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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Medicine.

Amid the uncertain gains and assured losses of the War, the triumphs of sanitary and medical science stand unquestioned and unquestionable. The War has been fought under conditions which are so fatal to health that, left alone, disease would have long ago brought the War to an end by a wholesale slaughter of the participants. For the health of the Army we have to thank, not the much-advertised "Padre," but the un-boomed doctor. The miracles of this War are those of healing, and of the means by which the health of the Armies have been maintained. The prayer of faith has not saved the sick, new limbs have not been made to grow on shattered stumps. What has been done in this direction has been done by Atheistic science. And yet we do not pay the head of the medical profession £15,000 a year; neither do we give him an army of well-paid assistants. We do not give mining Royalties of nearly £300,000 annually to the doctors as we do to the parsons; we have never voted them subsidies in Parliament, and we have never placed a tax upon every ton of coal entering London to build doctor's houses as we have done to build parson's churches. If our soldiers had trusted to God, it would, indeed, have been a case of "God help them!"

* * *

Faith and Physics.

Last week we were dealing with the close and historic connection between Christianity and dirt. And it is pertinent to now consider the influence of Christianity on medical science. That influence can be stated in a sentence—it was wholly and irredeemably bad. The medical science of antiquity was ignored and finally suppressed. The primitive belief that all disease was due to the action of evil spirits was revived and enforced. Right through the Old and New Testaments disease is treated as something that is supernaturally induced and must be supernaturally cured. In all essentials the Christian theory is that which flourishes among savages to-day. The boils of Job, the leprosy of Uzziah, the plagues of Egypt, are all due to God. Leprosy is to be cured by the High Priest taking a little blood and oil and placing it "upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot." If the efficacy of the method only equalled its simplicity, it is a

pity it was ever allowed to fall into disuse. Jesus healed the sick by a touch, cured blindness by spitting on the ground, and anointing the blind man's eyes with the spittle (John ix. 6). Peter's mother was cured by a touch. When a man's ear was cut off, Peter picked up the ear and stuck it on again. Paul cured fever by prayer, and restored Eutychus to life after his preaching had caused him to drop down dead. The New Testament is quite explicit on the point. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." In the Christian pharmacopœia there is but one ingredient—faith. In a Christian hospital a dispensary would be useless, and chemists downright blasphemy. The patients would supply their own physic, and the parsons collect subscriptions for having introduced the remedy.

* * *

Medicine and the Church.

The Christian Church had its own theory of disease, and its own remedies, and it dealt in its own way with all opposition. The great Origen was convinced that: "It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruption of the air, pestilences." St. Augustine said that "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to these demons; chiefly do they torment freshly baptised Christians." Tertullian was convinced that an evil angel attended every person and caused disease. Other Saints and Fathers were of the same opinion. And the Church of England Prayer Book still has: "Whatever your sickness is know you certainly that it is God's visitation." What, then, was the use of doctors or of surgical science to Christians? None at all. So we find St. Ambrose declaring that the "precepts of medicine are contrary to celestial science," St. Augustine denouncing anatomists "who inhumanly pry into the secrets of the human body," and Tertullian denouncing the surgeon Herophilus for the blasphemy of dissection. The barbarians, in their repeated invasions of the Empire, had left intact the pagan medical schools at Treves, Arles, Bordeaux, Athens, and Alexandria. It was left for the Church to close them or sterilize their usefulness. A Church Council of 1248 and that of Rheims (1119) interdicted the study of medicine, while giving monks the control of the treatment of disease. The Council of Beziers (1246) prohibited Christians applying to Jewish doctors for treatment, and this at a time when the practice of scientific medicine was in their hands. The Dominicans, in 1243, prohibited all books on medicine from their monasteries. Pope Innocent III. forbade physicians practising save under the supervision of an ecclesiastic. Honorius (1222) forbade priests studying medicine, and, at the end of the century, Boniface XIII. interdicted surgery as being Atheistical.

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A Christian Pharmacopœia.

The Christian world had its own pharmacopœia, which both piety and profit impelled them to preserve. In the matter of specialization, the religious theory of diseases lacked little. It was, indeed, a monument of ill-spent

ingenuity. The human body was mapped out, and each part placed under a special director, beginning with God the Father and ending with now unknown saints. Diseases were shared out in a similar manner. St. Gall cured tumours, St. Valentine epilepsy, St. Polonia diseases of the teeth, St. Roque the plague, St. Hubert the bite of a mad dog, St. Clara sore eyes, St. Gervaise rheumatism, and so on through every complaint the flesh is heir to. In the case of any disease the plan was simple. One merely hunted up the celestial directory, and having paid the necessary fee—a by no means unimportant part of the procedure—one's concern was at an end. In addition there were innumerable relics which played an equally important part in the Christian science of medicine. The saliva of saints, along with water in which their hair had been dipped, were esteemed of great curative value. Parings of saintly nails, remnants of saintly clothing, and even saintly ordure, were all esteemed as remedies. At Cologne Cathedral was preserved—and is still, for aught we know to the contrary—the skulls of the Wise Men of the East. The relics of St. Rosalia at Palermo had thousands of cures attributed to their efficacy; and even after Professor Buckland discovered they were the bones of a goat, the cures went on just the same. Nor did the trifling fact of their belonging to men prevent the bones of St. Ursula and some of her eleven thousand virgins demonstrating their efficacy. Sacred pools, streams, and fountains abounded, each with its list of cures. The touch of an anointed person was also of great value, a superstition that lingered on into the eighteenth century, and was exemplified in the cures narrated of Queen Anne. Charles II. is said to have touched and cured over 100,000 people. William the Third's remark to one whom he "touched" for scrofula, "May it bring you better health and more sense," showed more intelligence than piety.

* * *

Divine Insanity.

Among savages there is but one cause of insanity. It is caused by an evil spirit taking possession of a person. This was precisely the theory taught by the Jesus of the New Testament, and exemplified by him in practice. In this matter, at least, he would have felt perfectly at one with an African witch-doctor exorcising evil spirits. And the teaching was fully endorsed and carried out by the Church for centuries. Officially, it is so still, for the 72nd Canon of the Church of England reserves the power of casting out devils to licensed persons, while the Catholic Church still teaches it. There was no power on which the early Christians prided themselves more than this of casting out devils. And with the organization of the Church came the organization of the power to cast out demons—to doubt which was Atheism. The power became so developed that in the fifteenth century a Bishop of Beauvais not only caused five devils to leave one sufferer, but actually compelled them to sign a document promising not to molest this person again—a method which reminds one of the bargain of Jesus with the devils who were allowed by him to enter a drove of swine. But all other exploits were eclipsed by the Jesuit Fathers of Vienna, who, in 1583, produced a record of 12,652 devils that had been cast out by them. The exactitude of the figures disarms all criticism and silences all doubt.

* * *

A Ghastly Chapter.

Dr. Henry Maudesly may well ask, "What place could a rational theory of insanity have in such an atmosphere of thought and feeling?" Insanity being, on the authority of Jesus, produced by devils, the rational cure was to get the devils out again. All over Europe people were whipped and chained and ill-treated, in the

hope of making the dwelling-places of the devils so uncomfortable that they would come out. Lecky has collected a number of cases of people who were even burned for fancying themselves angels, Antichrist, or similar fabulous characters. Thousands of insane people—mostly women, for it was said the devils had more power with women than men—were burned for witchcraft. The state of public asylums even a hundred years ago were a disgrace to civilization. In Greece and Alexandria, centuries before, lunacy had been treated as a disease of the brain. It was left for Christianity to forsake this useful lead, and return to the practice of savages. Not till the scientific labours of men like Pinel in France, and Tuke in England, beat back religious ignorance, did the Church surrender its theories and put a close to one of the most discreditable chapters in the history of civilization.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christianity and Natural Law.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Galatians vi. 7).

THAT verse is one of the many golden statements contained in the Bible. Dr. Jowett, of Westminster Chapel, London, finds in it what he properly calls "The Law of Harvest." In a characteristic article in the *Christian World* for June 20, this popular divine says that we are "surely justified in gazing upon the sunny aspect of the great truth," which is, according to him, that "if we want a fine harvest we can have one." We readily admit that a preacher may legitimately draw such an inference from the apostle's words; but we are deeply convinced, nevertheless, that the author of the Galatian Epistle intended them to serve as a warning more than as an inspiration. He evidently had in his mind people who secretly doubted and openly denied their truth. The very form of the exhortation—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked"—implies that some there were who unblushingly taught that there was no inexorable law of sowing and reaping; or, in other words, that it made very little, if any, practical difference how a man lived under the Christian dispensation. Both the doubt and the denial were by no means unreasonable deductions from the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. Dr. Jowett ignores this dark aspect of his text altogether, basing his discourse, not on the verse he quotes, but on another, namely, "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." And yet the reverend gentleman, referring to his own youthful experience, makes the following significant admission:—

My own early associations with the words are mostly connected with tragedy and disaster. They are usually quoted to emphasize the dire consequences of ill-living in early days. We think of the sowing of wild oats and the inevitable sequence which is found in moral ruin. And so the word has come to be a threat rather than an inspiration; it is more a warning than a promise. It is a trespass-board, and rarely a heartening counsel of friendly and comforting direction.

There is a broad hint, in that extract, that the natural treatment of the text is not good exegesis, as if the apostle had not meant it to be so taken; but we venture to dissent most emphatically from such a view. Nothing can be clearer than the fact that the apostle is here giving expression to a solemn warning, or setting up "a trespass-board" rather than "a heartening counsel of friendly and comforting direction." His central doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he had so zealously proclaimed during his visit to them, had led the Galatians to the natural inference that believers in Christ were freed from the natural law of cause and

effect; and as a result some of them, no doubt, had gone morally astray, and were the cause of the moral downfall of others.

Now, Paul's contention is that they had made a false and disastrous inference from his teaching. As a religious teacher he was, in his own opinion, infallible. What he declared to his hearers and readers was the sure "word of the Lord." If his converts misconstrued his message, no blame attached to him; it was purely the outcome of their own blindness and stupidity. He assured the Thessalonians, "by the word of the Lord," that Christ's second coming would occur in their own lifetime. Pinning their faith in that ocular declaration, the poor people abandoned their daily avocations, and spent their whole time waiting and watching for that most happy event. The second coming was postponed year after year, and the apostle wrote to them again, not to confess that his doctrine was at fault, but to accuse them of having misunderstood and misapplied it. As a matter of fact, the mistake was entirely his own, though to his dying day he never owned up to it. The Lord's second coming is still an unverified dream, one of many falsified prophesies. Equally false is the doctrine of justification by faith, which for Protestants has been the "article of a standing or falling Church." It is but fair to state that the Council of Trent (1545-63) was unanimous in rejecting that dogma—that is, in anathematizing the view that "justifying faith is nothing but confiding trust in the Divine Mercy as remitting sins for Christ's sake, or that this trust alone is that whereby we are justified." And yet there is no doubt whatever but that Luther was perfectly right in his interpretation of the Pauline doctrine. In Paul's Epistles it is repeatedly asserted, with the utmost confidence, that justification is by faith alone.

What saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.....Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Romans iv. 3-6; iii. 28).

Such is the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith alone, and it is being preached to-day from all orthodox pulpits. In hymn books, still used in Nonconformist chapels, we find such nauseating doggerels as the following:—

Nothing either great or small—
 Nothing, sinner, no;
 Jesus did it, did it all
 Long, long ago.
 Cast thy deadly doing down,
 Down at Jesus' feet,
 Stand in him—in him alone,
 Gloriously complete.
 Free from the law; oh happy condition!
 Jesus hath bled, and there is remission!
 Cursed by the law, and bruised by the fall,
 Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

Protestant divines are in the habit of saying that it took the Church fifteen hundred years to discover this great truth so clearly taught in the Word of God. That is so; but once discovered, its value to the Reformed Communion proved incalculable, and with them to this day it is the "article of a standing or falling Church." That is true, and its truth is the supreme witness against the Christian religion. One Sunday, John Ruskin attended the Rev. Mr. Tipple's Church and heard a sermon in which it was proudly affirmed that faith in Christ in a moment converted the blackest sinner into a saint as bright and pure as any angel before the throne. To the

brilliant author such a doctrine was the most pernicious and damnable conceivable, and he could find no terms sufficiently scathing in which to denounce it. Mr. Tipple positively declared that he never preached it, nor even believed it; but Ruskin heard it in Mr. Tipple's Church, whether by him or another, not only timidly hinted at, but unequivocally proclaimed as an incontestable Gospel truth. Ruskin's unmitigated condemnation of it showed how clearly he perceived the absolute inviolability of the law of causation. The astonishing fact is that Paul, too, discerned how utterly impossible it is to set aside the law of harvest, though he preached a Gospel which exulted over the possibility of totally severing the natural connection between sowing and reaping, or between past and present in a man's life. It never once occurred to him that he was guilty of giving his assent to two fundamentally and wholly irreconcilable doctrines, only one of which he knew both by experience and observation to be eternally true. He was fully aware that a man's past cannot be blotted out, that of necessity we reap what we have sown; but he did not, or would not, see that the Gospel he preached could not be true because it flatly contradicted that inflexible law. At last, however, it is being slowly brought home to the human mind that justification by faith is absolutely impossible, and would be essentially immoral if it were possible. To secure a fine harvest we must sow fine seed, to be happy to-morrow we must pursue truth and virtue to-day. If we cannot save ourselves we are lost indeed. We are Nature's children, and it is at once our duty and privilege to understand, obey, and make profitable use of our mother's laws. In any case, these cannot be broken; but if we disregard them they both can and will break us, no matter what Gospel may be preached to us.

J. T. LLOYD.

"England's Soldier-Saint."

[A REJOINDER.]

"Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?"

"No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you sir; but I bite my thumb, sir." —Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet."

John P. Robinson, he

Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee.

—Lowell.

EDWARD GIBBON, the greatest of our historians, is dethroned and done for. Sentence has been passed upon him by the Honorary Secretary of the Society of Saint George. All that remains between now and the morning of execution is mere detail. In pursuit of his mission as a Christian and a patriot, the Honorary Secretary has addressed a long letter to the Editor of this paper, and pointing out that Gibbon has unaccountably confused "Saint George" with another gentleman of the same name in a similar line of business. Those who have adopted the "careless and sneering assertions of Gibbon" have been misled grossly. This is partly owing to the fact that their own churlish desire to belittle the saint coincided with the opinions expressed by the wicked Gibbon, who deserves all the plagues of Egypt for upsetting the faith of simple folk.

It is all very sad, but "Saint George" himself is the trouble. Whether we identify the "saint" with the scoundrelly army-contractor of Alexandria, or the other man with the same name, he is equally unsatisfactory. The chief exploit of the "other fellow" is the slaying of the dragon. Sane people regard this as a mere fabulous invention, such as the stories of Perseus and the sea-monster, Apollo and the python, Bellerophon and the chimera, and many another legend. This disposes the saint as a solar myth. It also disposes of him

as the Christian crusader, champion of chivalry, and "patron saint of England."

The other stories told of this "Saint George" serve to show to what depths human credulity can sink. This "saint" was, we are told, killed no less than three times, pleasantly reviving on two occasions. Among the trifling things that happened to him were that he was roasted, beaten with rods, crushed with rocks, beheaded, and thrown to wild animals. Coming to life again, he was sawn into pieces. These fragments were thrown into boiling pitch, but he again came to life, being finally and mercifully despatched by being broken to pieces on a wheel. What has all this beautiful nonsense to do with England, or even with common sense? Only in one fable is he described as having even visited this country. If the members of the Royal Society of St. George really believe that the decrees of Omnipotence are affected by saintly intervention, of what use is this particular "Saint George"? Is he not one of the patron saints of Germany and Austria as well as England?

Gibbon, be it remembered, identified "Saint George" with George, of Cappadocia. As he was writing history, and not collecting fairy tales, he was justified. And, if the "saint" moulted many a feather in the process, he emerges from the ordeal as a man and not as a monstrosity. Here is an account of the human "saint" as penned by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who should be beyond the reach of the shafts of the Royal Society of Saint George:—

George, of Cappadocia, born at Epephania, in Cilicia, was a low parasite, who got a lucrative contract to supply the army with bacon. A rogue and informer, he got rich, and was forced to run from justice. He saved his money, embraced Arianism, collected a library, and got promoted by a faction to the episcopal throne of Alexandria. When Julian came, A.D. 361, George was dragged to prison. The prison was burst open by the mob, and George was lynched as he deserved. And this precious knave became in good time Saint George of England, patron of chivalry, emblem of victory and civility, and the pride of the best blood of the modern world.

There is no getting out of it! "Saint George," in either version, is one of the most complete shams from which ever soft-hearted and soft-headed folk sought to extract religious sentiment. His story may appear as true as the Gospels to the unlettered and unsoaped members of the Greek Church in the East of Europe, but what concern have decent folk in England with the infamous bacon-curer of Alexandria, or with the central figure in a solar myth? Every schoolboy should know that "St. George's" vogue came to England with the Crusades, though the legend was known long before. As a Protestant country, we do not need a patron-saint at all, and Catholic ecclesiastics must rub their hands with glee when they recall that a "saint" still figures on our gold coinage and banknotes.

Custom makes cowards of most folk, but it is no use pretending that the bulk of people in a civilized country can be made to care for a meaningless blend of classic myth and deceased Cappadocian. Why not throw over the whole farce? So far from recommending any citizen to wear an artificial rose in honour of a still more artificial saint, we suggest that it would be a kindness to strew the poppy of oblivion over the grave of the army-contractor of Alexandria. A cynic might liken the history of "England's soldier-saint" to a purple passage from the earlier books of the Bible, or a succulent page from the Newgate Calendar. The patron-saint of England, like so many Biblical heroes, is a sham, and there is an end of it.

MIMNERMUS.

His Real Followers.

ONE Sunday morning in June, I met Uncle Joe returning from church. He had been to a special service, to which he had been invited by the vicar, and at which the Mayor of the Borough, and the Aldermen (in their robes), and Councillors, and many of the Borough officials had promised to attend; and a further attraction was promised in the announcement that various Volunteer corps, and Boy Scouts with their bugle bands, would accompany the representatives of the municipal authorities. In the circumstances, I was not surprised to learn from Uncle Joe that a large congregation, composed largely of ladies and other sightseers, were present. I did not attend myself, as I found the attraction of a good band on Peckham Rye more to my taste.

"Well," I said to Uncle Joe, when we had exchanged the usual courtesies, "what sort of sermon did you have from the vicar?"

"Oh, very good," he replied; "commendably brief, but right to the point. The vicar said that this War in which we are now engaged must be a war to the finish. It will never do to let the enemy come up again and renew this terrible conflict. So, therefore, we must crush the enemy now, once and for ever."

"Yes," I responded, "I agree with that sentiment; but I do not quite understand how a reverend gentleman, a follower of 'the meek and lowly Jesus,' could talk in that way."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not consider the sentiments at all Christian-like; it does not seem to me to express the ideas embodied in the teachings of the 'meek and lowly Jesus.'"

"As I have told you before, that is where you are wrong," said Uncle Joe, with an air of authority. "You seem to think that Christianity consists in nothing more than the teachings of Jesus; but Christianity is a great deal more than that. We believe in the Old Testament as well as the New, and we go to war to-day in much the same spirit as the Children of Israel did thousands of years ago."

"Oh, but I thought that Jesus had come to alter that state of things—that he had come to bring a new dispensation—to establish a better and nobler kingdom on earth?"

"That is true," said Uncle Joe; "but you cannot establish such a kingdom on earth until the people are prepared for it."

"Quite so; and it seems to me that it will be a precious long time before this 'glorious kingdom' can be established, while human nature remains what it is."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. Jesus, if he taught anything at all—that is, if the Jesus of the Gospels ever existed, which I very much doubt—his main teaching in regard to human conduct is what is called the doctrine of non-resistance. For example: 'If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other and let him smite that also; if a man takes your coat, give him your cloak,' and so on; and I mean to say that the only Christians who act up to that teaching are the despised and persecuted Conscientious Objectors, who not only refuse to fight for their country, but refuse to do any kind of labour that may be said to contribute towards the successful pursuit of the War."

"Ah, but I think that the Conscientious Objectors are wrong," exclaimed Uncle Joe, with some warmth, "and if all Christians acted up to that doctrine, the enemy would soon take possession of our land, and every one of us would speedily go under the iron heel of the

worst tyranny that has afflicted human civilization for ages."

"Exactly. And so it comes to this: that the majority of Christians are courageously fighting against tyranny and oppression, not in obedience to the teachings of Jesus, but in direct opposition to them."

"No, not exactly that," said Uncle Joe. "As I told you before, Christianity is not such a narrow creed as you imagine. It takes the whole of the Bible as 'containing the word of God'; and if it finds anything in the Old Testament that favours warfare, and strenuous warfare at that, the Christian is as much at liberty to follow that teaching as he is any of the particular passages that you may find in any one of the Four Gospels."

"But is there not a passage in Luke that says: 'But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me'?" (Luke xix. 27).

"Yes. I think, however, if you will look closely into that passage, you will probably find that it is an interpolation. It is opposed to the whole tenor of the teachings of Jesus?"

"I suppose you admit that some of the passages in the New Testament are interpolations?"

"Oh, yes; I cheerfully admit that," said Uncle Joe. "Many of our most eminent scholars admit it also."

"Very well; what I maintain is that the main teaching of Jesus was that of 'turning the other cheek to the smiter.' But where is the Christian who does it? As I have said, only the poor 'conscientious objector,' who is often sent to goal by the Christian in authority for having the audacity to obey the behests of his master."

"And what of the passage: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword'?"

"Yes; but finish the passage, please, and you will find that it had a purely domestic application. For the passage goes on: 'For I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household' (Matthew x. 34-36). In this case, I think, the sword was purely metaphorical."

"But you cannot deny," said Uncle Joe, "that the Christian soldier who fights not only for his own freedom but for that of small and oppressed nationalities is doing a noble work?"

"Oh, certainly; but he is fighting not as a Christian, and not in obedience to the teachings of Jesus, but as a human being who believes in liberty for his fellow-man and is prepared to sacrifice his life to attain it."

"Oh, I am glad you acknowledge that Christians do good sometimes."

"Neither I, nor any other Freethinker, would be stupid enough to deny that. But what I ask you is, What Christian, who is in the fighting line, acts up to the teaching of 'Resist not evil,' 'Love your enemies,' 'Bless them that curse you,' or 'Pray for them that despitefully use you?' I say, not one."

"But, my dear boy," said Uncle Joe, quite affectionately, "we cannot act up to all the teachings of Christianity at once. One at a time, I say, is enough for me, and the whole history of this country, and other Christian countries, is enough to show that Christians have never been deficient in fighting spirit, and have taken a leading part in some of the greatest wars in the history of the world."

"Which leads me to repeat that Christians have done so in direct opposition to the teachings of their Lord and Master. I am glad, however, they have done so, otherwise we, as a people, would have been wiped off the face of the earth. For the doctrine of

non-resistance, carried to its logical conclusion, would mean not only the abolition of our Army and Navy, of our law courts, and police courts, our judges, and magistrates, but our police constables also, and this would inevitably lead to the villain riding rough shod over the virtuous, and to the masses being left a prey to revolution and anarchy."

By this time we had reached the door of Uncle Joe's house, and he had scarcely put the key into the keyhole, when Aunt Jane came forward to greet us.

"Good morning," she said to me; "hope you have had a good time?"

"Splendid," I replied. "The band was excellent—the harmony delightful."

"And the sermon—how was that?"

"Oh, quite to my taste," said Uncle Joe, cheerfully. "But it was open to criticism; and we have been discussing it all the way home."

"Come to any settled conclusion about it?"

"No," I replied. "We agree to differ—as usual."

"Oh, then, dinner is quite ready," said Aunt Jane.

"And, at all events, we shall have a better prospect of agreeing on the qualities of that," I said, "than on any sermon that was ever preached." ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Acid Drops.

Earl Curzon's speech in the House of Lords the other day may be said to have advanced us a step nearer Thomas Paine's ideal of a League of Nations, although his lordship was not very enthusiastic about it. There are many difficulties in the way, but none that are insurmountable if only the nations concerned are in earnest, and mean to act honestly. But Freethinkers will not fail to note that the only thing for which Christian nations are able to effectively league together is war. When it comes to forming a League to prevent or abolish war that is a different thing. Was it Swift or Sydney Smith who said that most Christians had enough Christianity to enable them to hate each other heartily.

Another check has been given to Sabbatarian bigots. Some shopkeepers having been summoned for Sunday trading, Mr. Clem Edwards, M.P., made an application for a summons against James Bloer for aiding the printing of Sunday papers by purchasing on Monday a copy of *South Wales Daily News*, against Police Superintendent Williams for the same offence, and against the Chairman of the Bench for having milk delivered at his house during prohibited hours. The Magistrate said he had never known such an application in his experience, and adjourned it for consideration by a fuller bench. Nothing like giving these people a dose of their own medicine, besides making these Sunday laws stand out as the ridiculous things they are.

Every issue of the *Dublin Gazette* (bi-weekly, we think) contains at least three notices of charitable bequests, the major portion being for the purpose of bailing souls out of the purgatorial swamp. A late issue contains the following:—

£1,000 to the R.C. Bishop of the diocese of Dromore, to apply the income for the support and maintenance of a resident Curate or Priest, with the obligation of having fifty masses said in Cabra Chapel each year for ten years after his decease, and twenty-five masses for each of the ten succeeding years for the intentions above mentioned.....Two fifth shares of his estate to the said Bishop, to be applied in having masses said at the above honorarium for the suffering souls in Purgatory.

Though this poor soul is being dragged with only 750 masses, it must be remembered that the cost to his relatives is £1 6s. 8d. per offering. Now, a somewhat similar article may be purchased at 2s. 6d.; so that, in the case in point, the chance of resuscitation may be magnified ten times. These bequests are common in Ireland; they excite no comment. When their absurdity is pointed out, a flush of rage suffuses the face; the features betray no gleam of wit.

The late Parish Priest of Ringsend, a very poor district outside Dublin, left about £22,000. He bequeathed it—no, no; not to his starving parishioners—to Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. This seminary is one of the largest of its kind in existence, having at the present time about 750 crows. It is an exceedingly rich establishment, and, though it has a big Government grant, its regal splendour is firmly established in, and well maintained by, the piteous poverty of this poor little nation. It is the forge of the heaviest shackle in the world—the Roman dominion. Each stone in its walls, each acre within those walls, each fire in its grates, and each youth in its precincts, are shelter, land, warmth, and offspring grabbed from the growing structure of the nation, and set, a very mine, at its foundations. You people in England, do not sneer at your more unfortunate brethren in the sister isle; only remember. Remember! Remember that this little land is studded with spires, convents, monasteries, all in their thousands; with priests, nuns, brothers, monks, parsons, altar-boys, and the Devil knows what besides, in their tens and tens of thousands. *Just remember—and consider.*

Mr. Edward Clodd keeps a keen eye on the press nowadays, and frequently the columns of the daily papers are enlivened by bright letters from his pen. In a pointed attack on Spiritualism, he describes it as a "delusion" which is "as old as the hills." He adds: "Belief in the soul as a sort of etherealised matter, and in communion between the dead and the living, is wholly primitive, and what is pretentiously called 'new' is but the old animism 'writ large.'" Young Freethinkers might well emulate the example of this "unsubduable old Roman." Well-written letters to the press do much to dispel the darkness of superstition.

"The attitude of the Church has been the same in all wars," says Dr. Orchard. In other words, the Government religion has always dutifully echoed the views of the Government. And this is true whether the Church be Roman Catholic, Greek, Protestant, Lutheran, or any other of the many brands of Christianity.

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge is raising a fund for sending Prayer Books to soldiers. The prayers for fine weather might prove useful.

The indifference of Providence to sacred things is enough to make a saint swear. A churchyard in Aukendale, Upper Swaldale, has been washed away by the flooding of the river. And churchyards are "consecrated" ground.

Canon Lyttleton, preaching at St. Martin's Church, London, said he knew no one who believed in miracles who did not do so on the very soundest reason. On the Continent the clergy consider the gate-money a very sound reason.

Even theologians are moving, most of them in a circle, it is true, but one here and there dares to step out of the circle and go forward, bravely breaking lose from and leaving behind both Church and Bible. And yet, alas, that statement is only partially true, for no divine *can* advance entirely unencumbered, or wholly freed from the meshes of superstition. In reality, so-called progressive theology is the most irrational thing under the sun. The New Theologians proudly claim to follow the dictates of Reason; but at best they only form a limited liability company of Rationalists, while modern Rationalism knows them not.

The Rev. Arthur Pringle may be taken as a fair specimen of the members of that limited liability company. In an interesting article in the *Christian World* for June 27, he prides himself upon having outgrown and become independent of the letter of Scripture. He very truly points out "how constantly the tyranny of the text has degraded Scriptural exposition to verbal jugglery and special pleading." Then he quotes Newman's famous admission: "Every creed has texts in its favour, and again texts that run counter to it."

Unfortunately for himself, Mr. Pringle ignores the fact that renouncing the letter of the Bible is to all intents and purposes tantamount to giving up the Bible itself, *because when the letter has gone there is nothing left.* But the most amusing and amazing thing of all is, that the reverend gentleman regards this deliverance from bondage to the Biblical letter as due to "the War and all that it has brought with it." Thus the War is at once of the Devil and God, the worst of curses and the greatest of blessings, the direst calamity and a transient boon!

What becomes of the Bible, then, when its letter has ceased to exercise its ancient dominion? At this point Mr. Pringle lets the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. On his own showing, the Bible is now just exactly what any man may choose to make of it—what in truth it has always been. The following is the way it is put by the writer of the article: "So passes the text—not from its stimulating and legitimate use by the wise preacher."

We are pleased to see that Coventry Freethinkers have been getting busy, and the Rev. J. R. Armitage, a "munitions area chaplain," has undertaken to set them right. His correction assumes the form of the reminder that everything that was "best in Europe and the world" had been "implanted or stimulated by Christianity." It taught the powerful to care for the oppressed; it gave woman her true place as the equal of man; it abolished slavery, and cared for the child and the prisoner, etc. We note that Mr. Armitage does not claim that Christianity invented the law of gravitation and created the solar system. From which we infer that Mr. Armitage is really a modest man.

The only drawback to the credibility of Mr. Armitage's statements are that the poor and the weak are still oppressed, and that this oppression is greater in Christian countries than elsewhere. Children are as badly treated in Christian countries as elsewhere, while Christian England only a century ago instituted the slaughter of little children in factories for pure gain; slavery was backed up by all the Churches just so long as it was possible for them to do; the position of woman was worse under Christian than under Pagan-Roman rule, and it was Freethinking men and women who led the way in the movement for the legal equality of the sexes. Finally, the movement for reform in the treatment of criminals was initiated by Beccava, an Atheist, and for years remained in the hands of Freethinkers. These are drawbacks to Mr. Armitage's assertions being accepted without examination, but we do not expect they will disturb his opinions.

There is a Pagan quality about a new book by Mr. A. Safroni-Middleton, entitled *Wine-Dark Seas and Tropic Skies*. Says the author: "I cannot help thinking that the world's religion should be inspired by the soul of laughter." This is a very far cry from the figure of the Man of Sorrows, surrounded by the horrors of calvary, and with the fires of hell in the background.

There is a "meenister" at Dumbarton who holds a medical degree, and who is away with the Army. Whether he is drawing pay as a doctor or as a chaplain we do not know; but, in either case, it is above starvation point. The Presbytery has now asked this gentleman to allow £200 per annum—presumably from his Church allowance—for payment of a "supply" at his church. The minister, Rev. Cameron Campbell, has declined, and the Presbytery now intends placing the facts of the case before the Procurator for guidance.

The Glasgow Presbytery is also in trouble. It seems that four ministers only had volunteered for service in the Army—we assume it means since their exemption under the new Act. One volunteered as Chaplain, and three for Y.M.C.A., on hut work. At Dumbarton there are eight ministers of military age, and all these have taken full advantage of their exemption. We do not see they are to blame. The Government decided the matter for them.

To Correspondents.

- H. MAY.—A tax, ranging from one to three shillings per ton, was placed by Parliament upon all coal entering London for a period of forty-six years, to defray the cost of building St. Paul's and other City Churches. The present Bishop of London was made a Canon of St. Paul's in 1697 at a salary of £1,000 per year. The office was a sinecure. In the same year he became Suffragan Bishop of Stepney, and received another £1,000 per year. Soon after he referred to himself as "We working parsons."
- T. S. (Salisbury).—You are *not* troubling us in sending the names of likely subscribers to this paper. On the contrary, you are doing us a favour. It is only by the co-operation of our readers that we are pulling through one of the worst periods in the history of the printing and newspaper world.
- J. W. WHITE.—We have lively recollections of the old days at West Stanley, and if a hall can be secured shall be pleased to pay the district a visit during the autumn. There ought to be a strong Branch of the N. S. S. there. We may adopt your suggestion on the other matter later.
- LIBRA (Glasgow).—Pleased to learn that your newsagent has increased the number of copies he takes—with your assistance. Mr. Walsh is right in saying the power to end war rests with mankind alone, only that leaves one wondering what use God is in the situation? Apparently God doesn't matter, which is exactly what we say.
- H. J. (Manchester).—Sorry, want of space prevents the publication of your letter. We quite agree that Patho-psychical conditions underlies a great deal of religious phenomena, and have tried to prove that by a book now in the press.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—Glad to hear you are still well. Isn't your leave nearly due?
- A. HODGSON.—*The Popes and their Church* is issued by Messrs. Watts & Co., price 6s.
- J. BURRELL.—Mr. Runciman is quite right in replying that an amendment dealing with religious education will not be moved during the passage of the Bill now before Parliament. The danger lies in a separate Bill that may be introduced when the present one is out of the way.
- W. CUMMING (Glasgow).—Thanks for cuttings. Readers help us considerably in keeping us posted concerning local events. We are glad to have the appreciation of a fifteen years' reader of the *Freethinker*, and hope to meet you when we next visit Glasgow.
- A. J. (Gateshead-on-Tyne).—We have no present intention of reprinting last week's "Views and Opinions" as a leaflet. But we intend adding to the "Pioneer Leaflets," which you say you have found "very effective" at an early date.
- A. G. ROYSTON.—Pleased to hear you have induced the newsagent to display this paper at both Holyhead and Carnarvon. The result shows what determination will accomplish. We are obliged also for the pamphlet you enclose. It seems additional proof of chaos of uncertainty in which Christianity is at present.
- E. COLLETT.—Please let us know so soon as anything definite is possible.
- JACK BARTON.—Papers sent as requested. We are in hopes that the struggle will be less severe one day, meanwhile, we just "carry on." We note your suggestion of raising the price of the paper, but we are hoping to avoid that. After getting so far, it seems a pity not to go the whole distance.
- J. HUDSON.—The opinion of a fellow-craftsman that our last issue was "a rattling good number" is welcome. Those behind the scenes can best appreciate all that is involved in producing a weekly paper single-handed.
- T. DENNIS.—You are quite right in what you are doing. If anything is said by anyone who matters, let us know.
- 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 "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.*

Save Your Papers.

We hope our readers are bearing in mind the need we have for all their old papers, books, and magazines. We want as much as we can get, and as soon as we can get it. Send all you have in parcels of from fourteen pounds to one hundredweight to the Pioneer Press, 61, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. If the bundles are just tied round strongly with string it will be enough. They should be labelled "Scrap Paper," and can be sent carriage forward. We will send labels on request, or, if possible, sacks when they are preferred. But we must have all your old papers as soon as possible. If old ledgers—without covers, please—and other business documents are sent, we will see that they are properly destroyed. Remember that no parcel is too small to send. Full schedule prices will be paid.

Sugar Plums.

We publish this week a pamphlet, by Mr. H. G. Farmer, that will be of interest to most people, and will prove useful in controversy. The subject of *Heresy in Art*—the pamphlet in question—is the religious opinions of famous painters and musicians. Those who are familiar with Mr. Farmer's writings in these columns, will readily concede his right to speak on such a subject, and there are few who will fail to find *Heresy in Art* of interest. Of its use in controversy there can be no two opinions. The pamphlet is published at 3d., postage ½d. We venture to bespeak the widest circulation for a useful pamphlet.

Permission was given to form new Branches of the National Secular Society at Coventry and Maesteg at the Executive meeting on Thursday last, and forty-nine new members were admitted. More Branches are coming along, and we are expecting important developments in South Wales.

The Executive also settled the constitution of the Committee that is to consider the question of the Society's re-organization, and the Committee hopes to soon be at work. Meanwhile, individual members or Branches that have any suggestions to offer should forward them without delay to the General Secretary. These should be sent in not later than July 20.

We have in the press, and hope to publish shortly, a booklet by Mr. Cohen on *Christianity and the Slave Trade*. We think we can safely say this is the most thorough examination of the question that has yet been issued, and it contains a lengthy chapter on the relation of Christianity to labour in general. There will also be plates illustrating the famous old Liverpool slave-ship *Brookes*. The work will contain full references, and so will be useful for all purposes. We have other things in the press, which will be announced in due course.

One of the most outspoken of Freethinking poets during the latter part of the nineteenth century was Robert Buchanan. Many of our readers will remember the scathing indictment of Christianity contained in his two lengthy works—*The Wandering Jew* and *The Devil's Case*. The Pioneer Press has just secured a number of copies of *Robert Buchanan, the Poet of Modern Revolt*, by Mr. A. Stodart-Walker. The work does justice to Buchanan's heretical views, and is a handsome well-printed volume of over 300 pages. It was published at 6s. net, and is being offered at 2s. 6d., postage 6d. Those who wish to secure a copy should write at once.

From "Somewhere in France":—

What do you say to a full discussion on "Ought We to Believe in Christianity?" within sound of the German guns? It all arose out of the parcels of pamphlets you have been sending out. The things were well distributed, and well read.

Many discussions followed, and at last a regular debate, arranged on the above-named subject. I took the negative, and I believe the majority agreed with me; I am sure a good number did. Don't forget it; Tommy is getting his eyes opened to more things than one in this War.....I am writing this because I think you will be pleased to know how much good your stuff is doing at the Front. Keep it up.

We mean to.

Here is a piece of advice, offered by the *Church Times*, which we heartily endorse:—

Do we not keep our opinions too much to ourselves? We need not preach, we need not drag them in, but ought we not to be much more ready to state our convictions clearly and on well-reasoned grounds, not aggressively, but without compromise? The need of clear thought is as great in England to-day as it was forty years ago when John Morley lamented our "inveterate national characteristic—a profound distrust, namely, of all general principles; a profound dislike both of much reference to them and of any disposition to invest them with practical authority; and a silent but most pertinacious measurement of all philosophic truth by political tests."

Every word here applies quite well to people of all shades of opinion. If we have an opinion, we should let the world know it—not offensively, or even aggressively, but let it be known. Opinions are robbed of their force by not finding expression. It is like keeping seeds in a cardboard box.

From France, Corporal Gatenhill writes:—

Many thanks for parcel of literature duly received. I am now assured of an amount of intellectual pleasure—so are my friends. The demand for literature of this description exceeds the supply out here. More men are interested in "the best of causes" than ever before.

Mr. R. Jenkins, newsagent, Nolton Street, Bridgend, Glam., will be pleased to attend to the literary wants of Freethinkers in his district.

A Search for the Soul.

IV.

(Continued from p. 353).

ONE of the results which Sir Oliver Lodge's *Man and the Universe* appears to have upon the mind is a feeling akin to mystification, more especially with regard to the life, mind, and soul of man. Thus, Sir Oliver says:—

Life is not energy, but it is the director of energy and matter.....Mind determines. Life directs.....Mind and life dominate and transcend matter and energy (p. 60).

What about life? Can that be a nonentity which has built up particles of carbon and hydrogen and oxygen into the form of an oak, or an eagle, or a man? Is it something which is really nothing? Not so; nor is it so with intellect and consciousness and will, nor with memory and love and adoration, nor all the manifold activities which at present strangely interact with matter, and appeal to our bodily senses and terrestrial knowledge; they are not nothing, nor shall they ever vanish into nothingness or cease to be. They did not arise with us: they never did spring into being; they are as eternal as the Godhead itself, and in the eternal Being they shall endure for ever (p. 84).

In making the foregoing extracts I wished to see more clearly what Sir Oliver Lodge means by the "soul." On p. 73 that scientist says: "Life thus defined is a portion or partial aspect of what is often spoken of as *soul*." On p. 78, speaking of heredity, he says: "We call it *life*, we call it *soul*." On the same page he states that "the *soul* includes also feeling and intelligence and will, and is the storehouse of mental experience." According to these statements Life and Mind are immaterial entities, the two constituting the Soul, which lives and moves and has its being after the death of the body. Mind determines what shall be done; Life directs and sees it done. All this is pure mystification.

Let us now see whether these theories appear to be in

harmony with facts. Life, as we know it in the human organism, is maintained chiefly by the activities of the organs connected with alimentation, the circulation of the blood, and respiration. The vitality manifested by the functioning of these organs is called "life." The continued existence of this vitality is dependent upon the organs exercising their respective functions effectively: we have no difficulty in thinking of it as something which animates the whole body; but the mental abstraction "life" is a mere name. Vitality can only be found in the concrete where it appears to be a property of living matter—of the cells of protoplasm.

When a child comes into the world it is born possessed of life, and this life is maintained up to an advanced age solely by means of food. After mastication and insalivation the food enters the stomach, where it is acted upon by the gastric juice; then it enters the small intestine where it comes under the action of the bile from the liver, the pancreatic juice from the pancreas, and the juice of the intestine itself, after which the nutritive part of the food is found to be a milk-like fluid called chyle, which, owing to the chemical action of the juices mentioned, can now be perceived by the microscope to contain the elements of blood. The chyle next enters the thoracic duct, where it mixes with a similar fluid called lymph, then it passes into the subclavian vein where it mingles with the blood. It is this blood circulating through every part of the body that forms the common source from which every organ or structure derives the new materials necessary for its growth, as well as for the repair of its waste products. We can thus understand how wounded men who had lost a large quantity of that vital fluid died simply from "loss of blood." We can also perceive the truth of the statement in Deuteronomy xii. 23—"For the blood is the life."

But where is the immaterial controller which guides and directs the formation and development of the body? No such controller appears to be in existence; the hereditary influence in the cells of the organs are able, apparently, to perform their respective functions unaided. The mind—which Sir Oliver says is a portion of the soul, and determines what is to be done—does not even know that there are such organs in the body, except through books on physiology. Prior to the year 1628, not a single mind or soul upon earth, including those of the medical profession, knew that the function of the heart was to propel the blood through the arteries and capillaries to every part of the body, whence it returned through capillaries and veins again to the heart, and so continued to circulate during the whole term of life. This fact—discovered by investigation and experiment—effected a complete revolution in medical science. The Mind or Soul has no innate knowledge of what takes place within the body; it has to ascertain from books what has been discovered in the past, and from this starting-point to work on towards fresh discoveries.

Again, we heard last summer that a whole family was taken ill through eating rhubarb leaves, and that the father, a clergyman, died. What was this man's soul doing that it allowed his body to be poisoned? The answer is that neither the Mind, which Sir Oliver says "determines," nor the Life, which he says "directs," nor the two combined—that is to say, the Soul—knows anything whatever about the kind of food best suited to the body. This knowledge had to be learnt by experience, and could only have been known, in the first instance, by tasting everything that appeared suitable and rejecting all that was found to be injurious. In the course of time the information thus gained became the common property of the race, and food-bearing plants were brought under cultivation, to which was added the flesh of domestic animals already known.

A London newspaper of August 16, 1917, quoted the *Cologne Gazette* as saying that one morning, a few days before, the portals of every restaurant in that city were found adorned with posters bearing the following culinary recipe:—

INSTRUCTIONS TO PUZZLED COOKS.

Take the butter card, stew it down with the meat card, and add the egg card. In a separate saucepan cook the potato and vegetable cards together, and, when done, add these to the stew. For desert, warm up the potato card, add the milk card, sweeten with the sugar card, and bake with it the bread and biscuit cards. Then wash your hands with the soap card, and wipe them dry with the table-linen voucher.

This paragraph, which I cut out as a sample of German humour, is a remarkable illustration of the way in which Sir Oliver speaks of certain abstractions of the mind as "entities" that will survive the body.

Next, Sir Oliver asks whether the abstraction which he calls "life" is "something which is really nothing." Yes, this is so. Apart from the ideas associated with it, Life, in the sense in which he employs it, is "really nothing." This he emphatically denies, and further declares that intellect, consciousness, will, memory, love, adoration, and other mental attributes "are not nothing, nor shall they ever vanish into nothingness or cease to be." And what is his reason for thinking that these manifestations of the activity of the brain will continue to exist after that organ has perished? The reason is that those activities "did not arise with us," but are "as eternal as the Godhead itself, and in the eternal Being they shall endure for ever."

A worse reason for believing in a manifest absurdity could scarcely be given. There was a long period in the history of this planet before animal life appeared, and another long period before the evolution of man was completed. We have not a scrap of evidence that would lead us to suppose that there are other beings in the universe possessed of similar mental faculties, or that, even if there were, such faculties could survive the destruction of the organism that produced them. Furthermore, the statement that these mental attributes are "as eternal as the Godhead itself" is pure nonsense. Sir Oliver surely ought to know that man created his gods in his own image, and, in doing so, ascribed to these deities all the qualities which he himself possessed, together with many more which his superstitious nature imagined. Among the latter are omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and other powers, which, from past ages down to the present day, have been attributed to a purely imaginary being, whose existence has never been proved nor even shown to be probable. Needless to say, this deity is unknown to science.

(To be continued.) ABRACADABRA.

The Story of the Tea Plant.

III.

(Continued from p. 357.)

WHEN the Indian tea industry was in its infancy the official experts regarded the indigenous species of Assam as an inferior tea-producing plant. As a sequel, the Indian authorities imported tea-seed in enormous quantities from China, and distributed it throughout the Peninsula for the benefit of the planters. The Government proceeded on the erroneous assumption that the native Assam species was materially inferior to the Chinese varieties, with the result that the tea-gardens of India were planted with seed which yielded very poor quality tea. There seems to have been small excuse for this official misconception. It is now universally acknowledged that the Assam plant produces

the finest flavoured teas, while Colonel Money, who enjoyed long experience as a planter, declares that even in the early days of Indian tea culture, many of the growers, brokers, and others were fully aware that the Assam species was the premier tea plant.

Save in very favoured sites, the Assam species does not flourish, as it is constitutionally a delicate plant. Hybrid bushes thrive best in hilly, or comparatively dry areas, owing to their greater hardiness. It is also true that many of the finest teas of the Indian hills have been grown from coarse China tea-seed. But in fairly favourable conditions of climate and soil, even in upland places, a good hybrid is to be preferred, as it produces generous flushings of high-grade tea.

The tea shrub is propagated from seed. This process necessitates a longer period of growth, but all attempts to plant gardens with cuttings have ended in dismal failure. This is chiefly attributable to the fact that the tea seed sends a long tap root into the soil to a considerable depth so as to supply the future plant with sufficient moisture in days of drought. The scientific selection of seed, generation after generation, from the most robust and blight-resisting bushes, has materially improved the plants. The tea blossom may be seen from July to October, and when the flower petals fall, and the seed is set, over a year elapses before the seed is ripe. The seed is enclosed in a thick capsule which may contain one seed only, or even three or four.

The young plants are reared in nurseries, and when ready for transplanting they are dug out, each seedling being removed with a ball of earth in which it was rooted in the nursery still clinging to it. It is essential to success that, when taken from the nursery to the garden, the seedling should be placed at the same depth in the earth which it occupied in the nursery soil. The tap root should run straight down into the ground, while the lateral roots should be spread out to secure free access to the soil. A fair percentage perish, but if, after a month or so, the shrub still betrays signs of life, it will probably recover. Even when the young plant sheds all its leaves and appears to be dead it is still alive. The plant is really preserving its existence by casting away its foliage. During this critical stage the plant discards its breathing organs—the leaves—while the whole of its energies are concentrated in developing its roots which penetrate the surrounding soil in every direction. This task done, tiny leaf buds appear and replace the fallen foliage. As Bald writes:—

This is one of the remarkable illustrations of plant life, and of plant *instinct* for self-preservation. It is the more remarkable, because the tea plant is an ever-green, and this probably the only occasion in its life when it sheds its leaves all at once.

Seeds are very successfully grown in "pots" composed of clay, cow dung, and straw. When the seedlings are large enough for the garden, the "pot," with its contained plant, is buried on the spot where the new shrub is to grow. The "pot" is broken before it is placed in the earth where the rain soon destroys it. The seedling then continues its development without that delay of a month or more which invariably occurs when the plant is transplanted in the manner described in the preceding paragraph. Another advantage is that nearly all the seedlings develop into healthy shrubs.

In company with the fruit grower, the tea planter must patiently await the maturity of his garden before he gathers his harvest. Even in estates situated in the plains and in a climate conducive to speedy growth, the shrubs do not yield a full return until the sixth year. In the third year a half crop is harvested, and the yield increases annually until the maximum is reached. In upland regions the rate of growth is much slower, and

planters may wait ten or twelve seasons before their bushes attain full yielding powers.

We can form no conception from farming experiences in Europe of the difficulties encountered in the Tropics in securing supplies of animal manure. Small quantities are usually available, but for the fertilization of a large tea estate these are hopelessly inadequate, while in most plantations even the refuse of the coolies' temporary abodes is rarely utilized, although it forms an excellent fertilizer. Where the temperature is high and the rainfall copious, the flora grows luxuriantly, and green plants are advantageously utilized as manure.

All plants of the leguminous order—those that bear their seeds in pods, such as our beans and peas—possess the property of promoting on their roots the growth of nitrogen-storing bacteria. The warts or nodules found on the living roots of leguminous plants are really colonies of bacteria which are ceaselessly engaged in extracting nitrogen from the air, which they transform into a substance essential to vegetable growth. In the course of a season these nodules decompose and give up their nitrates to the soil, from which it is eagerly absorbed by the neighbouring plants. Fresh nodules form on the young rootlets each year, but the older roots fail to produce them.

On progressive plantations leguminous trees are grown as fertilizers. One of these, the Siris tree, has proved itself the best fertilizer; and according to Bald and other authorities, the results obtained from the cultivation of this tree in a few years are positively astounding. When the Siris (*Albizia stipulata*) grows near a tea estate, a large number of self-sown seedlings spring up in the gardens. The seed-pods of the Siris are wonderfully light, and strong winds will carry them for miles over the environing country before they fall to the earth. When the pods alight on moist soil they appear in profusion, but seldom seed themselves on stiff or arid earth. In these latter conditions, however, they may be cultivated, and the nitrogen with which their roots enrich the soil well rewards the planter for his trouble in planting the trees. This is certainly a most satisfactory method for maintaining the fertility of an estate, for its productive powers are secured at very small expense.

It has been urged that the Siris trees cast too much shade over the garden. But this is easily overcome by cutting away all branches that obstruct the light. These, again, when dug into the earth, or even if allowed to perish on the surface, will provide excellent manure.

The Siris is unnecessary on highly superior and well-watered soils, but on lands less opulent or liable to prolonged periods of drought the tree's importance as a fertilizer is immense. There are several other varieties of Siris available to the tea planter. Some serve to shield the gardens from gales. The dense evergreen leaves of the *Dalbergia* protect the tea bushes from furious hailstorms. A shrub which produces a profusion of flowers in the autumn—the magnificent Boga Medeloa—is another leguminous growth which thrives on inferior soil where the Siris languishes. The Medeloa grows rapidly, and the nodules formed on its roots furnish an early and sumptuous supply of nutriment to the tea plants. Annual crops are also extensively cultivated as green fertilizers. After a given period of growth, these green crops are dug into the soil, with signal success. Indeed, Dr. Mann estimates that in Assam, in normal seasons and with an average growth, that the digging in of green crops will produce an increase of three-quarters of a maund, about sixty pounds of high quality tea, per acre. The benefits thus obtained last through a couple of seasons, and then it becomes necessary to repeat the process.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

RELIGION IN THE ARMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. Comley, is, I am afraid, a bit astray in his remarks regarding religion in the Army. I am stationed in a camp where there is every facility for the religiously inclined, and all I can say is that the great majority of the soldiers don't care two straws about religion. On all sides there is grumbling and resentment when Church Parade comes, and I reckon that if the Parade were voluntary, ten out of every hundred would only attend. If there be a concert, or any other form of amusement, every available man is there. Religious services have to be bolstered up with advertisements that such and such a chaplain from Egypt or Palestine is coming, who will have magic-lantern slides to show; and all this is done to try and persuade Tommy to come to hear the "Word of God." Tommy's no fool; all he does is to smile, and very often remarks, "they won't catch me." I am trying to find religion exemplified in the Army in some tangible shape, but its like sugar—very scarce. When I say religion, I mean the religion of Christians. There are numbers of Freethinkers; in my hut I have the company of two who are of the militant stamp, who read the *Freethinker*, the works of Ingersoll, Paine, Bradlaugh, and other champions of the great cause of Freethought. The religion of the open mind is being felt in the Army as elsewhere, and the "Grand Old Book" is having a peaceful slumber in realms of dust and neglect. Certainly the Lord is not looking very much after his own; if he did, one wouldn't meet so many "infidels" who are turning his elect from the worship of his crucified Son. However, the fact is, Christianity has been weighed in the balance and found wanting; and as Tommy is not entirely a fool, he treats it as an exploded fable that has lived too long and cannot die too soon.

A CORP.

SIR,—I cannot let pass the observations of "F. Comley" on the above subject (in your issue of June 23) without mentioning my own experience in this direction during an equal period of service. I have found that the majority of the men are indifferent. This mental attitude towards Christianity and supernatural religion in general appears to have its origin in the fact that they have a vague feeling there is a fundamental fallacy underlying these beliefs, which has been instilled into them from childhood; while, on the other hand, they have never been brought into intimate contact with Rationalistic views. So far as they have any opinions regarding the latter, they are under the impression that the Rationalists' teachings are merely destructive, and have nothing to offer in return as a basis of life but loose living and a contempt for all the higher ethical principles. During the latter half of 1916 and the following year, I was in British and German East Africa (whence I was invalided with malaria), and, as compulsory Church Parades were very rare, one had a better opportunity for seeing what hold religion had among men amid strange surroundings which offered little in the way of entertainment to divert men in their leisure moments.

At a service I attended in Nairobi, in June last year, at a temporary church which stood only fifty yards from a large general hospital, whose patients consisted largely of convalescent malaria and dysentery cases, and at an equal distance from a repair depot where a large staff was employed, the total congregation in the evening numbered twenty-eight—considerably less than one per cent. of men physically able to attend, and who were within a minute's walk of the place. At Mombasa, which at that time was the coastal base, I visited the cathedral one Sunday evening a few months previously, and found, interspersed with a sprinkling of white residents and natives, less than a score of men in khaki. I might multiply instances of this kind with reference to such places as Dar-es-Salaam and Kilwa, and later on Cape Town, and also depots in England, but I think I have written sufficient to show that we who differ from Mr. Comley often do know of what we are speaking in this respect.

R. P.

GHOSTS' CLOTHES.

SIR,—“Abracadabra” “leaves the question for Spiritists to answer.” I am a Spiritist, though not a Spiritualist, so I answer.

Where did the ghost get his clothes? Forty years ago my father used to ask that same question as a poser for ghost-believers; but even as a boy of ten I wondered where the difficulty was. If the ghost can once cross the barrier between what does not reflect light and what does, surely one impression on the retina is as easy as another—a waist-coat as easy as a face. Materialists mostly believe in æther; I do not know how they can, for none of the five senses can reach it; but still they do believe in it. How, then, do they see anything absurd in the hypothesis that both the ghost or spook, and his clothes, are of æther made visible by an act of will much as a muscle is contracted?

“Abracadabra” says æther is “many million times thinner than air.” So far as I have studied the mathematical theorems, which form our only track to any mental picture of the æther, it is not comparable with air or any other gas, but is a very abnormal kind of liquid or solid, probably more solid than solids, because not atomic in structure. Prof. Larmer's article in the *Encyc. Brit.* is accessible and fairly intelligible.

C. HARPUR.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 27.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Braddock, Davidson, Eager, Gorniot, Heaford, Leat, Neate, Nearey, Palmer, Roger, Spence, Thurlow, Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, Miss Pitcher, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read.

The following officials were elected:—General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance; Monthly Auditors: Messrs. Leat and Samuels; Benevolent Fund Committee; Messrs. Leat, Samuels, Roger, Wood, and Miss Kough.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for Battersea, Bethnal Green, Coventry, Goldthorpe, Maesteg, Manchester, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Sheffield, South London, Southampton, Swansea, West Ham, and the Parent Society—forty-nine in all.

Applications were received and granted for the re-formation of Branches at Coventry and Maesteg.

The resolution passed at the Conference concerning Mr. Cohen's Scheme for Reorganization, which was to the effect that a Committee should be formed consisting of members elected by the three oldest London and four oldest Provincial Branches, each of these Branches to nominate one member, who must have had at least three years' membership of the Society; the place of meeting to be subsequently decided upon; the results of the labours of this Committee to be printed and circulated; and a special Conference of all Branches to be convened in a central position to fully discuss and finally endorse or reject the scheme of reorganization recommended, was considered; and it having been decided that the oldest continuous London Branches were Bethnal Green, North London, and South London (formerly Camberwell), and in the provinces Birmingham, Glasgow, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and South Shields, it was resolved to invite these Branches to elect their representatives to attend a meeting to be held in London on suggested dates.

It was further agreed that in order to facilitate the business of this Special Committee, a Sub-Committee be appointed to arrange all resolutions and suggestions sent in for its consideration.

Other matters remitted from the Conference were adjourned till the next meeting. All members of the Society are invited to send in such suggestions as they may consider helpful towards the scheme for reorganization. These will have the careful consideration of the Committee, and should reach me not later than July 20.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked “Lecture Notice” if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., “Civilization.”

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates, Queen's Road): 11.45, Mr. Kirkham, A Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. James Marshall, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Mr. E. C. Saphin, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 6, Mr. Bob Norman, “Keepin' it 'Oly” (A Revue); 7, Mr. H. B. Doughty, “Are Secularists Sincere.”

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, J. B. Johnson, A Lecture; 6.30, J. B. Johnson, A Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beaver Street, Goldthorpe): 3, Members' Meeting. Members and Friends are requested to attend. Business important.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, first floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, Ramble postponed. Important Special Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

SHEFFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (Poole Square): 7, T. Dennis, A Lecture.

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

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