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Views and Opinions.

Darwinism.

The comments of our newspapers on Darwinism, *apropos* of Haeckel's death—which, if collected and tabulated, would make about as grave an indictment of the intelligence or honesty of popular journalism as could be framed—reminded us of the treatment of Darwinism by Mr. Benjamin Kidd in his last book, *The Science of Power*. Mr. Kidd's book was published only last year, and it contained one good idea, almost drowned in a sea of fallacy. The good idea was that of social heredity, which he appears to imagine is original with him. As a matter of fact, the well-informed reader knows that this conception has been floating around for over half a century, and if the present reader will turn back to a series of articles which we wrote in this journal about ten years ago on "Freethought and Social Reform," he will find the idea worked out in some detail. We are not accusing Mr. Kidd of taking this conception from the *Freethinker*, although stranger things than that have happened. The *Freethinker*, although it has never had the circulation it deserved, has always circulated among what was probably the best reading class in the community, and many have found it, as Lamb said of some writer, "damned good to steal from." We do not complain of this; we are rather glad to see that it has so insistent an influence.

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Darwinism and Force.

Mr. Kidd's book was published in January, 1918, and it is a pity that he allowed the War to influence him in writing a deal that we are sure he would not have written had the War not then been on. As it is, he finds it desirable to take up the perfectly untenable position that the War was due, certainly in a large measure, to the influence of Darwinism on the German mind. That is the kind of thing we got from the pulpit when the War began, and it is the kind of thing we are getting from the newspapers now over the death of Haeckel. It is, of course, absurd. Darwinism is accepted to as great an extent in England as it is in Germany, and it is for Mr. Kidd to explain why, if Darwinism was so demoralizing in Germany, it was not equally demoralizing in England and America, and elsewhere. The trouble about a book such as Mr. Kidd's is that many will be inclined to take it as a quite

correct representation of Darwin's views and of the influence of Darwinism. Mr. Kidd's statements are the more worthy of note here because he has made himself the champion of the thesis that civilization needs some ultra-rational or non-rational sanction if it is to endure, and he finds that in supernaturalism in general, and in some form of the Christian supernaturalism in particular.

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Ideas and Force.

Western society, says Mr. Kidd, has been dominated by the idea of force, and the tendency of all antagonistic groups, whether in the State or as between States, has been to express themselves in terms of force. Hence the struggle between rival groups tends to become more and more severe, and to express itself in the form of war. Hence the success of Darwinism. For when it was propounded in 1859, it gave the world exactly that scientific sanction for which it was seeking. In England it was not without its voices, and in Germany it was exalted into a positive evangel. According to Darwinism, says Mr. Kidd, the progress of society is due to the production of the "individual efficient" under the operation of the survival of the fittest. But, he continues, civilization offers an entirely different process from that outlined by Darwin. Civilization is determined by social heredity; we inherit the experience of our ancestors, and are greater than they because of our inheritance. The civilization of the future will be dominated by the power of the ideal, and by the play of emotion under the sway of a true social efficiency. There is here both truth and fallacy. Human society is not, and never was, dominated by force, but by force in the service of ideas. The tendency of struggle to become sharper is not due to the conception of force, but to the fact that as men's ideas become stronger they will fight the more tenaciously for their realization in actual life. Mr. Kidd might find the strongest proof of the play of emotion and of the ideal exactly where he thinks it is least evident.

* * *

Social Evolution.

But we are really more concerned with Mr. Kidd's presentation of Darwinism. Mr. Kidd is very fond of the expression "the individual efficient," by which he means the ability of the individual to sustain himself in virtue of his own fitness. This, he says, was Darwin's sole conception of the survival of the fittest. The individual was dominated by self-interest, all was right that made for his interest, and he did not see that the superior efficiency was social and not individual. Now, this is a sheer misrepresentation of Darwin's position, and the curious thing is that in all the reviews of the book that we saw on the first appearance of the work, none had the wit to point it out. It is not disputed that so long as we restrict ourself to a state of things in which an animal is entirely dependent upon its own efforts as to whether it shall live or die, individual efficiency is the one thing that matters. But when we come to the case of animals living in groups another principle begins to operate. And when we come to man with a language, literature, traditions,

etc., instead of individual efficiency, it is social efficiency that is of the greater moment. Now, Mr. Kidd accuses Darwin of ignoring this truth, and of preaching the gospel of individual fitness with its consequent ruthlessness, so giving Germany her gospel which led to the War, etc. Now, on that we will ask readers to turn to the great fourth chapter of the *Descent of Man*, and he will then be in a position to judge the truth of Mr. Kidd's indictment. In this chapter, Darwin denies that man was ever anything but a social animal, and he proceeds to point out how this alters the operation of the principle of the survival of the fittest. If, he says, an individual possesses an instinct that is beneficial to a species it would be the most potent. And as no man can practice "the virtues necessary to the welfare of the tribe without self-sacrifice, self-command," etc., these have been at all times highly esteemed. The wishes and opinions of the community (Mr. Kidd's emotions and ideals) reinforce the social instincts, and "as man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation.....this point once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races." How, in the face of these and similar expressions, Mr. Kidd can say that had no conception of the modification of the struggle for existence effected by social evolution is more than one can easily understand.

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Evolution Past and Present.

The truth is that Mr. Kidd's misconception of evolution is vital. He assumes a time when man's hand was against every other man, and every man against him, when A sought to kill B before B killed A. But this state of things is quite imaginary, and quite false. Primitive life is not a state of universal warfare. Wars are more unusual with savages than with civilized people, and for reasons that are not hard to discern. Man commences life as a member of a group, and his interests and feelings are developed, one thing with another, in accordance with the interests of the group. And the course of social evolution is to spread these feelings over a wider and wider area, until as the tribe grows into the nation, and as knowledge and intercourse gradually extend beyond the boundaries of nations, it takes into account the whole of the human race. What we are witnessing to-day in the world is not the logical application of Darwinism to the life of the world, but the attempt to prolong beyond its proper time a phase of social evolution that the race has largely outgrown. We have been pointing out for years the modifications effected by social life in the operation of the principle of the survival of the fittest, and we are pleased to have Mr. Kidd following the same path. But we regret that in doing so he should have misrepresented Darwin's own position on the subject. Still, more, that by so doing he should be giving countenance, even though unconsciously, to those newspaper scribblers, who having little knowledge beyond that picked up from a cheap encyclopædia, and small concern save that of satisfying the ruling passion of the moment, can so readily misrepresent great ideas and great men. Darwin saw that a vital and a growing force in human society is the play of feelings and ideas. He also indicated the course of their development, and if the brute still lingers in the life of man that can hardly be placed to the discredit of one who helped us to understand the reason of their lingering.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The world and all things in it are valuable, but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman.—*Mohamm ed*

Orthodoxy Up to Date.

In the Protestant world Christianity is perpetually in the melting-pot. Incessantly it is undergoing radical changes. Like the human body, every few years it becomes an entirely new thing. Its more or less orthodox champions always complain of what they call its perversions by those who wickedly coquet with modern thought. It is a notorious characteristic of Protestants, as a class, that they are always endeavouring to adapt their theology to the ever-varying intellectual and social conditions of the times in which they live. That this is an extremely perilous policy is abundantly proved by the fact that Protestantism is a visibly vanishing concern. As the *Church Times* observes, "People sometimes say that the Church has failed. What is true is that Protestantism has failed." The success or failure of the Church, as such, may be a debatable subject; but our present point is that if Protestantism has failed, the failure has not resulted from any lack of adaptability. Its first attitude to every social reform or scientific discovery, is one of positive hostility and violent resistance; but no sooner has the reform or the new theory gained popular support than the Protestant Church begins, almost imperceptibly at first, to modify its opposition; but in the end it formally adopts and treats as its own the former and yields a reluctant assent to the latter. The more conservative divines disapprove of this policy of vacillation. We are assured that Dr. Gore has resigned the bishopric of Oxford because he is "dissatisfied with the looseness of doctrine and discipline in the Church of England." Dr. Kinsman, an American Bishop, has just resigned because of precisely the same defect in his communion. This prelate finds in the American Church "tolerance of denials of the Faith, which seem to indicate failure to defend the Church's doctrine; tolerance of imperfect views of sacraments, seeming to result in failure rightly to use them; and a theory of Orders which seems to nullify them."

Now, the "tolerance" bewailed by Drs. Gore and Kinsman is one of the infallible marks of a falling Church; and to-day Protestantism not only practises toleration, but eulogizes it as a shining virtue. In other words, Protestantism acts on the unavowed assumption that Christianity is not true. If it is true, it follows that toleration is open disloyalty at once to God and mankind; and by practising it the Protestant Church is digging its own grave. Its very life-blood is steadily oozing out of it. The Catholic Church, on the contrary, remains heroically true to its primitive ideal of a Divinely ordained and inspired institution. Within its borders, too, there has been development under the Holy Spirit's guidance, a process that lasted for many centuries; and, simultaneously, there was going on wholesale borrowing, or rather cribbing, from suppressed and semi-suppressed Pagan cults. But so soon as the Church had won an assured position and could wield all-power, it became in fact what it had been in principle and spirit from the first—an absolutely exclusive and intolerant organization, whose main and final appeal was to brute force. If Christianity is true, both the exclusiveness and the intolerance of the Church are fully justified, and Lecky, in his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, has demonstrated beyond the possibility of a doubt that the growth of the spirit of toleration has been due to a corresponding decay of supernatural belief both within and without the Church. There is, of course, a wide difference in this respect between Catholicism and Protestantism, which is to be chiefly accounted for by the fact that from the moment the latter substituted the Bible for the Church as the court of appeal and admitted the right of

private judgment in the interpretation thereof, the foundation of its faith and authoritative pronouncements were undermined, with the result that its tolerance is now the measure of its weakness. In its loyalty to the great creeds, Catholicism has not appreciably weakened, nor is it more tolerant now than it was three or four hundred years ago. If it still possessed the power which then it had, the fires of Smithfield would certainly be rekindled to-morrow. In Tract Number 27 of the *Protestant Press Bureau*, quotations are made from a book published in 1888 in New York, by Messrs. Benziger Brothers, "Printers to the Holy Apostolic See," which was circulated widely in England, in which the following questions and answers are boldly defended by the author, Father M. Muller, C.S.S.R. :—

Question.—Have Protestants any faith in Christ ?

Answer.—They never had.

Q.—Why not ?

A.—Because there never lived such a Christ as they imagine and believe in.

Q.—In what kind of a Christ do they believe ?

A.—In such a one of whom they can make a liar with impunity, whose doctrines they can interpret as they please, and who does not care what a man believes, provided he be an honest man before the public.

Q.—Will such a faith in such a Christ save Protestants ?

A.—No sensible man will assert such an absurdity.

Q.—What will Christ say to them on the day of judgment ?

A.—I know you not, because you never knew me.

Q.—Are Protestants willing to confess their sins to a Catholic bishop or priest, who alone has power from Christ to forgive sins ?

A.—No, for they generally have an aversion to Confession, and therefore their sins will not be forgiven them throughout all eternity.

Q.—What follows from this ?

A.—That they die in their sins and are damned (*The Catholic Dogma : Permissu Superiorum*, p. 67).

In the same booklet, p. 31, we read that "the Protestant religion was made, not by Jesus Christ, but 1,500 years afterwards by a wicked man called Luther, who broke his vows to God, and confessed that he made the Protestant religion to please the Devil and spite the Pope."

What the Church taught in the fourth, sixth, tenth, and eleventh centuries it still teaches to-day. In *A Guide for Priests*, the fifth and thoroughly revised edition of which was published in 1898 by the Dublin Catholic firm, Messrs. M. H. Gill & Son, we find the following :—

What is woman ? S. Jerome (342-420 A.D.) gives the answer : "She is the gate by which the Devil enters, the road that leads to sin ; she is what the sting of the scorpion is." And in another place he says : "Woman is a fire, man the tow, and the Devil the bellows." S. Maximus (580-662 A.D.) writes of a woman : "She makes shipwreck of men, she is a tyrant who leads them captive, a lioness who holds them fast in her embraces, a syren decked out to lure them to destruction, a malicious, evil beast." And S. Anastasius the Sinaite : "She is a laboratory of devils, a flaming furnace, a javelin wherewith the heart is pierced, a storm by which houses are overthrown, a guide leading to darkness, an unbridled tongue speaking evil of the Saints" (p. 68).

On the subject of woman this Priest's Manual supplies similar utterances from the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries' writers ; and it is a fact much criticized by Catholic laymen that in the article on woman in the *Standard Catholic Encyclopadia* essentially the same estimate of her character and position is maintained. Of course, this is the orthodox teaching, being but the legitimate application of the principle laid down by the apostle Paul.

The truth is that most Catholic dogmas are fair

deductions from Biblical statements. The Pauline doctrine of the God-man, to be conceivable, necessitates that of the Virgin Birth ; and there could not have been a virgin born Sinless One apart from the immaculate conception of his mother. Moreover, the orthodox doctrine of the Saviour-God inevitably implies that of the Holy Trinity. Then, it follows that, if salvation is possible only through faith in the finished work of the God-man, those who die without that faith are for ever damned. Now, this God-man, this Christ, has had all things put in subjection under his feet, and has been made "head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Consequently, it is through the Church alone that the saving grace and manifold wisdom of God have been and can be made known to a perishing world. Yes, verily, in none other than Christ is there salvation, and the Church is Christ's exclusive abode, out of which he cannot be found, and of necessity there is and can be but one Church, which Church, through its one earthly head, the Pope, is infallible, with the result that, according to the famous Papal encyclical on "Modernism," we must either accept every legend however false, every superstition however absurd, every conclusion of scholastic theologians however fantastic, or leave the Church and go to hell. There is, therefore, no logical escape from the following deduction put in a nutshell by Archbishop Bagshawe : "There is no Christianity out of the Catholic Church."

That is orthodoxy up to date, and it is incontrovertible that most of its dogmas necessitate one another. Catholicism is an eminently logical system ; and it is equally irrational and absurd. It rests entirely upon faith, and its supreme appeal is to the credulity of its adherents. As a Catholic writer puts it :—

The holy house of Loretto, the legend of which is known to rest on a fraud of the sixteenth century ; the cultus of St. Philomena, who is known to be an imaginary person, and whose so-called relics are known to be those of a person who was neither a saint nor a martyr ; these and similar impostures are now to be accepted by all Catholics ; indeed the Pope (Pius X.) has already done his best in practice to promote them.

On exactly the same deceptive authority, and in strictly the same manner, are we commanded, by God's sole representative on earth, to believe all the mysteries of scholastic theology, and to submit ourselves to the arbitrary and tyrannical rule of the priest. Emphatically refusing to yield the obedience demanded of us, we unhesitatingly endorse the *Church Times'* verdict on Protestantism, and with as full confidence declare that the Catholic Church has been and is the most colossal failure known to history.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be concluded.)

Jesus Christ and the Primrose League.

I am nothing if not critical.—*Iago*.

Uplift thy cross, and go, Thy doom is said.

—*Robert Buchanan*.

A STORY is told of a plaster-cast dealer who slipped on a piece of orange-peel whilst crossing Westminster Bridge. Much damage was done to his stock-in-trade, and a seven-and-sixpenny representation of Jesus Christ had its arm broken. The itinerant merchant bewailed his loss loudly, and a sympathetic crowd collected. Moved by his lamentations, a sailor stepped forward, and told the unfortunate man not to worry. "Say, guv'nor," he wound up, "why don't you knock his eye out, and call 'im Nelson?"

There is a beautiful moral to this touching story, but the weather is too hot to pursue it. The transformation of the Second Person of the Trinity from a personality to a phantom in the hands of the clergy is going on apace; but our intention is to show before it is too late that the hero of the Gospels was, from the point of view of Mrs. Grundy and the Primrose League, a most undesirable person.

We have no axes to grind in this affair. We know that far abler writers than ourselves have contended that the carpenter of Nazareth was insane. Some have been bold enough to assert that he never existed at all, and that he is as mythical as Sairey Gamp's friend, Mrs. Harris. We have a reason for broaching this subject. Our Christian friend, the enemy, continually publishes unpleasant "truths" concerning eminent Freethinkers. Smith, who knew less of music than an oyster, it is alleged, died singing "Rock of Ages." Brown, who lived and died a bachelor, is said to have deserted a large wife and a larger family. Jones is asserted to have committed every crime in the calendar, excepting only murder, the exception being made on account of the difficulty of finding a corpse. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity which thinketh evil of all men.

Possibly, these alarms and excursions are a positive diversion to men discussing such momentous questions as whether the climate of Hades is tropic or arctic, or the equally important subject of St. Paul's vaccination, or whether the Son of Man used a pocket-handkerchief. In the present essay we have merely attempted to return a compliment, which ought not to prove unacceptable to the meek and lowly followers of Christ. We are not asking for their "cheek," although we get so much of it. We merely request them to take our modest Roland for their numerous Olivers.

In examining the story of the Founder of Christianity under the microscope of respectability we have many shocks. Although alleged to be of royal descent, he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was merely the alleged son of a carpenter, which is dreadful; and he was born in a stable, which is even worse. The bar-sinister is almost a criminal offence in the case of poor people. It is sometimes a difficulty when royalty's jewelled hand puts by legitimacy. Born under such social conditions, it is not surprising that he was ill-bred. He "sauced" his mother at a very early age, and, it is said, disputed with "the doctors." If we understand anything of Oriental learned men, the son of Mary finished that dialectical encounter face downwards, whilst one of the doctors administered the recipe of the royal Solomon. If so, the treatment was not repeated often enough. By the time he had reached man's estate he was a controversial hooligan, and his speech was strong enough to blanch the face of a fish-porter. Folk who disagreed with him were called "vipers," "whitewashed sepulchres," "devils," and "dogs," to mention but a few of the oratorical jewels. He also possessed a fearful temper, as is shown in his row with the unfortunate fig-tree. He would never have been fitted for a tea-fight at a tin-tabernacle, or an evangelical lawn-tennis party, with the bishop's sedate flunkies in the background.

Christ's associates were anything but "twelve good men and true," despite the efforts of centuries of apologists. He called one of them "a devil," and another was not so truthful as George Washington. Our blessed Saviour also mixed with "publicans," but this need not concern us unduly. Are not these prosperous tradesmen the very backbone of the great Conservative Party? He also was seen with "sinners," including Mary Magdalen, whose reputation was as delicate as her com-

plexion. We often wonder, prayerfully, how the Virgin behaved when the Ever-Blessed-Wielder-of-the-Jack-Plane used to bring this particular lady friend home to tea.

What is almost as bad is that "the Lord" was not a teetotaler. On the contrary, he even encouraged folk to keep their spirits up by pouring spirits down. There is also a grave suspicion that he gambled. That anecdote of the coin, and the question, "Whose superscription is this?" seems to suggest pitch and toss.

A far more serious matter is that J. C.'s views on sociology approximated closely to anarchy. The topsyturvy ideas he had concerning the distribution of wealth, his panegyrics of poverty, his denunciation of riches, all have a certain flavour about them. But the last straw, the thing which places finally the Prophet of Nazareth beyond the pale of respectability, is that he did not respect the clergy. He cared no more for ecclesiastical authority than Paine and Voltaire, and other dreadful men. Small wonder that he finally left his country for his country's good. Surely an executed criminal is not a fit patron for the handsome knights, fair dames, and innocent buds of the Primrose League. Judged by ordinary commercial tests, Christ's life was a financial failure. The Founder of the first Salvation Army lived and died a beggar, which every self-respecting member of the Primrose League regards as one of the most abandoned beings crawling between earth and heaven. The Army and the managing director were sold for thirty pieces of silver.

Fortunately, British society is too firmly anchored to be washed away by the paltry spray of ignorance and superstition. Here, in this country, religion is a recreation and a plaything, and not a reality. It is an organized hypocrisy worked in the interests of the governing classes. Under the spiritual sceptres of Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, or even Mumbo Jumbo, precept is united with practice. But here, on virtuous British soil, we lightly tread the Primrose League path until such time as we rid ourselves of the great Lying Church and its thousands of petticoated priests.

MIMNERMUS.

"The Day of God."

"COME inside," I remarked, opening the door wide, and standing close to the wall in order to allow my adipose visitor to pass with comfort. "Nice warm weather for August," I continued. "Strange freak of Nature giving us warm weather in the summer—something's gone wrong with the works somewhere —." I stopped suddenly. My visitor, who grasped a small bundle of papers in his right hand, rolled his eyes sanctimoniously, and swallowed several times uncomfortably.

"The day of God is at hand," he said, in a thick and highly unpleasant voice. "The day of God is at hand."

"Oh! come, now," I remarked affably. Don't get nervous—sit down—allow me to place your hat upon the table, thus." As I did so my visitor unbuttoned his black coat and patted the lappets of his Victorian waistcoat with a fat, veiny hand. He was a most unpleasant sight, and reminded me with great nervousness of Smithfield Market on a busy butchering day. "And what have we here?" I asked, as he spread a series of little black pamphlets upon his stumpy knee.

"The Day of God is at hand," he repeated once again. "My friend, let me show you *the* truth. I say unto you that the mark of the beast is upon man—this is the day

of judgment: this is the appointed hour of doom—even the little children shall not escape." Again he rolled his lead-tinted eyes and swallowed uncomfortably.

"Oh! come, now," I protested, "your little black books don't say *that*. Not really. Don't say we're in your little black books—such a nice sunny afternoon as this, too! Pull yourself together, man: put your little black books far away into your splendidly spacious pocket. May I offer you a cigarette?" My visitor patted the little black pamphlets and coughed. "I came into this neighbourhood," he said, "on a house-to-house mission. I came to your house to tell you in simple, holy words, that the day of God is at hand. You shall not mock the servant of God with cigarettes." I smiled.

"Why, I thought the old gentleman was really fond of a little smoke—he used to be at any rate. How very well I remember at the little tin Sunday-school—they used to tell us all about the smoke and the burning bush.....most interesting it was—excuse me lighting up, won't you? Very good cigarettes these—'Three Nuns!'" My visitor shuffled his little black books and placed one of them upon my knee. The title read: "Beware of the Beast."

"Who's that?" I asked, calmly exhaling tobacco smoke; "not old Kaiser Bill again! No; *don't* say it's old Kaiser Bill. He's *such* a nasty old man to write about; made a lot of us go abroad for the benefit of somebody's health—God knows whose health —"

"No blasphemy," exclaimed my visitor; "I will not have the name of God taken in vain. I came to this district on a house-to-house mission for the New Christiana Christania Russelism, which alone can give the key to Holy Scripture. I came —"

"All right," I interrupted; "don't get overheated; it's such a nice, sunny day outside. Put all your nasty little black books away, and have a nice, pure Virginia cigarette; it's much more interesting than Christa-Christy Russelism, or whatever you call it. Such a beastly name, too. Couldn't you think of something simple, like Chrussellem or Chrissislem? You want much more up-to-date methods. You're millions of years behind the times—you are, believe me."

My visitor placed the little black books away, and rose from his chair.

"I am going back—back to Paternoster Row," he retorted, with a hideous scowl, "I came to this hell-dark neighbourhood on a house-to-house mission —"

"Don't go next door," I interrupted, grimly; "oh! *don't* go next door. He's six feet three in his socks, uses a Sandow developer regular, drinks Vi-Cocoa like a fish, takes Phosferine with every meal, swing clubs over the week-end, and says—says—there *isn't* a God! Just you think of the positively frightful risk you're running—especially with all those little black books! Take my advice: go round the corner as quickly as possible, and get on a No. 69 'bus. Go at once; go while you're all solid and complete. I couldn't behave unkindly to you myself—I dislike nasty messes. Your hat—the door—and please *do* go back to Paternoster Row at once. Take all your nasty little black books too; put them away in a nice, safe, smelly old cellar. They'll feel so happy, all piled up with the *Drunkard's Deaths* and *Ways of Sinners*.....Yes, I know the trade backwards. You're simply *millions* of years behind the times.....Well, good-bye-ee; there's a sun still shining in the sky-ee—and it will still be up there to-morrow—oh, so merry and bright. Don't forget the No. 69. Hide all your nasty little black books....."

Breathing heavily, my horrible Russelism agent slipped round the corner like a sinister snake—and disappeared.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Acid Drops.

Religion generally has lost by the War, but there is one way in which the underground influence of the Roman Catholic Church seems likely to gain—for a time. A number of new States are springing up as an outcome of the War, and a number of these are, we believe, sending representatives to Rome. A consequence of this is certain to be a strengthening of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, often in quarters where it can make itself troublesome, or where its serviceable influence can be bought by interested politicians at the price of concessions elsewhere. This seems to us to constitute a real danger, and one that has been apparently not realized by press or public. And the quarrels between the Greek and Latin Churches in the East of Europe have already been the most fruitful causes of disorder in the small nations there.

If the League of Nations—which, thanks to its rapid conversion into a League of Annexations and Dominations, runs some risk of a very early demise—were intelligently in earnest, it would see to it that something was done to check the political activity of the Papacy. The Roman Church is professedly a spiritual power, and its activities should be restricted to its proper domain. And a move in the right direction would be made if each member of the League were to decline to send a political representative to the Vatican. If the Churches in the various countries did so, that would be their business; but it would be an official declaration to the world that, so far as the League was concerned, the Church of Rome was to be kept in its proper place.

Games are to be permitted on Sundays in the recreation ground at Ealing. In the course of the next half century Ealing may rise to the giddy heights of the Continental Sunday.

A condemned man, who was not sure he was going to talk to Jesus, has been hanged. He should have had another chance, for people who commit murder never seem to have any doubts about their salvation.

General Sir W. Thwaites, formerly commander of the 46th Division in France, says he has heard Army chaplains preach the most bloodthirsty sermons before a battle.

The next Lambeth conference of bishops will discuss spiritualism, marriage, and sexual morality. The last item seems quite an old favourite; but the Fathers-in-God have overlooked the claims of the "starving" clergy. Are these poor creatures to go breadless for another year?

A religious contemporary suggests honours for horses. Why not? A large number of asses have already received titles.

In spite of the arbitrary action often taken under D.O.R.A., it is not, according to British law, an offence to have revolutionary literature in one's possession. A statement is now issued by the Press Association, evidently officially inspired, stating that if the "English law is unduly lenient in this respect," making the distribution and not the mere possession an offence, we must not complain at certain results. The announcement looks very much like a piece of official "kite-flying" with the intention of testing the public mind on the subject. The system of Prussianization has gone on apace, but anything more monstrous than this veiled proposal to make the mere possession of "treasonable" literature an offence it is impossible to conceive. We hope that a very sharp eye will be kept on any move in the direction indicated by the Press Association's message.

It must be remembered that offences of the kind implied, as in the case of "blasphemy," belong to what are known as "constructive" offences. And their peculiar feature is that no one knows when an offence has been committed until

a court decides that it is so. Publications that are not treasonable to-day may be so to-morrow. Everybody's liberty is at the mercy of the feeling of the moment. During the War the police distinguished itself by seizing copies of Mill's *Liberty*, and we conceive certain writings of Milton's being branded as treasonable or as calculated to create disaffection. There is no real freedom or justice where one's liberty depends upon the opinion of either a judge or a jury as to whether what one has done is likely to cause trouble.

Referring to the popular hymn, "Rock of Ages," the *Daily News* says that this has been translated into the Kaffir language, and it runs in this style:—

Very old stone, split
For my benefit.
Let me absent myself
Under thy fragments.

We wonder what the intelligent Kaffir thinks of it? Was it not a dusky convert who first roused Bishop Colenso to question the truth of the earlier books of the Bible?

Sometimes a prosaic entry in a calendar provokes thought. A recent entry reminded readers that a certain date was the tenth Sunday after Trinity, and that it was also the 347th anniversary of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Referring to the alterations in the marriage service by the American Episcopal Church, Finlay Dunne, the humourist, suggests that a needed modification should be worded: "Till death us do part," says the parson. "Or the jury," responds the blushing bride.

Here is a gem from a Metropolitan Court of Justice. The solicitor asked a woman: "Have you been an angel to your husband?" The wife answered: "There are no angels in married life."

The American Protestant Episcopal Church has under consideration the question of eliminating the word "obey" from the marriage service. Another suggestion is the alteration of dipping the wafer in the wine instead of drinking from the cup during the communion service.

Another of the "starving" clergy has shuffled off this mortal coil. The Rev. F. B. Teesdale, of Wheatenhurst, Glos., left £40,363.

A cablegram, signed by Dr. Guttery, President of the Free Church Council, Dr. Meyer, and Dr. Rendel Harris, has been sent to President Wilson, asking him to assume mandatory power in the case of Armenia. You can always trust Free Churchmen to think of the claims of liberty—outside of their own country.

A War-memorial dispute has taken place at Ealing, where the congregation of St. Matthew's Church object to the vicar's decoration scheme, which they consider would convert an austere interior into something resembling a cinema. And a picture-palace without Charlie Chaplain, too!

It is estimated that the water supplied by the Metropolitan Water Board works out at forty gallons a day for each Cockney. This ought to satisfy a hard-shell, teetotal Baptist.

Church organ-blowers are worse off than organists, and that is saying something. The late Rev. W. A. Cottee, of Kingerby, Lincs., has left £10 to "the person who blows the organ" at Kingerby Church. "The person" will notice gratefully that the reverend gentleman's estate amounted to £26,839.

A London newspaper writer makes the claim that a certain actor is the best female impersonator seen for a generation. That critic has overlooked the claims of the Bench of Bishops. He ought to see them with their dainty petticoats and lawn sleeves.

Some of our readers will remember how shocked was the House of Commons when one of the Labour Members declined to join in singing "God Save the King" at the signing of peace. Perhaps he agreed with Byron that saving kings was a very doubtful kind of an economy. We grant that it is not possible to charge God with being one of the War profiteers. He is decidedly poorer now the War is over than he was when it commenced. Still, it is not clear what we had to thank him for; and except to keep up a pious humbug, the singing was quite useless. Now we see that this English M.P. has had a successor in Johannesburg. According to the *Rand Daily Mail* for July 6, at a meeting of the Town Council the Mayor moved that thanks be "given to Almighty God, who has guided us through the War to victory." But one of the members wanted to know what we had to thank God for; and as the Mayor couldn't tell him, and as there were not enough members present to form a quorum, the matter had to be adjourned. Perhaps the Mayor will collect evidence before the next meeting. Anyway, God won't know whether he is to be thanked or not till the Council meets again.

At the forthcoming Church Congress one of the subjects to be discussed is "Housing." This is window-dressing, pure and simple. Housing has never been a strong point with Christians. The Founder of their religion is said to have been born in a stable, and the bulk of Christians have lived in hovels ever since.

The Church is fast losing her authority over the nation. She is against divorce, but folk disregard her advice. In one day recently, Mr. Justice Lawrence made absolute decrees nisi granted in no less than thirty-five divorce suits.

The *Daily Mail*—notorious for its devotion to the higher life—has been advising people to go to church, and the *Church Times* is inclined to see in this a promise of better times for the Churches. We doubt it. The movement away from religion has gone too far to be reversed, or even arrested, by an attempted revival of church-going. The *Church Times* properly says that people go to church to worship, and adds that if they care for God there will be no need to teach them to worship. It will come of itself. We are inclined to agree with this. Teach people to care for God. But how if there is a growing conviction that there is no God to care for? Or if there be a God, he is one who shows little care for man. How then? The real point seems to us, teach people that religion is true. Make them realize this—if you can—and all else will follow. And that is the one thing that cannot be done.

"Only fourteen days' coal in Europe" was a headline in a daily paper. This will be cheerful reading for the folk in the place so often mentioned in sermons.

A baby christened at Finchley has been named "Wilson Peace." That Christian baby had a narrow escape. Its pious parents might have named him "Charles Peace."

An indignant correspondent voices his grievance against the July weather by asking the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*: "Is the earth already beginning to cool down?" The earth is quite well, thank you; but a famous portion of the "next world" is much cooler.

Humour lurks under the august sign of the red triangle. A Young Men's Christian Association Holiday Home advertisement states that, "with the exception of the sleeping tents, the camp is shared by men and women." We wonder if the sisters and brethren salute one another with a holy kiss.

It was suggested by the Rev. T. Pym, speaking at St. Martin-in-the-Field's Church, Charing Cross, that men and women should read or study biography. Would he recommend the life of King David, the man after God's own heart, and if not, why not?

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE continuation of the abnormal circumstances created by the War compels—I hope for the last time—a reopening of the Sustentation Fund.

Despite the close of the War the cost of production is hardly less than it was a year ago. Paper is a little cheaper, but wages have increased, and higher prices rule in other directions. On the whole, as was to be expected, the last year of the War saw cost at its highest, the difference between the pre-War figure and that of the past year being about £18 per week.

Fortunately, a large part of this increased cost has been made good by larger sales and an increase of business in general publications. Thanks also to the generous response to last year's appeal, I am able to announce that we close the present year with a deficit of between £260 and £270. It is this deficit I am asking *Freethinker* readers to make good, and if things go, as I have every reason to believe they will, I am hopeful that the present will be the last occasion on which an appeal, similar to the present one, will be necessary. It is impossible, of course, to guarantee this, but our friends may rely upon my doing my best to see that this hope is realized. It is never a pleasant task to appeal for funds, and I prefer pleasant occupations to unpleasant ones. The Sustentation Fund was purely a War measure in its origin, and with the close of the War period we may hope for its disappearance.

Looking back over these last five years, I think we have every reason for satisfaction at the way in which we have pulled through a very trying period, and also cause for confidence in the future. The *Freethinker* is one of the very few papers, the price of which has been kept unchanged, and for the first three and a half years of the War there was no alteration in size. The policy of not raising the price of the paper has been justified by a very substantial increase in circulation, which has not only been a means of keeping down the deficit, but has meant increased usefulness to the Cause. It is to this steady increase in circulation that I chiefly look as the means of placing the paper on a self-supporting basis. That has been my aim ever since I assumed the Editorship, and it will continue to be so.

The policy of previous years has been followed of meeting all business claims as they arose. The deficit represents a debt incurred by me to certain friends, but every claim on the *Freethinker* has been met as it became due. And no second application from anyone for payment has ever had to be made.

Perhaps I ought now to say, seeing that the War is over, that although, as announced at the time, I had arranged to take a very moderate sum for my work as Editor and Manager, I have not, since the death of Mr. Foote, in 1915, taken a single shilling from the paper. What I have done, in order to keep the books clear, is to take the money as salary, and replace it as a loan. The books, which are in the hands of a registered accountant, show this quite clearly. I have no desire to make a virtue of this; simply the money was not there. Capital was needed for fresh publications, the paper had to be kept going—that I was determined on whatever happened—and I could not very well take what was not available. One day I have hopes that the money will be paid, and when things have righted themselves I shall not hesitate to take what is my due. I am only mentioning this now because the War is over, and this is, I hope, the last appeal I shall have to make. I do not think the information will surprise many. Most will have realized that we have not won through without much care, anxiety, forethought, and,

if one may use the expression, self-denial. And behind all there has been the comforting consciousness of the loyalty with which the friends of the paper have always stood by it. Without that knowledge the outlook would have indeed been cheerless.

But the important thing is that we have won through. Not only that, but the *Freethinker* is in a better position than it was when the War opened, and with a good prospect of being made self-supporting in the near future. Nor should it be forgotten that, in spite of the great difficulties in the way of publishing, that branch of our activity has been revived, and has proved of benefit to the Cause. Finally, the *Freethinker* has distributed amongst soldiers, sailors, and others, a very large amount of literature, and has thus been the means of carrying the Gospel of Freethought to regions where it might not otherwise have reached. We are proud of the fact that, despite the difficulties in the way, the *Freethinker* has never forgotten nor forsaken the fact that it stood primarily as the mouthpiece and representative of militant Freethought. Altogether, I think we may all feel satisfied with what has been done, and look forward to the future with cheerfulness.

It is, therefore, with the utmost confidence that I am asking for the deficit of the past year to be cleared off. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to me, and all letters addressed Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. Acknowledgment of all sums received will be made in the *Freethinker*. The first list will be published in the issue dated September 14, and, judging from previous years, I feel certain that it will be one of which the Freethought Party may well be proud.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents.

- C. SALWAY WALLER.—It would be a good test of the power of prayer, but it is not to be expected that the vicar has much reliance on it.
- A. RUSSELL.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible. Yes, we are glad to say that we have a great many readers in Ireland, and we see no reason why we should not have more. If there is one country in Europe that needs the *Freethinker* it is surely Ireland.
- P. V. M.—Thanks. Hope to use at an early date.
- J. M. SILKSTONE.—The *Freethinker* can be sent to any part of the world for 10s. 6d. per year. The badges are out of stock at present, but the supply will be renewed as soon as advisable.
- "IGNOTUS."—We will look out for what you require, and send as soon as we come across it.
- N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: R. J. Thompson, 3s. 6d.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: A. W. D., 4s. 6d.
- J. HIBBOTT.—Certainly your record would be suitable for what was intended, but we could not introduce that feature until we get back to our sixteen pages. Meanwhile, we will keep your MSS. by us for future use.
- L. HARDING.—The problem of making the paper pay its way is really that of bringing it before a sufficiently large number of people. There are quite enough people prepared to take this paper weekly if it is brought to their notice. Every time this is done we are a step nearer success.
- CIVILIAN (Capetown).—No excuse is necessary. Articles are in this paper for use, and if they can be used in other papers so much the better.
- PTE. J. SELBOURNE.—It is very difficult, and even dangerous to express an opinion on such a case as you describe without knowing the person intimately. But to us it looks like a case of suggestion in the first instance and self-deception afterwards. We can understand that it is a source of great anxiety and worry.
- OUR contributor, Mr. W. Mann, informs us that a translation of Laplace's *Mecanique Celeste* was published in 1830 by Messrs. Longmans & Co. It is a volume of over 500 pages, and could only be now obtained from a second hand dealer.

E. EGERTON.—Thanks for portrait which, so far as we can judge, is a good one. We have added it to our office gallery.

W. MACFARLANE.—We have heard of the Darwin story before. The falsity of Lady Hope's story was exposed by a member of the Darwin family—one of the Galton's. Shall hope to see you again when we come North in November.

AUTOLYCUS.—We are obliged for cutting. A useful tit-bit.

D. MACCONELL.—Sorry your *Freethinker* did not come to hand, but are glad of your report. We do hope that our readers will see to it that their newsagents secure the paper for them regularly. There is no reason whatever why they should not.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

An attempt is being made to start definite Freethought propaganda work in Bristol. There are a great many Freethinkers in and about the city, and if those who are interested will communicate with Mr. J. Milton, 15 Perry Street, Stapleton Road, Bristol, the matter might be put in proper trim. We hope that all who can help will do so.

Plymouth friends are trying to arrange a visit from Mr. Cohen, and we are asked to invite all who would co-operate in trying to make the visit the starting-point of a regular propaganda to communicate with Mr. H. Tucker, 7 Sea View Avenue, Plymouth. We trust there will be a ready and generous response to this appeal.

While we are on this topic; will Freethinkers at Portsmouth who are desirous of seeing an energetic campaign carried on there please communicate with the General Secretary, Miss Vance? There are shoals of heretics in the town, and something ought to be attempted there this season.

Some years ago Mr. Cohen wrote a pamphlet on *Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity*. The pamphlet has been long out of print, but there has been constant demands for it. Mr. Cohen has now re-written and enlarged the pamphlet to such an extent as to make it practically a new one. It has, therefore, been re-named *Socialism and the Churches*, and as the subject with which it deals is of special interest just now, there should be a rapid sale. *Socialism and the Churches* is well printed on good paper, and with neat cover. The price is 3d., postage 1d.

All human creatures, in all ages and places of the world, who have had warm affections, common sense, and self-command, have been, and are, Naturally Moral. Human nature in its fullness is necessarily Moral,—without Love, it is inhuman,—without sense, inhuman,—without discipline, inhuman. In the exact proportion in which men are bred capable of these things, and are educated to love, to think, and to endure, they become noble,—live happily—die calmly.

—John Ruskin.

On Chinese Lanterns.

THE impulse to be deceived finds a ready source of deception. The open eye may be a less sure judge than the closed one, and the screening of light may possess more symbolism than a piece of biscuit accepted as a portion of a man's body. Be that as it may, Chinese lanterns are very pretty. They are pretty to look at when lit up on summer evenings. Their mellow glow lends an air of enchantment to the most common surroundings, and if Ariel or Prospero should make an appearance, we, for one, should not be startled. Fairies are busiest in moonlight—the gleaming rays of the sun would scorch their wings. As their mission is to hang dewdrops on the tiny green swords sticking out of the ground, this work could not be done in the heat of the day. We are told in all good faith by a child of our acquaintance that they also repair broken flowers. It is not for us to cast doubt in the mind of one who thinks that beauty is eternal. Twilight, evening, deepest darkness—these are the times for light. Where sleeps the genius who first thought of surrounding the yellow flame of a candle with coloured paper? Maybe he sleeps with the other genius who invented bread-and-butter; and our sense of the fitness of things, of their quiet and majestic repose, would not allow it to be broken by the company of the lesser genius who invented poison gas and barbed wire.

Autolycus, wearing a very shabby pair of modern trousers, and living in one of our mean London streets, sold to us a Chinese lantern. It is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Is it not an illusion? When folded, you might guess its nature as many times as man has tried to discover the philosopher's stone. When opened, it displays a lovely coloured form that pleases the eye by its outline. On its corrugated sides, ultramarine smudges conjure up the beauty of a peacock's tail. There are red and yellow squares, suggestive of the game of chess—the game of life—where the bishop moves on the cross. Vivid red dragons on a pale green and yellow background are clawing the air. This does not disturb the for ever growing state of some lilac of the palest blue. Gold colour of sunrise or sunset is cunningly worked into the patterns; and emerald green takes us to the sea.

"The eyes of the multitude," says Plato, "are not strong enough to behold Truth." In a republic of masters and slaves this is true—it would be dangerous for the masters if it were false. In modern and more congenial times of monarchy, when truth seems to be below the bottom of the well, the lath and plaster of Democracy is content with the patronage of those who keep it up their lawn sleeves. Our great philosophers think they have found it, and bury it in expensive books. It is impossible for them to write about it in words of one or two syllables. Others find its counterfeit, and proceed to surround it by coloured paper. These are industrious people; they delight us with their poetry. The glow-worm lures its victims to destruction by its phosphorescent light; the moth will shatter or burn its delicate wings in an attempt to lose itself in light. This, in itself, seems a good reason why we should sleep through the darkness of superstition; or, better still, not trouble to look for truth in the night. Screech-owls, dressed in black, carrying farthing dips, will give us all kinds of stupid advice. They will ask to get on our backs so that their light may be used to better advantage. If we are wise we shall say: "Not to-night will we make our journey—we will wait for the sunrise; to carry you is too big a price to pay for your farthing dip, and we reason that the sun will want no such payment."

Maybe a mighty European impact was caused through the guidance of farthing dops. We would not kill a man nor break an egg in rage because a man's sense of beauty was dead to the glorious colour of a Chinese lantern.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Is Religion a Private Matter?

RELIGION, which may be defined as the relationship of men and women to a Supernatural Power, variously described, and the obligations which flow from such relationship, is spoken of and written about as though it were a matter peculiar to the individual, into the make-up of which no one has a right to inquire unless by special permission. This view is more generally held than many imagine, and often serves to shield hypocrisy and cowardice; so it is well that its validity should be tested. A person may cultivate a certain taste in dress or preference in foods, and so long as the rights of others in regard to such matters are not disregarded, no one is entitled to interfere or obstruct. All this was carefully elaborated years ago by John Stuart Mill, in his Essay on "Liberty." The most a friend can do (and this is wise only in special cases) is to judiciously advise. When the word "private" is so broadened out in meaning as to include ideas and opinions supposed to be above the influence of reason, those who believe that all ideas can be subjected to inquiry and analysis, are justified in entering their dissent.

One may differ from another in regard to questions of Science, Art, Literature, Trade, or Politics, but the line should be drawn at Religion. The feelings of the religious person might be wounded, and discussion would only lead to quarrelling. Besides, it is unseemly to differ over matters that concern Religion. Naturally, and even more or less inevitably, religious people erect a fence round religious territory to keep intruders from trespassing on the holy ground; but that is no sufficient reason for docile acquiescence on the part of others. Religion is no more a private matter than any other subject—form of tradition, knowledge, or experience. A plausible, mystifying phrase serves as a plea for safety from attack, and a present, pleasant refuge from the rough winds of controversy. Mere quarrelling is not admirable, but discussions on Religion need not lead to strife unless as an unconscious indication of defeat, when calmness and tact avert disaster. Occasion and manner of discussion are matters regarding which much might be written, but it is no more wise to suppress or tone down one's ideas on Religion to accommodate the wishes of others when no reasonable ground arises for offence, than it is to act similarly in regard to other subjects. Of course, full expression of opinion is withheld on many subjects in private and public for varied reasons. It is seldom, if ever, claimed that the all-sufficient justification lies in the magic phrase, "This is a private matter." The phrase suggests the subject.

Another view is worth consideration. In the sphere of social activities the plea again fills a gap. It is contended that, politically, men and women may be Conservatives or Liberals without reference to religious opinions, that Protestants and Catholics alike are included in Trade Union membership for Trade Union reasons, and that Religion and Socialism are not necessarily antagonistic. Toleration for the sake of combination, and a sense of proportion to enable difficult situations to be effectively handled, are admirable qualities, but if one is obliged to suppress one's views and opinions when these are really complementary to social formula, merely to please individuals or remove seeming stumbling-blocks from the path of timid sympathizers, toleration approaches

cowardice, and sense of proportion tends towards mental obliquity. A Movement that aims at material wealth for all, based on useful service, has no kind of need for the God idea. If God does nothing for Humanity, surely those who lead the way in altering human conditions can very well do without God!

A means of escape presents itself, and a last stand is made round the well-known phraseology "Religion is a private matter." But why pretend that ideas which are antagonistic to each other (the God idea and human efforts aided by natural forces, guided by human intelligence) blend and harmonize? This so-called private matter colours our outlook on Life, and requires accommodation outwardly, or insidiously, and by stealth. Far better is it to be intellectually honest than to suppress affinities in opinion for the sake of pleasing individuals, or promoting Social well-being with God as an onlooker who has to be humoured by silence or recognized by a strict policy of non-interference.

Each man and woman grows his or her own opinions, however gathered, but the growth is for use in relation to others, and Socialists should openly declare their detachment from the Supernatural, without entering the field of religious controversy. Then Humanity would begin to win all along the line, for, when the forces of Social reconstruction can do without God and his agents, people will learn to think and act for themselves, to the immense benefit of all.

Phrases which are quietly allowed to circulate, without scrutiny or protest, gradually become acceptable as verbal coinage in the realm of speech, till their substance and worth are tested and their value understood. In the category of such phrases the well-worn example in reference to Religion is worth remembering.

ALFRED RUSSELL.

God at St. Ives.

BROWNING told us that "God's in his Heaven." But Browning's evidence does not count, for he stultified it by adding "all's right with the world"—an error of judgment "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." Moreover, Browning is not orthodox. All the orthodox theologians, the experts in that line of business, agree that God is everywhere, expressing the idea by the more solemn-sounding word omnipresent. If I was not heartily convinced that he is nowhere, I should incline, on humanitarian grounds, to prefer Browning's version. In his heaven, where nothing unhappy might intrude, God's ignorance regarding certain occurrences on earth might be held to exonerate him; but when he is everywhere all the time, he has no excuse. Accepting for the moment the official statement, I am reluctantly compelled to admit that God was at St. Ives one week-end. As he is the creator and sustainer of the universe, he cannot be supposed to be without influence on events at St. Ives, especially when he was there in person. Even if not guilty of "malice aforethought," he must be guilty of "culpable negligence," for something happened at St. Ives which no effort of human ingenuity can reconcile with justice, nor, indeed, with anything but the most damnable and wanton cruelty on the part of Nature, supposing it to have a conscious director behind it. That the horrible incident, which is of quite a common type, should be reported in the daily press and read by millions of Christians without waking the dormant seeds of reason in their religion-sodden brains is a striking testimony to the immoral effects of the Christian theology. The incident, briefly, was as follows:—

A man, who had been discharged from the Navy, blinded and paralyzed, was lying in his bed in a cottage, while his wife took their children to the shore. On returning, she found the house in flames. The woman heroically fought her way to the side of her helpless husband, and succeeded in dragging him to the window. Before a ladder could be procured, she too disappeared, overcome

by the fumes, and their charred remains were found with the woman's arms still locked round the man "in an attitude of protection." Those are the words of the *Daily News*. Do its readers make no inference? Does not the noble action of this poor man's wife convey to their minds some hint of the fact that man is greater than his God? These two perished by fire—the one helpless, the other "in an attitude of protection"—while the God we are asked to worship stood by and, we presume, admired the bonfire and pronounced it good. Indignation is a mild term for the feeling that such an act on the part of a human being would evoke in the public mind. If God's acts, then, are so much worse than man's acts, why not re-name him Devil, as he deserves? The pious who worship at this shrine are devil-worshippers, flatterers of a foul tyrant, who will reward them for acquiescing in his misgovernment of the universe.

Atheism is a necessity on moral grounds as well as on intellectual. The recognition that morality is a product of the communal evolution of life, and has no existence or meaning apart from that, relieves Nature, inanimate or non-rational, of the charge of cruelty which no conscious God can escape, and thus removes from our minds the bitter hatred which the victims of a tyranny cannot but feel as one of the heaviest of our burdens. Nature, unseeing, unconscious, moves on its way, and all we can do is to study her laws and prevent the recurrence of mishaps to the best of our ability. Nature is not a tyrant—her forces know not what they do; but God, did he exist, is worthy of nothing but loathing. Shelley's incomparable poem of "Prometheus Unbound" typifies the only moral attitude to this monster created by the mind of deluded man.

H. TRUCKELL.

Correspondence.

A CANONIZED MORAL THEOLOGIAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the *Freethinker* for July 6 appeared a letter making a quotation from "Liguori" on the subject of sexual morality. The present writer, although he has not specialized in moral theology, yet has had various opportunities of getting a somewhat careful acquaintance with that and other theological subjects.

"Liguori" (the Catholic Church's name for him is "St. Alphonsus Liguori") is, of all theological writers, the most dangerous for laymen to study. This is not because his system is peculiar, but because it is so elaborate and goes into such an infinite number of minute questions. The result of this infinite elaboration is that an unwary reader may see some isolated passage and, reading it without its context, misunderstand it.

Alphonsus Mary Anthony John Cosmas Damian Michael Gaspard de' Liguori was born on September 27, 1696, at his father's country house at Marienella, near Naples. The family was an ancient one, and of noble rank, but Alphonsus belonged to a junior branch of it. His father (Don Joseph de' Liguori) was a naval officer; his mother, a Spaniard. The boy was bright and quick, and made great progress in learning. At the age of sixteen he took his degree as Doctor of Laws, although the statutes fixed twenty as the minimum age, and an exception had to be made in his case. He entered upon a brilliant career in the legal profession; but in 1723 he had a "spiritual crisis," which determined him to adopt the ecclesiastical state instead. He became a priest on December 21, 1726, at the age of thirty. The great work of his life was the foundation of a new Order, called the "Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer," or "Redemptorists." This Order was begun on November 9, 1732, in a little hospice at Scala. Although Alphonsus was its founder, he did not at first take a prominent part in controlling it; being at first under the guidance of the Bishop of Castellamare, Alphonsus did not become its Superior-General until the death of that prelate.

Students are aware that, when Ignatious of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, he at first met only with ridicule and opposition. A very similar state of affairs greeted Alphonsus. The primary work of his new Order was that of giving missions. Alphonsus, however, was indomitable against opposi-

tion; and eventually his Order became a great power. At the present day it has many churches, one in London (Lower Edmonton).

In 1762 he was made Bishop of a small Neapolitan diocese, that of St. Agatha of the Goths. This see, however, he resigned in 1775. The last years of his life were clouded by the treachery of supposed friends, who, by enticing him into signing a document which fundamentally altered the constitution of his Order, brought him not only into conflict with secular foes, but also into displeasure with the Pope. It was only after his death that the trouble cleared away, and his Order was restored to unity, having, by the troubles, been divided into two sections.

It will be seen that Alphonsus was originally rather a man of action than a writer. He only became an author fairly late in life—namely, in 1745—when his age was fifty. His great work on *Moral Theology* (*Theologia Moralis*) appeared first in 1753, and during his lifetime nine editions were called for. He also wrote numerous works of a devotional character. He died at Nocera de' Pagani, on August 1, 1787.

Catholic moral theology is an elaborate science,¹ and, if one wishes to study it, one must do so with care. This, of course, is the case in regard to any science whatever. Moral theology, is the study of man and his actions in relation to his "last end." Now, the actions of a man are infinite in number and complexity; therefore, the study of them will be ditto. Let us beware, therefore, of making isolated quotations. For example, the *Freethinker* correspondent quoted Liguori and Cardenas as to the lawfulness of a guilty wife's concealment of an act of adultery. Of course, the whole question there dealt with is the lawfulness, not of the adultery (which, having, in the supposed case, been actually committed, is the basis of the difficulty) but of the concealment. Liguori's opinion that she may conceal it is based on the ground that no person, even if guilty, is obliged to destroy publicly his own reputation unless some adequate good comes of such destruction. Alphonsus himself was at first a "rigorist" in moral theological teaching, but his opinions relaxed with practical experience of the world, and his final system followed the ideas of the Society of Jesus, which Society, while inflexibly maintaining fundamental axioms, applies them as moderately as possible to individual cases.

On the subject of adultery, Liguori, of course, took the view which every Catholic theologian must necessarily take, i.e., that it is absolutely evil in every case. Indeed, Liguori even went beyond the opinions of some theological teachers, for he gave the name of "adultery" even to improper acts between a lawful man and wife (see *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. i., p. 163, col. 2, top).

In regard to the opinions of Catholic theologians in relation to such matters as sexual morality the following may be quoted:—

Temperance is a virtue which regulates by the judgment of reason those desires and delights which attend upon the operations whereby human nature is preserved in the individual and propagated in the species. Temperance is the virtue contrary to the two deadly sins of Gluttony and Lust. As against the former, it represents Abstinence, or moderation in solid food, and Sobriety, which is moderation in drink. As against the latter, it is the great virtue of Chastity. The student must bear in mind that, to a philosopher, Temperance does not mean Total Abstinence.....Temperance, then, is made up of Abstinence, Sobriety, and Chastity (Joseph Rickaby, S.J., *Moral Philosophy*, third ed., pp. 90-91).

However, our glances into this subject have been longer than we intended, and we must close. The subject is both interesting and profound.

J. W. POYNTER.

WISE AND FREE THINKING.

SIR,—A Freethinker may surely think freely, but when he writes of stupidity it behoves him to think wisely.

For unadulterated stupidity commend me to the note in which you are good enough to concern yourself with my "Plain Man's Pulpit." The writer sets out to show that I am a stupid man, as he is entitled to do, and he begins by

¹ The science of human nature falls far short of the standard of exactness now realized in Astronomy; but there is no reason why it should not be as much a science as Tidology is.—Mill, *Logic*, ed. 1884, p. 553.

telling his readers that I informed the readers of *Lloyd's News* that, but for Professor Haeckel, there might not have been a German Empire.

I am not concerned that you should think me stupid, but I am concerned that journalism should be honest and wise. Only an imbecile or a rogue could attribute to me the sentence you put in my mouth. I said nothing of the kind; what I did say was, not that Haeckel made the German Empire, but that he was one of its destroyers.

Let us keep our freedom in thinking by all means, but let us keep a little sanity too.

ARTHUR MEE.

[The two passages quoted from Mr. Mee's article were "but for him there might not have been a German Empire," and Haeckel "founded what is called Materialism." Mr. Mee questions only the first. Referring to the article we find the sentence to run: "Who knows that but for him there might not have been a German Empire yet." We regret that in transcribing the passage the sense should have been reversed, and apologize for the blunder. But we do not see that attributing to Haeckel the downfall of the Empire is any less stupid than giving him credit for its creation. Save as a variation in folly there seems little to choose between the two statements. And, after all, we question whether creating the German Empire is more remarkable than for Haeckel to have "founded what is called Materialism." Mr. Mee either does or does not know that Materialism is a form of thinking that is as old as philosophy, and as he objects to foolish statements being called stupid, he will perhaps be good enough to say how that remark ought to be described. Quite frankly, it is deliverances such as those of Mr. Mee's that lower English journalism in the minds of all informed readers, and which would not be were the general public better educated than is actually the case.—EDITOR.]

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National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 28.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Kelf, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Palmer, Quinton, Rogers, Rosetti, and Silverstein, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed.

The Treasurer's Report presented and adopted.

It was reported that a further grant of £100 had been received from the Secular Society, Ltd.

New members were received for the Edinburgh, Maesteg, Regent's Park, and West Ham Branches, and the Parent Society, twelve in all.

The Secretary reported many fruitless attempts to secure London Halls for lectures in the autumn, and that a course of Sunday afternoon lectures had been arranged at South Place for the afternoons of October 12, 19, and 26.

It was also reported that Mr. Harry Snell had raised the question of the refusal of the L.C.C. Parks' Committee to permit the sale of the *Freethinker*, and that the matter would be raised again after the L.C.C. recess.

Suggestions as to the distribution of literature in London were received and remitted to the Propagandist Committee.

Other minor details were dealt with. The Secretary reported that she was taking a brief holiday and the meeting adjourned.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON,
INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Reality of Moral Forces."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Band Stand): 6.15, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 6, Mr. E. C. Saphin, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (near Band Stand): 3, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "Is There a God?"; "Bible Chestnuts," Rebaked and Boiled by Bob Norman.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. F. Shaller, "Is Christianity Played Out?"

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Saphin, Dales, Baker, and Ratcliffe.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 6.30, Lecture, "The Origin and End of Worlds."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Branch Meeting.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's Rooms): Members meet every Sunday at 5.45 (afternoon). Lectures in Victoria Square at 7.15.

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