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Views and Opinions.

The Test of Time.

Whoso would be a pioneer must pay the price. He must be prepared for misunderstanding while living, and for neglect when dead. Society forgives a man every offence save that of being in advance of his age. People will orate to-day about the freedom of the press, but how many think of the men and women who were oppressed, imprisoned, and slandered in their endeavours to win it for us? Many of the clergy will be found to-day voicing opinions about the Bible for initiating which Freethinkers of an earlier generation suffered persecution. To most people a new idea is painful, to many it is threatening. And when one threatens one must be prepared for reprisals. Paine and Owen and their schools were the creators of movements that are reshaping the whole of Europe, but their names are comparatively unknown while men of the stamp of Lord Shaftesbury are recorded as great social reformers. Plenty of clergymen are preaching the essential parts of the *Age of Reason*, but how many dare to mention Thomas Paine? It is the fate of the pioneer to sow the seed, it is the profit of others to reap the harvest. And the pioneer knows it is so. In very few cases is he under illusions on this head. He is like the dying Girondists singing the Marseillaise at the foot of the scaffold. On the eve of their own execution they could testify to their conviction that one day "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," would rule the world.

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Toeing the Line.

Recently the *Christian World* published a paragraph on what is called "a remarkable sermon," preached by the Rev. Bernard Snell, of Brixton. Presumably it was remarkable—for a clergyman. And it was remarkable in the same sense that a twelve-months'-old-child repeating the multiplication table would be remarkable. In any other sense, it could only be remarkable that amongst men of sense and education such expressions could be thought worthy of observation. "If," said Mr. Snell, "we were told a man had risen from his grave in Norwood cemetery, we should want the fact. If we were told that a child had been born of a virgin we simply should not believe it." That was a "remarkable" statement—in a church. But in a Freethought hall such a statement would be a mere commonplace. It

is what Freethinkers have been saying for generations. We have said over and over again, the proof of the incredibility of Christian stories is that not even a Christian would believe them if it was said they happened to-day. They will believe that a child was born without a human father 2,000 years old. Tell them that the same thing has occurred to-day and they will wink the other eye. They will believe that a man rose from the dead 2,000 years ago. Tell them you have a friend who saw a man rise from the grave, and they will suggest drink as the most probable cause of the phenomenon. Now, there would really be nothing more remarkable in these things happening to-day than in their happening in the past. There is no miracle-working virtue in a date, nor is there anything miraculous about geography. Nature is the same in 1919 that it was in A.D. 1. Causation is the same in Seven Dials as it is in Jerusalem. And if Christians really believed these stories of one time and place, they would believe them of the other. The truth is there is no real belief. There is only a verbal assent to a series of statements that are never made the subject of serious thought.

* * *

Then and Now.

But there is a principle involved in Mr. Snell's remarks, which, if logically applied and properly carried out, would break the back of every religion current among civilized mankind. And this principle is the very opposite to that employed by religious teachers. With them the plan is to judge the present by the past. We are to believe certain things, or to do certain things, as they are consonant with traditional views and teachings. But that is completely opposed to the scientific way. Here we judge the reasonableness of what has been believed, or of what has been taught in the past, by what we know to be true in the present. Thus, when we read the story of demoniacs in the New Testament, there is no need to discuss whether Jesus did or did not cast them out; we *know* that nothing of the kind ever occurred. We know it because we have the same phenomenon with us to-day. We have people exhibiting the same symptoms, but, instead of calling in the exorcist, we send for the doctor. And, on the other side, we have with us people in the same culture stage as that of Jesus who have exactly the New Testament conception of nervous disorders. We do not merely disbelieve in these stories of virgin births, and resurrected men, we *know* they are not true. We apply the scientific and logical principle of judging the likelihood of what *may* have happened in the past by our knowledge of what *does* happen in the present. Thus it is that while at first the gods judge man, in the end man judges the gods, and finds in a better knowledge of things the cure for illusions that have for so long held him captive.

* * *

Identity in Absurdity.

The study of religion is no longer a question of whether certain things occurred; it is only a question of how and under what conditions people came to believe

they occurred. We do not ask How did God come to send some bears to devour children for calling his prophet "Bald-head"? or, How Jesus came to have a talk with the Devil? it is solely a question of how people came to accept such fantastic stories as literal truth. In other words, the study of religion is primarily a question of psychology, and is a question of history only so far as concerns the date or place when these beliefs were accepted, or the social conditions that made them acceptable. In answering this, we are able to apply the principle named above—that of using our knowledge of the present as a means of comprehending the past. And in this case we have the living conditions actually before us. Among the primitive peoples of the world, we can see religion in the making. The works of such men as Frazer and Tylor have their chief significance in the fact that they show us this. And what substantial difference can anyone point to in the exorcisms of the Jesus of the Gospels and that of an African medicine-man? Study the one, and you will understand the other. The same type of mind creates both. Missionaries indicate as much when they tell us how savages appreciate their teachings. That may well be, seeing that they are more akin to the uncivilized pupil than to the civilized teacher.

* * *

A Plea for Courage.

Most cordially do we agree with Mr. Snell that, if a man or woman who had never before heard of the Bible stories were asked to believe them, he or she would decline to do so on the evidence produced. They would reject them for exactly the same reasons that they reject fairies and witches. It is gratifying to find Mr. Snell following our lead, even so late in the day. But when one has said this, there still remains the question of Mr. Snell—and of many other Mr. Snells; for in this particular he is representative of a class. Mr. Snell does not believe—if his words have any meaning—in the Virgin Birth, in the Resurrection, or in any other similar Biblical story. But if these are rejected, on what ground does Mr. Snell continue to call himself a Christian, and to officiate as minister of a Christian Church? His place, and that of others who agree with him, is *outside* the Church. Remaining inside the Church, he is not alone in a false position himself; he is, unconsciously, deceiving others. In spite of occasional sermons of the kind here noted, while he remains where he is, calling himself a Christian and officiating in a Christian Church, he will be taken as supporting the very thing he disbelieves. While he is where he is, he cannot help giving his countenance to what he believes to be a falsehood. Whether he will or not, he cannot help misleading others. A brave and logical action would make it easier for thousands of others to be straightforward likewise. Courage in the pulpit would lead to honesty in the pew. Mr. Snell believes that many thousands of people are believing in a lie. He knows that many thousands of clergymen are preaching a lie. Every educated man knows this to be the case. And all that is needed to bring this huge sham to an end is courage on the part of those who see the truth. But to merely preach liberal sermons, which soothe one's own conscience without awakening that of others, is not enough. It is the action of one with the wit to see, but without the courage to do.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

How intense is the loneliness for the most part of any man who endeavours to think—like the Nile wandering on through a desert country, with no tributary streams to cheer and aid it, and to be lost in sympathy with its main current.—*Helps*.

The God-Eating Sacrament.

I.

THE Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion, is declared by Bishop Gore to be "the greatest of all the sacraments of the Church," and the Council of Trent described it as "the most excellent of the sacraments." The general impression among Christians is that this rite was formally instituted by Jesus Christ himself the night before his crucifixion; but a critical examination of the New Testament texts descriptive of the institution shows clearly how utterly groundless that impression is. The oldest account of it, in 1 Corinthians xi. 23-25, is as follows:—

For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

Now, the Corinthian Church was founded about the year 52 or 54 A.D., upwards of twenty years after the crucifixion; and the first Epistle was probably written in 57. The chronology of Paul's life is practically unknown. We cannot ascertain the date of his conversion. Taking the Acts and the Epistles as they stand, all we are sure of is that there was an interval of several years between his conversion and the visit to Corinth, during a portion of which time he was in close association with the disciples at Damascus, and particularly at Antioch. In Gal. i. 18, Paul tells us that three years after the momentous change he went up to Jerusalem, where he spent a whole fortnight as Peter's guest. Even prior to his conversion, he must have been intimately acquainted with the believers, otherwise, being a thoroughly conscientious man, he could not have persecuted them with such severity. Now, with such facts in mind, there is no possible escape from the conclusion that the revelation concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper which he claims (1 Cor. xi. 23-25) to have received from the Lord is wholly contradicted by all relevant facts recorded. If Jesus had actually enjoined his disciples on the very last night of his life to observe such a rite as Paul describes, is it likely or credible that those present on so tragic an occasion would have forgotten all about it? Is it not, rather, absolutely certain that the witnesses of so solemn a scene would have not only retained the liveliest recollection of it to the end of their days, but also shown their loyalty to their Lord in scrupulous obedience to his loving command? Had that been the case, Paul could not have been ignorant of it, and a special revelation on the subject would have been superfluous.

As a matter of fact, there is no evidence whatever that the Apostolic Church practised any rite corresponding to the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. There is not the faintest trace of such an institution in the Epistle to James. The fourth Gospel, the three Epistles attributed to John, the second Epistle of Peter, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation contain no direct allusion thereto. In other words, all the non-Pauline portions of the New Testament are silent on the subject. Even the Book of the Acts, presumably written by a friend and companion of Paul, makes no mention of the Holy Communion, either directly or indirectly. That the "breaking of bread" incidentally referred to in this document was not identical with the Lord's Supper is frankly admitted by orthodox divines, such as Professor

Vernon Bartlet and Dr. A. J. Carlyle, who, writing of the sacrament of spiritual solidarity, say:—

"And they were adhering steadfastly to the Apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers." These last were the special forms in which the fellowship took effect; and we read farther on that "they daily broke bread" in domestic gatherings. Such table-fellowship the Jews were wont to hallow with prayers which invested common meals with sanctity and solemn joy. Much more would Messiah's followers do so. Neighbouring brethren would naturally form a unit of such fellowship, a "house-church."..... Such informal, domestic, daily "breaking of bread" is to be distinguished from the more formal meetings on the Lord's Day for worship and religious fellowship, when the Bread came to be broken with clearer reference to the Last Supper, with its special associations and explanatory words—so "showing forth the Lord's death" (*Christianity in History*, pp. 46, 47).

The sacramental breaking of bread came to be known as the *Agape*, or Love-feast, which, throughout the latter half of the first century, co-existed with the Eucharist; but they were two distinct institutions, though, eventually, the former was superseded by the latter. The authors just quoted significantly add: "There is no sign that the 'breaking of bread' in Acts ii. 42, 46, was on the lines of the Last Supper. There is no allusion to the wine, which was integral to its symbolism, nor, indeed, to anything connecting this breaking of bread formally with the death of Jesus."

It inevitably follows from the foregoing statements that Paul's alleged revelation touching the institution of the Holy Communion enshrines a deliberate falsehood. The "most excellent of the sacraments" owes its origin as an ordinance of the Christian Church, not to Jesus, but to Paul. A plausible objection to this view is based on the accounts of the institution found in the Synoptic Gospels. Take Luke's version first: xxii. 14-20. Verses 19 and 20 are taken bodily from 1 Cor. xi. 23-25, and are absent from some of the earliest copies of this Gospel. No two accounts are the same, though the three have clearly borrowed from Paul. It should be borne in mind, also, that the Synoptic Gospels are much later productions than 1 Corinthians, their probable dates being, Mark's, about 70 A.D., Luke's between 80 and 95, and Matthew's, possibly as late as 100, and that, in their present forms, the three versions of the Lord's Supper are interpolated from Paul. The most important question at this stage, however, is, why did Paul represent the Eucharist as having been instituted by Christ just before his death rather than by himself?

Much depends upon our answer to that question, and, in order to discuss it intelligently, we must keep vividly before our minds the indisputable fact that the early Christians were by no means the ideally peaceable and happy family they are usually imagined to have been. On the contrary, they were divided into at least four bitter factions between whom there was displayed the very opposite of brotherly love (1 Cor. i. 12). In particular, there were two parties, the Apostolic and the Pauline, or the Judaic and the Gentile, which were absolutely irreconcilable. Paul was not one of the original twelve Apostles, nor was he the one chosen by the Church to take the place of the traitor, Judas. In reality, he was self-appointed to the exalted office, thereby raising the Apostolate to the unlucky number of thirteen. Indeed, Paul prided himself upon the alleged fact that he was indebted neither for his knowledge of the Gospel nor his election to the Apostolate to any human authority whatsoever, but directly to the risen and glorified Lord who appeared and spoke to him in spiritual visions and immediate revelations. He claimed for himself, not only independence of the twelve apostles,

but also the right to preach a radically different Gospel from theirs. Consequently, the pillar-Apostles looked upon him, not merely with mild suspicion, but with positive disapproval, jealousy, and hatred, branding him as "a false apostle and a liar" (Rev. ii. 2), and comparing him to Balaam, who taught the children of Israel "to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii. 14). He was the perverter of their law, "the man of scoffing," and as such they anathematized him in the name of their common Lord. Echoes of the violent conflict are still audible in some of the Pauline Epistles, notably those to the Corinthians and Galatians, from which we learn that the fury and contempt were not all on one side.

Paul's Gospel differed fundamentally from, and was, in fact, almost diametrically opposed to, the Jerusalem Gospel, its supreme emphasis being laid on the person and work of Christ, his atoning death and triumphant resurrection, while, to James and his party, the all-important elements were the life and teaching of the God-sent Jesus. Now, the Eucharist has to do almost exclusively with the vicarious sacrifice on the Cross, and Paul ascribed its institution to Christ on the eve of that transcendent world-tragedy in order to facilitate its adoption by the Gentile Churches founded by himself. It was a species of deception or fraud which at that time was not regarded as morally reprehensible, but it invested the Sacrament with all the authority and glamour attaching to the name of the supposed Founder of the Christian religion. By the time the Synoptic Gospels assumed their final form, Paulinism had triumphed all along the line, and become the predominant version of Christianity. Jesus the teacher had become the Saviour of the world.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Salvation Army's Jubilee.

The Salvation Army beats the big drum till it sounds like a German invasion. But it turns out to be only the awkward squad on a beanfeast.—G. W. Foote.

THE first Salvation Army, according to legend, was not a conspicuous success. It is said to have been "sold up," including its proprietor, for thirty pieces of silver. Two thousand years later another Salvation Army was started by William Booth, and proved so successful that it has celebrated its jubilee amid the plaudits of the press and the blessings of Royalty. At the jubilee celebration figures were supplied to the audience concerning the fifty years' progress, and, curiously, much stress was laid on the social, rather than the religious, work of the Salvation Army. According to these official figures, as an outcome of the social work, there are now in active operation 1,231 institutions. In Great Britain alone, it is claimed, some 70,000 women have been received into the homes, a large proportion of whom have been restored to virtue. On the religious side, the Salvation Army possesses 10,000 corps and outposts, 24,000 officers, cadets, and 64,000 senior and junior local officers.

The Royal congratulations were unusually fulsome. The King's message emphasized the Salvation Army's "mighty achievements," and spoke of its "works of love and mercy"; whilst Queen Alexandra dwelt on "the great and beneficent work for mankind initiated by" General Booth the First. The sycophantic press of England, which is the meanest and most contemptible in the world, took up the refrain, and columns of the most colossal silliness appeared in print concerning the Salvation Army and its philanthropic work.

The plain truth is that the Salvation Army is the most reactionary religious body, save the Catholic Church, in England. Booth's trade-mark, "Blood and Fire," proves it beyond all dispute. It is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." In a country pretending to civilization, the motto should be sufficient to make a bronze statue blush. It means that all must plunge into the blood of Christ, or fall into the fire of everlasting hell. It may be Christian teaching; it may even be the quintessence of Christ's teaching; but most certainly it is not "great and beneficent work for mankind," as some titled and distinguished folk aver.

The value of the social work of the Salvation Army is exaggerated out of all proportion. Salvationists have all to be teetotalers. What effect has that on the country's drink bill? Salvationists have all to be abstainers from tobacco. The sale of tobacco was never so great as during the past few years. As for the alleged restoration of tens of thousands of women from lives of vice, it has not affected the condition of our towns, or the statistics of prostitution. Royal persons may bless the Salvation Army "shelters" and the "beneficent work" at Hadleigh Farm Colony; but what have Trade Unionists to say about these matters? There is no "charity," Christian or otherwise, in the Emigration Department of the Salvation Army. The emigrants pay their fares, and the army officials take an emigration agency's usual commission from the railway and shipping companies.

One flamboyant journalist declared that the Salvation Army took religion with the slums. Just so! And the slums are no better for it. Indeed, the country is seething with industrial unrest. Working men and women are no longer to be cajoled into giving other folk money to fight an imaginary Devil. They are going to fight the greedy, and probably Christian, landlords and slum-owners. They have been lulled long enough with the statement that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," for they have discovered that the earth is the House of Lords—a distinction with a difference.

People have been hypnotized by the big drums and tambourines of the Salvation Army. Look at the figures concerning converts in any issue of the *War Cry*, and then add them together from the time this religious periodical first added to the gaiety of the nation. The grand total amounts to millions. Where are those millions to be found? Despite the testimonial from Buckingham Palace, the thing is a bad joke.

It is a bad joke also for the Salvation Army to confine its energies to the working classes. If its officials are really interested in social problems, let them go to Park Lane and the West End of London and tell the folk there that it is immoral to draw rent from slum property. Let them go to the colliery and railway magnates and tell them that men are exposed to death and mutilation in order to pay royalties and dividends to shareholders. Let them tell their Royal patrons that it is immoral that little children should be half-starved and ragged. Endless repetitions of the "old, old story of Jesus" will not help men in these matters. England will not be civilized, in the true sense of the word, while it has a Christian majority. Nor will matters be improved whilst Royal persons and General Booth the Second stand in silent adoration before the highly coloured lithograph of a Saviour who never lived.

MIMNERMUS.

If as much care were taken to perpetuate a race of fine men as is done to prevent the mixture of ignoble blood in horses and dogs, the genealogy of everyone would be written on his face and displayed in his manners.—*Voltaire*.

The New Testament and the Arts.

THE chief divisions of art, or the expression of beauty, are poetry, music, drama, painting, architecture, sculpture; and to these we might add the art of Adorning the Environment, as in gardens and town-planning. I propose to examine briefly the relation of the New Testament to these arts.

The general remark may be made that the New Testament writers never discuss the place of art in the social and religious life. In other words, they took no interest in beauty in the philosophic and logical way the Greeks did.

Of poetry, in the strict sense, the examples are few. I should name as the principal instance the most admirable Hymn to Love, or Charity, in the Pauline document known as the First Letter to the Corinthians. Here is a verse of it:—

If I possess prophetic power, and ken all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have entire faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing. Love suffers long, and acts kindly; love envies not; love boasts not, and is not arrogant.

With this premier poem we may collate the Song of Zacharias, beginning "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," and telling of the sunrise of a new religion; and the Song of Mary, which, in a lyric of democracy, puts down the proud and exalts the humble and modest. These two songs occur in *Luke*.

I believe I have previously stated, in the columns of the *Freethinker*, my view that the Gospels essentially constitute a poem, and not a history or biography. That the tradition of a Prophet of Nazareth may have contained elements of the true record of a personality, I will not trouble to deny. I am, of course, well aware that many critics argue that if, on so small a basis of historical fact, the authors of the Gospels built up their imposing story of miracle, their work is a fraud. I do not accept this conclusion at all, for it does not appear to me, from what I know of forgeries, lies, and deceptions, that the New Testament Gospels bear the usual marks of such concoctions. When I say the Gospel (that is, treating the Four as a group) is a poem, I employ the term "poem" in a large sense. Dickens has been called a poet; so has Ruskin; so has John Bunyan; though their main writings are in prose. One may include Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, among the poets, and Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*. These prose-writers described and constructed both nobly and imaginatively. The Gospel was a novel with a purpose, and the four authors would have been immensely astonished and grieved if they could have seen, in a magical prevision, what fate would befall their poem in the coming centuries of theological logic-chopping, catechisms, Councils, Inquisitions, and the London County Council Scripture syllabus.

Music is so casually mentioned, as in references to hymns, and the heavenly choruses in the Apocalypse, that only a German encyclopædist could find material for comment. But it may be noted in passing that it is a popular error to talk of the Herald Angels of Bethlehem as singing. Our poet *Luke*, who always chooses his words with care, merely relates that the angelic host praised God, saying, "Glory," etc.

The drama has no place of honour. It is never alluded to. Yet, in Greece and Rome, the drama exercised an enormous influence, and Greek dramas hold as high a rank to-day (though not nominally) as the Gospel. This observation, however, hardly closes the subject. It is well known that religious clubs and popular

associations often performed what would now be called "Morality Plays," that is, scenes, tableaux, and dialogues designed to convey ethical lessons on human conduct and destiny, the machinery of the Supernatural being liberally used. Mr. J. M. Robertson has ably argued that the Crucifixion and Resurrection legend in the Gospel is practically the word-book, modified and enlarged, of such a play. In our own day, we notice that an event has scarcely happened when a quick-witted playwright seizes upon it as the theme of a stage-performance. And in early Christian times the latest religious ideas would naturally be turned into concrete figures and scenery for the interest and edification of serious-minded clubs and guilds. Some of the Gospel scenes of adventure and miracles—such as the Adoration of the Magi, the Transfiguration, etc.—may have had such an origin.

The history of painting records a tremendous number of works which derive their motive from the New Testament, yet not a word of appreciation of the art of drawing and painting is uttered in the Christian doctrine and narratives. The beautiful works, based on Evangelistic topics, by Raphael, Rubens, Murillo, Poussin, Rembrandt, and the rest, would have staggered the early apostles and deacons. I shrewdly suspect that if Peter, James, and John—or the simple Galileans whom these persons symbolize—could have beheld Rembrandt's "Raising of Lazarus," they would have remarked that this pictorial story was the first they had ever heard of that extraordinary incident. In any case, it never dawned on the primitive Christian mind to propose painting as a method of teaching.

Or architecture, unless we accept the singular plan and elevation (four-square and cubical, like a box) of the New Jerusalem as a type of buildings recommended for beauty and significance. The glories of Catholic architecture—St. Mark's Church at Venice, St. Peter's at Rome, Rheims Cathedral, the beautiful cathedral and cloisters at Wells, etc., are products of a complex European evolution which carried human genius far beyond the thoughts and capacities of the peasants of Capernaum or the Communists of Jerusalem.

Sculpture is quite out of the New Testament realm. One can but faintly surmise what Paul, Timothy, and John of Patmos would feel if they could be taken by a guide round our present Westminster Abbey with its crowded monuments.

The reader will recall that I added an item which I named the Art of Adorning the Environment, a subject which comes very much to the front in our age of reconstruction, and in our debates on housing for miners and the proletariat in general. There is no evidence that the Early Christians of the New Testament took the slightest interest in such questions. Even in 1919, one can hardly affirm that the official Christian community is deeply moved in this field. I hope it is not improper to whisper that many Christians are to-day housed in vile conditions. And it is, I believe, a fact in geography that every English or Irish slum is situated in a bishop's diocese. Our modern town-planners, like Patrick Geddes, and housing experts, like Raymond Unwin and Alldridge, are not officers of the Church.

To avoid confusion of terms in any such reflections as the present article offers, I may point out that Primitive New Testament Christianity (which I have shortly dealt with) is a very different thing from historic Christianity as unfolded from the second century onwards. This historic Christianity is best called "Catholicism." The Primitive form is fixed by a text or book. Catholicism is a vast development which embraces this Bible text along with an infinity of Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Anatolian (if I may use the word for Asia Minor), Italian,

Spanish, French, and Keltic elements of thought, art, custom, and polity.

Now, on ordinary grounds of sociology, it would be absurd to reproach the Primitive Christians with not foreknowing the values which mediæval and modern Europe would attach to the arts I have indicated. It would be as absurd as smiling at that eminent thinker, Aristotle, for not calculating on the arrival of steam-engines and aeroplanes.

Just so. But it happens that a mass of our fellow-citizens profess to find in the New Testament a complete guide to ethics, politics, and the principles of social progress. That proposition alters the case entirely. We are entitled, in the presence of such a claim, to ask whether it is rational to adopt, as a supreme standard and programme, a book which, in important spheres of experience and imagination, exhibits so little relation to the twentieth century world. As a popular creation of the early centuries, I value the New Testament highly, just as I value Virgil's *Æneid*, or the glorious epic poems of the Hindus. But when the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, and the worthy Presbyterian pastors of Scotland, and the rest, ask me to use the New Testament as the chief basis for the reconstruction of industry, education, politics, and manners after the War, I.....well, in all politeness, I.....

F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

Why is it that people cannot be accurate when they touch upon religion? To the *Daily Herald* of June 21, Mr. G. Lansbury contributes an article on Abraham Lincoln. In the course of that article he says that "Lincoln had the root of the matter in him when in his humility he fell on his knees to commune with God, and from that communion was able to rise a better and a stronger man." We published in a recent issue of this paper the testimony of Lincoln's partner, and that left no doubt as to Lincoln's attitude towards religion. Mr. Lansbury is simply repeating carelessly the chatter of the mission-room. If he were dealing with a political matter, he would take some care as to his facts. We would advise him to be equally careful when dealing with other matters. We do not ask Mr. Lansbury for proof of his statement, because we know that proof in this case is quite impossible.

"Negro hunts" have taken place in various parts of England, and the press of this enlightened country has helped to foment race hatred. The journalists might have the decency to remember that all dark people are not scoundrels, and that even Jesus Christ was not a white man.

A writer in a daily paper says that the New Yorkers have camouflaged a statue of Germany by putting the word "Belgium" on the shield. He adds that this way of bringing statues up-to-date should be useful to Londoners. We agree. A few strokes of the chisel would transform "Silly Billy," at the City end of London Bridge, into the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the statue of General Gordon addressing the rioters in Trafalgar Square might be altered to the Bishop of London blessing Nelson's lions. As Charles Kingsley would say: "Let us be good, if we can't be clever."

Last Sunday prayers for rain were offered in hundreds of churches. Yet some folk declare that this is a civilized country.

The clergy often exhort their flocks to "take up their crosses and follow their Saviour." Here is the other side of the picture. The Rev. D. Kennedy Bell points out in a daily paper that "a curate needs, and has a right to expect, at least £300 a year"—especially if his lot is cast in a pleasant neighbourhood, with good society, croquet, etc.

The following is from the *Daily News* :—

War truth is a bird of a strange feather. Lord Clwd, better known as Sir Herbert Roberts, presided at a League of Nations meeting the other day. In calling upon Major Wheldon, he said that one of the most touching incidents he had heard of in the War was when the Welsh troops were in a very tight corner and the order came for them to advance. Major Wheldon was in charge, and when they marched off he started singing the Welsh equivalent of the famous old hymn, "O God, our help in ages past." When Major Wheldon rose he began by saying that he thought the incident narrated was like the report of Mark Twain's death—grossly exaggerated—inasmuch as it never happened.

People who are otherwise fairly truthful become quite adept liars in matters of this kind. And it is curious how naturally and easily people tell lies when religion is on the carpet.

At the Primitive Methodist Conference at Grimsby, the President said that "Men of God should not smoke." It is a counsel of perfection, for the "men of God" so often tell other men that they will smoke—in the next world.

The Prince of Wales has become a "fishmonger." The King of Kings is said to have been a "carpenter." There's nothing so democratic as royal persons.

At a Baptist Conference at Swansea it was stated that ministers were ill paid. The speaker forgot that they have their reward in heaven, and that, if prayer can move mountains, it should get the petitioner a paltry war-bonus.

Peace or war makes very little difference to the dear clergy, for they turn everything to their own account. Under the camouflage of providing War memorials, pew rents have been abolished at St. Paul's Church, Herne Hill; and Epsom Congregationalists are finding the money for a thousand pound house for their pastor.

The Rev. T. Sykes, Secretary of the National Brotherhood, wants "2,000 men to preach the Gospel." We are more than satisfied with the 50,000 men who are paid to do it already.

The Dean of Manchester says that dancing is a civilizing agency. He ought to know. The Church has led men a dance through the ages.

Providence does everything well. According to the Board of Agriculture, the countryside is swarming with insect pests.

Sir Douglas Haig has arranged to review 40,000 troops at Liverpool on Sunday, July 6, and this has roused the ire of some people. It is not the review they are angry with but the day. On their behalf the Bishop of Liverpool has written asking that the day may be changed, because it will deeply "wound the feelings" of a "great multitude." This great multitude raise no objection to these men killing on Sunday, or making shells to kill with. But when it comes to a march past, well, there are limits. All of which makes one wonder if there really are limits to British religious hypocrisy? If there are, we have failed to discern them.

English ideas of "brotherhood" are tinged with snobishness. At Christ Church, Westminster, Men's Brotherhood, a speaker was announced as "W. E. Johnson, Esq., of Ohio, U.S.A." When Citizen Johnson returns to the Great Republic of the West, he will, doubtless, remember, with affection, democratic Westminster.

The savage is only skin deep with most people, and it shows itself in the petty superstitions to which so many bow. Thus it seems that motorists and aviators shun the number 13, and the London County Council decide not to issue 13 in their registration number of automobiles. All we can say is that if someone will provide us with a number 13 house rent free, and a motor car numbered 13 to take us

to the office, we will wear a coat with 13 buttons, and take our chance of disaster. Seriously, when people act in the way indicated with regard to a number, one need not wonder at the prevalence of superstition. The average man is still a savage, with just a gloss of civilization.

Increased burial fees all over England have made the cost of dying as formidable as the cost of living. We wonder what share the "starving" clergy have in this funereal profiteering.

Christianity is, indeed, in the melting pot. At the annual conference of the Primitive Methodists at Grimsby, the Rev. J. Watkin, the President, based his address on Shelley's words: "The world's great age begins anew." And Shelley was a militant Atheist.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's deliverances on Spiritualism become more and more curious. To many they should serve as a test of faith—for if they can accept them, their capacity for believing the improbable cannot be questioned; it can only be admired. Thus, in the course of some Sunday morning lectures now being delivered in London, he let in a little light on the conditions of life in the next world. The "etheric body" is an exact duplicate of this body—except that it is different. For the person who dies old gets back to about thirty-five if a male, to thirty if a female, and there they stop. The child who dies goes on growing till it reaches the same age, and then he, or she, stops. And there we are. No one is old, no one is young; everyone is eternally mature. The process is quite wonderful. A "law" by which one grows backward and another grows forward, and then both stop growing altogether, is quite the most wonderful thing we have ever heard of. There is an air of reason in saying one does not grow; so there is also in saying that one goes on growing. But a growth of this kind beats everything we have ever come across. Sir Arthur's proof of what he says is the word of the spirits. On earth the spirits are much below proof. In heaven they are much above it.

Sir Arthur says that everyone may be happy in the knowledge that if our relatives die we shall meet them again. But there are drawbacks. Will a young spirit of thirty be recognizable as one's old mother of seventy or eighty? Will a mother who has lost a baby boy or girl recognize her child in a bearded angel of thirty-five? And how will the baby know its mother? Really, we should have expected Sir Arthur to have shown a greater awareness of the quality and conditions of human affection. The spirits must have been taking a rise out of Sir Arthur.

Last year, after a drought, the Duke of Rutland asked for rain and rain came. So this year the *Evening News* wired to the Duke that the country expected him to move in the matter. The Duke replied: "Your rain wire has been sufficient. Raining here heavily. Fear parsons are unreliable folk." Such irreverence is shocking.

The Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard complains that he cannot raise £20,000 to start a theatre to supplement the teaching of the Church. Perhaps people are getting tired of the Divine Comedy.

The clergy are still "starving." The Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance received £4,756 last year, which was the highest sum on record.

The dear clergy are "starving," yet a lot of money is left to clerical organizations. By the will of Lady Trevelyan, £2,000 was left to the Bishop of London's Fund, and £1,000 to the Clergy Sustentation Fund, and various sums to other charities.

The President of the Primitive Methodist Conference declares that "the Church has grown anæmic; their very speech has become anæmic." We imagined that Methodists were very fond of such hymns as "There is a fountain filled with blood."

NOTICE.

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

To Correspondents.

E. M. PEALE.—Thanks for paper. The religious humbug of this country is as it always has been—colossal.

TAB CAN.—Much obliged for reference.

A. B. GREEN (Llanelly).—Reference to the Rev. R. J. Campbell's remark that "Everyone has been struck by the decline in Church attendance, but there has not been a correspondingly moral decline," has already appeared in this paper, but the statement is worth repeating.

DESMOND FITZROY.—Next week. Pleased to hear from you again. Thanks for congratulations.

R. M.—Comparative psychologists usually take the power of forming associations, or associative memory, as a criterion of intelligence.

MRS. C. M. RENTON.—Pleased to learn that you came across a fellow *Freethinker* enthusiast in Ceylon. We do not suppose, however, that there is a place inhabited by white people where readers of this paper are not to be found. If only the number of copies of the *Freethinker* sold were proportionate to the area covered by its readers our circulation would be colossal. We have added the hymn-verse you enclose:—

My heart is like a rusty lock
Lord, oil it with thy grace,
And rub, and rub, and rub it, Lord
Till I can see thy face.

to our collection. It is a gem in its way. Thanks for appreciation.

OLD FRIEND.—Thanks for papers—which you rightly describe as a "monument to a brave man."

W. J.—We are obliged for addresses. Will do what we can to arrange matters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

One of our readers who has taken a very warm interest in the *Freethinker* thinks there should be no difficulty in our getting another 1,000 subscribers. He has made a start by securing two. We have every hope ourselves of getting more. We must have them, if only to keep pace with the growing expenses. A fortnight ago there was another rise of 5s. per week on the men's wages, and that means a goodly sum by the end of the year. The only satisfactory way to meet these increases is by a corresponding increase in sales. And it can be done, if we all resolve it shall be done.

Very material help can be given by inducing newsagents to display copies of this paper or by displaying our posters.

These will be sent to any address on receipt of postcard. Nearly everyone must have a friend or an acquaintance who would become a regular reader if he only knew of our existence. That is a defect in that person's education we look to our friends to remove. We will also forward, post free, specimen copies of the *Freethinker* for six weeks to the address of any likely subscriber that may be sent us. Other ways of pushing sales will suggest themselves to our readers, and we welcome gladly any suggestions they may have to make.

Mr. J. McGhee writes sending us a plea on behalf of the "Peculiar People." He thinks their beliefs keep them free from the effects of many of the medicines given, and inquires whether they suffer from cancer, epilepsy, tumours, etc. We have no knowledge of the extent to which these people are immune, or whether they are immune at all. And as they usually come before the public in connection with the charge of having failed to call in a doctor, we expect they are no more immune than other people.

The West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. is arranging an excursion to Laindon Hills on Sunday, July 6. The train will leave Plaistow at 10 o'clock, Upton Park, 10.5, East Ham, 10.10, and Barking at 10.15. The fare is 2s. 6d. return. Participants are expected to see to their own mid day meal, but tea will be provided at 1s. 6d. per head. The Secretary will explain the programme for the day when the train arrives at Laindon. Further particulars may be had of the Secretary, Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 17 Garbutt Road, Upminster.

Glasgow pietists are up in arms. There is a proposal to open the children's playgrounds on Sunday for the benefit of youngsters in congested areas. But these "good" people would sooner the children sweated in the slums or played in the gutter than desecrate the "Sabbath." What a privilege it is to live in a Christian city.

Dr. Alington, the Headmaster of Eton, has made a great discovery. Speaking at a rural-decanal conference at Slough, he said that a great many of the cleverest men were outside the Church. We do not suppose that he will impart this knowledge to the hundreds of Eton scholars.

Be Damned.

BE DAMNED to the meek,
Be damned to the mild.
To the makers of Hell,
And the fakirs of Heaven!
Come, let us seek
The Undeiled,
That is neither in Hell,
Nor in winged Heaven.

Be damned to the chant
Of all priestly cant:
Of each Heavenly Myth,
And each Earthly Evil;
It is Life that we want,
Not oil—not cant;
Let us damn them all with
Their own goodly Devil!

C. E. WARWICK.

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

—Byron.

The Soldier and the Church.

Is not this the great God of your sires, that with souls
and with bodies was fed,
And the world was on flame with his fires? O fools, he
was God and is dead.
He will hear not the strong crying of earth in his ears as
before,
And the fume of his multitudes dying shall flatter his
nostrils no more.
By the spirit he ruled is he slain who was mighty to slay,
And the stone that is sealed on his grave he shall rise not
and roll not away. —Swinburne, "Hymn of Man."

DURING the earlier phases of the Great War, that pinch-beck warrior, the Bishop of London, arrayed himself in khaki and went to the Front—not the very front of the Front, but the back of the Front. He came back with a glowing account of the religious fervour and aspirations of our armies in France, declaring that the Tommies' one insatiable demand was for more chaplains! Our editor remarked at the time, the Bishop must have been mistaken, that what they wanted was Charlie Chaplins. But the Church has always acted upon the principle that truth is very very precious, and should be very sparingly used, especially in Church affairs.

In an article contributed to the *Royal Magazine* for June, we now get the real truth of the matter, in an article, entitled "Why are the Churches Empty?" by the Rev. W. Kingscote Greenland, who, during the War, has been preaching and lecturing in all the camps, here and in France. He has not only preached and lectured, but he has mixed among the soldiers, made friends with them, invited their confidences, received their personal opinions, and in this short article he tells us what he sorrowfully describes as "The naked facts" of the matter.

It will be remembered that the Bishop, and the clergy generally, claimed that owing to the stress and strain of the horrors of war the soldiers had abandoned their usual apathy and indifference, if not hostility, to religion, and were flocking to the fold. In fact some of them declared that God permitted or ordained the War for that very purpose! Fancy loving and worshipping a monster like that, better be a heathen and bow down to wood and stone.

Mr. Greenland, however, declares that the War had a diametrically opposite effect. For he observes that the Nonconformist and Anglican Churches had been steadily emptying for the past twenty years, and, alluding to the "public services, from which the soldiers and workers are so conspicuously absent," he declares that—

there is no church on earth for which the average soldier, sailor, and industrial worker has any use. They have no interest whatever in the Church as a great war-time institution. To them it appears as one among many other settled and unattractive vested interests. They don't believe that in their age-long struggle for a better life the Church has been on their side. They know that a Church defence meeting is far more certain to be well attended than an anti-sweating meeting.

The quality of sermons must also be taken into account. As Mr. Greenland remarks: "Listening to sermons is an acquired taste, and, listening to many of them, the taste takes a great deal of acquiring indeed." And he further caustically remarks:—

I have often wondered how many of the ministers themselves would attend these conventional and devitalized performances had they not to conduct them. In the Army it is notorious that the parade service is unpopular. Men will do anything to get out of Church Parade—clean out stables or go on fatigue duty. And the average sermon at such enforced military services is the very acme of dreariness and conventionality.

This chaplain's testimony bears out what the *Freethinker* has all along contended as to the detestation with which the soldier regards Church Parade.

A further cause of the empty pews, says the same writer, is:—

The lack of what may be called an "offensive" in church life is a still further unattractiveness. Troops lose heart under long defence or when nothing happens. And how little real aggression there is, or making of inroads upon surrounding evils, in the religious life of an average provincial town! At the end of the year both parsons and people are well content if they have held their own and kept up the finances. And how large a share of every Nonconformist minister's and Anglican clergyman's time is wasted in the very unedifying work of getting money.

As he further remarks: "Tens of thousands of men and women will still remain loyal to the Churches and ministry as at present constituted, but more and more the overwhelming mass of our fellow-countrymen and women will give us the go-by.....of our present vested-interest system there remains the silent indictment of ever-emptying pews." Mr. Greenland laments "the pity and the tragedy of it all," and observes that: "Once they took off the roof to get men to Him. But it is more than the roof must come off this time; in fact, it seems to be becoming clear that the foundations must go as well."

If, as it was asserted, God sent or allowed the War in order to strafe the people back to religion, then he made a very bad blunder, and stands condemned as an ignorant and vicious bungler.

W. MANN.

The Science of the Ultra-Material.

I.

IMMATERIAL SUBSTANCE.

TWELVE or fifteen years ago anyone who ventured to question the doctrine of the "indestructibility of matter" would have been regarded with as much astonishment as one who denied the rotundity of the globe or doubted the heliocentric arrangement of the solar system. Yet science to-day has become quite familiar with the notion of the "dematerialization of matter" and the "dissociation of the atom"; the "elements" are no longer regarded as elementary, and their supposed immutability has been conclusively disproved both in the laboratories of the chemists and the systems of the stars.

Nevertheless, familiar though the notion has become, not only to scientists but to ordinary educated persons, its profound significance for science and philosophy does not seem to have been fully realized, mainly perhaps through a misapprehension of its true meaning. The term "dissociation of the atom" is popularly supposed to mean merely its breaking up into smaller particles, just as a brick may be grated down into brickdust, and it is felt that there is nothing very profound or wonderful in such a simple process. But this is a complete misunderstanding of the facts. As Gustave le Bon says:—

What becomes of matter when it dissociates? Can it be supposed that when atoms disintegrate they only divide into smaller parts, and thus form a simple dust of atoms? We shall see that nothing of the kind takes place, and that matter which dissociates dematerializes itself by passing through successive phases which gradually deprive it of its material qualities, until it finally returns to the imponderable ether whence it seems to have issued.

But after all, the man in the street might well be excused for failing to grasp the doctrine that matter is nothing more than a form of energy—that the world-

stuff, matter, which has ever been regarded as indissolubly associated with mass, inertia, and stability, is only a manifestation of something so elusive and fleeting as energy. A logical difficulty seems also to be involved in the idea, for the only conception we have hitherto been accustomed to form of kinetic energy is matter in motion; and if matter itself can be completely dissipated into energy, what is it that furnishes the vehicle for *that* energy? Kinetic energy implies movement, and movement implies something that moves—some substance. Thus, if matter disappears as energy, we are at once committed to the notion of an “immaterial substance,” and this notion seems at first sight to be a contradiction in terms. We shall now inquire whether this seeming contradiction is a real one, and what sort of a notion, if any, can be formed of immaterial substance as the basis of energy.

Ordinary physical mass manifests itself as inertia, and is measured in our consciousness as resistance to movement. A heavy weight suspended by a string resists an effort to move it from its position of equilibrium, and the greater the mass the greater the resistance. All matter possesses mass, and the former is inconceivable apart from the latter. Is it equally true that mass cannot exist apart from matter? The modern physicist denies this, and declares that mass may and does exist apart from matter.

The following example, based on a simple principle in mechanics, may serve to elucidate this notion of mass as existing apart from matter.

Anyone who has held in his hand a heavy and rapidly rotating gyroscope, and has tried to move the whirling disc out of its plane of rotation, must have noticed the curious sensation of resistance to the hand's effort. This sensation is exactly the same as the resistance encountered when trying to push a hanging weight out of its position—that is, it is exactly the same as the sensation given by ordinary physical or material mass. Whence comes this resistance? It is obviously something other than the material mass of the gyroscope itself, for this resistance of the moving disc is not felt when the disc is at rest; and moreover the resistance is only exerted against an attempt to move it out of the plane of rotation, any movement in that plane meeting with no such resistance. It is evident therefore that this added resistance or kinetic inertia of the whirling disc, exactly stimulating static inertia or mass, is in some way a function of the movement of the disc, and is dependent on that movement. Let us therefore call it a “kinetic mass,” while the ordinary mass of the disc itself may be called its “material mass.”

We may now consider the energy generated by the rotational movement of the disc. Energy of rotational movement, like that of movement of translation, is measured by half the product of the mass and the square of the velocity; but in this case the velocity is dependent on what is known as the radius of gyration, which, for any given solid of uniform density, bears a definite and constant relation to its geometrical radius. The energy of rotation is equal to that which would be generated if the whole mass of the body were situated at the extremity of the radius of gyration, and were revolving round the axis of rotation with the linear velocity proper to that point. Thus the energy of our rotating disc can be expressed by mv^2 (where m represents the mass and v represents the velocity) multiplied by a coefficient which remains constant, and which can, for our present purpose, be left out of consideration so long as the dimension of the disc remain constant.

It is evident that if v be increased by any multiple, and if, at the same time, m be reduced by the square of that multiple, the energy of the rotating disc will

remain unchanged. For instance, if the rotational velocity be doubled, and the mass be reduced to one quarter, the energy of rotation will remain the same. Suppose, now, that such a reduction of mass and increase of velocity does take place. The energy would remain unaltered, and that resistance to movement out of the plane of rotation which we called the “kinetic mass” would, therefore, be as evident as before. Suppose a further diminution of density and increase of velocity to take place in the same relative proportions, and successive similar changes to take place in a continuous series to an indefinite extent. What would be the outcome of such a process?

Seeing that the process may theoretically be carried on without limit, it follows that while the kinetic mass would remain unchanged the material mass could be made to reach a degree of tenuity transcending any assignable degree of material diffusion, and similarly the velocity of movement could be made to reach a value transcending any assignable measure of velocity. In short, we have here a case which exemplifies the mathematical conception of “approximation to a limit,” the absolute limit to which m approximates being zero, and that to which v approximates being infinity.

Now, since we see that the degree of diffusion of material mass and increase of the velocity of movement can be theoretically made to exceed any assigned value, the question arises: Are there any assignable values for the diffusion and velocity beyond which material mass might be regarded as being wholly annihilated and replaced by the kinetic mass which has throughout remained constant? Is there any stage in the process of diffusion at which “material” substance becomes “immaterial” substance?

A. E. MADDOCK.

(To be continued.)

Book Chat.

THE reader who turns from English to Continental Freethought must have noticed the striking difference in the manner of the anti-clerical attack which, with our French comrades, is mordant, bitter, and intensely earnest. We here in England can afford to use the light weapons of good humoured ridicule and satire, because so many of the clericals are really half-hearted Freethinkers who are obviously Christians for social and economic reasons. Our friends have against them the unscrupulous, compact, and highly organized force of the Roman Church, whose aim is to dominate not only the conscience of humanity, but also its social and political existence. The issue for them is between reason and unreason, freedom and slavery, the powers of light and the powers of darkness. If the famous explanation of Voltaire, *Crush the Infamous*, seems unnecessarily violent, it is precisely because we do not realize that Roman Catholicism was and is a cancerous growth in the fair body of modern civilization.

This difference in tone is brought out clearly in a pamphlet we have received from the editor of *L'Idée Libre*, a monthly review of advanced thought, published at Saint-Etienne, in France. It is called *Le Vatican et la guerre*, and is an amazing exposure of the hateful and fatal intrigues of the Jesuits. In the form of a commentary and notes on a recently published book, *Le baptême de sang* (The baptism of blood), by a member of the Roman Church, it reveals the fact that the Vatican, in its blind hatred of Republican and Freethinking France, worked day and night with the criminal unscrupulousness associated with Jesuit policy to accomplish the ruin of our gallant ally. It is shown that those who were powerful enough to check the infamous intrigues of the Jesuits were quickly put out of the way by precisely the same methods employed in the Renaissance period. In realizing a Satanic plot to butcher Freethinking France in the interest of the Romish Church three open friends of our ally—Pius X.,

Cardinal Rampolla, and Cardinal Ferrata—were made to disappear in succession. The first two were poisoned, the last assassinated. It seems amazing that such things should be done nowadays in the name of religion; but as the writer of the pamphlet, M. Leon Prouvost, says: "To further the interests of the Church, Luther authorized lying and polygamy, and the Jesuits authorize murder to the same end." Protestant Germany and Jesuit Rome, there we have the Unholy Alliance for the religious drilling, by a baptism of blood, of Freethinking Europe. Fortunately, they did not reckon on England, and still less on America, and now that the hidden hand has been revealed, the Republic will know how to deal with its enemy. M. Prouvost sums up in this way:—

- I. The Vatican is a meeting-place for internationally organized bandits; all intrigues are there worked out, and all nations are the victims of insidious plotting.
- II. The Pope and his creatures, with the Jesuits, are the cause of the never ending conflicts and division among the peoples of Europe.
- III. The Roman Church wanted the War, and prepared it.
- IV. Every nerve should be strained to cripple the Jesuits and the Papacy, the source of all the evils that afflict the whole world.

There is a violence in the pamphlet I have just mentioned which is amply justified in the circumstances. In a three-paged leaflet which has reached us from the same publishers I find violence of thought rather than of style. It is called *Le Culte de la Charogne* (The Worship of the Corpse). There is some truth in the contention that humanity in general, and even those of us who claim to be emancipated, have too much reverence for what is past. Your academic critic in philosophy, literature, or art, never feels that he is quite safe in praising the work of a contemporary. But ideas are not necessarily valuable because they are of our own time, because they are alive. Indeed, whatever is of value in thought or life, however old it may be, cannot be said to be dead. The Greeks and Romans who pass before us in the undying pages of Plutarch are more alive and have more to say to us than the pinchbeck heroes of our morning papers. Our carefully prefaced Blue Books and Yellow Books indicate for us less clearly the moral implications of the gigantic struggle that has just come to an end than do the history of Thucydides and the comedies of Aristophanes. No, the past is not a corpse; intelligently interpreted, its impact on us is that of life on life; it is a dynamic, not a static force, if I may be allowed to use scientific jargon. Our French comrade could not do better than correct his woefully paradoxical opinions by a diligent study of Mr. F. J. Gould's pamphlet on *History; the supreme subject in the instruction of the young*.

Another aspect of Continental Freethought is its insistence on social action. In a programme of anti-religious action which M. Prouvost has drawn up for the meditation of the Freethinker, he reviews the work of the Protestants and Modernists in Italy, whose aim is to destroy the power of the Papacy. He finds in it an effective and organized attack on the great enemy of humanity. He is dissatisfied with the action of Freethought, which has up to now been contented to work only through the medium of ideas, and that in an isolated way. What has it effected, he asks, in this order of ideas? Where are its works? Where is its social action? Congresses, national and international, lectures, resolutions, banquets. Fetishism of the past, that is all! No educative aim, no social movement! It is not surprising then that Freethinkers (French) weary themselves with barren efforts. He notes that in sixty years the Protestants have established in Italy an organization which to-day is a serious menace to Catholicism, a menace acknowledged by the Roman Church itself. The French Freethinkers must form libraries, set up Sunday-schools, endow educational establishments and universities for the people. They must found orphanages, technical institutes, and dispensaries. With the example of the Italian Protestants before them, and the knowledge that they must bring the whole mass of their strength, intellectual and social, against the common enemy, it is possible that

they may concentrate their forces in the way suggested by M. Prouvost. English Freethinkers, I know, will watch with interest this forward movement of their French comrades to prepare the future for a better world.

We do not know if it is permissible to explain that the Soviets are merely groups or committees of artisans, peasants, and soldiers that meet for the purpose of examining and discussing their common interests. Personally, I am not certain that it is not wiser for the working man to pay £400 a year to intelligent representatives like Colonel Will Thorne and Mr. Jack Jones. I may be wrong, and the Parliamentary Labour Movement may be bankrupt, as some of my friends tell me. Those who are inclined to think that direct economic action is the only cure, will find to their taste a pamphlet by M. A. Lorulot on *Le Soviet*, and also a leaflet by the same writer, *Qu'est-ce que le Soviet?* (Editions de l'Idée libre). I am afraid that if I were to analyse them, the Parliamentary Labour gentlemen would accuse me of trying to take the bread out of their mouths.

G. U.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIAL ECONOMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your Correspondence column of June 8 inst. you inform "Anti-Christ" that his appreciation of Major Warren's writings is shared by yourself and your readers. I sincerely trust you were only referring to his hammer-blows upon Christians, not to his attacks upon capitalism, banking, wealth, and labour.

Long ago Mr. Foote's debate with Mrs. Besant on Socialism led me to renounce the errors which Major Warren still maintains. What can one understand of a writer believing in the law of the survival of the fittest, yet endeavouring to destroy those who are fittest to live? Leaving aside the imbecility of Christians, and the fraud, hypocrisy, and cunning of the priesthood, may I ask Major Warren would he substitute ugliness for beauty, cleanliness for filth, sloth for industry, prodigality for thrift, and, by the re-shuffling of the cards of social privileges and deprivations, prefer State officialism to private ownership?

Alas and alack! There is evil attending both systems; but the question is, which has the least? Perhaps Major Warren might infer the poor and needy are the fittest to live and make the laws—that they work the hardest and get the least in return; in other words, those at the bottom of the social ladder should change places with those at the top. If so, let the major change place with the private, the organist with the bellows-blower, the philosopher with the clown, and the Editor of the *Freethinker* with General Booth.

Scientists tell us that in every age there is a blank spot, which admits no ray of light from the outer world. May it not be similar with the organs of perception, producing specific density? How treacherous is Reason herself! For does she not lead all of us to believe she resides more with ourselves than with our neighbours? She gives different counsels, producing tumults and disorders, infusing strange notions, freaks, and whimsies, quite contrary to the sentiments she inspires. She advises Bernard Shaw and Horatio Bottomley that Christianity is a fraud and a snare, yet instructs them to bow to idols and pocket the cash.

In conclusion, Reason might suggest to Major Warren that Voltaire was a better judge of equality, liberty, and fraternity than he. But I have my doubts.

PRIVATE F. MARGETSON.

VERACITY IN THE PULPIT.

SIR,—I have to thank you for your courtesy in sending me the *Freethinker* containing a leading article on a recent sermon of mine.

The article is good and fair, except in one respect. It seems to accuse me of the insincerity of withholding knowledge which I possess because I am in Holy Orders. I wish to state that I always say exactly what I believe, and rather than conceal any truth whatever, I would renounce my Orders at once and leave the Church.

Mr. Lloyd says that because belief in God has passed through many stages—because, for example, Jehovah was a tribal deity, before He was regarded as the Lord of heaven and earth; therefore, "the Supreme Being is merely a human creation." I challenge this argument as illogical. All our beliefs—our mathematical, scientific, philosophical, even our Agnostic beliefs, have been *evolved*, and have passed through many imperfect stages before they reached their present state of comparative perfection. But that does not prove them to be false or to be mere human creations. The truths of arithmetic, algebra, and geometry have all been *evolved*, but that does not prevent them from being absolutely true. The fact some savages cannot count beyond five does not throw any doubt upon the truth of the differential calculus. The fact that chemistry has been evolved out of alchemy does not render modern chemistry doubtful. Similarly the fact that belief in God as the Perfect Being has only been gradually reached as the climax of a long stage of religious evolution does not prove it false, or a mere human imagination. The *evolution* of a belief is one thing, the *truth* of it is quite another. As a rule, the latest belief on a given subject is the truest; but this is not always the case, Error evolves as well as truth.

In a short sermon one cannot say everything. I have dealt with this subject more fully in a book of mine now passing through the press, *The Creeds and Modern Thought*, published by the S.P.C.K.

I wish to say that I am as thorough a "Rationalist" as any reader of the *Freethinker*, and base my beliefs entirely upon reason. Faithfully yours in the cause of Rationalism.

CHAS. HARRIS (Priest).

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