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## Views and Opinions.

### Deity and Design.

Last week we dealt with the more metaphysical aspects of the design argument. This week we purpose dealing with the more popular form—the one that is associated with the name of Paley, chiefly on account of his having popularized an argument that belonged to his predecessors. Paley's statement has all the merit of simplicity. We see objects which we know proceed from the work of man. We infer a maker from the thing made. In nature we see objects presenting similar marks of design or adaptation. And, again, we are equally warranted in arguing back from the thing made to the maker. So many parts are brought together in the case of a humanly produced object that it would be folly to ascribe such a combination to chance. Must it not be equal folly to ascribe to chance the bringing together all the parts that go to make up an animal or an organism? That is the argument reduced to its simplest terms, and, under one form or another, it is still the most widely used of all theistic defences.

### A False Analogy.

The weaknesses of this are manifest and manifold, and these have been often pointed out, although the fundamental flaw appears to have generally escaped notice. It is not a true analogy at all. The inference that a watch or a machine is made is not based upon an examination of the parts. It is based upon previous knowledge that such things are made. Without that knowledge a watch would carry no more marks of design than a caterpillar. The steps are from the known maker to the known manufactured article, and then from a known-made article back to an assumed maker. In the case of the world or an animal the only likeness between that and the machine is that both exist. But we have no previous knowledge of world-makers upon which to build. Or it is pointed out by Mill that this does not give a creator of the universe, only a moulder of the material. That is true, but the believer might reply, all I require at present is an intelligence that creates animal forms and cosmical structures. We can settle the larger question of creation later. As Free-thinkers have pointed out that the contrivances for evil in the world are at least as elaborate as those for good, and while both may show wisdom they cannot both show goodness. Or, again, if animals are designed to live,

their imperfections are so many evidences against even the wisdom of their alleged maker. And to all of this the Theist might reply: "Granted, I am not arguing, at present for a wise or a good creator. I am only arguing for the existence of a God. And for that purpose a God who, is not wholly good, or not wholly wise, or not wholly powerful, will serve. My case is simply that a God exists. Yours is, there is no evidence for any such existence. It is enough for me to establish his existence."

\* \* \*

### A Fatal Flaw.

The fundamental flaw in the design argument goes deeper than this attack and defence. Its fault is not that it is inconclusive, or that it does not prove enough, or that the evidence is weak, the real fault is that it is absolutely irrelevant to the question at issue. The argument has no bearing on the issue, the evidence has no relation to the case. To prove this let us give the Theist all for which he asks, remembering that his task is to prove that this world is the product of design. Take any animal structure: How does he know God designed that? "Oh," he replies, "look at the way in which the parts are brought together." But, admitting that the parts have really been brought together by someone, still, how does he know the product was designed? Let us illustrate. We remember once trying to make a pudding. All the parts of that pudding were brought together by us. There was no doubt of that. No one else had a hand in it. So an observer might have argued that the pudding was the result of design. But it really wasn't. It was altogether different from the pudding we designed. The pudding we designed was a gastronomic joy. It was all that a pudding should be. The pudding that resulted from our handiwork was in no way the pudding we designed. It was an entirely different thing. It came through our activity, but it was not the one we designed. Now, granting a God who stands to the world in the same relation as we did to the pudding, how can anyone tell that, although this world may have been made, this was the world designed? He simply cannot do it. There might be a God who manipulates the material of the universe; the world as it is might be the consequence of his manipulation; and yet the world might be an altogether different thing to the one designed.

\* \* \*

### What is Design?

Design, in fact, is not a physical thing at all, and you cannot, by examining physical processes and results, reach design. You cannot start with a material fact and reach intention. You must begin with intention, and end with a comparison of it and the physical fact. Things may be just the same whether there is design or not. If an enemy aeroplane drops a bomb on our house, we cannot logically say that this was the result of a designed act because it was the result of human agency. The airman may have designed to hit St. Paul's or Woolwich Arsenal. The bomb may have broken loose, and dropped sooner than it



was intended to drop. But whether it was dropped by accident, or deliberately aimed at our house and reached its mark, or was intended for the Arsenal and reached us through bad marksmanship, the relation between the means—the bomb—and the end—the explosion—is the same. And we cannot, by examining the material chain of causes, reach design. To do this, we must compare the intention in the mind of the airman with the actual result. If the two agree, there is design; if not, design is absent. But the psychic fact must be first. You may start with mind as a datum; you cannot by any possibility reach it as a logical inference. \* \* \*

#### The Impossibility of Proof.

To warrant a logical belief in design in Nature, three things are necessary. First, one must assume that a God exists. Second, it must be granted that one is acquainted with the intention in the mind of the Deity before creating. Finally, one must be able to compare the intention with the result, and demonstrate their agreement. But the impossibility of knowing the first two things is patent. And without them the third is of no value whatever. The fundamental fault of the Design Argument, therefore, is, as we have said, not its weakness, but its irrelevancy. No amount of examination of Nature can lead back to design. All the volumes that have been written, and all the sermons that have been preached, depicting the varied and cunning structures of Nature, are so much waste of paper and breath. They are no more than dust thrown in the eyes of people. They prove nothing, and can prove nothing. They assume at the beginning all they require at the end. Their God is not something reached by way of inference; it is something assumed at the very outset. And its root is not in civilized reason at all. God, in civilized society, is a mere hereditary appanage. It was born, not of the reason of civilized man, but of the fears and guesses of the savage. To the sane intelligence, the existence of God is not even a question for discussion. There is only a discussion of the history of the belief, and in that is found its strongest and clearest condemnation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### A Popular Delusion.

THE more we study the methods pursued by the pulpit the more evident it becomes that they are at once irresponsible and dishonest, and that their dishonesty is the natural outcome of their irresponsibility. In the overwhelming majority of cases the pulpit is either a coward's castle, or a safety-valve for fools. A tradition still survives that the preacher is Christ's ambassador, entrusted with a message, from another world with which he dare not tamper; his one business being to deliver it in the exact form in which he receives it from his Master. But in as much as his Master is both invisible and silent, and never interferes in any way, he naturally grows careless, and falls into the habit of attributing to his Lord opinions and prejudices which are exclusively his own. In the prayer before the sermon he implores God to supply him with a special message, or to speak himself to the hearts and consciences of the people, well knowing that the discourse about to be delivered is in his pocket, fully written out, or carefully committed to memory, and that in answer to his prayer not a single syllable will be altered or suppressed. Generally speaking, prayer is an insincere, hypocritical exercise, and the same is essentially true of preaching. One of Browning's characters pities a certain preacher's "immense stupidity"; but, as a rule, much more noticeable than the stupidity is the criminal play-acting,

the wicked pretending to speak in the name and by the authority of an absent Deity who never charges the speaker with his misrepresentation. Unfortunately, the hearers continue, to some extent, to take the preacher at his own valuation long after he himself has realized his true position; and as he is never formally called to account, either by the Lord or by the Lord's people, he waxes bolder and bolder, and utilizes the pulpit entirely for the expression of his own idiosyncrasies, eccentricities of temperament, and narrowness as well as shallowness of intellectual view. His theology becomes an endless repetition of meaningless shibboleths, and his messages degenerate into so many self-advertisements. Consequently, he naturally loses all real sense of responsibility, and utters only what he believes will be most acceptable to his audience, or least costly to himself. The other Sunday morning, in a provincial town less than two hundred miles from London, a preacher, occupying for the day the pulpit of a Congregational Tabernacle, took for his text Matthew xvi. 24: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The sermon began with the lying assertion that Jesus was the most attractive and popular personality of his own day. Even assuming the historicity of the Gospels the popularity of Jesus was extremely limited, confined to a few localities in an out-of-the-way part of the country, and lasting only for a short time. The tide soon turned against him, and his brief public career ended in humiliating disaster. It is only fair to add that the preacher admitted his ultimate unpopularity, or that he repelled as well as attracted people; but the repulsion was explained as the natural reward of his indomitable fidelity to truth.

But the preacher, undeterred by stubborn facts, declared that Jesus has proved the most attractive personality of the ages, neither Confucius nor the Buddha being in the running at all. Amazing is the audacity of a man who can so utterly ignore the facts as to indulge in such a false declaration without a blush. The people who heard and seemed to enjoy the lie belonged almost exclusively to the so-called middle class, the workers being conspicuous only by their absence, although the streets were crowded while the service was going on. Very probably the statement was one the congregation had heard so often that they took its truth for granted. It was simply one of a host of pulpit platitudes which tickled their vanity and made no demand whatever upon their thinking faculties. The preacher was eminently Scriptural throughout, his discourse from beginning to end bristling with quotations from the Bible; but he was also wholly destitute of the slightest tinge of originality in either exegesis or application. Christianity is defined by the Bishop of Oxford as "a certain kind of personal belief and a certain kind of personal life," but in the sermon under consideration it was reduced to mere imitation of the life of Jesus. To deny self signifies to root it clean out of our nature; to take up the Cross is to face suffering and sorrow cheerfully, and to follow Christ, to shirk no duty, however disagreeable, and welcome death itself in the service of the truth. This, we repeat, was loyalty to the written word, but it lacked the feeblest grip on reality. It was Christianity without Christ, or the old Paganism draped with Christian phraseology. With certain words left out, the discourse might have been given in a Confucian or Buddhist temple. It was Christianity minus its fundamental doctrines that the preacher presented to us. Curiously enough, in the evening of the same day we attended a Unitarian place of worship and listened to practically the same views, but presented with such a vast and vital difference. The Jesus of the morning address rested upon a supernatural basis, while the



Jesus of the evening discourse was a human teacher come from God, whose words should be done by all his professing followers. In the background of the mind each of those two preachers entertained a radically different conception of Christianity from that held by the other. And yet both preached substantially the same Gospel, and both equally had the lie direct given them by the facts of life.

To the Unitarian, the orthodox Church was guilty of betraying the Christian religion with a kiss. During the dark period of the regnancy of ecclesiasticism, Christianity was a dead letter; the beautiful and deeply true sayings of Jesus were as totally neglected as if they had never been spoken. Creed and ritual were treated with supreme respect, while conduct, which Matthew Arnold regarded as three-fourths of life, received but slight attention. And yet, the preacher assured us, the humble-minded, sweet-tempered, beautifully spirited teacher of Nazareth is destined to win the world's heart and bring all life into loving subjection to himself. But here again we are face to face with the irresponsible extravagance of the Christian pulpit. The supernatural Jesus is much more popular even to-day than the merely human one. The Congregational minister faced a congregation that more than half filled a moderately large church, while the Unitarian's audience numbered less than twenty. It is a vain delusion to speak of the popularity of any of the hundred different versions of the Gospel Jesus now extant. Superstition dies hard, but its death-knell has sounded and its grave is already dug. The day of Jesus is past, and Man's day is dawning. Even God himself is almost gone. As Swinburne says:—

Thou art judged, O Judge, and the sentence is gone forth  
against thee, O God.

Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept for a span;  
Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee lord  
over man.

For his face is set to the East, his feet on the past and its dead.

The very divines are to-day rapidly manufacturing  
Atheists.

J. T. LLOYD.

### What a Deaf Girl Did.

Hail to the steadfast soul,  
Which, unflinching and keen,  
Wrought to erase from its depth  
Mist, and illusion, and fear!  
Hail to the spirit which dared  
Trust its own thoughts, before yet  
Echoed her back by the crowd!  
Hail to the courage which gave  
Voice to its creed, ere the creed  
Won consecration from Time.

—Matthew Arnold, "Lines on Harriet Martineau."

THE life of Harriet Martineau is the simple record of a quiet and eminently useful existence devoted to the service of her fellows. It will be of interest to those who never read the literary works of this great and noble woman. So far back as 1832 Lucy Aikin wrote to Dr. Channing: "You must know that a great, new light has risen among Englishwomen." Lord Brougham, a still better authority, remarked to a friend about the same time: "There is at Norwich a deaf girl, who is doing more good than any man in the country."

It was in that quiet cathedral city that Harriet Martineau was born. She has given us a picture of life in the town; of its clerical exclusiveness and intellectual stagnation, only slightly modified by the social gatherings of a few cultured families, and by an infusion of French blood, the result of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Martineaus themselves were among the "aliens" whom that intolerant measure drove to our

then hospitable shores. At Norwich they had flourished for about a century, part of the family devoting itself to silk-weaving, while others were in the medical profession. Harriet's father died young, leaving a family of eight children, of whom Harriet and her brother James, the distinguished theologian, are both famous.

Harriet was barely of age when she published her first book, *Devotional Exercises for Young Persons*, a modest religious publication of the Unitarian School, in which she had been brought up. It is a work of very little consequence, but it was the harbinger of a splendid series of productions which were destined to raise her to the pinnacle of fame and influence.

Her mind ripened rapidly, and there was soon a marked improvement in her choice of subjects. Works of fiction, travel, folk-lore, biography, and sociology, followed in rapid succession. Her fertile and versatile pen even attempted a series of stories illustrating the working of the principles of Political Economy, which had been laid down in an abstract manner by Adam Smith, Bentham, and Romilly. These stories had a wide circulation, and were translated into several Continental languages. She found time for travel, visiting the United States, and meeting with a most cordial reception. On her return to this country, she associated herself with Charles Knight, the famous publisher, and contributed a number of useful books to the popular series which earned for him a well-deserved and enduring reputation.

With the object of lightening her literary labours by variety, she next employed her busy pen on a series of tales for children, of which *The Settlers at Home* and *Feats on the Fjord* are still read. At the same time she produced two novels of a very marked and distinguished character, called *Deerbrook* and *The Hour and the Man*, the latter dealing with the unhappy Toussant L'Ouverture and the Haytian Rebellion. This latter work passed through many editions, and remains, perhaps, her most popular work.

About this time her health failed, and Lord Melbourne pressed upon her acceptance a Government pension, but she was too high-minded and conscientious to accept it. In declining this pension, she pointed out that she could not share in the proceeds of a system of taxation which she had criticized adversely. Her illness lasted several years; but she, characteristically, turned her misfortune to account by writing *Life in a Sick Room*, a work which alike proves her rare courage and serenity under the iron hand of affliction. Soon after her restoration to health, she varied the monotony of a laborious life by a visit to the Orient, and recorded her impressions in *Eastern Life*, a work which is still full of interest, for in it she declared her Freethought opinions.

During all these years her mind had been irresistibly growing, and the result of her mature thought was embodied in *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*, written conjointly with Henry George Atkinson, who was afterwards a frequent contributor to the *National Reformer* and other Secular journals. This volume revealed to all the world that Harriet Martineau was an Atheist. Nor was this her most notable contribution to Freethought literature, for three years later she introduced to the English-speaking world a version of Auguste Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, a work destined to have an enormous effect on contemporary thought. While thus employed, she yet found time to write her *History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace*, which is characterized by its extreme clarity and fine impartiality, and is, perhaps, the finest historical work written by a woman in our language.

From this time it was mainly as a leader-writer in the *Daily News* and as a contributor to *Once a Week* that her



literary ability manifested itself. To the last, in spite of the drawback of bad health, she took the greatest interest in every movement for the bettering of humanity. She lived through a long, happy, useful, irreproachable life, and sank, calmly, full of years, into the grave, regretted and esteemed by all.

Because Harriet Martineau taught the vital truths of Liberty and Fraternity, of good deeds to others, of kindly tolerance, she is worthy of warm and genuine approval. Popularity, applause, and friends were rightly hers. Who knows, when the final result is weighed, who will have done the most good in the world—the artist who adds masterpieces to our literature, or the warm-hearted woman who does her best to alleviate “the weariness, the fever, and the fret” of life? If Freethinkers, still true to the long line of their illustrious dead, keep her memory green, holding her, as she was, the embodiment of true womanhood, then better than in effigy or epitaph will her life be written and her tomb be built in the hearts of her fellow-soldiers in the Army of Human Liberation.

MIMNERMUS.

## Materialism.

### II.

(Continued from p. 273.)

AFTER protoplasm, or the fundamental life-substance, had made its appearance on the earth, there was evolved the cell from which all living beings, that develop in the ordinary way, take their start. The development of this cell-unit was secondary. That is, it was preceded by the formation of un-nucleated, and almost structureless, living matter. The cell-unit is of definite structure, and has a nucleus. It has, therefore, quite a history behind it, which precludes the idea that even so small a form of living matter was specially created.

Here it is not possible to enter into the details of the evolution of sex, or discuss important subjects relating to the biological question of reproduction. Suffice it to say that man does not form an exception to the fact that all higher animals develop from a single cell which is brought into being by the coalescence of a male and a female cell.

From the single cell man evolves, stage by stage, in the same way in which the dog and the horse evolves; and at no time in his development does he show any signs of being under the especial care of a divine creator. Just as in the dog and the horse, cell is added to cell, until the whole body becomes a vast cell state, so it is in man. The various organs of the body are formed by a natural process of evolution; and, as occasion demands, they begin to function, unless from some cause or other the new being is defective. From beginning to end, so far as the development of the bodily structure is concerned, the whole process is a materialistic one. Yet the theologically minded have informed us that man has been made in the image of a divine being, in the sense that he is a spiritual soul, with a specially created body in which he dwells.

We must now deal with the materialistic evolution of the psychic life of man. And, in doing so, we shall find that there is no evidence for the theory that man's consciousness, or his mind, is of divine origin.

The psychic life of man includes the whole of the activity of the nervous system and the brain, whether that activity be conscious or unconscious. Reflex actions, and automatic acts are as much part of our psychic life as mind, or consciousness, is. And every process which takes place in man's psychic life is a manifestation of matter in motion.

Consciousness, which I take to be the same as mind, is a mode of motion that is quite natural to the delicate and highly sensitive matter of which the brain is composed. The purely natural development of mind-life can be traced, from the unconscious sensitivity of the lower forms of animal life, to the brain of the higher animals, including man. Not only so; we can observe it in the evolution of the child into the adult.

The physical basis of mental life has been termed psychoplasm. It consists of protoplasm, which is capable of psychic activity. In the earliest forms of animal life practically the whole of the protoplasm reacts, in an indiscriminate manner, when under the influence of stimuli from without. That is, no specific sense-organs have been developed. Later on, the formation of rather vague sense-organs, which are considered to be the forerunners of the nerves of touch and sight, takes place. Then, in still higher forms of animals, specific organs of sense appear. They are the chemical instruments of smell and taste; and, also, the physical organs of touch, temperament, hearing, and sight. This is followed by another stage in the evolution of the psychic life of animals, in which an approach to consciousness is made. The nervous system becomes more centralized, and impressions made upon the sense-organs by the outside world are, to some extent, unconsciously associated.

Lastly, we have the highest stage of development, in which we find the psychic function of conscious perception, as in the higher vertebrates and in man.

For a fuller statement of the gradual development of consciousness, from the sensitiveness of the protoplasm of the lowest animals, I refer to Haeckel's chapter on “Psychic Gradations,” in the *Riddle of the Universe*. To a large extent I have followed that chapter in making my brief statement of psychic evolution.

It must be remembered that the evolution of psychic life has been very slow, and that a long series of minute developments forms the chain of evolution, by which the simple response to stimuli in the lowest animals is linked to the consciousness of the external world, which manifests itself in the brain of man. Then the fact that the development of mind-life is dependent upon the evolution of psychoplasm into nerve-system and brain will be more easily grasped.

I shall not attempt to give a detailed description of the brain, but will content myself with stating one or two facts in connection with it.

The psychic life of man, both conscious and unconscious, is dependent upon a nervous system, which makes its ramifications into various parts of the body; and upon the groups of nerve-centres situated in the spinal cord and the brain. The nerves consist of bundles of fine white fibres, and are divided into two important classes. We have the sensory nerves, which are subject to nervous action on their end-organs being stimulated. Their end-organs are attached to the skin, and the membrane of the stomach, etc., while the other ends of the sensory nerves are connected with the nerve-centres of the spinal cord and the brain. The sensory nerves are the in-going nerves, as they transmit to the brain and spinal cord impressions made upon their end-organs by the outer world.

Then we have the motor nerves, which are stimulated to nervous action from the nerve-centres. These nerves are, at their outer terminations, mainly attached to the muscles. They are the out-going nerves, and may be set in motion as the result of thought or nerve reflex action. The nerve-centres, both in the spinal cord and the brain, consist of nerve-cells formed of a greyish kind of matter.

In the spinal cord the grey nerve-cells are to be found in the centre, and the white nerve-fibres on the exterior.



On the other hand, the grey nerve-cells of the brain are on the outer side, while the white nerve-fibres spread themselves inside.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be concluded.)

## Acid Drops.

If only the Government would rise to a plain statement, we should dearly like to know who was responsible for the exemption of the clergy from the Military Service Act. Nonconformists avow their indignation at being excluded; so do the Anglicans. And *if* we credit these protests, it seems that the Government alone was responsible. First it put the clergy in, and then it took the clergy out. And *if* we believe the protests of the clergy to be genuine, the Government was acting "on its own." Can it be that it thought the "spiritual" value of the clergy as an aid to winning the War too great to be lost? Looking at the Government, one would hardly think so. And so the matter stands. Everyone from eighteen to fifty-one is in the Army, except the women (who may yet be conscripted), the physically defective, and the clergy.

The Chief Rabbi has followed the Christian Bishops in declaring that the Jewish clergy are anxious to join the Army, and had no wish to be exempt from the operations of the Military Service Act. We quite believe that they are just as anxious as are the Christian clergy to join the Army. But if they are so desirous of joining, why the deuce don't they do so? The Act doesn't force them to stay at home. It only declines to force them to go.

A humorous incident took place at the Baptist Union meeting. An address was given by an Army Chaplain on the relations of the Baptist Church to the soldiers. At the conclusion, the President announced a hymn, "Souls of men! Why will ye scatter like a crowd of frightened sheep?"

"The ordinary clergy," says an evening paper, "have, on the whole, played their part as Christian ministers and as English patriots." Indeed! "On the whole" the clergy have stayed at home, and left the defence of the nation to other men.

The members of the Stratford-on-Avon Shakespeare Club attended church on April 28 as part of the annual observance. Apparently, the pious members of the Club do not realize that the poet himself did not often trouble the pew-openers.

Since the famous proclamation of the three tailors of Tooley Street, beginning, "We, the people of London," there has been nothing to compare with "a message from the Christian people of Great Britain to the Christian people of Russia," published in the English press. This document is signed by fifty-two persons who presume to speak for the millions of British people who profess and call themselves Christian. Among the signatories are three members of Parliament, two directors of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, one lady inspector of factories, a cocoa manufacturer, and a real bishop. The message has, we are assured, been "cabled to Russia to be read in the Churches." We wonder what the authorities of the Greek Church will think of this scratch-team of fancy religionists? Perhaps it will be like the cocoa-manufacturer's boast, "Grateful and comforting."

"A Man of Kent," in the *British Weekly* for May 2, says that George Meredith "must have been in a gloomy humour" when he remarked, during an interview with Desmond McCarthy: "Nature cares not a pin for the individual. I am content to be shovelled into the ditch." But "A Man of Kent," who is no other than Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, is certainly wrong. Nature's persistent indifference to the individual was a cardinal article in Meredith's creed, and in both prose and poetry his treatment of it is charac-

terized by anything but "a gloomy humour." Christianity bestows its supreme care upon the individual, and as an inevitable result it has been guilty of gross neglect towards society. Meredith, on the contrary, loved the race, and insisted upon the service of it as our chief duty. Individuals come and go without ceasing, but the race endures through all generations.

Newspaper editors often have to sit on the fence, but it is not often they do it so openly as the editor of the *Times*, who said in one issue: "We have made no attempt as yet to assess the direct responsibility of the Vatican for the action of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland," and a few days later stated: "The Vatican has not inspired the action of the Roman Church in Ireland."

An editor, trying to explain the Man-Power Bill, pointed out that "men in B2 are still in Grade 3." It is almost as puzzling as the tangle of the Trinity.

We are sorry to learn that the Rev. Rhondda Williams, of Brighton, has lost a gallant son in the War; but it was scarcely playing the game to exploit the sad event to serve a religious purpose, as the reverend gentleman is reported to have done. "He confessed that if he had been an Atheist the experiences of the past four weeks would have been enough to convert him." Not being an Atheist, it is sheer nonsense of Mr. Williams's even to pretend to know what effect such a bereavement would have had upon him had he been one. Atheists have lost sons in this War, and they are Atheists still, the mournful experience through which they have passed having only confirmed them in their Atheism.

There is to be erected a huge War museum which is to contain relics of "the Great War." We would suggest the following as worthy of a place: (1) Mr. Bottomley's Virgin of Albert, which was held up by the interposition of God—until the Germans cut the fastenings with which the British engineers had secured it; (2) Some feathers from the wings of the angels that saved our Army at Mons; (3) the Kaiser ordering his Army to pray to God for victory; (4) King George ordering the nation ditto; (5) plaster group of the Bishop of London on his visit to the Front surrounded by hordes of British soldiers begging him to send out more chaplains; (6) group representing the indignation of the clergy on being left out of the Military Service Acts; (7) statue of the Bishop of London uttering his famous "Thank God for the Zeppelins!"; (8) group representing Father Bernard Vaughan discussing with Jesus Christ the ethics of non-resistance; (9) Bible which saved a soldier's life by intercepting a bullet; (10) pack of playing-cards which did the same; (11) expression on the face of a soldier who, on opening a parcel from home, found it to contain nothing but a Bible and a number of religious tracts.

Connecticut recently repealed her old "blue sky laws" and for the first time in 300 years milkmen, druggists, ice cream stores, and similar mercantile establishments did a flourishing business on Sunday. It argues unusual endurance for a people to have stood such ridiculous laws for so long. Perhaps the change is part of the religious revival due to the War.

A newspaper paragraph states that the Bishop of Norwich has placed his palace and grounds at the disposal of the Red Cross Society. The Founder of the Christian religion was not so fortunate; he had no palaces and servants.

A "Rural Dean," writing in the *Church Times*, sharply criticizes the loose talk about the revival of religion at the Front. He says that "if there is any sort of revival of religion in the trenches, we find practically no trace of it among the men to whom it is our privilege to minister at home." Of course, the reason is that it exists neither at home nor abroad. Indeed, the fact that parsons write and speak as they do about the revival of religion at the Front makes one wonder at the stupidity of their audiences. For everyone



knows the soldiers, more or less. We knew them before they went out; we hear from them while they are out; and we meet them when they come home. How much religion do we hear or see? And if we can see this kind of bare-faced lie planted on the people, need we wonder that the greater lie of Christianity was forced on the world at a less critical period than ours? —

Commenting on May 5 on one of our "Acid Drops," Mr. J. McKenna writes dissenting from the conclusion that the Irish Question is a religious question. He says:—

I contend, and have always contended, that religion has absolutely nothing to do with the Irish Question. But it has been exploited to side-track what is essentially the Irish Question which is, was, and will be. Robbery, yes, sir, had the Irish been Hindoos, Agnostics, or anything else, you would have the Irish Question as you have the Indian Question. Irishmen are beginning to understand a foreign Government dominating politically and a foreign Church spiritually, and sooner or later they will shake themselves free from both and settle the Irish Question themselves.

We do not think it can be gathered from the paragraph in question that there is nothing but religion in the Irish Question. There are, of course, other factors involved. But we do not think it can be doubted that the two religions in Ireland—one identified with English rule and the other with Irish national aspirations is *the* factor that makes settlement so difficult. Without this the situation would present only such difficulties as have been or are being overcome elsewhere. —

Commercialism and Christianity often run in double harness. At the Sunday-school Union's Book Department, Ludgate Hill, London, the centre of one of the large windows is taken up with a display of Jerome K. Jerome's book, *Three Men in a Boat*. One would have imagined that a Sunday-school Union would be more concerned with eight persons in the ark. —

The Church militant, after four years of War, is at length waking up. Here are some headlines from a newspaper: "Dean Inge Attacks Labour Party"; "Bishop Attacks Bishop." The clergy are leaving their vicarage entrenchments at last. —

A half-column announcement in the press is headed "Y.M.C.A. Needs Money." We never remember the time when these young Christians were not in a state of impecuniosity. —

Speaking at the Lower House of Convocation, Dean Inge said that men had no right to mix up politics and Christianity. Yet the dear bishops do "mix up politics and Christianity" in the House of Lords, as Democrats have real reasons for remembering. —

The China Inland Mission acknowledges the receipt of over £115,000 this year, being an increase of £20,000. The *Annual* in answering the question: "Why has God given the mission this increase?" replies: "it is because he knew how serious the loss by exchange would be." Now, that really is considerate. And the picture of God Almighty studying current tables of exchange in order to see that the China Inland Mission doesn't lose anything is quite fascinating. And we are quite sure that when the Chinese look at the present state of Europe they will quite appreciate God's desire to make them more like unto us. —

A new work of reference is being advertised in the daily press as "the greatest book in the world." Won't the dear clergy be pleased? —

The clergy are still using the fiction of the angels at Mons. At the Central Hall, Westminster, a Wesleyan minister expressed belief that the enemy was checked in a supernatural way at Mons, and prayed for the intervention of more angel hosts to-day. —

Sir J. J. Thomson's Education Committee has recommended that natural science should be included in the general course of education of all children. If this course is

adopted the dear clergy will not find the children so gullible concerning the fairy tales of the Bible. —

The London City Mission speaks very dolefully of the outlook in the Metropolis. In its Annual Report the public is told, concerning "unbelief," that "never has the enemy been so aggressive, so seemingly powerful, as to-day," and no "peace offensive," to use the graceful language of Lord Robert Cecil, is likely to be made. Again: "The working classes are largely outside the reach of normal Christianity, and the clergy are handicapped in dealing with them." So much for the religious revival in London. And we wonder what the Bishop of London, with his fantastical yarns about religion in East London, thinks of the above? —

Dr. Henson, Bishop of Hereford, wants to get rid of the "insensate folly of denominational divisions" in Christendom. He has our sympathy, but he has his work cut out to reconcile Christadelphians, Unitarians, Swedenborgians, and other fancy religionists, with the Government Church. —

The Rev. S. M. Watts, the new superintendent at Whitefield's Tabernacle, says that present-day Christians have a "delicate spiritual digestion." This looks as if he had found out that they cannot swallow the story of "Jonah and the Whale." —

The Rev. William Henry Robert, of Philadelphia, says there never was a time in the history of the world when more faith in God was needed than right now. And there never was a time when so many people were seeing what a hollow fraud faith in God is. —

Following the "toning down" of the more barbaric expressions in the Psalms, the Lower House of Convocation has been engaged in revising the New Testament. The clergy have been searching for a substitute for the word "Damnation," and have decided to use the word "Judgment." Presumably, Hell will still remain at the usual temperature. —

Three hundred people, mostly women, took part in a procession from Newgate to Tyburn in memory of the martyrs of Tyburn. Why did they dissemble their love for the martyrs of Smithfield? —

Some of the newspaper editors are waking up to the fact that the Irish question is mainly a religious one. The *Evening Standard* deplores the attempt of the Catholic clergy "to restore the theological temperature of the days of Titus Oates." If not wisely handled, the political situation will be raised to the temperature of the place so often mentioned in sermons. —

The *Daily News* recently printed a bright description of some Yellow Press publications as "the ill-looking Sunday papers, with pictures of murderers and people who are still alive because they took the right pills." —

At the Royal Academy Exhibition a sensational picture depicts a ballet-girl in her war-paint, prone on the ground and clutching at the feet of Christ. It would serve as an excellent advertisement of the Church and Stage Guild. —

In a leading article, the *Evening Standard* (London) states that "The Prussian system is simply the negation of God." How is it that the German soldiers bear the words "God with us" on their uniforms? —

Of a woman who was sentenced to six months' hard labour at Sheffield for false pretences, it was stated that she had belonged at different times to every religious sect in Sheffield, and had exploited each one in turn. Evidently, she knew where to look for credulous folk. —

Private Charles Ernest Elmes, A.S.C., has been committed for trial for marrying three wives. His Old Testament ideals of marriage are not appreciated in a Christian country.



## To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—May 26, Maesteg.
- T. C. RIGLIN.—Mr. Cohen has written you. Nothing more is needed to withdraw your child from religious instruction in any school receiving a Government grant than a simple intimation to the effect that such is your desire. No explanation or reasons for the request need be given.
- S. HALL.—Sorry we can't explain why God doesn't stop the War. We suggest an application to the local parson, whoever he may be.
- R. F.—Go ahead. We can do with all the new readers you may find. And our motto, based on experience, is, "You find readers; we keep them." Before we are done, we hope to see the *Freethinker* with a circulation really worthy of it.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—"Ernest," £1; W. Francis, 2s. 6d.
- N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—W. Francis, 2s. 6d.
- F. KENYON.—We are sending you out the *Freethinker*, with a few pamphlets.—This correspondent, at present in Mesopotamia, would be glad to hear of any Freethinker with whom he could correspond regularly. Address should be sent to this office.
- H. TRUCKELL (Barrow-in-Furness).—We are obliged to you, and have written to the address given. Will prove very useful.
- V. H. SMITH.—We are not, as you will see, dealing with that aspect of the argument in discussing design in Nature. It is dealt with in our new pamphlet, *God and Man*. Pleased you are so interested in the "Views."
- A. T. EDWARDS.—Pleased to have your congratulations. Papers have been sent.
- W. MAWSON (Edinburgh) and C. KERR (Eastbourne).—Certainly, call at the office. You will see we are keeping the *Freethinker* office open later on Saturday, the 18th, on purpose to meet visitors.
- D. KEIR.—The office will not be open on Monday—Bank holiday. Shall be pleased to see you any other day if you will drop a card.
- C. F. SIMPSON.—Received with thanks. Will do as you request. Change of address noted.
- G. H. MURPHY.—We shall be pleased to avail ourselves of your offer of service, and will write you later on the matter.
- E. B.—Much obliged for cuttings and collection of epitaphs.
- C. F. DIXON.—We are greatly encouraged by your interest in the *Freethinker* and its work. Many thanks.
- W. K. SMITH.—Received, and shall be pleased to use as early as possible.
- E. LANE.—The ground rents of London amount to over twenty million annually. The Dukes of Westminster, Bedford, Norfolk, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (in whose hands rest the revenues of the Church of England) are among the largest owners.
- A. J. MARRIOTT.—Sorry we are unable to find space for your letter, but we quite sympathise with your protest against gratuitous interference with public liberty.
- C. W. GOULDER.—Pleased to have your approval. We have every sympathy for those who have lost relatives in the War and also for the sufferings of those who have them still engaged in the conflict.
- H. THURLOW.—We greatly appreciate your remarks, and think you will be pleased with the result.
- S. E. BEANDALL.—Papers are being sent. We are under no anxiety as to our "ability to carry on." A stiff struggle makes it the more interesting.
- T. JAMES.—Tithe was originally paid the Church on condition that one-fourth should be distributed among the poor. In process of time the parson grabbed the lot.
- 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.
- 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.

There seems likely to be a number of provincial Freethinkers in London over Whitsuntide, and not all in connection with the N. S. S. Conference. Several have written to say they intend calling at the *Freethinker* office in the hopes of meeting the editor, so we have decided to keep the office open until 6 o'clock instead of closing at mid-day as usual. The N. S. S. Offices at 62 Farringdon Street (next door) will be open until the same hour, and Miss Vance will be in attendance.

London Freethinkers will, we hope, do their best to see that the evening meeting at the Queen's Hall is a good one. As will be seen by reference to our back page, the platform is an attractive one, and the hall should be crowded. Admission is free, and every Freethinker would do well to make it a point of bringing an inquiring friend with him. The doors open at 6 o'clock, and the chair will be taken at 6.30.

London members will, we trust, not forget the business meetings of the Conference, at 10.30 and 2.30. Not much can be done this year in the way of providing refreshments for delegates, but enough will be provided to ward off starvation. Only members are admitted to the morning and afternoon meetings, and admission will be by exhibition of membership card, which must be produced at the door.

A friend who is interested in increasing the circulation of the *Freethinker* has placed at our disposal the sum of £2 16s. as payment for twenty-one quarterly subscriptions to this paper. He suggests that the recipients be soldiers at the Front, as a likely way of getting the *Freethinker* well read. We think this is excellent, and it will serve to supplement what we are already doing in that direction. So we shall be pleased to receive from our readers the names and addresses of soldiers to whom a weekly copy of the *Freethinker* would be acceptable. We should also like to add to the paper itself a few pamphlets which will, we hope, prove equally useful.

One of our friends at West Ham was, we are pleased to see, successful in getting a Labour Conference in that district to unanimously pass a resolution "That all State education, from kindergarten to university, should be purely secular." This is good work, and we hope other Trade and Labour organizations will follow suit.

We publish this week two four-page tracts by Mr. Cohen on *What is the Use of the Clergy?* and *What Will You Put in its Place?* We feel certain that they will prove useful, and we should like them to be widely distributed. As they are not published for profit, we are offering them at about cost price. This is an opportunity for all our friends to do a little useful propaganda for a very moderate outlay. The price of these tracts is 1s. 6d. per 100, postage 3d.; so that for 15s. anyone may put a thousand of these into circulation. We have printed a large supply of each, and we venture to ask the help of our friends to see that they are put into circulation quickly. They will be followed by others.

Next week (May 26) Mr. J. T. Lloyd visits Maesteg, and will deliver two lectures. This is the first meeting held by the new Branch which is being formed, and we hope that Freethinkers in the locality will make a point of being present. We have not yet been informed of the times and place of meetings, but that will probably come along in time for next issue.

The Southampton Branch reports a well-attended meeting on Sunday last to listen to Mrs. Palmer's address on "The Endowment of Motherhood," followed by a good discussion. We are glad to learn that things are promising in this new Branch.



## The Mechanism of Man.

### VI.

(Continued from p. 269.)

ALL the multitudinous activities of life are ultimately dependent upon respiration. The cells would perish, the blood would be poisoned, and the heart soon cease to beat, were the oxygen of the atmosphere denied access to the body. In the earthworm, amœba, and other lowly creatures, the surface of the body functions as a breathing structure. And precisely the same principle obtains for all the higher animals and plants. In fact, respiration is universal throughout the entire realm of organic Nature. So, to furnish the internal cells with their essential oxygen, the great multicellular animals need a respiratory surface much larger than that afforded by the skin surfaces. This requirement is met by the presence of a complex arrangement of internal organs which function as oxygen-absorbing surfaces. So exceedingly complicated are the human lungs, that were these organs unfolded, and all their tubes and cavities spread out in a flat sheet, that, according to the estimate of Professor Leonard Hill, they would cover a surface of twenty-seven square feet.

The air, unless the mouth is open, passes in at the nose, and returns through that organ. Each nostril leads to a cavity from which the nasal duct proceeds. The nasal passages open into the throat region or pharynx, and from the pharynx two tubes are directed below. One of these is the windpipe (trachea), and the other is the gullet or esophagus. The air now travels through the larynx or voice-box, which is really the enlarged upper end of the trachea. Beneath the larynx lies the trachea or windpipe, which is the largest air-tube in the body. It runs down in front of the neck into the thorax, while the gullet proceeds downwards at its back. At the upper region of the thorax or chest cavity, the trachea divides into two main branches, termed the right and left bronchus. Each leading bronchus proceeds to the lung situated on its own side, and enters that organ at its root. Having reached the lung, the bronchus speedily breaks up into branches—the bronchial tubes.

The main breathing organs, the two lungs, together with the heart and its great vessels, occupy the greater part of the thorax. Between the two lungs are placed the heart and its appendages. The right lung possesses three lobes, while the left has two only. That the lungs function as filters is evidenced by the fact that in the young these organs are pale pink in appearance, but they darken in later life, and this change is most pronounced in those who breathe the dust-strewn atmosphere of crowded and busy cities.

The chief respiratory muscles are the diaphragm, a muscle which divides the thorax or chest from the abdomen or belly; the muscles which form the walls of the abdomen; and two muscular structures situated between the ribs. These last consist of two sets of short muscles, and are termed the intercostals. When air is breathed in or inspired, the ribs ascend, and the diaphragm descends; while during expiration, when air is breathed out, the ribs descend, the abdominal walls contract, and the transmitted pressure serves to raise the relaxed diaphragm. Dr. Meachen thus describes the respiratory process:—

Inspiration is produced by the external intercostal muscles and the diaphragm; expiration by the internal intercostal muscles, aided by the natural elastic recoil of the chest-wall and lungs. The diaphragm descends in inspiration and rises in expiration. In both these movements the lungs follow the chest, inflating when it expands, and shrinking when it falls in again.

The lungs are non-muscular, but are composed of tissue containing a vast number of cavities—the pulmonary alveoli or air-cells. Lobules or clusters of air-cells are most abundant near the surface of the lungs. These alveoli are elastic, and enlarge as the chest expands. The air cavities are coated with an exceedingly delicate membrane of epithelial cells, through which oxygen easily enters and the poisonous carbon dioxide as easily escapes. The red blood corpuscles are the body's oxygen-carriers and distributors, and these discs derive their oxygen from the outer air during the act of breathing. Deprivation of oxygen proves fatal in a few minutes. An animal denied access to this life-sustaining gas quickly succumbs to asphyxia. Death by drowning, strangulation, or smothering is always due to the absence of oxygen.

All the vital active cells of the organism are constantly forming waste material, and carbon dioxide is one of the most noxious of these. Carbon dioxide or carbonic acid gas (CO<sub>2</sub>) is composed of one part carbon and two parts oxygen in a state of chemical combination. If this gas be permitted to remain in the tissues the gas, or in any case the organic particles contained in it, soon poison the body. This baleful product of cell activity must be expelled from the system if life is to persist. Therefore, it is absorbed by the blood and passed on to the lungs, where it escapes from the pulmonary capillary vessels into the air cavities. It is then expired by the respiratory process.

Respiration is essentially an interchange of gases. The blood which is carried to the lungs for purification arrives as dark red venous blood, but having expelled its carbon dioxide and absorbed oxygen, the fluid is restored to that bright red tint which constitutes the natural colour of healthy arterial blood. It is interesting to observe that "venous blood is changed in this way out of the body, for if some of the fluid be shaken up in a test-tube with air it will change its colour and become brighter; or, in other words, it will be turned into arterial blood."

The average rate of respiration, the acts of inspiration and expiration combining to form a complete respiration, is normally about eighteen per minute in the healthy adult. During heavy labour or vigorous exercise this rate may rise to twenty-four or even thirty-five per minute. In a state of great mental or emotional excitement the rate of breathing is also increased. In pathological conditions, such as those of fever or lung diseases, it is no uncommon medical experience to observe a rate of respiration ascending to forty, fifty, or even sixty per minute. On the other hand, the respiratory rate declines in sleep; while, when subjected to the influences of opium, and when we become intensely absorbed in intellectual work, or even when witnessing a play, or listening to music or singing, the act of breathing is prolonged. In fact all forms of sustained interest tend to lower the respiration rate.

In a healthy organism breathing is an automatic and almost unconscious act. In truth, unless the painful and laboured respiration of dejected health, or the rapid breathing which results from unusual exertion compel our attention, we are rarely conscious that we are respiring at all. Nevertheless, the function is regulated by nervous influences. Respiration is largely a reflex phenomenon of rhythmical character. But in that part of the brain termed the medulla there exists a special nerve centre which controls respiration. Nervous impulses are constantly travelling to and fro between the muscles of respiration, the lungs, and the brain.

The respiratory structures are highly susceptible to derangement. A cold or catarrh is suffered when an organ becomes inflamed. An inflammation in the nasal passages is called a cold in the head, and an inflamed



pharynx is termed a sore throat. Bronchitis arises from inflamed bronchial tubes, while pneumonia, asthma, pleurisy, and other ailments are due to the disease of one or another of the breathing organs. Vitiating air is one of the most malignant enemies of mental and bodily health. The whole art of ventilation exists for the purpose of banishing impure air and its microbic population, and for the provision of a plentiful supply of that oxygen so indispensable to organic vigour.

(To be continued.) T. F. PALMER.

### At the Vicarage.

SOMEONE has said that many a jovial hour is spent inside a mourning-coach. And, strange as it may seem, two of the happiest years of my experience were spent—at a vicarage. I was visiting-governess to the vicar's two young children, who never tired of assuring me that I was the sweetest and nicest of teachers. The vicar and his wife, too, were exceedingly kind and considerate, and spared no effort to make me feel at home. Mrs. Johnston was of a meek and gentle disposition—in striking contrast to the vigorous and breezy personality of the vicar. It was the vicar who played the leading role in domestic as well as in parochial matters; who was, so to speak, the Punch of the show, the hero of the tale, the principal humourist in the comedy.

I have often thought that the vicar, if he had chosen the stage as a profession instead of the Church, would have had a distinguished career. The way he used to mimic the doleful drawl and sanctimonious phraseology of his clerical brethren after attending some evangelical or ecclesiastical meeting would have brought loud applause from a theatrical audience. His mental attitude towards the dignitaries of the Church, who were over him in the Lord, may be judged from the following. One night the bishop was coming to take the evening service, and a little before the time of his arrival the vicar got leisurely up from his chair: "I suppose," he said, "I will have to go to the station and meet that damned, silly, old ass?"

I had only been at the vicarage a short while when the vicar was offered a better living in a neighbouring town. He accepted it; but so soon as it became known there was a storm of disapproval. The vicar was very popular not only with his parishioners but also with the general public of the district, and they had the sense to know when they had a good vicar. Accordingly, they got up a huge petition praying the bishop that he might be allowed to remain in order that they might have the benefit, as heretofore, of his wise counsels and spiritual ministrations. And so the vicar stayed.

A few days after he came home in the afternoon, and, rolling himself on the couch, fairly shook the room with his laughter. He had been walking along the main street, when he was hailed by an old man who followed a very humble occupation. After an exchange of greetings, the old man, in a reproachful tone, said: "Here, vicar, what the hell did you want to go away and leave us for?" Whether the vicar piously admonished the old man for his irreverence I cannot say, but at the vicarage he considered it a capital joke.

One morning when I arrived by the usual train, I found the place in a state of great commotion. There had been an air-raid during the night, and a considerable amount of damage had been done. The inmates of the vicarage were greatly perturbed, and the household arrangements all in disorder. They were breakfasting late, and I was invited into the dining-room to listen to their tale of woe. During the meal Mrs.

Johnston looked along the table with a penitent sort of look: "Oh, Henry," she said, "we haven't had prayers this morning." The vicar sprang from his chair as if another bomb had been dropped, exclaiming: "Damn the prayers after a night like last night!"

It never seemed to occur to the Vicar how these little incidents might strike a young lady who was supposed to possess all the religious qualifications necessary for the instruction of his children. But I admired him all the more for his candour and straightforwardness. As Mrs. Johnston said to me one day: "You know, Beatrice, there is one good thing about the Vicar; he is honest." And being perfectly happy in their home, criticism was the last thing I would have thought of. There was a touch of humour in everything he said or did, which at the time was the very salt of life to me. I have seen a phrase somewhere about the dulness of a vicarage, but I often smile to myself at the ignorance of the person who penned it. Dulness was a thing I never knew during the whole of my stay; there was always something happening to amuse one, and add a zest to life. Even in the vacations, if Mrs. Johnson had occasion to send me a card, there was always the little pencilled note appended by the Vicar before dropping it into the post, reminding me that I was missed. The dear old Vicar!

I shall never forget the evening of my departure, on which occasion I stayed to supper. Remembering all their kindness to me, I felt somewhat sorrowful at the thought of leaving them, and going out into the world afresh. But the humour of the Vicar came to the rescue. When he took his seat at the head of the table, looking at me as if I were the twelve Apostles rolled into one, he spread out his arms, and, with deep solemnity, said: "The Last Supper." I could have screamed; it was so funny. It was just as if Aaron's beard, the simple uncouthness of all the Biblical characters, and the hoary traditions of religion were embodied in the simulated gravity of the Vicar's tone.

But if the Vicar played the leading role, the children fulfilled their parts of the comedy with amusing success. One day Minnie came in, and assured us with childish positiveness that she had seen a bear in the garden; and no arguments or suggestion that it might possibly have been a dog would make her admit that she might have been mistaken. When she was ready for bed at night, her mother said she had better ask God's forgiveness for telling such a falsehood. When she came downstairs in the morning, and was asked if she had confessed the lie, with a jubilant and triumphant look she exclaimed: "Yes, I did; but God said, 'O, don't apologize, Miss Johnston. I thought it was a bear myself.'"

But perhaps the greatest surprise came from the Vicar's little son. He was a delicate child, and endeared himself to me in many ways. One day, when we were alone, he had a seizure, which naturally frightened me very much. As he lay in my arms, and I tried to bring him back to consciousness, his face was deathly white, and tears of genuine grief stood in my eyes. I could not help thinking of the possibility that the angels of God were hovering round, ready to bear his little soul away to the mansions of the blest. By-and-bye, he opened his eyes and stared at me. At last he spoke; and the reader may perhaps imagine something of my conflicting emotions when he said: "I—I felt the — thing coming on." At first I could scarcely credit my hearing; but when the humour of the situation was fully realized, my tears of sorrow were swept away by the flood of tears of laughter at the comical ending of the painful episode.

If it should appear to some conventional people that the Vicarage was lacking in the religious atmosphere



usual to such an establishment, I can only say that it had its compensations. The feeling of confidence, and of kindness and good fellowship with which I was always treated, was one of them. The position of a governess is not often an enviable one; but the Vicar it was a pleasure to serve. And at the risk of being considered worldly and irreligious, I will deign to say that, with all his faults, I loved him still.

BEATRICE.

### Christian Modes and Morals.

IN the evolutionary process there are two forces constantly opposed to each other, namely, the *natural* development with increased knowledge and an advancing civilization of a more perfect system of morals, and the *artificial* inculcation and imposition of a moral law derived from the teachings of the Holy Bible. The demoralizing effects of war always act as deterrents to natural development and, temporarily, with more ignorant people, enhance the opportunities of traditional authorities.

Put briefly, in other words, the perennial struggle is between knowledge and belief. Now, a thorough knowledge of any subject is not to be assimilated by anyone unless the knowledge is communicated at a comparatively early stage in life, that is to say, if the knowledge is to be personally and socially serviceable. On the most vital matter of the care of the human body the Churches unanimously protest against the communication by competent authorities of knowledge on the subject, particularly that affecting the procreative functions. On this topic the Churches prefer methods anarchic that would simply leave the ideas of the majority of people in a state of deplorable chaos. The Grundys of both sexes hold up their hands in pious horror when thinkers, like Edward Carpenter, hint at the advisability of informing children when they have attained puberty of the reproductive processes in mammals. *Their* plan would be to let the children acquire their information from the offensive garbage of pornography. They have no objection to young people reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting the "purple patches" of Holy Writ.

Another point in our indictment of Christian teaching is, that such communication of knowledge as it allows is limited by the restrictions imposed by Christian methods to a small minority. "Knowledge is power"; and it is certainly not in the interests of the class that benefits most by the continuance of religion that a rich measure of knowledge should be obtainable by the majority. The more knowledge rules the nearer is brought the doom of the supernatural and the unnatural. Ignorance and credulity are the most dangerous foes of natural development.

The helplessness and hopelessness of Christianity—notwithstanding all the rhetorical bombast of its representatives to the contrary—are demonstrated by the Christian attitude in great national changes and crises. Are the ancient sanctions appealed to to-day with the same effect that was produced by such appeals, say, fifty years since? We trow not. The object of such appeals (fortified by the most extravagant emotionalism) is ever to prove to the great mass of the people that religion is essential to man, and that the Churches have a supernatural mission. Mendacity—a weapon which can only be employed with the ignorant—is freely indulged in, chiefly to convince people that without religion an effective ethical system is impossible, and inferentially that any man who has not religious belief has no moral standard, and is bound by no ethical obligations. The Christian slanders of Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and Foote stand to illustrate to an admiring world the glory of Christian morality!

In England, it seems that there is on foot a movement for a change in the marriage laws, and this has set the black-coated boys by the ears. Organizations have been formed to oppose any change, and these bear the usual marks of the clerical monopolist. Is it so very much, after all, that the Law of England should be brought into line with the Law of Scotland on this matter? In England, marriage remains a sacrament of the Established Church; in Scotland it is a purely civil contract. And he would be a bold man who should contend that because of this there is a higher moral standard in England than there is in Scotland.

Nowhere has the fumbling febleness of religionists been more apparent than in the case of the unmarried mother. There is no more grotesque picture than that of a tribunal of censorious Holy Willies passing solemn judgment upon her. But the Holy Willies are mildness itself compared with the Holy Jeans; and it is the latter who are most "edified" when they are listening with rapt attention to the thundering voice from the pulpit that denounces their younger and, likely, more attractive sister!

IGNOTUS.

### What Is Nature?

JEAN JACQUES ROSSEAU wanted us to "get back to nature," and you hear lots of people saying that now, and I want to know what it means. Let's run a string of talk through it and see whether we understand it. What is Nature, with a capital N, or without it? Nature is the sum-total of things—the processes of the world. Nature is what brings the flowers in the spring-time, and the rain, and the fruits, and all the sweet things of life.

If man, in the beginning of the ages, had been content to remain in obedience and sinlessness, without the interference of naughty Eve in the Garden of Eden, the world would have been an unpleasant place in which to live. The average age of man would have been 1,000 years, and the only consolation for such a length of life would have been the absence of doctors, life-insurance agents, parsons, publicans, burglars, and picture shows, all of which are parasites caused by the development of micro-organisms in the human system.

There cannot be a doubt

For us, and us alone, the whole creation came about;

Do you know what "the laws of Nature" are? There are none! "Law of Nature" is only a phrase. It is like "Free-will" and "Predestination," it means nothing at all. It is a human phrase and no more. "Nature" and "Nature's Laws" are phrases with contents that differ according to the intellectual status of the people who use them. To one of our blackfellows "Nature" simply means "Debil, Debil." That's all. Nature, to an educated man, means the observed order of things. But there is no law! Do you remember the story of the Lord Buddha of India? I never grow weary of it, for it is the story of "Nature." He saw how lovely "Nature" was, and how kind and fair and mystical. He saw the beautiful colours on the birds, and he heard the tinkle of the falling water, and he heard the laughing nesting-songs of the birds, and he was glad that life was so lovely:—

But looking deep, he saw,

The thorns which grow upon this rose of life;  
How the swath peasant sweated for his wage,  
Toiling for leave to live; and how he urged  
The great-eyed oxen through the flaring hours,  
Goaded their velvet flanks, them marked he, too,  
How lizard fed on ant, and snake on him,  
And kite on both, and how the fish-hawk robbed,  
The fish-tiger of that which it had seized;  
The strike chasing the bubbul, which did hunt,  
The jewelled butterflies, till everywhere,  
Each, slew a slayer, and in turn was slain,  
Life living upon death, so the fair show,  
Veiled one vast, savage, grim conspiracy,  
Of mutual murder, from the worm to man,  
Who himself kills his fellow.

Then you have the story of "Nature." There you have "the laws of Nature," and there you have the reason why I don't want to have to "follow nature." Nature is horribly cruel, and I'm not going to "follow nature"; and what can I do? Nature provides the poison glands of the snake, and she sends droughts, and kills off the helpless and innocent things. Nature "is red in tooth and claw," life preys on life, and the law appears to "eat or be eaten," and the things that can't make a living die out. Nature has no blind asylums or benevolent institutions. There is no sort of namby-pambyism about Nature. She's a real dandy! You must be the mark with her every time, or it's you for the scrap-heap! Then what do we mean when we say that you ought to follow Nature?

Indiscriminate destruction, have ever made it plain;  
Earth's parasitic beings become victims every hour  
To elements regardless of their pectiness or power.

THE OWL.



## Correspondence.

## "THE DEFEAT OF THE CROSS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of May 5, Mr. J. T. Lloyd busies himself in proving, evidently to his own entire satisfaction, that "in conflict with the world's forces the Cross has been totally defeated." For this modest conclusion it is somewhat difficult to find any adequate basis set out in his article. I certainly cannot find it in Mr. Lloyd's self-contradictory criticism of the *Times* writer on religion, whom in one sentence he charges with "tantaling vagueness," and a little lower down with being "blindly dogmatic."

Moreover, Mr. Lloyd is clearly determined not to be out-matched in respect of dogmatism. His assertion that the truth and the life of Christianity have "produced, on the one hand, cruel tyranny, and, on the other, abject slavery," compels admiration—using "admiration" in its original Latin sense. Reasoners of Mr. Lloyd's stamp may well be regarded as the un-apostolic successors of the philosopher who maintained the thesis that snow is black.

Naturally, Mr. Lloyd makes great play with the shortcomings of the Churches. Of course, the Churches have "failed." Had they succeeded, it would have been a bigger miracle than any recorded in the New Testament. Every endeavour to realize or live up to an ideal is a failure. Even the noblest-minded Freethinker cannot live fully up to his ideal, constricted though that ideal be by the refusal to take account of eternal righteousness.

As to the statement that "in all sections of society..... unbelievers in their tens of thousands are to be found," one can only say that these cohorts of unbelief, if existent, are not working very hard at it, seeing (to take a rough test) that Christians denominations publish large and well-edited journals, while anti-Christian periodicals have to appeal persistently for more subscribers and subsidizing funds.

No doubt Mr. Lloyd will find that such remissness is due to the selfishness of human nature and preoccupations of human life. Will he be willing to admit the same plea in mitigation of judgment on the "failure" of Christianity?

A. J. S.

## REFORM IN LEICESTER.

SIR,—As the town of Leicester has been very much before your readers recently on account of its splendid pioneer work in connection with "the best of causes," I should like to be allowed to point out that, apart from its signal services in the realm of Freethought (which alone will secure for it a permanent niche in the temple of fame), that remarkable town has other claims to the gratitude of mankind; notably, for its enduring services in exposing the fallacies of that other privileged class, and twin sister to the theological priesthood—the medical hierarchy. This Mecca of the anti-vaccinist will always be remembered in history for the part it has played in respect of that alleged prophylactic; for by its control experiment, Leicester has shivered to pieces the claims of vaccination, and knocked the bottom out of a grotesque superstition.

Leicester stands incomparably higher than any other town of its size in regard to sanitation and hygiene, and to this is due its fine health record, which ranks higher, indeed, than that of many other large towns whose topographical situation would appear to be more advantageous.

To what is due the pre-eminent position which Leicester now occupies in the civic and social life of the nation? I submit that it is primarily because it is more richly endowed than other towns with administrators whose minds are less trammelled by conventional shibboleths, and who possess in a superlative degree that wide-viewing Freethought to which Mr. Gould refers. Thus we have in Leicester, if not a control case, certainly an indication of the lines on which civic and social life would be conducted if our legislators, and those responsible for the moulding of public opinion, had their minds cleared of the incubus of dead cults, superstitions, and unscientific formulæ, and allowed their reasoning and intellectual factors to have full play.

H. C. HEBBES.

## 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.): No Service.

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): No Meeting.

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): No Meeting.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: No Meeting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): No Meeting.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Maryland Point Station): No Meeting.

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

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