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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Life.

Many of my readers will be acquainted with Herbert Spencer's method of reconciling religion and science. The contest between the two, he said, was due to a delusion. The business of science, he explained, was with the known and the knowable; the business of religion with the unknown and unknowable. All that we know, or will ever know, is outside religion, and belongs to science; but all that we either know now or can know at any future time, belongs to religion. And if each keeps to its own sphere, there can be no conflict. The humour of the reconciliation may have been unconscious, but it was superb. Under cover of a philosophic camouflage, religion was informed that it began where human knowledge, actual and possible, ended. Ignorance, complete and irremovable, was its empire. Religion could avoid slaughter by agreeing to commit suicide. The business of religion was to worship a vacuum, and the conflict between it and science had resulted from its attempting to deal with things about which something could be known. That, we admit, is a dangerous thing for any religion to do.

* * *

Keeping Things Distinct.

We were reminded of this famous "reconciliation" by a passage in Dr. Lyttelton's article in last week's *Freethinker*. Dr. Lyttelton also thinks that the quarrel between the *Freethinker* and the Christian is due to a confusion, not, it is true, that of either stepping outside his proper sphere, but that of failure to recognize that each is really concerned with the same thing under different aspects. What we call social forces, Dr. Lyttelton calls God. About that Dr. Lyttelton must be the supreme judge. If he chooses to deify, and, we presume to personify, social forces, we have no right to object, much as we may wonder what justification he has for so doing. For we are quite certain that religion has never meant by "God" a complex of abstract and impersonal forces. The God of religion has always been, to quote Mr. Balfour, "something other than an Identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which it somehow holds in solution." These later forms we cannot but regard as being fundamentally semi-philosophic excuses for the retention of a belief which lacks either verification as truth or justification in utility. So that when

Dr. Lyttelton wonders why we shrink from calling social forces God, our reply is, because they are not God. Our reason is exactly the reason we have for not calling a yard of calico a pound of treacle. Of course, we can do so if we please, and can, on the basis of our wayward nomenclature, defend the sweetening properties of calico. But we are quite certain that few will understand what we mean, and, even when they grasp our meaning, will continue to use the old word in the old sense. And, on the whole, it is really better to call things by the names that the rest of the world use when speaking of them.

* * *

The Force Behind Religion.

And here, we are afraid, we fail to deserve the compliment paid us by Dr. Lyttelton as to our "lucid writing." For as our friendly critic has failed to grasp the essential point of our article for September 1, we are bound to conclude that in that case, at least, we failed to make clear our meaning. After saying that we "credit social forces with an amazing strength," Dr. Lyttelton writes:—

The forces in question, according to your estimate, have till lately been restricted to a tiny, almost invisibly small, section of mankind; I mean those who can fairly be called non-religious.....There is hardly such a thing as a tribe in the wildest region of the earth's surface who have not shown that they believe in a God of sorts.(therefore) we may only imagine the truly non-religious people to have been a very small minority of the whole number at any given moment.

Now, this certainly misses the whole point I had in my mind when writing—which may be due to my want of lucidity. For the whole point of my argument was that, instead of the operation of the social forces being confined to "an invisibly small section," their influence was felt by all. We said that "so far as man consciously adjusts conduct to circumstances" religion dominates; but that religious beliefs, under the pressure of the social forces, are being continually modified to meet social needs—the social forces thus acting as a selective factor. So that it is not the operation of the social forces that is confined to a tiny section; but the recognition of their real nature, the majority continuing—as a result of their want of enlightenment—to clothe the products of social life in a religious dress. To take an illustration, the agriculturalist who mutters a religious formulæ while planting his seeds, and who prays and performs religious rites during their fructification, will naturally regard the product as due to his religious devotion. The non-religious person, separating the essential from the non-essential, omits the religious business, and secures, other things equal, as good a result. It is not here a question of one obeying certain natural laws, and the other ignoring them. Both obey, the one blindly, the other consciously. The first stands for the religious phase of human history, in which natural conditions are observed, at least to some extent, in ignorance of their nature, but accompanied by religion. The second stands

for the rationalistic phase in which man becomes conscious of the nature of the forces at work, and leaves religion on one side as unnecessary.

* * *

A Question of Interpretation.

I hope the above will make my position perfectly clear. Man discovers the nature of the forces at work, but he does not create them, nor do they commence to function only when he becomes conscious of them. Gravitation was a discovery, not an invention. Natural selection did not begin with Darwin, he merely became aware of its existence. The whole matter, the real point at issue in the long struggle between religion and science, or between religion and rationalism, is really one of interpretation. The world is the same for all. Natural forces and conditions are the same for all. Disease attacks Atheist and Christian alike, but whether it is called a "visitation from God" or an outcome of natural conditions is a question of enlightenment. The same constellations look down upon us that looked down upon primitive man. The difference of our attitude towards them is a question of knowledge. We have epileptics and lunatics with us, as Jesus is said to have had with him. We have the same cases of hallucination and delusion to-day that two centuries ago caused hundreds to be burned for witchcraft. The facts of life do not alter, it is our interpretation of them that changes. And that interpretation marks the dividing line between the one who believes in God and the one who does not. And so with all other facts. If we may say it without conceit or impertinence, there is logical room in my philosophy for Dr. Lyttelton, but there is no logical room in his for me. We can explain him, can he explain us. The Atheistic view allows for the world starting religious and ending non-religious. Can the Theistic view allow for the reverse process? * * *

The Value of History.

Finally, we really cannot appreciate Dr. Lyttelton's desire to avoid a discussion of man's history, because we feel that it is only in the light of human history that we can understand the question in dispute. Allowing that we are in danger of landing in a quagmire, surely this is not inevitable. And the question to-day is for millions of people—not whether the belief in prayer, or miracle, or God, or heaven is true, that question is quite settled for them. What remains is the question: "How did people come to believe in these things?" And when that question is settled the reason of their existence nowadays is easy to find. Moreover, if, as Dr. Lyttelton says, God is what we call social forces, the historical question still remains. As an Atheist I believe that what men have called God is really a personification of natural and social forces—including under the latter head human emotions and ideals. And we have suggested how it was that man came to fall into this blunder and so to misinterpret Nature. In a word, what we have to do is to separate the facts from certain mistaken interpretations of them. Or, if these interpretations are not mistakes, we think it is Dr. Lyttelton's task to explain what function of life cannot proceed as well without religion as with it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

It is quite honour enough (and I expect before we get it done, we shall find it quite work enough) to get one truth cleared from rubbish before we die.—*Charles Kingsley.*

The doubts which beset men upon many of the greatest matters are the direct result of the lies and falsifications of our predecessors.—*Helps.*

The Authority of Jesus.

CHRISTIANITY, after a career of nineteen centuries, is still in the making, and its adherents are by no means agreed as to the best method of accelerating the process. This is true of it as represented under Catholicism. The development of doctrine in the Catholic Church is an intensely interesting and instructive study. No one can read the history of the General Councils without realizing that Christianity is an evolutionary product. We are reminded of Tennyson's well-known lines:—

Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

So it has been with Christianity in the Catholic Church. Many æons have passed and touched it into its present shape. This is truer still of it under Protestantism. Protestant theology being the most changeable thing under the sun; and it should not be forgotten that evolution implies dissolution. What we wish specially to emphasize just now, however, is that Christianity is in a vague, loose, fluid condition, liable to be affected by every wind that blows. Nothing is really and finally settled. Practically all questions relating to it are open, and are being freely debated. Dr. D. L. Ritchie, in a suggestive article in the *Christian World* for August 15, frankly admits that even the question of authority in religion is not closed, and that "there are trends of opinion and drifts to action among us that make it clear it must again be stirred." Then he ominously adds:—

There is a sense in which it is always with us, and much confused thinking and vagrant policy would be escaped if only it were first frankly faced and settled. It is the sword that lies hidden in many of our controversies.

What a sad, humiliating confession for a minister to make in the twentieth century of his religion! It is a peculiarly Protestant confession, as Principal Ritchie himself acknowledges. He even speaks of "our present helplessness as Protestants and Free Churches" due to "our confusions here." Then he asks the old, familiar question:—

Is the final seat of authority to be found in the Church, or in the Bible, or in the conscience, as God and his truth meet its needs? To that question there must be an unflinching answer.

Unfortunately, however, to that question there are different and conflicting answers, each one of which is absolutely unflinching. Has it never occurred to Dr. Ritchie that this fact alone proves conclusively that there cannot be any final seat of religious authority? He asserts that "Romanists do not hesitate in their reply, nor do Protestants who have thought through their position," which is doubtless true; but the determining factor is that Romanists and Protestants are at hopeless and fatal variance on the subject. Besides, Protestants are at loggerheads with one another on this fundamental point. The Principal is aware of this, as the following extract abundantly shows:—

Certain it is that a clear decision must be made by many of our teachers, for the appeal in a circle, first to private judgment, then to the Bible, now to God known in the soul, then to the letter of Scripture, as either best suits, cannot longer be endured. It is the uncertain note that is so baffling and leads many to say that the dogmatism of Rome, with its Church authority, is to be preferred to the hesitation of not a little Protestantism. Does authority in religion rest on experience of God's grace, or on something external, be it an institution, or a person, or a book? If the latter, then to-day, with the results of scholarship in our hand, Rome, with its Church authority, is more strongly placed than a Protestantism with only a book authority, and

how much more than the Church that trusts to neither and yet claims both! But all Protestantism that is not timid in its venture on God boldly affirms the former. It believes not only in a God who has spoken, but in a God who speaks, and that, too, as the Father, intimately and authoritatively, to all his children. And it claims the right to try the spirits whether or not they speak with the voice of the Father. The progressive religion of to-morrow will find its authority in God through experience.

We have now before us three different seats of authority, the Church, the Bible, and experience of God's grace; and Dr. Ritchie accepts the third. In reality, however, this is a trinity in unity, like the God-head. The Church is a body whose head is Christ, and when it speaks it is Christ who speaks in or through it. The Church is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and it follows that its voice is divine and holy. The Bible, too, is the Word of God, and, no matter what scholarship may say, a clergyman is bound to treat it as such. Even Higher Critics, like Sir George Adam Smith, in so far as they are professional theologians, find in it the final revelation of God to the world. Both Church and Bible are fallible, in certain respects, but both are also, in certain other respects, God-given and God-filled. Is not the same thing true of individual believers? Do they not admit that they are at best but fallible, imperfect, and sinful, and yet is it not their proud boast that they are supernaturally born and supernaturally guided in all their ways? In what sense, then, can it be claimed that the seat of authority is in them rather than in the Church or the Bible? And what is the Church but a society or community of individual believers in whom God is supposed to speak? Dr. Ritchie laughs to scorn the notion that the Protestant Reformers rejected the Church and set up the Bible. "This is largely hearsay, not history," he rightly declares. "The Reformers claimed the right to try the Scriptures by the Gospel that made the Gospels." True; and yet it was in the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles that they found the Gospel; and having found it *there* they rejected any portion of the Bible which seemed to them to contradict it, as Luther condemned the Epistle of James. In any case, it was God's voice, whether in the Bible, in the Church, or in their own hearts, that appealed to them as finally authoritative.

Now, our contention is that God's voice, like God himself, is a figment of the imagination, possessing no objective reality whatever. Conscience is one of the noblest human faculties, but its decisions are determined alone by heredity and environment. A man's conscience is simply an expression of himself in his relation to his fellow beings, or merely the voice of the social sense within him. In other words, it is the man himself as a member of society. A conscience, cleansed by grace is, like sin, a theological invention. To be of any service conscience must be regnant, self-sufficient, and assertive, not submissive, humbled, and apologetic. To call it the voice of God is to woefully misunderstand and misrepresent it. Dr. Ritchie says that the seat of authority is found "in its obedience to the truth of Christ meeting its need and leading it forth bravely to witness"; but what is the truth of Christ other than theological fiction? Surely the Principal cannot mean by it the ethical teaching attributed to Jesus, for to that nobody ever dreams of rendering obedience, not even the most enthusiastic Christians. The Rev. Vivian T. Pomeroy, preaching at the City Temple, London, lately, asked: "What would ensue if the Sermon on the Mount were preached to-day?" He flatly denied that it is preached, and candidly confessed that he did not preach it. He was confident that no congregation would listen to him if he did, without

protesting. Both Dr. Ritchie and Mr. Pomeroy are ordained ministers of the Gospel of Christ; but both are bound to recognize the fact that the Gospel they preach, in so far as it embodies the ethical teaching of the Gospel Jesus, is a dead letter, although they declare that "when war-madness has spent itself, when this interlude of measureless war is past, and the pride of man has utterly spent itself in wild rage, the authority of Jesus will be seen and felt like the peace of a storm-washed sky." That prediction has been indulged in millions of times before; but to-day the authority of Christ is as far from realization as it ever was, with the result that the utterances of the pulpit were never so unpopular, or received with such derision as they are at present.

The authority of Jesus has never been a reality in human history, and the authority of the Church is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. The priest of to-day is often laughed at as a nonentity even by multitudes who nominally believe in him. His day of power is gone for ever. He is already but a relic of the times of ignorance and superstition. The future shall know no other authority than that of enlightened and socialized reason. Under Christianity war has flourished, and myriads of its converts were won at the point of the sword. The present War is being waged in the name of God, and most of the belligerents profess that the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth is their sole aim. War shall cease only when the reins of national and international life are in the hands of Reason—scientifically trained and fully moralized.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Man Who Cheers Us All Up.

Do I view this world as a vale of tears? —Robert Browning.

THE function of the humourist is undervalued. In his little, unobtrusive way, the man who jests and sets you smiling back at him does a great service. The physiological value of laughter has never been appraised. Although doctors bestow a benevolent patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the pharmacopoeia, no one will dispute that the humourists are benefactors of society. And yet, with the exception of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Dickens—who is liked better for his pathos than his fun—humorous writers are held to be only second-rate literary artists. It is not that we do not laugh—though we do not laugh as much as we should—but we laugh apologetically, as if laughter were a weakness of humanity, a thing pertaining to the trivialities of life. So many people think that *Vanity Fair*, which is, on the whole, a serious book, is, therefore, greater than *The Pickwick Papers*, which is, on the whole, a comic book. Yet there is much to be said for the view that smiles are as important as tears. Falstaff is just as great a creation as Hamlet. It is allowed in all but the most pedantic circles that Shakespeare was a very great man, and his Falstaff is comedy in the highest.

The great Rabelais declared that laughter is the peculiar property of man; the outward sign which distinguishes the paragon of animals. The man that hath no music in him—we know for what he is fit; and just as certainly the man who has no laughter in him is fit for nothing that is of high service to man.

An advanced movement like our own can have no better champion than a humourist. And if the cause be a great one, and if the arguments, barbed by wit and winged by laughter, have any intrinsic worth, they strike the deeper and take the stouter hold because of the humorous nature of their presentation. In a theological discussion a laugh is a blessing, and a born humourist

like Robert Ingersoll was genuinely our benefactor. Although a master of the lash, he used his whip carelessly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Jonathan Swift, nor, like Voltaire, sting like a thousand wasps. Rather is he like Voltaire, into whom has passed the geniality and suavity of Renan. It is a mellowed and a transformed Voltaire, looking upon a sadder and a busier world with the laughing eyes we know so well.

Ingersoll was a master of what Milton calls the "dazzling fence." His attacks on orthodoxy were answered over and over again by ministers of all denominations, and he drew Cardinal Manning and Gladstone into the controversial arena. In his discussion with Gladstone, the English politician taunted Ingersoll with riding a horse without a bridle; with letting his ideas run away with him. Ingersoll retorted crushingly that this was better than "riding a dead horse in a reverential calm." Huxley, indeed, claimed the victory for Ingersoll. "Gladstone's attack on you," he wrote, "is one of the best things he has written. I don't think there is more than fifty per cent. more verbiage than is necessary, nor any sentence with more than two meanings."

Men seldom talk as brilliantly as they write, but Ingersoll was an exception. A volume might be compiled of his clever sayings, not as invented or recorded in the author's study, but as expressed in society; not as it grew in secret like a flower the blooming of which all admire, but as it flashed forth like sparks from flint and steel in social interplay.

Ingersoll's conversation was full of epigrams and jests, the least of which must have been the envy and despair of politicians. When a friend, finding a set of Voltaire's works in his library, said: "Pray, sir, what did this cost you?" the Colonel answered: "I believe it cost me the governorship of Illinois." Speaking of a hot-headed and sanguine acquaintance, he said: "Show him an egg, and instantly the air is full of feathers."

One of his best stories was that of an excitable Fenian who was boasting of the condition of Ireland. The Irishman said: "We have got 30,000 armed men in Ireland. They are ready to march at a moment's notice." "But," replied the other man, "why don't they march?" "Why?" retorted the Irishman, "the police won't let them." When Ingersoll first met G. W. Foote he was desirous of paying the English Free-thought leader a compliment. At dinner Foote passed the oysters, and Ingersoll said, smiling: "Not like oysters, Foote! That's the only fault I can find in you." How good, too, was the Colonel's description of a bank-note: "A greenback is no more money than a menu is a dinner."

When Ingersoll was on his first visit to the Pacific coast he was shown through the depth of the Comstock mines, and as he came out he remarked: "If there's a hotter place than this, I'll join some church." While he had his office at Washington, lightning struck and burned a church situated in the same terrace. Ingersoll said: "An offended deity may have intended that bolt for my office, but what marksmanship!" In response to an inquiry about Robert Collyer, he declared: "Had such men as Robert Collyer and John Stuart Mill been present at the burning of Servetus, they would have extinguished the flames with their tears. Had the Presbytery of Chicago been there, they would have quietly turned their back, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves." A woman preacher once called Ingersoll "an infidel dog," and he replied: "The lady would have felt annoyed had I referred to her as a Christian female of the same species."

Doubtless we can have, in Hamlet's phrase, "something too much of this." This is our own affair. The historian of wit does not invite us to a surfeit of it. He

spreads the board; he can do no more, and should do no less. We may take it as they are said to take a play in China; or we may take a reasonable cut and come again. "Here is sixpence," said a father to his son, "Don't make a beast of yourself."

MIMNERMUS.

The Dark Diamonds of the Earth.

IV.

(Continued from p. 465.)

OUR Great Northern Coalfield extends for fifty miles, and the Tyne forms the main highway for the carriage of the fuel to the metropolitan consumer. The Wallsend coal so highly esteemed by the London public, arrives from the Newcastle region. Experts differ concerning the distance beneath the waves at which the mineral may be mined. Perhaps the estimate of Sir Lindsay Wood, that of three miles from the shore as a limit of working where the seams dip under the ocean is that most usually accepted. Elliot considered three-and-a-half miles a fair estimate south of the Tyne, while to the north of the river, Forster regarded two miles as the limit for under-sea mining.

The coal measures of Scotland are valuable and important, and include the splendid coalfield of the Clyde Basin, the Midlothian and Haddington deposits, the Ayrshire, Fifeshire, and other formations. In 1904, Dixon placed the available resources of Scotland at 15,681,450 millions of tons. This total embraces a vast mass of fuel reposing beneath the bed of the Firth of Forth. Mining has been successfully conducted below the waters of the Firth at Bridgeness. A dense accumulation of clay rests on the bed of the estuary. This forms a wonderful waterproof barrier which permits the miners to labour in safety in the coal seams below. But were the pressure of the water to penetrate this barrier mining operations would be seriously handicapped. In a weighty address delivered in 1899, Dron forecasted the exhaustion of the proven coal deposits of Scotland by the close of the twentieth century. Let us trust that this gloomy prediction will remain unfulfilled.

Ireland also possesses coal, but most of her Carboniferous formations have long since vanished. A remnant, however, of Erin's original deposits has survived the tooth of time, and still remains for the service of man. Her southern beds embrace those of Clare, Cork, Carlow, Queen's County, Tipperary, Limerick, and Kilkenny. These seams contain anthracite, while the coal found in the counties situated to the north of a line drawn across the Island from Galway to Dublin Bay is bituminous. The Leinster coalfield (Queen's County, Tipperary, and Kilkenny), is the most valuable of the southern measures, and the Ulster beds in Tyrone are of considerable economic importance both from their richness and their easy accessibility to the industrial towns of North Ireland. Unfortunately, mining in this district remains in a very languid state. A geologist who studied the problem on the spot prayed that—

the day may come when the great manufacturing province of Ulster may awake to the discovery that while it is dependent on England and Scotland for its coal supply, there is a large undeveloped quantity of mineral fuel at its door.

As late as 1903 only about 100,000 tons were raised from Irish beds, while in the same year nearly thirty million tons were mined in the Midland seams of England alone.

The known coal measures of Britain, if exploited at the rate of about 240 million tons annually, will, probably, last for 600 years. It is highly likely, however,

that two extensive and previously unsuspected coalfields traverse southern England. One formation appears to range from Dover towards Bristol, while the other reaches from Romney Marsh in the direction of Glastonbury in Somerset.

The coalfields of France and Belgium are physically one, although in places discontinuous. The total extent of these deposits approaches 1,200 miles. The Saarbrück beds of Prussia possess an area of 900 square miles. This is the deepest formation in Western Europe, and the lowest seams descend near Bettingen to a depth of 3.6 geographical miles below sea level. It has been noted that this represents a depth below the ocean surface "equal to the height of Chimborazo above it; and at this depth the temperature may be inferred to range as high as 467° Fahr." This coalfield is interesting to the evolutionist inasmuch as it has yielded the fossils of several reptiles which serve to connect the Batrachians with the Saurians. The intermediate character of these extinct creatures is strongly pronounced. The remains of lower types of animals are numerous, while the fossil plants of this coal formation are abundant.

The German measures of Westphalia produce coals of fine quality that enjoy excellent transport advantages. The Weald deposits of Hanover and N.W. Germany are extensive, while those of Silesia are richly stored with fuel. Austria, Hungary, and Spain are fairly well furnished with coalfields, but production in Spain is very meagre. There is scope in Russia for future progress, although much of the coal is of inferior quality. The coal measures situated between the Dnieper and the Don are the best in European Russia. Poland possesses a small but highly productive deposit. One of the coal seams attains the abnormal thickness of sixteen yards, and is regarded as the thickest layer of fossil fuel in Europe. Extensive coal strata exist in India and China, while Australasia is opulently provided with coal.

British North America has poor supplies of coal, but the United States contains huge formations. The immense basin of the mighty Missouri is stacked with sufficient fuel to satisfy the demands of the Northern continent for 1,000 years, even were it as densely populated and industrially developed as England is to-day. According to Professor Rogers, the Missouri basin covers 100,000 square miles. But this is one field only among many, for the total coal regions of the States form nearly 230,000 square miles.

Vast stores of coal have been discovered in Brazil, and the adjacent republic of Uruguay seems well supplied. Other formations doubtless await discovery. So that, despite our present meagre rations, the world is assured of ample coal supplies for many centuries to come. Various substitutes have been suggested to replace coal as our chief material for heating and power purposes. Water power could unquestionably be employed on a far larger scale than at present, but streams and waterfalls are not everywhere available. Professor Forbes, after a careful review of the question, concluded that heavy engineering and other expenses, combined with further obstacles, rendered any serious competition with coal as a generator of power as highly improbable, in our Islands at least. Scotland appears the only part of the United Kingdom which possesses the immediate possibility of the substitution of water power for coal as an instrument of production. The Falls of Niagara, with their constant flow of water, certainly promise enormous results. The Cauvery Falls of Mysore, and the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi, with their descent of 400 feet, vary greatly in volume with the seasons, although at periods of flood Professor Forbes states that the Victoria Falls are capable of evolving energy quite six times that of Niagara.

As a substitute for coal, peat is out of court. It contains too much moisture, and the cost of compression is considerable. Moreover, it contains an excessive proportion of refuse, and it has been proved that one ton of good coal produces at least fourfold the heat as the same weight of peat.

The claims of petroleum to rank as a competitor must be reviewed. This mineral oil is of ever-increasing importance for propelling machinery, gas production, and other purposes. Although Britain is so generously stored with superior coal, it is nearly destitute of petroleum. Oil may be distilled from the Kimmeridge clay, but our only important oil products are those of the oil shale deposits of Scotland. America and Russia are the premier petroleum States. The estimate of Redwood for petroleum production in 1901 totalled 5,746,000,000 imperial gallons. Upwards of 5,000 million gallons of this huge total were raised in Russia and the United States. But great as these figures appear, they are insignificant when compared with the world's annual output of coal. Sir Boverton Redwood informs us that "if you double the existing production of petroleum..... it would only be an equivalent of about 5 per cent. of the present coal consumption."

We may safely say that science has so far failed to find any real substitute for coal. But, as already intimated, our coal measures will endure at our present rate of consumption for another 600 years if mined to a depth of about 4,000 feet only. And this represents the extreme limit of contemporary mining possibilities.

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

Acid Drops.

We shall hear much of the Continental Sunday when the War is over. The British troops, brought up to take their pleasures sadly, will never consent to return to the Puritan Sabbath after tasting the delights of a real weekly holiday. The correspondent of a London daily paper describes a French "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon." There were five bands, fencing matches, concert troupes, theatrical turns, dances, and all the fun of the fair. The account is sufficient to make Chadband and Stiggins drop down dead; but it should help to make "Merrie England" more than a phrase after the War.

Really we shall be getting quite popular soon. The *Daily News* notes it as remarkable that no one should have quoted "Tom Paine" in connection with the Luxury Tax. Paine, says the *D. N.*, "hit this particular nail very forcibly on the head." Moncure Conway's great biography was a step towards giving Paine his proper place in history, but it will be a long while before he is placed before the public cleared from the slanders and misrepresentations of religious bigotry. When it is done, he will be seen to have been one of the greatest benefactors of the English-speaking race.

"We all in this life have our crown of thorns," declares a provincial parson. Hallelujah! It is, however, quite unnecessary to sit on it every Sunday.

Billy Sunday, the Yankee evangelist, understands the art of loving one's enemies. His latest sample of this beautiful trait of Christianity is a statement that the German Kaiser is so far down that he would need an aeroplane to get to hell.

The Rev. W. W. Treleaven, a Wesleyan minister, of Kendal, Westmoreland, was found dead in his study chair. Had he been a Freethought lecturer, the editors would have found a lot to say on the subject.

Christ said: "Woe unto ye rich," but the dear clergy prefer to tread the primrose path of dalliance. The late Rev.

C. E. Hornby, vicar of Ebrington, left estate to the value of £69,822.

A woman fortune-teller was fined £20 at East Ham. The clergy have honours and money heaped upon them for telling people what will happen to them in the "next world."

Speaking of after-War problems, Lord Beauchamp observes: "After all two and two will still make four after hostilities have ceased." Believers in the Trinity should kindly note.

At Matlock an old man, aged seventy-seven, was charged with sacrilege. He was caught inside the parish church, and money was missed from the contribution box. "Sacrilege" is a more serious offence, legally, than ordinary theft, and helps to show how the clerical caste has looked after itself.

Highly amusing is the ingenious but sophisticated manner in which a clergyman gets over difficulties. Jesus says, "Love your enemies"; but does he want us to love the Germans, who are the only enemies we can think of to-day? Of course, he does; and yet how can we love such enemies? That is the problem over which Dr. J. D. Jones, of Bourne-mouth, as reported in the *British Weekly* for September 4, plays the sophist to perfection as follows:—

Love was not the weak, sentimental, flabby thing usually meant. Love included righteous anger, with the will to punish. And love to the Germans must include the purpose of punishment for the crimes which could neither be glossed over nor condoned. We could love them without liking them, for liking was instinctive.

Quite an original method of loving, in which we have absolutely no faith.

Dr. John A. Hutton, of Glasgow, says that, as Jesus was dying, the world cried to him: "Come down from the Cross, and we will believe thee." "But," adds this popular divine, "Jesus remained upon the Cross." So he did, simply because he could do no other. Peter said he could not come down for two reasons, the wickedness of his enemies and the holy will of God. At any rate, upon the Cross he was bound to remain until he was dead.

In a laudatory account of a lady preacher, a London newspaper said: "Clad in spotless white, she looked a striking and picturesque figure in the pulpit." Very few male parsons wear their "petticoats" gracefully.

A bold advertisement in the *Daily News* asks "all godly men and women" to offer up prayers daily at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. We suggest the use of praying barrels. They would waste less time and be less noisy.

The Christian religion is sadly in need of bolstering in these strenuous days. Perhaps this is the reason why the publishers of Harry Lauder's book, *A Minstrel in France*, announce that the comedian's "faith in a future life and reunion" is "simply but confidently stated" in its pages. Simplicity and confidence are not unexpected qualities in this particular association.

"Tax on Sunday" was a headline in a daily paper. It referred to the introduction of the new stamp duty on cheques; but the title suggests that Christians should be taxed for wasting a holiday in gloomy gospel-shops.

Owing to overcrowding, it has been found necessary to restrict the number of American soldiers, sailors, and nurses admitted to the Sunday concerts at the Palace Theatre, London. Only those in uniform, and bearing tickets, will be admitted. It has not been found necessary to issue a similar order with regard to churches and chapels.

The question of religion in the schools continues to occupy attention in the Scottish newspapers, and we hope that the controversy will be kept alive until a just conclusion is

reached. A very good letter appears in the *Scotsman* of September 3, by Mr. Alex M'Nair, from which we take the following passage:—

In moving his amendment to Clause 7 of the new Education Bill, Mr. Gulland stated with apparent jubilation that in almost every burgh and parish of Scotland the Bible and the Shorter Catechism were taught, and that in Edinburgh only 50 or 100 out of 30,000 children had been exempted, and in Glasgow to-day not more than 100 out of 100,000 were exempted. I read these figures with some degree of astonishment at the time, and I have my doubt still as to their accuracy. But, assuming they are correct, I venture to say that the non-exempted in the schools of Edinburgh and Glasgow are neither so willing nor so unanimous in their acceptance of the *decretum horribile* of the Shorter Catechism as the insignificant fraction of the exempted would lead one to think. The children certainly do not vote for the teaching of the Catechism, neither do they understand or believe it when it is imposed upon them. And as for the religious results of the teaching of the Catechism, they have not yet been ascertained; certainly they are not always such as would be of a gratifying character to the Churches. I am equally certain that the parents of the children do not approve of the Catechism to the extent that Mr. Gulland's appalling figures would suggest, and that a vast number of the children must therefore be receiving religious instruction of a kind which their parents do not approve, but are so indifferent as not, by any outward sign, to disapprove. All that Mr. Gulland's statistics prove is that an enterprising propagandist party may dominate the religious teaching of the schools of a great city to such an extent as to distort the numerical relations between those who think with them and those who do not.

There is much truth in the last sentence. The Churches are well organized. It should be for others to see that they meet organization with organization.

"Does Religion Count?" asks a Salvation Army advertisement. It does—in the balance-sheet.

Hythe Town Council has informed the local clergy that it cannot interfere with Sunday baseball. The Councillors will be remembered in the clergy's prayers.

It is very unkind of editors to print such lengthy examples of the great American "slanguage." A striking instance is this gem of purest ray serene: "We are prepared to fight till hell itself freezes over, and if Germany isn't beat then we'll buy skates and get after her on the ice." The author of this resplendent thought is Billy Sunday, who is a doctor of divinity in his own country.

A new book bears the title, *Jewish Fairy Tales*. We wonder if they are as humorous as the story of Noah's Ark, and other Biblical yarns.

Now, Dr. Hutton maintains that the Church is imitating Jesus by doing nothing in the present terrible crisis. The world cries to her, "Do something, take some decisive action, and we will believe in thee." Consequently, the Church is "in a real strait," being undecided as to what line of action she ought to take. "If she would only say a certain word," Dr. Hutton declares, "every church might be filled to overflowing." He thinks that if she is wise, she will remain "above the battle, unentangled, unperplexed, dealing with matters still deeper than those in dispute." As a matter of fact, the Church is not "above the battle," but, both in Germany and this country, is doing her utmost to back up and encourage the opposing armies, and she is doing this because she is powerless to do anything else.

The *Cambridge Magazine* cites the following from the *Sphere*: "The Kaverondos belong to a very peaceful tribe in British Africa. When trained they make fine soldiers." Who says that Christianity does not spread peace and brotherhood?

Providence is said to take a particular interest in the fall of sparrows; but nothing prevented Sissinghurst villagers from killing 1,621 of these birds, whom they regard as being as destructive as mice and rats.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

WE should be rather less—or more—than human if we did not experience a feeling of elation at the response to our Sustentation Fund. It proves, as we said in our statement of September 1, that the *Freethinker* still retains the confidence and devotion of those who have stood by it in the past. We feel repaid for our struggles during the past four years, and face the future with renewed courage and confidence. Unhappily, the War has prevented our doing many things we had hoped to do, but these plans are deferred, not abandoned. We have every confidence of one day placing the *Freethinker* in a better position than it has yet occupied in the country, and that means benefiting the whole Free-thought Movement. It is for that purpose the paper exists, and we have kept that ideal steadily before us all the time.

When we get back to normal times we hope to tell some part of the story of this War-period. We cannot tell it now for various reasons, some of which may be guessed. Many will doubtless share Mr. G. Brady's feelings who, enclosing a subscription, writes:—

All along the wonder to me has been how you managed so much on so little. With the utmost admiration for the way in which you "carry on" the best of all causes.

All we can say now is that it has not been done without much care and anxiety, and we have not been among the smallest contributors, even from a monetary point of view.

A well-known writer, who veils his identity under the pen-name of "Alpha," writes:—

In these days of ill-balanced and prejudiced journalism the excellence of the *Freethinker* stands out more conspicuously than ever. You are doing a great work, and I was heartily pleased to see by the list of acknowledgments that your labours are appreciated. My own contribution is—of necessity—a small one; please accept it as indicative of my appreciation of good work well done. Personally, I doubt if I should have had the courage to shoulder the burden, but that only increases my admiration for those who have done so.

Mr. G. L. Allward, one of the Old Guard writes:—

Pleased to read your statement in the paper, and to learn that the circulation has grown. The *Freethinker* is splendid reading, and, as an old Freethinker, I am delighted to know that we have at the head of the Movement one who has determined to push forward at this critical time.

From Major Warren:—

I am not in the least surprised that you have been compelled to make another call on us Freethinkers to help you to keep the flag flying. My only wonder is that you have been able to carry on at all, and hasten to send you all I can spare in these hard times. I wish it were ten times as much, as your weekly instalment of "Views and Opinions" comes to me like a tonic for the depression caused by the shallow and misleading verbiage of the ordinary press.

Mrs. A. Lawrence writes from the Willesden Freedom League:—

Some of us are regular readers of your very valuable journal, and we generally consider your work of fundamental importance, and wish you the greatest success in your endeavour.

The above reminds us that at present quite a number of advanced Societies take the *Freethinker* for display on their bookstalls. A very welcome advance, and one that promises developments. We should like to quote from other letters received, but defer doing so until next week.

The following represents the subscriptions received up to the time of our going to press:—

Second List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £184 19s. 3d. G. Allward, £1 1s. J. G. Finlay, £2 2s. J. Mathy, 10s. 6d. E. Parker, 10s. J. Blackhall, 5s. 6d. G. T. R., 2s. 6d. J. Steggall, 3s. W. Mendez, £2. T. and F. White, 10s. J. A. B., £1. W. C. Maurice, 10s. 6d. S. Clowes, 5s. J. Close, 5s. E. B., £1 1s. T. Dunbar, 2s. 6d. Edward Oliver, £3 3s. F. Reed, 10s. W. W. Mowbray, 10s. C. F. Hall, £1 1s. W. H. Knight, £1. Mrs. S. Dobson, 5s. A. L. Morris, £2 2s. Winifrede Hogg, 10s. A. J. Watson, 2s. 6d. S. Healing, 2s. 6d. Mrs. H. Parsons, 10s. 6d. Lt. W. T. Phillips, £1. Willesden Freedom League, 5s. C. A. Goddard, 5s. Blackburn, 5s. J. F. Rayner, £1. H. Jessop, £10. H. C., 10s. J. O. Restall, 5s. H. E. L. Wright, £1 1s. M. T. M., £2. J. F. W. (Liverpool), 10s. Dr. C. R. Niven, £1 1s. Mrs. A. Brooke, 10s. George Brady, £3. J. Lazarnick, £1 1s. M. S., 10s. "Alpha," £1. S. Scott, £1. J. Ratcliffe, £1 1s. B. H. Godfree, £1 1s. C. and T. Holmes, 5s. Jno. Hudson, 10s. D. C. Drummond, 10s. Lady Sarah Maxim (In Memory of Sir Hiram S. Maxim), £5. J. Higgins (first subscription), £3. J. Robinson, 2s. H. Irving, 10s. B. Bowlem, 10s. G. Scott, 5s. H. Mitchell (Leytonstone), 5s. H. Austin, 5s. C. W. Marshall, 10s. E. Dawson, 5s. Mr. and Mrs J. Neate and son, £1. H. J. Earthy, 2s. 6d. J. M. Henley, 10s. H. S. Wishart, 2s. Pte. E. A. Impey, 3s. H. Boll, 5s. Mrs. H. Boll, 2s. 6d. Mr. T. Boll, 2s. 6d. T. Garstang, 4s. C. Heaton, 2s. 6d. D. Seddon, 10s. 6d. A. H. Smith, £2 2s. A. H. Harden, £2 2s. A. B. Moss, 10s. 6d. O. Friedman, £2 2s. H. Good, 10s.

Per Mrs. H. Rosetti:—West Ham Branch, £1 1s. Individual Members:—Mr. H. Taylor, 5s. Mr. Pankhurst, 2s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Rosetti, 2s. 6d. Miss M. Panhurst, 3s. Miss M. Pitcher, 3s. Mr. Lowman, 2s. Mr. Gallery, 1s.—Total £2.—Total £251 6s. 9d.

Corrections.—"E. Wilson, £5" in last week's list should have read "E. Whitehorn, £5." "J. N. Hall, 2s." should have been "5s." The total has been altered accordingly. We have received a P.O. for 5s., but without name of sender. As the envelope bore the postmark of "Blackburn," we have acknowledged it under that name.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

September 15, Aberdare; September 22, Birmingham; September 29, Southampton; October 6, Manchester; October 13, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Both Mr. Moss and Mr. Effel have had their say on the subject, and we regret that the restricted space will not warrant our enlarging the matter.

T. PULLOCK (Bristol).—The *Truthseeker*, 62 Vesey Street, New York, will, probably, meet your needs. There is no Branch of the N. S. S. in your city, but there ought to be.

W. MOWBRAY.—There is no question, we think, of our going under, hard as it is to keep afloat. We have several life-belts, chief of which is the loyalty of our readers.

J. CLOSE.—You will be pleased to see that your expressed wish is being realized in the published subscription lists.

S. CLOWES.—We feel that we may, without undue conceit, congratulate ourselves on the number of new readers secured; and in that we evidently have your support, as we have had your help.

T. WHITE.—Pleased to learn you have heard from your son. It is a trying time, but we must hope that the end of the War is nearer than many of us think.

W. MENDEZ.—We plead guilty to enjoying a fight, when the object is worth fighting for. We hope we deserve some of the good things you say of us.

S. C. (Ireland).—Shall be very pleased to see you when you get leave. Hope the illness at home to which you refer will then be gone. Your letter was much delayed in reaching us.

MR. S. DOBSON.—The appreciation of such as yourself acts as a constant spur to renewed endeavours.

C. A. GODDARD.—We note you hope that the Fund will "beat all records." It is certainly doing well up to date.

R. SMITH.—The Secretary of the Manchester Branch, N. S. S., is Mr. H. Black, 446 Great Cheetham Street, Higher Broughton, Salford. We have been much interested in your letter.

ONE of our readers calls attention to the fact that Mr. Guy Aldred, who has been in prison since May, 1916, as a conscientious objector, has just been again sentenced to two years' imprisonment for disobedience of military orders. In the face of the Government promises, and the express provision made for such cases, there is only one word for such treatment, and that is—disgraceful. A man who has served two years in prison, and undertakes a third term, has given us strong proof of his genuineness as is possible, however mistaken some may believe him to be.

CAN any of our South Australian readers supply the address of Mr. F. Price, one time Freethought lecturer at Broken Hill, N.S.W.? If so, will they communicate with Mr. W. L. Rowe, Village Deep, Johannesburg, Transvaal, S.A.?

M. S.—We shall be glad to hear from you as to the success attained by your newsagent in selling the *Freethinker*, and also concerning the plan you mention. We certainly are not inclined to measure the feelings of anyone towards this journal by the size of the contribution.

ONE of our readers, Mr. T. Wadsworth, reminds us that the lines, "There's none ever feared that the truth should be heard," etc., is from Burns' poem, "Here's a health to them that's awa'." As often happens, we remembered it when we were told.

B. DUPREE.—Pleased to hear of the successful opening meeting of the Branch on Sunday last. Hope it is prophetic of the rest of the course.

J. M. HINLEY.—We are grateful for all you are doing to help in a peculiarly trying time.

E. B.—Labels have been sent. Carter Paterson would do quite well. The "unsolicited testimonial" to the paper you enclose is very encouraging. Thanks.

J. M. GIMSON.—Thanks for reference, which we recalled on being reminded.

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.

To-day (Sept. 15) Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures—afternoon at 2.30, evening at 7—in the Grand Theatre, Aberaman. This is, we hope, the commencement of a revival of Freethought activity; and after the lectures Mr. Cohen will be pleased to see visitors from other districts with a view to a further extension of the work in South Wales.

Next Sunday (Sept. 22) Mr. Cohen opens the season's lectures at Birmingham. These meetings are held in the handsome new Repertory Theatre, and a good list of lecturers has been arranged. The experiment last year was so successful that the Branch was induced to repeat it. The course involves considerable expense, and we beg to draw the attention of Birmingham Freethinkers to the desirability of their lending the Branch full support, both moral and financial. Those who can help in either capacity, or in both, should communicate with the Secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone Road, Rotton Park, Birmingham.

Mr. J. F. Rayner sends us a good-natured grumble which deserves publicity:—

I have much pleasure in enclosing £1 towards your Sustentation Fund, and wish you every success in your arduous undertaking. Your article on the ethical and social activities associated with Christianity, and erroneously supposed to be an integral part of it, is very suggestive. If these activities were, in any noticeable degree, associated with Secularism, our cause would flourish more. As it is, we are little more than critics, and a cause cannot live on criticism alone any more

than man, woman, or child, can live on medicine alone. I was struck, on rejoining the N. S. S. after thirty years' absence, that it had made no progress, either in the extent or style of its propaganda. We are still slogging away with the same old arguments, and people ask: "What good do you suppose you are doing?" The answer: "Clearing men's minds of superstition and cant" seems hardly convincing, and we've been doing that for half a century, and still we find it has to be done, and what have we to show for our expenditure of energy? if we *have* cleared away superstition to any extent (I think we have) why don't we fill its place with positive Secular doctrine? but we only do this incidentally and inferentially. The Churches peg away, after their fashion, with guidance, such as it is, in the trials and puzzles of daily life, but we do little more than find fault. You will answer, well, what are you doing now but finding fault? So I am, but it is friendly fault-finding as the treasury note within may testify.

Mr. Rayner's letter deserves more attention than we can at present give it. Perhaps we may return to the subject later. For the moment we can only say, briefly, that much turns upon whether one regards the Freethought movement as building up a new sect in a world of sects, and giving all its associated activities a sectarian label, or whether we take our work to be that of liberalizing and rationalizing thought in all directions. Next, we think Mr. Rayner rather underestimates the influence our movement has in creating and popularizing "positive Secular doctrines." The pages of the *Freethinker* itself, during over more than twenty years' association with it, bears evidence of much that has been done in this direction. And the task of preparing the public mind for sane views of the universe and of men is itself a work of tremendous importance, even, if not of a spectacular kind. However, we can only glance at some of the important issues opened by Mr. Rayner's letter.

Mr. Cohen's meetings at Maesteg on Sunday last were very successful, the hall being well filled both afternoon and evening. There were a few questions, but no direct opposition. There was also a good sale of literature, the supply being exhausted at the afternoon meeting. The members were all highly delighted with the day's work, and are looking forward to a vigorous and successful season.

Readers in the Abertillery district will please note that Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures at Blaina to-day (Sept. 15), at 7.30. We do not know the name of the hall, but we daresay it may be easily found.

The Bethnal Green Branch concludes its season's lectures with an address from Mrs. Rosetti this evening (September 8). The lecture will be delivered in Victoria Park, near the bandstand, at 6.15. We think this is Mrs. Rosetti's first appearance in Victoria Park, and we hope local "saints" will do their best to see that the attendance is a good one.

While we are dealing with the subject of lectures, we beg to call attention of Branch Secretaries to the need of their getting notices of meetings, both for the Lecture List and for reports of work done, to this office not later than the first post on Tuesday morning. We are always pleased to insert reports, but they must reach us in good time. If secretaries would make it a point of writing a few lines before the Sunday meeting closes and posting it at once they would ensure its appearance in the following week's issue. This cannot be done when it does not reach this office before Tuesday afternoon.

We are asked to draw special attention to the Committee Meeting of the Manchester Branch announced in our "Guide" column. There is important business for discussion. The last "Ramble" of the Branch will be held on September 29.

One of the contributors to our Sustentation Fund asks, "What reason is there that the 1,300 new readers you have obtained should not become 2,000 during the next few weeks?" None whatever, so far as we are concerned. All that needs is for those who read the paper to make sure that

others shall get it also. And it is not nearly so difficult to get new readers as many think who have not tried. Nothing would give us greater pleasure than to be able to announce that the additional 700 have been captured.

Paine: Prophet and Sage.

THOMAS PAINE is the Foe of Flunkeyism, the Terror of Toadies. His pen makes the knees of the Belshazzars to shake. In indelible words this great pioneer of Freedom has indited the fate of tyranny and autocracy.

Yet, comparatively, how very few are familiar with the *facts* about this great Englishman! This condition of things must be attributed to the sedulous efforts of courtiers and lying sycophants, who have vilified as brave a soldier of Justice and Progress as ever lifted voice or wielded pen.

Slanders cannot be transmuted into truth; but they can receive a currency and gain a credence only possible in the case of unfashionable prophets. For example, Theodore Roosevelt, without challenge from any organ of the press, is at liberty, or licence, to denounce Paine—whose shoe latchet he is not worthy to unloose—as a “dirty little Atheist”! Three lies in three words! Paine was neither dirty nor little, and he was *not* an Atheist. So much for the information of so-called eminent men! But George Washington appreciated and honoured Paine; and we take leave to say that Paine’s services to America will be remembered and extolled when the name of Roosevelt is forgotten.

Paine never allowed his passion and enthusiasm for human liberty to override his reason. He was a stickler for accuracy in thinking and accuracy in statement. He was businesslike in the best sense, and had great organizing and administrative gifts. He had the mathematical mind striving after plainness and precision, yet full of appreciation for all the beauty of Nature.

Paine has been represented by his vilifiers as a red revolutionary and a firebrand. Nothing could be further removed from the truth. Paine’s great aim was to advance the cause of humanity by peaceful means and methods; by getting the nation to recognize that the Government, or the State, is the nation’s servant, and not the nation’s master—really, and not merely in name. Can a man who writes like this be called a red revolutionary and a firebrand?—

I have always held it an opinion (making it also my practice) that it is better to obey a bad law, making use at the same time of every argument to shew its errors and procure its repeal, than forcibly to violate it; because the precedent of breaking a bad law might weaken the force, and lead to a discretionary violation of those which are good.

All Paine’s arguments are appeals to Reason, and not to Force. He was a convinced Republican, firmly opposed to all hereditary government. He has abounding and abiding faith in his fellow-men when they are not duped and deluded; when they are informed and enlightened. He writes:—

To say that any people are not fit for freedom is to make poverty their choice, and to say they had rather be loaded with taxes than not. If such a case could be proved it would equally prove that those who govern are not fit to govern them, for they are a part of the same national mass.

Changes, Paine held, could be brought about “without convulsion or revenge.” “It is not worth making changes or revolutions,” he writes, “unless it be for some great national benefit: and, when this shall appear to a nation, the danger will be as in America and France to those who oppose.”

Those who favour the formation of a League of Nations for securing the future peace of the world may find stimulation and instruction in the teachings of Paine. The incurable conservatism of many Britons unhappily turns their preferences into exclusions. It has been the fashion of the schools to read Burke. Some of our young intellectuals, who have been taught to worship Burke, the sentimental Monarchist, the weaver of sophisms, and to shun Paine as the coadjutor of the Devil, may be surprised to learn that Burke himself did not entertain a poor opinion of the personality and power of Thomas Paine. One hundred and twenty years ago Paine urged for the adoption of a scheme of Old Age Pensions. Now, you ladies and gentlemen who wish for a League of Nations, listen, please, to this:—

Government founded on a moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man, is now revolving from West to East by a stronger impulse than the government of the sword revolved from East to West. It interests not particular individuals but nations in its progress, and promises a new Era to the human race.

Paine preached the doctrine (which was embraced by many Radicals after his time) that true reform more often consists not in the enacting of new laws, but in repealing many of those which already exist. “But how often,” he exclaims, “is the natural propensity to society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government! When the latter, instead of being ingrafted on the principles of the former, assumes to exist for itself, and acts by partialities of favour and oppression, it becomes the cause of the mischiefs it ought to prevent.”

Paine is naturally impatient when he comes to deal with mystery-mongering. Government, in his estimation, is nothing more than a natural association acting on the principles of society. He conceives the hereditary element in government to be the great obstacle to progress:—

Man has no authority over posterity in matters of personal right; and therefore no man or body of men had or can have a right to set up hereditary government. Were even ourselves to come again into existence instead of being succeeded by posterity we have not now the right of taking from ourselves the rights which would then be ours. On what ground, then, do we pretend to take them from others?.....I smile to myself when I contemplate the ridiculous insignificance into which literature and all the sciences would sink were they made hereditary; and I carry the same idea into governments.

This is his description of the American Government:—

It is representation ingrafted upon democracy. It has fixed the form by a scale parallel in all cases to the extent of the principle. What Athens was in miniature, American will be in magnitude. The one was the wonder of the ancient world: the other is becoming the admiration and model of the present. It is the easiest of all the forms of government to be understood and the most eligible in practice, and excludes at once the ignorance and insecurity of the hereditary mode and the inconvenience of the simple democracy.

Surely Paine justifies a claim to the title of “Sage” in these wise and pregnant words:—

Government is not a trade which any man or any body of men has a right to set up and exercise for his own emolument, but is altogether a trust in right of those by whom the trust is delegated, and by whom it is always resumable. It has of itself no rights: they are altogether duties.

How true of our own time is this passage also:—

Governments now act as if they were afraid to awaken a single reflection in man. They are softly leading him

to the sepulchre of precedents to deaden his faculties and call attention from the scene of revolutions. They feel that he is arriving at knowledge faster than they wish and their policy of precedents is the barometer of their fears. This political popery like the ecclesiastical popery of old has had its day and is hastening to its exit.

Paine anticipated Cobden in the view that free and extending international commerce would be a fruitful producer of international amity:—

If commerce were permitted to act to the universal extent it is capable of, it would extirpate the system of War and produce a revolution in the uncivilized state of Governments. The invention of commerce has arisen since those Governments began, and it is the greatest approach towards universal civilization that has yet been made by any means not immediately flowing from moral principles.....There can be no such thing as a nation flourishing alone in commerce; she can only participate; and the destruction of it in any part must necessarily affect all. When therefore Governments are at war the attack is made upon a common stock of commerce, and the consequence is the same as if each had attacked his own.

What would have been Paine's attitude to the present conflict? This is not a war between Governments, at least so far as Britain and her Allies are concerned. It is really a struggle between nations, and, lover of peace as he was, can we doubt that Paine would have rejoiced to see the Alliance between Britain, France, and America—a project always close to his heart of hearts? Is it surprising that his contemptuous wrath was stirred by the unreasoning hatred of the English people of his own time against France and everything French? Burke had no little share in fostering that enmity. Is it surprising that Paine was roused to mordant criticism of the British statesmen of his day who so misread the signs of the times, and tried to strangle the infant American Republic in its cradle? The Alliance of to-day is the dream of Paine accomplished, and his heart must swell in the Elysian fields as he contemplates it. What we take to be the chief lesson to be learned from Thomas Paine is that each people must work out its own emancipation and salvation. Let our modern Socialists ponder this: national and international happiness and security are only to be attained through voluntary co-operation and socialization working from within. If we choose to subject ourselves to a bureaucratic system of State Socialism superimposed from without, we are but forging the fetters of a new tyranny. The sovereignty must remain in every case in the people as a whole.

IGNOTUS.

How Long Will They Wait?

"HOPE deferred maketh the heart sick,"—the Hebrew book of *Proverbs* said very wisely.

One of the key-words of the Christian religion is "expectation," in the sense of hope. We are now in the year—a very tragical year for mankind—1918. If Christians turn over the pages of one of their revered documents, written so long ago as the second century, or the latter half of the first century, namely, the Pauline manifesto called *Romans*, they will find these yearning words:—

I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.

The early Gospel was mainly the Gospel of the Poor, or (to use a term current in India to-day) the Depressed Classes. Such classes are always expectant, for life deals hardly with them, and yet the unconquerable

human spirit hopes for a day of liberty and joy. They waited for heaven to open, and disclose, in glory, the God-Christ who would emancipate them from exploiters, from their own sin, from all the dullness and darkness of the earthly existence.

That was how Christians expressed themselves in the period 50 to 150. And Christians still wait.

The remarkable thing is that, in remoter ages, people did not expect God at all. They saw him. They saw him either as fire, or lightning, or luminous cloud, or as a Superman—that is to say, angel. When the slave-woman, Hagar, sat solitary in the wilderness, she beheld the Angel of Yahweh (the Lord), and conversed with him. Her master, Abraham, was visited one day by three such Angels, who ate and drank with him, and one of whom talked in terms that implied his God-hood. Moses shepherded his flock in Midian, and "the Angel of Yahweh appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." The Israelite horde, in its emigration to Canaan, was guided by Yahweh in the shape of a pillar of cloud, which, at night, glowed brightly over the road. On one occasion, a Hebrew deputation ventured into the Divine presence on a mountain-top, thus:—

Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet a paved work of sapphire-stone.

In many a legend, the Yahweh-fire flickers, illumines, and sometimes devours. When the wandering Jews openly criticized the hard conditions under which they tramped the Wilderness, Yahweh's anger was kindled, and his flames consumed those who complained. Fire fell from heaven at Elijah's prayer, and licked up sacrificial bullocks, along with stones and earth. Elijah, having finished his earthly pilgrimage, was received into the heavenly palace in a fire car sent by the celestial King himself. Later on, this fire suffered a curious evolution. It was used, not so much as a garment to clothe the Heaven-God, as an instrument of punishment for God's enemies. In the second century B.C., a poet whose visions are found in the book of *Enoch* described the fate of the Fallen Angels:—

I saw a horrible thing, a great fire which burned and blazed, and the place was cleft as far as the abyss, being full of great descending columns of fire; neither its intent or magnitude could I see, nor could I conjecture. Then I said, "How fearful is the place, and how terrible to look upon!" Then Uriel answered me, one of the holy angels who was with me, and said unto me, "Enoch, why hast thou such fear and affright?" And I answered, "Because of this fearful place, and because of the spectacle of the pain." And he said, "This place is the prison of the angels, and here they will be imprisoned for ever" (*Charles's translation, chap. xxii*).

Some three hundred years after this explosive poetry was published, we find similar fires lighted in the New Testament scriptures, as, for example:—

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that knew not God (*i. Thessalonians ii. 8*).

It is, however, fair to add that the references to such fire are not so numerous in the New Testament as is often supposed. It was the monks of the Middle Ages who elaborated the idea so deeply and so widely. In any case, the progress of fire was from heaven to hell, so that, whether in Milton's *inferno*, or in Goethe's drama of *Mephistopheles and Faust*, popular fancy thinks of the Devil as having his home in flames and fumes.

Meanwhile, Yahweh was being displaced by the Christian imagination in favour of the God-in-flesh, Jesus. There are flashes of the ancient fire in the scene of the

Transfiguration, when Christ's face shone like the sun, and in the descent of the Holy Pneuma (spirit) in the form of cloven tongues of fire on the Day of Pentecost. But, on the whole, the Fire and Thunderstorm element gives way to the human element; and God walks the earth as a carpenter, a teacher, a camp-meeting orator, a faith-healer, a prophet. So human is he that Roman soldiers crucify him. It is true, he is said to have risen again, but the figure of the Crucified captured the heart of Christendom more than the figure of the resurrected God.

At this point the Pauline voice is heard breathing a hope that this God will return to earth; and so earnest was this expectation of the Primitive Church that (by design or by chance) the New Testament Scriptures were so arranged as to make the *Apocalypse* the final book; and it ended thus:—

Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus. (Rev. xxii. 20).

There is, of course, an ensuing verse, but it is merely a salutation to the reader.

A review of the facts which I have briefly set out will indicate a very notable process in theological thought during the last 2,000 or 3,000 years. I mean the disappearance of God. At first he came before men very visible and very obvious, as fire, cloud, angel, and the like. In the New Testament he is divested of these cruder attributes, and is chiefly presented as the Son of Man so evidently and characteristically human that he is penniless and homeless, and, at certain critical moments in Gethsemane, friendless. Then he is slain, he rises from the dead, he ascends, he is lost sight of, he is earnestly expected.

Why does he not reappear as fire? Why not again sit on a royal chair with a sapphire foot-stool? Why not fling once more volcanic torrents on his enemies? Why not labour again at the carpenter's bench, or give sight again to the blind?

"A cloud received him out of their sight," says *Luke* in his story of the Ascension.

The cloud remains. The human mind refuses any more to see God in gross Old Testament forms, or in the milder and homelier New Testament form. Still affirming its faith in the Incarnate God, it, nevertheless, experienced a secret doubt, and deported the God-Christ to heaven. And having, nearly two thousand years ago, "earnestly expected" his return and new revelation, it has allowed him to exist for centuries as a question for debate, and a subject for the speculations of argumentative preachers and Professors of Ecclesiastical History.

We have travelled a long way since Abraham and Yahweh ate and drank together as host and guest under the oak of Mamre! How near was Divinity to us then! In this day of World-War, how far!

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

"MR. MANN AND THE SOUL."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Owing to the divagations of the Post Office and the newspapers, I did not see the criticism of "C. H." in the *Freethinker* for September 1 until it was too late for an answer in the next issue.

"C. H." accuses me of "stupidity" in countering Sylvanus Thompson's claim to "spiritual perception" by the statement that there are tribes and nations without any idea of a God. "C. H." says: "Sylvanus Thompson said in effect: Some men have a sense of the non-physical." This is quite false. Sylvanus Thompson was not a Spiritualist, and there is nothing in his book, *A Not Impossible Religion*—as "C. H." would know if he had read it before rushing into print—

to countenance the interpretation which "C. H." attempts to force upon his words.

By "spiritual perception" Thompson meant a knowledge of God and worship of Jesus Christ. No doubt he also believed in a future life; but he does not treat of it in his book.

Thompson claimed that "the instinct of religion is then innate," and as natural as our other instincts; and I pointed out that this was diametrically opposed to the facts by the existence of Atheistic peoples. Where is the "stupidity"? There are worse things than stupidity. One of them is the calculated attempt to twist another man's words into conformity with our own belief.

"C. H." says he has lived before! One can only marvel that the experience gained in a previous life—or lives—has not resulted in better morals and better manners. If "C. H." wishes to receive any future notice, he must adopt the manners of common courtesy.

W. MANN.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "Our Warriors as Poets."

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. No Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mrs. Rosetti, A Lecture.

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

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 6, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "Can an Unbeliever Blaspheme?" Mr. R. Norman, "Bible Stories for the Young."

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

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

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERAMAN (The Grand Theatre, Aberaman): Mr. C. Cohen, 2.30, "Why Men Believe in God": 7, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

BLAINA: 7.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beaver Street, Goldthorpe): 3, Important Business Meeting. Will all Members try to attend?

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (60 Alexandra Road): 6.30, Discussion, Opened by D. J. Morgan.

OUTDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. Ramble to Stalybrushes.—Meet 10.30. Piccadilly for Stalybridge Car. Bring refreshments. Committee Meeting.

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