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Views and Opinions.

Atheism and the Working Classes.

Mr. George Lansbury was one of the speakers the other day at a meeting of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, which is the name of the newly Christened Navy Mission. The Bishop of London was also a speaker on the same occasion, and the juxtaposition of the two offered a delightful proof of how cordially a couple of Christians can agree, so long as they are careful to refrain from saying what it is they agree on. For it is pretty certain that what Mr. Lansbury means by Christianity and what the Bishop of London means by it are very different things. So long as they are content to talk about the "spirit of Christ" or "True Christianity," they will get along admirably. If they begin to explain there will be the devil to pay. Particularly if they were to talk about *applied* Christianity. Mr. Lansbury, for example, believes that the War was anti-Christian, and that the peace terms are devilish. The Bishop thinks the War was ultra-Christian, and that the peace terms are the essence of justice. And both are convinced that these are the plain and obvious teachings of Christianity. Still, we believe there is a policy in the Bishop and the labour leader being on the same platform. It helps the Bishop to evidence to the working-classes the sympathy of the Church with labour. It enables Mr. Lansbury to refute the wicked slander that the working-classes are becoming less religious. The labour leader thinks he is getting the better of the Bishop. The Bishop thinks he is fooling the labour leader—and we feel strongly inclined to put our money on the Bishop.

* * *

The Humbug of Belief.

Mr. Lansbury complained that in every walk of life there was only a lip service to Christianity. But what does Mr. Lansbury expect? If a people are to give a teaching anything more than lip service the teaching must be clear, distinct, and practicable. And where in the Christian Scriptures will Mr. Lansbury find this? Will he find it in "Take no thought for the morrow"? Or in "Love one another"? The question here is when are we really and intelligently loving one another? Will he find it in "The labourer is worthy of his hire"? Who

doubts that? None that we know of. Look at the Coal Commission! Everyone there believes that the labourer is worthy of his hire. Mr. Smillie believes it. The mine-owners believe it. There is absolute unanimity—until they begin to talk about what it means. Then the fat is in the fire. Of course there is the teaching not to resist evil, and the duty of turning one cheek when the other is smitten, but we do not observe Mr. Lansbury, as editor of the *Daily Herald*, laying very great stress on that teaching. There is also the New Testament teaching for *slaves* to be obedient to their masters—whether they be good or bad, that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that whoever resists them deserves damnation. But here, again, we do not observe Mr. Lansbury giving prominence to these teachings in his paper, and so am bound to conclude that they who render lip service to Christianity are not very likely to suffer from loneliness for some time. We do not suppose that Mr. Lansbury is conscious of the inconsistency of his position, but, then, neither are the other Christians. Nor do we wish to press unduly on either. When men profess to practice an absurd teaching they can hardly avoid coming to a ridiculous conclusion.

* * *

Who Are the Atheists?

Mr. Lansbury was quite clear on one point. And we are quite sure the Christian fellowship would agree with him. Nor would the fact of their not knowing whether the statement was true or false seriously disturb their agreement. "The working-men," said Mr. Lansbury, "are not Atheistic. They do not hate religion. They do not talk of hating God." A mental attitude may be indicated by a word, and Mr. Lansbury's words are illuminating. For he appears to think that to be an Atheist one must go about cursing God and "hating" religion with all the melodramatic ferocity of an old-fashioned Adelphi villain. And yet we are quite sure that the Atheists of Mr. Lansbury's acquaintance—and he must have many—do not behave in that manner. To an Atheist there is nothing in the shape of God to hate. And how can a man hate a thing without believing in its existence? But one wonders what exactly Mr. Lansbury means by his statement. Does he mean that there are no working-men Atheists? We think he knows better than that. Does he mean that working-men as a class are not Atheists? If he does we agree with him. Only that is no more true of the working-class than it is of any other class. And in substance, therefore, Mr. Lansbury is telling us just nothing at all—which is the kind of thing one would expect at a Christian Fellowship meeting. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority in every class are more or less religious. That is what one would expect. For Atheism demands a degree of independence of mind, a power of reflection, that few people possess. And mental independence is still far from common in every class. The important thing is that in every class Atheism stands for a type of mind that is steadily on the increase. Everywhere people are thinking less and less about the gods, and the spread of knowledge

concerning the origin and development of religious ideas in general is ending in their rejection by the more intellectual type of men and women all over the civilized world. And we fancy Mr. Lansbury knows this to be as true of the better type of working-men as it is of other classes.

* * *

A Doubtful Compliment.

It is paying the working classes a poor compliment to assert that, while with every educated class in the world the movement is away from religion, it is not true of them. For the growth of the human mind from Theism to Atheism is so general as to assume the quality of a law of mental development. Nor do the facts warrant us in saying that, while other classes are moving towards mental freedom, working men are destined to perpetual mental helotage. The growth of Freethought there is the same as elsewhere. Knowledge, which is no longer the property of a class, is producing its effect there as elsewhere, and the growing non-religion of the working class is a constant lament of the clergy. Naturally, desperate efforts are being made to keep up appearances; hence the talk about the deeply religious nature of the working man, etc. Naturally, also, the governing class is anxious to see the people kept in religious leading-strings. That, too, is part of the game. It may also be noted that while the bulk of the electorate profess some sort of a religion, politicians will continue to affirm that the movement with which they are connected is "deeply religious." That, again, is part of the political game. Probably, too, those who are not religious will continue to keep silent, under the impression that speech will hinder their cause. The cure for this game of mutual deception is, as we said last week, plainness of speech. The rank and file must show the leaders that this policy of pretence is quite needless. When they demand honesty, they will get it. And it is high time the policy was tried.

* * *

The Lesson of History.

No one, we think, who studies carefully the historic influence of the Christian Churches on the welfare of the mass of civilized people, can help regarding Christianity as in the nature of a narcotic used to blind the mass of the people to their real interests. To the poor it has preached submission, humility, and contentment. To the rich it has preached the duty of almsgiving; thus breeding servility on the one side and superciliousness on the other. Had it taught that it was not the duty of the rich to care for the poor, but that it was the duty of all to so organize society that widespread chronic poverty would be a practical impossibility, the state of things that now exists could not obtain. But Christianity's ideal society has always been a multitude of poor living upon the charity of a handful of rich. It has no real interest in social organization, as such. Special circumstances may lead the leaders of the Churches to feign an interest in such matters; but if one compares the zeal with which they work for building new churches or raising funds for missionary work with that displayed in social matters, one begins to realize how artificial their interest is. In truth, Christianity has all along flourished by physical, mental, and political pauperization. Independence of mind and character it has neither desired nor permitted, save under protest. And wherever it has ruled unchecked, civic decay has been a consequence. The civic independence of old Rome died out under its influence, as the intellectual fertility of Greece withered under the shadow of the Cross. While it taught the spiritual equality of men before God, it emphasized the social inequality of men on earth. And habits

engendered by generations of growth are not thrown off in a day, nor are customs sanctified by centuries of rule broken in a night. Those who are seriously and intelligently working for social betterment find themselves now, as ever, up against the sinister influence of organized religion. And they realize that with this enemy no truce is possible. The only sensible course is a fight to a finish.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Religious Life.

ASCETICISM has always occupied a high position in the estimation of religious people as the only possible escape from the corruptions of the world. Etymologically, it signifies a mode of life dominated by discipline of the strictest, sternest kind. The term is derived from the Greek verb, *asko*, which means to, exercise, practise, train, equip, accustom one's self to, labour; and naturally an ascetic is a person under control, one who exercises himself in the art of obedience to a superior. In its purely religious application, asceticism represents a life of retirement from all the secular duties, obligations, and relationships of mankind. At first, it was ostensibly resorted to by Christians as a means of overcoming the temptations of the Devil. "In its horror of sensuality," says Mill, Christianity "made an idol of asceticism." The deserts became crowded with hermits, recluses, anchorites, monastic communities, the alleged object of the retirement being conquest over sin in a life of complete devotion to God. And yet history makes it indisputably clear that sinlessness is not a virtue that thrives in solitude, or that living apart from the world is not conducive to the subjugation of the appetites and passions of the body. Nobody can read Tennyson's *St. Simeon Stylites*, Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Antony*, or Anatole France's *Thais* without perceiving that flight from the bodily instincts is absolutely impossible; and it is on record that monasteries and nunneries have in all ages been centres of the grossest sexual immoralities. This is the testimony, not of unbelievers, but of innumerable ecclesiastical dignitaries in different ages and countries.

On the present occasion, however, we desire to consider what is called the Religious Life as advocated by the Catholic Party in the Anglican Church. In a cleverly written article in the *Church Times* for May 23, it is stated that the War has called forth a spirit of sacrifice which "from all time has called men and women into the religious life." Now, we are convinced that the statement is doubly false and essentially misleading. In the first place, we fail to see any tangible evidence that the War has kindled a spirit of sacrifice in this or any other country. Speaking generally, it seems that almost everybody is extremely eager to reap some personal advantage from the greatest world-tragedy ever known, and that we are all living, moving, and having our being in an atmosphere of profiteering. That appears to be the law in full force everywhere. Churches and chapels, no less than commercial firms, appear to be entirely dominated thereby. Furthermore, we feel equally certain that men and women do not adopt the religious life in obedience to the spirit of sacrifice. In the article just mentioned we are told that—

Religious vocation is a call, not to a special work but to a life of sacrifice, a call to leave *all* and follow Christ—home, possessions, gifts, and, greatest offering of all and therefore more precious in God's sight, one's own will also. All choice is gone, a religious gives his or her whole self to Christ, and the superiour in his name, uses them as seems best.

Such is the theory, but it never materializes into practice. As a matter of fact, in the adoption of the religious life there is really no renunciation of self at all, but, on the contrary, a most forceful assertion of it. The writer claims that the strength and the attraction of the British community life lie in the fact that "it is not a call to do this or that work for God and his Church, high though such a call may be, but rather to give self wholly in utter self-abandonment"; but that claim is vitiated and rendered of no effect by the following *naive* admission: "The joy of sacrifice can only be known by those who have experienced it." Perfectly true, no doubt; but then, when the joy of sacrifice is so indescribable, it follows that no sacrifice is experienced. What transpires is the giving up of the less in order to secure the more valuable objects. When a child, I was forbidden to listen to secular and profane music, and if at any time I happened to be where it was to be heard, I instantly put my fingers in my ears and ran away at my top speed; but so far was that action from being a denial of self, that in reality it was a positive expression of it; for the music from which I fled so precipitately was the Devil's music, while it would be my unspeakable privilege, as God's child, to listen to the infinitely sweeter and more soulful music of angels in heaven for ever. Even if a man verily believes that in order to follow Christ he must leave all else he cares for—home, possessions, gifts, and his own will; he will make the great surrender only when and because Christ means more to him than the whole universe besides. To him the joy of giving up surpasses the joy of retaining earthly treasures, and therefore he makes no sacrifice whatever.

When honestly examined, the religious life, even as defined by Catholics themselves, is seen to be essentially selfish. Even on the assumption that Christianity is true, its call to give all to Christ, to spend one's whole time in prayer and holy meditation, represents the quintessence of selfishness. In the following words ascribed to Jesus the selfishness is in full evidence:—

There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this life.....and in the world to come eternal life (Mark 29-31).

The writer of the article under discussion says that "it cannot be too much emphasized that the religious life "is not a call to do some special work under the discipline and with the advantages of community life." Then he significantly adds: "Yet the life of consecration and sacrifice lived in their midst is, after all, the greatest help they can give to their people, and prayer may sometimes do more than activity." Altruism, in any rational sense, is unknown to the holders of such a view of the object of life. Their first and supreme desire is to secure the safety, comfort, and eternal felicity of their own souls, and then to do something for their fellow-beings as if incidentally—to become brothers and sisters to the poor for Christ's sake, and not for the poor's.

No, to us such a life seems to be not only selfish in the extreme, but uselessly, even injuriously, selfish. The Catholic Christ is a Catholic creation to which many centuries were devoted. The Gospel Jesus knew him not, and he was equally unknown to the Jerusalem Apostles. His lineaments begin to be visible in the Petrine and Pauline Epistles, but he still required many more touches before the picture could be completed. Paul supplied, so to speak, but the merest outlines of his personality, which were afterwards differently filled in by opposing parties in the Church. Ultimately several portraits of him were in existence, but only the one that

happened to belong to the majority was pronounced and treated as a real likeness. In reality, all of them were equally the products of the theological fancy which so vastly differed in different theologians. Several fundamentally different and contradictory conceptions of Christ exist, and have their respective champions to-day, all of whom presume to speak in the name of an infallible Being; but the truth is that all portraits or conceptions are alike purely imaginary or conjectural creations, or phantoms of the human mind, possessing no objective reality whatsoever. It follows of necessity, therefore, that it is the height of audacity and folly on the part of any party in any Church to solemnly invite the public to dedicate themselves to the service and glory of such a Being. In the Anglican Church alone there are three or four fundamentally divergent theological schools, the Christ of each of which does not bear the remotest likeness to those championed by the others. At one end is the Bishop of Oxford, a leader of the Catholic Party, and at the other the Bishop of Hereford, a leader of the Rationalist party, while between the two stand several more or less nondescript divines, veering now towards the one and now towards the other. One party warmly recommends the religious life, another condemns it as an already discredited institution; but all parties are agreed as to the objective existence of a supernatural Being whom they call the Saviour of the world, though they are bound to admit that as yet the world's salvation is an unaccomplished fact. Even in the article criticized it is admitted that there is no unanimity of belief as to what the religious life so earnestly advocated really is. Without a moment's hesitation we characterize it as a selfish, useless, and wholly superstitious life in the pursuit of which hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women in this country are wasting their own time and energy, as well as the nation's resources, while many puzzling problems—moral, economic, political, and social—are crying aloud for natural and sensible, but not supernatural, solutions.

J. T. LLOYD.

"The Minstrelsy of Peace."

The Minstrelsy of Peace. Edited by J. Bruce Glasier. (National Labour Press.) 5s. net.

THE World-War has interrupted many employments, but, fortunately, not the issue of good books. The literature of relaxation is more than ever welcome, for it is so varied in mood, and because it enables us to breathe a little peace on the mirror of war. People seldom mingle their ideas, and the lack of thought that binds each reader to his own favourites, like a smoker to a brand of tobacco, prevents poise and balance. Get ideas and study gravity was the substance of Matthew Arnold's discourses to his countrymen, particularly the reading class. Let us hope they took the advice in good part, and profited by it.

For nearly five years the publishers have wallowed in War-books, and a most welcome change appears in *The Minstrelsy of Peace*, edited by Mr. J. Bruce Glasier, which is the first anthology of its kind that has been published. As poets hold the mirror up to life, it is not surprising that the editor finds what he wants, especially as the singers are inspired in so many moods. Thackeray, indeed, went so far as to charge poets, as a body, with militarism:—

And ever since historian writ,
And ever since a bard did sing,
Doth each exalt with all his wit
The noble art of murdering.

Mr. Glasier has little difficulty in defending the poets against Thackeray's jibe, but he is none the less partisan

himself. For instance, he quotes Robert Burns' bitter lines on thanksgiving for victory:—

Ye hypocrites! Are these your pranks?
To murder men and give God thanks?
Desist for shame! Proceed no further!
God won't accept your thanks for murder.

This does not represent Burns' full view on war. He could hardly have written *Scots Wha Hae* if it did. Let Mr. Glasier ponder these lines:—

By Oppression's woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins;
But they shall be free.
Lay the proud usurper low!
Tyrants fall in every blow!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die.

Mr. Glasier is just as captious in his treatment of Walt Whitman, who saw war at far closer quarters than most poets. It is all very well to quote the lines:—

My enemy is dead; a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies white-faced and still in his coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

Whitman wrote many another strain; and there is no false rhetoric or brazen bravado in the touching tribute to the comrades of the great Civil War:—

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music;
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

It is an open question whether Mr. Glasier has done wisely in appropriating so many poets as pure Pacifists. The great poets, almost without exception, sing for both peace and war, because both conditions are incidental to humanity. It is one of life's little ironies that so many martial poets never saw a battle. It was, for instance, "the gentle Shakespeare" who gave us some perfect pictures of arms and the warrior, and Wordsworth, the recluse, whom an ironic fate selected to express in flawless verse "what every man at arms would wish to be." Tennyson was working at his desk while the guns of the Crimea imparted to his work a seriousness which up to then had only been seen in the quiet, reflective verses of *In Memoriam*. The war roused the poet like a trumpet, and later he was writing *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, and other stirring lines. It was the sedentary Thomas Campbell who wrote *The Battle of the Baltic* and *Ye Mariners of England*. With what consummate art does the landsman describe a naval battle:—

When each gun,
From its adamant lips,
Spread a death-shade round the ships,
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

On the other hand, while the real soldier-poet does not always sing of war in the same robustious way as his stay-at-home brother, he yet has something to say. Generations ago a brave and handsome soldier-poet sang of a warrior's honour in unforgettable language addressed to his mistress:—

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you, too, shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.

And now listen to the words of young Rupert Brooke, who died but yesterday:—

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

There is poignance, too, in the lines written by Captain Tom Kettle shortly before the battle of the Somme, in which he fell. The poem is addressed to his daughter:

We fools, now with the foolish dead,
Died not for Flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
But for a dream born in a herdsman's shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.

War may be an insane lust, but its cruelty and blindness are in part redeemed by the superb courage which never submits. I like well the fine tribute to fallen soldiers written by Austin Dobson:—

O, Undistinguished Dead!
Whom the bent covers, or the rock-strewn steep
Shows to the stars, for you I mourn, I weep,
O, undistinguished Dead!
None knows your name;
Blackened and blurred in the wild battle's brunt,
Hotly you fell, with all your wounds in front.
This is your fame.

As the militarist element in poetry has been exaggerated and exploited by so many people, Mr. Glasier has excellent reasons for presenting the other side of the case. His book may not please everybody, but, emphatically, it is a book to be added to the bookshelf, for the volume is of wide literary and even political interest.

MIMNERMUS.

A Fool's Philosophy.

It is difficult to write coherently of what is but a conglomeration of incoherencies. In the New Testament of Jesus Christ, we are brought into contact with that dual personality the conservative reformer—the man who introduces novelties while leaving unchanged ancient realities.

Christ, so run the words, came "not to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfil." It is, therefore, apparent that at the commencement of his preaching he intended merely to interpret what already existed, to modernize what was even then losing its grip on the people. He was, in fact, a revivalist.

It is noticeable that at the outset of his labours, Christ himself laid no claim to divinity, but, as time progressed and he began to get a following, he took the inevitable step. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and some Jeremias, or one of the prophets." "But whom say ye that I am?" and Simon Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus answered: "Blessed art thou, Simon." Thus the man-God evolved.

Now we have him, the preacher become the Gospel, with the assumption of divinity, he penetrates into the realm of original thought, using, as is generally the case with those who have only a vague idea of what they are driving at, allegory as his usual mode of expression.

Not that he has by any means a poor opinion of himself, for, while he exhorts his disciples to "be 'umble," he brays forth that he is a greater than Jonas, and wiser than Solomon.

But having launched out on the Sea of Philosophy, he must needs produce his Master's Certificate. It is "Love."

Indeed, one could not have asked for more. Love is the one thing lacking from all religions. We should have been thankful to Christ had he but left it at that, but he has so padded it around with restrictions, with emendations, with commentaries and appendices, that it is completely lost.

History has experienced Christianity for almost 2,000 years, and the one thing that has been most conspicuously absent from it has been love. This has been obvious both in the dealings between the Christian Church and other creeds, and in the collisions between the hundred and one sects that this one-and-indivisible inspiration has divided into. Christianity is the mother of intolerance.

And little wonder! The *Divine Philosopher* with one breath adjures us to "Love one another" and with the next threatens that "it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" than for the city (or individuals) who exercise their reason and refuse to receive his disciples. Little wonder his followers in the later days find such difficulty in discriminating between love and hate when he who formulates the whole rigmarole could make the two go hand in hand.

His wisdom is abnormal. I cite two examples from that storehouse of "inspired words": "Render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's" and "Ye are worth more than many sparrows." How divine! It bears the trade-mark of inspiration.

Yet so anxious is he to increase his following that he promises (or at least his Father promises for him, and it all comes to the same thing in the end) "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

So all the philosophy really goes for nothing. The only thing that is asked for is faith. Truly a convenient religion. This is indeed salvation made easy.

In this manner he continues; offering rewards to his followers and threatening all manner of punishments to unbelievers; and, oh, apostates are unmentionable.

Yes, I am afraid that the majority of Christians hold to their creed, not because of its philosophy, but because of its eschatology. However, if one should assert that such as hold to Christ for this reason misinterpret the teaching of the Master, although wondering at the universality of the misinterpretation, let me analyse the philosophy of the Gospels further.

In the first place, what being or idea is the God of the Christians? "God is love," says Christ; love has antithesis hate. What, then, is hate? Satan? Then love and hate (or good and evil) are the elements with which we have to deal.

Man is born: that is to say, he comes into the world; but in what state? Is he equally divided between good and evil, or is he without either? Christianity answers: "He is born with original sin: he must be born again."

The idea of purification of sin is to be found in many religions; but, though this be so, it does not entitle it to greater respect; it but intensifies the belief that sin is universal; it admits that evil is strong—is sometimes stronger than good.

On this line of thought, both would and do resolve themselves into phases of the mind, and the mind, or its exudence, thought, is an actuality. But the God of the Christians is capable of assuming the appurtenances of mortality, which he is said to have done in the form of Jesus Christ. For a Christian to deny that Christ is God is for him to admit that Christ was not divine; and this, in turn, admits of the suggestion that all he said need not have been divine, and consequently may have been human. On this hypothesis, Milton, who cannot be accused of a bias in favour of free-thinking,

says, ".....is either of divine constitution or of human. If only of human, we have the same human privilege that all men ever had since Adam.....to retain or remove it, consulting with our own occasions and conveniences."

Christianity thus resolves itself into a rule of conduct. An examination of the system of ethics Christ has formulated gives the following results.

"Love God": God, as I have demonstrated, is love; then must we love love—"amare amabam," as Augustine accuses himself of having done. But love implies a desire; a desire for what? Itself? Apparently. Again, "Love thy neighbour as thyself": this implies self-love, a desire for self to permeate the order of things. Thus self bulks largely; and what is self but existence, the period in which thought is possible.

In this manner, the system resolves itself into "the will to live," the god of Nietzsche, the devil of Schopenhauer, and the antithesis of the system of Gautama Buddha.

I am afraid philosophy is not a profession for a carpenter to adopt.

H. C. MELLOR.

Christians and the Sabbath.

THE illogical position of Christian theology in the retaining of Sabbath observance is seen in the fact that in one breath it pretends to have received a new Gospel—which included the abrogation of the old Jewish ceremonial law—from Jesus, who, both by precept and example, discouraged Sabbath-keeping. In another breath, it goes back to the old Law of the Jewish Old Testament for evidence to support one of the chief ordinances of that same Law which we have seen was condemned, and the abolition of which (amongst other ordinances such as circumcision) forms the chief *raison d'être* of its existence as a new theology. The Christian Messiah's chief Apostle, Paul, taught that Jesus by his death had "blotted out the written ordinances" and had taken the Law away, "nailing it to his cross"; and that they (Romans and Colossians) were "delivered from" and had "become dead to the Law." He also taught that no one, under the new dispensation, was to be condemned for not keeping the Sabbath. Now, "the Law," by which is meant the "Mosaic Law," an intrinsic part of which is Sabbath-keeping, was given to "those who were brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," and Sabbath observance was to be a "perpetual covenant" between Adonai (the Lord) and "the children of Israel" (Ex. xxxi. 16), special emphasis being placed upon these people to whom the commands were dedicated, as is shown by the repetition of the same in the next verse. For the Hebrew religion was never a propaganda, and never has attempted to make converts from any outside their own tribe. They considered themselves, as they do now, a chosen people specially favoured by Yahuh (Jehovah).

The evidence against Sabbath-keeping by Christians is conclusive when we take into consideration that in the "Hexalogue" or six commands, given in the three Synoptic Gospels (Matt. xix. 18; Mark x. 19; and Luke xviii. 20), and recapitulated by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (xiii. 9), Sabbath-keeping is conspicuous by its absence. Not only this, Paul clinches the matter by stating that "if there be any other command, it may be summed up in: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Two reasons are given in the Old Testament for the Sabbath obligation, one is that 'it was to commemorate the seventh day of the week, on which day the *Elohim* (the gods) rested from their arduous labours

of the creation. Can we picture to ourselves any Omnipotent God requiring rest and refreshment? The other reason is that it was to commemorate the leading out of bondage in Egypt by Moses, of the children of Israel, across the Red Sea to the desert of Sin. But for the real origin, we must go back to ancient Accadian days, when the moon was the chief god to the pastoral tribes of the Euphrates valley. The sun was the chief god amongst the agricultural tribes—from whom we get such relics as the word "glory," meaning the glorious nimbus or halo surrounding the sun. The latter ripened the crops by its heat during the day, while the former enabled the shepherds to watch and guard their flocks at night. The moon—"Sin" with the Accadians, "Ea" with the Chaldeans, and "Cabar" or "The Great" with the Muslims, was worshipped in her different phases, each lasting seven days, from which the number seven became sacred, and was kept as a feast day, on which sacrifice was offered, and all work was suspended, at first because the people gave themselves up to the pleasures of the day, work being considered inauspicious, and afterwards as a religious obligation. The seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days of each month were called "Sabbaths" or "Rest Days," from the word *sabatu* which means "completion" of the phase. It was not a *space of time* but the *phase of the moon* that they kept so sacred.

The Eastern origin of the Sabbath is made evident when we consider the earth as a whole, and contemplate the folly of considering a space of time sacred, when days are not all of equal duration all over the world. At or near the Poles, a day may be from three to six months long.

The days of the week were dedicated to the Sun, Moon, and five planets—Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. There was a special deity who received honour as patron of the number seven. Destructive tempests and hurricanes were believed to be directed by the will of seven wicked spirits. The sabbatical idea, with many other religious customs and observances, spread from the Accadians to their Semitic conquerors, the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries of Phœnicia, Phrygia, Canaan, and Syria. And from these the Jews learned them during their seventy years' captivity in Babylon. But the Jews do not appear to have understood the true (planetary) origin of their Sabbath, or they would surely never have been so foolish as to give such absurd and conflicting reasons for its institution. They were planetary worshippers of the most flagrant kind, and also phallic worshippers, all evidences of such in the Bible being suppressed. But the object of this article is to show that Christians have nothing whatever to do with Sabbaths or sacred days of any sort.

W. W. HARDWICKE.

THE "COST" OF EDUCATION.

People are always thinking of education as a means of livelihood. Education is not a profitable business, but a costly one; nay, even the best attainments of it are always unprofitable, in any terms of coin. No nation ever made its bread either by its great arts, or its great wisdoms. By its minor arts or manufactures, by its practical knowledge, yes; but its noble scholarship, its noble philosophy, and its noble art, are always to be bought as a treasure, not sold for a livelihood. You do not learn that you may live—you live that you may learn. You are to spend on National Education, and to be spent for it, and to make by it, not more money, but better men; to get into this British Island the greatest possible number of good and brave Englishmen. They are to be your "money's worth."

—Ruskin, "Crown of Wild Olive."

A Sunday in May.

As I lie back in my chair after dinner, close my eyes, and listen to the sighing of the soft south wind, I think of—nay, I see—a moist green cleft in a grassy bank and the wild wood waving over it. It is the corner of a wood, the outer emerald lawn, suggesting sweet beyonds of swaying, soothing, tranquil, shade. It is the background of reverie, of mine at least, and reflects the walk of yesterday, or that of two score years ago! But yesterday it rained as I walked the moorland road towards the hamlet in the valley. I hoped it would clear; in fact, I knew it would, nothing could shake my cast-iron faith! for was not my sire won't to say: "I never knew but one shower that did not end," and that one ended also as the ancient humourist knew it would, and now his is the sleep that endeth not. Yet, truth to say, I doubted, but I persevered, for was I not going to meet a friend and swap books and sentiments and be otherwise refreshed? A walking-stick is a poor substitute for the umbrella on a wet day—almost as poor as mansions in the skies for even a hovel here. But I was a Monist, and made the most of mundane material determined things. And, lo, in a quarry by the wayside, the rock of ages cleft for me, and in an inner cleft I lit a fire, and, seated on the workmen's tool-chest, smoked and steamed myself for a while. A young rabbit came out to nibble as I sat there, and a silver wagtail near by performed somersaults either to attract brer rabbit or to frighten him away, or for some other inscrutable wagtailian purpose. All the time man, the great enemy, was looking on, but he was monist in this also, ninety-nine in a hundred of his genus would have knocked poor bunny over with a lump of rock, and even this one per cent. felt quite conceited at his own forbearance. The lark, undaunted, was filling the moist atmosphere with melody. The tree-shaded stream in the hollow wound on its way singing its solemn song. Hedge, and bank, and brae, were richly green, and gay with golden whin. The pretty "lady's mantle" bediamonded with rain, the celandine and violet, the marsh buttercup, the crimson-tipped daisy, all were busking eager to be braw, even the moss and lichen on the stones brightened as it crept about the old grey wall.

The humans one meets with, after communion with those wondrous people of the wayside, must be attractive in a superlative degree if one is not to feel somewhat disenchanting or disendowed. With something like misgiving, I called at the home of the house-dweller I had come to see. It was a typical working-class home, in a typical Ayrshire village; and yet, also, not typical. This was one of those humble homes that are yet in the very van of civilization. Smiles and welcome and sincerity were here, and the backward and the forward vision, affection, humanity, common sense, and rarest hospitality. The bookcase overflowed with the choicest fruits, ancient and modern, of the human mind; and not kept for show either. The owner repeated to me from memory one of those magnificent passages where the philosopher in Gibbon excels the historian—the passage in question a vindication of books and writing. A young musician came in later, and new vistas were opened up as the afternoon wore away.

I sauntered homeward very leisurely, perusing Nature's book of books, renewing my acquaintance with all the little people of the roadway and the field, all the green and tender children of the Spring. There dwells in memory the wood, carpeted with celandine, where my attention was much divided between listening to my companion and observing those superbly littered aisles.

The rain had ceased, and the clouds, fallen apart, were gloomy still, but shaping themselves in isles and continents of quiet fantasy. Some background hills rose dimly, but grandly, in the gloom, for—

Though round their breasts the rolling clouds were spread,
These in the vale a softened radiance shed.

A. M.

Acid Drops.

It is no use complaining about the peace terms. Mr. Lloyd George has cleared up the matter. In a speech reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of May 31 he says that in enforcing the terms the Allies are carrying out "the edict of Providence." After that, there is nothing to be said. It would be unpatriotic, and certainly impious, to doubt it. Still, we shall not be surprised if some wicked people reflect that, when it comes to religious hypocrisy, the British politician can give the rest of the world a good start and then romp home an easy winner—that is, assuming that anyone would enter into competition with one whose superiority is so generally acknowledged.

The Bishop of Exeter, writing on sloth, says that "the movement for shorter hours makes people miserable." As so many of the dear clergy work only one day weekly, this may partly account for their sad expression.

The Bishopric of Chester is vacant, owing to the resignation of Dr. Jayne. As the stipend amounts to £4,200 yearly, there should be a tolerably lengthy queue of parsons after the job, especially as so many of the clergy are "starving."

Five Roman Catholics having recently married Protestants, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Galway has issued a proclamation on this "outrage on religion," declaring that such conduct is a grievous mortal sin. How these Christians love one another!

At a Bible Society meeting at Queen's Hall, the speakers included the Marquis of Aberdeen, Lord Shaw, and Mr. W. A. Adamson, of the Labour Party. What was the latter doing in that boat?

The Young Men's Christian Association announces an "emblem" day celebration. The emblem of the Y.M.C.A. is a red triangle, and much ink has been spilled in order to prove the spiritual significance of the triangle. Unhappily for this theory, the red triangle has been a trade-mark for a popular brand of beer for over a century.

A writer in the *Daily News* states that the Pope's civil dominion "is now restricted to a large house and grounds." Had the writer lived in Sunny Spain, or other Catholic country, his activity would have been restricted to a little room.

Apropos of a discussion on Sunday, Mr. John Scott manages to get the following neat letter into the *Glasgow Citizen* :—

I give my whole-hearted support and sympathy to "Citizens No. 1 and 2" on this question. I would suggest that we most important persons—the salt of the earth—should form a committee for the purpose of enforcing Sabbath observance. I would suggest our first duty be to stop the grass from growing on Sunday. Also the birds from singing. Also the wind from blowing and the rivers from flowing. After we have accomplished this we would stop the changing tide and the world from going round on the Sunday. Also there should be an Act of Parliament to make people stop breathing on the Sunday.

I suppose "Citizens 1 and 2," like me, hate to hear children laughing on the Sunday. We do not allow them to use their swings in the playgrounds and parks on the Sunday, so why allow them to laugh on that day?

It is interesting to learn that Landru, the French "Blue-beard," who is charged with so many crimes, had a strict

religious training. He even assisted at masses at the old Church of St. Louis en l'Isle. The kind Catholics who flood the newspapers with paragraphs will hardly condescend to notice this testimony to the value of religious training.

Bishop Welldon suggests that the Germans should have a century of repentance, and then "the door of reconciliation will be opened to them." Quite merciful! Such tenderness must arise from worshipping a God who punishes his enemies for ever and ever.

Newspaper proprietors make a great fuss concerning the alleged educative power of the press. A caustic commentary recently was the issue of a London paper's contents bill with the ennobling legend: "More Beer. (Official.)" Another example is that of a leading Nonconformist daily which is offering "Lucky Charms" free to its advertisers.

Here is another case of clerical poverty. At a farewell meeting the Rev. J. R. Gillies, of Hampstead, was presented with £2,000 by his congregation. A worse case is that of the late Rev. R. Burdon, of Heddon Hall, Northumberland, who left estate of the value of £45,310.

Speaking at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Public Morals, Cardinal Bourne said that the Church's teaching on marriage was openly defied, and an ephemeral public opinion put in its place. The Cardinal should realize that ordinary men and women know more of "the sanctity of marriage" than any number of elderly bachelors in petticoats.

The Rev. D. Kennedy-Bell says that, "the country overmen do not go to Church," and adds, "the Church of England in the past has shown a fatal coldness and apathy towards social reform." We have said the same thing for many years.

Sir John McClure, Headmaster of Mill Hill, and Chairman of the Congregational Union, said the public worship of God in this country was hampered by a host of American tunes of the "Sankey" type, and by the character of much of the Victorian art in music and other branches. Sir John must have heard the touching refrain, "The bells of hell go ting-a-ling, a-ling; but not for you and me."

A Coventry clergyman says that Lady Godiva was "in advance of her time." Surely, on a famous occasion, the lady's "dress" was prehistoric.

The *Daily News* is getting worse and worse, and more than ever on the side of the rationalistic angels. It has recently quoted the following instances of children's sayings :—

Mother (to son, aged 4): "Don't whisper your prayers, say them in a natural way."

Son: "As daddy does in the telephone?"

Mother: "Yes, that is the way."

Son (resuming prayers in a loud voice): "Are-you-there?"

My little sister of five was taken for the first time to a church with a circular stone pulpit. "And who was the gentleman standing in the copper?" she asked afterwards. There was a harmonium at Sunday School. "What a sour piano," she said, in a loud stage whisper?

A correspondent sends us an amusing story from Glasgow. One of the Salvation Army posters was displayed on the walls. It had been stuck over another poster advertising a Boxing Tournament. But by some means half the upper one was torn off. Result—the message ran: "Two Days with God. Grand Boxing Tournament." And in Glasgow, too!

Captain Butler, Canadian Army, replying to the objection that Sunday games would keep the men away from church, retorts that from his own experience 95 per cent of the men would not go to church in any case. We are not surprised to hear this, but Captain Butler overlooks an important point. If the men play games they will look happy, and

that may induce the other 5 per cent. to stay away also. If they are merely hanging about they will look miserable, and that will at least seem as if they are keeping Sunday in a properly Christian manner. —

But we may note that the *Church Times* is becoming reconciled to the inevitable, and remarks that "there is no use in blinking the fact that the habit of church-going has been immensely weakened during the last ten or fifteen years, and it is impossible to resist the pressure of the popular demand for the relaxation of the severe rules which once made Sunday the dreariest day of the week." It takes a long while for these people to come round to the Freethought view, but they get there—when they can no longer help it.

The *Star* of May 27 reports that two detachments in Koltchak's Army have been formed consisting of monks and preachers, and known as "God's Regiment" and "Jesus Christ's Regiment." No mistaking the holy character of this War. —

The Managers of Sonning Boys' School, Berks, have curious ideas about education. It is a Church school, and the Inspector recently set the following questions for children of ten and upwards:—

Who spoke the following words, who to, and where?—Do not lie unto thine handmaid; Put up again thy sword into his place; I will hear thee when thine accusers are also come. State shortly what you know of Abana, Rabshakeh, Darius, Shusham, Caiaphas, Arimathæa, Demetrius, Mnason, Euroclydon.

After reading this idiotic production, the Head-Master, in concert with the other teachers, wrote to the Managers that the questions were unsuitable. The Inspector, it should be said, was the Rev. W. H. Acworth. For raising this objection, and for suggesting that other arrangements should be made, the Head-Master was dismissed. The Head-Master contested the legality of his dismissal, but, after carrying the case to the House of Lords, lost. It is, therefore, a clear victory for bigotry. And one is left wondering at the type of man who could consider that kind of teaching as of value to anyone, and at the kind of parents who can allow their children's minds to be filled with rubbish of the kind given above.

The Rev. C. Eaton, Pastor of Madison Avenue Church, attracted attention in his pulpit by shouting, "To hell with the Germans. I have no use for tenderness towards them." Apparently, Brother Eaton has "no use" for Jesus, who told his disciples, "Love your enemies." —

A daily paper has been publishing a series of articles, entitled "The Men Who Make London Laugh." The Bishop of London was not in the list, although he has such strong claims. —

It seems as if the dear clergy are quick-change artistes. In democratic circles they appear as "working-men"; but when officiating at royal weddings and other functions, they dazzle the onlookers as princes of the Church. It is a nice game, played slowly. —

The Church League for Women's Suffrage is now known as the League of the Church Militant. It ought to be under the patronage of Saint Jael, the lady mentioned in the Bible as having settled opposition with a hammer. —

General Booth was in Glasgow last week, where he hired Hengler's Circus for what he called "Two Days with God"! and he was almost as funny as Hengler's old clown "Doodles." What beats us over this Salvation "stunt" is that if Booth and his people are so anxious for God's company, why stop at a couple of days with a return ticket when they can take a "single" and spend eternity with him. Judging from the saner and healthier human element in Glasgow there is no special desire to spend even the shorter *conversazione* with God. At any rate Booth's audiences did not reveal it. Glasgow seemed to prefer the theatres and at the *Empire* Theatre, the well-known comedian, Nixon

Grey, in his parody of the old street fiddler, poked fun at the Salvationists in these verses:—

I feel that the end's drawing near, sir,
I'm that weak, I hardly can stand,
So I been to the Salvation Army
And booked seats for that far better land.

And I guess I'll get there if I'm lucky,
Though I reckon I'll have to look sharp,
For they won't have much use for a fiddler;
I wish now that I'd learn'd the harp.

Would that Booth could have heard Nixon Grey, and the fun and jollity he evoked. Comparing the wholesome laughter at the Empire to the hysterical *hallelujahs* at Booth's (beg pardon, I mean Hengler's) Circus, it was like a good healthy beef steak to a driep-up vegetarian sausage. —

Protesting to the Southall Urban Council against band-music during church time, the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church has succeeded in his objection. As the congregation of Holy Trinity Church do not comprise all the inhabitants of Southall, it looks as if it is a case of the minority ruling the majority. —

The great Central Church Fund is launched to raise £5,000,000 for the Church of England, which already possesses millions of money, and enjoys Government protection. According to the promoters, one of the pressing needs of the Church is the provision required for the "starving" clergy. —

Mrs. O'Connor, the wife of the rector, was found lying dead across the pedals of the organ at Harsanden Church. There is no moral to be drawn from this distressing incident, but if the lady had been heterodox there would have been a very impressive one. —

A story is told that a teacher asked a class to write an essay on "The Big Four." One bright youth, impressed by the theological tuition, wrote: "The Big Four are composed of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and the Devil." —

For the thirteenth year in succession the Wesleyan Church records heavy decreases in numbers. The present leakage includes no less than 29,564 Sunday-school scholars and 7,451 teachers. This is enough to make John Wesley turn in his grave. —

"I shall not be satisfied until the Church of England and the Wesleyan Church are united," said the Bishop of London. If his lordship lives to see this consummation, he will beat Methuselah's record for longevity. —

In order to raise money, the Salvation Army in New York has been resorting to novel methods. A feature of the proceedings was the presence of two war-workers who fried doughnuts, offered prayer and praise, and made speeches. Perhaps the frying of the doughnuts was intended to convey an idea of the fate of sinners in another place. —

The Prince of Wales has been initiated into the rites of Freemasonry. This should give unmixed delight to the Roman Catholic priesthood, who do not approve of any secret societies except their own. —

A lock of Charles Dickens' hair was sold by auction in London for £37. This will not surprise the clergy, for they have made fabulous sums of money out of relics of persons who never existed. —

The Bishop of Salisbury says he is not in favour of the slow music so much in use in many churches. His Lordship has only to instruct the organist to play such soul-animating strains as "Come where the booze is cheaper." —

At last the railway companies have decided to run trains at reduced fares for Sunday-school excursions. This should lead to a revival of religion during the summer.

To Correspondents.

A. W. WILSON.—Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex: Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development* is not yet published. It is a volume of about 300 pages, and will be issued in the early autumn by Messrs. T. N. Foulis & Co.

G. R. M.—Your suggestion is a capital one. We will certainly put it into operation so soon as the *Freethinker* is permanently enlarged. How soon that will be depends, among other things, upon our readers.

"SCOTIA."—Sometimes we wonder ourselves *how* we manage to pull through. Perhaps a determination not to be beaten has a deal to do with it. We know that the loyalty and confidence of our readers has been one of our greatest helps.

A. EVANS.—Thanks for address. We are sending on specimen copies.

TOM OAKLEY.—We have a great deal of sympathy with your views concerning much that goes on in connection with funerals. Still, human sentiment is something that must always be reckoned with. We shall return to sixteen pages as early as possible.

J. G.—Canadian newspapers, so far as we can see, are much like English ones. What they give their readers depends on what the editor thinks they want. And, unfortunately, the majority of newspaper readers come under the Carlylean category.

S. STEINBERG.—We agree with you that advertising pays. Unfortunately one has to pay for advertising, and that creates a problem. Still, we are doing what we can. Thanks for what you are doing to push sales.

H. E. HOLLIS.—All that could be done to help in other directions was done. Nor are we particularly anxious to enter into that kind of sectarian rivalry with the churches. We are opposed to the churches, not merely jealous of them.

ANTI-CHRIST.—Your appreciation of Major Warren's writings is shared by ourself and our readers.

D. MCCORTINDALE.—Afraid we have neither time nor space for a criticism of Pastor Russell's writings. Whether we appreciate the "true teachings and spirit of the Scriptures" is a matter we must leave to the judgment of our readers.

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SAINTS.

The saints did not assist their fellow-men. Their fellow-men assisted them. They did not labour for others. They were beggars—parasites—vermin. They were insane. They followed the teachings of Christ. They took no thought for the morrow. They mutilated their bodies, scarred their flesh and destroyed their minds for the sake of happiness in another world. During the journey of life they kept their eyes on the grave. They gathered no flowers by the way—they walked in the dust of the road—avoided the green fields. Their moans made all the music they wished to hear. The babble of the brooks, the song of the birds, the laughter of the children, were nothing to them. Pleasure was the child of sin, the happy needed a change of heart. They were sinless and miserable—but they had faith, they were pious and wretched—but they were limping towards heaven.—*Ingersoll.*

Sugar Plums.

There was a little slip in Mr. Cohen's notes on the N S. S. Conference in last week's *Freethinker*. "President-Elect" should have read, nominated for the Presidency. We have no doubt our readers will pardon the transgression. And it rests with the Conference to verify or falsify the prophecy.

We are glad to say there promises to be a good gathering of members and delegates at the Manchester Conference to-day. The morning and afternoon sessions are held in the hall of the Clarion Cafe, Market Street, at 12.30 and 2.30, and are open to all members. The current card of membership must be shown, and if from any cause a member has not this, the matter can be set right by sending in the name of the member to the Secretary. In the evening there will be a public meeting in the Palladium, Peter Street. The chair will be taken by the President, and the speakers will include Mr. J. T. Lloyd, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, Mr. F. E. Willis, and others. The meeting has been advertised, but we hope our Manchester friends are not forgetting personal efforts, which mean so much. It is not often that local Freethinkers will have so good a chance of introducing an enquiring friend to such an array of Freethought speakers.

Since publishing our first volume of Voltaire's *Dictionary*, we have been astonished at the little knowledge even reading men have on the nature and force of Voltaire's attack on Christianity. People write thanking us for the new mine of enjoyment and information we have opened to them, and their remarks make us feel the more pleasure at having issued the work. Freethinkers really owe it to the great dead Freethinkers to keep their writings before the public.

It is in view of this duty that we intend publishing at an early date as possible an issue of at least one each of the pamphlets of Robert Taylor, Carlile, Hetherington, Southwell, Austin Holyoake, Patterson, Roalfe, Bradlaugh, and others. The whole is intended to form a gallery of dead Freethinkers, most of whom are names only to the present generation. They will be accompanied by short biographies, and, where possible, portraits. We cannot say how soon the series will commence, so much depends on the state of the printing trade. But when they do appear, we think most of our readers will be struck by the force of the writings, and will wonder why the series has never been attempted before.

Reviewing a recent edition of Voltaire's letters, Mr. W. L. Courtney remarks that to call Voltaire a humanitarian is true "in many respects." We would like to know in what respect it is untrue, or in what respect any man of his day had a better claim to the title? Comments of this kind make English journalism contemptible. It is always written with an eye on the bigots. Mr. Courtney admits Voltaire had a "burning love for justice," "he espoused the cause of all victims of tyranny," etc. So one is left wondering for the ground of the qualification. Mr. Courtney might have added that the people whose cause Voltaire championed were mostly poor people, and that it was done at a time when his action involved more risk than it does to-day. But that would have left his informed readers wondering still more. Mr. Courtney closes his review with the remark that Voltaire's language is not that of an Agnostic. Of course not. That "respectable" term had not then been invented. Had it been we should have liked to have seen his comments on it. Voltaire was a Deist—with his Deism modified by the Lisbon earthquake.

We see many of the publishers state that they see no chance of issuing books at anything like the old prices, owing to the permanently increased cost of production. Paper, which from nine and ten times the pre-War price, had dropped to about four or five times the pre-War figure, has now advanced slightly owing to the Government restriction of imports. Wages, too, are permanently doubled. Still, we intend keeping the price of our publications as low as possible,

and trust to increased sales. We feel sure we shall have both the approval and the support of our readers in this. A thousand more readers a week will remove nearly all anxiety, and we feel that these may be obtained if our readers continue the work of securing new subscribers.

There must be a number of our readers who understand French. We therefore take this opportunity of recommending them to subscribe to the vigorous little Belgium weekly, *La Pensee*. Particulars of subscription, including postage, can be had from M. E. de Jaegere, 13 Rue du Gazometre, Brüssels. Like all Freethought papers at the moment, our Belgian contemporary is living on its losses. It is sold at a penny (10 centimes), and costs more than twopence to produce. A number of new subscribers, especially among those who will not see a good cause go to the wall for want of a little generous help, would do something to keep it going. The forces of clericalism are very strong in Belgium; we can see that in the refusal of the Burgomaster of Brussels to replace the statue in memory of the Spanish martyr, Ferrer, which had been removed by the Germans. What is wanted is some recognition of the solidarity of the Freethought movement throughout Europe if it is to be effective.

Our good friend, Mr. Eugene Hins, the director of our Belgian contemporary, in a letter we received from him a little while ago, noted with despair the apathy of Freethinkers in supporting the good cause. He noted the generous response of the whole of learned Europe when it was a matter of replenishing the library of the Catholic University of Louvain. The books and precious manuscripts sent from all parts of the world must be valued at millions. He goes on to say that he can understand the sentiment of solidarity among the learned throughout the whole world, but this particular University exists to strengthen the clerical army with thousands of well-prepared recruits destined to fill the best positions in the State and in society, and "these positions they will use to the detriment of our liberties and to the greater glory of the Church. This pretended outpost of civilization is transformed into a citadel of ignorance, a cave of obscurantism." We trust the future will not be so black as Mr. Hins foresees. We wish our co-workers in the Cause of Freethought all the success we are sure they deserve.

We are pleased to record that Mr. J. A. Hobson, M.A., in giving evidence before the Coal Commission affirmed instead of taking the oath. We should have liked to have seen all others equally candid in their behaviour.

Congratulations to our leading novelist and Freethinker, Mr. Thomas Hardy, on reaching his seventy-ninth birthday on Monday last. It is unlikely that Mr. Hardy will present the world with another novel, but his interest in the affairs of life remain as keen as ever.

We did not know that Hector Berlioz, the composer of the only setting of *Faust* that comes anything near Goethe's poem, called himself an Atheist. However, we learn from a Swiss Freethought weekly that a Parisian bookseller has for sale a copy of *Paul et Virginie* with manuscript notes by the musician. At the end he exclaims: "How sublime, how disturbing this all is! It would have made me an Atheist if I were not one already."

The Freethinkers of the Pontypridd and Rhondda district are kindly asked to notice that the meetings of the Rhondda Branch will be discontinued until the first Sunday in October.

As a man domesticates the animals, or chooses those which suit his purpose, and abolishes the rest, so does reason govern the moods of the brain, feeds upon its tranquil emotions and compresses those which are fierce, governs its imaginations, and in a word civilizes the savage countries of the original head.—Garth Wilkinson.

The Trials and Tribulations of Animals.

(Continued from p. 254.)

SIR JAMES FRAZER writes:—

Strangely enough, the great philosopher of idealism, Plato himself, cast the mantle of his authority over these ignorant relics as a barbarous jurisprudence by proposing to incorporate them in the laws of that ideal state which he projected towards the end of his life.....The passage in which the philosopher proposed to establish a legal procedure modelled on that of the Athenian town-hall, runs as follows:—"If a beast of burden or any other animal shall kill any one, except it be while the animal is competing in one of the public games, the relations of the deceased shall prosecute the animal for murder; the judges shall be such overseers of the public lands as the kinsmen of the deceased shall appoint; and the animal, if found guilty, shall be put to death and cast beyond the boundaries of the country."

And Plato proceeds to add that if any lifeless thing, a thunderbolt or any similar missile flung by the hand of God alone excepted, should prove the agent of human death, his next of kin must avenge the crime by selecting his neighbour as judge, and when the homicidal object is found guilty it shall be conveyed outside the boundaries, thus suffering the penalty apportioned to beasts condemned for the like offence.

This custom appears to have prevailed throughout the Hellenic world in ancient times. And even the matter-of-fact Romans preserved the irrational methods of their savage and semi-civilized forefathers in this respect. A venerated observance traditionally traced from the days of Numa decreed death against those who even accidentally ploughed up a boundary stone. It was held that not only was it a capital offence committed by the ploughman, but by his oxen also. Man and beast were equally stained by an act of sacrilege and were equally criminal. They forfeited all legal rights and became social outcasts, and anyone was entitled to slay them. It appears probable, however, that the extreme penalty of the law or custom was still inflicted on the human delinquent at a period when the sins of the oxen were more leniently regarded.

Some may be disposed to dismiss these fantastic proceedings as the product of savage, barbarous, and unenlightened heathen minds, and almost unthinkable in a Christian community. Yet, truth to tell, the criminal trials and pitiless punishments of animals of all grades of intelligence were common throughout Christian Europe right down to modern days. Nearly ten years ago the present writer drew attention in these columns to the learned and most interesting volume of Mr. E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecutions and Capital Punishment of Animals*, a work in which a mass of historical testimony is contained which proves that the animal kingdom as a whole was held amenable to the ordinary criminal code. It is deeply disappointing that Mr. Evans's scholarly book made little appeal to the ordinary reading public, and still remains unknown save to a small, if select, circle. In these circumstances it is gratifying to observe that Sir James Frazer several times refers to this neglected volume in his footnotes, one of which mentions the fact that "the most important collections of original documents" relating to the trials, banishment, and execution of animals in Christendom "are reprinted by E. P. Evans, who adds a list of cases and a copious bibliography."

The picture of human unreason presented by Evans almost makes one doubt man's natural rationality. In continental States right down to comparatively recent

generations, domestic animals were prosecuted in the ordinary criminal courts, and when found guilty were solemnly sentenced to death. Wild creatures were, on the other hand, placed under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities, and their misdeeds were met by sentences of exorcism and excommunication. Catholic saints of the greatest repute are said to have anathematized and banished fleas, lice, locusts, and rats. St. Patrick is still credited by the Irish peasantry with the slaughter and petrification of the snakes of Erin.

The few who ventured to question the efficacy of such proceedings were invariably reminded of the words of the sacred text. And so unwavering was the faith in the validity of these penal methods that the trials of animals were conducted "with the strictest regard for the forms of justice and the majesty of the law." Trial, sentence, and execution were all performed according to recognized rules, which were rarely disregarded. Some of the most eminent advocates of the age appeared in court as counsel for the prosecution or defence. The subtleties and complexities of the legal mind as displayed in several of these cases almost exceed the dovetailings and wire-drawn distinctions of modern company law. During a period of 600 years, from the twelfth to the eighteenth century, innumerable animal trials took place. Of these the original records of nearly ninety have been recovered through the patient researches of French antiquaries. In France the last trial of this character occurred forty-nine years only before the outbreak of the Revolution of 1789. The culprit in this instance was a cow which was soon found guilty and promptly put to death.

In the earlier sixteenth century the rats of Autun were cited to appear before the ecclesiastical court of that province to answer to the charge of having wantonly devoured and destroyed the barley-crop. The celebrated jurist, Bartholomew Chassenee, is stated to have founded his reputation as an advocate by his masterly defence of the indicted rodents. In the words of Evans:—

In view of the bad repute and notorious guilt of his clients, Chassenee was forced to employ all sorts of legal shifts and chicane, dilatory pleas, and other technical objections.....He urged, in the first place, that inasmuch as the defendants were dispersed over a large tract of country, and dwelt in numerous villages, a single summons was insufficient to notify them all; he succeeded, therefore, in obtaining a second citation, to be published from the pulpits of all the parishes inhabited by the said rats. At the expiration of the considerable time which elapsed before this order could be carried into effect.....he excused the default or non-appearance of his clients on the ground of the length and difficulty of the journey and the serious perils which attended it, owing to the unwearied vigilance of their mortal enemies, the cats, who watched all their movements, and, with fell intent, lay in wait for them at every corner and passage.

Chassenee exercised his forensic art on this point at some length, and assured the court that as his clients were unable to arrive in safety, they were entitled to the right of appeal, and could decline "to obey the writ." It seems almost incredible that a farce of this character was possible even in the sixteenth century. But that this, or for that matter far more preposterous cases, were seriously sanctioned both by the civil and ecclesiastical courts, there is overwhelming evidence to prove.

In its attitude towards animals inimical to man, the Church proved somewhat wavering and inconsistent. The devastations of insects and other pests were usually ascribed to the baleful devices of the Devil and hisimps. These creatures were outlawed and anathematized accordingly. But, on the other hand, they were occasion-

ally viewed as the instruments of an incensed divinity. In either case, it was contended, they were naturally amenable to ecclesiastical treatment, and detrimental creatures were either cursed as emissaries of Satan, or penances and supplications were decreed to soften the punishment sent by an angry Deity to purge the sins of the people. When the noxious animals were regarded as agents of the Evil one, they were treated most unmercifully; but when they were thought of as messengers of God, a compromise was projected, and the harmful insects and other creatures were commanded to depart from the cultivated regions, and to take up their residence in some locality reserved for them, where they could pass their lives without injury to the inhabitants.

In 1478, a Cardinal Bishop displayed marked consideration to an army of slugs which had invaded various estates in his diocese. This powerful prelate ordered three public processions for successive days in each parish, and the ravenous molluscs were given notice to quit within that period. In the event of their refusal, they were threatened with the malediction of the Church. A year later the slugs of Beaujeu were granted similar favours. And when, in 1516, a horde of insects devastated the vineyards of Troyes, these vermin were allowed six days' grace before the Church's anathema was hurled against them. To complete the effectiveness of the curse, the vine-growers were admonished to pay their tithes both promptly and honestly. The Bible was cited to prove the importance of this, and it was pointed out that the prophet Malachi asserts that the Lord will "rebuke the devourer for man's sake, provided all the tithes are brought into the storehouse."

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

Bookworms and Philosophers at a Dance.

BEFORE the War I had many invitations to attend public functions of various kinds. Once a year, at least, I was expected to attend "The Reception" given by the Mayor of Camberwell to all the members of the Council, at which the leading men of the borough, the clergy and ministers of various denominations, and the Mayors and Mayoresses of neighbouring boroughs were expected to attend. These functions consisted of a short instrumental and vocal concert given by a select string band, a few songs by competent vocalists, male and female—which, however, were very rarely listened to by the audience, the members of which, for the most part, engaged in conversation nearly all the time, and often seemed not only determined not to listen themselves, but were equally resolved to prevent others from listening who were well disposed towards the vocalists and musicians.

In various parts of the hall—the Dulwich Baths, as a rule—light refreshments were served to a large and eager crowd in the intervals between the concert and the ball. Once the dance was properly set going, the crowd round the refreshment stalls became smaller and beautifully less, and certain sections of the audience began to distribute themselves in various parts of the hall. It was a matter of remark that the Bookworms were always to be found together in one corner, discussing some of the great problems of the universe that had occupied the minds of philosophers and sages for thousands of years, and the solution of which had puzzled the wisdom of man for ages. Most of the frivolous people—except the dancers—were to be found in another corner, retailing funny stories and generally conducting themselves in such a boisterous manner as to be either the envy of the more serious or the contempt of the more wise.

For my part, I generally sought the company of one of the librarians, and we occupied ourselves in discussing the merits or demerits of the latest books, and, as a rule, wound up with a talk on Evolution. But what did the dancers care? They were merry enough. Round and round they went as they waltzed on the polished floors. Gracefully the ladies and gentlemen bowed and crossed, and glided along, as the band played a familiar tune. Many of the dancers were highly trained, and danced with great skill. But there were exceptions. One could sometimes almost imagine oneself at Mr. Wardle's Christmas party, and see Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle in the crowd of dancers, so unskilful at the terpsichorean art were some of the dancers that helped to make up the happy group. On one occasion I went to the Lord Mayor's Banquet at the Guildhall, and beheld the dancers in their joyous revels; but I have never felt at home in such assemblies. Many years ago, in the early 'eighties, I attended a *soiree* and dance at the old Hall of Science. It was a very merry affair, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves immensely—even those who did not join in the dance or had not acquired the graceful art. These stood in groups in various parts of the hall, and chatted on all sorts of subjects. Some of them were Freethought lecturers, and others well-known writers on Freethought; but of these I noticed very few ever attempted to display their skill on the light fantastic toe.

I saw the great Charles Bradlaugh on one of these rare occasions, but he did not dance. He gave a reading from Shelley, which was finely delivered, with "good accent and discretion," as old Polonius said, and I could not help remarking to a friend: "What a fine actor Bradlaugh would have made if he had been trained for that profession." But I, as a young man, had come to this *soiree* and dance to see philosophers footing it merrily on the polished floor, and I found, to my astonishment, that, with one or two exceptions, they were as badly qualified in that line as I was myself. If, however, I was denied the pleasure of seeing them waltz, or to take their part in set dances, I heard many of them talk, and was allowed the privilege of joining in some of the conversation.

Before the War, I passed some very happy evenings at the *soirees* and dances at Anderton's Hotel, under the auspices of the N.S.S. The young people enjoyed themselves in a very rational way on those days. I am afraid that since the War they have become more hysterical and irrational, and their dances more wild and barbaric, and I am certain that some of the old-fashioned Freethinkers would have opened their eyes in astonishment if the young folk had engaged in such extraordinary exhibitions as "The Fox Trot," "Tickle Toe," "The One Step," and the lazy revels of to-day. I have met Mr. Foote, the late President of the N.S.S., on many occasions at these *soirees* and dances at Anderton's. What delightful company he was on such occasions! No swank about him. He put everybody at their ease. He did not dance, but he could converse on almost every topic whether inside or outside his favourite subjects of philosophy, literature, religion, and Freethought. But he did not dance. Philosophers, as a rule, do not cultivate the terpsichorean art. I have seen doctors and lawyers dance, I have even seen a red-haired curate waltzing right merrily, but not the rector, and not the Freethought lecturer. Why is this? Mr. Foote was a fine elocutionist, and his dramatic readings were a magnificent display of histrionic power. On these memorable occasions I have also met Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, and other Freethought lecturers, and we have discussed all kinds of subjects together, but I do not remember to have seen them dance. They were all good

talkers and good listeners—but no dancers! Yes—there was one exception—my old and esteemed friend, Willie Heaford, he could do everything, converse in several languages, dance, sing, in fact, was jolly good company wherever you met him. Let us hope that soon after peace is signed we shall meet again, philosophers, poets, writers, Freethinkers of every kind, if not to dance, to laugh and talk, as in the happy days before "grim-visaged war" had turned this fair earth into a horrible slaughter-house.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

On the Folly Of Cutting Off Heads.

DECAPITATION is a violent and effective method for the suppression of the victim's free speech. But whether it be a radical cure for the causes bound up in the expression of opinions, we cannot positively say. Christopher Marlowe made the discovery that a tyrant, however great he was, had only one neck. Let the quidnuncs and toothless greybeards of the Correspondence columns of the *Times Literary Supplement* now decide the merits of the two Christophers—the Christopher of the mighty line and the Christopher who discovered America.

We confess at once that tales of murder and bloodshed have little or no interest for us. An easy seat in a pleasant summer garden, *Theocritus* or the *Essays of Montaigne* in our hand, and we care not who makes the coarse fictional diet of this bright little, tight little island. Spinoza, who is our friend when the fire burns brightly, when the blinds are drawn, when the wintry winds howl through the naked trees, tells us that "He who feels that the object of his hate is destroyed will feel pleasure." The truth of this proposition was revealed to us upon reading *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime*. In this tale Wilde plays with and ridicules the idea of murder, whilst paying no compliment to Palmistry, that poor imitation of Christianity. There was a certain pleasure to us when we read of Lord Arthur's consciousness of the fact that he had no right to marry until he had committed a murder. The story at this point is lifted to pure comedy, and a feeling of satisfaction is engendered when this murder-theme is gracefully kicked about in each chapter to the inevitable happy end, with the foul deed committed, and the ringing of wedding bells.

Salome is another pair of shoes. As a work of art, we are not enamoured by it. Not that we expect art to serve any utilitarian purpose; but the cutting off of one head, and that a prophet's, is no cure for John the Baptist's obsession. Has not the European War made the siege of Troy a back-yard scrimmage in comparison? And the objection to the appearance of a head on the stage—what is this? The tender and refined feelings of the audience must not be shocked; but this same audience, in time of war, may be whipped by a kept press to urge men.....Well, whether John the Baptist's head was cut off or not, it did not prevent the appearance of another evil—a systematic bemusing of the senses known as Christianity.

Judith, Mr. Arnold Bennett's play, is another pair of sandals. Holofernes is despatched on the stage, and, by the kicking of his legs, we are left to imagine what is occupying the white hands of Judith behind the tapestry. This *naive* Apocryphal story apparently has no justification for being told, and Miss Lillah McCarthy's fine acting and splendid delivery are wasted on the triumph of woman's deceit, and the folly of having wells at the foot of a mountain instead of at the top. It was Hazlitt's judgment that "it is a sign that real religion is in a

state of decay, when passages in compliment of it are applauded at the theatre." The playgoer may listen with profit to the applause, noting the moment and that which evokes it.

Is it not time that we began to adjust our literary perspective? Has not history, fiction, and melodrama grovelled too long in the quagmire of bloodshed? Or, if not in these, in the perfumed sentiment of pity and pettiness, or the gin and tears and sobs of Dickens? We know now the precious sympathy of Christianity towards Labour. An extension of the Coal Commission towards other industries would reveal the clerical finger in bloodshed. We rightly distrust ethics erected on bloodshed. Death is a negative thing—downwards—and will not this millstone drag down the best we have in life? Our affirmation to life—we are immortal through our children and bloodshed only makes their path difficult. Instead of silencing my adversary by cutting off his head (with good Christian precedent), he shall keep it, and my idea shall meet his. But, then, my friends, what is this I say? Are we too generous? If Freethinkers had a God, and man was made in his image, we should think twice before destroying him in millions, for history proves the folly of cutting off heads. Did not Cromwelland have we not.....? And the folly of cutting off heads is equal to that of the money and time expended on flying the Atlantic. We could weep tears as big as acorns if the typical attitude of the *Daily Mail* did not make us laugh. With the world in a state resembling a china shop after a visit by a bull, this last word in newspaper culture says, in effect: "We smashed the china anyway; now you minority of reasoning fools clean up the mess, we are off to re-arrange the lighting scheme of the moon."

Such, then, is the low state of public opinion as presented by the "order if you please" journal. With Christian ethics at zero, we can now see the curtain lowered on the last act of Christianity on the European stage. If we, as Freethinkers, were in need of a creed, our first affirmation would be: "I believe in the utter folly of cutting off heads, as it is a nasty business chiefly connected with a concern called religion."

WILLIAM REPTON.

The Spiritist Absurdity.

SPIRITISM ("Spiritualism," as it calls itself—quite inaccurately, for that word is really the name of a much more respectable form of speculative philosophy) may be said to occupy quite a unique position amongst the company of eccentric faiths. Some people believe in some theological beliefs which cannot be substantiated, but which are at any rate straightforward, occupying a definite category of their own; others adhere to some mistaken form of philosophy which, though wrong, can be made to look plausible. The proud privilege of Spiritism is to unite in itself the worst fallacies of bad forms of theology and yet to be opposed to Christianity. Equally antagonistic to theological orthodoxy and to Freethought, it is surely a unique phenomenon! There have been many direct exposures of Spiritism: Mr. Mann's *Frauds and Follies of Spiritualism*, Mr. Raupert's *The Supreme Problem*, etc. In this article we propose to look at the subject from a rather unusual viewpoint, and to show that it is equally incredible from a Christian theological as from an anti-theological aspect, and in this way combines all possible absurdities. If you deny any spiritual tenets, Spiritism is out of court; if you are a Christian, however, it is equally beyond belief. It is indeed a strange craze!

"There," said Sir A. C. Doyle, "is the argument in a nutshell. The phenomena are proved. The phenomena guarantee the messages" (*Daily Chronicle*, November 5, 1918). When, however, we find that the history of mediumship is inextricably intertwined with fraud, the kind of "guarantee" one deduces from these "phenomena" is surely the very inverse of what Sir Arthur desires!

The present writer disavows a personal anti-theological bias. That is the very point of these remarks: namely, that the Spiritist propaganda is a matter so absurd that Rationalists and theologians are equally repelled by it.

Sir Arthur Doyle, in *The New Revelation*, admits the reality of the element of fraud in mediumistic history, but evades the difficulty by this argument: Mediums may have been perfectly genuine during most of their careers, but, towards the end, they, through stress of their spiritual labours, may have begun to lose their powers, and resorted to artifice, their early careers not, however, being invalidated on that account! What an answer to make!

When one remembers the mediums who have been tricksters all their lives, especially in the very "plenitude of their powers," and when one remembers that the element of fraud is a constant characteristic of the cult, one is amazed at Sir Arthur's hardihood of argument. Fancy a supposed "student" forgetting that fraud has not arisen from "failing powers," but has attended the acts of all parts of mediumistic careers!

In the opinion of the present writer, however, Spiritism is demonstrably useless as a religious guide even if we, not disbelieving absolutely in the existence of the supernatural, were to admit the reality of a certain number of Spiritist phenomena of a type not attributable to purely natural agency. It is here that theologians and Rationalists agree in opposition to this morbid cult.

Sir A. C. Doyle, Sir O. Lodge, Rev. W. Wynn (*Rupert Lives*), and other writers, seem to assume that, if they produce certain phenomena not apparently accountable by natural means, they have thereby proved Spiritism to be a reliable guide in matters of religion. The argument may be put thus: Such-and-such happenings cannot be explained on merely natural grounds; they must, then, be due to the spirits of the dead; Spiritism, then, is a reliable guide to belief. What logic! And yet this is the kind of stuff we are asked to pay five shillings to buy and read in *The New Revelation*!

In the first place, we should not, of course, be justified in admitting the non-possibility of a natural explanation until not merely the resources of our limited experience but also all conceivable natural hypotheses had been exhausted. Sir A. C. Doyle lamentably fails here. In the case of the Cardiff *seance*, for example, "The lights were turned down.....because ether transmits light and is also the source of all psychic phenomena!" (Sir A. C. Doyle, *London Evening News*, February 17, 1919). And later Sir Arthur said (*South Wales Daily News*, February 26): "There was, I repeat, no possibility of deception." Which, however, is most probable: that the lowering of lights is necessitated by a trick unknown to Sir Arthur or that it is due to a wiredrawn theory of immaterial souls being dependent on material lamps?

Supposing, however, we really admit (it is a rash supposition!) that some "non-natural" agency is at work, how far nearer, even then, are we to the deduction that "spirits of the dead" are manifesting? What do we know (of our own human wisdom) about the "other world"? Hypotheses founded on the beliefs of dogmatic Christian theology are, of course, inadmissible, as Spiritism claims independence of such and relies on its own phenomena. Even, then, if it be granted that Spiritists are in touch with some kind or other of non-human intelligences,

what guarantee have they that those beings are "souls of the dead"? They might (*if they are real beings of a supernatural kind at all*) be mere deceivers masquerading in order to mislead. In the nature of things we could set no bounds to such possibilities. Every phenomenon adduced by Sir A. C. Doyle, Sir O. Lodge, Rev. W. Wynn, etc., is invalidated thereby. Unless Spiritists not merely know there is "another world," but also know all the powers of it, they cannot say that (*even if their spirits are real*) they are not being played with and mocked and deceived. Spiritism, then, stands thus: Initially there is the air of fraud, and the barriers against logical proof of "non-natural" causes. Even if these be overcome, however, the possibility cannot be admitted of ever proving that "the dead" are really manifesting; or, even if they are, that they are telling us truth. Sir A. C. Doyle, for example (*Daily Chronicle*, November 5, 1918), thinks the alleged "spirit messages" cannot be diabolic deceptions, because they teach what he thinks is religious truth! He forgets that the very teachings he regards as "religious" are repudiated as sacrilege by most orthodox Christians, and are even denounced as blasphemy by others! Even, apart from this, however, is it not a proverb that "the Devil can quote Scripture to his purpose"? We can challenge Sir A. C. Doyle to produce, or any Spiritist whomsoever to produce, any criterion by which (even if "spirits" be admitted) the truth of any spiritistic teaching can be tested.

What does it all come to? Unverifiable as to actual facts at the beginning; unbelievable as to doctrine in beginning, middle, and end; chaos, perplexity, bad logic, delusions, deceit, all beyond test of truth, and this is "the fresh outpouring of revelation from the source of all knowledge"! (Sir A. C. Doyle, *Daily Chronicle*, November 5, 1918). The unique privilege of this cult, then, is to be opposed not to the tenets of any particular philosophy, but to the very basis of logical thought, whether theological or anti-theological.

J. W. POYNTER.

Correspondence.

A SUGGESTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Might I suggest very earnestly to your readers not to destroy their copy of the *Freethinker* when they have read it, but to leave it in some public place where it can be found and read by others? I myself first became acquainted with your publication by coming across an odd copy that some one had left behind in the smoking-room at a boarding-house.

At present I am trying to help a little by buying six copies of the *Freethinker* each week, which I soon dispose of by leaving them at hairdressers' shops and other places. I wish some more of your readers would do the same. After all, it is only a shilling a week, and surely the cause is worth it.

J. G.

THE CLERGY AND THE BIBLE.

Even the clergy have no vital belief in the inspiration of the Bible. It is merely the charter under which they trade. It is a source of oracular texts for their ambiguous sermons. It is lauded and adored, and neglected and defied. To bring it into disbelief and contempt by argument and ridicule is a misdemeanour; to bring it into disbelief and contempt by acting upon it (as the Peculiar People do) is a felony. The only safe course is that adopted by the clergy, who neither believe it nor disbelieve it, but use it as it serves their occasions; and so long as it answers their ends it will remain the Book of God.—G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Baker, Saphin, Cutner, and Dales.

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