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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Atheism.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	445
"Our Holy Mother Church."— <i>J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	446
<i>The Wittiest Book in the World.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	447
<i>Christianity and Cleanliness.—E. Lyttelton</i> - - - - -	448
<i>On Cessnock Banks.—A. Millar</i> - - - - -	449
<i>A Search for the Soul.—Abracadabra</i> - - - - -	452
<i>Religious Instruction in Scotland.—Freethinker</i> - - - - -	453
<i>The Dark Diamonds of the Earth.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - - -	453
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Atheism.

It is a safe game to misrepresent Atheism. Comparatively speaking, it has few friends, and it is blessed with a large number of active enemies. Hardly one in a hundred of its enemies are scrupulous in finding out what Atheism really is, and the remaining ninety-nine are only too anxious to discover occasions for misrepresentations. And these are not easily removed. There is seldom opportunity given to correct them in the places where they occur; a paper such as the *Freethinker* is the only channel of correction open, and this reaches but few of those who read the original misrepresentation. It is, thus, a safe game. It is also a cowardly game. To misstate an opinion that enjoys popular favour is wrong; but the wrong is soon righted, and one runs the risk of exposure. But there is no risk in misstating Atheism. You may deny it every decent quality, endow it with the capacity for producing every conceivable vice, and make it as mentally stupid as it is made morally obnoxious. The overwhelming majority of those who read will either agree with it as a statement of fact, or feel that Atheism deserves all that has been said. That is why it is a cowardly game. A sense of chivalry might lead one to refrain from throwing a brick at an unpopular opinion. A nice sense of honour would insist upon careful examination before attack. But where religion is concerned honour and chivalry rarely count.

* * *

The Myth of a Religious "Faculty."

This is not an appeal *ad misericordiam*. We are not asking that people should not attack Atheism, or suggesting that it cannot survive misrepresentation. Atheism has always been subject to both, and has survived them. It has more than survived; it has grown. Its position to-day is not reminiscent of past greatness; it is pregnant with the possibilities of assured growth. We are writing solely in view of the common religious plea that the Atheist is what he is, because he is lacking in some religious "faculty," or deficient in a religious "sentiment" possessed by the pious. And that is pure myth. There is no such thing as a religious "faculty." There is no such thing as a religious sentiment, or even religious feelings. Wonder and awe and veneration and faith and belief are not religious qualities, they never were religious qualities, and they can never become so. They may be exercised

in connection with religion, but so may love and hatred and cruelty and kindness and cleverness and stupidity. Human qualities are human qualities, and their nature is quite unaffected by the object in connection with which they find expression. A sunrise on the Alps, or a storm at sea, may awaken all the veneration and awe that a mystically drunken godite feels in the contemplation of the character of his incomprehensible deity. Religion does not initiate a single feeling, it does not absolutely control a single feeling. It only utilizes feelings developed apart altogether from religion.

* * *

The Nature of Religion.

There is no religious sentiment, there is only a religious idea. And even that has not become an "element of our nature." There is a religious idea because, as one writer remarks, "Surrounded by the forces of nature which he could neither comprehend nor control," natural forces "became for uncritical man superior animate beings whom he endowed with qualities like his own, whose favour was to be courted and whose wrath appeased." It is this idea, born of primitive ignorance, that is perpetuated by primitive fear and subsequent cunning. It has persisted through the ages, but even as an idea it has not become an element of our nature—ideas never do become that. What has happened is that it has become a permanent factor—up to the present—in the social environment. It is there when each newcomer arrives, and each newcomer is taught to express his feelings in a form consonant with the religious idea. The perpetuation of religion is a phenomenon of social heredity. So is the phenomenon of loyalty to a king. And one might, with just as much scientific warranty, when he sees a crowd cheering the passage of the king, say that loyalty to the king has become an element of human nature, and that cosmic evolution had as one of its supreme objects the creation of a feeling of devotion to George the Fifth. It is the social environment that perpetuates the religious idea, and it is the gradual weakening of the religious idea that is steadily bringing about such a modification of the environment as makes Atheism practically inevitable.

* * *

"Hath Not a Jew Eyes?"

The difference between the Atheist and the Christian is, so to speak, not one of matter, but of form. They both get pleased or angry, they both laugh or cry, they both have faith—of a kind—belief, reverence for greatness in human nature, and a feeling of awe in face of natural phenomena. The Atheist differs from the Theist in no quality of mind or body; the difference lies in the way in which the nature of each is expressed. Belief is not a consequence of inability of the intellect to find natural causes; it is rather a degree of knowledge that falls short of absolute certitude. And it is common to both Theist and Atheist. The difference, again, lies in the object of belief. The Theist posits a God as the cause of natural happenings. The Atheist declines to use such a synonym for ignorance, and prefers to believe

that, as natural causes have explained all the phenomena, the conditions of which we know, the same will be found true of phenomena whose conditions are unknown. Of course, it is flattering to the vanity of the believer in God to assume that the Atheist is one whose finer qualities and perceptions are either undeveloped or atrophied. It enables any Bible-banging, microcephalous local preacher to feel exalted without undergoing the toil and discipline of becoming genuinely so. In moments of compassion they will pity the poor Atheist, and, when specially sympathetic, will condole with him on his spiritual blindness. But there is really nothing in it. The Atheist laughs at both the pity and the condolence. It is not worth while being angry. He knows that the belief in God is not a frame of mind that people grow toward; it is a frame of mind they outgrow. The Atheist knows this, because he has been there. He sees in a believer a picture of himself in an earlier and less complete state of development. The sympathy of the believer with the Atheist is that of the blind man for the one who is put to the trouble of wearing spectacles. The Atheist has lost nothing of his human qualities in growing out of them. He has merely learned to look at things with a clearer and truer gaze, and face facts with a courage born of undimmed vision.

* * *

Who are the Materialists?

Of course, there is the cant about the Atheist's neglect of "spiritual" matters. But unless "spiritual" is used as a synonym for "supernatural," it is pure camouflage. If we may use the word without being misunderstood, the Atheist is more concerned with spiritual matters than is the Theist. His whole life is devoted to an idea. He cannot hope to gain the material for "animal pleasures" by professing Atheism. If he thought that, he would be too stupid to ever leave church or chapel. He is daily made aware of paying some price for the rejection of religion, and if Atheism were of no other value to the world than this, the possession of a body of men who place devotion to an idea first, without any possibility of material gain, is a social asset of the greatest possible value. And what the Christian means by "spiritual" matters—that is, supernatural matters—has always tended to the encouragement of a decided, ethical Materialism. It has taught men to estimate the value of truth in terms of material loss and gain. If the personal gain was not here, it was hereafter. And when, as was inevitable, faith in the hereafter began to waver, the same standard was applied to the present life. This is one reason why the most "materialistic" people in the civilized world are Christian. It is one reason why we in this country are so given to measure our greatness in terms of fighting strength or trading returns. A nation is great because it sells or slaughters, or sells *and* slaughters, not because it thinks and lives. And, as a consequence, we see the millionaire idealized and the thinker ignored; the dead plutocrat loaded with columns of an admiring obituary, and the dead philosopher dismissed with a contemptuous sneer. It is also why so many shallow-pated pietists are able to write disparagingly of a frame of mind of which Samuel Taylor Coleridge said not one man in ten thousand had either the strength of mind or goodness of character to possess.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

I remember in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys!—Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a —!

—Robert Burns.

"Our Holy Mother Church."

II.

CHRISTIAN apologists assure us that the fourteenth century was noted for its exceptional advance in learning, culture, and art. The Rev. J. K. Mozley, in his *Achievements of Christianity* (p. 48), asserts that "discoveries and advances in mathematics and mechanical science were made in it which were to be the forerunners of modern teaching." That is true; but Mr. Mozley does not inform us that those discoveries and advances were made in spite of the stubborn opposition of the Church. His statement that "very wide latitude was allowed to thinkers like Duns Scotus and William of Ockham" is utterly false concerning the latter, and not true of the former, who was profoundly orthodox in theology. William of Ockham was a Revolutionist, whose teaching was anathematized by the Pope. He was arraigned at Avignon, and in close custody, for his audacious opinions. He stood in imminent danger of being burned at the stake, a fate that had befallen so many of his brethren. He fled to the court of Louis of Bavaria. Is not Mr. Mozley aware that he was denounced as a heretic and schismatic, and sentenced to deprivation of all privileges and to perpetual imprisonment? But at the Bavarian Court, William could afford to laugh to scorn and defy such idle terrors. It is true, however, that during the fourteenth century, a strong wave of anti-clericalism was moving over Christendom, and that its last decade was darkened by the great Papal Schism. There was a well-nigh universal disposition to ridicule ecclesiastical claims. Even in England the clergy no longer enjoyed their ancient privileges. Their immunity from the civil courts was largely a thing of the past. Archbishop Langham "complained in Parliament that the civil authorities had not scrupled to arrest, indict, even to condemn to public execution clerics and regulars in holy orders." The immunity so ardently believed in and advocated at such terrible cost by Becket in the twelfth century, had thus been surrendered with reluctance, not because the Church's belief in it was weakened, but because it could no longer enforce it. This is how Wilkins puts it:—

The king and the magistrates, on the other hand, complained that when such persons, so found guilty of the most flagitious crimes (such cases seem to have been very common), were given up on demand to their Bishops, they were negligently guarded, and so pampered in prison, that it was a place of comfort and enjoyment rather than of penance. Some were allowed to escape, some discharged on slight evidence. They returned to their old courses, and were of bad example to unoffending clergymen.

In Scotland the anti-papal feeling was stronger still. Pope John XXII. undertook the task of mediating between the two countries; but Robert Bruce would not even receive his letters except on condition that he was addressed by the title of king. It is even stated that Bruce simply laughed at the Pope's excommunication, and that his partisans waylaid and plundered the papal nuncios near Durham.

It is well known that Edward II. was morally worthless, and a deplorably feeble monarch. But he was a loyal son of the Church, and the Pope treated him as if he were a child. Being poor he could not afford to pay the tribute of 1,000 marks to the Vatican, but John told him that not to pay it was an offence against God, for which he would be cast into hell-fire when he died. Milman says that the Pope was on the king's side

simply "in order to secure the tribute of the land, the Peter's Pence, and other convenient emoluments of the See of Rome." Under Edward III. and Richard II. there was a popular reaction against the Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury was charged with high treason. He fled from Lambeth to Canterbury, and at the latter place he had the courage to excommunicate his accusers with bell, book, and candle. On his return to London he sought refuge, cross in hand, in the House of Lords. Here was the Primate of England, the highest dignitary of the English Church, in the hands of the civil power; and when the quarrel was settled he had to accept pardon from, rather than condescendingly to grant it to, the King. Thus the tables were being slowly turned with a vengeance.

Of course, in spirit the Church was as tyrannical and intolerant as ever. John Wycliffe was born, of humble parents, in the year 1327. His ambition was to become a scholar, for which purpose he was admitted into Queen's College, and later removed to Merton. Merton was already famous as the scene of the marvellous logic-grinding displays of Duns Scotus, the celebrated Realist, and chief opponent of Thomas Aquinas, of the remarkable mathematical and scientific studies of Roger Bacon, known on the Continent as the "Wonderful Doctor," and also, probably, of William of Ockham, the great Rationalist of his century; and one is not surprised to find that, educated at an institution with such a history, Wycliffe, too, turned out to be a heretic of the first magnitude. On the retirement of Bradwardine, he was appointed Master of Balliol College. Ere long he published a tract, entitled *The Last Age of the Church*, in which he violently attacked the clergy, the simoniacs, and the holders of rich benefices. Then followed his merciless denunciation of the Mendicant Friars, who swarmed over the whole land. These attacks won popular favour, and even the lower clergy enthusiastically approved of them. But it was the treatise known as *The Kingdom of God*, in which he maintained that the King was as truly God's Vicar as the Pope, and that every man had the right of free and direct access to God, that kindled the Church's ire against Wycliffe. This became the most famous of all his works, because it contained his exposition of the nature and functions of society, his theory of Church and State as two distinct institutions, the one dealing exclusively with spiritualities, the other with temporalities, and his scathing exposure of a mediating priesthood which was the foundation upon which the mediæval Church rested. In fact, his conception of the Church was essentially heretical, and his passionate condemnation of the extortion and tyranny exercised by Rome galled the ecclesiastical authorities to the quick. As a matter of fact, the taxes levied by the Pope were five times higher than those levied by the King. Wycliffe's crime consisted in holding up to ridicule the wicked rapacity of the Church, and he was summoned to answer for it before Bishop Courtenay, of London. He appeared before the tribunal, and by his side stood John of Gaunt and the Earl Marshal. There was an enormous concourse of people, but the heretic's trial did not come off. The Bishop and the two noblemen had a quarrel, in which the crowd took part. A fierce riot ensued, in which a priest was killed. A papal bull was issued against Wycliffe, directing the University to condemn and arrest him. He vigorously defended himself, and succeeded in winning the support both of the people and of the Crown. A few months later he appeared at Lambeth Chapel, in answer to the Archbishop's summons; but here, again, no trial took place. An angry throng overawed the prelates in session, and a message from the Court put a stop to the proceedings. Walsingham, the historian,

indignantly denounced the cowardice of the frightened judges, saying:—

They were as reeds shaken by the wind, became soft as oil in their speech, to the discredit of their own dignity and the degradation of the Church. Panic-stricken they were, as men that hear not, as those in whose mouth is no reproof.

Yes, in spirit the Church of the fourteenth century was as intolerant and believed as firmly in persecution as ever; but in England it lacked the requisite courage to be true to itself because the trend of thought and feeling was antagonistic to it. As time went on, Wycliffe's heresies multiplied until they embraced most of the doctrines of the Church as well as its interference in Secular affairs. Strangely enough, even now the Church was afraid to bring him to trial. When Convocation met at Oxford, Wycliffe was called to answer on but one of all the dogmas he so uncompromisingly rejected, and though on the Eucharist his condemnation was a matter of course, yet no punishment was meted out to him. He was allowed to go quietly into retirement at Lutterworth, where he continued his onslaughts upon the Papacy and all its works. England was on his side because it had lost faith in Mother Church. Mother Church hated him with perfect hatred, but was too timid even to insist upon his imprisonment, well knowing that its supremacy in England was nearing its end.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Wittiest Book in the World.

Of all the intellectual weapons which have ever been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire.
—Macaulay.

THE name of Voltaire has ever been a terror to Christians, and, with the exception of Thomas Paine, none has been more hated, none more reviled. The reason is simple. A very great writer, a master of words, Voltaire attacked Christianity, not in the dry-as-dust fashion of professors writing for a dozen superior folk scattered throughout the world, but with wit and pleasantry which survive the winnowing-fan of time. He made bigots and tyrants appear ridiculous as well as odious, and those who felt the lash of his deadly satire denounced him as a literary Mephistopholes, whose writings all the faithful should avoid as they would a plague.

It is only dull people who associate brilliancy with superficiality, and imagine that, because a man is witty, he must therefore be shallow. Without it is based on seriousness, said Henri Heine, wit is only a sneeze of the reason. The soundness of Voltaire's judgment was only equalled by his felicity of expression. A book might be written on his anticipation of modern thought. He accepted the view of man's savage origin. He derived the belief in ghosts from dreams, and discerned the magical nature of early religion. He anticipated many of the social and political problems of our time. A pioneer among pioneers, he stated the population question before Malthus, and he cleared the way for modern science.

Voltaire was thoroughly equipped for his work. A perfect artist in language, he wrote with that ease with which a bird trills out his song. His versatility, too, was marvellous. "Monsieur Multiform" was his witty name for D'Alembert, and he himself had an equal right to it. In the eighty volumes of his collected works, he has proved his genius as historian, poet, essayist, thinker, humourist, tale-teller, letter-writer, and critic. So strong is his appeal to literary men that Macaulay, one of the

most Catholic of readers and a most acute critic, selected Voltaire's works for his reading on his lengthy sea-voyage to India. A glance at Voltaire's life work proves his unparalleled and untiring industry. Writing *Edipus* at seventeen, *Irene* at eighty-three, he crowded between these two masterpieces the accomplishment of a Titan.

Among Voltaire's works, *Candide* is the most characteristic. Nowhere has he displayed to such advantage the happiest features of his extraordinary genius. It is not only his masterpiece, but the wittiest book in the world. Frankly, the English translations cannot be said to add to Voltaire's charm for anyone who reads French with ease. In the journey from one language to another, so much of the master's sprightliness and piquancy are lost. For, remember, such translations were often entrusted to publishers' hacks, although those astute tradesmen professed to employ "eminent hands."

In this little masterpiece Voltaire brought out all his batteries at once. He faced the foe with that terrible mockery, that bantering jest, and that deadly levity which few could meet and live. It was occasioned by the news of the awful horrors of the dreadful earthquake at Lisbon, in which the greater part of the city was destroyed, and 40,000 of the inhabitants killed. The news roused Voltaire like the blare of many trumpets. Moved as he always was to reproduce his strongest feelings in his writings he wrote *Candide*. This time Voltaire did not argue; he merely exposed. In the searching fire of his irony the comfortable dogmas of the optimists blackened and died, and the "Sunny Jims" were shown forth the laughing-stock of the nations.

Candide's wit is as facetious to-day as when it was written. It still trips and dances on untiring feet. It reads like the fresh and unflagging work of superabundant youth. Yet Voltaire was actually sixty-four when he wrote it—an age when most men are thinking of slippers and ease. The story is, briefly, that of a young man brought up in the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. He meets with a hundred adventures which give it the lie. Life is a bad bargain, but one can make the most of it. That is the moral of *Candide*. "What I know," says the hero, "is that we must cultivate our garden." In the last resort be it noted, Voltaire's philosophy was Secularistic. The book is a mass of seeming extravagance with a deep vein of gold beneath. All flows so smoothly, the reader fancies it was lightly written. Yet when he notices how every stroke of wit adds to the effect, how every light touch tells, he sees that only a most consummate genius could thus dissect a philosophy and amuse men in the process.

Of Voltaire's irony, here is a specimen. When *Candide* was to be punished as a deserter from the Army, we read:—

He was asked which he would like the best, to be whipped six-and-thirty times through all the regiment, or to receive at once twelve bullets in the brain. He vainly said that human will is free, and that he chose neither the one nor the other. He was forced to make a choice; he determined, in virtue of that gift of God called liberty, to run the gauntlet six-and-thirty times.

Voltaire has been dead nearly a century and a half, and still his name is a symbol of liberty. Englishmen owe him more than compliments, for he built himself largely on British Freethought, and wrote good English to the last whenever he would. Protestants never forgive him for exposing the myth of the Pentateuch a century before Colenso forced them to recognize it; and Catholics never forgive him for branding their Church with the infamies recorded under the martyr-names of Calas and Sirven. Thomas Carlyle well says: "He gave

the death-stab to modern superstition." That horrid incubus, which dwelt in darkness, shunning the light, is passing away, with all its racks and poison chalices, and foul sleeping-draughts, is passing away without return. It was a most weighty service.

MIMNERMUS.

Christianity and Cleanliness.

SIR,—Gratefully to acknowledge the benefit which, selfishly I fear, I sought for when I offered to start this discussion, it seemed plain that if we could concentrate on discovering points of agreement under apparent disagreement, we should clear away from the brain some of that fog which Lowell aptly described in speaking of the Germans long before the War. He said the Germans were people "who looked upon fog as an illuminating medium," indicating their habits of cloudy thinking. Your comments, I find, are a help in the arduous and lengthy task of "packing" the clouds away of which we all have a wisp or two in our craniums.

Before passing on from the subject with which we started, and which, of course, we must not try to exhaust, I will just note the points where I fancy some mistiness broods. You question the relevancy of my bringing in the last 150 years on the ground that you never implied there was a *necessary* connection between Christianity and dirt. Of course, I am very glad to be told this; but let us note carefully whither your admission leads us. Granting that a great revival of Christianity was coincident with a revival of cleanliness, you suggest that the change in the habits of Christians may "well be attributed to the influence of those forces that have brought a modification of Christian teaching in other directions," that is to say, external forces, so that no credit for the result is due to Christianity or to Christian teaching. (I should agree that the forces alluded to are generally thought of as external to Christianity, and, perhaps, antagonistic to it; but if they produced so fair a result as a revival of cleanliness, I should say they were the action or message of God himself, whether Christian or not. But this is neither here nor there for the present). Well, ought we not to apply the same principle to the introduction of dirt? Is it fair to attribute a great cleansing of Christian teaching to the power of external forces, so as to debar Christians from all credit or share in the same, and, in the same breath, to assume that the defilement of Christian teaching in earlier centuries *was* due, not to external forces, but to the perversity of Christians themselves. Is this not to fix a responsibility upon them for their wrongheadedness, but to deny it them in respect of their sound thinking? I think we should hold them equally responsible, or irresponsible, for the degraded asceticism of Stylites, or the lofty teaching about the human body given by Wesley, Pusey, Church, or a thousand others. Notice, too, it is especially difficult to acquiesce in your diagnosis when we reflect that if external forces were strong enough to do the healing they were surely strong enough to accomplish the degrading of the Christians. Or, conversely, if Christianity was so receptive to outside influences that it worked its own cleansing—a most difficult and painful process always—how can we suppose that the same receptivity did not account for the introduction of the poison? That, in other words, the poison was alien—not home-grown.

But, if we don't take care, we shall plunge our four feet into the noose which Clio loves to spread about her beguiling pastures. We could dispute eternally about what happened long ago. I come, then, to the question you put in these words: "In a society in which Christianity is only one of many factors, what part has it

played in social life and teaching?" Because this question rests upon a certain assumption to the discussion of which we have been more than once drawing near. The assumption is that if you can prove that certain doctrines seem to have been so preached as to cause mischief you may safely conclude the doctrines are false. (I put in the word "seem" because we must be content with a balance of probabilities. The subject is too great to admit of mathematical evidence).

Perhaps you would demur to the words "safely conclude" and "false," and would prefer "there must be a strong presumption that there is a poisonous or erroneous mixture in those doctrines." That will do equally well. You mean, obviously, that Christianity is to be condemned, and that the above is a main and important reason.

I grant at once that it is exceedingly difficult for any one of us not to condemn a religion if its votaries preach in its name doctrines which subsequently seem to spread discomfort about the earth's surface. So difficult, indeed, that we all of us cease to struggle against the tendency. But if we are right in this, we shall be equally right in applying the same test to other great doctrines not specifically religious. I have already given Radicalism as an instance. Take Patriotism too. When purely taught and faithfully practised, what more beautiful? But lo! along with its loftiest manifestations there is the hideous counterfeit. I don't mean the rascally profiteer, but the man who goes about saying we are fighting for international honour and brotherhood and unselfishness, and so forth, and yet will not even discuss the project of a League of Nations for fear Great Britain will find herself called upon to renounce her exclusive hold on some choice piece of territory. That is his one article of political faith, and all his professions are rank humbug. But that makes no difference to our belief in true Patriotism. Why, then, do we apply a much severer test to religion?

I think I know the reason. It is contained in the old maxim, *Corruptio optimi pessima*. That is to say, as true religion is a higher thing than even pure Patriotism, or disinterested Radicalism, so its degraded counterfeit is the most baneful and abominable thing that can anywhere be hit upon by any pilgrim between the cradle and the grave; and when one of us does hit upon it, he naturally says, "Away with it! Away with everything that helped to give this monstrous thing birth!" That, I take it, is your attitude towards religion generally; and I feel a cordial sympathy with it because I have spent years of my life in acting upon this very principle: in believing in denunciation and abolition and purging, and the like. That belief it was that attracted me to your newspaper in the first instance.

But now I see reason to pause and reflect. Our attitude towards Patriotism and Radicalism is surely sound and sensible. If we justify ourselves for taking a wholly different attitude towards religion by saying—as I suppose we must say—that religion, however pure, is such a mean thing that it must be put out of court in comparison with the others, we are certainly begging the question. We are fairly embarked on a discussion which now comes to this: What is Religion; and, in particular, Christianity? Does it merit more halfpence than kicks, or *vice versa*?

Let me say in passing that technically I beg the question above; but I am sure that it does not vitiate the argument, being only on a side issue, and that we are fairly brought to the point indicated. But before going further I must wait to see if you agree with my statement of our inconsistency of mind, and whether you can produce any better defence of it than I have suggested.

E. LYTTELTON.

On Cessnock Banks.

JULY, 1918.

THE Cessnock is one of Ayrshires' classic streams, and characteristic of them all. It was the scene, as per above title, of one of the less known songs of Burns, and concerning, of course, a maid, and one who had

.....twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

The spirit of Burns breathes in those sylvan river valleys, for is it not the spirit of Nature itself? This spirit is perhaps not so evident in the men of Ayrshire—least of all, perhaps in those pillars of its county State, Church, and Society; the backbone, indeed, but not the *soul*, of Ayr. Oh, no; not yet. Some extreme specimens of this ruling class are quite transcendently, pompously, and piously materialistic; full of satisfied superiority, invulnerable stupidity, and tranquil, imbecile egotism. The writer has sketched them from life, and on the spot and elsewhere, and knows the genus is not peculiar to the Land of Burns. Behold, is it not all written in the (still unread) chronicles of heredity and environment, and resulting psychology!

On that other 22nd of July (1796), when "the sufferings of this great but ill-fated genius were terminated, and a life was closed in which virtue and passion had been at perpetual variance," it would seem as though the departing poet had wrapped the mournful mantle of his muse about him, leaving no shred or tassel for succeeding shoulders, but giving his soul to Nature only, which, in the requiem of the wind in the woods and the lullaby of the streams, repeats the eternal music of his name.

Some such thought occurred to the writer as he rested lately on "Cessnock Banks," which he had made a turning-point in what was to have been a more extended pilgrimage. But it was enough. There was the usual overhanging sandstone cliff festooned with tree and tendril, grass and flower, and fern, and ivy, all creeping things, and cunningly ensconced and clinging there, little nameless tufts and weeds, the "hanging gardens" of Fairyland! The trees met overhead and canopied the dappled amber pool and whispering pebbled strand.

The roadway (Kilmarnock-Mauchline) intersects the glen, and crosses on one single lofty arch embowered in clustering sprays. From the vantage ground of the bridge a striking view is obtained of the nearer grove, where rising among some more plebeian timber there towers a noble sycamore, and, beyond that, as in some inner sacred precinct, are seen the columnar tops of two rival chestnuts, each stirring gently in a stately way, or grandly, solemnly, augustly, still—the very majesty of the woods, the aristocracy of the arboreal world, a rich and regal, soothing, satisfying scene.

Much water has flowed under the bridge in that hundred years or so. The "youthful ash" will be an "aged tree." It is a pleasing reverie and a worshipful Mecca. It empties the pew and fills the mind. Here one forgets heaven, and remembers only this dear, delightful, beautiful, old earth. One bestrides the wheel again, and moves reluctantly away, and casts a longing lingering look behind!

A. MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

Some people are evidently under the impression that if a thing is said often enough it will come true. Or, perhaps, it is evidence of the conviction that repetition will lead many to believe it is true. At any rate, here is Dr. Clifford still talking about the "great religious revolution" that is taking place. We believe it to be true that little short of a revolution is taking place in connection with religion, but we are certain that there is a wide difference in what we and Dr. Clifford mean by the phrase. He means that people are getting more religious, and we are quite certain that they are markedly less so. During the past four years we have had hundreds of letters from men who have become definitely non-religious since the outbreak of War. How many could be shown to have changed the other way about since August, 1914?

Dr. Clifford says: "The conviction is deepening in men's minds that the ultimate victory in this War will come to the nation or nations that have the highest and truest moral, and are lifted to a higher phase of being." But this is mere words. What connection has it with religion, as Dr. Clifford understands it? All he says is that character will tell in the long run. And that is the message of Secularism. What he implies is that the nation will win which believes most fervently in God and a future life, and the numerous fables that go to make up Christianity. And people have not lost sight of the fact that it is nations saturated with these beliefs which have created conditions that have brought about the present catastrophe.

Priests may coo like doves, but they often display the wisdom of serpents. Father Bernard Vaughan, in a recent sermon, declared that "the root-principle of Christianity is the worth and dignity of man." Indeed! Priests like nothing better than to see men on their knees, confessing themselves miserable sinners.

Oh, those journalists! Referring to "Remembrance Day," a London daily paper declared that "the whole British Army in France has to-day joined in prayer and thanksgiving..... these services were attended by enormous congregations." Hush! Not a word about compulsory Church Parades.

The pious Town Council of Southend-on-Sea has introduced hymns in the Sunday concerts given by the military bands. The public still have to pay the *Amusement* tax.

A verdict of "felo-de-se" was returned at Manchester on the Rev. Bramwell Brown, a Wesleyan minister, of Workington, who cut his throat. According to the clergy, only Atheists take their own lives.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference declares that "Grip in the pulpit and glow in the Church were the best preparations for the future." In the past Wesleyans laid more stress on the "grip" of Satan and the "glow" of Hades.

The other Sunday evening a lecture was delivered on "The Angels: their Past, Present, and Future." Their mission in each of those three periods was also most minutely and graphically described. And, strange to say, the lecturer was not an angel, but a mere man who had never seen an angel.

The English Government's neglect of scientific education is notorious, and the *Christian World* puts its fingers on one of the causes of this when it says that our "secularized education" has been "a costly luxury." It is also the truth that "a large proportion of our rate-supported schools have been conducted in the interests of Churches rather than in the interests of national education." The *Christian World* might have added "chapels" to Churches, for when it comes to education they are all vitally concerned with the same thing. It was the Non-conformists who "sold the pass" in 1870, and they have shown small tendency since to better their record. The surprising thing is that the *C. W.* does not see that the only way to end this "costly luxury" is for the State to confine itself to the business of Secular Education and leave religion to those who want it.

A bold (and expensive) advertisement in a daily paper asks for 20,000 musical instruments which are needed by 2,000 Young Men's Christian Association huts as a means of entertainment. In earlier days Christians were concerned with the question of harps—in the next world.

The ancients had a wise saying that when two augurs met they could not avoid smiling. Present-day parsons do not often smile, but they understand one another. Speaking on the Sunday recreation question, Father Adderley said that many Christians objected to anything other than going to Church or Chapel. A palpable hit!

The much-trumpeted revival of religion is still conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps the following information may comfort the faithful in their distress. "For the first time," says the *Daily Chronicle*, "there was at noon a period of silent meditation and prayer for the victories of the Allies by members of the Stock Exchange."

Why cannot the divines leave the War alone? Preaching at St. Paul's recently, Canon Newbolt admitted that "if war is in itself immoral and wrong, God could never have ordered it, as he did in the Old Testament." Consequently, war is not in itself immoral and wrong, and it is certain that God has ordered the present War in order to punish the rapacity of Germany. It is a judicial catastrophe, "and God is obliged to allow it." Curiously enough, however, God is not *directly* in it, but stands on one side and lets his "outraged laws avenge themselves." What ineffable piffle!

If Canon Newbolt's teaching is true, the Germans were justified in entering upon this War, as fully justified as the Israelites were in their war of extermination against the Canaanites. Jehovah acted as Israel's avowed Ally in wars of sheer aggression, and the Kaiser claims him as his avowed Ally to-day. The German Emperor is as firm a believer in the inspiration of the Old Testament as the Canon; and judging by analogies, the Lord is even more likely to be on the German side than on ours. Thus, on the reverend gentleman's own showing, his teaching on God's relation to the War, lands him in an awkward quandary, from which there is absolutely no escape except by way of Atheism.

At the meeting of the Commission of the U.F. Church of Scotland in Edinburgh last week, exception was taken to the provision in the Education Bill whereby religious bodies were to have power to call upon the Education Authority to put down new schools when they had a certain number of children belonging to their Church. The Rev. Geo. Smart, Dundee, said they should move for the deletion of this obnoxious clause, which would put a most dangerous weapon into the hands of any religious denomination. The Rev. Dr. Jordan, Greenock, said the way out of all this was that the State should take charge of secular teaching, letting the Churches manage the religious teaching. The other members agreed that this was the proper solution. This has been the contention of Freethinkers for years and years. Only another instance of the old saying, "When rogues fall out, honest men get their due."

The Churchman's Union sends out a four-page leaflet, which contains a curious illustration of the mentality of the modern Christian. Defining the attitude of the Union in relation to Christian beliefs, it says: "We labour to secure such modifications as may save them from openly contradicting the knowledge of our time; and meanwhile we ask for such liberty of interpretation as may save a large part of the educated laity from being alienated from the Church." In plain English, the Churchman's Union is willing to surrender anything that cannot be retained, and to favour any kind of interpretation of Christianity that will keep people within the Church. The undisguised opportunism of the confession is delightful.

A new book bears the alluring title, *God and Tommy Atkins*. We wonder if the author blushed to make the association.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been preaching on "Patience," basing his remarks on the text, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Unfortunately, the clergy themselves are non-starters in this race.

Even the clergy are beginning to have doubts as to the robust "Atheism" of the Germans. The Rev. R. F. Horton, writing in the *Daily News*, declares: "We know that there are German Christians (the manifesto of the Lutheran pastors shows it) who long, as we do, to set the kingdom of God, with its mercy and love and righteousness, above merely national claims."

To Correspondents.

- P. HOWELL.—Sorry we have not space to spare for what we are sure would prove a long discussion on the social and philosophical aspects of Anarchism.
- DOZO.—Thanks for suggestion. We are already trying to organize something on the lines you suggest; so you will see we consider your plan a good one.
- GLENDALOUGH.—We cannot say how many readers we have in Ireland. All do not order direct from the office. Have noted your suggestions. Thanks.
- "SAPPER."—Pleased you found the parcel of literature so useful. If we could only establish a few literature depots in France, we should "see things."
- T. MORLEY.—We are not surprised that the two new subscribers you gained recently feel you have done them a service. Most of our new readers feel that way.
- J. E. WITHIFORD.—Sorry you did not receive the parcel of literature sent. It must have been lost—perhaps owing to enemy playfulness. We are sending on another parcel.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: H. Reeve, 4s.
- E. WYATT (Glasgow).—Being attached to other movements is no disqualification for joining the N. S. S. If too busy for active work, membership encourages those already engaged in propaganda. Glad to know that yourself and wife enjoy the *Freethinker* so much.
- C. W. MARSHALL.—Pleased to know that your friend, to whom you are sending the *Freethinker*, finds it "so refreshing after the tosh of the newspapers," and that he has made quite a lot of converts "among his comrades." Thanks for your help.
- L. ANSELL.—We think you will be quite safe in selling the literature in the way indicated.
- A. WILDMAN.—Very pleased to learn of the largely-increased circulation of the *Freethinker* you have secured in Southampton. *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.

We do not think that a paper ever had more loyal supporters than has the *Freethinker*. When the Government issued its "no return" order we wondered how it would affect our circulation. We are glad to say we are actually printing and selling more copies of the *Freethinker* without taking back unsold copies, than we printed while they were sent out on sale or return. For this result we have to thank our friends all over the country, and we do thank them most heartily. The fight to keep our head above water grows increasingly hard, but it is made the easier by such splendid support as we are getting. We are doing our best to deserve it, and when the War is over we hope the cause will benefit by the efforts that are now being made.

We have several times commented on the good results springing from our free parcels of literature sent out to the troops. Here is the latest to hand. A parcel was sent to a soldier in France who was evidently unacquainted with our

publications. The next we heard of this parcel was a letter from the soldier's father ordering a selection of pamphlets which his son had read with so much interest, and had duly recommended for home consumption. A case of casting one's bread upon the waters.

Common Sense is one of the most useful of present-day weekly papers, but that does not protect it against the pressure of present-day price of paper. Hitherto it has received the blow by reducing its size to one-half, while retaining its original price of one penny. It now announces that from August 31 it is to be twopence. What things will be like if the War continues for another two or three years it is fearsome to contemplate. Perhaps we shall be last again at the stage of the four-page sixpenny paper.

The London County Council is not playing quite fair over the literature permits. The permit for selling the *Freethinker* was framed very ambiguously, and now Mr. F. Wood and Miss E. M. Vance have been summoned for selling the *Freethinker* contrary to the regulations. The matter is under discussion, and we trust that the action of the L. C. C. will be found to be based upon a misunderstanding that admits of being easily removed.

The Committee elected at the recent Bridgend meeting of Freethinkers to organize the work in South Wales has arranged for a meeting at the Wyndham Hotel, Bridgend, on Saturday, August 24, at 6 o'clock. We trust there will be a good attendance, and that the meeting will bear good results.

Pontypridd Freethinkers are trying to arrange a visit from Mr. Cohen at an early date, and a meeting of supporters is to be held at the Washington Hotel to-day (August 25), at 6 p.m. We hope that all interested will not fail to attend. The district is a promising one, and it is regrettable to see good soil lying waste for want of a little attention.

We are asked to announce that the *Freethinker* is regularly on sale, with our other publications, at the Herald League, 94 George Street, Glasgow. Local friends will please note.

Upton Sinclair's Magazine is a "live" production, and from the August issue we take the following description of the religious condition of America:—

We have a continent, with a hundred million half-educated people, materially prosperous, but spiritually starving; so any man who possesses personality, who looks in any way strange and impressive, or has hunted up old books in a library, and can pronounce mysterious words in a thrilling voice—such a man can find followers. Anybody can do it with any doctrines from anywhere, Persia or Patagonia, Peking or Pompeii. I would be willing to wager that if I cared to come out and announce that I had had a visit from God last night, and to devote such literary and emotional power as I possess to communicating a new revelation, I could have a temple, a university, and a million dollars within five years at the outside. And if at the end of the five years I were to announce that I had played a joke on the world, some one of my followers would convince the faithful that I had been an agent of God without knowing it, and that the leadership had now been turned over to him.

Unfortunately, this description applies to places other than America—Great Britain, for instance.

The Secular Society, Limited, will be issuing shortly a pamphlet by Mr. T. F. Palmer on *The Story of the Evolution of Life*. Our readers will, we are sure, be glad to have something of Mr. Palmer's in a more permanent form than a *Freethinker* article.

An examination of the actual facts at once destroys in the most merciless manner all belief in a preordained harmony of the inner and external world.—*Helmholtz*.

There is not a more singular character in the world than that of a thinking man.—*Fitzosborne*.

A Search for the Soul.

IX.

(Continued from p. 437.)

In his essay on *Science and Man*, Professor Tyndall presents us with a little problem having to do with what some people call the Soul. This reads as follows:—

A merchant sits complacently in his easy chair, not knowing whether he is sleeping or waking.....A servant enters the room with a telegram, bearing the words, "Antwerp,—Jonas and Co. have failed." Up starts the merchant, wide awake. "Tell James to harness the horses." The servant flies. The merchant descends to the counting-house, dictates letters, and forwards dispatches. He jumps into his carriage, the horses snort, and the driver is soon at the Bank, on the Bourse, and among his commercial friends. Before an hour has elapsed he is again at home, where he throws himself once more into his easy chair with a deep-drawn sigh: "Thank God, I am protected against the worst!"

This complex mass of action, emotional, intellectual, and mechanical, is evoked by the impact upon the retina of the waves of light coming from a few pencil marks on a bit of paper. We have terror, hope, sensation, calculation, possible ruin, and victory compressed into a moment. What caused the merchant to spring out of his chair? The contraction of his muscles. What made his muscles contract? An impulse of the nerves, which lifted the proper latch, and liberated the muscular power. Whence this impulse? From the centre of the nervous system. *But how did it originate there?* This is the critical question, to which some will reply that it had its origin in the human soul.....To this question some may ask: "Do not the phenomena point to the existence of a self within the self, which acts through the body as through a skilfully constructed instrument?"

To this last question the answer is, "No; the phenomena do *not* point to the existence of a self within the self as the originator of the action here described." When we come to consider that we see with the brain and hear with the brain, and that when we are hurt, it is the brain that feels it, there is no need to assume the existence of an immaterial soul to account for the phenomena, more especially as this supposed soul, having no organs or substance, could not see, hear, or feel anything. Hence, since only the cerebral organ sees, feels, and thinks, it is that organ, and no other, which produced all the phenomena. It was the merchant's brain itself (in the part called the "visual sensorium") that read the telegram, and caused (through the motor nerves) his muscles to contract as he sprang to his feet. It was his instantaneous reflection of his pecuniary position (in a higher brain centre) that caused him to give the order "harness the horses"; and it was further reflection (in that centre) which caused him to rapidly take the necessary steps to render his position less disastrous. There was thus no need, nor even any place, for an immaterial soul.

Professor Tyndall's solution of this problem cannot be called wholly satisfactory. He admits, as we have already seen, that he does not know *why* the molecular activities of the brain should give rise to thought, and apparently for that reason he will not say that such is undoubtedly the case. In summing up, he says:—

From the side of science all that we are warranted in stating is that the terror, hope, sensation, and calculation of the merchant are physical phenomena produced by, or *associated with*, the molecular processes set up by waves of light in a previously prepared brain.

As will be perceived, the words I have italicized

considerably modify the statement. Again, in his *Belfast Address* that professor says:—

We can trace the development of a nervous system, and correlate with it the *parallel phenomena* of sensation and thought. But we try to soar in a vacuum the moment we seek to comprehend the connection between them.

Thus, though he knew perfectly well that it is the brain (and the energy associated with it) which generate thought, he did not wish to admit the fact until he had discovered the "why." When, however, he comes to the suggestion that the thinker in this problem *may* be the soul, he says, further on: "Try to mentally visualize this soul as *an entity distinct from the body*, and the difficulty immediately appears." Just so; but he should have said "difficulties," for they are many. As a matter of fact, any one who tries to "mentally visualize" this supposed soul—that is, who endeavours to conceive it as an immaterial something in the human organism that exists apart from the brain, and possesses the power to think—will find all kinds of difficulties appear. But believers in immortality never do this; they accept the idea without thinking—like a number of baa-lambs. We thus arrive once more at the rational question: "What is the soul?" A dualistic answer to this query is the following which I take from Sir Oliver Lodge's *Man and the Universe*:—

By the soul, then, we must mean that part of man which is dissociated from the body at death; that part which distinguishes a living man from a corpse (p. 72).

Whether this statement be correct or not, it is at least something definite. Five minutes before death the body possessed a soul; five minutes after that event the body was soul-less, though none of the relatives present at the death saw anything leave the body. Assuming, then, the existence of a "soul," that so-called "entity" must be invisible. Next, I have to ask: What is it which distinguishes a living man from a corpse? Well, there are many things. All the organs after death are still in the body, but they have ceased to function; the blood which maintained the body in life is still in the arteries, veins, and capillaries, but it has ceased to circulate, and is stagnant; the animal heat, produced by the combustion of food and exercise of the limbs, is now gone; all feeling is likewise gone; finally, all the energy that formerly animated the body and moved the muscles has departed, and has probably been transformed into some other force. In the first stem-cell, and all the other cells from which the body was formed, there was energy as well as matter; and it was this energy, associated with an hereditary influence, which put all the cells or particles of matter in their proper places in the body; it was this energy which caused the various organs of the body to carry on their respective functions, and it was the highest development of this energy, in association with the molecules of the brain, which produced thought. What, now, could a supposed "soul" take from the body? In the first place, it could take away nothing material; it can, therefore, possess no material organ of any kind. We have no evidence whatever of the existence of "spiritual bodies." Paul's idea was that the corpse would be raised from the dead and be given a new body; but this will never take place. There can be no such "spiritual body." It is quite certain that the supposed invisible and immaterial entity called the soul can take nothing from the body—not even energy—for the latter force works through matter and is found only in association with matter; it could not unite with a nonentity. A discarnate soul is a purely imaginary being, and, notwithstanding what Dualists say to the contrary, it can have neither form, substance, nor even existence.

The modern idea of a disembodied spirit would seem to have originated by comparing the living man with the corpse. Those acquainted with the former could remember his kindly disposition, his elevation of mind, his animated conversation, his intellect, good temper, ardour, enterprise, and high spirits. All these attributes are gone. Assuming that man is of a dual nature, as taught by the Church, then all those qualities are said to survive and be vested in, or exercised by, his soul or spirit to the end of time. But, as a simple matter of fact, all these activities or attributes were dependent solely upon his material body when all the organs were exercising their functions, more especially those of the brain and nerves. Without a human organism there could be none of the manifestations here named; hence, an immaterial and invisible soul could carry away from the organism, whether alive or dead, nothing whatever. Of this fact there cannot be the smallest shadow of a doubt.

(To be continued.) ABRACADABRA.

Religious Instruction in Scotland.

THE subject of Religious Instruction in the Public Schools of Scotland is again being forced on the people. Taking advantage of the preoccupation of the community in more serious matters, the two principal Churches have combined in getting the subject brought forward, and have been successful in getting the support of several of the Parliamentary representatives.

In the debate on the Scottish Education Bill in Grand Committee, an amendment was moved by Mr. Gulland, making it obligatory to provide religious instruction in all public schools, and to appoint committees to supervise the teaching of the same. The amendment was defeated by a large majority; but not content with this decision, it is now announced that on the Report Stage of the Bill, which is to be taken on October 16, Mr. Whyte and Mr. Gulland suggest the following new clause:—

Subject to the provisions of Section 68 (Conscience Clause) of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1872, it shall be the duty of every Education Authority to provide religious instruction in all public schools, primary, intermediate, and secondary, and every Education Authority shall decide as to the time to be given either at the beginning or end of school hours.

When moving the amendment, Mr. Gulland said it was the desire of the Scottish people that religious instruction should be given in school, and, as proof of this contention, said that out of 100,000 parents in Glasgow, only about 100 took advantage of the Conscience Clause. Does Mr. Gulland think this is a fair conclusion? How many more would take advantage of the Clause were it not for the fact that the parents do not wish their children to be victimized? Would Mr. Gulland and his supporters accept the alternative method of learning the desire of the parents, whereby religious instruction would only be given to the children of those parents who expressly stated in writing that religious instruction should be given? This, I think, would be the sure way of knowing the wish of the parents.

Mr. McLeod, Glasgow Central, in supporting the amendment, said "It was absolutely true that there was now an intense religious feeling, he might say religious fervour, throughout Scotland." I wonder if Mr. McLeod could produce any evidence in proof of such a statement. Only the other day a correspondent to a large daily newspaper, signing himself "A Retired Minister," was lamenting the fact that the cleavage between the Church and the working-classes has greatly increased, though all have now got a much better

education. He dates this cleavage back to 1872, when Scottish education was taken out of the hands of the Church and placed under the control of the publicly elected School Boards. His contention is that the Protestants made a great mistake in not following the example of the Roman Catholics, who have kept a firm hold of the children; and, as a result, have kept a hold on the parents. At nearly every Presbytery meeting comments are made on the decreased attendance at Sunday-school, and also on the decreased number of baptisms. It would be interesting if Mr. McLeod could let us have the statistics of divorce cases and bigamous marriages, say, for the last ten years, so that we could know whether there has been an increase or decline. Does the religious fervour only exist in the imagination of Mr. McLeod? If the Churches desire to impart religious instruction to their children, why cannot their ministers do so on Saturdays, or any other days, in their own churches, outside day-school hours? Are they afraid the attendances would not be up to the mark? Of late we have heard a great deal about the "hidden hand." This hand seems to have absolute control over the daily press. How many newspapers in the country will publish letters of an anti-religious nature? I know several have been sent by Freethinkers to the leading dailies in Scotland, giving their views on Secular Education in connection with the Scottish Education Bill, but none have appeared; and yet it is our boast that we have a free press.

Now is the time for Freethinkers to let their Parliamentary representatives know their desires regarding religious instruction, and it behoves all Secular Societies and others interested in the matter, to let their voices be heard between now and the middle of October, when no doubt the Churches will do their utmost to get the amendment in question added to the Bill.

FREETHINKER.

The Dark Diamonds of the Earth.

II.

(Continued from p. 442.)

THE enormous quantity of energy potentially present in coal is chiefly derived from its carbon constituents. Carbon forms the most abundant element in plants, and this invaluable substance was supplied to the vegetation in Carboniferous Times by the carbon-dioxide contained in the atmosphere in that remote age. Carbon-dioxide, commonly called carbonic acid gas, is a combination of oxygen and carbon, and plants possess the power, by means of their chlorophyll, or green colouring matter, when acted upon by the sun's energy, of separating the oxygen from the carbon. The first of these elements they restore to the atmosphere, while they store the carbon in their tissues. All the light and heat we evolve from the combustion of coal is, in truth, transformed sunlight that has lain imprisoned in our planet's coal deposits for prolonged periods of time.

Naturally, the chemical constituents of coal and wood differ. Wood fibre consists of cellulose, a substance containing fifty per cent. carbon, while the bulk of the remaining half of the compound is composed of hydrogen and oxygen. In coal, the proportion of carbon is much greater, because in the progress of the fossilization of the vegetation, hydrogen and oxygen extensively escaped, thus leading to the increased percentage of carbon.

The evolutionary stages of coal were:—First, solid vegetable matter; then peat, then lignite or brown coal, onwards through the ascending varieties of black coal, until we reach the furthest development of carbonization in graphite. For, while woody fibre contains fifty per cent. of carbon and forty-four per cent. of oxygen, there is a gradual increase in the proportion of carbon and

decrease in that of oxygen as we ascend the series from wood, through peat and lignite, upwards to Staffordshire, Newcastle, Wigan, and Welsh steam-coal (anthracite), which latter contains 90.1 per cent. of carbon and 2.5 only of oxygen, until we crown the series with graphite, which is practically pure carbon (94 to 99.5 per cent.). The residue is made up of ash, so that graphite is quite destitute of oxygen.

It is estimated that from one ton of Newcastle coal there is obtained—

about 10,000 cubic feet of gas, 110 to 120 lbs. of tar, 20 to 25 gallons of watery liquor, and about 1,500 lbs. of coke. It has been estimated also (1905) that we are now distilling coal at the rate of about 10 million tons per annum, so that there is annually produced 100,000 million cubic feet of gas, and about 500,000 tons of tar, besides proportionate quantities of the other products. The great metropolitan companies alone are consuming nearly 3 million tons annually for the production of gas, a consumption corresponding to about 6,000 cubic feet per head of population (*Coal; and What We Get from It*, pp. 45, 46).

In addition to this, vast quantities of coal are consumed for household and manufacturing purposes in the Metropolis. Yet a little more than a century ago the total annual consumption in London was well under one million tons.

An important bye-product of the gas industry is coal tar. This constitutes the raw material of colouring substances, various oils, perfumes, and other commodities. The history of the far-reaching coal tar colour industry, built up as it was out of the refuse of the gas-works, has been aptly described as "a romance of dirt." In Germany, the manufacture of aniline dyes had attained titanic proportions prior to the War. Although the able English chemist, Sir William Perkin, furnished the firm foundations of this thriving industry, it was contemptuously treated in the land of its birth, despite the significant circumstance that in England coal was first distilled on a commercial scale for gas-making, and that our country introduced the earliest coal tar colouring materials into the industrial world. England is still the premier coal tar centre, and appears to produce larger supplies than all other European States combined. Yet the leadership, nay, almost the monopoly, in colour manufacture has long since departed from us.

Immense supplies of coke are produced by the gas companies, and this residue is of vast industrial importance. Although the combustion of coke evolves powerful fumes, this carbonaceous substance has long been in request where an inexpensive smokeless fuel is required. It is largely employed in the furnaces of engines, and is extensively utilized in the smelting of iron.

When coal was converted into coke for industrial and domestic purposes, the tar and other derivatives produced were permitted in Britain, until quite recently, to run to waste. Some idea of this economic loss may be gathered from the fact that more than twelve million tons of coal are annually converted into this form of fuel.

The majority of people suppose that the several derivatives of coal are already present in the substance itself and merely await chemical separation. Certainly a small amount of moisture and a little gas reside in raw coal, but these constituents are practically inappreciable in comparison with the evolution of gas and water during the manufacture of gas. Again, a minute amount of tar is present in some few forms of coal; but, as a rule, tar is entirely absent in coal utilized at the gas works. Usually, tar is no more a constituent of coal than coke is. As a leading chemist states:—

All these products are formed by the chemical decomposition of the coal under the influence of heat,

and their nature and quantity can be made to vary within certain limits by modifying the temperature of distillation.

Among the numerous compounds distilled from coal some may be immediately applied to industrial use, but the majority of these isolated substances form merely the crude materials for the elaboration of various other utilities which include medicines and pigmentary preparations. Obviously these and other completed commodities cannot be regarded as tar constituents any more than tar can be considered as an ingredient of the coal. As a matter of fact these products are evolved from the tar constituents by chemical agency. Meldola justly contends that these finished products—

bear much about the same relationship to their parent substances that a steam engine bears to the iron ore out of which its metallic parts are primarily constructed. Just as the mechanical skill of the engineer enables him to construct an engine out of the raw material iron which is extracted from its ore and converted into steel by chemical processes, so the skill of the chemist enables him to build up complex colouring matters out of the raw materials furnished by tar, which is obtained from coal by chemical decomposition.

Coal is now known to exist in Kent, and the seams may prove far more valuable than is at present supposed. Probably other hitherto unsuspected coal deposits lie beneath our feet. The coal measures of the British Isles comprise about one-tenth of their land surfaces. The richest coal regions are those of South Wales, and our Northern and Midland counties. The available coal reserves reposing in deposits of Carboniferous Age and extending to a depth of 4,000 feet have been estimated to amount to ninety thousand million tons, while, in addition to these, we possess a considerable supply of coal at workable distances in the later Permian deposits of the northern and central districts of England. If these beds are added to those of Carboniferous date the entire available reserves of the United Kingdom have been figured at the prodigious total of about 146,454 million tons. We raise over two hundred million tons per year from the pits. Before the War about 15 per cent. was exported, while nearly one-third was used for iron smelting, and a mere modicum of the huge total for gas production. The remainder is utilized by the railways, shipping, our many manufactures, the domestic hearth, and our minor industries.

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

Notes From Ireland.

When the Reformers began their partial weeding of dogmatism they threw open the portals of existence and aggression to the most brainy, gifted, and marvellous men the world has ever seen—they opened the door to us. We immediately commenced to spray everything with Reason whose inquisitorial eyes soon completed the work of the pruning knife. The majority of the countries, however, that then remained untouched by Reform still remain untouched by any kind of sanity or moderation. In such countries the religious authorities "go the whole hog"; they fully realize that a man without reason is no man at all—a nonentity. Accordingly, in order to make people believe what they say, they choke the discerning faculty. To secure this they give out as true the most absurd and useless happenings. And they succeed. The happenings are invariably believed provided they are quite incredible. The latest pamphlet of the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland is the *Venerable Oliver Plunket*. It contains twenty-four pages in a good cover, price one penny. Call that nothing for War time! Well, Plunket was a Primate of Ireland who died in the year 1681 as a result of an axe having fallen on his neck,

and so having severed his body from his head. Now, mark you well, Plunket was a wonder when he was alive, but, now when he is dead, he is a living miracle. His martyrdom occurred well over two centuries ago, yet the hair has not yet disappeared from his pate, while his countenance is still illuminated with a look of extreme peace. But the most wonderful thing about the dead Primate's skull is, and we have a Cardinal's word for it, that, in September, 1893, it gave forth—no, no, not a stink—a fragrant odour.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will soon cease to figure as an undivided third of the Holy Trinity; he is being fast ousted from the right-hand side of the heavenly bench, and being relegated to the golden dust of the celestial pavement, where he is already serving as a scarlet footrest to his holy mother, of immaculate virginity, whose five-toed feet are victoriously marking time upon the nape of his neck as the palpitating harmony, "Ave Maria," salutes her auricular sense. In fact, this woman seems in a good way to usurp the sceptre of Good God Almighty himself, and betrays an inclination to brandish that regal insignia with a grace and gentleness not even exceeded by her son's most illustrious vicar, Pope Innocent III. She is drawing the mantle of majesty about her frail shoulders, and stifles the expostulations of the deposed with the millions of prayers addressed to her, which prayers must e'er this have attained to the regularity of a trade wind and the ferocity of a cyclone in the vaults of heaven. The current issue of the *Little Flower*, for instance, contains the following from a man's pen:—

O Rose! O Lily! O Lady full of grace!
 O Mary, Mother! O Mary, Maid! hear thou,
 Glory of Angels! Pity and turn thy face,
 Praying thy Son, even as we pray thee now,
 For thy dear sake thine Ireland free:
 Pray thou, thy little child!
 Ah! who can help her but in mercy He?
 Pray thou, pray thou, for Ireland, Mother mild!
 O Heart of Mary! pray the Sacred Heart:
 His at Whose word depart
 Sorrows and Hates, home to Hell's waste and wild.

Talk about the unintelligibility and mysticism of Mallarme, Verlaine, Maeterlinck, and the rest of the French schol! their most nonsensical utterance is wisdom in comparison with this sturdy piece of nothingness. Even the most unbridled poetic license, however, is subject to some kind of influential criticism—a scepticism that remembers the long hairs and limited mentality of genius; a poet's effusion is always without consequential tragedy. Can as much be said of this thousand-times-worse piffle? Alas, no! And here we have the horrible tragedy of authority. Many and many a poor aching soul will offer up this prayer poem; for is it not recommended by the One True Church? But no one will wonder at the signlessness of the Supreme. The Catholic Church can publish what it likes in this poor little isle; and it publishes what it likes with a vengeance. It is without critic, censor, judge—a law unto itself. All our literature is saturated with superstitious rot, yet no local voice is heard in protest. It is high time the standard of rebellion was raised against this galling yoke, and we Free-thinkers are the only ones to do it. But—but how many are we? A thousand, outside Ulster? Fifty in Dublin? Alas, not more! We are voiceless. What can we do? What—oh, what?

The Catholic Church is still sweating drops of blood lest its young men be forced to join what Bernard Shaw calls "that vulgar pageant of incompetent schoolboy gladiators," the Army. The *Irish Catholic*, in particular, is very hot on the subject, and is inconsistently pessimistic in its exhortation to the Irish people to use a shield far more powerful than England's bombs or rifles—the Rosary. It appeals, therefore, for a million of Rosaries. "Wanted: A Million of Rosaries."

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

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