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Views and Opinions.

Sunday Labour and the Clergy.

The War, which the clergy hoped to have turned to the advantage of the Churches, is serving to break down another hallowed tradition of British Christianity. The food shortage has brought to the front the question of Sunday labour. In munition works, Sunday labour has long been the rule, and battles are being fought as freely on Sundays as on other days. But the battles were being fought out of Britain, and munition workers were labouring under cover. To that extent the face of British Christianity was saved; and while this Sunday labour could proceed in comparative obscurity, our Churches, with their customary hypocrisy, remained silent. But agricultural labour is open to the light of day; and if labour is permissible on Sunday, it seems hard to discover why amusements and recreation should not be permitted also. So the clergy are on the horns of a dilemma. If they oppose Sunday labour, they lay themselves open to the accusation of placing a sectarian shibboleth before national welfare. If they countenance it, they are destroying the sanctity of the "Sabbath." So the compromising bless and the uncompromising curse. The Archbishop of Canterbury sanctions work for food production on Sunday, while the National Free Church Council passes a resolution against it with only two dissentients. Perhaps a *via media* might be found by allotting to those who object to Sunday labour their proportion of land, and let them try raising crops by prayer—and live on the harvest thus obtained.

* * *

The Collapse of a Bubble.

Never before, perhaps, has the inefficiency, the shallowness, and the radical dishonesty of the religious mind been so clearly indicated as it has been during the continuance of the War. Its dishonesty was demonstrated by the attempts to foist upon the public stories of a great religious revival, in the face of irrefutable evidence to the contrary. That seems now to have broken down hopelessly. The *Church Times*, as representing the

Catholic section of the National Church, laments that:—

The cause of religion is not flourishing either in England or in the world to-day. From all that we can see of things at home, and from all that we hear of the armies abroad, it seems that the majority of men are occupying themselves very little in thoughts of religion.

And, as representing another section, the *Christian World* cites a Southport vicar who declares that the much-boomed National Mission is a "ghastly failure," and that different sections have been simply trying to "bluff" each other into believing that it has been otherwise. So we have one falsehood after another, each worked for all it is worth while it shows the least evidence of vitality, to be replaced by another boom or another falsehood, to be worked at high pressure for so long as is possible. In this respect the pulpit runs the Yellow Press hard for first place in a thoroughly discreditable competition.

* * *

Pious Humbug.

The curious thing to note is the way in which politicians—of a kind—play to the clergy and lend them aid in their endeavour to gull the public. Thus, the Right Hon. John Hodge, whose fitness for office might be less a matter of opinion if he ceased talking, informed a Church of England Men's Society: "He looked to the men in the Church of England to act as the leaven in the lump. Every good Christian and citizen was required to do his best when peace was declared to assist in repairing the ravages of war." And if this is to be done, "two things were essential to the future; scientific organization by the employer, and increased productivity on the part of the worker." How this is to secure the establishment of more *human* relations between employer and employed, Mr. Hodge did not explain; probably he did not know; being quite content to throw out a number of the now stale platitudes about the spirit of self-sacrifice abroad, the breaking down of class feeling, etc., etc. The fact that all over the country, from the petty shopkeeper up to the merchant prince, from the carter with a one-horse van up to the owner of huge ships, there is going on a colossal game of grab, in which each considers himself justified in screwing the last halfpenny out of the nation's necessities, does not affect Mr. Hodge's trust in the men of the Church of England as those who will "leaven the lump." If Mr. Hodge had paused to consider the silence of the Church of England with regard to the plundering of the poor in the shape of excessive food prices, he might have felt less certain of getting assistance from the Church in bringing about desirable social conditions after the War. For our own part, we feel confident that when the War is over, as before the War commenced, religion will resume its historic function of inducing contentment in the interests of the governing classes.

* * *

Mass Morality.

One would have thought that by this time even the cant talk about the self-sacrificing spirit engendered by the War, the moralizing influence of this ghastly chemi-

cal and machine slaughter would have worn too thin for use by even that awesome product, the pious politician. For our own part we agree with the Bishop of Peterborough: "It is not safe to argue that because men have agreed to sink their differences in the face of a great peril that these differences will not spring into life and vigour when the peril is past." Or with Dean Inge:—

A lower standard of morality is usually found when people are acting in a mass than when they act individually. The present war and similar horrors are only possible because of a prevalent system of co-operative guilt with limited liability.....It is poor consolation that heads are no longer broken at elections for hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness run riot on the platforms, in the newspapers, and even in some pulpits.

That, we think, expresses both a psychologic and a sociologic truth. It would require an inconceivable degree of callousness for each individual to remain sane and feel that he was partly responsible for such a conflict as is now proceeding. It is borne because each one shelves his or her responsibility on the community as a whole. War establishes a mass morality that is of necessity on a low level because it lacks the refining and restraining influence of individual responsibility. But that is not progression, it is retrogression. We habitually live and think on a lower scale during war than we do during a time of peace. Analyse a great deal of the current "Patriotism" and there will be found not the patriotism that is motived by a love of country or a love of one's fellows, but the lower tribal feeling of hatred of some other country or group of people. One tenth of the motive power expressed in hatred of Germany or Turkey, if existent before the War, and expressed in terms of a genuine love of one's country, would have made it quite unnecessary to look for a desirable social state after the War—it would already have existed.

* * *

The Impotency of the Churches.

When all the chatter of the Churches is done with, there is one final indisputable fact that stands out as a clear condemnation of Christian rule and Christian influence. For centuries the Christian Church has held a position of power and influence in the world of European civilization. More than thirty generations of people have grown up and passed away with the Christian religions exerting a profound influence on their lives. The Church could make and unmake kings, it could strike a whole people with terror by a threat of excommunication, and plunge nations into war in defence of an article of faith. And, withal, the Christian nations of Europe have found themselves powerless to combine for any single purpose under the sun save that of waging war. A few years back this country was squabbling over an Old Age Pensions measure, and protesting its inability to spend a few millions a year for that purpose. To-day it can pride itself on spending on war as much in a day or so as was needed for Old Age Pensions during a whole year. Sixteen centuries of Christian domination found Europe ready for war, for the simple reason that it was neither ready nor fit for peace. And to-day the Churches, which might have stood as the natural mediators between nations at war, and so have commanded the respect of men, even though it could not obtain their adherence, are in all countries energetic in fomenting hatred and division. It is certain that when a better understanding between men does come it will be due to no effort on the part of the Churches. To our mind it is quite as certain that that better understanding will arrive the sooner the already dwindling, hold of the Churches on men and women is altogether relinquished.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Christianity as the Symbolism of Factuality."

UNDER the above heading, the Rev. E. Powell, Vicar of Bromyard, does me the honour of replying in the *Freethinker* for March 18, to my article, entitled "The Futility of Theodicies," which appeared in this journal for the 4th inst. That article was a review of a sermon by Mr. Powell on "The Father-Heart of God and the World Agony of War." The tone of the reply is everything that could be desired, and I trust the same will be true of my rejoinder. Clearly what we both desire is a knowledge of the truth on the subject under discussion. My contention was, and is, that what Mr. Powell gives us in his interesting discourse is "not the scientific conception of God, but an unscientific conception of Nature." He now asks me whether or not I believe in what Herbert Spencer calls "the absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," and I answer that I have neither consciousness nor knowledge of the presence of any such Energy. I accept the scientific view that the Universe is infinite in extent and of eternal duration, but I am unable to believe in "an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." Besides, even Spencer himself did not believe in its existence as apart from and of prior existence to the Universe. To hold that the Universe is but the fleeting manifestation of some Reality, or that it is but a surface veil of phenomena, is to part company with known facts, and speculate upon unverifiable assumptions. To me the Universe itself, "as a vast and orderly mechanism," is the only Reality of which we have any knowledge. But let us think, for a moment, of this "Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," in which Mr. Powell believes; and it is this Energy that he personifies and calls God. Then he adds: "The God in whom I believe is 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" Now, to a student of the Four Gospels nothing can be more certain than that Jesus regarded God as a person apart from and above the Universe, and whose will the Universe fulfilled. I repeat that nothing can be more undeniable than this, and it is equally incontrovertible that this faith of Jesus has been shared by the orthodox Church in all ages. What I maintain is that people who verily believe in the personality and fatherhood of God, in the sense that Jesus did, cannot personify Nature and call her God without being guilty of an act of gross misnaming. It is true that poets do sometimes so personify Nature; but when they do, nothing is further from their minds than that they should be taken literally. George Meredith takes the precaution of explaining his meaning in his fine ode, entitled *France: December, 1870*. In those sad days, what France needed was not comfort which the Church offered her.

Could France accept the fables of her priests,
Who blest her banners in this game of beasts,
And now bid hope that heaven will intercede
To violate its laws in her sore need;
She would find comfort in their opiates.

But it was for Strength France yearned.

For Strength, her idol once, too long her toy;
and,

Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.

Mr. Powell asks, "If Shelley, Keats, and Meredith are permitted by Mr. Lloyd to call this (Nature) God,

why may not I?" The answer is that those three poets did not believe in the existence of a personal God at all, while Mr. Powell confesses that he does, which makes a big difference.

Furthermore, the reverend gentleman accepts the teaching of the Creed, which he can repeat thus: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth," well knowing, surely, that the framers of that Creed understood by "the Father Almighty" the God of love who sent Jesus Christ into the world to save his people from their sins. He has no right to twist that article out of its intended meaning, and say, "Of such a Father, who is only stern Nature personified, whose will are the universal uniformities we call Nature's laws 'which shall not be broken,' we may well say" so-and-so. On the assumption that an infinitely powerful, wise, and loving Deity exists, the existence of the Universe as we know it is absolutely inexplicable; and Mr. Powell is quite wrong in suggesting that it was of this Father, "stern Nature personified," Jesus was thinking when he said, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust." To show the absurdity of that suggestion, we need only put those words in their proper context:—

Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye (Matt. v. 44-46)?

Clearly the teaching of that passage is that God's treatment of mankind is without respect of persons, and Jesus urges his disciples to imitate him in this respect. To infer from those words of Jesus that he regarded his Father as "stern Nature personified" in one aspect of his character, and as overflowing love in another, is to pursue a most abnormal method of exegesis.

Now, according to Mr. Powell, there are two Gods, two Fathers, the one made known by science and the other by Revelation, the one showing no pity, answering no prayer, forgiving no sin, and the other with a heart brimful of affection and yearning to befriend and pardon his sinful children. This is bad science and worse theology. I do most certainly deny that two such Fatherhoods "represent actual facts of human experience. I am profoundly convinced that there is no evidence whatever of the existence of a Father of Revelation whose outpouring of love in Christ delivers believers from the cruel clutches of the Father of Science and Philosophy, "who is only stern Nature personified." If this is the theology of the twentieth century, I, for one, am not surprised that people resolve to have nothing to do with it.

In his reply Mr. Powell says:—

The Father-heart is, in my view, not to be found in the European situation *as a whole*, but only in the highest and best part of it—*i.e.*, in human nature at its best. In my sermon I distinctly said that it was in "the ever-growing spirit of humanity alone where, it seems to me, we should seek the evidence of the great Father-heart.

That is perfectly true, but the truth involves a most humiliating reflection on the Father of revelation and experience. The world is chock-full of evils and wrongs, of injustice and oppression, for which the Father Almighty is not to be held responsible, but we are told that the ever-growing spirit of humanity that is being displayed in this horrible War evidences the active presence of the Father-heart. And yet in the face of this strange assertion Mr. Powell calls my attention to the fact that he has acknowledged that "in the presence of a

mystery apparently everlastingly impenetrable we are all Agnostics." The fault I have to find with him is that in the presence of an everlastingly impenetrable mystery he preaches in terms of the most thoroughgoing Gnosticism. The difference between the reverend gentleman and myself is by no means "merely one of terminology," but one that results from two absolutely different viewpoints. He acknowledges that "in the presence of an apparently everlastingly impenetrable mystery we are all Agnostics," and yet declares that there are two Fathers who are as unlike each other as day and night, while I can trace no sign whatever of the active presence of a God of truth and love in this dark world. What the preacher describes as the Father-heart at work in human nature at its best can be and is satisfactorily accounted for without any reference whatever to super-human agency. It is a purely natural process, painfully slow and intermittent. The social and moral progress of the race during the last six thousand years has been on such an infinitesimally small scale as to shame any Deity out of existence for ever. The curious thing is, that whilst affecting Agnosticism, Mr. Powell immediately blossoms out into a full-fledged Gnostic.

With what Mr. Powell says about the future power and triumph of the Church I have now no space to deal beyond to say that the same prophecy has been indulged in continuously since the days of the Apostles, but has never yet been fulfilled. Of the reverend gentleman's sincerity and love of truth I have not the slightest doubt, and with much of what he says I am in heartiest sympathy. It is to his supernaturalism and his Theistic theory alone that I am opposed, my conviction being that all the claims made by supernaturalists have been completely falsified in history.

J. T. LLOYD.

Our Greatest Philosopher.

Who saw life steadily and saw it whole.—*Matthew Arnold.*

This man decided not to live, but to know.

—*Robert Browning.*

Without fears, without desires, without ceremonies, he has used sheer reason, and played the philosopher.

—*Voltaire on Confucius.*

IN spite of a shortage of paper and a scarcity of labour, it is interesting to discover that in our present crisis, which is so clearly opposed to higher literature, there still exists a public which is curious about Herbert Spencer. Mr. Hugh Elliott has contributed to the makers of the Nineteenth Century Series (Constable) an attractive monograph on the great philosopher, whose reputation was world-wide, and who removed the stigma of insularity from his countrymen.

Herbert Spencer is our greatest philosopher. Long before his death men had come to think of him with Plato, with Bacon, with Kant, with Comte, and with Mill, as one of the men who mark an era. To the great mass of men, it is true, he was only a great name; but to the world of intellect he ranked with the highest minds, with those who open up new vistas to men's eyes and widen the horizon of knowledge.

He was not born, like Charles Darwin, to ease and affluence. He had his own way to make in the world; but for what is commonly meant by success he cared not a straw. To spurn delights and live laborious days for the sake of ambition and its rewards is comparatively easy. Spencer belonged to the few great men who have sunk their personality in their cause, and without thinking of fortune or fame. To his system of Synthetic Philosophy, which puts things together and does not pull to pieces, he devoted his genius, his energies, and patience. Struggling for years against

poverty, against obscurity, against the indifference of the general public to philosophy, he persevered to the end. For forty long years he was perfecting the details of his philosophical scheme. There has been no grander intellectual achievement since Edward Gibbon took his memorable walk under the acacias at Lausanne. Spencer, unlike Gibbon, never startled the world, and his utter want of orthodoxy was not fully realized until his *Data of Ethics* appeared. Then Christians were annoyed to find that the man who had taken his place quietly as the leading English philosopher was as thorough a Free-thinker as Charles Bradlaugh. Standing outside all churches and creeds, he built up his own philosophy by science alone.

Herbert Spencer, in his writings, sought to show that all phenomena, physical and psychical, are the natural products of elementary matter and its laws, these being modes of operation of the primal law of what he calls the "persistence of force." His scheme, probably the vastest ever conceived by the human mind, embraced the story of the evolution of the universe from formless stuff into solar systems, the process being the advance from the simple to the complex, from the indefinite to the coherent. This same process was shown to be in operation in the life-history of the earth. No break between things inanimate and animate being assumed, life, mind in the lower animals, and man, man's social and intellectual development are in unbroken sequence shown to be parts of the eternal order. The Synthetic Philosophy, as the author chose to call it, is nothing more nor less than the law of evolution, as exemplified in nature and in man, in the animal realm and the vegetable and human, the sphere of sense, and the sphere of conscious and moral aspiration.

Spencer's literary style was austere, and he stripped deliberately his writing of all embellishment. He never chose to ornament the expression of his thoughts by surface graces. If he did not display the element of fancy, he had the larger gift of imagination, for, in a sense, the *Synthetic Philosophy*, as a whole, is as truly imaginative as the tragedies of Shakespeare, or the pictures of Michael Angelo. To whom, Spencer asks in one of his essays, will a piece of Alpine scenery more powerfully appeal, "to an ignorant mind, or to the mind of a philosopher who knows that over that mountain a glacier slid a million years ago?"

The glory and triumph of Herbert Spencer is that his philosophy rests on ascertained knowledge. While other philosophers have evoked various extraneous agencies to account for the difference between man and the rest of the world, he preferred to trust to evolution, the law which connects the thoughts of a Socrates with the obscure movements of an ascidian on the rocks. Spencer had a harder task than any of his predecessors, because the product of science had become so much more extensive, and because he took all knowledge to be his province.

Living to a great age, Spencer long out-lived his associates in the early days of fame, Mill, "George Eliot," Lewes, Darwin, and Huxley. It is strange to think that Spencer's friends might well have reckoned him the least likely of their circle to survive to extreme age. For, like Voltaire, he had a frail constitution. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he never knew what health was, so fragile was his body. For the greater part of his life he was an invalid, a victim of dyspepsia and insomnia. What courage he displayed through it all? The quantity and quality of his work would have put a strong man to shame. As the product of an invalid it is marvellous. He was a hero as well as a philosopher.

For half a century his authority was unquestioned, not

merely in his own country, but in every part of the civilized world. His works were read not only throughout Europe, but in India, America, and Australasia. In the Far East the principles of the great philosopher of evolution are better known than those of any other English thinker. He belongs to that rare company to whom may be applied the supreme tribute: "Others abide our question; thou art free." Probably the pendulum is swinging away from the Spencerean teaching to-day, owing to the upheaval of a world-war. But that, after all, will only be in accordance with one of Spencer's own tenets—that there is a rhythmic movement in all thought, and that progress is in spiral curves, and never in a straight line.

Spencer was not merely an academic philosopher. His love for liberty was as worthy a feature of his life as his enthusiasm for knowledge. He was not loved by priests, ever the hindmost of the thinkers, and he suffered many of the whips and scorns of clerical animosity. But Freethinkers have to endure that sort of thing. Few men, indeed, were more sober or temperate in their expressions, or more just to opponents, than Herbert Spencer.

His was a life of sacrifice. The tremendous intellectual labours which Spencer carried on brought him neither wealth nor comfort. He was unable to find a publisher for his *Social Statics*, and he had to print and sell it on commission. A small edition took over fourteen years to sell, and the *Principles of Psychology* sold almost as slowly. Again and again he found he was losing money by his writings. Once he would have had to stop his great work but for a timely legacy. After a quarter of a century's work, the sales of his books just paid the publishing expenses. All his labour had gone for nothing, and his health had broken down from the constant strain of his studies. We can but admire the singular devotion, completeness, and dignity of his life. Seeking no honour nor applause, he made an imperishable name. No philosopher, ancient or modern, held up a higher standard of conduct, none illustrated it by a purer or more unselfish life. At a time when commercialism was rampant, the pursuit of study for its own sake, and not for any base or ulterior object, was an exception so rare as to be scarcely credible. In an age of compromise Herbert Spencer remained ever faithful to first principles; in an age of ostentation he cared only for truth.

MIMNERMUS.

Science and Spiritualism.

III.

(Continued from p. 166.)

What is one to do, when in order to rule men it is necessary to deceive them, when in order to persuade them to let themselves be driven where you will, you must promise them and show them playthings? Why, suppose my books and the *Theosophist* had been a thousand times more interesting and more serious, do you imagine I should have had any sort of success anywhere, if behind all that there had not been the "phenomena"? I should have done simply nothing. I should have long ago starved to death. They would have crushed me, and it would never have even occurred to anyone to think that I too was a living creature, that I too must eat and drink. But I have long, long since learnt to understand these dear people, and their stupidity sometimes affords me unbounded satisfaction. Why, you are not satisfied with my phenomena, but do you know that almost invariably the more simple, the more silly, and the more gross the "phenomenon," the more likely it is to succeed? I may tell you such stories about this some day as will split your sides with laughter, indeed they will. The vast majority of people who are reckoned clever by themselves and others are inconceivably silly. If you only knew how many lions and eagles in every quarter of the globe have turned into asses at my whistle, and

obediently wagged their great ears in time, as I have piped the tune!—*Madame Blavatsky*, Founder of the Theosophical Society, to V. S. Solovyoff.—*Solovyoff*, "A Modern Priestess of Isis" (1895), pp. 155-156.

A FEW years later Slade met his Waterloo at the hands of Mr. Truesdell, in America, who, in a seance with Slade, detected him using his foot to simulate a spirit hand. He had also discovered, "before the seance began, a slate with a prepared message, to which he stealthily added a message of his own, as follows:—

Henry, look out for this fellow; he is up to snuff.—

ALCINDA.

Alcinda was the name of Slade's wife, and Truesdell had the satisfaction of enjoying Slade's discomfiture when, at the appropriate moment of the seance, the unrehearsed message came to light.¹ The end of his career came in 1894, according to the *English Illustrated Magazine* (January, 1895), where we read: "The famous 'Dr. Slade,' who created such excitement in London in 1876, and made so much money with his slate writing, was recently taken to a workhouse in America, penniless, friendless, and a lunatic." One would have thought that the spirits who worked so industriously for him would have bestirred themselves to save him from this fate.

In the *Open Court* for June, 1900, there is a picture of Zollner and Slade seated at a small table; Zollner, bowed down, nearly bald and bespectacled. Slade is a fine, vigorous man in the prime of life, gazing intently at Zollner. It is a case of the spider and the fly. Zollner and his colleagues were as wax in the hands of this wily charlatan.

The late Captain Noble, who, under the initials "F.R.A.S.," used to conduct the correspondence columns of the *English Mechanic*, writing in 1903 on the case of the medium, Anna Rothe, who was convicted in Berlin of pretending to produce roses, lilies, and oranges from the air by "spiritual agency," and received eighteen months' imprisonment, remarks:—

Your older readers will remember that this was the role of the notorious Mrs. Guppy, whose trickery was exposed in Belfast, 1874, on the occasion of the meeting of the British Association there, by the pretty expedient of dropping a few crystals of potassium ferrocyanide into the ewer and carafou in her bedroom, and other water to which she had access, and which salt was subsequently discovered on the calyx and corolla of the asters and hollyhocks, so supernaturally produced! In the woman Rothe's case, a much less refined method was adopted, and she was caught, *flagrante delicto*, by the police official, who seized her bodily, and found a huge supply of flowers up her petticoats! This rough-and-ready way of seizing the medium or "materialized spirit" was employed, as will be remembered, with signal success in the case of Miss Florence Cook, who so thoroughly took in poor Sir William Crookes, and who was exposed by Sir George Sitwell and Herr von Buch; that of the Holmes's; in that of Herne; in that of Miss Showers; in that of Bastian and Taylor (at Arnheim)—and so very many others. Possibly from a wholesome dread of the provisions of the Act 5 Geo. IV., c. 83, s. 4, those scandalous impostors, the "Spiritual Media," have retired into the background in this country lately, and as medium after medium has been exposed, their dupes have decreased in number.²

The public has a short memory, and most people would be at a loss to give any particulars as to the frauds of mediums and their exposure if challenged by a Spiritualist, unless they happened to have made a study of the subject. The best encyclopædias fail one here. This being the case, and as there appears to be a strong attempt made to revive these frauds and follies, it will be as well to give a few of the more notable exposures.

¹ Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., p. 216.

² *English Mechanic*, April 17, 1903; p. 211.

Bastian, the last-mentioned medium in the above quotation, was exposed in the winter of 1884. The Archdukes John and Rudolph of Austria, being desirous of investigating Spiritualism, invited Harry Bastian to Vienna, where he gave two seances on the 17th and 30th of January, 1884. The performance aroused the deepest suspicion. The princes therefore requested another seance, and the date was fixed for February 11 of the same year. Says Lanslots: "They were bent upon surprising the medium in the midst of his operations, and find out for sure whether there was any jugglery about them. They so arranged that the doors could be suddenly closed by means of a hidden mechanism, and prevent egress from the room in which Bastian was supposed to be lying in a trance, while the spirits made their apparitions. The evening of the experiment sounds were heard, sparks were seen, raps came next, followed finally by materializations. Suddenly a white and well-defined figure passed out of the room in which the Archdukes had seen Bastian lying on the sofa in a state of lethargy. Immediately they set the machinery to work; it slammed the door behind the white figure. The spirit frantically tried to open the door, but in vain. The Archdukes jumped at him, tore the clothes from his body; the spirit was no other but the same medium, Harry Bastian, in flesh and bone. Finding himself unmasked, he began to tremble like a leaf. The princes felt pity for him, and gently assured him that all was over, and that he had nothing to fear. A report of the discovery was duly made, and signed by all those present. A detailed account of it was given to the press."¹

Here is an account of the exposure of the mediums Williams and Rita, in Holland:—

In September, 1878, a group of Dutch Spiritualists detected the mediums Williams and Rita in flagrant trickery at Amsterdam. The exposure was complete. At a dark seance, a figure purporting to be a materialized spirit-form named "Charlie" showed his face by the light of a spirit lamp. One of the circle, whose suspicions had been aroused at a previous sitting, grasped "Charlie" and found himself holding Rita by the coat collar. After a sharp struggle a light was obtained, the two mediums were baffled in an attempt to escape from the house, and their persons were searched. Upon Rita were found a false beard, several large handkerchiefs, and a small circular bottle of phosphorized oil,—the raw material of "Charlie" and his spirit lamp. On Williams were found also a beard, much used, several yards of dirty muslin, handkerchiefs, a bottle of phosphorized oil and a bottle of scent,—objects familiar in happier circumstances to the eye of faith as the bearded mariner "John King," with turban, lamp, and spirit perfume. In Williams' handbag were found a small tube filled with minute pieces of slate-pencil, and a piece of notched whalebone,—the instruments employed for writing on closed slates.²

Of course, the leading Spiritualists would not admit these frauds. Thus, when in January, 1880, Mrs. Corner (Miss Cook) was seized under similar circumstances by Sir G. Sitwell and Mr. Carl von Buch, the editor of the *Spiritualist* pointed out that "grasping one of the forms and finding it to be the medium proves nothing"; while the editor of *Spiritualist* "Notes" has "no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that on the occasion of the recent seizure Mrs. Corner was completely guiltless of deception." Moreover, as Mr. Podmore sarcastically remarks: "Mrs. Corner's character as a genuine medium was vindicated on this occasion with unexampled rapidity, by means of a successful seance held on the evening of the exposure at the house and in the presence of another professional medium."³

¹ Lanslot, *Spiritism Unveiled* (1913), pp. 109-10.

² Podmore, *Studies in Psychical Research* (1897), pp. 21-22.

³ *Ibid*, p. 24.

To cite the same author again :—

In October, 1894, Mrs. Mellon (*nee* Fairlamb) was seized in Sydney, N.S.W., when personating the spirit form of a little black girl, Cissie. Mrs. Mellon was discovered on her knees, with her feet bare, white muslin drapery round her shoulders, and a black mask on her face. In the cabinet were found a false beard and other properties. At about the same time Mrs. Williams was exposed in Paris, by the Duke de Medina Pomar and others. The medium in this latter case was found masquerading, in more or less appropriate dress, as the spirit of a man.¹

Miss Annie Eva Fay was another medium who achieved fame by the ease with which she imposed upon Sir William Crookes, the famous chemist, who, says Mr. Maskelyne, "after repeated visits to Miss Fay's seances, was so convinced of the supernatural character of the performance that, in order to test his opinion, he invited the lady to his house, there to give a demonstration of her powers, under what Spiritualists term 'test conditions.' Result—he discovered no trickery whatever. And how should he? The man of great attainments is, generally speaking, the one most easily puzzled. There is a simplicity of high intelligence, just as there is a simplicity of ignorance. An ignorant person may not be able to see through the simplest trick; and a person of culture may be as readily deceived, for the simple reason that he cannot bring his mind *down* to the level of the deception practised."²

After this, Miss Fay betook herself to the provinces; but, owing to Mr. Maskelyne's public exposure of her tricks, the business fell off sadly, says Mr. Maskelyne, "and being in low water, she made me an offer, through her manager (the letters are still in my possession), to come to London and explain publicly, for a sum of money, how she performed her tricks, and how she humbugged the scientific gentleman aforesaid. I declined her offer, however, in the belief that my own exposure of the fraud was sufficient" (p. 194).

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

RELIGION IN SCOTLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Might I draw the attention of your Scottish readers to the frantic efforts of our clergymen to regain the influence they once possessed over the people of Scotland.

At a meeting of the Commission of the Free Church of Scotland, held last week, a resolution was passed protesting against the continued desecration of the "Lord's Day," and especially against the suggestion that farmers should be persuaded to undertake ploughing and other forms of labour on the Lord's Day. In the next column of the same newspaper which reports the above, is a report of the Commission of Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in which the Rev. Mr. Dickie, New Kilpatrick, said he thought the Church should not be silent on the question of Sunday labour in raising food, but should give the people frank guidance on the necessities of the situation, and point out that it was a good thing that they should labour part of the Sunday this summer.

Do these ministers believe for one moment that the people of Scotland care one pin what they think? If I am not mistaken, more attention will be given to the appeal by the Director-General of Food Production than to all the pious resolutions passed at any Church meeting. The time has now passed when the opinion of a few ministers met together is taken seriously in Scotland.

Another question on which the Scottish clergy are hopelessly divided is National Service. It is pathetic to read in

¹ Podmore, *Studies in Psychological Research* (1897), p. 82.

² Maskelyne, *The Supernatural*, p. 192.

the columns of our daily newspapers the far-fetched claims the clergy are making that their calling is of national importance.

The Moderators of the three Scottish Churches suggest that the ministers might take up the work of teachers, and thus allow the teachers to go and fight. This suggestion is not allowed to go unchallenged, as the teachers rightly declare that ministers are not fit to teach, and that if the ministers wish to do their country a service their proper place is in the trenches.

A correspondent to the daily papers, signing himself "Church of Scotland minister," questions the importance of the work being done by ministers in the Y.M.C.A. huts. He says, it may be splendid work, but most of it can be as well or better done by waiters, clerks, or concert organizers; in fact, ladies could manage the whole thing—an admission in which I most heartily concur. Another trenchant question raised by the same correspondent is the question of salary. He inquires if ministers take up National Service at home, such as clerical, secretarial, or munition work, are they going to drop all or part of their stipends? To answer this question for him, I should say that would be the last thing they would think of doing. Do they not continue to draw their stipends, even though they have also been drawing the pay of Army Chaplains?

Freethinkers should view with suspicion the suggestion that ministers should supplant the teachers in our schools. It is the constant aim of our Church organizations to get more religion taught in the day school, and once the ministers get the chance of teaching, religion would form a large part of the curriculum. Whenever there is an outbreak of juvenile depravity, the ministers blame it on the lack of religious instruction in the day school.

The influence of the Church in Scotland is certainly on the wane, as witness the statement made at a meeting of the Paisley U. F. Presbytery last week, when the Rev. Mr. Simpson, of Johnstone, stated that with 55 Sabbath schools, 882 teachers, and 8,524 scholars, there had been a decrease during the past six years of 1,282, equal to 13 per cent.

Now is the time for Scottish Freethinkers to make their plans for after-war problems, as the clergy are certainly alive to the fact that their influence is on the decline, and they are on the watch to jump at anything which they think will put them on the popular side, and so regain their lost influence in the affairs of Scotland.

"SCOTTY."

Acid Drops.

In "Acid Drops" for March 4 we commented on the *Publishers' Circular's* remarkable saying that "but for the Bible there would have been no Shakespeare." Our remarks induced the editor of the *Publisher's Circular* to elaborate his meaning, thus :—

What we had in mind was this :—If there had been no Bible there would have been no Christianity, no Christian Church, no conversion of Britain from Paganism, no schoolmen monks, no order of chivalry, no feudal system, no English literature based on monkish teaching, and no English language for Shakespeare to use so magnificently. (We do not hold all these things to have been unmixed blessings!—merely that they existed and influenced Shakespeare from his cradle to his grave—he signed a will declaring he was a Christian, which may mean much or little.) If you cut out of Shakespeare all that is directly or indirectly connected with Christianity, it would be as fatal as the carrying out Shylock's demands for Antonio's heart would have been. We are not contending that Shakespeare was a converted Christian or a Christian Pagan—merely that he was a product of Christianity to a very great extent. So is the Editor of the *Freethinker*.

Now that statement is longer without being either clearer or more convincing. We may grant that if there had been no Bible there would have been no Christianity based on the Bible, and therefore no conversion of Britain from Paganism to Christianity. And there our concessions end. Schoolmen monks are, or were, not peculiar to Christianity. India, and Egypt had plenty. Feudalism is not an institution that springs from Christianity. Our Feudalism was merely coloured by it. And does the editor really believe that

English literature based on Monkish legends was vital to the production of *Hamlet*, or *Lear*, or *Othello*? Suppose there had been no legends would there have been no literature? What of the literature of Greece and Rome—to which Shakespeare's indebtedness is beyond question? And how does the English language depend on the Bible? That is really a discovery. We have heard of the claim that the Bible owes much to the English language, but that the English language should owe its strength to a book written in an obsolete Eastern dialect is a discovery of the greatest magnitude.

We refrain from commenting on Shakespeare having signed his will as a Christian, as the editor rightly dismisses that as of no importance. The summary is, however, that if one takes out of Shakespeare all that is connected with Christianity, the deletion would be fatal. How so? If Euripides and Æschylus could write their plays without Christianity, why could not Shakespeare have written his without monkish legends and Bible? What is there vital in Shakespeare's plays that belongs to Christianity? It is not Christianity but humanity that is vital to Shakespeare, as it has been to all the world's great dramatists and poets. There is nothing Christian in the passion of *Lear* or the philosophy of *Hamlet*. Christian phrases and images appear in them because they happen to have been in an age when the Christian religion was dominant. But that is purely an accident of environment. Had Shakespeare possessed nothing but Greek, or Roman, or Scandinavian, or even Indian legends and histories, the result, other things equal, would not have been vastly different. We beg the editor of the *Publisher's Circular* to cease trying to make Shakespeare an appanage of the Church. It is like making sunlight an appanage of stained glass windows.

We congratulate the Russian Duma on having made so successful a stand against the pious and other rascalities of the Russian Court and governing gang. At a time when our own elected assembly is sinking more and more into impotency, it is well to see one of the youngest of the world's Parliamentary bodies vindicating its right to direct the affairs of the nation. Everyone who wishes well to Russia will have but one desire, and that is that the cleansing will be thorough. The programme of the new Government is certainly thorough enough. It includes freedom of religious worship, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of Labour organizations—with the right to strike—and universal suffrage. If these things are realized, the ex-Czar will feel far more at home in England than in his own country. We may return to this subject next week.

We are very pleased to see that the proposal for the clergy to offer National Service by taking the place of teachers in the schools is rousing opposition in the Scotch newspapers. Numerous correspondents point out that, if education is National Service, the wise policy is to leave the teachers where they are. And that answer is quite unassailable. To take a qualified teacher out of the school and put a parson in is so absurd a procedure that only a country distracted by war would tolerate it. And it is quite clear that the game of the clergy is to get their clutch more firmly on elementary education under the pretence of National Service. If these gentlemen are really desirous of doing the nation a service, their best plan would be to emigrate *en masse* to the Arctic regions.

The organ of the National Union of Teachers, the *Schoolmaster* did well in calling attention to the imputation cast by the judge in the Wheeldon case on teachers generally because the teachers implicated confessed to habitually using bad language. Such an attack was quite unjustifiable, and was only another feature in a case that has left a bad taste in the mouth of those who took pride in the quality of our English judicature. But we beg to point out that there is another matter on which the N.U.T. and its organ has remained curiously silent. We referred the other week to the inquisition by the Cardiff City Council as to whether the male and female teachers in its employ objected to military service or

not, with a view to discharging such as had such an objection. Now, it was the plain duty of the N.U.T. to protect its members against both the inquiry and the threatened penalty, should their views on a subject quite outside their scholastic duties not harmonise with those of the Council. So far, it has not done so (we speak under correction), and its silence opens it to the imputation that it is much more concerned about the raising of teachers' salaries than about the cause of education or the status of the teacher.

Like many other people and organizations, the Salvation Army is eager to make as much as it can out of the War, and is advertising for funds to assist its "War Work"—whatever that may be. It declares that it receives "most enthusiastic praise" from the soldiers themselves, and prints the following as a specimen:—

I am holding on, and God is helping me. Last night two of my mates got converted, and three hours after they were both killed without a second's warning.

The benefit of the conversion is a little difficult to discover.

Evidently Scotland will not submit to Sunday labour on the land without a struggle. The Renfrew Town Council has prohibited all plowholders working on their land between the times of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. We wonder what would happen if the plowholders told the Council to go to the Devil? We doubt if a court would uphold that clause in the agreement under present conditions. Or, as the country is now being more or less governed by ukase, why does not someone issue an order declaring all such stipulations void?

All wars, said Sir Francis Champneys, M.D., addressing a Glasgow meeting on the question of "The Hidden Evil" "are accompanied by an intensification of venereal disease." Sir Francis Champneys is surely mistaken. We have it on high clerical authority that this War has been the occasion of a great "spiritual uplift," a source of "Moral regeneration," the cause of a "national rebirth," etc., etc. Sir Francis and the other doctors who were with him must be mistaken. Or, perhaps, they were referring to the effect of the War on Germany.

The Rev. E. Shillito, in a remarkable article in the *Christian World* for March 15, deals with "Theology and the War" in such a fashion as to make it perfectly clear that the case for theology is the flimsiest imaginable. Even his definition of theology is fundamentally false. He says that "one of its functions is the task of setting in order for the satisfaction of the intellect all that is involved in religious experience"; but he conveniently ignores the incontestable fact that theology is the fountain out of which all religious experience springs. Every believer in God is to that extent a theologian, and without belief in God there is not and there cannot be any religious experience whatever; *Atheists have never a single touch of it*. This is a point which the divines entirely overlook, or are afraid to face. If there is a God, why is he absolutely silent to unbelievers?

Mr. Shillito admits that the War has given rise to no new problem, which is perfectly true; and yet he expresses the opinion that all problems require to be discussed anew in the light thrown upon them by the War. Omnipotence, prayer, and the Atonement are singled out as subjects that must be studied in their relation to the immediate situation. He asserts, for example, that "the War has driven many to pray for the first time in an agony of desire." In what degree that statement is true we know not; but we do know absolutely that the War has driven multitudes who used to pray, to pray no more. The War has already demonstrated, not the omnipotence, but the utter impotence, of the Love said to lie at the heart of things.

The vicar of Redcliff, Bristol, "after a considerable amount of thought," has decided to offer himself as an assistant chaplain to the forces. Brave man! He adds he will serve Redcliffe better by going than by staying. Very probable. We commend this example to the rest of the clergy. They

would *all* serve their country better by going than by staying? Of that we have no doubt whatever.

Rev. W. M. Smith-Dorrien, brother to General Smith-Dorrien, sends to the *Times* a letter—a petition for presentation to the Prime Minister, asking him to “call the nation to prayer” on a given day “to show that the nation puts its trust wholly in God.” But does it? What of the call for men, and money, and munitions, and National Service for every one from eighteen to sixty-one? Besides there is Lord Northcliffe and Lloyd George, and Horatio Bottomley. Trust in God! The humbug of it all!

The War has given a splendid opportunity to religious cranks and self-elected moral reformers, so we are pleased to see the Chief Constable of Edinburgh taking a stand against the nonsense talked about the evil influence of the cinema on the young. With the older people, he said, the cinema had been a means of attracting the people from the public-house. He knew of no cases where boys had been incited to crime by the cinema, and was unaware of any evil resulting therefrom. The Chief Constables of Dundee and Aberdeen concurred with these views. The truth is, we believe, that these sensations are worked up by Societies for the Improvements of Public Morals and the like, which can only exist by manufacturing or exaggerating evils so as to make the flesh of the timid creep, and extract subscriptions from the unwary.

Rev. Bickersteth Ottley, Canon of Canterbury, writes to the *Daily Mail* that a good potato crop and a good corn harvest cannot be secured apart from “fair weather,” and suggests that the present is the occasion for offering of prayers throughout the country. We note, however, that the Food Controller and the rest of our rulers have not appealed for more prayers but for more labour. And, so far as we observe, those Freethinkers who have taken up allotments appear to be doing just as well as their pious neighbours.

We take the following from the *Glasgow Evening Times* of March 12:—

An unusual incident occurred during the hearing of a case of theft at Clydebank Police Court to-day. Charles Stewart, one of the witnesses for the prosecution, declined to take the oath, but said he would affirm. Replying to the Court Assessor, he said his reason for declining to be sworn was that he did not believe in it. In reply to a further question, he said he was not a member of any Church.

Stewart was ordered to leave the witness-box, and at the close of the Court was put into the dock, when Superintendent Mackay said that he would report the case to the Burgh Officer.

Some parts of the above seem obscure. Why, for instance, was the witness, after being dismissed, placed in the dock? And what was meant by Superintendent Mackay saying he would report the case to the Burgh Officer? We are trying to get fuller information on the matter, but one thing seems clear. The Court had no right whatever to refuse the witness the right of affirmation. That was a purely arbitrary and indefensible act, and we purpose drawing the attention of the authorities, so soon as we have made the necessary inquiries, to this high-handed action of the police-court officials.

Twenty thousand State schoolmasters are serving at the Front, says Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education. Yet the clergy, who number 50,000, have been exempted from military service.

The new edition of the *Catholic Year Book* is edited by Sir F. C. Burnand, a former editor of *Punch*. We hope this does not indicate undue levity in its contents.

In her book, *Non-Combatants*, Rose Macaulay writing in antithetical style of persons who longed for the end of the War, writes: “the staffs of journals as widely sundered by temperament and habit as the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Daily News*, the *Spectator*, and the *English Review*, the *Vorwärts*, and the *Kreuz Zeitung*, the

Church Times, the *Freethinker*, and the *Record*.” We should imagine that many others, beside those named, long for the end of the War. It has revealed so much of the savage, the brute, and the reactionist that, given a really long war, it looks as though one might almost say good bye to civilization.

The more irrational a creed is the greater are the vitality and power it seems to possess. All attempts to rationalize Christianity have invariably weakened its influence. Such is the effect of the Protestant Reformation even at this very day. As statistics continue to testify, nearly all the Non-conformist bodies are perceptibly losing ground year after year; and in the Anglican Church the only party that is making progress is the Catholic, and it prospers simply because it represents irrationality aflame with enthusiasm.

For several months the Catholic party in the Established Church has been enjoying a fine innings in its own ably conducted organ, the *Church Times*. In the issue for March 16 our contemporary devotes five columns and a half to correspondence on the subject of the Reservation of the Sacrament. To an unbelieving outsider nothing can be more irrational than the belief that so much bread and wine, over which a priest has pronounced certain words, can be the medium of supernatural grace and strength to those who reverently contemplate it; but the gullibility of the majority of mankind is quite a proverb. It follows, of necessity, that the heavier the demand made on this gullibility the greater and heartier is the response thereto. And it is against this direct foe of Reason that our hottest warfare must be directed in the immediate future. The Catholic religion is, undoubtedly, the only religion before which there opens out a future of any promise, and that, largely, because it sets Reason at defiance.

Sabbatarians in Wellington (N.Z.) have just experienced a nasty fall. The City Council, using its powers for regulating the Municipal Golf Links, decreed there should be no Sunday golf. Numerous golfers defied the regulation, with the result that the Council was compelled to prosecute. The judge who tried the case said that the sole reason, to his mind, for making the regulation was to impose a measure of Sabbath observance on unwilling people. Further, the by-law was an unnecessary interference with the right of private judgment. The summonses were therefore dismissed, and Sunday golf will proceed as usual.

It is worth while noting that in our own London Parks the L.C.C. has forbidden all games on the “Sawbath,” and Londoners have tamely submitted. But, then, English people appear willing to submit to any and every interference with individual freedom. Further, we have much the same kind of quarrel on with the L.C.C. with regard to the sale of literature in the Parks as the Wellington folk had with their Council. This is, not the right of the L.C.C. to make by-laws, but whether in making those laws the Council is acting in the interests of common sense and public policy. It remains to be seen, in the tussle that may come, whether English judges will be less enlightened than New Zealand ones.

Mr. R. Tweedy-Smith, a prominent Y.M.C.A. worker, says he helped many soldiers “to pen letters to their wives and sweethearts” during his stay in France. “Wives and sweethearts” is distinctly good.

Pious folk are often deficient in a sense of humour. At a London tribunal a Christian conscientious objector told the officials he had flat foot and hammer toe, but “stood for Christ.”

The *Christian Science Sentinel* has a leading article, entitled “Friends of Jesus.” It is significant that no names are mentioned.

The Bishop of London says: “We ought to be looking for a new country, new church, and new world.” Many people wish his lordship would look for a new country—and stay there.

Special.

WHEN I wrote last week, I was in doubt as to whether the newly increased price of paper was due to panic or to the imminence of a genuine paper famine. It was very soon obvious that there would be a real shortage of paper, and it became imperative to take steps at once to guard the future of the *Freethinker*. I am happy to say that this has been done. My greatest difficulty was, as usual, want of capital. There was only one way in which this could be overcome at short notice, and that was by borrowing the necessary money on my own personal security. This has been done, and I have no doubt I shall be able to meet the repayments as they become due.

The immediate question remaining is how to make good this new increase in the cost of material. The possible ways are: (1) Increase the price of the paper from twopence to, say, twopence-halfpenny. (2) Issue a special number at threepence once each month. (3) Re-open the Sustentation Fund. (4) Just carry on as usual, and trust to surmounting difficulties as they arise. (5) Issue a smaller number of pages each week.

Number two would nearly meet this new increase in the cost of paper, and number one a little more than meet it. Number three would, I am sure, meet with a ready response; but I am very loth to adopt it. I feel strongly inclined to venture on number four, in spite of its meaning greater worry and trouble. Number five has technical difficulties in the way of its adoption, and I do not favour that plan unless the output of paper ceases and it becomes a question of eking out one's supply.

However, the matter can now rest for a week or two; the great thing was to guard against danger, and that has been done. I am only writing now because I know how keen is the interest readers take in the *Freethinker*, and some of them may have suggestions to make that would be helpful.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 25, Manchester; April 1, Portsmouth; April 8, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 25, Avondale Hall, Clapham.

HENRY.—We are obliged for copies of local papers sent. Correspondents do us a real service in forwarding newspaper cuttings. They considerably ease our labours, although space often prevents them being used.

F. BETTS.—Received. Thanks.

A. F. THORN.—Pleased to hear from you, and to note that you are retaining both your spirits and your activity—though one, we suppose, goes with the other.

"SCOTTY."—The oversight was quite unintentional. Will bear it in mind for the future. We are obliged for useful batch of cuttings.

WILL Freethinkers in the neighbourhood of Cardiff who are willing to co-operate in the work of Freethought propaganda please communicate with Mr. J. H. Edwards, of 9 Sycamore Terrace, Taffs Well.

B. RUSSELL.—We are not surprised at the return of your letter. When officials are open to such influence, a profession of religious zeal is quite a common method of gaining preferential treatment. It is very annoying, but a little reflection enables one to smile at the privileges thus gained.

W. E. HOPKINS.—Thanks. Very interesting, but regret want of space will not permit reprinting.

H. JOHNSON.—If we may paraphrase Mark Antony "Intrigue should be made of keener stuff." When a writer addresses his letter to the Editor of "Freethought," it is a safe presumption that he knows very little of the *Freethinker*, and is interested in neither its policy nor its welfare.

C. JORTRAM.—Yes, it is a tyranny. Lately we almost think in realms, and dream of heaven as a place where the supply of paper is plentiful and cheap. Naturally our trouble is largely a

financial one. With adequate capital we should only be bothered about the cost. As it is we are worried in two ways. Still, we shall survive.

E. B.—We are obliged for your weekly package.

C. CHAMBERS.—We are very sorry to hear that your friend, lance-corporal Butcher, has been killed in action. From your account of him, we do not doubt that the Freethought cause has lost a brave and worthy servant. Your affection for him is complimentary to you both.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Glad to see you are endeavouring to reorganize at Newcastle, and hope all the local friends will heartily assist. Sorry to hear one of your sons is in hospital. Please give our regards to them both.

D. ADAMSON.—Thanks for cutting. Shall be obliged for any further information on the matter you can get for us.

R. G. SMITH (B. F. France).—We shall be very pleased to see you when you obtain your long-promised leave. Please advise us beforehand if you can. Sorry to hear of the interrupted supply of *Freethinker*. Hope it is all right now. Am sending current issue.

FREETHINKER SUSTENTATION FUND.—Tom Taylor, 9s. 6d.

DR. B. DUNLOP writes that he desires to make one comment on Keridon's "partizan article" "Profiteering and the Pulpit," which is that "all evolutionists should be able to see that excessive birth-rates inevitably cause poverty, superstition, war, and 'Profiteering.'"

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 25) Mr. Cohen will deliver two lectures in the Cosy Corner Picture House, Manchester. The place of meeting is at the corner of Swan Street and Oak Street, Shudehill, and is easily accessible from all parts of the city. The afternoon meeting will be at 3 o'clock, and the evening meeting at 6.30. We hope there will be a good muster of Manchester Freethinkers, and that they will bring their Christian friends along with them.

The attention of Manchester members of the N. S. S. is specially directed to the meeting at the Merchants' Hotel, Oldham Street, on March 24, at 7 o'clock. The President, Mr. C. Cohen, will leave London early in the day for the purpose of being present.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (March 25) in the Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham. The lecture commences at 7 o'clock, and the hall is within three minutes' walk of Clapham Road Tube Station. We hope that Mr. Lloyd will have the audience he deserves. In that case the hall will be more than crowded.

In connection with the repeated boycotting and burning of the *Freethinker* at certain Labour meetings in Liverpool, Mr. F. Hoey (Labour Representation Committee) and Mr. C. Barker (Kensington I.L.P.) write protesting against Mr. Gott's account as originally published in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Barker denies that the paper was ordered to be burned, although the Secretary of the Fabian Society, from whom the information originally came, reaffirms the truth of his statement. Mr. Barker says that he bought the unsold copies of the *Freethinker*, and gave them away. Mr. Hoey supports the I.L.P. in keeping anti-theological literature off the bookstalls, and protests energetically against an implied attack upon the Rev. Dunnico (selected as Parliamentary candidate) because he happens to be a parson. It should be added that both Mr. Hoey and Mr. Barker write as Freethinkers.

For our part we have already said all we had to say on the incident, and we only re-open the subject in order to place our readers in possession of the fact that contradiction to

the original statement had been offered. But, we may add, that if the I.L.P. really keeps both religious and anti-religious literature off its bookstalls, no Freethinker can have any legitimate cause of complaint. But does it do this? So far our information is to the contrary. As to Mr. Dunnico's selection as Parliamentary candidate we are quite ready to accept Mr. Hoey's contention that being a parson had nothing to do with his selection. We are the more ready to accept this as we hear very favourable accounts of Mr. Dunnico from other quarters. Finally, our whole demand is that Freethinkers in the Labour Movement should receive *fair* treatment, and be on their guard against a too great readiness to sink their Freethought in such a manner and under such conditions as will enable the common enemy to gain an advantage.

Members and friends of Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch are requested to note that a meeting will be held on Sunday, March 25, in the Colingwood Hall, Clayton Street, opposite the end of Nelson Street, at 3 p.m., to consider reorganization, etc. Hoping all desirous of assisting will attend or communicate with J. G. Bartram, 107 Morley Street, Heaton.

A medical correspondent, now on active service, writes, offering us "warmest congratulations" on what he calls the "vigorous manner" in which the *Freethinker* is conducted, and adds:—

Plain speaking is necessary now more than ever—for the present "World" War, having knocked away the few decaying props of superstition and orthodoxy which were still remaining, has engendered an entirely new spirit of inquiry and criticism in regard to long-cherished religious beliefs, this tendency being often most marked in those who previously were numbered amongst the most pious. This fact cannot have escaped anyone who is not totally blinded by ignorance and prejudice. It was after reading your leader on "Religion in the Army," every word of which I heartily endorse, that I determined to bring the following points from my own experience before you.

It has been repeatedly stated that a great and sudden change has come over our fighting men; that they have become more fervently religious, after many years of spiritual indifference; and that their splendid courage and self-sacrifice are attributable to a newly found faith in the divine power and inspiration.

It is my privilege to mix intimately with the men during the course of my duties. I also censor a great many of their letters. On many occasions, both by personal conversation and by facts related to me by others, I have endeavoured to form a rough estimate of the attitude of the average soldier towards religion.

After a good deal of close observation, I have no hesitation in stating emphatically that, as far as my experience goes, in the vast majority of cases the religious sense is practically non-existent in our soldiers. They are animated by a sincere desire to do their best for their country in its time of peril, and so help to bring about an early and victorious peace and a return to less strenuous conditions of life. Fair play and sportsmanship appeal strongly to the Tommy—God and the supernatural are of very little account.

In regard to the officers with whom I have come in contact, open unbelief is the rule in at least half the number; the remainder either believe in an indifferent and nebulous manner or do not trouble to venture an opinion one way or another. The corps to which I have the honour to belong is specially noted for its heterodox opinions on religious matters.

On several occasions I have talked to "C. of E." men whose only acquaintance with church was on the day they were married. Religious services and celebrations are often attended in order to kill time or afford a bit of variety from the monotony of active service. I have been unable to discover any indications of increased piety from the speech or the manners of the men. Pious ejaculations are common, but are reserved solely for moments of irritation or anger; whilst ribald ditties in which Biblical characters often figure prominently are the rule in moments of leisure.

The other night our church tent was blown over in a gale of wind. This caused considerable amusement amongst the men, and I heard from several the following morning that "God's House had been routed during the night," and that "Jesus could not have had many pals amongst the soldiers of this unit." On entering a hospital ward one morning, I was "terribly shocked" to hear the refrain, "Jesus washed my sins away, and I'm very much obliged to Jesus." I could recount many similar stories. I have no reason to suspect

that the experience of others who take the trouble to investigate this subject from an unbiased standpoint will differ materially from mine.

The statement that the average soldier has a "strong religious instinct" or "an extraordinary spiritual power" is directly contrary to the facts, and as yet there has been no proof that our men need a supernatural stimulus in order to enable them to carry out their hazardous exploits. To say that our troops suddenly become religious when the enemy is nigh is a gross and impertinent slander on an honourable body of men, and effectively demonstrates to what depths of calumny the pious, both clerical and lay, will descend on realizing the futility of their faith and seeing the edifice of superstition tumbling about their ears.

Truly to the Freethinker this War has been a "godsend."

Quite a lengthy "Sugar Plum," but, we think our readers will agree, both an interesting and an important one.

The Birmingham *Weekly Mercury* publishes a three-column descriptive article by "Arley Lane" on Mr. Cohen's recent Town Hall meeting. It notes the large "congregation," with "a happy sprinkling of beautiful girls and magnificent matrons." The close interest of the audience in the lecture, with their frequent laughter and hearty applause, is pointed as, we suspect, a warning lesson to those who profess to treat Freethought meetings as a negligible quantity.

Critical Chat.

FREETHOUGHT AND THE NOVEL.

A CORRESPONDENT, who is far too complimentary to my well-meant if insignificant attempt at literary criticism, has done me the honour to ask me to draw up a list of works in which Freethinkers are handled more or less sympathetically. Miss Lynd is also kind enough to suggest that I may possibly know the answer to the following conundrum: Why has the modern novel not been more frequently used as a vehicle for rationalistic propaganda, in support, as she puts it, of the Good Cause? With her permission, I will begin by trying to answer this question.

It is a remark as obvious as it is general that at the present moment most of our novelists of the first and second rank are Rationalists, or Freethinkers of some shade or other. If Christianity be rightly defined as a belief in the intervention of the supernatural in Nature and history, it would be very difficult to discover an unmistakable trace of it in their work. Mr. George Moore, Mr. Conrad, Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Miss May Sinclair, to mention only a few, are more or less definitely non-Christian in their philosophic attitude to life. Their Freethought is not something extraneous, something that can be easily thrown on one side; it is rather a pervading intellectual energy, giving harmony, depth, and spaciousness to their creative work. It is as natural to them as gesture or tone of voice, and, it may be, just as little a matter for argument. Their stories, like those of Tourgenief and Meredith, are Freethought fiction in the only sense in which there is such a thing. That is, they are written by men for whom the beliefs and affirmations of Christianity have no validity. But the ingenuous reader may here be inclined to ask why what is popularly known as the Freethought novel, the propagandist novel, is invariably left to inferior writers? It is, I fancy, because the more capable novelist is aware that it is no part of his business to argue and discuss, but rather to observe, understand, and represent. His aim is to represent the whole of life as it really is, not a mere fragment, however interesting that fragment may be to him and to others. He is careful not to allow his philosophical and ethical bias to stand in the way of a rounded conception of human nature. He is ever ready

to recognize loyally the fundamental complexity of man. For him, the world is peopled with men and women, creatures of flesh and blood, not mere types of good and evil. He knows that even the most anti-social of men—the burglar, for instance—has his hour of relaxation, when he has pretty much the same tastes and sympathies as the average law-abiding citizen. I once knew an intelligent burglar who, after he had “brought off” a particularly difficult job, would find relief for his overwrought nerves in Richard Jefferies’ descriptions of country life. Now, I have no doubt that I shall be told by people who think a work of fiction is all the better for being not a novel, but a tract, that my friend was not sincere; that it is ridiculous to think that a burglar could appreciate the harmonies of an exquisite prose style; that what he really enjoyed was Smiles’ *Self-Help*. But this is a fatuously simple view of the human mind. Let me remind them of a popular song by which W. S. Gilbert must have shocked the too serious minds of the mid-Victorian moralists. It celebrated the strenuous activities of a hooligan who, when he had finished jumping on his mother, would go and lie abasking in the sun. I am certain that his enjoyment of the warm sun was not more real than my burglar-friend’s enjoyment of Richard Jefferies. This inability to see that human nature is infinitely complex will explain the woodenness of so much of our fiction, especially the novel “with a tendency.”

However that may be, any writer of fiction who is worth his salt must know that it is impossible to *prove* anything in a novel. Morality without a sanction is possibly a higher form of ethics than morality with a sanction, but you cannot prove it by merely writing a story around a Freethinker and a Christian. Obviously, by reversing the process, you can get a completely different result. A second-rate novelist like M. Paul Bourget will prove to the satisfaction of the less intelligent of his Catholic readers that modern Materialism must lead to unscrupulous hedonism, and finally to spiritual bankruptcy and suicide; and that all virtue, if not all intelligence, is on the side of an unquestioning faith in traditional religion. What could be easier? All you have to do is to invent your facts, and then interpret them to suit your purpose. This sort of novel is merely a sophisticated and extended form of the religious tract, in which the vicious infidel got what the Christians thought he deserved. The success of *Quo Vadis?* shows that the reading public generally has not a very intelligent interest in fiction. Yet I doubt if a Freethought tract on similar lines would become popular. The Freethinker has more brains than the Christian. We know that the object of fiction is to give pleasure, not instruction.

Another equally strong objection to the use of the novel as a propagandist tract is that the animus necessarily set up by controversy must dissipate the atmosphere of Olympian calm in which the genuine creative artist works. How often do we not see the genius of a novelist go to pieces the moment he ignores his privilege of broad imaginative sympathy! Take the pretty obvious case of Mr. Hardy. It seems to me that his *doctrinaire* partizanship, the preoccupation with social and philosophic ideas of a man who did not happen to come into his intellectual heritage till late in life, is largely responsible for the semi-vitalized characters in *Jude the Obscure*; which, indeed, has some of the qualities of the tract, notably dullness and over-emphasis. Not a few of us are inclined to see the same falling-off in the novels of George Eliot. The early stories are shaped by that imaginative sympathy with the thoughts and emotions of her fellow-creatures which gives so complete a veri-similitude to her pictures of religious life. In later life, when her philosophic environment had killed the artist in her, we have, instead of the emotional

realism of *Silas Marner*, the dull and dry analysis of *Daniel Deronda*, a very dustheap of Positivism. The artistic balance of the novelist, it seems to me, implies an extremely delicate equation of life and ideas. Life alone will give you the superficial, if not unpleasant, fiction of Dumas, and Hardy in his first period. Ideas alone will give you the tendency-novel, a story intended to prove or disprove a certain thesis; the Freethought, Christian, or social tract masquerading as fiction. When there is this perfect balance of life and ideas, you get *Spring Floods*; *Madame Bovary*, and *Richard Feverel*.

If any Freethinker, after what I have said, still wants a list of works “suitable for Rationalists’ reading,” he will find one drawn up by the earnest young gentleman who discourses for our edification on bookish matters in the pages of the *Literary Guide*. Two stories by Edna Lyall, whom I have always had the misfortune to confuse with Emma Jane Worboise; a wretched pot-boiler by Robert Buchanan, who contrasts a violently lecherous and mendacious High Church clergyman with a frigidly virtuous disciple of Herbert Spencer; an excursion in didacticism by Mrs. W. K. Clifford, who ought to have known better than to spoil the reputation she had gained by *Aunt Anne*; and Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh*, which seems to have slipped in by mistake, as it has nothing in common with the rubbish our young gentleman is pleased to recommend. My advice is that we should avoid anything in the shape of a story with a purpose. Fortunately, Freethinkers have the whole body of English fiction, from Fielding to Henry James, to choose from. Its spirit is sanely secular, and its sympathy with all phases of life cannot but have a broadening effect upon the mind.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Unburying the Hatchet.

THERE has been a meeting at Rhyl recently for the purpose of establishing a memorial to the men of North Wales who have fallen in the War, and it has been agreed that the memorial will take the shape of new science buildings for Bangor University College. Mr. R. J. Thomas, of Holyhead, who has inaugurated the scheme and given it his most generous support, considers, “that the object would be a truly undenominational and unsectarian one for the benefit of all classes alike,” a proposition both self-evident and creditable, and from the point of view of translating love for the dead into work for the living can make a fair claim to rational support.

But “Unsectarian” is not always a word to conjure with. Moreover, anything “for the benefit of all classes alike” fails to raise the enthusiasm of those who have always been accustomed to the “long pull” and the turn of the scales. So it was strictly in accordance with tradition that the Bishop of St. Asaph appeared as spokesman for a minority of eight, amongst whom were at least two other reverend gentlemen.

Now, there had been called to this gathering the County Councils, Boroughs, Urban and Rural Councils of North Wales, the lords lieutenant, the high sheriffs, the Members of Parliament, the peers connected with North Wales, representatives of Bangor College, the Cymmrodorion Society, the Liverpool and Manchester Welsh National Societies, the quarrymen and miners of North Wales, the Old Students’ Association, the Agricultural Committees, and the Welsh County Schools Association. As a matter of fact, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, the assembly was remarkably large and representative of the five counties of Anglesea, Carnarvon, Denbigh, Flint, and Merioneth. Yet the first criticism

that the Bishop felt constrained to offer' was that the meeting was "somewhat limited" in character. The only conclusion to be drawn from this curious remark is that to the ecclesiastically minded no gathering is truly representative unless it shows a preponderance of the official Welsh Church and Capel Sion element.

For a moment the Bishop exposed his hand by having a rap at science, but one could hardly expect that temptation to be resisted. He hoped that science when developed "would not be concentrated upon the invention and perfecting of still more deadly instruments of war." Such a concentration is inconceivable. But what we are concerned in pointing out is that if this War is, as it is represented to be, a war in which civilization itself is at stake, and if science is winning it, then it is impossible to resist the conclusion that science is going to prove the saviour of civilization. This may be discomfiting to a Bishop; but, then, even a Bishop cannot have it both ways, though, of course, there is nothing to prevent him from trying. Then there was an attempt to make the scientific purpose of the memorial appear sectional and partial, in precisely the same way in which the Secular solution of the education difficulties is made to appear so by the same parties. Finally, he "was sure it would not command the universal heartfelt support of those who had a right to be heard."

The Bishop's opposition alone amounts to demonstration of this last statement. But why was he so disappointing? Why did he not give us some hint of a scheme which would command this universal heartfelt support? We venture to suggest that the Bishop was conscious of a lack of that spiritual sympathy around him which is such a great help to the proper appraisal of episcopal emanations. In the right atmosphere an extension of the scheme of Public Shrines, for instance, might have been hailed as a perfectly fitting memorial, and might have received *unanimous* "heartfelt support." But "universal heartfelt support" is an impossible desideratum in this world of pro and con. Even the *Daily Mail*, in its scholarly and dignified attempt to make us ashamed of being English, cannot achieve that.

We are sorry for these omissions, for we have an idea, which we would have liked confirmed, that the Bishop doesn't like the projected memorial because it has no relish of salvation in it. It must appear to a prelate that when anything concerning the dead is concerned, there should be room for him. It is his *metier*. "The bourne from which no traveller returns" is the matter about which he possesses most information. What is this memorial, then, but an impudent trespass on theological preserves?

* * * *

Why is it that when other prelates are quite willing, even anxious, for peace at any price, the Bishop of St. Asaph shows signs of trying a tilt with science? For the sake of the good Bishop Colenso, we should be charitable, and seek for extenuating circumstances. We think they are there.

The Gods have not dealt gently with the Bishop of St. Asaph. In their wisdom, they have chosen for his sphere of usefulness a neighbourhood which has been singularly fruitful to men of science, and has germinated the seeds of theological unrest in thousands of the faithful. A couple of miles south-west of St. Asaph are rocks and caves which breed suggestions most destructive to simple faith. In Cefn caves geologists and palæontologists brought to light the bones of the *Elephas Antiquus*, *Rhinoceros Tichorhinus*, and *Hippopotamus Major*, every one of which propounded an unanswerable Biblical conundrum. Three miles east of St. Asaph is the Bone Earth at Cae Gwyn, overlaid

by boulder clay, in which side by side with the bones of the mammoth and hyæna have been found the simple flint implements of primitive man. It is not credible that a person could be called to such a neighbourhood without being eternally reminded of the bands of fearless and truth-seeking investigators, who, from the bowels of the earth, drew the material for blasting into a thousand fragments the Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture. And the words of Huxley must ring in such a prelate's ears:—

Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules and History records that whenever science and orthodoxy have been fairly opposed, the latter has been forced to retire from the lists bleeding and crushed, if not annihilated; scotched, if not slain.

The Cathedral of St. Asaph is the smallest in the kingdom, but small as it is, the red sandstone of which it is built is conspicuous enough to force itself upon the attention. And if meditating on the Old Red Sandstone drove Hugh Miller to madness, the probability is that it would make a Bishop at least irritable. Environment, we are afraid, has been too strong for the Bishop of St. Asaph. Human Nature must not be imposed upon. It would be the height of folly, in these circumstances, to expect his enemy's dog—when it has bit him—to successfully seek for warmth at his reverence's fire.

T. H. E.

The French Revolution.

VII.

VENGEANCE.

(Continued from p. 171.)

THE Revolutionary Tribunal, it will be remembered, was established by the National Convention in March, 1793, to cope with the internal crisis in France which was revealed by the news of the rebellion in La Vendée. During the first six or seven months of its existence it was a useful and necessary institution. Every prisoner brought before it had the fullest opportunity of defending himself through counsel. The number of death-sentences, from March to September, averaged about ten a month—high no doubt, but not surprising when we remember that France, for most of the time, was in a state of civil war. The daily procession of tumbrils to the guillotine was as yet unknown and undreamt of.

In October, after the reorganization of the Government already described, the Committee of Public Safety decided on the trial of Marie-Antoinette. She had been moved on August 1 from the Temple to the prison of the Conciergerie, where prisoners awaiting trial were usually kept. Her trial had been postponed, however, owing to some negotiations which the Government was carrying on with the Allied Powers for the evacuation of French soil as a condition of the Queen's release. These broke down, and the trial was hastened. It would, indeed, have been anomalous to have punished Louis XVI., a weak and stupid, though criminal man, and to have let off Marie-Antoinette, his prompter in evil—this vile woman, who would have been willing to drown her adopted country in the blood of its inhabitants, if this could have saved her crown and her luxuries. "L'Autrichienne" was tried accordingly, and guillotined on October 16—the same day as the victory of Wattignies over the Austrians.

As for her son, the boy of eight whom the Royalists called "Louis XVII.," he was entrusted to the care of a working-class family called Simon, to be brought up as a good Republican and not as a princely popinjay. Great

has been the indignation expended by historians, and many the apocryphal stories circulated, respecting his treatment. Assuredly, if we concede the Christian-Conservative theory as to the "rights of the parent," a conclusive case can be made out against the action taken by the municipality of Paris in this respect. But to those who regard the individual as the unit of society, and who consider that a child has a right to a decent education irrespective of its parents, it will seem that the kindest thing that could be done, in the circumstances, was to try and neutralize the pernicious early influences under which this unfortunate boy had lived, and to make a man and not a king of him. As it was, young Louis was of a feeble constitution, and died in the Temple in 1795.

The next action of the Government was of a much more questionable kind. Of the Girondist deputies arrested on June 2, most had escaped to the departments and stirred up civil war, and only twelve remained in Paris. After the murder of Marat, the Convention had decreed that these should be sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal. This step was not taken at once; but on October 3 the Committee of General Security, which had the police and prison administration in its hands, proposed to the Convention that these twelve and nine others should be tried without delay, and that seventy-five other Girondist deputies, who had drawn up a protest against the expulsion of their leaders, should be imprisoned. This was agreed to, and virtually extinguished, for the time being, all Parliamentary opposition to the Government. The twenty-one, including Brissot and Vergniaud, were brought before the Tribunal in a batch on October 22. The course of trying so many men together was open to much objection, and created an evil precedent. It was difficult to find a charge that could be proved against every one of them. Some of them, no doubt, were involved in the insurrections in Normandy, Lyons, etc., and therefore could expect no pity. But others were guiltless of this; and one of them (Ducos) had actually been exempted by Marat's intercession on June 2. The trial lasted a week, and the result seemed doubtful. Then the Government made their first outrageous breach with the common rules of justice, and passed a special law providing that the jury, when they felt "sufficiently enlightened," might terminate a trial and find a verdict at once. The twenty-one were sentenced to death. One (Valaze) stabbed himself in court; the others went to the guillotine on October 31, singing the "Marseillaise" till there was not one of them left. Thus the Government embarked on that policy of mere vengeance, which was to break up the democratic party and run the Revolution on the rocks. The Revolutionary Tribunal passed only too quickly from salutary severity to needless and vindictive savagery. The twenty-one were quickly followed to the scaffold by Madame Roland, Bailly (ex-mayor of Paris, who had been responsible for the shooting down of the Republicans on July 17, 1791), Barnave, the constitutional Royalist, and Rabaut St. Etienne, a very harmless member of the Girondist party, and an early exponent of Socialist theory.

This is the best point at which to refer to the movement of "dechristianization." It has been mentioned already that some of the most advanced democrats, notably Anacharsis Clootz, were in favour of disestablishing the Church and organizing the State on a Secularist basis. This section was very strong among the working-class of the towns, who were beginning to see in Christianity only a means of making them content with hardship in this life by promising them consolations in another. This view predominated in the municipal council of Paris, where its principal advocate was

Chaumette, a pioneer of Socialism. Hebert, the editor of *Pere Duchesne*, lent the movement the support of his official position in the municipality, and of his popular and disreputable paper. He was never far behind the popular lead in such matters. The anti-religious policy took definite body and shape in September and October, 1793, when the Convention decided to adopt an entirely new calendar. This was worked out by two advanced members of the "Mountain," Romme, a mathematician, and Fabre d'Eglantine, a poet and a friend of Danton. The year was to start on September 22, the day when the Republic had been proclaimed, and by a coincidence, the autumnal equinox. There were twelve months of thirty days each, and five odd days at the end to make up 365. A sixth odd day was added in leap-year. The twelve months were named by Fabre d'Eglantine according to the fruits and the weather, etc., characteristic of each. Beginning at the autumnal equinox, we have Vendemiaire, Brumaire, and Frimaire till mid-winter; then Nivose, Pluviose, Ventose till the spring equinox; Germinal, Floreal, Prairial till mid-summer; Messidor, Thermidor, and Fructidor till September; and, finally, the odd days called Sans-culottides ("sans-culotte" being the cant name applied to the common people, originally in derision, and then taken up as a title of honour). This calendar was in force until Napoleon re-established Catholicism, when it was dropped, and was revived by the Commune in 1871. It is certainly a neater calendar than ours, which has the months all of varying lengths, and is without any astronomical basis. If the happy day comes when Christianity is dislodged from the conventionally privileged position it now occupies, civilized mankind might do worse than adopt the Revolutionary Calendar. The only flaw in it was the substitution of a ten-day week for one of seven. Ten is too long; but there is much to be said for a week of five days, and this might be agreed to.

The new calendar, by disestablishing Sunday, necessarily struck a blow at religion as by law established. The Secularist party grew bold, and, not altogether wisely or well, attempted to "rush" matters. Some commissioners of the Convention in different parts of France took the initiative by prohibiting, on their own authority, the exercise of Catholic worship in the streets, pulling down crucifixes, destroying "relics," and inscribing over cemeteries: "Death is an eternal sleep." As the clergy, whether non-juring or constitutional, had mostly opposed the latest Revolutionary developments, there was much popular support for these measures. Many priests came forward, voluntarily or under pressure, to renounce their orders and their religion. On November 10, the Paris municipality organized a festival of "Liberty and Reason" in Notre Dame, at which Revolutionary hymns were sung, while an actress impersonated the "Goddess of Reason." This new cult had a great vogue for a few weeks, and in many towns festivals of Reason were held, churches were shut up, and bells and plate melted down for cannon. Such ceremonies, however, will hardly appeal to modern Freethinkers, who tend to regard as unseasonable and superfluous any attempt to erect a new cult, "ethical" or other, on the ruins of Christianity. The Government never recognized the worship of Reason. Robespierre and Danton were both opposed to it, the former violently so, owing to his Deistic fanaticism. In many places, too, the peasantry showed a dangerous spirit of resentment at attempts to close the churches; and eventually the Committee of Public Safety had to circularize its commissioners, begging them to go slowly, and to leave the undermining of Catholicism to the gradual operation of human reason.

The Revolutionary Government had now the mastery

of its enemies within the country; and the best friends of democracy must agree that, too often, that mastery was tyrannously and cruelly abused. Lyons, the chief city involved in the Girondist rebellion, fell into the hands of the Revolutionary forces on October 8. The Convention decreed, on the proposal of the Government, that the city should be totally destroyed. This decree was not carried out, and was probably meant for effect; but the Committee of Public Safety sent down Collet d'Herbois, one of its own members, to punish the rebels. Local feeling ran very high against the wealthy classes of Lyons, who had used their power to guillotine Chaliier and to terrorize the common people. Collet d'Herbois, under the influence of his own passions and those of the local democrats, took a horrible revenge; the wealthy and reactionary citizens of Lyons were taken out and mowed down by musketry in batches. Toulon, which was taken in December, was similarly treated by the commissioners of the Convention there.

If such vengeance was taken on the Girondists and Royalists at Lyons and Toulon, it may be guessed that the Vendean insurgents, who had themselves been guilty of the most awful atrocities against the Republicans, met with no mercy when they were taken. The Democratic party at Nantes, who had nearly fallen victims to the Vendean themselves, and who heard from all sides horrid tales of torture and crucifixion by the priest-ridden peasants, went mad with revenge. The commissioner of the Convention at Nantes, Carrier, a weak-headed man, easily susceptible to such gusts of feeling, had the captured priests drowned in the Loire by boatloads. These "noyades," as they were called, and the shootings and guillotining which went on at the same time, were the most awful feature of the Revolution, and soon caused even the Democratic commissioners to denounce Carrier and demand his recall. He was summoned back to Paris, but escaped punishment for the present.

It must not be concluded, however, that Carrier and Collet d'Herbois were typical of their party. When the Committee of Public Safety had organized the administration, and had sent out commissioners to the various departments to enforce the central authority, many of the commissioners proved capable and humane officials. They relieved distress, organized defence, taxed the rich, provided work, and enforced the law of "maximum" against traders who sought to raise prices at the expense of the people. It must be admitted that most of them were public-spirited men, whose one object was to protect the poor against exploitation, and to secure victory over the foreign enemy. But such proceedings as those at Lyons and Nantes, however grievously provoked, have left a blot on the fame of the Revolution, which its admirers can only sorrowfully acknowledge. They should serve as a tragic example of the mischief that may be done by those who, in times of stress and strain, whether of war or Revolution, invoke and act upon the theory of "reprisals."

(To be continued.) ROBERT ARCH.

Obituary.

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Hall, who died March 7, aged eighty-seven years. The deceased was a constant attendant at the Hall of Science, London, during the Bradlaugh regime, after which she came to reside at Failsworth. She was, until sickness and advanced age rendered it impossible, a regular attendant at our meetings here, and was held in high respect by all who knew her. Steadfast and true to her principles she remained unto her death. She was interred at the Failsworth Cemetery on March 10, our President, Mr. James Pollitt, conducting the Secular Burial Service.—J. SMITH.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "Freethinkers' Theories *versus* Freethought." Introduced by J. J. Murphy; opposer, T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham, S.W.): 7. J. T. Lloyd, "Religious Witchcraft."

MR. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street): Wednesday, March 28 (instead of Thursday) at 7.30.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Shaller and Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Hyatt; 6.15, Messrs. Kells and Yates.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate); 6.30, Operetta, performed by Sunday School Children.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (Collingwood Hall, Clayton Street, opposite end of Nelson Street): 3, Meeting to consider Reorganization, etc.

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