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Views and Opinions.

Playing for Failure.

It was said last week that the striking thing about missions, whether national or local, is their extraordinary and admitted ineffectiveness. This is partly due, as was then said, to the fact that men like the Bishop of London are concerned only with effects, and never by any chance have they either the courage or the intelligence to attack causes. To clear girls off the streets appears to them to be the way to destroy prostitution; to forbid theatre managers producing certain plays seems to be the right way to destroy the taste to satisfy which these plays are produced; to close public-houses a sure method of destroying the craving for unhealthy stimulants, of which drinking is so often an expression. The position was well put by the writer of an article in the *Sunday Chronicle* :—

The Bishop of London has before him a society in which there are causes and effects. He avoids the causes and deals only with some of the effects. He proposes to persecute girls and women who are merely some of the results of the causes which he fails to tackle. Even when he reproaches theatre managers he does not reproach them for underpaying their programme girls and leaving them to subsist on tips, but directs his attention solely to what is put on the stage.

That expresses one reason why the Churches fail. And we have a sneaking suspicion that the leaders of the Churches know beforehand that they must fail. But the pretence of doing something serves, in the eyes of many, to save their credit.

* * *

The Praise of Pain.

A deeper reason for the failure of the Churches is that the whole atmosphere of "Christian" morality is artificial and unhealthy. The historic Christian conception of human nature is at best a poor one, and at its worst, debasing. Its greatest emphasis is placed on the conviction of sin and on purification by suffering. The first is unhealthy, the second is untrue. There is scarcely one case in a thousand in which character is

improved by suffering—and we are very doubtful about the exception. The common experience of life is that suffering makes people selfish and exacting; it deadens and in time degrades. The normal effect of suffering is to benumb and depress. It robs the organism of spontaneity, and, in time, even the desire for improvement. One might as reasonably hope to create good health by cultivating disease as to form a desirable character by suffering. We know all that is said about the charity and sympathy which is called forth, *in others*, but suffering did not create charity and sympathy in them, it was only the occasion for its display. Heine was psychologically correct when he called the Christian era the "sickness period" of humanity. One day it will be recognized that Christianity, with its glorifying of pain and idealizing of suffering, has been one of the most depressing factors in the life of the race.

* * *

Cultivated Ill-Health.

We have said that the Christian talk of sin is unhealthy; but it has its untruthful element as well. Christians do not really regard themselves as sinners. It is a phrase repeated without consideration, and if one took them seriously they would treat it as an insult. A Christian calls himself a sinner for the sake of example. And the other Christian acts on precisely the same principle. Each plays the hypocrite for the benefit of the other. A healthy mind no more dwells upon the fact of its sinfulness than a healthy organism is conscious of disease. It is symptomatic of moral ill-health to cultivate a "consciousness of sin." Sexual desires are not the largest facts in life, although a disordered imagination may make them so. Nor is the hypochondriac limited to the world of physical complaints. He flourishes just as well in the moral life—and the moral hypochondriac carefully retailing all his complaints, real and imaginary, is not a whit more wholesome than he who exhibits all his scabs and sores for the benefit of the public. It is a radically unhealthy occupation, but it is one in which the clergy are great, historic, and histrionic practitioners. The net result is, not improvement, but a development of life along essentially unhealthy lines.

* * *

A Jaundiced View.

One aspect of this is seen in the dwelling upon sexual offences by Christian preachers. The Bishop of London has enlarged his horizon sufficiently to take in the case of drink, and upon these two things we have a string of platitudes helpless for good, but illuminating to the student of social and mental pathology. We are not, be it understood, championing either sexual irregularity or drunkenness, only protesting against either or both usurping the field of morality. And, in particular, the emphasis on sexual vice by Christian clerics has had the effect of restricting the word morality almost exclusively to sexual offences. Mr. Augustine Birrell well says as illustrative of this narrowing of the contents of the word morality :—

Be untruthful, unfaithful, unkind; darken the lives of all who have to live under your shadow, rob youth of

joy, take peace from age, live unsought for, die unmourned, and remaining sober you will escape the curse of men's pity, and be spoken of as a worthy person. But if ever, amidst what Burns called "social" noise, you so far forget yourself as to get drunk, think not to plead a spotless life spent with those for whom you have laboured and saved; talk not of the love of friends, or of help given to the needy; least of all make reference to a noble self-sacrifice passing the love of woman. For all will avail you nothing. You get drunk—and the heartless and the selfish and the lewd claim the privilege of pitying you and revering your name with an odious smile.

Vary a word or two in the above and you have expressed the attitude of celibate priests like Bishop Ingram and Father Vaughan towards sexual offences. Other matters, fraud, lying, slander, extravagance of speech, the plunder of the poor, and a thousand other offences, fail to incur the charge of immorality. Men who are centres of widespread social corruption will escape the stigma of immorality and console themselves for their chicanery and dishonesty and callousness because they stand unconvinced of this one particular offence.

* * *

Disguised Salacity.

The worst of it is that this dwelling upon sexual vice does not make for even sexual purity; rather the reverse. Instead of making people better, it probably makes them worse. The Bishop of London's description of vice in the streets may do something to urge other people to work for its suppression in that form, but it is certain that it will not suppress the vice itself. And it will decidedly send many to look at it or look for it. But awhile ago the Bishop's mania was living statues, and that certainly did not make better the habitués of music-halls. All it did was to make certain things unclean for thousands of people to whom they had been previously perfectly innocuous. There is nothing like a salacious mind for detecting impurity where none exists, and exaggerating it when it does. It is significant that in the Bishop's own vocabulary chastity and celibacy seem convertible terms.

* * *

Some Consequences of Christian Teaching.

Meanwhile, we may note that all the time large tracts of moral teaching have been ignored by Christianity. It has ignored the important truth that the imperative nature of morality springs not from teaching, but from life, and so laid the foundation of assured failure. It has mistaken a radically unhealthy asceticism for sexual purity. It has given a preaching of peace with constant encouragement to war; a denunciation of wealth with the development of as useless a wealthy class as the world has ever seen, and a worship of money greater than the world had ever before known. On the intellectual side its influence has been equally fatal to a healthy morality. Its enforced conformity robbed the mind of its native strength, and people grew up without any clearly conceived standard of honesty. An emasculated intellect became as essential to the guardians of Christian truth, as physical emasculation to the guardians of eastern harems. It would indeed be strange if Christian teaching and practice had been without its evil influence on morals. It could not but create minds either stupidly dogmatic or dangerously compromising. Few people can face genuine moral issues because they lack either the clarity of mind to perceive them or the courage to deal with them. All they can do is to raise unmeaning cries against a particular evil, and often increase its prevalence by ill-directed efforts at improvement.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

From the Useful, through the True, to the Beautiful.—
Goethe.

A New Christian Apologist.

EMINENT men of science, to whom we owe a deep debt of gratitude for their lucid interpretations of many natural processes, when they turn their attention to religion, are often found to be exceedingly unreliable and misleading guides, chiefly because of their lack of accurate acquaintance with the facts of religious history. Sir Ray Lankester, as a biologist, occupies a deservedly high and distinguished position, and is an authority to which most of us gladly and proudly bow. His services to his own science have been invaluable, and in his retirement he is still doing exceedingly useful work. It is well within the memory of many of our readers how bravely he defended biology, in the columns of the *Times* for May 17, 1903, against the charge of having reverted to the exploded theory of a vital principle. His opponent on that occasion was the world-renowned physicist, Lord Kelvin, who regarded the alleged reversion as a virtue, not a fault. His literary articles which appeared weekly in the *Daily Telegraph* for years, and which since have been published in five or six volumes, under the general title of *Science from an Easy Chair*, have thrown light on many dark subjects. One of the best of that series, entitled "The Maligners of Science," was a powerful exposure of the obvious dishonesty of certain writers who descanted upon "The Bankruptcy of Science" and "What Scientists Do Not Know." In all his writings he advocates the working soundness of the Darwinian hypothesis, maintaining that "Darwin's theories are generally held to be essentially true." All along he has been a consistent opponent of supernaturalism in all its forms. And yet he has as consistently manifested a peculiar tenderness towards the Christian religion. Speaking from the chair of the British Association in 1906, he stated that "there is no essential antagonism between the scientific spirit and what is called the religious sentiment." In the *R. P. A. Annual* for 1917, there is an intensely interesting symposium on the subject of religion after the War, which is opened by Sir Ray Lankester in a paper of the most remarkable character. He claims that "natural science or the knowledge of Nature takes the place once occupied by witchcraft, and later by prayer, sacrifice, and priestly mediation." He says:—

This is Rationalism. It is as much "a religion" as its predecessors, since, like them, it is concerned to understand and to control the forces of Nature.....Rationalism is a religion, and is as truly so described as is Christianity. Its creed is that by science, and not by faith, shall man attain nearer and nearer to the understanding of the Eternal.

We are in full agreement with his contention that Christianity will survive the War. It has survived innumerable wars, of many of which it was the direct cause; but we cannot endorse the opinion that it "is being enormously strengthened in its noblest features by this War." It is not true that we nourish hostility to Christianity because we overlook the fact that under this name are blended and confusedly indicated two totally separate things, namely, supernaturalism and a system of morality. So far are we from overlooking this alleged fact, that we make a special point of attacking Christianity in its totality, both its fantastic mythology and its ethical teaching. We are convinced that Sir Edwin is entirely mistaken when he declares that it is "a system of morality which in its essential teaching is to-day approved by the united conscience of civilized man." In the first place, technically speaking, there is no Christian system of morality, what is so called being, in its origin, more Pagan than Christian, while some of the rules of conduct laid down in the Sermon on the Mount

have never been put into practice. Sir Ray Lankester says that, in spite of numerous wicked things done in the Christian name, "the fact remains that the philanthropic precepts of charity and unselfishness, pity and humility, which were distinctive of Christian teaching when it first appeared, have been approved and, as it were, absorbed by all civilized peoples, and form the central feature of that 'moral law' which is accepted by them." Now, if those precepts have been "approved and, as it were, absorbed by all civilized peoples," what explanation can be given of their failure to promote the interests of justice, peace, and brotherhood? How is it that society is still suffering from the tyranny of so many colossal evils? Of course, in Sir Ray Lankester's interpretation of Christianity there is no such thing as celestial aid or inspiration available, which, in the orthodox version, constitutes its chief merit. It is the doctrine of salvation through faith in the infallible efficacy of supernatural grace that gives the religion of the Cross its distinctive character. This doctrine Sir Edwin dismisses as purely mythological, but he does not seem to realize that in so doing he dismisses Christianity itself, which has never been defined by any of its champions as a system of morality. Even in the Sermon on the Mount the supreme emphasis is on the supernatural. It is addressed to disciples, to subjects of the kingdom of heaven, whose treasures are laid up in the spiritual world, "where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal," and to sons of the Father who is in heaven. Jesus is their Saviour from sin, who, after his death and resurrection, returns to heaven to prepare a place for them that he and they may be together for ever. Paul's distinctive doctrine is universally known as Justification by Faith, not by works. In the New Testament the sin that damns for ever those guilty of it is not immorality, or any form of wickedness, but unbelief. This being so, it necessarily follows that to call Christianity a system of morality is to renounce it, and it is safe to affirm that the world, whether in its acceptance or in its rejection of it, has always regarded it as a supernatural provision for the restoration of a fallen humanity.

Let us examine, for a moment, what Sir Ray Lankester describes as "the essential precept of Christian morality, 'Love one another,'" in order to ascertain what it really means. Whom does Jesus exhort to love one another? His disciples as citizens of heaven. It is true that in the Sermon on the Mount is to be found the following counsel, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you"; but we must not forget that those words occur nowhere in the New Testament, except in versions of that discourse in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels. There is not the faintest trace of them anywhere else. Paul tells us that Christ "must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet," and that the great apostle himself did anything but love his enemies. At Paphos, Paul encountered an active opponent named Elymas, who withstood him as he attempted to convert the proconsul. For daring to question the message delivered by a man who claimed to have been sent forth by the Holy Ghost, this is how poor Elymas is said to have been addressed:—

O full of guile and villainy, thou son of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand (Acts xiii. 4-12).

It is noteworthy that the Apostle is said to have been "filled with the Holy Ghost" when those horrible words fell from his lips. The truth is, that love to enemies has

never been a Christian virtue. The disciples were to love one another only, not mankind at large. According to the highest apostolic teaching the brotherhood of believers alone deserved to be loved, while "all men" were to be the recipients of "honour" merely. "Let love of the brethren continue," we read in Hebrews xiii. 1. Some five hundred years before the time of Christ, the Buddha is reported to have spoken thus:—

As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so let him cultivate love without measure towards all beings. Let him cultivate towards the whole world—above, below, around—a heart of love unstinted.

If Sir Ray Lankester is anxious that the best system of morality should prevail, let him adopt the Buddhistic philosophy, and urge his neighbours to do the same, for in early Buddhism there is a complete absence of the "fantastic mythology" which is so objectionable a feature of Christianity.

Having pronounced his extravagant eulogium upon Christian morality, which is declared to "have been approved, as it were, absorbed by all civilized peoples," Sir Ray Lankester can only account for this hideous War in the following manner:—

The Christian morality has been deliberately rejected by the leaders of German militarism. We are fighting for the triumph of that morality—to make an end of the German moral system which teaches that treachery, murder, and torture are rightly applied by Germans to their fellow-men in order to increase German wealth and material domination.

Far be it from us to write a single sentence in justification of Germany's relation to the War, but our sense of truth and honesty compels us to characterize that extract as fundamentally false. Even General F. von Bernhardi is a firm believer in the Christian morality, and maintains that Christ's "teaching can never be adduced as an argument against the universal law of struggle." He says:—

There never was a religion which was more combative than Christianity. Combat, moral combat, is its very essence. If we transfer the ideas of Christianity to the sphere of politics, we can claim to raise the power of the State—power in the widest sense, not merely from the material aspect—to the highest degree, with the object of the moral advancement of humanity, and under certain conditions the sacrifice may be made which a war demands. Thus, according to Christianity, we cannot disapprove of war in itself, but must admit that it is justified morally and historically.

Christian morality has never prevented a war, whilst practically all European wars have been waged under its banner. It is true that Professor Haeckel, the Atheist, acquits Germany of all responsibility for the present brutal conflict; but it is equally true that Christian moralists like Harnack and Eucken do the same; and practically every evangelical pastor throughout the empire is an enthusiastic defender of his country's action. Lord Grey's recent account of the origin of the War was, no doubt, perfectly accurate; but its accuracy in no way proves the rejection of the Christian morality by the leaders of German militarism. Without a single known exception, they all profess the Christian religion in its entirety, and they entertain no doubt that the War will strengthen Christianity by helping Germany to achieve some of her political ambitions.

Among thoughtful people the War is doing much to discredit Christianity, but there is no indication that the War is likely to end it. Nothing will do that but a well-instructed and wisely trained reason. Superstition dreads the advent of light, for in proportion as knowledge advances faith declines.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Peripatetic Parson.

In Slums and Society. By Canon Adderley. (Fisher Unwin.) 1916.

CANON ADDERLEY has written a volume which will take his readers away from the turmoil of the European War. His reminiscences are penned, too, in such high spirits, that he disarms criticism by his frankness and buoyancy. But the Canon's spirit of cheerful content is not the least excellent of his many excellent gifts. He has enjoyed living in society, and his sympathy with the people is genuine and unaffected. Whether he was among the "upper ten thousand," or the submerged tenth, life has interested and fascinated him.

It used to be said that the only books of reminiscences worth reading were those of players, because they were never expected to be respectable. Nowadays players are far more respected than prelates, and, unless the human interest is in evidence, even ecclesiastics may go unread, and their books find their way to the wastepaper merchants. This will not be the case with Canon Adderley's volume, which is crowded with interest from cover to cover, and which will appeal far beyond the very narrow circle of persons who regularly trouble the pew-openers. For Canon Adderley is one of the most remarkable of ecclesiastics, and, unlike the Bishop of London, does not require a khaki uniform and obsequious photographers to keep him in the limelight of popularity. Canon Adderley is a peer's son who has taken a prominent part in the Socialist movement, and has attained high distinction in the Church of England, and he could hardly fail to be interesting, especially if he has some force of character and literary ability. The Canon possesses both the latter qualities, and he has an engaging frankness. "It is not becoming," says he, "for a clergyman to use strong language in print, so I am precluded from telling some of my best stories there." What he gives, however, make most excellent reading, and his open description of himself as an *enfant terrible* is not without justification.

What many elderly spinsters may find undesirable in an ecclesiastic is a popular asset in a literary man, and Canon Adderley's cheerful budget of good things makes most pleasant reading. A capital story is told of Canon Liddon, who wrote to a clergyman who had confessed to the "borrowing" of a sermon: "Dear friend.—It is a pleasure in these days to hear two clergymen saying the same thing." Bishop Temple, who had been the headmaster of a great public school, and the terror of a generation of scholars, figures here in his most dictatorial and magisterial manner. Canon Adderley once had a letter from him consisting of the two short words, "Thank you"; and on another occasion the more expansive and familiar note: "Your second letter shows me that my first was right." A better story of the gruff bishop is his reply to the gushing lady who asked him, "Oh, my lord, I do believe you haven't seen my last baby?" "No, and I don't believe I ever shall!"

Unlike so many parsons, Canon Adderley has a keen sense of humour. He tells us of a fussy archdeacon who visited Father Stanton at St. Alban's Church, Holborn, and asked if the statue of the Madonna had miraculous qualities. "If you put down half-a-crown," said Stanton, "I daresay she'd wink." The freshest and most telling jests are Adderley's own. He writes of the present Bishop of London as "the Sunny Jim of the Church"; of the "eminent dogmatism" of his own brother; and of the Church of England Prayer Book as "a very provoking" volume. But, after all, the stories that are likely to attract the general reader are those concerning the busy world, and not the quiet backwaters

of the Church. Very neat is the anecdote of Sir Andrew Clark and Sir James Paget, two famous physicians, who breakfasted at the same house. Sir Andrew remarked: "I see, Paget, that you haven't many patients; there are few letters." Sir James replied: "I notice that most of your correspondence has a black edge."

Two of the best stories concern that ill-fated genius, Oscar Wilde, whom Adderley generously visited in Reading Gaol. "Have you ever visited a prisoner before?" asked Wilde. Adderley confessed he had not. "Then, bad as I am, I have made you obey your Master!" To the ready and brilliant wit of Wilde the Canon bears further testimony. Wilde boasted that there was no subject on which he could not speak at once. Someone suggested "the Queen." "She's not a subject," retorted Wilde. Canon Adderley has a gift of repartee of his own. A bishop once roundly accused the Socialist Canon of playing to the gallery. Adderley replied, "It is time the Church left off playing to the stalls and the dress-circle."

There is much in the book to show that Canon Adderley has very wide sympathies, and some of his reflections are worth quoting, such as "Converted Tories make the best Socialists"; "Extreme Protestants entirely lack humour"; "Since the divorce between religion and amusement we have had to pay for our amusement"; "The way of theology is marked by shaking milestones." Unconventional as the book is, there is no malice in it, and that is greatly to the credit of the author. Indeed, this is one of the very few books of clerical memories which an ordinary book-lover will find readable, and its justification is that its author, like the Reverend Laurence Sterne, is so much more of a man than a theologian.

MIMNERMUS.

Pagan and Christian Morality.

II.

(Continued from p. 694.)

To the truths already uttered in the Athenian prison (by Socrates, 400 years before Christ) Christianity added little or nothing, except a few symbols, which, though perhaps well calculated for popular acceptance, are more likely to perplex than instruct, and offer the best opportunity for priestly mystification.—R. W. Mackay, "The Rise and Progress of Christianity," pp. 19-20.

The attempt to separate the noble moralities which may be selected from the Gospels from all the men who have gone before Christ or who gathered round him is thoroughly unhistoric. There is not one of the ethical maxims mentioned by Mr. Mill as the imperishable gifts of Christ, which is not in substance to be found before his time.—John Morley, "Mr. Mill's Three Essays," *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1875.

When people calmly tell me that Jesus first established the brotherhood of man, the equality of races, the nullity of ceremonies; that he overthrew the narrowness of Judaism; that he found a national but left a universal religion; found a narrow-minded ceremonial, and originated a spiritual principle, I can do nothing but reply that every one of these statements is groundless and contrary to fact.—Professor F. W. Newman, "Against Hero-Making in Religion," p. 23.

The whole of Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount" is a collection of aphorisms taught by different nations long before his time. But to point out these aphorisms, one by one, as they existed previously to his time, and show the modifications they have individually undergone in being introduced into the Christian Scriptures, would require a distinct volume of some size.—E. P. Meredith, "The Prophet of Nazareth," p. 427.

It is not our intention to weary our readers with a detailed comparative study of the whole of the moral teachings ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament, a task that would require a volume larger than the Bible itself. We will, therefore, confine ourselves to that compendium of the teachings of Jesus known as "The

Sermon on the Mount," which Christians of all denominations declare contains the very "pith and marrow" of Christianity, a morality so lofty and divine that it bears the stamp of a direct revelation from God.

The task of comparing Christian and Pagan morality is a great deal easier now than it would have been, say, fifty years ago. At that time only a scholar thoroughly acquainted with the literature of Greece and Rome, and with the Chinese and Indian scriptures—many of which had not been translated—could have undertaken the labour.

Even to-day the average Freethinker has neither the leisure nor the use of the great library necessary for such a purpose. But, fortunately, he can now profit by the labour of others. The work has been done for him in books like A. Farrer's *Paganism and Christianity*, A. Lillie's *Buddhism and Christianity*, General Forlong's *Short Studies in the Science of Comparative Religions*, Muir's *Religious and Moral Sentiments from Indian Writers*, J. W. Lake's *Plato, Philo, and Paul*, Keningale Cooke's *Fathers of Jesus*, and McCabe's recently published *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*—to mention only a few dealing with the subject (others will be indicated in the course of these articles), and which we shall draw upon in addition to our own researches on the subject.

There are excellent reasons advanced by Christian scholars that the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" was not a set discourse delivered upon a certain occasion, but a collection of disconnected aphorisms; a question which we need not enter into here, as it does not affect the claim made for the originality and value of the sayings. For ourselves, we do not believe that they were delivered on the Mount, or that Jesus had anything to do with them; but, for the purpose of this article, we will take it for granted that the Sermon was delivered by Jesus, as stated in the Gospel of Matthew.

The discourse, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew, commences with the so-called "Beatitudes," of which there are nine, declaring the blessedness of those practising certain specific virtues. Putting aside the first three for later consideration, as we do not consider that there is any virtue in poorness of spirit, or that those that mourn are blessed, or that the meek inherit the earth, we pass on to the fourth, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." In the Jewish Talmud we read: "The age in which the teaching is not found—in which a righteous life, conformed to the law, is not possible—liveth in hunger."¹

Plato (400 B.C.) observed that "He who doeth well must of necessity be happy and blessed."²

Seneca, the Pagan Roman statesman, declared that "Virtue alone bringeth secure and perpetual joy."³

Marcus Aurelius, the Pagan Roman Emperor, in his *Thoughts and Reflections* written down for his own use, lays it down: "It is thy duty to order thy life well in every single act; and if every act does its duty, as far as possible, be content." And again: "Consider if thou hast hitherto behaved to all in such a way that this may be said of thee: 'Never has he wronged a man in deed or word.'"⁴

"The Buddhists, like the Christians," says Mr. Arthur Lillie, "have got their Beatitudes." They number ten. The sixth runs: "To bestow alms and live righteously. To give help to kindred, deeds which cannot be blamed.—These are the greatest blessing."⁵

¹ Schemotrappa, 31. McCabe, *The Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*, p. 213.

² Plato, *Gorgias*, 507. *Ibid.*, p. 213. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴ *The Thoughts of the Emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus* (Long's translation), pp. 151, 116.

⁵ A. Lillie, *The Influence of Buddhism on Primitive Christianity*, pp. 48-49.

Theognis of Megara, Greek poet-philosopher—540 B.C.—taught: "Justice and righteousness embrace all virtues collectively. Choose these though they lead thee to trouble and poverty."¹

Pythagoras, "The Samian Sage"—545 B.C.—advises: "Strive to be virtuous, good, and perfect as possible. Yet remember humbly that thou art no better than others."²

Lao-Tsze, the founder of Taoism—560 B.C.—declared: "The virtuous man is like water in a thirsty land, spreading blessings wherever he goeth; ever doing good, and content therewith. Seeking no reward, not even to please himself."³

In *Jainism*, an Indian religion said to have arisen 4000 to 3000 B.C., it was taught: "Thou must show thy holiness by thy life, by doing justly. Loving righteousness, by fulness of knowledge and equanimity good conduct is better than words, rites, or creeds."⁴

The next Beatitude in the Gospels runs: "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." This is paralleled in the Talmud by: "He who showeth mercy to his fellow-creatures shall receive mercy from the Lord."⁵

It will be noticed that we are enjoined to practise mercy in order to obtain mercy for ourselves; not a very high form of virtue, as Buddha pointed out five hundred years before: "That is no true virtue which seeketh reward, which crieth 'Give, and it shall be given unto thee,' but that which, uninfluenced by any creed or faith, or hopes or fears, giveth, expecting no return."⁶ The teaching of Epictetus, the Pagan Greek, was better than that of Jesus in this respect, for he taught that "Forgiveness is better than punishment: for the one is the proof of a gentle, the other of a savage nature."⁷

Jainism, the ancient religion of India, taught as the first of "The Five Great Duties," "Show mercy to all that has life."⁸

The sixth Beatitude of Jesus reads: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Purity of heart was sought after millenniums before the time of Christ. In an ancient Egyptian prayer, dating 5000 years B.C., the suppliant pleads, "I am pure, I am pure."⁹

The *Zoroastrian or Mazdean Scriptures*, compiled between 1700 and 500 B.C., enjoins its followers to "Seek after holiness of spirit and purity of mind and body. Exhibiting these by conduct as well as by words."¹

The equally ancient Indian religion of Jainism taught: "Attain unto purity of life, till evil be a burden to thee."²

Buddha—500 years B.C.—taught: "'To cease from sin, attain virtue and a pure heart, is the religion of Buddhas,' not rites and ceremonies."³

Plato—400 years B.C.—says: "He that is made pure and perfect coming thither will dwell with the gods."⁴

It is not necessary to cite any more evidence on this point, for it is a commonplace in the teaching of the sages and philosophers long before the advent of Christianity.

The succeeding Gospel Beatitude is: "Blessed are

¹ Forlong, *Short Studies*, p. 591.
² *Ibid.*, p. 588.
³ *Ibid.*, pp. 583-584.
⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 566.
⁵ *Sabbath*, 151, 2. McCabe, *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*, p. 213.
⁶ Forlong, *Short Studies*, p. 594.
⁷ Epictetus, *Fragments*, lxiii.
⁸ Forlong, *Short Studies*, p. 567.
⁹ Laing, *Human Origins*, p. 121.
¹ Forlong, *Short Studies*, p. 570.
² *Ibid.*, p. 566.
³ *Ibid.*, p. 596.
⁴ *Phædrus*, c., 28.

the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

The Talmud records the saying of the famous Rabbi Hillel: "Love peace, and seek it at any price."¹

Epictetus, the Greek philosopher, speaks for himself as well as for Socrates in his love of peace. He says: "A wise and good person neither quarrelleth with any man, nor, as far as is possible, suffereth another to do so. The life of Socrates (400 years B.C.) giveth us an example of this, as of other things, since he did not only avoid quarrelling himself, but did not even suffer others to quarrel."²

We shall return to this subject again when we come to deal with war.

The last Beatitude reads: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

The Talmud parallels this with: "Remember that it is better to be persecuted than to persecute."³ And again: "If the persecutor were a just man, and the persecuted person an impious one, God would espouse the cause of the persecuted."⁴

Plato—400 B.C.—declares: "Neither you nor I nor any man would rather do than suffer injustice; for to do injustice is the greater evil."⁵

Marcus Aurelius observes: "To have good repute amidst such a world as this is an empty thing."⁶

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Book Magic.

It is easy and delightful, and above all profitable, to refer to the Old Book, especially in those days when the internal teaching and the external fetishism of the so-called Book of Books is happily on the wane. A monopoly in magic is a bad thing. If there is magic in a book or a man, it must be shared in some degree by other books and men. There is a magic—a magnetism, rather—in men and books; a profound, but not mysterious, alchemy; a natural exhalation. There is something unmistakable about the great book; at once a rich maturity and a fresh simplicity, an evergreenness of spring with autumn's cloth of gold. And so with a man. When one has once met the real great man, and glimpsed the natural grandeur of true strength, sincerity, and intellect, the outer sparkles on the granite and the inner wealth of light, one is never again—at least, not easily—mistaken in the man or his message.

What drugs, what charms,

What conjuration, and what mighty magic?

Why, none at all; rather, as the same Othello says:—

This only is the witchcraft I have us'd.

The witchcraft of love, and truth, and beauty. What more is necessary?

My story being done,

She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:

She swore,—in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;

'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:

She wished she had not heard it; yet she wish'd

That heaven had made her such a man.

And it came to pass that I returned yet again to the Old Book. There is no sweeter solace for a time of sorrow, no wholesomer employment for an idle hour. Besides, modesty is not alarmed; for in such selections it is possible to please, and even elevate, as well the

¹ *Pirke Abot*, i., 12.

² *Epictetus, Discourses*, iv., 5.

³ *Treatise Yoma*.

⁴ Midrash, *Vayikra Rabba*, 27. Cited in *The Gospel History*, p. 101.

⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, 476.

Thoughts, v., 23.

most subtle and fastidious as the most simple and elementary reader, without posing as a "great author." The marble breathes, the diamond gleams for all. Listen once more:—

As trees and plants necessarily arise from seeds, so are you, Anthony, the seed of this most calamitous war. You mourn, oh Romans, that three of your armies have been slaughtered—they were slaughtered by Anthony. You lament the loss of your most illustrious citizens—they were torn from you by Anthony; the authority of this order is deeply wounded—it is wounded by Anthony; in short, all the calamities we have ever since beheld (and what calamities have we not beheld!) have been entirely owing to Anthony. As Helen was of Troy, so the bane, the misery, the destruction of this state, is Anthony (*Cicero*, 106-43 B.C.).

The reader may apply his own "modern instances" in this still more "calamitous war." On the other hand:—

Tully has a very beautiful gradation of thoughts, to show how amiable virtue is. We love a virtuous man, says he, who lives in the remotest parts of the earth, though we are altogether out of the reach of his virtue, and can receive from it no manner of benefit; nay, one who died several years ago, raises a sacred fondness and benevolence for him in our minds when we read his story; nay, what is still more, one who has been the enemy of our country, provided his wars were regulated by justice and humanity (*Spectator*).

Let your fame be regarded, but conscience much more. It is an empty joy to appear better than you are, but a great blessing to be what you ought to be.

Let your conduct be the result of deliberation, never of impatience.

But why? This is mere morality, of which Burns wrote sarcastically:—

Morality, thou deadly bane,

What tens of thousands thou hast slain.

But, in truth, in these quotations appears again and again the whole duty of man; simple truth their only skill. Deliberation!

Let us stay a little, said the sage, that we may end the sooner.

The world is in too big a hurry. If it were going anywhere in particular, haste would be commendable; but it turns out to be mere stationary or reactionary activity. There is, no doubt, a certain synthesis of aim revealed in the present War; but that, one fears, is destructive rather than reformative.

Let us stay a little!

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,

Saddest of all, it might have been!

Concluding for the present, one feels that a journal like our *Freethinker* is diligently but not hastily edited; even its trifles are considered trifles; and herein, perhaps, to a large extent lies the secret of its permanence and strength.

A. MILLAR.

Suggested Prayer.

For Adoption by the Christian Churches in Time of War.

WHILST yet our hands with blood are red,

And murder crawls on crimson feet,

Though children cry in vain for bread,

And heroes perish in the street,

Bless thou our holy cause, O Lord.

On bloody sword and shattered shell,

And souls destroyed by worldly lust,

On priestly liars spawned in hell,

And leaders who betray their trust,

Bestow thy benediction, Lord.

P. A.

Acid Drops.

"They believe in God in the trenches to-day," says the bishop of London. On the other hand, the Rev. C. Glynn Roberts, who has been in France for many months, serving in the R.A.M.C., writes to the *Inquirer* :—

On active service now the cherished pieties and hallowed exercises of Christianity are really very rare. I have lived and worked with all sorts and conditions of men, in the midst of terrible battle dangers during attacks and counter-attacks, without ever seeing the remotest evidence of the spirit of prayer.....My statement is based not only on personal observation, but also on the results of deliberate and persistent inquiry in every possible quarter among Colonial and British troops.The real truth is that the general attitude of the men towards religion, and by that we must understand the Christian religion, is one of complete indifference.

As we have said more than once, the picture of the British soldier, non-religious during peace but frightened into prayer by the roar of German guns, is not a very flattering one. All that can be said is that the picture is not a truthful one, and the Bishop of London is—well, say, trying to earn his salary.

Mr. Roberts continues :—

The full extent of the problem and the gravity of the situation are not expressed by stating that for practical purposes religious reflection is suspended for the duration of the war. It is not merely suspended but in a very radical sense superseded. A widespread stoic-fatalism is taking the place of the religious teaching of the churches. A man goes up the line and takes his place in the front trench or on the battery position with the calm assurance that his fate is pre-determined. If a shell is to kill or wound him then that will happen, or if he is to escape uninjured no missile can do him harm. His fatalism does not consist of a passive and abject self-subjection to his idea. He is seriously concerned about his fate, wants to see much more of life, does his duty well, and takes all possible precautions; but he will not offer up a Christian prayer for protection. He no longer believes in such prayer. What is to be is to be. He is a fatalist, and by his control of associated emotion, a stoic-fatalist. And emphatically one thing that makes such fatalism popular and easy of acceptance is the phenomenal evaporation of belief in a future life, which is, of course, a fundamental and indispensable Christian doctrine. Very few of the men are concerned about what may possibly come after death.

We venture to say that if people will only inquire of their soldier friends, they will find the above statements fully endorsed. The unthinking remain as they were. The thoughtful see the ghastly conflict between religious theories and actual facts in a way they never saw before the War. Of course, the conflict was there all the time; the War serves as no more than the occasion of its realization.

The *Birmingham Gazette* records two "wonderful escapes" of soldiers in action. A Coventry man was saved owing to his having a Prayer Book in his pocket on which the bullet struck. A Dudley man was saved in the same way by a cigarette case. Honours are equal. Prayer Book or cigarette case. Bible or *Brimstone Ballads*—anything does so long as it is something solid. Once upon a time only the Bible served on such occasions. But the nation is mobilized for war, and everything is dragged in; nor has the Bible pre-eminence over a case of Woodbines. How are the mighty fallen!

The *Daily Mirror* is responsible for the statement that no one after reading an article by Mr. Bottomley on "The Bishop's Blunder," and his appeal to the Churches to spiritualize the nation, can doubt that he "is inspired by as deep a religious fervour as the most devout Christian." Delightful! Most delightful! And yet again, delightful!

Mr. Pemberton-Billing (of air fame) has started a weekly paper. We have carefully read through the first three numbers, and, if his intention in doing so is anything but to advertise himself, we fail to find any justification for the production. He proposes various remedies, mostly puerile, for the ills of the body politic, and to show his want of expe-

rience, knowledge, and sense, it is only necessary to mention one. Mr. Billing tells us that :—

A Commission is now sitting to decide what attributes or circumstances shall qualify or disqualify a man to register his vote for any candidate for a seat in Parliament who may thrust himself *or be thrust* on any constituency.

And goes on to remark :—

But surely it is even more important to define the qualifications of the candidate, to decide what shall render a man eligible to represent, in the council of the nation, his brother citizens—who have had to prove themselves worthy to exercise their vote.

To this end there must be a tribunal; one cannot expect men to judge themselves in such a matter. It cannot be political, it might be judicial, but I would suggest in all seriousness that it should be ecclesiastical.

Why not make the Bench of Bishops the tribunal? It should be their job, for if the Bishops do *not* stand for purity of political and national life, of what use are they?

That is to say, we are to hand over to the Church of England our right to vote for whom we please, the Bishops being empowered to choose for us as to whom shall be allowed to stand for Parliament. That is a bright suggestion for a nation which is fighting a world-war for Liberty. We are to hand over our liberties to men like the egregious Bishop of London, who cannot live as a bachelor on an income of ten thousand pounds a year!

We wonder if Mr. Billing has ever heard of the political record of the Bishops. If he has, he should be ashamed of himself to suggest, and attempt to deceive, the people with these nostrums. If he has not, there are people who will teach him what he should know; and in the meantime let him cultivate a more meek and humble spirit, like the Master he follows.

If any tribunal for the weeding out of candidates is at all necessary, which we do not believe, it should be constituted of scientists who have made social and political economy a special study, and who understand the temporal needs of the people. The business of Bishops is to see to their spiritual conditions, which means preparing men, women, yes, and little children, for an eternity of soft soap and sugar, or an unending agony of thirst and high thermometer.

Rationalists are treated with scant courtesy by most governments; but superstition is always sure of tender treatment. Recently, the Holy Carpet of the Mohammedans was attended by British generals at Cairo, and on its arrival at Jeddah, on its way to Mecca, was received with fullest honours by British warships.

Preaching at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, formerly of the City Temple, inveighed against the prevailing Secularism of to-day. Many of his ministerial brethren emphasize the growing religiosity of the time. The congregations do not seem to mind these diverse opinions. Probably, they select the preacher they like best.

Mr. A. K. Yapp, Secretary to the Young Men's Christian Association, has been acclaimed as the "Kitchener of the Y.M.C.A." Some men would resent being called a "Kitchener" to a movement which preached Hell.

"What's in a name?" asked Shakespeare. At an Essex wedding recently the officiating clergyman was the Rev. Bernard Shaw; whilst a curate at Westcliff rejoices in the name of Herbert Spencer.

A few years ago Dr. Horton published a book entitled *Reconstruction*, and he has just received the joyful information that two people—one in the Far East and one in this country—have been brought back to faith as the result of reading it. The reverend gentleman's heart is overflowing with gratitude and gratification. The two had become thoroughgoing Agnostics, but now both rejoice in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, acquired by means of *Reconstruction*. Of course, their names are not given, and we are quite certain that neither of them was ever a genuine Agnostic. We, too,

perused this volume when it first came out, and the only effect it had upon us was to confirm us in our unbelief.

Dr. Horton admits that the Bible is a fallible book, containing mistakes and errors of various kinds, but claims that the Christ of whom the fallible book writes is absolutely infallible. He omits to tell us wherein the infallibility of Christ consists, though he states that he has made the Bible and the Church, both of which are fallible. We challenge him to name a single thing said to be produced by Christ which may honestly be described as perfect and flawless. This is evidently the last straw grasped by the reverend gentleman when every other support has given way, and he must be aware that the waters of criticism, which are rising fast, will soon make it impossible for him to hold on any longer even to this.

The ordinary means of grace having proved deplorably inadequate to the task of keeping religion alive and prosperous in the land, the Bishop of Manchester recommends more and more prayer all round, beginning with the revival of family worship. "And might there not be," his lordship adds, "in great factories and elsewhere among the wage-earners a prayer-room, corresponding to the Church Army huts in our camps, a corner for prayer in mines, and even stations for prayer by our roadsides"? The *Church Times* pronounces those suggestions admirable, because they would, if carried out, take us back to pre-Reformation conditions, and do much to restore Catholicism in this country. But it is altogether too late in the day for such things. They are desperate remedies suggested by the desperate state of religion; but though they may be tried, and revive hope for a season, they will not effect a permanent cure. In the nature of things, all superstition is doomed, and must gradually pass away.

We hope an open eye and a critical mind will be kept by the general public upon the latest Salvation Army Emigration Scheme. The Army is appealing for £200,000 in order to emigrate war widows and their children to the Dominion. The widows are promised support by the Army, and also assistance in getting to Canada. In what way widows and children, dumped wholesale in Canada or elsewhere, will be better off than they would be here we are not told. To certain people emigration is a magic word, and it is not always realized that many thousands who emigrate in this trustful spirit are left stranded on their arrival or soon afterwards. We are of opinion that the responsibility for these widows and children belongs to the people here, and the Salvation Army is the last body we should care to see entrusted with their welfare.

Moreover, if the Army follows its usual plan, it alone will profit by the scheme. The money to help these emigrants is subscribed by the public. But the Army rarely, if ever, gives. It lends. And the repayments will represent sheer plunder to the Army. Usually, too, the Army receives a commission from the shipping companies, and that also represents profit for the Army. And in the old days, we fancy it is stopped now, the Army also received a capitation grant from the Canadian Government, which meant further profit. If the £200,000 is subscribed, we venture to predict that no small portion of this will flow into the Army coffers for expenses, commissions, repayment of loans, etc. The Army seldom does anything for nothing.

Again, the notion that there is a shortage of women in Canada is a delusion. There is no surplus of men in the towns and cities. A surplus of men only exists in unsettled areas, where they are playing the part of pioneers, and where it will certainly not be possible to transport these widows and their families. Finally, if we have War widows and their families, it is unfortunately the case that Canada will have its own widows that will need care and protection. We do not think, therefore, that the Canadian Government will welcome the Army's proposal. And for the sake of the widows and children, we sincerely hope that some prominent public man will look carefully into this new scheme. Those who remember the exposure of Army methods some few

years ago will recognize that where profit is concerned the Army is both reckless and merciless.

The umbrella sheltering the clergy from military service has now been made larger, and a War Office memorandum states that Roman Catholic students for the priesthood are not to be accepted for service. "Heads I win, tails you lose," is always the motto of the clergy.

The following story appears in Mr. Edward Clodd's latest book, *Memories* :—

A new housemaid, having for the first time attended family prayers at the house of her new employer, a clergyman, "flounced out of the room in a manner showing violent temper. The mistress hastened after her to ask what it meant. The girl replied; 'I ain't a-going to stop in this 'ouse; I've never been so hinsulted in all my life by hanybody!' 'Whatever do you mean?' asked the mistress. 'Well, ma'am, master said, "O God, who hatest nothing but the 'ousemaid.''"

Father Bernard Vaughan has been girding at the press and points out that a phrase attributed to him, "No matter how many dinners were eaten," should be "No matter how many drums were beaten." After all, it is only a storm in a tea-cup, and few people expect sense from the clergy.

The *New Age* prints a smart jest concerning the brothers Gilbert and Cecil Chesterton. "Gilbert writes of Revelation, Cecil of 'revelations.'" Let us add that Gilbert gives gaiety to the religion of the Man of Sorrows.

The persistent cadging on behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association by means of Press advertising suggests to a contemporary that the letters Y.M.C.A. suggest: You May Contribute All.

We have wondered what are the special sins of which we were to repent during the National Mission, and now we have been enlightened by the Rev. W. Temple. He writes in the *Observer*: "The sin of which we chiefly need to repent is the broken fellowship which appears most prominently, but not solely, in the antagonism of capital and labour." There we have it! One great purpose of the National Mission is to heal the breach between capital and labour. They are to return to the good old conditions under which labour took what was offered, and was grateful for whatever it received. We hope that all genuine friends of labour will note Mr. Temple's remark, and will properly appreciate the part being played just now by pious "labour leaders." It is not the first time this game has been played, and we don't suppose it will be the last.

The Archbishop of York is far from satisfied with the religious knowledge of the men who profess the Government religion in our armies. He says that it shows "how comparatively little has been done in really building up the Christian life of the men who have been in the day-schools and the Sunday-schools." The Archbishop really ought to read the utterances of the dear bishops and the clergy, because he is taking the wind out of their sails.

The Christianity of the *Daily Telegraph* is of a peculiar and arresting flavour, and worthy of the flamboyant penman who can write two columns of beautiful nonsense about how many lumps of sugar Her Majesty has in her tea. Describing the happy state of a soldier who had "found Jesus" at the Front, it added that the converted one burst out "the bloke what ses a word agen our Church will 'ave 'is — 'ed bashed in." If true, it would be a truly touching tribute to the beneficent effects of the Christian religion.

General Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, that dutiful son of the Church, is still continuing his crusade against, what he calls, "Stage Indecency." He says, "I am glad to see the Army Chaplains are moving in the matter." What on earth does the general mean? Are the chaplains leaving their tabernacles in the wilderness and inspecting theatres and music-halls—and chorus-girls' legs?

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 5, Brixton; November 12, Glasgow; December 10, Leicester; January 14, Nottingham; February 4, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 12, Brixton; November 19, Birmingham; December 31, Abertillery.
- J. G. COX.—The marginal date in the Bible for the Creation is 4004 B.C. The details given by the celebrated Dr. Lightfoot are, however, more precise. He decided that the exact date was October 23, and that man was created at 9 o'clock on the morning of the same day.
- OLD N. S. S.—Sorry could not find room in last week's issue. You will see we have utilized it this week.
- REG. CLAYTON.—Your account of yourself makes us look forward to meeting you, which we hope to do before long—so soon as meetings can be arranged.
- BANINO (Malta).—P.O. handed to Business Manager. Quite correct. Thanks for your offer to subscribe rs. weekly to Sustentation Fund.
- V. SMITH.—Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam was revised by him several times. Hence the discrepancies in the quotations. There is an edition published by Macmillan which gives the various readings.
- W. H. BLACKMORE.—Small, as you say, and yet in the circumstances not so small.
- A. J. COTTLE.—We should like some particulars of the gentleman named in your letter of October 23. How do you suggest we could help?
- G. B.—Thanks for reference, which we will act on.
- E. LECHMERE.—In these matters the spirit counts quite as much as anything else. Thanks.
- J. D. PALFREYMAN.—Sorry you were unable to call while in London. Next time, perhaps.
- A. LITCOMB.—We are obliged for cuttings, which are always useful.
- J. WILSON.—Pleased to know that you are making such progress towards forming a Branch of the N. S. S. at Falkirk. Mr. Cohen is looking forward to his visit on the 10th—or is it the 13th?
- A. W. HUTTY.—It is difficult to say how much State money the Church of England receives. So much of it is indirect. There is the income from tithes, and much of that is disguised by the operation of the Tithe Commutation Act. There is income from grants of land—mining royalties, etc; and there is the release from taxation, which is clearly the equivalent of a State grant.—We are sorry to hear of your unpleasant experience. But courage and honesty, expensive luxuries at the best, are far more so during a state of war.
- A. WAYMARK.—Keep it up. We are pleased we have such vigilant friends. Criticism is the last thing that should be resented. We prefer to encourage it. It is healthy all round.
- J. A. TOMKINS.—Next week.
- H. G. HANN.—We are very pleased to learn that one result of your newsagent showing a *Freethinker* poster has been to secure twelve new readers. We hope that many others will follow the example.
- 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 favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- 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.*

Sugar Plums.

We are just in time to give the result of the County Council's deliberations this afternoon (Tuesday) concerning the sale of literature in the public parks. In spite of a very vigorous opposition, the Council decided to adhere to its original resolution, and to stop the sale of literature at all meetings. We understand that considerable interest was shown in the matter, and the voting was close. So far, it is evident that the agitation carried on has not been without influence, even though it fell short of achieving complete success. We

intend writing more fully on the matter next week. Meanwhile, the agitation must continue, and, if necessary, with more vigour than hitherto.

The National Secular Society has arranged, in connection with the Camberwell Branch, a course of lectures at the Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham, S.W. Mr. Cohen delivers the opening lecture to-day (Nov. 5), on "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?" Three succeeding lectures will be delivered by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., and Miss K. B. Kough. Avondale Hall is situated near the Clapham Road Tube Station, and so is easy of access. It may be also reached by 'bus and tram from the "Elephant and Castle" and City. We hope that London friends will do their best to make these meetings known. Advertising slips of a convenient size may be obtained either from the *Freethinker* Office or from Miss Vance, at 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.

During the past two years we have had scores of letters asking our advice on the matter of affirmation when joining the Army. We have advised all our correspondents to remain quite firm in their demand to affirm, to decline to take the oath on any consideration, and if the affirmation was refused, to either complain to the War Office or to take the refusal as a rejection of their services. A case before the High Court last week brought this question to an issue, and ended in a triumph for the *Freethinker*. We do not know whether the person concerned was one who wrote us, but anyhow, we congratulate him on the result of his courage in fighting the case.

The facts of the case are simple. A man employed in the Post Office attested under the Derby scheme in December last. When he arrived at the recruiting place he was given a New Testament by the officer, but the applicant asked to affirm on the ground of his being an Atheist. The officer declined to allow the affirmation, and ordered him to leave the place. On May 4 the rejected man was arrested as an absentee under the Military Service Act, and in spite of his defence that he had been rejected by the military authority, the parties before whom he appeared declared him liable to service. Against this decision Mr. Fowler appealed to the High Court, and the case came before the Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Ridley, and Mr. Justice Low. After hearing argument, these three judges decided unanimously that Mr. Fowler had an undoubted right to affirm, and that as when he wished to exercise this right he was ordered to leave, this amounted to a rejection, and the decision of the lower court must be reversed.

Nor do we suppose for a moment that Mr. Fowler wished to avoid service. All he demanded was his rights as a British citizen, and the responsibility for his being outside the Army to-day rests entirely with this particular military officer. What we should like to know now is the opinion of the War Office as to the behaviour of this particular gentleman. His conduct must be due to either ignorance or bigotry, and in either case he is quite unfitted to exercise authority in such a position as that occupied by him. The Oaths Act was passed in 1888—twenty-eight years ago. The War Office instructions are quite clear on the matter, and it is quite inexcusable that a man whose duty it is to attest men should act as this officer did. Whether his action was due to ignorance or bigotry, it is, we repeat, inexcusable. A less determined man than Mr. Fowler might have given way. Fortunately, Mr. Fowler stuck to his guns, and we congratulate and thank him for having performed what is really a public service.

The Liverpool Branch has arranged to hold lecture meetings on the first Sunday in every month, commencing with to-day (Nov. 5). The meetings will be held at the Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street, and will commence at 7 o'clock. The speaker for this evening is Mr. J. Hammond; subject, "The War and Christianity." Admission is free.

We derive small comfort for having companions in misfortunes, and we regret that ill-luck the more when it concerns brother *Freethinkers*. The *New York Truthseeker*

complains that its resources are severely taxed by the rise in the price of paper, which, it says, is now costing double the old price. We have no doubt that our esteemed contemporary will pull through, but it is an anxious time—as we know—while it lasts.

Our Sustentation Fund.

THE progress of this Fund has been most encouraging. The response has been ready and generous, and fills one with encouragement. It is evidence that others beside those immediately responsible for the maintenance of the paper have its welfare at heart, and to all I must express my very deepest thanks.

I mentioned last week that I had received a letter from an old friend of the paper, and I think the best way is to let the communication speak for itself. The writer has been a reader and a friend of the paper for over twenty-five years, so that his interest is no new thing. He writes:—

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Sumner's offer in your issue of October 22 suggests the right line on which to raise a Sustentation Fund. Such a fund is become necessary by your statement of accounts, and until the end of the War (if not for some time after) it will be necessary to have in hand a fair sum to meet recurring liabilities and to provide for contingencies that may arise. I suggest, therefore, that the Fund be raised to a round sum of £500, and while not many of your readers may be able to follow Mr. Sumner's example and put down £5, yet there must be hundreds of readers ready and able to subscribe smaller sums if paid weekly or monthly.

Some time ago the *Clarion* asked for 400 readers who would each guarantee one shilling weekly, and this has already resulted in a sum of over £2,000.

As a weekly subscription means additional cost for postage and poundage, it would be more economical, and economize book-keeping, if the amounts guaranteed—say from 2s. 6d. upward were sent every month for twelve months.

By this plan less than 250 subscribers of only 2s. 6d. per month would place the *Freethinker* in a position of being able to meet all liabilities, and also remove all cause for anxiety in the immediate future. Of course, if larger sums than 2s. 6d. were promised, a smaller number would be adequate.

I shall be happy to subscribe 5s. per month on my own behalf, and I do not think there should be much trouble in securing the remainder. I enclose my card.

Yours truly, MATHEMATICUS.

I prefer not to say anything either for or against this proposal, but to leave it entirely with *Freethinker* readers—(several have, as a matter of fact, adopted the plan on their own account). If enough readers reply favourably to induce me to push the scheme, I will do so. If not, I shall take it that they prefer to send a subscription—large or small—as means and inclination prompt, and have done with it. If anything like the proposed sum is raised, and in that case it should be among those who have not already subscribed, I hope it will be the last time the *Freethinker* has need to ask for help. And that hope is not, I may say, a mere pious aspiration, but one based upon a justifiable forecast, once this unhappy War is brought to a termination.

FIFTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £172 10s. 8d.—J. Hammond, £1 1s.; A. J. Watson, 2s. 6d.; R. N. Goodman, 2s. 6d.; W. E. and A. M. Kerslake, 13s. 6d.; H. McLeod, 5s.; M. R. Hunter, 2s. 6d.; A. G. Lye, 3s.; J. Brodie, 3s.; J. Molyneux, 2s. 6d.; B. Adams, 10s.; E. Lechmere, 2s. 6d.; Matt Brown, 5s.; J. B. Palfreyman, 10s.; T. Humphreys, 10s.; A. Waymark, 5s.; S. M. Peacock, £1 1s.; Avon Dale, 2s. 6d.; J. A. Glenritch, 2s. 6d. *Per Miss Vance*.—A. Harvey, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Daniells, 2s; Chas. Lewis, 4s.

A Human Creator of Plant Life.

II.

(Continued from p. 699.)

BURBANK'S labours among the flowers have been equally revolutionary. After prolonged and patient endeavour, he has transformed the amaryllis from a bloom of small size into a glory of crimson, or pink, or scarlet, nearly twelve inches in breadth. These massive flowers proved too heavy for their stems, so the stems were thickened to meet their new requirements. A bed of these wonderful blooms provides a spectacle of unspeakable loveliness, which has been compared with the light displayed by crimson flames. Burbank has created several novel species of poppies, whose beauty is so enchanting that their parent plants, chiefly the Oriental poppy, a perennial, and the opium poppy, a short-lived annual, appear mean and small. Moreover, most of these new poppies bloom perpetually throughout the flowering season, while the normal plants bloom for a very brief period. And they have also assumed the perennial mode of life.

The Burbank potato, already referred to, has been cultivated with gratifying success in Ireland, where it has shown its immunity to the diseases which have proved fatal to other varieties of the tuber. Later experiments have yielded even more remarkable results. The wild Arizona potato has been utilized in potato building to confer strength and hardness upon the ordinary vegetable. Thousands of new varieties have been bred by Burbank, and he is determined to evolve potatoes that may be easily cultivated in every climate and soil. To these advantages he has added a larger cropping power, as well as a materially increased percentage of nutritive matter. This last item is important from several points of view. Starch is the chief solid ingredient of the tuber, seventy-five per cent. being water.

Burbank has developed potatoes containing about double the amount of starch found in the ordinary vegetable. Corn is, or was until recently, in America, the leading source of the starch supply, so invaluable economically. But in Europe our starch is very largely drawn from the potato. As Harwood puts it:—

Potato starch is of much importance to the manufacturer of cottons, woollens, silks, and linens, as sizing for the warp before it is woven; for finishing the goods after they have been woven, bleached, and dyed; and, in the form of dextrine, as a thickener or vehicle for applying the colours to a fabric.

And in the States, where potato starch is commonly derived from the most inferior tubers, or even from waste unfit for the consumption of cattle, it realizes, nevertheless, nearly twice the price of corn starch for use in the manufacture of textiles. And in addition to its enhanced value as a source of starch, the importance of the potato as an article of human food possesses enormous possibilities of future development. Burbank's ideal potato will contain a better flavour, combined with a larger percentage of sugar, and will be of uniform shape and size. It will prove more resistant to disease, and yield more abundantly than any at present under cultivation.

According to theory, two plants of common descent should respond with alacrity to cross-fertilization. But although the tomato and potato are near relatives, they are extremely difficult to hybridize. Yet some very remarkable combinations have arisen. By grafting a potato-vine on a tomato-plant, potatoes have been produced on its aerial branches just as an apple grows on a tree. These "open-air" potatoes vary in form, shape, and hue. Burbank also reversed the process, and grafted

the tomato on to the potato-plant, and developed in the soil itself a queer-looking potato with pronounced tomato qualities.

Another highly satisfactory product is the novel fruit which Burbank has, in the light of its origin, appropriately christened the "pomato." Although the pomato grows on the potato-plant, it is most distinctly a fruit, and not a vegetable. When the potato has flowered, and the seed-ball is developed, the pomato puts on the appearance of a fruit resembling a small tomato. Its flesh is white, is very pleasant to the palate, and is eminently acceptable either as dessert or for culinary purposes, while as a preserve it is at least equal to many of our most popular fruits.

Burbank's experiments with lilies were conducted on a colossal scale. One hundred thousand hybrid lilies were in bloom at his pruning station at Sebastopol, California, in the summer season a few years ago. So powerful was their perfume that they scented the atmosphere for miles around, and the dwellers of the surrounding country lived in a perpetual fragrance of lily flowers. The lily is hard to hybridize successfully, but Burbank selected nearly fifty separate varieties of these plants, and after several seasons of cross-fertilization, he was at last prepared to prosecute his triumphant test.

To his testing-grounds his lilies were transplanted, and the 100,000 plants occupied two acres of land. These were the few carefully chosen from upwards of a million previously grown. From twenty to forty flowers appeared on plants which normally bear from three to eight. One tiny hybrid bore twenty-eight blooms, while another, "a branching lily, with eight stems coming from one bulb, bore over two hundred buds and flowers." The forms, colours, and markings, combined with the marvellous fragrance of these matchless blooms, excel anything ever evolved by Nature's unaided hand. As Burbank says:—

Can my thoughts be imagined, after so many years of patient care and labour, as, walking among them on a dewy morning, I look upon these new forms of beauty, on which other eyes have never gazed? Here, a plant six feet high with bright yellow flowers, beside it one only six inches high with darkest red flowers, and further on, one of pale straw, or snowy white, or with curious dots and shadings; some deliciously fragrant, others faintly so; some with upright, others with nodding flowers.

Burbank's new plums and prunes number more than a score. One town in California has risen to commercial importance through the value of a few of his improved fruits. The fruit culture of Borneo has been nearly revolutionized by the introduction into that large island of Burbank's plums. They flourish better, and are of greater economic value than the native fruits. Already an export trade has been developed, while in Africa, the late Cecil Rhodes proved that the new fruits were capable of the most remunerative cultivation.

That fruit so extremely beneficial to man, the prune, has been immensely improved by Burbank. These splendid prunes have been eagerly accepted in Europe. Their qualities are such that the world-famous French prunes have been eclipsed. We learn, for instance, "that the French packers in seasons of scarcity at home, import the Californian prunes, give them their own method of treatment, repack them, pay the American duty, and send them back in large quantities to the United States as prime French prunes." The long settled importation of prunes into America is rapidly ending, while, on the other hand, "From 1897 to 1904, inclusive, the export of American prunes was about two hundred and fourteen million pounds." In 1904, in California alone, nearly seven and a half million prune trees were producing fruit. And not merely are Bur-

bank's plums and prunes the finest and choicest ever grown, but they will bear long journeys by land or sea, and arrive at their destination in the pink of condition.

One of the new plums is stoneless, and the entire fruit is, therefore, rich, palatable food. Several European and New World scientists have seen these plums growing on numerous trees at Sebastopol, and they have been overcome with astonishment when, having cut through the fruit with a knife no stone could be discovered. "The surprise then shown, sometimes deepening into an apparent distrust of their own senses, has been one of the most delightful and one of the most prized compliments Mr. Burbank has ever received."

In addition to his giant and seedless plums, Burbank has developed the beautiful Shasta daisy out of the British, Japanese, and wild Massachusetts varieties. This daisy bears magnificent blossoms from four to six inches in diameter. Then we have the phenomenal berry; the pineapple quince improved out of all recognition, and possessing the flavour of a luscious pineapple. Burbank's dahlias give forth a sweet perfume; his "Climax" plum is a rare and refreshing fruit; his roses are of surpassing splendour; and his everlasting flowers, lovely to look upon, are designed to adorn ladies hats. Then there is the plumcot, evolved out of the plum and the apricot, a fruit for the gods. But our space will soon be exhausted if we proceed with our catalogue of Burbank's offerings to mankind.

Less æsthetic, but even more important, are the wonderful American's successes with that tough subject, the thorny cactus. A sullen plant is the cactus, sternly fixed in sinister habits by untold centuries of evil heredity. To wean a plant so stubborn from its bad ways was no mean achievement. The first requirement was its removal from its customary environment. More than ten years were spent in reforming this old offender against man and beast. The desert is its favourite habitat, and the cactus' "closest comrades, the rattlesnake and scorpion, its highest aim, apparently, to cause the death of some thirst-maddened animal driven to eat its juicy but deadly leaves."

To civilize a plant so truculent, appeared a hard task, but Burbank undertook it. The cactus is exceedingly resistant, and will thrive where the most pestilent weeds die down. It is serenely indifferent to the withering heat of the desert, and will withstand the worst drought. Its stems are succulent and nutritious, and the value of its fruit is not negligible. In an environment more favourable than that of the parched desert the cactus has displayed great powers of adaptability. It was, therefore, amenable to transplantation to the haunts of civilized life.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Religion in the Schools.

A Secular Solution.

It is, perhaps, a hopeful portent that questions of educational reconstruction are already in the air, and even engaging the attention of the "authorities" at Whitehall. And with them one may expect a resurgence of that hoary nuisance—the religious difficulty. Or rather the knot of difficulties which arise by reason of the inclusion of religion in the class-room.

There would not be so much reason to complain of its presence there, were it not for the peculiar insolence whereby the religionists arrogate to themselves the place of highest honour; claiming that it is in the fulfilment of their role that the chiefest aims of education—the formation of character and the cultivation of moral

qualities—are accomplished. That it is possible to make such a boast is a great pity. But if there is any truth in this claim the pity is multiplied a thousandfold.

It is curious to note that rival religionists, whilst always blissfully ignorant of the beam in their own eye, are painfully aware of the mote in their brother's. Thus the Dissenting party fully appreciate the scandal of foisting the sophistries of the Established sect *bon gre mal gre* upon the citizens of the future. But they suggest never more than an alteration (not necessarily an improvement) dictated by self-interest. The Prayer-Book, in which they have little concern, may go; but the Bible, their favourite fetish, must be retained. To such one-sided proposals the Established Party retort, with an air of injured innocence, that they are in favour of justice and fair play. Their pet nostrum is, Anglican teaching for Anglican children, Catholic for Catholic children, Jewish for Jewish children, and so on; which sounds very plausible, and is nicely calculated to entrap the unwary. So plausible, that a simple person—although he would have to be very simple—might fail to see that they only skirt the fringe of the question; leaving the main problem untouched. For are the majority of the children of England Catholics, Anglicans, Nonconformists, etc.? Is it customary for children to grow up into the mould fashioned by some particular religious sect? Even assuming there are some who might be so described, they would—or ought, in a civilized community—be only a very, very small percentage. And what of the rest?

Again, why should it be so readily assumed that parents have a right to injure their children in the way suggested? We do not stand complacently by if parents are so monstrous as to inflict physical injury on their children. For such offenders the law makes provision, and societies exist to facilitate its operation. Therefore, why do our ecclesiastical friends so easily jump to the conclusion that parents may inflict whatever mental injury they choose upon their children? For, if we should think little of any form of government which allowed parents to physically cripple their own children, we are not likely to be content with one which connives at the making of intellectual cripples.

Clerical solutions clearly are not likely to help very far, as they are always so hopelessly *ex parte*. Before, then, proceeding to a secular solution, it will be as well to glance at what has been tried elsewhere. There is, for instance, the plan adopted (to some extent) in France,¹ Japan, and some of the American States. This might at first sight be ranked as secular, but a little closer examination will show that it is not really secular, *au fond*, being a substitution rather than an elimination; and would be better described as quasi-secular. For the cult of the older gods is substituted that of the State—or, at least, the commonwealth. This is admittedly a vast improvement. But we must not too hastily conclude that it is necessarily the *ne plus ultra*. To foster a nationalistic spirit in children, as compared with a religious or political bias, is highly praiseworthy in itself; but this does not mean that within its bounds the whole scope of moral instruction is encompassed. With this scheme there is, of course, always the danger

¹ It is a rather common impression that moral instruction in French schools partakes almost exclusively of the character of national devotion (since the abolition of "religious" devotion). But, although feeling for "la patrie" at all times runs very high in France, education there is purely and properly secular, as instance the requirements of the present Code on this subject: "mettre les enfants des deux sexes en situation d'acquiescer l'instruction primaire, c'est à dire l'ensemble des connaissances elementaires, dans le domaine des sciences positives, en dehors de tout hypothese religieuse et de tout enseignement de dogme, sera une obligation legale pour les parents."

of some measure of political colouration; but, apart from this, it will be obvious, on closer examination, that it is really a reformist movement, and connotes the establishment of a national cultus (something in the way of the Shinto tradition, which has always prevailed in Japan) in place of a religious cultus; which is a step in the right direction—and a very big one—but not, perforce, the final step.

The question still remains, what position should moral instruction occupy in the school? Unfortunately, on this point Secularists are not at all agreed. Some would place it first, some last, and some opine that it can be dispensed with. But if we understand moral instruction to mean that part of education which aims directly at the formation of character and the cultivation of moral qualities, I think all Secularists must agree that this should be the bed-rock of every educational scheme.

So that, provided this definition be accepted, to moral instruction must be accorded the foremost place. But it must be definitely and finally sundered from religion. And, moreover, it must be conducted on lines entirely without reference to party interests of any sort. It should not be confused with (a) religious, or even (b) nationalistic aims. Really, the object of the school is not to turn out patriophiles or patriophobes. Moral instruction should be on the same scientific basis as pertains in the case of other branches of study, and when this is recognized, its trend will be found to be more anthropological and sociological than national or patriotic.

This distinction between religion and morality having been fully realized, the position of the former may be considered. As, in view of the prominent role religion has played in the history of mankind—for better or worse—it cannot perhaps be altogether disregarded. And here it is noteworthy that no subject has hitherto received more inadequate and haphazard treatment than religion; nor in any other would the same careless and desultory handling for a moment be tolerated. This state of things being due to the fact that it has so largely been left in the hands of party axe-grinders, whose chief object is to puff their own particular creed or system, regardless of the merits and demerits of others. In this connection, therefore, we might consider the supersession of religion, as at present taught, by comparative religion. This subject having no relationship with moral instruction, to be taught by impartial professors, also on scientific lines, and to receive at least as comprehensive treatment as obtains with history and geography, for instance.

Such a readjustment should satisfy the requirements of the case in the main. But—if a demand for it was forthcoming—it could be supplemented by the inclusion of a third subject, *i.e.*, local religion. This to be optional, and to be quite distinct from moral instruction and comparative religion—which should be regular—and here the Jews, Catholics, Anglicans, etc., beloved of the Established party (especially at election times) could amply slake their thirst for a more specialized study of their own particular cult.

There would still be the Church-supported schools, where larger doses of local religion could be obtained by those who were not satisfied with the fare provided in the non-sectarian schools. No objection could be taken to the continued existence of Church—or otherwise privately—owned schools, provided always, of course, that the instruction given therein (religion apart) was up to the standard prescribed by the local education authorities; that they were entirely self-supporting, and had no claim on the public purse.

The foregoing suggestions may not commend themselves to everyone as the highest *desiderata*, but I put them forward as merely indicative of the ease with

which the question could be handled, if only the use of a little commonsense and the sinking of party interests could be agreed upon. No one need have reason to feel aggrieved or ill-used; the religionists can have all they want—all even to which the most insatiable of them could lay any claim—without thereby continuing to jeopardize the welfare of the children, or remaining an obstacle to moral and intellectual progress. So that there is really little excuse for perpetuating any further the scandalous state of things which has so long prevailed on account of the intrusion of clerical interests in the schools. Nor is there any excuse for the retention of that unfortunate bias which causes even well-intentioned educationalists to view molehills as mountains.

C. R. PARRY.

Moonshine!

EMOTIONS are supremely contradictory. Sometimes they are even hateful. One resents their dominion; and when they take unto themselves acrobatic activities, or imagine themselves mental maelstroms, one especially feels desirous of attaining that height of philosophic will-power possessed by some of our own writers.

To-night I am perfectly happy. My vantage ground is on the rocks at the harbour-head. Behind me the calm sea is a sheen of yellows, upon which I have feasted fully and quietly.

Nature cleans the soul. More than God is Nature worth worshipping. I fancy that the primitive people experienced this feeling of purification when they gazed in wonderment and awe upon the changing loveliness of some tree-rimmed lagoon; and I suspect the religionist pinched the idea for his deity because he recognized the power-leverage it contained. Some value always lurks in the stolen goods with which religion is overburdened. It is one great thief, surely; but the black curtains it throws dramatically over its magic tables are not thickly enough woven to withstand penetration. Religious trickery, even, is but the adaptation of older wizardry. Secrets belong entirely to one person.

Before me are two ribs of rock, between which and my promontory flow sea-streams, singing a soft lullaby as they ripple along to kiss their passionless guardians. In the sky is a full, round moon. She is not in the least mystical. She is real, quite as real as any unquestionable fact; just as real as the rocks before and under me. Poetical, she is truly; but not so fascinatingly beautiful as her weird water reflections.

Across the farther rock-fashioned inlet thousands of goldfish appear to be darting. To and fro they leap, these rich, golden gleams of moonlight. The water is alive with them. Thronging like live things, quick, eager, like flashes of fire, they blaze for a moment, and disappear in the deep. Liquid gold is a poor simile; for these reflections have an activity super-surcharged with energy. Each passing away is a coming. Birth succeeds death with an electrical rapidity of motion that defies all words. Every ripple of water is the birthplace of innumerable golden gleams. They fascinate and enthrall. Their absolutely exquisite and joyful loveliness would keep the eyes fastened upon it were the nearer sea-stream not the mysterious mirror that the gods lost in their flight from the heaven of dreams.

Here, under my feet, the corrugated water lies dark in the shadows of the rocks. Possibilities of wonderful things hang upon its stern surface, and become intensified in the blackness beneath. It might be a mansion of mystery. In a sense it is; for, from the cavities of the huge boulders that form its bed, there seem to rise suddenly, and at infrequent intervals, dozens of

brilliant lights, like golden stars, that glitter for the fraction of a moment, and lose themselves in the air. Mysteriously they shoot up through the gloom of the shadowed sea, illuming, in their speedy passage, the sternness of the waters, giving them vitality, emotion, spirit even. Strange, fleeting flames of fire, glittering for a little moment like piercingly bright stars reflecting their golden selves for a flash of joy in a dark mirror—it is a glimpse into the enchanted dwellings of nymphland.

No gold was ever so pure as those flashes of moonray light on the surface of the sea. Nothing I have ever seen seemed to combine so much loveliness with so much light. Mystery, natural mystery, the clean, pure marvellousness of Nature seemed to concentrate all its power in this little sea inlet, making it a sanctuary for the soul.

Here, I dreamed, one's mind might know itself; one might cleanse body and spirit; one might climb to the unknown heights of real life and real thought. Natural beauty, the loveliness of our mother in her many charming dresses, in her adornments, in the perfections of her power, moves the sensitiveness of our beings to an extent that religion claims alone to reach. The profession is absurd. In some aspects it is ludicrous. To claim as isolated an effect, the causes of which are many and various, is the limit of prejudiced stupidity. And were it not for the incessant repetitions of this deliberately sustained error, it would be unnecessary to introduce religion at all.

Within the dark-blue starless setting of the moon there is no evidence of supernature. That broad band of moonray reflection betrays no suspicion of the master magician who, presumably, inhabits space. Those numberless upward shooting stars, whose light is so ineffably pure, so wonderfully rich, and whose rapidity of passing confuses, yet enchants, the mind, show no signs of deistical causation. The rigid solemnity of the rocks, darker, and more determinedly eternal because of the light the moon suffuses upon them, bears no foreboding of the terrible power of a controlling creator. Over the scene lies a silence, shaken by no voice but that of the sea.

Happiness is multicoloured and expansive; but the joy that seems to irradiate from Nature in her quieter emotions, filling us with peace and purity, is the holiest of all. From it, more surely than from anything the moralists would emphasize, we derive the nourishment for our soul-lives. Be good, and you will be happy. Do right, and live joyfully. Believe, and be saved. But the good and bad, the right and wrong, the believer and the infidel—Nature knows them not in their human classification. I am bad; I am wrong; I am unbelieving; but the exquisite picture on the sea's breast releases, for the moment or two, the ugliness from my life. I am blissfully, quietly, thoroughly happy.

ROBERT MORELAND.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 26.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Brandes, Gorniot, Leat, Nearey, Neate, Quinton, Samuels, Silverstein, F. Wood, Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for the Glasgow and North London Branches, and for the Parent Society.

Ordinary correspondence having been dealt with, the Secretary reported that, beyond taking the names and addresses of members who had continued to sell literature in the Parks in defiance of the warning of the London

County Council, no action had been taken, and was instructed to apply for the renewal of permits for collections.

The President reported the result of his visit to Sheffield. Arrangements for the course of lectures to be held during November at the Avondale Hall, Clapham, were also reported.

In consequence of the lighting restrictions and difficulties in travelling, it was proposed to hold the Executive meetings earlier in the evening, but the matter was adjourned for further consideration.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

An Honest Confession for "Honest Believers."

WE are a few believers weak,
Not blessed with special common sense;
We give to keep our parson sleek,
Our pounds, our shillings, and our pence.

We are such holy innocents,
We never doubt our parson's word;
Although the Bible's chief events,
Most scholars say have not occurred.

"When deep within our swelling hearts,
The thoughts of pride and anger rise;
When bitter words are on our tongues,
And tears of passion in our eyes."

Then *we* can say the bitter word,
Then *we* can strike the angry blow;
Say "we are fighting for the Lord,"
Ask him his smitey arm to show.

With canon law and creedal test,
Strife in each household we can sow;
Oppress and persecute the best—
The stake, alas! has had to go.

There's not a child so small or weak,
But for it we must fiercely fight;
Teach it all pleasure to forsake,
A rob its mind of reason's light.

Though we are few and counted weak,
We claim the universe to run—
By preaching "turn the other cheek,"
But practising Krupp's latest gun.

ESEE.

"Did you never hear Sir Godfrey's dream?" "No."
"Why, then, I'll tell it you. A night or two ago," said Sir Godfrey, "I had a very odd sort of dream. I dreamt that I was dead, and soon after found myself walking in a narrow path that led up between two hills, rising pretty equally on each side of it. Before me I saw a door, and a great number of people about it. I walked on toward them. As I drew nearer I could distinguish St. Peter by his keys, with some of the Apostles; they were admitting the people as they came next the door. When I had joined the company, I could see several seats, every way, at a little distance within the door. As the first, after my coming up, approached for admittance, St. Peter asked his name, and then his religion. 'I am a Roman Catholic,' replied the spirit. 'Go in, then,' says St. Peter, 'and sit down on those seats on the right hand.' The next was a Presbyterian; he was admitted, too, after the usual questions, and ordered to sit down on the seats opposite to the other. My turn came next, and, as I approached, St. Peter very civilly asked me my name. I said it was Kneller. I had no sooner said so than St. Luke (who was standing by) turned toward me and said with a great deal of sweetness—'What! the famous Sir Godfrey Kneller, from England?' 'The very same, sir,' says I, 'at your service.' On this St. Luke immediately drew near to me, embraced me, and made me a great many compliments on the art we had both of us followed in this world. He entered so far into the subject that he seemed almost to have forgot the business for which I came thither. At last, however, he recollected himself, and said—'I beg your pardon, Sir Godfrey; I was so taken up with the pleasure of conversing with you! But, apropos, pray, sir, what religion may you be of?' 'Why, truly sir,' says I, 'I am of no religion.' 'Oh! sir,' says he, 'you will be so good, then, as to go in and take your seat where you please.'"—*Alexander Pope, Spence's "Anecdotes."*

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.

INDOOR.

AVONDALE HALL (Londor Road, Clapham, S.W.): 6.30, Chapman Cohen, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "The Law of Population." Opener, B. Dunlop, M.B.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park): 3.30 Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, a Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales, "What is Sacred?"; 6.15, Messrs. Beale, Shaller, and Hyatt.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, J. Hammond, "The War and Christianity."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, second floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, J. Fothergill, "The Chief Good."

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