

The

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## Views and Opinions.

### The Doom of the Church.

Canon Peter Green, of Manchester, is in despair as to the future of organized religion in this country. In fact, it has, he thinks, no future. "Of the Church of England I have scarcely any hope," he says, which is the opinion of many others beside Canon Green. True, he hedges a bit by saying that he does not fear for the future of religion; "but that anything approaching organized religion is likely to survive is a very doubtful thing." And he goes on to say that the leaders of the Church have no conception of the extent to which people are losing touch with, and are hostile to, organized religion. But in this we think he does not do the leaders of the Church justice. They are not, it is true, all brilliant men—very few of them would be accused of brilliancy by even their best friends—but they are not fools. And they cannot well help knowing that large masses of the people think little of religion. But the clergy do not generally believe in calling stinking fish. They know that if people have outgrown, biologically, the simian stage of life, they have not yet outgrown the sheeplike stage of mind, and that nothing would induce them to leave the Church so much as to learn that others had already left. The ordinary man or woman is in the Church because of the pressure of the crowd, and they will be out of it for the same reason. So we think the Church leaders have quite enough wit to see how little the mass of the people think of the Church; but they have enough artfulness to see that to admit the fact would not be profitable. Canon Green is more reckless. He is letting the cat out of the bag—whiskers and all.

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### Religion and the People.

But while we are sure that Canon Green is near the truth when he speaks of the black outlook for religion (we wish we could feel sure the position is as black as he says), we note he has not overcome the clerical habit of distorting facts in the presentation. Thus, he said he had been travelling lately, and a man who had his finger on the pulse of one of the provincial universities had expressed astonishment at "the extent to which the students were throwing over all alliance to religion of any kind. They denied, not merely the fundamentals of religion, but of morality, and the women were worse

than the men." We are not surprised to hear this. We know something of the movement of thought in the universities (we do not think there is a university in Britain to which the *Freethinker* does not find its way, and our letter-bag is a fairly faithful index of its influence), and we fancy all that is meant by a denial of the fundamentals of morality is that the need of religion to morals is denied. But other sections of the community are in an equally bad way. In a northern town he found the "whole body of workers" hostile to the Church. A congregational headmaster of a municipal day school said the school was turning out Atheists every day. Religion was being destroyed there. In Manchester itself, in one poor district, the whole of the congregations in the morning could be accommodated in one church, and all the evening congregations in two. It is fortunate for the clergy in the district that their salaries do not depend upon the takings, or it would not have been left for a parson in a panic to let out a little of the truth. Finally, there is the Army. Everyone knows what hopes the clergy had that the War would bring about a revival of religion. And we know how the Bishop of London found the men at the Front filled with religion. Canon Green's testimony is that "very few indeed had returned to the Church." Evidently they lost their religion since Armistice Day—that is, unless the Bishop was not telling the truth. And as the Bishop told the soldiers that we at home had grown religious as a consequence of the War, the hypothesis of the Bishop having departed from the strict truth will not appear such a wild one—particularly to those who know him.

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### Religion and War.

The Canon attributes this collapse of organized religion to the War. He asks, "Is it likely that we should go through five years of war and see religion deeply discredited without some harmful result?" At this point we have to part company with the Canon. He has been quite cheerful company hitherto—of course, without meaning to be—but we cannot agree that religion has been discredited by the War. Why should it be? When has the carrying on of a war been disadvantageous to religion? Canon Green is concerned only with the state of religion in England, so that we will keep to this country. And what war is there in which the clergy have not played exactly the same part they played in the late War? They were not always so unanimous, we admit; but substantially their conduct has been the same in all wars and between all wars. For when we were not at war, the preparations were still going on. And never did the clergy refuse to bless the guns or the battleships, or to give their benediction to all those preparations without which war would be impossible. Why, for at least 150 years, there has not been ten consecutive years in which we have not been at war in some place or the other. And these never disturbed either the Churches or the people's religion. True these wars were not all what we call great wars. That is, the wars were not all so expensive as the last

one, and we were only killing coloured people in the interests of civilization. But, still, if all the wars that Great Britain has fought during the last century and-a-half did not injure religion, it seems odd that five years of war should have had so deadly an effect. Besides, religion and war are such old bedfellows that it is too much to ask us to believe that they are seriously disturbed at finding themselves in very close company.

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#### Pulling Off the Scales.

The War, as war, would never have injured religion. As such, war would have helped it. Those who think otherwise have yet to grasp the historical and psychological relation of the two. And yet the War has resulted in a tremendous loss to religion. That fact is very apparent. The clergy denied it so long as they could, and only admitted the truth when its concealment became impossible. Why is it that the loss to the Churches has resulted? The answer to that question is that the War, as war, did not prove religion to be false; what it did was to help men realize that they were no longer believers in Christianity, and that all their professions of belief had been no more than a formal assent to an established institution. And that institution still stood with all the apparent strength of earlier years. It was there like some old tree that, to a casual view, seemed able to defy the storms of a century. But when the storm came its weak spot was found and the giant bit the dust. The storm found the weak spot. That, I take it, is exactly what happened to religion in this War. For over a century the Freethought attack on religion had gone on. It had set up a blockade against it, if not so effective, at least as insistent as that which the Allies set up against Germany. And for long enough the Churches had been able to hide from their supporters the extent to which they suffered from the attack. So it was that the War came upon people in the same way that a severe storm comes upon a tree with a decayed trunk. The storm of war exposed the weakness of religion. It helped to show thousands of people that their belief was a mere pretence. A real belief in religion, had it existed before the War, would have survived the War, and might even have gained strength from it. But a mere formal assent, such as religion had become with thousands, only needed a shock to prove that for them it had no reality and no value.

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#### Labour and Religion.

Canon Green thinks there will be a Labour Government in at the next election, and that this will be followed by the disestablishment of the Church. We are not so sure of either thing. We are not sure that a labour majority will be returned, and still less certain that if so it would proceed to disestablish the Church. The Labour Party in this country is too fond of coqueting with religion, too frightened of it, too given to pandering to it, for one to feel that it will act logically towards it if ever it achieves power. We do not, as a matter of fact, see Labour advocates usually practising disestablishment where they may. They join in identifying civic functions with religious services where it is customary for the two to go together. The Labour Party in Parliament and in municipal life have numerous ways in which they could show that they do not believe in the State patronage of religion, but we have not observed their doing so. If the Labour Party gets a majority in Parliament, we think they are far more likely to please their Nonconformist followers by establishing all Churches instead of disestablishing one. It would be State patronage for the lot instead of for one. And we are not sure that the change would be for the better. There is only one thing that will tell in the long

run, and that is to go on making Freethinkers. That work has been going on for several generations. And it is good to have Canon Green in the box as an unwilling witness to the success of our efforts.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Samuel Butler.

### II.

SAMUEL BUTLER'S hatred of his parents was perfectly genuine. He ultimately hated them with his whole heart because in their treatment of him they had always been entirely hateful. For this we can neither admire nor wholly blame him; but his object in giving so graphic and exhaustive an account of the matter in *The Way of All Flesh* was to expose the falsity of the system of education that made such treatment possible. His father was a country rector, his mother the daughter of another, and religiously both were the narrowest literalists, in whose character self-righteousness, engendering supreme self-satisfaction, was the most conspicuous ingredient. But whilst Butler's hatred of his parents was thus an intense reality, though arising from no vindictiveness of temper, his denunciations of great men who happened to disagree with him was more of a literary pose than anything else, though he owed the tendency to it to his thoroughly bad education at home. In this respect he was a reproduction of his parents; it was their religious bigotry and intolerance that re-appeared in him and made him an Ishmaelite in the literary world. As Bernard Shaw puts it: "Ardent Butlerite as I am, I cannot deny that Butler brought a great deal of his unpopularity on himself by his country parsonage unsociability and evangelical bigotry." The following passage in Shaw's review of the memoir is significant:—

One does not get rid of that bigotry by merely discarding the Resurrection and making people laugh against their wills with such sallies as "Resist God and he will flee from you," or "Jesus, with all thy faults I love thee still." Bigotry in a parson is at least not unexpected, and not unnatural, if he is in earnest about the 39 articles; but in a rampant anti-clerical like Butler it tempts us to say that, as he brought so much of the worst of the Church with him when he came out of it, he might as well have stayed in it, to please his father.

I thoroughly agree with that sentiment. Intolerance is a Christian virtue of the purest order, and has ere now been seriously recommended as an eminent means of grace; but in a Freethinker it is the worst of vices and a source of incalculable weakness. This it proved itself to be in the highest degree in Butler's own case.

And yet this arch-hater was by natural disposition the most lovable of men. Among his friends he was an ideal embodiment of unselfishness, courtesy, consideration and conscientiousness. Even the *British Weekly* quotes the following estimate of him by his biographer, Mr. Festing Jones:—

To me he was the dearest, kindest, most considerate friend that any man ever had. He was never selfish nor egoistic, nor was there ever anything that required explanation.

No man was ever more easily gulled than Butler. A barrister, named Pauli, who earned or begged £900 a year, imposed upon him for years, pretending to be in abject poverty, and like the infamous scoundrel he was, obtained from him a pension of £200. Butler would not listen to a word in the man's disfavour; and when, after Pauli's death, the wicked deception indulged in became known to him, his only regret was that he was robbed of the opportunity to forgive him. Is that an

evidence of his being cursed with a vindictive disposition?

It is not our purpose to eulogize Samuel Butler either as a character or as a thinker, but simply to protest against attributing his failings in either capacity to the fact that he had renounced supernaturalism and "set himself to the demolition of Christian belief." His defects of character were the outcome of his Christian heredity and environment. His ancestors lived on in him in spite of himself, though not altogether without his knowledge. While despising his parents, he was perpetuating most of their delinquencies. It was much easier to get rid of the belief in the supernatural than to eradicate the evil seeds so sedulously sown in his constitution, much of which came to so disastrous a harvest during his life, and prevented him from occupying the position to which his genius so clearly entitled him. He was essentially weak from first to last; weak and perverse. He lacked the gift of continuity. He might easily have developed into one of the greatest scientists of the day, if he had had the strength to persevere. He had it in him to make fruitful experiments in biology and psychology. He continued his researches long enough to become an evolutionist, but abandoned them before perceiving the fallacy of the old design argument, so painfully constructed by the theologians during so many centuries. It is all very well for Mr. Bernard Shaw to belittle Darwin as a "simple-souled naturalist, with no comprehension of the abyss of moral horror that separated his little speciality of Natural Selection from Butler's comprehensive philosophic conception of Evolution"; but he cannot do away with the fact that Darwin's hypothesis has commended itself as most probably true, or as most nearly fitting the known facts, to the leading biologists of the world, while Butler's conception is by scientists almost wholly disowned. It is sheer affectation on his part to claim that "the best brains were always with Butler," for he must know that such neither was nor is the case. Beside, it was not as a scientist, but as a philosopher, that Butler approached the theory of evolution; and the amazing fact is that as a philosopher he adopted the argument from design after he had ceased to believe in a designer. Bernard Shaw himself admits that Butler imagined "that in getting rid of the miracles he had got rid of Christ, of God, of the Church, of any obligations to pursue anything but his own pleasure," but claims that "his mind was too powerful to be imposed on in that way for long." When he had outgrown that phase and came to advocate the presence of will and purpose in evolution, we learn that the intelligence, will, and purpose were alike unconscious. Butler did not, nor does his most eloquent disciple, believe in a personal, omnipotent God, who has existed from all eternity; and yet we are assured by both that the evolutionary process was directed for countless millions of years by an intelligent, directing, but unconscious force, consciousness in the universe being of a comparatively very recent appearance. Twelve years ago Mr. Shaw delivered a lecture in the Kensington Town Hall, in which he addressed his audience thus:—

What you have got to understand is that somehow or other there is at the back of the universe a will, a life-force. You cannot think of Him as a person, you have to think of Him as a great purpose, a great will, and, furthermore, you have to think of Him as engaged in a continual struggle to produce something higher and higher.

At first this God was "a bodiless, impotent force, having no executive power of its own, wanting instruments, something to carry out its will in the world," and yet in this bodiless, impotent state, and possessing no

executive power of its own, making innumerable experiments of all sorts, which resulted in failure oftener than in success, "creating reptiles, birds, and animals, trying one thing after another," until at last, blundering blindly and impotently along, it succeeded, "some or other," in producing man. Is that, I ask, a scientific, even intelligible, presentation of the doctrine of evolution? That, we are told, is the theory championed by Samuel Butler, a theory he evolved out of his own powerful brain without any reference whatever to the facts, to the study of which Darwin dedicated his whole life. As is well known, Darwin began his investigation as a firm and devout believer in an omnipotent personal God, who designed the Universe and presided over the working out of his own wise purpose; but a patient, careful examination of the facts extending over many long years, tended to weaken his belief in both God and design, and ended in his losing it altogether. One can understand such a theory, whether one accepts it or not; but the theory of a bodiless, impotent force minus executive power of any kind, yet working with an intelligent purpose, though continually making egregious mistakes, is inconceivable and unintelligible, and the number of its champions in the scientific world is infinitesimally small. It was announced from the chair at a recent meeting of the British Association that Vitalism had had its foundations undermined, and that most of the superstructure had toppled over.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to discredit Butler's "comprehensive, philosophical conception of evolution so much as to defend him against the disparagement heaped upon him in the *British Weekly*, and to show that his defects of character enumerated and emphasized by that Nonconformist organ, and even his intellectual perversities, which were many, were due not to his Rationalism, but to his ancestral inheritance, the evil effects of which were intensified a hundred-fold by his horribly unnatural and brutal upbringing. It was religion that darkened and soured his life, though he had ceased to be religious. It is forgotten by our contemporary that Butler was a satirist, and that his denunciations and anathemas often indulged in are not to be taken too seriously. For example, in his preface to the second edition of *Erewhon*, written in 1872, he assures us that it had not been his purpose "to reduce Mr. Darwin's theory to an absurdity, for which I have the most profound admiration"; and we feel confident that, had he persisted in his examination of the subject, instead of wasting his time over music and painting, he would, in all probability, have ended in a whole-hearted acceptance of his opponent's hypothesis.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Use and Misuse of Sunday.

### II.

Fear not the tyrants will rule for ever,  
Or the priests of the evil faith. —*Shelley*.

Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

THE clergy have flown the Jolly Roger over Sunday for so long that they resent the slightest interference. During the Great War, in which parsons were exempted from military service, a proposal for raising money for blinded soldiers by Sunday entertainments aroused the pious anger of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet the clergy are compelled to recognize modern conditions. It is useless to expect the democracy to be content to spend their only free day in the midst of the scene of their work, faced by the alternatives of places of worship and

public-houses. The clergy do not venture to attack Sunday excursions by rail, 'bus, or tram. They leave such follies to the mere laymen. It is recognized that this is too strong and powerful an institution to attack, and if a serious attempt were made in that direction, the Sunday Observance Movement would lose what influence it possesses among the leisured folk in sheltered homes.

Despite their hypocritical plea for a day of rest, the clergy themselves work on Sunday; so do their servants, choristers, organists, and all engaged in their churches and chapels. Religious people delight in noise, and plenty of it, provided it is made by themselves. They even delight in inflicting their barbarous taste upon the more civilized members of the community. Acts of Parliament give local authorities the power to suppress unnecessary noise, and vendors of milk, watercress, and muffins have, here and there, been compelled to desist from raucous cries. Even organ-grinders may be moved on. But the "unco' guid" turn the so-called "day of rest" into a pious pandemonium, and the peaceful citizen does nothing because the noise is associated with religion. We do not discriminate between any sect, and criticize equally the State and fancy religions. We object as much to the clanging of bells in church-steeple and tin tabernacles as we do to the ear-splitting noises of the Church and Salvation Armies and side-street mission bands. The tea-tray and hammer music of the Boy Scouts and Church Lads are as distasteful as the portable harmoniums of itinerant evangelists. It is not a question of prejudice, but of noise. The banging of drums, the blare of brass instruments, the bellowing of hymns on Sundays is sufficient to bring blood from the ears of a bronze statue.

Of all these noises peculiar to the Christian "day of rest," bell-ringing is the most perfect anomaly. People no longer believe in evil spirits, hence there is no necessity to ring bells to drive them away. Since none are so poor as not to possess a watch, the secondary purpose of the Sunday cacophany is a need of the past. As for the Salvation Army, it is true it banged and brayed itself into notoriety, but the time has gone by for such methods since its first "General" was canonized by our oldest University, and the Army patronized by royalty.

Unless the clergy, who profess to care so much for "the day of days," are prepared to grapple with this problem of noise, we cannot see that they can escape the accusation of hypocrisy. If they attacked the Sunday noises made by their co-religionists, they would probably not succeed, but they would persuade people more surely of the sincerity of their crusade.

The modern idea of Sunday is broadening. Millions of our soldiers have visited the Continent, and willy-nilly, religious denominations must prepare themselves for changed conditions. The time has gone by for ever when the working classes of this great nation can be satisfied with the sole resources of the public-house as an alternative to the ritual of an outworn creed. No longer will the democracy consent to wallow in such kennels, and so give excuse for saintly tyrants to call aloud for more laws which shall convert the one free day in a week of labour into one of gloom, bigotry, and persecution. Let those who have six days in the week for the pleasures of life appropriate Sunday to gloom, but let those who employ six days in toil devote their Sundays to a different purpose.

MIMNERMUS.

A man's giving in alms one piece of silver in his lifetime is better for him than giving one hundred when about to die.

—Mohammed.

## The Public.

A GREAT wit said of the public that it was like a clown with a broken heart. The felicity of this metaphor is not apparent to everybody, so that a little consideration of it will help to show how true it is. For what is more absurd and, at the same time, more pathetic than the public?

A composite creature, so to speak, as cruel and irrational as a wild beast, and, at the same time, excessively emotional. A thing to laugh at or weep over according to your mood and temperament.

Go with me into a Roman Catholic church, where is found in this country to-day the crudest form of religious superstition, and observe what the clown with a broken heart is doing. Each person on entering dips his finger in some water—he will tell you it is holy water, made holy by a priest, who may have been as drunk as a lord the night before—touches his forehead and his breast making the sign of the cross or gallows on which a god was killed by priests who worshipped the same god these people worship. Then he falls on his knees before an altar on which are various knick-knacks and lights. Then a priest appears and chants something that nobody understands. Then a bell rings and the priest holds up a gilt thing and everybody goes down before it as if it were a god whose terrified slaves they are. Then they eat a wafer of flour and water which the priest assures them is the actual flesh of the God who was killed nearly two thousand years ago!

All this is something to laugh at or weep over according to your mood; but if you were to arise in the congregation and try to call these people to their senses they would fall upon you and have you dragged to prison—if they did not beat you to death on the spot, and all the newspapers, some of them edited by Atheists, would declare that you were treated as you deserved for disturbing the people in their sacred occupation.

If five hundred workers meet to rationally discuss how it happens that a few idlers get half of the wealth they produce, and to propose measures by which this robbery may be stopped, that is not a sacred meeting and the chances are that it will be broken up by the police who are themselves workers. But if five hundred persons meet to worship an impossible being, and, in doing so, go through a performance that tends to reduce them to imbecility, that is a sacred gathering whose dim, religious shadows must be protected by force, if necessary, from the disturbing influence of one ray of truth.

Do something that is rational and useful and your conduct is profane. Do something that is senseless and injurious and your conduct is sacred. Only a few weeks ago the clown went on a parade in honour of a man who had directed the killing of some thousands of people. If he had saved that number of lives there would have been no parade.

In America, on every 4th of July, the clown amuses himself by exploding fireworks, listening to speeches and brass bands, and marching—he dearly loves to march. What is all this fuss about? Why, there was a time when he was ruled and robbed by a set of ambitious and greedy men in England, and there came a time when he threw off that yoke and began to be ruled and robbed by a set of ambitious and greedy men in America, and he thinks this change so fine that he has been sending up rockets on every 4th of July since.

Every Easter Sunday in this country there is a parade of gaily dressed clowns, because they believe that a certain God-man rose from the dead on that day. While

these worshippers are sitting in the fine churches, listening to the high-priced music and smelling the costly flowers and incense, thousands of unemployed workers will be almost starving, and it never occurs to these clowns that if there had ever been a God-man with power enough to rise from the dead, and kindness enough to save the world, nobody would be starving.

It is commonly said that our Government is established by the consent of the governed, and that it is of the people, by the people, and for the people. These sayings are admirably adapted to the interest of the politicians, the professional rulers, for they seem so fair that the public will take a long time to grasp the simple truth that such a government is impossible. People submit to government by brute force because they cannot help themselves, but they never consent to be thus governed. And what is called government of the people by the people and for the people is really the government of eleven-twelfths of the people by the caucus of politicians who are smart enough and rich enough to obtain the votes of a majority of one-twelfth of the people.

Every now and then these politicians go forth and harangue the electors. They appeal to their passions, their prejudices, and their party spirit. They know that if they can arouse these, their ignorant hearers will vote the very shoes off their children's feet to beat the other party; welcome taxes, welcome tyranny, if only they can beat the other party. But it makes no difference which party wins, except to the politicians, who get the public offices. The priest has his flesh-pot, the millionaire his unearned luxury, and the honest worker his low wages, whichever party wins.

Was not he a genius who said the people are like a clown with a broken heart? What can we expect of people who, when they hear lies, believe them to their own hurt, and when they hear the truth, reject it as poison? Is it any wonder that when the populace like lies, politicians and preachers and editors give them lies? Every politician knows that if he should speak the plain, unvarnished truth, he could not get the smallest office. Every parson knows that if he should tell the truth he would lose his living. Many editors know that if they wrote their honest opinions they would quickly get the sack. Think of the idols of the populace. They are the politician, the priest, and the policeman. The signs of these are the ballot-box, the crucifix, and the club. By these signs the rulers keep under foot liberty, wisdom, and kindness, and so long as the world worships these idols this world will be a place of prisons and poverty, which the enlightened man must endure as best he can, for he never can enjoy it.

Slowly and surely, however, the public grows wise and sane. The great majority are always wrong on living questions; but one by one these questions are fairly grasped and solved, and settled by the public ceasing to be a clown, and getting some truth and wisdom into its brains. Nearer and nearer comes the day when the present popular idols will be overthrown, when God will have no houses and the people will have better ones, when the State will give place to a fraternal society without rulers and without slaves, when guns shall be beaten into ploughshares, swords into pruning-knives, and policemen's clubs into paper-cutters.

One of the few deep joys of the sorrowful present is to dream of and work for that great day.

G. O. WARREN.

Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security. —Wordsworth.

## Acid Drops.

Another fraudulent medium exposure! A Mr. C. Chambers, of Walthamstow, was giving a materializing sitting, and, suspicion having been aroused, one of the persons present discovered that the spirit-form was composed of muslin. Nothing was said at the time, but preparations were made, and after awhile the spirit-form issuing from the cabinet was seized and discovered to be the medium himself with coat, vest, and boots off, and trousers turned up. He had a white cloth suspended from his waist, a handkerchief on his head, and was swathed in a quantity of muslin. A written confession of fraud was obtained from the medium with a promise that he would never practice again. It should be stated that this exposure was made and published by Spiritualists themselves. But there has never been any question of the honesty of the great mass of Spiritualists, but only of that of a large number of the professional mediums. And when one takes away all that is due to fraud, to illusion, to self-delusion, and to misunderstanding in terms of spiritual agency of occurrences that may well be explained in other ways, the residuum does not appear to be worth bothering about.

In an action brought by a father for the betrayal of his daughter, the accused man indignantly denied that he kissed the girl on Sunday. He admitted that he had kissed her on a week-day, and that he had been amusing himself with her, but he denied having done this on a Sunday because "there are no carryings on on the Sabbath." Macosquin, near Coleraine, Ireland, where the alleged offence was committed, must be a very pious place indeed. All the same, we have our doubts about there being no "carryings on" there on the Sabbath.

The clergy have always been a caste apart. They got through the years of war with the least discomfort. Now they have attempted, in the Enabling Bill, to strengthen their position. Stripped of its verbiage, this precious Act of Parliament means conferring autonomous powers of legislation on one calling and one profession, which shows quite clearly what quaint ideas of Democracy parsons possess.

"The new poor!" The Bishop of Oxford, whose income is £5,000 a year, has been the recipient of a new motor-car from people in his diocese.

The Yellow Press, describing "the devilry of the Bolsheviks," refers to the desecration of Russian churches by converting them into "movie shows." The phenomenon is not unknown in London, but here it is done under the guise of religion.

No Christian country has yet succeeded in standardizing wages, living, housing, or anything that is really useful. The only two things that are eagerly and rapidly standardized are lying and killing. Any new development in these directions are quickly seized and practised. Thus the *Daily News* of November 20 reports that a squadron of twenty-five aeroplanes circled over certain Mahsud villages (India) and dropped five tons of explosives "with good results." The same paper of a later date reports another raid on a *Sunday*. We have not been long in adopting German inventions as our own. Now, if it had been a German improvement in education or housing, we should have had to wait for years for its adoption, and should have had to meet the anti-alien cry all along. But, of course, dropping bombs on Indian villages is quite another matter.

How easily a statement passes into a tradition! A writer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, noting a book on the Salvation Army, says the "Salvationists have shown that their lurid theology was no impediment to hard-headed philanthropy." This is no more than the repetition of a phrase. Some years ago Mr. Manson showed very conclusively that the philanthropy of the "Army" was no more than a disguised trading, and that, where no profits were made, the

philanthropy was soon dispensed with. Other writers have since made similar charges, and the way in which, at Salvationist Shelters, unfortunate devils are worked and paid is notorious. Moreover, we think the entire work of the religious organizations during the War would repay inquiry. We need only remember that huge sums were subscribed, that the property purchased out of those moneys remain with the religious organizations, to realize that a very handsome profit was made out of the "philanthropy."

The Dean of Peterborough has denounced the Peterborough Board of Guardians for the hours they compel their officials to work. In process of time, doubtless, the Dean may find out that organists, church workers, and teachers in Church schools are in need of a champion.

At Christie's Sale Rooms, £33,600 was paid for a picture of "Saint Eustace," and the previous week another picture was sold for £54,600. This happens in a country which worships a carpenter-god.

The appeals on behalf of the penurious parsons have resulted in £120,000 being raised, and this is to be distributed by the Central Church Fund. As the Bishop of London admits that it is difficult for him to make ends meet, perhaps he will be entitled to a modest share.

In Queensland, Australia, the drought has become serious. In the Rosewood district there has been no rain for twenty-one months. It is evident that the local clergy have not used the prayers for rain often enough. May we suggest the assistance of praying-barrels?

The Bible Society is appealing for funds, and it says, in order to enforce its appeal, that in India there are fifty millions of people who are living "in degradation due to dirt, drink, debt, demonolatry, and depression by the higher classes." If this is true, it is the most severe condemnation of British rule in India that we have seen. If it is not true—and we know that these societies are not very particular what they say when their need is funds—it is a fine example of the reliance one may place upon statements made when a religious purpose is to be served. But how a larger circulation of the Bible is to help the Hindoo is more than one can see. Perhaps it will teach them to be content, and regard their misery as the fatherly attentions of an overruling providence.

Some time ago we had a call from a member of one of the Indian deputations at present in London, and it was precisely this kind of "dirty picture" of the Hindoo—to use his expression—against which he said the natives of India protested. Missionaries to serve their own ends, and to conjure money from the pockets of their dupes at home, present a picture of a crowd of dirty, ill-dressed, half-starved people as a representation of what India is like. But it is no truer of India that a crowd of ill-dressed, drunken, dirty denizens from the slums of one of our big cities would be a true picture of the British people. If such pictures were circulated in India as a type of the home population, we imagine that the Government of India would arrest those responsible for attempting to cause disaffection. It is a pity that some steps cannot be taken to prevent the circulation of what are virtually libels upon a proud people, and who had a civilization when the people of these islands were still savages.

The Congregational Union was gravely disturbed over the question of Sunday. Rev. G. Dalaston said that we were rapidly moving towards a Continental Sunday, and we have no doubt that our Continental Allies will appreciate the compliment paid them by this being regarded as a sign of degeneration. It is noticeable that this is about the only thing in connection with the War that the clergy really regret—the breaking down of the Puritanical Sunday, which, in reality, is one of the few good things that have come out of the War.

The Rev. Frederick L. C. Parkyn, formerly vicar of Holy Trinity, Southport, and afterwards an Army chaplain, was cited as co-respondent in a divorce petition of Mr. P. Stowell, of Southport. There was no defence, and a decree nisi was granted, with costs. The uplifting character of religion is not very clear in this instance.

Free Churchmen are preparing a crusade against premium bonds. They would prefer that people with money gave it to evangelical organizations.

The Bishop of Lichfield declares that the clergy are "almost the worst paid section of the community. His own salary is £4,200, and thirty-nine other bishops and archbishops share £180,700 a year. "Blessed be ye poor!"

Whatever happens to spirits in the next world they do not appear to improve much. A book has just been published which purports to be messages from celebrities of all ages and countries. Jesus Christ says: "I never formulated a creed, I never wrote or spoke a constitution of a Church. I never even gave a name to my religion." After spending a century and a quarter in the spirit world, the best that Voltaire can do is: "I hated shams and affectations and wrongs in Church and State. I saw it all, and my physical body grew hideous in the scorn I poured on this rank, stinking fabric of my earth-day society." Whitman says: "What a solemn tread I had when on earth, as I walked down the corridors of time on the fifth plane, but I set echoes of truth flying that will resound to the end of time." And Shakespeare delivers himself of the profound utterance: "I will be a silent listener in the house of the immensities of my God." There are plenty more from Plato and others, says the *Daily News*, to which paper we are indebted for the above quotations, and they all appear to be equally convincing. All we can say is that it is fortunate that these people made their reputations before they left the earth. They would hardly have done so afterwards. In the world of spiritual values we should say that the Bishop of London would rank as a genius and Charles Garvice as a great writer.

In a biographical notice of the new Bishop of Lincoln, the *Daily Mail* printed this delicious nonsense: "Dr. Swayne is a man of broad views who favours dancing as a civilizing agency." Old-fashioned folk used to consider that a bishop's duty was to keep people out of hell, not to teach Christians to waltz.

When the War broke out the dear clergy declared that the outbreak made for the spirituality of the nation. They left other men to do the fighting, however. Now the War is over, there is no sign of the spiritual uplift so confidently predicted. On the contrary, Mr. Edward Lovett, the folklore authority, says there has been more superstition during the War than at any time for a century.

Although the papers have been filled with distressing details of the plight of the "starving clergy," the *Daily Mail* asserts that "3,000 candidates have offered themselves for Holy Orders." Either these young men like "starving," or else another war is in sight.

At the Southwark Diocesan Conference it was resolved to revise the contents of the local Church Chronicle, which is now to include a serial story "with a strong love interest." It looks as if the "old, old story" is getting stale.

For stealing from the collection-box at Matlock Parish Church, David Davies, aged seventy-eight, was sentenced to three years' penal servitude, another charge of sacrilege being taken into account.

Bishop Welldon says politely that "Spiritualism in itself is not irreligious or un-Christian." Probably, he remembered that one ghost was holy.

**C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.**

November 30, Birmingham; December 7, Sheffield; December 14, Liverpool; December 17 and 18, Belfast; December 21, Manchester.

**To Correspondents.**

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—December 7, Swansea; December 21, Glasgow; December 22, Paisley.
- D. G. TACCHI**—Shall be pleased to see you when you come to London. We did not stop the correspondence. All the letters sent that were admissible were inserted.
- A. M.**—Glad to learn that you are better. We feared that your silence indicated indifferent health. Shall appear soon. Sorry we cannot spare the space to write on the subject of Communism. Our reference was quite incidental.
- T. MOSLEY.**—We know the man. He has been everything by turn and nothing for long. Thanks for cuttings.
- H. C. M.**—Received, and shall appear.
- R. H. NISBET.**—Addresses must have been duplicated. Presumably you refer to Professor Keith's lecture. We could not reprint the whole, but we might summarize it, if we can find the space.
- H. IRVING.**—We are very sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Crookson. We first met him nearly twenty-five years ago, and always recognized him as a fine type of the mentally courageous man. We agree that the world of Freethought is the poorer by his death.
- L. M.**—Very pleased to hear that you find the *Freethinker* the most satisfactory of the journals you read. As you read many, and for critical purposes, your opinion is the more pleasing.
- W. GILBERT.**—(1) The articles are not in print. (2) No Life of G. W. Foote has been published. (3) There is no difference between a reasoned Agnosticism and Atheism, so far as belief in God is concerned. The former is a later, and a respectable, form of the latter. (4) There is a Branch of the N. S. S. at Coventry. The Secretary is Mr. T. E. Fowler, 120 Nicholls Street, Stoke, Coventry.
- W. J.**—We observe that mere words are very powerful with many people who are otherwise enlightened.
- F. TRAVERS (Toronto).**—Cuttings useful. There is nothing new in inconsistency in such quarters. It is the badge of the tribe.
- A. E. MADDOCK.**—Received, and handed to proper quarter. We hope to publish articles at an early date. Thanks.
- MR. A. E. MADDOCK** writes, in sending subscription to the Sustentation Fund: "I am very pleased to see the hearty support which is being given to the Sustentation Fund. It not only shows the genuine esteem in which the paper is held, but the high appreciation of your work in keeping it going through so many difficulties."
- C. LEWIS.**—As we said, we were expressing our own opinion. There is, naturally, plenty of room for differences between Freethinkers on political and social questions.
- WILL** the gentleman who forwarded ninepence in P.O. and stamps for certain of Ingersoll's pamphlets be good enough to send our Shop Manager his address? There was none on his letter.
- E. GRAVES.**—We have no figures by us on the subject of the religious opinions of the N.C.C. Corps. We fancy the numbers were fairly mixed. We are sending you on a free parcel of literature for distribution. The *Bible Handbook* is at present out of print.
- J. PARTRIDGE.**—We note that there was a large audience at the debate between Mr. Willis and Mr. Skipp. It is no surprise to learn that Mr. Willis did so well, and we are afraid we cannot claim much credit as a prophet for hinting at this result before the discussion came off.
- W. ATKINSON.**—Pleased to hear from one of our new readers who has so high an opinion of the *Freethinker*. You will see that we have made use of your communication. The identification of freethinking with immorality is an old trick, but it is wearing thin. Freethinkers are common and well known, and that kills the slander.
- J. LAUDER.**—Thanks for complimentary remarks on the *Freethinker*. We have always done our best to keep things up to the mark. There is a sense in which the thinker will always lead a lonely life; but in another sense he has the finest company of all—that of the best minds and the freest spirits of the ages.
- R. MURRAY.**—Suggestion is quite a good one, and we shall adopt it so soon as we are in a position to employ a little regular help. But we cannot undertake more work ourselves. We are at work practically all day, and cannot do more.

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.

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.**

To-day (Nov. 30) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall, Birmingham. There will only be one meeting, at 7 p.m. Admission will be free, and this should serve as a good occasion to introduce a Christian friend. As the seating capacity of the Town Hall is about 3,000, there will be room for all. Visitors from a distance who would like to meet members of the Branch before the meeting, should enter by Door A, which will be open at 6 o'clock.

We publish this week the discussion that took place in these columns between the Editor and Dr. Lyttelton. There is no need to say much now on the nature of that discussion. It was quite unique both as to method and variety of subject-matter. And it was pursued to the end with a courtesy and good temper that have not always characterized such debates. While the articles were appearing in these columns they attracted very wide-spread attention. Sermons were preached on them, and many unusual readers for the *Freethinker* were found. A very general wish was expressed for their republication in book form, and this has now been done. The discussion covers 140 rather crowded pages, it is printed on good paper, with a neat coloured wrapper. In these days of dear printing it will surprise many to know that we are selling at 1s. 6d. per copy. We have fixed that price because we anticipate a large sale, for we are sure that Freethinkers will find it useful as a method of introducing the subject of Freethought to their friends. Postage will be 2½d. extra. Six copies will be sent anywhere post free.

Mr. W. H. Thresh pays his first visit to Glasgow to-day (November 30). He will lecture in the Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street, at 12 o'clock and 6.30. We hear excellent accounts of Mr. Thresh's lectures, and we hope that Glasgow saints will turn out in force on both occasions.

There was a much better audience at Leicester on Sunday last at Mr. Cohen's meeting than he has had for some time. There was also an unusually brisk fire of questions which would have kept on, apparently, all night had the chairman, Mr. Sydney Gimson, encouraged them. But Mr. Gimson is an old hand at controlling a meeting, and knows where to draw the line. We were pleased to learn that the accession of new members this year has been unusually large, and it was gratifying to see the large proportion of young men in the meeting. On Monday Mr. Cohen returned to London, and, after a few hours at the office, visited the Labour College, Kensington, to address the students on "Freethought and Labour." The address led to a very lively discussion, and the meeting was prolonged beyond its usual limits. After that it was, as Pepys says: "home and to bed."

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd had good meetings in Manchester on Sunday last. One of his audience writes us to say that he had never heard him in better form. That is the kind of report that all will be pleased to read, and none more than ourselves.

A pleasing feature at Mr. Palmer's lecture in North London was the speech of a lady visitor who announced

that on the 21st she took a party of forty school children to lay a wreath on George Eliot's grave in Highgate Cemetery. We see from a newspaper paragraph that only one wreath was observed on the grave, and if that is so, we know the origin of that solitary act of remembrance.

The Manchester Branch holds its second Social Evening on Saturday, November 29. We hope this copy of the paper will be in local readers' hands in time to make them aware of the fact. The function will be held in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick, and will commence at 6 o'clock. There will be music, whist drive, and other forms of entertainment during the evening. The tickets, which include refreshments, are two shillings each. We can speak from experience of the enjoyable nature of these gatherings, and we have no doubt that this one will be as well attended as others have been.

Admirers of Mr. Eden Phillpotts, and they are many, will welcome *One Hundred Pictures* (Methuen; 6s.). Mr. Phillpotts has made the Dartmoor country peculiarly his own, and one hundred of his descriptions of Dartmoor scenery are here selected by Mr. L. H. Brewitt with, so far as we can judge, commendable taste. It is astonishing how well these selections read divorced from their context. They are complete pictures in themselves, and one is apt to overlook Mr. Phillpott's power of painting these word pictures when they are given in connection with one of his novels. The volume is illustrated, and has as a frontispiece a portrait of the author. Now that Christmas is approaching, and people will be looking round for suitable presentation books, many of our readers will be obliged to us for calling to their notice so interesting and suitable a volume.

An old friend of the paper makes the following suggestion:—

I am convinced that there are thousands of people in the country who would gladly subscribe to the *Freethinker* if it could be placed within their reach. I, therefore, make the following suggestion. Let someone be found in each district who will make it his business to deliver the *Freethinker* for a stated number of weeks to subscribers. This will insure a regular supply, and once the habit of getting the paper is formed it may be assumed that it will not easily be broken. Two or three months will be enough. This is not much for those who are interested in the welfare of the *Freethinker*, and it would give the cause a real help forward. The copies ordered could be secured through a local newsagent or direct from the office.

This is a good suggestion, and we shall be pleased to give any help we can in the matter.

Mr. A. B. Moss is lecturing to-day (Nov. 30) for the Willesden Freedom League, at 7.30. The meeting will be in the Hamilton Institute, 375 High Road, Willesden, and the subject "The Glory of Freethought: a Challenge to the Claims of Dogmatism and Superstition." Admission is free, 'buses and trams pass the door of the hall. We trust there will be a good rally of local "saints."

## "Freethinker" "Victory" Sustentation Fund.

### Eleventh List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £346 3s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Kilpatrick, £2 2s. John Lauder, £1. E. K., 5s. W. Walker, 5s. A. E. Maddock, £2. L. Richards (Bargoed), 2s. 6d. E. Egerton Stafford, 10s. Mrs. Goodwin, 5s. F. W. Mathie, 13s. 6d. T. E. Robinson, 6s. 6d. W. F. Ambrose (12th sub.), 2s. J. Thackray, 2s. Mr. and Mrs. Holland, £1. T. A. Mathew, 5s. Total, £355 2s.

"Anonymous, £5," in last week's list, should read Apoxyomenos, £5 5s. The total has been corrected accordingly.

This Fund will close on December 14.

## George Eliot.

1819-1880.

II.

(Concluded from p. 577.)

I BELIEVE it is George Eliot who somewhere makes the remark that in attempting to estimate a writer we have first to consider what was precisely his contribution to the spiritual wealth of mankind. If we are able in this way to delimit the fundamental characteristics of his genius or talent the marking off of minor qualities, good or bad, is likely to be an easy task. It is, therefore, our intention here to try to find out by a rapid survey of George Eliot's work in fiction what was her individual contribution to English letters, and through translation, to the intellectual wealth of Europe.

Now, if we look for a moment at the great novelists of her period, or thereabouts, we shall find that no one of them approached fiction from the side of philosophy. Thackeray was prompted by an intense hatred of snobishness; Dickens and Charles Reade felt acutely the urge of social injustice; Kingsley, in *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, put into artistic shape his ideals of a new and better social structure, and in his fine novel *Hypatia* the impact of a simple vigorous race on an old and over-ripe civilization; Disraeli's impulse to fiction came wholly from politics, while the women novelists, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and Mrs. Gaskell were urged to fiction by nothing but the imperious will to create; their earliest efforts of self-expression took the shape of story-telling. George Eliot did not begin her work of fiction until she was thirty-seven, and seems to have had no prevision of her aptitude. She was the only novelist of her time whose practice of her art was preceded by a severe training in the rationalistic philosophy of the Spencer period. Had not the sympathetic intuition of Lewes given her confidence, we should have had another critic of religion and ethics, an English counterpart of Guyau. We should have been the wiser for her pessimism, her acute and acrid criticism of religious and scientific idealism, her clear-eyed rejection of the illusion of progress, but we should have missed the chastened pessimism (she called it meliorism, I think) of her novels, the all-embracing imaginative sympathy which, like the sun, shines alike on the just and the unjust, the gracious pity for the despised and rejected of this world—a pity which is as balm to the wounded spirit. It is this sympathetic emotion, supported by knowledge, that makes her the equal of Hugo and George Sand, of Tourgeniev and Dostoevski, and prompts an enthusiastic French critic to exclaim that if, a hundred years hence, there are readers of the novels of a past age, opinions will be divided between George Eliot and the great Russian writers of fiction.

*Scenes of Clerical Life*, three intimate studies of the parson type, appeared in *Blackwood's* for 1857, and were published in book form in 1858. The first story, *Amos Barton*, strikes at once the poignant and plangent note characteristic of George Eliot. It is peculiarly enough the same note that we get in Gogol's *Cloak* and Dostoevski's *Poor Folk*. Barton is just a well meaning, dull, unintelligent, and incompetent clergyman, who has hard work to make both ends meet, and is often dependent on the charity of his parishioners. His wife is a beautiful and gentle woman, who is devoted to her boorish companion. Her death (the scene is a triumph of restrained pathos) and his removal from his beloved countryside to a town curacy make a pessimistic ending, relieved only by the presence of a daughter, who seems to have inherited her mother's unselfishness and devotion. Mr. Gilfil is a parson of breeding, but limited education,



a type that George Eliot admired for its honest if stupid nature, and his love-story is a pretty, sentimental fancy. The Low Church parson in *Janet's Repentance* is a parson of the Simeon school, and we know what that is from Samuel Butler. The novelist could easily have sunk the humanity in these examples of the clerical type, but George Eliot raises them into individuals by the sheer strength of her imaginative sympathy. It is just this human quality that gives to her fiction its peculiar ethical value.

*Adam Bede* was published in 1858, and *The Mill on the Floss* in 1860. Here George Eliot tried her hand on a much larger canvas, and her success was greater than even Lewes had expected. The moving story, *Adam Bede*, was based on an experience of an aunt, Mrs. Evans, who was a Methodist preacher. She had visited in her cell a young girl who had been sentenced to death for killing her baby, and had passed the night in prayer with her. The central figure in the story is not Adam or Hetty, but Dinah Morris. Lewes had to use all his influence as a critic to get George Eliot to put some life into *Adam Bede*. We are afraid that both Adam and the novelist regard poor Hetty with her tragic fate as a mere episode. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) marks an advance in creative power. The early scenes between Maggie and Tom have the perfect finish, and the aptness of touch of an artist who knows her power. The tragedy, however, is not, to my thinking, inevitable; at least a mere tailor's dummy like Stephen Guest is not a worthy creator of tragedy. The humour of these two works has had an exorbitant share of praise. Mrs. Poyser has the pleasantly sharp flavour of acid malignity about her, but the Pulletts and Gleggs and Deanes and all the other relations of the Tullivers are just a trifle wearisome with their long drawn-out conversations about nothing at all. George Eliot liked to dwell on these early memories, and seemed to forget that her reader's interest was more impersonal. No; George Eliot's overpraised humour was not Shakespearean. I question if she cared at all for the incomparable Falstaff.

The one story that has the unreserved admiration of every artist is *Silas Marner*. The psychology of the thing is perfect. Silas is not by nature a miser, but by reason of a scandalous miscarriage of justice. The change wrought in him by the apparition of the pretty child come in from the snow to his warm hearthstone is instantaneous, but it is not miraculous. We see something like a preparation for it the moment he realizes that he will not get back his gold. The end is ethically as it should be, but we cannot help being just a little sorry for the squire. Here George Eliot seems to have exhausted, for the time, her stock of early memories. With *Romola* (1863) she tried a new vein. It is a story, as you know, of Florentine life at the end of the fifteenth century. The background is the City of Flowers, and the figures set against it are Tito, a Greek refugee and scholar, a polished and selfish schemer for political ends, meanspirited, and cowardly. Against him is set the noble, severe, figure of his wife, Romola, and that of Savonarola. There are those who find the story moving and grateful, but I am not one of them. For me it smells too much of the lamp, and the moral atmosphere is stuffy. You will see what I mean if you turn from it to the comedies of Machiavelli, the autobiography of Cellini or even Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. George Eliot had her limitations, and they stopped short of the Italian spirit of the Renaissance. Lewes it was who encouraged her to this departure, and, for once, his literary divination was at fault. We believe that to him was due another comparative failure, *Felix Holt* (1866). This was a venture in the political novel, but as George Eliot was practically confined to the society of Lewes and friends

who did not dare to criticize her work, she had not the opportunity of acquiring new knowledge of life. It was part of the price she had to pay for Lewes's protection. There is one subtle and delicate character-study in the novel, Mrs. Transome, which alone made it worth study. Rufus Lyon is a fine, earnest, archaic sort of parson, but Felix is a libel on the political reformers of the time. We know what Ebenezer Elliot would have said to him.

In the immense novel, *Middlemarch* (1872), she returned to the surroundings she knew best. On the whole, and apart from *Silas Marner*, in which there is a perfect fusion of art and philosophy, this great novel represents George Eliot's high water mark of excellence. It is, of course, far more serious in tone than the earlier work, and some people are inclined to regret the replacement of humour by caustic and, at times, acrid wit. But then you get the ripe wisdom of a woman who had read much and reflected more. And you have also three groups of fictional interest, a sort of three-in-one story, the curious thing about it being that no one who has the courage to attack the story resolutely will say that it is too long. It is the last work of George Eliot that counts with those who are not Zionists. *Daniel Deronda* (1876) is an orgy of psychological analysis exercised to no purpose. As a story it is dead, or at most, only half-animated matter, but you will find in it much quotable ethical wisdom. If George Eliot in her memory is ever dishonoured by the intituting of a Society, the members will find plenty of solid material in this portentous novel, the poems and the *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. I hope no such sad fate awaits her.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

### Hygiene Better than Salvation.

OUTSIDE the public hospital in Derby stands a statue of a lady, lamp in hand—Florence Nightingale—the famous nurse, whose family belonged to Derbyshire. The figure represents the popular opinion that nursing is one of the noblest activities of womanhood. So it is. Yet I venture to forecast a time when woman, as health-creator, or hygienist, will be held in greater honour than woman as nurse. The development of a sound body will be regarded as a finer office of humanity than the cure of sickness, or the redemption from evils caused by accident.

Observe these three names: Job, Christ, and Ross. Let us call them Job the Sufferer, Christ the Redeemer, Ross the Sanitarian. They symbolize three stages of human attitude towards the problem of Pain.

Job the Sufferer was the central and tragic hero of an ancient Hebrew poem. He bore the loss of property, children, and personal health with sublime fortitude, even going so far as to accuse the God Yahweh of moral injustice in afflicting a man who had lived an honourable life in the land of Uz. The God Yahweh closed the question by raising a whirlwind and shouting Job down. Thus, to the mind of antiquity, the spirit of the Cosmos appeared as an autocrat, suppressing both complaint and inquiry. As a matter of literary fact, the poem of Job is one of the most living Freethought essays in the whole course of human expression.

Christ the Redeemer marked a step forward. In the poem of Job, Satan (or the Devil) had been allowed by the Autocrat of Heaven to plague Job with a most loathsome disease. It is true that, at the end of the legend, Yahweh restored Job, but this was an act of particular grace towards his opponent in argument. In the New Testament a new situation arises. Here we see masses of poor people—the maimed, the paralyzed, the blind, etc.—horribly treated by Satan, and lovingly

cured by Jesus Christ. Jesus does this, not as an act of favour towards models of piety and intellectual capacity (as Job was), but simply out of pity for the afflicted. We behold a battle royal all through the Gospels. The issue of the battle is described in the figure of speech used by Jesus: "Behold, I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Over and over again we read of wretched creatures who are exploited, or "possessed," by devils, and relieved by the direct attack of Jesus upon these infernal parasites. All the New Testament turns upon the pivot of the idea that Jesus saves and redeems. The last book of the Bible (the *Apocalypse*) is a stormy, and almost frenzied, parable of this redemption—a series of thundering and fiery scenes in which Disease, Famine, Death, and Devils, are crushed and damred, and room is at last cleared for Jerusalem the Golden. I believe this Christian legend exactly portrays the feeling and thought of Europe for some eighteen hundred years, that is, from the times when the Gospels first circulated to the times when modern criticism began to dissolve the Catholic beliefs. Of course, a large portion of the Christian civilized world has not yet gone farther than this longing for cure and redemption. The faith in a Redeemer will gradually yield to three powers—the Rationalist power of criticism applied to theology, the economic power acting through Labour Movements, Socialism, Strikes, etc., and the sanitarian power wielded by such discoverers as Sir Ronald Ross, and such agencies as Preventive Medicine. In other words, the progress of the spirit of self-help has reached, or tends to reach, a point at which the Christian doctrine of Salvation will be displaced by organization for Health in the widest meaning. The nurse—admirable figure as she is and always will be—is the reflector of the second stage of mankind's experience. She is (as a social type—I do not refer to individuals) of less value than the Hygienist.

Thus we arrive at the third stage, of the nature of which I select Ronald Ross as example.

Ross was an Army surgeon, on service in India, when he hit upon the fact that malarial fever was conveyed to the sufferer by minute organisms that lived in the blood of mosquitoes. A mosquito bite injected the disease into a human patient. Hence it followed that to exterminate mosquitoes would effect the extermination of malaria. Practical experiment verified the discovery. The same basic idea was carried into the problem of Yellow Fever. American sanitarians (whom we might call Health-gods) have been busy for years in killing mosquitoes in Central America. The Yellow Fever, which once killed armies of Chinese and other navvies engaged on the Panama Canal works, has declined. The Canal was completed in triumph. One might affirm that the Panama Canal was created by Hygiene. Whether the removal—more or less—of malaria and other fevers will render the Tropics readily habitable by the White Race is a question yet to be decided; for other factors besides disease have to be reckoned with. In any case, this method of prevision, or seeing-before, and of provision, or supplying protective means, is characteristic of our dawning Third Period. It is a method far superior in efficiency to that of Redemption, Salvation, and Nursing.

If you pay close attention to what is called Christian Apologetics, you will sooner or later come up against this conception of Christ as Redeemer—a totally distinct conception from that of the Hygienist. The Christian conception, as such, knows nothing of Hygiene in the grand, effective significance represented by Ross's discovery. It must, as a system, die because it is wedded to the ancient idea of Redemption. Among Free-thinkers, I have stood in a somewhat small minority

through my willingness to acknowledge that Catholicism (the Christian way of living) did play a useful and beneficent part in civilization. Yet I join with all other Free-thinkers in regarding Catholicism as a purely human construction, and in rejecting, in whole and in every part, the Christian theology. It seems to me that, in what we often call the Middle Ages, the human power over the soil, the minerals, the plants, the animals, the sea, the air, the mechanical and chemical forces, the physiology of man—in a word, over nature—was so imperfect that a religion of Faith, Prayer, and Redemption was the only possible attitude. All through the Middle Ages, up to the period of Harvey, Gallileo, Swammerdam the microscopist, and other such explorers of nature, I think I discern signs of continuous struggle towards this Third Period of Self-confidence and Hygiene. But however that may be, the social truth remains that the Christian system must inevitably go because the Health-creation method is more beautiful and more powerful than the method of the Nurse.

F. J. GOULD.

### Debate in South Wales.

A HIGHLY interesting debate took place a week or two ago between the Rev. Mr. Foster and Mr. J. Davies at the Bible Christian Chapel near Cymmer, South Wales. The subject chosen was "Is Christianity True?" Mr. Foster, naturally, championed the affirmative in the presence of a densely packed audience, the overwhelming majority of whom were at first on his side. Possessing no natural aptitude for debating, he soon wearied his hearers by commonplace arguments unskillfully stated. His opponent, Mr. Davies, is a born debater, and it soon became evident that he was in complete command of his subject. He piled argument upon argument in support of his thesis, that Christianity is not true. A new feature in this debate was the throwing of it open so that any members of the audience could take part, a privilege of which several availed themselves by asking questions and raising objections. Then the reverend gentleman had the opportunity of making the closing speech, which, instead of being an attempt to reply to his opponent's attack on Christianity, turned to be a discourse written beforehand and closely read amid repeated murmurs of angry dissatisfaction. Several gentlemen rose and protested against his action, but he read on, loudly condemning Anarchism, Bolshevism, and Atheism, but without once touching upon the real subject of the debate. Mr. Davies was acclaimed victor.

Other debates are in contemplation in the same neighbourhood, in which Mr. Davies and another Freethinker are to represent our cause. The people generally are taking the liveliest interest in such combats, which is an exceedingly good sign. Mr. Davies has already made several converts to Freethought in different parts of Glamorganshire, and we wish him more power to his elbow.

J. T.

### Obituary.

At the great age of eighty-four, Mr. George Crookson, of Hoyland Common, near Barnsley, died on the 12th inst. Mr. Crookson was one of the "Old Guard." He assimilated Freethought under Holyoake, and, later on, Bradlaugh was his hero. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner wrote him a letter on one occasion, thanking him for much interesting information relating to the great "Iconoclast." Mr. Crookson was the means of Mrs. Besant visiting Hoyland Common in the stormy days of Secularism, and also Mr. Cohen. The writer remembers being present at Barnsley some time in the 'eighties, when Mr. Crookson acted as chairman in a debate between Mr. Wallace Nelson (now of Queensland) and Mr. Taylor, of Sheffield. The last Conference Mr. Crookson attended was at Stratford-on-Avon. A great lover of the stage and of Shakespearean drama, the visit to Shakespeare's birthplace, in company with Mr. Foote, was a red-letter day in his life. Mr. Crookson had lived his life. There is nothing for tears; but Secularism is poorer by one strong character.—H. IRVING.

**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.**

HAMILTON HALL (Trades and Labour Institute, 375 High Road, Willesden, near Pound Lane): 7.30, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, "The Glory of Freethought." Admission Free. Questions and Discussion.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7, Social Gathering—Music and Dancing.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Percy H. Muir, "The Need for Democratic Control of Foreign Affairs."

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, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Christianity in the Light of Physical Science."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Profits and Public Service."

**OUTDOOR.**

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

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Town Hall): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): Mr. W. H. Thresh, 12 noon, "The Solar System and Its Origin"; 6.30, "From Savage to Shakespeare." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Clarion Cafe, Gasgoine Street, Boar Lane, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Robert Dell, "French Election Result, Its Cause and Meaning."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S.—All Freethinkers in the neighbourhood of Pontypridd are kindly asked to meet at 4 St. Catherine Street at 2.30 to day.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (3 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock): 6.30, Mr. J. Fothergill, "What is the Meaning of Liberty?"

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