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Views and Opinions.

Design in Nature.

A correspondent who was present at one of my recent lectures asks whether I will be good enough to explain precisely what I meant by saying that the argument for and against what is known as "Design in Nature," usually moves along the wrong lines. It is not possible to deal adequately with such a request in a few sentences in "Answers to Correspondents," and, in addition, the subject itself is of quite sufficient importance to warrant a fuller and more careful treatment—fuller than it is possible for me to give even in this place. But I believe that the argument from design in nature is not only the most popular of the arguments for belief in God, it is also the strongest. Other pleas, such as that of causation, of consciousness, etc., are not really arguments at all. They are excuses that have been evolved by theological philosophers and metaphysicians from their own inner consciousness. If there is a God this world is his handiwork, it is in this world that proofs of his existence and character must be found. If the argument from design is not so universal as it once was, it is because reflection and criticism have shown how weak it is. But it remains the strongest argument, and yet it not only fails in its purpose, it is simply impossible for it to succeed. It is not that the argument is inconclusive, *it is absolutely irrelevant*. It does not prove design, for the simple reason that it cannot. It is not, as Mill thought, that the evidence is not strong enough, but that it is the wrong kind of evidence altogether.

* * *

"Directivity."

What is the argument from design? The Paleyan form is simple, but there are other forms which, while having no greater logical value, are more impressive to many because less clear in their outlines. Prominent among these is the argument, so beloved by Sir Oliver Lodge, of "Directivity." "We have overwhelming proof," says Professor Fleming, the eminent electrician, "that in the manufacture of the infinite number of substances made in Nature's laboratory there must be at all stages some directivity." Now this is a new name for an old thing; but, unfortunately for Professor Fleming, to call an onion a rose has not the slightest effect on the perfume. When Kepler, having determined the laws of planetary motion, tried to account for the existence of

the planets keeping to their orbits, he fell back on "angelic intelligences" as the cause. The true explanation came with the physics of Galileo and Newton, and, then, good-bye to the angelic "directivity." But taking away separate supernatural beings, each having charge of his own department, like so many government committees, and substituting a single controlling mind, makes no substantial difference. It is the same thing revised, and it is essentially an argument of ignorance. The only reason for Kepler's angels was his ignorance of the causes of planetary motion. When Professor Fleming says that the atoms "have to be guided into certain positions to build up the complex molecules," he is like a modern Kepler faced with something, the cause of which he doesn't know, and lugging "God" in to save further trouble. "God" is always what Spinoza called it—the asylum of ignorance. The gods rule over the regions where knowledge holds no sway.

* * *

A Suicidal Argument.

But the weakness, if not the absurdity of the whole argument is, that it is simply suicidal—it destroys itself. In the act of proving that "God" is essential to natural combinations, it is forced to admit that these combinations are possible of themselves. "Directivity" adds nothing to the qualities or capacities of the materials employed. When a man puts a lighted match to a train of gunpowder, he adds nothing to the qualities of the match or the powder; he merely places them in juxtaposition. And unless heat was capable of exploding powder, all the direction in the world would not do it. Thus, alcohol is composed of one atom of oxygen, two of carbon, and six of hydrogen. Alcohol is the product of these elements in combination; but unless the power to produce the result was inherent in the quality of the constituents, no amount of "Directivity" could produce it. Directivity cannot alter the qualities of things in the slightest degree. If it could, there would be no certainty in Nature. H₂O might form water to-day, and whisky to-morrow, and something else the day after. Thus the argument from "Directivity" is bound to admit that all Nature is assumed to do with God, it is able to do without him. It concedes all that Atheism has ever asked for—namely, that Nature is capable of producing all its phenomena without the help of any extraneous agency. As Laplace said, God isn't necessary to the hypothesis. He is pushed on to the stage, and paraded before the audience, only to be dismissed a few minutes later with the assurance that he isn't at all necessary to the performance.

* * *

The Order of Nature.

Sir Oliver Lodge and his followers see proofs of design in "Directivity." Others find proof, not in the "direction" of certain special combinations, but in the maintenance of a balance of forces which emerge in a given result. Thus, they say, we have a balance of forces which preserve life; we have another which preserves a structure such as a crystal, another which preserves a chemical compound, etc. There is an orderly

adaptation of means to ends, of processes to results, which argue a controlling intelligence. This argument proves on analysis to be really no more impressive than that of the preacher who saw design in the fact of death coming at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. The "adaptation of means to ends" is not a singular, but a universal, fact in Nature. And the quality of adaptation remains the same throughout. The relation of means to ends is the same in quality in the case of life as death. It is the same in the case of a child born a marvel of grace and beauty, and one born deformed and diseased. The end must be related to the means, the result to the process, because the one is the expression of the other. Twice two equal four; but no one dreams of praising God because they don't sometimes make four and a half. The sum is the expression of the factors. That is not only true of arithmetic; it is a universal truth. There is nothing else than "adaptation of means to ends" in Nature, however displeasing some of these ends may be to us. Beauty and ugliness, order and disorder, perfection and imperfection, perfect adaptation and imperfect adaptation, are not things that we find in Nature—all that is there are processes and results, consequents and antecedents—they are conceptions introduced by us, because we create ideals, and then measure Nature by them.

* * *

Order and Necessity.

Regularity in Nature is not proof of the control of Nature by a Divine intelligence; it is rather the reverse. If something—call it matter, or ether, or x —exists, it must operate in accordance with its innate qualities; and so long as this x remains uncontrolled, its manifestations will continue unchanged—in other words, there will be "order." The same causes, the same effects; the same processes, the same results. That is the manifest signs of a natural "order" that knows nothing of God. But if the "order varied," if Nature only functioned, D.V., then we should have variations, and these would indicate the presence of a controlling mind in the same way that the human mind controls forces to its purpose. So, when Pope asks the sceptic, "Shall gravitation cease when you pass by?" the sceptic might reply, "Certainly." If there is a God, he ought to show that he exists by occasionally doing something; and to arrest the local operation of gravitation, say, when a rock is falling on an innocent person's head, would not be at all a bad manifestation of "Providence." The existence of a natural "order" proves nothing. It is only another way of saying things exist. The existence of a natural disorder, a state of things in which the same processes did *not* always issue in the same results, would prove a deal—for the Godite. The Nature we know is such a nature as one would expect without God. And a Nature with God would be anything but an unmixed blessing.

* * *

Next week we will deal with the more popular presentation of the Design Argument.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.—*Shelley*.

The Defeat of the Cross.

II.

It is an undeniable fact that theologically the Cross has always served as the appropriate symbol of the way of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, in his once famous work on the Atonement, described it as the external condition of acceptance with God and full forgiveness of sins. This is the view expressed in all the great creeds of the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, and it is a view for which there is abundant Scriptural warrant, especially in the Epistles of Paul and Peter. Christians are said to be people who "by grace have been saved through faith, and that not of themselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Even their character is theirs only by imputation, not as the reward of successful struggle. Paul says: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. iii. 8, 9). The Apostles were ambassadors for Christ, whose message was this: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 20, 21). The New Testament summary of the doctrine of the Cross is as follows:—

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.....He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John iii. 16-18, 36).

Primarily, then, the death of Christ, rendered effectual by his resurrection, is the sacrifice, or propitiation, which satisfies the demands of Divine justice, and makes it possible for God to accept and forgive all who repent and believe. In other words, Christianity is a religion which enables lost and guilty sinners to get into harmonious relations with God, and so escape the wrath to come. It is only secondarily that it undertakes the task of doing anything for the life that now is. Indeed, the reorganization of society is not, strictly speaking, one of its aims at all, society in this world being practically of no consequence. Here we are to regard ourselves as but strangers and pilgrims, whose destination is the world to come. On this point Paul is most emphatic. Believers are in Christ, united with him both in his death and resurrection, and this is how the Apostle addresses them:—

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. iii. 1-4).

It is only those whose ambition is to be known as social reformers who even dream of representing Christianity as a religion for this world. Our point, however, is that in the latter capacity the Cross is the most gigantic and tragic failure in all history, while its alleged power to

deliver believers from the wrath to come is absolutely outside the sphere of practical verification, the deliverance being as purely imaginary as the wrath itself. Realizing the truth of this statement, the Rev. Dr. Fort Newton, in a sermon preached in the City Temple on Good Friday, and published in the *Christian Commonwealth* for April 24, ignores the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement altogether, and speaks of Jesus, not as Redeemer, Deliverer, Saviour, or Lord, but as partaker of the human struggle, with all its ghastly horrors and moral atrocities, sharing it without ridding us of it. He says:—

To-day we read the stately stanzas of the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah with a new vision, a new wonder; and the Figure that moves through those lines—gentle, heroic, silent, haunting, despised and rejected of men, smitten of God and afflicted—seems a living Presence by our side, looking at us with all-pitying, touching us with hands of healing. Truly he is the Suffering Servant of God, revealing the redeeming truth that, as there is a law of the survival of the fittest, so there is a law of the sacrifice of the best. To-day is this truth fulfilled before our eyes, and we realize as never before that not only the death of Jesus, but his life, was one long atonement, just because his love made him one with humanity in its sin, its woe, and its destiny..... Outwardly the Cross was an utter defeat; inwardly it was the ultimate victory.

What the reverend gentleman means by the outward failure and inward triumph of the Cross the present discourse does not help us to discover. For systematic theology he has nothing but withering contempt, but strangely enough he has a theological system of his own, the chief characteristic of which is looseness, vagueness, or ambiguity, and in defence of which he waxes absurdly dogmatic. His laudation of Jesus is grotesquely extravagant, particularly as he treats him as a member of the human category, saying: "God eternal, God paternal, in that faith Jesus lived, in that faith he died, testing it to the utmost. *Father!* that was his own word, his key to life, his first truth and his last; it was his religion." Jesus was a man specially commissioned to make God known to the world; not a Saviour who became the propitiation for our sins by dying on Calvary, but a real Brother or Champion who came to sympathize with and inspire us in our desperate conflict with malign forces by revealing a Heavenly Father who shares our sufferings and sorrows, and so heartens us for our never-ceasing warfare. We agree with Dr. Fort Newton when he says that "outwardly the Cross was an utter defeat"; but we are equally convinced that even inwardly it was by no means a victory. That is to say, Jesus neither said nor did anything that might legitimately be looked upon as in any sense or degree a revelation of a Friend behind phenomena, who is yet a partaker of our multifarious combats with the evils of life. Nothing can be more certain than the futility of the Cross from whatever point we may view it, while the Church founded upon it has done incalculably more harm than good in the world. Where is the Fatherhood of an Almighty and all-merciful Deity to be seen shining forth in all its glory? Can we honestly face the fact of the present War and believe that a God of love sitteth as king for ever? Has it never occurred to Dr. Newton seriously to consider how what is outwardly an utter defeat can be inwardly an ultimate victory? We unhesitatingly declare that in every intelligible sense, save one, the Christian Cross has been and is a fantastic fiasco. The Church, professedly its instrument, has been a stupendous success ever since its establishment as a department of the State under Constantine the Great; but its success has been due exclusively to the fact that it has always ingeniously played upon the ignorance and superstitious credulity of

the masses of the people. In other words, the Church has prospered alone by pretending to be what it is not and cannot be, or by sailing under false colours. As a moralizer of life's great problems, as a factor in the establishment of just and fair conditions in the social organism, as a friend of the weak rescuing them from under the heels of the strong, it has been an absolute failure; and the failure of the Church signifies, not the ultimate victory, but the continuous defeat of the Cross. There is no possibility of separating the one from the other. Supernaturalism is a discredited dream, and all interpretations of existence based upon it necessarily fall to the ground. Is it not high time to let Humanism have its innings?

J. T. LLOYD.

Mary Wollstonecraft.

A BRAVE WOMAN AND A BROKEN CAREER.

We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions.—G. W. Footc.

SOME innocents imagine that men and women of letters exert little or no influence in politics and upon politicians, in statesmanship and upon statesmen. It is a fond illusion. What far-reaching influence did not Jean Jacques Rousseau exert in world-politics? Instead of being a mere voice crying in the wilderness, his was the most potent voice in Europe of his day. Who heeded Thomas Paine? Yet his was the hand that first wrote the arresting words, "The United States of America," and the great Republic owed as much to Paine's live pen as to Washington's sharp sword. These questions are suggested by reading Mr. G. R. Stirling Taylor's excellent book on *Mary Wollstonecraft*. It is a handsome book, finely illustrated with photogravure portraits, and should adorn every Freethinker's bookshelf. For Mary Wollstonecraft may be fairly described as the chief founder of the modern Woman Movement, and she has many other claims on the attention of reformers and lovers of literature.

It is impossible to deny that the prevailing impression left by the records of Mary Wollstonecraft's life is one of pathos, the pathos of a brilliant and beneficent career, frustrated, at the height of its power, by an untimely end. And the emotion aroused by the record is accentuated, rather than shared, by the frank and open fashion in which Mr. Stirling Taylor has told the romantic story of her life. The book reveals a story of inevitable disappointment, of exceptional abilities heavily handicapped by a woman's physique, and, by way of compensating contrast, the pages bear witness to the determination of a brave woman using broken opportunities to the best advantage. The very courage of such an effort is touched to pathetic issues, and the partial success with which it was crowned is a tribute to the recuperative power of an eager and indefatigable temperament.

The triumph of the modern Woman's Movement is a victory for Rationalism, and the belated recognition of the rights of women is a tribute to the pioneers from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill. Mary Wollstonecraft was, if not actually the first advocate of women's rights, at any rate the first of her sex to give public expression of her views, and to have the courage to live up to her convictions. Sharing the usual fate of pioneers, she was reviled as "a hyena in petticoats" and a "philosophizing serpent." Her book, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, was mainly a plea for the universal education of both sexes, and from the seed she sowed sprang the goodly fruit of a free national education for boys and girls, and a larger and broader freedom for her sex.

It is not alone her message that now interests us, but the woman herself, her desires, her aspirations, her struggles, and her love. Pathetic and lonely, she stands out in the faint mists of the past, a woman who will continue to arouse sympathy when her books are no longer read, except by students in the bye-paths of literature. And of the woman no more complete revelation could be desired than the pathetic letters she wrote to Captain Imlay, who used her so harshly. Other writers have been unhappy, and have known the anguish and terrors of unrequited affection; but Mary Wollstonecraft addressed these letters with a breaking heart to the man whom she adored—the most touching and tragic love-letters in our literature.

Later in life Mary Wollstonecraft was united to William Godwin; and their daughter, Mary, married the poet Shelley. This largely intensifies the interest of Mary Wollstonecraft's association with English literature. For Shelley was a disciple of William Godwin, and the great poet adopted his philosophic ideas from Godwin. So much is this the case that it may even be said that Godwin explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin. It is no paradox to add that Godwin formed Shelley's mind, and that the *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas* were the greatest of Godwin's works.

Nor is Godwin's daughter undeserving of notice. Although overshadowed by the greatness of her husband, Mary Shelley had literary gifts of her own which commanded attention. It was while staying at Byron's villa on the lovely lake of Geneva that she conceived the idea of her famous novel, *Frankenstein*, a grim and powerful work, which made an immense and deserved sensation. None of her other novels, including *The Last Man* and *Lodore*, had the same success. She contributed brilliant biographical sketches of foreign authors and artists to Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, and edited her famous husband's poems. She survived Shelley nearly thirty years, and latterly made her home with her son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, at Boscombe Manor, Bournemouth. There William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, and their daughter, Mary Shelley, are buried. It was the intention of Sir Percy to erect a monument to his illustrious father in the adjoining church, but the then vicar, a Mr. Bennett, refused his permission on account of the poet's Freethought, and the splendid memorial had to find refuge at the more hospitable Christchurch church, where it is regarded as one of the literary shrines of England.

It will be seen that Mr. Stirling Taylor's book is full of interest, and turns the handles of many doors. There is not a dull page in it from the start to the finish. We began by saying that Mary Wollstonecraft's career was one of pathos, and so, to a certain extent, it unquestionably was. And yet, perhaps, the last word is one, not of pathos, but of strong human encouragement. For the woman who can in large measure live down disaster and shipwreck of hope, and rise triumphant over the fell clutch of circumstance, may justly be acclaimed as the victorious mistress of her fate.

MIMNERMUS.

I have every possible reverence for the much talked-of world beyond the grave, and I wish that which piety believes, and virtue deserves, may be all matter of fact. But in things belonging to, and terminating in this present scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand.

—Robert Burns.

"Mors" means death, and delaying; and "vita" means life, and growing: and try always, not to mortify yourselves, but to vivify yourselves.—Ruskin.

The Mechanism of Man.

V.

(Continued from p. 261).

THE cells of the living body are bathed by a fluid. This fluid is the lymph. Unlike a unicellular creature, such as the amœba, which is compelled to search for its food, the cells which form the multicellular animals are nourished by the nutrient materials contained in the blood. These exude through the vascular vessels into the lymph channels adjacent to the cells. The amœba excretes its waste substances into the water in which it dwells, whereas the higher mammalian cells expel theirs into the lymph to be whirled away by the circulation. The blood fulfils two offices. It conveys nourishment to the tissues, and removes waste matters from them. Or, as Professor Bayliss puts it in his elaborate *Principles of General Physiology*, 1915: "The object of the circulation of a fluid through the larger organisms is to supply food, especially oxygen, to the tissues, and to bring about effective interchange of chemical products."

The organs of circulation in vertebrate animals are the heart, which drives the blood into the arteries, and the capillary vessels which restore the blood to the veins. The human heart is about the size of a man's closed fist, and is placed diagonally behind the breast-bone, with its pointed end projecting towards the left. The smaller termination of the organ beats against the wall of the chest between the fifth and sixth ribs. The heart is safeguarded from external injury by the breast bone and ribs, and its encircling membrane—the pericardium—secretes a fluid, and eases the friction arising from the heart-beat.

In the superior backboned animals the heart is formed of two pumps in series. One of these pumps functions to propel the impure blood towards the lungs to obtain oxygen from the air, while the other pump operates to return the aerated and therefore purified blood from the lungs to the body. The heart contains two great cavities which are divided by a partition which separates one from the other. Each of these chambers is again divided by a movable partition. The upper chambers or cavities are the right and left auricles, and the two lower the right and left ventricles.

The heart, then, is composed of two pumps united together which pulsate in succession. The beating of the heart is caused by the contraction of the walls of its two auricles, which is immediately followed by a simultaneous contraction of the walls of the two ventricles. As Huxley said: "The contraction of the heart is rhythmical, two short contractions of its upper and lower halves respectively being followed by a pause of the whole, which occupies nearly as much time as the two contractions."

The blood's movements may be traced by observing the fluid flowing in its vessels of smallest calibre—the capillaries. From the capillaries of the skin or muscles the blood stream widens out into ever larger channels as it approaches the heart. From the capillaries small veins emerge which eventually unite into two great veins which conduct the blood to the right auricle. The blood then passes through the tricuspid valve into the right ventricle, and then travels through a valve into the pulmonary artery which proceeds towards the lungs. The lungs are abundantly furnished with capillaries, and while coursing through these channels the blood becomes purified, and it then resumes its journey through the pulmonary veins to the left auricle, and from thence through the mitral valve of the heart to the left ventricle. Then the blood is driven through a semi-lunar valve into the great artery of the body, the

aorta, and from this vessel it proceeds to the lesser arteries, and onward to the capillaries distributed throughout the tissues, thus completing its circuit round the body.

Veins and arteries are composed of three layers of tissue. One of these layers serves to lessen friction; the second, formed of connective tissue, renders the vessels elastic, while their middle layer of muscular tissue permits them to expand or contract. All the structures function mechanically as agents in that constant circulation of the vascular fluid which maintains the organism as a living entity.

The capillaries into which the larger vessels break up are finer than a delicate hair, and are formed of a single layer. This is the inner lining of smooth cells which promotes the easy passage of the vascular fluid. The minuteness of the capillaries enables them to pass among the cells of the tissues, while the delicacy of their walls allows their nutrient liquids to enter the tissues, and readily absorb their exhausted materials into the blood. Through these microscopic capillaries the blood flows very slowly. But, minute as the capillaries are—and they vary in diameter from 1-2,000th to 1-1,500th of an inch—their multitude is so vast that their total volume is hundreds of times larger than that of the arteries which feed them, or that of the veins which arise from them. In reality all the great blood-vessels, including the heart, act as instruments of pressure to compel the blood to circulate through the capillaries. The blood is renewed and the tissues are renovated through the agencies of the capillaries alone.

The red corpuscles give the blood its ruddy appearance. Examined under the microscope, however, the blood liquid is nearly transparent. This vascular fluid is known as the plasma. But suspended in this plasma are immense numbers of blood-discs containing a pigment—the hæmoglobin—and this pigment colours the blood. Larger white corpuscles also inhabit the blood. But the red corpuscles never leave the blood-stream, and are carried by the circulation to all parts of the body. The white corpuscles, on the other hand, are not restricted to the vascular vessels, but pass through their walls into the neighbouring tissues.

The plasma sustains the blood in its liquid state, and as it flows the plasma carries with it nutrient particles supplied by the digestive system. It also conveys carbon-dioxide to the lungs, and various waste body-products to the kidneys.

When the blood issues from the heart, some of it proceeds to the stomach and intestines through arterial vessels which branch off into capillaries. These capillaries take up all the food-stuffs from the intestinal system, the fats alone excepted, and then they combine to form the portal vein which pours the absorbed nutrient substances into the liver. This important organ burns up a part of these blood impurities, and transforms them into bile. The blood, thus purified, and freighted with food, is then conveyed from the liver to the heart, and is again restored to the general circulation. The foregoing phenomena constitute the portal circulation.

Arterial blood is carried to the kidneys, in which organs the waste matters are eliminated, and then the renovated blood returns along a vein which runs to the heart. This is known as the renal circulation. There is also the circulation through the lungs, during which the blood is purified and renewed. This forms the pulmonary circulation.

When we compare the arteries and veins of the body, we discover that the former possess thick, tough, muscular walls, while the latter are provided with thin, soft walls. Like a river that is fed by springs and brooks, the veins derive their blood from the countless capil-

laries distributed throughout the human organism. Small veins arise from the capillaries, and these vessels grow larger and larger as they journey to the heart, where they discharge their contents into the auricles. The arterial vessels commence at the ventricles of the heart, and pour their blood into the capillaries, and from these small channels the blood returns by way of the veins to the heart. The veins, therefore, lead to the heart, whereas the arteries proceed from the heart. When the venous blood, which is charged with impurities and is dark purple in colour, passes along a large blood-vessel to the lungs, it there undergoes a remarkable transformation. While in the lungs, the venous fluid gives up its carbon-dioxide, and replenishes itself with oxygen. Its colour then changes to a bright scarlet. Thus is venous blood transformed into arterial blood, and it now flows towards and through the heart, and recommences its journey along the channels of circulation.

In 1628, Harvey published his small work of 76 pages, announcing his discovery of the circulation of the blood. As Gregory says in his *Discovery; or, The Spirit and Service of Science*: "In this treatise Harvey established absolutely the fact of the circulation of the blood, and the fact that the muscular action of the heart causes this movement."

T. F. PALMER,

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

This War has shed many a searchlight on matters religious, and, among other things, the question of the Pope's infallibility. The Pope is in a tight corner, for the Allies include four Catholic nations: France, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal, and there are millions of Catholics in America. The only Catholic power on the other side is Austria, but she is regarded as "the eldest daughter of the Church." There are also very large numbers of Catholics in Germany. Hence, Papa has to use many voices. The attitude of the Catholic Cardinals in England is patriotic, but the Irish priests are "agin the Government." In Italy, the Vatican has never protested against conscription of the clergy, but France has protested against their employment as combatants. The poor Pope must feel like Blondin when he crossed the Niagara Falls on a tight-rope.

Close students of history and of the Irish Question will not be surprised at the action of the Irish priests. Home Rule always represented a threat to their supremacy. It is the identification of the Nationalist aspiration with religious belief, brought about by English rule, which has given the priest his sustained power. Once that union is broken, and the divorce of the secular from the religious interest effected, there would be seen in Ireland what is seen elsewhere, that is, the growing restriction of the priest to the sphere of religion. That is the tendency of things elsewhere, and there is no ground for anticipating a different consequence with the Irish people. The moral is that while the Irish priesthood dare not oppose Home Rule, they do not desire it. And if the present agitation were to wreck it they would not mourn.

The Irish Catholic bishops advise resisting Conscription "by all the means that are consonant with the law of God." Not many generations ago burning people alive was thought to be "consonant with the law of God."

Lord Bryce's Committee has issued its report on the reform of the House of Lords, and its publication has caused some caustic comments in the press. *Reynolds' Newspaper* says "the history of the House of Lords has been one long tale of resistance to the will of the people." As the Church of England Bishops sit in the House of Lords, this is not a compliment to the Black Army.

Christianity runs in double harness with commercialism, and it is not surprising to read that "merchandise now goes direct by rail from Cairo to Jerusalem." Those enterprising tradesmen will sing presently, "Jerusalem the Golden."

A special service for War-workers was held at St. Paul's Cathedral, which the obsequious press described as a "Labour service." Among the distinguished "Labour leaders" present were Mr. Winston Churchill and Sir Francis Lloyd. The address was delivered by that quick-change artist, the Bishop of London.

Expensive advertisements have appeared in the London press stating that the Church Army has 800 recreation huts for the soldiers, and asking for subscriptions for their maintenance. It would be more to the purpose if the Church authorities forced the able-bodied clergy to take their proper places alongside the other soldiers.

For ten hours without cessation prayer and intercession was conducted recently by the Wesleyans at Central Hall, Westminster. We suggest that Oriental praying-barrels be used in future, and, if necessary, they could be worked with a motor.

Christians are very fond of annexing men of genius. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Right Rev. James Cooper, preached the sermon at a special service arranged by the London Burns Club in the Caledonian Church, Holloway. Do these professional admirers of Burns ever read his works, or only talk of him? What sort of Christian was the author of the defiant lines: "The Church and State may go to hell, but I'll go to my Anna"?

The Bishop of London declares that Londoners can "do with fewer sermons." The people in the pews will echo Shakespeare: "For this relief much thanks."

It is quite all right. We have received a four-page leaflet, issued from North London, proving that the British really are the chosen people. And it is all backed up by exact references to Biblical texts. Whatever we do, or don't do, proves the writer's theses. Above all, we note that God promised Abraham the gates of the world, and the British possess these in Aden, Malta, Gibraltar, etc. There is no more to be said.

And then we turned to a report of the Rhodesia Land case, now before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. And we find that when Dr. Jameson led his men into Matabeleland, it was with the arrangement that each one was to be allowed "3,000 morgen" of land belonging to the Matabele—the British Government retaining the right to purchase at £3 per morgen. "The loot" was also to be divided between the British South African Company and the officers and men. We daresay there is Biblical warranty for this, if only "Ye shall spoil the Egyptians."

The late Rev. Arthur Gamble, of Bradbourne Vicarage, near Ashbourne, Derbyshire, left estate to the value of £59,056; and Canon Pepys, of Torquay, died worth £20,062. "Blessed be ye poor."

The Church Army advertises for a hundred "keen young Churchwomen," over twenty-one years of age, to take the place of evangelists gone to the Front. The proviso is made that they need not be experienced or highly educated. We should imagine that not being educated would be a distinct advantage.

"The Passer By" of the *Birmingham Gazette* is responsible for the following:—

In a certain town there were two prominent men of the same name. One died and the other is with the Army in the Holy Land. The latter sent a telegram to his wife. It is said that it was delivered to the widow of the other man.

The contents of the wire were: "Having a hot time; absolutely fit."

The fatherly attentions of Providence are not entirely absorbed by the World-War. Earthquake shocks have been felt at Milan and Bergamo, and Mount Stromboli has been in violent eruption.

The *St. Mark's, Noel Park, Parish Magazine* cites an unnamed Birmingham business man as saying: "On reflection it will be found natural for the business community to afford support (to missions). The circulation of the Scriptures transforms savage tribes into civilized nations, with resulting commercial needs." On which the writer of the article comments: "It is doubtless due to the influence of Christianity that honest trading among the infant nations of Africa and elsewhere has been rendered easy." Well, we have pointed out that the missionary is the agent in advance of the merchant, and we are pleased to see it frankly recognized. As to honest trading, it would be interesting to get the opinion of some intelligent members of these "infant nations" on some of the trading that goes on *here*—particularly on the numerous fortunes made during the War. And a little attention to the plunder of the poor Matabele by the whites, some particulars of which are now being made public before the Privy Council, are also enlightening on the "honest trading" introduced among the "infant nations."

The *Star* asks, "Is the Kaiser mad?" because it is alleged he believes himself to be an envoy of God. Personally, we believe the Kaiser is suffering from religious mania; but the evidence of the *Star* is not conclusive. Look at the clergy in this country who believe themselves to be envoys of God. Look, too, at the people who believe that Great Britain is picked out by God to do this or that. Being an envoy of God—in the case of individuals or nations—is too common a form of stupidity for it to be classed as insanity.

Mr. Hall Caine asks, in the *Sunday Herald*, "Why does God allow the War to go on?" And, after an avalanche of commonplaces, replies: "I do not know; I do not see; only God knows and sees; and before his awful Will I bow and wait." In that case it would have been more sensible to wait in silence. To believe it will be all right when one's reason tells one it is all wrong, is as near the ridiculous as one can get.

"I should have been better pleased if clergymen had been made liable for combatant service," declares Lady Eden. The dear clergy will not like this voice from Eden.

"I would rather live in the next ten years than in any time I have ever read of," says Dr. J. R. Mott, of the North American Young Men's Christian Association. Many thousands of Christian soldiers will echo the sentiment.

A provincial paper asks its readers for suggestions for cutting down the gas-bill. We suggest that the dear clergy be placed on half-pay.

The clergy have rare noses for business in spite of their professions of indifference to mundane affairs. The *Evening Standard* prints a spirited protest against charging for admission to parts of Westminster Abbey, and adds that the clergy have "no shame, no compunction." The remarks would apply with equal force to St. Paul's Cathedral.

The Irish Catholic Bishops would resist Conscriptio "by all the means that are consonant with the law of God." That is precisely how the Kaiser wages war.

The dear *Daily News* considers that the poet Swinburne was a "violent-mouthed Republican." The poet was not so "violent-mouthed" as some of the Free Church evangelists who are so admired by our contemporary.

The National Free Church Council is arranging for a special united intercession service on Whit-Monday. Pity the sorrows of a poor old deity!

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—May 26, Maesteg.
- M. R. HUNTER.—There is a prepared form of Burial Service, which could be obtained of the N. S. S. Secretary. We believe Mr. F. J. Gould has also prepared forms suitable for other ceremonies.
- "BEATRICE."—Pleased to hear from you. Will publish as early as possible.
- A. E. MADDOCK.—Received. Thanks.
- H. DAWSON.—Thanks. Owing to the position of affairs in the printing trade, and over which we have no control, the paper is a few hours later in being published than it used to be. When the War ends that delay will be removed.
- T. M.—Rather too technical for our columns although highly interesting. The only criticism we care to pass at the moment is that you appear to have overlooked the consideration as that natural selection must be chiefly—if not entirely—operative during the period of procreation.
- C. MURRAY.—Go ahead and write us again when it possible to fix something definite.
- H. MOTTE.—We appreciate your remark that our great fault is that we do not write more. But as we are already at it all day and every day, we do not see our way to remedy it. Glad to know of your interest in the "best of all causes."
- D. KEIR.—Shall be pleased to see you when you have time to call.
- W. H. HUNT.—Mr. Manson's book was published originally at 6s. Subsequently a sixpenny edition was issued. But we cannot say if either are still in print.
- R. MITCHELL.—Thanks. Shall be able to use one, if not both.
- G. E. FUSSELL.—Your MS. is in type. Pressure on our space has hitherto prevented its appearance.
- J. W. WHITE.—Glad to hear there is a resolve to form a new Branch at West Stanley. Let us know if we can be of any assistance?
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- 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 brought his lecturing season to a close with two addresses at Abertillery on Sunday last. The afternoon meeting was a good one, and very animated. In the evening the hall was crowded. A number of friends had come in from surrounding districts, and we were pleased to learn that endeavours are being made to commence work at Pontypool. Next autumn, if not earlier, we hope to have work going on in Aherdare, Pontypool, Pontypridd, and Cardiff. These, in addition to the places now active, will give South Wales a good place in our Movement.

Since last September, Mr. Cohen has spent few week-ends in London, and he will not be sorry for three or four months free from provincial lecturing. Travelling nowadays is costly and uncomfortable, and as provincial lecturing means about three days out of London, this, with running a weekly paper single-handed, looking after business details, attending to correspondence, etc., a promised slackening becomes attrac-

tive. The compensation for all the work is that meetings during the winter have been invariably successful. They have been good—sometimes better than good, and all witness to a real revival of interest in Freethought.

We publish this week a new pamphlet by Mr. Cohen, *God and Man: an Essay on Common Sense and Natural Morality*. The pamphlet has been written with an eye to the questions that are under discussion between Freethinkers and Christians, and will, we feel sure, prove useful. The price of the pamphlet is 3d., postage ½d.

There are several other things by Mr. Cohen in the press which we hope to issue shortly. Among others, there are two of a series of four-page pamphlets, which we think will be ready in a few days. They will be sold at as low a price as possible, in order to secure a large circulation.

The *Freethinker* was first issued, as a monthly, in May, 1881, so that we celebrate this month our thirty-seventh anniversary. No other Freethought journal in this country, or, we believe, in Europe, has ever existed for so long a period. And it is pleasing to record that this thirty-seventh anniversary finds the paper in perfect health. In spite of the War, the circulation is better than ever. We believe its influence is increasing, and, thanks to its many friends, there are few papers in the country that have undergone less change during this very trying war period, and we think we may safely say that without the *Freethinker* our Movement would not be to-day where it is. On the death of G. W. Foote, we assured everybody concerned that the *Freethinker* would weather the storm. So far, at least, that assurance has been justified. Many things we should have done have remained undone owing to the War, but these plans are delayed, not abandoned. We are dreaming big dreams, and, with the help of our friends, we hope to see them one day materialize.

We see that a regulation is to be issued forbidding the return of unsold copies of papers. Until that is the case we shall continue to send out the *Freethinker* on the old conditions. When the regulation is issued we shall be compelled to rely upon our readers for all help in improving our circulation. Perhaps it will then be advisable to revise the *Freethinker League* which worked so well in the earlier period of the War. We allowed that to lapse because we were so full of work in other directions, but it was a fruitful plan, and contained great possibilities.

Mrs. E. Palmer will lecture to-day (May 12) for the Southampton Branch of the N. S. S. at the Waverley Hall, St. Mary's Road, on "The Endowment of Motherhood." The lecture commences at 7 o'clock. We hope there will be a good attendance.

The New York *Truthseeker* reprints from these columns, with suitable acknowledgment, a recent article by Mr. A. B. Moss, in its "Children's Corner." Editor Macdonald has a keen eye for a good thing when he sees it.

All Things to All Men.

How cunningly are Christian teachings planned
By him above,
For if I gain I praise thy bounteous hand,
O God of Love!

And if perchance stands still my natal star,
Or downwards moves,
I recollect how strictly chastened are
Those whom God loves.

And though with God to jest I do not choose
— 'Twere grievous sin,
'Tis surely like the vulgar "Tails, you lose
And heads, I win"!

G. H. BOSWORTH.

The N.S.S. Conference.

THE National Secular Society's Annual Conference meets in London on May 19 (Whit-Sunday), and this is practically the last opportunity of calling attention to the fact.

The Conference promises to be well attended, and I personally hope that every Branch of the Society will see that it is represented. Being democratic, in fact, as well as in words, I believe in settling a Society's affairs by an appeal to *all* concerned, and by seeing that all express an opinion on the conduct of affairs.

The published Agenda shows that matters are to be decided which will vitally affect the Society and its work. I refer specially to the motions on re-organization which stand in my name. These have not been drawn up without careful consideration, and I am gratified to know that they have commanded general approval. While this is gratifying, it is not surprising. My twenty-eight years' experience in the N.S.S., as speaker and writer, has given me a wide and intimate knowledge of the opinions of Freethinkers all over the country, and I knew that in setting down those resolutions I was only putting into words what was a general feeling.

The great thing to be done was to give members all over the country as direct a voice as present circumstances permit over the Society's affairs. As will be seen by reference to the Agenda, I propose doing this by asking the Conference to elect an Executive of ten members direct, and, which all business people will agree, is quite large enough for effective work. The present method of an Executive formed of perpetual vice-presidents—is itself a practical negation of democracy—and delegates from Branches means, in practice, delegates from London Branches only. And when, as is actually the case, there may be five or six vice-presidents belonging to one London Branch, with a delegate added, it will be realized that government by Branch delegation becomes pure sham. In such circumstances it is small wonder that provincial Branches have complained for years that the Executive's view of affairs became parochial, that the operations were conducted with too great an eye to London alone, that the provincial Branches lost interest, and that many have died out in consequence.

Direct election will, I feel sure, create a greater sense of responsibility on the one side and increased interest on the other. I do not claim anything new for this. The Secular Society, Limited, Committee is elected by the Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting elects the Executive of the Malthusian League, of the Secular Education League, and of the R.P.A. So large an organization as the National Union of Teachers, with its 100,000 members and its control of very large funds, elects its Executive by direct appeal to the members. Many other Societies adopt the same policy. It is the only genuine democratic plan. It will be observed that in my suggestions *all* Branches, London and provincial, are placed upon an equality. Any Branch may nominate one of its members for election on the Executive, and it will be possible to elect any member or members of the old Executive; but when he is elected he will represent the Conference—that is, the whole of the Society whose affairs he is helping to conduct. It need hardly be said that if my proposal is adopted care will be taken by the Conference to elect only such delegates as are certain to attend; there will thus be guaranteed a regular and full attendance at all meetings of the Executive. To prevent misapprehension, I may as well say that, as President, I should abstain from nominating any candidates. The choice should come from the Society itself.

I am aiming not only at making progress, but in seeing that the progress made is conserved. The inadequacy of the old plan is shown by the shrinkage of the Society year after year. The number of Freethinkers was growing, but the N.S.S. was not reaping the fruits of the growth.

Since I threw myself, at the end of 1915, with extra energy into the work of reviving the Movement, I think it may be fairly said considerable progress has been achieved. The work has been re-established in Manchester and Liverpool—where it was in a state of suspended animation; and new Branches have been opened at Nuneaton, Southampton, Portsmouth, Falkirk, Swansea, and Goldthorpe, with two new Branches in London. Application is also being made

for new Branches at Coventry and Maesteg (S. Wales); and there are other Branches in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and South Wales in course of formation.

I have only one desire in this matter, and that is to see a Society built up that is worthy of our Cause. I think my long services—freely and ungrudgingly given to the Society—is evidence that I am no self-seeker in any direction. Seeking office or distinction is not in my line. The office of President of the N. S. S. brings me nothing but work and responsibilities. It carries no salary, and I have not charged, nor do I intend to accept, the value of a postage stamp from its funds for any expense which the office involves. But having taken the office of President, I should be unworthy of the post did I not act as I think best for the interests of the Society. It might have been easier to have sat still, said nothing, done nothing, and just let things drift. But that is not my conception of a President's duty, and I have the best reasons for thinking that I have the appreciation of all real friends of the N. S. S. for what I have done, and their confidence and good wishes in what I am now proposing in order to place affairs on a really business-like footing.

CHAPMAN COHEN, *President, N. S. S.*

Materialism.

MATERIALISM is the philosophy which recognizes and insists that, in the light of human experience, all emotions, feelings, and thoughts are nothing more than the products of the functioning of a material organism. It denies that there is any truth in the supposition that human beings possess a soul which is considered to be a spiritual entity, distinct from the body.

As a world-philosophy, it reduces everything to matter in motion, and claims that everything is a product of matter in motion. It recognizes that, so far as science is concerned, matter has always existed, and has always been in motion. Consequently, it refuses to acknowledge any necessity for postulating the existence of a being called "God," in order to account for or interpret the existence of the universe.

To the Materialist there is no need to postulate a creative mind, either external to, or immanent in, the universe, in order to bring about a unification of human knowledge. The unification of knowledge, if it is ever to be accomplished, will have to be brought about by the gathering together of all the available facts of the universe. These facts will have to be honestly acknowledged, and from them we shall have to make our deductions, if knowledge is to be made more and more reliable. That we shall some day fully understand the universe is not a claim put forward by Materialists. Materialism is not a philosophy which professes to explain everything. It is an attempt to describe the various processes which can be observed as taking place in the universe; and it is an endeavour to give accurate expression, so far as possible, to our conception of the relativity of those processes to each other, and more particularly to human life. With regard to the unification of knowledge, Materialists only hope to bring about that unification in the sense of eliminating from our ever-increasing stock of knowledge all false theories and all contradictions. Human knowledge will, no doubt, always be incomplete; but, even so, that is no reason why it should not become more unified, or more harmoniously wrought together, so far as it goes. But we must be ever on our guard against filling up the gaps with false theories, even when we find that such theories may be very pleasing.

Modern Materialism is essentially evolutionary. It recognizes that the various entities which we see around us have been formed by the perpetual rearrangements of the elements of Nature, which take place everywhere. There is no such thing as perfect rest, or a perfect static

state; all rest is relative. Consequently, as all matter, so far as we know, is in a state of perpetual motion, new combinations of the various atoms of matter are bound to take place, and produce entities in unnumbered varieties. Hence, we may conceive of the universe as consisting of matter manifesting itself in its various states of motion, from the motions which take place in a nebula to the movements which are known to occur in the highest forms of life.

The origin of the universe is a question that has vexed the mind of man in almost every age. One theory or another has been put forward in order to explain to us how the universe came into existence. But the Materialist is unable to discover that the universe ever had an origin, so far as matter in motion is concerned. Matter in motion being the fundamental reality of the universe, it is correct to speak of the origin of the various parts of the universe, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, or any particular entity with which we are familiar. But it must be remembered that it is an origin with regard to form, or structure, and not of the matter which manifests itself in certain forms or structures. For instance, the earth, as such, was at one time non-existent, but the matter of which it is composed has always been in existence; consequently, when speaking of the origin of the earth, we should mean the origin of the earth's form, and not the origin of the matter in motion out of which the earth has evolved.

Perhaps we had better take a more simple illustration of how we may speak of the origin of a particular entity, and yet admit that the matter out of which that entity has been formed has always been in existence.

We are justified in speaking of the origin of a table, because we know that men do make tables. But the wood out of which the table has been made existed before the table came into existence. Before being cut, and carved, and put together in the form of a table, the wood was to be seen as planks and logs, of certain shapes and sizes, which had their origin at the saw-mill. Yet these planks and logs previously existed as the trunks and branches of trees; and the trees had their origin, not in newly created matter, but in matter which already existed in the forms of various chemical and physical elements, which combine together in order to produce trees. The elements from which our trees have evolved can be traced to the soil in which the seeds have been nourished; to the rain that has watered the soil; to the atmosphere surrounding the trees; and to the rays of the sun, which have given their light and heat. Thus we are able to strengthen the evidence that matter has always existed, but is ever manifesting itself in new forms, owing to its being in perpetual motion, and we are forced to the conclusion that the idea of a divine origin of the universe is a myth.

So far as we know, every process that has contributed to the evolution of the inorganic parts of the universe has taken place in a purely natural way. But, interesting as a review of the evolution of inorganic processes would be, it is not necessary to enter into such detail for the purpose of the present essay. The anti-Materialist is usually more concerned about the questions of the origin of life and consciousness. He considers that the views which he holds regarding these questions form the bulwarks of his position as taken up in opposition to the Materialist. We must, therefore, discuss the position of the philosophy of Materialism concerning life and consciousness.

From the standpoint of science, there is no strict line of demarcation between the inorganic and organic. Matter in the inorganic state seems to imperceptibly merge into matter in its organic state. The same elements are to be found in inorganic as in organic nature;

but, in the latter, certain processes can be observed to take place which cannot be observed in the former. These processes are bound up with the fact that living matter is more highly evolved than non-living matter; and the combinations of the elements are more complex in the former than in the latter. In view of this, and in absence of proof of the special creation of living matter, we are led as a logical necessity to conclude that it has evolved, by natural processes, out of inorganic matter.

Knowing that microscopic particles of matter are capable of effecting continual recombinations, the difficulty of grasping the idea of the development of the living from the non-living should be greatly minimized.

It must be remembered that the earliest forms of life were not so complex as the highly developed forms of life which we see around us to-day. The simplest living entities would, comparatively speaking, be only a step or two in advance of inorganic matter so far as the combination of their elements is concerned. It is, therefore, a mistake to argue against the idea of the evolution of the organic from the inorganic, as if it implied the immediate development of even a lowly multi-cellular animal from non-living matter. Yet this idea seems to be at the back of many minds.

The formation of life-substance, or protoplasm, was, we are informed by scientists, dependent upon the combination of carbon with such elements as oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and sulphur. All these elements are found in inorganic matter; and, as metabolism, or the rearrangement of the elements of nature, is one of nature's essential processes, it is reasonable to expect that such a combination of these elements, as would produce living matter, should occur. That such elements, as are required to make possible the evolution of life, did happen to come together, at a time when the earth had cooled sufficiently to allow water to form on its surface, is matter of fact. And, the conclusion that this took place, without the influence of a designer operating upon nature, is supported by the fact that no elements, apart from those found in the inorganic world, are to be discovered in living matter. While the various processes—such as response to external stimuli, respiration, digestion, etc.—which occur in living matter, bear the mark, as it were, of having been evolved by a series of improvements, often tediously and painfully brought about, which give no evidence that they are the products of an all-wise being. But, if life started as protoplasm, unconsciously produced by nature, we can to some extent understand the imperfections of organic evolution; as, indeed, they are what might be expected in the circumstances. To assume the existence of a perfect, divine being, as the creator of living beings is to make the problem of the origin of life more difficult of solution; as we have then to reconcile the existence of a perfect being with that of his imperfect creations.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be concluded.)

The Blank Wall.

XII.

THE complexity of human life, its infinite paradoxes and bewildering inconsistencies, must impede and divert the Rationalist stream of thought and criticism. It is, indeed, debatable whether life is anything more than a deliberately organized evolution of mistakes, errors, and tragedies—domestic, commercial, racial, national, and even international. As Freethinkers, we may be quite certain that there is no "All-powerful," "Almighty God," or "Devil"; that these conceptions are primitive in origin; but, at the same time, we must acknowledge the very real and material existence of

a universal ignorance which works "evil" miracles of misery, insanity, and stupidity beyond the most extravagant dreams of "Gods" or nightmares of "Devils."

"God" quite obviously does nothing, because there is no such creature. The "Devil" does nothing, because he, too, is a myth. It is Man who is "God"; it is Man who is "Devil." It is man who does a little good when he can if he is so disposed; it is Man who makes manifest the stupidity which devastates Humanity as a whole. We have removed from our brains the primitive offal of anthropomorphic conceptions of "God" and "Devil," but we have to acknowledge the reality of Man; and this is the first positive step towards our hope of Progress; it fixes the focus of sanity upon the central and fundamental fact about human life. It is better to shame a bad man than to "shame the Devil"; it is more beautiful to praise a good man than to praise "God." Religion "passes things on." Religion creates a vacuum in the common sense of man; it throws the onus upon the alleged reality of "something" outside the normal life of man; it befuddles the intellect and drugs the consciousness with illusion. Religion, like all superstitious elements in the primitive mind, side-tracks the seeker after truth; Man is decoyed from the realization that he, and he alone, can alter his life and make it exactly what he desires it to be. Do men want Peace? Do men desire the destruction of brute force and War?....."Pray," says the Church. "God can do all things. God is Almighty." But Man is slowly learning better than this; he is learning that "God" does not exist, and that man is greater and lesser (as he chooses) than "God" or "Devil." This is the death of Religion, and the birth of Light.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

The Sinner.

SHE came into the cafe three days of every week. And always about the same time. Her mien, contrary to that inaction so perceptible in the average cafe patron, was aloof and decisive. With marked persistency she went direct to one table, whenever vacant, not far from where we, a small coterie of business fellows, usually sat.

For almost twelve months her consistent appearance had gone on, until the regularity of her habit gradually evolved a certain pleasure for us. We eagerly anticipated her arrival, and looked forward to her stately deportment as a relief from the daily worry of business exactitudes.

She was stately, and superbly reserved. The continuous curves that gave shape to her wonderful form; the delicate lines of her distinctive features; the simple taste and rare quality of her apparel, all went to make up the fine commanding air that coerced a clamorous, yet distant, praise from all. One of the fairest flowers in nature's glorious garden, she was sent to gladden the heart of man.

It was grand how she kept the baseness of men at bay; kept them from wantonly crushing the delicate petals that formed the beauty of her being. We watched, and rejoiced when she cut dead the intended advances of would-be philanderers. And yet how strange! It was a discreet commonplace with us that her association with a certain city merchant could be "explained." In the ordinary course of things this information would have left us unmoved, such affairs were merely items "en passant." But this girl's position seemed anomalous, and it was difficult to reconcile our idealistic appreciation with the somewhat ugly fact. Yet we never dragged her down to vulgar censure. We wanted to think she was different from the coarser vassals of her class. She was different. She possessed a dignity that kept her freedom out of the mud-rucks of lust, and we often wondered what casuistry could be at work. But our speculations met a blank wall, so we accepted facts with a gracious leniency.

Our jurisdiction was influenced by the philosopher who, in spite of a strenuous business career, had been able to fortify his intelligence by an extensive field of reading. We reaped the benefit from controversial combats he had with another member of our party—a Churchman.

The girl figured prominently, many times, in these debates. From them, our hereditary ideas of morality slowly became

obsolete, and our admiration for the girl rather increased than lessened. For she had a champion in the philosopher. This was why the Churchman called him a Positivist; which, in our limited opinion, seemed an honour to Positivism.

Perhaps we were not competent judges, for we were not initiated in the mysteries of theological paradoxes. But the philosopher's creed appealed to our world-worn experience; an experience untrammelled by the vagaries of artificial premises. To submit ourselves to feminine admonitions, we were certainly "shamefully" materialistic in our conclusions; yet they were healthier, and more natural, than the absolute moralizings of the Churchman. And so the Colossus, Sin, dwarfed before our analysis. The girl was just a child of Nature, and a victim of an emaciated society.

One day a wounded sergeant limped his way into her reserve, and we watched, and wondered. Weeks dragged into months, till at last the sergeant came, shorn of the hospital blue, looking magnificent in a perfect civilian cut. And well it fitted his splendid frame; perhaps just a little spoiled by the familiar limp; and there was a refinement, somehow overlooked before, which glowed from his face.

Who was he? What was he? We were not prompted by petty inquisitiveness; but this man had trespassed upon our preserve, and, with a sense of egotistical proprietary, our mental interrogations demanded satisfactory credentials. That he was respectable in worldly possessions seemed certain, for one of us had seen him drive up in a neat two-seater, a car that had many times of late been seen standing at the cafe door.

But our curiosity was never satisfied, for they both suddenly ceased to keep their *rendezvous*. We did elicit certain information (which was as startling as it was meagre) from the waitress who had generally served them. They had married, and left the town!

And so jurisprudence was overtaxed. The Churchman gasped, pitied the man, and reviled the girl. Poor atom! That she should have dared to make a bid for happiness; dared to stretch forth and pluck the solitary flower by the wayside, to grasp it eagerly, ravenously inhaling its glorious fragrance. It was the one cheering emblem along the barren road—and she stole it. Still sinning? What alchemy is this? Is happiness distilled only in the crucible of prudery?

The philosopher quietly said:—

"Nature, in her wondrous way,
The laws of man derides;
Herself the arbiter of sin,
A sense supreme provides."

The Pantheist!

W.

Correspondence.

WHAT WILL YOU PUT IN ITS PLACE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With your kind permission, I would like to offer a word or two anent your "Views and Opinions" of April 28. At the outset, I beg leave to differ as to "Nothing" being the best answer to the above question. I would prefer to answer the question by submitting that an appreciation of life in accordance with the explanations given by human knowledge rather than dogmatic assertions. In place of Christianity, I would offer a discovery of the world and its wonders. This seems to be rather more than weeding; it is rather, I would say, reconstruction. In "Our Aim" you say: "Of course, if a man believes that you cannot have a sound science, a healthy morality, or a progressive sociology without supernaturalism, he is warranted in asking for something equally effective in its place." Is this not giving your whole case away? Doesn't this apply to Christians generally? You say that the Christian blunders when he asks the Freethinker to account for the existence of evil. You say that is his own concern. In my humble sphere, I am glad when Christians ask me such a question, because it gives me an opportunity to try to disabuse their inherited barbaric conceptions. At the same time, I admit that the question of evil is important. We point to the evil in the world as a disproof of a ruling benevolent intelligence, but we must remember that the meaning of evil is entirely

different to the Freethinker and the Christian. The Christian accounts for evil by assuming a wilful personality. The Freethought conception is more in accordance with the facts of life; the chief trouble being the want of congruity or agreement among mankind. While Freethinkers do not see in Nature any specially favourably disposed intelligence, neither do they see any specially evilly disposed intelligence apart from this world. In making my little effort, I might say that I have never been satisfied with the answer that Freethinkers in the past have given to this question. The answer is best given in the work of Freethinkers; and in this respect, Mr. Editor, I hold you second to none. Our storehouse is so richly endowed that it is not at all necessary to give such abrupt answers as "Nothing" and "Common sense."—I hold this to be the most important question of all. It is a real revolution for anyone to view life without God rather than with God. I have Christian friends with whom I have discussed this question for very many years; and although they may continue in the Christian fold to the end, still I believe they are better humans for our fraternizing. But if they should change their persuasion, I would suggest that they should be helped to feel that the great bosom of Humanity is ever ready to welcome them. If they ask for bread, we should not offer them a stone and say, "Nothing."

J. FOTHERGILL.

[We do not see in Mr. Fothergill's letter any point of vital disagreement. Our whole case was that all that is valuable and makes for good in life is already here, and more or less active, apart from Christianity. Consequently, the removal of Christianity is no more than the dissipation of an illusion.—EDITOR.]

A WARNING TO FREETHINKERS.

SIR,—May I support your advice, given in the last issue of the *Freethinker*, for Secularists everywhere to take instant action to resist further encroachments upon civil liberties by those who want their religion taught in the public schools at other peoples' expense? They may take my word for it that the danger is real, and that, like the prophet Habbakuk, the present Government is "capable de tout." Any day may give us a rude surprise, and if we are unprepared some secret, wretched compact will be embodied into an "agreed" Bill and rushed through the House of Commons before any action can be taken. The matter is, therefore, urgent; and it should be remembered that when once a measure is on the Statute Book, it is the Devil's own business to get it taken off again. Once let the ecclesiastics gain the strategic initiative and dig themselves in and the difficulty of dislodging them will be increased ten-fold.

Secular Education will not be won without an organized fight for it, and every Secularist should feel it a matter of personal honour to take his part in the struggle. How can he do this? By speeches, by papers before literary and debating societies, by constant correspondence in the newspapers, by organizing special meetings in its support, and perhaps, best of all, by becoming a member of the Secular Education League, which badly needs new friends at the present time. Its membership should be doubled within the next few months, and I hope that hundreds of Freethinkers will apply for membership without delay. I shall be glad to send information to anyone desiring it.

H. SNELL.

19 Buckingham Street, W.C. 2.

SIR,—Thanks for last week's article on the new Education Bill. Acting upon your suggestion, I have posted a copy to the M.P. for North Salford, and the object of this letter is to appeal to all friends of the *Freethinker* to do the same to their Parliamentary representative. An organized action of this kind will have far-reaching effect, but it should be done at once. I will also see that a resolution in support of the Secular Solution is sent to the Education Minister from our Branch without delay.

H. BLACK, Hon. Sec. Manchester Branch,

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

—*Popc.*

Obituary.

North and West London Freethinkers will hear with much regret of the death, on April 26, of Mrs. Theresa Cottrell, the wife of Mr. E. Cottrell, at the age of sixty-five. Mr. and Mrs. Cottrell have both been intimately associated with our Society for over forty years, and for more than half this period were regular attendants at all Freethought meetings, and were among the founders of the old Paddington Branch. Mrs. Cottrell was a most zealous supporter of the late Charles Bradlaugh, and a reader of the *Freethinker* from its inception. She was buried at East Finchley on May 1, and a Secular Service was held. We sympathize deeply with Mr. Cottrell in his sad bereavement.—E. M. VANCE.

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, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Democracy and Foreign Affairs."

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, G. Rulé, A Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, E. Burke, A Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner of Ridley Road): 11.30, Mr. F. Shaller, "Why I am a Secularist."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, H. V. Storey, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 3.15, K. B. Kough, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., A Lecture; Clapham Common, 6.30, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., A Lecture.

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Ratcliffe, Dales, and Shaller.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beaver Street, Goldthorpe): 3, "Some Remarks Concerning Hell."

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Waverley Hall, St. Mary's Road): 7, Mrs. E. Palmer, "The Endowment of Motherhood."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. First Sunday Ramble.—Meet Chorlton-cum-Hardy Tram Terminus 10.30; Jackson's Boat 11.30. Will members coming please send card to Secretary, or leave their name at 68 Tib Street, Manchester, not later than Saturday morning.

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OF THE

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ON

WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 19, 1918.

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