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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Views and Opinions.

Dangerous People.

The thrower of bombs is a much over-noticed individual. So for the matter of that is the criminal. Both are allowed to bulk large in the public mind, and thus are given a position of public importance that neither deserves. It is amusing and interesting to observe the way in which a judge will lecture a criminal on being a danger to society, while ignoring the fact that a more dangerous man may be among the jury, addressing the Court, or even sitting on the Bench. For, truth to tell, the criminal or the bomb-thrower is not a very dangerous person at all—certainly he is not *widely* dangerous. The man who robs may injure me, or you, or someone else. The man who heaves a bomb into a crowded thoroughfare kills a few people and injures a few others. But, in either case, the consequences are, so far as it can be said of any action, limited. There is a ripple on the surface of society, and there the matter ends. It is beyond the power of the thrower of bombs to seriously disturb social life. He and the criminal may both be disagreeable persons, both persons we would rather not have as neighbours, but they deserve the epithet "dangerous" hardly more than does the owner of red hair or of a bulbous nasal appendage.

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Dangerous Types.

Of course there are people who are dangerous—really dangerous—to society. But they are not those who throw bombs, but those who throw ideas. These are much more shattering in their effects than any chemical combination that has played a part in the European War. A shell may blow up a house, but an idea may upset a town. A melodramatic gentleman lands in this country, throws a bomb, kills a few people, and there the matter ends. Another man comes here, or goes elsewhere, drops an idea here and there, and before we know where we are the whole country is in a state of disturbance. Karl Marx comes to England, walks about London, East and West, studies the life of rich and poor, and then drops *Das Kapital* on us! And what bomb ever thrown had the disturbing and unsettling effect of that? Charles Peace pursues a career of piety and crime and gets finally hanged with the proper religious accompaniments, and society congratulates itself on having got rid of a very dangerous person. Rubbish; the really dangerous person was his contemporary, Charles Darwin. His bomb, duplicates of which, every one warranted to act, was handed out to the public at five shillings each, was really shattering in its explosive power. Organized society found it an easy matter to protect itself against Peace, but what society has been able to withstand the influence of Darwin? German aeroplanes have, during the past four years, destroyed with bombs, a few churches. But the ideas of Darwin, before their influence is ended, threaten to overturn every church in Christendom. Society can afford to shelter, comparatively unmoved, a thousand burglars, or even murderers, but no society can afford to ignore the presence of a score of seminal thinkers. Or if the society ignores them they will not for long ignore society. The thinker is the real destroyer. He destroys because he creates; he creates because he destroys.

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Ideas versus Guns.

When the Russian revolution broke out, we said in the *Freethinker* that for the first time in the course of this brutal and stupid War an idea had emerged. It was not of consequence whether the idea was a good one or a bad one. The important thing was that a new idea had been thrown into the arena. And it was clear that neither the Allies nor the Germans knew what to do with it. They remained intent upon putting into effect the old and half-obsolete idea of brute force. and blind to the experience of ages, thought to meet it in that way. But you cannot attack an idea with bayonets, or shoot it into nothingness with high explosives. The only way in which an idea can be successfully opposed is by another one. And neither the Allies nor the Germans had one ready. True they were not without their ideas, but these were such as the world was already well acquainted with, and they were expressed in the existence of armies and navies, and in the power of force to settle the destinies of the world. And the result? Well, let anyone look at the state of the world to-day and then ask whether the combined destruction of the Allies and the Germans is likely to be greater than that of the ideas let loose by the Russian Revolution.

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Religion's Real Enemy.

The lesson is always the same; and to do the Churches justice, they have always recognized in practice the truth of what has been said. It is the thinker they have always marked down as their deadliest enemy. The Church has been tolerant towards the criminal; its intolerance has been reserved for the heretic. The worst of its tortures were neither created nor reserved for those usually called dangerous members of society. The thief threatens the existence of no institution—not even that of private property. But Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Lyell, Darwin, Spencer—these are the men who convey a threat in almost every page they write. They are really dangerous; and never was the instinct of the Church truer than when it concentrated its energies

against the creator and disseminator of ideas. No aggregation of criminals has ever threatened the existence of the Christian Church or disturbed its serenity. On the contrary, the worse—morally—the time, the greater its influence. It was when ideas were about that the Church felt its influence slipping. The Churches could forgive those who created the horrible social conditions prevailing in this country at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. It could never forgive the writer of the *Age of Reason*. The Church has always known how to discriminate between its true friends and its real enemies.

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Ideas and Evolution.

Let no one imagine that we are merely making play with the word "destruction." It is literally true that in human societies ideas are the most destructive and the most coercive of the social forces. That is why the emergence of a new idea—whether for good or ill—is always an event of great significance. Progress depends upon variation as much in the mental as in the physical world. And if we are to encourage variation, it must be tolerated in all directions—up as well as down; for good as well as for ill. You cannot prevent one idea appearing without threatening the appearance of all; and the ideas that make for social ill and havoc are the price we pay for a movement that is onward and upward. Therefore it is better to encourage the expression of a bad idea than to risk the discouragement of a good one. And ultimately ideas cannot be silenced; they can only be answered. All that force can do when applied to the suppression of ideas is to make them assume a more extreme form, to ensure a more violent break with the past, with the probability of a period of reaction before society resumes its orderly advance. History contains many lessons, but none more plainly written than this one; and it is one that both religious and secular tyrannies learn with reluctance.

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The Value of the Rebel.

You cannot seriously alter a given social State save by modifying the current ideas concerning that State. For all our institutions—the Church, the monarchy, the aristocracy, etc.—persist only so long as certain ideas are strong enough to keep them alive. Right through human history we can see the ideas of men fashioning and refashioning social institutions. Everywhere we see the starting-point for a new advance in civilization is the meeting-place of a new idea with an old one. All the great reformers of the world have seen this, and so also have their enemies. This is why all established interests dread the impact of new ideas. It is the one force against which they feel themselves powerless. It is possible to crush a man or a society of men; but an idea which has sprung from the life of the race can only be suppressed by the slow process of social decay. So, we repeat, the really dangerous men in society are not the throwers of bombs or the pickers of pockets. It is the thinkers of the world who are really dangerous. They are always threatening something. They are the world's iconoclasts; and upon the ruins of broken idols and shattered institutions they plant the beginnings of a newer and a better life.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

There is a common-place book argument,
Which glibly glides from every tongue;
When any dare a new light to present,
"If you are right, then everybody's wrong!"
Suppose the converse of this precedent
So often urged, so loudly and so long;
"If you are wrong, then everybody's right!"—*Byron.*

"An Easter Digression."

SUCH is the title of a chapter in Lord Morley's interesting *Recollections*, and the Rev. Thomas Yates, of Kensington Chapel, finds serious fault with the distinguished writer because he makes no mention of Jesus and the Resurrection. The reverend gentleman is distressed to discover that "the missing Lord of this chapter is absent in all these *Recollections*." It is to him inconceivable that, "in the review of a long life and of the favourite thoughts of a lifetime by a man of austere virtues and lofty attainments," there is no reference whatever to Christ, and he has the audacity to suggest that the clue to such an omission lies in the fact that the author "is a man to whom all the problems, the ideas, the literature of religion are indifferent and unknown." Indeed, his whole article on the subject, which appeared in the *Christian World* for April 17, bristles with impudent assumptions and mischievous inferences. Here is a man-of-letters who has the effrontery to treat Easter merely "as a point in the Calendar, and the occasion of a holiday," without inserting a single word of Christ. "Truly the chapter is not an Easter digression so much as a digression from Easter." Lord Morley entirely ignores the great Easter Personage, and devotes his digression to a fascinating study of the style and mind of a Pagan philosopher and poet. His words are:—

> I took it into my head that I might do worse than give a day or two to reviving memories of Lucretius.

As is well known, Lucretius was "a Pagan without religion or the feeling for it," who flourished in the first half of the last century before Christ. Of his life we know practically nothing beyond what is contained in his immortal poem, entitled *On the Nature of Things*. He was not only without religion, but a vehement opponent of religion. He was a disciple of Epicurus, sharing to the full his hatred of superstition. Whether he believed in the existence of gods or not is not at all clear, although there are passages, such as Book V., 1168-1178, in which he speaks of them as creatures of the imagination; but his condemnation of religion is unqualified. In Greece, when Epicurus arose, human life—

> Lay sprawling in the mire in foul estate,
> A cowering thing without the strength to rise,
> Held down by fell Religion's heavy weight
> Religion scowling downward from the skies,
> With hideous head, and vigilant eyes of hate.

Epicurus, however, had courage and presumed to raise—

> His brows, and give the monster gaze for gaze.
> Him not the tales of all the gods in heaven,
> Nor the heaven's lightnings, nor the menacing roar
> Of thunder daunted. He was only driven,
> By these vain vauntings, to desire the more
> To burst through Nature's gates, and rive the unriven
> Bars. And he gained the day, and, conqueror,
> His spirit broke beyond our world, and past
> Its flaming walls, and fathomed all the vast.

He then returned, crowned with victory, and explained the great law of causation:—

> Laying quite bare what can and cannot be
> How to each force is set strong boundaries,
> How no power raves unchained, and naught is free.
> So the times change; and now religion lies
> Trampled by us; and unto us 'tis given
> Fearless with level gaze to scan the heaven.

According to Lucretius, it is "terror which raises new temples of the deities throughout the whole globe of the earth, and impels men to celebrate their worship on feast days." Fear is the soil in which all religions are rooted, and fear itself is rooted in ignorance. Knowledge is, therefore, the implacable foe of superstition, and its spread has always had the effect of discrediting religion. Knowledge destroys the fear of death by showing

that it is an event as natural as sleep. Mr. Yates states that Lucretius is "deeply in earnest in proclaiming that immortality is an empty dream." Why, then, should we fear death any more than sleep?

> What has this bugbear death to frighten man,
> If souls can die as well as bodies can?
> For, as before our birth we felt no pain,
> When Punic arms infested land and main,
> . . . . .
> So when our mortal frame shall be disjoined,
> The lifeless lump uncoupled from the mind,
> From sense of grief and pain we shall be free;
> We shall not *feel*, because we shall not *be*.

Mr. Yates calls this "a gloomy view"; but, pray, wherein lies its gloominess? Lucretius himself found it comforting and inspiring. He was anything but a pessimist. To him life was a joyous song. How ardent was his delight in pleasant companionship, and how merry he felt as he described a simple, rustic meal partaken of by him and his friends as they lay "stretched upon the soft grass, near a stream of water, under the boughs of a high tree."

We are quite sure that Lord Morley could not have chosen better company at Easter, even had he paid a visit to Kensington Chapel. Mr. Yates, however, seems to look down in pity upon the writer of the chapter under discussion, saying:—

> This, then, is the company chosen at Easter; and the digression ends with a collection of sayings uttered by many since, in the spirit of Lucretius, "threads from the gorgeous palls men have spread over death." And that is all—in a world like ours to-day, in a world full of the terrors and sorrows of war as it was when this book was penned. What does this creed make of the riddle of the Universe as it has heaved itself up into such awful challenge? The answer is, Nothing. To the end the book is silent. This creed can only look upon it with perplexity and with questions to which it has not merely no answer but no clue. In a cold, grey light it looks on an earth made by unloosed passions into a city of dreadful night, given over to blood and tears, and can make nothing of it. The wisdom of Lucretius supplies only a painful interrogation.

Is not Mr. Yates aware that the world described in that extract is the Christian world, the world in which Christianity has been the dominant religion for upwards of fifteen centuries? The delineation is accurate; but "the earth made by unloosed passions into a city of dreadful night, given over to blood and tears," is not the product of the reign of epicureanism or Atheistic philosophy; it is rather the earth said to have been redeemed by the shedding of the precious blood of the Lamb of God. What the reverend gentleman is face to face with is the colossal failure of Christ, not of Lucretius. Lucretianism has never yet been tried, has never had its innings, whereas Christianity has been duly weighed in the balance of history and found wholly wanting. Yes, "in a world like ours to-day, in a world full of the terrors and sorrows of war," of economic selfishness and injustice, and of artificial and ruinous class distinctions, in a world whose social conditions are a discredit and a disgrace to its civilization, the supreme question by which Mr. Yates and his brethren are confronted is, How do you account for the egregious impotence of your religion throughout all the ages of its history? This is Christendom, defined as "that portion of the world in which Christianity prevails, or which is governed under Christian institutions," and yet this is the part of the world which a Christian minister portrays as having been "made by unloosed passions into a city of dreadful night, given over to blood and tears." Germany has been denounced throughout this land as the country wholly responsible for the World-War, with all its horrors and atrocities; and yet, six years before it broke out, an English bishop wrote:—

> Religious education in all the primary and secondary schools of Germany is compulsory.....Sunday observance in Germany deserves a few words. England may learn a good lesson from Germany here. When Germany makes laws she sees that to the letter they are obeyed—this is the outcome of her splendid military discipline. Sunday rest is of comparatively recent date, but the desire to make Sunday a day of worship is growing, The Emperor's good example has had great weight; once, at least, on Sunday, church is generally attended; and there is a growing feeling to observe that which English people are throwing away.

Let it be duly borne in mind that the world given over to blood and tears, the world so full of the terrors and sorrows of war, is the Christian world, not a world controlled by the principles so eloquently advocated by Lucretius and Lord Morley. We are strongly of opinion that had it been governed by reason and common sense rather than by a phantom Redeemer, it would have been an incalculably better world than it is to-day.

J. T. Lloyd.

France's Grand Old Man.

> Justice! what a little word! Yet it is, except goodness, the greatest of all words.—*Georges Clemenceau.*
>
> The lightning of the nations: Liberty.—*Shelley.*

English people are provincial. In spite of intermittent gusts of fashion for Continental reputations, usually fostered by publishers, Englishmen never seem to be on speaking terms with the great writers and notable personalities of Europe. With a few exceptions, the greatest living figures of the Continent are, to all intents and purposes, unknown quantities to the Englishman. It was only after years of propaganda by men of undoubted genius that Henrik Ibsen was accepted in this country. So, too, Friedrich Nietzsche received a mixed welcome. The British public always seems to need a card of introduction, backed by vouchers of respectability before it accords a tardy recognition to a foreigner. It is a sign of mental apathy that the personality of a statesman of the rank of M. Georges Clemenceau should be so little known and discussed in this country. He has destroyed eighteen French ministries in sixteen years, and is the most potent force in France to-day. Yet it would almost seem that in England there is a conspiracy to ignore him, an ostrich-like attitude which is at once ineffective and undignified.

Of the few efforts which have been made to present M. Clemenceau to the intelligent English reader, Mr. Joseph McCabe's *Georges Clemenceau* (Watts & Co.) is the best and handiest, and Mr. McCabe deserves thanks for bringing news to English readers of one of the most interesting personalities which has occupied the arena of French politics since the passing of Leon Gambetta. For, as his biographer points out, M. Clemenceau has "in this strenuous period of young men, at the age of seventy-seven, proved the strongest man of Europe in will and intellect." To Freethinkers the story of such a career is noble and stimulating, and well worth the telling.

Englishmen often fail to understand the feeling against Roman Catholicism on the Continent. They regard Gambetta's biting phrase: "Clericalism, there is the enemy," as clever rhetoric. The plain truth, brought out very clearly in Mr. McCabe's book, is that the Catholic Church is very active in French politics. Here are his words:—

> It (the Church) was in every Royalist plot against the Republic. It was behind MacMahon and his "Seize-

Mai," and Boulanger and his folly. It was mainly responsible for the alienation of Italy, and the formation of the dreaded Triple Alliance. It was linked with Anti-Semitism and the infamous campaign to defraud Dreyfus of justice. To the end of the century it intrigued for Royalism and for itself; in the schools, the Army and Navy, the Chamber and the Senate.

Some idea of the malignity of the Catholic Church may be gained by remembering that the Church party used all its forces against the revision of the sentence on Alfred Dreyfus. Clemenceau and his colleagues had to fight nine years for justice to this man. "The religion of charity," Clemenceau said, "brandishes its iron and cries: 'Down with the Jew!'" The result was a victory for Freethought and Humanity.

Clemenceau is much more than a politician. He is an idealist, a humourist, and a humanist, with an imagination that can find the beauty of life in the lowest of creatures. It is this amazing variety that lends such attractiveness to his genius. As a journalist, he wields great power. The words which he writes, almost in complete forgetfulness of every audience except that immediately before him, are carried over continent and ocean, and find their responsive chords in humble people living in small towns and remote villages, and become to them things which mark out one day from another by emotion. His invective stabs, his satire kills. When he had destroyed eighteen ministries, the old tiger growled, "I have really overthrown only one government—it was always the same." To those who spoke sneeringly of the French Chamber as "a talking shop," he retorted: "Glory to the lands where people can talk; shame to the lands where they are silent." In describing the tragedy of three poor children who had been found, locked in each other's arms, dead from cold and privation, he added the grim words: "They did well to die. All the chants of your Churches will not cover the mute lament of those three little frozen corpses."

The present charming little volume leaves Clemenceau a young man of seventy-two. For Clemenceau has too much vigour, he is too high-spirited, to grow old. His enormous vitality is really the secret of his power. We again thank Mr. McCabe for introducing the great statesman to us. It is high time that we knew something of France's foremost statesman. Such a book as this is of infinitely more value than many volumes, for Mr. McCabe may claim the credit of having described and defined the real place in modern politics filled by Georges Clemenceau, the Grand Old Man of France.

Mimnermus.

Economics.

Man produces wealth by applying labour to the raw material of the earth, and the wealth he thus produces is his wages. All wealth is wages, for nothing can be produced without the labour of individual men, and that which each individual produces by his labour belongs in justice to him, and to him alone.—*T. L. M'Cready.*

Every human being must eat and drink, wear clothing, and have some kind of shelter. These things are the necessaries of life. Most people also make use of luxuries, things not absolutely neccessary to the maintenance of life, but which give pleasure, or minister to education and refinement—books, flowers, musical instruments, works of art, and contrivances for amusement. Hence, in terms of economics, each person is a consumer. This being true, it is clear that if each person does not produce as much wealth as he consumes he is, to a certain extent, fed, clothed, lodged and provided with luxuries out of the stock of wealth produced by the labour of others.

While we are children it is necessary that we should thus be supported by others. But after we arrive at maturity there is no reason why anyone should be supported by the labour of another, unless the labourer voluntarily furnishes such sustenance to the non-producer.

If a man chooses to support any of his relatives, or to extend his bounty to a friend or stranger, no rational objection can be made. If he chooses to support his priest or political ruler, no fault can be found. In such cases, the labourer does only what he has a perfect right to do. But if a labourer is compelled by force to deliver up some of the products of his labour for the support of others, he is wronged. To the extent that he is thus deprived of the wealth he produces he is a slave. For slavery does not consist only in being bodily owned. It consists also in being in a position in which some other person can compel one to give up all, or a part of, the wealth one has produced.

Children and infirm persons who are the beneficiaries of kind-hearted labourers are not objectionable because they consume what they do not produce. What they consume is freely given to them by the producer. All here is voluntary. And in so far as priests or politicians are the recipients of gifts or wages, voluntarily paid, they also are inoffensive persons. We may think that the labourers who thus freely support them are very foolish, but that is *their* look out, and every labourer has a perfect right to do what he pleases with what he produces. Harm is done only when the labourer is plundered either by force or by fraud.

Nearly all the robbery of producers arises from their own superstitions, particularly as regards the ownership of land and the issue of money; and the result is the establishment of classes composed of land lords, money lords, sharpers of all sorts, and violent thieves. These great classes of non-producers form the dangerous classes, and we must get rid of them before there can be harmony and happiness. What a cinder is to the eye, an able-bodied non-producer is to society. There must be inflammation and pain until he is removed. Any person who breaks into houses and steals goods, or by violence robs people, is an unjust consumer; and so is one who slyly picks a pocket, or rifles a till, or forges a cheque. This class is composed of burglars, highway robbers, pickpockets, sneak-thieves, and forgers. But it does not include card-sharpers, gamblers, and confidence-men. We may despise such people, but they cannot be classed as dangerous criminals, because their victims are quite willing to get wealth without work, and are merely beaten at their own game. Or if they are deceived by false representations, that is their own affair. They should not allow themselves to be deceived.

And so, too, anyone who uses the power of what is called the Government to compel labourers to give up part of what they produce is an unjust consumer. By means of a paper title, based on force or fraud, the land lord holds land, which is the sole source of all raw material and food, and charges the labourers rent for the mere privilege of living. Bandits seize people and confine them until the highest possible ransom is paid, but at least they feed and lodge their victims so long as they keep them locked up. On the other hand, the land lords leave their victims at large and lock up the land, from which only can they get their food, clothing, and shelter. It's a cheaper way of extortion, and quite as effective.

Seeing that the ownership of any land in excess of what the owner requires for his own use involves the unfair exclusion of other men from their natural right of access to the storehouse of Nature, it follows that every man should have a right to use any land that

nobody else is already using; in short, no ownership of land apart from its use.

What the land lord pockets he does not produce. He simply appropriates a large part of what some industrious people produce on "his" land, and is therefore an unjust consumer.

Just in the same way, a money lord, or a money lender, is an unjust consumer. Interest is not produced by the person who receives it, but by the person who pays it. It arises from the fact that the manufacture and sale of the tools of exchange are confined by the Bank Charter Acts and Legal Tender Laws to those only who own gold. Thus these legally privileged people hold a monopoly of the banking business, and are able to charge an exorbitant price, quite ten times in excess of the value of the service they perform. Hence arises interest, and the taker of interest, as such, produces nothing, and is therefore an unjust consumer.

In short, the basis of all true economics is that every person has a right to what he produces by his labour, or has freely given to him and to that alone. Our millionaires are not rich because they excel in producing power. They are merely shrewd enough to take advantage of the laws which place the police and military at their disposal to wring from the workers a great part of the wealth produced only by labour. How does it happen that the machinery and houses and all the best of the food and clothing, which the workers produce, manage to get out of the hands of the people who make them, and into the hands of the people who do not make them? It happens, because up till now the workers have been too ignorant even to question the rights of "vested interests." But they are now thinking. New ideas are abroad. It takes rime, but by-and-by men will get the cobwebs out of their brains, and the industrial problem will be solved as it should be by an enlightened public opinion. Many people of fair intelligence do not see why a man who digs out a ton of coal should keep it all. They think he should give some of it away to an idle landlord, and some to an idle usurer, and some to a tax collector. To me such people seem as blind as the veriest fetish worshipper. But some day the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will see the simple truth that if a man works the land, upon its surface or in its bowels, it should be his so long as he works it; and if he does not work it it should not be his; if a man makes a coat or a pair of shoes they should be his. Rights of property! Why, certainly, but the rights of those who produce that property by their labour, whether of brain or hand.

This is what Prussianism denies, the Church denies it, and "vested interests" deny it. But the new economic thought affirms it, and Church and State, were they a thousand times as strong as they are, cannot prevent the final triumph of the principle that whatsoever a man produces by his labour that shall he also keep.

The work of the world
Must be done somehow:
Truth demands that your share
Be done by you.

G. O. Warren.

The time will come when even selfishness will be charitable for its own sake, because at that time the man will have grown and developed to that degree that selfishness demands generosity and kindness and justice. The self becomes so noble that selfishness is a virtue. The lowest form of selfishness is willing to be happy or wishes to be happy at the expense or the misery of another. The highest form of selfishness is when a man becomes so noble that he finds his happiness is making others so. This is the nobility of selfishness.—*Ingersoll.*

Acid Drops.

The "Great Lying Church" is as much a liar as ever. Probably it is too old for reform. The Spanish Ambassador in London, Cardinal (?) Merry del Val, writes in the *Daily Telegraph*, warning Britishers against being misled concerning Spain. After describing—or misdescribing—the events of 1909, he says:—

> The leader of the movement was a notorious Anarchist, Francisco Ferrer, a man after the heart of Lenin and Trotsky, in whose possession a complete plan of the revolution was discovered. Ferrer, an individual of no great intellectual capacity or learning, who had amassed money by swindling certain devout Frenchwomen of his acquaintance, was the founder and head of the so-called Modern School at Barcelona, where children were not only taught the doctrine of world-revolution, but the recipe for making bombs. He was the moral author of the dastardly attempt against the life of the King and Queen of Spain on their wedding day.

Considering the public attention paid to the Ferrer case in England, we are surprised at the *Daily Telegraph* permitting such a tissue of falsehoods to appear in its columns. Ferrer was not an Anarchist, but an educationalist. To say that in the Modern School children were taught a recipe for making bombs is as vile a slander as to say that he "amassed money by swindling devout Frenchwomen." Ferrer was shot to gratify the malignancy of the Church, and it is worthy the record of the Church responsible for his death to have someone so ready to slander the memory of one who gave his life for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen.

Any twaddle consistent with Orthodoxy is thought suitable for young people. In a children's paper, a story is told concerning "Sir Isaac Newton's Sin," in which the famous man is said to have asked pardon for having made a mousetrap on Sunday, and also for eating an apple in a church. The editor might have added that Puritanism was more rampant in the seventeenth century than in the twentieth. In any event, the story illustrates the weakness of a great man, and the still greater weakness of a modern editor.

Not one of six women who gave evidence at the inquest on a three-years'-old child who was suffocated in a fire in Old Street, London, had ever heard of the regulations concerning unguarded fireplaces. All the women had heard of a Heavenly Father who watches the fall of sparrows.

Prayers for the safety of the "Atlantic" airmen, Major Wood and Captain Wyllie, were offered by a R.A.F. chaplain before they left Eastchurch. The next piece of news was that the ill-fated airmen had fallen in the sea. A fine example of the value of prayer.

The latest gem from the priceless collection of wise utterances by the present Bishop of London is the following: "The crucifixion, the world's greatest tragedy, was sadder even than that of Nurse Cavell." His lordship forgets that Nurse Cavell was a real woman.

We were pleased to see the Annual Conference of Teachers condemning the introduction of "military drill or other forms of military training into the schools, whether primary or secondary." It is idle to talk of our dislike for militarism while we accustom children to military exercise, military parades, and develop a liking for all that belongs to militarism. There is only one reason for introducing military drill into schools—physical drill is quite independent of it—and that is to get the boy ready for the Army. That is the way Prussia went to work, and that is the way our Prussians will get to work if they are given the chance. It is the game of the Churches over again. The priest gets religious formulæ into the child, and sets it practicing religious exercises because he has his eye on the adult. The militarist is pursuing quite the same policy. We hope the teachers

will be firm in their resistance to using the school as "training stables for the Army."

During the trial at Edinburgh of the Glasgow rioters, a witness was being sworn, and when the judge came to "I swear by Almighty God," the witness, Malcolm McFarlane, asked: "Which God do you refer to?" "Don't ask questions," said the clerk, "Well," said the witness, "the reason I ask is that you appear to be the Handy Andy of a pantomime." The counsel decided not to ask the witness any questions, and he was ordered to stand down.

Our Members of Parliament would do better by sticking to politics than by adventuring their brilliant intellects among subjects they do not understand. Here is Mr. J. H. Edwards, M.P., saying that "the man in the street regards Christianity as an insurance policy against fire on the other side of the grave." The man in the street does nothing of the kind. Only a very small percentage of the population think as Mr. Edwards suggests, and the bulk of this section is made up of women.

What humbug Christian charity often is! Maundy-Thursday, the day before Good Friday, was, during the ages of Faith, the day it was customary for people in a high position to wash the feet of a number of poor people and to distribute alms. This is how the function is carried out in London. We quote from a daily paper: "Glorious music, a blaze of scarlet and gold, and a Royal company at the distribution of Maundy at Westminster Abbey. Queen Alexandra, in black velvet and an ostrich boa, was presented with a bouquet of roses, Princess Victoria received carnations, Princess Helena daffodils, and Princess Marie irises." Apparently, the poor members of the Royal Family received most of the presents.

The *Christian Commonwealth* printed in a recent issue a seventy-line prayer by Miss Maude Royden, of the City Temple. Perhaps the editor thought a lady's petition would be something of a novelty.

Preaching at Ealing on "Everyman's Bible," the Rev W. G. Horder said: "You must all feel that a great deal in the Old Testament is only of value in an historical, and not in a religious sense." His congregation must be in a bad way if they "felt" that the yarns of Noah's Ark, Eve and the Apple, and Jonah and the Whale were real history.

At the trial for heresy of the Rev. R. W. Knowles, of Petrolea, Ontario, Canada, one of the charges was that the Methodist minister had introduced to a Men's Bible Class two books not approved by his superiors. Does it not give point to Milton's grim remark that "presbyter is but priest writ large"?

The following paragraph from a daily paper throws a searchlight on Church affairs: "Two of the six inhabitants of Eldon, Hants, said to be the smallest parish in England, were married this week in the parish church. No previous wedding in the church can be traced during the seven or eight centuries it has existed."

The *Daily Chronicle* says that formerly the State made use of religion "as a pioneer in territories for purposes which were sometimes good and sometimes not." This is a very belated confession, but none the less true. First the missionary, then the trader, then the gunboat, is a very old summary of the procedure, and the anxiety of missionary societies to save the souls of people living in territories rich in commercial possibilities has long been noted. The *Chronicle* adds: "We are not thinking of Great Britain so much as of some other countries"—which shows the old hypocrisy is not quite discarded. We invite the *Chronicle* to look up the records of missionary and trading activities in, say, New Zealand and China. It should then discover that the limitation of the survey is not at all necessary.

At St. Paul's the other day, during a special service, a big gun that had actually been in action was stationed in the Cathedral. We do not suppose that it was intended to illustrate the kind of peace and love Christianity scatters over the world, but we should be surprised if some of those present did not draw this conclusion. Unfortunately, the gun still has its place in life, but, we confess, we never expected to see this superb comment on the civilizing influence of the Christian religion.

The Edinburgh *Evening News* say that the present position of the country is a challenge to the Churches. We disagree. It is not a challenge but an indictment. The Churches have exerted more control over life than any other single institution, and had it possessed any real desire to make the conditions of life better things could hardly have been as they are. "Come unto me," said the Churches, "and I will take ye in." And the Church took as many on as possible.

A worthy person named Petter is marching from Bath accompanied by "three tailors from Tooley Street" to effect the conversion of England. No doubt a pilgrimage is not an unpleasant variety after a walking tour at this season, but if there ever was any public interest in the march it would appear to have pettered out. The pilgrims have addressed meetings, and their character may be estimated by the complaint of one of the preachers that it was tiring "talking to children and perambulators." We should say it was the audience the pilgrims deserved.

The *Christian World*, as a reply to the frank comments that have been made on the work of the chaplains with the Army, reprints Sir Douglas Haig's praise of them as helping to build up "the indomitable spirit of the Army." But with all due respect to Sir Douglas Haig we prefer the judgment of the soldiers who came into direct contact with the chaplains—or who failed to meet them. On the face of it Sir Douglas Haig could not well say from personal knowledge the precise value of the work of the chaplains. Subordinate officers and the men themselves are much better authorities here; and a testimonial from Sir Douglas is of little more value than one from the War Office. The Field Marshal will have based his statement upon information supplied, and in connection with the chaplains this would have been of the stereotyped order.

The old ideas concerning Christianity flourish in out-of-the-way places, and, in an account of a Welsh revivalist in a Sunday paper, it is stated that the saintly one condemned unmercifully cigarette smoking, cinemas, billiards, and other mild amusements. Curiously, most of the things the preacher complained of are used as "bait" by the Young Men's Christian Association in order to attract audiences.

The Rev. Anthony Wilkinson, Rector of Hintlesham, has been deprived of his living by the Consistory Court for immorality of a gross character, and extending over a long period. The boasted restraints of religion were of little value in this case.

Easter, 1919.

Friday (April 18).

A warm, glad sun—a silk-soft air—
Cool little buds making ready to melt into bloom.
Was Nature exhaling a sigh of relief
For that Jesus the Christ had been sealed in the Tomb?

Sunday (April 20).

A cool, sad sky—a hard, bleak wind—
Tender young shoots making ready for premature doom.
Did Nature catch breath at the sinister rumour
That Jesus the Christ had burst forth from the Tomb?

A. B.

NOTICE.

The *Freethinker* is now distributed to the Trade through all the principal wholesale Newspaper Agents, and may be ordered from any Newsagent or from Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son's railway bookstalls. To those who wish to have the *Freethinker* supplied through the post the terms are: 3 months, 2s. 8d.; 6 months, 5s. 3d.; 12 months, 10s. 6d., post free.

To Correspondents.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.—S. Clowes, 2s. 6d.

F. A. Cassidy.—We could only do as you desire by printing your name in this column, and asking those who wish to do so to write you.

L. J. Roe.—*Freethinker* posters may be exhibited anywhere, but they may not be attached to places where posting bills is forbidden. The order dealing with newspaper posters, which existed during the War, is now cancelled.

W. J.—There are plenty of people who do not understand the nature of procreation, and attribute it to ghostly origin. These are not found among civilized people, but they exist. The belief in civilized countries is a survival.

R. Parker.—Last week's notice was received too late. We are acting on your advice, and trying to take it a little easier for awhile.

A. Symonds.—Don't get downhearted. One must cultivate courage and persistency when doing Freethought work. Something of what one does is certain to tell, and often the results accrue when and where one least expects them.

A. P. (Glasgow).—We sympathize with the tone of your letter, but the subject is just a little outside our scope.

T. W. Haughton.—We note and appreciate your well-meant advice. As you suggest, it is not easy to draw the line, but we never knowingly cross it.

P. C. T. (Inverness).—Shall appear as early as possible. Literature being sent.

H. Silverstein.—We felt tempted to deal with Mr. Harold Begbie, but the article was such a mass of confusion, fallacy, and question-begging phrases, that we concluded he was not worth the space that would have been taken up. The article may, however, be useful in other ways.

H. C. Waters.—You are quite mistaken in assuming that those who write on Spiritualism in the *Freethinker* have never investigated it. And surely the pointing out of errors of observation and fallacies in reasoning are themselves important parts of criticism. For the rest, we cannot be continually publishing articles on the subject. Not long since our contributor, Mr. Mann, wrote a series of articles dealing seriously with the subject, and these have now been reprinted in book form by Messrs. Watts & Co.; 3s. 6d. paper, 5s. cloth.

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

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

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

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

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour of marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Sugar Plums.

In spite of the blinding snowstorm on Sunday last, there was a good audience at South Place to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "The Logic of Faith and the Logic of Fact." In the circumstances, the audience was really striking, and, judging from their attention and applause, no one regretted braving the blizzard to get there. Mr. A. B. Moss occupied the chair, and, as chairman, said just the right thing in the right way—which is what one would expect. Such a meeting on such a night augurs well for the rest of the course.

To-day's (May 4) lecturer at South Place is Mr. J. T. Lloyd. His subject, "The Lord's Supper; Christian and Pagan," is one that should prove interesting to everyone, and we hope that Freethinkers will see to it that the hall is crowded. South Place is very easy to reach, and we rely upon our friends making these meetings as widely known as possible.

We have received a letter, signed "Robert Thomas," but without address or name of town, complaining that two "notices" advertising the *Freethinker* have been pasted "on the front wall of the Methodist Church in this town." We do not know where the town is in question; we can only say that the "notices" have been placed there without our knowledge or desire, and we regret that this should have happened. We are utterly opposed to that method of advertising this journal. We would have replied direct had the address been furnished.

We publish this week Mr. Cohen's new work, *Woman and Christianity: The Subjection and Exploitation of a Sex*. This forms a companion volume to *Christianity and Slavery*, and, we think, will be found equally informing and useful. Certainly no more damning indictment of the influence of religion and Christianity on the position of woman has been published. It is comprehensive, and yet concise. Except in one chapter, dealing with the influence of primitive religious beliefs on the position of woman, it sets theories on one side and keeps to hard facts. It does not argue a case, it lets the case argue itself. The present is a good time for the circulation of a work of this kind, and we hope to see it circulate as freely as the work on Slavery. The price is one shilling, by post three-halfpence extra.

The *Freethinker* commenced its existence—as a monthly—in May, 1881. This month, therefore, it celebrates the thirty-eighth anniversary of its birth, and few journals can look back with so much pride on its career. It has maintained itself for a longer period than has any Freethought paper in this country, and, we think, in Europe. It was started without a penny of capital beind it, and it has maintained itself without a penny of capital ever since. We refer, of course, to capital in the commercial sense. It has, however, possessed the best of all capital in the shape of the warm affection of its readers who have loyally responded to every call made upon them, and in the form of a band of writers who, for sheer ability, will compare with any journal published in this country.

While the *Freethinker* was still an infant, there occurred the famous blasphemy prosecution, which brought its editor, G. W. Foote, the savage sentence of twelve months' imprisonment. That sentence was served to the full, and he left prison to continue the fight, and to conduct the *Freethinker* until his death in October, 1915. During that time the paper was maintained at a point of excellence such as has seldom been attained by struggling propagandist papers, and the constant care and watchfulness necessary to this can be fully appreciated only by those who have been through the mill. As a commercial venture, the paper would not have lived six months; as a paper that expressed a labour of love with all concerned it enters successfully on its thirty-ninth year of undiminished vitality. Of that period we have ourselves written in its columns for nearly twenty-one years, and during that time we think only one issue has appeared without an article from our pen. This may not be a record in journalism, but it is a record of which we feel proud.

The four-and-a-half years of War brought to the *Freethinker* perhaps a more severe test than it had ever faced. It lost at the very beginning its *great* writer and editor with whom

it had become in a way identified. That alone was something to face; and had we known then the extent to which the cost of production—amounting in the end to about £1,000 a year—was to rise, we confess we might have been appalled at the prospect. But the difficulties accumulated gradually, although rapidly, and we simply *had* to overcome them. And with the willing and generous help of our readers these were overcome. We are not yet out of the wood, but we can see the end, and the prospect is in the highest degree promising. The position of the paper is better to-day than ever, the circulation is larger, and after one more call on our readers we have every hope of being able to announce by our next birthday that the paper is at last self-supporting. We have other and important developments in view, about which we may write later. At anyrate, to see the *Freethinker* where it is after over four years of War is compensation for all the work and worry that had to be faced. So, in the name of our readers, we feel justified in wishing ourselves "Many Happy Returns"—except from the newsagents.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will take place on Whit-Sunday; place of meeting, Manchester. We earnestly hope there will be representatives present from every Branch of the Society, with a good muster of members. Every Branch ought to make a special effort to send a delegate, and there are many reasons why this should be done this year. If the members are to really control the Society's affairs, such gatherings as the Annual Conference must be well attended. An effort from each Branch once a year, in this direction, is not too much to ask.

We have received copies of several new publications issued by Messrs. Watts & Co. These include Miss Jane Harrison's recent South Place lecture on "Rationalism and Religious Reaction" (9d.); a rather laboured skit on "Spirit Experiences," by Dr. Mercier (9d.); and a serviceable propagandist booklet by Mr. Joseph McCabe on "The Church and the People" (1s. 3d.), which aims at showing the relation of the Christian Church to the working-classes from the downfall of Paganism until to-day.

Another work (same publishers) calling for notice is Mr. F. J. Gould's *Common Sense Thoughts on a Life Beyond*. Taking as a text Paschal's great saying: "The whole succession of men should be considered as one man, ever living and constantly learning," Mr. Gould writes an exceedingly interesting and suggestive essay. It is an essay that, among Freethinkers, only Mr. Gould could have written, and is phrased with that graceful suavity which is characteristic of him. Mr. Gould's "life beyond" is, of course, not the disembodied and unnatural existence of the Christian or the Spiritualist, but that racial and social continuity which makes each of us what we are, and to which each of us contribute—whether we are aware of our contribution or not. Mr. Gould's essay has the admirable quality of leaving the reader inclined to continue the subject further than this little volume takes one—and that, perhaps, is the highest praise one can give.

An Irish friend writes:—

> I cannot help thinking that the present situation in Ireland should be a peculiarly interesting subject for Freethinkers and all other heretics. Here we have under our noses an example of supernatural religion (both Protestant and Roman Catholic) working evils of an indescribable kind. Yet the *Freethinker* seems to prefer to draw its illustrations of these evils from the history of Italy, France, Spain, and other countries—overlooking Ireland.

There is some force in this complaint; but it may be that, just because Ireland is one of our own problems, it is better to more often use other countries where our political prejudices cannot interfere with the point at issue.

We are asked to announce that Mr. W. H. Thresh will lecture to-day (May 4) in the Co-operative Hall, Southend-on-Sea, at 7 p.m., on the subject of "Primitive Man." Will *Freethinker* readers in the locality please make a special note of the place and time?

The Origin of Life.

III.

(*Continued from p. 204.*)

> Matter really rises in dignity from physical matter in which physical properties exist to chemical matter and chemical forces, and from chemical matter to living matter and its modes of force; and then in the scale of life a continuing ascent leads from the lowest kind of living matter with its force or energy, through different kinds of physiological elements with their special energies or functions, to the highest kind of living matter with its force—viz., nerve matter and nerve force; and, lastly, through the different kinds of nerve-cells and their energies to the most exalted agents of mental function.—*Dr. Maudsley, "Body and Mind"* (1870), p. 128.

THE overthrow of the phlogiston theory was not the only service rendered to science by Lavoisier, for he was "the first to distinctly and clearly enunciate the great principle of the *indestructibility of matter*. The belief in this pervades, and, indeed, alone makes possible the whole of his work. He showed that chemistry could not exist without the chemical balance."[1] It is true it had been taught as a philosophic principle ages before by Lucretius, but it was Lavoisier who, by the precision of actual experiment, proved that every chemical change is accompanied only by transfer and exchange of matter, not by destruction or loss. The total weight of the reacting bodies remains the same from beginning to the end of the reaction. Lavoisier, in spite of his great services, perished in the storm of the French Revolution, and died under the guillotine on May 4, 1792. After vainly petitioning for a fortnight's delay to complete some important experiments upon which he was then engaged. After which, he said, he would be at their service. But to return to our subject.

Life has not always existed upon the earth, for the earth was once a molten body like the sun, and life cannot have existed at such high temperatures. The earth now is covered with varied forms of vegetable and animal life. How did life first commence? The old view was that God created the first plants and animals, and this view still prevails among the unscientific and the religious. Some scientists, notably Lord Kelvin, have suggested that the spores of very low forms of life may have been carried by meteorites, or, according to Arrhenius, by radiation pressure, from other planets. But this view has not obtained any wide acceptance. No proof has been brought forward to substantiate it; and, as Arrhenius admits, there is little probability of our ever being able to demonstrate the correctness of this view, as it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove the celestial origin of any such germs if they should be found.[2] Moreover, this would not solve the problem of the origin of life but only throw it a step further back.

The view now held by most biologists to-day is that life arose on the earth by a process of natural evolution. That when this planet became cool enough to support life, and the conditions became favourable, life arose spontaneously, and the reason why it does not arise spontaneously now is because the favourable conditions have passed away. That there is only one period in the life of a planet when the conditions are favourable to the evolution of living matter from inorganic material. A few scientists, however, like the late Dr. Charlton Bastian and Mr. Butler Burke, believe that life is still spontaneously generated, and the late Dr. Bastian claimed that he had experimentally proved that it does so arise now; but his experiments have not found acceptance with the great majority of scientists. Many, like Tyndall

[1] Picton, *The Story of Chemistry*, p. 235.
[2] Arrhenius, *Worlds in the Making*, p. 230.

and Huxley, have declared against them, and the verdict of the rest, with one or two exceptions, is the Scotch one of not proven.

Dr. Bastian claimed that, after hermetically sealing certain liquids in glass flasks and subjecting them to boiling, and thereby killing any germs of life they might contain, after a certain time, bacteria, torulæ, micrococci, moulds, and other microscopic forms of life made their appearance.

If Dr. Bastian's experiments were what he claimed them to be, it is difficult to understand how it is that this does not happen in the millions of tins of meat, fish, and milk, which remain untainted indefinitely all the while air is excluded from them.

Secondly, we should not expect to see these organisms appear all of a sudden in this fashion. We should rather expect to find an intermediate evolution of matter between unorganized matter and the first forms of life.

Thirdly, suppose that the experiments of Dr. Bastian were all they are claimed be, we are not much nearer a solution or explanation of the manner in which life originated. It is true that it would prove that life arose naturally from non-living matter, but every evolutionist believes that already. What we want to know is the how and the why of the origin of life, and Dr. Bastian's experiments tell us nothing of this. That is why scientists have not shown much interest in these experiments and have turned to other methods of research.

But why, if life evolved naturally from the non-living, asks the believer in creation, "Why does it not do so now?" The answer is, because it is probable that there is only one phase in the evolution of a world in which the conditions are favourable for the production of life, and that phase, on our earth, has long since passed away. This is no arbitrary hypothesis, we can illustrate it by a case very much to the point. We all know what glycerine is, but few people have seen crystals of glycerine. Before the year 1867 crystals of glycerine were unknown. No chemist had succeeded in producing crystals of glycerine, it does not solidify at zero, even at 20 degrees below zero it merely thickens and becomes pasty.

But in the year 1867 in a cask of glycerine sent from Vienna to London during the winter, crystals of glycerine were found, and Crookes exhibited these crystals to the Chemical Society of London. How were these crystals formed? We did not know then, and after the flight of over fifty years we do not know now. Only once since has the accidental formation of crystals of glycerine been observed, this was by M. Henninger in a manufactury in St. Denis.

Professor Dastre very pertinently points out the bearing of these facts upon the evolution of life. He observes:—

> It may be remarked that this crystalline species appeared, as living species may have done, at a given moment in an environment in which a favourable chance combined the necessary conditions for its production. It is also quite comparable to the creation of a living species; for having once appeared we have been able to perpetuate it. The crystalline individuals of 1867 have had a posterity. They have been sown in glycerine in a state of superfusion, and there they reproduced themselves. These generations have been sufficiently numerous to spread the species throughout a great part of Europe. M. Hoogewerf showed a great flask full to the Dutch biologists who met at Utrecht in 1891. M. L. Errera presented others in June, 1899, to the Society of Medical and Natural Sciences at Brussels. To-day the great manufactory of Sarg & Co., of Vienna, is engaged in their production on a large scale for industrial purposes. Thus we are able to study this crystalline species of glycerine and to determine with precision the conditions of its continued existence. It has been shown that it does not resist a temperature of 18 degrees, so that if precautions were not taken to preserve it, a single summer would suffice to annihilate all the crystalline individuals existing on the surface of the globe, and thus the species would be extinguished.[1]

In the same manner, if by a sudden rise or fall of the temperature, all life and the germs of life on the earth were killed, it would probably remain devoid of life as the conditions favourable for its evolution have passed away.

Notwithstanding the vehemence with which the opponents of the natural evolution of life assert the diametrical distinction between living and non-living matter, they have never been able to produce a definition of life which will not also include the activities of non-living matter. Of the ordinary dictionary definition of life as "the state of living," and of Dastre's, following Claude Bernard, definition as "the sum total of the phenomena common to all living beings." Professor Schafer remarks that both these definitions are of the same character as Sidney Smith's definition of an archdeacon as "a person who performs archidiaconal functions." As the same scientist observes, the quest has baffled the most acute thinkers. Herbert Spencer devoted two chapters of his *Principles of Biology* to discussing the attempts at a definition of life, and himself produced another. "But at the end of it all he is constrained to admit that no expression had been found which would embrace all the known manifestations of animate, and, at the same time, exclude those of admittedly inanimate, objects."[2] It is like the supposed dividing line between plant and animal, or religion and superstition, the more you consider it, the more it eludes you. For the simple reason that there are no hard-and-fast dividing lines in these matters. They all insensibly merge one into the other.

W. Mann.

(To be continued.)

The Dædalian Thumb.

Icarus, disregarding the repeated warnings of his father, and filled with the vanity of having escaped from Crete by means of his waxen wings, flew higher daily until that fatal occasion when the heat of the orb of day melted the too fragile material supporting him, and he plunged earthwards to his death.

A few centuries later, few in the chronology of time, when man had lifted himself into the seat of the Gods, the æther was the only means he had not bent to his use. Earth he lived on, sea he travelled upon, but air defied him.

Dædalus watched all this with equanimity until by slow progression methods of air journeying became known, and gradually controllable. Then, in the anguish of spirit which can only be realized by those whose performances have been outdone by what they consider inferior brains, he went for help to the evil power, whom he persuaded to develop a great war between the nations of the earth. This was, of course, easy to the Master of Dæmons; he has always held the powerful in the hollow of his hand. By carefully stimulating the vanity of certain of his souls, he impelled the world war. For the moment it seemed to Dædalus that all was well, but suddenly came a check to the plans of Shaitan, and his *protegee* was forced to take advantage of the impalpable element in his efforts to achieve his end.

Again was the ancient dismayed. Here were machines, impersonal as ships, carrying cargoes of destruction to and fro in the world. However this was different from wings attached to the individual back, and the parallel was not so definite. Dædalus hedged himself about with this thought, and watched progress.

[1] A. Dastre, *Life and Death* (1911), pp. 302-3.

[2] E. A. Schafer, *Life: its Nature, Origin, and Maintenance* (1912), p. 7.

Before the success of stirring up this war to take men's thoughts from his domain, he had tried to vanquish the perseverance of man, but now it seemed that he must take more effective measures if he was to preserve his fame. These tiny men in their striving with one another had turned again to the unconquered and instable for a means of victory. More and more attention was given and their power extended rapidly.

Frantically now dashed the first flyer about and above the earth, invisible to all, but industrious in his efforts to dissuade. By virtue of the moulding of his wings, he had developed an enormously powerful thumb, and he used it for the destruction of many of his pupils. He, fortunately, was not omnipresent, although immortal in the spirit.

His thumb was his potent agent. He would hear the purring of an engine, and rapidly be at close quarters with it, his great wings disturbing the stability of an already unreliable element. He would dash a hole in the air with his powerful digit, and watch with delight the sway or fall of the man-made craft. Then hastily would he away to a new conquest.

But though more than fully occupied in his industrious pursuit of the mole-like, he was not able to cope with their numbers, and many escaped him. He had a number of allies. His son had died in his vain unwisdom, but the nations of the earth were determined to rob him of his prerogative, while they were equally determined to destroy each other's attempts. Thus he was helped by many; but his task was a weary one, and still the numbers of his enemies increased.

Naturally, the pertinacity, as all the other passions, of the gods is greater than that of individual man; but even the passion of a God cannot be greater than that of mankind. The numbers are steadily increasing, and the wings of Dædalus are very weary. But not so weary as his soul.

What a fate for one famous throughout time! He also one of those admitted to Olympus! He wanders up and down, up and down, as speedily as he may, dropping the moisture of over-exertion, and wearing his immortality as a case for a soul that he dreams might die and give him rest. And still his every effort is thwarted, and his fame is like to die away.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Correspondence.

RELIGION AND MAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Every superstition must have had a material beginning—some natural cause out of which it has grown like a gnarled and crooked tree from a shapely seed; there being no such thing possible to humanity, say the philosophers, as an original lie—*lies being only exaggerations, distortions, or mistakes*. Superstition is not confined to the humble, or the middle classes of society. It has many votaries even in the highest. Nor is this to be wondered at; for though the more affluent classes can command the best education, and thus emancipate themselves from many weaknesses which beset their inferiors, the great principles of human nature are still at work within them: the marvelling sentiment will work with more or less freedom from Reason's control, and there are even some agencies of an educational kind which tend to give these strength. It is the lot of almost every man to be impressed in childhood by notions of a superstitious kind, which remain ineffaced through life; nearly all men have so much that is to them unknown around them, that they are nearly as ready to believe in something which is contrary to natural law as in things which are conformable to it.

The incalculable injury which a baseless fear of what is mysterious or supernatural has done to credulous humanity is conspicuously revealed in the ceaseless conflict of confessions of faith. Think of the number of luckless men who, through religious differences, have been plunged into family troubles, have lost the esteem of their fellow-citizens and their position in the community. The official confession of faith becomes most pernicious of all when it is associated with the political aims of a State, and is forced as "religious instruction" in our schools. The child's mind thus early impregnated with traditional superstition—the Christian belief in Creation, the Fall, the Immaculate Conception, the Redemption, the Resurrection, the Ascension of Christ, the state of Reward and Punishment in a future state, the Trinity, and so forth, is just as purely imaginary as the belief in the various dogmas of the Mohammedan, Mosaic, Buddhistic, and Brahmanic religions, and is just as incapable of reconciliation with a rational knowledge of Nature.

The great value still attached to sectarian instruction is not only due to the compulsion by the State and its dependence on a dominant clericalism, but also to the weight of old traditions and "emotional cravings" of various kinds. One of these is the devout reverence which is extended everywhere to the sectarian traditions, to the "faith of our fathers." In thousands of stories and poems fidelity to it is extolled as a spiritual treasure and a sacred duty. Yet a little impartial study of the history of faith suffices to show the absurdity of the notion: thus witchcraft and slavery, so long upheld on the authority of Scripture, were condemned when arraigned before the bar of a moral judgment enlightened by the growth of culture and science. The morality of the Old Testament is a measure of the morality incident to the age in which it was written, and is by no means in harmony with the ethical aspirations of the thoughts of to-day.

The majority of religions have, in spite of their great difference, one common feature; they declare that they can explain the problem of existence, the solution of which is beyond the natural power of reason by the supernatural way of revelation; from that they derive the authority of the dogmas which in the guise of "divine laws" control morality and the practical conduct of life. "Divine" inspiration of that kind form the basis of many myths and legends, the human origin of which is perfectly clear. It is true that the God who reveals himself does not always appear in human shape, but in thunder and lightning, storm and earthquake, fiery bush and menacing cloud. Yet the revelation which he is supposed to bring to the credulous children of men is always anthropomorphic; it invariably takes the form of a communication of ideas or commands which are formulated and expressed precisely as is done in the normal action of the human brain and larynx.

In the Hindu and Mohammedan religions, in the mythologies of Greece and Rome, in the Old and New Testaments, the gods think, talk, and act just as men do; the revelations in which they are supposed to unveil for us the secrets of existence and the solution of the great world-enigma are creations of the human imagination. The "truth" which the credulous discover in them is a human invention; the child-like faith in these irrational revelations is mere superstition.

The philosophy of the Pagan priests was generally concealed in myths and narratives containing dim hints and suggestions of truth. On the shrine of Athene-Isis was the inscription: "I am all that was, and all that is, and all that shall be, and my veil hath no mortal raised." Here the goddess is represented as identical with the totality of things knowable and unknowable. And as it was then, so it is in these latter days, when Pantheism is breathed in the utterances of thinkers and preachers, both orthodox and unorthodox.

Underlying all the doctrines of the great religions is reverence for the moral ideal; it forms, indeed, the bed-rock on which their whole superstructure is raised.

What is it that constitutes the essence of the teaching of the prophets and of Christ himself? Does not the gist of their message lie in the reaffirmation of the eternal verities, and in an exhortation to man to pursue the path of truth, justice, and righteousness? What is the noble eightfold path of the Buddha that shall lead to the peace of Nirvana but an exhortation to right conduct, right thought, and right speech? It is true that the great religions inculcate righteousness as a means to an end, the gaining of a heaven, or the attainment of a state of eternal rest; but the religion of the future will pass beyond this stage, and preach righteousness as an end in itself as the only means whereby may be brought about the salvation of the individual and of the race. And, as with the individual, so with the race. It is not the attainment of a state of material prosperity that constitutes national greatness and well-being, but the moulding of a type of national character that shall make for truth, justice, and righteousness.

MARTIN J. STAUNTON (Captain).

A Freethinker's Wedding.

An interesting wedding took place at midday on Monday, April 21, at the Parkshot Registry Office, Richmond, when Mr. Erle Bartrum Side was married to Miss Elsie Adelaide Burges.

Mr. E. B. Side is one of the many grandsons of the veteran Freethinker, Mr. R. H. Side, who is now in his ninety-fifth year. The Grand Old Man is still very active, but, unfortunately, was unable to attend the ceremony. After a most enjoyable reception at the house of Mrs. Burges, the bride and bridegroom departed for the East Coast, carrying the good wishes of their many friends with them. H. W. S.

Obituary.

It is with the deepest regret that I have to record the death of the wife of Mr. James Marshall, of Upton Park. Mrs. Marshall had been suffering from cancer for some time, and by her death her husband has lost a very dear comrade. Those who know Mr. Marshall as a very able and gentlemanly advocate of Freethought will sympathise with him on his bereavement.—I have also to record the death of my brother-in-law, Mr. Albert Simpson, from heart failure, at Chelmsford. Mr. Simpson had been a very warm advocate of Freethought all his life, and for some years carried on a vigorous personal propaganda at Brighton. This led to systematic boycott, which had some effect on his business prospects. But for that he cared little. In his death Freethought has lost a zealous friend.—J. N.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.—I regret to announce the death of Mr. Mapp's youngest daughter, Rosine, aged three, which occurred after an illness of only short duration. The undersigned read a Secular Service at the Crematorium on Saturday, April 19. We tender our sincere sympathy to Mr. Mapp and his family in their sad bereavement.—H. Black, Hon. Sec.

With deep regret we record the death of an esteemed member of the West Ham Branch in the person of Miss A. E. Hickling, who passed away on April 13 at the age of sixty-seven, after a long and painful illness borne with great fortitude. The deceased lady had been for more than thirty years the loyal and devoted housekeeper of our esteemed octogenarian colleague, Dr. R. T. Nichols. Miss Hickling's genial and kindly disposition greatly endeared her to all who came in contact with her, and to her relatives, as well as to Dr. Nichols, whose declining years are saddened by her loss, we extend our deepest sympathy. The cremation took place at Golder's Green on April 22, when the Secular Service was read by Miss Kough. The first time our Service has been undertaken by a woman in a crematorium chapel.—E. M. Vance, *General Secretary*.

The Humanitarian works by Joachim Kaspary, out of print, can be studied in the Reading Room of the British Museum, London. They will, however, be Revised and Published as soon as possible.

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

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Whitman and the Common Folk."

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "The Lord's Supper: Christian and Pagan."

OUTDOOR.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. C. Kelf, "Why I am a Freethinker"; 6, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Shaller; 3.30, Messrs. Ratcliffe, Kells, Dales, and Saphin.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. H. Snell, "Modern Ideas of Immortality."

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