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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Death.

It is false to say that death is the supreme test of character. That is a philosophy preached to cowards by fools or knaves. The true test of a man is not death but life; for how a man will face death will be determined by his character, and character is not a thing of the moment. It begins with each one in the cradle, and the call of death is only the occasion for a last expression of its quality. But on the observer death has its inevitable and universal reaction. A tribute of silence, if not of respect, is wrung from all. Instinctively the voice is lowered, the manner becomes quieter, the most thoughtless recognize the presence of one of the great—perhaps one of the most significant—facts of existence. A world without death is an inconceivable world. It would be a place in which affection would die of inanition, where before and after would almost lose their meaning. Love finds its occasion in birth, but it is deeply rooted in the complementary fact of death.

* * *

A Good Beginning.

For over four years death has been more than usually busy in our midst. War, famine, and disease have been active. Never before has the grim reaper swung his scythe with such vigour; never before, and in so short a time has he reaped so rich a harvest. In France scores of thousands of our kith and kin lie buried. The dead have given their all, and the living can give them nothing in return but affectionate and respectful remembrance. The whole nation is at one here, and it is fitting that some attempt should be made to preserve and to clothe with some sign of outward dignity the places where our dead lie so thickly. It is, therefore, only just that the care of these graves should be taken from the hands of private individuals, and made the concern of the nation as a whole. So far the Imperial War Graves' Commission is well conceived. So, also, it is good to find Sir F. Kenyon, Director of the British Museum, in his just-issued report on the care and treatment of these cemeteries, recommending that private memorials be not allowed. It is well that in this matter individual caprice and wealth should be eliminated. Sir Frederic well says:—

The sacrifice of the individual is a great idea and worthy of commemoration; but the community of sacri-

... fice, the service of a common cause, the comradeship of arms which has brought together men of all ranks and grades—these are greater ideas which should be commemorated in these cemeteries where they lie together.

That is well put; and a logical carrying out of the idea would have been the recommendation of a monument which should eliminate everything of a sectional or sectarian character. Service in a common cause should be symbolized in a way that would strike no jarring note, and rouse no mocking or contemptuous spirit.

* * *

With a Bad Ending.

An earlier recommendation, from Sir E. Luyten, was that the memorial in each cemetery should take the form of "one great fair stone" raised on three steps, with suitable inscriptions. This, says Sir Frederic Kenyon, goes "far to meet our requirements," but it is not enough—

It lacks the definitely Christian character, and it does not represent the idea of self-sacrifice. For this the one essential symbol is the Cross. The Jews are necessarily interred with their Christian comrades, but it is believed that their feelings will be satisfied by the inclusion of their religious symbol in the design of their headstones.

But, in the name of all that is sensible, why should this national memorial to the nation's dead have a definitely Christian character? Does Sir Frederic wish us to infer that they who are dead had all a definite Christian conviction while alive? Sir Frederic must know, as everyone else does, that the vast majority of the soldiers thought very little about Christianity, one way or the other. And of those who did think, a by no means negligible number thought of it only to reject it. Surely the "service of a common cause," in which these men died, was not the service of the Churches. How many would have died for that cause? And by what moral right will the Graves Commission erect a cross above the grave of men who while living repudiated the cross and Christianity? It is an outrage on the dead. Sir Frederic may reply that the majority of the dead were Christians. Let it go at that. But right or wrong, decency and indecency are not determined by questions of majority and minority. An injustice must be done to an individual if it is done at all. These men died in "the service of a common cause." Sir Frederic Kenyon, in the interests of a discredited and a dying creed, repays their sacrifice by almost an insult.

* * *

Exploiting Death.

Clerical influence, we feel sure, is behind it all, and it quite accounts for the impertinence of the suggestion. Only the Cross can represent the idea of self-sacrifice! Was the Cross responsible for the self-sacrifice of the French soldier and the French people—whose sufferings were a hundredfold greater than ours? What of the Mohammedan, the Jew, the Buddhist, the Hindoo, the men who went into action with "Atheist," "Agnostic," or "Freethinker" written on their identification discs? Did self-sacrifice mean to them the Cross? It is the arrogance of the Christian who takes to himself a quality

that belongs to humanity as a whole, and stamps it with his sectarian mark. Christianity has for centuries made life hideous with its sectarianism; it cannot suppress its sectarianism even in the presence of death. Above the grave of the French soldier stands the inscription, "La Patrie." It stands to him for all that he holds dear—for home, for friends, for national greatness. Does the British soldier need more? Does he ask for more? No, it is not he who asks for aught else; it is the request of a class that sees in death little more than an occasion for advancing its own sectarian interests.

* * *

The Sign of the Cross.

And yet there is a grim, even though unconscious, irony in erecting the Cross over these huge repositories of the nation's dead. For the War, with its twenty millions of killed and wounded, represents the part product of over fifteen centuries of the rule of the Cross. The most contented people under the Cross have always been dead ones. It has stood as a sanction for some of the worst outrages that the history of the past fifteen centuries has furnished. When two civilizations were blotted out in South America, and nearly three million natives killed, the banner of the Cross floated above the ruins and over the corpses of the people. When Christian Spain murdered thousands of its Mohammedan and Jewish subjects, and robbed and expelled the remainder, what, again, was the symbol employed? The Cross. When the streets of Paris ran red with the blood of a St. Bartholomew massacre, and the fires of our own Smithfield blazed around the limbs of heretics, it was under the shadow of the Cross. It was held aloft over the horrors of the black slave trade, and over the fiendish brutality of the Inquisition. It has provided the occasion for bitterness and brutality in Ireland for over three centuries. It has divided families and set nations at each others' throats. And now it is to stand as a symbol over the graves of hundreds of thousands in France. A symbol of what? The thoughtful man or woman of the next generation may well see in it the symbol of the failure of a religion that possessing almost fabulous resources demonstrated its own dishonour in the world-war of the twentieth century. The satire of its erection will be lost on the dead. Let us earnestly hope its significance will be fully recognized by the living.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Metaphysics.

MR. J. DOWELL JONES, in a letter which appeared in this journal for November 24, in a perfectly friendly manner, finds fault with me for placing metaphysics on a level with "dogmatism." I have no recollection of ever having committed such an offence, and I am quite certain that I did not intend to do so in my article on "Experience as Argument," which is to be seen in the issue for November 10. However, I am grateful to Mr. Jones for affording me an opportunity to express my views on the important subject of Metaphysics. My critic regards my supposed attitude to it as symbolic of a weakness in the Freethought position generally. Every scholar is aware that *metaphysics* is the term which Andronicus of Rhodes is supposed to have applied to those writings of Aristotle that came *after* the *physics*, and that, therefore, it merely indicated the place of those writings in that edition of his works, but was not intended to be descriptive of their nature. Later, mystics of the Neo-Platonic school maintained that it signified *beyond*, not merely *after*, physics. In the work thus called, Aristotle treats of the principles of Being, as such, and of theology, or the existence of God. In other words,

metaphysics concerns itself with subjects which lie beyond experience and knowledge, but which have been the pet toys of speculative jugglers in all generations. Mr. Jones refers to certain "facts" which, "even in the present age of scientific progress, can only be investigated metaphysically"; but those facts are entirely unknown to me. The existence of "those infinite things that we to-day are unable to comprehend," is an assumption, not a fact. Is it not likely that my friend has ventured a little beyond his depth here? He says: "It is impossible for us to conceive of space and time as finite, and yet the Infinite is necessarily beyond our knowledge." Then, as if he had already forgotten that sentence, he adds: "To this same sphere—that of the conceivable but incomprehensible—appear to belong love, life, truth, goodness." Can the same sphere be at once conceivable and inconceivable? Be that as it may at present, the point of importance is that Metaphysics has not devoted itself to the investigation of facts, but to the discussion of questions relating to the nature of reality. It has been called a theoretical science, which, many Neo-Platonists declared, "could not be attained except by one who had turned his back upon the natural world." But it is a well-known fact that Neo-Platonism flourished only when dogmatic theology was prominent and the natural sciences had been forcibly suppressed. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of metaphysicians have been themselves zealous advocates of dogmatic theology, and it was certainly with this fact in view that, in my article, I placed the doctrine about God "a metaphysical speculation."

When Mr. Jones says that "metaphysical research is occupying so big a place in the Western hemisphere in these days" he must either be labouring under a delusion or attaching an unusual meaning to the adjective "metaphysical." I admit that in the nineteenth century there was a slight reaction in favour of metaphysics; but already that reaction is a thing of the past, and the natural sciences are everywhere all-victorious. Scholasticism, which was based on Aristotelianism, is now as dead as Queen Anne. This is by no means a faith-ridden age, but an age which, wholly dissatisfied with the unverified and unverifiable assumptions of dogmatic theology, is wistfully endeavouring to interpret the facts of life in terms of natural knowledge, and not of supernatural belief. I find that the generality of present-day thinkers are flying, for a solution of all pressing problems, not *to* but *from* religion; and to all such Freethought offers, not vain guesses, speculations, and hypotheses, but all the light already obtained and obtainable as the direct result of the scientific investigation of the mechanism of Nature. Mr. Jones alludes to people who want to know why memory persists in the subconscious mind, and what utility have experiences that extend over a lifetime if the ego ceases to be at death; but, surely, such "thinkers" look at social life through selfish eyes, and fail to realize that the utility or inutility of experiences is not affected by what happens to the ego at death.

I hate all dogmatism except that which inevitably accompanies actual knowledge, and I cannot see what justification I have given for the charge of being dogmatic which Mr. Jones appears to make against me. In the article which occasioned his letter I indulged in no dogmatism, but confined myself to characterizing all theological statements about God and his relation to human destiny as purely speculative dogmas. Does not Mr. Jones agree with me on that point, and is he not aware that the schoolmen regarded speculative theology as the proper sphere of metaphysics? I am, of course, aware that in Great Britain metaphysics is often used as a synonym of philosophy, especially by thinkers like

Carveth Read, who regard philosophy as "the attempt to unite the sciences in one system, and to expound their mutual relations and the harmony of their laws. In his excellent book, entitled *The Metaphysics of Nature*, Professor Read says:—

Positive philosophy is such a manifest demand of reason that almost at the beginning of European speculation it was felt by Plato (Rep. B. VII.); at the beginning of modern thought, by Bacon; since Comte the idea has become popular, and the first problem of the Positive Philosophy, the Classification of the Sciences, is now a common exercise. The great body of the Positive Philosophy (not merely Comtian) is constituted by those sciences which give an account of the genesis and history of the world—Astronomy, Geology, Biology, Psychology, Sociology: the Analytic Sciences, treating of the modes of energy or activity which the genetic Sciences imply, are,—Mechanics, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, Economics, etc.; the Formal Sciences, Logic and Mathematics, investigate the conditions of proving the relations and laws of phenomena in general, so far as proof is possible from accepted premises (pp. 1, 2).

Another critic of the same article, who has written to me privately, says he often detects bad logic in the *Freethinker*, but that I, in the article under consideration, have provided him with the worst specimen he has seen yet. This is the passage he pounces upon:—

Mr. Lord is entirely mistaken when he affirms that religion begins in experience. The present writer is acquainted with scores of persons who have never entertained a single supernatural belief, and not one of them has ever had any religious experience.

And this is the comment thereupon:—

That does not refute what Lord says. It confirms it. Lord might answer: "Well, if they have had no experience, I would not have expected them to have any religion, because religion *begins* in experience.

I may be very stupid, but with all due deference to my logic-grinding critic, I am utterly unable to trace the slightest illogicality in that quoted extract. Its truth is not questioned; but if it is true what it proves is, not that religion begins in experience, but that it never begins at all, in the absence of belief. Unless Mr. Lord or Mr. Harpur can produce a person by whom religious experience was enjoyed prior to his entertaining any religious belief my contention stands, not only as absolutely true, but also, because true, as entirely logical. Why are the people to whom I referred without religious experience? Whose is the responsibility for the lack of it? If there is a God, why has he never spoken to them? Whose fault is it that they are without knowledge of him? If through the influence of their parents and school teachers children are not induced to believe in God, why are they allowed to go through a life as Atheists? If their so-called Father in Heaven is not a myth, how can he have a moment's happiness while they are in total ignorance of him? Full well do the priests know that unless they secure the child they will never win the man. It is that knowledge alone that accounts for their burning zeal in the cause of religious education.

What I maintain is that God, the alleged giver of religious experience, is either a supernatural Being, metaphysically conceived, or an idealized abstraction; but, in either case, an imaginary creation, and, of necessity, no experience of him is possible except to those who believe in him. Consequently, and, of equal necessity, the degree of experience invariably corresponds to the intensity of the belief. In other words, religious experience owes its existence to metaphysical theology. Therefore, while I greatly admire many metaphysical systems because of their beauty, ingenuity, and subtlety, I attach no practical value whatever to

them; and I agree with the following estimate by Ingersoll:—

• There is no propriety in wasting any time about the science of metaphysics. I will give you my definition of metaphysics: Two fools get together; each admits what neither can prove, and thereupon both of them say, "Hence we infer." That is all there is of metaphysics (*Works*, vol. vii., p. 17).

J. T. LLOYD.

The Freethought Orators.

Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain.

—Ingersoll.

WHAT a volume could be compiled of Rationalist oratory! For near a hundred years the Freethought Movement has contained some of the foremost speakers in the country. From the stormy days of Charles Southwell until the present day the bead-roll of Freethought advocates has included men and money who could sway popular audiences as a musician plays on an organ. Owing, however, to the press boycott, scant records are to be found of some of their best efforts, although there is sufficient left to justify any claim of oratorical pre-eminence. To think of Charles Bradlaugh is to recall the personality of one of the greatest of orators; an artist in words who could rival Leon Gambetta and Emilio Castelar. His Parliamentary speeches were tame as compared with the volcanic orations delivered before Rationalist audiences; but, in spite of their judicial note, they are magnificent examples of their kind. Perhaps the speech on the Oaths Bill is the best—so suave and dignified—as befitted such an audience as the House of Commons. The address at the Bar of the House, too, is a masterpiece in its way; but neither display that Gallic fervour which was so marked a feature of his platform speeches. For it is the French orators, above all, who excel in this way. There is always logic and thought in what they say, and at the same time a volcanic emotion which can alone give it value for popular audiences, and enable them to turn votes by their eloquence. It was in the lecture halls that Bradlaugh uttered his most passionate appeals; there that the gage of oratorical combat was thrown down. A master of rhetoric, Bradlaugh could be solemn or volatile, grave or humorous, persuasive or denunciatory, pathetic or scornful at will. How magnificently these addresses would have read, only those who heard them hot from his great brain and heart can ever realize. For

that fiery heart, that morning star
Of re-arisen England, whose clear eye
Saw from our tottering throne and waste of war
The grand Greek limbs of young Democracy
Rise mightily like Hesperus.

Mrs. Annie Besant's name leaps to the mind. How vividly do her speeches come through the mist of the years, recalling the time when she was regarded by the younger soldiers of Freethought as Marie Antoinette was regarded by the youthful Royalists of France. Ladies were scarce on lecture platforms in those tempestuous days; and she was queen of them all. When she chanted the Galilean's requiem, or retold in awed accents the awful story of Bruno's sufferings, the audiences cheered themselves hoarse in their admiration at her consummate oratory. At her farewell address in the old Hall of Science, London, after fifteen years devoted service to the cause of liberty, she made a most moving speech. Some of her audience actually broke down, and men were not ashamed to be seen in tears. For, in those far off days, Mrs. Besant was one of the most fascinating and impressive speakers it was possible to listen to—"O noble music with a golden ending."

Bradlaugh's colleagues were men of exceptional ability. As orators, some of them rivalled their chief, and they richly deserve mention. Charles Watts was a consummate master of language, possessing a most persuasive style. I shall never forget my delight at hearing him again after his return from America, when his lectures were enlivened with witty Transatlantic stories, told with inimitable skill. As a debater, he was, to my mind, easily first of them all, and the reason was that he always wore the velvet glove over his steel gauntlet. He was urbanity itself in such dialectic encounters. Gilded with happy phrases, his speeches sparkled with effervescence and laughter, and became part of the intellectual capital of his audience.

George Foote's speeches and lectures had a literary touch peculiarly his own. His best lecturing period was during the time when he occupied the platform at the Athenæum, Tottenham Court Road. The perorations were wonderful, poetic, and illuminative. The pity remains that they were unreported. Of his published orations, the best is his defence before Lord Coleridge, and, in a far more intimate vein, his oration at the funeral of his dead colleague, Joseph Wheeler. These should serve to show his quality to a younger generation who never had the privilege of hearing the leader at his best. Ever a fighter, the sword was always in his hand. It is difficult to describe the vigour with which he swept off opposition from the field. He was the Prince Rupert of the Army of Progress.

What do we not owe to the fact that Ingersoll's orations were reported, and, in many cases corrected by the speaker? Easily the foremost orator of his generation in America, he flamed the evangel of Freethought over a continent, and, thanks to the reporters, many of his happiest efforts have become part and parcel of the language. In England his reputation is as secure as in his native land. So ardent was his love of Shakespeare that his own orations are enriched by turns of expression caught from the Master himself. Ingersoll's chief claim was his incomparable humour and intense humanism. Who can ever forget his words at Napoleon's tomb? He would rather have been a peasant, worn wooden shoes, lived in a hut, with his wife by his side, and his children on his knees, than have been Napoleon the Great. Recall, too, his beautiful description of a child's laugh—"the laugh that fills the eyes with light and every heart with joy," and puts to shame the "harp strung with Apollo's golden hair." Always, he was the banner-bearer of Freedom—"liberty, a word without which all other words are vain." As one reads, one can almost see the outstretched arm, hear the beautiful and resonant voice. Under the glory of the rhetoric the trumpets ring to battle.

To-day the great Freethought tradition is carried forward by men and women of outstanding ability. They represent a type of public speaking carried to higher perfection than by anyone else. Let us see to it that their happiest efforts do not go unreported. For their life-work is a positive contribution to the conception of a new civilization, a world new-born. Our children's children cannot fail to enhance the estimation in which we regard these standard-bearers of Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.—*Robert Burns.*

Let us have more science and more sentiment—more knowledge and more conscience—more liberty and more love.—*Ingersoll.*

Religion After the War.

II.

(Continued from p. 622.)

From the day when we awoke to an adult perception of the life of the world we have been aware that the established system of settling international quarrels was barbaric, and might in any year lead to just such a catastrophe. How comes it that such a system has survived fifteen hundred years of profound Christian influence? Whatever we may think of the clergy of to-day, with the more powerful clergy of yesterday, we have a grave reckoning.

If they had directed to war the smallest particle of the ardent rhetoric they poured on disbelief in dogmas which they are to-day abandoning, the public mind would have awakened long ago. There is no intrinsic difficulty in substituting arbitration for war.—*Joseph McCabe, "The War and the Churches,"* pp. 24-47.

In the early days of the struggle we grew accustomed to the reports of enthusiastic chaplains and others who told us that "contact with the realities of life and death" had brought great numbers of the men of the New Armies back to the faith and practice of traditional Christianity. But after four years of war we are now told, by most interpreters of the signs of the times, that neither the Army nor the civilian population has been to any appreciable extent affected by what has happened since August, 1914.

We lament that our soldiers are not Christian in any vital sense of the word.—*Rev. Cyril E. Hudson, "The Nineteenth Century,"* November, 1918, pp. 880-886.

At the commencement of the War the Churches declared that the disaster was due to the Materialistic teachings of science. Just before the War, it will be remembered, the clergy, both Church and Nonconformist, were unanimous in declaring that Materialism and Atheism were utterly discredited, and nobody but the ignorant and vicious believed in them any longer. Then when the War broke out they suddenly discovered that the Germans were a nation of Materialistic Atheists! That is just another sample of the utterly unscrupulous methods adopted by the Churches towards those who oppose them. And the falsehood is still being propagated. I take up to-day's *Daily Chronicle* (November 19th, p. 2), and find an article by Mr. Arthur Mee, entitled "The Churches' Ordeal," in which he declares that "it is Professor Haeckel who helped to sow the seed of the war: it is the Gospel of Materialism according to Haeckel that was supposed to have superseded the Gospel according to St. John.....It is his god of steel that has been set up above all others in Berlin."

We hold no brief for Professor Haeckel. In all the years of our advocacy of Atheism we have never recommended, or even referred, so far as we can remember, to his much-belauded—by many Rationalists—work, *The Riddle of the Universe*. His use of the word Soul, where he only means Mind, plays into the hands of the religious. The same may be said of the claim that his philosophy of "Monism" provides "a connecting link between religion and science." We do not want any connecting link between religion and science any more than we want a connecting link between science and witchcraft or astrology. His description of Christ as "that noble prophet and enthusiast," so full of the love of humanity," is open to the same objection.

It may be said that Haeckel does not mean by "Soul" and "religion" what the orthodox mean. Well, then, he should not use the words.

But to say that the teachings of Haeckel had anything to do with the preparation or launching of this War is absolutely false. As Mr. McCabe has pointed out in reply to a Catholic writer, Haeckel—

Is one of the few German professors who have for decades, in spite of the Emperor, drastically condemned the duelling and beer-swilling which sustain the military ardour of German middle-class youth. The influence of the Monists, as far as it goes, is emphatically on the

side of humanity. But it does not go far. For a Catholic writer, who knows that there are in Germany about 20,000,000 Catholics and more than 20,000 Catholic priests, to ascribe the conduct of a nation to a few thousand unorganized Rationalists, with no salaried servants, is the depth of fatuity.¹

In addition to the 20,000,000 Catholics, the Protestant Churches claim 38,000,000 members, and, as Mr. McCabe further remarks, "the only men to stand firmly against the war and condemn its conduct were freethinking Socialists (like Liebknecht). And in the face of all these facts our religious writers would transfer the guilt for the crimes of Germany from its 60,000 organized and professional clergy and their 60,000,000 followers to a scattered handful of Rationalists and less than two million notoriously humanitarian Socialists!"²

One would think, to hear some Christian preachers and apologists, that before the Christian era peace was unknown—that Christ brought peace to a warring mankind a peace which continued through the Middle Ages until the modern period, when the Atheists started the fighting again.

The exact reverse of this is the truth. Under the wise and beneficent rule of the Pagan Emperors, the famous *Pax Romanum*—the Roman Peace, was an accomplished fact. "During a long period of forty-three years," says the great historian Gibbon, "the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius offer the fair prospect of universal peace. The Roman name was revered among the most remote nations of the earth."³ This was from A.D. 117 to A.D. 161, more than a century and a half before Christianity became the established religion of the State. Gibbon declares:—

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and of wisdom.⁴

Never for a moment has the world been so governed since the establishment of Christianity. And this was accomplished with an army of less than 400,000 men. What would the ancient Pagans think of our armies now? They would declare that their verdict, that the new religion of Christianity was a wicked and debasing superstition, had been justified by the result. After Christianity was established by the Emperor Constantine as the State religion in the fourth century, the Church seized the sword, and used it to coerce other nations to the Faith. Christianity propagated itself by the sword; during the Middle Ages it organized Crusades and Holy Wars, and mail-clad bishops rode at the head of their troops, leading them to the slaughter. "Onward, Christian soldiers!" The Crusades, undertaken by the Church to obtain possession of the tomb of Christ, lasted intermittently for 200 years, and drained the resources of Europe of men and money. Millions of lives were sacrificed in the mad enterprise. The Thirty Years' War of the seventeenth century was a wholly religious war: and yet, in spite of all this bloody record, Christians have the hypocrisy to pretend that the present conflict was caused by the teaching of Materialistic Atheism! But nobody is deceived, and the false charges of the clergy rebound on themselves.

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

Religion: the Loveless and Limiting.

It has more than once been said that the noblest duty of Secularists is to add something to the sum of human happiness. But is it so? Is that conception of duty not even susceptible of extension? Yes, surely. Because if *human* happiness by itself is to be secured through the pain, suffering, and sorrow of beings that are not human, we desire no share in such happiness.

The whole teaching of Christianity regarding the "brute" creation is based upon the fundamental assumption that the beasts "perish." Man is immortal but (*pace* Dr. David-Smith) his dog may not attain the golden shore. The Bible provides no place in the ambit of human affection for animals. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" "Doth God care for cattle?" And so on.

And, observe, it is only the elect of mankind—those saved by grace—who have been born again and been washed in the blood of the Lamb who are to have the dubious privilege of walking the golden streets. The rest go with their dogs. There was a custom prevalent in the Highlands among hunting chiefs for their staghounds to be buried beside them—the idea, doubtless, being that man and dog might in some unknown future hunt together in fields Elysian. A Pagan idea and a beautiful one.

How many fair young lives have we seen blighted and withered by a fervid embracing of the "faith once delivered to the saints"! The inhuman precepts of religion have turned the rose garden into a desert. The best thoughts of men are quenched by supernatural inhibitions. What we have got to bear constantly in mind is that these inhibitions were devised and enacted with the definite object of retaining power over the masses. *Death* was the sentence on those who aspired to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Human love is cramped and stunted and prostituted to base ends by the influence of religion. Young people are adjured, with abundance of florid and violent emotionalism, to love One whom they have never met—never seen—never heard—even on the telephone. Lay up treasure in heaven, says the Bible, and where your treasure is there will your heart be also. An injunction based on a sordid idea. The great ones—the wealthiest ones in the world—know well how to work the *spiritual* hocus-pocus so as to secure their own *material* ends. In the world that now is the poor may have a superabundance of spiritual nourishment—probably a synonym for the blessings of poverty!

Religion blasts or constricts human love. It is the refuge of cowards, and the destroyer of heroism. No matter what your record has been, if you are willing to be a devoted servant of Mother Church, she will connive at your past; nay, all your transgressions will be blotted out—like a thick cloud! Religion shelters the whining sneak, the slimy slanderer, the shallow-pated but cunning self-seeker. There is nothing big or courageous or free about the manhood that the Church values. Blind and servile devotion is only possible to those mentally and spiritually emasculated.

There are so-called Agnostics who have made great names for themselves in the world, but who have bartered their manhood for their positions. There is no use in trying to mix oil and water. The power of religions consists in the power over material possessions. It matters not that eloquent preachers tell us a very different story. Religion makes man little, and it makes him a liar. It is a constricting, limiting, stunting, devitalizing thing. The Churches never rise to the occasion. When Attila is thundering at the gates, they are arguing about rules of precedence and the colour ceremonial robes should be! There is nothing expansive or uplifting or inspiring in religion. It distorts human thought and feeling by insistence on the reality of things unknown and unseen, and ignores the clamant needs of the factual present.

IGNOTUS.

For of waves
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.

—George Meredith.

¹ Joseph McCabe, *The Bankruptcy of Religion*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. i., p. 8; Professor Bury's edition, 1912.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 78.

Acid Drops.

A competition for winter evenings might be "Who Won the War?" There seems at present considerable doubt about it. A general impression appears to be that the soldiers and sailors won the War. But Father Bernard Vaughan says that Marshal Foch told him that God won the War. But as God is God of all, and no respecter of persons, it follows that God also lost the War. Then, again, a Parliamentary candidate in our division sticks up a big circular advising people to vote for him because "We won the War." But if God won the War for us, what is the meaning of three millions of our people killed and wounded? And why the deuce did he take over four years to win it? The position is certainly mixed.

Dean Inge, in a sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral, pointed out pathetically that the struggle in the world-war "was not between democracy and monarch, but between Christ and Machiavelli." This view suggests a duel, and not a fight between embattled millions, and, further, one of the antagonists would be nineteen hundred years old, and the other four centuries. We wonder if the congregation smiled at "the gloomy Dean"?

Canon Patrick Rogers, a Catholic priest, of Suffolk, has died from the effects of a fall while walking to church. There is not the smallest sign of a moral in this case; but had the gentleman been a Freethinker there would have been a very solemn one.

The secret of the singular and touching piety of Marshal Foch is out at last. The French Generalissimo has a Jesuit brother, and there can be little doubt that some of the stories of the great soldier have been coloured by the association. How, otherwise, should we know that the Marshal has under his tunic "a little crucifix hanging from a twist of twine."

The public has become accustomed to "potted plays" and "potted literature," and it looks as if the next thing is to be "potted" piety. The Rev. R. Pyke, writing in the *United Methodist Magazine*, suggests a time-limit for prayers, and criticizes invocations extending over twenty minutes. He complains that some prayers are "actually disquisitions." Mr. Pyke has been fortunate in his researches. Some ministers have the distressing habit of presenting a full and complete summary of the week's news at the Throne of Grace in the hour of supplication.

No less than 19,000 clergymen preached on drink prohibition on Temperance Sunday. We wonder if all these gentlemen drink lemon-squash or orangeade in private life?

A daily paper states that there is a famine in hairdressers, and that, in many cases, people have had to cut their own locks. Does this herald a return to the tonsorial fashions of the Twelve Disciples?

An officer, says a daily paper, wrote from the East to his father, a North-West London vicar, "The Bishop of London is here, camouflaged as a full colonel." We don't see why this officer should sneer at the Bishop. His is a pantomimic business; the Bishop is simply living up to his part.

According to the *Times*, German Catholic newspapers foreshadow a complete separation of Church and State, with a stoppage of payment of clerical stipends. We hope this will turn out to be correct. It is no more than a measure of justice, although we feel sure it will be the occasion for a great many English papers to commence harrowing our feelings with stories of brutality to the Church. This occurred in the case of the revolution in Portugal, also with the disestablishment of the Church in France, and later with the abolition of the State Church in Russia. The man whose library is made up of his daily paper kindly forgets to-day what he read yesterday, and so is ready to swallow anything that may come along to-morrow.

The clergy like to turn things to their own account. At a Catholic church at Maidenhead the musical items at a thanksgiving service included "Rule, Britannia."

The star-turn at a special Y.M.C.A. service at the Albert Hall was General Townshend, the hero of Kut. Probably more people attended to see the gallant soldier than to listen to other items in the programme.

The dyer's hand is subdued to the colour it works in, and the dear clergy look at things from a purely (and sometimes petty) ecclesiastical standpoint. Here is the Archbishop of Canterbury saying that the one thing which aroused his indignation during the War was that it had put a stop to the ringing of church bells.

The *Star* has many good things among its "Asterisks." The following is a brilliant example: "Cardinal Piffi, who says a restoration of the Austrian monarchy is probable, seems well named."

There is quite a Biblical touch in the press announcement that Mr. Joseph Smith, the head of the Mormon community, has passed away. Five widows and forty-two children mourn Mr. Smith's loss. His income was derived from tithes.

Under the heading of "A Happy Conversion," the *Daily Chronicle* says:—"Formerly a hostel for German governesses, The Swallows, at West Ealing, was opened by the Bishop of Kensington as a home for unmarried mothers." Educationalists will note the delicate suggestion that ladies who have taken the wrong turning are superior to mere governesses.

The Roman Catholics are not far behind the English Churchmen in imitating the pushful methods of advertising so successfully exploited by the Young Men's Christian Association. Recently large display advertisements have appeared in the newspaper press, asking for support for Catholic institutions. It is all vastly entertaining that the agents of "Omnipotence" should be so reduced as to be compelled to imitate the methods of the patent medicine vendors.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been saying some plain things about the Bishops—and other things. Speaking of the Bishops, he said: "Bishops may be estimable gentlemen personally, but politically and collectively they are a curse to the country. They have no place in politics. They ought to go back to the Church to which they belong." Another discovery made by Sir Arthur is one that we have dwelt on more than once. This is that "We in this country are more priest-ridden not only than in any Protestant country in the world, but far more than in any Catholic countries." We are priest-ridden, but our national capacity for humbug—where religion is concerned—induces us to pretend it is otherwise. Priestcraft here works by more underground methods—that is all.

Few will quarrel with Oxford University for offering to confer an honorary degree on President Wilson; but this seat of learning is sometimes rather reckless in conferring honours. Some years ago it gave the degree of Doctor of Civil Laws to—General Booth the First.

The religious world is taking to advertising in the press as a duck takes to water. Maybe the results are comforting to the faithful; but to the mere outsider it is a little disquieting to find an impassioned appeal for Sunday observance sandwiched between advertisements of Buggins' Baking Powder and invitations to use Somebody's Cure for Bunions.

With the people, and especially with the clergymen, who have him daily upon their tongues, God becomes a phrase, a mere name, which they utter without any accompanying idea.—*Goethe*.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 8, Leicester; December 15, Nuneaton; December 22, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 8, Garw.

T. H. GUNNING writes: "Heartly congratulations on your success in bringing the *Freethinker* safely through all difficulties caused by the war: outsiders can only dimly comprehend the qualities necessary for such an achievement. Although comparatively a recent addition to your readers, I have become truly appreciative of the truths so ably enunciated, and I wish you continued and increasing success in the killing of superstition."

A. F. THORN.—Card received. Hope to see you home soon.

W. B. D.—We don't wish anything of the kind, much as we appreciate the spirit responsible for the desire. We are content to see things going ahead.

W. J. CLEESBY (France).—We are sending a parcel of literature for distribution.

C. L.—We know nothing about it. While we value the feeling indicated by such a move, we hope it will not be persisted in. It will certainly not be with our sanction.

SAPPER RONALD.—Your previous letter never reached us. Probably it was torpedoed. Are we to return the letter you enclosed for our reading? If so, please send full address. The events related are peculiar. We have no doubt that other observers would have reached a different conclusion, and the value of the statement that there was no room for deception depends upon the observer. There is always room for deception, both deliberate and self-deception.

S. W. HAYNES (Durban).—We should be willing to print your article, but as it stands our readers would be in the dark as to what it is all about. It requires some information concerning the local circumstances which led to the article being written. We are returning the MSS.

W. J. BUTCHER.—We quite sympathise with your attitude, but we are bearing in mind other things of which you appear to have lost sight. The end will come soon we expect.

H. J. PORTER.—One day we hope to realize your ambition—which is also ours. Pamphlets are being sent. Thanks.

A. B. HARDY (Edinburgh).—Will this gentleman please send his address to the Editor? We have mislaid his letter.

W. HETSON.—We were not surprised, nor, we note, were you. Writing in the *Freethinker* for January 10, 1915, Mr. Foote said: "Calumnies fill the air every time Mr. Foote talks of change.....There promises to be much venomous opposition to any sort of change. Mr. Foote will therefore not throw himself into this herculean task until the litigation connected with the Bowman bequest is ended." The "herculean task" was left to us, and it would have been cowardly to have evaded it. And, besides, we knew we could count on the support of the party. For the rest, we did not look for a bed of roses when we took on the posts of President of the N.S.S. and Editor of the *Freethinker*.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: "Collection, Birmingham Conference," £1 2s. 6d.

"**SCOT.**"—As you give no address we are compelled to answer you here. We deeply appreciate your action, and also your opinion that "we have done wonderfully well for the *Freethinker* and the Society during these trying times." But please don't think we are sentimentalizing when we say that it was not a period when one could afford to think overmuch of one's personal interest. The great theory was to revive the movement and place the paper on a secure footing. If we have done anything towards these ends we are content.

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

The National Secular Society's office is at 62½ 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.

Freethought was busy in Wales this week-end. Mr. Lloyd was in Swansea on Sunday, and, we are pleased to say, had capital meetings. Mr. Cohen had a good meeting on Saturday evening at Maesteg, and another good one on Monday evening at Llwynypia, in spite of a torrential downpour. And on Sunday there were two magnificent meetings at Ferndale. The large town hall was well filled in the afternoon and quite full in the evening. Mr. Cohen was in good form, and every point in the lectures was well received by the audience. The two last-named places represent new ground, and there will be good work done there, we think, in the future.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (December 8) at Pontycymmer. We have no doubt that Freethinkers in the locality will make it a point of being present.

To-day (December 8) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, at 6.30. His subject is, "The New World and the Old Faith."

Some time ago one of our readers, Sapper Povall, wrote us on the question of church attendance. Acting on our suggestion, application was made to the O.C. for relief from church attendance. With quite Solomonic judgment, the O.C. decided that the matter should be settled in discussion between the chaplain and the soldier. At the end of two and a half hours' discussion, the soldier was deemed to have so far made his case good, in the opinion of all who listened, that exemption was granted. We cannot say this was the best way of settling the matter—a soldier should be able to demand exemption as a right—but it is a good way. And if all chaplains were put through the same ordeal, we should see things. Imagine the khaki-clad Bishop of London trying to hold his own with a decently educated soldier!

A meeting of all interested in Freethought principles will be held in the City Studio, 3, High Street, Belfast, on December 13, at 7.30 p.m., with the object of forming a branch of the N.S.S. All friends are urgently requested to attend, and those in sympathy with the movement, particularly those in the country, who are unable to attend on that evening are cordially invited to call or write to Mr. John F. Lessels, photographer, The City Studio, 3, High Street, Belfast. We sincerely hope that all Freethinkers, both old and new ones, will see to it that so large a city as Belfast is not left without a representative Freethought organization. Other places in Ireland will follow.

Our contributor, "Keridon," pays his first visit to the Manchester Branch to-day (Dec. 8). He will lecture—afternoon at 3, evening at 6.30—in the Downing Street Co-operative Hall. We hope that Manchester Freethinkers will do their best to see that there are good audiences on both occasions. The lecturer deserves them. Tea will be provided at the hall for those coming from a distance. There will be a selection of music before the evening lecture.

A rush back from Wales on Tuesday morning, in order to see the *Freethinker* through the press, left the editor with no time to attend to anything but the most pressing matters. A number of letters are, therefore, held over until next week, and acknowledgments of contributions to the Sustentation Fund are also held over. Intending subscribers are reminded that the Fund closes on December 17.

Religion and Life.

BY DR. E. LYTTELTON.

SIR,—I am reluctantly being led to abandon the hope of finding a common intellectual platform of agreement on fundamentals, for we are arguing, or tending to argue, on different planes: and there is no waste of time quite so abortive. It is extremely difficult to indicate even dimly what this means, but I will try. I think it possible that some of our readers may find it easier to understand what I am trying to say than you do. Anyhow, in the hope that this is so, I will ask for the hospitality of your columns for a few more letters, while I continue the statement of what Christianity is.

A word first about Humility. I was aware that there were *traits* in the character ascribed to Buddha which we should call *traits* of gentleness, and passages in commendation of such may be culled from pre-Christian writers. But first let me emphasize the fact that the virtue is something vastly more impressive and inexplicable than gentleness or want of arrogance. It is not a negative quality at all, but a wonderful power which springs from self-forgetfulness—the very quality which the Greeks seem not to have recognized at all, and the achievement of which is the most surprising triumph, perhaps, over our lower nature that man has ever reached. The Greeks preached “Know thyself” as a principle essential to a wisely ordered life; and Aristotle, the pupil of the prophetic Plato, drew a sketch of his ideal man, and we find that not only does this personage think a great deal *about* himself, but a great deal *of* himself. This differs *toto calo* from the Christian conception of self-forgetfulness which I will venture to say is not only an amazing secret of strength but the most beautiful thing in character, except what St. Paul calls *agape*, to which it is too closely akin to be contrasted. In a Christian country you find instances of that striking simplicity which gives to the orator, the actor, the statesman in council, and the missionary as he preaches a wholly mysterious power. The Christian mystic alone gives any account of it as the fulfilment of Christ’s promise to be present with His faithful followers; but the gift of self-forgetfulness seems to be native to others besides the conscious servants of the Master. In the case of many Christians it is not a natural endowment but a triumph of self-conquest, enjoined by Christ in the new command that we are to deny, *i.e. ignore*, ourselves—the most difficult conceivable, the most unlikely to have been invented by self-indulgent man; the most unpractical, Utopian order ever given; had it not been for two arresting facts (1) Jesus fulfilled His own order to the uttermost; and (2) promised to any who would trust Him that He would give them the power to do likewise.

Now, Sir, I am well aware that this sort of talk must be to you the veriest rhodomontade; and more than that, you are bound by fidelity to your own principles to rate it as rubbish, and doubtless, if you were not too courteous, you would say so. That is because we are not looking at the same set of facts: nor are we reasoning from quite the same set of assumptions.

To take the latter point. You remember I quoted H. Spencer’s dictum that all knowledge is a verification of assumptions. It is a remarkable saying, because it was uttered at a time when scientific thinkers poured cold water on assumptions as such. Unless one began by denying that one assumed anything, there was no chance of being listened to by anyone who thought himself—as a great many did—to be a superior person. Subsequently, it was found that without assumptions not only knowledge, but life itself, became impossible: be-

cause you might condemn yourself in theory to live only by sensation, but you at once debarred yourself from forming a moral judgment on anybody else’s conduct, or even on your own. Thus a reputable citizen who happened to fancy himself an advanced thinker—that is to say, as content to guide his actions by sensation only, because it was distasteful to him to assume the existence of an unseen world—was brought up short when, for instance, his own offspring betrayed unmistakable leanings towards gluttony. He was fain to admit that gluttony in a child is often the precursor of unclean habits in a boy; just as they are precursors of various ugly things in manhood, the Divorce Court or the home for inebriates. But to check the early symptoms he had to draw upon assumptions which not only were outside the area to which he had confined himself, but flatly in opposition to the principles he professed. He had to make an excursion into a region of obscurities where his goings became very unsteady and his voice sounded hollow as he spoke. In other words, he had to act on a moral judgment for which his materialistic principles gave no warrant whatever.

Similarly I conceive that I am throughout expressing judgments based on moral and religious principles, without which the judgment would be nonsense. You, on the other hand, draw all your judgments from a more restricted area; I am not at present able to say whether it is the Materialist’s area or one slightly more extended. I should conjecture it is the latter, and the extension beyond the region of matter and sensation would be into the region of some generally accepted morality. For instance, if a correspondent were to send you an article advocating “Free Love,” you would refuse it as likely to be pernicious to society: at least, I fancy so. Now, it would not be strange if by the same post another correspondent—a man of sanguine temperament—sent you a disquisition upon the eternal value of Tory principles, or on the desirability for each one of us of spending half an hour daily in brooding upon the higher life. I fancy the former would speedily find its way to the same waste-paper basket as the homily about “Free Love”; but I am not sure what would happen to the latter. It might depend on whether you conceive or deny that there is such a thing as a higher life: a form of existence above ours, as we believe ours to be above that of animals; and as to that I am still in the dark. But, anyhow, your action would indicate that you make certain assumptions dealing with matters extra-sensational: that is to say, drawn from what is sometimes called the unseen world, lying beyond all possible verification through our five senses. That is, I believe, a thoroughly reasonable thing to do, and, for my part, I find myself impelled to do it more and more. But when I engage in discussion with an Atheist, I find that while he invariably uses assumptions of the kind which show he is not a thorough Materialist, he rigidly bars out others drawn from the same unseen world, for no reason that I can learn, except that they are not verifiable by the senses—a reason which, in the other cases, he has discarded. In the case of yourself, or any other editor of a well-conducted and somewhat “advanced” journal, if my conjectures given above are correct, you would assume certain large principles about virtue and human welfare in morals and politics, irrespectively of any verification by the sense; and, what is more to the point, you would assume that there is such a thing as Truth in the abstract, yet in touch, so to speak, with human life; and that one or more of the contributions with which you were favoured was in conflict with this Truth, and, therefore, only fit to be “flung,” as a Cornishman would say. In other words, you would, I should say, practically admit that there is a “higher” life; but, at the same time, deny that there is

a Personal God. Now, this denial cannot rest on the impossibility of sense verification, because you show that, in the other cases, you disregard it. It appears to me to rest on an exceedingly daring assumption impossible to verify by the senses, or in any other way, the bald, barren, naked dogma that there is no God.

That is how the situation presents itself to me. Doubtless, you will correct my statement where it is incorrect. But, so far as I have gone, it is, anyhow, an attempt to explain why there is a great difficulty in our arguing on the same level, or looking at the same facts from the same angle of view.

Next time I hope to grapple with the question, nowadays widely discussed, how do we Christians reconcile our doctrine of God with the existence of misery, strife, bloodshed, etc., on the vastest scale throughout the world.

Modern Methods of Salving the "Soul."

V.

(Concluded from p. 622.)

BEFORE I take my leave of the subject I wish to ask Dr. McDougall a few pertinent questions in respect to the "soul."

He pleads "ignorance" of any definite knowledge of it; and well he may, for the word stands for a mere vacuity.

But strange to say that this consciousness of "ignorance" does not prevent him from always alluding to it as if it were the best known of "knowable objects." He surrounds it with a bodyguard of question-begging queries, which have the effect, whatever be his motive, of diverting attention away from this confessed "ignorance," and despite of it, of insinuating a belief in its reality.

Let me therefore put a few questions in turn with the avowed object of directing the reader's attention to the fact which Dr. McDougall apparently tries to avoid—viz., that the term "soul" is an idealess word—a sound or symbol devoid of any ascertained significant meaning; or, if I am mistaken, let Dr. McDougall enlighten us by answering the following questions.

What is the "soul" as a distinct entity apart from "mind"? What is its function? The "ether" metaphor shed not a ray of light; it rather "made darkness visible"—it only exemplified the "divine art of obfuscation" *in excelsis*.

As he has not supplied a scintilla of evidence of its existence, how is he assured of it? If it be an intuition, why not frankly tell us so instead of buttressing it up with the travesties of argument?

What part is played by the "soul" as distinct from "mind" in the life of the following: an amoeba, a worm, an insect, a snake, a cat, or an ape? And upon what evidence or known fact is the answer based?

How does the "soul" of a human embryo differ from that of an infant? Does it *vary* as it passes through the stages of childhood, youth, manhood, and senile decay? Or is it an *unchangeable* entity?

If the former, *which* "soul" endures after death, and why? If the latter, how does the *immutable* "soul" adjust itself into co-operation with *mutable* mind from the impregnated ovum through all its infinite changes till it finally disappears in death?

What relation has the "soul" of an idiot to an idiot's mind? Is its "soul" sane or insane? If the former, why does it not come to the rescue of the idiot during life? If the latter, does the soul remain insane after death?

Again, does or does not the "soul" share in the derangement of "mental structure" in cases of insanity and of cerebral injury? If it does not, why does it not *manifest* itself and take pity upon its "allied" victim and "come to the breach" with assistance while life lasts? The victim would not, apparently, be one whit worse off if it were without a "soul."

But as we are kept absolutely in the dark as to the attributes and functions of the "soul," possibly "sanity" is not one of its predicable attributes. Will Dr. McDougall condescend to tell us?

Does the "soul" of a genius differ from that of a dull person? If that is so, in what way does it participate in the mental activities of a gifted monomaniac—one, for example, quite sane in, say, a branch of science, and a hopeless imbecile in religion or spiritism?

In such a case, if the attribute be predicable of it, is the "soul's" sanity, like that of the mind's, confined within water-tight compartments; or does it alternate between sanity and insanity as it attends to the sane or insane section of mind? Or, as a possible third alternative, Can the soul be sane and insane at the same instant? For there seems to be no limits or restrictions to the possibilities of this mystic entity.

Where is the "soul" during sleep? Is the soul asleep too? If so, why? Is it subject to the physical fatigue? The mind is, which proves its correlation with the laws of energy. If it is not asleep, why does consciousness vanish till mind returns?

In short, why does it do *nothing* that is knowable at any period or under any condition during life? And why does it confine all its alleged activities to the time when life is extinct, when it is impossible to obtain any evidence of its doings. Can an essential factor or element of our being be so fantastically worthless and useless during life and likewise so grotesquely absurd after death?

This will suffice for the present, not that the "list" is by any means exhausted; but because I have little or no expectation of receiving any replies to them. For definite categorical statements would be as deathdealing to the "soul" as high explosive shells are to the body. The "soul" must on no account leave the protection of mist and fog. To come out in the open would be fatal. He will therefore, as is invariably the case with omniscient self-proclaimed oracles, adopt an attitude of supercilious silence. Should this forecast, however, prove inaccurate, I await his replies with no little interest.

KERIDON.

The Hour-Glass.

It is the quiet hour, and, being in a sweetly contemplative mood, we turn and view our hour-glass. It is popularly supposed to be held by a gaunt old gentleman, who is also armed with a scythe, with which he at the appointed time mows us down. "There is a reaper whose name is Death," etc. We well remember the time when a contemplation of this apparition brought the keenest terror to us; every dark corner was full of terrible possibilities; we were ever in fear of the inevitable. But, thanks to the teachings of Secularism, we are now freed from all these unworthy fears, the saddest burden which poor humanity has to bear. We can now view our hour-glass with equanimity. It is a peculiarity of this imaginary article, through which the sands of time are ever running, that we only see the lower chamber! we can, however, estimate quite accurately the number of grains in the heap as it steadily grows. But the upper chamber is, in the majority of cases, obscured from us. Some have been allowed to peep through

this obscurity, but mostly under tragical circumstances. Grand old Socrates saw his small amount of grains when he was handed the cup of hemlock by his tearful executioner; Francisco Ferrer saw the upper glass to be nearly empty when he faced the rifles in the trenches of Montjuich. But with all this, we think it well that we should from time to time remember that the sands are ever running higher in the glass. This will tend to remind us that we should ever be asking ourselves whether we are taking our full part in the emancipation of the race, which we believe can only be accomplished in accordance with the principles of Secularism, which "teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide." We sometimes wonder whether adherents of Secularism fully appreciate the significance of all this. It is an unmistakable profession, in which we conceive all our activities to be essentially limited to this our life between birth and death. This is fully in accordance with science and education. The work of Secularism is being carried on in all sorts of places; we can claim that even the Universities are with us. Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, in his Preface to *An Introduction to the Study of Social Problems*, says:—

In a certain sense we may say that the principal function of Universities is the negative function of knocking nonsense out of people's heads and filling the vacuum with orderly habits of intelligent curiosity about the things that really matter. It is never the business of a University to propagate an opinion; that is the function of missions and clubs, of churches and parties. A University exists for knowledge, and, as the Greek philosopher pointed out, knowledge is a very different thing from opinion. A University does not dictate opinion, but trains the mind to scrutinise its prejudices, to dispel its ignorance, and to ground its notions upon a basis of tested knowledge. It opens the doors of hospitality to any honest exercise of thought.

We quote this to show that Secularism is a profession of no mean order. It is in accordance with the great democratic movement which is known as Western Civilization.

Much of this is, however, encrusted with the tendrils of superstition. The Rev. W. Temple can still say from his important position as President of the Workers Educational Association, that "beauty, goodness, and truth are things of the spirit and not at all things of the flesh." Here we have an expression, from high places, of the old barbaric notion of the separate entities of spirit and matter, with its usual laudation of the unknown and its implied degradation of the known, of the very stuff of life with all its handshakes and smiles, aye! and with all its sorrows and tears. The work of the Secularist is clear cut from all this, we must recall men from all these vain illusions. We must ever learn to look, and think, and to more and more understand the world. To understand the world is to love it, it is the home of our race, and it is useless to encourage petty views. We must keep ourselves well in hand and not confuse our idiosyncracies with the outside world. The great river of life will flow on, and posterity will smile at our extravagance; but we venture to think that it will look kindly on our little efforts for its welfare. Our happiness is, of course, purely an affair of this life; our religious friends assure us that life would be unbearable if there were to be no future life in which rewards and punishments will be meted out. This has no basis of proof apart from tradition, it is not supported in any way by modern knowledge. Happiness is best secured by being in accordance with proved knowledge, it is vain to endeavour to square life with imaginary assumptions.

Let us rather provide ourselves with the power of happiness, which consists in a proper appreciation of the world. It has been well said that "he who understands the past will not be discontented with the present." Children are usually happy, their future unhappiness is largely the result of wrong teaching; they are taught that their home is not here; their minds are diverted from the real to the unreal, and a false estimate of the world is the result. Let us view the world as we would view a garden which we found in a certain state of perfection. It is capable of much improvement, but much work has been done in it, and it is sacred to us because of this. Our happiness will be best secured by endeavouring to leave it better than we found it. However, we turn to our hour-glass with serenity and view the heap of grains that calmly remind us of our duty, and whether it grows or has about reached its limit we will say with George Eliot:—

Oh may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence; live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self;
In thought sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge men's search
To vaster issues. So to live is heaven.
May I reach that purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty;
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion even more intense.

J. FOTHERGILL.

The Grave of Keats.

I.

WHERE silver swathes of newly fallen hay
Fling up their incense to the Roman sun;
Where violets spread their dusky leaves and run
In a dim ripple, and a glittering bay
Lifts overhead his living wreath; where day
Burns fierce upon his endless night and none
Can whisper to him of the thing he won,
Love-starved young Keats hath cast his gift of clay.
And still the little marble makes a moan
Under the scented shade; one nightingale,
With many a meek and mourning monotone,
Throbs of his sorrow; sings how oft men fail
And leave their dearest light-bringers alone
To shine unseen, and all unfriended pale.

II.

Oh, leave the lyre upon his humble stone,
The rest erase; if Keats were come again,
The quickest he to blot this cry of pain,
And first to take a sorrowing world's atone.
'Tis not the high magistral way to moan
When a mean present leaps and sweeps amain
Athwart the prophets' vision; not one groan
Escapes their souls, and lingers not one stain.
They answer to their ideals, and their good
Outshines all flare and glare of futile marts.
They stand beside their altars while the flood
Ephemeral rolls on and roars and parts.
It shall not chill a poet's golden blood;
It cannot drown the masters' mighty hearts.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

There is hardly a man in the United States to-day, of any importance, whose voice anybody cares to hear, who was not nursed at the loving breast of poverty. Look at the children of the rich. My God, what a punishment for being rich!—*Ingersoll*

More Popular.

IN the preaching of Dr. Fort Newton on the Soldier's Religion, the *Daily Mail* has found the inspiration of a really humorous leader. It winds up with:—

He [the British soldier] has shared in the greatest and last Crusade and passed through dangers which it seemed impossible to escape. Is it a wonder that the soldier is religious, and that in the rough language of the soldier whom the preacher quoted: "God is more popular to-day than he has been for a long time"?

That last sentence betrays the humourist, rough hew him how you will. God is more popular! Think of it! Think of it! After all these years! The Creator of suns, planetary systems, electricity, radium; all these things are interesting enough in their way, but the mere making of these things and the laws that govern them is not enough to make the Creator really popular in the opinion of man and other maggots. In fact, his popularity had reached such a low ebb that, rather than spit on the earth and roll it up into another one, he decided to restore his popularity by a four years' bout of slaughter, lust, cruelty, suffering, grief, and misery. More popular!

Where the Almighty went wrong was over granting man a free wheel. I mean will. So soon as man discovered his own free will he began to go his own gait, and thought more of his own popularity than of God's. The Germans, of course, have overdone the brutality business, and it is more than probable that man's free will will shortly be withdrawn; God having almost entirely regained his lost popularity by means of the somewhat drastic remedy of the War, will shortly make other arrangements in response to the universal appeal of "never again." With the abolition of war his popularity will reach the unaugmentable maximum.

Max O'Rell modestly admitted that the French were the most humorous nation in the world. Oh, that he had lived to hear the great revival of British optimistic religious humour of 1918!

Y. C.

Correspondence.

LIFE AFTER DEATH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Since Major Warren mentions my name in connection with Spiritualism, and quotes me as saying that "the phenomena have been proved up to the hilt for any reasonable man," let me say that I added elsewhere "but no evidence is of any use to those who refuse to examine it." Major Warren's letter shows that he is quite out of touch with the subject. The S. P. Research is not, as he seems to imagine, a Spiritualist Society, and could not possibly take up the self-advertising challenge of Mr. Maskelyne. As a matter of fact, if my memory serves, the challenge was taken up by Archdeacon Colley, and Maskelyne entirely failed. I remember reading an account by Dr. Russel Wallace, who had seen both the original phenomenon and the imitation, in which he said that there was no comparison at all between them. But in any case, would Major Warren seriously assert that because a thing can be plausibly imitated by an expert, therefore the thing itself must be false?

The other difficulties raised in Major Warren's letter would cease to trouble him if he read more of the subject, and realized the limitations as well as the powers of psychic phenomena. The other world has its own work to do, and if it interfered continually in ours (presuming that it could do so), we should all become automata.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

COAL IN CANADA.

SIR,—In T. F. Palmer's article on "The Dark Diamonds of the Earth" in your issue of September 15, p. 485, it is stated that "British North America has poor supplies of coal." As Canada has one fourth of all the coal of the world, and our Province of Alberta has one seventh, I wish to bring this to your attention. We have coal on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, and nearly the whole Province of Alberta is underlain with it. I am writing the

Department of Mines, Ottawa, to forward you a copy of their Report. On page 12 you will see the estimate for the Western Provinces is as follows:—

	TONS.
Anthracite and semi-anthracite...	769,000,000
Bituminous	242,313,000,000
Sub-bituminous	847,321,000,000
Lignite	86,422,000,000
Total	1,176,825,000,000

As Member for Peace River in the Provincial Legislature, I have made a study of our resources, and am conversant with an area of high-grade coal extending over several hundred square miles. The fixed carbon runs as high as 81 per cent., ash as low as 3 per cent., and moisture 1 per cent., British thermal units 14,500 to 14,750. This coal is a smokeless variety, and the development of this field will be one of the big factors in after-war reconstruction. I hope you will see that justice is done to us in this very valuable resource we have.

W. A. RAE (Toronto).

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.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Howell Smith, B.A., A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, George Ives, M.A., F.Z.S., "Extra-Organic Habits in Animals." Open Debate.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Edwin Fagg, "A Master of Disillusion."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, A Lecture. For particulars see advt. *Birmingham Daily Mail*, December 7.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, "Did Jesus Teach Socialism?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The New World and the Old Faith."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, Mr. J. Hammond, "Christianity, Old and New."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Downing Street Hall, Ardwick): Mr. J. C. Thomas ("Keridon"), 3, "Why Faiths Die Hard"; 6.30, "Theology: The Art of Squaring the Circle, or Solving the Insolvable."

PONTYCYMMER.—Mr. J. T. Lloyd.

SHEFFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (Pool's Square): 7.15, Mr. Thos. Dennis, "The Ethics of Atheism."

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. C. T. Gorham, "Intercession."

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