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## Views and Opinions.

### Religion and Reason.

Contemporary religion in defending itself against attack uses two defences, either of which destroys the other, and one of which is self-destructive. In the first place the attempt is made to prove that religion is eminently reasonable, and that its claims may be upheld in the face of the most rigid scientific enquiry. The second form denies the ultimate validity of reason in criticising religion, and asserts that in this respect it differs in no wise from ultimate scientific beliefs which are also ultra-reasonable and rest upon assumptions that are incapable of either verification or proof. In this way it is hoped to make the religious position secure. If it can be defended on a basis of reason so much the better. If it cannot, well, there is no need to worry, religion appeals to something deeper and more fundamental than reason. It is almost "heads I win, tails you lose." But all the same it is noticeable that this flouting of reason in religion only takes place when it is not found possible to give a logical justification for religious beliefs. So long as one's reasoning leads to a belief in religion all is well. It is when the conclusions reached are unfavourable to religion that reason is denounced as irrelevant. And as that is open to the retort that if reason is so independable an instrument it cannot be relied on for the purpose of discrediting reason, there is attempted the proof that fundamental beliefs, whether religious or non-religious are deeper than reason, and as we hold to scientific formulæ in spite of their ultra-rationality, there can be no objection to accepting religious beliefs on the same ground.

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### Faith and Experience.

I have no intention at present of going into the more recondite aspect of the question. My aim is to take one of its more popular forms, that met with in the common argument that as all our actions presuppose a degree of faith it is unreasonable to sneer at the religionist who bases his beliefs upon a similar foundation. For example, one writer tells us:—

Faith is the keynote of our existence. Without it the daily commerce of life would be impossible. Without the mutual faith of husband and wife, domestic life could not be; without faith in our neighbour's honesty and trustworthiness society could not continue. Our whole existence is a testimony to the

necessity and reality of that which is looked upon by the unbeliever as a religious weakness.

And the conclusion is that as we must have trust in these matters—a trust that is often mistaken—we ought to have faith in the existence of God and of a future life, and of all the other impossibilities or improbabilities of religious extravagance. To that it ought to be enough to point out that "faith" in secular matters has quite a different connotation from what it has in relation to religious belief. There is no more resemblance than there is between a horse-chestnut and a chestnut horse. In the one instance our faith has its basis in the normal experience of the race. We believe, for example, in the honesty of the average human being because experience has shown that on the average men and women come up to our expectations. Our faith here is no more than a summary of our experience. More, "faith" here is an affirmation of our conviction that the future will resemble the past, and is thus only a special form of our belief in the invariability of natural law. The use of religious faith is mainly to lead us to believe that the future will not resemble the past, and there is no experience to support that. Experience furnishes no evidence for the existence of God, for the fact of immortality, for virgin births or for resurrections of the dead. The faith upon which our daily lives are built rests upon experience and appeals to experience for justification. The faith called for by religion has no experience upon which to build, and no results that necessarily justify the appeal. The whole plea is an exhibition of a species of mental thimble-rigging that is characteristic of all religion when it is found outside that purely savage environment to which it properly belongs.

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### A Religious Fallacy.

So far the lower form of the argument. The other form has a superficially stronger appearance, but examination proves it of the same kind and strength. All ultimate scientific truths, it is urged, rest upon certain axioms concerning space, time, and number, which do not admit of proof in the ordinary sense of the word. We say that twice two make four, that the whole is greater than the part, that an external world exists, but if called upon to prove their truth we can only point to the constitution of the mind, and insist that if there is to be any thinking at all these things must be assumed to commence with. And then comes the corollary that as religion also rests upon an assumption, the same reasoning that demolishes religion demolishes science also. Cast into the form of a syllogism the argument would run as follows:—

The highest form of truth, *i.e.*, mathematical truth, is based upon an assumption.

Religion is based upon an assumption.

Therefore religion is one of the highest forms of truth.

It does not require a skilled logician to detect the fallacy involved here, but it will be made the plainer by an example of the same order. Thus:—

The higher orders of English society do not engage in manual labour.

Tramps do not engage in manual labour. Therefore tramps belong to the higher orders of English society.

How many schoolboys are there who would be imposed upon by so transparent a fallacy? It is the common fallacy of an undistributed middle. We assert something in the conclusion that it not warranted by the premises, or in other words, we commence with an assertion concerning certain specified forms of truth, and then draw the illegitimate conclusion that it is true of *all* alleged truths that do not admit of proof. In spite of attacks upon religion, it is hard to withhold admiration from a system that can make its advocates so impervious to the most elementary aspects of reasoning.

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#### Experience as a Teacher.

But let us see how far and in what sense it is that ultimate scientific truths do not admit of proof. And we will take, as an example, a conception upon which all science may be said to rest—that of causation. It is obvious that we cannot prove that every phenomenon will have a cause in the future. Yet we are all prepared to say that this will be the case, and we are actually unable to conceive of its being otherwise. We cannot think of anything beginning to be without a cause, even the Theist has to assume God when he has got rid of all else. And the same reasoning holds good of the ultimate truths of number, space, and time. The deepest of all truths, axioms, do not admit of demonstration as we demonstrate the constituents of a chemical compound. They are self evident. Now it is these truths that we are told are assumptions. Well, they are, in the sense that we start with them as the basis of our reasoning. Yet they admit of proof, and that of the highest kind, for they are at bottom, not assumptions, but expressions of invariable experience. And that may be very briefly shown. It is, for instance, a commonplace that the present constitution of the human mind has been brought about by the constant interplay of organism and environment. It should be also a commonplace that the truth of anything is no more than a harmony between our ideas and certain aspects of the environment. And, as Spencer long ago pointed out, the very highest kind of truth is precisely that of which it is impossible to conceive the opposite. We cannot think of the part as being greater than the whole, we cannot think of two straight lines enclosing a space, we cannot think of twice two being either more or less than four. To say that this is due to the constitution of the mind is to say nothing at all. The truth is intelligibly expressed when we say that as the mind has developed in relation with the environment, and as all its qualities and powers are the expressions of racial experience, the fact that we accept certain truths as self-evident, and cannot think of them as being untrue is proof that all experience has been in the one direction, and has provided us with nothing of an opposite character to go upon. Thus instead of ultimate scientific truths being incapable of proof, they are provided with the very highest kind of proof possible. They are the record of the invariable, unbroken experience of the race. I have compressed into a few lines what might easily make two or three columns, but I think it will be plain to most of my readers.

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#### Religion and Science.

Now it is obvious that between truths of the order named and the alleged truths of religion there is no analogy whatever. In the one case we accept certain things as true because universal experience has forced them upon us, and we cannot, do what we will, divest ourselves of them. In the other case we can and do shed our religious beliefs. They are not in the least

degree necessary beliefs, and their disappearance does not give us a less coherent or a less workable theory of the world and of man. Again, in the case of scientific truths our dependence upon them is daily justified by results, the experience of each bearing testimony to their validity. And once established, a scientific truth may be trusted to take care of itself. Once properly established no amount of subsequent experience will destroy it. But with religion the case is entirely different. Experience is so far from justifying and supporting it that there is needed constant stimulation to keep it alive. Religious beliefs are so wide of the experience of each that their tendency is to weaken in any individual without constant effort to keep them alive. Left alone, without the artificial stimulants of preaching, exhortation, elaborate Church services, etc., religion would rapidly disappear from civilized society. Whether the clergy realize this or not, they at least act as though they do. If they do not, it is only one more piece of evidence of the small degree of intellectuality with which modern religion is connected. And not the least amusing feature of the present situation is that a religion which we are told meets the deepest and most enduring needs of human nature, and which, we are also assured, is in its essence indestructible, should need so much attention to keep it alive. In the hope of making a particular fallacy plain I have gone into what I fear some may regard as a wearisome analysis of a stupid argument. But if it will help some to realize the uselessness of attending to professional theologians masquerading as scientific thinkers, my purpose will have been served.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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### "God is Good; Trust Him."

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SUCH is the motto we saw written in chalk on the gate of the gas works at Swansea. In the same town there was also prominently exhibited the significant warning: "Beware of Pickpockets." This warning seemed to mock the motto, for surely, the need for the former disproves the truth of the latter. The motto consists of a statement and an exhortation based thereon. The belief that God is good has doubtless led many to put their trust in him; but the question that confronts us is, has the trust ever convincingly verified the belief? In other words, has trust in God been of genuine benefit in the conflicts of life? It must be frankly admitted that those who exercise it do reap therefrom an abundant harvest of emotional thrills. The sense of trust in God inundates the heart with an irresistible flood of ecstatic rapture. Have not all of us been witnesses of the utter joyousness of Christian experience? The consciousness of communion with God often causes waves of frenzied delight to sweep through the heart and intoxicate it with bliss. In their attacks on Christianity Freethinkers are apt to forget this indisputable fact. Beyond a doubt trust in God is frequently an enrapturing reality, and many vainly imagine that it is of considerable assistance to them in the various problems of daily life. Nevertheless, we cannot possibly get away from the fact that after all, trust in God is a farce, that is to say, an emotional factor that has no bearing whatever upon the ordinary relationship of life. In other words, still, trust in God is a purely sentimental affair, never put into practice. Nobody trusts in God for his daily bread. Each one must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, or force someone else to earn it for him. Food, at any rate, is not one of God's free gifts to man, obtained in direct answer to prayer. The same thing is true of health. Recovery from disease never comes as the reward of dependence upon Divine providence. The few who happen to act upon the advice of the apostle James are

sometimes haled before a magistrate on a charge of wilful neglect, or even of murder, and punished accordingly. The truth is that in the ordinary affairs of life we rely upon our own resources alone, and this is as true of Christians as it is of Secularists. Trust in God is an emotion which never translates itself into action however saintly those who profess it may be.

Even as a sentiment trust in God, so far from proving the Divine existence, only proves the belief in it. Christian experience, in all its plenitude and glory, results from mere faith, or imagination. Christian apologists frankly admit that the only evidence of the truth of Christianity is the experience of Christians, but they are radically mistaken. The belief in God and Christ proves nothing beyond its own existence; and as the Gospel Jesus says, everything depends upon faith. "Be it unto you," he declares, "according to your faith." The joyousness of experience is in exact proportion to the strength and intensity of the faith. Now, in the Christian vocabulary, faith and trust are almost synonymous terms.

We ask on what ground is it asserted that God is good? It is a certainty that Nature affords not a scrap of evidence that the statement is true. Science has completely discredited the so-called argument from design. If the adaptations to which our attention is so often called were designed, the preponderating evidence would lead to the conclusion that God, if he exists, is more evil than good. Examining the history of the world we soon discover the utter absence of the slightest proof that God is good. Christian history in particular provides not a single argument in favour of the thesis that the world is governed by a just, holy, benevolent, and merciful Being. The Bible assures us that God sitteth as king for ever, and yet the world has been the abode of inconceivable suffering and sorrow, caused by monstrous wrongs, including injustice and oppression. Of the existence of a good God there is not a single trace anywhere. Christianity has been a colossal failure. The Rev. E. D. Henry, vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Swansea, is reported in the *Cambrian Daily Leader* for May 17, as saying in a recent sermon:—

In Bible loving Wales they saw being set up a secular system of education which was materializing her intense spiritual and poetic soul. They faced the horrible possibility of religious Wales becoming Pagan. He appealed to his beloved land no longer to allow itself to be blasted by the biting winds of religious strife and bitterness, but to return to its first love, "the Word," and to the Mother Church.

Bishop Welldon, Dean of Durham, makes the same charge against England that Mr. Henry makes against Wales. He is said to have suddenly snatched up the mantle of pessimism usually worn by Dean Inge. In the *Daily Sketch* for May 17 we read:—

Preaching in Durham Cathedral yesterday, Bishop Welldon said it was impossible to deny that the signs of decadence, or some of them, were discernible in Great Britain to-day—selfishness, luxury, profiteering, breach of faith, the warfare of classes, the violation of holy matrimony, Materialism in all its aspects, and the almost wilfully contemptuous rejection of God and his laws, and the obligation of his worship. These were, as they always had been, the premonitors of a nation's downfall. After a long journey through British Colonies, which were looking with an unspeakable loyalty, and yet with almost passionate anxiety, to the land they so fondly regarded as home, he had come back to an England which, as to many of its social and industrial activities, might well-nigh be described as a country of the dead. Even now it was late, but it was not too late to repent.

The Dean, of course, expressed his conviction that "it is Christ's Gospel alone which holds the key to the problems which afflict human society, and which will bring the dawn of a new and happier social order";

but he forgets that Christ's Gospel has been on trial for nineteen hundred years, and that never yet has it brought that glorious dawn within sight. If God is good he is powerless; if he has power, he is evil rather than good. The one undeniable fact is that the world has never been governed by an infinitely good and powerful Deity, or that humanity has never been under the care and leadership of an almighty and all-loving Heavenly Father. The God proclaimed by Christian clergymen is a phantom of their own minds, who has never done a single thing to justify the belief in him. Mankind are at last finding out how utterly vain it is to trust such a purely imaginary being, and that if society is ever to be re-organized on sane and equitable lines they must undertake the task themselves. Trust in God must be supplanted by trust in self, trust in the native resources of our own nature. Our firm belief is that there is no God, good or bad, in whom to trust, but that humanity itself is fundamentally good and worthy of trust. All it wants is its opportunity.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Cry of the Curates.

The tragedy of clerical poverty in London Diocese cannot be exaggerated. —*The Bishop of Stepney.*

The decision of the Bishop of Chester to sell his palace has been ratified by an Order in Council. The bishop will live at the Deanery. —*Daily Paper.*

THE announcement that the curates have been attempting to form a trade union, or a guild of employment, will provoke smiles. For curates, in spite of their alleged sacred calling, are usually regarded with amused tolerance. Dramatists and music hall song writers have made them the butt of their satire, and the public never seem to tire of the jest. It is all very ironic, for these long-faced young men take themselves very seriously as heaven-sent individuals commissioned by Omnipotence to reclaim a saucy world from naughty ways. Styling themselves "Reverend," these parsons have always endeavoured to keep their caste separate from the world of ordinary men and women. And now, fallen on evil days, the "sons of God" are "playing the sedulous ape" to the members of the Cats' Meat Mens' and Potato-Peelers' Unions.

The curates are beginning to look with longing eyes on the loaves and fishes. Perhaps it is only natural that they should wake up and find that in a time of industrial revolution they are as much "on the shelf" as the most elderly spinsters of their congregations. In the race for the flesh-pots of Egypt the curates have been passed by the errand boys, and the road-sweepers. Prayers may move mountains, but it takes so much to move the horny hearts of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Lords Spiritual. Truly, it must be galling for the curates to see men of not superior ability living in palaces, legislating in the House of Lords, and drawing incomes varying from £2,000 to £15,000 yearly. It is even said that the poorer clergy are "starving." At least, that is how the Bishop of London puts it, and he has quoted the horrid instance of a parson who fed a whole family on sixpence a meal, and the still more distressing example of the unfortunate "man-of-God" who lost whatever brains he possessed for the want of a respectable bank-balance. It is very sad, but there is always balm in Gilead. The Bishop of London, who is so generous, has already collected about £50,000 from other people to protect the sacred persons of the clergy from the blessings of poverty.

The excellent Bishop of London should be an authority on poverty. He is oppressed by the woes of the rich, and is always painfully anxious to rebut the charge of wealth. Some time ago he explained, in full-throated tones, to an astonished congregation that,

after drawing his episcopal salary of £10,000 for fifteen years, he was £2,000 on the wrong side of the ledger, and actually worse off than when he started the awful experience of following in the footsteps of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth. On such bookkeeping it is abundantly clear that, had his lordship's salary been that of His Grace of Canterbury, he must have finished his career in a Rowton house, or a Church Army shelter.

Whether the clergy are really starving is an open question. That they are hard up has been vouched for by Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons, and he is to be believed as much as the Bishop of London. Mr. George declares that the "men-of-God" are worse off than the miners. But why should they be in such a condition of dire distress. The ancient ecclesiastical endowments of the Church of England are more solid than the gold streets of the New Jerusalem, and they were not invested in Farrows Bank. Lord Addington's return of 1891 showed that the annual value of these ancient ecclesiastical endowments was £5,469,171, exclusive of modern private benefactions, which amount to £284,000 a year.

Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see that the average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable livelihood. In addition, he lives in a decent house, often nicer than most of his neighbours. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in the household expenses. The higher ecclesiastics evade the blessings of poverty in a more skilful manner. The Bench of Bishops, forty in number, share £182,000 yearly. The bachelor Bishop of London, who is so concerned about the poverty of the clergy, starves on a salary of £300 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep fifty working class families in comparative comfort. The blunt truth is that the Anglican Church is the richest Church in Christendom. At the top there are prelates with seats in the House of Lords, where they never do any good service for the democracy; at the bottom are a multitude of holders of benefices better off than the ordinary man. Within the narrow confines of the City of London £50,000 is spent each year in ministering to a small resident population of caretakers, policemen, and Jewish people. The latter, who form a large proportion of the total, never trouble the pew openers. The Anglican Church has also property in the City of London worth over £2,000,000. As an index of the work done in the City the summary of confirmations for one year, 1919-1920, shows that in the East City sixty-two candidates were confirmed, and in the West City ninety were similarly received into the Church. Nor is this all, for recently the Church authorities decided to sell nineteen derelict City churches in order to use the money in other ways.

Curates should be interested to learn that the most hideous of all known costumes—the episcopal war-paint—costs £200, and fancy that a curate's wife could have stitched together something as good at less cost. Hospitality to the tune of thousands a year should stagger them, for much bread, mutton, and beer can be procured for a moderate figure. "The stair-carpet at Farnham Castle are measured by miles," wrote old Bishop Thorold. "My episcopal income goes in geraniums," complained Bishop Stubbs. It is, indeed, a far cry from the fishing nets of the original disciples to Lambeth Palace, with its guard-room, Fulham Palace, with its pleasure-grounds; Farnham Palace, with its deer park, and Wells, with its moated garden.

We fear that the Bishop of London's arithmetic will not entitle him to a membership of the Society of Incorporated Accountants. His lordship's engaging

candour is sure to cause much heart-burning in the breasts of devoted Churchmen. He should have imitated the quiet and cautious reserve of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, two North Countrymen, who pocket larger salaries and say nothing of finance.

There is a way of providing money for the curates which will, doubtless, find favour in the eyes of the Bishops and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. It is to act on Shakespeare's lines, adapted from *King Lear*:

Take physic, pomp,  
Expose thyself to feel what curates feel;  
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,  
And show the heavens more just.

These pious employers of curates could afford to "show the heavens more just," and could, if they wished, prevent the poorer clergy from watering their bread with their tears. Perhaps an innate sense of modesty alone prevents them from depriving wealthy laymen of an opportunity for disbursing charity in such sad and distressing cases. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners alone could so easily mitigate the Spartan fare of the curates. One cannot think for a moment that these descendants of the apostles would act like the selfish boy with an apple, who, when his young brother asked him for the core, replied, "Get away! There ain't going to be no CORE."

MIMNERMUS.

## The "Profession" of Christianity.

THE Rev. Elijah Weekwill sat in his study one evening in April writing an important document. It was, in fact, a letter addressed to the Bishop of his diocese tendering his resignation as vicar of a small parish not many miles from London. The vicar wrote and re-wrote several passages, and then rose from his seat and paced up and down the room in an agitated manner. After muttering a few sentences to himself he returned to his desk and continued writing. While still engrossed in his composition the study door opened and the vicar's wife entered. She noticed at once that the vicar looked pale and his mind seemed disturbed.

"What's the matter, my dear Elijah, you seem upset over something—what ails you?"

"For the twentieth time, my dear Martha, I am writing a letter of resignation to the Bishop—I feel that I cannot conscientiously continue in my position as vicar of this important parish any longer."

"Why not, Elijah?"

"Well, you know that for some time my mind has been undergoing an important change in regard to the doctrines I am expected to believe as a Christian, and now I feel that I have reached a point when I can no longer say that I truly believe in the doctrines of our beloved Church, and I propose to send in my resignation and come out like an honest man."

"But, my dear, why take such a fatal step? What is to become of us if you adopt such a course?"

"I fancy I could turn my hand to journalism, or something of that sort."

"You may fancy so, Elijah, but there are already hundreds of journalists unemployed, as you know, and it is a most precarious living even for those who can get their contributions accepted. Besides, you can only write on religion, and I have heard many of your friends say that that subject is a drug in the market, at the present time."

"But not such articles as I can write. For many years past I have been reading most diligently all the most important works on both sides of the question; I have even read the works issued by "The Rationalist Press Association," and that most advanced of

journals the *Freethinker*, and I think I can honestly say that I understand the nature of the problems involved and could present them in a new light to readers."

"Ah! you may think so, but then you have to find a journal whose editor will take them, and then suppose you got one of your articles accepted, how long do you think we could live on the money you earned by that? No Elijah, you must remember that we have got a growing family, and the children have got to be fed and clothed and educated, and we cannot do that on an income earned by such precarious means."

"Yes; I see its the same old mercenary arguments that you have urged before; and I am getting tired of them, Martha, and I feel that I ought to make a strong effort to relieve myself of the intellectual fetters that have bound me for so long. Why, only the other day the Bishop of London, speaking at the annual meeting of the 'East London Church Fund' at the Mansion House, said that 'the business men of London were not such fools as to put their sons to such 'a rotten profession' as preaching."

"That's just like the Bishop; he's a dear old gentleman but he's always making stupid statements like that. In any case he does very well out of it himself. £10,000 a year and a palace to live in is not so bad in these days."

"But he is quite right, my dear, when he says that the clerical profession is a 'Rotten Profession.' It is 'rotten' because many a young man enters it believing that it has truth on its side, only to find out later in life that he has made a mistake; that science, Biblical criticism, history, philosophy and common sense alike combine to prove that Christianity is not of divine but of human origin; and by the cumulative growth of human knowledge is proved to be false in many respects in theory and decidedly harmful in practice."

"But, my dear Elijah, many more learned men than yourself still believe in it and make a very good living by preaching it to thousands of simple minded people who find great comfort and solace from its teaching."

"Quite so. And there's no error so damnable—pray excuse the expression, dear—that parsons have not been prepared to preach, as part and parcel of their creed, so long as their living was secure and their salary certain. That's what I complain of; it leads to hypocrisy."

"But there is a very liberal spirit permeating the teaching of Christianity to-day you must acknowledge, my dear; indeed, as I have heard you say over and over again, that leading Christians have been constantly modifying their creeds and that many of the bad old teachings have been discarded altogether."

"That is perfectly true, Martha, and one of the most important strides in the direction of modern advancement was the recent declaration of Canon Barnes that the old doctrine of 'The Fall of Man' was no longer tenable, and that Darwin was right; that 'Man was, in fact, the final product of a vast process by which all life had evolved from primitive organisms.' But, then, Canon Barnes was not logical; having disposed of 'The Fall' he would not acknowledge that 'The Atonement' became unnecessary."

"Logical, my dear, what Christian is logical? If Christians were to abandon themselves to mere logic I am afraid that very little of their beautiful faith would be left. Thank God, Elijah, it has not come to that yet."

"Ah! but I believe in Reason, and that's why I want to come outside the Church to proclaim the truth as I understand it to-day."

"That's where you are very unreasonable, Elijah. The first duty of man is to understand the bread and butter question; he must be practical first, or his theories may bring him to utter ruin."

"The Bishop of London says that preaching is a 'Rotten Profession'; yet the Bishops between them get over £180,000 a year. And many of the clergy, such as archdeacons, canons, get over a thousand a year each and a fine house to live in; and even rectors and vicars can boast a very decent income. It is only the poor curates that get badly paid, and most of these are appointed to very decent livings in a few years. They cannot all get the prizes of the profession."

The vicar rose from his seat and paced up and down his study with his hands on his head and exclaiming at intervals "that he yearned for freedom."

"Well, my dear, there is no harm in yearning; go on yearning, my dear Elijah, but cling on to your appointment all the same."

"But I feel that I ought to be true to myself—honest to my noblest convictions."

"What business task could you turn to if you gave up your profession? You own that you have no faculty for figures and that commercial life would kill you. You are not a musician, an artist, or even an actor, and you would find it hard enough to earn a decent living in either of these professions if you were, and you could not turn your hand to any mechanical art. Why you can't even hang up a picture without either smashing the wall, or the picture. The fact is you have been waited on hand and foot for so many years that you scarcely know how to do anything for yourself."

"Oh don't say that Martha; I am sure I am very useful in many ways—my parishioners say so."

"Of course they say so; they like to flatter their vicar. But I tell you the plain, blunt truth, Elijah, and you don't like that."

"Well, Martha, I suppose if you are going to continue to oppose my will in this matter, I must resign myself to the inevitable and continue to remain a member of the 'Rotten Profession' to the end of my days."

"Ah! now you are talking sense, my dear Elijah, and you are a good, kind husband, and I admire your noble character and high aspirations, and I am sure that you are taking the course that would meet with the approval of every high minded Christian in the Community. Now I must leave you and see how the servants are getting on with the preparations for dinner."

So saying, she made a polite bow to her husband and left him to ponder over his decision in silence. After reading over portions of his epistle to the bishop he rose from his seat, tore the letter into fragments, deposited them carefully in the waste paper basket, took one of his favourite books from the bookcase, and read it in silence until, at length, he was summoned by a bell to join the other members of the family at dinner.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

When we consider, for the feelings of nature cannot be dismissed, the calamities of war and the miseries it inflicts upon the human species, the thousands and tens of thousands of every age and sex who are rendered wretched by the event, surely there is something in the heart of man that calls upon him to think! Surely there is some tender chord, tuned by the hand of the Creator, that still struggles to emit in the hearing of the soul a note of sorrowing sympathy. Let it then be heard, and let man learn to feel that the true greatness of a nation is founded on principles of humanity and not on conquest. War involves in its processes such a train of unforeseen and un-supposed circumstances, such a combination of foreign matters, that no human wisdom can calculate the end. It has but one thing certain, and that is to increase taxes. I defend the cause of the poor, of the manufacturer, of the tradesman, of the farmer, and of all those on whom the real burden of taxes falls—but above all, I defend the cause of women and children—of all humanity.—*Thomas Paine.*

## Found Wanting.

### A Study in Catholicism.

#### II.

(Continued from page 333.)

A WORD NOW as to the priests. If we turn from the laity to the clergy the prospect is just what might be expected, for the leaders are, if anything, worse than the followers. It is from Catholic sources that we learn the profound depravity of the Religious Orders during the Middle Ages, how the Nunneries resembled brothels, and how the Monasteries were full of sodomy and masturbation. The reforms which Macaulay (*Essays* ii. 135) says were made in the Church to counteract the influence of the Lutheran party, did not root out these evils. Jurieu, a learned and sober author, writing in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century, declares that:—

It is a notorious and acknowledged truth that all the convents of Spain and Portugal are places of prostitution, and that when chance draws the curtain to give us an opportunity of seeing what passes in the French monasteries, we discover that they take a little more care of external appearance, but at bottom are as impure as the others.—(*Esprit de M. Arnauld*, II. p. 392.)

Everyone has heard of the little skeletons that the troops of Garibaldi discovered under quicklime in the cloisters of Italy. The beneficed clergy were never better than the rest, and they have also greater opportunities of doing mischief. In 1171, the Abbot-Elect of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, was found to have seventeen bastards in a single village. In the same century an abbot of St. Pelayo, in Spain, kept no less than seventy concubines (*Lea's History of Clerical Celibacy*, Philadelphia, 1867, pp. 296, 322). In 1807, Napoleon I. caused an inquiry to be made by Councillor Le Clerq and Professor Sall into the relations existing between priests and women in the thirty to forty miles radius between Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne; but he stopped it suddenly because so many priests and so many women of position were involved that the scandal seemed likely to make the people rise up and slay the clergy as they did at the Revolution (*Grassmann*, p. 28). Father Chiniqui states that of two hundred priests who confessed to him, no less than one hundred and seventy nine, accused themselves of unchastity with their penitents; and that one of these priests had had about one thousand five hundred females in his Confessional, a thousand of whom, according to his own statement, he had completely ruined or severely tried by his foul interrogations. The same authority quotes Father Hyacinthe as having once said that 99 per 100 of the priests behave unchastely with the women who come to them to confess (*Grassmann*, p. 14).

Liguori teaches that moral sins even if already confessed should be recalled again in confession. Thus, as has been well observed, it comes to pass that a woman who has sinned with one priest, and confesses her fault to others, is exposed afresh to temptation every time, for her account is likely to excite lust in her new confessors.

Among the highly placed clergy there have been some strange examples of iniquity. Cornelius Agrippa (1468-1535), asserts, in his remarkable work, *De Vanitate Scientiarum*, that Pope Sixtus IV., who ruled from 1471-1484, erected a noble brothel at Rome, and that the harlots of this city had to pay the said Pope a weekly tax, which sometimes amounted to more than twenty thousand ducats in the year. The feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary and the feasts of St. Joseph and St. Anne were instituted by the pontiff here in question. Good old Thomas Fuller, in his *Church*

*History of Britain* (R. III. S. VI. c. 48), says, that "profit from Jews and stewards much advance the constant revenues of His Holiness." Professor Friedrich, in a Diary which he made of the Vatican Council held at Nordlingen, 1873, declares that a brothel for the clergy was kept at Rome by a reverend professor of ethics during the tenancy of Pope Pius IX., which began in 1846, and is memorable for the glorification of St. Alphonsus Mari de Liguori (p. 308). These historical instances are no doubt carefully concealed from the Catholic laity, but the latter have little need of them for they have so many current examples before their eyes. It is a fact that in Popish lands to-day, the people relate without a blush, often with a sympathizing smile, the abominable doings of their clergy. On the western coast of France, at the places inhabited by long-distance fishers, you may hear many a gaily told tale of how the priests carry on with the women, whose husbands are far away, toiling on the perilous deep. The truth is, the people do not expect the priests to be models of holiness, and are, therefore, not in the least surprised or shocked to find them no better than themselves, or even worse. They have been brought up in the belief that the priests are appointed by God to forgive them their sins and thus get them into heaven, and that being the servants of God the priests are answerable to nobody but God and his viceregents for their conduct. Hence, the people naturally think that what the priest does is of no importance so long as he performs his priestly duties, and that they can only complain of him for neglect of their souls, a rare fault, owing to the excellent discipline and easy functions of the order. Thus it is that whereas in Protestant communities a pastor who should give way to drink and lasciviousness would be likely to vanish quickly from the scene, in Catholic communities the sight of priests bearing all the marks of debauchery is very common, and nobody takes any offence at it. How thoroughly this sort of thing has depraved the conscience of Catholicism is shown by the fact that there never was a Catholic who thought it strange for the Carthusians and the Benedictines to have got an age-long and world-wide fame by distilling certain virulent intoxicants, a fine occupation for ministers of the Gospel!

It is organization and policy, not the grace of God, that keeps such a system as Catholicism agoing. The priests are assistants in depriving the people of everything likely to win them from the Catholic faith. They set forth this faith as absolutely necessary to eternal life, and they make the people think that it has to be taken on trust or not at all, and that to demand a reason for it, or to seek to have it supported is to commit the grave sin of infidelity. To the query, What do you believe? the reply is, What the Church believes! and to the query, What does the Church believe? the reply is, What I believe! It is forbidden to argue with anybody on matters of faith. The devil is wily. Unbelievers are plausible. The heart is treacherous. Layfolk do not understand the mysteries of religion. Only priests are capable of dealing with divine things. The duty of the laity is to obey. This is enough to keep the bulk of the people from opening a book, or taking a tract, which they think the priests would disapprove of.<sup>1</sup> It has also a deterrent effect upon the

<sup>1</sup> The list of works prohibited by the Catholic Church is very long, and forms what is called the *Index*. Jean de Bonnefon, himself a Catholic, and an excellent authority on matters relating to the policy of his Church, says, "To-day all Catholics bow before the decisions of the *Index* with reverence: the author should submit, the publisher should withdraw the condemned book. The severest chastisements are reserved for those who print the books of Holy Writ without authorization. Let us pass to the *Catalogue of the Index*, a handsome volume, printed in the Sacred Palace, and re-edited with additions four times per century. In less than five hundred pages it gives about eight thousand names, and nearly twenty

production and spread of such literature. Books and newspapers are in the first line, commercial affairs; and printers and publishers, business people. Unpopularity spells ruin. Public opinion is a mighty despot. Owing to these facts the journals, magazines, reviews, and what not, either support the prevailing superstition or decline to attack it. Treatises of a Protestant type have little or no chance, because the periodical press ignores them, or notices them only in a slighting and dishonest way.

Booksellers, too, come under the influence of zealous bigots set on by priests, and very often refuse to exhibit "heretical" lucubrations on their shelves. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." There is gold in many a Gilead where the balm has ceased to flow. The fact is that most people are so occupied with their vocations, their pleasures, and their ambitions, that they have neither the time nor the will to go into matters of doctrines, even if they had the requisite ability and training, which, to say the truth, is very rare. This tends to hinder the spread of inquiry and thus greatly helps the priests. Another thing is, that knowledge, unless repeated, becomes speedily forgotten. How completely reformed principles may vanish and the old ones revive is shown by the way the greater part of the Anglican Church has gone back upon Cranmer, Latimer, and the other martyrs. If a system be but long and firmly established, then, however it may be attacked, a period of reaction succeeded by an age of indifference will amply suffice to let it recover all its former strength. This accounts for history having given the lie to many a famous man foolish enough to imagine that he had sung the death-knell of one or another imposture. The misfortune is that the priests represent the survival of their system as due to providential care; and when a new attack is made upon it, they affect to despise the arguments employed as being ancient objections long ago answered, thus conveniently disguising the fact that old errors must be confronted with old truths.

The use of political interests is another device on the part of the priests. A writer in *The Daily Mail Year Book*, 1909, says:—

The Catholic Church, and in the Church the Society of Jesus, plays, indeed, a large part in the politics of Europe.....positively, by means of the clergy and the clerical press, negatively, by the exercise of personal influence upon the great organs of public opinion, and by pushing clerical adepts to positions of confidence in the neighbourhood of ministers, editors, and thrones (p. 4).

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded.)

The most infamous popes, the most heartless and fiendish bishops, friars and priests were models of mercy, charity and justice when compared with the orthodox God—with the God they worshipped. These popes, these bishops, these priests could persecute only for a few years—they could burn only for a few moments—but their God threatened to imprison and burn forever; and their God is as much worse than they were, as hell is worse than the inquisition.—R. G. Ingersoll.

Small service is true service while it lasts;  
Of friends, however humble, scorn not one;  
The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,  
Protects the ling'ring dewdrops from the sun.  
—Wordsworth.

thousand words" (*Le Journal*, February 24, 1914). The list offers some agreeable surprises. Thus, Taine has got there for his apparently harmless treatise on English Literature, whilst "M. de Voltaire n'est pas condamné en bloc; on ne trouve qu'un choix de ses oeuvres" (11).

## Acid Drops.

There is one feature about the slump in religion that will yield a melancholy satisfaction to those engaged in the profession of preaching. This is that it is world-wide, and so may prevent any of them feeling that he is individually to blame. There is not a country in the world where the falling off in the number of worshippers is not apparent. Nor is it confined to any one religion. Mohammedans lament the fact as much as do Christians, and any apparent increase in membership of any of the Christian sects not alone fails to keep pace with the growth of population, but the increase of one body is at the expense of one or more of the others. In relation to the world of non-believers the loss is absolute and irretrievable.

So we are not surprised to find the Archbishop of Capetown lamenting that men and women have drifted and are drifting away from the Churches. Of course, he accompanies it with some vague comments upon the breakdown of "materialism," for it would never do to admit that those who are drifting away from the Churches are definitely anti-Christian. Even in misfortune the average Christian cannot afford intellectual honesty. He must pretend that those who have left the Church have done so because the Churches are not Christian enough. In this way the remaining members may, perhaps, be encouraged to stay. And we suppose there are some who are content to be fooled by such a transparent device. Others will recognize that what the world is witnessing is not the defection of a few disgruntled believers but the break up of a religious system. There may be discussions concerning the immortality of man. There can be no reasonable doubt about the mortality of the gods. That is almost self evident.

The Church of Christ frowns at divorce, but the people of this country do not all agree with the clergy on this matter. A recent week constituted a record in Divorce Court work, about 300 matrimonial cases being dealt with by twenty-five courts, five each day.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been writing in a Sunday newspaper on "Married Love and Counterfeits." As a celibate priest, Father Vaughan should know as little of this matter as a pigeon understands hydrostatics.

The pill of religion has to be coated with amusement nowadays. Painful Sabbaths have been transformed into Pleasant Sunday Afternoons; tame Members of Parliament often replace preachers; and organ recitals, instrumental music, and vocalists, take the place of lengthy sermons. At a provincial church, recently, the evening service was almost entirely devoted to musical renderings, ranging from Chopin to Wagner. What Secularists these Christians are!

The results of the enquiry that is being made by a group of Chinese students in the States as to how many people believe in God, and why, have not yet been published, but so far the replies show that, dividing the people into "believers, disbelievers, and Agnostics," there are more believers than disbelievers, but that if one puts the disbelievers and the Agnostics together then they outnumber the believers. The results of the enquiry have not yet been tabulated. We suggest that when the Chinese students have finished the enquiry they combine with the Buddhists in a mission for the moral elevation of the Christians. As the Christians teach these people religion, it is only a fair return for them to bring them ethics in exchange.

"Modern parents have had sense enough to stop the tales of ghosts," says the *Daily Mail*. Maybe! Unfortunately, 50,000 clergymen encourage belief in the Holy Ghost and other bogeys. And the dear parsons are assisted by an army of Sunday-school teachers.

The clergy are still "starving," but there is no diminution in the amounts left by deceased parsons. This week's

wills include those of the Rev. M. Anstey, of Malvern, who left £9,148; the late Rev. A. Fraser, vicar of Harbycum-Swinthorpe, Notts, £108,774; the late Mrs. Susan Jackson, of Putney, widow of the Rev. A. Jackson, £17,601, and Bishop Harrison, of Stanway, near Colchester, £48,888.

The *Daily Graphic* points out that in Circus Road, St. John's Wood, there is an old place of worship which is now used as a theatrical storeroom. This is not an isolated instance. In Walworth, South London, two chapels have been transformed into picture theatres, whilst at Clapham a former "house of God" is now used as a post-office.

For the first time since 1907 the Methodists show a small increase in membership—of 3,235 persons. Well, there it is, but it is not unfair to assume that, after many more or less melodious howls from the pulpits they have made a great effort, and, with their wealth and extensive organization have achieved this result. We notice that while the Sunday-school teachers have increased by 409, the scholars only augmented by 846, so that the new masters may be confident of a class of two kids apiece, unless, in the meanwhile, these youngsters have not, like the youth of Ipswich mentioned in *Pickwick*, dispersed to cricket.

At a meeting of the Colonial and Continental Missionary Society the other day, the Rev. S. M. Stewart said that when he arrived at a native settlement in Labrador he found all the people dead. The cause of it, he told the audience, was that some years ago they were taken to be exhibited at the World's Fair at Chicago. "There the majority received their death blow, contaminated by white men's vices." The survivors evidently brought home the seeds of the disease, with the result named above. We do not know what moral we are supposed to draw from this, the only one that appeals to us is that the less the natives come into contact with the white Christians the better.

The pious people of Abergele, North Wales, are lamenting the fact that since their return from the war not fifty per cent of the young men attend a place of worship. We are surprised that fifty per cent. of them attended Church before the war, but it is hardly to be expected that they would attend after they had a look at the wider world outside their village. Some good has come out of even the war.

The Vicar of Houghton Regis says that tectotalers are unfair and some of them will end in lunatic asylums. Perhaps the vicar remembers that lemonade is not used in the communion service.

The *Church Times* provides us with a leading article on "The Ineffectiveness of Sermons." But how on earth can sermons nowadays be generally effective? If a clergyman says all that he knows concerning the truth of Christianity he would either be driven from his Church or his congregation would see little reason for remaining with him. If he continues in the Church he is bound to either preach deliberate untruths, or leave religion on one side and devote himself to mouthing harmless social and ethical platitudes of no particular value to anyone. And the consequence of that is that his congregation sooner or later find their interest drifting from religion to a number of other questions. The only way to get effective preaching is for it to be the expression of sincere belief, and that is becoming more difficult to men of intelligence and education.

We English believe in Respectability—with a capital R. Religious faith does not disappear suddenly with us. The Latin race passes by a fairly quick transition from Roman Catholicism to complete emancipation from superstition. We like to proceed by easy stages, and the same is true of our American cousins. In every one of our hundred sects and sections, large or small, we can espy "spiritual values" of a sort. Let anyone notice the

placards on the public hoarding in Blackfriars Road this very week. The Salvation Army is appealing for support, Whitefield's Tabernacle is to hold a revival, and the Christadelphians are exposing the fallacies of the "popular theology." To give a spice of variety to the whole, we are importing from the States Christian Science and the Newest Thought. All these survivals receive a very real support from the privileged classes. The whole forms an artistic picture, does it not? But the situation to-day is full of hope for Freethought. The Christian religion is now reduced to reliance on the classes and certain "social values." That is why its case is past all surgery.

The newspaper men have discovered a prodigy in the shape of a Turk named Zorali, who lives by the Bosphorus and claims to be 140 years old. There is nothing to write home to mother about the affair. At that tender age the Bible patriarchs were spinning tops and trundling hoops.

The Rev. A. D. Belden, of Westcliff-on-Sea, says that "the Christian business man of to-day is a troubled person." Maybe! But he is not so worried as the unfortunate folk who have transactions with the Christian business man.

The latest wills include: the Rev. C. C. Coe, of Bournemouth, who left £22,451, the Rev. S. Iatham, of Worthing, £16,690. These two brothers-in-the-Lord will only hear the hallelujahs of the blest from an extreme distance.

"The mystery of the Jew is profound," says a writer in the *New Age*, in the course of an article which commences anywhere and ends in the same direction. And there is the further illuminating sentence that the mystery of the Jew is "as profound as the mystery of Christianity and of the Incarnation." If for "Mystery" we read "nonsense" we shall not be far from the truth. There is no mystery about the Incarnation, it is merely nonsense, and nonsense does not become sense by the process of printing it in capital letters and writing mystical articles about it. And the mystery of the Jew is only a mystery for those who make it so. As a distinct people the Jew has been kept alive by his enemies, mainly by the separatist influence and hatred of Christianity. And in any other direction the explanation of the Jew offers no more than a problem in sociology. We are surprised that a journal such as the *New Age*, which stands for a scientific sociology, does not realize this. Perhaps the remark we have quoted may be taken as evidence of how surely religious thought leads to mental confusion on any subject with which it is connected.

The Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales have written a pastoral letter to be read in all the Churches in connection with the Catholic Bible Congress. It admits that "It can no longer be taken for granted that the great majority of those who claim to be Christians will acknowledge the absolute authority and truth of the written word of God; on the contrary, nowadays we see it treated, even by those who profess themselves ministers of Christ, with no more respect than they would show to a collection of merely human documents, if not, indeed, with less." This is very sad, and we can appreciate the distress of the Catholic hierarchy. In the end, the authors of the pastoral advise the people to rely on the authority of the Roman Catholic Church on the matter. That is quite a professional counsel.

The clergy are still starving. A London newspaper states that the mess dress for army chaplains is now black evening coat with purple silk facings, black trousers, patent leather shoes, and black silk waistcoat, the total cost being about £16.

The Rev. F. W. Norwood, of the City Temple, says that he respects Dean Inge because he speaks out frankly at a time when men rarely say what they believe. This compliment should bring a smile to the face of the gloomy dean, but what a comment on the intellectual honesty of Christians!



### To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

MRS. F. LINEHAM.—We can appreciate that to a sympathetic nature death would appear to be the happier lot of those who, through accident or disease, are incapable of leading a happy life. But we are afraid that any step in the direction of regulations on that head would lead to greater injuries than it removed.....We are not impressed by the argument that drunkards and the like are benefited through their belief in Christianity. As a matter of fact Christianity has nothing to do with it. It is the sympathetic association of human beings that does the trick. And quite apart from religion the experience of nearly everyone will furnish cases of men who have been "saved" from one or more vices, and without the least suggestion of religion. Thanks for displaying *Freethinker* poster.

W. H. HUNT.—We do not see that we can do more than we have done. All that can be done is to make the matter as public as possible. Some years back the matter might have been raised in the House of Commons with profit. But the present lot of members seem to think only of getting a job, keeping their job, or avoiding the risk of an election. There are, of course, exceptions, but they "be precious few."

T. A. BAKER.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome, particularly when containing information as to Freethought and religious movements abroad.

J. G. FUSSELL.—MSS. received. Hope to publish shortly, but have been, as usual, overcrowded with copy.

"CHEMIST" (Chicago).—The Bahai movement is not at all a new one. It has been in existence for a good many years now. We should be obliged if you would date the more important of your cuttings. It adds considerably to their usefulness.

J. BOURNE (Toronto).—We do not know of any movement to prevent our paper entering Canada. But we can quite believe that many good Christians would suppress it if they could. Ahd we have to always face the boycott. That is why we so often ask our present readers to help us get new ones. But the paper can be sent direct from this office to any would-be subscriber in Canada for 15s. per year.

A. PLIVA (Bombay).—The missing numbers are being sent to you. Pleased to know that you take so much interest in the *Freethinker*.

M. E. DOOLEY.—Thanks for verses. The idea is quite a good one, but the lines are hardly up to the standard.

S. B. SYKES.—Certainly, if newsagents would display the paper it would be good from many points of view. We value your appreciation and advice the more as you are not a believer in the views for which we plead. But your interest in reading opposing views argues a liberal intelligence, and that is an important factor in the world's welfare.

G. BEDBOROUGH.—We are pleased to hear of the success of your metrical essay, *The Atheist*, and also to have your opinion that our *Theism or Atheism* "is excellently conceived, admirably written, and destined to be the classic exposition" of Atheism. We hope it will prove of service, anyhow. We have never written anything save for a very definite purpose, and we had a purpose in writing that. As you think, the book has been very thoroughly boycotted by the ordinary press. That, in a way, is a very great compliment. A reply would have advertised the book, also the mental calibre of those who undertook the defence of Theism. Silence is by far the wiser policy.

W. J.—There are several popular figures of the day that have been named as an historical nucleus for the legendary character of Christ. Gerald Massey describes one of these in his pamphlet *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*, which we have now in the press. With regard to the other matter, we do not propose to do more in the matter than we have done.

H. BARBER.—Every decent minded person must feel that the present position of affairs in Ireland is a disgrace to any country or government calling itself civilized. But we are sorry we cannot see our way to opening these columns to what would be a very lengthy correspondence on the subject. It would be interesting, no doubt, but the *Freethinker* does not claim to exhaust all the interesting aspects of life.

The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

We should like Freethinkers in all parts of the country, and who would like to see some outdoor propaganda conducted in their district during the summer, to communicate with the Secretary of the N. S. S., Miss E. M. Vance, as early as possible. The Society will send down a speaker, and bear the cost of the same, if one or more friends will look after local arrangements. If Freethinkers will help to make this experiment the success it should be, it could be extended, and would prove itself a source of strength to the entire movement.

We must take this method of thanking all those who have written us concerning our article of May 15 and offering suggestions as to the best way of increasing the circulation of this paper. We are carefully considering the suggestions that have been offered, and shall put some of them into operation as soon as we can. We regard the increase of circulation as one of the most urgent needs of the moment, and of vital importance to the whole of the Freethought movement. That is the main reason why we are always urging those interested to take a hand. To double our circulation would be a splendid achievement, and we feel that it can be done if all will do their best.

Here is one way in which many of our readers may help. It has been suggested that some who would like to get new readers do not care to personally press for them. To meet these we are making the following offer. We will send to any address, or addresses, the *Freethinker* post free for thirteen weeks for 2s. 6d. The only condition is that the sender of the address must be one who already takes in this paper. There should be a generous response to this co-operative form of propaganda.

We publish this week, for the National Secular Society, three new four page propagandist leaflets which we hope will be distributed by the thousand by our readers. These are *Religion and Science*, by Mr. A. D. McLaren, *Does God Care?* by Mr. W. Mann, and *Do You Want the Truth?* by Mr. C. Cohen. The price for these is 1s. 6d. per hundred, postage 3d. The price is intended to cover the cost of publication only. The pamphlets are well calculated to arrest attention and secure adherents. A treasury note will enable one to do a fair amount of propaganda for a moderate outlay.

We are glad to see a well written and timely letter from our old friend Mr. H. Latimer Voight on the subject of "Christianity and Social Reform" in the *Isle of Thanet*

*Gazette.* We trust that it will be the beginning of a real live correspondence on the subject. Those who wish the labour movement well, and those who have an intelligent interest in social reform could not do a better piece of work than to put the preachers who are exploiting both in the name of Jesus in their place. Any movement that is overrun with parsons is not likely to come to much good.

## The Last of the Race.

ONCE upon a time there was a great island, covered with luxurious herbage and fruits and flowers of great beauty and value.

Amongst the herbage animals of various kinds peacefully carried on their lives resting and lazily feeding, mating and sleeping, sheltering from the rains and basking in the sun from daylight to dark.

And the blue sky above was only equalled by the blue of the waters rising and falling with the tides, and everywhere was contentment and peace.

And all at once the more intelligent of the animals bethought to make improvements. The herbage was too long, it would be better short. The fruits were nice enough, but some were better than others. The flowers were handsome, but they took up space. And so, they began to improve; the herbage was dug up or cut down, the fruits not quite so good as others were destroyed. The flowers which took up space were no longer required.

"Improve," they murmured, "let us improve. Let us have more of what we like, let us make laws and regulations to protect our improvements, for surely we will be happier when we have more of all we desire."

The laws were made, those whose duty it was to see the laws carried out came into existence. For what would be the use of laws if there was full liberty to break them? And as a snowball gathers to itself as it rolls along, so more laws gathered to the old laws, more regulations to the old regulations.

The fruits were improved, everything was so much nicer. The rain was unpleasant; so was the sun when you wished to be cool. There is even too much of a good thing, however good it may be.

And so it even happened that one day, on seeing themselves in a pool, the more intelligent animal became unsettled, even as to its own appearance. "Surely, this is the road to happiness" it murmured, as it altered this or that.

But the sky was still blue; the waters still vied with the sky in colour, the fruits were better than ever and the herbage on the island was of more value and of shorter length.

And the animal with intelligence remained supreme; the others had fallen back, some even out of the race, for the intelligent one had decided that this one or that one was no longer wanted, or could be controlled for his benefit, and had acted accordingly.

For some time the animal with intelligence was happy, carrying on life, feeding and loving, sleeping and sheltering from both rain and too much sun, in improved situations and on better conditions. But all the time laws and regulations were increasing, leaping one on to the other until they accumulated in great heaps.

It was no longer right to do this or that! It was no longer right to say or think what one felt!

And the laws and regulations, the race for development and improvement, the race for more and yet more went on and only the sky and waters remained unaltered.

"We are civilized," they chuckled. "Look at our development. From being merely an animal which lived, feeding and mating and sleeping amongst the

long grass in the sunlight amidst wild fruits and flowers, and had no thought of time or age or fortune, we have now become civilized. Other creatures work for us. We have better foods, we have greater comforts, we have laws and regulations, we have all that life can give."

And so time passed away, years and years rolled by.

The island has altered in appearance. Where once was luxuriant herbage is now huge building with great chimneys vomiting forth black smoke and lighting up the heavens at night with bursts of flame. The fruits and flowers of great beauty and value are gone. Even the sky has lost its gorgeous colour and the waters are no longer blue, for great pipes empty masses of brown sludge from the mills. And the most intelligent animal stands feeding huge engines or wielding hammers. And great masses of molten metal are drained off from great tanks. Everything is activity, and the whirl of machinery never ceases.

And the more intelligent animals herd together in narrow cells, spitting out blood, fighting for food, working each day so as to live another day, and blinding misfortune by stupefying drink.

They have even ceased to care, they have lost enthusiasm, they wish to be left alone, "what does it matter" they murmur, "as long as I have my beer, as long as our football team wins the cup."

The women have lost all sense of motherhood, they have lost the charm of their sex, they too work in factories and keep the machinery at work. They are no longer women.

Health passes by, illhealth and misery follow close behind. Here and there a few hands clutch at health; here and there someone makes a wild attempt to seize health as she passes by.

But the wheels grind on; the hum of the machinery drowns the cries of mere flesh and blood.

"Be satisfied with your lot"—"You will have your time after you are dead"—cries a blind man, unable to realize what blue skies and blue waters may mean, or what the world might be if had developed towards mutual welfare instead of added wealth.

"How very sad," said the super-intelligent of the intelligent animals, "that your poor little girl should suffer so dreadfully."

"How unfortunate that your boy should be dying of consumption." "We must have a home, a hospital; we must have asylums, where those who suffer may find comfort."

And as a snowball as it rolls gathers more snow, so as time goes on does misfortune gather more misfortune; misery more misery and poverty more poverty.

So also does wealth gather more wealth, and disease more disease. The luxurious herbage is gone and there are no longer fruits and flowers of great beauty. Even the blue skies have changed, and the waters have become muggy.

The intelligent animal is no longer satisfied to eat, love and sleep, sheltering from the rain and basking in the sunshine, it has lost its strength and health, and now covers its malformed body with various coloured materials so as to give an appearance of health and beauty, races through the air on machines, seeking and seeking for some excitement to break the monotony of its existence, crowding together in cells and hovels, searching to find something to replace that which it has lost, and which it can no longer realize.

And the future? Can you see through the smoke of furnaces the arms of men and women, lit up by the flames, deformed by passing shadows; can you hear above the hum of machinery their last despairing cries for life and love? Can you not see the degenerate, loveless, aimless creatures, now mere parts of that machinery which hums on night and day? Can you hear the words of a few that have escaped the island and live the life all men should lead murmuring in

churches and chapels "You will have *Your time After You are dead.*"

Can you see what it all means, or must you wait until the smell of decaying flesh wakens you up to the truth of the situation! For as a snowball gathers to itself as it rolls along, so do misery, poverty and disease.

The desexing of the race is the work of the few, helped by laws and regulations often the result of some individual's ignorance or even lusts. For what is nicer than to make something illegal which you can carry out yourself and thus get more because others fear that law?

The death of the race is the work of many, helped by the laws and regulations and various organizations which weigh up men and women—in life and blood, and value the weighings in pounds, shillings and pence.

"It is pounds, shillings and pence we want from you," they cry. "It is blue skies and sunlit waters, green luxuriant herbage which pounds, shillings and pence means to us. For that is what we want."

"You fill the hospitals and asylums, that is true. You are losing health and life, becoming mere pieces of machinery, that is also true. But it does not matter, for God meant it to be so."

"You are born to be the cogs in the wheels of civilization. Be satisfied with your lot, for *You will have Your chance After you are dead!*"

The machines have stopped now; the hospitals and asylums are empty; the prisons no longer contain the last of the race.

Luxuriant herbage is climbing over decaying walls, blue waters are vying with blue skies.

A few wild creatures of various kinds carry on their lives, feeding, mating and sleeping, sheltering from the rains and basking in the sunshine amidst the herbage or by the side of the blue waters, which rise and fall with the tides.

The more intelligent animal has gone, and huge pieces of metal, masses of brick, cement and rubble remain as his monument.

For the story is as it must be. Poverty and disease, unnatural lives have only one end, and that disease and death. Disease enters cottages and slum dwellings, villas and mansions, and even wealth can only prevent its entry for a time, but cannot prevent for ever. Even the best armour becomes weak at some spot and the best varnish will wear out. AXIOM.

## N. S. S. Annual Conference.

HELD IN THE DOCKERS' HALL, SWANSEA.

Whit-Sunday, May 15, 1921.

MORNING SESSION.

The first Conference in Wales was somewhat overclouded by the untoward industrial conditions prevailing everywhere, and several delegates were unable to attend. Nevertheless, Mr. C. Cohen, who presided, looked forward to future Conferences in Wales, where he confidently expected Freethought to make noticeable strides.

Branches were represented by the following delegates: W. A. Littlewood (Barnsley); James Neate (Bethnal Green); J. G. Dobson (Birmingham); J. T. Lloyd (Glasgow); F. E. Monks and S. Cohen (Manchester); Miss K. B. Kough (N. London); T. Bennett (Upper Rhondda); A. B. Moss (South Shields); B. Jenkins (Swansea); T. J. Thurlow (West Ham).

Amongst the visitors were noticed: Messrs. Bonvonn, Brookes, Dupree, J. Harris, T. Harris, J. C. Kirkman, Rees, Richards, Roberts, Tucker, Thomas, Williams, J. Williams, R. Williams (Swansea); J. Davidson (Newport); Mr. and Mrs. Gair (Pontypridd); A. D. McLaren, Mrs. Neate, Mrs. Goddard, Mrs. Cohen (London).

After disposing of the purely formal business, the delegates proceeded to deal with the fourth item on the

Agenda. Mr. A. B. Moss (South Shields) moved, and Mr. J. Neate (Bethnal Green) seconded: "That Mr. C. Cohen be re-elected President of the N. S. S."

The motion was supported by Messrs. Bennett, Davidson, Thurlow, and Dobson, and carried unanimously.

Mr. C. Cohen moved and Mr. Dobson seconded: "That Miss E. M. Vance be re-elected General Secretary."

Mr. Thurlow supported the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. C. G. Quinton was elected Treasurer, and Messrs. H. Theobald and Co. (Incorporated Accountants) were appointed Auditors.

Messrs. James Neate, J. T. Lloyd, C. H. Kelf, A. B. Moss, R. H. Rosetti, J. G. Dobson, F. R. Corrigan, H. Silverstein, and Misses Pitcher, M. Pankhurst, and K. B. Kough were elected to the Executive. A representative for one of the London districts has still to be chosen.

Mr. A. B. Moss moved, and Mr. S. Cohen seconded: "That in view of the recent, and the recurring cases of Blasphemy, it be an instruction to the Executive to take immediate steps to circularize members of Parliament with a view to the abolition of these iniquitous laws, that a campaign should be initiated throughout the country with a view to the education of public opinion on this matter." Mr. Bennett deprecated waste of time on members of Parliament, the only method of reaching our goal being the education of public opinion. He moved an amendment to delete the words "to take.....laws." Mr. Thurlow seconded. The amendment was withdrawn on the supporters of the original motion agreeing to add the words "and others" after the word "Parliament," and the motion in this form was carried. Mr. Bennett then moved: "That the Executive be instructed to arrange for the publication of a pamphlet on the Blasphemy Laws."

Seconded by Miss Kough and carried.

Mr. A. B. Moss moved and Mr. Bennett seconded: "That in view of the many recent cases before the Courts in which freedom of publication and the free expression of opinion is seriously threatened, this Conference is of opinion that the formation of an Independent Committee, made up of representatives of all shades of liberal opinion, for the purpose of watching such cases, is desirable, and hereby authorizes the Executive to take whatever steps may be necessary to bring such a Committee into existence, and so safeguard the invaluable right of freedom of propaganda."

Messrs. C. Cohen, S. Cohen, and Thurlow urged the necessity of ceaseless vigilance if rights to the free expression of opinion were to be safeguarded. There had been an unmistakable tendency of late seriously to curtail these rights. The motion was carried.

### AFTERNOON SESSION.

The first item in the afternoon session was No. 11 on the Agenda. Mr. C. Cohen moved and Mr. Bennett seconded: "That Clause V., Rule 17 be amended so as to read, 'All motions to be submitted to the Annual Conference must be forwarded to the General Secretary at least four weeks before the meeting, the complete Agenda to be issued to the Branches at least fourteen days before the Conference.'" Carried.

Mr. Dobson moved and Mr. Moss seconded: "That this Conference calls upon the Government to institute legislation providing for the repeal of all laws which authorize the exemption from taxation of churches and places of worship in the United Kingdom, and so end a practice which throws a part of the maintenance of churches and chapels upon the entire body of ratepayers." Carried.

The President then made a statement *re* a Trust Deed for the N. S. S. The Manchester and Birmingham Branches had passed resolutions authorizing the Executive to continue steps to place the Society on a secure basis. The objection to a Charter of Incorporation under the Companies Act was that, the matter being within the discretion of the Board of Trade, meant Government recognition if the charter were granted. Since the Bowman case the objects of the N. S. S. were legal in the fullest sense, hence the way was quite clear for a Trust Deed.

Moved by Mr. Bennett and seconded by Mr. Jenkins: "That the President's report on the Trust Deed be accepted." Carried.

Moved by Mr. F. E. Monks, seconded by Mr. T. Bennett: "That in view of the determined efforts of various sections of the Christian community to maintain a form of Sabbatarianism that has had so depressing an effect upon the national character, this Conference urges upon all Freethinkers to do what lies in their power to maintain an active agitation in favour of the complete secularizing of the day of rest so that it may be spent in ways that will really contribute to the physical, mental, and moral health of the community." Carried.

Moved by Mr. A. D. McLaren (for Mr. R. H. Rosetti) and seconded by Mr. Dobson: "This Conference deplors the fact that the public mind should still be debauched by talk of future wars, and that the resources of this and other countries should be expended on the building up of large naval and military establishments, and urges upon the nation that the ideal of Thomas Paine of a League of Nations, formed for the maintenance of peace and the settlement of all international disputes by legal and reasonable methods, should be substituted for the present ineffective appeal to arms."

After some discussion Mr. Bennett moved as an amendment the substitution of the words "co-operation of peoples" for the words "League of Nations" in the original motion. The amendment was carried and the original motion lost.

Miss E. M. Vance moved, Mr. T. J. Thurlow seconded: "That having advocated during the whole of its existence a reform of the marriage laws to secure equal justice for husband and wife, with a reasonable liberty and facility of divorce, this Conference of the National Secular Society expresses its pleasure at the advances already made in this direction, and protests against the intrusion into the subject of religious prejudice and bigotry, and demands that, marriage being an essentially civil institution, its contract and dissolution shall be settled solely with a view to social well-being and the interests of all the parties involved." Carried.

Mr. Kirkman moved, Mr. Bonvonn seconded: "This Conference deplors the repeated failure of the Government to settle the education question on lines of justice to the whole of the community, and in view of the constant attempts to arrange a compromise with the various Christian sects in such a manner that their religion will continue to be established in the State schools, thus receiving endowment from public funds, insists that the only policy of peace and justice is to confine the education given in all State aided schools to purely secular subjects."

Mr. Dickson supported the motion which was carried unanimously.

The President, having congratulated the delegates on the manner in which they had discussed and dealt with a list of very important items, on the motion of Miss E. M. Vance, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded the Swansea Branch for their hospitality and their efforts to make the Conference a success. A. M.

## Correspondence.

### DR. LYTTTELTON'S CHALLENGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Dr. Lyttelton lays down that there are three possible positions to take up with regard to the laws of nature, (1) to assume that "a mathematical mind" made the universe (2) to assume that we shall never know how it came into being, or (3) to assume that "electrons met together.....and agreed by a kind of universal suffrage to regulate their movements," etc., which Dr. Lyttelton, naturally, dismisses as "stark lunacy." Personally, I plump for (2), and say that we shall never know how the universe came into being, for the simple reason that it is a contradiction in terms to suppose that it ever did come into being. For "the universe" includes everything that has any relation to our experience. Now, whatever "comes into being" must arise out of something else, which by definition is included in "the universe." Consequently, the universe as a whole cannot have "come into being." Dr. Lyttelton's whole position thus rests on an unwarrantable assumption. Letting this pass, how-

ever, for the sake of argument, I proceed to your correspondent's question: "On what grounds is (1) (the Theistic view), ruled out as stupid"? I answer: because it explains nothing, and instead raises new difficulties. We cannot conceive an infinite being as a mind at all; for a mind distinguishes itself from objects, and apart from an infinite being there could be no objects. Consequently, we cannot attribute to an infinite being wants of any kind, or purposes, and the idea of a Creator is thus inconceivable. In fact, all actual conceptions of a God are anthropomorphic, except the abstract "absolute" of the philosophers, which is no God at all. Dr. Lyttelton for some reason identifies Materialism with view (3)—I do not know why. As, however, I am not concerned with view (3), I will pass on to his last question but one: "If a man chooses to be indifferent (to the miseries of others), why should he not be? If on the other hand there is a law higher than inclination under which we are to love one another, who made it or revealed it, and why should A, B, or C be scolded because they only obey it as far as they choose"? Certainly, if a man chooses to be indifferent, why should he not be? But then, if others, who are not indifferent, choose to kick him, why should they not kick him? If he chooses to take up an anti-social attitude, he forfeits his claim to be treated as a social animal. Mutual aid is an instinct native to man, as hunger or thirst, and no more requires a revelation to explain it than those instincts do. All alike owe their survival to their value in the struggle for existence in face of a hostile nature. As to Dr. Lyttelton's last question, regarding the "noble" teaching of Jesus, some of the teaching attributed to him (for Dr. Lyttelton must be aware that his very existence is disputed) is noble, some is not. I do not think that the teacher, whoever he was, who gave as a reason for right doing, "great is your reward in heaven," raised the standard of disinterested conduct. I do not think the man who ate with unwashed hands, and abused his fellow-guests for washing theirs, displayed courtesy or refinement. I do not think the teacher who anticipated the day when he would say to half humanity, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," can be acquitted of a ferocious and tyrannical spirit. Finally, in the noble parts of his teaching, there is nothing that cannot be equalled in the maxims of Lao-Tze, Confucius, or Buddha, who lived centuries before his alleged birth.

ROBERT ARCH.

SIR,—Dr. E. Lyttelton says (15th inst.): "If there is no such thing as a law higher than inclination then G. O. W. has no ground for accusing the indifferentists or anyone else." I am certainly not aware of any "law" of human action higher than "inclination," or the desire for happiness, as I would term it. If Dr. Lyttelton can tell me of a single case in which any human being has ever acted except to promote what he considered his own happiness I shall be glad to hear of it. And the reason why I want to abolish poverty is, firstly, because I now have to go without a good many nice things myself, and secondly, because I am so constituted that the undeserved and unnecessary poverty of others makes my own full happiness impossible. And I accuse the indifferentists, or, as I term them, the "Don't Cares," because it is their apathy and indifference to the suffering of others that are the main cause of this pleasure-killing poverty. G. O. W.

### THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. H. Cutner, has, indeed, "buted in" with a vengeance, and to tell you the truth, sir, I am delighted to hear from him. It gives me real pleasure to meet such a doughty "champion" of Freethought on the question of the harmony of the gospels, and on the resurrection of Christ. That it gives him equal pleasure is apparent, for says he, "In no other part of the Old Book are contradictions to be found in such *delightful abundance*." He certainly has presented to us a jumbled lot of statements which show he has done some very loose thinking, which justifies my statement that champions of Freethought do not always live up to their claims. I must, therefore, give a sample of Christian Freethought to show to him that mine is "the more excellent way," believing that under it he will see his

so-called contradictions and the "heaps more" that are to follow "delightfully" vanish away. So now for the reply that Mr. Cutner is "after." Readers will note first of all the following important things. First, the *time* the women came to the sepulchre, and then, what was their *object*, the *number* that came, what they *saw*, what was *said to them*, and what they *did*. But the *time* they came is the most important. The first visit is recorded in Matthew. This was by Mary Magdalene and the other Mary "in the end of the Sabbath." They came "to see" the sepulchre *not* to anoint the body. The Sabbath ended at sunset, *i.e.*, about 6 p.m. on Saturday. The second visit was by Mary Magdalene alone, "when it was *yet dark*," *i.e.*, on Sunday towards morning, about ten hours later (John xx. 1). The third was by Mary accompanied by Peter and John (verses 2-10). The fourth was by the women of Luke "very early in the morning," literally, at "deep twilight" (Greek *Batheos*). These came after Mary had gone away, and were the only women mentioned as "bringing the spices." Their number would be five or more. The fifth visit was by the women of Mark, who came when the sun *had risen*. See R. V. Douay and Young's versions. Surely it is plain and easy to see that all the visits were at *different times*. The sixth and last recorded visit to the tomb was by Peter alone. See Luke xxiv. 12. This must not be confused with the one above (John xx. 2). Now, if Mr. Cutner and other eminent Christians had taken the trouble to go into the matter properly, instead of taking past interpretations for granted, the charge against the four Gospels on this question would not have arisen. Obviously, successive visits to the tomb at *different times* by *different persons* will permit them to *see, hear, and do different things*, and herein lies the solution to the "contradictions." They (the differences) are all perfectly natural, and what any one might reasonably expect under such remarkable circumstances. That is why Matthew speaks of *one* glorious angel *sitting* on the stone *outside* the sepulchre, and the other gospels of one *inside* (Mark), two *standing* by the women (Luke), and two *sitting inside* in John. The *presence* of the guard as "dead men" in Matthew, and their *absence* in John, Luke and Mark ten to twelve hours later is explained thus. As the two women of Matthew went to tell the disciples that Jesus was risen, some of the guard entered into the city (Jerusalem) to tell the chief priests all the things that were done (Matt. xxviii. 11). This accounts for their absence on Sunday morning when Mary came and when Peter and John *entered* the empty tomb, which would not have been permitted *had the guard been present*. And would Mary have been unchallenged either? And, naturally, if the guard was not present when Mary came, they would not be when the women of Luke and Mark arrived still later. Thus, all the difficulties vanish away like snow in the sun when rightly considered. It is as clear as print can make it that the four Gospels give accounts of what happened at different times, and Mr. Cutner should employ his detective instincts to unravel what appears to him a tangled skein, instead of doing his best to manufacture "delightful contradictions," as his own phrase implies. Finally, *re* the appearance of Christ. Matthew records *two* only. First, to the two women *after* they left the tomb. This was at Jerusalem. Second, in Galilee. John records several appearances at Jerusalem and one in Galilee (xxi. 1), but neither contradicts the other. *All* the apostles, *please* Mr. Cutner, were finally convinced at Jerusalem as to the truth of our Lord's resurrection. Thomas was the last of the apostles to give in (John xx. 26-29). The translation of Matthew xxviii. 17 is faulty. Dr. Young's version gives it thus: "And the eleven disciples went to Galilee (from Jerusalem of course) to the mountain where Jesus appointed them. And having seen Him they bowed to Him, *even those who doubted*." Now all the apostles and probably those with them had treated the messages of the women as "idle tales," in fact, they were all "champion doubters" at first, and this is what Matthew refers to apparently when he says, "even those who doubted." Further, the appearance in Matthew being "by appointment" at a certain mountain seems to be the time when Jesus appeared to five hundred brethren at once. See 1 Cor. xv. 6. The evidence seems fairly clear. And now it is Mr. Cutner's "reply I am after."

"UNORTHODOX."

#### "SCOTCHMEN."

SIR,—Sir Walter Scott, apart from the facts of his being a "Scottish man" and "unco' touchy," with possibly "a bee in his bonnet," may be as good a guide in matters Scottish as Mr. Phipson, even though I cannot remember that the former claimed to have been "an enthusiastic philologist for fifty years." I think Sir Walter made out a case for "Scot" against "Scotch" which put his contention on a somewhat higher level than "a fad," but what especially interests me is Mr. Phipson's comment on "patronymics." Would Mr. Phipson oblige by telling me where he found a Scotsman rendering the prefix Mac as "Mc"? The spelling of a surname is, or may be, largely a matter of individual choice, but the proper rendering of a patronymic is in a different category. I could say much about "Mac" and "Mc," but if Mr. Phipson will say where he has come across "Mc" for Mac in Scotland it will be enough to be going on with.

DAVID MACCONNELL.

#### FAIR PLAY FOR TEACHERS.

SIR,—As a schoolmaster and a *Freethinker* reader of some years' standing, may I venture to ask you whether it is not time that Mr. E. A. Phipson ceased to abuse the liberality of your columns by indulgence in venomous and unproved calumniations of the profession to which I count it an honour to belong. Without wishing to imply that teachers are, or claim to be, paragons of virtue, I must protest that the use of such expressions with regard to them as "ineffable ruffians and cads" can only be described as a gratuitous insult to a body of citizens who are at least as humane and public-spirited as any in the country. Mr. Phipson knows, or should know, that the teachers themselves are not primarily responsible for the conditions under which work in the schools goes on. The system is not of their making. There are "powers that be" who have to be obeyed, and they in their turn merely reflect the mind of the electorate. Yet I think he would find the children in the schools, on the whole, interested and happy. May I suggest, therefore, that if Mr. Phipson is really anxious to lead a crusade in educational reform, he should ventilate his views in the public press, and not in a journal which is presumably concerned with the propagation of Freethought and reaches necessarily a limited circle of readers. Let him utilize his "particularity of expression," of which he appears to hold a high opinion, in exposing the iniquities committed by teachers, but let him also, may I add, bring forward something more than mere assertion, and bear in mind that every flock has its black sheep. He would, however, employ his pen more profitably if he were to advocate such practical and long overdue improvements as the reduction in the size of classes, and a more generous policy in regard to educational matters generally. If these were realized, many defects, of which teachers themselves are only too well aware, would disappear automatically. "PEDAGOGUE."

The wild fellow in Petronius that escaped upon a broken table from the furies of a shipwreck, as he was sunning himself upon the rocky shore, espied a man rolled upon his floating bed of waves, ballasted with sand in the folds of his garments, and carried by his civil enemy the sea towards the shore to find a grave: and it cast him into some sad thoughts: That peradventure this man's wife in some part of the continent, safe and warm, looks next month for the good man's safe return: or it may be his son knows nothing of the tempest; or his father thinks of that affectionate kiss which is still warm upon the good old man's cheek ever since he took a kind farewell, and he weeps with joy to think how blessed he shall be when his beloved boy returns into the circle of his father's arms. These are the thoughts of mortals, this is the end and sum of all their designs: a dark night and an ill guide, a boisterous sea and a broken cable, a hard rock and a rough wind dashed in pieces the fortune of a whole family, and they that shall weep loudest for the accident are not yet entered into the storm, and yet have suffered shipwreck.—*Jeremy Taylor* (1613-1667).

Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Nellie Longhurst, aged eighteen years, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Longhurst, of 75 Garratt Lane, Wandsworth. She was of a lovable and kind disposition, and all who knew her adored her. She had been terribly afflicted from birth, being the victim of general paralysis. She was unable to walk, and had not the full power of speech; but she was able to understand all that was going on. Her body was cremated on Monday, May 23, at the West Norwood Crematorium, when a secular service was conducted by the undersigned. J. T. LLOYD.

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 post card.

LONDON, INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Debate between the Rev. Father McNabb and Mr. Ratcliffe, "Free Will and Determinism"; also Social.

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

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. Shaller, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regents Park): 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Religion and Science."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, and 6.15, Mr. Corrigan, Lectures.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 6.30, Mr. E. Healey, "Cause and Effect."

OUTDOOR.

THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. are having a ramble on Sunday, May 29, to the Lickeys. All members and friends are cordially invited. Meeting place, Navigation Street at 2 p.m. or Shelley Oak Terminus at 2.45 p.m. Tea at Bilberry Hill Tea Rooms, Rednal.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. 2. Bible and Teetotalism, J. M. Wheeler; 3. Principles of Secularism, C. Watts; 4. Where Are Your Hospitals? R. Ingersoll; 5. Because the Bible Tells Me So, W. P. Ball; 6. Why Be Good? G. W. Foote; 7. Advice to Parents, Ingersoll. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

£200.—An old Member of the N.S.S. requires Capital (£200) at liberal interest. Plant offered as security. State terms.—Address PLANT, c/o Freethinker Office, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

MR. R. BELL, late of West Stanley (one of the Old Brigade), has taken over the White Swan Inn, Dinnington Village, Northumberland, where he would like to meet old friends and make new ones, to discuss matters relating to Freethought over a cup of tea or a glass of good ale.

TIMES ARE BAD, wherefore keep your intentions the contrary. Adversity should draw us closer. Before spending with the Christian, tell us what you want. Past advertisements will have taught what we sell. Help us to help the "Freethinker."—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell.

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for meetings in Western district of London.—Write particulars and terms to SECRETARY, METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY, 526 Oxford Street, W. 1.

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CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

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## THEISM OR ATHEISM?

BY  
**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

### CONTENTS:—

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