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In all cases we find that that view of life which would maintain that we, either as individuals or as a race, are under the protection of some external Providence will not fit the facts of our experience.

—SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND.

With the Angels.

THERE are people who write because they have really something to say, and must say it. There are others who write because they feel there is a public that wish them to say a certain something, and, having found out what it is that this public requires, they straightway produce it. No really thoughtful reader will confuse these two classes of writing. There is a ring about the one that is altogether absent from the other. With a glib pen, a slapdash style, and a nose for what is likely to sell, there is no limit to the number of books that a writer of the second class can turn out. True, he writes nothing that will live; but that is not his concern. He writes to sell; and the way to achieve sales is to exploit the passion of the moment, and present it in terms that are so familiar to the particular public catered for that it will not have to exercise its brains to understand it. And as one phase of popular passion or interest succeeds another, so there is a stream of opportunity for producing bundles of printed pages that, because of their appearance, one is compelled to call "books."

To be quite frank, the commercial possibilities of a book on the question of the Mons Angels appears to be the only justification for a recent work by Mr. Harold Begbie with the title, *On the Side of the Angels*. Mr. Begbie has nothing new to say on the subject; and what he does say is devoid of the slightest critical judgment. As a piece of religious writing, it quite lacks the "reverential" note; as an essay in evidence, it is beneath contempt; and as a piece of writing—well, even the *Church Times* points out that "the style is atrocious." Quite apart from the question of whether there were really angels at Mons, the book is badly conceived, badly written, and its theme stupidly argued. It is an almost avowed catering for the most stupid class of religionists, which delights in details of the marvellous, and revels in denunciations of those who criticise them. The only excuse for the work is that while the story attracted interest there was room for a book. It would sell. And sales mean royalties.

It will be remembered that the story of the angelic vision at the battle of Mons—which took place at the end of August—first appeared in its religious dress some months after the fight in the pages of a *Church Magazine*. Then it began to make headway. Clergymen all over the country began to tell what they had heard from officers, soldiers, nurses—always with a curious absence of verifiable details. These stories were reprinted and repeated—with more details added—still without names, and all was going along swimmingly, when Mr. Arthur Machen entered upon the scene. And he claimed—and proved—that he invented the whole story as a piece of imaginative writing as far back as September, 1914. There was the article in print in support of his claim. And since then Mr. Machen

has reprinted his article, with an account of its origin and a criticism of the "evidence" offered to prove that his invention was an unconscious narrative of fact, or a miraculous anticipation of the actual.

It is this book of Mr. Machen's to which that of Mr. Begbie's is intended as a reply. Mr. Begbie can quite understand that "a hothead of infidelity" would laugh at people believing in such a story; but his pure and sensitive soul is shocked at Mr. Machen's "lamentable failure to realise the acuteness of human suffering and the intense eagerness for consolation which are now lying at the heart of English existence." It is indeed "an act very near to sacrilege" that, having had that story suggested by the Battle of Mons, and "having created a thousand hopes and a thousand consolations," Mr. Machen should now admit that it was all imagination. Such a proceeding justifies, in Mr. Begbie's opinion, "those foreign critics of England, who accuse us, not only of lightness and frivolity concerning serious things, but also of an incurable vulgarity of soul." And he solemnly warns Mr. Machen that "not to believe in the angels is to believe in a mindless, meaningless, and soulless universe." Hence Mr. Begbie rushes forward "to undo, so far as my powers will permit, the mischief wrought" by Mr. Machen. The days of chivalry are not over, even though knights be armed with a pen instead of a sword, and receive royalties in place of some fair lady's favor.

One can quite believe that, had Mr. Begbie been in Mr. Machen's place, he would have acted differently. The mere accident of a story of his having no foundation in fact would never have led him to shatter "a thousand hopes and a thousand consolations" by "pointing out the nature of its origin." In Mr. Begbie's mind, only "a hothead of infidelity" would do this.

Nevertheless, Mr. Begbie protests too much. It is really not a question of the acuteness of suffering, or of the hopes of people, or of our possessing in the eyes of foreign critics—and probably breaking up the Quadruple Entente—a vulgarity of soul; it is really a question of whether the story is true or not—although Mr. Begbie never appears to realise this simple fact. Nor is it true that not to believe in the angels offers no alternative but Materialism. Mr. Machen does believe in angels, but not in these particular Mons angels. And as he created them, he has excellent ground for his disbelief.

It was said of a certain famous person that no one could possibly be as wise as he looked. Paraphrasing this, I venture to say that no man—with even a moderate education—could possibly be as credulous as Mr. Begbie claims, in this book, to be. His credulity is almost miraculous. He questions nothing; he accepts everything. The story of an unnamed wounded soldier, who told a nurse, who told a lady superintendent, who told Mr. Begbie, is accepted as "a most convincing and satisfactory statement." Also there "are many," both in France and England, who could support the stories of angels seen, "if they were so minded." How Mr. Begbie knows this, we are not told. I am only surprised at Mr. Begbie's modesty. He might just as easily have put the number of witnesses at, say, 10,000—if they were only minded to speak.

Everything is fish that comes to Mr. Begbie's net. He cites Dr. Horton's sermon in support of the angels at Mons, but in his desire not to rob anyone of hope or consolation, or expose the English to a charge of "vulgarity of soul," refrains from pointing out that Dr. Horton told Mr. Machen that his sermon was based upon the statement of the Vicar of Clifton that Miss Marrable knew officers who had seen the vision. With rare self-restraint Mr. Begbie does not inform his readers that Miss Marrable wrote publicly denying having any such evidence, or that she ever said she possessed any. Mr. Begbie also supplies his readers with the sworn testimony of Private Cleaver that he had been at Mons and had seen the vision of angels. But he does not inform them that Private Cleaver's superiors report that he did not reach France until after the Battle of Mons was over. Perhaps this was for fear of robbing folk of their hopes and consolations. Still, Mr. Begbie remains on the side of the angels—and other things.

We shall come to more serious matters later. Meantime, it is instructive in a study of writers of Mr. Begbie's type to notice what he considers evidence—or professes to consider evidence—in favor of the angels. There is "a wounded soldier" who made a statement to a nurse, and whom Mr. Begbie says he afterwards visited. "A wounded Grenadier Guardsman" told him the vision was "common talk on the great retreat." There was also a "Lancashire Fusilier" who gave his experience to another nurse. An unnamed Abbé spoke to an English nurse of the visions seen by French soldiers. A wounded man in a London hospital told a sister that he had seen them. An unnamed second lieutenant said that angels had been seen at Neuve Chapelle. An Irish lady knew a member of the Dublin Fusiliers who, when told of the story, replied, "Yes, I saw it myself." A "Mrs. —" went to see a wounded cousin in Bucks who said that some angels had saved his detachment. Another lady reported that a nurse had shown her three letters from soldiers who had "personally seen the angels," etc.

There is a wonderful resemblance, and yet a curious contradiction, between these stories. The striking thing is Mr. Begbie's amazing credulity—so amazing that one cannot help expressing doubts as to its genuineness. It never dawns upon him to subject any of these stories to the slightest critical examination—that might show a vulgarity of soul which Mr. Begbie dreads. Delicate minded people, he is convinced, will be quite willing to accept them at their face value. It does not appear strange that with all these stories no definite name and address is given. It is all Private Blank or Lieutenant Dash. That is quite enough for Mr. Begbie, and he thinks it ought to be enough for other people.

The names of only two soldiers have appeared in connection with the Mons legend. One is that of Private Cleaver who was soon shown to be a very plain, ordinary kind of a liar, ready to repeat the stories that were suggested to him by his questioners. The other name is that of Private J. E. Seymour, of the 8th Hussars. He actually was in the Battle of Mons, fighting rearguard actions, and he says in a letter to the *Daily Mail* of August 20:—

"I never saw any angels during that time. Since August 22 I have spoken to thousands of men who went through the retirement, and I never heard angels referred to. Also, while this controversy has been in progress, I have spoken with soldiers on this subject who described it as 'bosh.'"

It is a little remarkable that the spiritual minded Mr. Begbie does not notice *this* soldier's testimony concerning the angels. Perhaps it was too vulgar! But to those who have not reached the level of Mr. Begbie's spiritual development, it will appear strange that of the two soldiers who have given their names and regiments, along with their evidence about the angels, the one endorsing it is a conceited liar, while the one whose statements remain unchallenged describes it as "bosh."

But Mr. Begbie remains on the side of the angels, and—?

(To be concluded.) C. COHEN.

A Mischievous Doctrine.

THE Christian dogma of forgiveness is peculiar to the Christian religion. No other religion under the sun contains it; and it is safe to affirm that it has done more harm in the world than any other form of superstition ever promulgated by the priests. We are repeatedly assured that the very heart of the Gospel is the declaration that the sins of the whole world were fully atoned for and forgiven by the sacrificial death of the only begotten Son of God on the cross of Calvary, so that all sinners have to do is to claim the forgiveness which is already theirs *de jure*. In other words, forgiveness is God's free gift to the guilty rebels of the Fall, who are now only called upon to believe in his love and sincerity as our Father, and receive it. It is ours merely for the asking. But if we do not ask for it, we shall go to hell and suffer for ever on account of the very sins for which Christ fully atoned when he died. What the Gospel says to every one of us is, not "Believe, and your sin will be atoned for," but, "Your sin has been atoned for, therefore believe"; and this is the quintessence of immorality. Forgiveness is called a "blood-bought heritage." It cost the life of God's beloved Son, and it becomes ours the moment we appropriate it by faith. No matter what we are or have done, faith in what Christ did for us nineteen centuries ago clears us of all evil in Heaven's sight. We are justified, forgiven, and no iniquity is imputed to us. But if we fail to believe, we are numbered among the damned. Luther was perfectly sure of this when he exclaimed that "nothing damns but unbelief."

This is a crucial point. Salvation is by faith. Justification, which is really only another name for pardon, is for all time. This is how Professor David Smith puts it:—

"What happened when we first repented and believed? We were assured of our forgiveness; but forgiveness of what? Not of our past sin only, but of every new sin which will ever overtake us. It was the sin of the whole world that was laid on the Savior long ago. The Atonement covered not only the past, but the future, of the humanity; and it covers not only the past, but the future, of every penitent sinner. God knows the end from the beginning, and when he received you and me at the first he received us with the future in view, and no fresh sin takes him by surprise."

Mark the process of thought. Forgiveness, covering past, present, and future, is a "blood-bought heritage," purchased by the shedding of Christ's precious blood. Freely and fully is it ours if we but humbly receive it. If the biggest scoundrel that ever breathed but receive it in the last hour of his life, he will enter heaven like an all-conquering hero, and be for ever with the Lord in the enjoyment of ineffable bliss. On the other hand, they who do not appropriate it go down to the place of torment, therein to be kept and punished to all eternity, not because they are wicked, but because they died in unbelief. Christ atoned for *their* sin, Christ paid *their* debt, and bought *their* forgiveness; and now they are doomed to bear the penalty of their sin over again, without the least hope of ever securing pardon. Is this in harmony with the alleged moral order of the Universe, which is said to be under the direction and control of a God of love? Dr. Smith sees no incongruity in the idea that the sins, for the bearing away of which Christ offered himself up once for all, may yet be visited upon the majority of those for whom the sacrifice was made, and cause them to be treated as vessels of wrath through endless ages.

There are two Gospels, the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Nature, which contradict each other on almost every point. The Gospel of Nature has no forgiveness to offer, the very heart of it finding expression in the words, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We are the offspring of heredity and environment, and from under the dominion of those two factors there is no possible

They rule us with a rod of iron, and complaint is useless. In a deep and solemn sense, man is Nature's slave, and may become her dust; but if he "accepts the spur of explicable pains," and lives in ever-increasing conformity to her "rigid laws," he gradually emerges "her just Lord." But there is no possibility of reversing or setting aside a single one of her laws. In a semi-poetical sense, Sir Ray Lankester speaks of man as "Nature's Insurgent Son," but all he means by the phrase is that we have succeeded, in a remarkable degree, in converting the law of Natural Selection into our servant. The law still exists, but we have become, by the use of our wits, its just lords, rather than its miserable slaves. But it remains as true as ever that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Such is the Gospel of Nature, to the truth of which all the ages bear witness. Now, the Gospel of Christ represents an ignorant, and more or less ignoble, attempt to be emancipated from what many feel to be our slavish bondage to Nature. While acknowledging or defending the essential justice of the God of Nature, the superstitious flee for refuge from his relentlessness to the God of Grace, who delighteth in seemingly setting the God of Nature at defiance. Thus we arrive at the Gospel of Forgiveness, which Meredith makes just game of in his *Earth and Man*. To an ignorant man, Nature's yoke is galling:—

"Therefore the wretch inclines
Afresh to the Invisible, who, he saith,
Can raise him high: with vows of living faith
For little signs."

He begins to imagine that his real affinity is, not with the Visible, but with the Invisible, and that he is merely Nature's prisoner. "By virtue of his worth" he fancies that he has nothing in common "with brutes and knaves." Therefore,—

"From dust, of him abhorred,
He would be snatched by Grace discovering worth.
'Sever me from the hollowness of Earth!
Me take, dear Lord.'"

That is the prayer of a coward, of one who cringes with fear in contemplation of the law of reaping, from which he vainly hopes the Fables of the Above provide a merciful release. But what is the use of praying? Meredith reminds us that there is no Invisible who hears and answers, and that the truth about the man who looks aloft for aid is that—

"His cry to heaven is a cry to her
He would evade."

In other words, the Gospel of Forgiveness, if true, is fundamentally immoral, wicked Gospel; and, if false, must be pronounced the most misleading and deceptive message ever invented. From this point of view, nothing could be a greater insult to common sense, a more disgraceful playing upon the superstitious fears of the credulous, or a more unforgivable attempt to set the God of Grace in opposition to the God of Nature than Professor Smith's article in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for September 23. Take the following as a sample of this delusive teaching:—

"The message of the Gospel is, that when Christ died on Calvary, he made a full and final atonement for the sin of the world. He bore the sin of the whole world—every sin, past, present, and future, of every sinner. His atonement stands complete and final, and all that we have now to do is to appropriate the mercy which he has won for us. It is already ours in virtue of his Infinite Sacrifice, and we have no need to plead for it; we have only to claim it, and rejoice in it."

Forgiveness means release from the law of reaping, which release was procured for us by a sacrifice as unjust as it has been fruitless. Such a release is an eternal impossibility. Though a zealous preacher of this lying Gospel, Paul admits its unreality in several passages. Again and again does he maintain that the final judgment of mankind will be according to character, not attitude to Christ; according to deeds done in life, not according to belief or unbelief. What demands a man is wickedness, injustice, fraud, disobedience to the law of life, and for a person guilty of this there is no forgiveness. If he has the strength to reform, if by the help of the love and sympathy of

relations and friends he manages to cease to play knave with his conscience, and learns to wean the passions from their state of servitude to the pleasures, he will eventually find Nature's frown transformed into a smile. There is no other way of salvation, either for individuals or for nations; and it is a salvation to be realised in the world that now is.

The curious thing is that, in practice, the divines are powerless to ignore the truth of the Gospel of Nature. What they say is, that God's forgiveness in Christ does not interfere with the natural consequences of the sins forgiven. What, then, does it do? Nothing, so far as the outward life is concerned, the blessing that it brings being purely a spiritual one. It engenders within us, they inform us, a sense of glorious peace with God, a sweet feeling of harmonious communion with the Invisible. In the body, the law of reaping still holds sway, but in the soul it has been supplanted by a higher law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. In other words, even according to the divines themselves, forgiveness is only an emotional transaction, the value of which cannot be expressed in terms of earthly life at all, and the reality of which cannot be demonstrated until we leave the present world. Is such a doctrine true? we ask, and the divines answer, "We feel it to be true, and that emotion fills our hearts with joy; but for the outward evidence of its truth we must wait till we enter heaven, when, not only the guilt and power of sin, but all its consequences as well, shall have ceased from troubling us." We firmly hold that such a doctrine is at once utterly false, and frightfully pernicious in its effect upon character. A Christian is a person whose wrongdoing no longer counts against him with God. He is forgiven and accepted in the Beloved, and he is, in consequence, serenely happy, be his character and his deeds what they may. However much he may deceive and defraud and injure his neighbors during the week; on Sunday he can kneel down in church or chapel, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and be as happy as the angels before the throne, being able to start another week with an emotionally clean slate. Alas, there is no more damnable and damning heresy, nor any lie that has done half as much to retard the progress of the world.

J. T. LLOYD.

The British Valhalla.

"Aux grand hommes la Patrie reconnoissante."
—Inscription on the Pantheon.

"Let the sound of those they wrought for,
And the feet of those they fought for,
Echo round their bones for evermore."
—Tennyson.

"WESTMINSTER ABBEY or glorious victory" was Nelson's word in action. Yet when the time came the little admiral was not carried to lie in the royal dust of Westminster. St. Paul's took him, eagerly as ever an ancient church took the wonder-working relics of a saint. Yet the Abbey is the more venerable building. Apart altogether from its religious aspect, it is richer with historical association. It is the last resting-place of many famous men and women, of every rank and creed, and of no creed, and every form of mind and genius. It contains the bones of Charles Darwin, one of the greatest of scientists, whose august name towers over the other celebrities buried there. One name alone surpasses his; but only a statue represents William Shakespeare, whilst his dust makes Stratford-on-Avon the central spot of the world's idolatry.

The Abbey is to England what the Pantheon is to France, what the Valhalla is to Germany, what Sante Croce is to Italy. Yet, owing to clerical prejudice, it is but an imperfect and irregular commentator of greatness. A building from which clerical hostility excluded Byron, Shelley, Swift, Pope, Gibbon, Keats, Burton, Swinburne, and Meredith, whilst many of small and no fame sleep within its precincts, hardly

deserves to be regarded as the Mæcca of the English-speaking race.

Westminster Abbey holds the dust of St. Evremond, a mere rake and man-about-town. It immortalises such actresses as Anne Oldfield, Susannah Cibber, Hannah Pritchard, and Anne Bracegirdle. It throws a halo round the memory of John Broughton, the prize-fighter, and sanctifies the bones of Mrs. Aphra Behn and Tom Brown, two of the sauciest scribblers in the language. The Abbey should be the Valhalla of our greatest dead. If we except about a hundred of real eminence, it is crowded with the tombs of what Shelley calls "the illustrious obscure." For every eminent name inscribed on its monuments, there are a score of nonentities either interred or commemorated within its walls.

It was Nelson's wish to be buried in the Abbey, but neither for him who made the world resound with the splendid tumult of his deeds, nor for Wellington, the victor of a hundred battles, was room to be found, for the Abbey must find space for the bones of its own dead clergy, and sometimes of their wives.

One marvels at the monuments which meet the eye. The cenotaph, justly raised to the Earl of Chatham, which proudly declares that he "was worthy to rest near the dust of kings," is jostled by the colossal monument to three of Rodney's captains, doubtless worthy individuals, but possessing no claim to such extreme honor.

This work of supererogation was long thrown in the shade, however, by the prodigious mass which commemorated the peaceful death of Admiral Tyrrell. Hard by rests Sir Cloudesley Shovel, "wearing the eternal buckle of a long periwig." Tyrrell and Shovel were brave men; but what is to be said for Generals Fleming and Hargrave, who never heard a shot whistle in anger? Hargrave was one of the richest men of his day. The clergy, who imagined that Isaac Watts, Mason, and Shadwell were very great poets, had no scruple in honoring this military nobody. Hargrave's burial roused much indignation. The monument was by Roubilliac, and when Oliver Goldsmith saw it, he said, "I find in the Abbey memorials erected to several great men. The names of these great men I forget, but I remember that little Roubilliac carved the tombs."

Some of the inscriptions, too, are in bad taste. The caustic remarks of the great Duchess of Marlborough, as she gazed on the epitaph erected to Congreve by the second duchess, with whom Congreve had been very intimate, might have been uttered by Thackeray. The epitaph alludes to the happiness and honor the second duchess had enjoyed in her intercourse with Congreve. "Happiness, perhaps," scornfully ejaculated the Dowager, "but the less we say about honor the better."

To place the Abbey on a level with the ever-extending wants of a great Empire, it should no longer be the private property of a prejudiced and purblind priesthood. The Abbey should be the possession of the nation. A narrow and sectarian body is by no means a fit judge as to who is worthy to rest under the Abbey's time-honored roof. The clergy admitted Dickens and Longfellow, both of whom were Unitarians, and excluded scores of men who were Freethinkers.

Indeed, it would be well if the people knew their famous men better, and praised them with their due. It will be well for the children that they hear about Herbert Spencer, who took all knowledge for his province, and of Sir James Simpson, whose great discovery concerning chloroform has soothed the pain of millions, no less than the stories of the Iron Duke and the little Admiral. Few people know in what battle Sir Philip Sidney died, but all children should know that he gave a cup of cold water, brought for himself, to a poor nameless soldier, who was dying beside him.

It is well to remember that the sculptor is not the only artist whom we can call in when we would commemorate a great man under the ancient roof of Westminster. There are monuments which are more enduring than brass. A few inches upon a

wall, room for the carving of a few words, and your great man may have his memory handed down in an undying sentence. Who is better remembered at St. Paul's, the sea-captain, with his tons of lumbering allegories in marble, or Sir Christopher Wren, the architect, with his few words of Latin?

At Westminster should be written the whole history of a mighty Empire. Here should be gathered the mighty and the noble dead. Under the present regime the Abbey's sculptured glories throw their shade over the tombs of unknown clergymen and their wives, whilst many memorials are excluded by reason of religious prejudice. There is nothing for it but to supplant the clergy. Citizens should demand full freedom in the National Valhalla. A new day has dawned for Freethinkers, and the old legal shackles have been removed. And against the dawn there stands the petticoated, clerical figures challenging the new day—figures emblematic of an ancient tale of wrong and of a night that is past.

MIMNERMUS.

The Land of Rubens and Maeterlinck.—II.

(Concluded from p. 620)

IN 1899 a scheme of Proportional Representation was adopted in Belgium, which has now been in operation for over fifteen years, and has consistently refused to realise the ideal results confidently expected from it. The new system favors the best organised parties. The smaller semi-independent groups, in order to escape annihilation, were driven, in some instances, into alliance with other political bodies with votes to spare. A few philosophical Conservatives who had severed themselves from the Clerical Party were among the most earnest advocates of the Proportional system. This thoughtful group almost disappeared as soon as the new law was put into operation, and, in order to survive in the struggle for political existence, they were compelled to return to the Clerical fold. Again, the old Liberal Party, which had previously broken up into the *Doctrinaires* of the contending schools, and had evolved a progressive wing under the skilful leadership of the orator, Paul Janson, had now no alternative save political combination. Under Proportional Representation, unity is essential to success, and the quondam antagonists sank their differences in the interests of power. Even the Liberals and Socialists to some extent joined hands in the election of 1912, particularly in Flanders, where the Clericals outnumber all the reformers combined.

But even the Clericals have consolidated their forces under the pressure of the new system. Any party, however unprogressive it may be, that has enjoyed unbroken power for thirty years, is certain to develop divergent interests and aspirations within its own ranks. Prior to 1899 the Christian Socialists, or Democrats, had severed themselves from the official Catholic Party, and in Flanders its prospects were promising when the advent of Proportional Representation almost ended their political existence. The warring sections within the Clerical group itself are only kept within official bondage through the pressure exerted by an electoral system which favors the organised party machine at the expense of all revolt from the rules laid down and incontinently exacted by men who place the power and pretensions of the Church above all else.

Those of us who recognise that all the beneficial changes ever accomplished in the world have been brought into being by minorities, and usually very tiny minorities, are loath to place unrestricted powers in the hands of mere majorities. The cumulative vote which formed part of the old School Board system enabled supporters of Secular Education to become members of the Board who would unquestionably have failed to secure seats had it not been possible in any separate borough to cast several votes for one candidate. If it were possible to

derise a system of Proportional Representation which would really secure the representation of minorities that are otherwise swamped by the organised party vote, such a scheme would be warmly welcomed by all real lovers of freedom. But from this standpoint the Belgian plan has proved an unmitigated failure. It is merely a party ticket arrangement. Theoretically, men of independent mould might be returned to the Chamber, as outside candidates are eligible for election. But, unfortunately, fifteen years' experience proves that the vast majority of the electors confer their votes upon the candidates whose names appear in their particular party lists. In other words, the mass of the voters record their suffrages for the candidates chosen by the official parties. The people's representatives are selected for them; they do not select their representatives.

From 1830 onwards, the two leading parties have been the Liberals and Clericals. The liberation of Belgium was accomplished by the two parties acting together, and as a result Coalition Governments were in office during the fifteen years that followed the accession of Leopold I. In 1846 the truce was broken, and from that date until 1884 the two parties governed the country in turn. From 1884 to 1914, however, the Clericals remained in power; but when the European War began in 1914, Belgium, like France, and more recently England, formed a Coalition Ministry. The present Belgian Government includes the foremost representatives of both the Liberal and Socialist Parties.

The powerful Clerical Party has an economic as well as a theological basis. Directly or indirectly, the Church is the greatest property owner in Belgium. Since the Reformation, Catholicism has been supreme. The country contains a handful of Protestants, who are mostly settlers from other lands, and a small number of Jews. The native Belgian is either a Catholic or a Freethinker, while nearly all the women are under the thumb of the priest. This highly destructive and sinister circumstance "has had the serious consequence, that on various occasions during the recurrent franchise dispute, Catholics have suggested women's suffrage, which Liberals and Socialists have rejected."

In some respects the moderate Liberals are little wiser than temporisers and trimmers, but they have rendered sterling service in opposing the tyranny of the Church in educational matters. The advanced Liberals, like the genuine philosophical Radicals of Victorian England, are consistently anti-clerical, and are prepared to go to the root of the disease. The Church detests the Socialists, who return the detestation in full measure. Young Belgium has long understood the perils and dangers of the Black Legion of what Catholicism means where the Church is all-powerful. The lesson has been learnt in all the bitterness that comes of century-old experience in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and other Catholic lands. The urban classes in easy circumstances in Belgium incline to Liberal Individualism, and view with suspicion the ever-widening extension of State control. But recent developments have led the Liberals to accept in some degree the theories of the Collectivists. The Liberal Party is a Walloon group, and has made little progress among the Flemings.

But unless the fates decide that the future of Belgium is to be committed to German control, there are good reasons for the belief that Flanders will ultimately fall into line with the Radical and Socialist reformers. The Flemish rural population is intensely superstitious, and to them the academic doctrines of the Liberals make no appeal. They require more solid evidence than the Liberal table will provide; and there is evidence that the Socialist evangel is not altogether unheeded among them, despite the solemn warnings of their spiritual pastors against the dangerous doctrines of the Red rebels. What has happened in Lancashire may be repeated in Flanders. For generations the English cotton county returned

Tories to Parliament, and the orthodox Liberals were constantly defeated. But instead of pursuing the normal course of political evolution, the electors began to ponder over the Socialist gospel that was preached to them, with the result that a very large percentage of the Labor members have been three times returned with large majorities for constituencies that were either chronically Conservative or which swung with the pendulum as parties rose or fell.

In addition to her many other shortcomings, the Church in Belgium has proved herself the uncompromising foe of all educational progress. Until the late 'eighties, the Clerical Party thwarted every attempt to improve the lot of the propertyless classes. A few of the more generous and enlightened, and some of the astutest, Clericals were constrained by the industrial troubles of 1886 to devote some attention to social reform. In consequence of this, excellent social legislation has been enacted. But most of the reforms were designed to benefit the agricultural and peasant population, and to tighten the already fast grip in which the clergy hold the Catholic countryside.

In 1894 the Socialists appeared for the first time in Parliament. The extended franchise enabled them to elect twenty-nine representatives, many of whom are men of very exceptional ability. In Belgium, Socialism and Co-operation coexist. The wonderfully successful co-operative stores form the basis of friendship, propaganda, and—above all—monetary assistance. And these influential organisations are certain in the long run to prove stronger than the Church societies to which they are opposed. In their conflict with the Clericals, the Liberals depend more on the Freemasons' lodges. One extraordinary outcome of religious and political cleavage in Belgium is that Catholics and Liberals very rarely enter into private friendship, while the Clericals and Socialists are almost invariably social as well as religious enemies. "The separation," writes Mr. Rowntree, "extends to cafés, gymnasia, choral, temperance, and literary societies; indeed, it cuts right through life."

Freedom to teach in schools was granted by the Constitution of 1831. The Church assumed control of primary education, while the Government concerned itself with University training. Shortly afterwards the present University system was established—the two State Universities of Liège and Ghent, and the two "free" seats of learning, the Catholic University at Louvain and the unsectarian academy at Brussels. In 1842, an Education Act was passed into law, under which every commune was bound to maintain a school in which elementary instruction was to be free. In the event of one school proving inadequate, outside agencies could provide further schools. Grants were made by the State to the communes to enable them to compensate the outside agencies—usually the Church—which supplied the additional teaching. In the State schools, the Catholic faith was to be expounded. This branch of learning was entirely controlled by the priests, who were at liberty to enter the schools "at any time" to assure themselves that Catholic theology was being properly taught. The priests were also given the power to control moral instruction, and had the right to ban any reading-book that did not please them. This scandalous system lasted for thirty-six years.

Discontent manifested itself when the Liberal statesman, Rogier, advocated a system of adult schools in 1868. Rogier was willing to permit the priests the same privileges in the projected adult schools which they possessed in the primary schools. But he failed to carry the Cabinet with him, and he was compelled to resign his leading position in the Ministry. With Rogier's retirement, the Liberals were to some extent freed from the Clerical incubus; and ten years later, when the Progressives were once more in power, Frère-Orban asserted the rights of the State. His Education Law of 1879 turned the priests out of the schools during school hours, denied

them all control over secular education, and made the teaching unsectarian. Theological lessons might still be given in the public schools, but only before or after the ordinary hours of attendance, and facilities for the accommodation of the clergy were to be furnished. "The adopted Catholic schools lost their rights to grants, and the communes could no longer adopt them." The influence of the clerically controlled communes was weakened by the creation of a Government department of Public Instruction, which now assumed complete control.

This mild reform maddened the clergy. Naturally enough, the number of Clerical schools had been decreasing for several years, as the priests were supreme in the schools maintained by the State. As usual in times of trouble, the bishops were busy. They promptly published a pastoral forbidding parents who desired to escape everlasting torment to permit their children to attend the godless schools. Teachers and inspectors were threatened with temporal and spiritual penalties if they continued to carry out their duties in them. The parish priests labored incessantly to provide Catholic schools, and the superstitious population seconded them in their efforts. Sheds, stables, and inns were taken over, and new structures were hastily raised. The clergy did not pause at damnation in the next world. In their pulpits they fiercely recommended—

"the boycott of Liberal tradesmen and the eviction of Liberal tenants; while every known Liberal was refused absolution and the sacraments, besides every form of temporal assistance.....The Pope, Leo XIII., was appealed to by both sides, and affirmed his desire to mediate; but as all the concessions which he suggested were to come from the Government, Frère Orban lost patience with him, and withdrew the Belgian Legation from the Vatican."*

The fury engendered by this conflict would, in a more religious age, have led to a sanguinary civil war. The State scheme was wrecked, all true friends of education were embittered, and the Catholics failed utterly to secure anything approaching instruction in their improvised schools. As a result of the reaction that now set in, and in consequence of the disgraceful electoral laws, the obscurantists returned to power in 1884. The new Education Law was immediately repealed, the worst features of the old system were restored, and the Clericals abused their powers as only Clericals can. Serious disturbances occurred in all the leading cities, and fierce fighting raged in the Brussels streets. The communal elections took place a little later, and the anti-Clericals won such astonishing victories that the King was driven to intervene to compel the worst of the reactionaries, Woeste, to resign. But the Clerical Government refused to modify the law.

Instruction in Belgium, though free, was not compulsory. Many thousands of Catholic children never saw the inside of a school. Probably ten per cent. of the children never attended, and the irregular attendance of the remainder made the elementary system little better than a farce. In the schools themselves, the influence of the priest tended to lower the standard of efficiency. Needless to note, the worst illiteracy in the country is to be found in Catholic Flanders. According to Mr. Rowntree's careful inquiries made on the spot, it is a fair deduction that over twenty per cent. of the entire population can neither read nor write. In the Walloon districts, where the Clericals have been kept in check, the percentage of illiterates sank to 11.75 per cent. This applied to Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, and Ghent. In the remainder of the country, "the returns from the Walloon communes showed a percentage of 17.34, and from the Flemish communes a percentage of 34.69. The illiterate percentage of people over forty in the Flemish communes was 58.10." The Clericals have been very influential everywhere; but in those parts of the country where their power was supreme in all things, both secular and religious, the ignorance of the people is most profound.

* Ensor, *Belgium*, pp. 178, 179.

Freethought pressure has wrung some concessions from the Clericals. Despite the inflexible attitude of the Catholic Woeste, the Government was forced into the adoption of compulsory education. Under an Act of 1913, this reform was effected, and the teachers must now pass a Government examination.

In the face of great difficulties, the Belgians have made considerable progress in recent times. Many reforms are still imperatively needed, but there is that progressive spirit in the people which must ultimately secure the redress of the grievances under which they suffer. When they have shaken off the priests and discarded the shifty politicians, progress is bound to be made at an ever-increasing pace. Let us trust that Belgium will be permitted to work out her own salvation as an independent State, and that from the country now afflicted, with its wealth destroyed, its land laid desolate, its children terrorised, and with its cities shattered, may arise an emancipated nation, which may once more serve as a beacon to all oppressed peoples aspiring to be free.

T. F. PALMER.

The Break-up of Europe; or, Christ's Hell Revealed.

Between war and peace, between love and hate, there is no half-way house.

" 'Twas never merry England since gentlemen first were."
—JACK CABE.

THE present Euro-Christian outburst of sacrificial cannibalism has already lasted a year. Most likely it will last another two at least. The higher civilisation, that of Christianity, has already jobbed to death or hopeless mutilation, by means of spikes stuck at the end of poles, or destroyed and marred for life by other means, some twenty millions of its miserable dupes. The humble believer ought to be pleased at the fruits of his philosophy, which teaches that human beings are "perfected by suffering," and that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Indeed, the man-God he worships said plainly that he "did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Everything, therefore, is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. And when God has gone on "educing good out of ill" long enough, we may look forward to a millennium where nothing is left but empty barracks, military flying-machines, cannon of all sorts and sizes, explosive bombs and bullets, asphyxiating gases, and inflammable liquids—and nothing else. The religion of reversion to sacrificial cannibalism will have finished itself off and its dupes along with it in one grand European bonfire. What I wish to point out here is that the War's uncertain duration, and the methods employed to carry it out, render it perfectly logical and legitimate from the civilised Euro-Christian standpoint; at any rate, to destroy women and children of both sexes and of almost any age. Obviously, as it may go on another two years, as many boys over sixteen years of age ought to be killed as soon as possible, because they will be ready to serve in two years' time, if left alive, will only help to prolong the War uselessly; therefore, it is only "highest mercy in disguise" to send them to a "better world" (it could hardly be a worse one) at once. But as no one knows how long the War may last, the same is true of boys of any age, and also of the matrix in which these Christian reptiles and cockatrices are hatched; therefore, all women arrived at puberty and under fifty should also be put to death. Nature made women to perpetuate the species, but Christian love and duty and mercy and loving-kindness now renders it imperative they devote themselves to turning out as many instruments of murder as possible. This justifies their extermination at any age, as well as that of their murderous little fraternal counterparts. If the Germans can locate a cartridge factory full of "sweet girl graduates" turning out cartridges by the million, who is to blame the former if they dispatch a Zeppelin and send the latter to smithereens?

The Socialists, with their usual stupid incoherency, have discovered the panacea. It is the nation armed. But this arrangement, rendering the nation and the army one and the same thing, justifies wholesale extermination of the whole nation. It is, in fact, impossible to draw the line between the civilian who directly or indirectly prepares "the means to do ill deeds," and the agents who use the means to do them. When this Socialist millennium comes, its odious Euro-Christian brats will be born pickel-halbed before they can walk, and "thinking in continents" before they can talk, and the nation's enemies may very properly consider that

The proper place for them is the end of a pike or in an oven. I do not write this to approve of Christian war and "love," but to demonstrate that, logically carried out, "civilised" warfare is a contradiction in terms, and leads straight back to the primitive sacrificial cannibalism from which it sprang. You cannot serve God and mammon. Between war and peace, between love and hate, there is no half-way house.

W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A., Trin. Coll., Cam.

Acid Drops.

Theology is not *John Bull's* strong point, in spite of its Editor's recent deliverance on God and the soul. And in a note on the retirement of Mr. R. J. Campbell, the writer manages, it seems, to illustrate what we have just said. He compliments Mr. Campbell on his "rare courage" over the New Theology campaign, and adds, that while it was a hard fight, "the victory was his," there being no doubt as to the precious service rendered to intellectual religion in the end.

We do not know where Mr. Campbell has ever displayed "rare courage." He knew that he had followers with him in the New Theology preaching—which was really very old-fashioned heresy—and that the City Temple was an autonomous body which could not be interfered with by other churches. Apart from this, we do not know of a single Colonn cause that Mr. Campbell has ever championed, or a single struggling movement that has ever commanded his ready support. He has always been in receipt of a good salary, and it is easy to manifest courage when there is an adequate backing large enough to prevent one from experiencing any serious damage. Real courage is shown when one faces social ostracism and poverty in defence of an ideal; and while we cannot say whether Mr. Campbell has or not, we do say that his career affords no sure evidence of its presence.

As to Mr. Campbell having gained a victory with his New Theology, that is certainly not the case. He soon ceased to preach it, and one was bound to assume that he could not face the opposition. Here, for example, is Mr. Campbell's description of the Bible God in the early days of his New Theology campaign. We seem, he said, to have two gods:—

"The first is a sort of an old woman who made the world and man as though he expected everything to go right, and no evil or misery to mar the work of his hands. But he laid his plans so badly that the whole scheme went awry, and heaven has been in mourning ever since. Poor God!..... You will, I am sure, forgive me for the seeming irreverence of saying that that God is a fool. And the other God—or God with the other face—is not much better. This other God has prepared a bed for the poor helpless victims of what is called his righteous wrath. He has made it big enough to contain the whole race, and into it the whole race will have to go unless they repent in time and avail themselves of the suffering which he has graciously inflicted upon someone else for their benefit.....This is a hateful sort of God which the theologians have made in their own image, and I hope he will soon be dead and buried."

And here is a further expression from the same sermon:—

"What are you doing, sitting up there on your sapphire throne, and letting people come into this torture-chamber with the glad tidings of your marvellous love? You have plenty, and we are starving. You can see, and we are blind. You have omnipotence, and we are crushed by pitiless fate. And what about that hell of yours? Ought you not to be in it for awhile yourself? Bah! You are contemptible, you King of Kings and Lord of Lords, if you have nothing more to say than that you will accept our penitence and remit our terrors when we are dead, if we only believe! I would rather trust my own humanity than your divinity."

We can well understand these expressions shocking religious people, but readers of Mr. Campbell's sermons cannot but have observed that he gradually reverted to a more orthodox preaching, and it is at present anticipated that he will ere long enter the Church of England.

John Bull says that "it required a rare courage to flash these lights on the old, old story." But they were all accepted by Thomas Paine near a hundred years before, and the reverend gentleman who flashed them long afterwards was very well paid for his trouble.

Mr. Bottomley also says that he was "misunderstood, reviled, even persecuted" for these opinions. What a perdition! A salary running into four figures, two motor cars, and the applause of the ladies.

There seems something rather peculiar about the following case, the only particulars of which we possess are in the subjoined report published in the *Daily Mail* of Sept. 22:—

"I cannot allow a man to give evidence who cannot take the oath," said Mr. Ingleby Oddie, to a witness yesterday while presiding at the Westminster Coroner's Court.

"Repeat the words after me," said the coroner's officer.

The Witness: Yes.

Say: "I swear."—Yes.

Say the words: "I swear."—Yes.

Efforts to make the witness read the printed words from a card were equally fruitless.

The coroner decided to dispense with the man's evidence.

But however peculiar may be some of the features connected with the case, one thing is clear, and that is the coroner's declaration, "I cannot allow a man to give evidence who cannot take the oath." This is the second case in London within a very brief period, and it is high time the Home Secretary stopped these gentlemen, dressed in a little brief authority, setting the law of the land at defiance. The laws of this country give a witness the full right to affirm if he chooses to do so, and it is simply monstrous that a mere coroner should take to himself the right to negate those laws with a consequential "I cannot allow." One of these days this impertinent assumption of power will occur with a witness who will insist upon his legal rights, and then, we fancy, there will be an unpleasant surprise for these Solomons of the deadhouse. Meanwhile, we would ask whether the Home Secretary is content to remain a silent partner to this treating of English laws as mere "scraps of paper"?

Miracles do not happen, but a contemporary professes to have discovered one in a most unexpected quarter. The article is headed "The Miracle of Lloyd George." The idea of a successful solicitor being a "miracle" is sufficient to cause the resurrection of the twelve disciples.

The merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows is not to be disregarded in the fighting lines, and a leading newspaper is collecting subscriptions for supplying Christmas puddings for the soldiers. Among the subscribers are the Bishops of London and Rochester, the Dean of Lincoln, Canon Rawsley, and other Church dignitaries. Let us hope that the clerical subscribers will not insist on giving a tract with each plum pudding.

Pre-eminent saintliness and extreme cruelty often go together. We read that St. Dominic was thrilled by an intensely evangelical passion for souls. When he drew near to any town or village, he wept over it. His sweet communion with the Lord was broken only by sleep, which only visited him when he was completely exhausted by his anxious vigils. Yet St. Dominic is usually regarded as the founder of the Inquisition, the most savage and brutal institution the world has ever seen; but it is certain that, whether he shared in the atrocities of the war against the Albigenes or not, he remained the friend of De Montford, its intrepid and bloodthirsty leader, to the end, blessing the marriage of his sons and the baptism of his daughter. The truth is that Christian zeal hardens the heart, and renders possible the worst horrors of persecution against unbelievers and heretical Christians. Christianity is, of necessity, the most heartlessly cruel of all religions.

Even the *Church Times* for September 24 admits that the Dominical ideal is not congenial to the temper of our age; but it does not occur to our ably conducted contemporary to add that this lack of congeniality is due to the decay of Christian zeal. The twentieth century is more tolerant than the twelfth simply because it is less distinctively Christian. In proportion as humanism develops, supernatural belief declines. The Augustinian doctrine of sin and redemption was bound to materialise in something like the Spanish Inquisition.

The *Church Times* does not often mince important matters, but speaks out with all plainness. In a recent issue, it sorrowfully confesses that never was there a time, perhaps, in the history of the Anglican Church when the average preacher did his work so badly as he is doing it just now. The confession is doubtless true; but behind it is the undeniable fact that the preacher, as such, is a greater non-entity than ever, now that people are beginning to think for themselves. Who ever goes to church or chapel primarily to hear the Gospel preached? The Gospel is out of date; it is the orator, the man of outstanding and magnetic personality, or the cunning trickster who has learned well the high art of playing to the gallery, it is such a man who is today the popular preacher. Such a preacher will always have hearers, because the majority of people are always so

easily gulled; but the Gospel, in itself, has lost its attraction; it is now quite dead and unheeded because the living belief in its truth is a thing of the past.

Gold is a snare, and wealth but a burden. All the more honor to Rev. G. B. Hadow, of Warminster, who carried till the day of his death the burden of £94,031, and the Rev. J. Spovart, of Bournemouth, who cheerfully faced the snare offered by £34,722, and only with death turned his back upon it. Such shining examples are object-lessons to the ungodly.

Sir George Birdwood, in a letter to the *Times*, suggests the reissue of the coin known as "the angel," with figures of saints on the reverse side, in order to counteract the "Atheistical" teaching of our Board Schools. There have been no "Board Schools" for many years, so Sir George's "angels" will not be wanted.

What quaint ideas the clergy have! "It is not enough to say to your children, 'Thou shalt not,' and to suggest nothing positive," says the Rev. Charles Brown. Yet Brother Brown's "God" worded his commands in that way, and we tremble to think where the reverend gentleman will spend eternity.

The National Brotherhood Conference has passed a strong resolution against Conscriptio, and some strong remarks were made concerning the newspaper crusade following compulsion. One speaker said, "The press gang wanted to introduce the press gang again."

Christians are trying to get what comfort they can from the present War. Alderman Wilkins, speaking at the National Brotherhood Conference, said, "Almost all the British soldiers had been Sunday-school scholars." Just so! And they show their love for their enemies in exactly the same way as the non-Christians.

Archdeacon Wilberforce, speaking at Westminster, advised "an ever-increasing economy in luxuries and even in necessities." It will be difficult for the poor curates and poorer organists; but the bishops might start the ball rolling.

We hope to notice at some length—so soon as opportunity offers—Mr. Balfour's just published *Theism and Humanism*. There is no need for hurry; and the subject is not likely to lose its interest on account of a little delay. Meanwhile, we desire to say a word or two on a review of Mr. Balfour's book by Mr. Harold Begbie in the *Daily Chronicle* of September 23. Mr. Begbie appears to have heard one of the lectures which make up the volume, and although he "tried hard to follow the lecturer," had finally to give it up. This we can quite believe. Mr. Balfour, whatever be his faults, certainly possesses intellectual ability, and we can easily realise that a presentation of the case for Theism from him would overtax Mr. Begbie. He would be more at home with the argument as presented by Dr. Dixon or a Salvation Army converted burglar. Mr. Balfour wouldn't come down, and Mr. Begbie couldn't get up. That seems to sum up the case.

But on reading the book—or, to be exact, and to quote Mr. Begbie's own words, "the book of these lectures is now at my side," which does not guarantee a reading, still less an understanding—he has realised the fact that Mr. Balfour believes in a god. True, Mr. Balfour's god is not Mr. Begbie's god; but that matters little. It is a god, and any sort of a god is better than none at all. It gives Mr. Begbie hope, and he repeats—in reviewing Mr. Balfour—exactly what he says in writing of "Burglar Bill's" conversion. And his unconsciousness of the incongruity of it all is enough to earn for Mr. Begbie the title of the Charlie Chaplin of the religious world. Thus: "If there be no God.....there is something to be said for the German gospel of brute force"; "Consider what would be the state of Europe if Christ had debated the existence of God"; "Use your reason, your reason only, and you must believe in mind"; "The march of the human race is towards God"; "Atheism is only possible to the fool." And so on, and so on. The same thing whether Mr. Begbie is reviewing a philosophical volume or writing advertisements of the Salvation Army. No wonder Mr. Begbie found himself, when listening to Mr. Balfour, "wondering what in the world he was driving at."

"Use your reason and you must believe in mind"! But who on earth disbelieves in mind? We wonder whether it is a too severe tax on Mr. Begbie to point out that the question of the nature of mind is not the same as whether

mind exists. Perhaps Mr. Begbie means by "mind," "God." But in that case, what becomes of the example of Jesus, whom, he says, never debated the question? "Theism is the inescapable faith of rationalism," so that millions of people appear, somehow, to have dodged the inescapable, and Mr. Begbie ought to add this to his list of miracles. More, as "the march of the human mind is towards God," these same millions must be marching away from the point they are making for. And as the race begins with a universal belief in God, the problem becomes more puzzling still. We had better, perhaps, give it up, because, as "Atheism is only possible to the fool," it would be depressing to believe that the number of fools in the world grows larger. Only one alternative theory offers itself. This is that Mr. Begbie is determined that the atheistic fool shall not have the world to himself. There are other Richmonds in the field.

A little girl, having been told that she would not go to heaven if she did not behave better, replied: "I've been to the Zoological Gardens, and I went to the Hippodrome the other day; I really can't expect to go everywhere."

A woman sentenced to three months' imprisonment by a London magistrate, asked the Almighty to strike the legal gentleman dead. Religion is such a restraining power.

By a packet of his mother's letters in a breast-pocket, the life of Private C. Murrell was saved at Gallipoli, the letters diverting the shot. Had the soldier been saved by a pocket Bible, there would have been a lengthy moral.

The Young Men's Christian Association is rapidly ousting the patent medicine proprietors in the race for publicity. One of the advertisements asks that remittances should be forwarded to a certain Royal Highness. Wouldn't Peter, Andrew, and the other longshoremen stare at the suggestion.

It was surely a slip of the tongue on the part of the Archdeacon of London to tell his St. Paul's hearers that "there are those who are devout but not honorable." What an insulting reflection upon God, who, we are led to infer, made them reverent, holy, pious, but neglected to make them reliable, truthful, honorable. In his very next sentence the Ven. Mr. Holmes throws the whole responsibility upon the Divine shoulders by saying, "God make them not less devout, but more honorable." Poor old God of the Church under his all-crushing load of accountability!

Dr. Jowett, of New York, says that "the believer in Christ Jesus is to be distinguished by his buoyancy"; that he is "the man whom nothing can sink," who is "always on the top of circumstances, their master and not their slave"; and that when the spirits of others are sinking he heartens them and lifts them up by his own unquenchable cheer. The worst about this glowing description is that it is anything but true. Dr. Jowett loves to deal in hyperbole, and superlatives are his constant delight. Simple truth is beneath him. In the present instance, the truth is the very opposite of what he says. Taking them as a class, Christians are noted, not for cheerfulness, but for their sorrowful faces; their contempt for the present world, and their dejected outlook upon life. As Hawthorne metaphorically puts it, "crossbones, scythes, hour-glasses, and other emblems of mortality" are the things for displaying which they are chiefly distinguished.

From the *Observer* of September 24, 1815:—

"The common bellman gave notice in Staines market last week, that the wife of — Issey was then at the King's Head Inn, to be sold with the consent of her husband to any person inclined to buy her. The only bidder was her paramour, who offered 3s. 4d.; this degrading custom seems to be generally received by the lower orders as of equal obligation with the most serious legal forms."

And in *Christian England*, too!

Professor Kirsopp Lake, of Harvard University, wishes the Churches to "translate their message into the terms of to-day." There is no need. The collection-box speaks all languages.

The Catholic War Correspondents of the English press are very industrious in writing puffs for their own religion. One of them recently said that there were "23,000 priests fighting for France in the Trenches." This is an enormous exaggeration, for there are only about 30,000 priests in France, and only a percentage of them are of military age, and the majority of these are non-combatants and acting as army chaplains.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Previously acknowledged, £150 5s. 10d. Received since:—Ernest, 5s.

L. BERNARD.—Sorry we cannot find space for your lengthy criticism of Dr. Licorish's recent article. If you could put your point of view with greater brevity, we should be happy to publish it. While we are on this point we may say, for the benefit of other correspondents, that letters intended for publication must be strictly to the question at issue, and also of reasonable length. Otherwise we are quite unable to publish.

C. B. WARWICK.—Received.

E. R. WRIGHT.—Your chief complaint seems to rest on the fact that "the leading men in the Freethought cause" do not mix politics with their advocacy. We have already said that in our opinion this is the wiser course to follow, and the vast majority of Freethinkers appear to be with us on this question. This does not, as a matter of fact, prevent their taking a very keen interest in all sorts of political questions; and, generally, we think their freethinking helps them to a saner view of political questions than might otherwise be the case. We fully appreciate your own very warm interest in Freethought, but we differ on a question of policy.

Several correspondents are warned that we take no notice whatever of anonymous communications. They only serve to fill the w.p.b.

A. ATWAS.—We quite appreciate your remarks. The man who is anxious to conduct a Freethought journal must be a pretty fair-sized sort of a fool, and his anxiety would not be a bad measure of his inability for the work. We can understand a man finding it necessary for him to do so—but that is a quite different question.

E. E. RYAN.—Always pleased to hear from our readers in the Trenches. Driving Freethinking soldiers to Church Service is quite in accord with the Christian spirit, although it is not very likely to convert them to a more favorable view of "the great lying creed."

T. QUINN.—Will try and find space for your communication in our next issue.

J. KING.—Glad to receive your appreciation of Keridon's article. We agree with you that his indictment of Huxley's fatuity was not a bit too severe. It is a case of save us from our friends.

T. C.—It was just before the sinking of the *Lusitania* that Frohman said "Why fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure that life gives us." We would much prefer to face death in the company of a man who could say that at such a time, than with one whose mouth was filled with pious verbiage.

W. W. STICKLAND.—Thanks for copies of the *Buddhist Review*, although we are well acquainted with that publication. We hope that the Western races are rather better than your diagnosis would indicate. Other things in hand.

T. BROWN.—Didsbury is not the only place in which, as a town grows larger, the attendance at church decreases.

A. GALLIVIE.—We would suggest that you approach the Glasgow Secular Society on the matter. We are not on the spot, and so cannot be expected to give an authoritative opinion on local matters. We feel sure that the Committee of the Glasgow Branch will gladly co-operate in any direction that promises success to its propaganda.

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 office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

Personal.

I WAS hoping to read a nice article on Bradlaugh by one or other of my colleagues in last week's *Freethinker*. I had written so much on the subject myself during the last quarter of a century that I thought I should like to read something fresh from another pen with at least the charm of novelty, and possibly something more; but I was disappointed. Of course, I am referring to written articles, and not

to outdoor lectures, with which, at my age, I cannot be expected to be concerned. Perhaps the silence about Bradlaugh's birthday was due to the fact that this is a time of war and he was a man of peace. He was always for peace and always against war. It is war that rules and fascinates the world to-day, but peace will have its day again, and Bradlaugh's name will shine again as one of her bravest and most loyal apostles. His service to Freethought can never for a moment be eclipsed, and some day his real biography will be written with a view to his position as the greatest champion of Freethought in the nineteenth century. What exists in print about him at present is not so much biography as materials for biography. The biography of a great man is rather the work of an artist than a chronicler. I do not know if I shall live to see it, or who is going to write it, but the man will arise and the work will be done, and the world will be the richer for the new life of one of its most indisputable heroes. I can do no more in this brief space than introduce Bradlaugh to the younger generation, and I introduce myself in relation to him in my *Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh*, which I believe is still in print (or soon will be) and which has won the praise of some good judges.

* * *

Mr. Balfour's Gifford Lectures for 1914 have been published. They are on the subject of "Theism and Humanism." I have not read the book yet, but I lectured in reply to it when it was first published at Glasgow as a report in the newspapers. I have read enough of Mr. Balfour to know that there is nothing in him, except a somewhat graceful academic style, which gives a wonderful charm to many illiterate people. Mr. Balfour may have improved with years, and as he is a champion spokesman of conservatism and reaction, I may notice his book if I come across it without trouble.

It is strange how few review copies of books of good standing are sent by authors or publishers to Freethought journals. George Meredith used to send me his volumes of new verse. He was far above the prejudices of his profession, if I may call it so. He knew that I read him myself, and that an introduction to other readers from such a critic was not unpleasant. I have been offered pounds for the volume of poems he sent me when I was in Holloway prison for "blasphemy." Meredith sent it to me personally, with an inscription in his own hand, and the good old Governor, himself but half a Christian, let me have the volume. It is doubtful if Meredith sent out half-a-dozen copies of that book in all to friends and reviewers. So said one who should know, the late Mr. Bertram Dobell. It was a rare distinction, and I hardly need remark that it is not for sale.

* * *

I have just received the August number of the *Examiner*, Christchurch, New Zealand, edited by my old friend and colleague, W. W. Collins, formerly of Birmingham, and now upholding the local flag of Freethought as the organ of the New Zealand Rationalist Association. The front page opens an article by Mr. Collins himself on the decision of the three judges as to the Bowman Case in the Court of Appeal. He congratulates the Freethought Party on this tremendous measure of progress, and ends by a reminder which ought not to be needed:—

"There is something peculiarly fitting in the fact that the Secular Society, Ltd., which will benefit to the extent of some £10,000 by the decision of the Appeal Court was founded by Mr. Foote, who himself suffered twelve months' imprisonment for doing what ought not in these days to be treated as contrary to public policy. At such cost are such victories won! For the price of Liberty is eternal vigilance—and SACRIFICE."

I thank Mr. Collins for his tribute, but I shall be much surprised if the legacy realises £10,000 or anything like it.

* * *

The future of the *Freethinker* will soon be occupying my attention. It has weathered many storms, and I

suppose my imprisonment for a whole year was one of the worst of them. I never saw it during the whole of that time except surreptitiously, but kind and devoted friends looked after it in my absence, and it was going strong, with a balance at the bank, when they handed it over to me on my release; for it had a larger circulation by the circumstances of my absence, my martyrdom giving it a big advertisement throughout the world. Its subsequent difficulties and dangers are too numerous to relate at present, but it has held its own in spite of them all, and has proved its immense vitality as the organ of what George Meredith, in a letter to me, called "the best of causes." * * *

We have weathered the War so far while scores of other papers—some of them "advanced" enough—have sunk and perished. My recent illness must have entailed some disadvantage, though the paper has been in such excellent hands meanwhile. Some of our readers have been killed in the War, and will never cut open the pages of their dear old *Freethinker* any more. Others are still in the fighting lines, or on the ships at sea where Britannia still "rules the waves." A number of poor readers—alas and alas!—have had to drop their weekly copy through sheer poverty in consequence of this terrible War. We were bound to suffer in these ways, but it has not been as heavily as might have been expected. Nevertheless, we are not the *Times*, and our circulation is not that of *John Bull*, and we had reason to tremble when our cost of production was shockingly increased. Unlike so many Christian employers, I did not find relief in reducing my employees' wages. Every man working for me gets the same money as ever, and for the same work. I bear all the loss, being the bloated capitalist of the enterprise. And now I am threatened with what Lord Rosebery calls "the end of all things." I have just received another notice from my paper-merchant, and you know what that means. Paper is going up, but I am going down. And, then, the Coalition Government, with pooled salaries (I'll pool, especially with the bishops) has descended upon me (with a lot of other people, I admit) and abolished halfpenny postage in my poor, struggling office. What am I to do with the *Freethinker* in these circumstances? If the subscribers won't pay a little more, I really believe I shall have to carry the paper round myself. Anyhow, joke or no joke, this problem has got to be met, and our conclusion shall be notified next week. Meanwhile, I beg to say that I cannot run half-a-dozen different subscriptions in the *Freethinker*. The one fund which has shown any ability to stand on its own legs is the President's Honorarium Fund. It is a fund quickly dealt with and may easily be used in support of whatever may be immediately required. * * *

Some months ago I announced that a medical consultation had decided that Mr. Keir Hardie required at least six months' rest and retirement to enable him to enter public life again after his nervous breakdown. Unfortunately, his breakdown was irreparable. He never returned. He died on Sunday last (September 26). I commend this to the attention of some who have talked about my own illness as an extravagant one. Mr. Hardie courted the Churches in his later years, and professed to belong to one of them himself, but I have heard that he was never a Christian at all, except as a matter of political and social convenience, just as Napoleon (Heaven save the mark!) was a Catholic at Paris, a Protestant in Switzerland or Germany, a Mohammedan at Constantinople, and anything else anywhere else. But this is certain. Hardie was brought up a Freethinker. His father and mother were members to the very day of their death of the Glasgow Branch of the National Secular Society. He had the impudence and ill-taste to blame them publicly in after years for bringing him up in the Secular faith. He had found it stand in his way, and had discovered a more profitable one. I do not like saying this over a man's coffin, and there is a certain

truth in the proverb, *Speak no ill of the dead*. But, as Renan said, truth is higher than politeness, even in the presence of death. With Mr. Keir Hardie's political and social opinions I have, of course, no concern in the *Freethinker*, and being neutral in the great battle of a future life, I wish him well wherever he has gone. He certainly devoted his life in the main to the good of his kind, as he understood it, and, even if he sometimes failed, this is a case in which the intention must be allowed to count for the deed.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Partly because of the difficulty of obtaining halls for lecturing purposes, partly because the public mind was busy with the War, the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. had no lectures last autumn and winter. This autumn the Society has, very wisely, we think, decided to resume work, and Mr. Cohen opens the session with two lectures on October 10. After so long an interregnum Glasgow "saints" should gather in large numbers, and even the general public may hail the lectures as an agreeable break in an eternal round of war messages.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (October 3) before the New Era Union, Abertillery, Mon. The lectures are afternoon and evening. We hope there will be a good gathering of both Freethinkers and Christians—particularly of the latter.

We are asked to announce that a "Commemoration of Professor E. S. Beesly," the well-known English Positivist, will be held at South-place Chapel to-day (October 3) at 4 p.m. We very gladly do so, and we trust that the meeting will be in every respect worthy of the occasion. Professor Beesly did good work in his time for a number of advanced causes, and it is well that those who remember this should place the fact on record, and also introduce it to a newer generation. Conservative interests always conspire to bury the memory of the reformer, and very often with complete success. At the South-place meeting addresses will be given by Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. R. Applegarth, and Mr. S. H. Swinney. Admission is free.

Last Sunday was "Bradlaugh Sunday," and we are pleased to learn that a number of speakers, both in London and the provinces, made the life of that great Freethinker the text for their lectures. At Birmingham a special function was held at the Market Hall, and speeches were delivered by a number of those who were present. All this was quite praiseworthy, but we would impress upon Freethinkers in Great Britain generally that the truest and best way to honor the memory of Bradlaugh is to go ahead with the fight against the great superstition that it was the chief purpose of his life to crush.

East End Freethinkers will please note that on and after Thursday, September 30, the weekly Branch meetings will be held in Earlam Hall (Room No. 12), Earlam-gate, Forest Gate, at 8 p.m. Friends and inquirers will be welcomed.

"It clears print something wonderful," exclaimed Phillips, "and of late, for want of power to do anything useful, I've sunk down to reading the newspaper, and found it very interesting. I've had a good dash at the Word, too; and 'tis curious to see that fighting was just as bloody a job in Old Testament days as it be now. The only difference is that then they always knowed which side the Lord was afore they went to war, and now we never know till afterwards. If the Almighty took the same pleasure in England as he done in Israel, we should just walk over the earth."—Eden Phillpotts, *The Whirlwind*.

PRAISE INDEED.

It was in one of the Southern States of America. A black preacher wished to introduce to his flock a brother preacher who had made quite a reputation in his own district. "This noted divine," said the home preacher, "is one of de greatest men dat ever lived. He knows de unknowable; he can do de undoable, and he can unscrew de unscrewable."

Famous Freethinkers I Have Known.—IX.

TOUZEAU PARRIS AND W. W. COLLINS.

SOON after the famous trial of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant for publishing the Knowlton pamphlet entitled *The Fruits of Philosophy*, in 1877, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Touzeau Parris, another distinguished Freethought lecturer. He had taken a very active part in assisting, in various ways, the two defendants in this action, and I remember him telling me how, when he went to the house of Professor Henry Fawcett to serve a subpoena upon him to attend as a witness, the blind Member of Parliament backed into the fireplace and put his hands behind him, so that the paper should not be served upon him. In the circumstances, Mr. Parris did not serve the subpoena, as both Professor Fawcett and his wife were unwilling to be called as witnesses.

A few years later I became more intimate in my friendship with Mr. Parris, and he used frequently to come to tea with me at my humble abode in Bermondsey. At that time he was in business on his own account, in a fairly large way, in Spa-road, near the town hall. When he came to see me, we used to discuss all the great problems of the day—political, social, and religious. He took a particularly broad view of things generally, and was very independent in his criticism, very rarely agreeing with any Party that was in, or out, of power. On religion he was extremely well-informed, having read nearly all the more important works on the subject, from almost every point of view.

During all the years I knew him I never inquired as to his early career, but I understood from him that he was about the same age as Charles Bradlaugh, that is, that he was born about 1832 or 1833, and that he had been a Unitarian minister before he came over to the Freethought movement and took his place among the leading advocates of the day. The veteran Freethinker, Mr. W. H. Morrish, of Bristol, who knew Mr. Parris when he was a boy and went to school with him, says that when young Parris grew into manhood he believes that he became a printer, and subsequently kept a bookseller's shop at Clifton, near Bristol, where he sold advanced publications.

I think there can be no doubt whatever that if Mr. Parris was ever a bookseller, he sold books of a very heretical character, and saturated his mind with the ideas of the leading philosophers and thinkers of his day. I did not often have an opportunity of hearing Mr. Parris lecture because, in the strenuous days between 1878 and 1890, I was so frequently engaged in lecturing on Sunday myself that I could not get an evening off to go and listen to a colleague. When, however, Mr. Parris lectured in London on a week evening I embraced the opportunity, and on more than one occasion I had the pleasure and privilege of taking the chair at his meetings. He was a dark, handsome man, of medium height, with a long, flowing, black beard. His eyes were large and penetrating, and he had a commanding platform appearance. One of his lectures impressed me very much.

It was called "Sin against God an Impossibility," and was worked out with an elaborate series of arguments and illustrations, alike powerful, apposite, and convincing. Another very interesting lecture of his was called "Facts about the Bible worth Knowing," containing a lot of useful information not often given by other lecturers on the subject. As far as I remember, Mr. Parris never had a public debate, and did not have much faith in their utility. In fact he was more of a teacher than a lecturer, more of a student than a controversialist. He could see some truth in every phase of belief and unbelief, and he thought it his duty to explain their origin and evolution. He continued to lecture so long as he was able, and then he devoted his time entirely to business. This he did until one day he met with a serious accident, which hastened his death.

As a Freethinker and reformer he will be remembered by those who knew him and heard him for many

a long day; and I am glad to write this brief sketch of his career to try and keep green the memory of one who worthily upheld the banner of Freethought when it required courage and earnestness to walk side by side with the warriors of a noble cause.

WILLIAM WHITEHOUSE COLLINS.

It is many years ago since I first met Mr. W. W. Collins. Long before he ever thought of going to New Zealand, I paid a visit to Birmingham and delivered a lecture on the subject of "Salvation," with special reference to the brilliant effort of Colonel Ingersoll, entitled "What Must We do to be Saved?" I should think it was about the years 1881—2, and Mr. Collins did me the honor of taking the chair. I don't know what he thought of me on that occasion, but I know that I thought a good deal of him, and for many years afterwards I watched his career as a lecturer very closely.

Like Mr. Parris, he came to see me on two or three occasions, and we discussed together the prospects of Freethought in this country. Mr. Collins and I were about the same age; we were born in the same year, 1855, though, I believe, in a different month. He was born at a small place called Harborne, a suburb of Birmingham. Upon leaving school he was put to his father's business—that of a designer and die sinker, at Mary Ann-street, St. Paul's, Birmingham. A friend of his tells me that young Collins, having the artistic temperament, soon became a most efficient craftsman. His great speciality was floral designs, and his minute knowledge of botany enabled him to produce marvellously natural results—beautiful leaf effects. Together with his friend "Ignotus," they became immersed in the *Synthetic Philosophy* of Herbert Spencer, and read together *First Principles, Biology*, and other works of the series. Indeed, the study of philosophy became such an absorbing study to young Collins, that he put everything else aside, even to the business of his life—that of a designer. He joined the Freethought movement in Birmingham, and soon began to deliver lectures at the Temperance Hall, Temple-street, which proved so successful that he got invitations from various provincial societies, and, finally, he came to London and lectured at the Hall of Science. I heard him several times. One of his most successful efforts was a lecture on "The Design Argument," which was a most powerful and lucid presentation of the case from the Freethought standpoint. This lecture he issued as a pamphlet, and I find that it is still in circulation, and advertised in the list of publications sold by the New Zealand Rationalist Association, Christchurch.

In 1884 young Collins became a special lecturer of the National Secular Society, and he is proud of the certificate he received on that occasion, signed "Charles Bradlaugh." For some years W. W. Collins continued to lecture in this country, until an invitation from New Zealand attracted his attention, and he went over to try his hand in a new country under more favorable conditions and with greater scope for the exercise of his talents and ability.

In Christchurch, New Zealand, he has since achieved considerable success, both politically and as a Freethought lecturer. He is the editor of a journal called the *Examiner*, which he has kept afloat for over nine years under very trying conditions. On Sundays he gives lantern lectures on "The Story of the Heavens," in answer to the erratic American evangelist, Pastor Russell; and also at Everybody's Theatre, illustrated science lectures on "The Story of the Earth." I regret to learn that his health has suffered severely of late on account of his strenuous labors; but I sincerely hope that he has quite recovered ere this, and that he has many years of useful life before him.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

In my early days I constantly made the foolish supposition that conclusive proofs would change beliefs, but experience has long since dissipated my faith in man's rationality.—*Herbert Spencer.*

Jesus on the Stage.—III.

A Lecture delivered in Chicago by M. M. Mangasarian.

(Concluded from p. 621.)

NEITHER did Jesus have what we might call "the malady of the ideal" which haunts all great souls. He was devoted to no great issues, such as political liberty, free government, universal suffrage, woman's emancipation, or the problems of labor, education, slavery, war, race prejudice, the fight against disease, the intellectual enfranchisement of man—not one of these mighty issues commanded his sympathies. To save his own followers and glorify his own tribal God was the extent of his ambition. I really think the players in the Oberammergau performances make a great mistake by exaggerating the role of Jesus in history. An even greater mistake is to dwell so much upon what they call "the passion of Jesus." The idea that a god could suffer pain is too absurd to deserve consideration. If Jesus was a god, he was perfect, and pain is a defect; if Jesus suffered pain, he was not a god. An infinite being cannot afford to be in trouble. Men have died from worry, and worry might kill a god, if he were susceptible to it. But if it was the human in Jesus that suffered and groaned with pain, then, as already shown, the sufferings of Jesus appear slight in comparison with the unspeakable tortures endured by mere mortal man throughout the ages. To weep over the imaginary sufferings of a god is to shut our eyes to the heroic sacrifices made by man for conscience's sake.

The figures, characters, and scenes of the Passion Play are modelled after famous paintings in the European galleries. The most impressive spectacle, for instance, on the Oberammergau stage is the Last Supper, which represents Anton Lang and his twelve fellow actors breaking bread and drinking wine in commemoration of the Lord's Supper, and is copied from Leonardo's famous painting of the same subject. Likewise in the descent from the cross, the entombment, the resurrection, etc., an attempt is made to produce the masterpieces of Bernini, Van Dyck, and Raphael in the art galleries of Europe. The man who impersonated Christ during the last performance, Anton Lang, submits to a make-up behind the scenes which suggests to the spectator the picture of Christ before Pilate.

In this connection, it is worth noting that, though Jesus was a Hebrew, in not one of his pictures in the galleries of Christendom is he made to look like a Jew. Being of Jewish parents, it is highly probable that Jesus had the features of an Eastern Hebrew. Notwithstanding this, the painters invariably give him the features of an Aryan. The portraits of Jesus are made to order. Yet the liberty which the artists have taken with his features is not even a circumstance to the liberty the theologians have taken with his teachings or character. Christianity is as much the result of a process of accretion or compilation as the Christ portrait. The theologian made his Christ, even as the artist made his Jesus. And as we have positively no way of finding out what kind of a looking man Jesus was, we have no way of knowing exactly just what were his teachings. The Italians painted Jesus to look like an Italian, the French artist gave him the likeness of a Frenchman; in Germany, Jesus has the features of a German; and in Russia he is painted to look like a Slav. A Christ with Jewish features in Russia would not be tolerated. The history of the past twenty centuries would have been different had Jesus been painted to look like an Oriental Hebrew. In the same way, the Christ of the Presbyterian teaches Presbyterianism, the Christ of the Catholic is a believer in the papacy, the Christ of the Lutheran belongs to the church of Luther, and the Christ of the Unitarian or the Quaker repudiates all other sects and recognises only Channing or Hicks as his true apostle. This raises the question of the historicity of Jesus, upon which I am not now going to enter except to say that it would have been almost impossible to take such

liberties with Jesus, his life, and teachings, had he really existed. While the portraits and character of a Washington and a Lincoln remain in essentials the same, there are as many different portraits of Jesus as there are schools of painting, and as many different Christian creeds as there are religious sects.

The Passion Play is given in three parts. There is first the prologue, which announces to the audience what is to follow. This feature reminds one of the times when the real acting was supposed to take place behind the scenes, and hence someone, generally the Virgin Mary, ran to the front of the stage and announced to the audience what was happening behind the curtain. Following the prologue, comes the choir and the living tableaux. There are about twenty-two of these, representing scenes from the Old Testament, supposed to have a bearing on the Christ tragedy. "The Expulsion of Man from Paradise" is the subject of one of the tableaux. This supposed episode in the life of man, when he was turned out of the Garden of Eden, is really the prelude to the tragedy of Calvary. If Adam had not eaten of the tree of knowledge, if he had not dared to disobey God, there would have been no Christ. It is the fall of man which made the atonement necessary. The liberal theologians who pretend to still believe in Christ, though they have discarded the fall of man as a mere allegory, hold a position which seems to us very inconsistent. The sacrifice of Christ is meaningless without the doctrine of original sin through Adam's transgression. We may still have a kind of Jesus left, but if Adam goes, Christ must go too.

Although all the actors in the Passion Play are Catholic, and the play is given in a Bavarian Catholic town in that part of the German Empire where the Catholics are more Catholic than in any Catholic country, and although a priest is the stage-manager and author of the libretto, yet the play is so arranged and presented as to avoid offending any of the other Christian sects. It has been explained that this is done for the purpose of drawing an audience from all the religious denominations of Christendom. The Catholics may have the true faith, but the Protestants have capital, and it is capital that supports the Passion Play. If this is the motive, the charge that commercialism plays a great part in the presentation of the Passion Play seems to be well founded. But I promised to steer clear of that phase of my subject.

In the Oberammergau performance, the Lord's Supper, which is the holiest mystery of the Church, is celebrated on the stage by laymen, which innovation is difficult to reconcile with the Roman Catholic attitude toward the "Holy" Mass. How can it tolerate the celebration of the Mass on a stage, and by laymen? And again, Anton Lang, representing Jesus, asks his comrades, representing the Apostles, to partake of the wine as well as of the bread. This also is in direct violation of the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church. And, by the way, which is the Christian way of celebrating the Communion—as it is celebrated on the stage or as it is celebrated in the church? In the Roman Catholic Church the priest alone partakes of the wine, giving only of the bread to the communicants. If that is the right way, why do they have a different way in the theatre? And if the way the Lord's Supper is celebrated on the Oberammergau stage is the right way, why does the Church not follow that practice? This is an important point and we wish to press it home. If the way the Communion is celebrated on the stage is not according to orthodox doctrine, then it is a travesty on Christian teaching, and the Catholic Church could be accused of double dealing. If, however, the Oberammergau version of the Last Supper is scriptural, then the way the Catholics celebrate Mass in church is a heresy.

The scene in the Passion Play which touches the spectator is the one in which Mary, the supposed mother of Jesus, appears on the stage. She is the picture of desolation. The most impressive thing about her is her loneliness. She has a son, a wonderful son, according to report, but he will not

acknowledge her as his mother. She cannot go about and say to her women friends, "Look at my son—my son! See the beauty of his face! Listen to the music of his words. Mark how wonderful are his thoughts! He is my son—my son!" But he will not let her call him *son*. He is a god. She is only a woman. How could a woman mother a god? Ah, it is very touching! A son become a god disowns his mother. The grief of Mary, the childless mother, is superb.

And is it not remarkable how, throughout the entire play, as also throughout the Gospels, Jesus never addresses Mary as *mother*. He calls her woman, but not once does he call her mother. Even from the cross he looks down upon her, and addresses her as "woman." And he could have made the centuries fragrant, if he had only, once at least, been moved to look into those womanly eyes, and addressed her as *my mother*!

As we see Mary weeping at the cross, one feels as if she should be congratulated on the death of her offspring, for now, now that he is dead, she may take him in her arms, kiss him on the cheeks, and clasp him to her bosom, which she was not permitted to do while he was alive. But I am not sure that anyone in the Oberammergau Theatre realised how great was the anguish of Mary, the disowned mother. But time has done justice to Mary. She is now "the mother of God" in all church calendars.

Another very beautiful scene, which is spoiled, however, is that in which the woman gives her handkerchief to Jesus with which to wipe his face. The story is not in the New Testament, but be that as it may, Jesus spoils it by saying to her, "The Father will reward you for this." What a pity! Why suggest *pay* to a loving woman! Must everything be done for a reward?

Finally, what we expect of a great play is to show that there is something in human nature which, under adverse circumstances, is provoked into greater power and beauty. We are disappointed when sorrow and failure crush a man's spirit instead of making him stronger and braver. When a cat pounces upon a bird we do not admire the act as brave, but when we see the bird, with the help of its beak and its claws and its throbbing breast, charge upon a cat to save its young, ah, is not that splendid! It is not the courage of might, it is the courage of love that is beautiful. It is not the death of a god, but the life of man—man struggling in the darkness and the tempest to keep his radder true, that is sublime!

Correspondence.

DARWINISM AND LAMARCKISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to the criticism passed by Dr. Licorish on my article of June 6 last, I wish to remark that I was not dealing with the respective merits of the Darwinian as opposed to the Lamarckian theory of Evolution. My article was entitled "Science and the Bible," and I was dealing with the idea of Evolution as a whole, as opposed to the idea of Creation, and not with any particular theory of the origin of species.

Dr. Licorish objects to my statements that, previous to Darwin "There were plenty of hypotheses like Lamarck's, but they were only ingenious guesswork, and provided no proof," and that Darwin "supplied the scientific proof for which all the philosophical naturalists in Europe were searching; hence his great success." I maintain both statements.

Lamarck's works were purely speculative. What proof did Lamarck advance for his theory that the neck of the giraffe became elongated through being continually stretched out to reach the leaves at the tree-tops? Or, for his idea that snakes lost their extremities and became elongated through having taken up the habit of moving along the earth, concealing themselves among bushes, and passing through narrow spaces?

As Mr. Edward Clodd has remarked, in his *Pioneers of Evolution*, his speculations on these matters have been relegated to "the museum of biological curiosities."

On the contrary, as Dr. Licorish himself remarks, "undoubtedly Darwin succeeded in demonstrating the truth of organic evolution; but he did so, not by scientific proof, but by accumulating a vast array of facts in organic life—which appealed to the minds of the majority of intelligent scientists the world over."

Well, if Dr. Licorish prefers the phrase "accumulating a vast array of facts" in place of "scientific proof," I do not mind; it seems to me a distinction without a difference. I think it would be difficult to prove that, prior to the Darwinian theory, "the truth of organic evolution had already taken hold of many minds at home and abroad, especially France." It would be nearer the truth to say that it had taken hold of very few minds, and those, with a few exceptions, of obscure men. When Darwin published his theory of the origin of species, it was opposed by Owen, Agassiz, and Virchow, who all believed in the Creation theory. Carl Vogt and Sir Charles Lyell deserted the Creation camp and came over to Darwin. Huxley and Hooker were sitting on the fence, and at once came down on Darwin's side. To-day, every scientist is an evolutionist—thanks to Darwin.

But, objects Dr. Licorish, Darwin was altogether wrong in his theory of Natural Selection as the cause of the origin of species, and Lamarck was right when he declared that evolution, "as regards animals, is brought about indirectly through the needs or wants of the animal as manifested in species, not as in individuals," and that "without the transmission of acquired characters there can be no evolution." He further remarks that "Darwin has become to many evolutionists even as a Pope; but we Freethinkers need neither a Pope in science nor one in theology." True; but why overthrow the Darwinian Pope to set up the Lamarckian Pope in its place?

Apparently, Dr. Licorish imputes to me a desire to champion every statement and theory propounded by Darwin; but I have stated more than once, in these columns, that if Darwin's theory was disproved, the truth of organic evolution would remain untouched.

As to the cause of variation and the transmission of acquired characters—about which Dr. Licorish writes so positively and dogmatically—I keep an open mind. The very fact that the keenest minds in Europe are divided into hostile camps on these questions, proves that there is not a sufficient accumulation of facts at present to settle them. That these questions will be settled sooner or later, is certain; and when they are settled, those who have been least dogmatic will have least to regret.

W. MANN.

If God Rules.

"We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land";
Then priests begin to chatter
Of "God's almighty hand."
If "God" would do the ploughing,
And put the seed in too,
We would not mind allowing
Whatever praise is due.

If good things around us
Do not depend on work,
Then trust the Lord, and thank the
All men can "shirk." [Lord,

"God only is the maker,"
Of all things near and far;
He makes the wayside flower,
He makes bronchial catarrh.
"The winds and waves obey him,
By him the birds are fed";
And yet sometimes poor people
Drop dead for want of bread.

If good things, etc.

No thanks to thee, "O Father!"
If things are bright and good;
Thy storms, thy droughts, thy earthquakes,
So oft destroy man's food.
Priests call this "over-ruling,"
And say that "God knows best,"
When rain spoils half a harvest,
And lightning blasts the rest.

If good things, etc.

"ESSE."

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.
OUTDOOR.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 7.30, E. Burke, "The Tyranny of Words, Dogma, and Formulae."

COUNTRY.
INDOOR.

ABEILTILLEY (New Era Union): C. Cohen, 3, "The Physiology of Faith" (with Special Reference to the Mons Angels); 6.30, "Is Religion a Disease?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Committee Room, Foresters' Hall, Trippet-lane): 7, Meeting of Members.



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