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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Cleanliness.

Arising out of a police court case in the North of England, the Vicar of Burton Wood, Lancashire, writes to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* that "religion and dirt are strange bedfellows," a statement somewhat discounted by the Vicar's admission that two of the most godly women among his own personal acquaintances were among the unwashed. These ladies, it appears, strictly confined their washing to hands and face; no other part of the body received attention. Probably the number of the unwashed is much greater than many people imagine—certainly so far as the unseen portion of the body is concerned. Anyway, the Vicar of Burton Wood is clearly wrong in declaring religion and dirt to be strange bedfellows. They are not. Historically, so far as Christianity is concerned, the relation is of the closest. To-day, cleanliness has become a religion—to use a cant expression. But time was when the lack of it was one of the accepted marks of godliness.

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The Order of the Bath.

Everyone who knows anything of the life of the old Roman Empire knows what a prominent part baths held therein. They were numerous, they were for all classes, and all classes used them. Even in their ruins the baths of Rome appeal to the imagination, and enable one to form some idea of their extent. The baths of Caracalla are said to have contained over 1,600 seats, those of Diocletian over 3,000. Nor were these baths confined to a class. They were open to the whole of the population, and Gibbon tells us that the meanest Roman could purchase a bath at the cost of about half a farthing of our money. Wherever the Romans went, they took their baths; and their ruins meet us in various parts of this country. To-day we know the old Roman bath as the *Turkish* bath, and the changed name is illuminating. The use of the bath died out with the Christianizing of the Empire. It flourished elsewhere; it was unknown among Christians. For seven hundred years Christian Europe was without a public bath; the first public one in England was opened in Liverpool less than a century ago. The public bath reappeared in Europe when the Crusades and later Mohammedan influences brought the Christian world into touch with a saner and cleaner civilization. And Christendom, which

had inherited the old Roman civilization, straightway convicted itself by calling it the *Turkish* bath. Christians had forsaken its use and forgotten its origin. Christianity and dirt are not strange bedfellows; historically, they are the closest of room-mates.

* * *

Piety and Dirt.

Two causes are responsible for this alliance of Christianity and dirt. The first was the intense hatred of everything Pagan—science, art, literature, sanitation. The second was the division of life into spiritual and material, helped by the conviction of the approaching end of the world. To shun the world and all it offered became the sign of spiritual rebirth. Pleasure and sin became synonymous terms. Asceticism, imported into Rome from the East, gained ground as the mass of superstitions grew that were afterwards consolidated as Christianity. The figure of the monk and the ascetic dominated the stage; and to approach as near the beast as possible became the pious method of showing oneself superior to ordinary human nature. We read of whole communities, 20,000 and 30,000 strong given up to ascetic practices. And the behaviour of these almost passes comprehension. St. Jerome says that he knew of one man who lived on a piece of bread and a drop of water per day, another who only cut his hair once a year, who never washed himself, and whose skin grew like pumice-stone. Some carried heavy weights or sat in constrained and unnatural positions after the manner of Indian Fakirs. Others threw off all clothing and ran about like wild beasts. In Syria one sect ate grass like cattle. St. Anthony, the founder of monasticism, never washed his feet. St. Abraham went one better and never washed at all. St. Euphraxia belonged to a convent of nuns who never washed. St. Simon Stylites lived in such a state of filth that even his adoring visitors often found the "odour of sanctity" too much for them. He is said to have lived for thirty years on the top of a column, his body covered with ulcers, and swarming with vermin. And on his death his funeral was attended by some of the greatest dignitaries in Christendom. Bathing among nearly all the monastic orders was forbidden, or only allowed under stringent regulations. Lecky sums up the period in the comment, "A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without natural affection, without patriotism, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the phantoms of his own delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato." It is said that Augustus found Rome brick and left it marble. Christians took all that Roman civilization had acquired, and buried it beneath superstition, filth, ignorance, and disease.

* * *

Christian Civilization.

Neglect of cleanliness was not confined to professed monks. It was common to all—more or less. Some of the highest dignitaries of the State were often found in a

filthy condition. As an example, one may cite the case of Thomas Becket who, after his murder in Canterbury Cathedral, was found to be wearing a hair shirt that was swarming with vermin. The following is a picture of Christian cities at the close of the sixteenth century as drawn by Draper:—

In Paris and London the houses were of wood daubed with clay, and thatched with straw. The luxury of a carpet was unknown; some straw, scattered in the room, supplied its place. There were no chimneys; the smoke from the ill-fed, cheerless fire escaped through a hole in the roof. No attempt was made at drainage, but the putrefying garbage and rubbish was simply thrown out of the door. Men, women, children, slept in the same apartment; not unfrequently domestic animals were their companions; in such a confusion of the family it was impossible that modesty and morality could be maintained.....Personal cleanliness was utterly unknown.....To conceal personal impurity, perfumes were necessarily and profusely used. The citizen clothed himself in leather, a garment which, with its ever-increasing impurity, might last for years.....The streets had no sewers; they were without pavements or lamps. After nightfall the chamber shutters were thrown open, and slops unceremoniously emptied down, to the discomfiture of the wayfarer, tracking his path through the narrow streets, with his dismal lantern in his hand.

It is not surprising that plagues and epidemic diseases were such regular and deadly visitors during the Christian ages of European history. And when disease came the Church found in its presence, not proof of the need for sanitation and greater cleanliness, but evidence of the anger of God upon an impious people.

* * *

God or Man?

The alliance between religion and dirt is not, therefore, a revelation to anyone who bears in mind the nature of the Christian record. It has been frequently manifested, and was a consequence of the ascetic preaching of Christianity combined with opposition to sanitary and medical science. The Christian Church inoculated mankind with a mental disease of unexampled virulence; and at the same time it robbed nations of their greatest protection against physical disease. Even the methods of protection adopted by the Church only served to intensify the evil. The massing of people in religious pilgrimages, with days of prayer for protection against an epidemic, served but to make contagion more certain. The medicine-chest of the Church held but one ingredient—faith; and that was powerless against disease. The true remedy came when man paid less attention to religious exhortations and more to the conditions that govern the causes and the cure of disease. For Nature yields nothing to prayer, and everything to knowledge. Man on his knees is symbolical of ignorance and helplessness. But man erect and open-eyed is typical of the spirit that writes "finis" to the reign of the gods, and ushers in the era of a liberated humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

NATURAL SOCIETY.

Man in general has always been what he is now. This does not mean that he has always had fine cities, cannon with twenty-four pound balls, comic operas, and nunneries. But he has always had the same instinct of self-love in himself, in the companion of his pleasure, in his children, in his grandchildren, in the work of his hands. That is what never changes from one end of the world to the other. The foundation of society always existing, there has always been some form of society. For we were not made to live like bears.—Voltaire, "Essai sur les Mœurs."

"The Popes and Their Church."

A VOLUME of upwards of six hundred closely printed pages lies before us, bearing the alluring title of *Christianity in History: A Study of Religious Development*. It has two authors, J. Vernon Bartlet, M.A., D.D., and A. J. Carlyle, M.A., D.Litt., and is published by Macmillan & Co., at the price of 12s. 6d. The task attempted is a vast one, which is to supply a compendium of the history of the Church and of the development of doctrine. In the words of the authors, it is "an attempt to set forth the genesis and growth of certain of the more typical forms and phases which Christianity—whether as conduct, piety, thought, or organized Church life—has assumed under the conditioning influences first of the Roman Empire and then of the Western civilization that was its successor and heir." Naturally, the work is divided into five parts, entitled "The Beginnings," "Ancient Christianity," "The Middle Ages," "The Great Transition," and "The Modern Period." The impression which a careful perusal of it leaves upon the mind is twofold; first, that Christianity, though in its essence a Divinely revealed religion, "appears in history as the child of Judaism, claiming to be the perfected religion of Israel," and, second, that, starting as a child, its history has been one of growth and development. Besides, though "the essence of Christianity is Christ, and its method the influence of personality upon personality," yet it won its supremacy in the West through long-continued and more or less brutal conflict with three great rivals, all the most characteristic elements in which it unblushingly appropriated and assimilated to itself. This is candidly admitted by the authors, who treat it throughout as if it were merely a human system strenuously and not over-scrupulously struggling for sole dominion over the minds and consciences of men. In many respects, *Christianity in History* is a work which Freethinkers will appreciate and enjoy, because, while reverent, careful, and scholarly, it is also pre-eminently rationalistic. Indeed, it could not be more rationalistic without being positively sceptical, and even hostile to the Christian Faith.

Our object in calling attention to *Christianity in History* is to point out that, although presenting a generally accurate and rationalistic portrayal of the Christian religion's growth and development in the different periods of its history, it yet wholly misleads the reader as to its influence upon individual and social life. For example, the Christian Church is spoken of as zealously promoting the intellectual education of the Western world. We are assured that "Christian ecclesiastics and monks never wholly lost the tradition of the education of the ancient world"; and we would naturally infer that, on the whole, the Church was a centre in which righteousness and truth, purity and love, shone most brilliantly, irradiating the outside world with their healing and warmth-giving beams. But every honest student of ecclesiastical history is fully aware how absolutely false such an inference would be. We are, therefore, delighted to be able to refer our readers to another book recently published by Messrs. Watts & Co., namely, *The Popes and their Church*, by Mr. Joseph McCabe. This is, perhaps, the most effective work Mr. McCabe has yet given us. His knowledge of Roman history in general, and of the Catholic Church in particular, is of the most intimate character. Of the latter he writes from actual experience, as well as with accurate knowledge, and of necessity his testimony deserves the most serious consideration. Now, nothing can be more certain than the fact that the Church has always been the sworn enemy of education, in the ordinary sense of the word. Next

to Leo I., the greatest of the ancient Popes was Gregory the Great, who occupied St. Peter's Chair from A.D. 590-604. Of him Mr. McCabe says:—

His ignorance and credulity were unlimited. His largest works, *The Magna Moralia* and *The Dialogues*, are incredible hotch-potches of stories about devils and miracles. He sternly rebuked bishops who tried to educate their people; and he did not perceive that the appalling vices and crimes which he deplores almost in every letter—the general drunkenness and simony and immorality of the priests, and the horrible prevalence of violence—were mainly due to ignorance. He was one of the Makers of the Middle Ages (*The Popes and their Church*, pp. 27, 28).

Gregory hated culture with his whole heart, and in his zeal against it is reported to have destroyed libraries and monuments not a few. The authors of *Christianity in History* curiously admit that "an immense amount of the ancient learning and the ancient intellectual discipline was lost," and that "the intellectual methods and conceptions which the Christian Church handed on to the mediæval world, were in many important respects, far below the level of the higher intellectual civilization of the ancient world"; but, whilst making that damaging admission, they glory in the alleged fact that the Church "became the guide and educator of the civilization of the Western world." On their own showing, however, the guidance and education which she provided were of a woefully imperfect and lowering type.

Mr. McCabe traces the history of the Roman Church from the fourth century down to the present day, and the perusal of the horrible record brings the blush of shame and contempt to the reader's cheek. That there were a few comparatively good Popes is unquestionable; but, taking them all in all, the claim that they were the vicars of the loving Christ and filled with the Holy Ghost is too ludicrous for words. We are told in *Christianity in History* (p. 351) that "the Christian Church was born into a world which was very highly civilized—a world whose civilization is, indeed, comparable only with that of quite modern times," and that she handed that civilization down to the Middle Ages; but the truth is that she despised Pagan civilization and practically destroyed it; or, as Mr. McCabe puts it, that in proportion as the Popes thrived Europe decayed. What even the best Popes aimed at was the triumph of the Papacy, not the reformation of the world. Take Pope John XII. who ascended the Papal throne in 955, of whom Mr. McCabe says:—

There was not a crime in the penitentials that John XII. did not introduce into the "sacred palace." The palace of Caligula or of Nero in ancient Rome had not witnessed more wanton scenes than the Lateran Palace now exhibited. Liutprand tells us (*De Rebus Gestis Othonis*, IV.) how John, pressed by a rival, appealed to the Emperor Otto, and when Otto came to Rome the Romans brought up against their spiritual father a list of crimes which would, they said, "make a comedian blush for shame"; and a comedian was the lowest thing they knew. The Romans were lenient, but they could not tolerate a Pope who committed murder, perjury, adultery, incest (with his two sisters), and sacrilege. Before the Synod convoked by Otto it was proved that John had "turned the Lateran Palace into a brothel," cut out the eyes of or castrated those who criticized him, raped girls and women who came to pray in St. Peter's, gambled, cursed, drunk to the Devil.....There was, in brief, nothing that he had not done (pp. 45, 46).

Unfortunately that is by no means the worst Papal record, that concerning Alexander VI. at the close of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth being odious beyond compare, of whom we read that one evening he and his daughter, Lucrezia, dined with Cardinal Cesare "and fifty prostitutes in Cesare's rooms in

the Vatican," and that after the banquet "the women danced unclothed." Alexander was also guilty of duplicity in war and diplomacy, and, according to some, of a murder for £150,000. Even prior to the thirteenth century, "the Holy See had rarely had an illustrious man in it during eleven centuries. It was stained black with blood, and vice, and corruption. Europe, at the mercy of the Popes, was sordid, filthy, fearfully cruel and violent, crassly ignorant, utterly primitive in the administration of justice, indescribably lax in sex matters."

Mr. McCabe's book is accurately described as "one of the most deadly indictments yet written of the Church of Rome"; and no reader of *Christianity in History* can over-estimate the need of such a merciless exposure. We can heartily recommend it to all who are eager to obtain facts wherewith to disprove the silly dogma of the divinity and infallibility of the Christian Church.

J. T. LLOYD.

Henry Stephens Salt.

When the sword glitters o'er the judge's head,
And fear has coward churchmen silenced,
This is the poet's time; 'tis then he draws,
And single fights forsaken virtue's cause.

—Andrew Marvell.

A STORY is told of a modest Frenchman, that when the great Napoleon took him familiarly by the ear, and said, "I intend giving you the Legion of Honour, the man answered: "Thank you, sire, but could not your Majesty give it to my father?" In some such spirit we may picture Mr. H. S. Salt's acceptance of praise. His striking talents and his widespread philanthropy have always been united with a modesty which is, in these days of self-advertising, extremely rare.

The life-work of Mr. Henry Stephens Salt places him definitely among the potent forces of progress. A pioneer among pioneers, he is one of the foremost heralds of a new era. Thinking men and women treasure his volumes, and look with eager eyes for other works from the same wise pen. For he has devoted a long life to the service of his fellows, and his significance in modern literature and thought is very marked.

Born in India in 1851, the life of this great social reformer has its touch of romance. He was educated at Eton College—he became one of the house-masters—and also at Cambridge University, although he could never have completely acquiesced in the old order of things, such as was dominant at these seats of learning. For the young master was soon reading Shelley's lyrics of liberty, and was absorbing the intellectual audacities of Henry Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In such company young Mr. Salt was bound to look beyond Eton and her old-fashioned ideals, and to scan far horizons and the unalterable stars.

Such a fine spirit as that of Mr. H. S. Salt's was bound, sooner or later, to rebel at being "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd" within the narrow limits of the educational system of Eton, that "nursery of Toryism," as he himself wittily described it. There was no bitterness, however, in his criticism. Though he ploughed a lonely furrow, he has never been morbid. Taking all things at their true worth, he has never been surprised by views he could not accept. He has merely acknowledged urbanely that they were so different from his own.

So acute a critic as G. W. Foote has said that Mr. Salt is "without the least fanaticism." This is the more remarkable as he challenges contemporary convention at so many points. He conceives human society as a

great brotherhood; but the underlying unity is not merely economic, not merely the apotheosis of an enlightened selfishness, but an ethical fraternity, where love and mutual service are to be confidently expected:—

Till each man find his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood.

This optimistic faith is not to be limited to one race or species, but extended to the whole world of innocent beings. And herein lies the genesis of the Humanitarian League, with which Mr. Salt's name is inseparably associated. In a letter written in 1910 by G. W. Foote, on the occasion of the Society's twentieth anniversary, the great Freethought leader wrote:—

I believe the Humanitarian League has been, is, and I trust will continue to be, one of the noblest and most useful organizations in England. No friend of humanity need despair if he will only look at what the League has done for the real higher life of England in the face of tremendous odds and with ridiculously small material resources. Yours is veritably the triumph of a great idea.

The scope of the League's activities may be estimated by recalling that it has dealt with such measures as Criminal Law and Prison Reform, Cruel Sports, Humane Diet and Dress, Education of Children, Flogging in the Services, the Humanizing of the Poor Law, and many other needful reforms. In brief, the distinctive purpose of the League is to consolidate the principle of humaneness, which it considers should be an essential part of any intelligible system of society.

Through all the vicissitudes of life Mr. Salt preserves a serene mind, an unconquerable optimism, and an inexhaustible interest in all things human. A great reformer, his life has been devoted to a ceaseless whirl of activities. Under less strenuous conditions he might have made a great name for himself in literature. His sympathetic studies of Shelley, Richard Jefferies, De Quincey, Thoreau, and James Thomson, prove his devotion to letters. His quiet humour is displayed in his delightful volume of verse, *Consolations of a Faddist*; whilst his scholarship is apparent in his spirited rendering of *The Treasures of Lucretius*. In another vein he has emulated George Borrow, and his *On Cambrian and Cumbrian Hills* is not without a touch of genius.

Meanwhile, society is not yet a brotherhood. It is divided into mutually antagonistic classes. Tyranny, crime, and war prevail, and how to remove them is the question of questions. Not by bloody revolution, thinks Mr. Salt, but rather by peaceful evolution. While it is true that there is no set programme warranted to cure all social ills, there are principles to be followed. Love is the principle that, by its superior, attractive power, will draw to itself the virtue and strength which selfishness has before absorbed. In this way, the greed which produces crime and misery and so many forms of social unrest, will be banished through the power of a new, stronger, and nobler spirit.

The phase of Mr. Salt's activities which will appeal most widely is his dauntless championship of the Humanitarian movement and of the rights of animals. He will always be remembered as the chivalrous knight-errant ever seeking out forlorn, oppressed, or distressed causes and objects, in whose behalf to break a lance, on whom to lavish his passion of pity, and satisfy his yearning for service. Mr. Salt's career is a discourse on the indispensability of reformers, who, more even than the poets, are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind."

MIMNERMUS.

Thought fights with thought: out springs a spark of truth
From the collision of the sword and shield.—*Landor*.

A Search for the Soul.

III.

(Continued from p. 341.)

ONE of the few British scientists of the present day who are believers in the immortality of the soul is the great physicist, Sir Oliver Lodge. In his book, entitled *Man and the Universe*, that eminent member of the scientific profession tells us many things which are in complete harmony with science; but he also tells us things that are not admitted as facts by the great majority of scientists, as may be perceived by the following extracts:—

What is it that combines and arranges the particles of matter so that if absorbed by root or leaves they correspond to and form the tissue of an oak, if picked by talons they help to feed the muscles of an eagle, if cooked for dinner, they enter into the nerves and brain of a man? What is the controlling entity in each case, which causes each to have its own form and not another, and preserves the form constant amid the wildest diversity of particles? We call it life, we call it soul, we call it by various names.....The soul is that controlling and guiding principle which is responsible for our personal expression and for the construction of the body, under the restrictions of physical condition and ancestry. In its higher development it includes also feeling and intelligence and will, and is the storehouse of mental experience.....Life is not matter, nor is it energy, it is a guiding and directing principle; and when considered as incorporated in a certain organism, it, and all that appertains to it, may well be called the soul or constructive and controlling element in that organism (pp. 78, 79).

Looking at the foregoing statements, we see that "soul" includes the "life" of the human organism, as well as "feeling and intelligence and will" and other mental attributes. And, what is even more surprising, all human beings, animals, and plants are each possessed of a soul, whose office it is to guide and control the formation of the body, to regulate its growth, and cause it to assume the height, girth, and form of its ancestral type.

But what is this "life" or "soul," which is said to guide and control the formation, growth, and development of the human organism? Sir Oliver says: "We call it life, we call it soul, we call it by various names." But the only thing which performs all he has described he never once names. This is "heredity." Yet it is the mysterious action and influence of this form of matter, protoplasm, that Sir Oliver calls "life" or "soul," and this "principle," he tells us, when united to the mental faculties, will survive the death of the body and live for ever.

Now, since it appears to be the action connected with heredity, which Sir Oliver Lodge calls the soul, we will look at the matter in the concrete. Commencing, then, by fecundation, in which the sexual cells of both parents meet and coalesce, we find in this union the formation of a new cell, the impregnated egg-cell or "stem-cell," from which each individual life begins. This stem-cell soon afterwards divides into two, and when each half-cell has developed, each of these again divides into two. By continuing this process the cells increase by geometrical progression into four—eight—sixteen—thirty-two—sixty-four, etc., and soon evolve into millions. When a sufficient number of these protoplasmic cells are formed, then the real work begins. The cells have to arrange themselves into the human form, not only as to the body, limbs, and external organs, but also into all the internal organs possessed by the parents. Such a task seems impossible; but it is performed unerringly

by these cells of living protoplasm. Sir Oliver Lodge tells us that they are guided and directed in this work by an immaterial "principle" which he calls "life" or "soul." As a matter of fact, the stem-cell, and all the other cells produced by segmentation, are minute particles of *matter* derived from the parents. No real life is originated until the parent cells unite: neither the spermatozoon (male) nor the ovum (female) possesses sufficient vitality in itself to reproduce the species.

If we follow the cells of protoplasm through the period of gestation, we find that they travel over a very old and beaten path, which leads in a roundabout way through all the past ages before arriving at the human stage. The following short paragraph from *The World's Advanced Thought*, published many years ago, states the case in a few words:—

The development of the embryo is a condensed and abbreviated repetition of the evolution of mankind. In the gestative period previous to birth the inchoate human being runs swiftly through the whole gamut of change that his ancestors slowly experienced in their movement of ages up the zoological ladder. He passes through the several stages of cell, leaf, egg, worm, reptile, serpent, fish (including gills), quadruped (including tail), till he reaches the human stage.

The foregoing statement is true only as regards the human race as a whole. In the majority of individual cases there are breaks in the chain; but notwithstanding some missing links, the long, devious path of evolution in the past can be clearly perceived. This aggregate of cells, then, which forms itself into a human body, would seem instinctively to know how organized bodies were formed in the past; hence, it travels, blindfold as it were, through the earlier stages of evolution, then through the later ones, until it ultimately reaches its goal. "There is a time," says Professor Huxley, "when the embryos of neither dog, nor horse, nor porpoise, nor ape, nor man, can be distinguished by any essential feature one from the other; there is a time when each and all of them resemble that of the dog. But as the development advances, all the parts acquire their speciality, till at length the embryo is converted into the form of the parent from which it started."

Now, assuming for a moment the existence of an immaterial director that guided the protoplasmic cells in their formation of the body, Why, it may be asked, did this director allow the cells to form themselves into the parts of an organism belonging to an early stage, then reform themselves and take the form of an organism belonging to a later stage; in one stage providing their body with gills, then reforming it and giving it a tail, and so going from one stage to another until they ultimately reached that of man? Why did not this controller show the cells a short and direct way of reaching the human stage without all this forming and reforming? Is it not clear that the cells have *no* immaterial director to guide them, but, in their own way, by some kind of instinct, they follow the path which protoplasmic cells had always taken in the past. Setting aside, then, this immaterial director *that does not direct*, is it not far more probable that the hereditary influence which resides in the cells—and is a property of living matter—is the agent that directs all the formative processes?

Sir Oliver Lodge appears to speak of "life" in an abstract sense, as he might of "goodness" or "wickedness." But such qualities are not entities which survive the death of the individuals in whom they are found; there is no "goodness" or "wickedness" apart from people who are classed as "good" or "wicked." The same is the case with the abstraction called "life." We know that one of the attributes common to members of the animal and vegetable kingdoms is vitality. This

fact the mind takes cognizance of, and, dissociating it from the organism, calls the abstraction "life." But life in the concrete refers, not to an abstraction, but to the state or condition of the entire living body when all its internal organs are exercising their respective functions. There is no such thing as "life" apart from bodies or things which are living, and though all the organs and tissues of the body contain life, this so-called "vital principle" cannot be separated from them. The word "life," as employed by Sir Oliver Lodge, is thus merely a *name* used to distinguish animated from inanimate forms of existence. Hence, to imagine "life" in the abstract to be an entity which will survive the body after death is to throw reason and common sense to the winds.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

A Bill is at present before Parliament that is of some interest to Freethinkers. In our fervour for liberty and democratic government, we have got rid of so many safeguards of freedom that losing one more or less makes little difference. The new proposal is that trial by jury shall be abolished for the duration of the War and for a certain time after, except in cases where personal character is involved. This means that in the event of a prosecution for blasphemy—for we hardly expect that would be considered a charge involving personal character—the defendant will be left without the protection of a jury. And before a judge of pronounced religious convictions, we can guess the result. We can see no reason for this Bill save as a preparation for other things. We daresay the Bill will pass. The present House of Parliament will pass anything. Charles the First would have considered it a dispensation of Providence had he had such a House.

In "dedicating" two ambulances at Trafalgar Square on Saturday, the Bishop of London said: "The difference between conveying wounded in ambulances like this and in a motor lorry is all the difference between heaven and hell." No doubt his lordship is an authority upon the conditions of these places, but we mustn't forget that his God made both.

After four years of war, Christians are beginning to have doubts as to the entire German nation being "atheistic," and they are actually saying things which would have been well-nigh impossible before the world-conflict. *The Evening Standard* (London) goes so far as to say that "the religious-minded German is on the whole a much worse man than the German Atheist."

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge has published a pamphlet, entitled *The Problem of Man's Ancestry*, by Professor F. Wood Jones. The most striking thing about the booklet is that the Biblical account of man's origin is completely ignored, and the writer admits the truth of evolution. Orthodoxy must be in a bad way when it has to borrow its arguments from Freethinkers.

The Vicar of Waltham Abbey invited all Nonconformist bodies in the town to join the Church in services of intercession. Providence was as deaf as usual.

The fawning newspapers editors have made much of the King's visit to a factory, when he helped to cut soldiers' shirts. There was nothing in the incident to waste good printer's ink on a lengthy report. If the Bible be true, God himself on one occasion turned tailor and made "coats of skin" and clothed Adam and Eve.

The Committee on Munition Workers' Health report that Sunday work does not pay. Yet the dear clergy have always found Sunday work pay very handsomely.

Although parsons run Gospel-shops, they are not usually popular with other tradesmen. A notable exception was the late Rev. Henry Long, of Higham Ferrers. At his funeral all the public-houses in the neighbourhood were closed. Perhaps the deceased gentleman purchased his "communion-port" from local dealers.

Clergymen as a rule are adepts at begging, and in securing the assistance of Mr. Lloyd George to take up the collection at the Welsh Service at Westminster Abbey they recognized that his abilities in this direction outdid their masterly efforts. Trust a parson for knowing the best way to collect the "dibs."

The Health Committee of the Carlisle Town Council granted permission for a concert in the Park on behalf of a Prisoners of War Fund. On this coming before the Council the Mayor said "there was something repugnant and distasteful in doing anything which in any might encourage the secularization of the Sabbath," and moved that the matter be referred back for consideration. We are glad to see that the Mayor failed to find a seconder, and that the concert was held. It is a curious thing that these Sabbatarians can see no wrong in War work being done on Sunday, but complain of harmless and healthy amusement. The Mayor is taken very sharply to task in the local paper, which reminds him that his argument no longer appeals to public sympathy—or, we hope, to public intelligence.

A London paper describes Mr. William Hughes, the Australian politician, as an "Imperial Christian." We have heard of "Chinese Presbyterians," but this union of "Punch and Pray" startles us.

Truth is stranger than fiction. At the Southwark Coroner's Court two boys told that official they had never heard of the Bible. The two boys were not related to one another, and attended different schools.

"It is no wonder that thousands are turning from the Churches in disgust." This is not a sentence from a Free-thought paper, but is taken from the *Daily News*, and is from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Orchard. It does not augur well for the near future of religion.

One of our readers, acting on the advice we gave in these columns, wrote to the local M.P., Sir Herbert Neild, on the question of Secular Education. In the course of his reply, Sir Herbert says:—

I am wholly opposed to a purely secular education, which in my judgment would be most disastrous to the country. I have never shrunk from expressing my view and sought to obtain support of advocating measures which are opposed to my strong personal conviction, and on this subject there can be no surrender if the best interests of the youth of the nation are to be safeguarded.

What we should like to know would be the facts upon which an estimate of the consequences of Secular Education, such as is expressed by Sir Herbert Neild, is based. We know of none. Will Sir Herbert say that Secular Education in France has been disastrous to the youth of France? And if not there, why here? Is English human nature so inferior to French that it needs a support which others can do without? We fail to see anything in Sir Herbert's reply save sheer religious prejudice.

It will be noted, too, that Sir Herbert Neild takes no notice whatever of the political aspect of the question. He is quite content that everybody should go on paying for the religion of everybody else, and that others should be forced to maintain a religious teaching to which they have a convinced opposition. This, of course, is because the religion taught is one with which Sir Herbert happens to agree. If he were a citizen of a Mohammedan country he would consider it an injustice to be compelled to maintain the teaching of that religion. It makes a world of difference whether one belongs to the dominant religion or not. And it is almost invariably fatal to one's sense of justice.

The German Kaiser claims that during his thirty years' reign he has been "A Prince of Peace." Like most Christians, he uses the word "Peace" in a Pickwickian sense.

A "Calvary" is to be erected outside a Kilburn church at a cost of £1,200. In these terrible times, it isn't the clergy who are being crucified.

The Duke of Connaught opened a "Y.M.C.A." hut subscribed for by East-End Jews, states an evening contemporary. This is proof positive of the complete secularization of the work at the "Y.M.C.A." huts. None are so devoted to their faith as members of the Jewish community.

Providence, we are told, watches the fall of the sparrows, but there seems some laxity with regard to the "paragon of animals." During last year over five thousand persons were killed and injured on British railways.

The Wirral Board of Guardians have decided to open their meetings with prayer. The only comment came from a Roman Catholic who said he would leave the room while the prayers were in progress, and would offer up prayers by himself. But what will happen if the Roman Catholic prays for something different from the rest of the Board? How will the recording angel be able to tell which is the official prayer? We suggest, as a way out of the trouble, that all the prayers should be signed by the chairman and clerk. That will prevent misunderstandings.

The *Church Times* warns clerical owners of glebe lands against being in a hurry to get rid of it. It is probable that a rise in value is anticipated. Anyway, our contemporary cites approvingly a caution of the Bishop of Winchester to the effect that the land is not his own but is the property of the Church. So far, we are bound to admit, the Bishop is on sound ecclesiastical ground. Students of history will remember that the Mediæval Church forbade the sale of slaves belonging to the Church for the same reason. The slaves were not their property, and no abbot or bishop was to sell the property of the Church—except at par or a little over.

The Australian Premier, Mr. Hughes, is running some risk of being accused of blasphemy. Speaking at the British Empire League on June 19, he said:—

We should not befool ourselves or think that in some fashion the God of which we have no knowledge—Providence—will again lead us, who have blundered so often, into the promised land. We have to face facts. Nothing but our own valour and inflexible will can get us out of where we are.

That looks like a semi-official repudiation of "Providence." If we are not careful we shall have German writers citing Mr. Hughes as proof that we are a nation of Atheists. English journalists have asserted that of Germany on about as much evidence.

It was one of life's little ironies that in a City bookshop two volumes should be displayed, side by side, bearing the titles, *Savage Survivals* and *The Popes and their Church*.

A new book bears the delicious title, *The Bells of Paradise*. Pious folk are more used to the beautiful hymn, "The bells of Hell go ting-a-ling, a-ling."

The clergy occasionally do other War-work beside seeing the soldiers off at the railway stations. The Bishop of Llandaff recently consecrated a memorial chapel at Bas-saleg.

The Bishop of Woolwich says that boys earn too much money, and one Woolwich lad earns twice as much as a curate. The simple remedy seems to be that the unhappy curates should be paid boys' wages.

If the clergy are unwilling to fight, they do their best to make their sojourn in this vale of tears tolerable. At a cricket-match at Lords, one of the teams was advertised as being composed of clergymen.

To Correspondents.

- A. S. PICKERING.—From what you say, Coventry, evidently, needs attention, and we hope will receive it. Thanks for your inducing your newsagent to display an extra copy of the *Freethinker*. You are quite safe in distributing our tracts when and where you please.
- J. L. CARR.—Pleased to have your name as one of the *Freethinker* League. We are sending papers to all the addresses given.
- MRS. K. MAXWELL.—Our Shop Manager is writing you *re* subscription. Pleased the *Freethinker* meets with your warm approval. That the two Presbyterian churches in your village have combined in order to secure a congregation is encouraging.
- DECIT (Ayrshire).—The present editor of the *Freethinker* is an Atheist. So was the last editor, G. W. Foote.
- H. S. W.—We were waiting only for available space, as you will see from this week's issue.
- E. LECHMERE.—The result might have been better, but it is well to put one's point of view before these people. Otherwise they are apt to think their own view is more powerful than it really is.
- H. A. HUTTON.—We are quite prepared to meet any god we may ever come across. At present we are left marvelling at the mentality of some of the followers of one god.
- GREVZ FYSHER.—Your instructions have received attention.
- A. RUSSELL.—Quite a well known work, and in great vogue among Freethinkers a generation or two back. It is still good reading, but not sufficiently up to date to warrant re-publication.
- T. D.—You are quite misinformed. The *Freethinker* does not benefit in the slightest degree from the Bowman legacy. Neither does it receive financial aid in any form from either the National Secular Society or the Secular Society, Limited.
- G. RILEY.—Hope you will be successful. Thanks for ordering extra copies for display in your newsagent's window.
- V. LE ROY.—Next week. Many thanks.
- A. WILDMAN.—Good news is always welcome.
- T. DENNIS.—Pleased to know you had a good meeting in Sheffield on Sunday last in the open air. You do not give the time of next Sunday's meeting in the Forester's Hall, so have guessed—6.30.
- A. B. MOSS.—We are doing as you request. Your suggestion that Freethinkers should carry a copy of this paper about with them for the purpose of introducing special portions to friends is a good one. Pleased you like the idea of a *Freethinker* League. It is catching on.
- E. ANDERSON AND A CORP.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.
- G. RULE.—We are very appreciative of what the Battersea Branch is doing to encourage the sale of the *Freethinker*. We have no doubt it will be successful.
- A. BRAMHILL.—You appear to be jumping at conclusions.
- W. BARTON.—Pleased to have your name and help. Literature for distribution is being sent. Kindly send on the paper when the parcel is large enough, safely secured with string and labelled "Waste Paper."
- LAWRENCE SMALL.—Compliments received with appreciation. *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.*
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to the "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."*
- 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.

We have already had several responses to what we wrote last week regarding a supply of waste paper in order to guard supplies of printing paper for the future. One London reader writes:—

You want paper, we want the *Freethinker*. I, perhaps, cannot do much, but I am calling on my friends, making a list of those willing to give their waste paper. I propose collecting those—collecting from them every month, and sending same to you. It may only be a little, but you are perfectly welcome to what I can get.

That is the right kind of spirit. We want all the papers, magazines, old books and ledgers (without covers) we can get. Those who care to give will doubly help. But we will pay the scheduled prices for all paper sent. The paper can be tied in bundles of about 56 lbs. and over, and sent to us. We will remit on receipt.

Canon Peter Green, of Manchester, asks the *Manchester Guardian* to receive literature, and subscriptions for the purchase of literature, in order that some "serious" reading-matter may be sent out to the troops. The *Guardian* offers to comply with the request, and adds that large numbers are ready "to ponder and examine the basis and ultimate things of life." We believe this to be the case, but when the *Guardian's* literature gets there it will not have the field to itself. We have taken care of that, and many of our readers would be surprised if they knew how much we have sent out to the troops. And our reward has been scores of letters from men who have confessed that it was in this way they made their first acquaintance with Freethought.

Sir H. H. Johnston's recent Conway Memorial Lecture, "On the Urgent Need for Reform in Our National and Class Education," is now issued by Messrs. Watts & Co., at the price of 9d. net. The lecturer has no trouble in making out a strong case against the present methods of education, and of the complete unsuitability of much that is given. If Sir H. H. Johnston's lecture has the effect of leading some people to recognize the urgent need of reform in education, he will have done good work. But the English people take little interest in education, although one is pleased to record that at present a more hopeful spirit is abroad.

A lively little paper is *Shaw's Journal*, published at Wolverhampton, and devoted to the discussion of social questions. The editor has several competitions running, and we notice that one of them consists of "the best essay on Paine's *Age of Reason*." Decidedly, the world is moving.

The *Humanitarian* continues to make its regular monthly appearance, and its persistent advocacy of a broad humanitarianism is a welcome sign during a period of war. The last issue to hand contains a review of Lord Morley's *Recollections*, and, among other interesting matter, a protest against the use of the word "meat" for flesh-food exclusively. "Meat," the writer holds, is a generic term, and is properly applicable to all food. But we are afraid that usage in this matter will be all-powerful.

The New York *Truthseeker*, in its issue for May 25, reprints as an article our Pioneer Tract, *What Will You Put in its Place?* We have been waiting for several weeks to retaliate by serving up one or two of the *Truthseeker's* excellent articles. Some of these are much too good to be spent on American readers alone. We are quite sure our readers will appreciate these reprisals.

We are at present sending out a large number of specimen copies of the *Freethinker* for several successive weeks, and as this involves some expense, we should be obliged if those who decide to become regular subscribers would drop us a post-card to that effect. At the same time, we are glad to report an increase in the number of subscribers due to this form of propaganda.

"Old Hand," writing in the *Accrington Observer*, recalls a lecture given by Charles Bradlaugh in the Accrington Town Hall in 1883. The meeting, says "Old Hand," was presided over by the Rev. J. Harrison, and was the finest political gathering ever held in the town. The meeting was held in connection with the Affirmation question, and, judging from the recollections of "Old Hand," the occasion must have been a memorable one. It is a pleasing reminder of the great days of Freethought. —

Mr. James Anderson, of 95 Hanover Street, Edinburgh, will be glad to meet other Freethinkers in that city with a view to forward the interests of the *Freethinker* and organize propaganda work. There should be much greater activity in Edinburgh than there is, and we trust Mr. Anderson's invitation will meet with a prompt response.

The Story of the Tea Plant.

II.

(Continued from p. 345.)

As Colonel Money intimated many years ago in his pioneer treatise, *The Cultivation and Manufacture of Tea*, the selection of site and soil for the plantations is of vital moment to the success of the industry. India bids fair to become the great tea garden of the globe, and in that luxuriant land the ideal conditions for growth are furnished by an alternation of sunshine and shower. In the Tropics evaporation proceeds at a rapid rate, and a copious supply of moisture is essential to the wellbeing of the plant. During a period of protracted rain the plant flourishes for a time, but its growth gradually lessens, and may ultimately cease. In very damp seasons the leaf yields inferior tea, for, as Bald states in his textbook, *Indian Tea*, the sap becomes watery, and "the plant has not been in sufficiently vigorous circulation to elaborate the substances necessary for the production of thick juice."

It has been scientifically demonstrated that all soils are rendered fruitful by the nitrifying activities of bacterial organisms. These micro-organisms form a multitude so immense in all good vegetable soils that the earth may almost be regarded as a living entity. The decomposition undergone by animal and plant substances so commonly attributed to water and air, is really produced by the labours of bacteria. Micro-organisms thus render available to the higher floral structures those nutrient materials so necessary to their life and growth.

Beneath the superficial soils, teeming with bacterial organisms, lies the deeper dead earth. This is seldom exposed to the influences of the atmosphere, and is therefore destitute of oxygen. It was well known in India that when the site of a deserted village was brought under cultivation, its crops, for several seasons, proved themselves miserably poor, no matter how rich it might be in all those constituents which usually promote fertility. Such soil as this has been trodden for generations by countless feet, and thus its population of nitrifying bacteria has been destroyed, and therefore the many attempts to rear the tea plant on it have ended in failure. Dr. Aikman has shown that oxygen is necessary to the life and labours of soil bacteria, and with the cessation of their nitrifying activities the earth becomes barren. When a tea estate is extended so as to embrace the site of an abandoned village, unless special measures are taken to introduce bacteria into the soil, the site will remain as a sterile patch for several years. To avoid this barren blemish in the landscape, the progressive planter provides each tea bush with a generous surrounding of virgin soil from the adjoining jungle. Thus is supplied the nourishment which enables the tea plant to thrive

until the beneficent bacteria have restored the soil to a state of fertility.

The tea shrub languishes on water-logged soil. When cultivated on sloping land, drainage may be neglected; but on estates situated on level country, the soil must be drained. When the rain falls, it is most important that the moisture should be afforded the fullest facilities for saturating the ground. If the rain runs over the surface, it not only transports invaluable soil substances to the streams, but the priceless nitrogen and other precious chemicals suspended in it are likewise lost. Rain not merely confers moisture to the thirsty earth. Its chemical constituents form an ideal fertilizer. The better the drainage system, the larger the percentage of nutritious materials added to the soil when the rain water slowly filters through it. Again, even in seasons of abnormal rainfall, well-drained land is much more responsive to the cultivator's art than indifferently drained or water-logged soil.

When totalled, the yearly rainfall is surprisingly heavy even in Europe. We attach small importance to the fact that an inch of rain has fallen during a summer storm. Yet every recorded inch of rain represents a downpour of 101½ tons on every acre of land. Therefore, 100 acres of land receives 10,150 tons for each inch of rain that descends in the course of the year. Hence the great superiority of steady, penetrating rain to the violent downpour which usually accompanies a thunderstorm. In the one case, the fertilizing rain filters through the soil, while in the other an enormous proportion of the rain, with its contained chemicals, is swept along the river valleys towards the sea.

At one time it was usually held that tea would flourish in a poor soil. This erroneous idea arose from the circumstance that when the tea gardens of China were first described it was stated that the shrub was usually grown on inferior soil. But, as Money remarks, the tea plant is, as a rule, cultivated in China on land which is useless for other purposes. "If," says he, "a soil is light and friable enough, it cannot be too rich for tea."

Poor or even moderately good soil is of little worth to the tea planter. Hops require rich land in temperate Europe, and the more opulent the soil the more abundant the picking. This is equally true concerning tea. The planting of tea gardens is a costly undertaking, and the utmost circumspection is needed when selecting sites for new plantations. Unlike cereal crops, which succeed clovers or roots, and may be themselves succeeded in the ensuing season by leguminous plants, the tea plot is continuously cultivated for a century. The richest virgin soil is best suited to a garden which is to be cropped for a hundred years or more. Land liable to river flooding must be shunned, for the overflow of a river will, in a few hours, reduce to a state of ruin the most promising plantation. Early cultivators imagined that the rice fields of India could be utilized as tea farms, but hard experience has proved that clay lands suitable for rice culture are worthless for tea.

It is estimated that the amount of rainfall in existing tea areas is something between seventy and one hundred inches per annum. The finest teas are raised where the rain falls throughout the year, with the most copious downfall at the season of highest temperature. Although the tea shrub is an evergreen, the frost and snow of the Himalaya regions, unless severe, do not appear to seriously injure the plant. This is due to the circumstance that the shrub becomes almost as dormant as our own deciduous trees, such as the oak and elm during the reign of winter. In the sub-tropical uplands of India the colder conditions prove useful to the tea plant, for slight frosts serve to destroy the eggs and grubs of insect enemies. Various observers have noted

that teas cultivated in the more temperate regions are less liable to the depredations of parasites than those grown elsewhere.

Local conditions, both of climate and soil, conspire to produce the choicest teas. The hot and humid plantations of the low-lying districts of Assam are celebrated for their abundant harvest of leaf, but the fine flavoured teas are rarely gathered in this region. In the less heated country of Upper Assam and the Darjeeling Hills splendidly flavoured teas are produced, but even in these areas the teas vary greatly in quality on different soils.

Before a garden is planted it is essential to ascertain whether an abundant supply of good water is easily available for the consumption of the coolies who work on the estate. Water must also be handy for machinery and factory use, as a constant supply is imperative in times of drought. A water famine has frequently brought a flourishing tea plantation to the brink of ruin in the arid period which precedes the arrival of the monsoon rains. The deepest wells have run dry with the sinister sequel of disease and death decimating the dwellers on the estate.

One signal advantage to those whose gardens occupy a hilly site is usually the proximity of mountain streams which may be utilized to provide water power for factory purposes. This secures a very substantial economy in the annual outlay, while the neighbouring forests furnish fuel for machinery, wood for the tea-chests, and timber for dwellings and factories. It is also important to secure ample facilities for transit by river or road to bring in supplies for the labourers, and to send the tea to market. A fairly open site is requisite to ensure the prosperity of the plantation. Narrow valleys are usually too near the jungle to repay the cost of cultivation, for the perpetual encroachment of the forest vegetation entails much extra labour, while in very narrow valleys the tea shrubs are apt to become half buried by the earth swept down by water descending from the adjoining slopes.

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

Miracles and Omnipotence.

THERE is one phase of the recent reassertion of the miraculous by Catholic apologists that, as it seems to me, has escaped the attention of the militant sceptic, concerned, not so much with the excrescences, but the essentials, of the faith he is attacking. The most important of those essentials is, I need hardly say, first the existence, and then the qualities of God. Obviously, until both of these are made clear, then the sacrifice of Christ, assuming that he ever lived, cannot count for anything. Man cannot be reconciled to a God that is either non-existent or pitiless by any tragedy, however poignant, that may have been enacted; and the prime question that we are, therefore, driven to consider is—to quote the words of John Stuart Mill—how, if God is omnipotent, he can still remain benevolent and allow all the inmedicable ills that flesh is heir to still to continue; allow, that is, the wicked still to flourish like a green bay tree, and the innocent, even the helpless and innocent child, to endure cruelties that wring the heart of the most callous of his own creatures. If we examine the answer tendered to us by Catholic and neo-Catholic apologists in the light of their own assertions regarding miracles, we shall realize, I think, more than ever, its complete inadequacy.

We are all familiar with the answer. God is omnipotent, we are told; he is all-powerful, but he has parted with his power; he has given man freewill, that blessed

and divine attribute; he cannot, therefore, interfere without despoiling man of his destiny, and must perforce continue to take the rest cure through centuries of sorrow, tragedy, and sin. Omnipotence, in other words, does not mean *all*-powerful, but merely all the power left to God; and just as it is impossible for a man to have his cake and eat it too, so it is out of the question that he can have freewill and the intervention of the Almighty to free him from evils that individually, at all events, he is not responsible for.

I might pause for a moment to point out that, even assuming that this argument is well founded, it is no justification of the inertia, which endureth, like God's mercy, for ever. As between the child, innocent and blameless, born into the horror of a London slum or the miseries of an Indian famine, and God, it is no answer to say that it must starve, or be beaten to death, because its ancestors used their freewill improperly. The child remains an injured, a tragic, victim of "sin" not its own; freewill, or no freewill, it is a victim of injustice. But the point is that there is nothing to show that freewill could not be preserved and the child protected, at one and the same time, provided always that the word "omnipotence" is left with its true meaning; the meaning that there is no limit to the power of its possessor.

Let me take another word applied by Catholic apologists to the Godhead, for it will make my meaning perfectly clear. We are told that God has creative power. What does creative mean? It means the ability to launch, or, if you like, impose a condition of affairs upon man without any cause but the will of God—that and nothing else. If freewill, therefore, now spells non-intervention, God can, if he chooses, impose a condition of affairs reconciling those apparently irreconcilable things. And, in point of fact, if miracles do, as the Catholics assert, continue to happen, that is exactly what he does achieve.

What is a miracle? As described by Catholic writers, I suggest much like this. A child is dying of an incurable and dreadful disease, not amenable to treatment. But, in view, perhaps, of specially strong representations, God concerns himself specially with the case. The attitude of non-intervention is abandoned. Human agencies having failed, God gets to work. The child is cured by his direct action; the law of cause and effect is obviously suspended, at least a human effect is produced through causes other than human; the child is cured, *and does not lose its freewill!*

That, according to Catholic writers, is what takes place, and the question at once arises, why, if it be possible in one case, not in all? Why, if one child can be saved by a miracle, cannot thousands of others? Miracles are easy to God. Without omnipotence in the true sense he could not perform them. With omnipotence, he could save the whole of man by one grand miracle. He could end the injustice of children suffering till the third and fourth generation for faults not their own; could abolish a condition of society whereby the unscrupulous become rich, and the worthy remain poor, and could, *inter alia*, save blameless old ladies from dying of the agonies of cancer, because as we are asked to believe, their grandfathers led wild lives.

Why, if God is benevolent, does he not do so?

I may be told by my fellow sceptics that they do not believe in miracles; that it is preposterous to suppose you can produce a cause without an effect; that the misery of man is so clamant that no being, in the slightest degree worshipful, no being not incredibly base and hideously repellant, would suffer it to continue if he had the power to alter it. I incline to that view also. But what, then, becomes of God's omnipotence?

John Stuart Mill's question still stands unanswered, and, as I fear, unanswerable, and for Catholics to stress miracles is merely to emphasize their own inability to meet the crucial objection to their faith.

AGNOSTIC.

S. P. C. K.

THE Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has just issued a pamphlet by Frederic Wood-Jones, Professor of Anatomy to the University of London, entitled *The Problem of Man's Ancestry*. The chief interest to Freethinkers is that its main object appears to be to belittle the work of Huxley and Haeckel, no doubt because they were violent antagonists of the Christian religion.

There lives in the dense forests of the East Indies an animal rather smaller than our English squirrel, which sleeps during the daytime, but jumps from tree to tree catching insects and lizards during the night. The natives call it the Malmag, but it is known to science as *Tarsius Spectrum* or the Tarsier. The generic name "*Tarsius*" is due to the animal possessing an astonishingly long tarsus or ankle, while the specific name "*Spectrum*" refers to its huge goggle-like eyes, resembling those of a motor-cyclist, which give the animal such a weird-like appearance, that it is held in superstitious awe by the natives. Until quite recently it was placed amongst the lemurs, but lately our greatest authority on the subject, Mr. R. J. Pocock, owing to its organization departing markedly from other lemurs, has put it in a phylum all to itself at the base of the primate stock.

Professor Wood-Jones brings forth several lines of evidence indicating the resemblances between *Tarsius* and man, and points out also that in these characters both differ from the monkeys and anthropoid apes.

The bones of the nose, the structure of the eye-socket, the form of the cheek-bones, the condition of the roof of the mouth, the teeth, and many other parts of the skeleton are alike in *Tarsius* and *Homo*, while differing from those of the monkeys and anthropoid apes.

The muscles also show more affinity between man and *Tarsius* than between man and apes. For example, the pectoralis minor which passes from the ribs towards the fore-limb, where it is attached to the shoulder-girdle in *Tarsius* and man, in the monkeys and apes ends on the upper bone of the arm. Primitive characters are shown in the tongue, the vermiform appendix, the kidneys, and other organs in man and *Tarsius* which differ from those of the monkeys and apes.

Turning to the fossil evidence, he quotes from Professor Boule's *L'Homme fossile de la Chapelle-aux-Saints* as follows: "Man has been derived neither from the Anthropoid stem nor from any other known group, but from a very ancient Primate stock, that separated from the main line even before the giving off of the Lemuroids." The conclusion arrived at is, that man and *Tarsius* linger to-day as specialized primitive Primates. A fossil form of *Tarsius*, called *Anaptomorphus*, dates right back to the base of the Eocene period, and is thus contemporary with the earliest tools of man, the well-known Eoliths.

Although the worthy Professor frequently sneers at Haeckel, nevertheless, he brings in his well-known law, that in the individual development of an animal, it climbs up its ancestral genealogical tree. The skull of man shows no suture between the premaxillar and the maxillary bones, although in apes and monkeys a well-marked gap is distinctly visible. This is a human specific character. If man acquired this character late in his

history, we should expect the fusion of the two bones to be very late in its appearance in the human embryo. Professor Wood-Jones says:—

As a matter of fact, this character is established as soon as ever the future bones of the human face are first represented as cartilaginous nuclei. It has become a character of the human embryo at a stage when development has proceeded so little way, that the future being is no longer than ten times the diameter of an ordinary pin's head. Such a finding, in the development of any animal, forces the conclusion that a distinctive feature, so early acquired in embryology, was early acquired in history, and that the species must be very old indeed.

The Professor concludes by mentioning that Dr. S. A. Smith, of Sydney University, has proved from mineralized fossils found on the Darling Downs at Talgai, in Queensland, that men, women, and dogs broke into the Pleistocene fauna of pouched Marsupials, and became the ancestors of the present aboriginal Australians and their native dogs. Dr. Smith believes they came in a boat, and were as highly civilized then as the Australian savage is to-day.

HENRY SPENCE, B.Sc.

Correspondence.

TURNING TO GOD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Some few weeks ago I read in your sensible paper of a clergyman who had lost a son in this horrible War. This clergyman was reported to have said, had he been an Atheist before this happened, it would certainly have converted him. I take it that he would have turned to God, as the saying goes. I would just like to put my case, and see how they look side by side. I had two sons fighting for a very long time. For about six weeks we received no letters from one son; then came the official news that he was missing. We then received a postcard from the boy himself, stating that he had been wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans, and would send us all the news when he got settled in hospital, as he had been sent to England as an exchange prisoner of war. The following day we received a letter from him, which ran like this:—

Dear Mother and Dad,—I promised to let you know all the news. On March 22 I was wounded. The Germans came up so rapidly that they passed on, with the result that I lay out until the 26th before I was actually in the Germans' hands, having the days and nights out in the open. I know how sorry you will be when I tell you I was so seriously wounded that it was found necessary to amputate both legs.

Now, Sir, I could not read any more of that letter for some time, as you will well understand. What I want to say is this: Can any of your readers see anything in my case that I or anyone else should turn to God? I am glad to say that his mother and myself have been down to King George's Hospital, London, to see him, and he is in good health and cheerful. He says himself, had the doctors and nurses been as helpless as his so-called Heavenly Father seems to be, it would have been all up with him, but the doctors say he will be able to walk again with artificial legs. Note the good work of the doctors and nurses; then note the work of God. I am told I should thank God my son is alive. Others must thank God because theirs are dead. What a game! Will we ever get out of this horrible nightmare, and allow sense and reason to take their proper place, and get rid of this blind faith and superstition for ever?

THOS. O'NEILL.

RELIGION IN THE ARMY.

SIR,—after reading Mr. Comley's letter to-night on "Religion in the Army," I feel induced to send you my experience of both Services. I knew a good deal of the Army before the War—did the first two years of the War in the Army, and have now been nearly two years in the "Senior Service." My experience (and I am a pretty close observer) is

exactly the opposite of Mr. Comley's. The overwhelming majority of N.C.O.'s and men regard Church Parade as a nuisance, and openly cuss it. Were it voluntary (and really voluntary), as it should be, the attendance would be very small.

I do not say the majority are Freethinkers on a basis of intellectual conviction (though a steadily growing number are), but the prevalent spirit is one of utter indifference, tintured with doubt, suspicion, and a considerable amount of increasing hostility. The conversation proves it. My *Freethinker* was (and is) always eagerly read by many in the Army in France and in the Navy. And the "Man in the Street" (now the man in the Army) has a far more "open mind" than ever before of the great case against religion.

In all my experience I have only seen one man—he was a young man in barracks—saying his prayers before turning in. I might, if you can find space, relate this amusing (and true) story as to the effect of war experiences on some religious folk. In my boat we had a "sailor" who knew nothing of the sea before the War. He was, to use the common phrase, "a bit religious," and never used "strong" language. The class of boats we were in roll, and pitch, and jump about in anything of a sea to a very great degree. Our "religious" friend was a terrible victim to *mal-de-mer*, and five days at sea meant to him five days of practical starvation, and return to port in a very weak condition. One day, while making another offering to Father Neptune, he was covered in a sea and thrown up against a deck house. He struggled and staggered into the foc's'le and there fell under a table, which collapsed on top of him. He managed to rise and make his way out again, where, dropping into an arm chair in the little sick-bay, he said: "I don't believe there is a bloody God!" Though not arrived at in quite so strenuous a manner, that is the conclusion that enormous numbers have been forced to come to by the War.

The opinion held by the great bulk of the men (and expressed among themselves) about the chaplains is a very poor one indeed. Where they are thought well of, it is because of their qualities as *men*, not as parsons.

You, Sir, referred some time ago to the hymns sung by men in the Services. The greatest favourite I have come across is to the tune (I think) of the hymn "When we gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful the ri-eh-ver," and it runs thus:—

Thank Christ we haven't joined for ever
For ever, and for ever, and for eh-e ver:
Thank Christ we haven't joined for ever,
We'd all go bally batchy if we had.

So I must agree with the note you append to Mr. Comley's letter.

A. Z.

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OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates, Queen's Road): 11.45, Mr. Geo. Rule, "The God Idea."

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.30, Miss K. B. Kough, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Miss K. B. Kough, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 6, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

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COUNTRY.

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