

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN ■ ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XXXIX.—No. 19

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

War and the Future.

It is quite certain that one of the greatest questions before the world at present is whether it is to be organized for peace or war. And this is not a question of politics, or even of nationalities, it is fundamentally a question of civilization—of whether life is really to be worth the living or not. So far, we have had the melancholy pleasure of seeing all we said at the beginning of the War come true. Not believing that grapes could grow on thistles, we declined to believe that war could make men kinder, or more moral, or even more intelligent. War, we said, over and over again, meant progressive brutalization. Militarism, whether in Germany, or England, or France, meant the same thing. And now, six months after armistice, we find ourselves burdened with an enormously increased Army and Navy, a military air service—costing more than the Navy did before the War, a war minister crying out for more, and other nations, naturally, treading the same road. Until 1914 Germany was the ostensible reason for these huge armaments. Militarily—Germany has gone. Still our leaders pursue the old, stupid, and vicious road of attempting to secure peace by having a bigger war-force than our neighbour. They, in turn, must have a bigger force than we. And all along, the real solution of the difficulty is neither stronger armaments nor the limitation of armaments, but the abolition of armaments.

* * *

War and Common Sense.

At the root of this practically world-wide policy of pitting army against army lie certain ideas, and, therefore, the war for a peaceful world, one in which the idea of war shall arouse a revulsion of feeling similar to that aroused by crime within the nation, becomes in essence a war of ideas. From this point of view we welcome as an important contribution to the literature of the subject *The Biology of War*, by Professor F. G. Nicolai (Dent & Co., 21s., net.). Dr. Nicolai is one of the German publicists who publicly protested against the invasion of Belgium, and one who has been throughout utterly opposed to the German war spirit. He saw quite clearly that the ideas underlying war are in a modern environment wholly unjustifiable; they are in modern society a survival from primitive and mediæval social conditions. Even the notion that highly drilled

and elaborately organized armies are a source of strength is shown to be a fallacy. As Dr. Nicolai points out, national armies have generally proven superior to professional ones. The Swiss peasantry beat the knightly hosts of Leopold of Austria. In mediæval Germany the peasants beat the professionals until the city Militias joined the knights. The American Militia beat the English troops, and the raw levies of revolutionary France beat the trained armies of Europe. Dr. Nicolai might have added the example of the farmers of South Africa in the Boer War, and the fact that improvements in war have not infrequently been the work of civilian soldiers. Only the other day General French was saying in the *Daily Telegraph* that no one foresaw what kind of war the recent one would mean. That is not true. Soldiers did not see it, but a Polish banker did. In his *Is War Now Impossible?* M. Block laid down the conditions of the recent war over twenty years ago. The conservation of militarism is fatal to even its own development.

* * *

War and a Natural Selection.

Dr. Nicolai's book is a big one in both bulk and matter. It extends to about 500 pages, and it is free from verbiage and empty rhetoric. The author has something to say, and he confines himself to saying it. In some respects his task is an easy one, for the facts against the theory that war is beneficial, or has some biological value, are so strong that merely to recite them is enough. But, beginning with the animal world, Dr. Nicolai has no difficulty in showing that between members of the same species war has little or no biological value. As a general rule, and in the animal world, members of the same species do not war with each other. A state of warfare or of "armed peace" may exist between different species, but as Kropotkin has shown in his *Mutual Aid*, between members of the same species co-operation is the general rule. With man alone is a state of warfare with the members of his own kind a common phenomenon. And this becomes, not a struggle *for* existence, but really and in its final results a struggle against existence. War is selective; but, as Dr. Nicolai points out, so is everything. The important thing is, in what direction does war select? Does it select the wheat and remove the chaff? Or does it select the chaff and remove the wheat? The author's chapter on "Selection by Means of War" discusses this point fairly and adequately. Physically, there can be no doubt that war makes for retrogression. The aged, the blind, the infirm, dwarfs, etc., are of necessity rejected. And during actual fighting a still further selection takes place, the brave and capable being given the most dangerous jobs, and suffering the severest casualties. Physical deterioration has been a consequence of all lengthy and large wars, and there is no reason to expect any different consequence from the present one. Some of these consequences may be overcome by wiser and better social legislation; but to thank war for this is like praising God for creating quinine after he had previously created fever.

Society and War.

From the point of view of morals, the effect, of war on social life is quite as disastrous—if not more so. In this country we were all accustomed to pictures of battlefields showing nothing but German dead. In Germany the same pictures were given the people, with British and French dead taking the place of Germans. Intense hatred towards the enemy is inevitable, and along with that goes a readiness to believe anything vile concerning him, which develops in turn a credulity reminding one of the mentality of the savage—if it were only less vicious. Instances of these things are too well known to warrant citation. And Army life is inevitably a negation of much that one would like to see established in social life. Individual initiative and independence is discouraged. It would be fatal to discipline and military efficiency. Between officers and men a sharp line must be drawn. In Germany, the officer class stood as an order apart. And in this country officers are prohibited riding in third-class compartments in railway carriages. All other classes of the community can mingle; officer and ranker must, so far as is possible, move in different orbits. To pretend that military organization, with its checks on individual liberty and truncated sense of responsibility, makes for social development or betterment, is in the highest degree absurd. There is a vital truth in Dr. Nicolai's description of the German Army as it was: "The Army is on the high road to convert our people into a Jesuitical order. The Jesuits have also a chief college which every one of them blindly obeys. No one knows *why* he does so; he simply obeys. No one *speaks* of what he is doing; and every individual impulse is stifled for the good of the Order in general. Man ceases to be an individual, and becomes a mere wheel in an organization." And it must never be forgotten that Germany only illustrated militarism in its most logical expression.

* * *

The Stupidity of War.

The great issue before the world is that of war or peace—not merely a lull in hostilities, but the creation of conditions that will make war impossible. That is why Dr. Nicolai's work is so welcome and so timely. For you cannot kill war by making it dangerous or costly. Nations and individuals will always face both—as they always have done. You can only kill war by killing the ideas on which it lives, by stripping it of its glamour, and portraying it in its true colours. We have to fight the idea that a nation can really be benefitted by war, even when successful. We have to fight the idea that the battlefield is a school of virtue or of courage—it is neither. Virtue and courage are born in social life: the battlefield only provides a theatre for their expression—also for their decay. As a nation's material reserves are wasted by war, so are its moral resources. An aggressive war is a crime; a defensive one is, at best, a necessary evil. To-day war lives on the mistaken idealism of the many, and on the foolish short-sighted calculations of the few. To paint war in its true colours, and on a canvass large enough to be seen by all, is the great need of the present.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Theology, driven from one field after another, makes its final stand in the science of society. Here it is in its last trench, and while it is discouraging to note that the oft-fought battle must be waged again and again, there is some consolation in the reflection that when it is vanquished here it can never again rear its hoary head to mock the upward struggles of the marching hosts of men.—Arthur M. Lewis, "An Introduction to Sociology."

Religion and the Child.

THE Rev. G. D. Rosenthal, M.A., Vicar of St. Agatha's, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, delivered recently a series of Lent lectures on "Religion and Daily Life," one of which dealt with the education of the child. It was published in the *Church Times* for April 17, and many of the statements made in it challenge critical attention. Like the majority of the clergy, Mr. Rosenthal is by no means a passionate lover of the truth. For example, it is popularly asserted that Germany caused the War for which she had been preparing for upwards of thirty years, and that her supreme motto, as stated by General Bernhardt in his famous book, *Germany and the Next War*, was "World-Power or Downfall." That verdict may be a thoroughly sound one, and, assuming its accuracy, Mr. Rosenthal draws therefrom the following inferences:—

The conduct of Germany in the War has thrown a blinding flood of light on the effect on character of education divorced from Christian principle. Culture in the German sense of the word, the glorification of intellect at the expense of the whole of man's spiritual nature, the development of cleverness apart from conscience, has revealed itself in its true colours as the most potent force for evil the world has ever known.

That extract must be characterized as essentially and outrageously untruthful. Whatever we may think of the German conception of Culture, it is a deliberate lie to say that in Germany education is divorced from religion. The so-called "blinding flood of light" has evidently blinded Mr. Rosenthal to the truth. Had he consulted any reliable work about Germany, even Charles Tower's *Germany of To-day*, it would have been absolutely impossible for him to indulge in such a lying statement. It is well known that Matthew Arnold, having observed it in operation, pronounced the German system of education superior to our own; and, up to July, 1914, it was customary with British divines to point to Germany as an example of fidelity to the evangelical faith. Some time ago the Secular Education League issued a tract, entitled *German Crime and Secular Education*, in which it is demonstrated beyond the possibility of a doubt that the "crimes of Germany during the War, which have so grievously manifested its moral deterioration, are not due to the lack of State provided religious teaching in the German system of education." And yet the opponents of Secular Education in this country not only withhold the truth about the German system, but are guilty of grossly misrepresenting it. The Rev. Stanley Rogers, of Liverpool, a year-and-a-half ago delivered himself of the following black lie:—

Do we not need to keep in mind the Duke of Wellington's warning: "educate children without religion, and you will make a race of clever devils." German Kultur has achieved this result. Do we wish to imitate Germany in this?

To show the utter stupidity as well as wickedness of such an utterance we need only consult the article on education in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in which the following clear statement occurs:—

The Prussian system remains to-day both for Catholics and Protestants essentially denominational. All schools, whether elementary or secondary, are Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, or mixed.....In all cases, the teachers are appointed with reference to religious faith; religious instruction is given compulsorily in school hours, and is inspected by the clergy.

The late Right Rev. Dr. Wilkinson, being Bishop of North and Central Europe, was thoroughly familiar with the conditions of life in Germany, and being also a bitter

opponent of the policy of Secular Education, he enthusiastically sang the praises of Prussia as a country educationally worthy of closest imitation. Mr. Rosenthal is, therefore, convicted of being a false witness against a neighbouring State, and his chief argument against the secular policy falls to the ground. The country which he so ruthlessly condemns because of its conduct in the War is, after all, a country in which education is not divorced from Christian principle. The first and chief point in his lecture is this: "Education must be founded on religion." This he declares to be "a truth which is far more generally accepted to-day than it was five years ago." In reality, however, instead of being a truth, it is an obvious and misleading fallacy; and the more we look at it the more irrational and misleading it is found to be. If, as Mr. Rogers contends, Germany has achieved the result of producing "a race of clever devils," she has done so by means of an educational system in which "religious instruction is given compulsorily in school hours, and is inspected by the clergy." In France, on the contrary, devilry of all kinds has been steadily on the decline for many years, though the policy of Secular Education is in force in that famous country. Of course, there is much to be said for the position taken up by most of the clergy. They are simply doing their utmost to safeguard the interests of their own profession, and they are quite right in thinking they can succeed in doing so only by assigning to religion the all-important place in education. Like non-religious people, they recognize the certainty that religion, if divorced from education, would quickly die out from end to end of the land. It is education alone that keeps it alive. The Duke of Wellington's warning would be entirely well founded if it read thus: "Educate children without religion, and you will make a race of clever Atheists." Of this the ministers of religion are fully aware, and some of them occasionally give frank expression to it. But the argument which they generally put forward is that Secular Education would plunge the world into a state of the lowest moral degradation. They candidly admit that, after nineteen centuries of the Christian religion, the moral condition of the Western nations is not a thing to be proud of, the all-conquering Christ having done but little in the saving line; but they are profoundly convinced that, in the absence of religion, unspeakably worse conditions would inevitably and quickly arise. The curious thing, however, is that they have no data whatever upon which to base such a prediction. There are data which they dare not use, because they lend support to the advocates of the secular principle. This principle was adopted by France in the year 1886, and from 1889 down to the outbreak of the War there had been a marked decrease of crime. In five years, from 1889 to 1894, the number of boy-offenders (under sixteen) went down from 4,080 to 3,582, and the number of girl-offenders from 728 to 260. In Germany, with all her religious instruction in primary and secondary schools, juvenile crime increased by fifty per cent. between 1883 and 1890, and the same thing occurred in Protestant Holland and Catholic Italy. Facts are stubborn things, and cowards cannot face them. As yet, Secular Education is a new experiment, but already the consequence of adopting it has proved beneficial to morality.

It is perfectly true, however, that the discontinuance of religious instruction in the day schools of the land would result in the disappearance of religion. Religion is not one of the ingredients in our constitution as Nature hands it out at birth. It must be instilled into it by artificial means afterwards, or it will never get in at all. We are often assured that man is instinctively religious, that he has a constitutional thirst for God, and

that God alone can meet all the requirements of his nature; but the truth is that, with the combined attempts of parents, teachers, clergymen, and other Christian workers to infuse religion into the youthful mind, many children grow up without the slightest feeling for or delight in it, while many of those who seem to harbour it in early years lose it afterwards, and go through the rest of life without showing any trace of it.

Now, education is a process, not of sowing something in the mind that was not there before, but of drawing out the various powers that are already latent in the organism; a process, not of pouring in, which religious education of necessity is, but of bringing forth into shining actualities the glorious potentialities which lie slumbering within. Science is opening our eyes to the fact that an infant is a neatly packed bundle of possibilities, of good and bad tendencies, of noble and ignoble potentialities, and that the business of education is to encourage the one and suppress the other; but religion is not in the bundle at all. The clergy and their associates are here for the sole purpose of injecting religion into our organism and of preventing it from oozing out again. Everybody remembers what a gigantic task it was to force religion into St. Augustine's heart. His mother made it the supreme object of her life to induce him to give his heart to God, but in the end she succeeded, and this is his account of it: "It is to my mother that I owe all. If I am thy child at all, O God, it is because thou gavest me such a mother." Augustine was a man of genius; but even his explanation of his conversion shows clearly that religion is entirely foreign to human nature. It was because in the end he took his mother's word for it that he knew he had a Heavenly Father. But while religion is not one of the ingredients in our organism, the moral sense is. We have a social instinct, like the ants, and we take naturally to a moral life. Mr. Rosenthal lays much emphasis upon what he calls "the claims of God"; but the claims of God are purely artificial, invented by the priests, the only real claims upon us being those of our fellow-beings.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Collapse of the Churches.

Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star.—*Emerson.*

THE clergy are never tired of telling people that the brotherhood of man is one of the primary elements of Christian doctrine. They are now forgetting all their patriotic platitudes concerning the "God of Battles," and bid men to turn their eyes to the "Prince of Peace." Jesus, they tell us now, proclaimed "Blessed are the peacemakers." The clergy themselves have, however, never earned for themselves this benediction, although the Pope sought to impose what was called "the truce of God" several times during the late war, although not much could be gained by postponing a fight between embattled millions for a few hours on Christmas Day or Good Friday. Such minor palliations are of little moment compared with the grim fact that the clergy never set themselves in opposition to militarism itself.

Turn to the history of our own country, and refer to the record of the Church of England since the Reformation. Britain has waged over a hundred wars, great and small. In every instance the Church has been the obedient handmaid of the Government; blessed the regimental flags, and sung *Te Deums* for victory. The Prayer Book, issued with the sanction of Parliament, assumes always that justice is on our side, and reminds worshippers that

"there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God."

In the late War whole nations, professedly Christian, were engaged for years in wholesale slaughter. Europe was a steaming slaughter-house, in which perished the flower of the manhood of the Christian world. It is a complete indictment of the Christian religion, which has proved itself the most powerless thing on earth. The millions who profess to be followers of the "Prince of Peace" were unaffected by his teaching. When passion or self-interest was aroused, every commandment and every precept were forgotten. Nor is this all, for a few persons were actually treated as criminals for attempting to take the Christian religion seriously, as with the Quakers, and the Conscientious Objectors in England, and a few Communists in America. So far as the prelates of the different Christian Churches are concerned, the profession of Christian ethics is a mockery. Whether they be Catholic cardinals, Anglican bishops, or priests of the Greek Church, the fact is the same. As for the dream of brotherhood, no man, remembering the awful treatment of the Jews throughout Europe, can but see that Christian doctrines are of one aspect, but its practices of another.

The clergy are now very anxious to persuade everybody that they had a very important share in the improvement of the condition of the people. They wish to forget the Great War, and their own shameful share in it. Hence we are not surprised at the inclusion in a Church hymn-book of some pathetic appeals to the sympathies of the British working man. Listen to the dulcet tones of the clerical siren:—

Sons of Labour, think of Jesus
As you rest your homes within,
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary
In the stable of the inn.
Think, now, in the sacred story
Jesus took a humble grade,
And the Lord of Life and Glory
Worked with Joseph at his trade.

"Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Where are the hymns of hate, the hymns about hell and the blood of the Lamb? Without elaborating the matter, this complete change of front is disingenuous, and by no means clever. Is it possible that the growth of the Democratic Movement has frightened the dear clergy, and they are preparing for the dreadful day when the Red Flag flies at Westminster? Someone ought to remind the Black Army it is certainly possible that mediæval beliefs may be found quite incompatible with materialistic efficiency. With every generation the social conscience becomes quickened and more sensitive; men cannot tolerate to-day ideas that were quietly accepted by their badly educated forefathers. Christianity is a great illusion, and the clergy fail invariably to get to grip with vital affairs. The World-War produced horrors and evil enough, but there is a silver lining to the blackest of clouds, if this awful outbreak but shows clearly and unmistakably that Christianity is but a superstition, and that the Gospel of Christ is of the things that perish. The collapse of Christianity is too complete to be glossed over by the glamour of false sentiment and assumed heroics. Let the Black Army leave the people of England free to work out their secular salvation without the fables of a foolish faith. Modern man has outgrown the dogmas of Oriental creeds, and civilized man is better than the gods of decadent and debased superstitions.

MIMNERMUS.

Every principle contains in itself the germs of a prophecy.
—Coleridge.

The Origin of Life.

IV.

(Continued from p. 217.)

Men can make machines, it is said, but not organisms, *ergo*, organisms must have a spiritual origin. But the fact is that no man can make a machine *unless* he take advantage of the immense traditions of our race, and apply the skill of millions who have worked and thought before him, slowly and tentatively, discovering the necessary means of mechanical effect. The greatest thinker, or the deepest scholar, who did not place himself in the line of the tradition, and learn the principles of mechanism, and the properties of the materials, would be as incapable of making a watch, as the physiologist now is of making a cell. But the skill of man has already succeeded in making many organic substances, and will perhaps eventually succeed in making a cell, certainly will, if ever the special synthesis which binds the elements together should be discovered.—G. H. Lewes, "The Physical Basis of Life" (1877), p. 12.

WHEN Robert Brown, the botanist, in 1827, dissolved some gamboge in water and examined it under the microscope, he discovered that the particles in suspension were in a constant state of motion backwards and forwards, and the finer the particles the more active their movements. These are now known as Brownian movements, after the name of their discoverer. Brown suspected the movement was due to living particles, and his discovery gave rise to a great deal of curiosity, speculation, and discussion. But we know now that these movements are not living, but due to the molecular structure of matter, and produced by molecular bombardment. We also know that the same laws of motion govern the living world as the non-living; for, as Professor D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, in his lately published important and valuable work, *On Growth and Form*, observes: "One sometimes lies awake of a summer's morning watching the flies as they dance under the ceiling. It is a very remarkable dance. The dancers do not whirl or gyrate, either in company or alone; but they advance and retire; they seem to jostle and rebound; between the rebounds they dart hither or thither in short straight snatches of hurried flight, and turn again sharply in a new rebound at the end of each little rush. Their motions are wholly 'erratic,' independent of one another, and devoid of common purpose. This is nothing else than a vastly magnified picture, or simulacrum, of the Brownian movement.....the same phenomenon may be witnessed under the microscope, in a drop of water swarming with paramoecia or suchlike infusoria;¹ and here the analogy has been put to a numerical test. Following with a pencil the track of each little swimmer, and dotting its place every few seconds (to the beat of a metronome), Karl Przibram found that the mean successive distance from a common base-line obeyed the 'Einstein formula'—that is to say, the particular form of the 'law of chance' which is applicable to the case of the Brownian movement. The phenomenon is (of course) merely analogous, and by no means identical with the Brownian movement; for the range of motion of the little active organisms, whether they be gnats or infusoria, is vastly greater than that of the minute particles which are passive under bombardment."²

The Brownian movements are a microscopic repetition of the activities of the flies and the water organisms. With these facts before us, we can appreciate Sir Oliver Lodge's illustration of free-will by this dance of the flies. He says: "Watch the orbits of a group of flies as they play; they are manifestly not controlled

¹ Infusoria—Microscopic living organisms which appear in infusions exposed to unsterilized air.

² D'Arcy W. Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (1917), pp. 47-48.

completely by mechanical laws as are the motions of the planets. The simplest view of their activity is that it is *self-determined*—that they are flying about at their own will and turning where they choose.....Here we see free will in its simplest form."¹ Sir Oliver is an authority on physic and electricity, but he is quite at sea on biological questions like these.

The average man, if asked to define the difference between living and non-living, would reply, "Movement and growth." Metals and rocks do not move about or grow; plants and animals do. We place a drop of pond-water under the microscope, and find it swarming with living particles. "We notice a small mass of clear slime changing its shape, throwing out projections of its structureless substance, creeping from one part of the field of the microscope to another. We recognize that the slime is living; we give it a name—*Amœba limax*—the slug amœba. We observe similar movements in individual cells of our own body.....But physicists show us movements of a precisely similar character from those of the living organisms we have been studying; movements which can only be described by the same term amœboid, yet obviously produced as the result of purely physical and chemical reactions causing changes in surface tension of the fluids under examination."²

Again: "Quincke brought a drop of almond oil and chloroform on to the surface of water and allowed a small drop of a 2 per cent. solution of soda to approach the drop of oil, which then moved and twisted itself like a living thing. And Butschli observed such oil and lather movements to continue of themselves and without interference for several days on end."³

Crystals are not alive, but they grow; and if placed in the mother-lye they will repair a fracture, or replace an angle that has been cut off.

Far from motion being a distinctive quality of life, it is an inherent property of matter. Take one of the hardest of the metals, steel; examine the steel rails on a railway track, you will find a space left between the end of one rail and the commencement of the next. If they were placed close together, when the sun heated and expanded, or lengthened the rail, and this space were not left, the rails would buckle up and go all shapes. The Eiffel Tower at Paris is never at rest, when the sun strikes it in the morning it begins to expand and increase in height as the sun becomes more powerful, and when the sun begins to decline the tower sinks again with the fall in temperature. All steel constructional engineers have to allow for this. Many steel bridges rest on rollers for this expansion and contraction. There is a difference of twenty-four inches in the great Forth Bridge during winter and summer.

(To be concluded.) W. MANN.

The Old Jester.

SOON I shall have to answer the summons
To appear at Life's last great Festival—Death,
So dress me in my old motley, with cap
And bells complete. Then ere my final breath
Escapes, I'll give you cause for laughter
To lighten your sorrow now—and after.
And should I see tears as I prepare to go
'Twill not be grief only that causes them to fall,
For my last jest will bring laughter's tears as well—
And to laughter's music I'll attend the Festival.

L. B. HEWETT.

¹ Sir Oliver Lodge, *Raymond*, p. 385. Cited by Sir George Greenwood, *The Problem of the Will*, p. 46.

² E. A. Schafer, *Life*, pp. 8-9.

³ A. Turnbull, *The Life of Matter*, p. 42.

Acid Drops.

A considerable quantity of literature is at present being circulated in connection with the Industrial Christian Fellowship. It is curious how readily money can be found for the purpose of teaching the working-classes Christianity, and in the collection of leaflets that lie before us we see one containing commendations of the Fellowship by about two dozen large employers of labour. Evidently they feel it is quite a good thing. A covering letter enquires if the employer has an opening "to employ our agents as.....Christian social workers, or in any other capacity," and there is an assurance given that they will "never interfere during working hours." That is very considerate. They will only worry the workman in his own time. The employer shall lose nothing.

Of course, it is not difficult to gauge the real intention of this kind of missionary work, and those who supply the funds are certainly not doing so without the prospect of getting an adequate return for their investment. But we have little hope for the working-classes, until they are self-respecting enough to resent this kind of religious patronage. These mission movements are never directed towards the people with money, only towards those without. And there is something humiliating to any self-respecting man or woman in the attitude of their self-elected evangelists. One day we hope to see the working-classes telling these missionaries plainly to go about their business. Then we shall begin to see things.

It is rather late in the day for an outbreak of anti-Semitic feeling in England, but the *Daily Sketch* is doing its best. Here is a fine outburst from a recent issue: "When you scratch a major Bolshevik he invariably turns out to be a Jew." And, according to the same wise authority, Bolshevism is an "abomination." The editor of the picture-paper might reflect that if he scratched the Christian Trinity, he would find two more Jews, and the ghost of a third.

Those lukewarm Freethinkers who fondly imagine that the fight with Christianity is over should glance at this year's list of "May Meetings." There are 360 announcements of fixtures of religious organizations, and the speakers, mostly well-known men, number about 1,500.

At the Albert Hall, London, the Spiritualists held a "National Memorial Service," and Sir A. Conan Doyle was present. The service was held in memory of those who fell in the War. This seems incompatible with the Spiritist idea that there is no death. If a man walks from one room to the next and is heard talking his friends do not hold a "memorial service." Perhaps there is more "bogey" in the affair than meets the eye.

The Bishop of Winchester has aroused the bile of his fellow-Christians because he has suggested that it would be an ungentlemanly action to hang the ex-Kaiser, and that the German people may, after all, be human beings. The poor Bishop does not realize that the folk who love their enemies have been, and still are, on the war-path.

The Right Reverend Father-in-God, the Lord Bishop of Lichfield, declares that "Christianity and slums are incompatible." That is his opinion; but the two things have subsisted side by side for nearly two thousand years. And, what is more, some of the worst may be found in close proximity to the cathedrals.

We have heard a deal from the pulpits concerning the splendid "moral uplift" of the War; now we appear to be getting it. The Chief Commissioner of Police says that "the War is responsible for increasing the amount of crime in the country, and for changing the type of the criminal." To an *Evening News* representative he explained that "Freedom from the restraint of ordinary law in battle lowered man's respect for that institution. An increase of

crime invariably followed war. There is a big rise in the number of robberies. The robber of to-day, grown callous after four years' experience of killing, is indifferent alike to the taking of life and to his own personal safety." We wonder what the clergy think about it?

Everyone, says the Rev. R. J. Campbell, has been much struck by the decline in church attendance, but there has not been a corresponding moral decline. We are not surprised; but we wonder what the clergy make of it.

An association has been formed for promoting Sunday games, and at the preliminary meeting in London over twenty governing sports bodies were represented. This looks uncommonly like the end of the game that the Churches have had with the people of this country for generations.

In a lengthy obituary notice of the late Rev. Timothy Richard, an agent of the Baptist Missionary Society, the *Westminster Gazette* has the following: "Dr. Richard, like other great religious teachers, laid emphasis upon the need for saving the heathen from the hell of suffering in this world." If this is true, Dr. Richard was more of a Secularist than a Christian; but then he was very unlike "great religious teachers."

Canon Horsley, Vicar of Detling, who stood as a Labour candidate at the Rural District Election, was elected. This will be quoted as a proof of the Church's concern for the people; but one swallow does not make a summer. There are 25,000 Church of England ministers, and about the same number of Free Church parsons and Catholic priests.

The clergy often assert that Freethinkers are the only folk who commit suicide. Facts, however, are stubborn things, and do not invariably bear out the truth of clerical assertions. After having told a friend that he was lonely and that life was monotonous, the Rev. H. W. Jenkins, a Baptist minister, of Bleddfa, Radnorshire, threw himself under a train and was killed.

The starvation stipends of the clergy are notorious, but some of them manage to "put a little bit away for a rainy day." The late Rt. Rev. Alfred Earle, Bishop of Marlborough, left estate to the value of £30,859.

The Roman Catholics appear to have a very efficient news agency. Newspapers constantly record the doings of Catholic ecclesiastics, and recently a daily paper devoted a sixth of a column to a description of a service at Westminster Cathedral.

The clergy are professing great fondness for Labour now that the idea of a Labour Government is likely to materialize before long; but the Rector of Merthyr Tydvil is in quite a hurry to proclaim his affection. "I sometimes feel my heart go out to the Socialists among my fellow countrymen," he says.

After blaming the Russian revolutionists, and using them as a scapegoat for everything that has happened of an unpleasant character from Aberdeen to Timbuctoo, it seems that they too were instruments of God. At least so says the Rev. Professor Paterson, of Edinburgh. God, it seems, was in a bit of a hole. "If Germany won, then militarism won; if the Allies won, then Russia and Tzardom won with them. Then Providence did a wonderful thing, with the result that Germany was beaten, and Russia also." So the Revolution and the Bolsheviks were all part of the wonderful thing. German militarism was defeated—and our own tanks and barbed wire were released for service in Ireland. Providence is really wonderful.

The Pilgrim Preachers of Bath arrived in Hyde Park on Sunday, April 27. On reaching London, they sent a message to the King, telling him of the coming of Jesus Christ. The Preachers arrived during a snowstorm. Probably the

arrival of "Our Lord" was put off till the summer weather arrives.

The *Cambridge Magazine* has an interesting article on the low wages of women servants at the University, and refers to the "Jesus Bedmakers," meaning the ladies who attend to the cubicles at Jesus College. As generosity should begin at home, it is curious to read in the same periodical that "no payment is made for contributions however indigent the contributor."

A discussion has taken place in the columns of a daily paper on "Soldiers' Memorials," and one correspondent points out that vast sums have been spent on Church clocks, crosses, chapels, and ecclesiastical furniture, while the soldiers and sailors who have fought and survived look in vain for houses in which to make their homes.

The May Meetings are being advertised in the press, and it is stated that the new President of the British and Foreign Bible Society will be the Duke of Connaught. Before the War, this Society used to include the ex-Kaiser among its patrons, and point to the Imperial Bible-banger as an example to all Christians.

A remarkable story is told in a daily paper of a Bible saving the life of a soldier by deflecting a bullet. The book was torn open, leaving exposed the words: "Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you." Presumably the bullet trailed round the text so as to render it conspicuous, but what would have happened if that soldier had been reading his Bible at the time?

The *Statesman* (India) for March 6 records the case of the Rev. A. J. Johnston, of St. Paul's Mission College, Madras, charged with defiling an object sacred to the Hindoos—to wit, throwing an image of Saraswati, goddess of learning, into a dustbin. On coming before the court, Mr. Johnston expressed himself as sincerely sorry for what he had done, and, on the prosecution accepting the apology, the case was withdrawn. In India, under our administration, one god is as good as another. At home we have preferences.

"The road to heaven is still the old, old road that leads from Galilee," says a Sunday paper. That journalist seems to be treading the old, old road to Colney Hatch.

The Vicar of Camberley refused to celebrate the marriage of a Christian Scientist in his church. He explains: "These people are not Christians."

Henry Richards, a church sidesman, was fined £10 and costs at Marylebone for street loitering and betting. His sacred office did not prevent him breaking the law.

The Bishop of Chester is resigning. As the position is worth £4,200 a year, together with a residence, the Holy Ghost should have little difficulty in finding a successor.

According to a press paragraph, at the close of a choral service at a Willesden church, the members of the congregation were startled almost out of their lives by hearing applause from a small girl. That dear little heathen has yet to learn that the difference between a theatre and a church is that you pay to go in one, and pay to get out of the other.

"My churchwardens are like wine, the longer they go on the better they get," said the Vicar of Hillingdon. This conjunction of the spiritual and the spirituous reminds one of the Christian ideal of Sundays devoted to the church and the public-house.

The influence of the Church on social life is waning rapidly. There are 692 undefended divorce cases for the Easter term, as shown by the Divorce List, and defended cases number eighty-seven. This is an ironic comment on "Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder."

To Correspondents.

- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—G. F. Samuel, T. Crosby, D. A. Robertson, D. Williams, E. McDougall, £1 5s.; E. J. B., 10s.; T. Hamilton, 2s. 6d.
- E. A. ST. RHONE.—Sorry unable to spare so much space for the subject taken by you.
- R. E. LAWSON.—The subject is dealt with in Mr. Cohen's *God and Man*. There is no more need for a God in morals than there is in arithmetic.
- H. YOUNG (Shanghai).—It doesn't seem to matter very much, but certainly a more ignorant type of clergyman appears to be associated with foreign missionary work. But the exporting of shoddy goods is a general rule, commercially.
- KARKI (Melbourne).—You may take it that, whatever the Papacy does or says, its only purpose is to secure advantage to the Church.
- L. B. HEWETT.—Thanks. Shall appear.
- F. F. SAMUEL (Tobago) sends greetings for self and friends to the Editor and his staff, with an expression of appreciation of the *Freethinker*.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Richard Green, 10s.
- H. W. BARNES.—Evan Powell Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth* was a very fine piece of work. The author was not related to George Meredith.
- T. THORNTON-BERRY.—Handed to shop manager. We should be pleased to see the essay to which you refer.
- E. H. OLDS (N.Z.).—Please to have your warm appreciation of the *Freethinker*. Literature is being sent.
- W. ROBERTSON.—Thanks. Will prove very useful.
- W. CUMMING.—We are surprised that those concerned are not more alive to the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to control the Labour Movement. Expressions of sympathy can only delude fools. The Roman Church always acts on a set policy, and its policy in coquetting with the Labour Movement is pretty evident.
- ONE of our readers is anxious to get a copy of the *Freethinker* containing report of the International Freethought Congress held in London in 1887. Please write this Office, stating price.
- 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.*
- 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.

The second of the South Place lectures was delivered by Mr. Lloyd on Sunday last to an improved and very appreciative audience. Mr. Collette Jones officiated as chairman. The last lecture of the present series will be delivered by Mr. Harry Snell to-day (May 11), subject: "Do the Dead Still Live?" We hope to hear of the hall being crowded.

We publish this week the first volume of a work that is of more than passing interest to Freethinkers. Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* is a bulky work, and contains much that to-day would be of small interest to the general reader. But a large part of the *Dictionary* is still of importance to all concerned with the never-ending war with superstition,

and a selection has been made of all the articles dealing with religion. It is intended to publish these in three or four volumes, with consecutive numbering, so that the whole may be bound together when complete. The present selection runs from "Abraham" to "Christianity," and includes articles on Angels, Apostles, Babel, Blasphemy, etc. The work covers some of Voltaire's most characteristic writing, and there is scarce a sentence that does not exhibit those qualities of wit and satire, with their underlying deadly seriousness, which made Voltaire so famous and so dreaded. The first volume runs to 128 pages, and the cover bears a fine portrait—not the usual ghastly thing—of the author. As printing goes to-day, it is a marvel of cheapness at 1s. 3d.; postage three-halfpence. This is the only English version of the *Dictionary* on the market, and no Freethinker should be without a copy.

Readers of this paper will remember Mr. Mann's striking series of articles which appeared in this journal in 1917. They gave a careful examination of the evidence for the genuineness of spirit communications, and a telling exposure of the means by which assent to their genuineness had been gained. These articles have now been reprinted in a volume of about 200 pages by Messrs. Watts & Co. (cloth, 5s.; paper, 3s. 6d. net), and we are sure that many of our readers will desire to have the volume by them for reading and for reference. No clearer exposure of modern Spiritualism exists than this work of Mr. Mann's, and we hope it will have the circulation it really deserves. Full reference is given for all statements made, and the author deals very effectively with evidence put forward in the names of men like Lodge, Crookes, and Wallace. As a study in credulity, the book deserves a place on the shelves of every Freethinker.

We have in hand, and hope to publish in the course of two or three weeks, a new pamphlet by Mr. Mann, on *Science and the Soul*. We believe this will be found of great use to Freethinkers, and although it will extend to sixty-four full pages, with cover, we hope to publish at 7d., in order to secure as large a circulation as is possible.

Rev. Dr. Lyttelton, writing in the April *Commonwealth*, a Christian social magazine, strongly advises that "some of us take in the *Freethinker*." Needless to say that is advice we cheerfully endorse. It is, perhaps, the best piece of advice we have ever seen in a Christian journal. And may we further suggest that our readers do their best to see that "some of us" get the *Freethinker* for a week or two. Still further, that those non-Christians who are not readers of the *Freethinker*, also get a copy. We want a great many more readers than we possess, and there is no reason why we should not have them. There are thousands of potential subscribers ready to hand, and if our readers will only make up their minds to reach one—well, we would increase the size of the paper within the next month. And then we could widen the scope of our activities, and increase the sphere of our usefulness.

Generally the summer sales of the *Freethinker* do not equal the winter ones. This year we want our readers to help us prevent this. They can do it either by purchasing an extra copy and handing it to a likely person, or by inducing their newsagent to display copies, or by sending the address of probable subscribers to us, and we will see that specimen copies are sent. It is not nearly so difficult to get new readers as some people imagine. A little industry is all that is required.

In illustration of what we have said, here is a letter from one who has been receiving specimen copies of the *Freethinker*:

Just a note to thank you very much for the copies of the *Freethinker* I have received lately. I may say I can take a much broader view of the "religious business" than I could before I started the reading of the *Freethinker*. I also want to say that you need not bother sending any more copies, as I am getting it here every week.

A remittance is enclosed to our Sustentation Fund as a "thank-offering."

It is not a too easy task nowadays to secure hotel accommodation, and those Freethinkers who intend visiting the Manchester Conference would do well to write in good time. We hope that every Branch of the Society will see to it that a delegate is present, and the more individual members there are there the better. But all should write early, giving the length of their stay and the nature of the accommodation required. The local Secretary is Mr. H. Black, 446 Great Cheetham Street East, Higher Broughton, Salford, Lancs.

To-day (May 11) Mr. R. H. Rosetti—fresh from the Western Front—will lecture for the Bethnal Green Branch at the usual spot at 6.15. Will East London Freethinkers make a note of this and do their best to be present. This is the opening of the Branch's lecture season, and there is nothing like a good beginning.

We are glad to welcome the reappearance of the *La Pensée*, the issue of which was suspended during the German occupancy of Belgium. Whatever the War may have done, it has certainly not diminished the fire and enthusiasm of our Belgian friends, and those of our subscribers who read French may desire to send for copies. The April number contains a translation, by M. Eugene Hins, of Mr. Cohen's article on "Paine and the League of Nations." The office of the paper is 13 Rue du Gazometre, Brussels.

In the *Freethinker* for April 13 we published a letter from "B. F. B." commenting on a remark of ours concerning the killing of Jews in Poland. Our correspondent was of opinion that we had been misled by newspaper reports, and declared the stories of Pogroms were "Hun lies." We should have been pleased to have found that we had been misled, although we thought otherwise. But in the *Daily Telegraph* for May 2 there appears a communication from that journal's correspondent, and also a letter from Mr. Israel Cohen, of the Zionist Organization, affirming the raiding of a Jewish gathering in Warsaw, called for the purpose of distributing food. The men were marched off to a public square, ill-treated, and, finally, a machine-gun turned on them. The names of the killed have been supplied by the *Daily Telegraph*.

We are asked to announce that Mr. W. H. Thresh will lecture to-day for the West Ham Branch at Maryland Point. We are glad to learn that this Branch opened its season's work with a good meeting on Sunday last.

The Manchester Branch has arranged, during the summer a series of rambles to take place once a month under the leadership of Mr. Stewart. A full programme of these will be supplied to members shortly. It is hoped that members will attend themselves and bring along their friends.

The Birth of God.

The beautiful gods and the vile are but men in a garden of flowers.—"Withered Roses."

"FEAR," says Statius, "first created God." Yes, Fear and Ignorance—those two. They are the progenitors of most of our calamities, but of all the evils this is the greatest.

One can imagine our forefathers slowly developing in brain-power, reasoning slowly and dimly wondering at things they could not understand. Then, on a day, issuing from their caves, they saw the lightning and heard the thunder. Trees given and sent, some of their fellows dead, and all by something they could not dream of. What could they think? Either it was the deed of one of their fellows, one of the strong men amongst them, or — but who else could it be? They only knew of things that had come under their notice. In those days each idea had its local reality.

So their strongest men, he of the heaviest club and

the biggest stone must be the wielder of the fire and the maker of the roar. Thus they reasoned and were afraid.

But the great man, was reverence bitter to him? Were the gifts of propitiation unwelcome? Should he deny his agency in this mysterious happening? Yet if he did, would his fellows believe him? Hard men of few ideas are not easily disillusioned. (This is well illustrated by the behaviour of Christians to-day). This was the only way they could account for the hidden death and, willy-nilly, he must become their god.

But time passed on and men grew wiser; at least they gained experience. They began to ask their god to perform his "stunts" at most undesirable times, and, more often than not, they didn't come off. What was to be done? The god, being often a person of some ingenuity, generally got going first. He studied the symptoms leading up to the phenomena over which he was supposed to exercise control, and managed to blossom into a sort of weather-prophet.

As time progressed, even this god in semi-deshabille could not satisfy the people. They wanted some better substitute; so the temporary gods withdrew with the best grace they could, and assumed the *role* of prophets of "a greater one than they."

This new god the people assumed to be any extraordinary thing they fancied—a block of wood, a stone, a snake, fire, the sun, and, in some cases, a similar sort of being to his prophets, only more so. He was an adept at knocking stones together, and thus causing the lightning and the thunder, and at doing various other little odd jobs that they could not otherwise explain.

But as the mind of man expanded, the idea of god expanded with it. The rude god of the early days developed into the tribal god, the protector of a little people, and the prophet became either a priest or a magician (medicine-man), choosing that which, in his opinion, brought in the biggest profit.

Little by little, this idea passed away, fighting hard for its "place in the heavens." The God (with a capital G) became all-powerful, omnipresent, "maker of heaven and earth and all that in them is." He bears many names, many attributes, has various ideas about the same thing, is liable to change of opinion with change of abode—in fact, is an all-round, all-obliging sort of God, ready to do anything for a following, ready to promise anything to his believers, to threaten anything to his traducers, and generally set up an "Exchange of Blessings" Bureau.

This is the God of the Christians, who has not one iota of originality in his make-up. He is borrowed, pirated, and generally decorated from the store of forgotten deities, and his greatest prophet, Jesus Christ (whose prophecy of the coming end of the world so missed the mark that no tribe of "stone-men" would have believed in him), was but a plagiarist.

H. C. MELLOR.

The Missions Microbe.

MANY Churchmen are making frantic efforts to take the movement for the constitution of a League of Nations under their wing. The tomahawk-brandishers of four years ago will coo you now like any turtle dove. But that is not the way with all of them, or at least there are some who seem to imagine that a League of Nations is compatible with the perpetuation of racial hatred. And of such is Captain Gipsy Smith, the revivalist preacher, who, in the North of England lately, informed an audience that the Germans were "a dirty mob right through."

"A dirty mob right through." Beautiful Christian sentiment! Who can sling mud like a Christian? Gipsy Smith could not know intimately every German in the world, and without such knowledge he has no title to make such a disgraceful statement. And even with such a title his personal conclusions would still be open to question or criticism.

The biggest social nuisance is the individual "with a mission." The biggest menace to the freedom and enduring peace of the world is a nation "with a mission." But it is fashionable to be a missionary, and therefore he is numerous. Any vain little forked radish who has failed at everything else may be sure of a livelihood if he starts a "mission" stunt. There is always a gaping demand for new religions if you can make one grotesque enough. Some alliterative hymn-writer, one of these fine days, will be writing an up-to-date sacred song to some such refrain as, "Jazzing Home with Jesus."

Baffling is Christian logic. There is a renewal of appeals for money for missions. The Christian Church is placarding every hoarding with them. One area in particular is mentioned as requiring the attention of the dog-collared ones, viz., German East Africa, which it is said has been handed over as a vineyard for British Christians to work in. In support of one appeal the Rev. Dr. Grose, of the American Y.M.C.A., said, if we did not send the Gospel all over the world, the next war, in comparison with the last, would appear to be a mere Sunday-school picnic. He must be a bold man, Dr. Grose, but he certainly is not logical. Why should the result of preaching the Gospel everywhere be peace? On the contrary, all the facts of history, ancient and modern, point to another conclusion. Not only has Christianity hindered the footsteps of peace, it has stirred up the worst human passions, and has been a fomenter of public tumults—and war.

One of the chief dangers against which secular and humanistic agencies have to guard is the infection of this "missionary" fever. There are professed Atheists who have not wholly escaped its poison gas. We need to be refreshed by the watchwords of men like Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, Foote, in these days of ethical camouflage. "No surrender" was the motto of the old guard. It well knew that compromise spelled surrender for Freethinkers. Every sect, cult, coterie, and clique must have its "mission"; which is, after all, but some copy, in another colour, of the pernicious doctrine that you are your brother's keeper. Many of the modern advocates of freedom never start a speech without having first assured themselves of the holding power of the steel of the shackles of their "Faith." We have all sorts of societies eager to pose as moral guardians of humanity, shouting from the housetops that man can't live without this, and man can't live without that. It is the old Puritanical dope for enforcing sanctification by legislative enactment. It is all very well to say that such policy is based on fallacy and ends in futility; but that doesn't damp its popularity. So the merry-go-round of missionary enterprise proceeds.

What do most of these babblers mean by the terms "Democracy" and "Freedom," which are so often on their lips? The fact is, the noisiest are always the emptiest, and from such "guides" you are unlikely to get any exhaustive or satisfying definitions. But we are moving. Even the old universities are beginning to feel the pulsations of a new life. They are, we hope, soon likely to sit up and listen. If they don't they are damned. The new generation is snapping the old inhibitions like withered wisps. Ay, it is reading Voltaire, Paine, Buckle, Ingersoll. Where will it all end? Freethinkers can answer the question as those who have a sure hope.

IGNOTUS.

Writers and Readers.

SWINBURNE ON SHAKESPEARE.

THERE is a popular saying met with in Tudor literature which tells us that "like will to like; as the Devil said to the collier"—implying, I suppose, that the Devil is as sooty in spirit as is the collier in body. There is some truth in this, as there is in all expressions of popular wisdom; yet in literary criticism it more often happens that like will to unlike, the attraction being all the stronger when the writer studied is temperamentally the opposite of his expositor. Let me give an illustration from a series of literary monographs, "The English Men of Letters." You will note the intellectual and temperamental gulf fixed between Scott and R. H. Hutton; between Pater and Mr. A. C. Benson; or, worst of all, between Burns and the pious and priggish Victorian don, J. C. Shairp, whose self-appointed mission was to plaster with moral stucco the honest timber and brick of the great builders of literature. To be of any value, criticism presupposes a sympathetic bond between the critic and his subject, although it does not presuppose identity of mental outlook. Your creative artist is often enough but a poor judge of the work of a fellow-artist, and even of art in general, although, like Mr. Frank Harris, he is always ready to fall foul of academic critics, who trust more to knowledge than intuition, but who have not been guilty of indifferent fiction or unplayable and unreadable plays. Goethe is the best modern counterpart of our "myriad-minded" Shakespeare, yet he got no nearer to the solution of the mystery of *Hamlet* than did the creatively ineffectual Hartley Coleridge. Mr. A. C. Bradley and Mr. J. M. Robertson, who are certainly not the dramatist's artistic compeers, manage to reach broad, subtle, and penetrating judgments that are denied to creative minds like the splenetically depreciative Tolstoi or the rhetorically appreciative Hugo. The rich domain of Shakespeare criticism, except here and there, would be a dry and stony waste if it were dependent only upon the intermittent tillage of the poet's peers.

I am told that there are Freethinkers who piously believe that Swinburne was one of the great, if not the greatest, of Shakespearean critics. I am afraid I cannot subscribe to this article of the faith. I read the *Study of Shakespeare* in my green youth, and no doubt revelled in more or less uncritical delight. A little while ago I took the opportunity to renew my acquaintance with it in the pretty and handy reprint issued a little while ago by Mr. Heinemann. I found it brim-full of contagious enthusiasm, and at times it even gets surprisingly close to the subject. But the style in places—the wonderful purple patches I used to admire—is now too much for my nerves. Gong and cymbal are effective instruments only when they are used sparingly. To praise Shakespeare in terrific diction is to ask for trouble in the shape of discouraging comparisons. Another fault of Swinburne's, a fault that only the illiterate worshipper can miss, is his inability to avoid the irrelevant. Many pages are wasted on idle flings at the New Shakespeare Society and its learned founder, Dr. Furnivall, himself one of the best of Freethinkers. Now; every society of students is sure to have its cranks and pedants, and poking fun at them is amusing enough when it is not out of place. An illiterate friend of mine once told me that his ambition was to found a Swinburne Society, and I can imagine the attraction it would have had for the half-educated. Furnivall, who was the object of Swinburne's scurrility, was by no means a pedant; he was a conscientious scholar of genius. He once admitted to me that he enjoyed these schoolboyish bouts of abuse, and he must have done so, because he had no difficulty in keeping his end up. Whenever Swinburne's fount of English not undefiled showed signs of drying up, Furnivall used to send "Mr. Pigsbrook" a slanderous postcard, and the fun would begin again. Apart from a serious study of Shakespeare's art, this abusive and malicious byplay would have had its attractive side; but when you never know it will turn up in the text, and when it irritates you in a wearisome appendix, it becomes an intolerable nuisance. Even the valuable essay on the authorship of the anonymous play,

Edward III., is rather out of place, since the thesis put forward is that Shakespeare had no hand in it.

We are left, then, with an essay on the three periods of Shakespeare's artistic development, and however much one may indulge in the critic's privilege of grumbling at inequalities and ineptitudes, there can be no doubt that Swinburne often comes near to the truth. The problems of the divided authorship of various plays he dismisses with a dogmatic asseveration which is anything but persuasive, although its petulance is amusing. The student will recall the valuable work done by Fleay, Spedding, H. C. Hart, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, and forget the dithyrambic vituperation of the Victorian poet-critic. Swinburne is at his best when he is tracing the influence of the Freethinker Marlowe on Shakespeare, when he is indicating with the insight of a fellow-practitioner the natural bias of Shakespeare's genius to rhymed verse, and his inability to shake off the fetters at once. He rightly advises the student who may wish to examine the condition of the struggle at its height to analyse the first act of *Richard II.* The whole of the first section of the essay is well worth the attention of every lover of Shakespeare. He glances on one page at the attitude of the dramatist to the populace, which, it may be remembered, is one of the strong points of Tolstoi's splenetic indictment:—

With Shakespeare the people once risen in revolt for any just or unjust cause is always the mob, the unwashed rabble, the swinish multitude; full as he is of wise and generous tenderness for individual character, of swift and ardent pity for personal suffering, he has no deeper or finer feeling than scorn for "the beast with many heads" that fawn and butt at bidding as they are swayed by the vain and violent breath of any worthless herdsman. For the drovers who guide and misguide at will the turbulent flocks of their mutinous cattle his store of bitter words is inexhaustible; it is a treasure house of obloquy which can never run dry.

Shakespeare had the dramatist's interest in the individual. The voice of humanity had not the same appeal for him as it had for the ill-fated author of *Utopia*.

In the wonderful second period Shakespeare brings to perfection his comic and historic styles. The immortal Falstaff is the greatest comic figure in the whole of literature. But he is more than a mere comic figure; there is the plangent note of tragedy in the way he takes the defection of his royal friend, "His heart is fractured and corroborate," and a broken heart none of us may despise. It is just his capacity for affection, his heart of gold that lifts him high above Panurge, and places him even above Sancho Panza. In objecting to Hugo's strange misconception of Falstaff, Swinburne urges in an eloquent defence of the fat knight that his counterpart in Rabelais is not Panurge, but that "irreverend father in God," Friar John. "The difference," he avers, "is as vast between Falstaff on the field of battle and Panurge on the storm-tossed deck as between Falstaff and Hotspur, Panurge and Friar John. No man could show cooler and steadier nerve than is displayed in each case—by the lay as well as by the clerical namesake of the fourth evangelist." Any of my readers who are interested in the thesis—it is not a Shavian paradox—that Falstaff was no coward, will find it supported with rare wit and ability, by Maurice Morgann in *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777). The *Merry Wives of Windsor* is a libel on the "genuine and pristine" Sir John. It commends itself, as Swinburne says, rather to the moralist than to the humanist, to the preacher rather than to the thinker. The real Falstaff could never have been a "credulous and baffled dupe," one "easier to be played on than a pipe." On *Hamlet*, which is a link between the second and third periods, Swinburne is at his best. He has no easy solution of the problem of the play. He wittily answers those who abuse Hamlet for not making up his mind to any direct action against his uncle, by suggesting that he had "somewhat more mind than another man to make up, and might properly want somewhat more time than might another man to do it in." He points to the long monologues added by Shakespeare as proof that Shakespeare knew quite well the philosophic scope of his work; and of the soliloquy on reason and resolution he writes with the clairvoyance of the poet and Freethinker.

It proves, he says, "that Shakespeare was in the genuine sense—that is in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term—a Freethinker. To the loftiest and most righteous title which any just and reasoning soul can ever deserve to claim, the greatest save one of all poetic thinkers has thus made good his right for ever."

The third period, beginning with the great Roman plays and the heart-racking *Othello*, and passing on to *King Lear* with its bitter comment on the foolishness and soulless cruelty of man, and then to the enigmatic *Troilus and Cressida*, and, finally, ending in the radiant beauty and wise serenity of *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*. This period is the *annus mirabilis* of Shakespeare's genius; and, what is more, it is as perplexing as it is wonderful. How are we to reconcile the more than Rabelaisian salaciousness, the "fetid and rancid ribaldry" of Pandarus and Thersites with the "swift and bright lightening of laughter from the lips of the sweet and bitter fool" in the tragedy of *Lear*? In what way are we to explain to ourselves the rabid cynicism, the "ascetic passion of misanthropy" which must have possessed the most philosophic, the most human of all dramatic poets when he chose the awful subject of *Timon*. A hateful and obscene libel on human nature, it is as execrable as it is dramatically unmanageable. Some alien spirit of insane perversity and doubt had for a time darkened the poet's mind. It may be; but this is one of those explanations which explain nothing. Swinburne, and those who thought with him, would have been less perplexed, and their faith in the wisdom of Shakespeare would have strengthened if they had worked upon the theory of the doubtful authenticity of these plays. Certainly Swinburne had as little aptitude as he had liking for this ungrateful and laborious line of study; yet, I fancy, he would have been ready enough to welcome Mr. Robertson's ably sustained thesis that other hands were responsible alike for subjects and treatment, Shakespeare merely adding or altering here and there. However, that may be, Swinburne, with all his limitations, has one of the great gifts of criticism—contagious enthusiasm. He not only loves what is rare and excellent, but he is also the cause of that love in others. At times he may be a little too full-mouthed, too Beotian, for those of us who prefer a less noisy manner. Yet, personally, I find more pleasure in the tumultuous rhythms of his prose, with their complicated cadences, than in the gasping and irritatingly oracular sentences of Mr. Masefield.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

ATHEISM AND MORALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I claim a little space, necessarily belated, for a remark or two upon Dr. Lyttelton's article in your issue of February 16? I heartily agree that "as a help to license" Atheism is the doctrine *par excellence*—that is, in the accustomed Christian use of the word "license."

In the Dark Ages the soldiers of liberty were dubbed "licentious" by Christians because they dared to step beyond the confines set by their dreadful creed; to-day it is only Trotsky! With the admission that Christians have also done "blackguard things," have we, then, reached that basis of agreement it was the Doctor's original purpose to discover?

The Editor has dealt conclusively with the assertion that, in doing wrong, Christians "are violating their own professed principles." But I would go further, and say that the Freethinker, in doing so, is acting against his better, although obviously not stronger, self.

If Christianity, although mythical, consistently made for the uplifting of mankind, something could be said for its encouragement; but it is the passionate conviction to the contrary that makes a good Freethinker. Therefore, in acting brutally, he is a self-convicted atavist. But not so the Christian, who most often is broad-minded *in spite*, not *because*, of his religion, which is there to support him the moment he "backslides." We do not love this Prussian of the intellect; we love liberty too well, and he is still far from

disarmed. As for a "gospel of negation," let me say that I am a young man, and, even should I live out my natural span, I know I will but touch the fringe of the vast constructive problems which a *free mind* has awakened my interest in.

Johannesburg.

E. A. McDONALD.

MEREDITH AND PRAYER.

SIR,—In his article on Meredith in this week's *Freethinker*, Mr. Lloyd tells us that "Meredith himself, in his mature years, does not advocate prayer in any sense, and in support of this statement, cites the following from "The Empty Purse":—

If course should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel,
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities, tower-like stand.

If these lines do not advocate prayer, then, I confess, I am altogether at a loss to understand them. Why we should kneel if not to pray; how we can pray without asking someone for something; and how we can feel ourselves cleansed and strengthened unless we have a superstitious faith in a Being who will hear and answer our prayer are questions for which I, "in mine ignorance," can find no answer. That Meredith should advocate prayer for its psychological value without any belief in its supernatural power is surely an impossible supposition, for he must have known that such value depends wholly on the faith or credulity of the suppliant.

I should be glad if Mr. Lloyd would kindly elucidate these points.

A. YATES.

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OUTDOOR.

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