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Views and Opinions.

Christianity and Socialism.

There was a May Day procession in Glasgow that moved the leader-writer of the *Bulletin* to pity. The procession consisted of several lorry-loads of children belonging to the Socialist Sunday-school. The children were not ill-clad, nor did they look unhappy. Ill-clad and unhappy children in Christian countries are too common to call for any special comment. The *Bulletin's* pity was aroused by the fact that these children were being brought up without religious instruction—or at least without the proper religious instruction. And the anonymous writer is “absolutely certain” that those responsible are “wronging the young people,” who are being offered something as “a substitute for religious education.” “They are being wilfully deprived of the only sure safeguard of wayward, sensual, selfish man.” These children, who ought to have been singing about the blood of the Lamb, were singing songs that hadn't a gill of blood in them. Instead of learning the Shorter Catechism, they were learning songs about brotherhood and similar rubbish. Their being well-clad and happy only added to the pity of it. They should have been dirty and neglected—then the *Bulletin's* heart would have gone out to them.

* * *

Labour and the Churches.

The complaint of the *Bulletin* is that there is not enough religion mixed up with the Labour and Socialist Movement. Our own complaint is that there is rather too much; and there is too strong a tendency for certain people belonging to these movements to play to the religious gallery. It is not here a question of whether certain social theories are true or false, sound or unsound. It is simply that if the Labour Movement, or any other social movement, is to develop healthfully or profitably, it must steer clear of entanglement with all the Churches. For the Churches, big and little, Protestant and Catholic, Dissenting and Established, have their own game to play, and their interest in any movement is never more than a sectarian one. Look, for instance, at the Church of England. It is one of the largest landowners in the country. What help is that likely to give towards a satisfactory solution of the Land Question? It has been pointed out before the Coal Commission that annually the Church takes between

three and four hundred thousand pounds in mining royalties. What help will anyone get there who believes in the nationalization of the mines? And if the Dissenting Churches do not rank so largely as landowners, or are not recipients of royalties, they are quite as heavily committed to support established and vested interests. Socialists and Labourists may imagine they can fool the Churches; in the long run the Churches bid fair to fool them. It is not the first time that the Churches have broken up a movement from within, after failing to smash it from without.

* * *

The Church and the Schools.

A few weeks ago we called attention to a remarkable feature of the Scottish education elections. This was the number of Roman Catholic candidates returned. One of the Scottish papers said at the time that ninety-three per cent. of the Catholic voters went to the poll. This is a phenomenal and an unheard-of proportion of voters in any election; and we decline to believe that these voters went to the poll because of their interest in education. Plainly, they went because their priests ordered them to go. And the priests ordered them to return certain Roman Catholic candidates in order to safeguard the interests of Roman Catholic schools—in other words, the interests of the Roman Catholic Church. The paramount interest of each of these elected candidates is not education, but religion. They are there to see that the children get as much religion as is possible. These men may be quite worthy persons—about that we do not know nor care; we only know that their controlling interest is the welfare of the Roman Catholic Church. We put the question to those interested in Labour questions, and who appear to be attracted by a suggested alliance between Roman Catholicism and Labour, whether they can place reliance upon voters who vote this way or that at the order of their priest? Have either these voters or their masters a real understanding of the Labour Question, or any intelligent interest in it? Is it the Labour world that is capturing the Church, or is it the Church that is out to capture the Labour Movement?

An Ingenuous Plea.

The peculiar tactics of the Roman Catholic is clearly shown in an article which appeared in a recent number of the Scottish Socialist paper *Forward*. It is an advance proof of what the editor calls “a remarkable special article appearing in the Catholic press in England.” Evidently it is an article inspired by authority, and it is also evident that the Church feels that the labour movements is escaping its control. “Many Socialists,” it says, “are Secularists.....But in Scotland the Catholic members in Trade Unions and Labour organizations counteract any sinister influence with which Secularism might seek to invest labour.” And this is preceded by the following ingenuous statement of policy:—

When a clear-cut Catholic issue arises and demands the defence of the Catholic electorate, a call is made and is loyally met.....But except where there is a

clear-cut Catholic case, the Catholic Hierarchy and clergy wisely leave the Catholics of the country to their own devices.

Now, that substantiates all we have just said. In substance it says that Catholics may vote as they please—except when and where their priests order them to vote otherwise. Then they must vote with the unanimity of a flock of sheep. For who is to judge when there is a Catholic case? Not Catholic electors, but the priests. The Church must come first, and after that nothing matters. We leave Catholics to their own devices, says the priest in England. In Italy the Pope declares against Socialism, and in Ireland Cardinal Logue says in an official pronouncement: "Socialism in any of the forms in which its advocates propound it is inconsistent with Christianity." If workers in the Labour Movement regard an alliance with the Catholic Church as giving strength to their cause they are much bigger fools than we take them for.

* * *

The Acid Test.

The Labour Movements, either in England or elsewhere, owe nothing to any of the Christian Churches—except that they have succeeded in bringing several of them to ruin. It received no help from the Churches during its period of greatest struggle, and it is unlikely to get real help or intelligent counsel now it is more favourably situated. "In their bones" the best of the working-classes everywhere realize this; and it is not without significance that all over the world, in the past as in the present, a real revolt of the people against intolerable conditions has always been directed against the Churches. How could it be otherwise? What upheld the worst forms of Russian Tsarism? The Church. What upheld the villainies of the *Ancien Regime* in France? The Church. What countenanced and apologized for the almost unbelievable horror and infamy of the English factory system? All the Churches. And when that great Atheistic reformer, Robert Owen, set to work to educate and help the people who were his greatest enemies? The Churches. Robert Owen denounced "All the religions of the world as so many forms of geographical insanity"—if he had added "disguised rascality" he would not have greatly overstrained the truth.

* * *

Wanted, Common Sense.

We are not now concerned with whether any particular social theory is good or bad. Our desire is to enforce the lesson that if any purely social movement is to achieve all that it might achieve for good, it must keep clear of preachers and their kind. The Roman Catholic priest cannot help letting it be seen that he is serving the interests of his Church—and those behind. The tactics of the Protestant priest are different in form, but they are the same in essence. As a whole, Churches show an interest in the schools. Why? Because it is vital to them that they should control the rising generation. As a whole, they are interested in the Sunday Question. Why? Because here again their sectarian interests are affected. But where these sectarian interests do not arise what kind of activity do the Churches then display? They can talk of morality and tolerate conditions—many drawing revenues from them—that make morality a practical impossibility. The vested interests of the world knew their business when they subsidized religion. It has been one of their best, if not their most profitable investments. It is not true that religion was "invented by knaves to impose on fools." It is true that it has been very widely used for that purpose; and the fools are never so foolish as when they join hands with the knaves for their own exploitation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Keeping the Spiritual Fire Burning.

THAT is the problem of problems with sincerely religious people. What is called spiritual fire is perpetually threatening to go out. This is a fact of universal experience. From age to age it has been the supreme lament of the pulpit that the people generally forget God, neglect his worship, and bring his name into contempt. Neither man nor woman, however saintly, has ever risen above the peril of letting the spiritual fire burn low, smoulder, and die. This is the danger against which the faithful are constantly and most solemnly warned in the Bible and books of devotion. Religion is a fire that kindles not from within, but always from without; neither is it, once started, self-fed, but must ever depend upon an eternal supply of fuel. It is the sole business of the clergy and their satellites to kindle it in the hearts of little children, and afterwards to keep on systematically feeding it to the end of life. That is the object aimed at in all religious assemblies. In the correspondence column of the *British Weekly* for May 1 there was a pathetic letter from "H. A." appealing to Professor David Smith for help thus:—

I am an old man, seventy-seven next month, and with increasing years has come an impaired power of hearing. Latterly it has become acute, and I have been unable to follow my minister on Sundays either in prayer or in his sermons. I have changed my seat, but have gained nothing. The loss to me is great. I am anxious to keep the spiritual fire burning, and with that as my object I am writing to ask if you can make any suggestions that may prove useful to me.

That poor old man was afraid, in consequence of his inability to follow the services of his Church, his religious life would perish. In reply Dr. Smith offers smooth, decorous platitudes, but provides no real remedy. He exhorts the elderly gentleman to face the inevitable and adapt himself to it, casting up, as it were, his account, calculating his losses, and making the best of what remains. He alludes to "the precious asset of human fellowship." "To my thinking," he says, "the heaviest of curses is that old Roman malediction: *Moriatur ultimus suorum*, 'May he die last of his people'! and it is my constant prayer that, if I am spared to old age, I may never, please God, be left desolate among strangers, with no loving hands to tend me and close my eyes." Another advice Dr. Smith gives is to fall back upon the asset of "a gracious memory," saying:—

You have loved the Gospel in the past and found blessing in the ordinances of the House of God; and now that this solace is denied you your experience is a rich storehouse of blessed remembrance.....The visions of youth are ever the dreams of age; and it is well for you that now, when your soul dwells in silence, you can "hear far voices out of darkness calling your feet to paths unknown." This is the final and crowning comfort of a godly life.

Deafness is, of course, a physical infirmity, and under it the Professor recommends "H. A." to reflect thus:—

Think of the men who have inscribed their names deep on the pages of history; how many of them laboured under some disability? Alexander the Great was a hunchback, and he conquered the world; Julius Cæsar, Nelson, Napoleon, and Wellington were mere mannikins, to say nothing of St. Paul, who, though but "three cubits high," yet touched "the heavens"; Homer was blind and so was Milton; Epictetus was lame—"that halting slave who in Nicopolis taught Arrian when Vespasian's brutal son cleared Rome of what most shamed him"; and so were Shakespeare (if indeed the

critics will suffer us to believe his own testimony), and Byron, and Kelvin; and Beethoven was deaf:—

Though so deaf he could not hear the thunder for a token,
He made the music of his soul the grandest ever spoken.

No doubt the delights of memory are most precious, especially in old age. It is exceedingly pleasant to bear in mind that some of the world's greatest thinkers achieved their triumphs in spite of serious obstacles. But with all due deference to the erudite Professor, we are convinced that he utterly fails to meet "H. A.'s" difficulty, which is, how to retain his religion when he can no longer follow his minister in his prayers and sermons. He evidently feels that already the spiritual fire within him is not so bright as it used to be in years gone by, and he dreads the possibility of its going out for lack of fuel. To keep it burning, one must not neglect to put fresh coal upon it for a single day. The truth is that between religion and our nature there is no vital connection; they are brought and kept together by purely artificial means, while in the absence of such means the connection is never established. Mr. H. G. Wells' *Joan and Peter* is the story of an education. Joan and Peter were reared in a non-religious home. When they were quite young their parents were drowned in Italy, and one of their guardians, Lady Charlotte, being a religious fanatic, had them duly baptized and sent to a religious school; but the attempt to convert them to the Christian religion was a complete failure. Later, Oswald Sydenham became their sole guardian, and one day Joan approached him when he was smoking in the little harbour at the Ingle-Nook, and said: "Mrs. Pybus said that everyone who doesn't believe there is a God goes straight to hell." She added: "I don't believe there's a God, and Peter *knows* there isn't." Oswald was for a moment taken aback by so bold and emphatic a statement; but all he could say was this:—

One thing you may be sure about, Joan, and that is that there isn't a hell. Which is rather a pity in its way, because it would be nice to think of this Mrs. Pybus of yours going there. But there's no hell at all. There's nothing more dreadful than the dreadful things *in* life. There's no need to worry about hell.

Oswald was by no means an orthodox believer himself, but Joan was certain that he believed in God, though he did not say so on that occasion. "Then she asked one of those unanswerable children's questions that are all implication, imputation, assumption, misunderstanding, and elision: 'But if there isn't a hell, what does God do?'" Joan and Peter were Atheists simply because they had had no religious upbringing. God never makes himself known to anybody; and even those who believe most firmly that he exists must hold him in their thoughts with the utmost persistence, or they will forget him altogether, and live as if he were not. It seems to be a law of the religious life that unless you pray without ceasing you will soon not pray at all, or that unless you think of God every moment you will end, and that ere long, by losing all sense of him. The curious thing is, however, that God never reminds anybody of his existence, never complains of being forgotten, never praises nor blames those whose father he is said to be. All that is done by those who claim to be his spokesmen. Was it not Carlyle who remarked that God's chief characteristic is that he does nothing? and the late Sir Robert Anderson published a book, significantly entitled *The Silence of God*. Well, a God who neither acts nor speaks can only be an object of blind belief, and never of direct or even indirect knowledge, and with scarcely an exception the belief is infused into the mind in earliest childhood. Supernatural belief antedates natural knowledge, and hundreds of thousands there are who lose the former with the advent of the latter. It is

only a comparatively small number of people who harbour both simultaneously, and even in their case there is going on a never-ending conflict between the two. To keep the so-called spiritual fire burning is an enormously difficult task, while only one here and there succeeds in making it flame out and light up the whole of life.

Professor Smith's article contains much that is profoundly true and well put. There are people who are made perfect through suffering. Struggle, duly waged, is a potent tonic, securing the survival of the fit. In other words, it is struggle that produces fitness to survive. The Professor well says:—

Preachers are fond of dwelling on the compensations of life; but this is a shallow notion. It is not a question of compensation at all. The truth is not that when we lose at one point we can turn to another and get on with little inconvenience. It is rather this: that our losses, when we accept them gently and manfully and believingly, are transfigured; they are themselves transmuted into precious possessions, and we win by means of them undreamed of enlargement and enrichment such as we could never have known without them.

The truth of that extract savours not of supernaturalism. The Buddha might have uttered it, or a modern Secularist. What "H. A." meant by "the spiritual fire" was communion with God in Christ, joy in the Holy Ghost, or the sense of eternity, which is facilitated and perfected by listening to prayers and sermons, and which at best is evanescent and illusory.

J. T. LLOYD.

An Old Friend in a New Dress.

Yearning in desire
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought.

—Tennyson.

I have no sceptre, but I have a pen.

—Voltaire to Frederick the Great.

Voltaire gave the death-stab to modern superstition.

—Carlyle.

THACKERAY, in the beginning of his famous lectures on *The Four Georges*, makes affectionate mention of an old friend whose life extended far back into the eighteenth century. "I often thought," the popular novelist said, "as I took my kind old friend's hand, how, with it, I held on to the old society." Even such a link with the past is the great satirist, Voltaire, whose live writings bridge the gulf between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

For this reason an excellent reprint of some of the most readable articles in Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, issued by the Pioneer Press, will be welcomed by all Freethinkers. The introduction, by Mr. Chapman Cohen, is an admirable piece of work, and on this account alone the new edition of one of Voltaire's masterpieces deserves to be bought, and kept, for he who has read it will be sure to find need at times to refer to its instructive and suggestive pages.

The poison-gas of the pulpits that surrounded Voltaire during his lifetime still helps to obscure and warp the judgment of the ordinary reader. This preface will help to dispel the poisonous fog, and many who never thought of looking into the pages of so ostracized a writer as Voltaire will now make the acquaintance of one of the greatest of authors, one of the boldest of Freethinkers, one of the foremost of Humanitarians.

The *Philosophical Dictionary* itself is a most entertaining book, and the simple fact that it has survived through many decades the attacks of the whole strength of the Black Army is a proof of its vitality. It was, in its day, "a thunderous engine of revolt," to use Lord

Morley's famous phrase, and Voltaire's opponents fully recognized this, and, in default of argument, replied, characteristically, by insult, untruth, and the shameless behaviour which has usually been associated with Christian apologetics. Hence the stories of Voltaire's death-bed, and other idle tales of holy horrors, which have been retailed for generations, and are still served up by the unscrupulous for the edification of the uneducated. Voltaire is being reckoned at his true worth at last, in spite of orthodox venom, and it is sometimes interesting to compare the real Voltaire with the "Sunday-school bogey" set up so long by Christians. Voltaire was a man of brilliant gifts, and one of the greatest of Humanitarians, but he never did better work than when he flamed the torch of Freethought over the dark and narrow places of orthodoxy.

Voltaire's name has ever been a terror to Christians, and, with the exception of Thomas Paine, none has been more hated, none more reviled. The reason is not far to seek. A really great writer, he attacked Christianity, not in the dry-as-dust fashion of learned professors writing for the dozen superior persons scattered throughout the universe, but with fun and frolic which survive the winnowing of generations. He made bigots and tyrants appear ridiculous as well as odious, and those who felt the sting of his satire denounced him as Anti-Christ, whose writings all should avoid as they would a plague. "Of all the intellectual weapons which have ever been wielded by man," says Macaulay, "the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire."

Like Moliere, Voltaire looked upon literature as a tower from which to shoot the arrows of scorn at all things evil. He was a master-archer, and his arrows seldom failed their mark. Some of his witty sayings have permeated the languages of all civilized countries. Generations of men have smiled at his *jeux d'esprit*. Admiral Byng is a half-forgotten figure, but he survives in Voltaire's phrase: "In this country they shoot an admiral—to encourage the others." How good, too, is his fling at a Biblical character: "Like Habakkuk, capable of anything." And what more sane and pointed than his advice at the finish of *Candide's* adventures: "Let us cultivate our garden." Voltaire was not deceived by the pride, pomp, and circumstances of war, but denounced it as "an epitome of all wickedness." Indeed, one could easily fill a volume with examples of his wit and wisdom. "Monsieur Multi-form" was his name for D'Alembert, and he himself had an equal right to it. In the eighty volumes of his collected writings he has proved his mastery as historian, thinker, critic, letter-writer, essayist, tale-teller, and, above all, humanitarian. For the life-work of Voltaire was that he was the untiring and eloquent advocate at the bar of the universe of the rights of humanity. Voltaire's superb irony made his *Candide* the wittiest book in the world, and the *Philosophical Dictionary* more deadly to the clergy than whole regiments of artillery. In his pages the Ages of Faith are for the first time represented in their true colours as periods of ignorance, cruelty, and superstition. Liberty was Voltaire's sovereign specific for the ills of his time. Finding his contemporaries bound with chains of their own manufacture, it was his life-purpose to break the fetters and set them free.

MIMNERMUS.

Christianity and Slavery.

With a Chapter on Christianity and the Labour Movement.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price One Shilling. Postage 1½d.

In Flaming Fire.

PLAYGOERS are familiar with the red glare which the stage-carpenter or his cousin throws upon Mephistopheles when he adorns the stage and terrifies the girls in the gallery. There are vivid passages in the New Testament which, when I read them, appear to be illumined by the same crimson ray. For instance, at the beginning of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonian Christians the writer foretells the coming of the Lord Jesus, with Angels of Power, to take vengeance "in flaming fire" upon those who know not God and who do not accept the Gospel.

If an Eastern sultan, an Arab chief, an Ethiopian king, or a Roman general had uttered such a threat, we should express no surprise.

Let us be frank. Human nature has hitherto been immensely sectarian. You can put the fact down (with Calvin) to original sin, or (with Socrates) to want of knowledge, or (with Karl Marx) to the varied economic conditions; but the fact is only too obvious. It is illustrated in military wars, but not merely in military wars. It is illustrated in what Socialists call the Class Struggle. It is illustrated in social boycotts, engineered by the virtuous but somewhat unintelligent lady who passes by the aristocratic name of Mrs. Grundy. It is illustrated in the Colour race-prejudice, not only of White against Black, but occasionally of one Colour against another Colour. From a long experience of Progressive circles of thought, I am obliged to confess to having seen not a little of the militant spirit among the prophets and apostles of Enlightenment, Liberty, and Brotherhood. At a Peace Society Committee I have witnessed moving scenes of passion and bitterness. As to the jealousies and discordances of theological groups and churches, I could testify to their acuteness out of my own Church of England upbringing; but the history of the sects during many centuries bursts with ill-smelling proofs. With such evidences before me, I am not prepared to lay special blame upon a controversialist who menaces his opponent with "flaming fire" (*flammenwerfer*, shall we say?), so long as he does not give himself out to be a superman in his motives and principles. Amiable as I am, I have sometimes felt "inflamed" against A or B or C; and it is possible that the Editor of the *Freethinker*, who is even more amiable than myself, may now and then have been ready to use "inflammatory" language concerning D or E or F. But neither Mr. Cohen nor I claim to have been caught up to the Third Heaven (ii. Cor. xii. 2), and to be endowed with ability to perform the signs of celestial apostleship.

We who are Humanists (if I may use a favourite term of mine), and who labour for the ultimate realization of world-fraternity, are aware of the obstacles to that Happy Republic. There are many sorts of fools. I think the biggest fool on earth is the man who believes the Happy Republic will be created by preaching Love. Nothing of the sort. The causes that prevent the development of love must be profoundly studied. Universal love, when it matures, will have been gained through the sweat and agony and thought of ages—supreme effort for supreme value.

Ah! but we are Humanists. We know, and we admit, that the wisdom of mankind has hitherto been incapable of devising methods of ensuring practical fraternity. We lend our hearts and our enthusiasm to the League of Nations, but we cannot swear that it will be infallibly efficient. We are proud of the glories of human literature, science, and political development; yet we admit that nations who shone in these fields have none of them attained the valid point of neighbourliness.

This failure (brightened by a thousand gleams of partial success) in no way hinders our further endeavours.

With our Christian comrades it is not so. They are chained by texts. The method they must follow is the Divine method. Many centuries ago, they were told the character and spirit of that method. The Lord will take vengeance, "in flaming fire," upon those who obey not the true Evangel. Christians ought not to better the instructions which their Master's example recommends. Fortunately, since the human heart is nobler than the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, our Church comrades often exhibit a finer temper than the Flaming Fire displays. But that is only humanity rebelling against the logic of texts; for texts are tyrants.

Philosophy changes. Political systems change—with difficulty, to be sure, but they do change. Economic fundamentals change, from slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to wage-payment, from wage-payment to..... I think I know, but here I will not tell! Art changes. Science—model of exactitude as it is supposed to be—also changes with the march of discovery, and the need for re-statement. But the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians does not change. No revision or amendment is in order. Even the "unchanging East" develops. Even the "eternal hills" waste,—

Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

Even the Turkish Empire has to adapt itself to Twentieth Century conditions. But the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians stands immovable. Texts are texts.

Our glorious poet, John Milton, often hits off psychological facts with great accuracy, under the guise of things imaginary. He depicts the Fallen Angel, Satan, as not relying altogether on his own absolute judgment. Satan summons an Infernal Parliament, and even a sort of inner Cabinet; and he freely consults his friends. But in Heaven there is no Parliament, nor even a Privy Council. The Almighty speaks and listens not. He asks no advice. He never reconsiders his decisions. He lays down the law, and that, for him, is the end. And, in this allegory, Milton is really portraying the nature of Catholic psychology. It erects a text to divine rank, and allows no discussion on its merits. "It is the first step that costs," say the French. Theology's first step was to claim infallibility. That step practically ordained its own doom. For some centuries, no doubt, the theological system was able by means of this doctrine of infallible texts to maintain a very firm position against criticism and heresy. But, in the present age, this doctrine is slowly strangling its mother.

The institutions that hold the promise of life and triumph are all willing to revise themselves. Look at Parliaments, Arts, Crafts, Universities, Sciences, Parties, Movements—they all confess the need of change of programme from time to time. Some are more conservative than others. Some hasten one year and linger the next. But not one claims infallibility. The result is progress, health, hope. But, amidst all these forward forces, these spiritual troops on the march, these noble currents of fresh ideas, these fleets of heroic adventurers sailing in quest of lands that await the hands of science and imagination, the pillar of theology stands weather-beaten, grim, desperate, sullen, repelling the modifying touch of new thought, defiant towards the Modern and the Creative—a monument of death fixed in the stream of life.

The "flaming fire" motive, that is to say, the motive of hostility and boycott, will, by inevitable degrees, be eliminated from human relations. Each generation will be more quickly repentant of its wars and enmities, more effectively merciful than the preceding. Humanity can afford to admit its errors; divinity cannot. Having

once committed itself to the proposition that the wisest method of dealing with disobedience is to pitch it into flaming fire, divinity dare not drop the torch, even though all sensible men are laughing. F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

Dr. Clifford says that the "Pact of Peace and the League of Nations was due to the Churches." We should like Dr. Clifford to explain why it is, then, that both were not accomplished facts centuries ago? Who have been the greatest practitioners of war but the countries in which the Churches were most powerful? Which are the least warlike of nations to-day? Certainly not those that call themselves Christian. Germany was as full of religion and Churches as any of the "great" Powers, and militarism was there most developed. The "Pact of Peace" looks like ridding Germany of militarism, and keeping it established everywhere else. Which makes one ask—Who won the War? The War that was to end militarism for ever!

The one good thing in the Peace Treaty is the League of Nations idea, and that owes nothing to Christianity. It owes far more to Paine and to the spread of Freethought. For the rest, the world contemplated by the Treaty is still a world based on force and sheer militarism. Armies and navies are everywhere. Armies of occupation, and armies ready in case war breaks out somewhere or other. It is not at all a question of how much punishment Germany deserves; it is a question, as we said last week, whether we are to organize the world for war or peace. The moral question is never how one can keep one's neighbour down, but how can we teach him to behave himself as he ought. Four years ago we said that the abiding problem was not how to beat Germany, but how to live with Germany. The Christian nations, untaught by the examples of Napoleon, of Frederick, and of the ex-Kaiser, still imagine that the world can be permanently controlled by the mailed fist. And Dr. Clifford says this pact of peace has grown out of the Gospel of Christ. We are inclined to agree.

Meanwhile it is interesting to note the *Daily Telegraph* saying that "When the new rivalry in naval armaments opens" our battleships will cost not a million, but between six and seven millions sterling. Quite cheerful reading as an aftermath of the War that was to end war. Still it is something to have destroyed militarism in Germany. And we are cheered by the knowledge that two of the troopships taking our men out to Russia bear the names of *The Tzar* and *The Tzaritsa*.

Hot-headed Freethinkers sometimes say that the Christian superstition is dead. It may be that the "intellectuals" have the best of the argument, but there can be no doubt that the Christians have most of the money. In one day the following "windfalls" were received by organizations supporting orthodoxy: £1,500 Church Missionary Society; £500 Religious Tract Society; £1,000 Pastoral Aid Society. This sort of thing goes on merrily. Scarcely a day passes but one or the other Christian institutions receives a legacy.

At the annual meeting of the Essex Congregational Union, the Rev. A. D. Belden said: "they had done something to build up the Essex Union, and, incidentally, the Church Universal." Is it not delicious? It reminds one of the petition of the three tailors of Tooley Street, beginning: "We, the people of London."

In Catholic Vienna the Christian Socialists, hitherto in control of municipal affairs, are now in a considerable minority, having been replaced by Social Democrats. Some of the Church papers in this country will see in this a fresh evidence of enemy villainy.

Prebendary Carlile stated at the annual meeting of the Church Army that its receipts for the past year exceeded

£1,000,000. The first Church Army was not so successful, for the managing director was sold up for thirty pieces of silver, and the treasurer hanged himself.

The clergy are beginning to pose as democrats. Replying to a question at a Labour meeting, Bishop Welldon proclaimed that he was "a working-man." The Bishop of London also contends that the clergy are "starving," and cited the example of a country parson who fed his family on sixpence a meal. As for the Bishop of London himself, he is, so he assures the public, poorer than when he began to draw his income of £10,000 a year. In spite of the clerical camouflage, the fact remains that thirty-nine of these ecclesiastical "working-men" share £180,700 yearly between them.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, in whose hands rests the administration of Church of England property, etc., are the largest landowners in the country. They are also top in the drawing of mining royalties. Their representative admitted before the Coal Commission that the royalties paid to the Church of England amounted to £370,000 in 1917. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners are strongly against nationalization of the mines. One would be surprised were it otherwise. It was also admitted that a deal of the coal-bearing territory owned by the Church was formerly common land—that is, it once belonged to the people. The Church is thus the holder of stolen property from which it draws a large annual revenue. "Let us Prey."

Now that the War is over, and formal peace within sight, we wonder whether our liberty-loving Members of Parliament will have the courage to wipe out the infamous system of deporting men and women by a mere administrative order? We are not objecting to aliens being deported, but common sense and justice demands that these people should know of what offence they are accused, and that the charge should be made public before a properly constituted tribunal. At present it is being done on the mere order of a Government official, who gives no reason whatever for his action. This system of imprisonment and banishment by *lettre de cachet* did much to bring the old French monarchy to the ground, and it was one of the worst features of Czarism. It is bad enough for such a method to be practised during a time of war. For it to exist in peace time is an infamy in any country calling itself civilized.

The Rev. B. Bouchier, Vicar of St. Jude's Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb, says the clergy want smartening up. The present clerical dress, he declares, created a barrier between priest and people. The reverend gentleman will experience great difficulty in persuading his clerical colleagues to discard their petticoats. Besides, it is just as well that the "third sex" should wear a distinctive dress.

Sunday bands are to play this year in Glasgow at Kelvingrove, Roaken Glen, and the Green. These are Council bands, and the resolution authorizing their performance has passed through the Council without a single dissident. How some of the orthodox must lament the degeneracy of the times!

At the same Council meeting a recommendation from a Special Committee advocating the birching of juvenile offenders was sent back. We were heartily glad to see this. Birching adults is bad enough. Birching children is infamous. The Council that endorses Sunday bands declines birching. That is good. If the Council had been pious enough to refuse the first, it would most likely have accepted the second.

By kind permission of a benevolent Providence, pneumonic influenza has made its appearance in Queensland, Australia.

Speaking at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, the other day, Mr. George Lansbury said that nowadays the newspaper had largely taken the place of the Bible. Well, it is well qualified

to do so. The history of both is about on the same level, and the claims of each on the credulity of its readers is pretty near equal.

When the War broke out the patriotic clergy denounced Germans as "Atheists," and the still more patriotic press filled in the awful details. Now that the War is over, it appears that the artful Germans have all been converted to Christianity. At any rate, there is no trace of the "Atheism" of the German nation, and many proofs of their orthodoxy. At the annual meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Bishop King stated that the Anglican Church had shepherded 100,000 Indian converts, who, when the War broke out, were under the charge of German missionaries. Just fancy a nation of "Atheists" sending out missionaries to convert Indians to Christianity. It is as inexplicable as the tangle of the Trinity.

We have before pointed out, as an illustration of the character of "Christian" civilization, that in dividing the world into "great" and "small" Powers, the only regard is to cash and brute force. We see that in connection with the Peace Conference, China is referred to as one of the "small Powers." This cannot be because the Chinese are less intelligent than others, or less moral—their honesty in business is universally recognized by merchants, it can only mean because they have no large army or navy. Numerically they are 420 millions. So they remain a *small* Power. Now, if they would only raise an army of five or six millions, create a large navy, then proceed to fight a big war, and win it, Christian nations would at once place them in the front rank.

"Craven street" seems a particularly appropriate address for the headquarters of the Christian Evidence Society.

A contemporary has an article entitled "Where Our Copper comes From." We give it up. A lot of copper, however, finds its way into parsons' collection-bags and alms-dishes.

Lena Ashwell, the actress, has been permitted to recite in Worcester Cathedral, and Maude Royden, the preacher, has been forbidden to address the congregation in a London Church.

The dear *Daily News* has been gathering opinions concerning the English Sunday, and the published results are truly delightful. Two of the opponents of a bright Sunday are the Lord Mayor of London (Sir Horace Marshall) and Mr. Charles Garvice, the novelist. The latter proclaims that he is "strongly against a Secular Sunday." Well, Sunday is a dull day, and Mr. Garvice's books certainly provide suitable reading.

Mr. Gordon Selfridge is quite up-to-date. In his view, Sunday should be "the brightest, cheeriest, happiest, sunniest, lightest-hearted day of the week," and he insists that "there is nothing in this idea opposed to the beautiful Christian life." Except, dear Mr. Selfridge, that Christians are saturated with the idea that they are "miserable sinners." This is so apt to make them take their pleasures sadly.

"Clergyman's Strange Behaviour" is the *Daily Telegraph* heading to the report of a case in which a clergyman was fined 40s. for insulting words and behaviour towards a girl in Hyde Park. "Strange" behaviour! Had it not been a clergyman, it would have been indecent or obscene. But what is obscene in others is merely "strange" in a clergyman.

A daily paper has an article on "Clerical Limpets," complaining that clergy can hold their livings indefinitely, and adding that the authorities are powerless to remove them except in the cases of grave misconduct.

St. Bede's Church, Liverpool, has been completely destroyed by fire. A gentle reminder that Providence has no interest in "sacred buildings."

To Correspondents.

RICHARD BARNES.—Very pleased to hear that your effort secured three new readers in a fortnight. As you desire, we are making public the fact in order to encourage others to do likewise. If your newsagent experiences difficulty in getting copies, let us know.

MRS. CLONES writes: "I have read your *Woman and Christianity* with intense interest, and should like to see every woman who attends Church in possession of a copy. I always knew my sex owed little to the Church that was good, but how much injury it has done women I never realized till I read your book."

ANXIOUS.—One day, when the conditions for printing are easier, we may issue a selection of "Views and Opinions" under that title. For the present, we must rest content with their circulation in the paper.

R. L.—Unfortunately for your argument Materialism does not rest upon a particular conception of the atom or of matter. "Matter," after all, is only a name, and if everything were reduced to a conception such as "force," it would not in the least affect Materialism.

T. WHITFIELD.—Of course there are sensible people in the Churches. We never doubted it, but we are sometimes surprised they stay there.

W. TOMS.—To what book does your citation refer?

E. SAPHIN.—Some time back we had an article in the *Freethinker* from the pen of Mrs. Bridges Adams, dealing with the insanitary and condemned Church schools in London, which, as you say, provide accommodation for over 50,000 working-class children. But you overlook the important fact that they are being taught sound religion, and what is sanitation beside that?

J. W. POYNTER.—Had already written you.

J. EVETTS.—Thanks for cutting. We daresay, if the weather was more settled, and more to everybody's taste, Christians would claim that as being due to the influence of the "Gospel."

A. MILLAR.—Pleased to have your opinion that *Woman and Christianity* should be "sold by the million." We shall be content with thousands. We have other bombs of similar character in store.

E. PANKHURST.—Very glad to learn you were all so pleased with Mr. Thresh's lecture. We have had similar flattering reports from other quarters.

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.

Common sense is primitive logic. It does not depend on books, and it is superior to culture. It is the perception of analogy—the instinct of causation. It guides the savage through trackless forests, and the astronomer through infinite space. It makes the burnt child dread the fire, and Darwin see in a few obvious facts the solution of a mystery. It built the first hut and the last palace; the first canoe and the last ocean steamer. It constructed docks, and laid down railways, applied steam to machinery and locomotion, prompted every mechanical discovery, instigated all material progress, and transformed an ape-like beast into a civilized man.—G. W. Fools, "*Flowers of Freethought.*"

Sugar Plums.

Woman and Christianity has brought us many complimentary letters from readers; and, in point of view of sales, it promises to run *Christianity and Slavery* very close. From a well-known man of letters we venture to quote the following:—

Your method of leaving facts to speak for themselves is the very best. Propagandists are too prone to draw a moral and adorn a tale, whereas if the tale is such a one as you set out in *Woman and Christianity*, it needs no adornment—any more than a 100 lb. explosive shell needs adornment. The brochure ought to shatter any honest mind subject to the conventional idea; but where are the honest or open Christian minds? How many journals will review your book adequately? How many will notice it at all? May the summer bring you a little leisure and a recordable rest from your tremendous labours.

It is probable that very few journals will notice the book; but that is rather a compliment to it than the reverse. There is only one safe policy for them towards uncompromising and straightforward work, and that is silence. All the more reason why those who have the courage to speak should do so. Someone is sure to hear, and every one counts.

The course of lectures at South Place came to a successful finish on Sunday last with an address from Mr. Harry Snell. The audience was evidently delighted with the lecture, and there was a brisk fire of questions at its close. London ought to be more active with lectures next autumn.

We are pleased to say that in Glasgow the sale of the *Freethinker* is steadily on the increase, although there is still room for improvement. Our friends should do their best to see that it is well displayed in the newsagents. We are asked to state that the *Freethinker* is now on sale, as well as other Freethought literature, in Jail Square, in connection with meetings that are being carried on there.

A correspondent writes protesting against the quality of the lecture-guides provided by the authorities to take the public round the British Museum. From the specimens provided these gentlemen appear to be very much out of date, and their habit of using the Bible as a means of checking Egyptian and Assyrian remains must be quite amusing to educated listeners. The Bible is treated as though it were quite reliable history, and its mythological character quite ignored. Our correspondent suggests some well-informed Freethinker should make a point of attending these lecture-tours. They are quite free, and open to the public.

We are asked to announce that Mr. W. H. Thresh will lecture at the Failsworth Secular Sunday School to-day (May 18) at 2.15 and 6.30. Manchester and district friends will please note.

We are sorry that, owing to want of date on the notice, we unwittingly misled Freethinkers concerning the date of Mr. R. H. Rosetti's lecture in Victoria Park. The meeting will be held to-day (May 18) at 6.15. We daresay that Mr. Rosetti will have something to say about Freethought and religion on the Western Front, and as he will be speaking from personal experience what he says will sure to be interesting.

Mr. Cohen has arranged to lecture at Pontycymmer on Sunday next (May 25). He will lecture twice in the Ffaldau Workman's Institute. Friends in that part of South Wales will please note.

The most ignorant nations have always been found to think most highly of themselves. The Deity has ever been thought peculiarly concerned in their glory and preservation; to have fought their battles, and inspired their teachers; their wizards are said to be familiar with heaven; and every hero has a guard of angels as well as men to attend him.—Goldsmith.

Lenten Fare.

IF man was physically immortal, we should be left in a state of wonder. As the Christian centre of gravity is beyond the grave, without a Newton to demonstrate to millions of sceptics, it would not be difficult to imagine the position of our modern soothsayers, if man was born never to die. They preach death and not the positiveness of life. The chief event of their doctrine was a *death*. If the crucifixion of Jesus had not happened, then that nadir of religion, the Salvation Army, would have been forced to seek some less gory motto to fascinate its followers. The subtlety of Christianity in fastening on this natural event in man's life should warn us not to be too optimistic in our estimate of the enemy, because he is unable to burn us, or make us social lepers.

These thoughts were prompted by our visit to see the *Everyman* morality play. The Rev. Scott Lidgett in a labourious introduction to the performance reminded us that there was nothing like leather, and, in our opinion, he mistook an *audience* for a congregation. In his discourse we could not refrain from thinking of the thousands of exempted clergymen during the War—men peculiarly fitted by their vocation for the perils of battle—probably with the spirit willing but the flesh weak. They specialize in the subject, and their leisure equips them for the grand plunge much better than the mechanic, the labourer, and the miner whose chief occupation is bread-and-butter-getting. Some clapping of hands greeted the close of the introduction, yet we can vouch for one who had many differences about cobblers—and their leather.

The English drama had its origin in religious performances. There are tons of books on the subject, and those readers with the leisure of clergymen may find for their instruction writers with copious information—with a wealth of detail and explanation—so that the reading of Chronicles will appear as a pleasant relief. The purpose of these early religious plays was to educate the people in the truths of their religion. We are told that the producers in that time had a curious sense of the fitness of things. In a presentation of religious plays the building was given to carpenters, water-drawers were entrusted with the Flood scene, bakers were used for the Last Supper, and butchers in the Crucifixion scene. A question that suggests itself—granted the origin of English drama to be religious—how comes it that actors linger in the twilight of vagabondage?

But the play's the thing.

In *Everyman* there was fine acting and good enunciation, and it was followed by the closest attention from the audience. The story, no doubt, familiar to all our readers, represents the early Christian attitude towards death. *Everyman* is deserted on this journey by Good Friendship, Kinship, Riches, and Strength, before he comes to the edge of the grave. His only companions to that place are Knowledge and Good Deeds, and he descends into the grave alone. What Knowledge connoted in those times we can only surmise; reading and writing were only practised by a small class, and those who are interested in symbolism may make what they like of the Bible locked and chained to a post. Those who care not for symbols may smell the condition of Knowledge in the words of the gentle Sir Thomas More. Scratch a philosopher and you find a Christian:—

Ah, blasphemous beast, to whose roaring and lowing no good Christian can without heaviness of heart give ear!

These honeyed words were hurled at William Tyndale, a pious clergyman and translator of the Scriptures. They are of little interest to Freethinkers, but we cite them as

an instance of Christian love, and as a straw to show the way the wind blew. Knowledge and learning being in the hands of a few, and the few at loggerheads, religion, Catholic or Protestant, had the half-fed minds of the multitude at its mercy. Someone has said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; for our part, we prefer the feeble light from our candle of little knowledge than the utter darkness of superstition. Reason may not make a man perfect, but it will help to preserve him from the folly of burning another—because he has a difference of opinion with him.

The period of the Middle Ages, from 1066 to 1530, is one to cause tears. We can hear nothing but the blowing of horns in the chase, the tolling of bells, bloody fights about religion, some twaddle about kings and queens, the intonation of priests so admirably preserved to this day, and any other trifle the historian may think fit to give to us. "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers who were before us," but do not let us forget the herculean tasks that sane men had when our forefathers were only children in mental stature.

From the shades of the Middle Ages we turn to the lighter and purer air of Greek philosophy. Lucian, the prince of satirists, with less formality than the morality writers, gives us many pictures of many attitudes to Christianity's stock-in-trade—death. His *Dialogues of the Dead* attempt to place the subject in its proper light, and his greatness in dealing with it allows him to joke—not with difficulty. There is a difference between solemnity and seriousness. In fact, we might say that it is permissible to joke whilst being serious, but a joke during solemnity is unthinkable. Charon is busy at the ferry. He has given instruction to Mercury to refuse any soul not in light marching order, and to allow no one to enter the boat who has not left all his encumbrances behind.

Merc. Quite right; I'll see to it.—Now, who comes first here?

Menippus. I—Menippus. Look—I've pitched my wallet and staff into the lake; my coat, luckily, I didn't bring with me.

Merc. Get in, Menippus—you're a capital fellow. Take the best seat here, in the stern-sheets, next the steersman, and watch who gets on board.—Now, who's this fine gentleman?

Charmolaus. I'm Charmolaus of Megara—a general favourite. Many a lady would give fifty guineas for a kiss from me.

Merc. You'll have to leave your pretty face, and those valuable lips, and your long curls and smooth skin behind you, that's all. Ah! now you'll do—you're all right and tight now: get in.—But you, sir, there, in the purple and the diadem,—who are you?

Lampichus. Lampichus, King of Gelo.

Merc. And what d'ye mean by coming here with all that trumpery?

Lamp. How? Would it be seemly for a king to come here unrobed?

Merc. Well, for a king, perhaps not, but for a dead man—certainly. So put it all off.

Lamp. There—I've thrown my riches away.

Merc. Yes—and throw away your pride too, and your contempt for other people. You'll infallibly swamp the boat if you bring all that in.

Lamp. Just let me keep my diadem and mantle.

Merc. Impossible—off with them too.

Lamp. Well—anything more? because I've thrown them all off, as you see.

Merc. Your cruelty—and your folly—and your insolence—and bad temper—off with them all!

Quite a little Republican discourse takes place underground. Menippus is a quaint character—he warns

Mercury about the cheats and charlatans coming aboard. The tailor—for such is Menippus—chops off a philosopher's beard with a hatchet, and would also like to take a little of the eyebrows of one who pretends to be wise. Hamlet's advice to Polonius may be an echo from this scene. The moorings are slipped, and Mercury is forced to cry out, "What are you howling about, you fools? You, Philosopher, especially?"

Philosopher. Because, dear Mercury, I always thought the soul had been immortal.

Menippus. He's lying! It's something else that troubles him, most likely.

Merc. What's that?

Men. That he shall have no more expensive suppers—nor, after spending all the night in debauchery, profess to lecture to the young men on moral philosophy in the morning, and take pay for it. That's what vexes him.

Menippus gets across without even paying his obolus. He twits Charon, and asks if he would like to row him back again! In despair, Charon turns to Mercury, and asks, "Where on earth did you bring this dog of a Cynic from, Mercury?—chattering, as he did, all the way across, cutting his jokes and laughing at the other passengers, and singing while they were all bemoaning themselves." He is told that Menippus is a most independent fellow, who cares for nobody.

Having no particular God-axe to grind, Lucian is free to state his attitude, and his dialogues are as near the truth now as they were in his own day. Our black-coated and intoning friends may continue to rattle the bones of death, but we imagine that it is rather pathetic—nay, ridiculous—particularly to those who have been so near to it, sleeping and waking, with a contrivance round their neck known as a gas-mask. Their words are one thing, their acts are another. Those who are alive are so with no thanks due to that class whom, in time of war, Napoleon placed with the camels. And it were the veriest scoundrelism that this class, with its professions, could allow casualties at anything between ten and fifty thousand a week, without dissociating itself from the War, or admitting that Armageddon had smashed its business, and that Christ's injunction to love one another was not for this earth. Intellectual honesty—but there, one does not expect to go skating in June.

WILLIAM REPTON.

A Cushy Faith.

As the Editor truly observed in one of his recent answers to Dr. Lyttelton, the question for Christians is *not* the teachings of Christ, but Jesus Christ himself. If Jesus was *not* the Son of God, miraculously conceived and born of a Virgin; if he did not perform miracles; was not crucified, and did not in his body rise from the dead and ascend to heaven in a cloud—then the whole structure called Christianity topples to the ground like a house of cards. It is to the good to remind us of these simple, fundamental things. Apart from the supernatural, Christianity speaks with no more authority than any other cult or philosophy.

It is not only that the area of belief is contracting; but the believers of to-day believe in a different way from their forefathers. The belief of to-day is of a different *quality* from the belief of yesterday. The truly orthodox often bewail this. The real believer—how his numbers are dwindling!—grasps with all the tenacity of his faith the great verities which erudition and critical research cast doubts upon. He has no patience with the disturbers who regard Adam and Eve, Cain and

Abel, Noah and Jonah, as figments of the poets' imagination. Most firmly does he look for the return of his Saviour, the living Christ, through the sky, descending in the same manner as he ascended; but returning as a Judge as well as a Justifier:

Great God, what do I see and hear?
The end of things created!
The Judge of mankind doth appear
On clouds of glory seated!

To illustrate this attitude of mind, the present writer recalls an experience of his youth. A Scottish lady, a strict Baptist, to whom "sprinkling" and the eating of baked blood were both abominations of the Devil, was living alone in her cottage when the district was one day, about noon, visited by a thunderstorm of most unusual severity. Though it occurred thirty years since, people still speak of it. It was little past noon, when all around was Egyptian darkness. The writer remembers being told by the lady a year or two after how she felt. "I thought," she said, "that the last day, the great day of judgment, had come. I was at perfect peace, because my mind was wholly stayed on the Lord. I got my big Bible, and opened it where his most precious promises are. I sat in the back sitting-room—its window wide open—with the open Bible on my knees, just waiting for the Saviour to receive me at his appearing in the clouds, and to take me to be for ever with the Lord."

Now, that is the *kind* of faith that we venture to say is scarcer than it was thirty years ago; and the scarcity is mainly to be attributed to the continuous dilution of Christianity that has been going on. *Anybody* now who makes the barest profession of belief in Christ is admitted to Christian communities to share in the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood. This proceeding would have been *anathema* to those old-fashioned Christians. *They prescribed severe tests.* Numbers was not their object, it was the fellowship of the redeemed, no matter how small a handful. These old-fashioned believers bore the cost of maintaining their ordinances *themselves.* They had a dignified independence which made touting for money impossible—nay, unthinkable, to them. On the contrary, if a stranger was present at any of their meetings, and strangers were always quietly but cordially welcomed, the collecting-box would never be presented to him. They were a "peculiar" people resolute in one thing: that their holy of holies should not be accessible to the feet of *any* who chose to visit them. Of course they had no ordained clergy. The male members of the strict Baptist communities conducted the worship, preached the sermons, visited and tended the sick, and succoured the poverty-stricken. There are few strict Baptists now. Like other bodies, they did not prove to be immune against the germ of fashion, and it began to be fashionable—at first for the larger congregations—to get a "meenister." So ministers were got. We will not presume to judge as to whether that step was spiritually advantageous or not. But, from an economic standpoint, it must at once be seen that a minister—an educated, theologically trained preacher—costs a good deal of money; so now, even in Baptist churches in Scotland, they will not, it is understood, reject the proffered money of strangers. Do the acceptors ever think that the eyes of some old strict Baptists may be reproachfully contemplating the changed conditions from the "cloud of innumerable witnesses"?

It is, perhaps, a startling suggestion to those who support, in two senses, a paid clergy that the existence of such a profession actually has the effect of reducing the quality of faith, and of making hypocrisy more common. But they may as well look facts in the face.

There are Christian believers, no doubt a small minority, whose position Freethinkers can respect. But what respect can be accorded to the flippant and shallow "Christians" who are so superficially minded as to be quite unable to give any coherent reason for the faith that is in them, who, moreover, don't care a brass button because they cannot do this? Does any one ever hear of a new church being started without the burden of a huge initial debt? That debt has to be met; the pastor's stipend has to be met. Necessarily, so far as money is concerned, the old reserve must be abandoned, former constraints must be thrown to the winds. Result: two "collections" every Sunday, and a "special collection" every now and then in addition to sales of work and tea-parties. Even the week-end pennies of working-folk's children, which were to go for toffee, are commandeered by the mission-box! No wonder the unbeliever with a ten-pound note finds plenty of rival candidates for his patronage, while the widow of the poor Church member must depend upon her old age pension for a bare subsistence.

On all hands, we are told it is so easy to be religious. Christ himself said: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Is that an appeal to the heroic in man or woman? Any cause worth fighting for is worth enduring and suffering for. But the modern fashionable, up-to-date, commercially prosperous Christian likes, demands, and will have a cushy faith.

IGNOTUS.

Book Chat.

OUR intelligent Belgian contemporary, *La Pensee*, in one of its recent numbers, quotes a passage from a work by the eminent Freethinker, the late Dr. Lucien Henault, in which he deplors the lack of anti-theological criticism which should be at once popular and scientific. On the one hand, it is a dry summary of facts. The conclusions must be accepted as an act of faith, for want of the necessary documents added to the text. And the references, if any, are not exact enough to be controlled. On the other hand, it assumes an erudition which can be acquired only after years of working in some great library. I have no need to mention particular English books of anti-religious criticism that answer to the description I have given above. Every student must have a number of them on his shelves, and must have been let down frequently between the two stools of light ignorance and ponderous learning.

In Mr. Cohen's longer pamphlets I imagine that Dr. Henault would have seen the work of an admirable popularizer of exact knowledge. And no "*livre de vulgarisation*" would have appealed to him more than *Woman and Christianity*, which I hope I can praise without incurring the charge of log-rolling. In its ninety-six pages and eight chapters it covers the ground of woman's religious beliefs, primitive and modern, and this without undue compression of any point. It shows an almost uncanny command of material. I am even now at a loss to know how the thing is done. Where all the chapters are good, it is perhaps ungrateful to single any for special praise; but those dealing with "Christianity and the Home" and "Madonna-Worship and Chivalry" have, for me, an ingenuous freshness which is as engaging as the learning is informative. What is more, or what is most important when you take up one of Mr. Cohen's books you are in intellectual communion with the man who thinks, not the mere pedant who is ignorant in five or six languages—who is rich in words, but a beggar in ideas.

I notice that Mr. Cohen omits to mention the high position of women in ancient Pagan Ireland under Brehon or customary law, in which some historians are inclined to see the influence of Greek rather than Roman civilization. The Irish women, like the women of the Norse Sagas, held a place of equality with the men. They could hold property, bring actions at law, give evidence, and marriage was a contract equally binding on both sides.

I have only one exception to take to Mr. Cohen's historical erudition. In a note on page 48, and in the text of page 77, he refers with all the righteous indignation of your scandalized moralist to what is known as *jus primæ noctis*; the so-called Feudal right of the spiritual or temporal lord to take the place of the bridegroom on the night following the marriage ceremony. It is, of course, impossible to prove that this never happened, but it was not peculiar to feudalism. I have an idea that Lactantius makes the same infamous charge against the Pagans. If it had been a legal right, a privilege, or a custom in Feudal France, there ought to be plenty of evidence of it before the eighteenth century. I can hardly imagine Rabelais with his nose for anything unsavoury as refraining from making capital out of "culage," to use the vulgar but expressive name, Montaigne (*Essays*, i. 22) treats the subject as a farce, and does not connect it with France but some other country. By French jurists it was supposed to be a Scottish privilege, but Scottish jurists disowned it, and proved to their own satisfaction that it was French. It seems to have been an ingenious invention of the eighteenth century *philosophes* who had a light-hearted way of solving historical problems. They acted on the principle that if you throw enough mud some of it is sure to stick. You have only to read the picturesque but untrustworthy Michelet to see that they were not far wrong. Anyhow, this pretended Feudal "right" is disclaimed by accredited historians alike in England and France.

G. U.

Correspondence.

THE SCOTCH ELECTIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Regarding your note in the *Freethinker* of April 20, in which you refer to Glasgow School Board Elections, I think one reason of the apathy was the altered arrangements of areas and voting, causing readjustment of means of organizing the vote, and considerable rush and hurry.

The Labour and Socialist Programme was in the hands of the Political Section of the Trades Council, as distinguished from the purely Trade Section, and was really a poor affair. For instance, relative to Religious Instruction in Schools, the Circular stated: "We believe in religious teaching in schools; but with the right of the parents to withdraw their children if they so desire." That is merely the *status quo*. I understand that three British Socialist Party candidates stood for Secular Education quite plainly. The Circular referred to was not submitted to the Trade Unions; but anyhow, Secular Education is an old Socialist claim, and those who issued it acted very weakly. In future the Secularists should put forward their claim to the central body in good time. One candidate, a clergyman, headed his bills, "The Bible in the Schools." The Roman Catholics were well organized, absolutely united, and loyal. This letter is a bit late, as I have been busy, and you can deal with it as you think fit. With best wishes to you in your splendid work.

ALFRED RUSSELL.

ECONOMICS.

SIR,—It is with great interest that I turn to the article by Mr. G. O. Warren in your issue of May 4. I think it is well that we, at least on occasions, should consider in the *Freethinker* all questions pertaining to human welfare. We are fully cognizant of the terrible power of prejudice, and also of the ever possible intrusion of superstition, even from the most unexpected sources. Of course, as Freethinkers, we treasure very highly thoughtful adverse criticism. We somehow feel more sure of this than that of adulatory praise which is, perhaps, only meant to please. I am no economist, thus I hoped to get some light and leading from Mr. Warren at "half-price." But, alas! it was not to be; I seem to differ from Mr. Warren's pronouncements generally, and in nearly every particular. His dogma that all wealth, by which term I suppose he means that which supports and maintains life, is produced by individual man, will, I think, be found quite insupportable after a little thinking. I would rather suggest that "a man" cannot produce anything. It is the race which produces and consumes. It would, perhaps, be

the most awful superstition that ever tortured the human mind if "a man" could hold the produce of his piece of land inviolate, the owners of those favoured portions which happened to flow with "milk and honey" would inherit the possibilities of the greatest tyranny the world has seen. It may, of course, be that these labourer-owners would be kind-hearted, and would thus see their way clear to support the little children, they might even lend a helping hand to their brethren who toiled on the more barren places. But, if they should happen to be of the stuff that "landlords and millionaires" are made of, what then? Oh, no! Production of wealth is a much greater problem than is implied by Major Warren's effort, this question reaches far back in the ages of the world. There is the pre-history of the pre-human. There are a host of considerations that the Secularist has to remember that has not necessarily burdened those ruled by religion. Hard work does not necessarily imply good work. We must have the "man of mind" in order that as much as possible of the unnecessary hard work should be eradicated. Let us be careful how we put these benefactors of the race down as undesirables.

J. FOTHERGILL.

Obituary.

It is with deepest regret I record the death of Mr. Edward R. Smith, eldest son of Mr. Fred Smith, member of the Goldthorpe Branch. He joined the Navy in May, 1915, being invalided in June, 1915. He had been in a very bad state of health. In health, sickness, and to the end of the struggle he was a sincere Freethinker. He was buried at Bolton-on-Dearne on May 4, Mr. T. Williams (Sheffield) officiating. Councillor Pickles (Bradford), Councillor T. Williams (Goldthorpe), and Mr. T. Mullins (Bolton) also spoke.—H. A.

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OUTDOOR.

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

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

COUNTRY.

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