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Views and Opinions.

The Secularization of Life.

It is part of the case for scientific Freethought that, while human institutions are in their earlier stages dominated by religious influences, the secular forces of life ultimately achieve supremacy. This generalization is true, not alone of institutions as such, but also of conceptions of life in general. About the belief in God, for instance, there is at the beginning no ethical quality whatever. Men believe in gods simply because they assume they are there, and they have to be faced as have other facts. The dominating idea is power. The gods may be cruel or kind, and their anger must be averted or their friendship retained. But a gradual change takes place. The growing intellectual and moral perceptions of man are reflected in his conception of God. An emphasis is placed upon the assumed good qualities, and there is exemplified a kind of intellectual marxism in which the character of Deity reflects the general social state existing. Later, bad qualities are denied the gods altogether. As man learns to frame an ideal human character which shall be wholly good, so he fashions an ideal god. In one direction the gods become rationalized, and operate in accordance with general principles; in another they become moralized, and are endowed with all the qualities of human excellence. But this has nothing whatever to do with the existence of God as an objective fact, or with a better knowledge of God's nature. It is no more than an illustration of the triumph of the natural over the supernatural; of the supremacy of secular social forces over early religious beliefs. Man humanizes his gods as society humanizes man.

* * *

The Character of Jesus.

Dr. Lyttelton's article in last week's *Freethinker* appeals to me as an illustration of this process applied to the figure-head of Christianity. For it will be noted that the doctrinal Christ does not appear; it is the ethical Jesus only. The Christ that saves men's souls in the next world is not obtruded on us; it is the ethical teacher who leads men to a better life here. As presented, Jesus is no greater in kind than Socrates or Epicurus, or Voltaire, or Paine, or Bradlaugh. He is one of a band of good men striving to make others good, and influencing others for good as did each of those named. Of

course, Dr. Lyttelton would say he was very much greater in this direction than anyone else; but a difference of degree will not establish a difference of kind. And if that is all that is involved—a discussion as to whether Jesus was a better or worse teacher than Robert Owen—there is nothing vital in the controversy between the Christian and the non-Christian. But is this really so? Look at the ritual of all the Christian Churches, or at the works of all the great Christian writers, including the New Testament. Is it the moral character of Jesus Christ or the supernatural character of his mission that is the vital fact to them and in them? Take away the miraculously conceived, miracle-working, resurrected, incarnate God, and on Dr. Lyttelton's presentation we have nothing left but one of the world's innumerable band of moral reformers, with a moral teaching quite independent of his birth, death, and personality. Is this really the Christ of Christian history? Or is it not rather one more assertion of the supremacy of the secular over the supernatural, of ethics over religion?

* * *

Morals and Miracles.

I have no present intention of discussing the moral excellence of the character of Jesus. Otherwise much might be said on the petulance displayed by him, as in the cursing of the fig tree, of his endorsement of the doctrine of demonism and possession, and kindred superstitions; of his ignoring of the higher intellectual ethics, and of the important fact that there was really nothing new to the world either in the life he is said to have led or the precepts he is said to have taught. Dr. Lyttelton's remarks call for a different form of reply. He asserts, roundly, that the world was captured by the moral greatness of Jesus. I assert that the evidence is all against this thesis. Jesus the moral teacher simply could not have captured his contemporaries, for his moral precepts were commonplaces to all around him. It was Christ the supernatural Saviour they followed, as in Paul's blunt statement that if there is no resurrection from the dead then nothing else is of consequence. Look at the controversy that has raged round Christianity through the centuries. Has it been concerned with the moral character of Jesus, or about the methods of getting saved in the world to come? Did Christians—orthodox and heretic—butcher each other over a moral question or a doctrinal one? And is there, even to-day, a single body of Christians who will accept adherence to the moral side of the teaching of Jesus as enough? Of course, there has been of late years a growing emphasis on the moral side, but this is because the other side fails to commend itself to the modern mind. But dismiss entirely the miraculously born Saviour, and who will bother about Jesus the teacher of moral platitudes that were hoary with age at the time he is said to have voiced them?

* * *

Christianity in History.

But whether the character of Jesus Christ has had the remarkable influence given it by Dr. Lyttelton is

really a question of fact. If it has occurred, or does occur, the evidence should be producible. And where is one to look for it? Are we to look in the earliest records of Christianity, where the first trustworthy glimpse we get of Christians is as a number of warring sects whose fanaticism, bitterness, and intolerance astounded the Pagan onlookers? Are we to look for it in the activities of the Catholic Church which is represented by even Christians as a sink of moral impurity during the larger part of its history, and whose records for savage intolerance exceeds anything the world can produce? Is it conceivable that the men who blasted the South American civilization, or who crushed out a civilization in Spain, or who organized a Bartholomew night in France, were dominated by the moral aspect of the character of Jesus? And where is the evidence in everyday life that the teaching and example of Christ tends towards an utterly complete detachment from the world, and from worldly allurements of all kinds? Have we seen it in the greed and self-seeking displayed in the War through which we have just passed? Has any considerable body of people with opportunities for gain refrained from preying on the public? Are Christians really more generous, more forgiving, more considerate, less grasping of worldly power and pelf than are other people? Is there, when we have done with words and come down to facts, a single virtue in which it can be said Christian people excel? Are they more kindly than Buddhists, or more sober than Mohammedans? Only this can we say with certainty of the Christian peoples of the world. None have plundered more extensively, fought more savagely, hated more intensely, persecuted more vindictively, and falsified history more thoroughly than they. It has taken abroad a handful of moral precepts, but it has carried also a bushel-basket full of supernatural absurdities and inherited religious hatred which has robbed its ethical teaching of a large part of its value in its application.

* * *

Naturalism and Morals.

Dr. Lyttelton's article really raises the issue whether morality—at least, in its higher manifestations—is or is not independent of what he calls "supernatural desires." It appears to him that the Atheist is all the time deriving inspiration for his conduct from an unacknowledged source, inasmuch as natural considerations are inadequate to the end of providing a sufficient stimulus. And, he says, "the very essence of self-sacrifice is the suspension of our natural desires in favour of supernatural desires which refer to hopes and aims manifestly above the worldly level." With all of which I profoundly disagree. First, unless the nature of man was capable of doing all that Dr. Lyttelton admires *without supernatural desires*, it would be equally powerless with them. A desire can only call into operation existing forces or capacities; it cannot create new ones. And self-sacrifice is not peculiar to any one creed or race, or even species. Animals are capable of it in defence of their young, or the male animal in defence of the female, or the dog in defence of its master. And what we see in man is a higher development of the same quality. Secondly, I dislike altogether the term self-sacrifice. It is curious that Christians should regard the giving up of wealth, or worldly position, or even life in defence of a worthy object as *self-sacrifice*. It is not self-sacrifice at all, it is rather self-realization. Of two men, one who gives himself whole-heartedly to the pursuit of a worthy object, the other who spends his life plotting and scheming and slaving for "wordly advancement," which has sacrificed most? Personally, I admire the first, my sympathy is for the second, for it is he who has really sacrificed himself. And Dr. Lyttelton's comments

does but serve to bring out the inherent selfishness and "Materialism" of the Christian conception of life. Its emphasis is all the time on personal gain, either in this world or in the world to come. It thus coarsens in the very attempt to refine, and lowers in the endeavour to raise. And that some Christians rise superior to the influence of their creed is evidence only that the social feelings of man will not be eternally or universally denied. Man does, indeed, use his dead self as a stepping-stone to higher things, and on the piled-up bodies of his discarded gods stands erect to obtain a broader and wider survey of the road along which the race is marching.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Baseless Assumptions.

I.

PROFESSOR LYNN HAROLD HOUGH, D.D., of Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., is contributing a series of articles to the *Christian Commonwealth* on "Fundamental Issues"; and inasmuch as the subject is of universal interest, it may prove helpful to examine its treatment by the American divine, who writes with an air of authority. Whether he possesses the knowledge and the judgment requisite to justify his occupying the position of intellectual guide to his readers or not, can only be determined by a careful and unbiased study of the articles themselves. The first article appeared in our contemporary on January 1, and is entitled "The Challenge of Life." In this Dr. Hough insists on "utter honesty" and "entire candour" in facing all the facts. In the assumed exercise of those heroic qualities he quotes the following utterance of a great but nameless preacher, "There is no Atheism in the front trenches," upon which he bases this positive inference:—

In the presence of life's demands we know some things, and we know that we know them. The insight of the front trenches must be made the insight of everyday life.

Here complete reliance is put upon a second-hand testimony which we know to be absolutely false. From the front trenches numerous letters were received by this and other journals, during the War, written by both officers and men who were convinced Atheists, and whose Atheism was confirmed, not weakened, by what they saw and experienced. Thus Dr. Hough makes an extremely unfortunate beginning. The insight of the front trenches, in scores of well-attested instances, has been anything but favourable to Christian Theism; it has even accounted for many accessions to the ranks of unbelief. On the whole, then, we offer no objection to making the insight of the front trenches the insight of everyday life. It is not everybody that makes a pilgrimage through hell and beholds the glory of God. It is perfectly true that "our thinking must perpetually be brought to the test of life"; but this is precisely what the divines are not in the habit of doing, and certainly what Dr. Hough does not do in his first article. He builds his theory on the sandy foundation of mere hearsay and dogmatic assertions. What he gives us is an academic and formal proposition unsupported by a single first-hand evidence. It is quite possible that with more than one soldier, sailor, or aviator, the War may have led to self-discovery and the gathering together of the forces of life; but it by no means follows that this meant either conversion to or the intensification of already existing religious beliefs and practices, and we are fully aware that in some cases it had a wholly contrary effect. Dr. Hough virtually admits the truth of our contention in the following passage:—

Particular doubts are often justified. Particular scepticisms often serve a useful purpose in leading on to truth.

Of course, such an admission is made with an object, disclosed in the next sentence:—

But doubt itself, the attitude of doubt, is the characteristic of a decadent mind. And wholesome doubt can only exist and justify itself as the shadow of a great assurance. Intellectual decay is never the servant of true progress. The robust mind is fed by blood flowing from a robust life. And convinced and commanding assurance is the fundamental attitude of the robust life confronted by the necessity for action.

The assurance upon which Dr. Hough lays so much stress is a veritable will-o'-the-wisp which it is impossible to overtake, our divine taking every care not to define it. And yet to him, as a theologian, it must signify a deep-rooted conviction of the reality of supernaturalism. What else can it mean? Hence no doubt of the existence of the supernatural can be wholesome unless it is simply a shadow cast by a great, unshakable assurance of its reality, which is obviously absurd. The lack of that assurance is said to be an unmistakable symptom of intellectual decay, and intellectual decay "is never the servant of true progress." This is a baseless assumption falsely represented as a positive fact. Certainty, or assurance, in the theological sense, is the characteristic of a mind in a state of suspended animation; and it evaporates in proportion as the mind awakes and becomes vigorously active. It is now an ascertained psychological fact that, in Dr. Hough's own country, religious unbelief is most rife among the most thoughtful people. This is a fact which our divine has not the temerity to deny, but the force of which he seeks to parry by quoting these lines,—

It is the heart and not the brain
That to the highest doth attain.

In other words, he falls back upon the Bergsonian metaphysics which assigns to the mind a secondary function in the discovery of truth. The second article treats man's nature as a thing that can be split up into so many pieces or departments, among which mind is by no means the biggest or most important. It is self-evident that "there are some things which minds cannot do"; but it is equally incontrovertible that without mind there could be neither heart nor conscience. Besides, both heart and conscience are mental attributes. You cannot put brain and heart in opposition because they are identical. It is by means of the brain that we think, and feel, and act; that is to say, feeling, intellect, and activity are three divisions of mind. There now abideth emotion, intellect, activity, these three, and the greatest of these is emotion; but the greatest as well as the least, if a least there be, is a property of mind. This is one of the common places of psychology, although Dr. Hough completely ignores it when he states that mind is but "one instrument for the finding of truth." As a matter of fact, mind is not one but the sole instrument to be employed in that noble quest. Unintelligent or unguided emotion has never made a discovery yet, while an unenlightened conscience invariably goes wrong on most momentous questions. That is, however, immaterial to our present argument, because what Dr. Hough wants to impress upon us is that there exists somewhere an entity called truth which can only be discovered by mind, heart, and conscience acting together. We maintain, on the contrary, that the existence of such an entity is an unverifiable assumption. God, Christ, the unseen spiritual world, and the meaning of life, do not lie within the sphere of possible knowledge. They are creations of the theological imagination, and findable by no mental process whatsoever. They are the contents of supernaturalism, and, as such, unknowable. We have no justification in reason for assuming their objective existence. Dr. Hough does

not name them in the three articles hitherto published, not even in the third, entitled "The Things We Must Assume." Of course, there *are* things we must assume, or certain mathematical axioms to deny which would be the height of folly; but these are all within the domain of Nature, and "the deepest meaning of life" is not one of them. Curiously enough, Dr. Hough grants that "the man who assumes all sorts of things without critical inspection is landed in complete intellectual confusion," and we are in full agreement with him, but he omits to inform us what sort of things they are which, as theologian, he is forced to assume. Instead of doing that, he merely repeats how essential it is "by a most careful and critical process of analysis to discover what things it is necessary to assume in order to use the rational process at all, and when it comes to living, what things it is necessary to assume in order to deal with life in a way of genuine response," and closes his article without giving us the slightest idea of what they are, though asserted to be of such vital importance. He sits in judgment upon nineteenth century thinkers in general, declaring that it was a favourite pastime with them "to kill their only steed in order to get quickly up the hill"; and upon Herbert Spencer in particular, charging him with having "once and again with grave dignity used all his intellectual resources to discredit some principle, without whose validity his whole structure of reasoning would fall to the ground."

In the three articles under review, Dr. Hough indulges in eloquent discourse concerning fundamental processes of reasoning and the lack of attention to them by doubters and deniers of the Christian faith, but without paying the least heed to them himself. His forte is not logic, and he seems incapable of being fair to those who do not share his views. He alludes to "a tremendously vigorous mental tussle" between two anonymous University thinkers on the subject of Determinism *versus* Freewill. They were both specially able; but either the Determinist knew absolutely nothing about the subject, or our Professor grossly misrepresents him, and his own remarks on Freedom betray the egregious superficiality of his acquaintance with the subject, as well as the utter irrelevancy of the whole paragraph to the question really at issue.

We await further developments.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Centenary of "George Eliot."

She was exactly the right person, and came at exactly the right moment. She is an original word which could not have been uttered before, and cannot be repeated or imitated.

—Mark Rutherford.

"GEORGE ELIOT" (Marian Evans), the greatest of English woman-writers, was born in Nuneaton on November 22, 1819, and her centenary is to be celebrated in a manner befitting the occasion. It is hoped to raise a permanent memorial to her memory. So far, nothing in that direction has been achieved, apart from the erection of an obelisk near her birthplace.

It is nearly forty years since the literary world was trying to realize the extent of the gap made by the death of "George Eliot." She had long been accepted as one of the foremost writers of her age, and, what is not always the case with Freethinkers, her works were very popular. The interval has affected her reputation, and her fame has shrunk. Her books are neither so much read nor so much quoted as they were. As regards some of her works this is not surprising. *Theophrastus Such*, with its repellent title, is dead. *Daniel Deronda* and *Middlemarch* are dying. But that *Scenes of Clerical Life*,

Silas Marner, Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Romola should become obsolete, is incredible. This priceless legacy in books marks the highest achievement by a woman in English prose.

"George Eliot" is unique. No woman has attained to so high a place among the writers of our country. She has even been spoken of as "Shakespeare's sister." The simile is a happy one, for they were both nursed by the same outward influence. The same forest of Arden was round them both. It is pleasant to think that the great trees of her childish memories, survivors of the great forest, may have cast their shadows on that immortal poet to whom the world owes the finest flower of the world's literature. There was something Shakespearean in "George Eliot's" genius, and her Mrs. Poyser took her place from the first by the side of Falstaff and Sancho Panza. It was but a few weeks after the appearance of *Adam Bede* that a speaker in the House of Commons quoted one of Mrs. Poyser's caustic remarks, certain that his hearers would understand him.

At once novelist and poet, "George Eliot" was the singer of the intellectual life, sincere and dignified, full of a scholarly reverie. Her poetry brings with it a far-off sound of bells heard down some lovely village on a golden afternoon. "The still, sad music of humanity," which had fired the austere imagination of Auguste Comte was to her a well of exhaustless inspiration. Content to know that though her personality be blotted out by "the popped sleep, the end of all," her influence would go to swell the volume of human worth, she expressed her aspiration in the beautiful lines:—

O 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 in self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge men's search
To vaster issues.

In her dual character of Freethinker and author, "George Eliot" united the critic who analyses and the artist who creates. The pen which had translated Feuerbach and Strauss, two most relentless opponents of the Christian superstition, this very pen drew the portrait of Dinah, the Methodist girl, and composed the pathetic prayer in the condemned cell. All writers but the great take interest in their own class, their own religious or philosophical ideas, alone. The great writer discovers the touch of Nature in all the characters—in frivolous Hetty Sorrell, in sensuous Arthur Donnithorne, as well as in pious Dinah and Mr. Irvine. Or, as the Master saw it, in jolly old Falstaff, in crafty Iago, in ambitious Lady Macbeth, in mad Lear, or under the motley of the jester.

One of the freest of thinkers on all subjects, "George Eliot's" union with George Henry Lewes is a proof of its extent. This union was, undoubtedly, the most important event of her life. It was a true marriage, undertaken with all deliberation, and was a source of strength and happiness to both. The dedications of the manuscripts of each succeeding novel declare in varying language how her beloved friend was the source of her inspiration. Without his literary guidance and sympathy, it is doubtful whether she would have produced the masterpieces which are her claim to fame.

It is impossible to ignore the personality and work of "George Eliot." The greatest woman among her contemporaries, maybe one of the greatest of all Englishwomen, she did magnificent work in her day. She was a pioneer among pioneers, and deserves recognition as

a brave woman who attempted to free the life of the nation from "the lie at the lips of the priest." We do right to commemorate her memory. In this unquiet age we need to be taught to admire, to surrender ourselves to admiration. "If you call a bad thing bad," says the great Goethe, "you do little; if you call a good thing good, you do much."

MIMNERMUS.

The Birth and Development of Gods.

LONG centuries ago, in Pagan Greece, the sceptical philosopher Euhemerus propounded the hypothesis that all the divinities of the Hellenic Pantheon once dwelt on earth in human form. The multitudinous myths and legends concerning the eternal gods were, he contended, exaggerated and distorted stories which reposed on a basis of historical truth.

This doctrine received little or no acceptance among the contemporaries of Euhemerus, and was practically forgotten for 2,000 years. In the nineteenth century of our era, however, that prince of anthropologists, the late Sir Edward Tylor, and the great evolutionary thinker, Herbert Spencer, were driven by their investigations into primitive religion to revive the old Greek's view. But while Tylor clearly realized the important part played by the savage belief in dead men's ghosts in the genesis and growth of theology, it is to Spencer that we are most fully indebted for the completest and most convincing exposition of the theory that the whole army of anthropomorphic deities has been derived from the spirits of the dead.

The views of Spencer are presented with abundance of detail in the first volume of his monumental *Principles of Sociology*. There innumerable evidences are advanced which trace the rites, ceremonies, and beliefs of ancient and modern religion to the misconceptions of uncivilized races regarding natural happenings, and, above all, in relation to early humanity's misinterpretations of dreams, echoes, shadows, epilepsy, catalepsy, and similar obscure phenomena.

These far reaching speculations met with a mere modicum of open support, although their weight was widely realized by men of science; and they undoubtedly modified the opinions of the educated classes. In England, that versatile genius, Grant Allen, consistently championed his master's doctrine, while it found one powerful advocate on the Continent.

In the 'nineties of last century, with the advent of the first edition of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, it began to appear as if the anthropomorphic gods and goddesses of the classic world were doomed to resolution into animal and plant originals. But deeper meditation and further research induced Sir James Frazer to admit in the preface to one of the volumes of the final edition of his masterpiece that probably all the deities would ultimately stand revealed as the apotheosized spirits of dead men.

Until recently there was little or no evidence that the men of the Old Stone Age paid any attention to the spiritual life. The memorials of these long extinct savages failed to include any sign of burial. Now, however, positive proof exists that even in remote Palæolithic Times mankind had adopted a belief in the spirit realm. In 1907, at La Chapelle aux Saints, a Palæolithic skeleton was discovered lying on its back, and directed from east to west. Encircling this fossil, writes James, in his *Primitive Ritual and Belief* (1917),—

were a quantity of Mousterian implements, fragments of ochre, and broken bones, while over the head were several long bones of an ox lying flat, one of them still in connection with some smaller bones of the foot and

toes, so as to suggest that it was still clothed with flesh when it was placed in this position. This was evidently a ceremonial interment, accompanied by offerings of food and implements for the use of the deceased in the spirit world.

Two years later, a second Palæolithic grave was opened at Le Moustier. The remains were those of a boy, and the corpse had been laid on its right side, and its right arm supported the head on a bolster of flints. A splendidly fashioned implement, charred bones, and burnt stones had been placed with the body. Faith in soul survival is again indicated by the presence of weapons and food offerings. In very ancient times, man not only appears to have entertained a faith in a life beyond the grave, but, even then, the belief would seem to have been well established. All of this strongly supports the view that the existence of man dates back to a period immensely distant. Professors Sollas, Keith, and others appear amply justified in drawing large drafts on the Bank of time when estimating the centuries during which the genus *Homo* has tenanted its terrestrial dwelling-place.

Various other recent discoveries are of a kindred character, while the evidence furnished by interments of the later Neolithic Age concerning the elaborate funeral observances of prehistoric peoples is decisive. Moreover, when the contents of highly ancient graves are compared with the funeral furniture of contemporary African races such as the Bushmen, the similarity of their burial customs is truly remarkable. The lowly savage of Africa paints the dead body, and presents its face to the eastern sky, while the bow and arrow of the deceased are placed ready to his hand. Weapons and adornments also repose with the dead in Palæolithic graves. In the Old Stone Age burial caves at Mentone, tools, weapons, and colouring materials were deposited with the corpse.

The antiquity of the faith in post-mortem life is therefore unquestionable. In his Gifford Lectures on the fascinating subject, "The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead," Professor Frazer divides the vast company of divinities into three classes. First, we have the gods evolved by man from his environment; secondly, there are the exceptionally gifted men who are raised to divine honours by the motley multitude. The third and last class comprises the deified spirits of departed ancestors. Not only with savage and barbarous peoples, but even among highly polished races, "the worship of the human dead has been one of the commonest and most influential forms of natural religion, perhaps indeed the commonest and most influential of all."

The belief in ghosts and spirits exists in every stage of human culture from the lowest to the highest. These shadowy entities are usually conceived as baleful beings whose keenest pleasure consists in the spiteful persecution of man. Also, alike among the most abject savages, the fiercest barbarians, and the most civilized communities, the propitiation of the souls of the dead constitutes an outstanding feature of their religious observances. The degree of respect paid to the spirits of the departed varies widely. The souls of men who were powerful in life inspire a deeper dread than those of meaner mortals. Cruel and despotic chiefs, mighty monarchs, and relentless warriors in their spiritual state preserve the prestige they exercised when they ruled as men. Traditions of their malice and rapacity, their magnificence and their ruthlessness, pass and expand from generation to generation. Their original natural, if unusual ability, becomes, as the years roll by, a stupendous marvel of superhuman achievement, and, finally, these dead men are exalted to the realms of divinity. Nor is this all. For, in addition to the crowd of deities plainly evolved

from the spirits of departed rulers, there are sound reasons for concluding, states Professor Frazer,—

that many gods who rank as purely mythical beings, were once men of flesh and blood, though their true history has passed out of memory or rather been transformed by legend into a myth, which veils more or less completely the real character of the imaginary deity.

And even if we concede that this explanation cannot account for the genesis of all the gods, it appears to account more largely for their existence than any other. "For," proceeds Professor Frazer,—

the more closely we look at many deities of natural religion, the more distinctly do we seem to perceive, under the quaint or splendid pall which mythical fancy has wrapped round their stately figures, the familiar features of real men, who once shared the common joys, and the common sorrows of humanity, who trod life's common road to the common end.

How, then, were the ghosts generated and their development into gods accomplished during man's religious ascent? It cannot be denied that we ourselves sometimes fail to discriminate between real happenings and dream experiences. One occasionally says: "Did this occur or did one dream it?" And although this query is not always interpreted in a strictly literal sense, there was a time when it was invariably thus interpreted. With the strictly literal savage of primitive times, destitute as he unquestionably was of the art of agriculture, even in its rudest form, and at best an indifferent hunter of animals, and, therefore, mainly dependent upon the fish he caught, and the fruits and nuts of the neighbouring forest, it must, indeed, have gone hard with him in seasons of dearth, unless a stranded whale or some other adventitious comestible appeared to relieve his hunger. It was largely a feast or a famine. A distended or depleted stomach may each prove the parent of most vivid dreams, and untutored man must have often found it difficult to distinguish clearly between the realities of the living world and the ideal phenomena of dreams.

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

Acid Drops.

Whenever support is needed for any form of militarism, one may count upon a very large section of clergymen. Militarism and religion are so closely connected historically, and in temper, that this fact will surprise none but those unacquainted with the two things. There has never been a war waged at any time or for any purpose that the clergy have not supported, and cloaked the most criminal designs with all the moral and pious language at their disposal. So we are not surprised at Canon Dorrity, Rector of St. Ann's, Manchester, sending to the public press a plea for Conscription in England. The Canon's argument is that "military training is a national investment in discipline, good physique, and security, and as a taxpayer I consider them a good investment." And this with the example of Germany before the world!

For our part, we consider there are few institutions, with the exception of the Church, that breed greater evils than Conscription. It creates discipline, true; but it is the discipline of the animal, not of the man, and any good results from physical training can be obtained in the absence of military discipline. It creates a class within the State hostile to the free development of a nation. It encourages, not the intelligent discrimination of a free people, but the blind obedience of a piece of machinery. Criticism becomes an offence, and refusal to obey orders a crime. And the whole lesson of history is that a nation which saddles itself with a huge soldier class, and learns to depend upon military force, has taken a long step towards its own disintegration. Still,

we are not surprised that the Canon is in favour of Conscriptio. A highly militarized State makes for religion. The type of mind encouraged is favourable to both.

A press paragraph contains the information that "General" Booth has made changes in his "staff" appointments, including that of the "Salvation Army Assurance Society." Salvationists are to be envied. They are insured against fire in both worlds.

Indians of all creeds, including Parsees, Brahmans, Mohammedans, and Hindoos, have formed an educational hostel at Ilkley, Yorkshire, with the object of breaking down caste. Religion is the active influence in caste.

Since the War, people "dote on the military." Perhaps this is the reason why the newspapers mentioned that the Rev. E. H. Pearce, the new Bishop of Worcester, was, years ago, "Chaplain of the Post Office Rifles."

Some very Christian folk in this country are most anxious, now that Constantinople is in "Christian" hands, that Sancta Sophia should be converted into a Christian Church. The ground is that it was a Christian Church hundreds of years ago. We have no doubt that "Christian hands" will act up to tradition and keep all they can, but we wonder what will happen if the world is redistributed on this plan. For our part, we suggest if the Turk is to leave Constantinople, that it would not be a bad plan to internationalize the city, constitute it the headquarters of the League of Nations, and convert Sancta Sophia to some more useful purpose than any to which it has yet been devoted.

Shoemakers are credited with thinking there is nothing like leather, so it is not surprising that Bishop Taylor-Smith advises people to "put God first in Church and State." The bishop and his colleagues are God's representatives, so the request is natural.

A paragraph in the press stated that the Bishop of London would not preach on a certain Sunday. "For this relief, much thanks."

Writing in September, 1914, at a time when the pulpits were ringing with the "moral uplift" induced by the War, and illustrating it by the suspension of disputes between capital and labour and the political truce, we pointed out how absurd all this was. We said, then, that the quarrel was suspended, not ended, that the relations between "classes" remained unaffected by the War, that political treachery and knavery would remain what it was, and that, in any case, we had only a suspension of a social welfare on the plane of ideas, in favour of the prosecution of a warfare on the lower plane of brute force. Events have, we think, shown our analysis to be correct. The War is over, and the old quarrels are renewed. The "moral uplift" has meant a weakening of home life, a coarsening of manners, a reliance upon brute force, and intensified class hatred and suspicion. For victor and vanquished war brings its inevitable social consequences.

The religious world is also paying the price. Under a less advanced social state than our own a state of war might have resulted in a gain to religion. War and religion both move along primitive mental lines, and under certain conditions to strengthen one is to strengthen the other. To-day education is general enough to defeat this consequence, and after spreading tale after tale—deliberately manufactured—of the revival of religion, the confessions are numerous of the decline of belief in the Army and elsewhere. We have published many of these confessions, and now we see that the authorities of Hartley Primitive Methodist College, Manchester, are compelled to institute an enquiry concerning returned students in order to see "where they stand in regard to spiritual things." In other words, to see whether heresy has made enough headway to disqualify them for the career of a clergyman. We hope, for the student's sake, it has.

Bishop Boyd Carpenter left estate valued at £25,272. This sum should suffice to keep him from the beautiful place he so often preached about.

A Nonconformist newspaper, which does not dissemble its love for the Prime Minister, says that "Mr. Lloyd George claims to be a Baptist." The word "claims" is distinctly good. It shows how Christians hate one another.

A large sum of money was raised last year in Ireland as an Anti-Conscription Fund, and the question of its disposal has been raised. According to the *Manchester Guardian*, some people in Ireland believe that its escape from Conscriptio was due to prayers of the Roman Catholic Bishops. So the Bishop of Cork quite naturally proposes that the money—about £100,000—should be spent on building a new cathedral. The glory to God, the money to the Church. That is quite the customary plan of distribution. On the other hand, the new senior Member for Cork objects to the proposal. He says Ireland has already enough churches. With that we quite agree. But we welcome the declaration as endorsing what we have often said—namely, that, given the free development of Irish political life, and the power of the Church will soon be curbed. Protestant bigots are the best friends of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland.

The *Portsmouth Evening News* reports a burglary in the house of a Mr. Fleming, but says that with the exception of a "valuable copy of a letter supposed to have been written by Christ before his crucifixion" nothing was missed. We imagine that the burglar who stole that ancient religious fake must have been a lunatic. But there is no accounting for taste.

The Pope is credited with infallibility. Indeed, it is one of the Catholic dogmas. But Papa often forgets that the perfection of art is to conceal art. When President Wilson visited him in Rome, the Pope hailed him as "the greatest figure of the twentieth century." And everyone knows that the century is still in its first score of years. Presumably, if Mr. Wilson had only visited the man next door, Papa would have dubbed him the wickedest man of the century. It looks as if Italian ecclesiastics were forgetting the traditions of their trade.

The clerical boast that the War was needed to purify our morals is constantly being refuted by facts. In reality, national morality is considerably the worse as a direct consequence of the War. Crimes of violence are on the increase; bigamy charges are very numerous; and magistrates have had recourse to flogging to restrain juvenile crime. So many boys have been birched at Uxbridge during the past year that the birch has had to be renewed.

"Primitive Methodists have always lived within easy reach of the workhouse," says the Rev. H. J. Taylor, "but I have never visited one there." They have endeavoured, perhaps, to avoid the example of Jesus Christ, who was born and died a pauper.

Catholic authorities state that a Liverpool lady was restored to health by bathing in Saint Winifred's Well at Holywell. She is described as an incurable consumptive. It is a fine advertisement for the coming season.

Some "profitable reflections" on the salary of Lord Halsbury, a former Lord Chancellor, have been made by the *Daily News*, which estimates that during thirty-three years "his modest earnings" amounted to £250,000. It is a large sum of money; but during the same period of time the salaries of the Archbishops of Canterbury reached the respectable sum of £495,000. It may be added that the Lord Chancellor did not preach on the blessings of poverty.

A new "Life of Christ" is advertised under the title, *By an Unknown Disciple*. Doubtless, it is as reliable as the existing Gospels.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 9, afternoon, Blaina; evening, Abertillery; February 10, Abertillery, Debate; February 23, South Shields; March 2, Swansea; March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Per F. Rose (Bloemfontein)—A. S., 5s.; N. G., 10s. 6d.; F. Rose, £1 1s.
- W. COLLINS.—Thanks for cutting. Religion and Militarism have always been good stable companions.
- "GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY."—We fail to see what use you imagine your M.S.S. is likely to be to us. It is too lengthy to be interesting to our readers, and too short to be of value to our waste paper man.
- R. W. BLACK.—Your letter was received, and contents duly acknowledged in our issue of December 22. Copies of papers are being sent you.
- ONE of our readers would like the pamphlet by the late Charles Watts, *Jesus as a Social Reformer*. Perhaps this may reach the eye of one who has a copy for disposal.
- G. WHITEHEAD.—Your experience of being invited to lecture in a chapel is certainly not common with Freethinkers. We would cheerfully accept such an invitation ourselves. We note your opinion that the *Freethinker* ought to be threepence. Still, we believe our policy to be the better one. Anyone who placed financial considerations in the forefront would not take on our job. Thanks for the help you are giving.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—Pleased to hear from you. We are not surprised at your comments. Their accuracy will become patent to all—one day.
- WOULD some reader of this journal kindly oblige the publishers with a copy of the issue of the *Freethinker* dated November 24, 1918.
- W. W. BELL.—We find ourselves in complete agreement with your letter, but regret that its length forbids publication. We are hoping for better days for Ireland. One of its needs is evidently a vigorous Freethought propaganda.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: Robert Lloyd, 5s.
- D. KEIR.—We can see no objection whatever to young children reading fairy tales. It is a very natural food for young minds, and forms a stage of their development, as it has been a phase of racial growth. Harm is only done when it is used as a basis on which to plant other "fairy tales" as historic and literal truth.
- H. J. DWIGHT.—Sorry we cannot reply to all your queries in this column. Your question, "Are you in league with the clerics?" is amusing, and we do not think the discussion of that would be profitable.
- G. VINE.—Please read the article again. You appear to have quite mistaken its bent and purpose.
- W. F.—Thanks for advertising list.
- ISABELLA GORDON.—Your view of the situation is one with which we quite agree, although its elaboration would be out of place in these columns.
- E. A. MACDONALD.—Letter of December 6 to hand and shall receive attention. We hope *Christianity and Slavery* will come up to your expectations. It has enjoyed an almost unprecedented sale so far.
- J. E. YEATES.—We have no doubt that if compulsory religious service is abolished in the Army it will go in the Navy also.
- C. F. J.—Idea not quite striking enough.
- 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.

There was a fine audience in the Repertory Theatre on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Free-thought, Religion, and Death." The theatre was well filled, and every point was followed with keenness and appreciation. So far, the taking of this theatre has been one of the best ventures of the Birmingham Branch, and we hope it will receive the financial support it deserves from Freethinkers in the locality. Much more might be done in the way of advertising if adequate funds were available.

We were glad to learn that the Coventry friends were setting seriously to work on the question of propaganda. Mr. Cohen has arranged to visit the town for a week-night lecture towards the end of February. We should much like to see Wolverhampton once more active. There are plenty of Freethinkers there if they would only set to work.

The distribution of Freethought literature among the troops has had its due effect, and nothing proves this more clearly than the frenzied appeals from religious quarters wherewith to counteract its influence. We recognized this plan of attack as a promising feature very early in 1915, and have been sending out parcels ever since. Scores of Freethinkers—that we know of—have been made. The truth is, that our literature never has been put into circulation on a sufficiently large and comprehensive scale. No doubt lack of funds has been responsible for this, although something is due to its never having been taken in hand on any systematic plan, but the fact remains, and it has been an obstacle to growth. We have done what we could to remedy this defect, and we intend pursuing the task. We shall continue distributing among the troops until demobilization is complete. After that other avenues will be explored.

The South Wales Secular Committee is holding a meeting at St. John's Restaurant, Bridgend, on Saturday (January 25), at 6 p.m. All those interested are asked to make a special effort to be present. The business is important.

One of our readers asks us for an exact reference to Thomas Paine's writings in which the famous statement, "The World is My Country," etc., appears. As is not uncommon, we find ourselves, after a hasty run through the principal works, unable to give the required information. Perhaps some other of our readers can oblige.

Antinous.

His loveliness is shadowed; still there flies
 One cold doubt darkling through that mystic gaze,
 Whether surrender of the glorious days
 Must be. Pure joy of living fiercely vies
 With joy of giving; while the Destinies
 Await his youthful will, and Clotho stays.
 Apollo—Dionysus? Parting ways
 Stretch grey and golden underneath his eyes.
 For love he tastes the lips of death and goes
 Down to the dreamless. His young spirit bends
 Unto Light's Lord; while stricken earth bestows
 A godhead, and much marble grief ascends.
 But all the immortality man knows
 In living hearts of men begins and ends.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

It is so seldom even at the most important moments that our faculties are permitted fully to help us. There is no free space allowed, and we are dragged hither and thither by a swarm of temporary impulses. The result has to stand, fixed for ever, but the operative forces which determine it are those of the moment, and not of eternity.—Mark Rutherford.

Unbalanced Minds.

"MIMNERMUS," in his very interesting article in last week's issue (January 12) on "The Part and the Whole," and especially in his reference to "Shepherd" Smith, has put me in mind of a valuable book I once received as a gift from the late Bertram Dobell.

It was a copy of the *Shepherd* for the years 1834 and 1835, *A London Weekly Periodical*, edited by the Rev. James E. Smith, M.A. It was the journal which gave the editor his popular name of "Shepherd" Smith.

Mr. Dobell sent it to me with the request that I should write an article for the *Literary Guide* on "The Psychology of Credulous Insanity." That is, how to account for the fact that the same person may display in the highest degree, the rationality and the logical reasoning of civilized man, and, at the same time, the senseless credulity of a savage.

Mr. Dobell was amply justified in the belief that the volume presented revealed a man of extraordinary gifts and culture—not one of merely ordinary intelligence—but a man of brilliant parts, possessing not only a rare acumen but a discreet judgment, in the art of catering for the literary palate of his public.

It may be doubted whether any journal of to-day displays such an insight into human nature, and such a skill in striking its million keys into a "symphony" of success.

And yet as a follower of the hare-brained, crazy fanatic Joanna Southcott, *this same James Smith was an imbecile of the imbeciles*, and, without doubt, it was a conviction that the new century promised to be as much entertained and enlivened by famous "imbeciles" of that type, as the old one had been, that induced Dobell to present me with the book, and to make the request. Let me give one example:—

The "imbecility" of "Shepherd" Smith is not one whit more pathetic or pitiable than that of the late Mr. W. T. Stead (another journalist of the first water) travelling all the way from London to the Rhondda Valleys, in Wales, to meet and interview that demented ignoramus and neurotic, Evan Roberts. To witness that brilliant and well-informed publicist listening with breathless and almost reverential attention to the senseless, incoherent drivel muttered by that religious maniac about an interview which he had had with "God the Father" the previous night, was a spectacle pathetic enough to make one despair of even cherishing the hope of ever reclaiming the race from the submerged swamps of superstitious Credulity.

Now, to a man like Dobell, possessing as he did so rare a sense of the intrinsic value of thought and of logical consistency, such a medley of sanity and insanity must have been very perplexing indeed. In his letter he makes very apposite remarks about the gifted "crank," and regrets that the task of writing his biography (a copy of which he also sent me) "did not fall into better hands."

The psychological problem is not in the existence of religious maniacs; they are as natural a product as cripples; nor yet in the fact that Spiritualism has an army of rogues preying upon the community; they are as natural as thieves in a society with private property. The puzzling mystery lies in the fact that the one has clients and the other disciples and followers. In other words, to account how is it possible that people noted for astuteness and reasoning power in the spheres of social life, become such ready dupes to the fanaticism of the former and to the roguery of the latter?

That was the problem that Bertram Dobell invited me to write about. At the time, however, I could not

comply with his request, as there was an article of mine in type that, for quite a long period, blocked the way. And when at last the path became clear, dear Bertram Dobell has passed away. I had now no enthusiasm left, or heart to proceed with the task.

Moreover, it was a task beset with exceptional difficulties. For when the "lucid self" of such a "double personality" is so very "sane" and astute as to make use of its "non-lucid self" to exploit the ignorance, the gullibility, or the grief of society, for the sake of attaining personal wealth or notoriety, one does not know whether to ascribe it to the *spell* of mediumistic imposture or to self-conscious charlatanism.

It is so difficult to know where the dupe ends and the charlatan begins—the one merges so imperceptibly into the other. I might, however, discuss the subject on some favourable occasion. In the meanwhile, "Mimnermus" may extend his list, which possibly will be more effectual in directing public attention to the fact that the pestilence derives much, if not most, of its power of infection from famous "cranks."

KERIDON.

Freethought versus Evil.

III.

(Concluded from p. 33.)

Take the Church to-day in relation to War. Now, if there is any truth in religion at all it must be a universal truth, as, I maintain, the reason of the Freethinker and the Idealist is universal, and the spirit of life is universal; but the Church, to-day, is as actually war-like as the militarists. The Christian Church of England would destroy the Christian Church of Germany just as remorselessly as the English Army would destroy the German Army, or *vice versa*. There is no sense of brotherhood between Christian priests; there is no law of love to be observed; there is no idealism; no lofty sentiment; no moral force whatever. There is just the same warlike and vindictive spirit in the Church as in the Press. The Church, as a professed agent for an Almighty God of love, makes no effort whatever in any country to resist the universal ragings of War. It blindly follows the mental vacuum. It licks the shining boots of the State and, this latter, because the State subsidizes the Church—! The root of the whole matter is the getting of money! The Church is as commercial at heart as any bloated Capitalist. It thinks only of money—of its own material interests; it does nothing whatever for idealism, or reason, or sanity. It is a slimy servant of that popular ignorance which brings about war, and which allows political tyrants to pull the strings of the death-trap. It is inert—a mere parasite of that popular docility and stupidity which it should attempt to enlighten. There is no hope in the Church. There is no hope in anything except sanity, reason, and great ideals. Reason is, I maintain, a more spiritual force than the religion of the Church. Reason alone can destroy stupidity and irrational evil. Reason alone can make life sane and beautiful.

The sole hope of the Freethinker lies in this—that reason lies dormant within every human consciousness. That reason is as universal as electricity; it can remain hidden and unsuspected, invisible and yet exist—awaiting the master hands and brains to unloose the flood-gates of the mind. Many evil things stand in the way, and these must be smashed before any effective progress towards Freethought and reason can be made. Foremost and most formidable stand the Church and the Press; with these, ranged in ranks, some certain popular conceptions about life, which are kept alive by these two evil ones command.

Then, in the ranks, come Commercialism, love of the idealized dollar; Respect for Authority—and of tyranny (to-day, synonymous terms); a hunger for cant and hypocrisy, sugared over by sentimentality; charity, and a servile State generally. These things chain the undeveloped brains of the majority, and resist progress.

The thinker whose mind has cast off all the popular illusions and superstitions, whose mind exists upon certain unassailable truths about the condition of humanity and of society, maintains that these popular illusions are entirely evil, both in their nature and in their power and function. He realizes that the Church and the Press pander to, support, and strengthen the human stupidity which keeps man's feet deep in the mud and blood of misery and ignorance. He likens the Church to a gramophone record of great antiquity and futility, which has been played over and over again for thousands of years, until it is absolutely useless, and fit only to be scrapped. He realizes how the Press works hand-in-hand with the Church and State. This War will prove the uselessness of the Church to save all imbeciles. The clergy (agents, remember, of an "Almighty God of Love") have either taken an active part in the War or they have, as in most cases, remained safely at home, urging other men into the trenches, to become mechanical murderers in the name of the "Prince of Peace"! Such is the final futility of the Church. Nothing else need be realized about it. No long abstract theological arguments are necessary now—we need not trouble to bring any analysis to bear upon the various supernatural creeds—the supreme fact that the Churches and Chapels have urged men to murder other men is sufficient.

Freethinkers can do no more than reiterate certain truths, which must ultimately become popular if the race is not to degenerate into an absolute slavery of mind and body. We are near these things now—perilously near. It will need all the courage and determination of Freethinkers and free spirits to save the race from itself, and it is necessary to believe that the race can be saved. We must have more faith in our Freethought than the Churches have ever had in their supernatural gods. We must shame these evils as best we can, insisting that Reason alone can restore sanity to mankind and bring us safely out of the darkness of mind which envelops us in this hour. We have a lighted torch in our hands which must at all costs be handed on. We cannot be crushed, for we fight with Truth, and bear with us the only certain means of bringing light into the world. The Church cannot crush us, the Press cannot crush us; they can merely ignore us—a purely negative action, which betrays impotence and final decay. Egotistical as it may seem, we know that ours is the true greatness. We treasure the inheritance of man, Reason, and in this we are the only real source of hope which the people have; and whether they acknowledge us or no, ultimately they must come to our way of regarding the facts of human experience, otherwise the human race will have been a failure. There is no question about it at all. Religion will not prevent war. Religion has caused war, but religion has never stopped war. Reason will stop war, and reason will kill the evil of religion and disarm the Church, and demobilize the clergy. The greed, stupidity, and blundering idiocy of the Church is proved by the fact that it gave no support whatever to the man who conscientiously objected to becoming a mechanical murderer. The Church could have saved its face by backing up the Conscientious Objector—it was a great opportunity—but the Church was afraid of losing its State subsidy; it was thinking of £.s.d., not of the pacifism of Jesus Christ.

This bloody cataclysm of murder and destruction

makes us surer of our own ground. Others may change their views fundamentally as a result of this War, but Freethinkers will remain where they have always been—on the side of reason and humanitarian ideals.

Reason alone can save man from the evils within himself and create sane and harmonious conditions of life where before existed the struggle for existence, encouraged and strengthened by the prostitute Church and press. Freethought is an enemy of cant and falsehood. Freethought alone can bring the love of truth into the heart of humanity, and offers a real and lasting salvation to the human race.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Public and Private.

In an article in the *Freethinker* of December 15, 1918, Major Warren remarks of the clergy: "In their private relations they are kindly, but in the sacred name of the Church they are as cruel as Calvin's God." But what self-respecting person puts any value upon the "kindliness" and "truth" of men who say, or do, one thing in private and the very opposite in public? In my estimation, there could not be a viler form of hypocrisy, or one more deserving of contemptuous rejection.

If I had an opportunity of preaching a sermon to the clergy of Great Britain, I should take for my text the words, "What you say in secret shall be proclaimed from the housetops." The Great War has done much to hasten the fulfilment of this prediction. Men are beginning to say on public platforms many things that have hitherto only been whispered in privacy or in semi-privacy: by firesides, at workshop benches, in intimate club circles, in smoking-rooms, and at public-house bars. The boys are coming home, and demobilization, we venture to assert, will mean the death of the particularly nauseating kind of hypocrisy which makes men wear one face in private and another (and totally different) face in public.

The difficulty facing the occupants of pulpits is that when this hypocrisy dies their occupation dies with it. To proclaim the truth from the pulpit is to bomb the pulpit. A Free Platform will lead the way—the impulsive force of Freethought lecturing is becoming ever more powerful; but the Press will be a bad second, and the Pulpit nowhere.

Major Warren truly points out that the Church, like the State, has no identity; but that fact does not make the conduct of the clergyman who is amiable to you in private and who—in association with his fellows—defames you in public, any the less reprehensible. The criminal who acts as *socius* or *particeps* is just as guilty as the criminal who acts by himself. And the criminal who acts by himself is not such a coward as the criminal who shelters himself behind associates.

There is another aspect of this matter which must not be left out of account—namely, that the cleric claims the divinely bestowed *right* of prying into, directing, and controlling *your* private and individual concerns. No matter that you do not concede the right, he still claims it; and if he cannot enforce it, he takes precious good care that if he can make you suffer for your denial and repudiation of his claim, he will. If you do not allow him to baptize you, marry you, bury you, and supervise you in the intervals between, look out for trouble.

The issue is not between kindness and cruelty, amiability and hostility. It is between justice and injustice. Freedom and truth are the parents of justice—tyranny and falsehood the parents of injustice, and injustice has for brother and sister servility and superstition. Put this issue before a clergyman in private, and if he cannot skilfully elude charges of

injustice against his professed faith he will smilingly pretend to acquiesce in your views. But will he say in the pulpit what he says by his study fire over a pipe? No, he will not, because he has first to satisfy his wealthy hearers. They can stand *words*—plenty of them—often well spiced to please the palates of the poor members of the audience, but they draw the line at *acts*. Thus, the Church is a curse, because it puts charity before justice. This is the crucial test of the system of morals laid down by the Church. And if the Church condones the robbing of the poor, opposes claims for restitution, connives at profiteering, and preaches the blessedness of poverty, every individual clerical representative of the Church equally does so. But even the grace of God cannot fill an empty belly or an empty grate.

The princes of the Church are careful to secure the substance for themselves. They are agreeable that the masses should divide the shadow amongst them. There is no superior authority to examine *their* bank-books. The only bank they allow the poor to draw freely upon is the "Bank of Faith." Was it C. H. Spurgeon who published a *Cheque Book* of that wonderful bank? By means of it the starving tramp may buy a mansion in the skies, but not a turnip or a crust of butterless bread. The Christian "Haves" possess two gods, one for private use—gold—the other for public exhibition—Jehovah. The "Hosts of the Lord" are composed of three army corps (1) commanded by General Property, (2) commanded by General Parson and (3) commanded by General Pettifogger. A notable trinity in very sooth! But they do not discern the gleam of the spears of the new allied force that is marching to engage them commanded by General Freedom, General Enlightenment, and General Justice. Can we doubt whose shall be the victory? It is a struggle between sham and reality—between faith and reason.

An individual cleric here and there sees more clearly into the future than his complacent comrades, and beckons frantically to them to cease their internecine quarrels and combine against the common enemy. But it is too late—too late! The whole world has had too flagrant an example of the terrible devastation and havoc wrought by the insane ambitions that grew from the roots of a deep-seated Christian faith. No more shall the furies of superstition herd credulous and ignorant mortals to death. We shall not merely seek peace, we shall ensue it; but a secure and enduring peace can only be won by the triumph of General Freedom, General Enlightenment, and General Justice. And when their swords are sheathed no man will fear to proclaim from the housetops what he says at his fireside.

IGNOTUS.

"Always Ready."

"ALWAYS READY"—that is the motto of our town. It would be useless for us to deny that we are quite proud of our motto. We all try to live up to it, and no matter what may be our persuasion, we like to think that we are "Always ready." Quite near to the sea there is, high and dry, an old cork-armoured boat. During its sea-life it was the means of saving above one thousand lives. In a certain sense we may say that "its days of usefulness are o'er"; but who can estimate the effects of its silent teaching? It stands there safe and apparently sound, under a protecting roof, a memorial of the brave deeds in which it performed its part. Its work still goes on; it still inspires, and will so continue; and when the cry for help comes, whether on sea or land, "Always ready" will ring imperatively in the hearts of those who have listened to its teaching.

In many ways it might be shown how this motto of ours takes effect. But time and space is limited, and our present

fancy impels us to consider two or three efforts of our local clergy. Even they are "Always ready," and it is thought that a recalling of certain episodes will help us to decide whether their theory of life is in accordance with the actual trend of events. During the dark part of the year, when the nation had its "back to the wall," when the shadows hung heavy over the land, an entertainment was arranged in a local variety theatre for the benefit of the fighting men or their dependents. It might reasonably be assumed that this was very important work. But a serious thing happened in the arrangements. The day was Sunday, the time fixed for seven o'clock. This raised the ire of the Rector of St. Stephen's. He protested in the press, it was an intrusion on the "sacred hour"; Christian people of the town would view with grave concern this terrible thing. How the dead past seemed to rise again; how we seemed to hear the menacing, austere voice, "Thou shalt not"! We seemed to feel the cold, merciless hand of persecution gradually gripping our hearts. It was nothing to this worthy rector that hundreds of people were anxious and willing to help a good cause; it was nothing to him that the performers in the band may have to be up betimes the next morning to descend into the bowels of the earth, with very short rest; it was nothing to him that anxious mothers wanted their children and grown-ups home again.

This is one of the real tests of the Christian religion; in the dark hour it was found wanting. It put forward its rude claims when the people were anxious, and needed sustenance. The Rector of St. Stephen's may have won a temporary victory. But the times were redolent with anxieties; the mantle of D.O.R.A. hung heavily over us. We could only wait and hope.

In a somewhat lighter vein we might refer briefly to another functionary of the Church who was "Always ready." The "Old Comrades of the Great War" were appealing for funds with which to start a club where they might meet and "fight their battles o'er again."

The Vicar of St. Aidin's bravely came forward and offered the use of the parish hall for the purpose. It hurt him to think that these men should use public money for such a purpose. We have no desire to speak at all disparagingly of the offer of the vicar, he may be a very hearty fellow; it may have happened that "the landlord's laugh was merry chorus" when some humorous reminiscence was recalled by some "old comrade." It may be that the "old comrades" would have settled sweetly and snugly in the parish hall; but the fact remains that they did not do so. We would, again, suggest that the vicar's theory of life prevented him from having a sense of fitness; and while he may be "always ready" to further that theory, still it is apparent that he fails to appreciate the needs of life in all its rich variety.

We next had "a gathering of the clans." There was a town's meeting called, to be addressed by clergymen of various denominations, to deal with the divorce question. It was quite a jubilee, the lion was about to lie down with the lamb. The Catholic and Protestant were about to sink their differences. And humanity would have to adapt itself to their "iron kultur." Marriage is an affair arranged in heaven for human beings, these priests would see to that. They were a law unto themselves, and they spoke defiantly of any law that may be decided upon by the civil power. These gentry care nothing about the patient work that is being done all round us in order to arrive at conclusions that will help in framing rules to meet all the varying conditions of life. Again, their theory of life fails to allow them to sympathize with the great problems which face us all over wherever we turn. No "Wrong Man and Wrong Woman" difficulty bothers them; it is the same yesterday, to day, and forever. They are "always ready" with their rigid principles. But humanity will not be thus saved; the principles of Secularism and the recognition that we are dealing with a "growing and a changing thing" is the only hope for the eventual happiness of the race. We should be "always ready" to forward our great work. Before the Christian era the principles of "this worldism" lived in a restricted area on the surface of the earth. Men are more and more turning their thoughts wistfully to those wonderful far-off results of human reflection. It is even claimed that modern civilization would have been impossible without them; what a re-

fection upon Christianity. Let us hope that the light of peace will once more soon reign over the earth. Then the growth of civil science will get its chance. Then those who would enchain our minds will have to huddle more and more in their dark places. It is a long stern work this freeing of man, but we must not falter; we must be "always ready." The people have never really accepted religion in its entirety, such acceptance would mean race-suicide. Love is the dominating factor of life, and its sphere of activity is here and now.

J. FOTHERGILL.

Faith.

My muscles were arrested in the very act of leaving by the entry of a slim girl of not more than twenty-one. I knew her to be the occupant of a room in my tumbling tenement—a room some three stories higher than my poor lodging. Beyond her appearance, and that her Christian name was Eileen, I knew little about her. So slight an acquaintance, however, was not alone sufficient to make me pause, for I often passed greater intimates in that impoverished and gaudy paradise for guiltless, though corrupted, outcasts. No, it wasn't that. Would that it were!

She stumbled and almost fell on the threshold. Slowly she came under the murky light. Then what a face I saw with terrible vividness! How haggard, and worn, and drawn! How thin and emaciated! with protruding bones and large, beautiful white teeth that seemed so strong, oh, so strong! in contrast with the poor wasted face. Her sapphire eyes literally bobbed up and down in the great weird sockets. How they sparkled and flashed! Methought those heavenly orbs held in their unfathomable depths the concentrated vitality of the whole shrunken frame. If I were an artist.....but alas! no artist can paint life. It is too subtle, too beautiful, too transiently pathetic. Indeed, the dim, formless shadows of brush, pen, and chisel are no more than strange momentary impressions of unreality.

I recollected a plain warm skirt. Now what was there! Scarce a tattered rag. I remembered a plain gold ring. Now what was there?

A thin white finger that scarce could 'bide
The frailest band of gossamer, much less
The endless sign of woman's servitude.

For fully five minutes she rested near the door motionless. At length she falteringly drew a faded purse from beneath the skirt. But she put it back again—there was nothing in it. I saw the eyes grow dimmer—oh, starvation, starvation, thou art a pitiless knave! Why, oh! why should the heart beat only for the pulse to throb with pain? Why, oh! why should the tongue thirst unavailingly? Why, oh! why should the soul yearn for the infinite only to expire tortured by beauty untasted and wine undrunk? The wind moans, answerless; the ocean roars, answerless. And still life goes on leaping from birth to death!

I approached her gently. I saw the lips move, and felt the breath undulating as the poor creature strove to articulate a prayer.

"Nearer," the lovely eyes implored.

She thrust a hand into her bosom whence she drew a scrap of paper containing something.

"Nearer, still nearer," the eyes still beseeched; though the lids had almost hidden the tiny spheres of life. The hands trembled. I held the disengaged one. I stooped.

"God forgive me—give this too—I could not before—give this to Father Lavelle—I am not beyond—I will not be beyond prayer."

And so I was left: a lifeless bone in one hand, a florin in the other!

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SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "How Fast Can Human Nature Change?"

OUTDOOR.

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

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