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Views and Opinions.

Man Power and the Clergy.

When the Government brought in its new Man Power Bill it contained—in spite of its substituting, in the name of freedom and democracy, Government by Order in Council in place of constitutional methods—one feature that gave widespread satisfaction. It provided for the inclusion of all clergymen of military age. At last the Government had decided to drop its "third sex" legislation and treat the clergy as citizens. True, it was only half-heartedly done. They were to be liable to non-combatant service only. And non-combatant service is evasive at best; it is cowardly at worst. The case of a man who voluntarily undertakes to do what he can to repair the ravages of war is one thing, the man who becomes part of the organization of an army, and who of his own choice says: "I will not fight, but I will do another man's work so that he may fight in my place, is in quite a different category. No man is warranted in asking another to do what he would not do himself. The clergy have urged others to fight; the least they could do would have been to set these others an example.

* * *

Exempting the Clergy.

Perhaps the clergy realized this at the last moment. Perhaps the Government never intended the conscription of the clergy to remain part of the Bill, but only placed it there in order to facilitate its passage through the second reading stage, and thus get the House committed to the Bill as a whole. The first indication of the real position came with the Government announcement that there should be a special tribunal to deal with the clergy (one member suggested that the proper body to deal with the sky-pilots would be the Air Board). It was going to be Dooley's description of the right way to give votes—give everybody the vote, and do the counting yourself. But even that was not enough. The clergy were not, and are not, taking risks. So on Monday (April 15) Sir George Cave announced that the Government had decided to insert a clause exempting ministers of religion altogether. And that is where the matter stands as we go to press. Even the contemptible farce of non-combatant service has broken down. The clergy are out for privilege, and the Government will see they get it. Whether the clergy will receive a medal and a pension for so bravely urging others to fight, and for conspicuous ability in keeping the home-fires burning, remains to be seen.

Was Conscription of the Clergy Intended.

What lies behind this throwing the cloak of privilege over the clergy. It is noticeable that the expressions of some of the bishops and leading Nonconformists were very guarded. They said they were sure the clergy would not shirk their duty, but they would wait and see how events worked out. Most probably they knew how events would work out, and their waiting was therefore pure farce. "General" Booth complained loudly and bitterly at the Army taking his "officers," and the *War Cry* said:—

All around us the Governments and Parliaments, and great captains of this world, can give no place in their scheme of things for anything but force—gun-powder and man power, and so on. God-power, and the power of prayer, and of truth, and of heart religion seem of little moment.

Can it be that the Government has at last awakened—really awakened to the value of "God-power and the power of prayer"? If that is the case something definite should have been announced from the Government benches. Or was the whole thing from the very beginning an elaborate farce—a mere trick of the shifty kind that makes politics stink in the nostrils of honest men?

* * *

That Seven Per Cent.

Sir George Cave, in announcing the exemption of the clergy, said that, "after allowing sufficient clergy for the needs of the country, the Government would not obtain a large increase of military man-power from the remainder." "Military man-power" clearly means here fighting men. But the Government has already announced that it does not expect to get more than seven per cent. of fighting men out of the country by means of its new Bill. For the sake of that seven per cent., thousands of homes are to be broken up, thousands of businesses ruined, and men of fifty and upwards will return to civil life, probably broken in health, and quite unable to enter into competition with younger men and with the big combines—which will be the main business firms conserved by the War. But not even this seven per cent. is to be taken from the Churches! The man on whose health and strength the prosperity of a family depends must join the Army, in which he may already have sons fighting; the man who has spent all his life in creating a small business must shut his doors and go; but the dear clergy must remain! Does Sir George Cave, does the Government, with all his and its confidence in the stupidity of the British public, really expect men and women to believe that the country will go to ruin if seven out of every hundred clergymen are put into the Army? There really are limits to human credulity, even if there are none to political jobbery.

* * *

Does the Nation Need Religion?

What are the religious needs of the country? Who is to decide what these needs are? We have heard no complaint from any quarter that there is a shortage of religion, there has been no clamour from the people for more parsons. We have seen queues standing for sup-

plies of butter, of meat, of sugar, and other things, but we have neither seen nor heard of queues waiting for religion. Why not adopt the system of rationing? We feel quite sure that there would be no complaint, however small the ration fixed. Allow one parson to so many thousand people, and let the people say whether they really feel they require a clergyman to look after them. Letters have, we believe, poured into the letter-boxes of Government officials pointing out the hardships and injustices that will be the result of the Man Power Bill. Against all such protests the Government is adamant. Businesses must be ruined, homes broken up, the future of children jeopardized. The nation needs men. Everything and everyone must go—except the clergy. And Sir George Cave declares that the religious needs of the nation demand their exemption! Religious interest and vested interest hang together. Perhaps one day when the British people are bitten with a desire for genuine freedom they will hang together in a more satisfactory sense.

* * *

Our Contemptible Clergy.

At the opening of the War, the clergy disgusted thousands of their supporters by their general attitude. When conscription became the law of the land, and the clergy, after being zealous recruiting agents, obtained exemption, contempt was added to disgust. And now, when a further measure of conscription is about to be enforced, the clergy decline to give even a miserable seven per cent. of their number. And the Government, insistent in its plea that the nation needs *every* man, yields to pious pressure, and declares they must not be touched. We hope the mothers, and daughters, and wives, and sweethearts of Britain will remember. We hope it will help them to realize that in every clergyman they have a representative of one of the most useless classes that ever saddled itself on a civilized community. Aristocracy may be an affront to civilized sense, but an aristocracy will play its part at a time like the present. It will claim privilege, but it will also face duties. The clergy ask and stand for privilege alone. They will inflame men's passions to the point of battle. They will urge others to go and join in the battle. But for themselves—their mission is to stay at home and *prey*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Justification of God."

SUCH is the arresting title of a characteristic and deeply significant book from the fertile pen of P. T. Forsyth, M.A., D.D., Principal of Hackney College, Hampstead, which, in a sub-title, is said to be a series of *Lectures for War-Time on a Christian Theodicy*. Dr. Forsyth is an exceptionally clever man, endowed at once with a keenly artistic and critical intellect, who has cultivated an exceedingly forcible but not always too lucid style of writing. He is a theological specialist who affects a burning hatred of the amateur. He used to taunt Mr. R. J. Campbell, during his brief New Theology campaign, with being nothing better than a theological charlatan, who had no moral right to mislead the public on the most momentous of all subjects. It is necessary to bear in mind, therefore, that Principal Forsyth comes before us in the guise, and assumes all the authority, of an expert in theological lore. Powerfully impressed by "the magnitude of our present calamity," he is under the spell of an all-consuming passion for the high task of adjusting the ways of God to conscience. In other words, following the example of a great predecessor, he has come forth in the work now before us,—

To vindicate Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.

The Justification of God is a theodicy, a fresh attempt to defend the Divine character, to adjust the ways of God not only to man's conscience, but "to his own conscience above all." Describing the work in the Preface, the author says:—

Its object is not to bring God's ways to the bar either of man's reason or man's conscience, but rather to the bar where all reason and conscience must go at last, to the standard of a holy God's account of himself in Jesus Christ and his Cross. A philosophical theodicy or vindication of God's justice has not yet been found. And if faith wait for it, the soul may perish first. But a religious and theological theodicy (for here the one means the other) is not only not impossible; it is our only refuge.

Already we are in possession of an all-important admission, namely, that hitherto no attempt to defend God philosophically has been crowned with success. In Dr. Forsyth's opinion, Leibnitz, in his famous *Theodicee*, utterly failed to justify the Supreme Being, nor has the Hackney trainer of budding clergymen the least hope that any work on those lines will ever succeed in achieving the desired object, and myriads of immortal souls may perish before there is any chance of such a work making its appearance. It follows, therefore, that if the theologian fails us, the cause of God is utterly doomed. It is from him alone, if from any source, that a satisfactory theodicy can be expected. The Principal adds:—

This is the kind of theology that retains much public interest or promise to-day—the justification of God by himself, and not by a course of history which is a dim mixture of his ways and our ways, and where the cross lights make it impossible to see it steadily and see it whole. The only vindicator of God is God. And his own theodicy is in the Cross of his Son Jesus Christ. The problem of God is the problem of history with God in it. The doubts that unsettle men most to-day are those that rise not from science but from society, not from the irrational but the unjust.

Two alleged facts have now been brought to our notice in the short Preface, namely, that of the complete inability of the philosopher to produce a theodicy, and that of the supposed competency of the theologian to supply the much-needed article. And yet our author seems to think that even the theologian is scarcely equal to the herculean feat, a religious and theological theodicy being merely declared to be "not impossible," though "our only refuge." Indeed, Principal Forsyth is courageous enough to concede that history is by no means exclusively on God's side. Superficial divines, like the Rev. Dinsdale T. Young, are constantly appealing to history for confirmation of their apologetic positions. In one of his popular lectures, in which he so successfully plays to the gallery, Mr. Young repeatedly, and with a show of conscious triumph, exclaims, "If people would but honestly face history they would see what Christ has done for the world," "If you only consult history you will realize how uninterruptedly God has been fulfilling himself"; but though the reverend gentleman makes ever so many confident appeals to history, he seldom dares to make literal citations from it. Dr. Forsyth, however, is veracious and discreet enough to confess that history is, at best, but a doubtful witness for God, there being in it "a dim mixture of his ways and our ways." No; history, at any rate, is not one of the data upon which the belief in the justice and goodness of the Divine Being can be verified. Brought to the bar of human reason and conscience, or, in other words, brought to the bar of history as interpreted in the light of human reason and conscience, God neither is nor can be justified. Dr. Forsyth, by making such admissions, makes it clear that even to the theologian the construction of an adequate theodicy is in no sense a simple undertaking.

The chief obstacles which lie across the apologist's path are not scientific but social. Scientific discoveries have swept away supernatural beliefs not a few, such as the Mosaic cosmogony, the inerrancy of the Bible, and the theological view of death; but the most cogent of all arguments against the existence of God is derived from the conditions of social life at which Christianity has winked in all generations. The fact that man's injustice to man has been allowed to exist throughout the ages is an insuperable barrier flung across the road pursued by the apologist. All the dogmas which science has discredited are now regarded by the theologians as entirely non-essential, the disappearance of which has been a gain rather than a loss; but the continued existence of the evils from which society has always suffered, and in consequence of which it has now been overtaken by the most dreadful calamity, discredits not a dogma here and there which may or may not be essential, but the entire Christian system. This being the case, Dr. Forsyth is forcibly driven to the following conclusion:—

It will then be found that the justification of God to man is not possible except to the conscience of man as justified by God. We have God's justice as a gift and not as a conclusion. God vindicates his justice by saving man from the doubt of it, and not by demonstrating to him the truth of it.

Such is Principal Forsyth's theodicy as condensed in the Preface to his book. The sum and substance of all he says is that, to the natural man, the justification of God is impossible. Judged by unaided human reason his ways are not equal, his government of the world is a total failure, the argument being: "If he has power to stop these things and does not he is not good; if he is good, and does not, he has not power." This argument never has been and never can be refuted; and Dr. Forsyth does not even try to meet it. He says: "The only vindicator of God is God," only he never acts the part. Had God been his own justifier there would have been no need of such a book as this one which the Hackney College divine has seen fit to publish. God has never undertaken his own defence, with the result that his self-appointed champions are never tired of issuing apologies on his behalf, not one of which can be pronounced in the least degree adequate. Fancy a man in his senses saying that "God's method with evil is not prevention but cure"; but the fact that stares us in the face is that God neither prevents nor cures it. Evil is with us now, and seems to exercise a completer sway than ever. What is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian? The former believes against evidence that God is just and good, while the latter is convinced by irrefragable proofs that there is no God at all. On the Principal's own showing, God never demonstrates the truth of his own justice, but saves man from doubting it, thus verifying Tennyson's well-known line—

We have but faith, we cannot know.

While this frightful War is raging at the top of its fury, the believer can only exclaim: "In spite of all these indescribable horrors and abominations I am convinced that a God of infinite justice and love is over-ruling them so that they shall hasten the coming of his own glorious kingdom.

J. T. LLOYD.

It surely is far sweeter and more wise
To water love, than toil to leave anon
A name whose glory-gleam will but advise
Invidious minds to quench it with their own,
And over which the kindest will but stay
A moment, musing, "He, too, had his day!"

—Thomas Hardy.

The Leicester Secular Society.

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O Pioneers! —Walt Whitman.

Rough work, Iconoclasm, but the only way to get at
truth.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

PIONEERS and apostles are ever prophets. Swinburne saw and sang "A Vision of Spring in Midwinter," and long before that Shelley asked the question: "If winter comes can spring be far behind?" Happy are the pioneers who can ignore the mistakes of the past and the present, and fix their gaze on the promise of the future. For them the darkest night is jewelled with the brightest of stars. For them there is a budding tomorrow in every midnight. For them there is nothing irrevocable, for their eyes are ever looking forward.

Even the pioneers who are not poets possess this fervent belief in the future. Hissed at by the superior people, stoned by the vulgar, they have a hard road to travel. Perhaps the hardest of their trials is that of seeing charlatans ride by in their carriages, or, in other words, to mark the success of humbug and chicanery whilst they find that intellectual honesty is not a paying career. Yet good and true men and women have had to submit to this treatment. Charles Bradlaugh, prematurely aged by his many years' struggle for liberty, saw honours showered on men not fit to black his boots; Francisco Ferrer, fronting the rifles of the soldiers of Authority, had to find his triumph in his own heart; George Foote had to listen to the mocking voice of the Christian judge telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the services of the Devil. Yet in their hours of apparent failure these men had triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm, but not the pains and penalties of martyrdom, heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the jubilation of victory. Labouring not for themselves, but for the world and for coming generations, for them shall be influence as far-reaching as the utmost reach of the great wave whose crest they sometimes were.

Now and again the work of the pioneers comes to fruition within a shorter space. Such, for example, is the record of the work of the Leicester Secular Society, which recently celebrated its thirty-sixth anniversary. Its history is a veritable romance, and dates back to the "stormy forties" of the past century. It is a noble record of small beginnings, of struggles, and of ultimate brilliant victory. The Society sprang from a discussion class held in the Mechanics' Institution, originated and animated by George Bown, one of the small band of pioneers who carried the flag of Liberty in those dark days. Among the young men who gathered about him was Josiah Gimson, the father of Sidney Gimson. The intellectual subjects discussed in the class soon became the talk of the town. Afterwards a school was carried on during the week, with lectures on Sundays, and a lending library was formed. The advanced views of progressive thinkers were discussed constantly, and Leicester thus had the opportunity of listening to new thoughts, and of widening her mental horizon. Out of this evolving institution, which readily adapted itself to changing circumstances in 1873, was organized the Secular Hall Company, and the site of the present hall was purchased. Eight years later the hall was completed from the designs of W. Larnier Sugden, one of whose hobbies was the publication of pretty little booklets of a Freethought character. It is a handsome structure on one of the best streets of Leicester, with ample accommodation for improvement and pleasure.

The opening took place on the first Sunday in March, 1881, and a large number of notable Freethinkers were present from all parts. That sombre genius, James

Thomson, contributed a poetic address at the opening of the hall. A few lines are well worth quotation, for they show the vigorous Freethought of the poet, whose talents have won for him an imperishable name in his country's literature:—

So, all the lands wherein our wandering race
Have led their flocks, or fixed their dwelling-place,
To till with patient toil the fruitful sod,
Abound with altars to the unknown god
Or gods, whom man created from of old,
In his own image, one yet manifold,
And ignorantly worshipped. We now dare,
Taught by millenniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and hate and bloody strife,
With which these dreams have poisoned our poor
To build our temples on another plan, [life,
Devoting them to god's creator, man;
Not to man's creature, god. And thus, indeed,
All men and women, of whatever creed,
We welcome gladly if they love their kind;
No other valid test of worth we find.
Who loveth not his brother at his side,
How can he love a dim dream deified?

Another illustrious name associated with the Leicester Secular Society is that of Professor Huxley, the world-famous scientist. Not only was he in agreement with the objects of the organization, but he was one of the financial supporters. In enclosing a cheque in support of the Society, Huxley said it was sent "in evidence of the full sympathy with the objects of the Society." To a request for permission to publish the note, he replied: "You are quite at liberty to publish my note, and I shall be glad if it is of any service." This record places Huxley in complete accord with the principles of Secularism, and should clear away much misapprehension on the subject.

The importance and far-reaching nature of the Leicester Movement will thus be understood. For near two generations it has spread Secular principles far and wide, and still maintains a vigorous propaganda, including a Sunday-school for the children. We thus see that, give Secularism a fair field, it will show its true adaptation to human needs and welfare.

In the hall are the portraits of Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, and Josiah Gimson. The name and fame of the last-named can never be forgotten in the history of this Society, or even in the record of the Secular Movement. He was one of its founders, and a most generous supporter. At his death, in 1883, he bequeathed, in maintenance of the institution, an income of one hundred pounds annually for ten years.

The lesson to be drawn from the inspiring record of Leicester is that "Unity is strength." Forgetting trivial distinctions in the face of entrenched ecclesiasticism, these brave Freethinkers have closed their ranks and stood shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy. It is precisely because the hearts of these dauntless pioneers were aflame with human sympathy that their work has had vital and permanent effect. They deserved well of their generation, for they did their best to hasten the day when the world will be one country and to do good the only religion.

MIMNERMUS.

BIBLE MORALS.

How little good and bad conduct were associated in thought with the intrinsic natures of right and wrong, and how completely they were associated in thought with obedience and disobedience to Jahveh, we see in the facts that prosperity and increase of population were promised as rewards of allegiance; while there was punishment for such non-ethical disobediences as omitting circumcision or numbering the people.—*Herbert Spencer, "Principles of Ethics."*

The Mechanism of Man.

II.

(Continued from p. 221.)

THE skin of the human body is composed of two layers. The skin's external layer is the epidermis, and is distinguished from the internal layer—the dermis—by its greater transparency, rigidity, and thinness. The epidermis is made up of epithelial cells lying in close contact. The inner layer of the skin is a complex woven mass of connective tissue, and appears under the microscope as a medley of blood vessels, lymphatics or absorbent vessels, sweat and oil glands, nerves, and hair roots. The dermis is, therefore of much greater moment to the organism than the epidermis.

The epidermis is composed of a mass of cells bound together by a cement-like substance, similar to the white of egg. Epidermic cells situated on the surface are hard and flattened. These are dead cells, and are removed by washing the body or cleansing the hair. The scurf, which we brush from the scalp, or remove when we bathe the skin, is simply the worn-out cellular material which has been thrust out by the active cells of the dermis, so that it is no longer nourished, and, therefore, dies. But quite unlike these epidermal cells, the dermal cells are soft and circular. They are living and growing cells, and as they multiply they replace the cells of the surface skin-layer, and thus maintain the epidermis.

In the deeper layers of the epidermis, grains of colouring material or pigment are present. Pigment differs from ordinary epidermal cells in possessing the property of absorbing and arresting light. In animals where the normal amount of pigment is present the usual colours peculiar to the species are displayed. But in abnormal instances where the pigment is absent, albinism is manifested. Organisms devoid of pigment have pale skins and pink eyes, for the absence of pigment in the iris permits the blood vessels of the eye to become visible. In one of the leading exhibits in the Natural History Museum in London various examples of albinism may be seen which range from white ravens, crows, and blackbirds, to white, or extremely pallid moles, mice, and frogs. A tropical climate seems favourable to the development of pigment, and the native races are darker there than elsewhere. There appears to exist a tendency towards the darkening of the skin among the European settlers in the sunnier regions of America, while the fair Norwegian affords an illustration of an adaptation to colder and less sunlit surroundings.

The hair of our heads and bodies arises from a sac or follicle. Vascular vessels and a nerve fibre run to the bulb or root from which a hair springs. The hair continues to grow so long as its papilla or bulb lives. It not only serves to keep the head warm, but it also provides protection to the brain. In the lower mammals and with savage man the hair is useful as a protective covering to various important areas of the body. Oil glands discharge their secretions into the hair pits or follicles. These glands elaborate oil from the blood. The oil produces the glossiness of the hair, and prevents undue dryness and hardness in the skin.

In common with the hair bulbs the sweat glands lie entrenched in the deeper parts of the dermis, and assume the appearance of a tube coiled into a ball. This tube passes as a duct through the two skin layers and emerges at the surface as a pore. Perspiration in average circumstances evaporates as readily as it flows from the pores, but at moments of unusual exertion, or in hot weather, it pours out very rapidly,

and then forms into beads or drops. This sweat is chiefly water, but it holds in solution several salts with a trace of urea. The blood, which circulates in a network of small vessels around the sweat gland furnishes the material for the perspiration. Nervous subjects are more prone to blush or perspire than the more self-possessed. The nervous system controls sweating in two ways. Certain nerves regulate the activity of the epithelial cells which coat the gland, while other nerves regulate the diameter of the vessels which supply the gland with blood.

It is an obvious inference from the foregoing that a clean skin is conducive to health. It is a plain verity that "A bath is to the skin what gymnastic exercises are to the muscles." The muscular walls of the blood-vessels, with their nerves exercising authority over them, crave activity in company with the other organs of the body.

When wild in woods the early savage ran, his skin was bare to all the winds that blew. He was probably not so much addicted to the bath as were the old Romans, but his constant exposure to the sun, the rain, and the breeze helped to invigorate and healthen his skin. Many modern Europeans to whom ordinary ablutions were not unknown have experienced utter astonishment as the dirt ran from their bodies during their first Turkish bath. Heavy underclothing, combined with the absence of open-air exercise, allow our sweat-glands to become quite clogged. Hence the hygienic value of tepid or cold baths. These promote the physiological activities of the dermal structures, and assist in maintaining in healthy action the pores of the skin. Even the dingy London sparrow, that Arab among birds, delights in washing, even in dirty water; while that most intelligent mammal, the elephant, is fond of showering water over his body with his trunk.

The kidneys are highly important organs of the body. Situated on each side of the spinal column, in the lumbar region—the small of the back—they extend a little above the level of the waist. Shaped in the form of a bean, their length is about four inches. They are attached to the rear wall of the abdominal cavity. One artery travels to each kidney, and becomes distributed into minute vessels or capillaries, and these encircle the tubules of the kidney. A secretion in which impurities of the blood are suspended is constantly being lodged within the tubules, and these convey it to a funnel-like cavity at the kidney's inner edge. Proceeding from this receptacle is a tube termed the ureter, which passes along to a storage organ in the pelvis. This organ is the bladder, which must be emptied from time to time. There is ample accommodation for the free flow of liquid from the ureters—one from each kidney—into the bladder, and from that organ into the urethra, and for its final expulsion from the body. There is, however, this reservation. Arranged circularly around the neck of the bladder, at its junction with the urethra, there are certain muscular fibres forming the sphincter, which are usually in a contracted state, and thus function to close the bladder's exit while the remaining muscular fibres of the organ are relaxed.

At given moments, however, this state of affairs becomes reversed. Then the walls of the bladder contract and its sphincter relaxes, and thus the urine is discharged. This latter process is intermittent, but the excretion itself is constant. The urinary fluid is driven drop by drop "along the ureters by rhythmic contractions which pass along their walls in the direction of the bladder, where it accumulates, until its quantity is sufficient to give rise to the uneasy sensations which compel its expulsion" (Barcroft).

The fluid holding the nitrogenous waste materials of

the organism varies with the amount of liquid imbibed, and with the skin's activities. The lungs assist the skin and kidneys in eliminating superfluous moisture, while the kidneys are almost entirely responsible for the excretion of certain mineral salts and a white crystalline substance termed urea. When retained in the body, urea proves very detrimental. This product is largely responsible for rheumatism, head troubles, and other ailments. Nitrogen is introduced into the animal system as protein food, and almost all of this element is expelled from the body in the form of urea. It is worth recalling that urea was the first animal product artificially elaborated in the chemical laboratory from inorganic (non-living) substances.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

A report reaches us that religion is a feature of the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilized Sailors and Soldiers. We are loth to believe the report, but it may well be that, in some of the Branches, one or two fanatics may try to introduce their anti-social ideas. If we might give advice, we would say to the members, "Destroy the infamous" while it is small and weak, and so prevent future troubles, leaving a free and untrammelled field for the social and intellectual welfare of all connected with the cause for which the Federation stands. Belief in the supernatural is a weed-like growth, and, like all noxious growths, if not kept under, will quickly overrun and destroy the beneficial plants of humanity.

The dear clergy like to pose as belonging to an over-worked profession, but the social activities of the bishops and higher clergy do not lend support to the view. By the death of the Rev. C. W. Holditch, Vicar of Warrington, the interesting fact is revealed there have been only two vicars of the parish in 107 years. Evidently, these two clergymen were not cut off in their prime by overwork.

A pocket guide to the *May Meetings* contains a list of 404 fixtures to be held in London. Christian loquaciousness has not lessened since Lord Macaulay remarked sarcastically that "Exeter Hall sends forth its annual bray."

Canon Burroughs, of Peterborough, says that a Chaplain at the Front had written to him that "to the layman denominations are damned nonsense." That Army Chaplain is learning things at the back of the Front.

A religious contemporary says that the first duty of a poor Christian is to suffer and obey. Just so! And if he only obeys, the autocracy will see that he suffers.

"There is a very great shortage of biscuits," says a daily paper, and posters advise the public to "eat less bread." Perhaps the dear clergy will take the hint, and dispense with wafers and bread in their services.

"Our novelists ought to write for the young citizens of both sexes," declares Mr. James Douglas, who is old enough to know better. For whom, does Mr. Douglas think, the "smooth tales, generally of love," are written? The dear clergy agree with Mr. Douglas, but they also thrust the Bible into the hands of "young citizens," and the Bible is the bluest of blue books.

The War is teaching the clergy that there are many heresies mixed with the orthodoxies of the ordinary Christian, even after centuries of clerical teaching. Principal Forsyth,

for instance, is astonished that average Christians display "far more passion to see their dead than to know Christ." The wish is not so unreasonable after all. Surely a mother would wish to see her own son rather than an Oriental preacher she had never been introduced to.

Principal P. T. Forsyth has written a new book, *This Life and the Next*, in which he trounces the Spiritualists. He is also out of patience with those Christians who seek to communicate with the dead through mediums. It is the old, old story of the disagreement of rival tradesmen.

Present-day novelists make a great display of originality, but there is precious little fundamental brain work in their books. Conan Doyle, Wells, and others have tickled the ears of the groundlings with their romantic views on theology, and other writers of fiction follow dutifully like a flock of sheep. There is a Spiritualistic element in Sir H. Rider Haggard's new story, *Love Eternal*, and the villain of the story is a parson. Rider Haggard had better be careful or he will be excommunicated by the dear clergy, who have great weight on the committees of "free" libraries.

The Archdeacon of London says that all sincere prayer is answered, either by "Yes," "No," or "wait." How does this apply to the prayer asking that our legislators may have "grace, wisdom, and understanding"?

"The Army of Movement"—The Church Army which is too proud to fight, but valiantly defends the communion-port.

The charges for getting hair cut have recently gone up. Pious folk may adopt the style of hair-dressing favoured by the Twelve Disciples—in pictures.

Mr. Moses Brain, of Warmley, who is a Sunday-school superintendent, has celebrated his hundredth birthday, and the newspapers are recording the pleasing fact. It is only reasonable that Christians should make the most of what Brains they possess.

What quaint ideas religious folk have! A Sunday paper reminds its readers that "the Devil is a mighty fighter," and a daily editor prints a headline referring to the soldiers: "Fought like Demons." One would imagine that both periodicals were published in the South Sea Islands, and not in the capital of a civilized nation.

The clergy pretend that they receive their call from "on high." The following paragraph from a daily paper is therefore interesting: "Canon Adderley has accepted the living of St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, which is in the gift of the Duke of Bedford." In this instance the call was no higher than the Peerage.

In order to save space, newspaper editors are condensing information into single-line paragraphs. Sometimes the result is humorous, as in the following, which appeared next to each other: "The Archbishop of Canterbury is 70 to-day. Vesuvius is in eruption."

"I do not know a single Churchman who has been a conscientious objector," says the Bishop of London. Few people, however, expect to find consciences among the followers of the Government religion.

One of the great doctrines of the Christian Church is that of justification by faith, which means that a guilty sinner, if he only believes in Christ, may be pronounced innocent. But Principal Forsyth has just introduced a new dogma, which he calls the Justification of God. The Supreme Being, too, is a guilty sinner in the estimation of thousands, but he, also, may be justified by the faith of those who trust and love him. The one justification is as much a figment of the religious imagination as the other, and both immoral.

The Canadian Government has passed an Order in Council asking the Imperial Government not to create any more hereditary titles for Canada. We wonder when the flunkeyism of our own House of Commons will lead it to pass a similar resolution. As matters are at present, a title is almost an insult to a man of worth, and a slur on the nation when it is given to a man of un-worth.

Principal W. B. Selbie says: "When spiritual ends are to be gained no price is too high." This may account for the fact that poor laymen permit thirty-nine archbishops and bishops to share £180,700 annually.

Dr. Colin Simpson, an Aberdeen doctor, who has served with the soldiers since the outbreak of war, has performed 2,000 operations, treated 38,000 wounded, and superintended 47,000 dressings. This is better work than that of the Army Chaplains, who conduct "divine service" at a safe distance from the fighting front.

The Founder of the Christian religion said, "Woe unto ye rich," but the dear clergy are quite willing to take their chances. The late Canon Hawkins left estate of the value of £29,177, a sum sufficient to keep him in the place where there is no winter.

A religious contemporary says that the present World-War is "the world's Calvary." Our contemporary might have added that mankind was being crucified between the two thieves—Kingcraft and Priestcraft.

Mr. John Oxenham, a minor novelist, whose articles lighten the solemnity of a weekly newspaper, says that, prior to the War, "as a nation we were dropping God out of our reckoning." Bless his innocent heart! Does he think that a nation of Atheists would maintain 50,000 parsons and build churches?

In a leading article, the dear *Daily News* says that "In Egypt the priests were custodians of everything, knowledge, wealth, power." The editor might have noticed the same phenomenon nearer home. In this country they are the "custodians" of everything they can get their saintly hands on.

A new and original hymn "for those in peril in the air" has been written and composed by two enthusiastic Churchmen. We hope that it will not displace the old favourite, "There's a friend for little children, up above the bright, blue sky."

The sacred side-shows in the Holy Land are well patronized by the soldiers, so the *Times* assures its readers. "All who can, visit the Church of the Nativity," writes the correspondent in Jerusalem. We rather fancy that correspondent is an Army chaplain.

A Sonnet.

TO A CHRISTIAN CHILD.

OH, Thomas Jones, why dost thou stand and cry?
 (I need not ask you why you do not sit)
 Your punishment was only meet and fit
 As witnesseth the law of God on high.
 For as your teacher saw your grandsire lie
 Sodden with liquor, and devoid of wit,
 Last night; why, then, to-day, his cane did hit
 Your flesh with sanction from the very sky.
 For He who gave the laws to Moses sware
 That if one sinned, his son, and his son's son,
 Should feel the weight of His destroying might.
 Why dost thou, then, a doleful visage wear,
 And murmur now that justice has been done?
 "Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?"

G. H. BOSWORTH.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

April 21, Goldthorpe; May 5, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 28, Nuneaton.
- T. O. HARDING.—Thanks for cuttings. The "miracle" of the Virgin of Albert *ought* to be dead now; but one never knows. If it pleases some other politician, or journalist, or pietist to tell the lie, he will certainly do it. While there are fools there will always be knaves to trade on their folly.
- A. J. MARRIOTT.—We quite agree with your opinion as to who is the "villain of the piece." But what a commentary on the calibre of the British public!
- S. COTTART (SERGT)—We are sending you on *Freethinker*, with other literature, for distribution.
- J. BREESE.—You will see next week we have acted on your suggestion. Hope the change of residence will be beneficial.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Goldthorpe Branch, 6s. 6d.
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- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- 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.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- 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.

Mr. Cohen visits the new Goldthorpe Branch to-day (April 21), and lectures there in the Empire Palace. The morning lecture, at 10.30, is on "Christianity and the Logic of Life"; evening, at 6.30, "Why Atheism is Inevitable." The local friends are expecting large meetings, and we hope they will not be disappointed.

A Correspondent writes:—

I have been visiting friends at a Surrey village who have a son *six years of age*. This child attends the village church, the incumbent being a parson named Longley, who, each week, gives the children texts to learn for the following Sunday. Imagine my surprise when I ascertained that the text for this child to learn was: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." I protested against the six-year-old being compelled to repeat such stuff, but was informed by his guardian that he would have to get it by heart, otherwise he would have a whipping and be sent to bed without any tea, which forced me to the conclusion that there is as much ignorance in the villages as ever there was.

The subject of Determinism is not really a difficult question to master, provided the issue is fairly stated, and the terms employed used with care and accuracy. In *The Problem of the Will* (Watts & Co., 9d.) Sir George Greenwood supplies a very effective answer to many of the false issues raised by opponents of Determinism, and, in so doing, places the subject in its proper relation to morals and sociology. Sir George properly emphasizes the truth that the whole essence of Determinism is the application of the principle of causation to human conduct. And once

that is grasped, its opposite, the denial of causation, is seen to be downright lunacy. We can safely commend *The Problem of the Will* to all interested in the subject.

Another work, issued by Messrs. Watts & Co., is *The Popes and their Church*, by Joseph McCabe, price 6s. The first part deals with the history of the Papacy, the second with the position and influence of the Roman Church to-day. The first portion strikes us as being too compressed to quite do justice to the subject. The second part is more satisfactory, and it is a phase of the conflict between Free-thought and Supernaturalism with which all should be familiar. After all, there is nothing worse than under-rating one's enemy, unless it is to mistake one's enemy. And the Roman Church represents by far the strongest, and the best organized enemy that Freethought has. Mr. McCabe, as usual, makes effective play with his own experience within the Catholic Church.

Mr. William Romaine Patterson (better known, perhaps, under the pen-name of "Benjamin Swift") publishes—also through Watts & Co.—*The Credentials of Faith: a Conversation on Religion* (4d. net). The speakers are a clergyman and a sceptic, and within a small compass many of the questions with which Freethinkers are concerned are discussed. We are glad to see Mr. Patterson combating that popular delusion—popular even with Freethinkers—that, religiously, Christianity represented an advance. It did not. It was a retrogression, here as elsewhere. The pamphlet is a small one, but "meaty."

We are asked to announce that an "important" business meeting of the Glasgow Branch will be held in the Good Templars' Hall, 122 Ingram Street, on April 21, at 12 noon.

Two very satisfactory meetings were held last Sunday at Liverpool by Mr. Cohen. In the evening the hall was rather inconveniently crowded, and the opposition led to its being rather late before a conclusion was reached. But everyone seemed in high good humour, and so all ended well.

Argument.

O STORMY winds of argument,
How ruthlessly ye blow!
In whirling up the blinding dust,
Accumulated by the rust
Of thoughts formed long ago,
Ye cause mine eyes to lose their trust
In paths they do not know!

O stormy winds of argument,
Ye fill mine ears with pain!
Not that ye make them truly *ache*;
But gusty truths delight to take
On wings unto my brain;
Whereby I gather thoughts which make
My childlike faith complain.

Yet, stormy winds of argument,
Why should I thus bemoan?
Though *ill* winds blow no good, as said,
Your winds of robust thought have spread
Their seeds of knowledge sown
In soil on which your rains are shed—
Where wisdom-trees are grown.

Come, stormy winds of argument,
I'll face each lusty gale!
With mind well fixed on solid fact,
Stout Reason makes his sure compact
With Truth, who does not fail
In leaving wisdom-trees intact
Where arguments prevail.

J. F. CORDON.

The Soul of a Dog.

ONE summer evening last year, accompanied by my faithful dog, I wandered into one of our many parks in South London, and came across a group of elderly men who were discussing a variety of topics. I listened for awhile, until one, who looked like an old-fashioned Scripture-reader, introduced a subject upon which I was deeply interested, and then I thought it was time for me to join in the discussion. Several times I heard the name of "Tom Paine" mentioned by the speaker, and once I heard him declare that Paine was a confirmed Atheist, and that he died a miserable death, recanting at the last moment, and calling upon God to destroy all his blasphemous writings that had done so much to contaminate the minds of the rising generation. Although I had heard these Christian lies many times before, I felt very indignant at the wretched misrepresentation of the views of Thomas Paine and the calumny of his alleged death-bed recantation, and I undertook on the spot to produce, on the following evening, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, and to show that the author was not only "not an Atheist, but a sincere believer in God and a future life." When the group of "grave and reverend signiors" heard this, they were astonished, and begged of me to tell them something more about Thomas Paine; and when I went on to tell them that Paine was one of the greatest and noblest men this country had ever produced, they began to feel a keen interest in the subject, and sat with open mouths while I recounted some of the more important incidents in his great career. I told them that Thomas Paine had taken part in two Revolutions—one which gave America her independence, and the other in France, in which Louis XIV. lost his head. Further, I told them that if Thomas Paine had not written his famous work, the *Age of Reason*, in which he tried to prove the existence of a God who was less capricious and more just than the God of the Bible, he would probably have been regarded in America as one of the greatest patriots and political philosophers in the English-speaking world. But he paid the penalty for speaking and writing what he believed to be the truth on religion by being ostracized and persecuted by all the priests and parsons and bigots of Christendom.

When the little group of listeners heard this, they, with one exception—that of the parsonic-looking gentleman who had calumniated the character of my hero—proclaimed that it was a great big shame, in a sentence in which a big D played an important part, and expressed their agreement with me that Christians never recognized talent nor nobility of character in men who were outside the pale of their narrow creed.

"Ah, but," said the Pecksniffian representative of the Christian religion, "if Tom Paine was not an Atheist, Bradlaugh was, and he believed that man died like a dog, and that there was no hope for the future for any of us."

I retorted that "at all events, Charles Bradlaugh did not believe in hell, and that if the Christian religion was true, the future prospect of most men was to pass an eternity in that warm place, where the Devil appeared to be engaged as the permanent stoker."

To this the Christian gentleman replied in one word, "Blasphemy!" which he repeated several times.

At this juncture my faithful dog came from under the seat, and that reminded me that I had something to say in reply to the statement of man dying like a dog.

"Did you ever see a dog die?" I asked of the whole group, and without waiting for an answer, I said, "Well, I have. The dog I had before this little terrier—a fine, large collie—was poisoned by some callous wretch, and

I shall never forget the pathetic look he gave me just before he expired. It was pitiful to behold, and I shall never forget that look 'while memory holds a seat in this distracted globe,' as Hamlet says. Never!"

"Yes," said one of the group, who had been a sailor, "I can confirm that, for I've had several dogs in my time, and they die just like an ordinary human being—in fact, just like a Christian."

"Better than a good many Christians," I exclaimed, "many of whom die with the fear of hell before their eyes, whereas a dog goes into the everlasting sleep with no fear respecting the future."

When I said this, the narrow-minded Christian before mentioned got up and left the company, and shook off the dust of his feet in disgust. So I continued to harangue the company without further interruption.

"Yes, my friends," I said, "my little dog deserves to live again as much as any Christian; and if the soul of a dog is associated with its brain, then, I think, it can be demonstrated that the soul of a dog is just as likely to be immortal as the soul of a man."

"Indeed, in some countries, when a child dies they bury a dog with him. What for, you may ask? Well they think that when the child arises on the day of the resurrection he *will not know his way about*, will not be able, in fact, to find his way to heaven without the guidance of the dog."

"Well, I never heard that before," said one of the group.

"It's a fact nevertheless. Now, it is admitted that if a man has a soul, it must be associated with the brain—the intelligence. My little dog has plenty of intelligence and a marvellous memory. He knows Sunday from all other days, and though he never attempts to come out with me on the morning of any other day of the week, because he knows I go to business, he is always ready and eager to go out with me on Sunday for my morning's ramble in the park."

"Look at that," exclaimed one of the group, "just like my dog."

"Now memory is the basis of all reasoning."

"A man takes perception of objects about him, arranges his perceptions in his mind, and judges between two or more perceptions. A dog does just the same, but if a man or a dog did not remember their perceptions they would not be able to carry out this process of thought—in other words they would not be able to display the intelligence they do. Are we agreed on that?"

"Yes," I think so," said one of the group who had been an engine driver. "I have seen much evidence of great intelligence in dogs."

"Well, then," I continued, "most scientific men agree that the difference between the intelligence of men and dogs is only one of degree. And where are you going to draw the line and give an immortal soul to the man with a large brain, and no soul to an intelligent dog with a lesser brain, but much intelligence. No, it will not do. And, finally, think what a fine animal a dog may be, how faithful and how heroic. We have all heard the story of the dog—the noble Beth Gelert—who saved a child from the ravenous fangs of a wolf, and the pitiful look he gave his master when he slew him, because he found blood upon his mouth, and could not at first find the child, or perhaps you have read the dramatic story of a dog told by my friend Geo. R. Sims in one of his *Dagonet Ballads*, entitled "Told to a Missionary." The dog was taken down to the canal by his master with the object of drowning her, but by some accident the master fell in and would have been drowned but for the faithful bitch rescuing him just at the critical moment."

"Yes, gentlemen, and I could tell you many more stories of noble deeds performed by dogs if I had time at my disposal.

"But do you really believe that dogs have souls and will live again?" asked one old gentleman of the group who had been listening most intently to the argument and the stories.

"No; I do not say that. What I do say is, that the same arguments that are used by Christians to show that man possesses an immortal soul, are equally good to show that a dog possesses an immortal soul also, and, in many cases, the nobility of his conduct entitles him to live again."

"Enough! I will tell you some more stories about dogs when next we meet. Gentlemen, good evening!"

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Writers and Readers.

"IN the dazzling diadem of Freethought, which stretches from Desperiers to Remy de Gourmont, there is no jewel more glorious, more resplendent, than Rabelais, the immortal son of an obscure innkeeper of Chinon." I must hasten to assure the reader that I am not quoting from myself, but from an ingenuous young friend of mine, whose glowing enthusiasm is apt to get in the way of his critical judgment, and who, I imagine, has not always more than a bowing acquaintance with the subjects of his indiscriminating eulogy. No doubt I shall be told that there is really some excuse for an English reader's ignorance of Rabelais. Translations in a handy form are difficult to come by. There is, of course, the ill-printed, paper-covered, and bulky volumes exhibited in the window of the bookseller of malodorous reputation, usually flanked by the so-called *Complete Works* of a great Greek philosopher, and fiction of the ultramarine, aphrodisiac school. For the book-lover with the average amount of self-respect, such an edition is an eyesore, an abomination; it is much worse than none at all. I remember, as a boy, reading Rabelais for the first time in English, in an edition carefully "Bowdlerized" by that sympathetic if not very accurate scholar, Henry Morley. It has been out of print for a long time. Something of this kind, however, is needed if Rabelais is to be put in the hands of young people; and even for those of us who are familiar with the original, a purified version has a charm of its own. Obscenity is usually more tedious than amusing. Still, a Rabelais without the grossness is only half a Rabelais. You must read the whole of him if you want to get the strong characteristic flavour. The smell of him is worse than the taste, like a Limburger cheese. There used to be an edition issued by Chatto and Windus, with illustrations by Dore, but it is now out of print. Like the same publisher's *Boccaccio*, it was not a scholarly book. The version used was that of Urquhart (1653), and Motteux (1693). By the way, it is a common literary delusion that old translations are always the best; most people will tell you that the only translation of Montaigne is Florio's (1603), yet it is no more like Montaigne than Mr. Bernard Shaw is like Moliere. The best version of Rabelais is a modern one, made by a distinguished Cambridge scholar, Mr. W. F. Smith, who has the good sense not to try, as the older translators did, to improve upon the original. This version, with a companion volume, *Rabelais in his Writings*, just issued by the Cambridge University Press, will help both the student and the general reader to clearer notions on the subject.

Like all great men who have appealed strongly to the popular imagination, and who have attracted the enmity of the malevolent, Rabelais has his myth or legend. The traditional date of his birth, although even now accepted by the illiterate, was long ago proved impossible. Instead of 1483, it was somewhere between 1490 and 1495. He was just as certainly not the son of an innkeeper. This was a lying invention of the holy and pious water-drinkers of the times, who were scandalized by Rabelais' constant association of wine and veracity, and his suggestion of a complimentary proverb, *in aqua mendacitas*: and it is not impossible that our

Protestant water-fanatics are even now inventing a legendary potman for the father of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. In fact, Rabelais' father was a lawyer, a landed proprietor in Chinonais, who was the owner of a house in Chinon which was afterwards (1590) turned into an inn called "The Lamprey." But legend did not stop at his birth; it went on to the day of his death.

The attack came from three sides; he was abused by the monks, the Reformed clergy, and the Rousard group of poets. The monks were furious with the apostate, as they called him, for exposing their ignorance and gross viciousness. In 1547, a Benedictine, one Gabriel des Puits Herbault, fell foul of him in a scurrilous pamphlet. "This plague-spreading monster," he calls him, "this art-master of every unmentionable kind of debauchery, more impious than the Genevan Atheists; this miserable wine-bibber and glutton, soiled with unspeakable vices of those filthy heathen Greeks." If the monks were inarticulate with rage, the Reformers were coldly virulent, and attacked without anger their ancient ally against Rome, monasticism, and the philosophy of the schoolmen. In 1550 he had the honour of a place in Calvin's "Index Expurgatorius" (*Tractatus de Scandalis*), while Ramus, a Rationalist of some importance in the history of thought, denounced him as an Atheist. Robert Estienne, the Humanist, reproached the Sorbonne with neglecting to burn the atheistic creator of Pantagruel. "He often enough amused himself by throwing stones into our garden," said Henri Estienne, who thoughtfully gave him a prominent place in the chapter of his *Apology for Herodotus* that deals with "Blasphemers." For the Protestant fanatics, Rabelais and his hero were two figures of Anti-Christ. The poet Ronsard and his friends were not less bitter than the raging monks and the coldly malevolent Calvinists. Rabelais had ridiculed unmercifully these stupid, if learned, innovators, who were trying to turn the graceful French language from its natural line of evolution by overlaying it with Greek words and phrases, and so converting it into an uncouth jargon. Although an ardent lover of the New Learning, the rediscovered literature of Greece, Rabelais refused to bow down before it in abject adoration.

The moment the death of Rabelais had relieved them of all fear of his derision and corrosive irony the three enemies formed a sort of Triple Alliance, and at once set about the pleasant task of inventing the legend of his last hours. The holy monkish liar who received his confession, solemnly and mendaciously asserted that Rabelais had passed away in a state of drunkenness. At the very last moment, we are told, he gathered together his strength for a final sarcasm, and exclaimed: "Draw the curtain, the farce is ended!" A similar phrase, however, is attributed to Augustus; but it is doubtful if the exclamation ever escaped the lips of a man at the point of death. It was obviously a man-of-letters that invented the famous last will and testament of Rabelais: "I possess nothing, I owe much, the remainder I bequeath to the poor." This amusing witticism may be found in a letter from Erasmus to Beda written in 1527 and, no doubt, was borrowed from someone else. When he was anointed with the holy oils he said to the priest that he was greasing his boots for the last long journey. This has the authentic, the characteristic flavour; but surely there is in it nothing of blasphemy. The "Great Perhaps" is very likely a Calvinistic invention to fasten on Rabelais a philosophic scepticism. He is a Montaigne sceptic only for those who have never put themselves to the trouble of reading him intelligently. In fine, we may be pretty certain that he accepted the inevitable with the serenity born of a natural good humour, and what is more than many of his enemies had, a conscience free from all remorse.

Was Rabelais a Freethinker? I imagine that there is little doubt he was not, at least, not in the meaning we now attach to the word. There is nothing to show that he did not believe in God, and little to show that he did not believe in a life after death. That he could ridicule the ignorance and coarseness, the greed and lubricity of the monkish rabble, that he could denounce monastic institutions as radically unsocial, is not sufficient proof that he was not a

believing Catholic. The Roman Church then, as now, permits a good deal of latitude in the criticism of what it considers the non-essentials of the faith. Both the Protestant and the Freethinker are inclined to ignore or forget this essential fact, and to judge the standards of an earlier period by those of to-day, with the result that many a good Catholic is made to seem either a Protestant or a Freethinker. For Prof. Lounsbury, a literary man with a bias to Agnosticism, Chaucer is a sceptic in religion; other people, with an anti-Roman bias, see in him a leader of the Wickliffite revolt which heralded the breaking away of England from Rome. Both these opinions, to my thinking, are hopelessly wide of the mark, simply because they are not nourished by what I may call the sympathetic imagination. Too much is made of Chaucer's attack upon celibacy in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the Protestant commentators arguing as if it were a dogma of the Church, which of course, it is not. Rabelais, no more than Chaucer, attacked the fundamental dogmas of Christianity; and the more intelligent of the Roman clergy would never have dreamt of calling him an Atheist on the strength of his unseemly handling of sacred things. An Italian peasant will, in a fit of anger, couple so filthy an epithet with the Virgin Mary that even a Freethinker would be shocked. And yet he is devoutly religious. It is the Latin temperament which has in it more of Paganism than is readily admitted. Coleridge once noted a good illustration of the Latin attitude to religion:—

This is a story from some old Spanish humourist which had by some strange oversight escaped the shears of the Inquisition. At the Sacrament, a priest gave, without perceiving it, a counter instead of a wafer. The communicant thinking it would melt, very patiently waited, but without effect. The priest seeing him hesitate, inquired what was the matter? "Matter," said he, "I hope you have not made a mistake and given me God the Father, he is so hard and tough there is no swallowing him."

Now such a story, I am inclined to think, did not "escape" the Inquisition, simply because the Spanish Inquisitors, unlike Coleridge, who, with all his philosophy, could not get rid of his Puritanism, could see in it nothing blasphemous. For the solemn Puritan type of mind God is above a joke, for Rabelais, he was probably the great Cosmic humourist—a Rabelais writ large.

Rabelais had no desire for the crown of martyrdom, and he was prepared to tone down some of his expressions. He felt that he would be more comfortable in his ordinary clothing than in a sheet of fire. He liked his jokes at superstition, but he was not so foolish as to pay too dear for them. As with all great creative artists, his philosophy lies deep down in his work, and the only way one can get at it is through the sympathetic imagination. Even then we may be reading our own ideas into it, as so many of us have done with Shakespeare.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

A Building Made with Hands.

It is satisfactory to know that many State officials have a correct appreciation of their position towards the public generally; but, unfortunately, there are some who abuse their positions, and who are easily induced to figure at Christian functions. Statesmen, judges, sailors, and soldiers ought to be subject to one rule. They ought, by virtue of their offices and as servants of the State, to be debarred from appearing publicly on sectarian platforms. They must know that the country, with whose administrative interests they are entrusted, comprises thousands of citizens who do not believe in, or who are definitely hostile to, the Christian religion. Notwithstanding, several such officials have on various occasions succumbed to the persuasive blandishments of priest and parson, and thereby put an affront upon members of the community who repudiate the pretensions and presumptions of clericalism.

An example of such a lapse from official correctitude is to be found in the case of the Rt. Hon. Robert Munro, the Secretary for Scotland, who, on March 8, opened a new Y.M.C.A. building in Edinburgh. Accompanying him on the platform were divines representing the Scottish Episcopal

Church, the Established Church of Scotland, and the United Free Church of Scotland; the Permanent Under Secretary for Scotland, an M.P., a Judge of the Supreme Court of Scotland, and others. At an evening meeting, the notorious Sir Arthur Yapp appeared, and sufficiently indicated the main function of the Y.M.C.A. in "that time of reconstruction towards which they were all looking forward. In that great period the red triangle might be the clearing-house—the communication trench for the Churches." We begin, pondering such an utterance as this, to see some light being shed upon the hitherto inexplicable lack of co-operation between the Scottish Churches and "General" Booth, who recently decided to make Scotland a "unit of the Salvation Army's life." The position is becoming clearer. At the function to which we have directed attention no mention was made of the Salvation Army; not a word was heard of "General" Booth's magnanimous succour for a Scotland fast falling from grace; not one humble private even of the Salvation Army was present to convey greetings to the Y.M.C.A. Is this, then, the solution? Has the Y.M.C.A., in the estimation of the clergy of Scotland, beaten the Salvation Army, in its utilization of the chances offered by the War, "to a frazzle"? Therefore, let us part company with the Band of Blood and Fire, and let us thank God for and put our trust in the Y.M.C.A.! Indeed, the Rev. Dr. Fisher, of the Established Church, recently went the length of saying that the Y.M.C.A. was just the Church under another name. At the function to which we are now referring, the Rev. Dr. Sclater, of the United Free Church, declared that suggestions of rivalry between the Church and the Y.M.C.A. were most ludicrous and fatuous, and that "the Y.M.C.A. was simply the Church in action." What, then, is the Church apart from the Y.M.C.A.; and what in the name of common sense must the Church have been before the Y.M.C.A. existed at all? Anyway, the parsons were unanimous in asserting that there was a "growing good understanding" between the Y.M.C.A. and the Church; and we may live to see Sir Arthur Yapp's vision of the red triangle as "the clearing-house—the communication trench for the Churches" realized. It certainly looks very much as if the writing on the wall, "*Mene, mene, tekel upharsin*," is appropriate in Scotland to the case of "General" Booth. The "General's" organization has been beaten by several heads by the old young sprinters of the Y.M.C.A. The "General's" job is taken from him "and given unto another." The *denouement* is complete, and it is a staggering answer to the very much trumpeted mission of the "General" to Edinburgh but a few weeks ago.

Having gone out of his way to open this new Y.M.C.A. building in Edinburgh, the Secretary for Scotland went the whole hog in the matter of rhetorical recklessness. He "evened" (as they say in Scotland) the red triangle with the Red Cross in its works of generosity, sympathy, and mercy! He "thought he saw one of God's good gifts to us even in the midst of war." The War must needs be glorified because it has afforded opportunity for service by the clerically controlled Y.M.C.A.! "Mr. Munro," we read, "said that the War's annealing fires had cleansed and purged the world. They had burned off the dross and left us the pure gold." Can anyone conceive a statement less in accordance with actual facts than this? The War is daily impoverishing humanity in physical, intellectual, and moral respects. Are the agencies that caused or permitted the continuance of the evils which have culminated in this damnable, devitalizing, desolating, dehumanizing, demoralizing, and disintegrating War to be looked to to renovate the world—to eradicate the wrong and wretchedness of which they themselves are the authors and condoners? Are there no Freethinkers bearing arms in what they believe to be a campaign against tyranny? Are there no Freethinkers succouring the wounded and helping the bereaved? Has the Secretary for Scotland been informed that in connection with the Red Cross Department of the Army of our great Ally, America, there is an ambulance car named the "Robert Ingersoll" car? This we know with a certitude, which no amount of oratorical wealth can disprove, that it is solely because of its *secular* activities that the Y.M.C.A. has been of service. Christianity filches the virtues of humanism; but the thinking observer knows full well that they are stolen plumes.

We have no hesitation in claiming that the money spent on

this new Y.M.C.A. building in Edinburgh is a piece of unnecessary extravagance in war time. In the issue of the *Scotsman* newspaper of March 9th, which reports the proceedings at the opening, there are ninety-nine churches advertising their "services" for Sunday, March 10. Many of these church buildings are well constructed and commodious, and scarcely ever used on six days of the week. Most of them could, at little expense, be adapted as hostels with reading, writing, smoking, recreation, and sleeping-rooms. But there seems to be a section of the community which has a craving for faked shows, at which its members may have an opportunity of posing in the limelight as public benefactors, while they are really countenancing and indulging in reprehensible waste of good money. Multiplication of organizations, too, means multiplication of officials with comfortable salaries. Administration could be cheapened to an almost incredible extent if there was a central pooling of resources and energies, and if limits were put to mawkish, misdirected, and patronizing philanthropy which inevitably leads to lamentable overlapping and unhealthy emulation.

There was a glint of common sense in the middle of the address of the Secretary for Scotland—strangely at variance with the prediction of the egregious Yapp. Mr. Munro said that the service being rendered by the Y.M.C.A. "had shone like a lamp through the dark night of war—a lamp which would not be extinguished till day broke and the world was once more fair with the sunshine of peace." We trust Mr. Munro does not delude himself with the idea that war in every form will cease when peace dawns on a stricken world. All men's energies will continue to be needed in war against ignorance, disease, poverty, and cruelty of all kinds and in all places. But the signs of the times furnish evidence that in that war of the future confidence will be placed in agencies that are purely humanistic in their constitution, operations, and aims. Agencies controlled and vitiated by religion will have found their graves in a forgotten past.

IGNOTUS.

War.

WAR-CORRESPONDENTS and artists are often severely blamed for picturing too clearly the real horrors of the battlefield, the ambulance, the hospital tent. What, then, shall we say of the rulers and statesmen who—for the most part wickedly and wantonly, on the one side, if not on both—safe themselves, set the tremendous machinery of these horrors in motion? What of the chivalrous heroes who hire themselves out to be always ready for the human butchery, be their country's cause just or unjust? What of the pious priests and prelates who render fervent public thanksgivings to their God of Love and Mercy when the slaughter has been exceedingly great, but greater of another people than their own? We exult and triumph in national actions whose inevitable consequences we cannot bear to look upon in the dim vague reflection of pictures or words. Unashamed of the deeds, we blench from their truthful record. Tender girls and women worship the scarlet at balls and reviews, while they shrink with abhorrence from the blood of which it is the proper flaming emblem, shrink with nausea from such far faint suggestions of the blood as red ink or red paint. As for the common Jingo (we no longer need borrow *chauvinists* from the French, having by recent vile experience gotten us so much viler a name for a so much more despicable species of the same genus among ourselves)—as for the cowardly, greedy, callous, vainboastful Jingo, of the clubs, the slums, the Exchange, the music-halls, the press, and even the pulpit, who inflame others to the carnage to which they never expose themselves, we will not heed their piteous protests against the faithful record of murder and devastation, for the personal comfort of those persons that they could not see or conceive the actual state of their darlings; but it would be infinitely better if all men and women could see, or, not seeing, could conceive and realize in of every battle, such misery and desolation and bereavement as are the fruits of every campaign; for then war would be soon extinct, drowned and consumed beyond resuscitation in a lava flood of horror and loathing, throughout all our pseudo-civilized world. Therefore, the more plainly, the more brutally and disgustingly, because the more veraciously, the horrors and agonies of war

can be depicted by pen and pencil and related by word of mouth, the better; that the poor foolish, unimaginative people who are fascinated by the flaunting trappings of war in peace, may be terrified into shuddering abhorrence of war in action; ravaging, burning, mangling, murdering; changing rich fields to trampled swamps, fair cities to black ruins, brave strong men to carrion; leaving parents childless, children fatherless, wives widowed, maidens frustrate of wifehood and motherhood. "Sensational?" Are you so imbecile as to dream that there can be one thousandth part so much "sensation" in any writing or picture as in the fever-stricken, the wounded, the maimed, the ruined, the dying, and all their afflicted families, the teeming produce of every glorious war?

JAMES THOMSON (B. V.).

Correspondence.

A PERTINENT QUESTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On March 29—Good Friday—a large church in Paris was struck by a shell fired from a gun about seventy-five miles away, so it was apparently specially attracted to this building. At the time it was filled with a devout congregation engaged in solemnly commemorating the anniversary of the death of their Saviour. This shell killed seventy-five and wounded ninety persons.

Jesus is reported to have said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). So, it is a legitimate inference that he was in the congregation. As, however, he was not among the casualties, it would be of great public interest if some privileged theologian—I mean one of those who is on intimate terms with God—would explain what became of Jesus. For, if he cannot, we are once more driven to believe that—

Providence moves in mischievous ways,
Its blunders to perform.

E. B.

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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Self-Determination."

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Swasey, and Kells.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Maryland Point Station): 7, Mr. Shaller, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Sunday-school, Pole Lane, Failsworth): Annual Spring Services, Mr. Harry Snell, 2.45, "Woman's Entry into Political Life"; 6.30, "King George's Day of National Prayer: Sense or Nonsense." Music by School Choir. Collection.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Important Business Meeting.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (Empire Palace): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 10.30, "Christianity and the Logic of Life"; 6.30, "Why Atheism is Inevitable."

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Minshall, "Epigrams and Epitaphs."

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