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Views and Opinions.

Shakespeare and the Jew.

A strange thing has happened in America. According to the *Evening News* of December 31 the Board of Education at Newark, New Jersey, has decided to remove the "Merchant of Venice" from the schools under its control. The reason given for this peculiar action is that the picture of Shylock is a libel on the Jewish race. Quite promptly the action of the Board met with its logical consequence. The League of Scottish Veterans of the World-War met and demanded that "Macbeth" be removed from all American schools on the ground that it traduced the whole of the Scottish race. The latter may have been merely a piece of sarcasm played by the Scotsmen upon the Board of Education—for the Scot has a keen wit. The opinion to the contrary is probably based upon the Scotsman's inability to see the point of a number of *English* jokes. That may be more of a compliment which the Scotsman pays himself than the average Englishman has the wit to see. For there are jokes and jokes. There is the subtle humour of climbing the greasy pole, or of emptying a bag of flour over an unsuspecting victim's head, which every Englishman will at once appreciate; and there is the humour of a good story or an apt retort, which is plentiful in every Scotch gathering. And certainly there was more wit in the Scotsmen asking what they did, in face of the Education Authority's action, than there was wisdom in the banning of the "Merchant of Venice" as a libel on the Jewish race.

* * *

An Impeachment of Religion.

One cannot, of course, say what it was that led the Board to take their remarkable step. If the teachers were presenting Shylock in the guise of the orthodox Christian presentation of the Jew, one can easily imagine Jewish parents objecting to their children having that view of the Jew—which is about as true to life as is the orthodox presentation of an Atheist—given to their children. But the remedy for that is, surely, to see that the teachers are better trained, not to ban one of the world's greatest plays. For in that case it is not Shakespeare's Jew that is being taught. Were a Christian to object there would be some reason, for the figure of Shylock is

not alone a subtle impeachment of Christianity, it is an indictment of the influence of religion on life. In the two characters who are most closely connected with religion in the play, Shylock and Antonio, the worst of both is brought out in connection with religion. In all the ordinary relations of life, so long as he is dealing with Christians, Antonio is a good-humoured, amiable, generous man. It is when he encounters the Jew and his Christian feelings are aroused, that he becomes rude, bitter, revengeful. Even when asking a favour he cannot discard his insulting behaviour. So, too, with Shylock. The worst of *him* is brought out in his hatred of the *Christian*. "I hate him, for he is a Christian," is the key here. The Christian regards everything as justifiable against the Jew. The Jew regards everything as justifiable against the Christian. The basis of all the hatred and ill-will shown in the play is religion. And it is as true of the Christian as it is of the Jew. If Shakespeare had said in so many words, as did Lucretius, "See thou, then, to what damned deeds religion urges men," he could hardly have said it more plainly than he does in this play. Had Shylock been less of a dominating figure in the play than he is, even Christians might have seen this clearly.

* * *

Christian and Jew.

The greatness of the characterization of Shylock lies in his being made a summary of the consequences of centuries of Christian brotherhood in practice. Shylock, says Professor Sir Walter Raleigh, "is a man, and a man more sinned against than sinning"; and he adds:—

Antonio and Bassanio are pale shadows of men compared with this gaunt, tragic figure; whose love of his race is as deep as life; who pleads the cause of a common humanity against the cruelties of prejudice; whose very hatred has in it something of the nobility of patriotic passion; whose heart is stirred with tender memories, even in the midst of his lament over the stolen ducats.

What Shakespeare did was to discard the Jew of the diseased mediæval imagination, and to apply his matchless knowledge of the springs of human conduct to a specific problem. The Jew hated the Christian; the Christian hated the Jew. Ostracized, shunned, hated, ill-used, robbed, and tortured, generation after generation, Shakespeare showed the figure the Christians and their religion had created. Look at the retort: "If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what would his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute. It shall go hard but I will better the example." There is no slander here on the Jew; there is nothing that should lead a Jew to ask that "The Merchant of Venice" be withdrawn from the schools. A Christian might, because it shows Christianity as the great corrupter of human nature—a religion that could doom a whole race to torture because of religious differences. Shakespeare does, indeed, provide a reason for many of the ugliest features of Jewish character; and to understand is always to excuse.

How Religion Distorts.

We commenced these notes with the intention of dealing with other aspects of the subject which suggested themselves, but these we will leave for another occasion. What we would point out now is that what we regard as one of the principal lessons of the "Merchant of Venice" is true of religion, in a greater or smaller measure, wherever it is found. Almost invariably the worst part of human nature is expressed in relation to religion. Look at Mohammedans and Christians in the East, or at Catholics and Protestants in Ireland! We find people of the same race or nationality living together, engaged in the same manual or business occupations, mixing in the same social circles, and able to do all this without ill-will—so long as religion is not introduced. But once let religion be brought upon the carpet, and the social amenities die. The man you can meet in social intercourse with all friendliness, you must shun in religion, and doom to outer darkness. The same man who is a man of honour in his commercial relations, you must conclude is well worthy of damnation from a religious point of view. The slander which is reprehensible in ordinary life becomes an act of piety in defence of religion. Hatred, which in social life may be recognized for what it is, in religion becomes moralized under the name of pious zeal or concern for the honour of God. Have we not seen the gathering together of Churchmen and Nonconformists on the same platform proclaimed as evidence of the spirit of Christian brotherhood! And it has only taken nineteen centuries for Christian influence to achieve this remarkable development! All hope is not yet lost for the human race.

* * *

The Hate-maker of the Ages.

Religion no more creates vices than it does virtues, but it often moralizes the one, and not infrequently depreciates the other. It would not be true, for instance, to say that religion creates the quality of persecution. But it moralizes it. The amenities of social life always tend to diminish intolerance and so to restrain persecution. But religion gives to it a moral basis, makes it a duty, and so tends to perpetuate the cast of mind on which it lives. The give and take of social life inevitably makes for toleration and friendly intercourse. The exclusiveness of religious belief as naturally tends in the opposite direction. And it is not surprising that the element of persecution, being continually reinforced in the religious field, should be carried over into politics and sociology. The evil inflicted upon life by religion in general, and by Christianity in particular, by this distortion of values, and by the perpetuation of unlovely types of mind has been but little examined, and remains an almost virgin field. Writers have been concerned far more with the picturesque and superficial evils wrought by religion. Shakespeare did otherwise with Shylock and Bassanio, but then he held up the mirror to nature, and few have followed his lead in that direction. But when this aspect of the subject is carefully examined we think it will be found that religion is the great hate-maker of the ages. It has kept hatred alive when it might otherwise have languished. Conservative papers have of late been trying to harrow our feelings with the picture of the bloodthirsty revolutionist shrieking out: "Be my brother or die!" But what is this but the Christian cry of "Believe as I do, or be tortured in this world and damned in the next"? In the case of Shylock we have the picture of a man with his soul narrowed and distorted by the evil of religion—his own religion and that of others. And one day it will certainly be recognized that the soul of the race has been similarly tortured and distorted by precisely the same influence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Do We Believe?

To the *Sunday Pictorial* for October 19 Mr. Horatio Bottomley contributed an article entitled "Do the Bishops Believe?" With one exception their lordships remained silent. The Evangelical Bishop of Durham was the only one who responded to the challenge, and he did so for himself alone. But though the bishops themselves took no notice of the article, the Rev. D. Kennedy Bell, one of the "humble curates," undertook the task of speaking for the overwhelming majority of them, asserting that they believe, "without mental reservation whatsoever, in the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ," as Mr. Kennedy-Bell most certainly does. In the *Sunday Herald* for December 21 the same reverend gentleman had an article bearing the title: "Do We Believe the Christmas Message?" Curiously enough, Mr. Kennedy-Bell finds the Christmas message in the angelic song: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." As a matter of fact, the Christmas message was delivered to shepherds as they were keeping watch by night over their flock. An angel came down and said unto them:—

Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you; ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

No sooner was that message given than "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom God is well pleased." The reverend gentleman's questions are as follows:—

Do we believe that Christmas message to-day? Do we believe the stupendous mystery which this season is intended to commemorate? Is the story of the Incarnation just a beautiful but incredible myth, or is it a dynamic reality in the life of the world?.....Will the old, old story still be told a hundred years hence, or will it share the fate of those fairy stories which so charmed our youth, but are beginning to appeal less and less to the fancy of our children? Will the Church of the future point with the certainty of triumphant conviction to a definite set of historical facts, or will she be content to explain as allegory much that was accepted with simple faith by a non-scientific age?

We rejoice to learn that Mr. Kennedy-Bell is a staunch believer in liberty, in the inalienable right of every man to hold his own opinions and to "state them plainly and uncompromisingly." Bigotry and intolerance he condemns in the severest terms at his disposal, because they "have brought the whole question of religious controversy into disrepute." He passes no censure or judgment upon those who think differently from himself; but he adds:—

I claim the right to state in the plainest language that, in my humble opinion, nothing but the acceptance of the Christmas message can save our painfully evolved civilization from the crash of utter, hopeless, and irretrievable ruin.

We have no objection whatever to his exercising that right to the utmost; but we also claim the right to characterize his statement as wholly erroneous and to furnish our reasons for so regarding it. Mr. Kennedy-Bell expresses opinions which are palpably wrong. It is absolutely false to describe the present as pre eminently an age of faith, to affirm that the majority untouched by the Churches "is throbbing with what Donald Hankey called 'inarticulate religion,'" and to assert that "never has there been a greater reverence for the Christ than

to-day." It is utterly untrue that Materialism is visibly declining in the twentieth century. "In science," as Mr. Hugh Elliot well says, "there has only been one tendency—towards Materialism. The history of scientific discoveries is a history of materialistic successes: for no scientific discovery has ever been made that is not based upon Materialism and mechanism" (*Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*, p. 167). Mr. Kennedy-Bell betrays his prejudice when he depicts the Materialism of the nineteenth century as "cold and blank," and also his ignorance when he says that we have left it behind us. It may be true that he very rarely meets with "an out-and-out professed Atheist simply because he turns among the minority still associated with the Church. If he mingled freely with the crowds in our public parks and open spaces he would soon find that Atheists are a great multitude no man can number.

The reverend gentleman contradicts himself. Whilst admitting that "a reverent Agnosticism is the legacy left us by the War," he asserts that "there is a widespread conviction of the existence of a Supreme Being." If the first statement is true, there is no possible escape from the conclusion that the second is false. It is the frequent boast of those who call themselves Agnostics that they neither affirm nor deny, neither believe nor disbelieve in the existence of a God. But Mr. Kennedy-Bell declares that the War has bequeathed to us a "reverent" Agnosticism which, in plain English, means a "reverent" Ignorance. What is there in heaven or on earth for ignorance to revere? The dictionary informs us that "reverent" signifies disposed to revere, impressed with reverence, or expressing reverence, veneration, devotion; but the only object ignorance can revere, venerate, or be devoted to, is itself. Surely the reverend gentleman ought to exercise greater caution in the selection of his adjectives.

Mr. Kennedy-Bell glories in the grand old message of Christmas, which is that the Word which from the beginning was with God and was God became flesh and dwelt among us for our salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. "The personal acceptance of the Incarnation," the preacher avers—"not the colourless and timid watering down of it, which is heard in so many modern churches—alone supplies the key to the riddle of life." For this belief he makes no apology, nor does he endeavour to justify it in any way. He frankly confesses his inability to prove it on the ground that "in matters of faith mathematical demonstration is unavailable." That is certainly an honest confession which only a few are bold enough to make; but Mr. Kennedy-Bell falls into an unsuspected trap when he ventures "to put the onus of proof upon those who reject." He proclaims the Incarnation as the supreme fact of history and the one hope of a lost world, but admits that he cannot prove it to be such, alleging that the burden of proof lies alone on those who deny it. "The only proof," he adds, "is to test and see." We agree, and invite the reverend gentleman to adduce just that proof. We challenge him to do it; and we beg to assure him that we are perfectly prepared to accept and abide by the testimony of the facts conscientiously presented. We thus throw down the gauntlet and defy him to take it up.

Mr. Kennedy-Bell is evidently afraid to face the facts, and so he falls back upon emotionalism. Nothing is easier than to declare that "the Power of the Divine Christ is found to be just the same to-day as in Galilee of old," because the statement is profoundly true, though in an essentially different sense from the one intended by the preacher. In Palestine, Jesus "was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and his Galilean ministry ended in stupendous failure. So, likewise, in Christendom to-day, his power

to uplift and ennoble peoples and nations is conspicuous only by its absence. "Belief in the Unique Personality, in the Divinity of Jesus Christ," however reached and however pleasurable to the few who possess it, has been morally, socially, nationally, and internationally impotent throughout the ages, and never more or even as much so as during the last five years. Mr. Kennedy-Bell, entirely ignoring the actual world, has in mind some undiscovered realm in which Christ's "influence to-day is a thousand times greater than that of the greatest earthly conqueror"; but no sooner has he said that than he contradicts it by naively admitting that Christ's power is "limited and circumscribed by the amount of faith which we are able to bring to him"; and it is a well-attested fact that the overwhelming majority of the British people bring no faith at all to him. Mr. Bell's own faith is of fabulous dimensions. Speaking of the doctrine of the Incarnation, he expresses the belief that "the whole world is groping after it." According to him, our supreme need is for faith, and faith comes only when the need for it is fully realized, while without it nothing can be accomplished.

It is just when the consciousness of the world-wide failure of man to usher in Utopia by his own unaided efforts is felt that the age of conscious faith will dawn.

Curiously enough, two thousand years ago, Mr. Kennedy-Bell assures us, God the Son became flesh for the sole purpose of saving the world from all its sins and wrongs. While on earth, he is represented as prophesying that if he were lifted up on the Cross he would draw all men unto himself, that they might obtain the redemption he was about to purchase on their behalf. For two thousand years, then, men have been living under the Christian Dispensation. During the whole of that long period the second and third persons in the Holy Trinity have had their residence on earth in order that they might lead humanity out of the darkness of sin and shame into the marvellous light of the Gospel of grace and power. But the fact remains that, despite the active presence of those two Divine Persons in the world all that time, the world is to-day just what it was when they entered it. Are we to infer that their ministrations have failed to achieve the desired results? By no means, answers the divine, for it has been ordained that they can do their glorious work only through the instrumentality of men specially called and equipped, but still men whose powers are in no sense superhuman. This excuse or apology for the failure of the Christian religion is too paltry to be seriously considered. Is it conceivable that God, if really existent, could make himself known to and save and inspire the generality of mankind only through a few specially favoured men to whom he had revealed himself directly? Is it not beyond all doubt that, if an all-good, all-loving, and all-powerful God had existed, there would have been no lost world needing salvation, no men and women whom he could not approach and commune with without the intervention of third parties, and no bloody wars to destroy the offspring of his heart? Besides, to represent the Divine Being as acting only through instruments and as incapable of heightening or transcending the normal powers of those agents, is to eliminate every shred of evidence that he acts at all. In spite of his supernatural beliefs, Mr. Kennedy-Bell says that until men and nations develop mutual good will among themselves, the very Prince of Peace can do nothing for them, and "the whole fabric of civilization is but a pack of cards." And yet with this admission on his lips and with two millenniums of tragic failure behind him, he predicts that in the immediate future faith will perform mighty miracles. "The tuneless discords of human strife will be harmonized around the Cradle of Bethlehem. That

day is coming. On this subject I am an incurable optimist."

Meanwhile, the most obvious fact is that the Christian faith is visibly decaying, and that men and women are slowly learning to rely upon their own resources alone, and that the claims of supernaturalism are being completely discredited everywhere. It is science, not religion, that is supplying the key to the riddle of life, and the hope of the world is in evolution, not conversion.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Colonel's Table-Talk.

Do I view this world as a vale of tears?

Ah, reverend sir, not I. —Robert Browning.

COLONEL ROBERT INGERSOLL was a most potent force of Progress in his day. For a generation he was one of the chief orators of the evangel of Freethought, which is changing slowly, but surely, the character and direction of the ideas of the civilized world. For years he was discussed as few other men, except Bradlaugh and Darwin, were discussed. Catholics and Protestants forgot for awhile their ancient enmities, and assailed him. Ingersoll was the leader of an intellectual and ethical revolt, and he had all the courage and genius needed in a leader of an advanced movement. True, he was only an inheritor of the great Freethought tradition. The famous French and English Freethinkers were his predecessors, but Ingersoll took the torch of Liberty from their dead hands and flamed it over a continent.

Not only was Ingersoll an apostle, but he was a great man. As an orator he had no superior in the United States. He wrote, too, quite as brilliant and delightful a style as his spoken word. He drew Gladstone and Cardinal Manning into the controversial arena. His masterpiece, *Some Mistakes of Moses*, is a Freethought classic, and still commands a large circle of readers. Near a generation after Ingersoll's death, his lectures are widely read. Such literary vitality is the surest test of his power, for it is rare that controversial matter is endowed so richly as to survive the purposes of the moment. Nor is Ingersoll's popularity to be wondered at. A master of what Milton calls the "dazzling fence," his retorts and repartees are the finest things of their kind since Voltaire challenged the best brains of Europe.

Ingersoll was happy in his written jests; but he was even happier in his table-talk. Men seldom talk as brilliantly as they write, but the Colonel was an exception. A volume might be compiled of his witty sayings, not as invented or recorded in his study, but as expressed in society; not as they grew in secret like flowers the blooming of which all admire, but as they flashed out like sparks from flint and steel in social interplay. The epigrams and jests are as good as anything of their kind in the language. Beside them, Rogers and Sam Foote pale their ineffectual fires. Had Ingersoll been orthodox, he would have been hailed as one of the foremost conversationalists of his time.

How good Ingersoll's jests are! When a friend, finding a set of works in his library, said: "Pray, sir, what did this cost you?" the Colonel answered: "I believe it cost me the Governorship of Illinois." Speaking of a hot-headed and sanguine acquaintance, he said: "Show him an egg, and instantly the air is full of feathers."

One of his best stories was that of an excitable Fenian who was boasting of the condition of Ireland. Said the Irishman: "We have got 30,000 armed men ready to march at a moment's notice." "But," objected the other man, "why don't they march?" "Why?"

retorted the Fenian, "the police won't let them." When Ingersoll first met George Foote he was desirous of paying the English Freethought leader a compliment. At dinner Foote declined the oysters, and Ingersoll said, smiling: "Not like oysters, Foote! That's the only fault I can find in you." How excellent, too, was the Colonel's witty description of a banknote. "A green-back is no more money than a menu is a dinner."

When Ingersoll was on his first visit to the Pacific coast he was shown the depth of the Cornstock mines, and as he came out he remarked: "If there's a hotter place than this, I'll join some church." While he had his office in Washington, lightning struck and burned a church in the same terrace. The Colonel said: "An offended deity may have intended that bolt for my office, but what markmanship!" In response to an inquiry about Robert Collyer, he declared: "Had such men as Robert Collyer and John Stuart Mill been present at the burning of Servetus, they would have extinguished the flames with their tears. Had the Presbytery of Chicago been there, they would have quietly turned their backs, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves."

A woman preacher once called Ingersoll "An Infidel dog," and he replied: "The kind lady would have felt annoyed had I referred to her as a Christian female of the same species." On one occasion the Colonel had, in a law case, to refer to a legal book, Moses, *On the Law of Mandamus*, and the judge, thinking to be witty, asked: "Is that the same writer whom you refer to in your lecture, *Some Mistakes of Moses*?" "No! your honour," promptly replied Ingersoll, "I am quoting from Moses on *Mandamus*; but I wrote on Moses on God damn us."

In his discussion with Gladstone, the English politician taunted Ingersoll with riding a horse without a bridle, with letting his ideas run away with him. Ingersoll retorted crushingly that this was better than "riding a dead horse in a reverential calm." In another discussion, a reverend opponent said sarcastically that Ingersoll thought that he could have suggested improvements to the Creator. "Just so!" replied Ingersoll, "and I would have suggested that good health should have been catching instead of disease."

Doubtless we can have, in Hamlet's phrase, "something too much of this." That is our own affair. The historian of wit does not invite to a surfeit of it. He spreads the board; he can do no more, and should do no less. We may take it as they are said to take a play in China; or we may take a reasonable cut and come again. "Here is sixpence," said a father to a son, "don't make a hog of yourself."

MIMNERMUS.

THE SHIP OF LIFE.

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

On sunny moons upon the deck's smooth face,
Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to pace;
Or o'er the stern reclining, watch below
The foaming wake far widening as we go.

On stormy nights when wild north-westerns rave,
How proud a thing to fight with wind and wave!
The dripping sailor on the reeling mast
Exults to bear, and scorns to wish it past.

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

—Arthur Hugh Clough.

Superstition.

THE minds of most persons are more or less enslaved by superstitions—not only of a religious, but of a political and social nature. A superstition is a belief in something that is not true—such as the existence of a man-like God, the necessity for idle landlords and usurers, the idea that a nation becomes wealthy by taxing all consumers for the benefit of producers, that carrying a potato in your pocket will cure your rheumatism. All these beliefs rest upon nothing, and, indeed, are contradicted by facts. And the conduct of the vast majority of the human race is determined, not by observing facts, but by believing fictions. The bodies of most persons are now enslaved by the difficulty of finding congenial work, and by the subsequent toil necessary to procure food, clothing, and shelter. This results from their superstitious beliefs. Just as they used to believe that kings had a divine right to rule, that one man had a right to own another man, so do they now believe that if a man owns certain bits of paper—title deeds to land, War Bonds, and the like—other men must work to support him in unearned luxury.

If you go into certain churches, you will see a priest hold up a gilt thing before the people, who cringe before it in abject awe. Because of their superstition, this priest can make these foolish persons support him. They will go hungry to keep him fat. They will live in hovels and put him in a palace. He does not have to use force to compel them to give him anything. They hand over a large part of their hard-earned wages to him quite willingly, because they are hypnotized by their own superstition. It is just the same in what is called secular life. The sight of a title deed or a bond produces the same effect upon the ordinary mind as the elevation of the host does upon a Roman Catholic. The idle landlord or usurer says to the worker: "You see, here are my title deeds, my bonds, my certificates of stock. Now you will go to work and get me the things I want—the best of food and wine, motor-cars, opera-boxes, and a seat in Parliament. Whatever I want, you must get it for me; and my wants are very expensive, and increasing." He does not have to use any force to make the workers get all these fine things for him. He simply appeals to their superstition. They believe that land naturally produces a thing called rent, and that, if you plant £10 in the right place, it will have ten little shillings growing out of it for you at the end of a year. Because they believe such silly things, they bow down to the idle millionaire, and willingly support him in luxury.

If you walk along Fifth Avenue, you will see a white marble palace and a brown stone mansion. The man who lives in the palace holds up before the people a crucifix, and they drop on their knees, and forthwith take the bread out of their children's mouths in order that he may have fish and game and wine. The man who lives in the brown stone mansion holds up before the people a bundle of bonds and stocks and title deeds, and the same effect is produced on them. They will do without good clothes and food and houses in order that he may have diamonds and pictures. And they grin and think him great when they hear him say, in that lofty way that great financiers affect: "The people be damned!"

The priest and the monopolist, the archbishop and the coal baron, brothers in prosperity, both supported in luxury by working people who are enslaved by silly superstitions. It is a fine dodge, this, to hold up a crucifix or a bond in one hand and take money with the other; to befuddle a mind in order to enslave

a body; to fill a brain with falsehood in order to empty a pocket of cash; to stock a bishop's or a usurer's cellar with wine distilled from fruit that should be on a working man's table; to trick out in diamonds idle and dissipated women with money that should be spent on good shoes and clothes for the wives and children of working people. And the worst thing about it all is that the priest and the usurer think that they do as right in taking as the worker thinks he does right in giving.

The more I reflect upon it all the more I am filled with shame and indignation at the blank folly of our so-called civilization. And when I point it out to priest, monopolist, and working man, they turn from me in derision. The priest tells the worker that he loves him, the monopolist tells him that he gives him employment, and the worker loves them both, obeys them both, works for them both, and dies in the belief that because he impoverished himself and his family to enrich his masters he did what was pleasing to a God who does not and cannot exist.

I wonder how it all can persist. It is so palpably wrong that any child of eight year's old should be able to understand the folly and wickedness of it. In the darker moments that come to all social idealists, I can see little to cheer me. When I think of the Anarchist-Communist, Jesus of Nazareth, murdered by priests, politicians, and usurers, because he cried out against them, and now pretended to be worshipped by the same sort of people who murdered him, his very name used for the purpose of the fraud and oppression that he denounced. When I think of John Brown hanged by the same classes that murdered Jesus, and now a hero, while the negroes for whom he died are still in bondage; when I think of the many other martyrs now praised by the persons who compose the same old Church and State that tortured and slew them, I feel driven to conclude that if the ocean of blood already shed for the right cannot wash away the wrong, the evil must ever prevail. But when I am more calm and patient I recognize that injustice cannot always hold justice by the throat. True thoughts once formed, right words once spoken, do not perish. Siberia has swallowed up the prophets of liberty, but before they went to their living tombs they spoke, and hundreds of thousands of brains are now actuated by their ideas. Tchernechewsky is dead, but he lives in the aspiration and high resolve of multitudes.

The movement towards human betterment is slow, but it goes on all the time, as the grinding of the surf upon the shingle, now softly, now roaring; day and night it never ceases; while men wake and while they sleep; whether they listen or stop their ears the ocean eats away the shore, and as persistently the wall of superstition is eaten away.

Nothing can stop its slow decay. The Pope is powerful, but he cannot kill the worm of doubt that gnaws away the Churchman's faith. The politicians are mighty, but public opinion undermines them, and it is too subtle for them to control. The sun of truth is rising and gently shedding light upon the causes of poverty and wealth, and as these causes come out in ever bolder relief they will be removed, and by and by the millionaire will have to sell his superfluous diamonds and motor cars, and the tramp will buy a decent coat. The distance between the prince and the pauper is ever diminishing; the prince is coming down the palace stairs, the pauper is rising from the gutter, and some day there will be neither prince nor pauper but two men, and they will clasp hands and know themselves as brother workers.

G. O. WARREN.

Christianity: The Amphibian.

ANIMALS of the whale kind—the Cetaceans—are usually regarded as fishes. And it is quite natural, or indeed inevitable, to do so; for they live in the sea; they are fish-like in shape, and move through their watery medium by the lash of their tails and fin-like paddles. And yet they are not fish except in outward appearance. Their lungs, their temperature, and mode of procreation belie the inference based upon their shape, their habits, and mode of locomotion.

The whale is a warm-blooded, air-breathing animal which suckles its young like an ordinary mammal. Its whole anatomy betrays its pedigree and family secret, and shows who were its ancestors and who are its living relatives, though Nature has done her best to camouflage it with a fish-like exterior. Its spindle shape and its fin-like paddles relate it to the denizens of the deep, but its air-breathing lungs, its warm blood, and its maternal love reveal its real kinship with the inhabitants of the jungle, the meadow, and the air; and on account of this duality of nature it is called an Amphibian—a creature belonging to two worlds, the air and the ocean.

How came it to possess this dual nature?

It is obviously a case of adaptation to an adopted aquatic life. Its remote ancestors must have been land animals, dwelling probably amid or near the swampy shores of primæval seas. But owing to climatic changes or a geological subsidence it was obliged to seek means and modes of survival under new conditions or perish.

Those forms which managed to adapt themselves to the new situation survived sufficiently long to leave an offspring. So, through the perpetual exercise of this stern process of elimination upon myriads of successive generations, the present races and species of Cetaceous Amphibians were eventually evolved.

If now we may compare things in nature so disparate as a living creature and a social institution, we cannot fail to be struck and impressed by the remarkable parallel or resemblance between the final form of Christianity and that of the Amphibious whale.

Christianity is, in the most literal sense of the term, an Amphibian—a compromise of two worlds. And its amphibious character came about much in the same way as in the case of the animal.

Primitive Christianity was a movement wholly devoted to the interest and welfare of the "soul"—an imaginary entity which the early Christians, like all other people of primitive times, always assumed to exist and imprisoned within the body during life, but which was liberated at death to remain in being for ever, either in weal or woe, according to its last destination.

The body was material and accursed; for matter was the fount and origin of all evil. The body, therefore, was to be denied and repressed. Its motto was: "Mortify the flesh." The body was to be "crucified," so that the "soul" might be "saved." The "soul" was the object which Satan and his host were out to capture and damn; so Christianity was a mission direct from heaven to inform man, if he chose, how to rescue his "soul" from the toils and powers of Satan, and to enable it to reach the upper heaven—the blissful abode of the supreme God. Thus primitive Christianity claimed heaven as its birthplace, as well as the source of all its inspiration and vitality; and its only concern was the destiny of the "immortal soul."

Verily it may be said of it that "it moved and had its being" in the supernatural.

Now this is more or less true of all religions; but it was a characteristic of primitive Christianity in a very special sense. At that time the Mediterranean world

was, more or less generally, obsessed by a fanatical hallucination—viz., that the "end of the world" was at hand. With at least a certain section of the dispersed Jews this delusion was not a mere transient conceit, but a conviction so fixed as to be assumed as a fact in all their speculative thought.

That this belief was a fundamental assumption in the Christian scheme may be easily realized by anyone who reads the New Testament with open eyes. It is the key to its understanding. Without it, it is a hopeless tangle of absurdities—an insolvable riddle. With it, it is an open casket.

It is that belief and assumption which gives meaning to its strange maxims, counsels, behests, or prohibitions. The amelioration of society or the betterment of man's lot on *earth* it unequivocally repudiated and condemned. To do that would be to indulge and gratify the "body," the very object which the Christian was enjoined to crucify.

Even "turning the cheek to the smiter" was not in the least an altruistic behest; it was only a means through *suffering* for intensifying the sweetness of the votary's heaven when he got there. Why, "this world," as civilized society was then called, was the cunning handiwork of Satan; and as the accursed thing was to be demolished, almost immediately, what meaning was there in trying to improve it?

Thus the early Christians were not ordinary men and women, but "saints"—those whose one thought and occupation was to prepare the "soul" for the "last trump."

Gradually, however, a spiritual subsidence occurred. The Christian communities awoke by imperceptible degrees to a realization of the fact that the world was *not* going to end, and that the Church, if it desired to continue to exist, must set about to adapt itself to "this world"; that it must abandon that arrogant and contemptuous spirit of aloofness from it, and become an integral part of that which it so superciliously affected to despise.

A long period of transitional adaptations then ensued, during which the religion of "otherworldliness" became more and more conformed to "this world." The result was as remarkable as in the case of the great amphibian. The Church became as worldly and materialistic as the form, the habits, the instincts, and the abode of the whale became fish-like. Wealth, worldly pomp, and power, which it had so ostentatiously spurned, became its sole ambition. In no respect did the cetacean adjust itself more completely to its watery medium than did the great religious leviathan adapt itself to "this world."

The Church became one of the greatest landowners in the world. Its leaders and rulers were wealthy potentates; its coffers were filled with gold. The priestly class rivalled all others in worldly pomp, in idle ease, in costly and palatial abodes, in sumptuous living—in short, in everything on which the "world" sets value.

It is no exaggeration to state that the very foundation of the Christian Church is gold, and that its very life-blood is material wealth. Deprive it of that, and it would soon be as dead as the dodo.

Even the common practice of re-interpreting the Gospel maxims—that is, of emptying them of their natural significance and of refilling them with fictitious meanings, and then call them a "Christian ethic" or "moral code" has its strict analogue in the body of the whale—in suppressions, twistings, modifications, and growths. The animal and the Church alike become by these changes deceptive counterfeits; the one, a spurious fish; the other, a spurious oracle of moral law. But without the compromise involved in the counterfeit, neither would have survived.

But, while the Church has thus become the most worldly of social institutions, it has, throughout its history, kept up its profession of other-worldliness as its *raison d'être*. This pretension is as essential to it as the air is to the amphibian. As the whale would soon drown and perish if permanently kept under water, so would Christianity perish as a religion if it abandoned its other-worldly mission. Its professed concern for the "soul" is still its breath of life.

All attempts made to transform it into ethical organizations have been conspicuous failures, for morality, in the true sense of the term, was as alien to the movement which "gave it birth and being" as were flippers, paddles, and "flukes" to the ancestors of the cretaceans.

This dualistic trait is manifest in all Christian actions. While professing a great spiritual detachment and other-worldly aims, it encompasses land and sea to retain its hold upon its worldly possessions and to increase them. Its "greed for gold" was seen in the alarm and panic over the Welsh Disestablishment Act, and its acquisitive cunning was likewise displayed in "The Church Enabling Bill."

Every service sees it display its amphibious character. In the collection plate it is as worldly as the Stock Exchange, and, at the very same time, it professes to draw its breath of life from the supernatural. In the case of anniversary services it always selects a preacher on account of a reputed popularity with a view to drawing large audiences so as to secure big collections—which, in very truth, is their one object. And yet the "talk" so freely indulged in during the services is calculated to create the impression that its one concern is to "save souls"! In all its doings the Church acts the amphibian. It professes to breathe in heaven while it revels in the worldliness and materialism of modern life.

KERIDON.

Acid Drops.

The Seine is rising, and Paris and suburbs are faced with serious floods. The Marne is also rising, and families in the flooded districts are having to leave their homes before the advancing waters. So the Archbishop of Paris has now issued an appeal to the public to offer up prayers for the cessation of the floods. We do not doubt but that the prayers will be answered—if people only have enough patience. But it would be more convincing if the Archbishop would prevent the floods occurring by his prayers. And the one thing should be as easy as the other. If God can stop the floods rising higher, he can stop them coming at all. And those whose houses are flooded have a legitimate grievance. They deserve protection quite as much as do these others. But perhaps the Archbishop thinks that God must be allowed to do a little in the drowning business before he is asked to stop, much on the principle that young men are considered entitled to sow their wild oats. And "God" has had no chance for a real burst in the direction of floods since the time of Noah.

An interesting sidelight on the poverty of the clergy is published in a London newspaper, which says that at least £2,000 must be disbursed by each new cardinal before he receives his hat. The clothing and ornaments alone cost about £800. Seven prelates have lately been raised to this dignity.

The Bishop of London wants to be a hero. Speaking at Fulham, he said he was determined that we should not go back to the long hours' opening of public-houses if he had to die on the doorstep for it. Perhaps the publicans will oblige by making him a Christian martyr.

A crucifix has been stolen at Lakenheath Church, Suffolk. So far no one has been struck by lightning.

One of the most amusing features of Christmas was the display of religious pictures in the shops. It would be interesting to learn who buys these outrages. One picture we noticed depicted the twelve disciples as twopenny pirates in nightgowns.

The current Estimates are very illuminating reading. They include £287,000,000 for the Army, £148,000,000 for the Navy, £66,000,000 for the Air Service, and £38,841,000 for education. The proportions are informing. And we were out to end all war! Meanwhile our leaders, or some of them, are talking quite cheerfully about "the next war," and we are preparing ourselves for the amenities of Christian warfare by bombing people in various parts of the world. And the men who are leaving the Army are not being discharged; they are merely being transferred to the reserve—to be handy if required, we presume.

Frank Leslie Gregory was charged and sentenced at Woolwich Police Court on December 26 to three months' imprisonment for stealing some bottles of whisky, stout, and port wine from a van. He pleaded that he had recently embraced Christianity. We do not expect that his case will be reported by the London City Mission as evidence of the great need for more missionaries.

We have said the same thing so often that we have peculiar pleasure in quoting the following from the *Nation*, as given in an organ of the League of Nations published in Tchecho-Slovakia:—

MOTHERS! TEACHERS! FRIENDS OF CHILDREN!

The festival of gifts is coming! Let it be a festival of joy for our children! A festival of the rebirth of life. Away with the atmosphere of death and destruction!

Refuse to give a toy which is a reminder of the world destroying war, of the great death! It is forbidden to equip children with warlike weapons or clothing. Toy soldiers are forbidden, from spear-bearing soldiers of antiquity to the metal helmets of to-day. Toy weapons are forbidden, from revolvers to machine-guns.

Refuse to give books which glorify war, wake warlike spirit or celebrate warlike deeds.

Refuse to give pictures which represent places of battle, torments of the wounded, the dying, the delirium of the victor.

Poison no longer the souls and the imagination of your children with the spirit of hate, which you wake and nourish by these toys and books.

Recollect the child's right. Give him back the true children's land:—

A realm of cheerfulness—without cruelty—a realm of the good—weaponless! A realm prepared for peace—without hate! A realm of reconciliation—without hostility! A realm of life—of peace—of civilization.

As you shape Youth, so you shape the Future.

That, we are convinced, is the only way in which war will ever be killed. Make people as ashamed of it as the really civilized man would be at being engaged in a duel, rob war of its glitter, and let children realize it for the brutal, dirty, and cowardly thing it is, and its days will be over. Religion and war are the two superstitions that threaten the well-being of civilization.

The Rev. Dr. Clifford, in his New Year's message, as reported in the *Daily News* for January 3, pays the Almighty a very left-handed compliment by saying that he is now busily engaged in "creating a new humanity," which is assuming the form of an "international soul." One wonders how many humanities the Creator has experimented upon in the past. The Book of Genesis tells us of one, apparently the first, concerning which the record is that "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Has the veteran Baptist preacher any guarantee that this last creative venture on the part of his God will be more successful than all the previous ones?

Dr. Clifford differs from the Apostle Paul on the fundamental question of liberty. The latter blames the Colossians for subjecting themselves to "ordinances," such as

"Handle not, nor taste, nor touch"; but the former seems to think that the only way to reform mankind is to put it in chains to rob it of its freedom—to force everybody to become a total abstainer by an Act of Parliament. We cannot be men except by being treated as children.

According to an able writer in the *Church Times* for January 2: "Whether we like it or not, the old-fashioned English Sunday has gone, never to come back again." Unfortunately, that is only partially true, as yet. Most of the Churches still claim the day as their own monopoly, and more, unfortunately, the law is on their side; but the encouraging fact is that the liberalizing, secularizing, process is steadily going on, and will not stop till it has reached completion.

The inevitableness of the movement is wisely recognized by our contemporary when it adds: "And we must accommodate ourselves to the new environment." There is here an implied confession of practical impotence in the face of a victorious enemy, and there is also the resolution to make the best of a bad situation. The only duty a Catholic is taught as infinitely sacred is that of never omitting Sunday Mass. Attendance at Sunday morning Mass covers a multitude of sins during the rest of the day; it even throws a halo of sanctity around Sunday golf, football, chess, or whist.

In an Oxford restaurant there is displayed the notice, "Ladies will not be served after 7 p.m. unless accompanied by gentlemen." The notice sets one wondering. Does it mean that the ladies in one of our principal university cities are such that after 7 p.m. they cannot be permitted to corrupt the students, or does it mean that the students are such that a lady is not safe in their company after that hour? Now, if that notice had been exhibited in a non-Christian city, or even in Bolshevik Russia, we should have had it cited as an example of what happens when a people are not Christian. As it is, we must leave our readers to draw whatever moral they think the fittest.

Canon Simpson, of St. Paul's, says it is not the priest, but the prophet, who "holds the key to the present situation." We fancy that many would agree that the prophet-teeer has a great deal to do with the state of unrest. That may have been what the Canon said, only the reporter did not catch the sentence correctly. The game of grab carried on during the War by all classes forms a fine comment on the much-advertised idealism of the public. Patriotism as a five per cent. investment, and all else at as much as could be got.

A daily paper suggests that Christmas was invented by drapers and shopkeepers. This is as truthful as the clerical suggestion that it originated in a Judæan stable.

London is to have a "cathedral of commerce." It can hardly be run on more business-like lines than the present cathedrals.

Providence will have its little jokes. While digging a grave at St. Thomas's Abbey, Erdington, Father Wilhelm was killed by falling earth. Lifford Church, Donegal, was severely damaged in a storm by lightning.

The war-battered Rheims Cathedral has been reopened for worship, and the unbattered clergy officiated.

The Prince of Wales is the residuary legatee of the divine right of kings, and it is very unkind, if not impious, of the *Daily Mail* to refer to such a distinguished personage as "Our Young Man." Provincial readers might imagine that His Royal Highness was a junior member of the staff of the *Daily Mail*.

In a notice of Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, the *Glasgow Herald* remarks that "it was the Church which suppressed the Pagan relics in its midst," and says that the book may help to prevent certain forms of religious emotionalism. We

cannot congratulate the reviewer on either his accuracy as to facts or his perception of the purpose of the book. The Church did *not* suppress the Pagan relics in its midst. Every student knows that these Pagan "relics" were absorbed by Christianity, and now form part of that religion. There is simply no room for controversy on that point. And the main purpose of the book was, not to counteract certain forms of religious emotionalism, but to point out that religion has been kept alive by the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of sexual and mental states, normal and abnormal. It is the distortion of human nature under the influence of religion that is one of the lessons of the book, and another is the extent to which the sexual element enters into *all* religions, without exception. We know of no other work that covers the same ground, with the same purpose in view, and with the same moral drawn. But perhaps it would have never done to have pointed out this in the columns of one of our big dailies.

Mr. Fisher, our Minister of Education, lectured the other day to the Educational Association, and dwelt upon the evils of ignorance. We are afraid, however, that some of his remarks open him to the charge of not being quite so enlightened as many would wish. He told his audience that the number of intellectual was small. But we quite fail to see on what principle Mr. Fisher decides that some families are *naturally* and others are not. The fact that some families, under present conditions, produce a larger number of men and women of ability may show only that in those families the general environment is more favourable to the development of capacity than it is in other cases. One need only think of Charles Darwin being poor of poor parents, and having to go into a factory to earn a living to see what a difference it would have made to his future career. The talk of intellectual families seems to us more or less quackery.

But in one other thing Mr. Fisher was right, and that was when he pointed out how painful it was to the average person to think. That is so, but one might ask, why should it be otherwise? What inducement is there held out to the average man to encourage thinking? If he hits on an unorthodox conclusion he is boycotted by the press, and subjected to all kinds of abuse. The earliest lesson the child gets is to bow down to authority and to do nothing with which the people around him will seriously disagree. If the child has an active mind he becomes in course of time mentally dishonest. If his mind is of a less active character he degenerates into a mental nonentity with an intelligence that never gets above the morning or evening paper. The first task for those who wish the manhood or womanhood of the nation to be intelligent is to see that people when young are encouraged to think and express their opinions quite freely. From the point of view of national welfare a wrong opinion independently reached is of far greater value than a right one that has been imposed by sheer authority.

J. D. Rockefeller has just broken all records by the size of a sum of money he has given away in charity. But this is how the Rev. F. L. Carr, of the First Methodist Church, of Lynn., Mass., speaks of him: "He is a member of my Church, but I am certainly not proud of it. I know what he is doing for God and the Christian world." Rockefeller's income is somewhere about sixty-four million dollars, and part of it has certainly been gained by methods which give good grounds for Mr. Carr's denunciations. But how money is obtained is a question that never troubles the average parson. Not where the money has come from, but where it is going to, is the principal thing with them.

The Rev. H. P. Stevens, speaking at the Brotherhood Church, Southend, declared that "most men hungered for God, not only the good, but even the biggest blackguards." To comment upon this would be as superfluous as to attempt "to gild refined gold; to paint the lily."

There is an agitation for more colour and variety in men's dress. This will hardly affect the clergy. Their petticoats and embroideries constitute the finished article.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 18, Abertillery; January 25, South Place, London; February 1, Stratford Town Hall; February 22, South Shields; February 26, Glasgow (Debate on Spiritualism); February 29, Glasgow; March 7, Leicester; March 14, Birmingham; March 21, Manchester; April 18, Swansea.

To Correspondents.

W. J.—We thought our meaning would have been plain. We were chiefly awake to the exploitation of sentiment that was going on in the interests of ideas and policies to which thinking men and women are opposed.

MR. C. LEWIS writes that at the opening of the New Year, "I want you to know the pleasure I have derived from the *Freethinker*. I can understand what a struggle it has been during the last five years to give the readers of the *Freethinker* their copy every week."

L. SOMERTON LOVE.—Our Shop Manager is sending you on *The Parson and the Atheist*, and also Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*. Hope you will soon get your demobilization papers.

G. F. DIXON.—Pleased to learn that you had so enjoyable a trip. The *Bible Handbook* is out of print for the present, but will be reprinted as soon as is possible. There will remain a shilling or so to your credit. You do not say for how long a period the paper is to be sent to the home address.

J. A. McILWHAM (Perth).—Have sent on your address to the one who made the inquiry.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—R. Allen (N.Z.), £1; J. W. Wearing, 10s.; G. F. Dixon, £1 1s.; G. Webb, 5s.; H. E. Latimer Voight, £1 7s.; G. Bate, 8s.

E. KIRTON.—We appreciate all you say, but we are up against facts, and must face them. We do not think that the rise in price of the paper will seriously interfere with the circulation. So far as the first week is concerned, it has made no difference whatever. And there are plenty of ways in which our friends may help to promote the circulation of the *Freethinker* without subscribing to a Sustentation Fund.

J. KENNARD.—Letter shall appear in an early issue. Hope you will soon recover from the effects of the War.

G. SCOTT.—Thanks. As you say it is something for the newspapers to admit that the *Freethinker* exists. It is laughable to see the way in which almost all reference to a Freethought journal that is known all over Britain, and is particularly well known to newspaper men, is excluded from the press. Some of the London dailies are peculiarly contemptible in this respect.

DOVER BROWN.—We are obliged for P.O. bringing your paid subscription up to the new rates. Your example is being generally followed.

A. HEWITT.—We think that Father Hearne, of the Presbytery, St. Helens, is to be congratulated on his ability to thank God for this "Year of Peace." And when he says that the reduction of the hours of labour and the improvement of wages "are blessings direct from the hand of God," we take off our hat to the cheek of the man. It is superb.

W. H. BLACKMORE.—Pleased to think you find the Lyttelton Cohen discussion of interest and use with Christians. It is creating as much attention in book form as it did when appearing in the paper. And for the times, the publication is a marvel of cheapness. If you will address a letter to Major Warren, c/o this office, it will be forwarded. We have no doubt but that what you desire will follow.

B. ROSS (Kaerland, S.A.).—We have received no letter from Mr. Steyn. Our Shop Manager is writing you on the other matters.

T. MACKAY (Boston).—Mr. Cohen has no intention of visiting the States. He has far more than he can do here. And there is no useful end to be served in travelling 3,000 miles and leaving things undone at home.

G. BATE.—We quite appreciate both the tone and spirit of your letter. But we had given the question of the rise in price the most serious consideration, and saw no other way out, save making a Sustentation Fund perpetual.

G. WEBB.—Subscription to hand. We are afraid that the want of reflection characteristic of people in relation to the question of population is true of their attitude towards life generally. But one must keep on pegging away.

MR. H. LATIMER VOIGHT writes: "I think you did well to increase the size and price of the *Freethinker*.....It would not be fair if I were to pay the old rate of subscription for so much more material, so I enclose cheque (£2 2s.) towards your funds." We have placed balance to Sustentation Fund.

J. KILPATRICK.—Thanks. We had a pleasant voyage back from Ireland, and pleasant memories of our stay there.

J. OWEN AND G. CHANDLER.—If you will send them on we shall be pleased to see to their distribution.

MR. G. CHANDLER writes:—"With regard to the letter in this week's *Freethinker* from A. W. Skilling, I can go one better than him, as I still have my identity disc marked "Ath." in place of the usual religious denomination." Quite a number of our readers had their discs marked "Atheist" or "Agnostic."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

The course of afternoon lectures at South Place opened well on Sunday last. There was a very good attendance, and Mr. Cohen's address was listened to throughout with the closest attention and very evident appreciation. Mr. Moss acted as chairman, and confined himself to a few well-chosen remarks in introducing the speaker. The second of the lectures will be delivered to-day (Jan. 11) by Mr. Lloyd. His subject, "Christianity in the Melting Pot," is certain to be as interesting as the title would lead one to believe, and we hope that our London friends will see that the hall is crowded. London Freethinkers have few opportunities of listening to Mr. Lloyd, and they should make the most of the occasion.

We take this means of thanking all those who have sent us New Year's greetings. If only a tithe of their wishes materialize during 1920 we shall, indeed, be fortunate. Meanwhile we are glad to comment on the way in which the increased size and price of the paper has been received. We have had three letters questioning the policy, but only because they think it may be a little more difficult to get new readers at the advanced price. Others have resolved to guard against any falling off by taking extra copies, some write that they think the larger paper may prove more attractive, and so make it easier to get fresh subscribers, and one friend ordered 500 copies which he intends to see is well distributed, by hand and post, in likely quarters. If ever a paper had a more loyal body of readers than this one has they would, indeed, be a remarkable collection. Altogether, we start the New Year with renewed hopes, unflagging courage, and a resolve to stick it until the *Freethinker* has the position it deserves.

For two or three years one of our readers has paid subscriptions for thirteen weeks for a number of persons who are not at present subscribers to this paper. This generous offer has been again repeated this year, and we have received the money for fifteen quarterly subscriptions, the names and addresses to be supplied by our readers. The only conditions are that the names shall not be those sent in last year, and that they shall be persons who are likely to become interested in the paper and its work. We shall be glad to receive the names and addresses as soon as possible.

Mr. H. Dawson writes :—

If by any miracle you find time to read this letter, please accept our good wishes towards yourself and our earnest thanks for the continued existence of the *Freethinker*. No thinker will be surprised that its future price must be threepence, and no one can get better value for the money. The only surprise is that through all the War, and with all the powers of heaven against you, you have pulled through at all. For a long time I have taken four copies, and last week I increased my order to six. I hope there is no Freethinker so poor that he cannot afford the extra copy, but if you know of one and will send his name and address, I will gladly send him one for the next six months, free.

Mr. Dawson's offer is a very generous one, and we much value the help he is giving in pushing the cause. We may also add that, so far as we can, we never allow a man or woman to go short of a copy of the paper if we can help it.

It is not our fault that it was not noticed earlier, and the press is not so lavish of its notices of Freethought meetings that reports should be ignored. But we have just received a cutting from a Manchester paper containing a very well done summary of Mr. Lloyd's recent lectures in that city. We should be obliged if local friends would keep us informed of anything that happens in their locality of interest to the Cause. We should be glad to receive the names of those who would be prepared to regard themselves as local representatives of this paper, and to whom we might apply for information when it was needed.

Dr. R. Swainton writes :—

Congratulations on the first enlarged number of the old paper. It reflects credit on all concerned in its production, and on the pluck and endurance that has kept it going through so many dangers. It is a pity that some means cannot be found to bring so useful a journal more prominently before the public. I do what I can to introduce the *Freethinker* to new readers, sometimes with success, and sometimes without. Generally I am astonished that after so many years so large a number of folk are unaware of its existence. Some way should be found to remedy this, and I hope soon. I happen to live in a priest ridden place where one cannot expect to do much, but that is an additional reason why one would like to see it in the hands of a greater number of readers.

We are doing all we can in the direction named by our correspondent, and one day we hope to do it more systematically than we have yet been able to do.

We are asked to announce, for the benefit of Belfast readers, that the *Freethinker* and other of our publications can be obtained from W. D. Darton, 85 Donegal Street. May his sales increase!

The first delivery of Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex* has been sold, and we are now waiting for a further supply. There has been some delay in receiving this owing to the binders. But we are hoping for a delivery within a few days. Those who have ordered the book will understand the cause of their not receiving the work promptly. There seems a brisk demand for the book.

With reference to the "miracle" of St. Januarius, Mr. Trebells writes us from New York :—

In regard to the miracle of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, inquired about by Mr. W. J. Poynter, in your issue of November 23. I am able to inform him that a few years ago there appeared in the *London Tablet*, for several successive weeks, most interesting and detailed articles on the substance liquefied. Unfortunately, my copies are lost; but I remember distinctly that this congealed and quickly melting matter was simply common boiled linseed oil, which every artist has had experience of, in every one of the numerous changes of the "blood" during the last two hundred years. The impure cheap oil of the common oil-shop will give him red and dark congealed blood substances, and the refined artist's colourman's expensive preparation will give him the beautiful gold colour it appears on occasion. All that is required is to place it over night in a cold place—say on the window-sill—and next day place it near the fire, and he will see the miracle performed, and learn how to manipulate the length of time for the liquefaction at his discretion.

The following note from one of our readers, Mr. Ambrose Barker, will be of interest :—“ Dr. Holbach's *System of Nature* was first published in 1770. William Hodgson, sentenced to two years' imprisonment for sedition, which consisted in drinking success to the French Revolution, translated the work into English, and it was issued in 4 vols. in 1795. The first vol. had as frontispiece a portrait of Hodgson, and the other vols. each an allegorical illustration. An exact reprint of this edition was published in 1797, but without portrait and illustrations. In 1817 a third edition was issued 'with additions.' This is generally understood to be the definitive edition, and is always described by booksellers as the 'most authentic edition.' In 1820, Thomas Davison (not Davidson, as Wheeler and McCabe put it), issued the work in sixpenny parts, which were finally collected and published in 3 vols. Tradition has it, and Robertson in his *Short History of Freethought*, states that the translation 'tampers with the language of the original to the extent of making it theistic.' He adds: "This perversion has been by oversight preserved in all the reprints." I have recently taken the trouble to carefully examine four editions, and I find that the mischief was done in the 1817 edition. The idea that this edition is 'definitive' 'best,' 'most authentic,' is, therefore, shattered.

We have received a copy of the first Annual Report of the Rationalist Association of Victoria, and we are pleased to find it a very encouraging document. Mr. Langley acts as Secretary and lecturer for the Association, and has held no less than five debates with clergymen since March last, in addition to delivering his lectures. The Association has also been busy in the distribution of literature, and likewise carried on an "extensive correspondence through the press." Last, but not least, the Association concludes its year with a cash balance on the right side. Freethought is, apparently, going ahead in Australia, and the oldest Freethought organization sends its heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the newest.

Shakespeare's Kings.

No reader of history can be a lover of kings.—*Haslitt*.

SHAKESPEARE is the King Charles' head of literature. You may read in him the height of snobbery—all his great characters are kings, princes, dukes, or aristocrats. You may look upon him as a successful *play-producer*—a successful Elizabethan Charles Frohman. You may entangle yourself in the meshes of the Baconian theory, or you may riot in unadulterated praise and worship of him, as did Swinburne. Whatever way your temperamental disposition may incline, a study of his kings should bring you to the opinion of the celebrated critic quoted above. What a set they are!—below pity, which is akin to contempt; above hatred, which leads nowhere; and, with modern evidence that the divinity of kings is a myth in the sere and yellow leaf of life, we are left amazed at the sight of Shakespeare, in his time, depicting kings as something a little less than men, and a little more than animals. We say a little more, as animals are without the godlike intelligence of man, and without great power over their kind. Ambition in a king seems to us very much like a man who wants to eat two dinners. If a curate must act like a curate, then a king must act like a king. A curate may do no more than break or bend the hearts of industrious parish spinsters; but a king, whose revenue is low in his country, must declare war on a foreign country, and break heads to fill his coffers. That appears to be one of the inflexible rules of Shakespeare's kings. Richard II., divinity in petticoats, to cover his weakness in England, must show his strength in Ireland. Henry V., for the same reason, turns to France. Richard III., passionless—a scheming, crafty, heartless villain—would spend his life in trying to gain power; and his actions would lead us to believe

that he imagined himself immortal. Men have died, and worms have eaten them—and kings are no exception to this rule. It was left to Ben Jonson to point out to a nation just emerging from the jungle of Catholicism and the Middle Ages that “a tyrant, how great and mighty soever he may seem to cowards and sluggards, is but one creature, one animal.” Shakespeare, in his historical plays, would have us believe that kings had very ordinary minds—that is, when they were not obsessed with witches; or, as in the case of Hamlet’s father-in-law, passed away the time pleasantly by poisoning one in the same line of business. O competition! In glue and sewing-machines it is all very well, but to carry it to the illustrious line of kings, it were too unkind. We must not forget, in our haste, that King John was prettily engaged during his reign; hot irons for burning out eyes seems to be a variation from the poisoning pastime by Hamlet’s father-in-law. Henry VIII. would, in these enlightened days, have found asylum in the Zoo, or he might have received a contract from some music-hall for an evening recital of his fickle nature. As it is, it is left to Mr. Harry Champion to immortalize this divinity king in an oblique manner, and this monarch of polygamy is jostled side by side with song, dance, and patter. “We have often wondered that Henry VIII.,” writes Hazlitt, “as he is drawn by Shakespeare, and as we have seen him represented in all his hideous deformity, is not hooted from the English stage.”

Richard III. is a monstrosity. In comparison, Iago is a very perfect knight. In Richard III. we have the born criminal. Nature has been unkind to him in giving him a hump on his back and a withered arm. His savage attitude towards woman, well concealed, but there nevertheless, might have germinated in the mind of some of our stinking saints of history—a Pauline attitude, say, or an attitude found in the minds of some of the Biblical writers, who placed her with the ox and the ass. George Brandes, in his Study of Shakespeare, comments on this king in no flattering terms:—

Every one who has been nurtured upon Shakespeare has from his youth dwelt wonderingly upon the figure of Richard, that fiend in human shape, striding, with savage impetuosity, from murder to murder, wading through falsehood and hypocrisy to ever new atrocities, becoming in turn regicide, fratricide, tyrant, murderer of his wife and comrades, until, besmirched with treachery and slaughter, he faces his foes with invincible greatness.

Shakespeare was vocal history. From the dry bones of Holinshed’s Chronicle he took the framework, and with his stupendous imagination wrought the history-plays into their form. That he was not a snob is easily refuted by the fact that even his aristocratic characters suffer; that he was no lover of kings is seen in his treatment of them. He gives us a rich, rare, and varied *depiction of life*, where the great Greek dramatists gave us an *interpretation of life*. His historical plays may be of a moral order, but Shakespeare cared as much for being a moralist as an astrologist. In the play of *King John* there is no mention of the most famous deed in that king’s life. Magna Charta in this play might have interfered with his royal patronage.

Huxley’s quarrel with historians was well founded. With the rise of printing, with the careless and sycophantic pen of the paid historian, with the school curriculum laid down by those who profit by ignorance, all kinds of gilded villainy pass muster for history. That we may not be accused of talking in the air, we quote from Longman’s *Summary of English History (1906)*, under the heading of Summary of Fourteenth Century “Great War with France giving opportunity for Constitutional Progress.” Foreign wars, then, would prove

the salvation of any country if continued long enough; but, fortunately, we all know now, to put it mildly, that this is not the case. Books were scarce and dear in Shakespeare’s time, and history was taught from the stage, and a boy might do worse than learn history from Shakespeare. Archbishops, and cardinals, and priests, figure in his plays as a glorified sort of charwomen for the steps of the throne, and one of the kings takes his stand between two bishops to impress the multitude. In his retirement to Stratford, we read that he was visited by his peers Ben Jonson, and Drayton; those supporters of royalty, if lucky in escaping prison or the block, would be left by him to the whim and fancy of James I., whose name appears to have been a by-word for corruption. This myth of kings, this myth of religion—of high heels and low heels. Gargantua, when he fell out of his cradle, turned on it and smashed it into a thousand pieces, and we are left to infer that he henceforth stood on his own two legs. Divinity of kings, beware! when a genius broods on your credentials. Shakespeare visited by Jonson and Drayton; royalty playing tricks with Catholic and Protestant in a very quagmire of stupidity and ignorance about getting their precious souls to heaven. No more of these tales of pomp and show; who, my patient readers, would you care to meet? Jonson, the master of style and erudition, Drayton, with his fairy poems of sweetness and delicacy, or James I., the witch-king who had been so long marking time on Elizabeth’s shoes. Shakespeare had *amused* him by writing *Macbeth* for his special benefit; there is a wide gulf between the amused and the one who amuses. In taking leave of this subject we cannot but think that the genius of Shakespeare divined the emptiness of the king myth. The only time that we have ever been impressed by it was in looking at a picture of the finding of King Harold’s body after the battle of Hastings. Harold, a king, a leader of men, lies dead; his great battle-axe still grasped by his dead hand. The myth, *then*, was necessary; who would not fight under the leadership of such a king in those days? But the necessity of the myth exists no longer, and to those who look with the eyes of discernment on Shakespeare’s kings there is no other conclusion. In some far-off age in the future when the whole paraphernalia of outward show is lodged safely in some museum, we may be thankful to Shakespeare’s history, and settle down to seriously consider Jean Pauls proposal for a *Cast-metal King*. And this, as you know, was the only occasion on which Teufelsdröckh was known to laugh.

WILLIAM REPTON.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION.

Upon the remote and abstract questions of religious faith, the influence of education is very predominant. The theological doctrines which have received our passive assent in early infancy, are not encountered on our entering the world by experimental proofs of their fallacy, such as correct the fanciful and enthusiastic notions of every-day life obtained in the school, the college, or the ideal world of books. The proofs (such as they are) which decide on the fate of religious theories, are difficult to obtain, and hard to comprehend; and argument is so opposed to argument, that discussion ordinarily tends only to increase doubt. But catechisms and early drillings confirm the child in the belief of dogmas which afterwards never enter his mind, except when it becomes necessary to transmit them, by a repetition of the process, to his own progeny. By these means, nations go on from generation to generation, entertaining the same faith respecting religions, while they vary incessantly in all that concerns practical morality.—*Sir T. C. Morgan, M.D., “Philosophy of Morals.”*

Ireland and Christianity.

II.

(Concluded from p. 12.)

ANCIENT Irish piety, as painted by modern Papal writers, and the great "Christian" rally against the "Pagan" Norsemen, which ended in the triumph of "Christianity" at Clontarf, all the stories invented to tie the Irish people to the Roman tyranny, are flatly contradicted by authentic history. In the ninth century, when the Danish incursions became formidable, the great storehouses of monastic wealth at Armagh, Kildare, Durrow, Clonmacnoise, and other places throughout Erin, were plundered by Irish kings and chiefs almost as often as by the Vikings; notably in one period by Felim, King of Munster (died A.D. 846), who used Vikings, monks, and anything else which might serve to establish his claim to the high-kingship. The great Brian himself cannot be proved to have been a Christian except in so far as it suited with his ambition to establish an hereditary dynasty, and he was connected by bonds of marriage and of mutual aid with many of the much-maligned Pagan Northmen.

In the state of affairs depicted above, drastic action was necessary; the Irish clergy and the Pope both saw that a free Irish people would have none of them, so Rome made use of a vile instrument to bring this recalcitrant nation "to God," and the Irish hierarchy were the first to welcome and grovel before the Pope's usurper. Throughout the ages since Adrian's impudent Bull, the English interest in Ireland has invariably been backed by the Vatican, and the Irish Church has used the Irish people to the profit of itself and Rome, while the latter has played Ireland in the game, gaining aid and countenance from England, from Adrian's Bull down through the Middle Ages, when we find Honorius II. reproving the Irish for rebellion against their good masters, and a later Pope commanding Irish bishops to pay up their feudal dues to the English king; and, ever consistent, centuries later, in the nineteenth century, the Vatican, in the person of Leo XIII., obedient to English desires, condemned the Irish National League.

In 1794, the Right Reverend Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, by representing to the alien Parliament sitting in Dublin how obedient the Catholic Hierarchy had ever been to the Protestant tyranny, and consequently opposed to all the efforts of the oppressed Gaelic-speaking masses to obtain justice, received for his nursery of priests at Maynooth a bribe of eight thousand pounds a year. When those Gaelic masses were struggling against odious tyranny in 1798, in the rebellion fomented by Pitt and Castlereagh to take away even the semblance of freedom, we find Maynooth solemnly disavowing connection with the Irish rebels and protesting against rebel action when Erin had such a beautiful Constitution as existed in Dublin, in an address signed by seventy-two baronets, gentlemen of distinction, and the Rev. Peter Hood, D.D., for himself and the professors and students of that seminary. A number of students believed to hold rebel sympathies were at the same time expelled. The Irish Catholic bishops supported the infamous Act of Union, fearing to lose their miserable bribe, which was increased to £26,000 annually by Sir Robert Peel, and, when Gladstone disestablished the Protestant Church in Ireland, he squared Maynooth with a lump sum of £370,000. Many Irishmen boast of Fathers Murphy and Roche, and others, five or six in all, who led their flocks in the fight for freedom, but they overlook the fact that so few were found on the popular side out of many hundreds in

the country, and also that priest-informers of the type of Father Arthur O'Leary and Father Thomas Barry, many times exceed the Murphys and Roches. The seeker after truth will reap a rich harvest of names of reverend, and possibly right reverend, spies and betrayers in the State Papers in Dublin Castle.

After the Union, the Irish National Movement practically died out, what little energy remained in the country being skilfully directed by the bishops into a struggle to make themselves masters, a struggle which alienated from their Catholic countrymen the Ulster Presbyterians who had fought so nobly for an Irish Republic in 1798, and initiated the dissensions between Orangeman and Catholic which form the pretext for alien rule in the mouth of every British statesman from Pitt to Lloyd George. O'Connell was used by the bishops until he achieved all that was possible by opening up well-paid jobs to Irish Catholic bourgeoisie, but when he began to agitate in the cause of National freedom they either opposed him, as in the instances of the "great" J. K. L., Dr. Doyle, Bishop of Leighlin, and John McHale, Archbishop of Tuam, who would not hear of Repeal of the Union, or they were silent. Repeal and the Tenant Right Movement were avoided by hierarchy and clergy, and a few daring priests who took the national side were bitterly condemned by "the Church"; but, after the famine of 1847, when a religious question arose, they began the Catholic business over again. In 1850, when the Pope conferred territorial titles upon the Catholic hierarchy, Lord John Russell introduced the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. Sadleir, Keogh, and other Irish M.P.'s, who had voluntarily sworn not to take bribes from the English enemy, made themselves so conspicuous in opposition to the Bill that they were contemptuously named "The Pope's Brass Band." Russell was defeated, and the faithful sold itself to him entire as a going concern, with the blessing of Cardinal Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, and the Irish Catholic hierarchy generally; this piece of infamy may be described as the firstfruits of Catholic Emancipation. Of the scoundrelly "Brass Band," one O'Flaherty, appointed Commissioner of Income Tax, absconded with many thousands of pounds, and thus disappears from history; John Sadlier, after causing terrible distress among the Irish poor by the failure of his swindling Tipperary bank, and in England by his stock-broking transactions, was found self-poisoned on Hampstead Heath; and William Keogh, after becoming a judge of men who held honestly the views by pretence to which he began his career, also died by his own hand. So much for Christianity and its choice tools. Cardinal Cullen lived to be, aided by many zealous Catholic lawyers and other place-hunters, informer-in-chief against the men whom Keogh sentenced, and this bright Catholic party were abhorred in Dublin in the 'sixties as "Ghouls" and "Felon-setters."

When Mr. Parnell commenced his agitation, he found up against him the great John of Tuam, Dr. McHale, and the first fight in the land-war was against a landlord of "God's own Church," the Rev. Canon Ulick Burke. All Irish history shows that the path to freedom leads away from a Church which has sold, and would again sell, Ireland at the bidding of Rome—a Church which, in common with its numerous by-products of Anglicanism and Nonconformity, is the negation of freedom and of all that is pure and wholesome in life. The Irish Bishops appeared to do a right thing when they opposed conscription, but they did not dare do otherwise with the whole people determined on their action; but their opposition was also dictated by economic reasons; their money comes direct from the people, and returned conscripts would not bring back to

Ireland an increased zeal in religion; also there are still in Erin some capitalist concerns—whiskey, stout, etc.—and the poor followers of the Carpenter are shareholders therein. In the Dublin troubles of 1912 it transpired that on the list of tramway shareholders were many names of priests. Sagart Aroon? Under those circumstances, conscription could not be to the glory of God. Sinn Fein must beware of the priest; he may mean well while he is young and enthusiastic, but he is in the toils of a power which allows no allegiance except to itself; a power which blesses treachery and fraud, vile deceit, and every other crime, if the end be increased strength and influence for Rome. The bishops and general body of the Irish clergy are sitting on the fence and looking on the new effort for freedom superciliously, ready to denounce or praise as the interest of Rome dictate, and without a care for Ireland and her suffering people. There has been a rift in the lute of friendship between the Vatican and British diplomacy since the outbreak of the European War, the interests of the former being obviously bound up in the fortunes of the Central Empires, with their teeming millions of faithful Roman Catholics; but differences will be adjusted, and then Ireland may look for a recrudescence of the Papal Rescript, a weapon wielded by Popes at the dictation of Britain whenever the Irish united to demand their rights. Religion fights to hold the wealth and power of the world by inspiring fear of an imaginary God in the minds which it keeps in ignorance. But men are rapidly learning that there is a way out of this Slough of Despond which these two ogres guard, and the ogres are trembling before their starved victims. Irishmen, as well as the lovers of liberty in other lands, must throw over the two ghouls at the same time, and stand out for a fair, cleanly life here and now, forgetting the nebulous bird in the bush, or all their efforts will have been vain.

AUSTIN RUSSELL.

Robert Burns.

A SUGGESTED ADDRESS FOR JANUARY 25, 1920.

GENTLEMEN,—I am giving you a short address which I fondly believe to be my own. In briefest exordium I may remark that I would like to say something worthy of the subject—worthy of myself and of this Society; above all, I wish to avoid implied insult to the "Immortal Memory" by boring you with too much Burns.

Burns was born at Alloway, no child of myth or miracle, but a sturdy, wholesome, cottar's son; that date, January 25, 1759, is fast receding down the years. When our children of to-day are middle-aged, and most of us here to-night, perhaps, are with the great majority, two centuries will have elapsed between then and then, and yet it is certain that the star o' Rabbie Burns will shine brighter still amongst the constellations of fame, and in defiance of the dust of antique time. To vary the metaphor, the star on the night's horizon as we travel keeps pace with us, and is there before us and after us. In due course even the Great War shall have become a vague and nebulous memory, the so-called great actors in it have been absorbed in oblivion's heap of indistinguishable and ephemeral things, while this truly great prince of peace and humanity will stand out in yet more and more honour and regard.

It is difficult to account for a man of genius; but, after all, it is unnecessary; we know that nature, in her slow but certain processes, with as much ease and as little concern, produces the imbecile; as an ultimate result the one product of nature is as legitimate, if not as desirable,

as the other. In fact, as a great transatlantic observer has said: Failure would seem to be the trademark of nature. Why? Nature has no design, no intelligence. Nature produces without purpose, sustains without intention, and destroys without thought. From the point of view, then, of an aiming and intelligent evolution the genius is significant of nothing. But the genius arrives upon the scene of conscious intelligence, sensitive, receptive, perceptive, instructs, delights, inspires, and then becomes a measurable, purposeful, and intelligent force; a man of destiny; one of those many choice spirits who, since the dawn of human history, has kept emerging from the blind night of creative energies into the light of calculable and progressive day.

Burns was a common man, with common virtues, and common failings, but these ever illumined by the electric light of genius, becoming at last intensely incandescent by contact with the actual world of men and things.

He was a Freethinker in the best sense of the word. I do not know if there is any worst sense; he was even free to believe reverently, if somewhat vaguely, in "powers supreme beyond the sky." All men should be free to accept and express the evidence of their senses.

How little, after all, even a worldly successful man lives in his actual life. By far the larger part of his existence is passed in the sphere of so-called abstractions—in thoughts, sentiments, emotions, wonders, hopes, and fears; in content and discontent, happiness and misery, passive sensation, contemplation, and reverie; all the interminable intangible but tremendous issues and considerations, qualities, and influences of the world of ideas, sensations, doubts, convictions. Such give variety and richness to the poorest, most meagre life. In such a world, soaring and descending, rejoicing and sorrowing, lived the spirit of Robert Burns, but a more intensely poignant, incandescent world (as I have said) than is experienced by the ordinary mind; for, in the sense of averages, it must always be remembered, Burns was not a common man. And such a buoyant, quenchless spirit, inhabiting such a wonder-world of beauty and desire, of feeling and vision, love, friendship, and social joy, made all the more pathetic the grim, desolate, despicable, hammered actual of its hand-to-mouth existence of hopeless toil.

But yet we are not to suppose that mere work was unpalatable to Burns. On the contrary, I am sure he was often happiest behind his plough, as he watched the wholesome brown earth twisting and recoiling from the shining "reist," as he hummed snatches of some "heart-felt song," as the lark carolled in the skies above him, as his spirit flew in feathers also, and fanned the fleecy cloud, yet never far away from the lowly daisy and the timid moosie, his earth-born companions, fellow-mortals! Yea, finding his religion there, the sweet and certain satisfying religion of reason, of Nature, and of man.

There are a thousand things I could say about our great compatriot, things new and fresh and interesting, even for a well-worn theme. You all know how and where he was born, how he lived, how he died. Save for a host of personal friends, none so poor as to do him reverence in that day; Parliament, oblivious of his existence; now the Pyramids of Egypt could not express our love and admiration for this king of men—of minds, I should say, or of hearts. Detractors he has had, but these rather awkward and stupid than malignant. I, at least, will avoid this stupidity. I will not speak of the morals of Robert Burns, except to say that, even in the sphere of morals, aye, and sobriety of mind, the best of his accusers are not worthy to tie his shoestrings.

No further seek his merits to disclose
Or draw his frailties from their dark abode.

The former are known and acclaimed in every corner of the civilized world; the latter, if we must admit them, but draw him closer to the heart of man universal, who feels he is only more fallible than Robert Burns, and who, inspired by his virtues, is fain to be worthy of Scotland's greatest son.

A. MILLAR.

A Note on the Irish "Question."

ENGLISH politicians will never solve the Irish problem if they cannot—or will not—recognize the powerful and complex elements involved. Political chicanery is merely a contributory factor to the main issue of religious intolerance. From the point of view of Irish Nationalism, political and ecclesiastical objectives are diametrically opposed. The root and substance of Ireland's predicament is fanaticism—Roman Catholic and Protestant alike—created and zealously maintained by certain clerical fanatics. At the opportune moment these fanatics are at hand, possessing the necessary "bogey" and inflammatory speeches, thereby fanning into flame the smouldering ashes of religious passion, and prejudice, of the whole nation. A glance at the opposing sects should suffice.

CONFLICTING CREEDS.

In the North there is Protestantism (or rabid Presbyterianism), loyally supported by numerous Orange Lodges and *Unionism*. Unionism, as taught to Orangemen, denotes "England first; Ireland second." Now the Irishman of the North is both peaceful and industrious, loving his compatriots, until roused by the inevitable clerical war-cry, "No Popery," or "The Boyne Water"; when he ceases to think and to act as an Irishman, but becomes, automatically, an impassioned unit of the "Anti-Romish" army of Ulster. In the South and West is Roman Catholicism, supported by the ancient order of Hibernians, innumerable religious clubs, and *Sinn Fein*.

THE MEANING OF SINN FEIN.

Sinn Fein, translated from the Gaelic, means "Ourselves Alone," but the real definition of *Sinn Fein* denotes "Church first, Ireland second."

It will be difficult to reconcile the following statement with recent outrages, but it is undoubtedly true that the Irishman of the South and West is law-abiding—yearning for national unity—until he hears irresponsible young priests openly preaching sedition and, apparently, immune from arrest. These speeches—anti-English, anti-Protestant, anti-everything except Mother Church—invariably include the old war-cry, "Remember '98," or, in its modern form, "Remember Easter Week."

Thus it will be seen that ecclesiastical contumacy is the stumbling-block to Ireland's unity, as her denominational autocracy work incessantly, directly and indirectly, for the maintenance of religious bigotries, as opposed to political peace and reconciliation.

In despite of all English schemes towards federalism or Home Rule, Ireland *must* become a nation, and cease to be 'conquered territory'; that wonderful Ireland, known only to those Englishmen who have lived there, with a people possessing an exceptional temperament and wealth of hospitality; that glorious nation, incomparable in art, in history, in fighting, and in sportsmanlike qualities, must continue her unenviable existence, unless extirpation of ecclesiastical intrigue in politics—ecclesiastical aspiration to temporal power—can be successfully accomplished and made absolute for all time.

KENNETH DESMOND.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, "Mimmermus," writing on the subject of Christian Science in your issue of December 21, has completely missed the point.

In his article, entitled "A Saucy and Spurious 'Science,'" he vainly endeavours to show that Christian Science is an attempt to build a bridge between religion and science. No such attempt is therein made. There is hardly a word in

the English language which has a wider meaning, and yet is so confined to a limited meaning by the average person, than "science." It means "knowledge classified and made available in work, life, or the search for truth" (Webster).

Christian Science means Christian knowledge, and stands, as Mrs. Eddy writes on page 127 of *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*, "for everything relating to God, the infinite, supreme, eternal Mind." It is not, therefore, an attempt to build a bridge between religion and what is termed natural science, as our critic avers. It is purely the Science of Christianity. It will be acknowledged that all one will ever know about God must come through revelation. The unilluminated human mind, which is the carnal mind spoken of by St. Paul, is "enmity against God." This so-called mind cannot know God, and must be replaced by the divine Mind, the Mind which was in Christ Jesus, before God can be understood. It was the Mind of Christ which gave to Mrs. Eddy the great spiritual understanding which enabled her to take of the things of God and show them unto the world in the text-book, *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*, and her other writings.

One wonders if our critic has ever had the humility to stop and consider why so many people from all walks of life, who have professed almost every other form of religion, as well as Atheists, Agnostics, and Freethinkers, have come into the ranks of Christian Science. It is because they have found therein a logical, reasonable, and, above all, demonstrable religion. They have found that Jesus the Christ was the most scientific man the world has ever seen, and through the light that has been thrown on the Bible by *Science and Health: with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, the priceless treasures it contains have been revealed.

I do not think even "Mimmermus" would say they were all wrong and that he was right. I would advise him to study the text-book a little more carefully the next time without prejudice, and honestly try to see the point of view of the Christian Scientist.

CHARLES W. J. TENNANT,

District Manager, Christian Science Committee
on Publication.

Glasgow Secular Society.

THE Members of this Branch of the N. S. S. believe that by greater cohesion on the part of the Freethinkers in the West of Scotland, an organized Secularist propaganda could be carried on.

Within a few miles of Glasgow are Airdrie (population 25,000), Coatbridge (45,000), Clydebank (45,000), Motherwell (40,000), Paisley (90,000), Wishaw (25,000). Beyond that small circle are Ayr, Dumbarton, Falkirk, Greenock, Kilmarnock, and others, ranging from 25,000 to 75,000 people.

All over that district the Religious Sectaries are lamenting the growing indifference, the non-Church-going, the Sabbath-breaking habits of the working people. "P.S.A.'s," "Brotherhoods," "Manly Meetings for Men," and other Agencies, are being tried to bring them back to the apron-strings of the true Mother Church.

The Churches are on their Trial. So are We.

Practically no effort is being made to guide the thoughts of these men and women, or their children, into Rational, Secularist channels.

As a preliminary step towards a wide propaganda, will Freethinkers in any town or hamlet in the West of Scotland communicate with—

Mr. F. LONSDALE,

256 Calder Street, Govanhill, Glasgow.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.
INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Hyatt, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Elstob, "Economy in Truth."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Debate: "Christianity v. Secularism." For Christianity, Mr. Sydney Crabb; for Secularism, Mr. C. Ratcliffe.

SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.): 3.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Christianity in the Melting-Pot."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Ideal Man."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.
INDOOR.

BELFAST.—The Annual Business Meeting of the Belfast Branch will be held on Thursday, January 15, at 8, in the City Studio, 3 High Street. Business: Lecture Arrangements, etc., for 1920, and election of Office-Bearers. Subscriptions for the ensuing year are now due, and may be paid to the Secretary.

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

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

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Instrumental and Vocal Concert. (Collection in aid of Leicester Infirmary.) The Secular Society's Annual Meeting will be held at 3, and Tea will be served at 5.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street): Mr. J. C. Thomas ("Keridon"), 3, "The Return of the Gnostics"; 6.30, "The Pagan Roots of the Christian Creed."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Hunter Terrace): 6.30, Mr. J. Hannon, "In the Rocky Mountains."

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