

The FREETHINKER

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EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

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Views and Opinions.

"On Compromise."

Many years ago Lord—then plain John—Morley wrote a book called *On Compromise*. The book was a good one, full of sound generalizations and wise maxims. Personally, we always associate with this one another good book, *The Struggle for National Education*, which has never been reprinted in his collected works. Much of this would be now out of date, but it will still repay careful reading. *On Compromise* was an attempt to give compromise its right place in life, and was, in the main, a plea for a thoroughgoing application of principle in intellectual matters. But having written the book, Lord Morley appears to have spent the rest of his life in breaking nearly every one of the rules he laid down for the guidance of other people. This may have been due to his absorption in politics which has spoilt more than one good man, and has anything but an elevating influence on the best. Or it may have been due to an inherent weakness of character; or, yet again, to a combination of both factors. For our own part we are inclined to lay stress on the political factor, for that is the field on which compromise flourishes and principles perish. In practice one is often compelled to compromise, in teaching, compromise is out of place. That is one reason why the thinker and the teacher should avoid entanglement in politics. Their function is to teach the politician, and to see that, so far as is possible, legislation should move in the direction of principle, if not parallel with it. At any rate, there is the historic fact that no sooner does a movement become entangled with politics than it suffers from a sacrifice of principle. Votes become of more importance than conviction, and to stand well with the public is of more consequence than to see that the public stand well with you. And there is some significance in the fact that in England where, from various causes with which we are not now concerned, political development has been more rapid than it has been in most other countries, the habit of compromising should be most in favour—and most dangerous. Politics has killed many a worthy man; it has still more often buried a good principle.

* * *

Breadth and Depth.

We have already said that there is a legitimate place for compromise, and that is on the level of practice. When it comes to putting principles into operation, one

is often compelled to apply only so much as circumstances admit. Thus, to take the question of religion in the schools. It is one thing to secure that no one who wishes to dispense with religious ministrations or teaching shall be bothered with it. That is wholly to the good, and may be considered an advancement of the general principle that the State should have nothing to do with religion at all. It is quite another thing to agree, as was done by the Nonconformists, that a measure of religion with which all religious sects agreed should be taught at the public expense. That was a clear sacrifice of principle. Some apology for this kind of tactic is offered, in this and in other connections, by the plea that it is broadening thought. That, again, is a dangerous phrase. It assumes that a mere broadening of thought is in itself and by itself good, when as a matter of fact it may only be comfortable. Breadth of thought, or of anything else is not in itself a good thing. A river which has a certain depth and breadth will be a good thing. But if one sets about broadening it, he may pursue that task until as a result he has, not a serviceable river, but a very unserviceable swamp. Breadth and depth combined make a wholly good combination. Breadth alone is not of necessity a good thing at all. You may broaden and broaden your teachings until they become so broad that everyone may agree with them, and are therefore of no service to anyone. To state Freethought in such a way that a Christian clergyman or a half-liberated Theist will agree with you is not a gain, but a compromise that involves a very real sacrifice of principle and a loss of effectiveness. To act in this way may minister to the love of ease or to the craving for popularity, but it counts for nothing in the real progress of the world.

* * *

Facing Facts.

An apology is attempted on the ground that it is wise to pursue a policy of permeation. That, we admit, has its uses, but it also has its limitations, and they are very pronounced. The chief, perhaps the only use of a policy of permeation is to secure a jumping off ground in circumstances where it would not be possible by a more direct method. It is essentially what one may call a foothold policy, and it puts itself out of court in the exact measure of its success. The Sunday lecture movement, to take an example, had its use in familiarizing the minds of people with lectures on the "Sabbath." It was directly opposed by the Churches, and to take part in it became the equivalent of an attack on organized religion. But soon the Churches, in the big centres of population, accommodated themselves to the change. Prominent Christians began to identify themselves with it, and, as a consequence, its Freethinking character was lost. For some years we have seen scores of Freethinkers, whose time might be more profitably employed, spending their energies in connection with a movement which, under present conditions, has but the minimum effect on the disintegration of religious beliefs. So also with the spread of more scientific knowledge. Fifty

years ago popular scientific lectures also had the same effect as the Sunday lecture movement. Evolution was branded as anti-religious, and to advocate it was inferentially to attack religion. But here also accommodation took place. The Churches began to preach evolution. They began to arrange for scientific lectures on their own account. These were and are given in connection with churches and chapels. Clergymen take the chair, and even deliver lectures themselves that are in point of manner and matter quite impeccable. The conditions have therefore altered. We are no longer where we were fifty years ago when a scientific discourse had all the force of an attack on religion. More than ever it is the direct attack that is needed. It is the Atheistic character of science that must be emphasized to-day. The matter of science, so far as Freethought is concerned, is merely so much illustrative material. If we would advance with the times, we must bear in mind that what was effective half a century ago may be largely a waste of energy to-day. In other words, the need for Freethinkers to-day is to discriminate between the permeation that disintegrates and the permeation that ends in absorption by the enemy.

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No Compromise With Religion.

It is a mistake to suppose that the great need of the world is broad thinking or liberal thinking. There is, as a matter of fact, no shortage of either. What the world really needs—what it always needed, and still needs—is strong thinking. Putting on one side the political and social worlds, we can take as an illustration the situation in the world of Freethought. And here there is no question if those who have really abandoned all Christian and Theistic beliefs could be brought to the point of saying so without apology, or evasion, or qualification; they are sufficiently numerous to command recognition, and to put a stop to that petty persecution and miserable boycotting which still prevails. But what we find in a large number of cases is an attempt to narrow differences in such a way that the advantage nearly always rests with the religious believer. The Atheist in fact becomes the Agnostic in profession, then the agnosticism of philosophy is confused with the agnosticism of theology, until, as a grand *reductio ad absurdum*, we have a religious agnosticism emerge, and we are assured that we are making progress. But we are not. It is a step wholly in the wrong direction, a form of compromise that John Morley in his better moments wrote so forcibly against. And how can we expect that the religious world will ever yield Freethought the respect that is its social due while so many who have ceased to believe in religion spend so much of their energies in placating the common enemy? "No compromise with the Hohenzollerns" was a popular cry during the War. The cry was based on the assumption that the aims of the Hohenzollerns and of the Allies were wholly incompatible. How much more force should the cry "No compromise with religion" have with the Freethinker who understands his position! Many years ago John Stuart Mill said that the time had come when people should speak out their minds on religion. It is more than time that all disguise and timidity should be thrown aside. A little courage is all that is needed to end the farce of religion in nearly every civilized country. And we are doubtful if a country has the right to be called civilized until this has been done.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christianity and the Times.

ON a recent Sunday evening three of us attended a fairly large church in the North-West of London, and found it not quite two-thirds full, though it was the occasion on which a Salvation Army band paid its annual visit thereto. The minister is exceedingly well known, and fully deserves the high reputation he enjoys. He is entirely free from all pulpit mannerisms. He talks with perfect naturalness, and though his discourse lasted upwards of an hour, he held the attention of his audience to the end; and being natural, he was thoroughly unconventional. Indeed, in some respects, the lecture was very remarkable, the like of which is seldom delivered from a pulpit. It was eminently frank, suggested by and largely based on the equally frank book edited by the Rev. Dr. Cairns, which book has often been alluded to in the columns of this journal. From a religious point of view the book is profoundly pessimistic. Dealing primarily with the state of religion in our own Army during the War, and recording the evidence supplied by a vast number of more or less impartial witnesses, it reveals the fact that the bulk of our fighting men knew little and cared less about the Christian religion. Of course, some of the witnesses were not competent judges on this point. Chaplains and military officers, for example, were not in a position to ascertain the men's real attitude towards religion. As a rule, parsons are the very last persons to whom the majority of young men are likely to disclose their religious views, whilst in the Army, during a great war, there is very little intercourse on such matters between officers and men; and to our own knowledge some officers were themselves unbelievers.

It is amazingly easy to fasten this charge of ignorance and indifference upon the non-religious. The preacher did so repeatedly in the course of his address. The allegation is that the overwhelming majority of people in this country have no idea of what the Churches stand for, or of what Christianity is. On the assumption that the accusation is true, whose fault is it? How is it possible for such gross ignorance to prevail in the most Christian country under the sun? Is not its very existence the most damning of all arguments against the truth of Christianity? The Church claims to be a Divinely founded institution, charged with supernatural powers, and its ministers glory in being the ambassadors of an omnipotent, all-conquering Redeemer; and yet, according to their own admission, some eighty per cent. of the population of this country are outside of the Churches, and densely ignorant of Christ. If this is the state of things in a country which constantly boasts of its Christianity, what inference can any sane person draw save this, that Christianity is the most complete farce ever heard of, the most colossal failure on the face of the earth?

Of course, the charge is at most only partially true. Of this statement the preacher himself furnished ample proof. He admitted that when in France he was subjected to a fiery ordeal of heckling, awkward questions, and stubborn opposition. One officer testified that English people generally and Tommies in particular did not think at all; but the preacher found out at the Front that many soldiers did think, and that as a result they had become intellectually hostile to the Christian religion. The same thing is true of multitudes all over this island. They are Atheists because they have successfully thought themselves out of Theism. They reject Christianity because they have convinced themselves that it is not true. The people who do not know what the Church stands for or what Christianity is are

The Philosophy of Secularism.

By G. W. FOOTE.

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incapable of intelligent hostility to either. In a vague, unintelligent way they are all believers, though they cannot tell exactly what they believe. They never read the *Freethinker*, or any other intellectual publication. Through ignorance and carelessness they have become *lapsed* Christians, but it is not in them to become *anti* anything. Their case is utterly hopeless, so far as the Christian religion is concerned. Neither directly nor indirectly does God seem able to do anything for them. But outside the Churches are to be found tens of thousands of intelligent, well-read, cultured, and highly moralized men and women who have been obliged to renounce their belief in any form of supernaturalism. Our preacher frankly admitted that "most of the heroism and self-sacrifice displayed on the battlefield was not connected with Jesus Christ," and that at present in the Homeland crowds of the best living folk are not associated with any religious sects.

This preacher set great store by his frankness, and assured us that he was not speaking to the gallery. But is it frankness to affirm that non-Christians of acknowledged ability of character are leading Christian lives? If that affirmation is justified, why should Christian missionaries be sent out to such Heathen countries as China and Japan, where the moral standard is known to be fully as high as, if not higher than, in Christian England? Or what need is there for churches and chapels, with their huge staffs of paid and honorary workers? Are not all these wholly superfluous if the majority of the best characters are produced apart from them? Such characters are no more Christian than they are Confucian or Buddhist; they are merely human characters, and are to be found in all lands, whether Christian or Pagan, civilized or savage.

Our preacher was equally inaccurate when he asserted that scientific or theoretic Materialism had gone for ever. Soon after the War began he made a similar assertion concerning Rationalism. As a matter of fact, Materialism was never in such strong evidence as it is to-day. The materialistic interpretation of the Universe was never so widely accepted as it is at this moment. Vitalism among biologists is as dead as Queen Anne. It is true that, as a theory, Materialism, like most other "isms," has waxed and waned alternately throughout the ages, but it has never been without its advocates. Dr. Russel Wallace, who repudiated Materialism, confessed again and again that he stood practically alone. Sir Oliver Lodge could make the same confession as regards his own position among physicists.

Almost every passage our preacher read from Dr. Cairns' book was of a peculiarly pessimistic character. He declared that there is a bright as well as a dark side to the picture; but on this occasion the bright side was not presented, neither from the book nor from the preacher's own experience and observation. He enumerated a few of the conditions upon which, in his opinion, depends the possibility of putting an end to the present impotence of the Churches, such as the creation of a genial, cheery, homely atmosphere within each Church, the cultivation of an incorrigibly optimistic disposition on the part of all professing Christians, and the banishment from ecclesiastical activities of all formalism, artificialness, and sanctimoniousness. It will be observed that he treated the Church as an exclusively human organization dependent for its prosperity upon purely human conditions. In the New Testament the Church is represented as being of Divine origin and the medium of Divine power. What made Pentecost memorable was the alleged descent of the Holy Ghost; and Paul depicts the Church as a body whose head is Christ. It used to be the belief that every religious revival came down straight from heaven

—from the very presence of the Lord. But on the occasion now under review there was no allusion whatever, except perhaps in the prayers, to the supernatural powers believed to be inherent in the very nature of the Church. Besides, the preacher closed his eyes to the significant fact that some Churches are, from a simple business point of view, eminently successful now. Here is a Church which flourishes like a green bay-tree, not because there is bestowed upon it a larger measure of the Holy Ghost than upon its less successful neighbours, but because the man in the pulpit has a voice like silver bells in tune, or is the possessor of an irresistibly magnetic oratory, and treats his hearers as so many musical instruments upon which he has learned to play with consummate art. In his church there are no vacant seats whenever he occupies the pulpit; but only a few filled when he is absent. Are we to infer from this that the Holy Ghost is a respecter of persons and pours out his power upon those who are passing rich in power of their own, but withholds it from those who lack the natural endowment; or are we to learn the only sane lesson, namely, that the Holy Ghost and his power are an exploded myth, and that all Churches alike are purely human societies, conducted on exclusively natural lines, though under the hollow pretext of being indwelt and energized by a trinity of supernatural persons? In any case, as saviours of society and nations, as purifiers of public morals, as refashioning factors in economic relationships, and as promoters of the brotherly and sisterly solidarity of the race they have in all ages exhibited and still continue to exhibit the quintessence of incompetence and futility. In these most important and vital respects, the word FAILURE must be written in letters of fire across their entire history.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Lower Slopes of Parnassus.

"Heine's not the man," you say, "for me,
Tennyson or Kipling is my poet.
If I must be plagued with poetry
Let me have it as at home they grow it.

Something sapid, cut and come again,
On the tickled palate such as lingers,
Not like Heine, jam who gives, you then
Raps you with the spoon upon the fingers."

—John Payne.

PRIOR to the War, there was a slackening of public interest in the works of Mr. Rudyard Kipling; but the inclusion of the Union Jack among the sacred symbols of the National Religion roused the public attention to a writer who is nothing if not patriotic. The five years of war have but increased this vogue, and to-day we are confronted with an *edition-de-luxe* of his verse, which, since publishers are not philanthropists, means that the great public which neglected Meredith and Swinburne has taken Rudyard Kipling to its capacious bosom.

It may be that Mr. Kipling does not covet the bay leaves of the poet, but his publishers have put him forth as one. And the critics, obeying the nod of the advertisement managers, have lauded him extravagantly as a singer. The clergy, too, have included some of his verse in their hymnologies in order to divert a too strict attention to the other poetasters who contribute to sacred anthologies. It is all very diverting, for the blunt truth remains that Mr. Kipling is seldom other than a brilliant and spirited rhymester. *Departmental Ditties* are clever society verses, *Barrack Room Ballads*, *The Seven Seas*, and *The Five Nations* are more evidence of a poet in heart than of an artist in expression. They are stirring, these metrical and verbal effects, but they are not "the linked

sweetness, long drawn out" of real poetry. The golden music of Swinburne or the quiet dignity of William Watson is not paralleled in Mr. Kipling's pages. The smart audacity of *Tomlinson* serves only to remind us what such a theme might be in the hands of a great master of melody. The *Recessional*, if we have any canons to measure it, must show cleverness rather than poetry as the result; but we dare not dwell too closely upon Mr. Kipling's rhymes. To the wide public, to the people who admire George R. Sims or Mrs. Wilcox, Mr. Kipling may seem something like a poet; but to the lovers of real literature he is first and foremost a romancer who can hold his audience surely with his stories.

Much has been made of Mr. Kipling's politics, and more of his piety. The curled, perfumed darlings of the Tory press acclaim him proudly as the most religious poet since old John Dryden, and the sad-eyed students of the Nonconformists retort sorrowfully that he has no "soul." This, however, is the merest and paltriest partisanship. Of all the thousands of gods created by men in their own likeness, the Anglo-Indian deity of Mr. Kipling is one of the most astonishing. For example, such high-minded sentiments as those expressed in *The Young British Soldier* ought to make pious penmen shy of claiming Mr. Kipling as a lineal literary descendant of Dr. Isaac Watts:—

When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
An' the women come out to cut up your remains,
Just roll to your rifle, and blow out your brains,
And go to your Gawd like a soldier.

He uses Biblical illustrations with a freedom which reminds one of wicked old Sir John Falstaff:—

Said England unto Pharaoh, "You've had miracles before,
When Aaron struck your rivers into blood;
But if you watch the sergeant he can show you something more,
He's a charm for making riflemen from mud!"
It was neither Hindustani, French, nor Coptic,
It was odds and ends and leavings of the same,
Translated by a stick (which is really half the trick),
And Pharaoh harked to Sergeant Whatshisname.

Now and again Mr. Kipling leaves this fluent finger-ing of the keys, and strikes a deeper note. He has reproduced in startling fashion the wondering amazement of the Hindoo brought face to face with the Christian religion:—

Look, you have cast out love! What gods are these
You bid me please?
The Three in One, the One in Three? Not so!
To my own gods I go.
It may be they shall give me greater ease
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities.

In *White Horses* we are back again with the old patriotic piety and the old beautiful nonsense. Here the poet hints harshly that the very sea is bestowed by Omnipotence for the pleasing purpose of destroying the enemies of England. In the *Recessional* our wonderment is by no means lessened. The second verse, if it stood alone, might pass, though its best line, "An humble and a contrite heart," is no more novel than the National Anthem. Yet how curious is the association of the line just quoted to that other sentiment:—

Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the law.

We would not close upon this note. Mr. Kipling has other claims upon our attention than those of a versifier who has gutted the Old Testament. Writing at a time when so much of contemporary literature is neurotic and "tommyrotic," Mr. Kipling has kept on the old road, and witched the world with noble story-telling. Read with wonder to-day, we wonder if his charm will last. It matters little. He has an audience, and in the future the secret of immortality is beyond us, as the greater secret was alike to old Omar and his love. To discover

how much choice of subject and novelty of incident have prejudiced us in his favour is not worth trying. "Nature's infinite book" is open to all. If Rudyard Kipling finds subjects where others had but found dusty material for dustier books of travel, so far from decrying such talent, we yield him praise for the pleasure he has given us.

MIMNERMUS.

The Nose of Freethought.

HAVE you a taste for philosophy? As a Freethinker your answer must be yes. The right kind of philosophy will take you through life, not without a tear—this it cannot promise you, but it will at least steer you safely past those phantoms of imagination thrust at you by priestly visionaries. You shall not waste your time in deciding whether a mouse, having partaken of a consecrated wafer, assimilates the Holy Ghost. Perhaps you, with Montaigne, in the fullness of your knowledge will exclaim: "What do I know?" But independent thought will make you cast aside as presumptuous the idea that a man was crucified to save you. In our travels we have seen chalked up on a wall: "Christ died for the ungodly." Someone with childlike simplicity had added: "And so did Tommy Atkins." We would not refute the necessity of a myth; we would refute the necessity of it when humanity had outgrown it. When Moses had brought the Israelites to the land of milk and honey, it was not necessary for him to see another fertile country—that is, create another myth. Honour to the myth makers! but let them beware of outstaying their—necessity.

Cyrano de Bergerac (published by Messrs. Heinemann, Bedford Row) is a fine play. Throughout the progress of it, in our mind, this myth idea kept recurring. For its philosophic qualities alone this play will equal any of the best modern productions. *Cyrano's* nose, his deformity, is a subject under a taboo. *Cyrano* is wit, poet, soldier, defender of lost causes, but he is essentially a philosopher. He is the sun and all the other characters revolve round him. In the mouth of a stammering lover he puts the glowing words that win for him his love. In a fight he accounts for seven ruffians. Upon the stage, he is the inspirer of a mediocre actor, but it is in the trenches at Arras that we confess we were held spell-bound. My readers who have first hand experience of trenches, without assistance from heroic bullish editors, will have their emotions stirred in this scene. The party has been foodless for days. In our own duration language it is "fed up." To be fed up is to be verminous, wretched, and envious of the *lucky* man who goes down the line on a stretcher. We will not elaborate this state for many can fill in the blanks. The party is reduced to despair; *Cyrano* calls to the piper to play a tune. It is a simple pastoral air; many of the soldiers remembering the scenes that the music recalls, give way to tears. Then *Cyrano* calls to the drummer to give a roll on the drum. This instantly pulls them together; they forget their hunger and misery and prepare for an attack, and *Cyrano*, by example and exhortation, lifts them completely out of their dejection. Although this scene is mounted according to a former period, it is a truthful picture of many during the late War. If the great fat-headed public could only have seen parts of the line a little over a year ago, our contemptible daily press would have been unable to sell its trash. In the words of our editor: "If war could be painted on a canvas large enough there would be an end to it." And, whilst so many can be out of it, authority will be no more pacific in its intentions in the future than it has been in the past.

Cyrano accomplishes many courageous deeds, and, in the last scene of all, he appears in the garden of a convent. In this scene his words are full of wisdom. He tells a sister the old joke: "Sister, I ate meat yesterday." He loves the pointed word for a good cause; what is appearance? It is not reality. Dead or alive, his spirit is ever alert in the world of shams—it is on the side of the oppressed, it is against the dressed-up foppery of humbug. It supplies courage to the faltering; it pursues goodness and beauty in whatever protean shape it assumes.

In very truth readers, it is a man's play, it is a woman's play. It leaves a mark on the mind. The author has something to say, and we prick our ears, for this is something extraordinary during an epidemic of revues, and pyjama, and bedroom plays.

Spirit of Cyrano—truth is not always handsome. Often it weareth an ugly nose. The rewards of truth are not measured by the tradesman's gold. Modern society may be founded on a lie. Truth is keen—it is keener than the edge of the sharpest razor. The culture of a nation may even exist on the fringe of truth, and—the successful merchant, apparently, receives more honour than the scientist or the philosopher. But that will not deter any student of truth from his path—nor will it make him a tyrant wishing to *impose* his knowledge of truth on others. Farewell and hail! spirit of Cyrano, spirit of laughter and tears—spirit of life that long-faced Christians cannot understand—for laughter was disastrous in the Bible. Help us to understand man. In the words of "R. H. C.," in the *New Age*, "The gnosis of man is necessary to the gnosis of God; and God can well look after Himself and bide our time."

Cyrano's nose, his deformity, is a subject under a taboo, and Mr. W. L. Courtney writes in the *Daily Telegraph* that the real Cyrano (1620-1655) was regarded in Paris as a somewhat dangerous Freethinker. Dangerous to whom? we ask. Our reply is best given in Cyrano's dying words:—

But since Death comes,

I meet him still afoot.

[*He draws his sword.*]

And sword in hand!

Why, I well believe

He dares to mock my nose? Ho! insolent!

[*He raises his sword.*]

What say you? It is useless? Ay, I know!

But who fights ever hoping for success?

I fought for lost cause, and for fruitless quest!

You there, who are you? You are thousands! Ah!

I know you now, old enemies of mine!

Falsehood!

[*He strikes in the air with his sword.*]

Have at you! Ha! and Compromise!

Prejudice, Treachery!

[*He strikes.*]

Surrender, I?

Parley? No, never! You too, Folly,—you?

I know that you will lay me low at last.

Let be! Yet I fall fighting, fighting still!

All men of spirit would wish for no better company than the foe to Falsehood, Compromise, Prejudice, and Treachery. It is a matter of public regret that this brilliant play is now homeless; that we should be denied the privilege of Mr. Robert Lorraine's acting and his company's splendid support is an excellent index of the spirit of the times. The purveyors of the rag-and-bobtail flummery at present on the stage in London no doubt care for public taste as much as the man in the moon, and the valiant figure of a parson pushing a porter's truck during the railway strike indicate the last words in Christian culture. Is it only Moneybags who prevents you from giving the public something to think about, Mr. Lorraine?

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

We note the *Church Times* points out that it has information from "a sure source" that the head of the Church in Moscow has accepted the principle of Soviet rule for Russia, and is advising the people to support it. That is a striking comment on the lies that have been told in the general press here concerning the suppression of religion and the closing of the Churches in Russia. We have pointed out all along how false these statements were, and we presume that we are not far off the time when the truth will be told on this matter. The *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, Mr. Goode, pointed out in a recent lecture that in Soviet Russia there obtains complete freedom of worship, the Bolsheviks treating all religions with a good humoured and contemptuous intolerance. Naturally, the religious parties don't like that. Not to be granted special privileges is, to the Christian, equivalent of persecution. And Christians have always been careful of the truth in dealing with their opponents—careful, that is, in the direction of economy.

The *Toronto Mail and Empire* reports the case of a woman who complained to the court that her husband had only given her twelve dollars in three months. She said that her husband spent a lot of time in bed, but he went to church every Sunday morning and evening. The magistrate summed up the situation by saying the trouble with him was that there was too much church and not enough of wife and home.

An advertising expert has been lecturing on "How to earn £10,000 a year." It isn't worth doing. The good Bishop of London has told us that it only leads to the workhouse.

The dear clergy, who did none of the fighting in the War, promised us when peace came a new heaven and a new earth. A writer in the *New World* says bluntly "we only find a different kind of hell." A palpable hit!

Speaking of the poverty of the parsons, the Bishop of London (salary £10,000) said £137,000 was required for 1920, as against £85,000 for 1919. Two brothers-in-the-Lord (anonymous) were bankrupt, and another (also anonymous) had died of worry in an asylum before the news could reach him that his wife had been given £200. No news was given of the unhappy ecclesiastic who fed his family on sixpence a meal.

Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, who is an old journalist, says: "They talk about the editor's opinions. It's the advertiser edits half the paper." Yes! And think of the quacks and other holy innocents who do advertise.

A recent Spiritist publication contains an alleged message from Shakspeare, dated last year. It reads: "I will be a silent listener in the house of the immensities of my God." And whisky had not then been released.

Miss Mary Hall, whose death was reported in the papers last week, achieved the distinction of travelling from the Cape to Cairo without a white companion. She experienced from the natives nothing but courtesy and consideration. Mrs. French-Sheldon was another lady with a similar experience among "savages." So also was Miss Mary Kingsley. These experiences bear out the testimony of many males that, when one goes among primitive peoples who have had little experience of the rascality of the white man, there is evinced a consideration and rude hospitality on which one may count. The savage is much like a child in this respect. Treat him with consideration, and he will respond with the readiness of a child. But when the white man begins to treat him as an inferior animal or a beast of burden, when he outrages his tribal customs and generally regards him as a mere instrument for exploitation, when the problem becomes "how to make the nigger work," all the material for trouble is there, and the next white that comes along reaps the consequence. Someone has said that the only real savages in Africa are the white men.

We travelled to Scotland a little while back in the company of an Indian tea-planter and his wife. They were quite an admirable couple, and, we should judge, of a kindly disposition, the man one who would most probably treat his workmen with every consideration. As a man, we think little fault would be found with him. And yet, running through all his talk was the quiet assumption that the only real justification for the existence of the people of India was that they might minister to the benefit of the white man—preferably of the Briton. This was not so much stated as it was taken for granted. So long as the native received food and shelter, and medical attendance, there seemed nothing else that he had a right to demand. And one could not help reflecting that, if this was the state of mind of a naturally amiable man, there were immense probabilities of trouble when the individual was of another type.

Incidentally, my travelling companion expressed great indignation at the tactics of some of the missionaries in diverting labour from the tea plantations of the traders to their own plantations. We do not think it is generally recognized to what extent the missionaries are interested, either directly or indirectly, in trading ventures. It is a capital policy—for the missionaries. The public supply the capital in the shape of subscriptions for conversion, and there are no dividends to pay. And religion, we have no doubt, plays a useful part in keeping in order those of the natives who are "brought to Christ." Industry becomes a religious duty and a cardinal virtue. The people at home subscribe for Christ, and the native abroad works for Christ—and the missionary sits at the receipt of custom.

A new Bishopric has now been established at Bradford, and for the present the Parish Church is to serve as the Cathedral. The *Church Times* remarks that for the present it will be well to go slowly in this matter, because if money were to be spent now on this project a good many people would ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" So at present it advises Bradfordians to be content with "a spiritual building." We assume that the Bishop will hardly be content with a spiritual salary. But one hopes that presently the intelligence of the country will be sufficiently developed to prevent large sums of money being spent on the erection of these costly Joss houses.

In Somerset and Gloucestershire the Church has organized a travelling cinema. A motor van has been fitted up and visits the villages giving its performances. Sometimes the performances are given in the church halls, where the rent is small, and the place is, we are informed, invariably crowded. We see no reason to doubt this, particularly as we are informed that "No effort is made to gild the religious pill; the promoters of the movement are out frankly to entertain with interesting drama, straight comedy, or events of world-wide interest." The move is artful enough. It counts on the stupidity of village people being great enough to conclude that because "Passon" provides a picture of Charlie Chaplin there is some ground for belief in the resurrection. Or a picture of Bill Farnum among the cowboys will be taken as evidence for the Virgin Birth. At any rate, the evidence here for Christianity is as good as any other evidence that we have come across. And the move serves to illustrate what we point out in another part of this issue, namely, that the Church to-day is quite ready to arrange for any number of scientific lectures, or lectures on educational addresses, since it sees that it no longer pays to associate these with heresy. Our real task as Freethinkers is to point out the bearing of the developments in science and life on religious teachings and doctrines. Unless this is being done we are permitting our movement to be side-tracked, and are even helping at the game. The direct attack on theology is more necessary than ever. The more the Churches seek to evade the real issue, the more it should be our concern to see that it is faced.

The Committee of the Conference of the League of Nations Societies has decided to advise that, while the Holy See is not a Nation, it is a Power, and should therefore be

admitted to the League. We hope that nothing of the kind will be done. The Holy See is a *Church*, and there is no more reason for admitting that to a membership of the League than there is for admitting any other Church, or even the National Secular Society. The reactionary and out-of-date influences are already sufficiently strong on the League without their being made stronger by the official inclusion of the greatest reactionary of all. We quite admit that the Roman Church would prove of service to some members of the League; but if the League is ever to become an instrument for the real good of the world, the less religion there is mixed up with it the better. The Christian Churches have done nothing whatever to make the peoples of the world live together in peace in the past, and we see no reason for expecting any better influence from them in the future.

Something like a comment on our remarks in last week's "Views and Opinions" as to the relative rewards given to soldiers and others is seen in the appeal for £53,000 to purchase a property for General Haig. This in addition to the huge sum already voted by the Government. We should think more of General Haig if he declined the subscription.

"His father thinks that if you knock one devil out you will let in two," said a Bagshot woman to a school attendance officer who suggested that the boy should be thrashed. This remark was given in evidence in a case before the Chertsey Bench. It occurs, be it noted, in a country which has enjoyed the blessings of Christianity for many centuries.

The Rev. A. V. Magee, Vicar of St. Mark's, Hamilton Terrace, N.W., declares that in the East End "sixpenny messages from the dead" are advertised. Whew! Prayers for the dead bring in more than sixpences, but the Rev. Magee does not worry about that.

Providence is something of a humourist. Whilst the choir at an Acton church were hymning the Lord, thieves entered the vestry and stole their overcoats and belongings.

The latest news of the "starving" clergy is terrible. Church folk at Frinton-on-Sea are building a new place of worship which will cost £20,000. Estate to the value of £25,565 was left by Canon Nisbet, of Canterbury. The King has signed the decree authorizing a new bishopric of Bradford. The late Rev. J. Scott, of West Cromwell Road, W., left £15,476.

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, in its issue for December 1, publishes a report of a lecture by a Mr. J. E. Bell that is really worth preserving. Mr. Bell is a theological "whole-hogger." He declares that the Biblical statement of creation is literally true. The world *was* made in six days, and it was only a few thousand years of age. The story of Babel was a true record of the origin of languages, and fossils were not formed to-day because, "if you throw a dead cat or dog into the canal, the fish and other things eat it." We know what the physical structure of the cave-man was, but we have often wondered what he was like mentally. After reading Mr. Bell, we are in doubt no longer.

Judge Bankes, speaking at London Diocesan Conference, said men had given up the idea of Holy Orders and were becoming policemen. We wonder if this will affect the veracity of the boys in blue?

The Rev. F. B. Meyer declares that he sent eleven hundred men from his own church to the War. Which commandments did he break?—"Thou shalt not kill" or "Resist not evil"?

Sir Arthur Yapp is still yapping on behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association. Appealing for more money, he said people did not realize that the War-work of the Y.M.C.A. is still continuing on a very substantial scale. From Ireland to Palestine the society was still at work.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 14, Liverpool; December 17 and 18, Belfast; December 21, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 21, Glasgow; December 22, Paisley.

CHRISTIAN READER.—We do not know on what ground you conclude that the case of stealing you enclose is the result of preaching Secularism. Is it because stealing is such a rare occurrence in Christian circles?

H. T. HUMPIDGE.—Mr. Cohen's work on *Religion and Sex* is now on sale.

G. G. JOSEPH.—We cannot see the force of your distinction between Agnostic and Atheist as the one being "without knowledge" and the other "without God." What is it of which the Agnostic is without knowledge? If it refers to God, then it is only Atheism under another name. If it has nothing to do with God, then it bears no relation to the point at issue, and becomes a subterfuge. The question of Existence, Force, or Cause has no necessary connection at all with the theological question of God. It is a confusion to identify the two. And you quite overlook the significance of the fact that it is only in Britain, the classical home of compromise and mental timidity, that Agnosticism has a vogue worth bothering about.

W. K. ANDERSON.—Professor Keith's work on the Antiquity of Man is the latest and most authoritative on the subject. A list of vestigial remains will be found in almost any popular treatise on Evolution.

L. MAYLAND.—We thought our answer to you on November 9 quite explicit. At any rate, we can only repeat that we do not and never have issued challenges, or challenged anyone, to debate. When we are asked to represent a responsible organization in a Freethought discussion we have never declined, but we do not fancy ourselves issuing challenges to all and sundry to tread on the tail of our coat. We have another purpose to serve on the platform other than that of merely getting a big crowd. We did receive an invitation from the person named but declined.

H. C. WHITE.—Many thanks. We will pass it on to Mr. Lloyd, who is the person concerned, and he will return it to you later.

B. SMITH.—We should be only too pleased to visit Bristol if a hall could be obtained. Will you see if anything can be done and let us know?

G. FINLAY.—We are as much in the dark as you are concerning the matter. Probably the habit of suppressing news, set up by the War, is too strong to be overcome easily. And when a people have been treated for five years as children, perhaps they, too, are not yet recovered from the treatment.

AUTOLYCUS.—We are obliged for references. We believe that G. B. S. did attend the Hall of Science in his younger days.

W. MINSHALL.—All subscriptions to the N. S. S. are due in the January of each year.

G. GROVE.—You are untiring in your efforts to push this paper. Thanks.

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.

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.

Sugar Plums.

We have to thank all those who have so generously subscribed to our Sustentation Fund, which closes this week. The sum subscribed will clear off the deficit to date, and, as we announce elsewhere, we have the fullest confidence that we under the new arrangements the *Freethinker* will pay its way. When we say that, exclusive of the high cost of paper, which we do not count, because that should presently get cheaper, the permanently increased cost of producing this paper is at present between four and five hundred per year, to bring the *Freethinker* to this point is something at which we

may all feel pleased. We count this as a permanent cost, because it is represented by wages, and no one anticipates a fall here. And wages, it should be said, means the cost of composing, machining, and shop expenses.

To-day (December 14) Mr. Cohen lectures, afternoon and evening, in the Clarion Cafe, Liverpool. His subjects are: at 3, "God and Evolution"; at 7, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation." Tea will be provided for visitors from a distance. Mr. Cohen will then cross to Belfast, and lecture in the Ulster Hall on the 17th and 18th. From there he will return to Manchester, on the 21st, in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, Manchester. Any delay in dealing with correspondence during this period must be excused for obvious reasons.

Mr. Cohen had two capital meetings at Sheffield on Sunday last. There was a good audience in the afternoon, and at night the hall was packed, many being compelled to stand. A party of twenty came over from Barnsley to the meetings, and there were visitors from Rotherham and elsewhere. The large proportion of young men and women present was very noticeable, and cheering for the future. On the Saturday evening, Mr. Cohen, who was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Irving at Barnsley, met the members and friends of the local Branch for a chat. It is hoped that a hall may be obtained, and propaganda on a larger scale attempted in the near future.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (Dec. 14) in the New Theatre, Maesteg. There will be two meetings, morning and afternoon. We hope to hear that there has been a good muster of Freethinkers and their friends from the surrounding districts. Mr. Lloyd's lectures should be very welcome, with that part of Wales threatened by another revival. And there are few men better able to act as a counter-irritant.

We have barely space to announce that Mr. F. J. Gould lectures to-day (December 14) in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, at 7 o'clock on "The March of a Million Years." We hope the theatre will be as crowded with people as we are this week with matter.

Religion and Sex: Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development is the title of a new work by Mr. Cohen which is published this week by T. N. Foulis & Co. We hope soon to review the work at length. At present we can only say that it is an attempt to depict the part played by the sexual instinct and abnormal mental states in the perpetuation of religious beliefs. There is no other book that covers the same ground, and, to quote the publisher's announcement, "the author's researches cover a very wide field, from the primitive culture field onwards. Although strictly scientific in tone, the style of the work is fully acceptable to the general reader, and should prove of interest no less to the sociologist than to the student of religion." The book makes a handsome volume of about 300 pages, well printed on superior paper, and is published at 6s. Copies can be supplied direct from the *Freethinker* office. Postage, 6d. Those who are looking out for suitable Christmas or New Year gifts might well make a worse selection than a volume of this description.

**"Freethinker"
"Victory" Sustentation Fund.****Thirteenth List of Subscriptions.**

Previously acknowledged, £363 12s. 6d. C. Bridger, 5s. H. C. White, 5s. H. Lupton, 10s. G. F. Shoults, £3. T. White, 10s. C. Wykes, 4s. S. Lidgett, 2s. 6d. W. Owen, 5s. D. Seddon, 10s. J. Shipp, 10s. E. Oliver, £3 3s. G. Smith, 5s. R. J. Thompson, 5s. W. F. Ambrose (13th sub.), 2s. G. Morrison, 5s. B. B., 10s. A. Coleman, 5s. R. Lloyd, 2s. 6d. Total, £374 11s. 6d.

This Fund is now closed.

Belfast's Lost Souls.

[Scene, outside City Hall, Belfast, one Sunday evening. A number of fanatical and freakish-looking men and women of a type usually associated with evangelical Christianity are holding a meeting. They are clad in uniform similar to that of the Salvation Army; they carry musical instruments, and flaunt a banner. One of their number, the possessor of a radiant smile and glorious lungs, is appealing for converts—and funds.]

MEN and Weemen of Belfost,—I want to give my testimony to the great joy that has entered my heart now that I have lost God. (Hallelujah!) Oh, men and weemen, I was once a stupid believer, a howling Christian seeking salvation; but now, thank God, I'm an Atheist. Oh, I'm so ha-appy now that I've lost God. Oh, men and weemen, I want all yous Christians to stop believing, to lose God, to know how ha-appy you'll feel when you're lost souls. Oh, for years and years, I was seeking God; but now, praise his name, I've lost him, and I'm so ha-appy now I've joined my brothers and sisters in unbelief. Oh, men and weemen, poor saved Christians, don't delay, don't put off; don't say you'll put off being ha-appy, that you'll keep on believing a little longer. Oh, men and weemen, you may be too late, too late to lose God, and be so ha-appy. Oh, men and weemen, don't persist in your stupid believing; some of yous may say, "Oh, I've always been a miserable Christian, and salvation's good enough for me." Oh, brothers and sisters, men and weemen, that'll maybe do to-day when you're well and strong; but oh, when you're on your deathbed, oh, how you'll wish you'd been lost before it was too late. You'll cry out, "Oh, if only I had listened to th' infidel in Ann Street, and read his tracts about dying Christians, I might have been so ha-appy now." Oh, come away, brothers and sisters, flee from the terrors of salvation and the horrors of another world, come and lose God now, to-night, and oh, you'll be so ha-appy. Everybody's ha-appy in the Lost Souls Army. As the great Colonel said, "The rime to be happy is now, and the place to be happy is Belfost." (Amen!) Oh, it's a glorious thing to be lost, to know there's no glorious hereafter! Oh, when I look round at all the smiling, ha-appy faces of the Lost, I feel so ha-appy that when we're dead we'll never meet again. Oh, thank God for guiding me to infidelity (Hallelujah!) and to the ha-appy hearts of the Lost Souls. Oh, come away, men and weemen, come to-night, come along to our hall, come and hear the glad tidings of unbelief. Oh, we're all so ha-appy at our meetings in Joy Street. You're all welcome, dear brothers and sisters. Never mind if you're steeped in belief; there's not one can be too good a Christian but what can be lost, come and be washed in the precious mud, come and join the ha-appy Army. We're now going to march to our hall; come along with us, men and weemen, you're sure of a treat. Brother Effel will be speaking; Brother Effel's sure to be speaking; Brother Effel's *always* speaking. Some say he speaks too much; but when you've lost God, what's half an hour when you know the world can never end? Oh, all our good comrades will be there at the hall to-night. Jim Wilkinson, the converted painter, all the way from Ballymacanett, is to give his testimony. Oh, it's a plain, unvarnished tale Jim tells. Come and hear him yourself. He'll tell us how he found the poor, trusting paper-hangers clinging to God; but, thank God, Jim could size them up. Oh, they couldn't whitewash the dirty passages in the Bible when Jim was about. He gave them coats of many colours of infidelity. And now, praise God, many a Christian painter has brushed aside his belief, and got over his distemper, so to speak, and now gives hell and boiled oil a flat denial, and

pastes up the posters advertising the *Infidel*. Oh, Jim has made them so ha-appy.

And our good Captain Mawhinney will be with us to-night. Oh, the Captain's always so ha-appy. He'll tell us the old, old, story of his early struggles with the Christians on Thiland. Oh, it'll make you so ha-appy to hear it from the captain in his own words. Oh, men and weemen what the good captain suffered from these poor ignorant savage believers on Thiland! Captain Mawhinney tells us they were nearly all believers, scarcely one of them was lost, or had ever read the *Infidel*. Oh, brothers and sisters, it was hard to be sneered at and jeered at, and told to go to hell, when the Captain knew there was no such place. But Captain Mawhinney, always so ha-appy, with his pipe in his mouth, went on with the good work. He never lost heart, and gradually he made converts; and, thank God, hundreds on Thiland are now ha-appy lost souls. And wherever the Captain goes, into the engine-shops, and the boiler-shops, and the chip shops, and all the other shops on Thiland, he carries the *Infidel* and all our other literature. At first the captain did this in his spare time, but now, thank God, he's got no time to spare—for work. For thirty years he has worked in the vineyard—I mean shipyard—of the Lord, and even the poor saved Christians now respect him. Captain Mawhinney never hides his opinions, everybody on Thiland knows he's lost, in fact, Lord Pirrie himself often thinks he's lost.

Oh, come away men and weemen, come now, come with us to-night to our hall. Next week is our Self-Indulgence week; and, ah, we're going to be extra ha-appy all the week. The General himself will be coming ("God bless him," "Praise his name," "Hallelujah"), to lecture on "How to lose God," and we'll have such ha-appy days. Now that we're lost, we can rightly indulge ourselves. There will be ham and eggs every meeting during our self-indulgence week, and them that's married will have sausages for tea (hallelujah) and them that's not married can have kippers (bless their name!). And monkey nuts and chewing-gum for the little lost souls, and squeaky balloons from Woolworth. Oh, we'll all be so ha-appy, but, oh, we need funds, we need collections. Throw in your money, men and weemen. Thank God for a bit of silver. Oh, give us funds for the good work. Our brothers and sisters will go round and collect. Don't be afraid of offending us, men and weemen, drop the money in the tambourines, put it in the comrades' caps, stuff it into the cornets, fling it on to the drum, throw it at me if you like, but for God's sake give quick and give plenty. Don't stop at nine and ninepence. Thank you, sir, God bless you, but sixpence is too much. Ten and fourpence, we'll have to make that fifteen bob. Oh, men and weemen, think of the lost cause, and help on the work. Give us money, we need funds, we can't have too much funds. Fifteen and twopence, I'd like to get a pound. Oh, we're so happy we could knock hell out of the drum. Brother Blowhard, why do you play the piccollo, that can't hold funds? Oh, come away with your brass, we're needing a thousand pounds for our Fresh Air Fund to take poor children to Glengormley for half an hour on the Twelfth. Oh, think of the children, men and weemen, you were once kiddies yourselves before you were saved. The dear little lost children at our hall are all so ha-appy now that there's no God to punish them when they break the furniture.

Now, we're just marching away to our hall in Joy Street, and we want all yous to join in and be so ha-appy.

(The banner is unfurled and borne on in front, the drum is soundly beaten, the instruments blare forth, and the orator, alternately facing the Army, and with

his back to it, with waving arms and clapping hands, leads the singing):—

I don't believe, I won't believe,
That Jesus died for me,
This talk of God, is all a cod,
We wish men's minds were free.

CYNICUS.

Freethought in Unusual Places.

IV.

THE BALLROOM.

THE expression of the modern tendency towards liberty of thought and of action is ubiquitous, and it would be hardly credible that the devotees of Terpsichore, who are so numerous, should not be involved in that expression. There are here, as everywhere in the field of human action, two parties: the retrograde and those who desire to advance; and naturally the former are imbued with the desire to return to earlier days, when all was well. Needless to say, my own feeling is not with them. The ordered stateliness of the dance in earlier times, the authority of the Master of the Ceremonies, and the formal repetition of a given sequence of movements by a large crowd of people, is a mirror of the life of the times, which were so organized that the necessity for thought was removed from the individual. Moreover, it removed the possibility of self-expression in the dance; and for what purpose do we dance but for joy?

The vast outcry last year against the Jazz step was an indication of the attitude of all who worship set forms. The modern ballroom is one which is organized quite differently from that of the era before the introduction of the equally immoral Tango, which has had so marked an influence on dancing. To-day it is quite unusual for a Master of the Ceremonies to be appointed. The dancers do not need to find partners to dance with. It is sufficient that one has a partner with whom to dance through the evening, and it is most important that the dancers should be well acquainted with each other. They must be temperamentally in unison in order to extract the greatest enjoyment from the art. They are not to be tied in the thongs of rule. A one-step may involve a number of movements allocated to that dance, or it may be jazzed, or it may be a mixture of movements taken indifferently from the one-step or jazz step. Similarly a fox-trot may be treated. And the orchestra simply provides a sequence of music to which the dancers may suit their own choice of steps. Further, the abolition of programmes releases the dancers from engagements with other partners whose dances must be acknowledged and gone through with, however much the desire may have changed before the time for those dances has come.

All this may seem to be towards anarchy more than liberty, but in practice it proves that the majority of people are quite happy without license if they are allowed to please themselves. The Godlike authority of the ubiquitous and troublesome Master of the Ceremonies having been removed, it is found that the amenities of courteous conduct are observed with as much, if not more, care than under his instructions. On an occasion within my experience, indeed, the authority of the official was nothing but an irritant, which spoiled an evening's enjoyment, just as the code, which the ecclesiastics seek to enforce, is one which destroys the happiness we could achieve in the only world we know.

The most retrograde, of course, would not admit that these innovations add to the enjoyment of the terpsichorean art. They prefer the set solemnity of those dances which are the repetition of a sequence of steps

by all and every dancer on the floor, or the lusty, romping which is frequently part of the Lancers. They can hardly believe that they enjoy dancing unless they labour to the flow of perspiration. And it cannot be doubted that this also is a mental reflex from their view of life, wherein all should be bound in the slimy bonds of convention, and wherein each action must be dictated by the criterion of the possible judgment of the unthinking.

It will be remembered that the most determined onslaught upon the introduction and increasing popularity of the smooth and swinging Jazz step were ecclesiastics, who professedly had not seen the dance, but who, nevertheless, seeing its tendency, declared it immoral, and placed a taboo upon it for their faithful followers. The Press, willing to exploit anything that would add to its circulation—they are not blameworthy therefore in a commercial world—took up the cry, and behold it had become immoral! Later it was found, on inspection, to be mere innocent enjoyment; but that was not until it had obtained a popularity which was beyond gaining.

More important, however, than the strictures of priestly personages upon the immorality of innovations in the life and pleasures of the people, is that tribe of fanatics who are of no use for that they wish to do always as was done before; those who cannot realize that to-day is a new day. In all the teaching profession, whatever is taught, there is somewhat of this, and amongst the leading instructors in dancing at the moment it is fashionable to say that the Jazz step is dead, and that there is a reaction in favour of the valse, which is the only graceful dance in vogue. They forget that all the iniquities of Jazz and similar steps were found in the valse when it first became popular. These poor souls seem to believe that the mere antiquity of an institution is its criterion, and they base their judgment accordingly.

They, and the priests who condemn, and the people who refuse to believe in the new things, the new pleasures of the new people, are those who do not know the liberation which has been caused by the cataclysm. They confuse liberty with license, believing that the one is inevitably the result of the other, for they cannot trust material human beings who are not intimidated into acting as they think right.

It is just that lack of faith in the possibilities of human character for good that has led civilization into its turmoil. The principle of intimidation has sapped the vitality from our life. We look here and there, and we perceive the desirable, but we dare not obtain it. It is possible that the method by which we might bring the desirable into being would be illegal; it is possible it might not be respectable; it is possible it might be sin; it is possible we might go to hell; it is possible—oh, anything is possible as the result of our actions, except the possibility that our instincts may be right, and we may be proceeding in the direction of an improvement of this life instead of hoping for the prospect of the possibility of the chance of a throne in Heaven.

Fortunately those who are intimidated are decreasing in number as the innovations are understood and appreciated, and the reaction of each phase of life upon the others leads us inevitably forward. No one who is devoted to dancing to-day would care to return to the conventions of dancing of ten years ago. Correlatively no one to-day would have it that they should return to the state of mind of ten years ago. The events of the last ten years have caused suffering, but they have granted development out of that suffering, and it is just that which has rendered possible progress in thought, religious and political as well as scientific and economic, which shall not be confined to those who are profession-

ally interested in these things, but shall spread among the people at large, so that to-day we see more clearly the fallacies under which we have laboured, and which we are determined to remove. And when we have removed them, the light that is now only percolating through the mists of fallacy will blaze out in splendour on the face of the earth.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Nature and Religion.

NATURE and Religion—normal and abnormal—usually coincide.

If you meet a person who is superstitious, aggressive, arrogant, or without any real ideals in life except himself, or one without respect for those outside his own sphere, you will usually find on inquiry he is either a member of the Catholic or a very High Church. The Catholic and High Churches apparently appeal to this class of individual.

If you meet a man or woman without humour, or one who is always willing to put any everyday episode in life down to God's will, or is inclined to interfere or criticize others, or is indecently puritanical, or one who is interested in tombstones or foundation-stones, and with a general dismal view of life, as a rule you will find this individual a fine Free Churchman or a rabid chapel-goer.

If in your travels you meet a man genuinely interested in life, one fair-minded and refined from a moral point of view—plenty of give-and-take—and one always willing to give in to common sense and decency, you will find as a rule he is either a man to whom religion does not appeal or is an avowed Freethinker.

The foregoing remarks are the opinion of one who has had the opportunity of studying the various natures of men and women—that is, the normal and abnormal.

A normal nature is capable of thinking for itself, an abnormal cannot, as a rule; therefore it follows that Religion appeals more directly to the abnormal. Churches and chapels evidently find it pays to encourage the abnormal nature for obvious reasons (mostly financial).

"SATIS SUPERQUE."

Notes From Ireland.

About two weeks ago I saw some rather artistic postcards of the Sacred Heart and Holy Child in a shop window, and entered to get some. When I had selected, the woman bade me wait a moment, and made a dive beneath the counter, to reappear with a large green card. "This," said she, "has nothing to do with me business, but is in connection with the society." Whereupon she urged me to pledge myself never to read immoral or infidel publications, especially those imported from London, blandly remarking the while that "she would not ask everyone, but she asked me because I looked an intelligent young man."

At first I brushed the incident aside as a bubble of laughter. Suddenly it struck me, however: Why did she ask me, an intelligent looking young man? Why didn't she ask the old woman who was at the same time wrangling over the respective merits of two pictures, each of a man in pain? Why does she not ask the middle-aged mental decrepits? Aye, why? I'll tell you. Because the man who has gone through thirty or forty years of Irish Catholicity is no more than a witless automaton, a withered weed, a broken bottle. He is devoid of originality in so far as the vital, significant things of life are concerned, while his imagination, where it is given to artistic creation, is crippled somewhat by the absence of intellectual freedom. To him life is a dark, dull patch of consistency—his opinions and prejudices are cast in brass. Now, what effect would the *Age of Reason* produce

on such a man? No more than the falling of a solitary snowflake upon the top of an Alp or the twinkling of a star at noon. And this is so, not because the Church has removed his reason, but because the same One True Church has encircled him with its vile hemp and throttled in him the passionate longing for truth, one of the two great hallmarks of man's divinity. No; the confirmed invalids love their beds too dearly to rise. The traps are laid, black and ghastly and yawning, for only "the intelligent-looking young men."

Not far from me lives a doting old man, who devotes most of his time to hymn-singing and to praising God for his old age, his wrinkles, his infirmities, and his troubles. He is a swaddler. Well, the young urchins of the neighbourhood, goaded on, no doubt, by the old urchins, their parents, scarcely allow a week to pass without roaring in through his window, throwing stones at his door, and putting insects and crabs in his letter-box—and the poor old fellow, harmless as are all old men, keeps on gaily praising God!

Beauty is the only thing in the whole world worth living for. When a man frees his shoulders from the sable, impenetrable fur coat of creed, and, donning the ordered hem of Freethought, steps into the smooth glories of the mighty unyoked soul, let him see to it that he understands, that mere scepticism is not the tip-top of his freedom. Freethought is only the basis of the new empire; beauty must be the superstructure. The basis, the foundation, however, is our immediate concern, and in Ireland, alas! it is thin and fragile almost to invisibility. In Belfast, it is true, some advance seems to have been made; but I am afraid Belfast is a bad lead for the remainder of the country. If we southerners want to crystallize, we had better not point to the north until our birds are safely nested. Then, when we have a Branch of the N.S.S. in each of the other provinces, we can—ah, but when that time arrives all men will be perched upon a cloud!

Shall I Be a Priest? is a pamphlet published by the office of the *Irish Messenger*. This precious epistle is written by Rev. Wm. Doyle, S.J., and, up to 1917, thirty thousand impressions had been issued. God only knows how many more thousands have been sold since. It is full of sweet, innocent, lies. Permit me to quote some choice *bon mots* :—

In the eyes of God and His Heavenly Court the priest is no longer a man, a sinful child of Adam, but another Christ.

Deeply conscious of his own great unworthiness, his faults and failings, the priest can never forget that.....he is the elect of God.

Strengthened by the power of great personal holiness the priest becomes indeed a terror to Hell.

Priests, priests! send us priests!

And to wind up with the most terribly significant :—

A sweet poet, Wordsworth, once wrote :—

A mother is a mother still

The holiest thing on earth.

Had he known the Catholic priesthood, the sublime dignity and lofty calling of Christ's Anointed, he must have changed his words, since of all God's creatures there can be none more sacred than the priest whose body, hands and feet, whose lips, eyes, ears and very soul are holy to the Lord.

When one reads all this and then gazes upon one of these "elect of God," one's soul cannot but splutter with fury. To my eyes the face of nearly every priest is a red bulbous bit of masquerading morality streaked and shot with fish blood. Their lips are so soiled with the sinfulness of men and women that they regard themselves as hounds of heaven hunting in the fair, false, fields of hell. They are puffed up with the truth of their own falsehood. "As one knows the poet by his fine music, so one can recognize the liar by his rich rhythmic utterance."

DESMOND FITZROY.

All compromise with institutions of which your conscience disapproves,—compromises which are usually made for the sake of the general good,—instead of producing the good you expected, inevitably lead you not only to acknowledge the institution you disapprove of, but also to participate in the evil that institutions produces.—*Tolstoy*.

Correspondence.

WAR MEMORIALS AND RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The local War Memorial Committee invited me recently to fill in a form stating the age, rank, war service, and other particulars concerning my late son, who was killed in action.

Of course, I was only too pleased to do anything I could to assist the Committee, and forwarded the particulars asked for, including a photograph.

On the other hand, I added a postscript, the substance of which will, I believe, receive your approval:—

Please Note: My late son was a convinced Freethinker, and complained bitterly that he was compelled to adopt some form of religion before he was permitted to volunteer to serve his country. He mentioned in his letters that he had carefully obliterated the letters C of E (Church of England) from his identity disc.

I wish it to be clearly understood, therefore, that my dear son's name must not appear in your records or on any memorial unless entirely dissociated from any "religious" reference.

To quote his own words, he volunteered to fight, not for God or King, but for the liberation of mankind. He has made good, and it remains for me to see that the freedom he fought and died for is accorded to his memory.

If it should be necessary to state the religious views of those whose memory you desire to perpetuate, you may put against my son's name "no religion" or "Atheist"—whichever you please, but I should object to a blank being left against his name, which might be taken to mean that his "religious" views were not known.

Would it not be as well if other Freethinkers adopted the same course in similar circumstances?

WM. SKEATE.

[We think the above a capital suggestion, and hope that it will be carried out.—ED.]

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Wm. Heaford, "The Superstition of Religion."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, J. Perry, "Atheist Virtue versus Christian Vice."

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. E. Burke, "Science and Superstition."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Place of Frivolity in Life."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (Ulster Minor Hall): Wednesday, December 17, 8, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Christianity Before the War and After." Thursday, December 18, 8, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Christianity and Evolution."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. F. J. Gould, "The March of a Million Years."

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

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Coun. J. W. Murby.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "God and Evolution"; 7, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (White Palace, Pontypridd): 2.30, Mr. Owen Hughes, "Freethought and Freethinkers"; 6, Mr. W. Mainwarring, "Christianity and Socialism."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (8 William's Terrace): 6.30, A Member, "A First Year in New York"; 7.30, Proposed Conference of Tyneside Freethinkers."

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