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Views and Opinions.

Dr. Lyttelton and the "Freethinker."

It was with much pleasure that we received Dr. Lyttelton's offer to open a discussion on the points at issue between himself and Freethinkers, and his first letter will have been read by all with considerable interest. As his object is to discuss broad and fundamental issues rather than superficial and unimportant differences, we shall endeavour to imitate his example, and hasten to deal with the more important points raised in the article. The facts cited in our notes on "Religion and Cleanliness" are, of course, admitted. Dr. Lyttelton rightly says the whole question is, What are the legitimate inferences from the facts produced? Our own inference was that religion and dirt were, historically, not unusual bedfellows; that lack of cleanliness was *once upon a time* accepted as an indication of saintliness, and that this was a consequence of a preaching of asceticism, combined with opposition to medical and sanitary science. Indeed, this was hardly an inference—it was little more than a statement of historic fact. The teaching of Christians and the practice of Christians are there for all who care to study the subject.

* * *

Modern Influences on Religion.

But we must demur from Dr. Lyttelton's inference that in saying an alliance between Christianity and dirt existed for several centuries, and that this alliance was inevitable, inasmuch as it followed from certain aspects of early Christian life and teaching, we implied that "professing Christians to-day wash less frequently than Agnostics," or that, in order to justify our position, we are bound to prove that there has been an alliance between Christianity and dirt "during the last 150 years." We should be much surprised to discover that Christians wash less frequently than Agnostics—other things equal—and we quite fail to see the relevancy of the "last 150 years." For it is just part of the Freethought case that for considerably more than 150 years freethinking and secularizing ideas have been rationalizing and humanizing Christians to such an extent that they have been compelled to drop some of the more objectionable doctrines, and mould their lives more in accord with the dictates of science and secular common sense. The last 150 years has seen a great change in Christian doctrine and teaching, and the contention of the Secularist is that this change is the result,

not of a new revelation from heaven, not even of a more correct understanding of the old revelation, but is entirely due to the pressure of a more secularized social life on religious teachings. And the settlement of that issue is of vital importance in the controversy between Christians and Freethinkers. * * *

The Implications of Christianity.

Dr. Lyttelton submits that the issues are whether there is a "necessary connection between the doctrines of Christianity and dirtiness of person," and whether "religion is to be condemned for the folly or blindness or barbarism of its votaries." It does not seem to us that issues raised in this way admit of a plain and simple Yes or No. Of course, there is no specific command in Christianity, "Thou shalt not wash," nor "Thou shalt kill the unbeliever," nor "Thou shalt obstruct or suppress science." But when we find in the Christian Church from the earliest times these things being done by people in the name of their religion, and done in virtue of their intense belief in the Christian religion, then we submit we are warranted in believing there was something in Christianity that encouraged such conduct. To say they misunderstood Christianity hardly meets the case. A religion that can be so early, so easily, and so universally misunderstood is clearly no *safe* guide for mankind. And in the terms of the Christian hypothesis, Christianity was given to man as a guide; it was not something he slowly elaborated by the method of trial and error, such as rules in secular affairs. And the case is still more startling when we discover that the correctives to these alleged misunderstandings of Christianity have been supplied by those who had least belief in it, and often by those who rejected it altogether. There is clearly much better ground here for attributing the modifications of Christianity to the rationalizing and secularizing spirit of the age than to any genuine discovery of the real message of Christianity. * * *

Were Christians in Error?

But is Dr. Lyttelton quite justified in repudiating the Christian Church of the ages, and the vast majority of Christians—until, we presume, about 150 years ago—as so many perverters of Christian teaching? And, if true, is it not, to a Christian, as damning an indictment of Christianity as any Freethinker could frame? Dr. Lyttelton is endeavouring to save Christianity at the expense of Christians. It is left for the Freethinker to say a saving word on behalf of Christians. When Jesus came before the world as a celibate, when he indulged in lengthy fasts, and so entered into communication with the supernatural world, was he not illustrating in his own person the common practice of the Eastern ascetic religious teacher? When he cured epileptics and lunatics by a mere touch, and declared that such could be cured by prayers and fasts, when he declared that diseases could be cured "In my name," was not that giving an encouragement to the theory of demonism in disease, and discouraging scientific medicine? And

when eternal salvation hereafter was made the end of human life here, and salvation made dependent upon right religious belief, was not that laying the seeds for persecution? And there is the final, and to our mind, damning fact, that in our earliest acquaintance with Christians we find them manifesting, in some degree, all the evils upon which we have dwelt. The Freethought case is that the evils manifested by the Christian had their germ in Christian teaching, and that given the teaching the evils were certain to develop. And one proof is that they have developed wherever Christianity has established itself.

* * *

The Survival of Christianity.

We are endeavouring to keep to broad issues rather than to run after mere expressions that are open to criticism. As Dr. Lyttelton says, it is not a matter of importance what the selected topic is, so long as it gives the chance of discussing something of importance. And in this spirit I take my critic's concluding words:—

The worse one finds the conduct of Christians has been, the greater wonder it is that the creed still survives in vigour. And never before have Christians striven so hard as now to recover the primitive purity of their faith, by studying the doings and sayings of the Christ of History; rather than the Christ of later fiction.

We are afraid we cannot share Dr. Lyttelton's wonder at the survival of a Christian creed, when we consider the manner and conditions of its survival. For it has survived, not in virtue of intrinsic strength or merit, but on account of extraneous and adventitious agencies. It has used the power of the State to enforce its own teachings, and to suppress the teachings of others. It has corrupted history in its own interests, and has made the road to political preferment and social advancement dependent on the acceptance of its teachings. It has terrorized where it could, and bribed where it could not terrorize. For centuries it maintained a social environment in which criticism of the Creed was a crime, and in which credulity, and docility, and submission were extolled as the supreme virtues. *Anything* could have survived with equal success given the same means, and the same ruthlessness in their use. With equal success, we say, because one may well ask *what* creed has survived? Is not the modification of Christian teaching in the face of hostile criticism a commonplace of history? What has become of Biblical inspiration, of salvation by faith, of the doctrine of possession, of witchcraft, of eternal damnation, of miracles, and a dozen other things, on behalf of which the Churches fought and slaughtered? Christianity has survived in little else but name; and one may question whether Christians are now really trying "to recover the primitive purity of their faith." Are they not rather trying to see by what means they can read modern ideas into primitive beliefs, and convert a supernaturally conceived, miracle-working, legendary Christ into a figure-head for current social reforms and ethical aspirations?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The One Thing Needful.

THERE is a "menace," Clergy say, in Sex.
And Drunkenness "increaseth day by day."
Such evils do our virtuous Parsons vex,
And must be settled now without delay.
So stifle sex, and Beer let all abhor.
Strafe all things earthly—all—
—Except the War!

A. F. T.

"Nearer, My God, to Thee."

II.

IN the cinemas, at present, an interesting film, bearing the above title, is being exhibited, and every now and then the half-minor tune to which the popular hymn seems indissolubly married is slowly played. The story opens amid most beautiful rural scenery in the bewitching month of May. It is a love-story, teeming with blood-curdling episodes, but ending in apparent peace and happiness. What there is in it ever so remotely suggestive of the hymn, beyond the mere fact that at two or three religious services it is shown as being very indifferently sung, is not at all obvious. In the first scene we are brought delightfully near to Nature's heart. On the edge of a lovely forest we are introduced to a small village school-house, and roaming among the flowers are a dozen or so of little children, with the headmaster and pupil teacher. The first fact that impresses us is that the misshapen schoolmaster, with the fine face, is deeply in love with his lady assistant. But a man from London turns up, whose plausible, seductive ways win the young lady's heart. They get married, and settle down in the Metropolis. It was a most unfortunate union, of which a son was the only issue. John Boden became a drunken, good-for-nothing scoundrel, and ere long committed a crime for which he was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. During his absence, the schoolmaster befriended his broken-hearted wife, and adopted their son. Boden hated his wife, and had been guilty of maltreating her; and no sooner was he out of prison than his savage behaviour was resumed. She left him and returned to her native village. Boden traced her there, and shot her benefactor, severely wounding him. Afraid of the law, he committed suicide. Now, the curious thing is that the religious people in this tragic story were despicable hypocrites, utterly incapable of appreciating any noble action, and who were even shocked at the spectacle of unselfish service and the sincere gratitude it elicited. John Drayton was doubtless a religious man, but his heroic conduct was the outcome of a noble nature which was his quite independently of his religion, which would have been his and found a similar outlet in like circumstances had he been a Pagan or an Atheist. The people who went to church and sang "Nearer, my God, to thee," were narrow-minded, bigoted, self-righteous, censorious, and hateful, however God-fearing and heavenly minded they may have been. Their very saintliness dehumanized them.

Now, nearness to God and saintliness being synonymous terms, we may lay it down as a principle that the possession of this Christian product, by whatever name it may be called, is in no sense a guarantee that its possessor is a noble-minded, brotherly hearted person. As the divines will surely challenge this proposition, it may be advisable to verify it from history. Few defenders of the sanity of the saints as a class are to be found to-day, the abnormality of such characters as Catherine of Sienna being indisputable. The sincerity of the majority of them may be taken for granted, but sincerity is a token neither of sanity nor of moral excellence. Some who had the reputation in their day of being saints, were but brilliant rogues in disguise, whether canonized or not. Our present point, however, is that saintliness is not necessarily accompanied by high ethical qualities. Of Dean Milman's belief in and advocacy of the perfection of the Christian religion in its original purity there can be no intelligent doubt. "Its essential doctrine," he tells us, "was, in its pure theory, insepar-

able from humane, virtuous, and charitable disposition"; but he is not blind to the fact that the balance between piety and beneficence was seriously disturbed at an early stage in its history, with the following disastrous result:—

Thus, in a great degree, while the Roman world became Christian in outward worship and in faith, it remained Heathen, or even at some periods worse than Heathenism in its better times, as to beneficence, gentleness, purity, social virtue, humanity, and peace (*History of Christianity*, vol. iii., p. 409).

St. Bernard, of Clairvaux, who flourished at the commencement of the twelfth century, is universally acknowledged to have been one of the very greatest, if not the greatest and most illustrious, of all the saints Christianity has produced. He was, certainly, the most powerful personality of the twelfth century, or of almost any other century. Milman describes him as "at once the leading and the governing head of Christendom." He ruled supreme in the multitudinous convents that were rapidly springing up in all the lands, in the councils of State, and even in the intellectual world. His word was final on every subject. Of noble birth and brilliantly endowed, he might have won immortal fame as courtier and statesman, or in the Church as bishop, cardinal, or even pope; but he chose the severest monastic retirement from all worldly allurements or ecclesiastical honours, joining the new Cistercian Order at Citeaux, which was characterized by the most rigorous discipline and ascetic practices. Here he denied himself the simplest comforts of life; he punished his body in every conceivable way, eating only just enough to keep himself alive, and yet undertaking the hardest, most menial, and degrading offices, and devoting himself to solitude, prayer, and study. Soon the Citeaux monastery became so thronged with votaries that a new one had to be opened with Bernard as its first abbot. Clairvaux, situated in the valley of Wormwood, not far from the river Aube in France, shot into repute as the most hallowed spot in Christendom, and its abbot as the holiest and most saintly of men, whom the people more than half worshipped. His nearness to God overawed all who came in contact with him. His brothers followed his example, and were inmates of the same monastery. But did Bernard's sanctity incarnate itself in those shining virtues which ought to adorn social life? Did his nearness to God co-exist with sympathetic, compassionate, and helpful nearness to his brother men? One day his sister, who had married a nobleman, appeared, in great state, and with a magnificent retinue, at the gate of the monastery, desiring to see her brothers. But they were altogether too holy to have anything to do with so worldly a woman. Milman says that "she was spurned from the door as a sinner." Stung to the quick by their attitude towards her, she exclaimed: "If I am a sinner, I am one of those for whom Christ died, and have the greater need of my brother's kindly counsel." Bernard was sorry for her, and tried hard to separate her from her husband, but did not succeed, though eventually she did renounce all her worldly treasures and retire into a convent. Are brothers ever justified in treating their sisters with such disdain?

St. Bernard was a tremendously orthodox man who bitterly hated both heresies and heretics, and was resolved to do his best to crush both. Abelard and Arnold of Brescia, were the two chief objects of the saint's vehement detestation, the former being the most distinguished intellectualist of that century, who championed the cause of Reason in an age of Faith. Bernard denounced him in the most virulent and sarcastic language at his command. Abelard was un-

deserving of any sympathetic consideration. Writing to his friend, the Pope, Bernard said:—

Which is most intolerable, the blasphemy or the arrogance of his language? Which is most damnable, the temerity or the impiety? Would it not be more just to stop his mouth with blows than confute him by argument?

Arnold of Brescia, like Abelard, declined to submit to the authority of the Church, and Bernard could not find terms harsh enough to express his abhorrence of him. He called him the enemy of the Cross of Christ, the fomentor of discord, the fabricator of schism, who ought to be seized and imprisoned. Milman cites another instance of Bernard's mean action:—

The Abbot of Clairvaux was involved in a disputed election to the Archbishopric of York. The narrow corporate spirit of his order betrayed him into great and crying injustice to William, the elected prelate of that See. The rival of the Englishman, Henry Murdach, once a Cluniac, was a Cistercian; and Bernard scruples not to heap on one of the most pious of men accusations of ambition, of worse than ambition: to condemn him to everlasting perdition (*History of Latin Christianity*, vol. iv., pp. 390-1).

Milman adds that whether Bernard was imposed upon, or was the author of these calumnies, his interference in the election forms "a dark page in his life."

The truth is that piety, nearness to God, or saintliness does not necessarily either arise from or lead to a loving, compassionate, and beneficent disposition. A man's religion may yield him the most exquisitely sweet and joyous experiences without producing in him any marked elevation and nobility of character, as was notably the case with Benvenuto Cellini and many others whose history is known to us.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Pomp of Yesterday.

Genius hovers with his sunshine and music close by the darkest and deafest eras.—Emerson.

And yet what days were those, Parmenides!

When we were young.

—Matthew Arnold.

TIME works wonders with reputations. Gladstone's statue "in London's central roar" exhibited but one solitary wreath on the anniversary of his birth a few years after he had passed away. A predominant figure in British political life for over half a century, Gladstone was scarcely cold in his grave before his life's record was being revised. Generations after Beaconsfield's death his statue is loaded with flowers, and his name acclaimed by the descendants of the people who regarded him as a pariah. Byron, who woke one morning to find himself famous, and whose poetry crossed all European frontiers, is now but little read. Shelley, who woke many mornings to find himself called infamous, is now recognized as one of the supreme glories of our literature. Wellington, dying at an extreme age, had long outlived his popularity; whilst his great rival, Napoleon, our life-long enemy, upon whom had been exhausted the vocabulary of vituperation, is acclaimed as one of the world's greatest men.

A similar reversal of verdict has been applied to the Victorian era. Our parents and grand-parents were self-complacent folk, and deemed themselves the heirs of all the ages. And now their age is a common synonym for a narrow and conventional view of life, and every journalist has his fling at them. Truly, the whirligig of time brings in its revenges.

These ideas are prompted by Mr. Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (Chatto & Windus), an acidulated and witty study of some of the best-known personalities of that period. His survey is comprehensive and entertaining, and includes, among others, Dr. Arnold, the

famous headmaster of Rugby, Florence Nightingale, the heroine of the Crimean War, Cardinal Manning, the Catholic statesman, and General Gordon, of Khartoum fame, all of whom Mr. Strachey criticizes with a playful freedom and cool detachment which will irritate some readers and amuse others. Under Mr. Strachey's microscope the heroes and heroines of the Victorian era are dissected, and the result is more entertaining than the pages of most modern novels.

Mr. Strachey's manner is shown in his caustic account of Cardinal Newman's visit to Rome, where he says Italian ecclesiastics looked at the great English Cardinal "with their shrewd eyes and hard faces, while he poured into their ears—which, as he had already noted with distress, were large and none too clean—his careful disquisitions; but it was all in vain." Gladstone does not escape the knife, for Mr. Strachey points out that, "in spite of the involutions of his intellect and the contortions of his spirit, it is impossible not to perceive a strain of *naivete* in Mr. Gladstone." How biting, too, is the writer's denunciation of the Taeping leader in the Chinese rebellion, who is described as being "surrounded by thirty wives and one hundred concubines," and devoting himself to the "spiritual side of his mission." Perhaps the most amusing example of Mr. Strachey's quality will be found in the account of General Gordon's departure from Victoria Station on his last adventure into the Soudan:—

Gordon tripped on to the platform. Lord Granville bought the necessary tickets; the Duke of Cambridge opened the railway-carriage door. The General jumped into the train; and then Lord Wolseley appeared, carrying a leather bag, in which were two hundred pounds in gold, collected from friends at the last moment, for the contingencies of the journey. The bag was handed through the window. The train started. As it did so, Gordon leant out, and addressed a last whispered question to Lord Wolseley. Yes, it had been done. Lord Wolseley had seen to it himself; next morning, every member of the Cabinet would receive a copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Promises*. That was all. The train rolled out of the station.

Few things, it will be observed, escape Mr. Strachey's critical eye. Perhaps it is human to be pleased with this, but in some cases the pleasure is short-lived. Even the brilliant Mr. Strachey may not be infallible in his judgment of men and affairs. Apart from the foibles of individuals, there is something to be said on behalf of this maligned period. So far as literature is concerned, there must have been a high level of taste which made it possible for Robert Browning, Thomas Carlyle, George Meredith, and Alfred Tennyson to be acclaimed so loudly. These writers, of such varying degrees of genius, all required more constant and active intelligence on the part of their many readers than any authors who are popular to-day. Science, too, made its appeal, and never lacked enthusiastic support. So far-reaching, indeed, were the changes wrought by Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and their brilliant colleagues, that at the present time we have eminent ecclesiastics adopting a breadth of interpretation which would have seemed the absolute limit of scepticism to an earlier generation. The intellectual energy of the great Victorians precipitated a silent revolution, and we owe our present wider outlook to these men. Mental energy must be inferred in the pioneers of the Victorian era; more than in the many ordinary intelligences who now profit by their achievements. When great questions have to be answered, may we deal with them with the same fervour as the despised Victorians:—

Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider.

MIMNERMUS.

A Search for the Soul.

VI.

(Continued from p. 389.)

IN one of the volumes of "Science and Art" by the great Dionysius Lardner, published many years ago, that writer says in his article on "Man":—

There is a principle called personal identity, which consists in the internal consciousness by which each individual knows his past experience, so as to be able, with the greatest certainty, to identify himself as existing at any given moment during his earthly life, or at any former time and place in it.

Then, after referring to the fact that in the course of life the entire mass of "matter" composing the body has many times undergone a complete change, he says:—

Yet no one doubts that there was *something* there which *did not undergo a change* except in its relation to the mutable body, and which possessed the same thought, memory, and consciousness, and constituted the personal identity of the individual. This something must necessarily have been something *not matter*, but something spiritual.

This continuous consciousness of identity, he states, "is a proof of a *spiritual essence* connected with the human organism." At the same time, however, he admits that if there is nothing in the phenomenon of death "to demonstrate the simultaneous destruction of the spiritual principle, there is on the other hand nothing to prove its continued existence." This argument, drawn from what is sometimes called "the persistence of the self," has been constantly advanced in support of the existence of an immortal soul from the time of Lardner to the present day.

Upon looking at the question as stated, we find the position deduced to be (1) that there is *something* in the human organism which *did not undergo a change*, like the material portion of that organism, during the whole course of life; (2) that the *something* which remained unchanged must be *spiritual*, and may legitimately be called the Soul. This is the dualistic argument. But how do we know that such a "spiritual principle" really exists? The reason implied is that the Mind (which is said to be a part of the Soul) is not a material substance, and could not therefore have undergone any change in its composition like that of the body; and, such being the case, it felt no change in its own personal identity.

Now, as a matter of fact, all the mental functions which give rise to the phenomena we call "mind" have been generated by certain activities of the molecules of the brain, in conjunction with the cerebral energy residing in that organ. But since both the molecules and energy have been many times renewed during life—so that the mental manifestations have been produced by continually changing particles of matter—it necessarily follows that the mind has changed as well as the body. If we take into consideration that the functioning, and the thought which arises from it, are but two aspects of the same thing, we shall see that this change of the Mind is an undoubted fact. And this brings us back to the question, How do we *know* that an immaterial "spiritual principle" exists in the human organism? The answer is, We do *not* know. But we know that there was a time in the childhood of every human being when these phenomena were unknown. They could not, in fact, arise until after a host of impressions from the external world had been registered by the sense organs on the brain. In the case of an individual born deaf and blind these impressions from the outside world, which are mainly derived through the senses of sight

and hearing, would be unknown, and could not therefore be registered; there would consequently, in such cases, be no phenomena of Mind whatever. The mental faculties, though latent in the brain, have to be developed by outside impressions before their existence can be manifested. The so-called "mental faculties" are thus purely materialistic. In his essay on Vitality, Professor Tyndall says:—

After a certain number of years the whole body is entirely renewed. How is the sense of personal identity maintained across the flight of molecules? Like changing sentinels, the particles of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon that depart seem to whisper their secret to their comrades that arrive, and thus, while the Non-ego shifts, the Ego remains the same. *Constancy of form* in the *grouping* of the molecules, and not constancy of the molecules themselves, is the correlative of this constancy of perception.

Upon the same subject the eminent physiologist, Dr. Maudsley, says in his Gulstonian lectures upon "Body and Mind" (p. 127):—

Every part of the body is in a constant state of change, and within a certain period every particle of it is renewed, and yet amidst these changes a man feels that he remains essentially the same.....It is not absurd to suppose that in the brain the new series of particles *take the pattern* of those which they replace, *as they do in other organs and tissues* which are continually changing their substance, *yet preserve their identity*. Why, then, assume the necessity of an "immaterial principle" to prevent the impression of an idea from being lost?"

It appears, then, that in renewing the waste particles of the brain, as well as those of all the other organs and tissues of the body, the new molecules are careful to preserve, not only the outward form, but all the registered impressions, so that when renovated, every portion remains precisely the same in size, shape, and position as before. It seems quite clear, then, that it is the preservation of the exact forms of these registered impressions on the brain which gives the feeling of personal identity, as we see is the case in the minutely marked surface of a gramophone record. Suppose a hundred of these records to be cast from the same original mould, so that every one of them bears precisely the same marks and registered impressions throughout. The material particles of which each record is composed are entirely different in every case; but the *form* of the registered impressions upon the surface of each (made by the speaker or singer on the original blank record) is identical in all. Yet from each of the hundred records we shall hear the identical tones of the same well-known human voice, either in word or song—say, that of the late Dan Leno in his comic speeches about "buying a house." This result is in perfect agreement with Professor Tyndall's statement that the sense of personal identity is derived from identity in form and grouping of the molecules, and not identity of the molecules themselves.

But, after all, what is it which causes a man to feel that he is essentially the same, notwithstanding all the changes that have taken place during life in every portion of his organism? This is nothing more nor less than Memory—which recalls to him a multitude of his own sayings and doings in the past, as well as people he has known and places he has visited. Take away memory and his personal identity is gone; he knows not who he is, who are his friends, where he lives, or anything that has happened in the past. Many such cases have been recorded at different times, though the loss of memory was only temporary.

In his *Riddle of the Universe* Professor Haeckel says that "Ewald Hering, in a thoughtful work, showed

memory to be a *general property of organized matter*," and he adduces reasons of his own in confirmation of the fact. Dr. Maudsley, in the work already quoted from, says (p. 19):—

The acquired functions of the spinal cord, and of the sensory ganglia, obviously imply the existence of memoryThe impressions made upon them, and the answering movements, both leave their traces behind them, which are capable of being revived on the occasions of similar impressions.....Memory is the organic registration of the effects of impressions, the organization of experience, and to recollect is to revive the experience —to call the organized residua into functional activity.

Memory can only go back to the time of the dawn of thought, that is, to the time when impressions from the external world had been registered upon the brain. No trace of remembrance of the embryonic condition or of the first two or three years of childhood has ever been found in man's after life.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

Scotsmen have a reputation—fairly well deserved, I believe—for being intelligent, level headed, and cautious; or, to use a word of their own which includes all these admirable qualities—canny. Yet, at times, they are apt to become sentimental and perfervid, and then there is no stopping them; they go the whole hog. Who of us would engage to measure the volume of tepid and turbid eloquence in which they have done their best to drown the memory of Burns? And R. L. Stevenson, whose talent was genuine enough if a little meagre, would have cut a handsomer figure to-day if he had not been mis-praised and over praised by those of his countrymen who find the pavement of Fleet Street more attractive than the bonnie heather of their dear "hielands."

A correspondent has been kind enough to draw our attention to a leader in a recent number of the *Hawick News*, from which we gather that the Bible runs the author *Tam o' Shanter* pretty hard, and puts poor R. L. S. in the shade altogether. The writer is moved almost to tears by the work of the Bible Society, a monument of British stupidity as solid as the building in which it is housed. "With sublime faith (we are told) it trusts the book to convey its own message; to give its own lights; and to hold its own place by its own intrinsic merit. And this faith justifies itself. It never did so more effectively than in this present moment." There certainly can be no doubt that only with a "sublime faith" are we able to find a message in the mixed collection of history, legend, and ethics, known as the "Bible"; without faith, sublime or otherwise, we find that it conveys not one but many messages reflecting very different stages of culture, from the barbarous militarism of nomadic robbers to the humanitarianism of the Gospels. But we are not the only people who have faith in the Bible fetish. The Hun, too, has been nourished on the Hebrew diet. While we were sentimentalizing over the New Testament, he was bracing his moral sinews and nerves with the *real politik* of the Old Testament. It is not for the British Bibliolater to object that we are not now under the Mosaic dispensation. That may be so, yet we as a religious nation and with our genius for compromise, have always tempered the softness of the New with the blood and iron of the Old dispensation.

We send New Testaments to a race of savages whose only weapon against the invader is indomitable courage. The virus of slave-morality, from which we have long ago obtained immunity, acts upon the savage mind as the diseases we introduce act upon his body. We are not, however, content to impose a culture unsuited to a lower race. We make its failure an excuse for destroying what a religious writer recently described as "blind alleys in the evolution of spiritual humanity." In our concern for the raising of the spiritual type we send out missionaries and Testaments, trade

rum and gaudy cottons, followed by land prospectors and maxim guns. We present the heathen with hell in a moral sense, and if they don't take kindly to it we give it to them in another and more compelling form. Mr. Safroni-Middleton has pictured for us the devastating effect of Christianity in the Marquesas and other South Sea Islands.

Our Harwich apologist is impressed by the persistence of the Book. Yet there is little cause to wonder. Given a vast body of men whose living it is not to tell the truth about the Bible, with laymen stupid enough to accept what they are told, and the position of the idol is fairly secure. Yet there is less talk now than there used to be of the secret of England's greatness. The Bible is often left out altogether. According to the point of view, it lies in our sea-power, constitutional government, free trade, genius for colonization, or diet of beer and roast beef. The less we say of the Bible at the present moment, the better. If the Christian is consistent, he must cry back, not to Jesus, but to Moses, to Joshua, and to that arch-Machiavellian David, the man after God's own heart; and in that case, denunciation of the methods of the enemy is not unlike hypocrisy. The fact of the matter is that we neglected the Old Testament, with its vigorous if unscrupulous nationalism, for the brotherhood and sentimental humanitarianism of the Gospels, which we are now contented to leave to the Quakers and Mr. Snowden. Consistency was never one of our strong points.

Although the clergy are exempted from military service, they do not like admitting the soft impeachment. According to the Bishop of London, if many more parsons volunteer for the Army, sermons at morning and evening services will soon be the exception rather than the rule. Many people would like to know how many of the 50,000 clergy of this country are actually fighting, and not strutting around in khaki uniforms as Army Chaplains.

The Duke of Rutland is either very pious or something of a humourist. Recently he suggested that the bishops should instruct their clergy to read the prayer for rain. Even the mildest-mannered curate might resent undertaking the duties of a rain-doctor in a civilized community.

Four hundred additional names of clergymen have been submitted by the Archbishop of Canterbury as Army chaplains. Presumably, these men will receive officers' pay, and their chief duties will comprise religious services at the back of the Front.

At the coronation of Napoleon the First as Emperor of the French, one of his generals remarked that nothing was wanting to complete the ceremony but the million or so of men who had given their lives to put an end to that kind of thing. We were reminded of this on reading of the requiem service for the Ex-Czar of Russia, held in London, with the King and Queen in attendance. All that was wanting was another service in memory of the many, many, thousands of men and women who had suffered torture, imprisonment, and death, under the rule of the Russian autocracy.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, writing with reference to Sunday baseball games, says the proposal "fills me with dismay." Just so! So many things produce that unhappy result in brother Meyer.

According to the report at the annual meeting of the London Mendicity Society, many thousands of pounds are given away yearly to beggars in the streets of the metropolis. No mention is made of the dear clergy who are the cleverest beggars on earth.

The Court of Appeal, on July 22, confirmed the judgment of the lower court, that various legacies for the saying of Masses for the dead were null and void. We do not see how, in the present state of the law, any other decision could have been reached. But, as we believe in liberty for others, as well as for ourselves, we hasten to add, that the

sooner this kind of law is wiped out of existence the better. It is a stupid use for a man to put his money to, and the picture of a number of priests mumbling so many hundreds of pounds worth of Masses for the souls of the dead is an insult to civilized intelligence. But the cure for this is education—not legislation. Our interest in freedom of opinion is not for ourselves alone but for all.

Here is an excellent opportunity for the clergy to test the efficacy of prayers for the weather. Ocean Island, in the Pacific Gilbert and Ellice group, has suffered for two years from drought.

Bible and Beer! A Labour member stated at Edmonton Tribunal that a certain trade union opened meetings with prayer and ended by sending the hat round for "beer-money."

A Yorkshire parson, owing to labour shortage, has had to act as minister, sexton, bellringer, and gravedigger. Quite a quick-change turn!

Sandbagging the statue of Charles the First at Charing Cross has cost £450. Has this anything to do with the king's canonization by the bishops?

The hard work of the clergy does not tend to shorten their lives. The Bishop of Marlborough has resigned the Deanery of Exeter at the age of ninety-one, but he still retains the title of Bishop.

The Bishop of London told a story of the transformation of a Bethnal Green boy at the anniversary of the Sunshine Guild. He said he saw "a most gorgeous" footman at the Athenæum Club, and this impressive person had come from a tiny room in Bethnal Green. The point of the Bishop's story was that this "gorgeous" footman owed his progress from the slums to such Christian agencies as the Sunshine Guild, what the Bishop did not add was that the Christian religion was admirably adapted for training flunkeys.

An authentic case of conversion is associated with the late Father Clements, of St. Ethelberta, Slough. He went to Slough thirty-seven years ago, and converted a stable into a church.

A *Daily Chronicle* reviewer cites the following in a review of the *Collected Poems* of that brilliant writer, Rupert Brooke, who met his death in the War:—

Did you hear of the British private who had been through the fighting from Mons to Ypres, and was asked what he thought of all his experiences? He said: "What I don't like about this 'ere b—— Europe is all these b—— pictures of Jesus Christ and His relations, behind b—— bits of glawss.

Brooke adds: "It seems to express perfectly that cheerful Atheism which are the chief characteristics of my race." None but a Freethinker at heart could have written that last sentence. But what will the clergy say?

The Wesleyan Committee on Spiritual Advance emphasizes "its conviction that the greatest need of the Church at this hour is the recovery of the vision of the Risen Lord and of the apostolic experience of the power of the Holy Ghost." The Committee has hit the nail right on the head. The vision has vanished, the power is no longer felt—why? Simply because the belief that made both possible has been lost. Neither the Risen Lord nor the Holy Ghost does anything at all; it is the faith in them that does everything. When *that* is gone, the situation is hopeless.

The most humiliating of all admissions on the part of a clergyman has been made by the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. As reported in the *British Weekly* for July 25, the reverend gentleman said that "the Church had been weighed in the balance and found wanting." For repeatedly saying the same thing we have been set down as liars; but our judgment is now confirmed by the chief official of a great Church.

To Correspondents.

ROBERT MILES.—We have read both your letters with considerable pleasure. The one published was well expressed, and we are not surprised the editor felt called upon to reply. Perhaps that was to save himself reproach from pious quarters. Anyway, it is a good thing to ventilate *our* side of the case. We are dealing elsewhere with the article.

J. H. ROUND.—Sorry your letter is "crowded out." We agree that if the "Day of Prayer" has given the Lord as much amusement as it has given to some mortals, it will serve the purpose of a much-needed diversion.

A. RUSSELL.—We should liked to have printed your communication, but, with our restricted space, we must forbear. We think you are right in saying that "religion" is not the right word. Our objection to the use of the word is that long usage has clearly fixed its meaning to the average man or woman, and its use nowadays in a new sense is bound to mislead. It puzzles us also why some people should be so anxious to prove they have a *religion*. If one rejects the thing, why not the name? It reminds us of the clinging of some people to an ideal "Christ" after criticism has demonstrated the mythical nature of the character.

R. MARTIN.—The Pioneer Press would gladly quote special terms for 500 or 1,000 copies of Mr. Cohen's *Religion and the Child*. Certainly, their circulation would do good, while the subject of education is so much to the fore. Now is certainly a good time for pleading the cause of Secular Education.

T. FISHER.—The question of reprinting is under consideration. Cost and scarcity of paper is the only real obstacle. We share your appreciation of "Abracadabra's" articles.

We have received a letter from Mr. W. Walters, of Derby, which we regret being unable to print in full, in which he argues that Humanism is essential to Atheism, and Vegetarianism essential to Humanism. Mr. Walters hopes that all Freethinkers will give the subject their earnest attention. We fancy we are right in saying that this subject has received more attention from Freethinkers than from any class in the community.

ANOTHER CORP.—Your advice was quite correct.

A. G. EARLY.—Your judgment of Butler is, we think, quite sound. His *Analogy* is now little more than an exercise in dialectics. It was a powerful piece of work, written for a special purpose—against Deism—and it was conclusive. Too conclusive; for it pointed to Atheism as the logical end of the journey. The work must always be read with an eye to the times and the purpose for which it was written. Butler's sermons on morals are, however, on a different level. In our judgment, they represent a valuable contribution to the literature of the subject. They will always repay reading.

J. GAIR.—Shall be delighted to meet you again after all these years.

GLENDALOUGH.—Thanks. Will appear next week. MSS. will do. We hope you enjoyed your holiday, and are the better in health for the change.

E. LECHMERE.—Thanks for paper. Will deal with it next week. The sender must have a very inadequate idea of the strength of your convictions.

G. BOSWORTH.—MSS. received. Thanks.

R. DUNLOP.—We did not receive a review copy of the book named or would have found room for a brief notice of it. The daily illustrated papers are, we presume, largely written for those who do not read, and by those who are not over-careful in their thinking.

L. J. ROE.—Darwin's *Life and Letters* is published by John Murray. We believe there is a cheap edition. Mr. C. T. Gorham has published (Watts & Co.) an account of the Spanish Inquisition, which you will find useful. *Darwinism To-Day* is sold by the Pioneer Press, price 3s., postage 6d. "Atheist" should have been placed on your identification disc at the beginning. Why not apply to your C.O. for rectification?

MISS VANCE asks us to announce that in the obituary of Miss Annie Harwood, in our issue of July 21, the name of her father was inadvertently written as "George Harwood" instead of "Charles."

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 "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 printed an extra supply of the *Freethinker* last week, but in spite of this it ran out of print, and we were unable to supply all orders. This is gratifying, although we regret not being able to satisfy customers. We have, however, increased our printing order this week so that none will be again disappointed. We do not mind how often we are compelled to repeat the same policy.

We presume the letter comes from a new reader, but a correspondent writes asking whether we think it would be good work to send out Freethought literature to the troops in France and elsewhere. Certainly we do, and we have been doing this ever since the War commenced. A great deal of it has been sent at our own cost, although, as announced, we have had a little unsolicited help from readers from time to time. Still, the literature has been and is being sent. We do not think we have refused a single request for a free parcel of literature during the past four years. And we are quite sure much good has been done thereby.

While we are on this point, we may take the opportunity of acknowledging the letters of thanks sent us by soldiers who are receiving the thirteen weeks' free copies of this journal, and which have been chiefly paid for through the generosity of one of our readers. We feel sure some of these will continue regular subscribers. When a man reads the *Freethinker* for thirteen consecutive weeks it is not very likely that he will drop it altogether.

At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive permission was given for the formation of two new Branches, and twenty-nine new members were admitted. One of these Branches is located at Barnsley, and it hopes to get well to work by the autumn. We hope it will have a prosperous career. The other Branch—we hope missionaries will note—is at far-off Lagos. This Branch owes its existence, we believe, to a "Blasphemy" prosecution which occurred there last year, and on which we wrote an article in the *Freethinker* for November 4, 1917. That article has been reprinted as a leaflet and circulated in Lagos. We hope the missionaries are pleased with the outcome of their bigotry. We are.

Mr. Cohen has been asked to visit Pontypridd, South Wales, during the autumn, and he has agreed to do so if it can be arranged. Heresy has been more or less rife in Pontypridd for centuries, and there should be a good organization. Will those in the district who are willing to help communicate with Mr. J. Gair, 4 St. Catherine's Street, Pontypridd.

The following has been sent us for publication:—

A line to let you know the funny little experience I had to-day at "Base." I had to get a new identity disc here; so in I went to the counter-cum-clerk at the Q.M.S.'s. Right. "No.," "Rk.," "Name," "Unit," "Religion." That did it. Of course, I used the *Freethinker* denomination. Up jumps the dear "Bath bun and glass of milk" gentleman, and, with a dramatic attitude worthy of Robey or Tree, the dear fellow cast aside the branding-irons that almost caused him to "fall" (and really he looked almost "without visible means of support" as it was, so underfed the poor fellow looked) and dramatically declared, "Never!" and said he would not soil his hands by so doing. I told him point blank he had a personal animosity, and that did it. He ordered me out. Of course, I went next to the Q.M., and, after an argument, I

produced the W.O. letter you gave me. He said it referred only to various religious denominations, and not to "Atheism"; and there we left it. To-morrow I leave for the line, with no religious denomination on my identity disc. What am I to do? Can you give me further advice?

The proper course would be to apply to the superior officer to have the matter put right. A soldier is fully entitled to have "Atheist" or "Freethinker" on his disc if he desires it.

Too late for insertion this week, probably owing to postal delay, we have received a reply from Mr. Moss to Mr. Effel's letter on "Atheism, Anarchism, and Accuracy." It will appear in our next issue.

We see from the *Times* that Herr Conrad Belzuangen, editor of *Der Atheist*, organ of the Proletarian Freethinkers of Germany, has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment for high treason. We do not know what is the nature of the high treason. Perhaps he had been speaking disrespectfully of the Christian Kaiser and his Deity.

The Portsmouth Branch of the N.S.S. is, we are glad to hear, taking seriously the work of collecting waste paper on our behalf. Mr. N. Crosby, of 5 Fratton Road, Portsmouth, has undertaken to receive small or large parcels of papers from friends in the district, and will, when collected, forward them to us. This is an excellent plan, and we hope to hear that Mr. Crosby is being "snowed under" with old papers and magazines.

Paper is getting steadily dearer and dearer, but we have some for sale at this office. They are only very small slips, the size of a sheet of ordinary notepaper, and we are selling them at 5s. 3d. and 10s. 6d. each. The holder of one of these slips is entitled to receive by post a copy of the *Freethinker* every week for six or twelve months. We have also a supply of two-and-eightpenny slips, which will secure the same privilege for three months. It would not be at all a bad thing to send one of these slips to a friend. We feel certain he would appreciate it.

A New Lucian.

THE average man is an incorrigible sentimentalist in what concerns his own actions and ideas, and those of the social group to which he belongs. He regards all criticism which is not mere praise as irrelevant when it is serious, and scandalous when it is bantering or ironical. We may be certain that the windy demagogues and hustlers, the trimmers and placemen who did their best to ruin Greek Democracy, had a poor opinion of the humour and wit of Aristophanes. And we may be equally certain that Lucian was no favourite with a public that liked to be gulled, the late Greek counterpart of the unsophisticated folk who are nowadays cheerfully putting money into the pockets of the Pelmans and other memory-quacks. For the majority of people, irony is either foolishness or a stumbling-block; for the intelligent minority it is the subtlest, the most delightful form of literary pleasure; but it needs for its enjoyment a refinement of intellectual emancipation. It requires, if I may say it without self-conceit or flattery, the free-thinking temperament, a rare mental detachment. It is not strange, therefore, that the *National Reformer* was the only paper that had any suspicion of the ironical nature of Samuel Butler's defence of orthodox Christianity in *The New Haven*. No! irony is not an intellectual form that commends itself to the average man.

I.

It was a Unitarian parson who once said that the best way to deal with Biblical difficulties was to look them boldly in the face and pass on. A better way, or at least a more general way, is to ignore what you cannot

understand, or do not want to understand. This was the sort of treatment meted out to a little book published a month or so ago, entitled *1920; Dips Into the Near Future*, by Lucian (Headley Bros.; 2s. net). If my memory serves me, only one paper gave anything like an adequate review of it; the rest were contented merely to record its publication among "Books Received," although the literary editors had no doubt enjoyed the ironical touches when it irradiated the rather dull pages of the *Nation*. It is an attempt to give an idea of what England may be like two years from now if the War should go on. It is not a cheering picture of our social future, but only the congenital optimist or the born fool would be rash enough to maintain that it is wildly impossible.

Charteris is an Oxford man, a parson, who for two years before 1920 has been opening new missions in the interior of China. He comes home for a needed rest, knowing little of recent happenings and still less of the social conditions of England, where he finds the War still going on. His first impression of the new England is disturbing. The morning after his arrival, as he stands on the steps of Morley's Hotel, he sees a long procession of aged men and women, led by a bishop, and seemingly heading for the Abbey. A friend whom he happens to come across is surprised to find that Charteris knows nothing of the Aged Service Act, which, he tells him, was ordered by the *Morning Bull* and passed by the new Government of young newspaper and business men. By this Act compulsion was applied to the aged, who had not responded willingly enough to the nation's call to them to save the food situation by voluntary sacrifice of their useless lives. It was now working fairly smoothly, and only those who had the biggest pull could dodge it. For some time Dedication Services had been held regularly at the Abbey, when the new Archbishop (the youngest to attain this high office) spoke in glowing language of the privilege of being allowed to make the supreme sacrifice. The music, the impressive address which aroused in them a sense of patriotism, and lifted up their hearts as the old people marched, a long and sombre procession, to the crematorium at Golder's Green.

Another new development in 1920 was an immense extension of the practice of Reprisals. The War had become a struggle for the mastery of the air; trench-fighting was a thing of the past. Official London (every man with any "pull" at all had a Government job) had dug itself in; it worked and enjoyed itself underground, where its innocent luxuries could not be seen by an envious lower class. There was a sort of competition between the combatants as to which of them would kill the greater number of children. The War being likely to go on indefinitely, this new policy was a far-sighted one. The old-fashioned sentimental humanitarian, of which a few still existed, was silenced by insisting on the "hard logic of frightfulness," and by proving that, as the enemy had forced us to imitate his barbarities, our vile deeds would be transferred to his account.

The Churches (of course) rallied gallantly round the spiritual emergency. Indeed, the last scruples of anti-patriotic sentimentalism were stifled by the famous vote of Convocation in favour of a "diluted Christianity" operating through the instrument of a National Intelligence Department, to practise Mosaic morality for the duration of the war. This entailed some readjustment in the services. "Back to Moses" became the spiritual slogan, and a drastic reconstruction of the rubric removed from the Lessons of the Day the more pacific chapters of the Gospels, and gave due prominence to the bracing incidents in Joshua and Judges. A general assent was readily accorded to the charge which the good Bishop of Peterborough gave to his diocesan clergy: "Above

all, remember that a genuinely Catholic Christianity must learn to adapt itself to the peculiar spiritual requirements of every great occasion in the national life. Thus, and only thus, can it maintain its full potency as a living, an organic creed."

II.

An amusing, and for some, perhaps, a provocative, chapter describes the intellectual outlook of England in 1920. The working of the department known as "The Laboratory of War-Truth" is explained to Charteris by Paston, an Oxford acquaintance of his, who had been a philosophical don, and a bright exponent of Bergson. He was now applying Pragmatism to the manufacture of War-truth. This up-to-date department was the outcome of a conviction that in a war of ideas the State must have full control of the intellectual and moral ideas of the nation. Censorship was seen to be the merest fumbling. It had made a distinction between the suppression of news and the suppression of opinions. It had set up a sham voluntarism. It was Pragmatism that supplied the fundamental conception of truth as being—

a raw material infinitely malleable and adaptable to the purposes of the State.....We begin (said Paston) by accepting the familiar distinction true for me, false for you. This idea of the relativity and adaptability of knowledge is then generalized and applied in the processes of our laboratory, for producing out of the same raw material the separate truths which war requires for the home consumer, the Ally, the neutral, and the enemy. The crude fact is the same for all; everything depends upon the treatment.....It is our duty to compose the sort of news which it is good for the respective parties to receive, and to mould the sentiments and opinions it is good for them to hold. And then, when the expert taster says that we have got it just right, it is pumped into the news-agencies and the other publicity machines.

The State, in 1920, was not satisfied with inventing the truth that would work. It drew up a formidable index of forbidden books, among which were "such well-known works as Milton's *Arcopagitica*, Locke's essay on *Toleration*, and Mill's *Liberty*. But this did not exhaust the energies of the department. It soon got the Universities to shed their early scruples about "objective facts" and "absolute reality." The famous monograph "How Blucher lost us Waterloo" struck the shrewdest blow to Prussian military prestige, and equally valuable support to the Allies was given by the "Disparagers" whose business it was to discredit German literature and philosophy. Here they had more success than they had with the music of the enemy. First, they had tried to cure the musical amateur of his unpatriotic infatuation by changing the name Wagner into Scholes and Strauss into Boughton. Then some one suggested hiring third-rate orchestras to do their worst with Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner:—

The first performances were rehearsed with care and given with really murderous effect. At least, such was the intention. Unfortunately, the more cultured musical public took the perverse fancy to treat the most excruciating passages as a novel and fascinating phase of what they termed futurist transvaluation; and so the Hun names that had been advertised for execration came to acquire a fresh lease of undeserved glory.

III.

It would seem that by 1920 people had got quite used to D.O.R.A. The didn't object to her reading their private letters, licking up their envelopes, tapping the telephones, and generally interesting herself in other peoples' business. The people is now so tame, says Roxburgh, who is in the service of the incomparable young lady, "that it comes to feed out of Dora's hand.

There isn't a week passes but some well-signed memorial or petition comes up, begging for another regulation, or reporting the discovery of some little surviving liberty that needs stamping out."

"But," broke in our old-fashioned Liberal, "what about liberty making the world safe for democracy? Is there no loss of liberty in the doings of Dora?"

"There is just as much liberty as ever," was the answer, "only it is concentrated at the top."

The Military Service (Females) Act, War bondage and War aims in 1920, are three chapters that will make the reader smile, look serious, complacent, or irritated, according to his philosophic standpoint and political bias.

The wittiest chapter is the last: "The New Jerusalem in 1920," with its amusing picture of the Temple used as the International Gold Reserve Bank surrounded by mansions in the Park Lane style, and Lyons' new caravanserai the "Cœur de Lion" fitted out with every convenience, swimming-baths, theatre a Boots' library, and a snappy little paper the *Prophet*. The guileless Hebrew financiers turn the commissioners of the Palestine Protectorate round their little fingers, getting from them a patent to run a joy-railway up the Mount of Olives with a casino at the top.

I trust I am right in thinking that there are still people in England who have enough mental detachment to enjoy a witty and ironical book.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Another Scientist's Profession of Faith.

II.

(Continued from p. 406).

His religion is a poor affair if it has been accepted only as a matter of tradition and authority, as merely the correct thing for the society in which he moves. It is this unintelligent, unspiritual acceptance of beliefs that have come down to us enforced by the weight of the pious tradition of centuries that makes a large part of that which passes for religion so terribly insincere. And in a time of advancing thought there is ever a tendency on the part of the otiose or the preoccupied to let others do their thinking for them; to accept as of faith all that is presented with authority. For fear of believing too little, they are ready to believe too much. Having renounced the duty of private judgment, they swallow wholesale the dogmas of current theology. Unmindful of the warning that "credulity is a real, if not as great, a sin as unbelief," they fall a prey to the bigotry of the ecclesiastic, and their very faith, because it has in them no sure foundation, becomes an unfaith which shrinks from the investigation of religious problems as though all such investigations were profane. It was all very well for Newman to deny the right of private judgment, but anyone who reads the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* will discover what a vast amount of private judgment was necessary before he could convince himself of the authority of the Church of Rome. He walked into credulity with his eyes open, for fear of being damned for believing too little.—*Silvanus Thompson*, "A Not Impossible Religion."

THE central doctrine of Christianity, the Atonement, by which it is taught that Jesus was offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, Professor Thompson describes as:—

A scheme of contracts and covenants, which presuppose a revengeful Deity who cannot be appeased except by blood, and who refuses even after supreme atonement to such of the human race as fail, by no fault of their own, to hear of the circumstance? Nay, I will go further, and maintain not only that this supposed contract or plan of salvation, in which the innocent is allowed to suffer for the guilty, is a piece of intellectual materialism, I will say it is a piece of revolting heathenism, which during the night of centuries has become engrafted into the creeds of Christendom in their transmission from their first source. The whole idea of

expiation by a sacrifice of blood is, as every student of the primitive religions of mankind knows, a survival from antiquity, which even the nobler Jews, before the captivity had learned to discard.

But if to consider the great All-Father as a monster only to be appeased by the shedding of innocent blood be an impiety, what are we to say of all that terrible, soul-searing, unedifying rhetoric which has been current, and is still current, about the blood of Christ? Let us endeavour as reverently as possible to divest ourselves of all materialism on this point. The mediæval scribe who emblazoned in his missal the miniature of the crucifixion, showing the priest collecting in a silver ewer the drops of Christ's blood, was he any more materialist in his ideas than he who wrote "There is a fountain filled with blood"? or than the street-preacher who exhorts his hearers to wash in the blood of Jesus? Jewish tradition again is responsible for these terrible and revolting ideas (pp. 129-132).

During the present War, and upon many other occasions, the Churches have set apart a special day for prayer, the idea being that by this concentrated attack they would make God sit up and take notice. This is how Professor Thompson regards the manoeuvre: "Yet another of the idols of the temple which have been lifted up by pious hands is the quantitative prayer..... prayer manufactured, prearranged, concerted, to be uttered in a vast number of congregations at once, as if to impress the Almighty by the importance of mere numbers, is a piece of the veriest superstition. One of the least superstitious of Nonconformist bodies in England, in a recent annual bulletin, when recommending its congregations to prayer, added: 'such a volume of prayer cannot fail.' As though the efficacy of prayer were to be measured by the number of people praying or the quantity of their prayers! One's thoughts go back to Elijah's mocking words to the priests of Baal: 'Cry aloud for he is a god; peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened.' What ideas those have of the Most High who think that He can be moved by a 'volume' of preconcerted prayers? In what respect are they any more enlightened than the devout Oriental who turns his praying wheel before the image of Buddha?" (pp. 155-156).

At this point we can imagine the faithful crying, with Falstaff: "Call you that backing up your friends? A plague upon such backing." But there is more to follow.

The right of private judgment, declares Professor Thompson, is not only a right but a duty, and adds: "No honest seeker after truth will renounce his right and duty of search simply because of a pious hope, or a friendly assertion, that in some book, or Church, or priest, he may find an infallible guide." He points out that the English noun "sceptic" means "one who considers or examines, or looks about carefully. Instead of being a term of discredit, it ought to be regarded as a term of honour.....Suspense of judgment on many controverted points is often a sacred duty: the only honest course when neither belief nor disbelief would be right."¹

He denounces "The selfish sort of religion that dominates most of Protestantism, and writes up 'Save your soul' over the doors of its chapels" (p. 174), and declares: "The tribe of revivalist preachers has much to answer for in the unwisdom of their influence upon young people, whose mental and spiritual health is injured by the unwholesome pious orgies of artificially stimulated religiosity." Then there is the familiar phenomenon of the "spiritual valetudinarian, who is morbidly taken up with the question of his own spiritual health, and whether he is going to be 'saved' or

damned.'" Never do we find him, says the Professor, "working for others" (p. 213).

Of the Church, he remarks: "it has stoned the prophets and excommunicated the reformers, until now the term 'orthodox' has become a byword denoting all that is unprogressive and reactionary" (p. 214). Of Christianity itself, he observes: "In thousands of ways the failure of our 'Christianity,' the incompleteness of the 'working out the beast,' makes itself evident..... Degeneracy and disease are writ large on vast herds of toilers who seek in sheer soulless excitement an escape from the drudgery of their lives. If we have abolished slavery in its grosser form, we have not yet found means to abolish slavery in the sweating shop. The man who grinds the faces of the poor, or who defrauds the community by swindling prospectuses of public companies, is still received and honoured, provided he will subscribe freely to party funds, or build chapels for the respectable, or preside at Bible Society meetings. Our newspapers live largely on lying advertisements of patent medicines and details of ghastly murders—yet every student of sociology knows that both these things are social concerns that corrupt the community. But the task of exposing from time to time the abuses of the Press has been largely left to men who made no profession of Christianity, while the watch-dogs of the Church have been dumb, though this is not a pestilence that walketh in darkness but a destruction that walketh by noonday. The watch-dogs of the Church are, for the present, much more concerned in the jejune discussion of what they call Reunion, or in prevention of a woman from marrying the widower of the deceased's husband's sister, or in the appointment of more bishops, than in the uplifting of the sons of men;" (pp. 232-3).

This is refreshingly outspoken, especially the admission that the work of reform "has been largely left to men who made no profession of Christianity, while the watch-dogs of the Church have been dumb."

(To be concluded.) W. MANN.

Notes from Ireland.

"An Unworthy Client of Mary" strongly recommends all true Irishmen three or more times daily to pray thusly: "Our Lady, our Queen, our Mother, in the name of Jesus Christ and for the love of Jesus, take our cause and the cause of Ireland's campaign against Conscription in hands and obtain for them good success." The Unworthy Client declares it to be "a little prayer he has never known to fail." The Unworthy Client is by no means the only person who puts deep credence in the efficacy of this delightful wireless message; a quasi-political journal, the *Irishman*, considers it worthy of a space on its front page. So powerful a bit of impotence is, alas, only too indicative of an untaught public, an untaught paper, and a very well-taught swarm of falcon-priests. But the worst of it is, the paper that publishes this lamentable twaddle is one of the most strenuous and widely read advocates of the stringing of the Celtic harp with the chords of autonomy. Prayer is ever a rummy weapon of defence—in its use the suppliant is especially exposed to the arrows of ridicule and the keener darts of laughter. Still, if Conscription be not applied we will cheerfully acknowledge the prophetic faculty of the Unworthy Client. But the efficacy of prayer! Only when the importuned is a poor, weak, miserable, vindictive human being does its efficacy come into the reckoning. "Though we wield an impious language, we are a prayerful nation," so say our bishops. "Man on his knees is symbolical of ignorance and helplessness," so says the holy editor of this journal. Alas! Cathleen ni Hoolihan, not yet have you the walk of a queen!

¹ Professor Silvanus Thompson, *A Not Impossible Religion*, pp. 168-9.

The interesting ruins of Mountmellery Abbey, co. Louth, are accessible to the public. A few weeks ago we were shown

the holy wonders by an ancient woman of queer recollections who was good enough to inform us, in respect of our national grievances, that God is slow but he's very sure. We were joined by a stout son of rest whose face was somewhat less interesting and less animated than that of a cheap alarm clock; one of his pockets bulged with soda, another with brown-bread. His mode and manner of salutation were strange: "Oh, the struggle for life is terrible. Praises be to God!" This addition to our party added deep crimson to the already red political discussion; it now appeared that the mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceeding small. He was a strange person; he of the inanimate features ornamented with a moustache like a couple of goats' beards. When the good woman was exhibiting a piece of "dog-tooth" work his soul became deeply moved, and, finding expression in the bulging eyes and flabby cheeks, and articulation at length in the tongue, burst out in an ecstasy of the Holy Ghost: "Praises be to God! it was a saint that did that. He's in heaven now"; then, as an afterthought, "but they are all in heaven for the matter of that" This celestial being knew an awful lot about heaven, but we found, to our dismay, he knew precious little about earth; he couldn't even tell us the distance to Drogheda.

Quite recently a highly spiced melodrama was presented at the Queen's Theatre, Dublin. The following episode, in addition to a recital of the hymn "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" occurred:—

Villain: I'll make you a little angelo with flapper wings.

I'll kill you that's what I'll do. I'll make you appeal to me for mercy.

Five-Year Old Child: I will not appeal to you for mercy but to my Saviour.

(Thunderous applause from the gods).

Apropos Views and Opinions of July 7: "Parings of saintly nails, remnants of saintly clothing, and even saintly ordure were esteemed." The *Cross*, an Irish magazine, conducted by the Passionate Fathers, asks "How is it that there is but the one Church that preserves and prizes even the rags of the first Christians?" The answer is obvious—glaringly obvious. Some time ago a man, a fully grown man, who grew hair on his chin, bequeathed £50 for the purchase of a slice of Saint Anthony's toe-nail! But this deceased intellectual was not so great a fool as it would at first appear. A holy toe-nail is a family heirloom, and, in all Catholic countries, especially this little island, is always sure of a market. It is a possession well worth having. A man fortunate enough to own a full toe-nail, even one that appertained to the smallest digit, could borrow £10,000 with that as security, and start business in the money-lending line.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JULY 25.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Braddock, Brandes, Eager, Heaford, Kelf, Leate, Lazarnick, Neate, Palmer, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Spence, Thurlow, Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, Miss Stanley, and the Secretary.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were accepted for Barnsley, Birmingham, Coventry, Goldthorpe, Lagos, Portsmouth, South London, South Shields, and the Parent Society (twenty-nine in all).

An application was received, and permission granted, for a Branch to be again formed in Barnsley.

Considerable pleasure was expressed at the request for permission to form a Branch of the Society at Lagos, Nigeria. This was also granted.

The President reported the result of his recent visit to and lectures delivered at Bridgend, Maesteg, and the possibility of the formation of new Branches in the surrounding districts. This was received with much gratification, and it was resolved unanimously that the Executive lend all its support to the furtherance of the work in South Wales.

The names of the delegates elected to serve on the Special

Committee for Reorganization were reported, and meetings were arranged to take place at 62 Farringdon Street on August 3 and 4.

Messrs. Davidson and Roger, and Miss Kough, were elected as a Committee for the arrangement of resolutions and suggestions.

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.

OUTDOOR.

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

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): No Meeting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Mr. J. B. Johnson, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 6, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "The Berlin Bible Depot Open—Why?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A Lecture; 6.30, 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, "The Historic Enemy." All Friends invited to attend.

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

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