony. The ashes were scattered on the ground.—F

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