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Views and Opinions.

Socialism and Religion.

In the pamphlet, *Socialism and the Churches*, we noted that, while on the Socialist platform there were plenty of assertions as to the identity of Socialism with Christianity, one looked in vain for an equally clear declaration that Socialism had no connection with religion. The comment was meant to call the attention of those Socialists who are Freethinkers to the way in which their platform is being used by Christian preachers and time-serving politicians to bolster up Christianity, and to urge upon them the need for asserting their own beliefs in relation to religion. As we explained in the course of the pamphlet, we did not mean by this that Socialists should spend their time in preaching Atheism, or that Atheism and Socialism were always convertible terms. It was part of a statement that scientific Socialism was Atheistic, inasmuch as it had nothing to do with the belief in God, and that so long as Christian preachers and others were busy trying to identify Socialism with "true Christianity," or "true religion," self-respect seemed to demand from those Socialists who really understood their case a distinct repudiation of the attempted identification. If Socialism, or any other "ism," is to be of permanent benefit to the people, those who advocate it must have clear ideas as to what it is and what it is not. Clear thinking is even more important than good intentions. The world has never been lacking in the latter; it has, time after time, gone wrong for want of the former.

* * *

God and the Socialists.

In the course of a very friendly notice of our pamphlet, *Justice* remarks that when Socialists speak of the religion of Socialism,—

They mean that the democratic fraternity which Socialism aims at realizing by economic emancipation and a corresponding political emancipation is, to them, an inspiration as all-compelling as was the love of God in the ancient form of faith.....With that borne in mind, we can meet friend Cohen by declaring that social democracy is in no way dependent upon or associated with the Christian religion, or the Jewish, or Hindu, or Buddhist, or Moslem.

If all that is meant by the platform identification

of Socialism and Christianity is that Socialists feel their faith as inspiring as that of any religion, there can be no disagreement. This is no more than an Atheist would say about his Atheism. But we think they mean more than this. If their statements mean anything at all, they clearly mean that Socialism is religious in such a sense that it is in full accord with Christian teachings, and is even based on those teachings. To say that Socialism is as good as religion, would be such a harmless remark that it would not be worth the saying. Everyone who rejects one form of belief for another believes the new to be at least as good as the old, otherwise there would be no change. What these Socialists mean is that Socialism is in some sense based upon the Christian belief in God, and has in some way grown out of Christian teachings. That they make these statements with their tongues in their cheeks is quite possible, but one must take public utterances at their face value, or not at all.

* * *

An Implied Atheism.

We will return to that point in a moment. Meanwhile, we will take another point that is touched upon by our friendly reviewer. Our claim was that, while Socialism and Atheism were not convertible terms, inasmuch as Socialism was in no way based upon the belief in God it was properly described as an atheistic system. On this our critic remarks:—

Yes, but this amounts to affirming that Socialism, chemistry, geography, the theory of ether, bookkeeping by double entry, and cricket are all atheistic. They are in a philosophical sense, but one must talk the tongue of daily life when engaged in daily life. Your ordinary citizen thinks of an Atheistic institution or system as one that deliberately sets out to attack Church doctrines. We cannot allow that, on that interpretation, Social-democracy is Atheistic.

Well, we do affirm that geography, chemistry, etc., are atheistic. That is precisely part of our case as an Atheist, and precisely why we object to all those half-hearted tactics and compromisingly "respectable" plans which consist in first of all rejecting all that is really religious, and then taking enormous pains to assure the religious world that one is still *truly* religious, or that we retain the spirit of true religion, even though we may have rejected its forms. My only demand is when people believe in God they should say so. When they do not believe in God they should say so. And when a man does not believe in a God we know of no other word than Atheist that properly and honestly describes his position. So, when a system is not based upon, does not involve, and makes no appeal to the belief in God, we know of no other word than Atheist that properly and fairly describes it. And we can see nothing either intellectually admirable or socially useful in using a word such as religion—which has a well recognized meaning to the ordinary man—in one sense, while they who hear it cannot fail to understand it in another.

From God to Man.

The evolution of society is from some form of belief in God to its rejection. In other words, the progress of thought is from Theism to Atheism. This is so general, so universal, that one may fairly describe it as a law of social growth. Those illustrate it who are least conscious of its operation. And its effect is seen in the transition of geography, chemistry, and all other forms of mental and social activity from a Theistic to an Atheistic basis; that is, from a form in which some appeal to God is involved, to one in which the idea of God is altogether discarded. We paid Socialism the compliment of assuming that it had outgrown the religious or fetishistic frame of thought, and had reached the positive or scientific one. We assume that, because Socialism, whether it be sound or unsound, sensible or silly, really has nothing to do with religion. It is, as we have said, and as we now repeat, an Atheistic system. And when we talk of Atheism, we mean what responsible Atheists always have meant by it—without belief in a God. That a large number of people who are as much without a belief in God as we are, and therefore are as much Atheists as we are, choose to call themselves by some other name, something a little less definite, and a little more pleasant to the religious world, because no one is quite sure what it means, is their business. It is only one more illustration of the fact that moral courage is a rare thing in the world, and is not to be acquired by merely disowning the orthodox faith.

* * *

The Need for Plain Speech.

We quite agree with our critic that we must talk the tongue of daily life when we are engaged in daily life. That is precisely our case. It is quite certain that when someone on a platform or in the press talks of Socialism as being religious, and as being essentially Christian, and when that carries with it a repudiation of Atheism as though it were some sort of a moral plague, it is certain that the ordinary man will take religion to mean, not the possession of an inspiration equal to that of the religious one, but that Socialism really is religious in the legitimate and proper sense of the word. And we have no hesitation in saying—while freely making an exception in the case of our critic—it is intended they should have that impression. Intellectual insincerity is, indeed, one of the afflictions of our public life, and makes it the more necessary that those who are aiming at something more than a mere political shuffle should set an example in the right direction. A "democratic fraternity," or any other fraternity worth having, will never arrive until we have taught people clearness of vision and courage of speech. We are far more convinced of the need for clear and informed thinking than we are of our need for moral endeavour. The world has never been short of the latter, but when undirected by the former it has been as productive of harm as deliberate villainy. Ignorance is not merely the mother of devotion, it is the seed-plot of some of the gravest of our social evils. The greater need for those who stand forward as teachers is to see that their message shall be put forward without subterfuge, and as free from ambiguity as deliberate and considered speech can make it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Covet not overmuch. Let the strong desires come and go; refuse them not, disown them not; but think not that in them lurks finally the thing you want.

Presently they will fade away and into the intolerable light will dissolve like gossamers before the sun.

—Edward Carpenter.

The Menace of Secularism.

III.

It is indisputable that Secularism is a formidable menace to all forms of supernaturalism. Some divines pretend to ignore its existence altogether, while a few others treat it with silent contempt. The majority, however, regard it as their arch-enemy and denounce it in the wildest and most scathing terms at their command. What Secularism is and endeavours to achieve they do not seem to understand. Sometimes it is defined as blatant Atheism; but both the noun and the adjective are wholly inaccurate and misleading. Secularism is not Atheism, though most Secularists are openly avowed Atheists; and certainly it is no more blatant than the Christian religion. Without defining it at all, Mrs. Gell characterizes its "results" as most ghastly. She gives examples:—

What do we find in Wales? We find that, whereas about one-third of the marriages take place in church, and considerably under a third in Nonconformist chapels, the average number of marriages celebrated *without any religious ceremony at all* is 6,238. Think what this means. There are nearly 13,000 people every year in Wales who deliberately decide that they will enter on what should be the most sacred human relation without the consecration of God's blessing. How can it be expected that a union from which God has been purposely excluded can be regarded as other than a mere civil contract, in which the law, having bound them together, the law can loose them should they desire it? Is it not heart-breaking to contemplate such a lowering of ideals, such a Pagan attitude towards a Divine institution, affecting as it does the whole future of the race? (pp. 55-6.)

It never occurred to the author, evidently, that in penning such a passage she was piling up evidences of the utter impotence of both Church and Chapel to check the gradual secularization of life in Wales. Organized Secularism there was not then in any part of the Principality; but the Secular spirit was all the time silently working and almost imperceptibly creating a Secular atmosphere. In other words, Mrs. Gell herself furnishes abundant proof of the complete failure of the Church in Wales. She declares that it is pre-eminent among the forces which make for righteousness; and yet she is forced to recognize the fact that in Wales, where it has been in active existence since the year 200, it has never succeeded in winning the people to its way of looking at so important a subject as marriage.

Now, why is Secularism regarded as a menace? Our author does not take the trouble to tell us. That it is a serious menace to Churches and Chapels is undeniable; but one naturally infers from certain expressions in her book that in Mrs. Gell's opinion it is a menace to truth and righteousness, and to the decencies of social life as well. Curiously enough, although the Church is pre-eminent among the forces which make for righteousness, and despite all the advantages it derives from its connection with the State, righteousness is conspicuous by its absence from most of the relationships of life. "One cannot take up a newspaper," Mrs. Gell says, "without reading of grievous wrongs and evils in our midst, crimes of violence, of intemperance, of impurity," after fully seventeen hundred years of the Christian Church. Clearly, such a woeful state of things, so far from being the outcome of the prevalence of Secularism, is a most damaging witness against the efficiency of the Body of Christ. As yet Secularism has never had its innings, except once in India under Buddhism, when the result of its reign

was pre-eminently satisfactory, and we are convinced that when it gets a fair trial in the West it will be justified of all its children. For Secularism is simply a philosophy of life in this world, based on the principle of universal brotherhood. It is a philosophy of this life without any reference to another. Instead of undermining morality, as many Christians aver, it lays its whole emphasis upon every individual's duty to make his or her life a contribution to the sum of social welfare. Mrs. Gell finds fault with M. Paul Bert's *Moral Catechism*, because it forbids instructors to teach that there is a God; but surely she is aware that God is not an object of knowledge, and that in the absence of knowledge teaching is not morally allowable. To teach children that there is a God is to be guilty of a species of immorality. To Secularism, God is a purely imaginary Being with whom it can have absolutely nothing to do; but while it has nothing to do with the supernatural, it revels in the natural, making it the only subject of study, the sole standard of duty and arbiter of virtue. As the late G. W. Foote, in his famous debate with Dr. McCann, well said:—

Secularism is the philosophy of this life, without reference to another; it recognizes no providence but science, and no saviour but human effort, and it regards the public welfare as the criterion of right and wrong. The ground and guarantee of morality exist in human nature. All real progress is Secular, not Christian (p. 58).

Secularism, as thus defined, is doubtless a menace to all forms of Christianity; but it is the glowing hope of humanity, and one can address it in the fine words of the poet Campbell:—

Auspicious Hope! in thy sweet garden grow
Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every woe.

The late Hugh Price Hughes once referred to "those truths of Secularism which are happily no longer neglected by Christian teachers;" but the reverend gentleman was radically mistaken, because the Secular or natural truths found in Christianity are vitiated by their unnatural incorporation in a system essentially supernatural. Secularism urges us to pursue virtue in the strength of our own nature; but Christianity assures us that virtue is attainable alone when supernatural grace fills our hearts. Secularism says to everyone: "Save thyself and become the saviour of thy fellow-beings"; but Christianity says, "Salvation is impossible except through wholehearted trust in the finished work of Christ; come to him and be saved." Thus the Secular Gospel appeals to us as members of society, and as being individually and collectively responsible for all social conditions. It addresses us not as fallen and sinful, lost and ruined, but as imperfect, undeveloped, endowed with magnificent possibilities and promises which are capable of conversion into actual fulfilments by our own efforts alone. Such a Gospel, enthusiastically believed and acted upon, would inaugurate a new era in human history, abolish all artificial class distinctions, enthrone justice and fairplay in all departments of life, and out of the present social hell evolve a paradise aglow with peace and prosperity. As thus understood, Secularism is a menace to nothing except unreality and superstition, while it offers encouragement and cheer to all endeavours after a higher and nobler standard of social behaviour.

The Hon. Mrs. Gell expatiates with pride upon the witness of the Church for Christ, upon its summons of the faithful, Sunday by Sunday, to the worship of the Most High, and upon the services of intercession constantly carried on for all classes and conditions of people, even for the thousands of colliers whose work will not

permit them to attend themselves. Then she significantly adds:—

Tried by whatever test we like to apply, whether the number of baptisms or of confirmations, or of new churches built, or of increase in the staff of clergy to cope with the growing population, or, above all, of those who kneel in humble faith at the sacred feast of Holy Communion, these poor Welsh dioceses show a record which puts many of our wealthy English Sees to shame. The history of the Church in Wales for the past half century is one of steady, continuous upward growth. During the last eighty years no less than 800 new churches and mission-rooms have been built; the number of resident clergy has been more than doubled; the number of Sunday services has nearly trebled, and wherever Welsh is the most familiar language of the people they are held in that tongue. Confirmations and baptisms show a steady increase, while the Easter communicants, which were 134,000 in 1906, had gone up over 10,000 by 1909. It is impossible with these figures before us to doubt that the Church is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of Wales (p. 57).

We are quite prepared to admit the truth of every statement, except the last, in that long extract, and that thus judged the Welsh Church has latterly been an unqualified success; but that standard of judgment is fundamentally wrong. Ostensibly the Church exists as God's instrument to redeem the world, reorganize society, right all wrongs, and redress all grievances. Wales is chock full of churches and chapels, vying with one another in zeal and devotion, and yet Wales, like other parts of the country, is in a state of disastrous unrest, as far below the ideal of justice, brotherhood, and charity as it well can be, the fact being that towards the solutions of the vexed problems confronting it organized Christianity makes no contribution whatever. Mrs. Gell seems fully satisfied with the fact that the number of Easter communicants went up over ten thousand in two years, and that confirmations and baptisms show a steady increase. This evidently indicates that the kingdom of God is in a flourishing condition in poor old Wales; but what the Principality needs above everything else is the firm establishment in its midst of the kingdom of man, for the coming of which churches and chapels have done and are doing practically nothing. This is the kingdom which Secularism teaches us to seek with all our might, but the coming of which the Church has often, not only discouraged, but openly resisted, and the preachers of which it has generally persecuted and sometimes put to death. And yet, in spite of all opposition and wicked delays, man's kingdom is coming slowly, and it is on exclusively Secular lines that its advances are being made. Yes, Secularism is a serious menace to priestcraft in all its stages, to other-worldism of every form, and to all the silly vagaries of sacramentalism, but it advocates the essential brotherhood of mankind and the solidarity that should grow out of it, and lays its supreme emphasis upon the need of loving and sympathetic cooperation in the grand mission which has the purification and ennoblement of human society as its sole aim.

J. T. LLOYD.

Would but some winged Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

Oh Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire.

— Omar Khayyam (Fitzgerald's).

"Chartered Libertines."

Literature and art have in all ages required a strong moral supervision and restraint.—*Canon Horsley.*

"Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?"

"No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb, sir."—*Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet."*

How pleasant it is for the cultured clergy to have a resident scapegoat on hand to be "damned for the sins they're not inclined to." Whether the victim enjoys it so much is no matter. When, however, the shocked virtue of a Canon of the Established Church utters shouts of prudery concerning modern novels, the feeling of hopelessness that must follow any attempt to instil facts into such muddled brain-matter leaves us again defeated by the outcry of Philistine pruriency.

Canon Horsley has been employing his ample leisure by writing a two-column article in a Sunday paper on the "Evil Influence of Modern Novels," and this is what he says:—

No list of the causes of low morality in the upper and middle classes would be complete if it excluded the influence of very many of our popular novels.

And then he quotes from Bishop Porteus, who lived before the days of the novel-readers, and when the standard of public decency was so much lower:—

The contagion of a licentious publication knows no bounds; it falls into the hands of all ages, ranks, and conditions; but is peculiarly fatal to the unguarded minds of the youthful of both sexes, and to them its breath is poison and its touch is death.

Bishop Porteus, it is to be noted, knew nothing of modern novels. He addressed our great grandparents, and the books he had in mind may still be seen in the British Museum Library, provided that the applicant is a man with a strong constitution. To associate, however, such allusions to the present-day novelists is ridiculous. When such insults come from a priest, who thrusts the open Bible into the hands of innocent childhood, our sense of justice is outraged. For there are things in the sacred volume which are eminently calculated to bring the blush of modesty on any face except that of a clergyman. Raw, naked filth, which cannot be read aloud to a mixed congregation, is compulsorily forced into the hands of every child and every maiden; but masters of fiction, who would fain present their puppets as sentient beings, must emasculate and etherealize them until they are the mere shadows of shades of men and women, swayed by motives and temptations that would be held blameless by the Rev. Mr. Stiggins, and gain the approval of Mr. Samuel Pecksniff himself.

For a writer must not even suggest, with Shakespeare, that man is, in sober truth, "the paragon of animals," and that man is no more able to cast off his body than he could sprout the legendary wings which are the recognized attributes of a church-window angel. That a clergyman should go out of his way to denounce modern novels as immoral, is an illustration of the extremely loose meaning attached to words the clergy fling about so recklessly. How such a man can read the account of Ezekiel's banquet, or the story of Onan, and the adventures of Lot and his daughters, without remark, and exhaust the vocabulary of vituperation with regard to present-day fiction is inexplicable, except on the hypothesis that he has the same extraordinary notions of morality as the great Tartuffe.

We are quite satisfied that Canon Horsley's indignation is overdone. All public libraries have committees of selection, and the censorship in the circulating libraries is very drastic. How can the shelves of such places be crowded with "guides to seduction," or "palliatives to

adultery"? If Canon Horsley has any real reason for safeguarding the morality of young people, he will see at once that, if the ordinary novel would corrupt a young reader, the Bible would corrupt a regiment. No present-day novelist would dare to disfigure his pages with salacious details of Oriental vice. He would be imprisoned and his books destroyed by order of a magistrate. Yet Canon Horsley and his colleagues force the Bible, which contains all this nastiness, into the hands of every child. Instead of prating of indecent literature, let the clergy themselves set an example. Let them cease to force into the innocent hands of little children a volume which they dare no longer read in its completeness to a mixed audience of adults. Until they consent to do this, they merit the title of "Chartered Libertines."

MIMNERMUS.

Holiday Notes and Discussions.

One of the greatest assets of the Christian religion is a sense of humour.—*Dr. H. Lynn Hough.*

DURING the glorious month of August I wandered about in the land of the British Jack Tar—viz, Portsmouth—the man who saved this country from the invasion of the enemy by his ceaseless vigilance and labour on the high seas, and later in the training land of the British Tommy at Aldershot. In both places I found many Freethinkers. Sailors, as a rule, are very superstitious; but the modern Jack Tar is a very intelligent and genial sort of fellow, not so easy to be imposed upon as the sailor of former generations. In the course of his career, Jack sees a good deal of the world, and, as he keeps his eyes wide open, he does not miss much of interest. It is no good trying to impose upon Jack. Tell him that Jesus once walked upon the sea, without Boynton boots, and he will give you a sly dig in the ribs and chuckle with delight, and you can see at once that such stories for him are but pious puerilities, unworthy of his serious attention. On the other hand, the modern Tommy is affected differently by such a story; he has not such a large knowledge of the sea; and, while he might think that Jesus, as a supernatural being, might perform such an extraordinary feat—or should I say feet?—he would know that, so far as the performance of a human being was concerned, it was quite outside the range of probability.

During my stay at Aldershot I met quite a large number of soldiers, some of them demobbed, who, when I got into conversation with them, confessed that they were out-and-out Freethinkers, and what they had experienced while in France convinced them that there was no "good, kind Heavenly Father" who looks after his children; at least there was no evidence of it in the time of war, and plenty of evidence to the contrary.

Out Farnham way I met a dear old lady of the old-fashioned school, who, hearing that I was "a wicked infidel," wished to say a few kind words to me concerning her blessed religion. She was quite a character. The poor old soul belonged to the Primitive Brethren of the old original sort, and she assured me quite confidentially that she knew that her name was written in "the Lamb's Book of Life." I felt inclined to call her a *Lamb Dyer*—a term invented by the late Fred Leslie while acting in one of the Gaiety burlesques to describe people who have little or no regard for the truth—but compassion for her age, her sincerity, and her manifest ignorance, restrained me. However, I let her down lightly by expressing the hope that the book would not be lost or mislaid before the Day of Judgment, for her sake.

When I returned home, I spent a week of my holidays in visiting the various parks in the South-East of London, such as Greenwich Park, Blackheath, Southwark Park, Peckham Rye Park, and Dulwich Park; and one evening, after having passed a delightful afternoon in the latter place of recreation, I called on Uncle Joe on my way home. He had been playing bowls during the afternoon, and was rather tired, and at first distinctly opposed to anything in the nature of controversy; but I led him on gradually, and at last he fell into the trap. Knowing his strong aversion to Free Trade, I led him, by an artful device, to admit that, under the present Government, the prices of all commodities had gone up, and that the only way to bring them down was to get an "open market" for all goods coming into this country and plenty of competition, and let the law of supply and demand settle the matter. This he would not admit, but confessed that he was heartily sick of the subject, and would sooner talk upon any subject rather than "Free Trade *versus* Protection." So I sprung upon him the subject of "Some Humorous Aspects of Christianity."

"Uncle," said I, "did you see what Dr. Lynn Hough said the other day?"

"No, my dear boy. What was it?"

"Well, it was this. I don't pretend to know what it means, but he is reported to have said: 'One of the greatest assets of the Christian religion is a sense of humour.' What do you think of that, Uncle?"

"If the learned divine thinks that there is anything humorous or funny in the Christian religion, I don't agree with him. I think that the Christian religion is serious and tragic. But if he means that many Christians have a good sense of humour, then I cordially agree, for I have met many of them with this characteristic in the course of my travels."

"Christians may have a good sense of humour when they are discussing any other subject than that of their own religion; but the Christian religion itself seems to me to be a deplorably miserable and gloomy subject. I grant that there are many things unconsciously funny in it, but they are not meant to be, and Christians, as a rule, are very much annoyed if a Freethinker points them out."

"What do you mean? Give me an illustration."

"Certainly. For instance, I think it is decidedly funny for Jesus to have had either two fathers or only a ghost of a father."

"Come, now, don't be funny at the expense of truth. You know perfectly well that the Church Service says that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost."

"But one of the Gospels (Matthew i. 16) gives the genealogies of Jesus, and traces him back through Joseph to Abraham. Now, if Joseph was not the real father of Jesus he was no relation at all. And then you have the incredible story of the Virgin Birth."

"Oh, for goodness sake, don't go into that. Freethinkers are always harping upon that string. Give that a rest."

"But has it never struck you, Uncle Joe, that assuming the old story of 'The Fall of Man' to be true, God allowed four thousand years to elapse before he decided to send his only Son, who was really as old as himself, down on earth to die, who couldn't die because he was eternal, to blot out the sins of mankind. God seemed to be quite willing to allow all the millions of human beings that were born and died between the time of Adam down to Jesus to be damned before he thought it was time to send his only begotten Son."

"Yes, that is one of the mysteries of the Christian religion," said Uncle Joe. "I don't pretend to understand it, nor do I know anyone that does. But let me

tell you that I do not believe that all these people who know nothing about Jesus—never even heard his name—will be damned. No that will not do, and it would not be just, and God must be just before everything."

"Well, but how unjust it would be to damn people who did hear about Jesus and yet were unable to believe in him. Passing over a good deal of the alleged career of Jesus without criticism, come to the story of the alleged betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. If Jesus came to die to save the world, did it matter how he died? and if it was necessary for him to die on the cross, then Judas was the real Saviour of mankind, for if he had not betrayed Jesus the masses of mankind would have gone to their doom unrepentant and unredeemed. What do you say to that?"

"I say that's nonsense, my dear sir—absolute piffle. Somebody was sure to have betrayed Jesus, and no doubt God used Judas as his instrument."

"Oh, then, poor Judas was an innocent victim in the hands of God? Poor Judas! I always thought he was the villain of the piece, but according to you he was the hero in spite of himself. But, Uncle, Judas came to an awful end."

"Yes, the poor devil hanged himself," said Uncle Joe, with a sigh.

"No he didn't, Uncle."

"What did he do, then?"

"Why, according to 'The Acts,' he purchased a field and had an accident—a fall and burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out"—(Acts i. 18).

"Good God! I don't remember that passage, although I remember that Judas bought a field as the result of his iniquity; but I quite thought that he was hanged. Anyway, he died, and that was an end of him."

"Perhaps he died in both ways."

"I say he died," said Uncle Joe, with indignant emphasis, "so let the poor devil rest!"

"Oh, I don't suppose we shall disturb him after all these years, especially as he had a double death—was hanged and then met with an accident and his bowels gushed out. Poor beggar, he had his deserts."

"Let him rest, I say," repeated Uncle Joe.

"But Christians won't let him rest. Do you know, the last time I saw him, he was on the cinema."

"Good God—what next?"

At that moment Aunt Jane entered the room and informed us that supper was quite ready, and Uncle Joe was spared any further expostulation.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Religion of William Michael Rossetti.

I CAN hardly have been fourteen years of age when the Christian faith, as a scheme of mysteries and miracles—and with this and every form of faith involving a supernatural mythology—became inoperative upon my mind; and so it has always remained.....The term "Agnostic" was not invented in those years. As soon as it got invented, I found it to be the clearest and the simplest definition of my mental position in relation to the supernatural—a position which amounts to this: that a number of things are affirmed by many people concerning matters beyond their observation, and beyond mine, and that as I know nothing about those things, and am not conscious that anything can be known about them, I likewise profess to know nothing. The affirmations may be true, but I do not know or particularly surmise them to be so.

It appears to me natural that an Agnostic should be more or less a necessitarian or fatalist; such is the case with me. The one thing that seems pretty clear to an Agnostic as regards the constituent parts of the universe is that they are a series of effects arising from causes. The theologian may

say: "Yes, causes going to a First Cause, namely, God, then why will not you, the Agnostic, openly entertain and avow your belief in the First Cause?" But this will not quite do for the Agnostic. He replies: "I postulate a cause for every effect; therefore I must postulate a cause for your professed First Cause." And I rejoin: "If there was not any cause for the First Cause, then I will stick to the ultimate cause that I can with any clearness trace, namely, the universe as cognizable by the senses and the intellect; and I acknowledge (it is the very essence of my agnosticism) that I don't know whether there was or was not a further cause beyond the ultimate-traced-cause. There may have been; but I, unfortunate and limited creature, know not of it."—*William Michael Rossetti, "Some Reminiscences."*

Acid Drops.

Are the "impecunious clergy" turning to journalism? We ask this question, because the *Times Literary Supplement* has lately developed a theological bias worthy of a parish magazine. In a recent issue it is announced that "Darwinian evolution is no longer counted synonymous with improvement." In a review of a book by a German writer, the reviewer writes: "Whatever his fate in the next world, Providence has already commenced his punishment." This sort of writing should be more suited to *Comic Cuts* than the *Times*.

We wonder who is behind the "League of Truth and Freedom," whose offices are in Essex Street, Strand. It has published for some time, in a leading newspaper, some daily "reflections," more or less topical, and more or less nonsensical. Here is a gem of purest ray serene: "Remember Russia! The Materialism of the World makes it at present impossible that any new Industrial System can meet with success."

A £3,000 organ is to be built for St. John's Church, Southend-on-Sea, as "a War-memorial." The organist will be a lucky man if he gets anything like that sum.

In the Children's Corner in the dear *Daily News*, the adventures of the Noah family are being illustrated in a series of humorous pictures. Where does that unhappy editor expect to spend eternity?

A picture paper has an illustration of a "woman-gardener of 90" years of age. In Bible days folk kept their hair on at the spectacle of a man-gardener aged 900, and without any old age pension either.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer says that modern church life depends too much upon "cultured sermons." In hundreds of chapels there is very little culture, but you can hear "the bells of hell go ting-a-ling, a ling."

The sufferings of the clergy are notorious. The Bishops of Dover and London have been holiday-making in Sutherlandshire, and making record catches of salmon. Dr. Paget, Bishop of Chester, states that he will not live in the episcopal palace.

The modern, up-to-date, parson is a very different individual to his sedate predecessors. The popular clerical flat-catcher can talk of God, Christ, and the Holy Bible amidst drink and smokes and jokes, but becomes very solemn at cross-examination on "sacred" subjects. Recently, a group of four Twickenham clergymen, sitting in a public-house, and fraternising with the inmates, was published in a London paper. In the photograph, these men of God are drinking, but whether it is gooseberryade or "fire-water" the letter press does not disclose. Anyhow, it seems a very pleasant method of soul-saving.

Because the vicar discharged the organist, St. Paul's Church choir, Grimsby, went on strike. The vicar will remember those choristers in his prayers.

"Working men are the moneyed people of the congregation," said Canon Marriott at Worcester. The preacher knew that there were very few in the pews. The Christian working-man is so often represented in church by his female relations.

"What's in a name?" asked Shakespeare. At Old Street Police Court, Mahomet Baba, a seaman, was charged with stealing money from Julius Cæsar, a fitter, of Grays, Essex.

"It is easier to grow sweet peas than a sweet disposition," sagely remarks the Rev. F. L. R. Lowe, at Uxbridge. And, the man of God might have added, it is as easy to deceive people as to shell peas.

The War revealed the latent superstitions of the English people. Mr. Edward Lovett, the folk-lore specialist, declares that "nearly every soldier, sailor, and airman carried a mascot in the War. The price of children's cauls, supposed to be a safeguard against drowning, reached £3, as compared with 1s. 6d. before the War." Yet the dear clergy still insist that Christianity is the religion of educated people.

An old woman at Bethnal Green was fined £34 and costs for telling fortunes. Nobody fines the clergy for telling folk what will happen to them in the next world.

The War Office is one of the most extraordinary organizations. It forced soldiers to attend religious services; it permitted able-bodied parsons to escape military service; and now it proposes to issue War Medals to the camp followers who handled tea and buns in Y.M.C.A. huts at a safe distance from the fighting lines.

A strange letter was left by Lily Brown, a clerk, of Forest Hill, who committed suicide. In the letter she stated that "her coward heart would not serve the Saviour." Another testimonial to the value of religion.

Judge Crawford, at Edmonton County Court, declared it was "a blot on our civilization" that a Church of England parson should have received "only £204 in thirteen months," after paying away £70 due on a bankruptcy order. Tens of thousands of families are kept on less than £274 for thirteen months, but that fact rarely excites judicial emotion.

A thirty-nine line paragraph, with bold headline, was devoted by the editor of the *Daily Herald* to an account of a letter received from the Pope by the Secretary of the "Save the Children Fund." The editor could do little more if the Holy Father had joined the Fabian Society.

Mr. Robert Smillie declares that "had it been possible to bottle God's sunshine, someone would have charged so much per cubic foot for it."

An evangelical mission is to take place at Cambridge University, which, according to the promoters, "should issue the challenge of Christ" to the Undergraduates. The Cambridge "Heretics" should be trembling in their shoes.

"Christ and the New World" is the fascinating title of addresses to be given at the Queen's Hall, London, and the Bishop of Exeter is announced as the Chairman. "The New World" may be the title; but the Old Gang will be on the platform.

Bishop Golding Bird says "the Church has ceased to touch the imagination and the life of the ordinary man. Just so! But the Church still "touches" the pockets of the ordinary woman.

Writing in *Lloyd's Sunday News*, Mr. Arthur Mee says plain men "are sick to death of the rubbish we are asked to believe in the name of God." Excellently put! We wish every editor in the kingdom had that printed on a card and hung on his desk.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 12, South Place, London; October 19, Weston-super-Mare; October 26, Manchester; November 2, Glasgow; November 3, Paisley; November 6, Milngavie; November 9, Edinburgh; November 16, South Shields; November 23, Leicester; November 30, Birmingham; December 7, Sheffield; December 21, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 19, South Place Institute; October 26, Birmingham; November 16, Leicester; November 23, Manchester; December 7, Swansea.

OWING to the Editor's absence from London over the week-end, a postal packet, which included a number of letters, missed him at Swansea, and has not been returned in time to be dealt with in this week's issue.

CAPT. LATHAM.—We are very appreciative of your congratulations on what you call our "courage and success in bringing the paper through the War without raising its price or lowering its quality or circulation." Perhaps we had better call it a constitutional dislike to being beaten.

T. HARTING.—We quite share your view as to the value of the opinion of bishops in a general way, but our note upon the matter to which you refer was based upon a desire to help a cause in which a very large number of Freethinkers are keenly interested. We are certainly not inclined to go out of our way to advertise the patronage of a bishop. We are naturally suspicious of advocacy of even a good cause from such quarters.

J. L. LEWIS.—We cannot advise as to a "line" without knowing what is the aspect of the subject with which you wish to deal. But in any case we should say that Professor Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought* and Lecky's *History of the Rise of Rationalism* would help. The first is published in the Home University Library, and the second, at 2s. 6d. (?), by Longmans. Meredith's book is quite good, but can now only be obtained second-hand.

ROBERT CLARKE.—We are pleased to hear from a reader of so long standing as yourself that you find the *Freethinker* more interesting than ever. We should say that the majority of our new readers are gained by the plan of personal introduction. Thanks for your good opinion of our own efforts.

W. P. KERNOT.—It was acknowledged as "W. P. Kensit." Sorry, we have made the necessary correction.

H. C. CLAUSEN.—There is something distinctively humorous about a church magazine depending upon the "law of averages" for the arrangement of its pious outings. Thanks for compliments. Hope you are well.

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.

The curious thing is the orthodox world insists that all men and women should obey the injunctions of Christ; that they should take him as the supreme example, and in all things follow his teachings. This is preached from countless pulpits, and has been for many centuries. And yet the man who does follow the Saviour, who insists that he will not resist evil, who sells what he has and gives to the poor, who deserts his wife and children for the love of God, is regarded as insane.—R. G. Ingersoll.

Special.

THE strike is settled, but we are not yet able to say whether we shall be able to send out this week all the copies ordered. We shall, however, do our best; but much will depend upon the extent to which the railways are working. Those who do not get their paper will, if they see this, understand the reason why.

Last week we were not able to send out more than half the usual number. We had the full quantity printed, so that everyone will be able to get what is required. We rely upon each of our readers seeing that the newsagent gets the back number, and if any difficulty is experienced, and they will let us know, we will send on the number from the office. But they should insist upon it coming through the usual channels.

The strike was unfortunate for us, as we had last week several demands for supplies of this paper in new quarters. Our friends are evidently at work getting us that thousand new readers, and we mention the fact of the increase in order to let them know that their efforts are bearing fruit.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (Oct. 12) Mr. Cohen opens the course of Sunday afternoon lectures at South Place. His subject is "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation," and, in view of recent occurrences, the lecture should prove interesting. It is difficult to advertise London meetings, but some lecture slips have been printed, and we hope those who can, will apply either to Miss Vance or at the *Freethinker* office for some for distribution. The lecture commences at 3.30, so there will be time for all to get home before dark.

"By devious ways and strange devices" Mr. Cohen succeeded in getting to Swansea on Sunday last, although it took him two days to get there. Swansea was like a besieged city, the centre of the town filled with soldiers of very boyish appearance, wearing tin hats, which made one think of boy scouts who had been put into military uniform. However, Sunday showed that it would have been a pity not to have gone. The uncertainty of the situation prevented the Branch advertising the meetings, but in spite of that the hall was packed to the doors, while many crowded into the entrance. It was a good opening for the season, and it was good to know that the Branch, which has a number of very earnest workers, is as determined as ever to see that the movement makes headway.

On account of the strike, Mr. Lloyd was compelled to abandon his journey to Scotland. There would have been a strong probability of his being held up somewhere on the line, and to attempt a 400 mile journey under prevailing conditions might have had unpleasant, and even dangerous, consequences. So Mr. Lloyd had to postpone the pleasure of meeting his Scotch friends and admirers till later in the season.

A Forgotten View of War, by Lieut. Trevor Berry (Blackwell, 1s.), strikes a note that is very much above that usually made by those who have as much faith in Christian teaching as has this author. There is scope for a very elaborate article in the questions opened up by Mr. Berry, and we have room only for a few lines. Mr. Berry's thesis is that the mediæval theologian hated war, and to the mediæval Christian mind war was penal in its nature, and was justifiable only when waged for the purpose of vindicating justice. Later there emerged what he calls "materialistic views," which regarded the needs for national self-development as adequate ground for the waging of war. On this our comment is (1): It is a trifle dangerous to take the views of certain theologians and proclaim these to be the mediæval Christian mind; (2) the general mind was certainly not hostile to war, and wars were never so brutal or so blood-thirsty as they were during the dominance of the mediæval

Christian mind; (3) in all ages writers have denounced war, and no more credit is due to Christians than to others; (4) the great fact remains that not only were wars constantly waged with the approval of the Church, but all those features of war that Mr. Berry denounces have grown up in Christian times, and under Christian auspices.

Mr. Berry must, we think, search further for the explanation of the prevalence of the "penal view" of war which he praises as a product of the Christian mind. It was nothing of the kind, and its practical decay was proof that even a good thing decayed under Christian influences. Here, again, we have room for only a line when we need a chapter. Christianity inherited from old Rome the conceptions of world empire, of universal social justice, and of clusters of different peoples living under the same laws and central government, modified by local traditions and circumstances. The consequence of this was that war naturally assumed the character of "vindicative justice" which a central government exercised towards unruly members of the world State. Had Christianity possessed sufficient moral force of its own there was here the groundwork of an era of universal peace. But this was precisely what it lacked. Under its rule the Pagan empire went to pieces, and there was left, as its ghost, the universal Church. Petty nationalities began to develop, and war as an avowed instrument of national development made its appearance. The fruits of all this is before the world to-day. At present we can only say that the features which Mr. Berry finds so admirable in mediæval Christianity, were really the afterglow of the old Roman Empire which the Christian Church lacked the moral and intellectual greatness to perpetuate. For those who wish to know the best that can be said on behalf of Christianity in its relation to war, we commend Mr. Berry's pamphlet.

The discussion between Dr. Lyttelton and Mr. Cohen is now, we hope, almost ready, and we are expecting to have it on sale in the course of two or three weeks. Mr. Cohen has written a brief preface, and Dr. Lyttelton a rather lengthy appendix. The whole covers about 150 pages, and we hope to be able to make the selling price 1s. 6d. That would be a low price in ordinary times; under present conditions we can safely call it a marvel of cheapness. Mr. Cohen has also revised and enlarged his *Determinism or Freewill?* and that also will be on sale within the next few weeks. This has been out of print for some time, but there is, we are glad to say, a constant demand for it both here and abroad. The book has taken its place as one of the standard works on the subject, and has received praise from the most diverse quarters. Other works are also in preparation.

Will Birmingham friends please note that Mrs. Bayfield, of Manchester, will lecture in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, at 7 o'clock, on "Gods and Humanity." This is Mrs. Bayfield's first visit to Birmingham, and we hope the theatre will be well filled.

"Freethinker"

"Victory" Sustentation Fund.

Fifth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £240 15s. 6d. Miss A. M. Baker, £1. Robert Clarke, 5s. Willingly, £1. E. G. Baskerville, 10s. Capt. J. Latham, £5. John and James McGlashan, £2. A 17th Lancer, 5s. H. C. Clausen, 10s. V. Massey Crosse, £1 1s. L. Campbell, £1 1s. J. Ekins, 5s. F. Reed, 5s. P. and J. P., 10s. W. Dobson, 2s. 6d. W. F. Ambrose (5th sub.), 2s. T. J. Thurlow, 2s. 6d. M. Beale, 5s. H. Russell Phillips, 10s. H. Tucker, 10s. A. G. Hann, 2s. 6d. H. McC., £1 1s. D. S. MacDougall, 2s. 6d. E. Donat, 10s. R. Bell, 5s. A. Shepperd, 10s. D. Porteus, 5s. J. Chapman, 2s. 6d. E. Chapman, 2s. 6d. A. G. Lye, 5s. Total, £259 6s.

Correction.—"W. P. Kensit, 5s.," in last week's issue, should have been W. P. Kernot.

The Advance of Materialism.

IV.

(Concluded from p. 493.)

What, then, is practically the notion which most people seem to have of the relation of Deity to Nature? It is that of a great master-mechanic far away above us and beyond our reach, who once upon a time, long ago, and once for all, worked, created matter, endowed it with necessary properties and powers, constructed at once out of hand this wonderful cosmos with its numberless wheels within wheels, endowed it with forces, put springs in it, wound it up, set it a-going, and then—rested. The thing has continued to go of itself ever since. He might have not only rested but *slept*, and the thing would have gone itself. He might not only have slept but *died*, and still the thing would have continued to go of itself. But, no, I forget. He must not sleep or die, for the work is not absolutely perfect. There are some things too hard even for Him to do in this masterful, god-like way. There are some things which even He cannot do except in a 'prentice-like, man-like way. The hand must be introduced from time to time to repair, to rectify, to improve, especially to introduce new parts, such as organic forms.

Such was the state of the compromise until twenty-five years ago. Nature is sufficient of itself for its *course* and continuance, but not for *origins* of at least *some* new parts. Such was the state of the compromise until Darwin and the theory of evolution. But, now, even this poor privilege of occasional interference is taken away. Now origins, as well as courses, are reduced to resident forces and natural law. Now, Nature is sufficient of itself, not only for sustentation, but also for creation. Thus, Science has seemed to push Him farther and farther away from us, until now, at last, if this view be true, evolution finishes the matter by pushing Him entirely out of the universe, and dispensing with Him altogether. This, of course, is materialism.—Professor Le Conte, "Evolution"; 1891; 298-299.

In the face of these statements, Dr. McComb admits that:—

It must be confessed that the answers made to this contention are far from satisfactory. The familiar argument, that matter is not an independent something prior to thought and a production of thought, but is real only in so far as it appears to mind, so that, if you abstract mind from matter, matter ceases to be—this argument appears to the scientific materialist to be a mere metaphysical puzzle or quibble, and he takes his stand on the principle that for practical purposes reality is directly perceived. The idealist's reasoning seems an airy nothing when confronted with the world of objective facts.

Therefore, to meet the new situation, says Dr. McComb, "the materialist is pointed to the elements of mental and moral experience. No physical facts, it is maintained can explain moral values and ideals.....But, much as it appeals to the student of ethics and philosophy, it fails to persuade the scientific materialist. For the demand of the student of physiology is for facts, observed phenomena which may compel him to modify his thesis of the mind's functional dependence on the body. In the absence of these facts, his hypothesis holds the ground, and no assertion of man's moral and spiritual dignity will avail. But the curious and startling feature of the present situation is that the idealist acts as if he had achieved only a seeming victory over his antagonist. For, of course, materialism denies immortality, and if idealism had really inflicted ruinous defeat on its antagonist, would not the idealist proclaim to the world the fact of survival, and bid all men rejoice with him in the sure and certain hope that death is not the end? As a matter of fact, the idealist draws no such inference, in the great majority of cases. On the contrary, he warns us that undue emphasis on a future life augurs an unhealthy spiritual temperament; that, at best, the belief is secondary and inferential, and might even disappear, leaving all ethical and religious interests unaffected! The scientific materialist may well smile

as he sees the *impasse* in which the philosopher finds himself, and he goes on his way, more than ever convinced that philosophy is a will-o'-the-wisp, and that for him the path of wisdom is that of observed fact and inductive method. Out of this deadlock there is only one way. It is to refute the materialist by giving him what he professes to crave—that is to say, facts open to observation and experiment."¹

Dr. McComb does not offer any such facts, but declares that only by the slow and tedious accumulation of psychic research, "to show that mind works independently of the physical organism, can the scientific materialist be met on his own ground, and be compelled to surrender." Well, the Materialist will welcome all the facts of psychical research when he has convinced himself by actual experiment that they are facts, and not dreams and fancies, and he has not the smallest doubt as to the result. He has "sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat." As Huxley so eloquently remarked: "The majesty of fact is on their side, and the elemental forces of Nature are working for them. Not a star comes to the meridian at its calculated time but testifies to the justice of their methods—their beliefs are 'one with the falling rain and with the growing corn.' By doubt they are established, and open inquiry is their bosom friend."²

We are now in a position to appreciate the statement in Hasting's *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* that Materialism to-day is only to be found "in the literature of Secularist 'Free' thought." And in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* that "in alliance with Secularism and Socialism it is, no doubt, influential among certain sections of the working classes, and often forms the creed of the half-educated specialist." These writers seem to be infected with the same snobbishness which caused Heine to give up Atheism when he found it was being adopted by working men.

These gentry sneer at Materialism because it is adopted by Secularist working men, as if that alone was sufficient to condemn it. And yet when they wish to recommend their creed they mouth about their Christ being a working man. What unspeakable cant and humbug.

Secularists can justly pride themselves upon the part they have played in the conflict between religion and Materialism. The whole strength of the Secular party has been on the side of Materialism. Our organ, the *Freethinker*, has ranged itself on that side from the very first, nearly forty years ago, in the face of the most sinister campaign of calumny, persecution, misrepresentation, and ostracism, connived at, and sometimes instigated by the Government, backed by the Churches, as in the prosecutions of Bradlaugh, Foote, and Holyoake. The object of the Government being, as Professor Bury rightly declares: "to prevent the spread of Freethought among the masses. The victims have been either poor, uneducated people, or men who propagated Freethought in a popular form....."

The unconfessed motive has been fear of the people. Theology has been regarded as a good instrument for keeping the poor in order, and unbelief as a cause or accompaniment of dangerous political opinions. The idea has not altogether disappeared that Freethought is peculiarly indecent in the poor, that it is highly desirable to keep them superstitious in order to keep them contented, that they should be duly thankful for all the theological as well as social arrangements which have been made for them by their betters."³

It is the Secularists who have fought for and vindicated

the right to popular free speech and publication in matters of religion. The Secularist has never cloaked his opinions under the discreet veil of Pantheism or Agnosticism, he has boldly adopted the secular trinity of Atheism, Materialism, and Determinism. In this sign we conquer. As the late Dr. Maudsley well said:—

There is always a fund of wisdom in the common sense and practical instincts of the common people, the instruction whereof philosophy misses when it neglects or disdains to take sufficient account of it. Having to deal with the stern realities of life, working men are compelled to have working beliefs in order to act; feeling instinctively that the best test of the value of a belief is—Will it work? They turn their backs impatiently upon empty abstractions and demand beliefs with real contents. For example, persons of culture who make for themselves the dismayful discovery that they cannot go on believing in a personal God, are happy to take refuge in more general terms and abstractions, such as Deism and Pantheism, and make mighty use of them; but the labouring classes, rejecting such barren metaphysical abstractions, either repudiate God altogether or demand that, if there be a God who ruleth the earth, He shall be a real living God, working in the events of the world as they do themselves; not any abstract absolute, emptied of contents and living only in the misty regions of speculative thought, but "a literal, personal, and eternal God." Thus they by their practical instincts, escape those self-deceiving effects of abstractions by which philosophers sometimes seek and discover the explanation of a concrete fact in what is no more than the abstract statement of the very same fact."¹

As to the disdain and contempt expressed by these lowly followers of Jesus, for Secularists, we may cite the testimony of Dr. Flint, a Scotch Professor of Divinity, who made a special study of Secular and Atheistic literature for the purpose of refuting it. He says:—

There is an impression in some quarters that Atheism is advocated in a weak and unskilful manner by the chiefs of Secularism. It is an impression which I do not share. Most of the writers who are striving to diffuse Atheism in literary circles are not to be compared in intellectual strength with either Mr. Holyoake or Mr. Bradlaugh."²

That is to say, that the educated literary men who advocate Atheism in the upper circles, are not to be compared with the leaders of Secularism.

The future historian of scientific Materialism will pay tribute to the heroic efforts of those Secularists who, in the face of every discouragement, calumny, and persecution, devoted their lives, without hope of gain or fame, in popularizing the philosophy of scientific Materialism.

W. MANN.

Apologetics from the Heathen.

THE other day a Catholic weekly, the *Universe*, in a paragraph under the above heading, referred to an item of news which it had from a French religious journal—*Le Croix*. It would appear that a delegate of the Chinese Republic had presented a decoration to Mgr. Reynaud, the Vicar Apostolic of East Che-Kiang, and had taken the opportunity to say some complimentary things about the Roman Church. The Chinese politician, a Mr. Soun, was, at one time, an uncompromising and active opponent of Catholicism; but, for reasons best known to himself, had been converted, not, of course, to Christianity, for the religion of Paul makes no headway among the educated classes in the Far East, but to a

¹ Dr. McComb, *The Contemporary Review*, June, 1919; pp. 688-689.

² Huxley, *Lay Sermons*, p. 279.

³ J. B. Bury, *A History of Freedom of Thought*, p. 222.

¹ Maudsley, *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, pp. 11-12.

² Dr. Flint, *Anti-Theistic Theories*, pp. 518-519.

more indulgent view of the superstitions of Western Europe. We are not surprised to find our contemporary making childish capital out of what he impolitely, if not impudently, calls the testimony of the *heathen*. Our Western religionists have deplorably obtuse ideas as to the relative values of the words they use so glibly. For them heathenism seems to imply a low stage of civilization. But the Chinese have ages of culture behind them. Their ideals of conduct spring from a wide and profound knowledge of human nature, and provide for all contingencies of social life. Their poetry, an art which is the supreme test of the culture of a race, reveals a subtlety of imagination, both in the writer and the reader, that seems to us strange and wonderful in comparison with the coarser intellectual and emotional texture of our Western verse. On a lower plane, this mental fineness is manifested as wilyness, the chicanery of statesmanship and commerce, the artfulness of the celestial card-sharper whose bland smile and vain tricks were celebrated by the greatest of American humourists.

Evidently the artful and complimentary Mr. Soun had some object at the back of his subtle Oriental mind when he forced himself to say nice things about Catholicism. Now, our religious friends must be badly in need of comfortable words if they can find a palatable truth in the egregiously untrue assertion that "Catholicism is the foundation of the purest patriotism, and an unfailing source of self-sacrifice." This, surely, is to lay on the butter just a bit too thick. Only the religiously prejudiced and ignorant can believe that the patriotism of British Protestants or Freethinkers was in any way less pure than that of French, Belgian or (shall I say?) Austrian Catholics. Indeed, what has most struck intelligent observers everywhere is that the majority of soldiers have no interest in and no use for religion of any kind. This is the conclusion reached by the modernist theologian, M. Loisy, in *The War and Religion*, and he suggests that the eloquent paragraphs in the clerical newspapers about the great revival of religion in France are rhetorical fictions invented by unscrupulous journalists and their friends who are interested in political and religious reaction. What the millions of French Freethinkers fought for, and what they went cheerfully to certain death for, was the safety of their best and dearest, the preservation of their beloved country from the unclean hands of the Boche. In point of purity the very sacrifice of the Freethinker was not less than that of the Catholic. They were both fighting for the august life of the country, which life, as M. Loisy well says, was of a more supreme value, even for the believer, than a "blessed immortality in the company of Christ and the saints." The narrow and parochial religion of Jesus was absorbed in the far nobler, the far broader religion of patriotism. As with the French so with our British troops, there was a noticeable absence of religious feeling of any interest whatever in truth as it is in Jesus. Father Dominic Devas, who was a Roman Catholic chaplain in the British Army, notes the prevailing ignorance of Catholicism, but he has nothing to say about the "purest form of patriotism." The ideal of equal justice for all civilized people, for which so many of our brave fellows fought and died, was, for them, something above and beyond the creeds of Christianity. It put fire into the blood, and stirred up emotions which the religion of the Churches was powerless to reach.

Our artful and bland Chinese diplomat had evidently taken the exact measure of his Catholic friends, and knew what would please them. The bravest and most

intelligent officers and generals were all practising Catholics, and, of course, their patriotism was purer than that of anti-clerical officers and generals. Then he introduces the usual claptrap about the religiosity of Marshal Foch, who "prays, goes to mass, and has a brother a priest." Now, of course, if Marshal Foch tells us that he is a devout believer, we see no reason why we should doubt him; but the fact of his brother being a priest is hardly conclusive evidence of his orthodoxy. We seem to remember that Cardinal Newman had two brothers, one a Theist and the other an Atheist. Are we to use this fact as an argument to prove his scepticism, or their belief? We are afraid that the wily heathen had a poor opinion of the intelligence of the average practising Catholic, and, from what we can see, he seems to have had good cause.

Again, in France as here in England, many men of prominent position lend their support to the national religion without being themselves pious. They go to church at times, and their presence is used to extend the credit of religion. When discussing the Catholicism of the converted Freethinker, M. Paul Bourget, M. Dimnet reminded us that, while there are many practising Catholics among the members of the *Action française*, some of the most prominent are avowed unbelievers; but the latter, he goes on to say, uphold Catholic principles quite as much as the former, from patriotic, or, as they say, positive principles. Bourget himself praised Fustel de Coulauges, the famous historian, for writing in his will the following passage: "I wish to be buried according to the customs of the French, that is to say, religiously. It is true that I neither practise nor believe in the Catholic religion, but I must remember that I was bred in it. Patriotism demands that if we do not think as our ancestors, we may at least respect what they held to be the truth." It comes to this, that a man may be an open infidel and yet act as a believer without incurring opprobrium; indeed, he may be praised for his duplicity. There are many political Christians here who regard the Church as a useful element in the State, much in the same way as Voltaire insisted on the social value of a belief in God. It is not impossible that Foch, like M. Bourget, may be a Catholic from "political necessity postulating higher principles."

It is obvious, then, that the Catholics who read *The Universe* and *Le Croix* are in need of comfortable words, or they would have asked themselves what the Chinese politician had up his sleeve. From testimony on all sides, it is common knowledge now that in both the French and English armies the rank and file were ignorant of and indifferent to the teaching and dogmas of Christianity, while the more intelligent were openly sceptical and anti-clerical. Among the officers in our own Army, the unthinking were Christians not from earnest, thoughtful conviction, but because their school-training had impressed it upon them as good form. Officers of a more disciplined and more independent turn of mind regarded religion as a more or less amiable, emotional vagary, which could do no harm if it did little good; they would even assist at superstitious functions from mere politeness. In fine, if we assume that the armies of France and England represent the people as a whole in its most vigorous form, we notice an almost complete lack of religious feeling. And it is curious that the only testimony in a contrary direction should come, not from the chaplains who were at hand, but from an astute Chinese politician, who, we may be sure, had good reasons for flattering his European friends.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

"Mixed Marriage."

This term is used by the Catholic Church to indicate that it has given permission (or dispensation) to one of its members to marry another of a different faith. What really follows is that refined human nature is to be defiled or defied, or that the outside party of the Church is to be conjoined into the Church Rites. We will say that a young man, brought up in a good independent atmosphere, happens to make the acquaintance of a young woman who has been brought up in the Catholic religion—the man is not warned or does not know of the young woman's religion, and when the time comes that he feels he ought to marry her, he is brought into contact with her Catholic relations, and if he is naturally of a peaceful disposition, his frame of mind does not allow him to raise any objection to meeting the wishes of the young woman's religion. When he agrees to marry, papers are put before him to sign, first, that he will not interfere with her religion, and, secondly, that all children of the union shall be brought up in the Catholic faith—these he considers small items, for on his part he does not want to lose the girl, and he wants to be fair to his lady love. It is not until the actual wedding ceremony is performed—that he wakes up, and probably leaves the Church, already sick at heart and a broken man.

In the married life that follows, his ideals are shattered, and he finds it very difficult at times to live a straight and useful life; his children, if he be unfortunate enough to have any, become a mockery to him; he cannot consider them his own. He is hounded about by his wife's relations, who never cease to remind him of their considered superiority, and he is tackled at every conceivable opportunity by the priests of the Church, to whom his wife at all times appeals, in preference to him.

If he still retains his independence at middle age, it speaks much for his determination; but it is very rarely he survives to enjoy old age as it should be enjoyed.

Much more brutal and indecent is the case of a young woman who agrees to marry a Catholic. Probably she has attended, in her girlhood, chapels and Free churches, which, with all their faults, at least do, to a degree, educate. She is humiliated directly the marriage service is performed. Her body ceases to be her own, her husband considers her a long way beneath him, and she leads a life absolutely at her husband's dictation, and according to his nature and desires. Her children are brought up to ignore her.

Sometimes, at some crisis in her life—say at childbirth—she gives in, and enters the husband's Church; but even then she is given to understand that converts are inferior to born Catholics. She may retain her independence until the end of her life, but in all probability she is tackled on her death-bed, and entered into the Church. Her husband then announces to his friends that she was always at heart a Catholic.

Of all problems connected with the rites, privileges, and doings of various religions, there is nothing to equal the livelong misery of the mixed marriage. Young women contemplating a mixed marriage particularly should be warned of the danger, and given to understand plainly that they are to lose, first, control of their own bodies, and then possession of their children, by these alliances.

"HORRESCO REFERENS."

Man can paint, or make, or think nothing but man.

—Emerson.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Joseph H. Van Biene, "Lessons to be Unlearned."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Debate, "Does Materialism Supply an Adequate Philosophy of Life?" Affirmative, Mr. T. F. Palmer; Negative, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Laurence Housman, "Ideals of State Service."

OUTDOOR.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (at Regent's Park or Parliament Hill): 3, Mr. H. Brougham Doughty, "Socialism and Secularism in Germany"; Mr. R. Norman, "The Holy Strike."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mrs. B. Bayfield, "Gods or Humanity."

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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