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Views and Opinions.

Secular Education Again.

For some months, as our readers are aware, we have been drawing the attention of all concerned to the necessity of "getting a move on" in relation to the question of Secular Education. In addition to the work carried on in the *Freethinker*, we have written a large number of letters to people likely to help, and we are glad to note that the articles and letters have borne fruit. It has meant a lot of extra work, but the cause was worth it. As a result of this campaign quite a number of resolutions affirming the policy of Secular Education have been passed by Trades Unions and other organizations, and have been duly sent on to the Minister of Education. Mr. Fisher, at least, cannot plead that he is ignorant of any feeling against religion in State schools. In addition, members of Parliament have also been written by their constituents, and the plea of ignorance is also removed so far as they are concerned. If those responsible will not act rightly, it is well that they should not be able to plead they did not know which was the right course to follow.

* * *

An Impudent Misrepresentation.

Following out the advice we gave, one of our readers sent Mr. Bartley Denniss, M.P., for Oldham, a copy of the *Freethinker* for May 5 containing an article on "The New Education Bill." Mr. Denniss replies as a firm believer in religious education in State schools, and after reading his letter one can well appreciate it. For a grosser travesty of the argument of an opponent, a more deliberate (we use this word advisedly) perversion of a writer's meaning it has seldom been our lot to read. A single instance will prove the *moral* quality of this champion of religious instruction. In a postscript to his letter Mr. Denniss says:—

Another writer on p. 256 of the *Freethinker* you sent me says: "At that very moment Britain's 'drunken soldiers' were opposed to the full fury of the German war machine." Do you approve of a paper which inserts such a sentence?

Now, if anyone will turn to the page named, he will find the sentence occurs in an article by Mr. Andrew Millar. But the sentence pilloried is not Mr. Millar's. Mr. Millar is, in fact, pouring scorn upon some religious teetotalers who had been denouncing our soldiers for getting drunk. The words "drunken soldiers" were

within quotation marks. Here is the whole passage:—

The whole exhibition was futile, effete, pathetic..... For at that very moment Britain's "drunken soldiers" were opposed to the full fury of the German War machine. And these pitiful moralists would dictate to these men their parsonic idea of perfect conduct.

What is one to make of the *moral* calibre of a man who can take that passage, convert "drunken soldiers" into the writer's own expression, and then ask: "do you approve of a paper which inserts such a sentence?" And, be it noted, Mr. Denniss believes in religious education. He himself had it. The outcome is truly appalling.

* * *

Parents versus Children.

Mr. Denniss' letter covers three pages of quarto (House of Commons) paper, and excluding the fearful misrepresentation above cited, his comments on our article come under two heads. It accuses us of intolerance. It "appals" Mr. Denniss that we should be so intolerant as to deny the "right of anyone, even of the parent, to teach his child religion." But if anyone will do us the honour to glance again through our article, he will see that what we denied was the right of the modern State to force a particular religion upon all, or even to compel all to support the religion of a part of the community. It is a fact that a parent possesses the *right* to give to his children whatever religious teaching he pleases; but we suggested that this might be exercised injudiciously, even tyrannically, and it is hard to see on what moral ground a parent can be perfectly justified in giving a child, as absolute truth, teachings which, to adults, he admits are more or less speculations. What we are asking for is justice to the child—for the child of the Christian as well as for the child of the Atheist. If we may quote a sample of our own "intolerance": "We want the child to grow up mentally fitted to select any religion it pleases, or able to intelligently reject them all should it feel so inclined." And Mr. Denniss is horrified! As one of our intelligent legislators, he is vastly concerned with the right of the parent to coerce the child, he is benignly indifferent to the fact that the child has rights as against the parent.

* * *

Why Bother?

The rest of Mr. Denniss' remarks are made up of more or less irrelevant comments, which go to show a complete want of understanding of the points at issue. Thus Mr. Denniss is quite sure that the few pence a year which religious instruction takes out of his correspondent's pocket cannot be a matter of great concern. It is a pity that so strenuous a Christian cannot lift his mind above the cash issue. Injustice is not made justice because the monetary cost is slight. Doubtless Hampden would not have missed his share of ship-money, but it was enough to act as one of the causes of a revolution. And then comes this gem:—

If Atheists truly think there is no such thing as God, why do they trouble themselves because other people believe in him? Why do they talk of it and try to get

disciples if they are not faint about it, and do not want the consent of others to keep them in countenance?

Then are we to assume that when Christians try to bring others to their point of view, it is because they are faint, and want others to keep them in countenance? If not, why not? Perhaps it may one day cross the mind of Mr. Denniss that when a man sees what he believes to be truth, there is a plain duty before him to see that others see it also. The Atheist is discharging a plain social obligation in putting *his* truth before the people. Doubtless, Mr. Denniss finds it difficult to understand this. Is he not in politics? And is it not natural that he should marvel at a man troubling himself to "disturb" others when the disturbance can bring the disturber nothing but trouble and misrepresentation? Nothing but that—and a sense of duty done. Oh, these politicians! Can we wonder the world is as it is when our legislators are made of such stuff?

* * *

An Appeal to Parents.

Mr. Denniss is "happily convinced" that no one will ever "see the people of Oldham converted to such views. They are the most sincerely religious community in the United Kingdom." It may be so, and it is only fitting that Mr. Denniss should be so appreciative of the people of Oldham. For have they not elected him! And what better proof of their religion and intelligence could they give—to Mr. Denniss? And yet one wonders whether there is any real warranty for thinking that the people of Oldham are less susceptible to a sense of justice and to the trend of civilization than are other people. For ourselves, we should require more than Mr. Denniss' word before we formed so poor an opinion of the Oldhamites. All over the civilized world the conviction is growing that the teaching of religion is the concern of the individual, not the proper business of the State; that to force religion on the child and leave the adult uncoerced is an act of cowardice. The child can't hit back; the adult can. That is the sole distinction. Mr. Denniss believes that nowhere in the country do parents love their children more than in Oldham. We are glad to hear it; and it was to this very parental love that we made our appeal. We do not want to see that parental love exploited by the priest and by the vote-catching politician. We want to see the parental love of the people not only strong, but expressed intelligently, in the best interests of the child, and ultimately of the State. Give the child all the protection we can, not from physical ills alone, but from mental ills also. Let us spend our time in teaching it *how* to think, and *what* it thinks will take care of itself. We detest Prussianism in the State; and we hate it not the less heartily in the school and in the home.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Mischievous Dogmatism.

OUR land is full of broken homes and mourning hearts. Tens of thousands of bright and brave young men have been slain on the fields of battle, whilst multitudes of others have been more or less frightfully maimed, and rendered incapable of earning a living. There is scarcely a family in the whole country into which suffering, and sorrow, and bereavement have not entered during these four years of disastrous War. It is impossible to contemplate so appalling a situation without desiring to do something to help and comfort the sorely stricken ones round about us. The *British Weekly*, being a religious newspaper conducted on strictly evangelical lines, has, of late, devoted many of its leading articles to the subject of Christian consolation in bereavement. Of course, in

the estimation of the pious editor, life is not worth living if death ends it. During a world-war, therefore, the most precious of all doctrines is that of immortality, and the *British Weekly* has been proclaiming it with burning enthusiasm off and on for several months. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* was laid under tribute for two or three weeks. In its issue for July 18, the leading article is entitled "In Christ Redeemed, in Christ Restored," the opening sentences in which are these:—

In this world of death a message of "Reunion in Eternity is a first necessity. It is as music to all souls in pain.

We unhesitatingly give the lie to both statements. Though this is a world in which all things die, yet its great fact is not death, but life, and the first necessity is a message, not of reunion after death, but of wise counsel and inspiration for the best conduct of life. The message of reunion after death is not "as music to all souls in pain," but rather as the baseless fabric of a dream to a great many such. There are even Christians not a few to whom those sentences are anything but true. Sir William Robertson Nicoll admits that even the bereaved do not listen to the message of reunion "in the first force of their passionate misery, while they feel in their breasts the burning of the murderous steel," though that is the very time when the message, if true, would be of the most substantial service to them. But is the message true? Sir William concedes that it "concerns only those who are in Christ." What exactly that concession means is left to our imagination. Are we to infer from it that only Christians survive death, or that there is no reunion in hell? Christ's relation to immortality is thus expressed:—

Apart from his doing, his dying, his rising again, his testimony, there is no doctrine of the future.....He has abolished death by his resurrection. He is the Conqueror of the last enemy. He has risen and ascended and he rules.

The editor of the *British Weekly*, being a scholar, cannot plead ignorance of the fact that belief in continuation after death antedates Christianity by countless thousands of years, and that the more modern doctrine of personal immortality cannot truthfully claim a Christian origin. Possibly the idea Sir William wishes to convey is that no doctrine of the future, other than the Christian, is worthy of credence, and that, consequently, the Christian doctrine is the only one that we need to consider. But we utterly fail to perceive on what grounds the Christian theory of immortality is regarded as in any sense or degree more credible than any other.

Sir William is an incorrigible dogmatist. What he gives us is a well-nigh interminable series of naked assertions. He never condescends to argue, or to supply evidences, but contents himself with stringing together a vast number of unverifiable assumptions. His orthodoxy is undeniable, and his loyalty to the New Testament is equally beyond doubt. He is a colossal believer, and takes for granted that belief and knowledge are synonymous terms. Apparently he subscribes to what was a popular heresy thirty and forty years ago, namely, conditional immortality. At any rate, it is faithful followers of Christ alone who are to enjoy the boon of reunion beyond the tomb. Death signifies the flight of the soul out of the body, and from the moment it is on the wing Christ takes charge of it, "and as a magnet draws it upward to himself." Redeemed souls in the next life, being gathered together "unto him, to know and be known of him," will, of necessity, know one another. Speaking in their name the reverend knight says:—

He who inspired the human love that now seeks its own, he who was himself strengthened and solaced

thereby during the earthly years when he walked softly in the bitterness of his soul, will never deny us our heart's desire.

The writer may honestly believe all that; but he oversteps his right when he presents it to his readers as an item of knowledge. Any man who claims to know that he is immortal is a liar, and the truth is not in him, no matter how sincere he may be.

It is an incontestable fact that the number of believing Christians is startlingly small, and is steadily growing smaller year after year, from which fact the only rational inference is that Sir William's soothing "message of Reunion in Eternity" "excludes the vast majority." Although believing that salvation is possible only in this world, Sir William evades that inference in the following sophisticated manner:—

We do not know what may pass of a sudden, in the very moment of dying, between the soul and Christ. All the great Christian teachers have told us that the very slightest recognition on the part of men of the Divine Sacrifice is enough to secure salvation.

That reminds us of a story we once heard in early life. In our neighbourhood there lived a man who was universally looked upon as an incarnation of all wickedness. He cursed and swore, openly blasphemed, was a notorious liar, and a most disagreeable neighbour. While helplessly drunk one night, he mistook the parapet of the bridge for the wall in front of his cottage. Failing to find the gate, he climbed over what he supposed to be the wall, dropped into the river, and was drowned. All the people pitied him, saying sadly, "Poor chap, he is now burning in hell-fire." A benignly disposed old clergyman, on being told of the dreadful accident that had hurled the ungodly man to the flames, coolly observed: "Well, well; but we don't know what may have happened between the parapet and the water." Here again the reverend knight is beautifully true to the Word, for he quotes the case of the penitent thief on the cross, to whom the dying Saviour said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Thus, in its very nature, salvation denotes the setting aside of the great laws of causation, which, of course, is an impossibility, and which, if possible, would involve the Divine Being in an essentially immoral conduct.

The *British Weekly* tries to comfort the bereaved by offering them a sheer illusion for an established truth. No one has a moral right to say of a purely imaginary future life that this, that, or the other is "blessedly true" or "certain" concerning it. Many scores of Atheists have lost loved ones in this ruthless War, and these, too, mourn, not in illusory hope, like the Christians, but in loving memory of lives well spent and of death bravely met. To mourn in hope is, at best, but to mourn sadly, unwholesomely, for faith often dies down and hope burns dimly and the future life itself becomes a continent of ever-shifting mist.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Tragedy of a Genius.

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke; with a Memoir.
(Sidgwick & Jackson; 1918.)

THERE have been multitudes of names in the tale of the heroic dead of this great War which could be said in sober truth to be a loss to their country; but few are associated with greater pathos than the career of Lieutenant Rupert Brooke, the soldier-poet, who laid down his life for England at Lemnos. For many saw in this high-minded young man the hope of a continuance of a noble poetic tradition, and watched with fascination the opening of what promised to be a great and memorable career. It is very tragic irony which closed in the War

the years of earnest study before the great task for which they were to fit him had been but well begun.

The feelings of Rupert Brooke's admirers must be like those of the survivors of a shipwreck when, the morning after the storm, they contemplate the relics that the capricious sea has spared from the rich contents of the sunken ship. Their joy at the sight of each relic is insufficient to compensate for the sad memories it awakens of equally precious treasures lost. Nor is this feeling attributable merely to the fact that an early death has snatched from us a poet of genius. Many such might pass without exciting these keen feelings of regret. The world would be grateful for what it had received, and would not concern itself with speculations as how much greater might have been their achievements had more time been allowed them. But no one in the case of young Brooke, can banish the thought of what might have been, of the future that was denied him.

"There are only three things in the world," said Rupert Brooke; "one is to read poetry, another is to write poetry, and the best of all is to live poetry." How he did all three things triumphantly is seen in the volume of his Collected Poems and a Memoir.

Rupert Brooke's short life was packed with experience. He assimilated culture at Rugby and Cambridge, and he travelled extensively. When the calling bugles of England sounded, he never hesitated. He took part in the expedition to Antwerp, and sailed for the Dardanelles. Now he lies in Lemnos, a fitting grave for a poet, the guerdon of a brief and happy life.

This heroic young poet, for whom the meteor flag of England had such a fascination, was at heart as Pagan as a Greek of the classic period. The man for whom the passing hours had such possibilities of joy or sorrow was conscious always that they could never return. Young as he was, he realized "the sense of tears in mortal things." In the most exultant moments of life he was conscious of the shadow of death:—

And has the truth brought no new hope at all,
Heart, that you're weeping yet for Paradise?
Do they still whisper, the old weary cries?
'Mid youth and song, feasting and carnival,
Through laughter, through the roses, as of old
Comes Death, on shadowy and relentless feet,
Death, unappeasable by prayer or gold;
Death is the end, the end!
Proud then, clear-eyed and laughing, go to greet
Death as a friend.

Again and again the young poet reverts to the working of this Nemesis. In many a lovely line we catch hints at the secret fear which was at the core of the Greek conception of life, this Pagan antipathy to that physically repulsive for which there was no consolation. His sympathies were ever with the youth who feels in his blood the hunger of an unshaped desire and revolts against Fate which would tame it. Listen to this beautiful sonnet:—

Breathless, we flung us on the windy hill,
Laughed in the sun, and kissed the lovely grass.
You said, "Through glory and ecstasy we pass;
Wind, sun, and earth remain, the birds sing still,
When we are old, are old." 'And when we die
All's over that is our's; and life burns on
Through other lovers, other lips,' said I,
"Heart of my heart, our heaven is now, is won!"
"We are Earth's best, that learnt her lesson here.
Life is our cry. We have kept the faith! we said;
We shall go down with unreluctant tread
Rose-crowned into the darkness!" Proud we were,
And laughed, that had such brave true things to say,
— And then you suddenly cried, and turned away.

He was saturated with poetry, and translating the poetry into action. How fine was the inspiration that prompted him to request that any money that he left

should be divided among three of his fellow-poets. "If I can set them free," he said nobly, "to write the poetry and plays and books they want to, my death will bring more gain than loss." It reminds us of Shelley shielding Byron's body from an armed Italian. "I cannot understand it," exclaimed Byron, afterwards referring to the act, "a man to run upon a naked sword for another."

Idealist though he was, Rupert Brooke had a keen zest for life. "Is there anything better," he asked, "than sitting at a table and eating good food and drinking great drink and discussing everything under the sun with wise and brilliant people." He was only too happy in his friends, and he has written some delightful things of friendship:—

There is nothing in the world like friendship. There is no lust in it, and therefore no poison. It is cleaner than love and older; for children and very old people have friends, but they do not love. It gives more and takes less, it is fine in the enjoying and without pain when absent, and it leaves only good memories. In love all laughter ends with an ache, but laughter is the very garland on the head of friendship.

There are smiles as well as tears in the book. Brooke would write "limericks" for his friends, and was fond of a good story. He repeated one that Julian Grenfell told of a private soldier who had been fighting from Mons to Ypres, and was asked what he thought of his experiences. The private said: "What I don't like about this b— Europe is all these b— pictures of Jesus Christ and his relations, behind bits of b— glass." Brooke's commentary was characteristic, when he added: "It seems to express perfectly that insularity and cheerful Atheism which are the chief characteristics of my race."

Sometimes the smiles and tears are very near, as in the poem on a dog, who did what he wanted "for a day," which he made a red-letter one. "He fought with the he-dogs, and winked at the she-dogs," and raised Cain. Then:—

When the blood-red sun had gone burning down,
And the lights were lit in the little town,
Outside in the gloom of the twilight grey,
The little dog died when he'd had his day.

Such brief quotations only partially illuminate the genius of the brilliant young scholar who contemplated twentieth-century England like a youthful visitor from another planet. The Great War wrought a change in Rupert Brooke, and afterwards he sang with richer inspiration. In his later poems he showed more passion. In his own noble way, and as though he knew his own fate, he wrote a beautiful sonnet, which must remain his own proper epitaph:—

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

MIMNERMUS.

If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broken machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants. If that part of us called mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales. Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence they have often, perhaps always, been deceived.—Robert Burns.

A Search for the Soul.

VII.

(Continued from p. 413.)

SOME months ago, in a review of a somewhat pretentious work on Immortality by Canon Streeter and other Churchmen, the reviewer, T. G. Bonney, Sc.D., LL.D., F.R.S., said:—

To explain the relation of body to mind, three hypotheses have been advanced: (1) the *materialistic*, that the mind is only a function of the brain-cells; (2) the *idealistic*, that the brain is merely an instrument of the mind (both of which are shown to be insufficient); (3) the *psychological*—which is the more satisfactory—that the mind and brain interact, each having the power of initiation. That the body does have an influence on the mind is proved by mental disturbance from physical causes and the localization of mental functions in the brain, and it can be equally proved that the mind can influence the brain and nervous system. A man may so concentrate his attention on certain objects as to be blind, deaf, or insensible to others.

Looking at the three hypotheses here advanced to explain the relation of body to mind, the only one which may be called "scientific" is the first, the materialistic—to which hypothesis every known fact relating to body and mind points as the true one. Of the other two, the second—which the reviewer calls "idealistic"—is the modern Christian view, long held by dogmatic churchmen of the Bishop Butler type, and still stoutly maintained by the majority of orthodox believers at the present day. The third hypothesis, which is said to be "more satisfactory" than the other two, is a comparatively new idea—a kind of half and half measure—which admits part of the materialistic view in order to escape the whole.

In the last two hypotheses—that "the brain is merely an instrument of the mind," and that "the mind and the brain interact"—the mind is assumed to be an "entity" separate from the brain, the only difference being that in the latter case the mind is admitted to be not quite so independent of the brain as in the former case. Now, neither of these two hypotheses has a particle of evidence on which to rest; both are pure assumptions. Our reviewer says: "It can be proved that the mind can influence the brain and nervous system." But in this statement he is in error; for if the materialistic hypothesis be correct—as we shall find it is—then it cannot be proved that the mind can "influence" the brain. How can that which arises from the functioning of the brain exert an influence on the organ which has caused it to come into being?

The statement that "a man may so concentrate his attention on certain objects as to be blind, deaf, or insensible to other things" does not show that there is in the human organism a mind apart from the brain, but merely that the cerebral organ was considering some particular matter which it deemed of more importance than other questions that ordinarily occupied its attention. As already stated, it is only by assuming that the mind is an entity independent of the brain that the former can be said to influence the latter, and this dualistic assumption begs the whole question. Moreover, Professor Bonney's admissions that mental disturbance can arise from physical causes, and that mental functions can be localized in the brain, not only prove that "the body does have an influence upon the mind," but they furnish independent proofs that the mental manifestations which are called Mind are produced by the brain. These phenomena will be noticed later on.

Now, there are scientists and medical men whose high regard for truth will not permit them to conceal from

the public the many important facts which their investigations and experiments have proved to be correct. From the writings of some of these conscientious workers I quote the following brief statements:—

Professor Buchner (*Force and Matter*):—

The word "mind" is nothing more than a collective word and a comprehensive expression for the whole of the activities of the brain and its several parts or organs (p. 301). Thinking and Being are as inseparable as force and matter, or energy and body; and the idea of thought without being, or the idea of an immaterial spirit, rests on a mere arbitrary theory which has not an inch of reality to stand on (p. 495).

Carl Vogt (quoted by Buchner):—

Physiology declares itself categorically against individual immortality, as against all theories in general which include the special existence of a soul. The (so-called) soul is produced by the development of the brain, just the same as muscular activity is produced by the development of the muscles, or secretion is produced by a development of the glands.

Professor Tyndall (*Belfast address*):—

Divorced from matter, where is life? Whatever our faith may say, our knowledge shows them to be indissolubly joined. Every meal we eat, every cup we drink, illustrates the mysterious control of mind by matter.

Professor Haeckel (*Riddle of the Universe*):—

The mind or the "soul" is that sum of cerebral functions which psychic dualism regards as a peculiar entity, independent of the other vital processes of the living body.....All the phenomena of the psychic life are, without exception, bound up with certain material changes in the living substance of the body, protoplasm.In other words, we do not attribute any peculiar "essence" to it, but we consider the (so-called) psyche to be merely a collective idea of all psychic functions of protoplasm. In this case the "soul" is merely a physiological abstraction like "assimilation" or "generation."

Dr. Bastian (*Nature and Origin of Living Matter*):—

The phenomena manifested by living things are dependent upon the properties and molecular activities of protoplasm, just as mental phenomena are dependent upon the properties and molecular activities of nerve-tissues, and just as magnetic phenomena are dependent upon the properties and molecular activities of certain kinds or states of iron (p. 18).

Dr. Hollander (*Mental Symptoms of Brain Disease*):—

Mind is still regarded by some as if it consisted of intellect alone, whereas we all *feel*, as well as *think*, with our brains (p. 1).

Dr. Maudsley (*Body and Mind*):—

The broad truth is that all mental manifestations take place through the brain (p. 37). Multitudes may logically believe that mind is inseparable from body in life or death—that it is born with it, grows, ripens, decays, and dies with it, without disbelieving in an intelligent Power who has called man into being. In the assertion that mind is altogether a function of matter there is no irreverence (p. 124).

This last statement was made by Dr. Maudsley as Professor of Jurisprudence in University College, London, in a course of lectures delivered before the Royal College of Physicians in 1870. Its apologetic character is due to the days in which he lived, and it plainly shows that he was fully aware of the nature of the opposition that might be expected from the dignitaries of the Church in those priest-ridden times. An example of this may be seen in the public denunciation of Professor Huxley by the bigoted Dr. Wace at a Church Congress some years later. There can be no doubt that the fear of the Church or of public opinion has been, in the past, the main cause of the silence of many scientists respecting the true nature of "the soul."

The relation of body and mind may be compared to a clock which strikes the hours and chimes the quarters, the striking and chiming apparatus representing the brain, and the sounds produced by it being considered ideas or thoughts; while the sum of all the sounds for any given period being regarded as the mind. In this illustration, what we are asked to believe is, that all these sounds constitute an entity independent of the apparatus which produced them, and that not only have these sonorous vibrations of the atmosphere the power to "interact" with the apparatus, but that they will continue to be produced every quarter of an hour for many years after the mechanism which brought them into being has been destroyed. This is the hypothesis which Professor Bonney says is "more satisfactory" than the true one—that which is called the materialistic.

(To be continued.) ABRACADABRA.

Go To!

THIS is a well-recognized Biblical expression, corresponding to our modern colloquialism, "Get a move on." A man sometimes, when in a difficulty, decides to "go to" his parson for counsel or guidance, and often discovers that he is by doing so a nice goat too, for he usually is kidded.

In "Acid Drops" of March 3, 1918, I read that Dr. Fort Newton had said, "When a man comes to me with intellectual difficulties, I want to say to him: 'What have you been up to?'" Why should he want to say that when the man's trouble is *intellectual*, and not *moral*? Arrah, good Newton, go on—go to!

Seriously, however, Dr. Newton's observation has another significance, going to show that every parson is a *pope at heart*. He is the infallible counsellor of weak or undeveloped intellectualities. Is he not the repository of omniscient wisdom? The Protestant parson has for ever been protesting that the chief superiority of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism lies in the fact that the former does away with any intermediary between the lay member of the Church and his God? But this is only theoretical. *In practice*, the Protestant parson as often acts as the intermediary as the Catholic priest. So again we say to Dr. Newton as Sairah Gamp said to Betsy Prig, "Go along with you." Go to.

To "go to" one's parson is a confession of ignorance—a weakness. It is like admitting a poor hand at nap when one can only "go two." But if I "go on" like this I shall soon be meriting the editorial blue pencil in decisive characters—Go to the W.P.B.!

Are we to conclude that, according to Protestant teaching, moral rectitude is only to be found in a person with a stagnant brain, or a brain that has stopped? Aparently so. Arrah, Dr. Newton, go hon!—go to —!

Christians are always "going to" and never arriving.

NEMO.

AMBITION AND GREAT MEN.

We exaggerate the ambition of Great Men; we mistake what the nature of it is. Great men are not ambitious in that sense; he is a small poor man that is ambitious so. Examine the man who lives in misery because he does not shine above other men; who goes about producing himself, pruriently anxious about his gifts and claims; struggling to force everybody, as it were begging everybody for God's sake, to acknowledge him a great man, and set him over the heads of men! Such a creature is among the wretchedest sights seen under the sun. A *great* man? A poor, morbid, prurient, empty man; fitter for the ward of a hospital than for a throne among men. I advise you to keep out of his way. He cannot walk on quiet paths: unless you will look at him, wonder at him, write paragraphs about him, he cannot live. It is the *emptiness* of the man, not his greatness. Because there is nothing in himself, he hungers and thirsts that you would find something in him. In good truth, I believe no great man, not so much as a genuine man who had health and real substance in him of whatever magnitude, was ever much tormented in this way.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

Acid Drops.

We suggest the Lord has behaved rather shabbily to his followers. August 4 was the announced Day of Prayer, and it would have been good stage management to have held up the splendid counter-attack of the Allies until, say, the 5th or 6th. But the advance was made *before* the Day of Prayer, and that was not—from the Christian point of view—well done. Deity has messed another chance of a much needed advertisement.

Naturally, the clergy "did themselves well" on the Day of Prayer. They were everywhere, and a stranger from another planet might have got the impression that they believed their flummery would have some effect on the progress of the War. Everyone knows it will have no such result, and none know it better than the majority of the clergy. These are no more deceived by the performance than a professional conjurer is deceived by his own tricks. Perhaps the whole thing was a bit of camouflage, to lead people to believe that the clergy were exempted from national service because they were engaged in work of real national importance.

An association of "One Man Business Proprietors" has been formed. "General" Booth should be interested in this.

Miss Louisa Jenkins died in Cowbridge Baptist Church, South Wales, during a service. There is not even a small moral to be drawn from this event.

"Every great man has something of the Biblical seer and prophet in him," declares the oracular *Daily Chronicle*. Great Ezekiel!

If a parson looks over the rectory wall he is reckoned to have courage. "It is rather brave of Dr. Gore to be going to America again," says the *Daily News*.

A Bishop has been brave enough to occupy a Nonconformist pulpit, and the dutiful *Daily News* calls it "an event of far-reaching importance." Such language is more suited to a parish magazine than a daily paper.

According to the Bishop of Kensington, girls show an increasing disinclination to submit to authority, and he regards this as "a grave matter."—We quite agree. In the long run it means the funeral of the Christian religion.

"There are too many trashy novels about." That's what the Bishop of London says. No doubt he finds them dangerous competitors to the Bible, which is the trashiest concoction of fiction in the world.

Owing to ill-health, Dr. Jayne, Bishop of Chester, is about to resign. This will flutter the ecclesiastical doves, for the bishopric is worth £4,200 annually. Dr. Jayne has held the bishopric for thirty years. It was, therefore, unkind of a big London newspaper to refer to the retiring ecclesiastic as "Dr. Joynes."

Mr. H. G. Farmer, writing from Ayr, says:—

According to the daily press, the Royal Air Force have adopted a patron saint in St. Michael, and the figure of this celestial commander of Jahveh's aerial forces actually appears as a crest on the notepaper of the R.A.F. Personally, I think this is a slight upon the terrestrials, when we can boast of such aerial heroes as Elisha and Jesus Christ, and I am sure that the former, in his fiery chariot, would make an excellent design for a crest. Of course, there may be some scoffing Freethinkers who may say that they do not believe in this "bunkum," and suggest that if the R.A.F. really needed a patron, they might have adopted Montgolfier, the *Atheist*, who was the first real aviator. At any rate, Mr. Editor, you will surely allow that I have some claim to speak with authority, seeing the place I write from.

"Two hopeless and irremediable bachelors," said the Lord Mayor, introducing the Bishop of London and Father Vaughan to a Mansion House meeting. That is more polite than the continental jest that mankind is divided into men, women, and priests.

A lady writer in a London daily paper suggests that men are really the "weaker sex." Maybe the lady judges from seeing athletic young clergymen handing around tea and cakes at garden parties.

The late Mr. Percy Clarke, one of the proprietors of the *Christian World*, left estate of the value of £6,305. Let us hope that he experienced less trouble in entering heaven than the camel in passing through the eye of a needle.

The bitter gibe, "'How these Christians love one another' still retains its sting," says Sir Kingsley Wood.

Satan is supposed to be the patron saint of lawyers, but his name is not often heard in law courts now. An exception occurred the other day when Mr. Patrick Hastings, K.C., complained to Judge Dickens at the Old Bailey, "I am between the Devil and the deep sea, my lord." "In that case stick to the Devil," replied the Judge.

According to a daily paper, a number of policewomen, equipped with shields, revolvers, and handcuffs, are to be added to the New York police force. It looks as if the civilizing influence of Christianity requires the assistance of the mailed fist.

The Bishop of Lichfield has been operated on for appendicitis. Not even bishops think of relying upon prayer nowadays.

It is suggested that Anglicans and the Fancy Religionists should combine in united services in parks and open places. Adversity makes strange companionship.

For having hoarded large quantities of sugar and cheese, the Rev. E. M. Madoc, vicar of Mattishall, Norfolk, has been fined £20 and costs. The civilizing effect of the Christian religion is not very apparent in this case of a man hoarding food when his fellow-citizens were threatened with famine.

A writer in the dear *Daily News* says: "the heart of the feminist does not leap when she imagines the old ladies in bombazine who would knit their socks beside Sir Frederick Banbury." It would not be a greater nightmare than the sight of the hard-faced bishops wearing expensive petticoats in the House of Lords.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling declares that "the Devil is very much alive." The dear clergy will be duly grateful for this testimonial.

Dr. Fort Newton, of the City Temple, London, declares the "blessed English people are the poorest advertisers on earth." This should bring blushes to the faces of "God's own Englishmen."

Owing to the so-called "influenza" epidemic Sunday-schools have been closed in many districts. Another testimonial to the value of prayer.

The Bishop of Manchester declares that "the Church of England is half-Wesleyanized." Indeed! Is the other half Catholic?

The President of the National Free Church Council will spend a week in August with the Grand Fleet and conduct services. A very pleasant season for open-air evangelical work.

Dr. Truby King, of New Zealand, declares that only fifty per cent. of men are fit for parenthood, and only seventy-five per cent. of women were fit for motherhood. What a criticism of Christian civilization!

To Correspondents.

T. FOWLER.—Thanks. Shall hope to see you in Coventry during the autumn.

W. CUMMING.—We are obliged for cuttings. Our time has been so fully occupied this week that we are holding over several for use in next issue.

J. R.—Mr. Cohen's *Christianity and the Slave Trade* will be issued, we expect, about the end of August. It depends upon how soon it is delivered from the binders.

F. C. HOLDEN.—We should be quite willing to give a hand if asked to do so, busy as we are in other directions. We quite appreciate your feelings in the matter.

"M. A."—Shall be pleased to receive and consider article, but please note that it should not exceed two columns. Pressure on our restricted space causes us to reject many articles solely on account of length.

LAWRENCE WILLIAMS.—We have many new developments in contemplation, but it is useless describing them publicly until such time as circumstances make them practicable. These include your own suggestion, which we regard as an important one.

W. FITZPATRICK.—Too late this week, through holidays. Will be noted in our next.

FRANCES DUNNE.—Sorry we cannot send you copies of the *Freethinker* for July 28. That number is quite out of print.

"KERIDON."—Received. As early as possible.

R. B.—Bank Holiday prevented our getting your letter in time for this issue.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "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.

Mr. Cohen has arranged to visit Aberdare, South Wales, on September 15, where it is hoped to form a new Branch of the N. S. S. Aberdare is quite close to Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, and Merthyr Tydfil. We have many readers in these places, and if halls could be obtained, Mr. Cohen would visit two of these towns on September 14 and 16. In that case, he would be obliged if friends would communicate with him as early as possible.

We should be greatly obliged if all those who have followed our advice as to writing their Parliamentary representative on the subject of Secular Education would let us know the nature of the replies received. We want a complete list, and we should like someone in every constituency to take the matter up. The political parties are all quietly getting ready for a general election, so are the churches and chapels. We see no reason why Freethinkers should not also be prepared to bring their case before the general public. At the proper moment we hope to make suggestions as to the methods we consider likely to be effective.

Will unattached Freethinkers in Glasgow and neighbourhood, who are willing to co-operate in any way in the promotion of Freethought, be good enough to communicate with

the Secretary of the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S., Mr. F. Lonsdale, 256 Calder Street, Govanhill, Glasgow. There must be hundreds of unattached Freethinkers in Glasgow, and we ask them to seriously consider whether it is not time to definitely associate themselves with a Society which represents the principles in which they believe.

We are asked to announce that a discussion will take place on Parliament Hill Fields to-day (August 11) at 3.15 between Mr. Muir, of the Christian Evidence Society, and Mr. T. F. Palmer. We cannot announce subject, as no title has been supplied.

One-third of this year's Civil List grants were devoted to the widows of scientists. No wonder Huxley said "Science does everything but—pay."

The Editor has been more than usually pressed for time this week, and a number of letters, paragraphs, etc., have to stand over until our next issue. This explanation will, doubt, ensure forgiveness.

Christianity and Dirt.

DR. LYTTTELTON'S REJOINER.

SIR,—Allow me to thank you sincerely for the tone of your comments on my letter. In this chequered world—I take it we agree on that adjective—it is a real aid to living if one comes unexpectedly on a new fellow-seeker after the priceless treasure which we call Truth. Even if, when he announces a fresh find, or gives his opinion on one's own recent acquisition, some of his words startle, or disappoint, or even annoy, there is something bracing about the tone in what he says; it encourages one to hope that some of one's own utterances may appeal to him in the same way. That is to say, that they may give him the impression that, if he listens, his mental horizon is not being narrowed, but enlarged; that being the impression I received on reading your notes in the August 4 issue.

The fact is, the joint pursuit of truth teaches many most cheering paradoxes: among them, that the more truth I find, the larger at once becomes *your* share; because dividing this treasure with a true partner means keeping more for oneself. For we are not poaching independently, but discovering as partners; so that my wish for your success, if genuine, is thoroughly selfish, at the same time as it is thoroughly unselfish.

Remembering, then, that I must try to be brief, yet that it is possible to be both brief and tedious, I must forgo the pleasure of dwelling upon more than one or two of your comments: our object being to get speedily down to the great subject which demands our attention.

Two points only, your view is (1) that the dirty habits in vogue in the early centuries were in consequence of a preaching of asceticism; (2) that it is irrelevant to bring in the last 150 years.

(1) I agree that dirt was preached and practised as asceticism; and by religious people. But what we want to get at is this: Was that preaching an essential part of the Christian religion? or, on the other hand, was it preached by those who were not Christians? To answer this we must notice, first, what asceticism is. The word is Greek, and the Greeks, especially the Spartans, practised it. It originally meant simply bodily training; then such bodily training as involves voluntary hardship; and for a time such hardship took the form of dirt. But neither the word nor the thing has any necessary connection with dirt. There is a great deal of asceticism which requires cleanliness; and we need not attach any more recondite meaning to the word than that of training (by exercise), in order to produce phy-

sical efficiency—widely interpreted. I believe it would be true to say that no one ever really thought that dirt conduced to physical efficiency, except some tramps and the like, who find blocking the pores of the skin keeps out cold. Dirt, as Mr. Gladstone used to say, is a form of self-indulgence, and it attached itself like a parasite to asceticism, which in turn, and for a much longer time, became part of Christianity, and has sometimes been thought to be of its essence.

I must not give evidence, but would refer your readers to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, whence they will ascertain another interesting fact. Asceticism has been almost universal among every nation except the Jews. The Jews practised fasting, not as bodily training, but as a form of worship, connected with certain seasons. But into the young Christian Church Greek ideas quickly were infused, so that you find quite early the two ideas blended under the word "fasting." But that is a very different thing from dirt. I am not an historian, but I venture to assert that dirt has been held to be an essential part of asceticism only for limited periods, and adventitiously. It is no more an essence of asceticism than wearing long hair is of a poet; and notice that if all poets for three centuries should wear long hair, that would not show that the practice is of the essence of *poetry*, though it may be universal among poets. The bearing of this will soon be evident.

(2) Therefore, we must, as Coleridge said, discriminate without dividing. Christianity, Asceticism, and Dirt are three things, and have never been one, or two, though they have been temporarily connected. It brought in the last 150 years as good evidence that between the first and the third there is no *necessary* connection; because you will probably allow that the two great movements during those years, described as the Evangelical and the Oxford movements respectively, were Christian movements, and, *taken together*, were very broadly and deeply Christian. My contention then is, that if there were any necessary connection between Christianity and Dirt we should have seen it exhibited in the light of day during the 150 years among the followers of Wesley, Simeon, Keble, and Newman. But we could not see this because it never happened; nor anything like it. Possibly you may remember that Newman wrote a lovely little poem in a young lady's album, in which he said it was her duty to look nice. There was no Dirt in that teaching, and only a very little of the loftiest Asceticism.

Now, this is all very interesting, but of no great importance till we come to weigh your remark that I am trying to save Christianity at the expense of Christians, that is, by defending the doctrines while admitting the badness of the practice. This is just one of those criticisms which are really valuable and clear the air. Is every creed, or any creed, justly, that is truly, condemned because an undefined number of its votaries have played the fool? I think the instance I gave a fortnight ago about Radicalism requires an answer. Here is another. I once met a young lout in Shoreditch who told me, with some appearance of conviction, that he had gone in for fornication because he knew it was the will of God that he should learn the difference between right and wrong. Now, that was a case of justifying self-indulgence under a plea of religion. I thought at the time, and have continued to think, that the plea was pure bosh. It reminded me of a close parallel. There were doctors forty years ago, and I am told there are still some to be found, who will tell a young man that fornication is necessary for his bodily health. That is the teaching given by men (whom I am inclined to call criminals) closely connecting moral dirt and medical science. But

we don't believe any science is anything but hostile to any form of dirt; and if the whole medical profession were to unite in preaching the above lie, you know, sir, neither you nor I would lower our ideas of science because of all the sorry cant. No; no more than I lowered my idea of religion because of that poor sniveller in Shoreditch, or of any other snivellers, though clean in person, found further westward and elsewhere. A big ship is a glorious thing when launched, after some buffeting of the waves it is found to have a mass of incrustations round the keel; they take a long time to get off, and stick mighty close; but no one believes them to be part of the ship, or imputes them to the muddleheadedness of the builder, or even of the owner.

So what history teaches seems to me to be plainly this: Asceticism (a noble thing but easily spoilt) came into the Church from heathen sources—not through Christ's teaching or example, nor through Judaism. Before long it got mixed up with dirt, which, at different times, has had attractions for all kinds of people whether Christians or not. But whenever there has been a real revival of Christianity it has involved asceticism more or less severe, and dirt sometimes came in as the spirit languished; but during the last century and a half the vigorous revival of Christianity has been only slightly mixed with asceticism, and quite free from dirt; indeed, it has been contemporaneous with astonishing progress in cleanliness, sanitation, and the like. If this is nonsense, I should be really grateful to have it pointed out.

Next time shall we discuss why Christianity—according to its defenders—has been so often misunderstood and corrupted, and has done so little good?

E. LYTTTELTON.

Another Scientist's Profession of Faith.

III.

(Concluded from p. 418.)

THE doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ he dismisses as "a myth," and declares it to be responsible for the teaching of the Church that motherhood is inferior to perpetual virginity; a dogma, he says, that "has wrought incalculable harm to the human race."

The doctrine of the Atonement—that Christ was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind—also shares the fate of the Holy Communion and the rite of Baptism, Professor Thompson declaring that: "Those who—like the Salvation Army—represent that the salvation of mankind depended on the shedding of the blood of Jesus, are simply declaring that which is not true" (p. 159). "Why, then, did Jesus die?" he asks; and replies: "Not to convert God from a state of anger to a state of forgiveness; although that amazing doctrine is still the teaching of the Anglican Church," as laid down in Article 11 of the Articles of Religion. "Think of the astounding utterance of a Protestant divine," says the Professor, quoting from *The Doctrines of Grace* (p. 111), by Dr. Watson, "who declared that 'The sins of the human race gathered in one huge penalty and a cloud of guilt upon the head of Jesus Christ.' What a conception this implies of the character of the All-Father. A wrathful demon who hates His children, and will only be appeased by making the innocent suffer for the guilty—that is the being presented to us in place of a God of love and justice" (pp. 98-99).

Professor Thompson also makes a clean sweep of the miraculous, declaring that "It is impossible in

the twentieth century to build a religion upon miracles."

In what, then, it may be asked, does Professor Thompson believe? What does his *A Not Impossible Religion* consist of?

It consists of belief in a God, of whom no definition or description is given. Of a future life also undefined. And veneration of Jesus, not as a God or a supernatural being, but a great religious and moral teacher.

And what proofs does Professor Thompson bring forward in support of his *Not Impossible Religion*? From science—none whatever. His proof was not drawn from the science of which he was a master, or from Nature. He well knew that such proof does not exist. His proof was the same as that offered by Methodist or Salvationist—neither more nor less. The proof is inward and spiritual. He says:—

To him who possesses the spiritual perception the facts are as real as eyesight is to the man who can see.He possesses something that they have not, and which, possibly by analogy, they cannot understand.¹

If that is the case, how is it that every person does not possess this inner conviction? Competent travellers and men who have lived among savages tell us of numerous tribes who have no idea of God whatever. Buddhism, which counts a larger number of adherents than Christianity, has no God. Confucianism teaches nothing about God, and many good authorities contend that Confucianism is not a religion but a philosophy. Even among the nations, nominally classed as Christian, there are many unbelievers. In France there are many millions, the State itself has severed all connection with religion, and England is following fast in her footsteps. Therefore, Professor Thompson's statement that: "The instinct of religion is then innate, as natural as the instinct of hunger, or of self-preservation, or of sex" (p. 15), is diametrically opposed to the facts. And if it were not for the fact that children have these religious ideas implanted in their minds, before their reasoning powers have been developed, there would be no instinct for religion. In another part of his book Professor Thompson admits as much. He says:—

Most of us, without being conscious of it, grow up in a set of religious ideas and beliefs simply as the result of our environment from birth. We grow up in a certain spiritual atmosphere, and breathe it in as a part of our national and racial inheritance. The outward religion of men is at least largely determined by that of the nation into which they are born; and they adopt it more or less unconsciously without discussion or deliberation. Very few men, in all probability, set themselves in any calm philosophic mood to consider whether they shall choose for themselves a religion, or having so far decided that they will adopt a religion, proceed to investigate what sort of religion they will choose. To the great mass the choice of a religion does not come about in that way: it is made not with scientific deliberation but under stress of emotion.²

That is what Freethinkers have always contended, a man's religion is merely a matter of geography. If he is a native of India, China, or Turkey, he will believe in one of the Asiatic religions—and according to many good Christians be consigned to Hell. If he is born among a tribe without religious ideas he will have no religion.

That Professor Thompson's religion was the result of his emotions, and had nothing to do with science we have his own admission. He says if we "admit that the intense convictions that drive men to decisions in matters of religion lie in the province of emotion rather than in that of thought, we are but accepting as axio-

matic that which experience and history, at least, in a majority of cases, affirm" (p. 162). Really, the Professor has no ground for his contemptuous references to the Salvationist, for his religious belief has no firmer foundation. Both have their origin in emotion.

We do not think the Church will advertise this book, containing, as it does, a demand to abolish bishops, priests, and clergy, but Professor Thompson's name will come in handy when religious apologists are compiling those lists of religious scientists, which are so fashionable now, on the same principle worked by the great Barnum, who, when the newspapers attacked his show, had some advertisements printed giving a glowing account of "The Greatest Show on Earth," and finishing up in large type: "See Daily Press." They will use his name trusting to the public's ignorance of his book.

W. MANN.

Presbyterian Piffle.

A RECENT number of the *Presbyterian Messenger*, a monthly organ dealing with Presbyterian Church of England matters, contains a survey of the 1918 annual meeting of the Synod of that Church. The report itself is somewhat discursive, and from it one can hardly tell whether the church "elders" are satisfied with the little world they live in or not. Generally, the tone is strongly akin to that of a peevish, disappointed child whose past desires were nowhere near realized in the present, but who looks forward with the somewhat indefinite idea of "better luck next time."

It contains enough evidence, however, on which judgment can be passed regarding the level of mental development attained by the leading lights of this particular Christian sect. It is hardly surprising that this level is not of the highest, for one of the speakers declared that "the best brains were not now in the ministry." The remark was challenged, of course; but it is good to know that the truth will out in the most unexpected places.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that these Presbyterian beacons are at their wits' end what to do to stem the tide of spiritual apathy now permeating not only their own ranks, but those of all other religious bodies. They lament that "there was no clear sign of religious revival," and perhaps it is for this reason that they have at last overcome their religious fanaticism and confessed that they will "never make England Presbyterian." They consider, however, that they stand a fairly good chance with China; though the Almighty has done them a very "unkind cut" in that he has allowed one of his noble earthquakes in that region to smite them sorely in various unpleasant ways—but mostly diabolical. They will, or ought, to find comfort in the text that "God is no respecter of persons"; and, it may be added, of religious sects either. Anyhow they badly want £10,000 to rebuild his vineyard, which he himself has so wantonly destroyed. Yet, for some inscrutable reason (which, no doubt, deep students of psychology will be able to understand), after rehearsing the sickening facts of the catastrophe, they "appealed for a worthy response to the call, which by this 'Act of God' was addressed to us. A worthy response would be the prelude to fuller blessing."

Then as God's presence shook the earth
Then drops from heaven fell.

The italics are in the original. One would have imagined that the object of this earthquake address was plain enough; *i.e.*, to clear out of China altogether. But "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to per-

¹ Sylvanus Thompson, *A Not Impossible Religion*, p. 64.

² Sylvanus Thompson, *A Not Impossible Religion*, p. 166.

form"; so perhaps the "fuller blessing" alluded to is the utter extermination of them all "by drops (brick-drops) from heaven falling."

Amen; and amen again.

Presbyterians have also their own interpretation of "spiritual" values. They do not agree that other Churches have exactly the right brand, for they contend that "man was naturally Presbyterian." To be sure! Moreover, "in the Presbyterian conception of worship the preaching of the word occupies a central place"; which, being translated, means *their* particular interpretation of the Grand Old Book of myths. Anyway, some few of them seem to consider that they might get along passably well with other sects. Others, on the other hand, don't think so. So the position is that "the house was somewhat sharply divided"; and whilst they may be more or less willing to federate, they strongly demand that no outsiders shall interfere with their particular methods of propagating the Gospel of Christian love and unity. For instance, they insisted that "the object in view was federation, not union," and that they do not intend to "give away the principle of ordination, or anything else that Presbyterians hold dear." Note the decisiveness of "or anything else": the contents of the collection plate—or bag—for instance. Anyway, the finale was that "All reference to 'the principle of Federation' was dropped." They are going to wait another year. In the meantime, Christ's vineyard may be growing thistles; simultaneously, the ravages of the wireworm will require the most earnest week-end attention of an ever-increasing number of Presbyterian allotment holders.

That their spiritual troubles are keen is evident, for they "could not allow the influence of these happy days to hide from us that all was not well with the Church in our land: statistics showed that Christianity in this country was not in possession." No wonder the Moderator "asked all the brethren for their forbearance, sympathy, and prayers during his year of office." He will need it all, every scrap; especially as, like everything else, the output will be somewhat restricted owing to exigencies of the War.

"Z."

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

RELIGION OF SOLDIERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—An incident that occurred at a large convalescent depot in France last August in reading the correspondence on "Religion of Soldiers" I thought may form a criticism of how the average soldier regards it all. At the Y.M.C.A. at this depot a debate was held on "Is Religion Essential to the Welfare of Nations?" The affirmative position was upheld by an ex-journalist, the negative by an ex-London postman, a clergyman being the chairman. What was said on both sides will not concern you, but this was the result of the voting taken from an audience of between two to three hundred soldiers of the British Empire. Only about twenty voted for it, and about half-a-dozen against it, the rest remaining indifferent. From my own experience out here the voting represented just about the average religion of Tommy. Other examples that I have first hand knowledge of is, at the Church of England compulsory parades, both in England and France, while these parades usually mean 50 per cent. of the unit, at voluntary Holy Communion immediately after not 1 per cent. is the usual attendance, and in the voluntary services held in the evening about five per cent. is the average. As for soldiers praying at bed-side and prayers in the trenches, under the most terrible of bombardment, well, it has never been my lot to see, so I am forced to come to this conclusion that religion in the army is what we call "A Wash Out."

GEORGE H. HOBBS (France).

SIR,—*Re* Mr. Comley's letter (*Freethinker*, June 23), I also feel constrained to give a direct denial to his claims. I've a fair experience of Army life, at home, in France, Belgium, Dardanelles, and Egypt; in the line hospital, back areas, and convalescent camps. Nowhere have I met any great desire for religion in any shape. To the contrary, these services are so popular that everywhere I have found efforts to avoid them.

On several occasions it has been my duty to warn men to attend voluntary service, to make up a number.

The Vicar of Ampthill refused to have compulsory Church Parade in his church (all honour to him). Volunteers were few. As a result, we had a compulsory parade, and attended at the church hut in an infantry camp near.

At Haynes Park Camp, the chaplain held voluntary services only. His were the strongest I've seen, although a count showed less than an eighth of the camp strength attending. And this was in January, 1916, when the huts were unwarmed, and there was nowhere to go. The Soldiers' Home in Alexandria was crowded any evening. The lady helper personally touted for her Bible class with little luck. A class of a dozen made her beam.

I left hospital a few weeks ago, and am now in a convalescent camp. While at hospital, the leader of the Y.M.C.A. hut publicly denounced the practice of men leaving the hut when he announced ten minutes' prayer. "I cannot understand how men who have just recovered by the help of God (no mention of the medical services) will not spare a few minutes to ask help for their less fortunate comrades still lying on a bed of pain and sickness. Perhaps this is only thoughtlessness," etc. It wasn't, as his words had no apparent effect.

At this camp we are well catered for by the Y.M.C.A., Church Army, Salvation Army, Scottish Churches, Catholic, and Christian Soldiers' Association huts. The bait (library, paper, games, and bar) is freely taken, but few appear to be trapped.

The Y.M.C.A. cinema has its crowd waiting every night; its prayer-room caters for an average congregation of twenty. The Christian Soldiers average forty an evening service; the Salvation Army about the same number. As several of these congregations go from one to another, the average is even lower. I have counted them myself, evening after evening. As these are in a camp of several thousand beds, even Mr. Comley can hardly claim them as a large average Sunday services are better attended—but then pay-day is Monday.

ANOTHER CORP. (B.E.F., France).

ATHEISM, ANARCHISM, AND ACCURACY.

SIR,—In his able letter to the *Freethinker* of July 28, Mr J. Effel takes me to task for making the statement in my conversations with "Uncle Joe" "that 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 our magistrates, but our police constables also, and this would inevitably lead to the villain riding roughshod over the virtuous, and to the masses being left a prey to revolution and anarchy."

Mr. Effel makes a protest against what he says is a "too common misrepresentation of Anarchism," and against the inference that armies, judges, policemen, etc., exist to prevent roughshod villainy. Well, with regard to the use of the word *anarchy*, it is quite possible I might have used a more appropriate expression if I had said that the people would have been left "a prey to lawlessness and disorder." But Mr. Effel should remember that I merely represent "Uncle Joe" as a conventional sort of Christian, who uses and understands only the ordinary language of everyday life. And a reference to a standard dictionary like Webster gives the definition of anarchy as "a want of government in society, lawlessness and confusion"; and that really conveys roughly what I had in my mind at the time of writing. I am well aware that a Philosophical Anarchist may be a highly cultivated person, with a scientific order of mind, as I know from having heard Prince Kropotkin lecture on the subject. But I was not dealing with Philosophical Anarchism, nor with the fine theory that a man can, by the proper cultivation of his intellectual and moral qualities, become "a law unto

himself," and need neither government, nor law, nor judges, nor police, to guide or regulate him in his conduct in daily life. In fact, I was merely talking as a man who lives in the world as we know it to-day, with the masses of people still very badly educated, despite the operation of a compulsory Education Act for over forty years; with thousands of children ill-treated by their parents, as the appalling figures of the Annual Report of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Women and Children reveals; our county courts still glutted with business, in which defendants attempt to evade the payment of their legal debts; our police courts occupied with thousands of cases of drunkenness, larceny, and felony; our law courts still occupied with cases of divorce and cruelty; and our criminal courts engaged in the trial of cases of more serious offences, such as robbery with violence, fraud and forgery, manslaughter and murder. All this takes place in a country where tens of thousands of officials of various kinds are employed for the purpose of discovering the offenders and bringing them to justice. Was I not right, then, when I said that if Christians followed out the doctrine of non-resistance to its logical conclusion, it would lead to the villain having the upper hand; for all restraints upon villainy would be removed, and the masses, being without the protection of the police and the magistrate, the judge, and the Army and the Navy, would be left a prey to every form of lawlessness and disorder?

But I used the word "Anarchy," and that, in Mr. Effel's mind, is the "head and front of my offending." Mr. Effel will not deny that I was right in the use of the word according to the ordinary English dictionary meaning of the term, either Webster, Walker, Nuttall, or any other. But his contention, I take it, is that as the ordinary dictionary definition of "Atheist," as "one who denies the existence of God," is wrong, so also is the definition of "Anarchy," "as a want of government in society, or lawlessness and confusion." If that is so, we must have fresh definitions of important words as they undergo transitions in their meanings in the minds of thinkers; and the dictionaries of the future must be compiled by philosophers who understand all the varying phases of thought of every class of thinker. With regard to Mr. Effel's statement that—

Mr. Moss, I feel sure, would think that we were more highly civilized, if we were completely without priests, Churches, and all their socially wasteful and useless ceremonies, ye he has not outgrown reverence for the judge with his wig and his wisdom, and for the policeman (guardian of virtue, and professional enemy of villainy), the justice of courts, and the belief that society could not exist without these repressive institutions.

At present I am only dealing with life as I know it, and I can say this confidently, that the masses of the people have more completely outgrown the superstition of the priests and the ceremonies of the Church than they have a belief in the wisdom of our judges in the interpretation of the law or the efficacy, of the police in safeguarding their liberties, the soldier and the sailor in upholding the stability of the State as an organized human institution.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

MODERN CLERGY.

Crabbe, descanting "on the so-called Christian Clerus," has this wild passage: "Legions of them, in their black or other gowns, I still meet in every country; masquerading in strange costume of body, and still stranger of soul; mumming, primming, grimacing—poor devils, shamming, and endeavouring not to sham: that is the sad fact. Brave men many of them, after their sort; and in a position which we may admit to be wonderful and dreadful! On the outside of their heads some singular headgear, tulip, mitre, felt coalscuttle, purple hat; and in the inside,—I must say, such a Theory of God Almighty's Universe as I, for my share, am right thankful to have no concern with at all! I think, on the whole, as broken-winged, self-strangled, monstrous a mass of incoherent incredibilities, as ever dwelt in the human brain before. O God, giver of Light, hater of darkness, of Hypocrisy and Cowardice, how long, how long!"—Carlyle, "Latter-Day Pamphlets."

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. E. Burke, A Lecture.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Debate between Mr. T. F. Palmer, N. S. S., and Mr. Percy Muir, C. E. S.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 6, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "A Plea for Atheism"; Mr. R. Norman, "The Tragic Comedy of War—August 4, 1918."

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. Shaller, A Lecture.

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