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Views and Opinions.

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Intimations of Immortality.¹

We have been considering an argument for a future life which proceeds on the assumption that an examination of human nature provides intimations of immortality, inasmuch as it possesses more than can be explained by residence on this earth. There are two forms of this argument, one, with which we dealt last week, that the moral sense demands a better adjustment of consequences to conduct than is provided in this life, the other that human nature possesses potentialities that are clearly not exhausted in this world. The argument as a whole is so common that presentations of it can be found in all directions; but to illustrate it I will take three writers, giving the place of honour to a lady. In an essay written originally for the *Contemporary Review*, but afterwards published in book form, Madame Caillard says:—

Till we come to man.....each individual existence apparently ceases at death.....With man.....so far from actual conditions exhausting his individuality, they rather seem insufficient to rouse his powers or exhibit its full scope. His conscious demand for himself and his fellows is more time, fewer physical disabilities, and mental limitations, a wider sphere, a fuller experience, a wider life.....The body of a bird or of any other animal does not strike us as limiting its individuality—rather expressing it in a most complete and appropriate manner.....The individuality of many a human being, on the contrary, seems to be fighting its way to expression through bodily hindrances, rather than clothing itself in a suitable and controllable manner.

The Rev. Dr. Mellone, in his *Immortal Hope*, says:—

Animals, so far as we can see, are able to reach in this world the highest kind of existence possible to them; they are able to do the best which it is possible for them to do and to feel.....It is possible for the animal to live a complete animal life in this world; full satisfaction is given to its powers and possibilities, if we take into account its relation to its fellow-creatures and to its offspring. But it is not possible for man to live a complete human life in this world. Human reason shows no sign of ever stopping in its development, while it seems as if the reason of

animals has already stopped. Anyone who thought of denying this would have to meet a difficult question: taking animals as we know them now, could an animal ever be trained to, by any kind of experience or changes in its environment and its bodily organism, to feel and think as Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, St. Paul felt and thought.

Finally, we have Dr. Martineau advising us that the constitution of the human mind is not what we should expect:—

If it were constructed for a lease of a single life like ours.....When you place side by side the needs of human life, taken on the most liberal estimate, and the scope of the intellectual powers of man, I shall be surprised if you do not find the latter to be an enormous over-provision for the former.....There is clear evidence of their being adequate to indefinitely more than the present term of life allows them to accomplish.

These three quotations all have so much in common that they may well be taken together, rather than separately.

* * *

Egotism and Science.

There is something very ingenuous about Madame Caillard's confident belief that the body of an animal fully expresses its individuality, and in the most appropriate manner. Could an animal put its thoughts into words, it might as confidently say the same of man. All that Madame Caillard's statement really amounts to is that she sees no necessity for the immortality of animals, and, quite seriously, I can see neither necessity nor profit in the immortality of a vast number of human beings. The universe is certainly not sensibly the better for their emergence, and it cannot conceivably be the worse for their disappearance. And to say that a man is capable of doing more than he achieves, while an animal is not capable of doing more than it does, enshrines a common, but none the less mischievous, fallacy. Man and animal do all they can at any given moment. Of course, by varying the conditions, we shall get a different result, that is, if we imagine the man taking a different view of things we can conceive him acting in a different way, but no one was ever silly enough to contradict that. And the same thing is true of an animal, within limits. Give a horse better feeding and a different training, and it will act differently from what it does under other conditions of dieting and education. Substantially the principle holds of all animal life. What differs is the degree of educability. The old lady in the story said that Adam would have a hard job naming some of the animals, but it would be easy with others, for he would know that a pig was a pig the moment he saw it. There is a strong family likeness between the old lady's philosophy and that of Madame Caillard's.

* * *

Man and the Animal World.

Dr. Mellone does not effect any substantial improvement on Madame Caillard. How does he know that animals reach the highest existence possible to them? Animals are certainly more or less educable, and their physical structure admits of being more perfect than

¹ Previous "Views and Opinions" on the subject of "Immortality" appeared in the *Freethinker* for October 24, 31, November 14, 21, and December 5.

it is. As with man, animals may grow in intelligence. The limits are more sharply defined than is the case with man, but that is due, not so much to any individual superiority, as it is to the lack of a social medium which enables man to transmit from one generation to another the results of his experience. But as an individual it is not true that man either does or can develop indefinitely. The development here is social rather than individual, although the individual reaps the benefit of it. And when Dr. Mellone asks whether we could think of an animal ever thinking as Shakespeare or Newton thought, the answer is, of course, No; but I can think of animals reaching a degree of development much higher than is usual with their species. And, question for question, can we, taking men as we know them, think of them all becoming Newtons or Shakespeares? And if not, what is the value of the comparison? Some animals progress more than others, and some men progress more than others. And that is all there is about it; unless Dr. Mellone means that we ought to see a horse behave like a man if we are going to credit it with the capacity for progress. The fact is that Dr. Mellone is—owing to a defective psychology—playing fast and loose with the conception of the growth of man, considered as an individual, and the conception of progress as a racial fact. It is only with the former that the idea of immortality is concerned. And so far as that is concerned, the argument breaks on the fact that the individual does not progress indefinitely. It is the race that progresses, and to that progress no one can place a limit. This point will be more fully dealt with in the quotation from Dr. Martineau.

* * *

Man and Society.

The essential weakness of the plea of Dr. Martineau, that the capacities of man are not such as are demanded for the present life, and therefore cannot be explained by it—an argument used by Mr. Balfour in his *Theism and Humanism*—owes its apparent strength to an ignoring of one whole side of human nature, and that its most important side. I agree that if human life were constructed for the "lease of a single life," and that the life of the individual, the argument would be unassailable. But it is one of the facts of the situation that man is a member of a social group, that his whole nature is fashioned with reference to the existence and the needs of the group, and that his capacities must be judged, not from what is necessary to his existence as a mere living object, but from the point of view of the life of the species. To study the individual, apart from the group to which he belongs, is much like taking a steam engine to pieces and attempting to get an idea of its character as a whole by examining its parts out of relation to each other. Man's feelings, no less than his capacities, have on the one side reference to his own preservation, but on the other side they have a no less clear reference to the needs of the group. There is a glimpse of this truth in the remark of Dr. Mellone that "If the immortal life is to be more than a name for a shadow, it must be a life where men are members one of another, not less, but more, than they are here." Quite so. An immortality of solitude would be positive torture. The social instincts demand satisfaction, and how is that to be obtained in the absence of conditions substantially similar to those that now exist? The side of human nature that puzzles both Dr. Martineau and Mr. Balfour (and a pretty comment on the mental outfit of our political governors it is) is the social side of man. It is that which supplies the impetus to nearly all on which the advanced theologian erects his fallacies. Men and women work, and give themselves to the work, in the belief that their family, their friends, and their kind will benefit. The brightest and best of the race have been inspired by this ideal, even though they may have used a religious

terminology in expressing themselves. But their sentiments and their capacities are in no wise directed towards a future life, but towards that racial life from which we all emerge, and into which we finally disappear.

* * *

The Poverty of the "Spiritual."

Finally, when Dr. Martineau measures the capacities of man by his "needs," it is clear that what he has in mind is a mere sufficiency for the maintenance of life. But, surely from almost any point of view, to live a human life implies more than the ability to maintain a mere existence. It is not living merely to stave off death. A living death would be an appropriate term to describe such an existence. It is essential to all life that the capacities possessed by the organism shall be such as will stave off death. But to lead a human life we must include the provision for satisfying mental, moral, and æsthetic ideals, without which life would be scarce worth the living. The powers of man may be an enormous over-provision for the mere maintenance of life; but to say that they are an over-provision for the needs of man in other directions is simply not true. On the contrary, our desires tend always to develop beyond our powers, and to be the spur that leads to the development of the latter. While instead of there being a consciousness of a surplussage of power, it is the impotence of human faculty in the face of desires craving for satisfaction, and of problems demanding solution, of which we are most conscious. Dr. Martineau only reaches his conclusion by restricting his view of life here to the lower animal aspect. And it is not the least curious feature of the situation that the very people who stand forward as the champions of a higher and more "spiritual" side of human nature are the ones who insist upon a lower, a coarser, and a more material view of life in order to gain support for their theory of survival after death.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Without God in the World."

THE above phrase forms the climax of St. Paul's description of the wretched condition of the Ephesian Christians prior to their conversion from Paganism. In their Pagan state they were greatly inferior to the Jews, because they were Atheists, and had no religion. They did not belong to God's chosen people, and were consequently "outsiders," to whom Jehovah's covenanted promises did not extend. Paul, being presumably a scholar, ought to have known that his characterization of the Pagan world was almost wholly false. The Ephesians were devout worshippers of the Goddess Artemis, or Diana, as the Romans called her. They firmly believed in her divinity, and her temple was the most gorgeous building in their city. When Paul visited the famous centre, his first appeal was to the Jews. For the space of three months he attended the synagogue regularly, "reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God." For a time, he was patiently, if not favourably, listened to; "but when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude," he retired, followed by his disciples. After his withdrawal from the synagogue, he began to give daily addresses in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus. Who this Tyrannus was we have no means of ascertaining, but, according to the Book of the Acts, Paul's ministrations there were continued for two years, and bore abundant fruit, not only in Ephesus itself, but throughout Asia Minor. Probably the story of the great riot in the city and of the stormy meeting in the amphitheatre is largely legendary; but the important fact that emerges is that the Ephesians were a deeply religious people, and held

the object of their worship in highest reverence. According to the only report extant of the tumultuous meeting in the amphitheatre, the cry heard above all the turmoil was "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians."

Curiously enough, the Rev. H. Mayne Young, M.A., recently preached a sermon on the words, "Without God in the World" (reported in the *Christian World Pulpit* for December 1), in which he significantly admits that the charge brought against the Christians by the Pagans was identical with the charge which Paul made against the Pagans, namely, that they were Atheists. Speaking of the Pagans, Mr. Young says:—

The God of the Christians they could not understand. He in whom the Christian speaker lived and moved—"breath of his breath, thought of his thought, soul of his soul"—was scarcely conceivable to the average believer in many Gods, whose Deities were definite, almost tangible, realities. A God who was everywhere seemed to be nowhere, and they who worshipped him were condemned as Atheists—"without God in the world." And this taunting accusation Paul takes up and flings it back, with interest, upon those who had used it. You Gentiles, he says, were Atheists; you who were dead in sin, you who were without Christ, were also without God.

Up to this point the reverend gentleman is exegetically correct. The one party did fling at the other the odious charge of Atheism, which, as applied to either, was totally false. Whatever else was true or not true of them, neither Pagans nor Christians were Atheists. They were all alike in their attachment to Theism. From this point to the end of his discourse, however, Mr. Young speaks from prejudice, and, if sincere, from ignorance as well. He begins to deviate from the right path when he declares that Paul's retort to the Pagans "was not only telling, but true." To prove the accuracy of that statement, he quotes Paul's indictment against the Pagan world found in the first chapter of Romans, which, according to all historians of the Roman Empire, is a vicious caricature. What Mr. Young avers, in the name of the Apostle, is that the Heathens were in a state of hopeless corruption, and that they were without excuse. Then he adds: "And we know that this picture which St. Paul draws of their moral corruption was true, because their own writers speak about it quite plainly." I hereby challenge the reverend gentleman to name one accredited Roman writer who gives the least support to the Apostle. It is easy enough to quote virulent passages from the satirists, which were, no doubt, more or less true of the lowest sections of Roman society in the capital; but those satirists, Juvenal and Martial, flourished during the last quarter of the first century, a period during which, the historians Tacitus and Suetonius assure us, there occurred a marked improvement in the moral condition of Roman society. That those two historians accurately represented the state of things we have the emphatic testimony of such eminent writers as Gibbon, Lecky, Renan, Emile Reich, Harnack, and Dill. The last named is the latest and most competent authority on this subject, and Mr. Young would do well to read, mark, and inwardly digest his *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*.

In the middle portion of his sermon, Mr. Young gives expression to a hopelessly nebulous conception of God. After referring somewhat insultingly to people whose "religion has degenerated into religionism," whose "religion is so mean a thing, and the part which God plays in it so insignificant, that it might be omitted almost altogether," he proceeds, apparently, to identify God with all that is. "Ah!" he exclaims, "the man who disregards God and his laws is a foolish man." We are told that it is a fool who says in his heart, "There is no God; but, according to this divine, they are much greater fools who, believing there is a God, resolve to

exclude the thought of him from their minds. Mr. Young informs us that there are thousands of people trying their hardest to live without God; but he frankly tells them that what they are really doing is "trying to live without the source and reservoir of life." Comparing life to a stream, he says:—

Where does this stream, this tiny rivulet, come from, which, growing and growing ever larger and larger, makes this vast stream of wondrous life, with all its endless variety? It is God. God is Life, and all phenomena are but the manifestations and the revelations of the Divine life that lives and moves in every living thing. All that you have and all that you are, is of God. There is just so much God in you as there is life in you. Your intellect, your affections, your higher feelings, they are each and all of God. And if you come up to this point and stop, and say, "I will have no more of God," you are saying, "I will have no more of life."

Is not that Pantheism in all its nakedness, and does it not divest man of all responsibility, whatever his belief and life may be? If we disbelieve in God, it is really but God in us disbelieving in himself. Whatever we have and whatever we are is of God, and is God. If a man's religion is a mean thing, the blame is God's, not his, for he is but God manifesting and revealing himself. According to this teaching, everything is God, and God is everything. And yet, with the usual inconsistency of the theologian, Mr. Young represents the Deity as knocking at every door, as if he were not already inside every door. For the God already described there is neither outside nor inside, for he is everywhere and everything.

Of course, Mr. Young is not a genuine Pantheist, in the sense that Spinoza, Goethe, or Haeckel was. After defining God as life, he shudders at the very idea of "a dead and heartless abstraction taking the place of a Heavenly Father, whose mercies are over all his works." To him after all, "God sits effulgent in the heavens," and it is the privilege of every creature, be he ever so poor or low, to look up with childlike confidence, and say, "My Father, Thou art mine." Yes, God is an outsider, whose one ambition it is to become an insider. He is knocking at every door, seeking admittance; he is knocking at the heart, the brain, the eye, the ear, as if he were an utter stranger; but if he is the Heavenly Father, why, in the name of reason and affection, does he not lift the latch, open the door, and enter, as any human father would certainly do? The truth is that the Christian God has never lived up to the character given him by his official representatives. He has remained an imaginary outsider through all the ages of time. In speaking of him, Mr. Young contradicts himself several times in the course of one short discourse. At one time he says: "You cannot possibly live without God, for all that you have and all that you are is of God, who lives and moves in every living thing." Then, almost in the same breath, he affirms that "there are persons who even come to church, and who are, as much as ever these Gentiles were, without God." A little further on he assures a man who says, "I will live without God," that he cannot get rid of God—at any rate, not until he gets rid of life itself. At the very end he even surpasses himself by announcing that "if any of us are living without God in the world, it is all our own fault." This is the very apex of inconsistency. It is at last admitted, in violation of all logic, that the God who lives and moves in every living thing may yet be excluded, or expelled, from the hearts and lives of human beings.

We are full of pity for such a man as Mr. Young, for in reality he cannot help himself. It is his profession to represent a Being of whom he possesses absolutely no knowledge. He has imbibed certain beliefs concerning him which are in ominous conflict with one another. He proclaims each without realizing that the

next one is in complete contradiction to it. He works himself up to such a state of emotional exaltation that he is stone blind to the contradiction. Is it any wonder that churches and chapels are emptying, and the belief in God gradually dying out? J. T. LLOYD.

The Story of Gerald Massey.

The genius that can stand alone
As the minority of one,
Or with the faithful few be found
Working and waiting till the rest come round.
—Gerald Massey.

GERALD MASSEY once declared that he had no childhood. It is the simple truth that he was cheated of his early years, and those who write of the "good, old days" will find the career of the famous poet and scholar a very grim commentary on their boastful assertion.

The son of a bargeman, Gerald Massey was born in the grip of poverty nearly a hundred years ago. At an age when more fortunate children were at school, he was working in a mill for eleven hours daily at the weekly wage of one shilling. This was not the worst. He became a straw-plaiter, and for three years lived in the black shadow of starvation, often prostrated by illness. Writing of that awful, early life of his, it is a striking comment on his stoical character that his utterances lack bitterness.

In spite of it all, young Massey learned to read and write, and became familiar with *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Brave, old John Bunyan, and "unabashed Defoe," are not bad schoolmasters for a quick, intelligent boy, for they wrote their books in two languages—in literature and in life. At fifteen years of age Massey came to London, and found the Metropolis a stern foster-mother. As an errand-boy, he earned little money. Books, however, were procurable, and his literary appetite was voracious. He read everything he could lay his hands on; "going without meals to buy books, and without sleep to read them." What a picture of the past, the old days of storm and peril, when the soldiers of freedom arose almost every day to meet a fresh difficulty or a new danger. For Massey lived right through a most trying period of English history, when machinery counted for more than men, and any attempt at alteration was crushed with an iron hand. It was during that stirring period that he laid the foundations of that encyclopædic knowledge which made him afterwards one of the noted critics and scholars of his time.

The revolutionary movements of 1848 greatly impressed Massey, and many of his verses are the direct outcome of that period of struggle. At twenty-one he was editing *The Spirit of Freedom*, a revolutionary publication, mainly written by himself. Then he contributed to *Cooper's Journal*, and other democratic papers. He became known, and numbered among his friends the warm-hearted Charles Kingsley, and Frederick Maurice, a Christian minister, who is remembered for his denunciations of one of the chief dogmas of the religion he professed.

Massey's first book of verse was issued when he was but nineteen years old. Later came his *Voices of Freedom*, which showed a notable advance. Hepworth Dixon, of the *Athenæum*, was greatly attracted by his *Song of a Red Republican*, and recognized it as the work of a man who had something to say, and could say it well. Among the admirers which Massey's early poems won for him were Landor, Ruskin, Tennyson, and Lytton. A still greater honour awaited him, for "George Eliot" made him her model for the hero of *Felix Holt*.

It was *Babe Christabel* which made Massey famous. With this he stormed the bastions of success at one

leap. The tenderness and grace of this poem are in direct contrast with the stirring music of his political songs, which recall the effects of trumpets singing to battle. The Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny roused the poet, and he never sang so finely as in his *War Waits*, a volume which is well worth reprinting. He was never so near being a great poet. One of his poems, *Scarlett's Three Hundred*, indeed, challenges comparison with Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*.

But Massey began to regard poetry as an idle occupation. He had no wish to carve cherry stones; he elected to hew granite. In the maturity of his powers, he deliberately put aside the laurel wreath, and devoted himself to the work of emancipating his fellows from the Christian superstition. He turned from verse writing, and put all his energies to a scholarly exposure of the greatest religious fraud of all the ages. His books, *The Book of Beginnings*, *The Natural Genesis*, *Ancient Egypt*, *The Light of the World*, and his profound lectures, have had to be reckoned with. For Massey shows that the holy mother and child—the one a virgin, the other a god—were worshipped in Egypt many centuries before Christianity. It was there that all the dogmas of early Christians, and all their myths and legends were manufactured. In a pregnant passage in *The Natural Genesis* Massey says:—

The writer has not only shown that the current theology is, but also how it has been, falsely founded on a misunderstanding of mythology by unconsciously inheriting the leavings of primitive or archaic man and ignorantly mistaking these for divine revelations.

It was not an easy task that the poet-scholar imposed upon himself. In the noble, dedicatory verses to *The Natural Genesis* he shows, with rare pathos, the isolation of a scholar's life:—

A willing slave for years,
I strove to set men free:
Mine were the labours, hopes, and fears,
Be theirs the victory.

When George Foote was in prison, Massey wrote to Dr. Aveling, and, referring to Foote, said: "I fight the same battle as himself, although with a somewhat different weapon." Massey wished to be reckoned as a fellow-soldier in the Liberation War of Humanity. No one will deny the laurel-wreath, and assuredly to Gerald Massey belongs the sword of a brave soldier of Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

A God and Immortality.

Said the parson, "Be content,"
Pay your interest, pay your rent;
They that earthly joys despise
Shall have mansions in the skies;
Though your backs with toil be bent,
Said the parson, "Be content."

Be content! Be content!
Till your dreary life is spent;
Lowly live and lowly die,
All for mansions in the sky;
Castles here are much too rare,
All may have them—in the air.

—Thomas McGuire.

It is said that human nature hungers for a God and for immortality—that we instinctively, intuitively, yearn for heaven. No doubt many persons feel this hunger, but those who care for truth before anything else will understand that this hunger is purely due to education. If you are taught from your earliest childhood that there is a God and a future life, and if you are the product of generations who believed in them, it is only to be expected that you will hunger after them.

But those persons who are not taught to believe so, or who accomplish the difficult feat of eradicating such beliefs from their minds, have no such hunger.

In foolish families the sand man, the traditional nursery "bad man" and Santa Claus are all realities to the childish mind, and remain so until the truth is known and accepted. Then the "sense" of these imaginary creatures disappears from the consciousness. The "sense" of a God and immortality would not exist, as now, without priestly teaching, and disappears when facts are faced and the logical deductions from them accepted. And it is beyond question that the facts of the universe are against the ideas of a God and immortality, as they are commonly held.

When I say a God I do not mean Nature. I mean a person apart from the material universe, who can hear and answer prayers, who can do something out of the usual sequence between cause and effect, or who can use that sequence for special purposes. And I deny that there is a single known fact in the universe that points in the remotest way to the existence of such a person. And when I say immortality, I do not mean fame, or the reabsorption of individual life into the general life of the universe. I mean the conscious continuance of the individual in separate, personal life after the body is dead, and I deny that there is one single scientifically proven fact to show that there is any such future life.

Facts go to show that there are life, power, and energy—perhaps the same thing under different names—in this universe, always associated with matter, and incalculably greater than any force that man can produce or exert. But when you talk of personality, will, purpose, love, or any presumable attribute of a kind of being who might reasonably be called a God, I defy you to find any of them outside of the animal kingdom. And I defy you to explain how a person can think, and feel, and love—how a person can live—after his body is dead. I defy you to form a mental conception of a person without a body.

All this being true, it must be best for us that we should accept it as fearlessly as we can, and an honest mind will not try to twist the truth, even for its own comfort.

I do not mean to say that the existence of a God would be bad for us. It is impossible to form an opinion on this point until a clear definition of him is available, and so far none is forthcoming. And it is best for us to let the subject of a God drop, because we waste valuable time when we talk about things of which we know nothing.

Nor do I mean to say that a future life would be bad for us, because the nature of it is quite unknown. What I say is that it is best that we should be in absolute ignorance of anything but this life. Why? Because a belief in another life distracts our attention from this. I know of a Spiritualist who committed suicide, and left a letter saying that he knew so much and thought so much of the other world that he liked it better than this. All very well from a selfish point of view, but he left two young daughters to battle with a world that had discomfited him. If he had kept a level head; if he had recognized that it is better not to know the future than to know it, he would have lived a braver life and died a nobler death. What has the imaginary next life to do with this? Just what next year has to do with to-day. Look at it. A man is making shoes. An idler strolls into his shop, and says, "Where will you be next year?" "I do not know," replies the shoemaker. "That's very sad," says the idler. "Not at all," says the shoemaker. "I know that these shoes must be finished to-day, and I mean to finish them. Where I *may be* next year has nothing to do with what I *must do* to-day. And if you, my idle friend, would spend more time in doing some useful thing, and less in asking useless questions, both you and the world would be better off."

Curiosity is a strong feature of the human race. Fortune tellers, spirit mediums, and priests make a

good living out of it, but the world would be much better off without them and without any belief in a future life. To-day, the living and pregnant now, and the people who are still alive and on this earth—these demand our every thought and effort. Besides that, the belief in a future life tends to lower the moral standard, and make it impossible to develop the highest kind of character, because it tempts people to be good by the hope of some reward not inherent in goodness itself. I am not now referring to the particular Christian doctrine that promises heaven not to the *doer*, but to the *believer*. That is so absolutely destructive of morals as not to be worth consideration. But I say that the alleged higher idea that one may gain in heaven by being good also strikes at the root of true morality. For there is but one reason why we should do right, and that is because it is right—that tends to general happiness, our own included. And if there were no other reason, it would still be necessary to do right in order to respect ourselves, as physically and morally clean. If it is essential to our health and happiness to keep our bodies clean, surely it is more necessary that we should keep ourselves free from moral filth. What have death and a future life to do with morals? The motive to right doing is in the thing itself. Suppose we were certain either way, would we not have to do right all the same? But this belief in heaven and hell offers only base motives for conduct, and so it comes to pass that in the Church there are ten merely pious persons to one good one, and almost the only persons of really correct moral ideas and fearless moral conduct are Atheists and Agnostics.

But, worst of all, the belief in a future heaven tends to damn the poor into a present hell of contentment. The very arguments that are oftenest used for supernatural religion are the strongest arguments against it. "What would the poor have if you were to take away their beer and their religion?" is often urged. As to the beer I have nothing to say, but I am sure that the so-called comforts of religion are the main cause of the miseries of the poor. These are what make them such beasts of burden, such clodhoppers, so willing to be robbed, so eager to be slaves. "Patience, patience," says the parson. "Be humble, be resigned, be content; it is the will of God, and you shall all enjoy mansions in the skies." Oh, these well-fed, oily agents of the plutocrats. Few of them understand what they are doing, but all of them are helping to ruin the poor in this world under the promise of wealth in the next! I oppose them with all my might because they stand as a bulwark against human freedom. They teach the people to pray to a Father who does not exist, to fear a hell and hope for a heaven which do not exist, and meantime to submit to a man who compels them to make bricks without straw. I insist that so long as the people believe that a God will help them they will never help themselves, and so long as they believe they are bound for a mansion in the sky they will never rouse themselves to make this world a decent place to live in.

So far as we know, there is no organism in the universe higher than man, and we must therefore look out for our own welfare. So far as we know, there is no life for us beyond the one we are now living. Let us, then, make the best of it for ourselves and those who will come after us. When foolish people talk to you about a future life, point to the slums, and tell them that it is a crime against humanity to think of any other world than this while men, women, and children are crammed into parts of our cities like swill into a garbage can, and at the same time all over the land sweet, pure air and smiling fields invite them to live as human beings should.

If anybody can show you a God who will abolish the banking monopoly and set the vacant land free for use, believe in that God. But if you cannot find such a

useful God, believe in none. If anybody can pull away the curtain and show you another world, believe in such a world; but until someone can do that, join with those who wish to make this world fit for heroes by having done with the banking baron, the landlord, the priest, and the politician.

G. O. W.

The Implications of Atheism.

As Theism involves belief in the existence of God, with its implications, more or less accepted, so Atheism involves non-acceptance of the belief, with the implications attached. This appears to be so obvious as to be scarcely worth stating, yet the outcome is very important. Let us view the whole situation.

Christianity is the official religion of this country, the reigning monarch being required to uphold Protestantism, and, in Scotland, the Government of the Presbyterian Church. Thus Christianity, in its Protestant form, receives a kind of kingly sanction, with the accompanying comfortable sense of constitutional respectability, to be reckoned with by those who would rouse the drowsy British people. The State Church gives an organized anchorage to religion, holding it together, and rendering it comparatively stable. Bible teaching in day schools is compulsory, unless exemption is claimed. Lack of individual initiative hinders claims for exemption being made. Thus the compulsion is much more general than should be the case.

It is worth while considering the grip and ramifications of Christianity in this country. Churches and Sunday schools, with their associated agencies, are still reckoned part of the established order of things by many people who have been well supplied with religious teaching in their youth. Objection to questions and discussion at Church services, and at open-air religious meetings, places religion in an exalted position. Many people are awed by that which is above them in measure or mystery. Through the medium of Churches and with reference to Church requirements, a host of people are involved. Economic interests are interwoven with religious associations. Music, art, architecture, literature, contribute their quota to the upkeep of religion. Workers in many trades necessarily support Church mechanism and outworks, from cradle to grave, willingly or unwillingly, for fairly obvious reasons, but they need not support Church principles.

Recommendations from clergymen are supposed to prove respectability when application is made for relief, or for certain kinds of situations quite unrelated to religious duties. On certain occasions mayors and councillors attend Church in their official capacity, and this is considered by most of them to be the proper course, irrespective of religious opinion, or the lack of it. Members of Parliament and of the House of Lords listen, more or less attentively, to the reading of prayers at the opening of Parliament.

Temperance and the Gospel are mixed together. Certain types of Friendly Societies strive to bring religion and the work of the society into touch. I heard lately about one such society, in connection with which prayer is offered at the commencement of each meeting, without protest, though contrary to rules, which do not provide for such an innovation. Politics and religion are mixed, too. Many Socialists intrude religion into politics either directly or obliquely, though Socialist principles plainly cut right across religious ideas. Some years ago, when visiting the Isle of Man, I attended a chapel service to hear Arthur Henderson, M.P., and noted one sentence in his prayer, as follows:—"Of ourselves we can do little or nothing to retrieve our lost condition." Another snatch from the prayer reads: "The triumphant resurrection of Thy Son." And the

following finely selected sentiments are contained in the hymn announced by Mr. Henderson:—

Thy Providence is kind and large,
Both man and beast Thy bounty share,
The whole creation is Thy charge,
But saints are Thy peculiar care.

The ideas contained in these extracts are bound to affect the outlook of anyone who sincerely proclaims them, reacting on work in a competing sphere—that of the Labour Movement. It would be very easy to include a clause in the constitution of Socialist bodies affirming that the Movement is entirely unrelated to the supernatural, dealing simply with the affairs of this life.

At public gatherings unconnected with religion, but of a social or semi-social nature, the tea-drinking and cake-eating performance is duly preceded by the customary blessing, though all is bought, paid for, and inevitably available. Such matter-of-fact people as engineers and scientists somehow do not take God into their public deliberations. They confine their attention to hard facts. Prayer finds its way to the family tea-table, in the shape of grace before meat, round which many pawky stories have gathered. Modern hurry has happily abolished grace after meat. The zealous or merely conventional Christian insists on prayer on behalf of the whole company, including visitors, without distinction of opinion or desire.

Christianity is perennially with us, because it is officially recognized in State affairs, supported by National Church and State-supported schools. Its roots remain untouched, however its forms may change. Its method is sapping and mining, rather than open attack, for skirmishes on the surface do not reach deep enough, and Christianity will not be finally conquered till it becomes entirely detached from national affairs—political and educational—each one gathering and growing its own thoughts on the subject. That is why the process of enlightenment is slow, and sometimes discouraging—so much is tugging behind and below.

The implications of Atheism involve interference with the tugging process at close quarters by well-devised plans, patiently, hopefully, and all together. But obstacles must be cleared out of the way as well, and, in the midst of religious entanglements, the Atheist places himself or herself in a false position by conventionally acquiescing in Christian usages, which will not be adversely affected by being left alone. Atheist ideas are intended for every-day application. Christians are assured largely because they are numerically superior, conventionally acceptable, and mutually self-supporting.

No one has a right to come between another and his or her ideas, so long as these ideas do not interfere with second parties. Therefore, let Atheists assert on all occasions their right to act in matters of religion as individuals, and let them assert these rights in reference to the seemingly small, but collectively large, affairs of every-day life and practice. If religion were only a personal matter between the individual and his or her ideas, or if collective association were open only to those holding such views, then the work of the Atheist would be enormously simplified. Let us have courage, then, to assert ourselves on every occasion when common practice conflicts with individual principle, protesting and declining. Freethought alone opens up the way to untrammelled mental growth, providing improved material (much required) for the social reformer, in all matters of real importance—every day, public, civic, national—it is the business of the Atheist to claim his or her rights, to disturb composure, and to educate opinion, so that others may move forward to the parting of the ways.

ALFRED RUSSELL.

It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into.—*Swift*.

Acid Drops.

Mrs. Sheridan, the cousin of Mr. Winston Churchill, who has just returned from Russia, says of an interview she had with Lenin:—

I know these men are idealists and selfless. I did not know these qualities could go hand in hand with Atheism. The remarks illustrate what we have so often said, not only with regard to the ignorance of the "educated" classes, but also with reference to the general ignorance concerning Atheism, and also of religion. What else could an Atheist be with the world as it is than an idealist and a "selfless" person? He cannot profess Atheism for what he can get out of it. He cannot call himself an Atheist in the hope of getting on in business, or in politics, or in society. He must be an idealist of a most invincible type. He may, of course, be quite wrong in his opinions, but his unselfishness and idealism, in relation to the rest of the people, seems to us quite unchallengeable. Merely because Atheism represents to-day an unfashionable and financially unprofitable form of opinion, the avowed Atheist is bound to be of a higher type than the run of believers. That is why so few, comparatively, have the courage to call themselves by so unfashionable a name.

On the other hand, the selfishness of religion, particularly of Christianity, has always seemed to us as clear as daylight. The motives that animate the Christian are mainly of a selfish order. His arguments for his faith and against Atheism are on the same level. One need only analyse them to realize this. The plea of future rewards and punishments, that the mere consciousness of right-doing is not enough, that if men felt there were no God they would give rein to all that is bad and black in their nature, are all either appeals to selfishness, or dependent upon a low view of human nature. And it is really because Christianity, in spite of its phrasing and its pretensions, is all the time a disguised appeal to the lower side of human nature that it has failed so deplorably to lead the world along the right path.

It is also for this reason that we at times have such scant patience with those who flatter themselves as being liberal thinkers, and who go so much out of their way to profess their profound respect for Christian ideals and the Christian temper, and who accuse the Christian when he acts badly that he is false to his religion. He is not; he is only bringing out its true quality. And it is deplorable to find alleged non-Christians so little understanding the psychology of Christianity as to pay compliments where they are so little deserved. We are quite confident that until the whole body of liberal thinkers are sufficiently clear in their thinking, and sufficiently courageous in their utterances to set the true nature of Christianity before the public, Freethought will always be robbed of a great deal of its strength in attack, and also hindered in building up a better world.

The Bishop of Galway is, for a priest, unusually modest. In a letter to the Irish Secretary, he says that the kidnapping and death of Father Griffin is the beginning of an attack on "the Church and religion." There are over a hundred different "Churches" in the country. One is the Government brand; and the others, including the Roman Catholic, are simply "fancy religions."

Cardinal Bourne declared that Jesus directed that marriage was to be dissolved only by death. How is it, then, that Papa at Rome sometimes grants indulgences to the faithful.

The Young Men's Christian Association is on a new "stunt." It is now engaged in rescue work, and, according to the Association's own advertisements, has in less than three years "picked up and taken to lodgings 132,708 men who were drunken or debilitated." We cannot imagine how so large a number of men managed to get intoxicated on the alleged beer sold nowadays. Perhaps the good-hearted Christians picked up some of the men several times.

The Church of England clergy boast of their care for education. The Church school at Thundersley, Essex, has been condemned, and a Council school is being erected in its place.

That the clerical profession is a business is clearly brought out in a notice of the Rev. A. D. Belden, printed in a Southend newspaper. It says that in the first five years of his ministry he raised £8,000 in liquidation of the church's debt, and since then another £4,000 has been collected. Besides these amounts, large sums of money have been subscribed for the many church activities.

The other evening, in the district in which we reside, we dropped into a political meeting. The purpose of the meeting is of no particular consequence, but during the time we were there we had a striking illustration of the degree of intelligence that goes to the making of a politician. When we arrived, the gentleman on his feet was a prospective candidate for Parliament, and he was relieving himself of a furious attack on Communism. Communism, he said, meant robbery and destruction. It commenced by killing all the capitalists, then it murdered the middle classes, and finally it murdered the proletariat. That settled it. The next speaker was a real M.P., Mr. J. Seddon. And he commenced by telling the audience that he was going to inform them that Communism was a very old thing. It began with Jesus Christ, and the first Communist Society was formed by his disciples. Mr. Seddon is a very careful speaker, one gathers, since he was at pains to discriminate between the "forebears who came before us," from, apparently, the forefathers who come after us. But the two speakers, with their pictures of Communism, the one as a system of pillage and murder, and the other attributing it, with all the fervour of a Sunday-school speaker, to Jesus Christ and his disciples, was an apt commentary on the kind of intelligence that flourishes in the political world, and helps to explain the existing muddle in the world's affairs. After standing two speakers, we left the meeting, feeling more convinced than ever that the true liberation of the world was along the road of intellectual enlightenment.

According to some of the newspaper correspondents, the burial of the French Unknown Soldier at Paris was accompanied by three religious services, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. It seems a brilliant idea, but suppose that the deceased was, after all, a Mohammedan, or a Freethinker.

A New York telegram says that an application for divorce was made by a Cleveland clergyman, Rev. B. A. Sherwin, on the ground that on his salary he was unable to keep a wife. The application was refused by the Judge, who said that he should get another job that paid better, and ordered him to pay the wife £15 per month alimony. Now, if that parson had lived under God's own law, as laid down in the Bible, all he would have had to do would be to give the woman a bill of divorcement and to have sent her away. But we live in very degenerate days.

Mr. A. J. David, K.C., Recorder of Newcastle-under-Lyme, declares that the cinema has assisted to reduce crime. He hoped the marked change in social life would long prevail. It is a pity that these words cannot be displayed prominently before some bigoted Town Councils and County Councils, who object to cinema performances on Sunday.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has been shouting that the Divorce Reform Bill will destroy the sacredness of marriage, and says if the Bill becomes law the marriage service would have to be altered thus:—"I, John, take thee, Mary, to be my wedded wife, until one of us gets drunk, or until one of us goes mad, or gets locked up, or goes to live somewhere else for three years." The *Evening Standard* (London) characterizes this as "controversially sharp practice. The thing might be excused once. It is inexcusable for the bishop to go on doing it." But whoever knew the clergy willingly give up telling a lie they found profitable?

The *Modern Churchman*, the organ of the Churchmen's Union, says: "Like Canon Barnes, the modern Churchman regards the Fall Story as a myth. The Tree of Knowledge and the talking serpent and the seraph with the fiery sword are fiction, not fact." But our contemporary overlooks the fact that there are "ancient" Churchmen, and still more "ancient" Churchwomen, who still believe, not only in "Adam" and "Eve," but also in Jonah and the whale, etc.

The best thing about a Christian is that he is always asking for more power, and always seeking to still further force his opinions upon people who do not want them. In this way he is apt to breed a revolt where otherwise no revolt would occur. This has recently occurred in New York in connection with the teaching of religion in the public schools. From the *New York Globe* of November 9 we see that there has been a proposal that pupils should be dismissed from the public schools every Wednesday at two in order that they may receive religious instruction. Considerable opposition was manifested to the proposal, and the Board of Education agreed to receive public deputations on the matter. From the report in the *Globe* the deputations appear to have been very numerous, with a decided balance of hostility to the suggestion, and a very strong feeling that the Bible should be removed altogether from the schools. There were, says the report, a number of Freethinkers in the deputation, and some of them appear to have got in some good straight speaking. We hope that the proposed move will have the effect of raising the whole question of the teaching of religion at the expense of the general ratepayer. In this matter the position of the Freethinker is simply impregnable. We also congratulate American Freethinkers on the good report of the meeting. In this country either no report would have appeared, or it would have been cut down to a very bald paragraph.

It costs more to live, and it also costs more to die. The Kensington clergy, Church of England, Roman Catholic, and Nonconformist (all united in this instance), have requested that burial fees be increased by fifty per cent.

By the casting vote of the chairman, the Rev. E. Morgan, the inmates of Willesden Workhouse are to be graciously permitted to drink beer at Christmas. We hope that the pampered inmates have also received permission to eat.

Two applications were recently made to the Prince of Wales for money. One came from the Church Army. Ten pounds was sent. The other came from a body of unemployed. They received a letter of regret that the Prince could not subscribe to all the funds that requested assistance. We do not suppose that the Prince of Wales had much to do with either reply. But the motives that guided his advisers are not difficult to discern.

Said Mr. George Bernard Shaw at a Fabian Society meeting the other evening, "The moment you have a Socialist Parliament in this country, it will not only meddle with religion, but it will consider religion the most important thing it has to deal with." If Mr. Shaw means what he ought to mean by religion, one can only say that he has provided another argument against religion. We quite agree that if Socialists allow their movement to be run by ex-Sunday-school teachers, with the brains of second-rate curates, what he says is not improbable. But the possibility is that he is attaching some fantastic meaning to "religion" such as is not warranted either by its history or by usage. It is a pity that at a time when the great need of the day is for clear thinking and exact thinking, Mr. Shaw should spend his abilities on making statements that satisfy neither requirement.

The Bishop of Southwark has been criticizing severely the sale of livings in the open market, and declared it was "a scandal to the Church of God." It has taken Christian bishops a good many generations to discover this "scandal."

Three well-known cricketers, Warner, Gillingham, and Studd, were the star turns at a service for men at the Regent Street Polytechnic. This "big three" seem more popular than the Christian Trinity.

At Brixworth Vicarage, Northants, Miss Grace Bettison, sister of the vicar, was found shot, with a gun at her side. Yet fervid evangelists always assert that only wicked Atheists do such things.

There is often unconscious humour in posters. A notice of a Spiritualistic film was worded: "Impressive Pictures of the Unseen World."

The latest news of the "men-of-God" include the following items:—The Rev. F. J. Murrell, a Wesleyan minister, cut his throat with a razor.—While the Rev. F. Norton, of Bristol, was making a call, his motor-car was stolen outside the house.—Canon Corbett, rector of St. Mary's, Wanstead, died after morning service at his church.—The *Daily Graphic* says the Bishop of London visited the Apollo Theatre, and went behind the scenes in the interval.

A Celtic cross, costing £400, is to be erected in the churchyard of St. Giles', Camberwell, as a war memorial. As Camberwell folk are not Celts, nor all Churchpeople, and as "Saint Giles" never fought in the war, the memorial does not appear very suitable.

The Rev. E. N. Gowing, Vicar of Prittlewell Essex, and Rural Dean, preaching the Mayoral Sermon, declared that education owed its beginnings to Christianity, and trade unions owed their existence also to Christianity. When the reverend gentleman has sufficient time he might look up the record of the votes of the Bishops in the House of Lords, and see how far these reverend Fathers-in-God assisted education and the trade unions movement. He will find much material for future sermons.

The Young Women's Christian Association is feeling the effects of the movement for the equalization of the sexes. A split has taken place over theatre-going, dancing, smoking, and other mundane matters. Even "A Week of Prayer" has not put the discord right.

There is a recrudescence of bigotry at the theatres and cinemas. To give three instances, *The Wandering Jew*, *The Garden of Allah*, and *Earthbound*, are all full of violent religious animus. Yet these three productions are being shown to crowded houses.

The clergy sometimes let the cat out of the bag. The Rev. E. A. Maley, rector of Thundersley, says that "it is along the line of the Stoics that woman is advancing to-day." So many of the reverend gentleman's colleagues insist that woman owes her position to Christianity.

Sir Owen Philipps, M.P., has given £10,000 to the Welsh Church Re-endowment Fund. Thus is superstition perpetuated in an alleged civilized country in the twentieth century.

A Yorkshire manufacturer, who died worth over £20,000, made it a condition to his heir that he should enjoy himself without extravagance, and give no money to religious societies. The *Evening News* comments on the affair with the opening sentence that there have been many humours and oddities in wills. To our mind the will seems a very sensible one. The manufacturer had probably noted what becomes of the legacies left to religious societies, and how much good they do. What we want now is someone to come along and endow, by will or otherwise, a paper such as the *Freethinker*, and then we should begin to see things. When one considers how much a paper such as this one does without a halfpenny of capital, and with no means of bringing its existence before the public, save through the goodwill of its readers, we can form some idea of the good that might be done with a journal that was financially well equipped, and with means at its disposal to let everyone know of its existence.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.

Some of our Subscribers will receive this week's copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN Wrapper. As the postal regulations forbid our inserting a printed slip inside the paper, we are adopting this device of reminding Subscribers when their renewals are due. We should be greatly obliged if Subscribers will remit as promptly as possible, or will send us a card in cases where they have made other arrangements for securing their weekly supply.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE purpose of this Fund is to meet the deficit incurred owing to the excessive cost of printing and paper, and to provide a balance to meet fresh deficits until such time as prices approach a normal level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £596 4s. 8d. George Smith, 10s.; G. White, £1; T. H. E., £3; F. C. Folley Ebbens, 10s.; A. Jones, 5s.; "Ex-Soldier," £1; Miss M. Pitcher, 10s.; F. Collins (second subscription), 10s.; A. Hewitt, 5s.; W. Sanders, 5s.; F. Guyton, 10s.; T. W. Love, 5s.; H. Kennedy, £2 2s.; H. Dawson, 5s.; John Ross, 10s.; H. Barber, £1; R. Wood, £1; R. J. Thompson, 10s.; H. Spence, 5s.; H. H. Hurrell, £1; The Bindle Club, £1; Mr. A. W. Morrison, £1 1s.; A. D. Guest, 5s.; "One of the New Poor," £1; Harold Elliott, 10s.; S. H. Laycock, 10s.; A. L. Morris, £1; A. and A. Harvey, £2 2s.; H. O. H., 2s. 6d.; L. A. S., 2s.; W. T. Allfrey, 5s. 6d.

Per J. Fothergill—Mr. T. Lumley, 5s.; Mr. J. Hannon, 2s. 6d.; Mr. J. L. Carr, 2s. 6d.

Total, £618 19s. 2d.

PROMISED, provided the total sum raised reaches £1,000, including the amounts promised:—"Medical," £25; "In Memory of the late Sir Hiram Maxim," £50; Mr. J. B. Middleton, £10; "A Friend," £100; "Working Journalist," £3; X. Y. Z., £10; J. Morton, 10s.; R. Proctor, £1; National Secular Society, £25; F. Collins, 10s.; H. Black, £1 1s.; T. Sharpe, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. S. Clowes, £1 1s.; J. Breese, £3; A. Davis, £2 2s.; J. W. Hudson, £1; "Anonymous," £5.

Total promises, £239 5s.

To Correspondents.

A. ALDWINCKLE.—We will let you know if we hear more of the matter of advertisement, but we are not very sanguine. Soon we hope to be able to arrange for a preliminary meeting of a few friends who are interested in the idea of a "Freethinker Fellowship."

A. B. MADDOCK.—Thanks for copies of correspondence, but we don't think that it is on any lower level than much that occurs here at home. The believer in Christianity appears to be much the same wherever he is found, and, with some exceptions, one may say that whenever he is sincere he is foolish, and whenever he is not foolish one doubts his sincerity.

W. E. CUTLER.—You are not any worse off in Canada with religious propaganda than we are in this country. Some of the things that are worked here display such a degree of ignorance and such a primitive view of things that, except for the language employed, they might as well be the product of savages. And we are not referring to the religion that is current among the uneducated classes, ignorance is not removed by education; education only provides, in many cases, a more grammatical form of expression.

D. ARCHIBALD.—Thanks for cuttings. We have readers in Aberdeen, but we cannot say how many. But we should like many more, and could have them if someone on the spot would take the matter in hand. Our circulation might be double what it is, and our usefulness four times if in every town and city one or two would put their backs into this question of circulation.

CONTENTED READER.—What is the good of asking us what is the purpose of the world until it has been made clear that there is a purpose? And why must I provide another explanation before I can destroy one that is offered? Is it not enough if I show that the one offered me doesn't fit the facts? We are sorry to note your *nom de plume*. If you were a discontented reader, you might be nearer getting at the truth.

A. HEWITT.—We daresay many are now sorry they did not make the same stand as you did. Thanks for good wishes.

W. SANDERS.—We are afraid that it is rather too late to adopt your suggestion of organizing a system of local collections on behalf of the Fund. That is rapidly approaching completion, and, as you will have noted, many have already adopted the practice. We suppose it is the trouble of getting the p.o. or writing a letter that prevents many sending till the last moment.

G. WHITE.—We are quite well, and hope that all of you are also. Perhaps we may see you sometime before the present season is over.

F. C. FOLLEY EBBENS.—We are pleased to have your high opinion of our contributors. We know they give of their best. Have we your name quite correctly? We are in doubt, but the end of your letter is rather cramped.

S. J. SCHNEIDER.—Money will continue to be wasted on the propaganda of religion until such time as we clear the superstition out of men's minds. Don't bother about the other matter. We must each do what we can towards doing what we ought. Glad to hear that this paper is so prominently displayed at the Cape Town railway terminus.

FRANK TERRY.—Your subscription was acknowledged in the issue for November 28 under the name of "F. Ferney." Sorry for the blunder. Hope you are well.

H. SPENCE.—Obliged for reference; will look it up.

P. M. EVANS.—Glad to hear of the good results from Mr. Cohen's meeting. Let us know if we can help in any way.

HAROLD ELLIOTT.—We have no doubt but that the £1,000 will be raised. Thanks for your own contribution.

ONE OF THE NEW POOR.—Many of us are passing through a very hard time, but one hopes that the worst of the struggle is now over. It is, anyway, a disappointing pass for the world to have reached its present state, and people like yourself are apt to feel it keenly.

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 Pioneers 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:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (December 12) in the Concert Room of the St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Securing this hall involves considerable expense, and we hope that all local friends will do their best to make the meeting known. There will be only one lecture, at 7. The entrance to the hall is in William Brown Street. Admission is free, but there will be a silver collection. That, however, does not prohibit the use of paper. We are sorry that, by a slip of the pen, we announced this meeting, in last week's issue, for December 5, and we offer our regrets to any who paid a fruitless visit to the hall.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (December 12) in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham. His subject, "Is Progress a Reality?" should attract a large audience, and we hope to hear that this has been the case. The meeting commences at 7 o'clock.

It is pleasing to be able to record that very good notices of Mr. Thorn's *Richard Jefferies* have appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, *John o' London's Weekly*, the *Herald*, the *Star*, and other papers. It will, we hope, send many to the reading of the works of one of the most interesting of English writers.

Mr. Cohen's new work on *Theism and Atheism* is now in the press, and we hope to have it on sale either just before Christmas or early in the New Year. The work extends to over two hundred pages, and we think we may say is the most thorough-going examination of the subject yet done. One of the main reasons for writing it was, indeed, that no complete examination of Theism, with a straightforward exposition of Atheism, is at present available to readers, and there has long been felt a need for such a book. Sometime in the spring Mr. Cohen hopes to publish another volume under the title of *A Grammar of Freethought*, which is also intended to fill a gap in the literature of advanced Freethought.

We cordially sympathize with the opinion of the *Church Times* that the present price of books amounts to a tax on knowledge. The number of good books published are diminished in number, and the price at which they are issued allows only a few to purchase. It is quite common to find books of about 300 pages published at from 15s. to 25s., the rule of the publishers appearing to be that there are a few who will purchase at any price, and they had better make a sure profit on an edition of 1,000 than risk anything on one of five times that number. A great deal of this increase may be justified by the present cost of paper and printing, but some portion is certainly due to the fact that publishers know certain authors have a public that will buy a copy of their favourite's work at any price, and they bleed them accordingly. We suppose publishers would retort they are business men, and not philanthropists. And to that there is no reply. We cannot expect all to act as we have done during the war to keep prices down. But, then, we never lose sight of the fact that our main purpose in publishing is a propagandist one. Anyway, and as a book-lover we speak feelingly, the increasing cost of books is a serious thing to those who really love them.

East London Freethinkers will be interested in learning that to-day (December 12) a lady lecturer, Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, will occupy the platform of the West Ham Branch at the Engineers' Institute, 167 Romsford Road. Her subject is "The Confusion of Religion with Morality." That is a confusion from which religion gains, and the sooner the two are separated in the public mind the better.

Manchester friends will be interested in learning that Mr. A. B. Moss will lecture twice to-day (December 12) in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, at 3 and 6.30. We trust that Freethinkers will do their best to introduce their Christian friends to these meetings. It is some years since Mr. Moss visited Manchester, and doubtless many of the older Freethinkers will be glad of this opportunity of renewing their acquaintance with the lecturer.

We are also asked to announce that on Saturday, December 18, there will be a children's party in the same hall, the Co-operative, Downing Street, from 3 to 7. Following the children's party, there will be a whist drive and dance for adults, so that by the time it is all over those adults who have had charge of the youngsters will feel that they have had enough. These socials of the Manchester Branch are very well done, and deserve the fullest support of the members. The Secretary writes that he hopes that, as this is the last function of the year, those members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 1920 will take this opportunity of "making good."

Mr. F. Collins, in sending a further subscription to the Sustentation Fund, says, "I herewith make a further promise to either beg, borrow, or steal a further 10s. when the total reaches £600, and so on at each £100 till the £1,000 mark is reached. If 200 others would only make the same effort (I am quite sure there are over that number better able to manage it than I am) the £1,000 can be reached by Christmas." We admire the spirit in which Mr. Collins approaches the matter.

Pages From Voltaire.

II.

(Continued from p. 764.)

THE QUESTIONS OF ZAPATA.

1767.

[Zapata, a master of arts, elected professor of theology at the University of Salamanca, presented the following questions to the Academic Council in the year 1629. They were suppressed. The Spanish original is in the Library of Brunswick.]

XXI. Why did God make Moses his prophet without a word of reproach for his marriage with the daughter of an idolator? How did Pharaoh's magicians work miracles in all respects the same as those performed by Moses, with the exception of the lice and vermin? How did they manage to turn the waters of the Nile into blood when they were already turned into blood by Moses? Why did Moses, who was led by God himself, and who commanded six hundred and thirty thousand fighting men, why did he not make himself master of the land of Egypt, instead of merely running away, seeing that the first-born of that country were already slain by the hand of Jehovah? So far as we know from historical records, Egypt never had an army of one hundred thousand men. Moreover, when Moses fled from the land of Goshen, why did he march through a good part of Egypt, and go up as far as Memphis, between Baal-zephon and the Red Sea, instead of making a straight line for the land of Canaan? How could Pharaoh have pursued the Jews with his horsemen when the fifth plague had destroyed all the horses, with the other cattle? Besides, as the country is cut up by canals, there must have been a very small cavalry force.

XXII. In what way am I to reconcile what is said in *Exodus* with the account given by St. Stephen in *Acts*, and with certain passages in Jeremiah and Amos? *Exodus*¹ tells us that the Jews sacrificed to Jehovah in the desert for forty years. Jeremiah,² Amos,³ and St. Stephen⁴ says that they made no sacrifice nor burnt offering during that period. *Exodus*⁵ tells us that they made the tabernacle, in which was the ark of the Covenant; while St. Stephen, in *Acts*,⁶ tells us that they brought it from Moloch and Remphan.

XXIII. I am not chemist enough to account adequately for the golden calf which *Exodus*⁷ says was made in a single day, and which Moses reduced to a powder. Have we two miracles here, or are the operations possible to human skill?

XXIV. Is it yet another miracle that the leader of a nation through a desert should have the throats cut of twenty-three thousand men of that nation by one tribe only of the same nation, and that they should let themselves be exterminated without an effort in their own defence?

XXV. Am I to regard it as a miracle or as an ordinary act of justice, when I read that twenty-four thousand Jews were put to death because one of them had amused himself with a damsel of Midian, while Moses had taken one of these women for a wife? Indeed, were not these Jews, who are described as very fierce, really simple fellows to let their throats be cut for the sake of an idolatrous damsel? With regard to this subject, do you think that I am likely to be taken seriously if I say that Moses found thirty-two thousand virgins in the Midianitish camp with seventy-one thousand asses? Is not this more than two asses for each virgin?

¹ *Exodus* xvi. 35.

² Jeremiah does not say so.

³ *Amos* v. 25.

⁴ *Acts* vii. 42.

⁵ *Exodus* xi. 5.

⁶ *Acts* vii. 43.

⁷ *Exodus* xxxii. 14.

XXVI. In what way am I to explain the law⁸ which forbids the eating of the flesh of the hare because it is an animal that chews the cud and divides the cloven hoof, seeing that, although it has a cloven foot, it does not chew the cud? We have already seen that this fine book makes God an indifferent geographer, a bad chronologist, and a worse physicist; is he, then, no better as a naturalist? What explanation am I to give of a number of laws not a bit less wise than this one, such as the waters of jealousy, the punishment of death for intercourse with a wife during her menstrual period, etc.? How am I to justify these barbarous and ridiculous laws, which, I am told, were received from God himself?

XXVII. What am I to say to anyone who is surprised that a miracle should be needed in order to cross the Jordan, which, at its widest, is not more than forty-five feet, and which could have been crossed easily on a light raft, and, at many places, was even fordable; witness the forty-two thousand Ephraimites slain by their brethren at one of these fords?

XXVIII. What answer am I to give to those who ask why the walls of Jericho tumbled down at the sound of trumpets, and why other towns did not collapse in the same manner?

XXIX. How am I to excuse the action of the harlot Rahab in betraying her native city, Jericho? Why was such a betrayal necessary when the town could have been taken by the mere sounding of trumpets? And how am I to fathom the depths of the divine decrees which made our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be descended from this harlot Rahab, as also from the incestuous union of Tamar and Judah, her father-in-law, and the adultery of David and Bathsheba? Truly, the ways of God are hard to understand.

XXX. How am I to approve the conduct of Joshua, who caused thirty-one petty kings to be hanged, and usurped their petty kingdoms, that is to say, their villages?

XXXI. In what way am I to explain Joshua's battle with the Amorites at Beth-horon, on the way to Gibeon? The Lord sends down a rain of great stones from Beth-horon to Azekah; it is about twelve miles from Beth-horon to Azekah; thus the Amorites were exterminated by rocks which fell from the sky over a space of twelve miles. Holy Writ says that it was midday; for what reason, then, did Joshua command the sun and moon to stand still so as to give time for the defeat of a small army which had already been slaughtered? Why did he command the moon to stand still at midday? How could the sun and moon stand still for one day in the same place? Which commentator must I look up for an explanation of this wonderful truth?

XXXII. What am I to say of Jephthah, who offered up his daughter as a slain sacrifice, and who cut the throats of forty-two thousand Jews of the tribe of Ephraim because they could not pronounce the word *shibboleth*?

XXXIII. Must I admit or deny that the Jewish laws have nothing to say about punishments or rewards after death? How is it that neither Moses nor Joshua ever speaks about the immortality of the soul, both of these dogmas being known to the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Greeks? The latter did not become a part of Jewish teaching until after the time of Alexander, and it was rejected by the Sadducees because it was not in the Pentateuch.

XXXIV. What meaning am I to attach to the story of the Levite, who, when riding into Gibeon, a Benjaminite town, on donkey-back, became an object of unnatural passion for the male inhabitants, who would have violated him? He, however, abandoned his wife to them, and she died the next day.⁹ Suppose the men

of Sodom had accepted Lot's two daughters instead of the two angels, would the young ladies have died?

XXXV. I am sadly in need of your help to understand this nineteenth verse of the first chapter of *Judges*: "And the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron." I must confess that my reasoning powers are too weak for me to understand why the Lord of heaven and earth, who had changed the order of nature so many times, and suspended its eternal laws in favour of his chosen people, was not able to vanquish the inhabitants of a valley merely because they possessed chariots of iron. Can it be, as many learned critics pretend, that the Jews, at that time, regarded God as a tribal and protective deity, at one time more powerful than the opposing God, and at another less powerful? Is not this contention borne out by Jephthah's answer:—"Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh thy God giveth thee to possess? So, whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them shall we possess"¹⁰

XXXVI. I may mention, too, that it is hard to believe that there were many chariots of iron in a mountainous country, where, as Holy Writ tells us in many places, it was the height of magnificence to be mounted on an ass.

XXXVII. The story of Ehud gives me a good deal of trouble. I find that the Jews were always bond-slaves, notwithstanding the aid of their God, who had made a covenant to give them all the land between the Nile, the Euphrates, and the great sea. For eighteen years they had been the slaves of a petty king, named Eglon, when God raised up to their help one Ehud, son of Gera, a man of might, and ambidextrous withal. Ehud, son of Gera, having made himself a double-edged dagger, hid it within the folds of his cloak, under his right thigh, as did Jacques Clement and Ravailiac. He asks the kinglet to grant him a private audience, telling him that he has an important secret message from God for his private ear. Eglon rises from his seat respectfully, and Ehud, with his left hand, plunges the dagger in the king's bowels.¹¹ God approves the whole of this action, which, judged by the moral code of every nation, would be regarded as shameful. Let me know which assassination you think more divine, that of the holy Ehud, or that of the holy David, who murdered the husband of his leman, or that of the blessed Solomon, who, possessing seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, assassinated his brother Adonijah, because he asked for one of them, etc., etc., etc.

XXXVIII. I want you, if you will, to let me know by what trick Samson caught three hundred foxes, tied them together by the tails, and attached firebrands to them in order to burn the sheaves of the Philistines. Foxes are seldom found in any but wooded country. There were no forests in this country, and it would have been a hard job to catch three hundred foxes and to make a string of them by their tails. Later on, we are told that he killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, and that out of one of the teeth of this jaw-bone there gushed forth a fountain. I have no doubt you will be able to throw some light on this subject of the jawbone of an ass.

XXXIX. I must ask you for similar information about that good man Tobias, who, sleeping with his eyes open, was blinded by the droppings of a swallow; about the angel who descended expressly from what is called the empyrean to seek with Tobias, the son, the money which the Jew Gabel owed to Tobias, the father; about Tobias junior's wife, who had seven husbands whose necks the devil had wrung; about the method of restoring sight to the blind with a fish's gall. These

⁸ Deuteronomy xiv. 7

⁹ Judges xix. This story is one of inconceivable brutality.

¹⁰ Judges xi. 24.

¹¹ Judges iii. 15, et seq.

stories are curious; and, apart from the Spanish romances, there is nothing more worthy of our attention. But in what way am I to interpret the sacred text, which says that the beautiful Judith descended from Simcon, the son of Reuben, whereas Simeon was the brother of Reuben, according to the same sacred text, which, of course, cannot be supposed to lie? I have a great admiration for Esther, and I think that the self-styled monarch Ahasuerus was very wise to marry a Jewess, and to live with her for six months without knowing who she really was. All the rest is pretty much of the same character, and I must ask you to come to my help; you, who are my masters in wisdom.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.
(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

GOD AND SUFFERING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I must try to be brief in my replies to the fusillade of questions in your issue of November 28, but one letter I must leave unnoticed, that of Mr. Maybank. The points he raises are too numerous (I hope to discuss some underlying assumptions in an article shortly), and it is always a waste of time answering sneers: for they mean that the writer is determined not to be persuaded, though I have that to say which would turn Mr. Maybank's sneers into blessings if he wished to understand it. "Keridon" narrates a tragedy of suffering, and asks how it can be called a good. It all depends on whether you assume that there is no life besides the one we see going on, or not. Of course, I was assuming the Theistic hypothesis, according to which a great deal of suffering now going on is intelligible as training for a completer life; not all; but if we knew more I assume that all would be intelligible. Probably that will seem nonsense to "Keridon"; but if the opposite to Theism is assumed, it is certain that all suffering remains a hideous chaos and enigma.

What is evil apart from suffering? Wrong choice, or disobedience to known law.

Mr. Jameson asks "Don't we have to find out the difference between good and evil by results? No. We talk about results and try to excuse ourselves by saying they will be slight; but I have never known a healthy minded boy who did not feel the sense of shame when he had done things that had no results on others at all. That is, his feeling can be explained only by the sense of failure to reach an ideal. (A Theist has his explanation of a phenomenon of consciousness, which, like many others, cannot be explained without Theism; and, indeed, only very partially with it.) Anyone who agrees so far will go on to ask, what is the ideal?"

Next, what about the evils man is not responsible for? I have said that I don't admit there are any. That is nonsense to those who assume this life is all. But that is as pure an assumption as the opposite. Notice the difference. Theism offers a partial explanation of *some* suffering now, and suggests one for *all* suffering when we know more hereafter. Atheism has no explanation of suffering, or of anything else; for to a convinced Atheist, if there is such a thing, the whole of life is inexplicable, and, moreover, without hope.

Lastly, "how do I know" that the conviction of God's existence is reliable or not, as Mr. Cohen explains it on p. 71 of *The Parson and the Atheist*.

Let me give this story of a great soldier. Lord Roberts, not long before he died, told me, in answer to a question, his own experience. When on a campaign his practice was to thrash out overnight in conference with his generals two alternative lines of strategy. Every possible argument was weighed. Roberts never came to a decision then, but would dismiss his captains, and tell them he would give his decision next morning. He then went to bed; woke up about six a.m.; and always found that one policy stood out clear before him as the better. "I always chose it, and I never was wrong. But the fact is anyone might do it. I simply commended the matter to God, and went to sleep."

Now if Mr. Cohen had told "Bobs" that this experience of his was the tag-rag of a decaying superstition, the great warrior would have answered by silence. That was his way of arguing, and not a bad one. But his certitude would have remained unshaken.

By contrast, let me point out what Mr. Cohen's affirmation on p. 71 implies: (1) That he has lived through similar experiences to Lord Roberts (line 28), but has outgrown them, and discarded the profound convictions which took effect in very impressive action. It would be an interesting bit of autobiography if Mr. Cohen would tell us how far this is a fact. (2) Mr. Cohen claims that those who have gone far enough in Atheism to be convinced preachers of it, as he is himself, belong to the advanced guard of the intellectual *élite* of mankind. This means a very small minority. I am not speaking of the huge horde of professed believers who are virtually non-believers and dumb Atheists of all shades; but of the leaders, the positive, the propagandists. We shall agree that they are few. Is it not, then, rather strong to claim that your small group contains all the wisdom in the whole world? I readily admit that Mr. Cohen and Mr. Jameson have far better trained minds than mine. I should be sorry for them if they had not. But when a handful of men tell us that they are ahead of Paul, Origen, Anselm, Darwin, Pascal, Goethe, Browning, Balfour, Kelvin, etc., etc., I can't follow them, however much I try. E. LYTTLTON.

PHONOGRAPHY AND SPEED.

SIR,—Mr. W. T. Newman, in his letter, which appeared in your issue for November 28, 1920, suggests that I have allowed myself to be imposed upon by false reports of the rate that shorthand has been written. In the first place, I should like to say that as a writer of phonography and one who has been on the staff of a London news agency for some years, I am perfectly aware that a speed of about 150 words per minute is sufficient for ordinary reporting. Mr. Newman will see that I state that in the last paragraph of my article.

In the second place, I applied to Sir Isaac Pitman and Co., to the Sloan-Duployan headquarters, and to Dutton's shorthand headquarters before writing the article which he criticizes, and the facts adduced in the latter part of my article are taken from the data with which they supplied me. Moreover, if Mr. Newman will look on page 19, para. 2, of *Pitman's Shorthand, Its Invention, Development, and Present Position*—a very fine and up-to-date account of the evolution of phonography—he will read the following:—"Under the stringent conditions of International Shorthand Championship competitions in England and America, Pitman writers have set up remarkable records in speed and accuracy.....In 1913 Mr. Nathan Behrin, another Pitman writer, won the "Shorthand Writer" Cup, and the title Champion Shorthand Writer of the World, also for the third year in succession, and thus outright, with net speeds of 268, 278, and 272 words per minute. No International Shorthand Championship contest has been held since 1914, but in that year Mr. Behrin carried off the World's Championship Gold Medal with a net speed of 277 words per minute. In the three tests at 289, 220, and 200 words respectively, Mr. Behrin's average of accuracy was 98 per cent....." The volume from which I quote was published by Sir Isaac Pitman & Co. in 1918.

With regard to Mr. Edward O'Shaughnessy's feat, the facts which I adduced were not only supplied me from the Sloan-Duployan headquarters, but are also to be found—as I stated in my article—in an article by Mr. P. Connolly (Champion Shorthand Writer of Ireland), which he contributed to the *Clerk* for May, 1911.

He will also find Nathan Behrin's feat referred to in the *Everyman Encyclopædia*, under the heading, "Shorthand":—".....Nathan Behrin at New York, in 1912, achieving a record with 278 words per minute for five minutes."

Unless one is prepared to maintain that Messrs. Sir Isaac Pitman and Co., Sloan-Duployé, Dents, and the proprietors of the *Clerk* have conspired to circulate false reports regarding the highest speeds that have been attained by shorthand scribes, it appears to me that one must accept the facts which I have quoted as being accurate. They certainly seem, to me, to be too well established to be impugned merely on the grounds of improbability.

I should also like to point out to such of your readers

as do not write shorthand that the Pitman system makes extensive use of "phraseograms," by means of which a skilled writer can more easily write four or five words—without being under the necessity of lifting his pen from the paper—than he could make an equal number of dots—being obliged, as he would, to raise his pen or pencil for each dot.

As to dictation, I believe that in the high-speed competitions the dictation is done either by specially trained men or by dictating machines. But—as I know from personal experience—the average person can read at a far higher speed than 150 words per minute.

W. H. MORRIS.

SOCIALISM AND THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST.

SIR,—The letter of Mrs. Bridges Adams calling on Labour leaders to do their duty *re* the insanitary clerical schools has decided me to deal with a cognate subject. I am a member of the Reading Branch of the I.L.P. Now the I.L.P. as a whole has a considerable number of members who are Christians, and I.L.P. lecturers take unfair advantage of this fact by dragging Christ and his teachings into every address they give. If your readers number, as no doubt they do, members of the I.L.P., I hope when this happens they will do as I do.

I almost invariably protest against religion of any sort being dragged into our propaganda. I am, I say, a Socialist and Secularist. I refrain from dragging in pure Secularism because it would offend my Christian fellow-members. I also claim similar consideration from them. Failing that, as often as the subject is forced upon me, I am compelled to point out that Jesus is, above all others, the capitalists' friend, and his teachings their chief bulwarks. I point out the fact also that the teaching chiefly quoted—the Sermon on the Mount—is really stolen from Gautama, who lived 600 years before Christ. Blessed are the meek; blessed are the poor in spirit. What has Socialism in common with such piffle? Resist not evil; my kingdom is not of this world. These are all doctrines for slaves, not for Socialists.

Christ, it is true, did denounce capitalists. But where does he suggest, even by implication, Socialism as a remedy? No; charity in this world, and reward in the next. This doctrine so admirably suits the capitalist class that they endow it out of the rates and taxes if possible. But if they can't do that, they support the teachings of Christ out of their own pockets with more liberality than anything else.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

STATE SCHOOL METHODS.

SIR,—It is inevitable that the motives or mentality of anyone who exposes the conventionally hidden evils of our hypocritical society should be impugned, especially by those whose interests lie in maintaining them. This was so in the case of the original author of *The Confessional Unmasked*, of Bradlaugh, Stead, Mrs. Besant; shortly, of all who have ventured to tell the truth. Of course, their personal character is also assailed, and, as schoolmasters are adepts at personalities, which they can bandy about on their helpless pupils (who dare not "answer back") at will, one must expect such, in full measure, from them. Indeed, it is seldom one gets even ordinary civility from an official school teacher, whose replies are usually abrupt, or even insolent, to any request or inquiry, so much so that it is a common saying that they address even adults as if they were ignorant children, from which it may be judged how they treat the children themselves. In the present case, however, it is not a matter of "imagination," but of facts, which have been brought, quite casually, to my notice in all parts of the country, many of which are, indeed, notorious, while flagrant cases sometimes appear in the papers, notwithstanding the efforts of interested parties to suppress them. They can also be verified by anyone who feels sufficient sympathy with the woes of children to investigate their complaints.

So far from exaggerating or imagining anything, except in so far as one cannot but infer from the various (but not conflicting) statements of the child martyrs, the general atmosphere of the schools, my strictures fall far short of the truth, which is simply unprintable. Their sufferings are too bad to describe, but not, alas, to endure! It is astonishing that the "anxious parents" of such children should so light-heartedly send them at the very

dawn of life to places where they will soon be familiarized with the grossest vice, without so much as inquiring how they are treated, taking it for granted that all is right, while as to the "observant eyes" of the boys, what can they do, when sedulously schooled into absolute secrecy, and being in abject awe of the schoolmaster, the only person in the world, indeed, of whom (or rather of his cane!) they do stand in awe? It is bad enough that boys from respectable homes should be subjected to such influences, but for girls it is infinitely worse. Yet, if anything, however modest and timid on entry, they soon begin to display an even greater curiosity, and indeed a common case is that reported lately in the *Sunday Chronicle* of a girl of ten, who, "while well versed in procreation, was unable to say her eight times table." One has only to go along our back streets to hear not only the most abominable grammar, as "I seen 'im," "I seed 'im," "I sor 'im," "I can't 'ardly do it," and mispronunciations such as "Febuary," "reconize," which evidently the teachers do not trouble to correct, but the foulest and most disgusting language imaginable, while the sole preoccupation of the girls seems to be "sweet'artin'." The highly charged sexual atmosphere of the schools is still further heated by the present craze among mothers to dress their girls in the most suggestive and provocative costumes which the law will allow, and that to stimulate the passions of the boys and youths with whom they associate is their real object (conscious or sub-conscious) is obvious from the fact that it is always the lower, not the upper, limbs which are so exposed, though the common excuse, that the "air is good for their skin" applies just as much to one as to the other. There is no need to imagine anything; the facts are too palpable. Will it be said that Canon Newbolt "imagined" his experience at a rescue home he was invited to visit, where, instead of the brazen hags he expected to see, he found the inmates were all little girls, from fifteen down to five years of age? Are the scientific researches of Dr. Havelock Ellis, Dr. Albert Moll, *et al.*, imagination? Yet, with the growing public apprehension of these evils, the terrible and now governmentally recognized ravages of venereal diseases, the maternity homes crowded with unmarried and immature mothers, and our parks and field paths sheltering at every turn ecstatic couples down to nine years old or less, anyone who ventures to hint at the first early cause of these irregularities is insultingly denounced as a prude and killjoy!

I am far from exonerating the parents, many of whom seem absolutely careless about their little ones' welfare, and so far from inquiring closely as to what goes on at school will not even listen when complaints are volunteered, much less demand explanation from the teachers or write to the committee, though even this is of little avail unless taken up to the head office in Whitehall.

The principal source of and incitement to the moral evils of the State schools is the total absence of all instruction in manners or morals, for which no provision is made by the code, except in connection with the illegal, but tolerated, religious teaching, and, above all, to the strict prohibition of all complaint (a privilege accorded even to criminals in gaol), so that weaker children have to submit in silence to any cruelty or indignity from the stronger, except in the rarest cases. That teachers are aware of, but condone these assaults (which ought to be totally suppressed), is evident from a fact mentioned to me by a young lady, that on leaving school the headmaster warned her on no account ever to mention any of her experiences or observations while at school, so that the terrorism exerted by the teachers still holds sway even when pupils are freed from their direct coercion.

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

What people call "Fate" is, as a general rule, nothing but their own stupid and foolish conduct. There is a fine passage in Homer, illustrating the truth of this remark, where the poet praises shrewd conduct; and his advice is worthy of all attention. For if wickedness is atoned for only in another world, stupidity gets its reward here.—*Schopenhauer*.

All love is sweet, given or returned
They who inspire it most, are fortunate,
But those who feel it most, are happier still.

—Shelley.

The Unknown Warrior.

THE pulsing arteries
Of this mighty Empire
Have ceased to throb :
The miser leaves his hoarded gold ;
The profiteer forgets to rob ;
On City, and Exchange,
A holy silence falls ;
The nation pays its homage
To the dead,
Who gave their lives
That we
Might pierce the veil of self,
Shrouding the beauty
Of this world,
In the grey fog
Of living death.
Their sacrifice was not in vain—
For two minutes,
In the tense silence,
Articulate with grief,
We contemplate
This fitting tribute
To the nation's might ;
Heads bowed
And hearts upraised,
We offer thanks,
And praise,
Unto the Unknown God—
Praying that He,
In His ethereal,
Far-distant heavenly sphere,
May see
The widows' tears
That never cease to fall ;
Forgive our worldly vanities
That for two minutes' pall ;
And in His all-embracing love,
Avert from us
His chastening rod.
The Unknown Warrior
Passes to his last resting-place,
The home of warriors,
Statesmen, poets, priests,
And Kings—
The temple
Of the Unknown God.

His eyes in piteous appeal
Entreat the passer-by ;
Upon his breast the ribbons gleam—
Emblems of valiant deeds,
'Midst charred, and mutilated human flesh,
And rotting bones in bloody vermin-covered rags,
On tortured, shell-scarred fields
Beneath an alien sky ;
His misery proclaims—
" My wife and children starve,
And I can find no work,
Nor sheltering roof,
From such as I—
Disabled in the war,
Big business holds aloof."'
Through some mischance
There is no welcome,
And no home for him ;
No trumpets blare
His fame abroad—
For fate to him was merciless,
And would not let him die ;
By God, and man
Forgot,
The living warrior
Hobbles by.

PERCY ALLOTT.

You will find, if you think deeply of it, that the chief of all the curses of this unhappy age, is the universal gabble of its fools, and of the flocks that follow them, rendering the quiet voices of the wise men of all past times inaudible.—*Ruskin.*

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) : 7.30, Mr. Hyatt, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH, N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.) : 7.30, Mrs. W. Paul, "Direct Action and Its Effect on the Women's Vote."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9) : Miss Nina Boyle, "Class War and the Middle Classes."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2) : 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Civilization and the Backward Peoples."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford Engineers' Institute, 167 Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7, Mrs. H. Rosetti, "The Confusion of Religion and Morality."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street) : 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Is Progress a Reality?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street, near Oswald Street) : 12 noon, Mr. John Watt, "The Secular Education Question." (Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds) : 6.30, Mr. H. R. Youngman, "Christ and Confusion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mr. Councillor J. K. Kelly, A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (St. George's Hall Concert Room, William Brown Street entrance) : 7, Mr. C. Cohen, "Do the Dead Live?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street) : Mr. A. B. Moss, 3, "A Freethinker's Philosophy of Life" ; 6.30, "Freethought in the Churches."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room No. 8, Plymouth Chambers, Old Town Street) : Thursday, December 16, at 8, Mr. W. H. Harris, "The Mechanism of Life."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (The "Elysium," High Street, Swansea) : 1, Mr. Dan Griffiths, "Crime and Punishment." Seats Sixpence.

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MR. JOSEPH H. VAN BIENE has a few open Sundays for Lectures.

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