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Views and Opinions.

The Benefit of Irreligion.

Someone has been good enough to send me a small pamphlet by the Rev. R. F. Horton entitled "What are the benefits of Irreligion?" Irreligion is defined by most dictionaries as the state of being without or opposed to religion, and it is in the sense of being without, rather than being in active opposition to religion that Dr. Horton uses the expression. Along with the pamphlet came a note asking whether I would be good enough to notice it, and although, in the ordinary way, I should have passed the effusion with no more than a casual glance, it is possible that a brief survey may serve a useful purpose. And to begin with, I may observe that the way in which the question is put is characteristically Christian. The first question that suggests itself to the preacher is not the truth of the irreligious attitude, but its advantage. What am I, or what is anyone else, going to get out of it? But when a man faces a question in that temper he is almost hopeless. That is the last question that suggests itself to a healthy mind. A healthy intelligence when faced with a definite proposition does not ask, what shall I get from believing it? it asks only whether it is true or not. I do not mean that if pressed one would not attempt to prove that acceptance of the proposition would be of benefit, but that it would not be the immediate issue. One would work on the assumption that truth pays, and that one's first duty is to examine questions from that point of view. Dr. Horton, as the representative of one of the intellectually poorest of the great religions, writes only of profit and loss. Whether religion is true or false is an issue that is never once raised in the whole of his pamphlet. Some time ago I said that the ethics of Christianity was the morality of the stock exchange combined with the intellectual outlook of the savage. A first class illustration of that lies before me.

Are Unbelievers Scarce?

My second remark is that Dr. Horton is very unfortunate in the kind of irreligious people that he has come across. He has three characters in his pamphlet which he presents as types of the irreligious, a society lady, an old college friend who has become a successful man of business, and a working man whose church is

the public house, and who has a vague kind of a belief in a future life and a God. They are really remarkable specimens of unbelievers, considered as representatives, but it may be urged in defence of Dr. Horton that he has found it difficult to learn from the irreligious the advantages of irreligion, as "one cannot get them to speak candidly on the subject." That is very unfortunate, and it suggests to the unwary reader that the irreligious person has the same disinclination to talk about his unbelief that a person suffering from some loathsome disease has to talk about his ailment. But if Dr. Horton had cared to write to this paper I could have promised him that he would have found the unbelievers of my acquaintance anything but reticent in their speech. Or better still, if he is really anxious to find out all about irreligion, instead of merely writing about it, and will place his chapel at my disposal, I promise to fill the place with irreligious persons who will be only too glad to tell him about the advantages of irreligion. But as Dr. Horton once expressed the belief that the irreligious person ought to be shut out of human society, he will not probably be in a hurry to invite them to his church.

* * *

Some Queer Unbelievers.

The first one of Dr. Horton's "horrible" examples is a society woman who is good enough to explain that by not bothering about religion she escapes "all the uncomfortable claims of the poor, and the incessant demands which the clergy make for bazaars and soup-kitchens." That is a sufficiently remarkable woman, for Dr. Horton has evidently never heard of the fact that in fashionable society it is part of the performance to belong to some church or other and to take religion as part of the social outfit. Still more remarkable is this lady, who, when questioned by Dr. Horton, confesses, "I am wretched; there is not a more miserable woman living than I." This is quite in the style of the old fashioned tract writer, and helps us to realize the style of person it was who compiled these startling narratives. The business man is quite as remarkable a character. This is an old college chum of Dr. Horton's, and he neglects religion so that he may "have a good time in town," and besides, "in business I should have been hampered at every turn if I had been religious," and "to get rid of all religious ideas and practices is the greatest help in business and pleasure." Again one marvels at the kind of person Dr. Horton hopes to influence by such helpless drivel. What business man ever finds religion a drawback? I have heard often of men finding a profession of Free-thought a drawback, but religion! Why there is no finer asset for the man who is bent on exploiting his fellows at any cost than religion. It covers a multitude of sins and excuses mountain heaps of rascalities. Will Dr. Horton please inform us how many business men really shun religion because it interferes with either their business or their profit? Really, a religious man who was stupid enough to think that religion stood in the way of his making money would be too stupid to run a business at all.

A Working Man Sceptic.

Dr. Horton's working man unbeliever is not the less remarkable. When Dr. Horton went to this man's house the child was ill, and "the wife was in despair because the husband wanted all the week's money for his (drink?) score and his bets, and she could not get the necessary food for the child." And being a working man he could not, of course, speak decent English. That is, in the eyes of the "dignified clergy," the hall mark of the genuine working man, much as some of our worshippers of Tommy Atkins delight in picturing him as a drunken, unthinking brute, unable to put a sentence into a decent shape. This working man explained to Dr. Horton that when he wanted anything the district visitor came, "they looks after the missus and the kids for me, and I'm a free man, a honest independent working man." This is so remarkable a working man that I should really like to be favoured with his name and address so that I might pay him a visit myself. A man who so candidly confesses—to a parson—that he relies upon the district visitor to keep his children, and does not bother with religion because, presumably, he might be led to look after his children himself if he did, is so remarkable a character as to be worth looking up. We were quite under the impression that the type of character that lived on religious charity was in the habit of parading his religious convictions rather than denying that he has any. But at any rate he is not less remarkable than the parson who tells the story.

* * *

Lying for the Glory of God.

It must be understood that these three characters are introduced by Dr. Horton as taken from real life. They are actual persons, only the names are false. And of all the clumsy lies that have ever been told by Christians in defence of their miserable creed this one is about the clumsiest. One would think that there are not a dozen people outside of a lunatic asylum who could be deceived by so transparent a stupidity. But, apparently, some people are appreciative of such writings, or others would not write them. And that shifts the interest of the matter to the parsons and their congregations. The privilege of the religious tract writer is a very obvious one. He is permitted to lie in a manner that would not be tolerated in any other department of life. Even the writer of the inspired political article is not allowed the same latitude in lying as is the professional Christian propagandist. He invents people and experiences, he endows his puppets with opinions and credits them with actions such as, one would think, could deceive no one of average commonsense. And when one thinks of the pictures given to the world of the death beds of unbelievers, of their lives, of the confessed misery that their unbelief has brought them, and then bears in mind that these things are not introduced as parables, or as pictures of what might be, but as actual experiences, then one wonders whether any religion that the world has ever heard of has ever been so deficient in the sense of truthfulness and decency as Christianity has shown itself to be. There is an unconscious satire in the picture these tract writers draw of Christianity going to the depraved. One would imagine that it is the only class for whom it is fitted. Whether Christians actually believe these stories to be true is, to my mind, open to doubt. One would think that even Christian credulity could hardly go so far. Probably they take it as part of the game, and the untruthfulness of the average parson as a privilege of his profession. Or, perhaps it is just part of the huge system of sham, moral cant, social humbug, and intellectual decadence that goes to make up current Christianity. Whether looked at from the point of view of the parson or of his congregation the pamphlet is illuminating. It

helps those who need assistance to realize the type that Christianity breeds, and how much there is yet to do before it definitely gives way to something of a more desirable nature.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Essential Christianity.

In the estimation of not a few divines the Church and religion are identical and used as synonymous terms. Bishop Velimirovic, of Serbia, is reported as saying, recently: "The Church means for Europe her soul. If her religion perishes, Europe perishes." If that is true, what an unspeakable pity it is that Europe ever had a soul, for it is the soul that has always led her to the overwhelming majority of all her troubles and misfortunes. By religion the Bishop evidently understands Christianity, and throughout her Christian history Europe has been war-lad, war-prepared, and most of the time engaged in devastating wars. In fact, her history is mostly written in the blood of her slain. If it is the hand of God that has written the open pages of history, then that hand is the guiltiest in the Universe. According to the Bishop, what God's hand is writing at this moment is "Unite or perish." Well, in 1914, the Great Christian Powers did unite in the most colossal and hideous holocaust on record, and thereby brought Europe to the very brink of perdition. Europe's curse has been her soul, and it is her soul that now threatens her with utter ruin. "The Church means for Europe her soul." Is it not well-known that the Great War was waged, on both sides, in the name of God and his kingdom? And now the harvest has come in—countless widows and orphans, with bleeding hearts, thousands of horribly maimed young fellows, universal unrest and upheaval, caused by unemployment, starvation, class distinctions and antagonisms, and a sad lack of the social and brotherly spirit. The Church itself is split up into innumerable little sects, among which there are endless rivalries, each one of them having its own tiny axe to grind. Surely, the Church or religion, as Europe's soul, has stood her but in very little stead.

Other divines there are, however, who distinguish better the Church and religion, or between what they describe as organized and essential Christianity. Their contention is that organized religion is already practically doomed, and that consequently true religion has never been organized. They acknowledge, publicly as well as privately, that organized Christianity, that is to say, the Christianity promulgated by the Churches, is very largely a spurious article. This is the view held and advocated by Canon Green, of Salford, and by other prominent clergymen in different parts of the world. By favour of a friend, I have been permitted to read an article which recently appeared in a leading Belfast morning newspaper. It is clearly one of a series contributed by one who signs himself "Interpreter," from "a Study Chair." Though written in such a chair, the article presents few signs of careful study on the part of its author. The subject around which it turns without seriously touching is "Spiritual Healing." In the subject itself we are not at present interested, but while revolving round it, "Interpreter" makes several significant admissions. According to him essential Christianity may appear under various official forms; but "it is the thing itself that matters rather than the particular form which the inclinations or customs of men may have given to it." What the thing itself is "Interpreter" does not tell us. Around this point also his article revolves without once really touching it. Whatever Christianity is or may be, nothing can be historically more certain than that it has never had "a direct relationship to our bodily health, upon which it ought to have cura-

tive and renewing power." "Interpreter" himself candidly confesses that in this respect "the understanding no less than the practice of Christianity has been very ineffectual." True as far as it goes, this confession is yet painfully inadequate. The theological theory of disease used to be that it was a manifestation either of Divine love or of Divine anger. For this theory the Church was wholly responsible. It helped to keep the ignorant and vulgar peasants in a state of suitable humility. Buckle informs us that in Scotland, during the seventeenth century and part of the eighteenth, "some of the noblest feelings of which our nature is capable, the feelings of hope, of love, and of gratitude, were set aside, and were replaced by the dictates of a servile and ignominious fear."

The physical sufferings to which the human frame is liable, nay, even the very accidents to which we are casually exposed, were believed to proceed, not from our ignorance, not from our carelessness, but from the rage of the Deity. If a fire chanced to break out in Edinburgh, the greatest alarm was excited because it was the voice of God crying out against a luxurious and dissolute city. If a boil or a sore appeared on your body, that, too, was a Divine punishment, and it was more than doubtful whether it might lawfully be cured. The small-pox, being one of the most fatal as well as one of the most loathsome of all diseases, was specially sent by God, and, on that account the remedy of inoculation was scouted as a profane attempt to frustrate his intentions. Other disorders, which, though less terrible, were very painful, proceeded from the same source, and all owed their origin to the anger of the Almighty. In everything his power was displayed, not by increasing the happiness of men, nor by adding to their comfort, but by hurting and vexing them in all possible ways (*Civilization in England*, Vol. III., pp. 246-8).

To the so-called Spiritual or Divine Healing the law of evidence has never been applied. "Interpreter" cannot deny that "undoubtedly in this direction our modern conception of and practice of Christianity have failed," and that "the ancient belief in the power of spirit over matter has almost altogether died out." The belief in Divine Healing and in the power of spirit over matter is dead because science has uprooted it. "Interpreter" thinks there was and is a truth in that belief, but he cannot tell us what that truth is. We are not afraid to challenge him to produce a single instance, scientifically tested, of the operation of supernatural agency in human affairs. He says that "most of us have much to learn as to utter trust in God," but it would be truer to say that most of us have still much to unlearn. Is he not aware that no such thing as utter trust in God has ever existed? Even "Interpreter," though he may cultivate it as a sentiment, dare not put it into practice. If he did his life would speedily come to an end. Years ago there was conspicuously displayed in a New York warehouse the following placard: "God helps the man who helps himself, but God help the man caught helping himself here." A friend of ours, on going to a boarding school was solemnly exhorted by his mother to speak the truth always and irrespective of circumstances, adding, "God will certainly protect you." One evening a number of the boys stole fruit from the school orchard, but nobody had witnessed them committing the theft. So all the boys were ushered into the presence of the headmaster, and each one was asked if he was one of, or knew who, the guilty ones were. All denied any knowledge of the deed until it came to the turn of our friend who, with his mother's assurance fresh in his mind, told the truth; but his trust in God's promised protection was falsified by the event. From that day to the end of his life he was a convinced and consistent Atheist. Trust in God is a pious sentiment that is never translated into action, except in matters that do not count, or cannot be tested.

"Interpreter" yearns for a return of the Ages of Faith, for the restoration of superstition in its most glaring and dehumanizing forms, for the recovery in a real sense of that otherworldliness which made the Middle Ages so dark and fearsome for the masses of the people; but he is longing for the impossible. We have left the past, with its supernatural beliefs, hopes and fears behind us, and it is absolutely irrecoverable. All that pertains to us is natural; our lives are governed and guided by natural law, and it is to Nature alone that we are answerable for our behaviour. All else belongs to the discredited realm of dreams, which never materializes in real life. It is a realm apart, which, if not taken literally, is highly interesting and amusing, and by no means devoid of instruction, especially as poetry and art and music.

Those divines who confess that organized Christianity has failed and is destined never to succeed, still remain within the Church as active agents of a forlorn hope. On what ground can they defend their conduct? Admitting the discredit that has befallen organized religion they yet continue to be its ministers, confident that the day is coming when it shall be superseded by an undefined something now dubbed Christianity. It is true that a spirit is moving upon the waters of human life, there is a hovering breath, a half conscious trend towards those nobler and saner ideals which cry for realization in the establishment all round of the rule of justice and brotherliness, of mutual forbearance and vicarious ministries, which rule, if once dispassionately set up, would satisfactorily solve all the problems now so violently agitating all sections of society the world over. It is not a new religion, founded by Mr. Wells or another, that is needed, but a new Humanism based upon wider and more equitable principles and aims than have ever yet dominated and inspired social conduct. Any social structure, erected on any other foundation, it may be safely predicted, is sure to tumble into ruins at a very early date. J. T. LLOYD.

The Return of the Laureate.

That same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow.

—Spenser.

THE Poet-Laureate, Dr. Bridges, has broken his long silence with a new poem, which was recited at the opening of the new theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. It is a pleasant reminder that in the chequered history of the Laureateship the name of Robert Bridges will be one of its titles to regard. His succession to Alfred Austin restored distinction to the post, for the present Laureate is the one classical singer we have. Though at times formal in style, his work has had great influence by its purity and delicacy, yet strength of expression. It may be that he is a poet's poet, and that the man in the street does not read him, but it is rash to apply such tests, for strange literary idols are worshipped in the market-place.

Every genuine poet must wait for his audience, because he sees the world freshly for himself, and has to represent to others the vision that he sees. At first his method seems strange; his epithets are unusual; the things he sings of may not be the things that readers think of. Or, maybe, the public is at a loss to understand his drift. Undoubtedly, Robert Bridges's voice is individual. His lyrics do not suggest those of any other poet. His blank verse is not Tennysonian; his sonnets do not recall Rossetti; his lyrics are totally unlike those of Swinburne. The fresh voice has to make its own impression.

The prime quality in the Laureate's work is the purely English character of the poems. Bridges has held the mirror up to nature. He is, perhaps, better at the small and quiet than at the broad and moving,

for in the pictorial vein his scenery has none of the glorious movement of Meredith's muse. Few poets, however, have surpassed Robert Bridges at the purely native quality of his art. Shelley's verse bears a wild orchid fragrance; Keats' the perfume of a musk-rose; Wordsworth's the essence of mountain loneliness. The lyrics of Bridges are fresh with the blossoms of the English countryside. Here, for example, is a description of the north wind in October:—

In the golden glade the chestnuts are fallen all;
From the sacred boughs of the oak the acorns fall;
The beech scatters her ruddy fire;
The lime has stripped to the cold.
And standeth naked above her yellow attire,
The larch thinneth her spire
To lay the ways of the wood with cloth of gold.

The nightingale has been hymned by countless poets. Robert Bridges conveys an original note:—

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet springing meads and bursting
boughs of may,
Dream while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

The Laureate has other notes. For a contrast compare that fine poem, "A Passer By":—

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest not sea rising nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
Ah! soon, when winter has all our vales opprest,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling?

Although "caviare to the general," Robert Bridges has written some very appealing verse, which haunts the memory and pierces the reader, as Newman said of old-world Horace, "with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness." Listen to the stanzas "On a Dead Child," written in unusual, but singularly effective rhythm:—

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain
on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou; alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride;—ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength
make stronger.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! Doth the change content thee? Death,
whither hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body and wish but to warm thee
and awaken thee.

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen and have known and
have heard of, fail us.

The Poet Laureate has been very successful in the writing of odes. The following is from that written for the bi-centenary commemoration of Henry Purcell, the famous musician:—

The sea with melancholy roar
Moateth about our castled shore;
His world-wide elemental moan
Girdeth our lives with tragic zone.

There is rare quality in the ode on "A Lady Whom Grief for her Beloved Killed":—

Assemble, all ye maidens, at the door,
And all ye lovers, assemble; far and wide
Proclaim the bridal, that proclaimed before
Has been deferred to this late eventide;

For on this night the bride,
The days of her betrothal over,
Leaves the parental hearth for evermore;
To-night the bride goes forth to meet her lover.

Born over seventy-five years ago in Kent, Robert Bridges is a man of many parts and of varied experiences. At Oxford University he distinguished himself as a cricketer, oarsman, and scholar. Then he travelled on the Continent and in the East, and on returning home studied medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, took up practice, and filled several hospital appointments. Since 1882 he has devoted himself to literature. His output has not been bulky, and few poets have challenged the critical public with so small a nosegay of verse. His first poems appeared nearly fifty years ago, and his works have long been prized by lovers of poetry.

Careless of applause, he has his reward. The little band of "Georgian" poets dedicated an anthology from their works to Robert Bridges, presumably, as the most distinguished of living English poets. And the best critics, including Andrew Lang and Arthur Symons, have always hailed Bridges as the singer who has carried on worthily the splendid tradition of English poetry. MIMNERMUS.

Poverty, Meekness, Humility, The Next World, and—Hypocrisy.

It is plain from recent experience that religion and loyalty are the only cement for a nation struggling for its existence.

The Russians are a loyal and religious race, and they are having an object lesson which should last them for centuries!

In truth, there is much to justify real pessimism.

I am coming to think that before long the world will witness a great Conservative reaction.

But in any case, I think the world will soon be ripe for another attempt to govern itself by Faith and Loyalty.

—Dean Inge in the "Evening Standard."

Observe, observe; he's moody.

If there were reason for those miseries,

Then into limits could he bind his woes.....

Then give him leave, for losers will have leave
To ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.

ONE of the outstanding characteristics of Christianity is its hypocrisy. That is, probably, the most prominent feature of that faith to-day. The liver secretes bile. The brain, some brain, is said to produce thought. Christianity may be styled the organ in the social organism that changes natural sincerity into hypocrisy. That is the function it performs. The male mammary glands, the inner eyelid, the caudal appendage, the vermiform appendix, and a few other odds and ends of organs in the man or woman serve no useful purpose. They are vestigial; but they do not injure the individual, except as encumbrances. Christianity is still active for disease in the social body. It still curses society with hypocrisy. Happily, its ravages are being steadily reduced by the successful operations of that great surgeon Freethought, ably assisted by the grand mental hygienist, Reason. We may confidently look forward to the day when the curse of Christianity will be as completely excised from our social life, as the vermiform appendix was from King Edward I. and VII., who loved the Christian Kaiser. But that complete success to come necessarily entails earnest and sustained effort on our part (the "rank and file") as the attendants, nurses, and assistants to our leading social surgeons who are keenly engaged in carrying out the much needed operation upon a more or less recalcitrant and sometimes far from patient patient.

It is notorious that the great vice of Britishers is their hypocrisy. It is the national vice most often and most caustically commented on by "foreigners," and

by candid critics amongst ourselves. The accusation could be extended, justifiably, to the English speaking peoples—taking them “by and large.” That all too prevalent vice may be regarded as a proof that they are the Christian people.

On the other hand, this wide-spread hypocrisy may be taken as the result of the English speaking people’s Christianity. It is not to be wondered at. The corruption of natural sincerity begins in our schools, in the “infant” classes even—when the child has not already been inoculated with the poison of Christian hypocrisy in the home. The Christians in the United States are doing their utmost at present to introduce this poison into American schools. We had a fine illustration of Christian hypocrisy some years ago when Dr. Clifford claimed to be in favour of secular education; then, it turned out that the Reverend Doctor’s idea of “secular education” was just as much “Bible” in the schools as suited his religious purposes. The children are taught about the Bible, about Creation, the Flood, “God,” “Christ,” “The Resurrection,” etc., etc. The teachers, largely, do not believe what they teach. The children, more or less, speedily find out the untruth of the teaching. They discover that their teachers, their parents, their guardians, nay, even their pastors, do not really believe in these funny old stories. The contradictions between the life, teaching, and example of “Jesus Christ” in the Canonical Gospels and the life of decent members of society is glaring, open, palpable as a mountain. Sooner or later the growing child is conscious of that. Yet he or she finds belief in that “Christ” expressed all around. Apart from the general “moral” injury to them from the “Bible” (it is the filthiest book published in England), the inevitable result of this emphatic contradiction of belief in “Christ,” by the practice of all decent citizens, is to foster hypocrisy among the young. Almost unconsciously Christianity makes this hypocrisy second nature. Intellectual sincerity and logical consistency are not even striven for. Mental muddle reigns supreme, BECAUSE OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF.

The present writer, beginning about fourteen years of age, took five years of constant, and sometimes painful, study to develop from Christianity to Atheism or Rationalism. A lady of more weight in the Free-thought movement and more knowledge of it than any other, once did him the honour of saying that it was the most steadily logical and rational development of that kind that she had ever known. But that’s another story. Almost the starting point of that progress to mental freedom was the recognition of the startling gulf between the teaching of “Christ” and a decent moral life. When the philosophy of Secularism is attained, clear thinking in politics, economics, history, ethics, sociology, is comparatively easy. But, where the individual has not been freed from this Christian hypocrisy, muddle-headedness is almost sure to vitiate his or her thinking (and action) in social, ethical, political, economic questions. The hypocrisy is thus political and social life here and in America is thus clearly due to the Christian religion. We are far, far, away from any real democracy, and shall be until Christianity is extirpated.

My present object is not to deal with the hypocrisy and mental muddle in our politics and exhibited by our ~~st~~—no—politicians. I felt impelled to draw my pen after reading an article by Dean Inge, from which I have taken my opening quotations. The discriminating reader (and such are all good Freethinkers) will perceive how utterly the reverend gentleman gives himself away. I do not desire to deal with the Dean’s article in detail. That were an easy matter. The purpose of these quotations is to point a moral in the matter of Christian hypocrisy. The Dean’s attitude, his denunciations of the “working class,” his crude

dogmatism, his flagrant falsehoods, and, chief of all, his “advanced” views about the clergy and Christianity are symptomatic of one phase of Christian hypocrisy. The same failings were featured by R. J. Campbell when he was a New Theologian.

Dean Inge, and others of that ilk, do not “lead.” They do not try to lead—even “their own” people. They denounce—from behind. But they still pose as leaders—and take leaders’ fees. After the rickety old chariot of Christianity has got diverted into another direction they try to adapt their religious gear, their doctrines, their ritual, their ideas (if any), to the new road. Their main object is obviously to retain their self-assumed position as driver of the bus at all costs, and to ensure that the passengers who are left will pay their fares to their unknown destination, for which the driver has no map.

Bishop Colenso, as the result of thought and study, came to the conclusion that the Christian ideas about the Pentateuch were false. Daring consequences, he published what he thought was true, and tried to lead in the right direction. Professor Robertson Smith acted in the same way. So did Malthus on another subject. Greatest of all, Thomas Paine, urged by the Freethought motto, “The Truth Compels,” led the way, careless of what the result might be to himself. Compared with such men how contemptible are these prominent parsons (and politicians) of to-day! They lead nowhere; they do not try to lead; they cannot lead anybody—even from behind. They change. They adapt. They threaten. They denounce. Beyond that, nothing. “Limpets” in government offices are nothing in comparison to the “limpets” in the Christian Churches. They cannot say:—

.....O! This life
Is nobler than attending for a check,
Richer than doing nothing for a bribe,
Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk.

Christianity has had its chance for fifteen hundred odd years, and miserably failed. Before the war they could tell us—nothing. During the war they could do no good and give no guidance. Believing that we should lend, without hope of reward, they lent millions to the State at five per cent.—and prate of patriotism! They urged the manhood of the nation, with Christian vehemence, to “join up” and “do their bit” in France and on the sea. But they were the only class, as a class, who funk’d doing it, and who had their precious bodies specially protected by Act of Parliament. Could religious hypocrisy, Christian hypocrisy, be more nauseating than in these two instances?

To-day, Britain, nay, Europe, is in a parlous condition indeed. It is in the balance whether what we have of civilization may not go down to ruin. Clear thinking by the people, as well as clear thinking, sincerity, and strong guidance in the leaders are imperative to-day as never before. It behoves every one to do the best that can be done, to get on the path to progress, to happiness, to freedom, to a saner and a better life. A way of salvation in this life, this world, this continent, this country, is our clamant need; either that or unimaginable misery and suffering for us all. The politicians are fumbling in Christian darkness for a way out. The priests and parsons cannot even fumble. They can do—nothing.

Dean Inge says, of the miners, “We are now held to ransom by a body of privileged men, whose incomes, on an average, are far above the average income for the whole nation.” Messrs. Clynes, Hodges, Walsh, and others, have effectively answered that. But, were it true, the members of the Black Army haven’t the guts to make a start on this well-paid job, and, crawling in the pit, dig out coal for the nation. These servants of “God” are helpless to solve these pressing problems, and, even for them, “miracles are ceas’d.”

The old dilemma was “Rome or Reason.” ’Twas

true. *Mutatis mutandis*, 'tis true to-day in these sociological problems that *have* to be solved—some way. "Rome" stands for submission to authority, meekness and humility, on the part of the people; trust in "God," and let the parson do you. Dean Inge can only hope for "a Christian and conservative 'reaction'"—for some more of Christian cement—for another dose of Christian faith. He and his friends must continue to have all that they've had in the past, no matter what price the people pay. He appears unable to understand that, if used, these Christian quack remedies could only fail, as they have so abjectly failed in the past. His only method is to trust in "God," and sit on the safety valve, while the devil of ignorance and hunger stokes up the fires below. Well, that's one way of going to Heaven. "Reason" represents the more difficult, the slower, but the only sane line of approach towards "Heaven" in this world—for our children, if not for ourselves. As Free-thought overcomes Christian hypocrisy and superstition we can advance. Rational effort is being made in spite of Christian obstruction. Man was able to devastate Europe inside five years while the priest and parson merely egged him on, but did that very effectively. Surely, if we will only exercise our reason and use what knowledge we have, we might make a garden by co-operative effort where we made a wilderness? It can be done. It might be done. It is for the people to say, "It shall be done." Then Dean Inge and Co., will be done. The sooner the better, for Humankind.

ATHOS ZENO.

The Evolution of Crime.

HAS any religion formulated an earthly scheme based on realities for the happiness of humanity? The civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Babylon, Persia were killed by the forces of disorder and brigandage. As soon as the ecclesiastics obtained power, three hundred years after the death of the founder of Christianity, they began a campaign of destruction which had no parallel in the history of Asia. Egyptian civilization was destroyed root and branch, the schools of the Neoplatonists were closed, the Roman temples were all converted for Christian use, Roman festivals were abolished, and a new political power based on theology came into existence. The foundation of this new force was the crude Jewish law of Moses, which was promulgated for a tribe of stiffnecked barbarous Behouin brigands of the Arabian wilderness. All that was beautiful, homogeneous, æsthetic, went down, and a new crude, dogmatic, blood curdling, unmoral civilization, founded on the lucubrations of morbid, selfish theologians, came into existence. Socrates, Plato, Democritus, Heraclitus were great thinkers before whom the Church fathers of theology appeared as fire-flies before a big burning fire. Science, arts, architecture of a thousand years of culture went down and darkness followed, which continued for many centuries. Roman Catholic Christianity was a miasma that poisoned the European world until the birth of the Protestant form of Christianity. Catholic religion was a composite superstition with saint-worship Mariolatry, infallibility, papal viceregency, etc. The new creed of Protestantism was a rabid iconoclasm, its only fetish being the code of morals intended for the barbarous Hebrew tribes of the wilderness of Sinai.

The legacy of Christianity to the world is destruction, bestiality and alcoholism. Cortez, Pizarro, and the filibustering pirates of Spain and Portugal; Drake, Frobisher, etc., of the Elizabethan period, master pirates who robbed the Spanish and Portugese pirates; Clive, the yokel, who committed suicide, led by remorse

of the evils that he had done, Rhodes, the founder of the South African British Empire, Duff and Clifford, these were all adventurers of the brigand type. In the ancient days in India kings fought with kings, and the armies were led by kings, but the empire builders of modern times were adventurers who had no place to lay their heads in their own native land.

Islam extended its power by means of the sword. The founder of the creed had no education, was absolutely poor, and began life as a servant; yet the creed that he preached was taken up by the brigands of Medina, the lust of plunder made them heroes, and the unoffending tribes fell before their onslaught. They began life in mud huts, and ended their career in palaces. Wherever they went ancient culture and civilization went down with a crash. It was one long campaign of destruction which began in Medina and ended in the founding of a vast empire of lust and cruelty. The Bagdad Empire helped to enlighten the people a little by having the ancient text books of civilized races translated into Arabic, but on the whole the loss to Aryan civilization is incalculable, brought on by the vandalism of Arab hordes that entered India.

The cause of all this destruction may be traced to the spirit of covetousness. The pirates of Spain and Portugal pillaged lands in the distant seas in the fifteenth century. They were poor and yet full of the spirit of adventure, and had no idea of the existence of the spirit of Righteousness. The Protestant pirates had their Old Testament, and the Catholic pirates received the sanction and blessing of the Pope, dividing the world between Portugal and Spain—all the countries discovered in the West to go to Spain, and the countries in the East to go to Portugal.

In the Eastern seas battles were fought between Arabs and the Portuguese, and the latter won, and thence forward the produce of the East was carried on the Portuguese trading vessels to Europe. The pirates of Spain went to Mexico, Brazil, Peru, and plundered the native race, and the pillage was brought to Spain. Then entered the Dutch and began trading with the American Indians in the West, and in the East with the people of Ceylon, West India, Siam, China, Java, etc. The Spaniards destroyed completely the ancient civilization in South and Central America; the Portuguese began their work of destruction in Ceylon and Japan. The far seeing statesmen of Japan found that the Portuguese were conspiring to destroy Japanese independence, and at the right moment had the conspiracy nipped in the bud. That was the right thing that the Japanese patriots did. Had they contrived and allowed the Portuguese to destroy Japanese independence with the help of Japanese converts the world would have lost the æsthetic civilization of Japan. The alien missionaries in Asiatic countries are political spies, their one object is to destroy the independence of the native Power. Only Japan learnt this secret and thereby escaped. Other Asiatic kingdoms succumbed to the treachery of alien advisers.

The East India Company came to trade with the East Indies, and by bribery and corrupt methods managed to win the political leaders under Mohammedan rule. The early history of the East India Company is a record of political chicanery, fraud and immorality. The history of the corrupt methods employed by the traders has yet to be written. India was never conquered. The Madrasi low caste mercenaries employed and trained by the East India Company helped the latter to conquer Madras and South India, then with the help of the Telegu and Tamil mercenaries Bengal was subjugated. Indian mercenaries conquered India for the East India Company. The wealth of India was the object of plunder to the invader. The western pirates had no morality to guide their conscience. Their code of morals was founded on the ethics of Hebrew brigandage. The Hebrews began their career

by plunder and bloodshed under the leadership of Jehovah and Moses. The chapters of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, are a black record of plunder and destruction.—From the *Mahi-Bodi* (Ceylon) for April.

Acid Drops.

That representative of the Middle Ages, the *Morning Post*, has discovered yet another plot—or perhaps it is only a variant of the other plots it has been exposing with all the exuberance of the writer of a boy's detective serial. At any rate, it informs its readers that the present unrest is due to there being a deliberate attack upon Christianity, which is, or was, the religion of this country." And its cure is to get the proper sort of religious teaching back into the schools—a form of religion, that is, which shall be acceptable to the established Church. If we can once get the proper sort of religion set up, fill the children with it while they are in the nation's charge, get a thundering big army and navy, with the streets paraded with big booted military officers, who must, of course, be drawn from the "upper succles," with some very drastic regulations against the preaching of any doctrine that will disturb things, then the *Morning Post* will feel that it has not lived in vain.

And yet with all its stupidity—real or pretended, the *Morning Post* is not so far from the mark as might appear. If the belief in Christianity had not been weakened there certainly would not be the unrest there is; and contrariwise, if the belief in Christianity, the proper sort of Christianity could be restored, the unrest would be diminished. For over and over again Christianity has proven that there is nothing that keeps people so contented in their semi-slavery as it does. Get hold of the children while they are quite helpless, rub Christianity well into them, teach them to look up to their pastors and masters and obey without question, and all unrest will disappear. We quite agree with the moral of the programme, our only difference lies in our regarding unrest not as an essential evil, but as an indication of the coming of better times. Of course, it is uncomfortable while it lasts, but one must pay a price for most things in this world, even for reforms.

We were, quite recently, again looking up the history of slavery, ancient and modern, and there was one thing that impressed itself very powerfully upon us. The slaves of antiquity were continually giving their owners trouble by their outbreaks and by their armed rebellions. They formed themselves into armies, and often maintained their independence for years at a stretch. The ancients were, after all, dull in this connection. They taught, side by side with the existence of slavery, the doctrine of the dignity of man. And the teaching became infectious, the more so as the ancients never prevented their slaves from acquiring education. Christianity went to work in a more effective manner. Instead of the dignity of man, it taught the littleness, the worthlessness of man in this world, and that the greater his abasement here the greater his reward elsewhere. And it took care to prevent the slave getting education, even by passing laws to prevent it. Non-Christian nations did what they could to prevent the slave succeeding in his desire for freedom. Christianity took the surer path of robbing the slave of the desire for freedom and so making his servitude inevitable. And the consequence of that was not only seen in the state of the slave under Christian rule, it is seen in the type of mind that is prevalent in all Christian countries, where not one in a thousand have the least appreciation of genuine freedom.

In a recent letter to the *New Statesman* Mr. O. C. de C. Ellis says that G. K. Chesterton, H. Belloc, John Ayscough, and R. H. Benson drag the Church of Rome into their writings, however inappropriate to the subject under discussion. Mr. Ellis thinks that a disease known as encephalitis afflicts quite a number of eminent literary Roman Catholics, and he objects to being conducted all

the way to Rome by the scruff of his neck. There are, however, many fascinating pathways to the Eternal City. Rome exercises a fine discrimination in her methods of leading patients to the appointed goal, but they are all one flock when they get there.

The penurious clergy do not appear to be so destitute as represented. The late Rev. T. S. Mylne, of Amwell, Ware, left £32,539, and the late Rev. W. H. Wood, of Benwick, Cambs, left £10,125. Canon Pemberton, of Cambridge, was still more unfortunate. He left only £54,572. The Rev. W. A. Heard, Edinburgh, left £12,271.

A handful of nails and iron washers were found in the stomach of a cow which died suddenly at Grimsby. According to the Bible, a whale once had a live prophet in its stomach for three days and nights.

A painful scene took place at Trinity Free Church, Ayr. A woman entered the pulpit and embraced the minister, saying she wanted to make confession. This is not the first time that one of the daughters of man has embraced one of the sons of God.

Mr. Rooth, the Thames Police Court magistrate, dealing with the case of an unruly lad, ordered a policeman to call and read the Fifth Commandment to him. Truly, as W. S. Gilbert reminds us, "a policeman's lot is not a happy one!"

At the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May, Mr. James Brown, Labour M.P., extolled the work of the Church, and saw no ground for pessimism. "No agency in the country or the world to-day could compare with the Church." This is tragically true for the Church. The bulk of the men and women represented by Labour M.P.'s are ceasing to waste their time in comparisons. Like Demas, they are beginning to "love this present world."

In Scotland, too, there has been some talk of Christian re-union, and the prospect of realizing it is about as bright as it is in England. The issue of the *Glasgow Herald* (May 26), reporting the General Assembly, also gives a long account of a meeting of the United Free Church Association, which expressed with considerable emphasis its opposition to all proposals for a union with the Presbyterian Church which would involve the statutory connection of Church and State.

There seems to be some move on with the various Churches, established and others, in the direction of another compromise over the question of religious instruction in the schools. The slump in religion is so great that these bodies are afraid lest their mutual antagonisms should lead to the exclusion of religion altogether from the schools. What they appear to be out for is some form of compromise that shall guarantee every child receiving instruction in religion as its parents desire, and to make the teaching of religion compulsory by statute. And as neither of the principal religious parties are animated by any other principle than that of saddling the cost of the teaching of their religion on the ratepayers, and trading on the helplessness of children in order to secure adult supporters for their churches and chapels, they may succeed in what they are after unless that portion of the public that have a regard for justies is more alive than it seems to be.

The King went to Epsom to the races. From one of the papers we learn that he "stepped quietly" out of his carriage. From another that he descended "unostentatiously." One wonders how some of these people expected him to get out, and whether they would have been surprised had he got out on his hands, or made his exit through the roof. One is also left wondering at the type of mind to which this kind of thing is interesting. Also one ceases to wonder at the name of the winning horse of the principal race being "Humourist." Either that or "Satirist" would have been quite appropriate.

During the past two months we have several times referred to the strenuous efforts of the Sabbatarians to make Sunday a day of darkness and gloom for all who refuse to attend "divine worship." One aspect of this matter deserves the closest attention of the manual labourer. It is against cricket and football, train travelling, and the picture palaces, on Sunday, that the supporters of Lord's Day observance mainly direct their attack. Those who indulge in these wicked pastimes are not the wealthy section of the community, which can disport itself on the golf links or in motor cars. It is the thousands of trade unionists and other toilers, the men and women who work in the factories and shops, that are to be penalized for the sake of their immortal souls. And it is the souls of this class that the leaders of religious faith and the privileged minority alike have always been desperately concerned to rescue—for the next world.

Setting the bed-clothes alight through overturning a candle, Mrs. Maginn, wife of the rector of Wormshill, died as a result of burning. The finger of Providence is not discernible in this instance.

Stating that she was the victim of a barbarous system, Sir Robert Wallace, at the London Sessions, bound over an old flower-seller who had been in and out of prison for nearly fifty years. It was stated that for stealing flannel worth about a shilling she had in 1872 been sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. What a comment on the claim that Christianity and civilization are inseparable.

The Lord Chancellor said the other day that the war, and the consequences of the war, were the cause of nineteen out of twenty of the cases for divorce now before the courts. He said that the war had left a degree of unrest that would last for an indefinite period. The public has a very short memory or it would recall that the Lord Chancellor was one of the very numerous band who talked so glibly during the war of the splendid influence of the war on the people, and who denounced as traitors and worse those who insisted that the war should be faced as something that was inevitably demoralizing, the consequences of which we should have to face, despite the very energetic lying of press and pulpit during the war period. Had that fact been kept steadily in front of the people, had they been told that however necessary it was to get on with the war we must expect a time of demoralization, of reaction, and of partial bankruptcy to follow, the evil might not to-day be so great as it is.

But we have learned nothing from the war. Over Europe the conquering powers have set up a number of little states, each with its own national barrier, and petty military ambitions, the greater ones are pursuing that policy of grab, and exploitation, and of dominancy, that led to the last war; they are proceeding to pour money out like water on armaments, on the development of chemistry in the interests of military adventures in the future, and in general are treading exactly the same path that was trodden before the war occurred, and the argument that the only way to secure peace is to prepare for war is being repeated, as though the history of Germany is not a complete refutation of that absurdity. Added to which the war which was to see the end of secret diplomacy, sees England, France, Belgium, and Italy, each with its own secret treaty—which are not secret to the governments concerned, but only to the people who have to ultimately pay the price. If the men who died did not die in vain, it is certain that they died for a very different kind of world from that which our rulers are attempting to build.

The latest development in the interests of peace among those who went to war in order to end war is the invention of gas shells for naval warfare. Owing to the system of ventilation in use on ships, it is calculated that a single shell would poison a whole ship's company. Whereat, the hearts of the godly rejoice, and the Christian governments of the world hasten to spend money freely in order to go ahead with the work of killing on a wholesale scale. That is the one thing on which Christians spend money ungrudgingly.

The Secretary of the St. Alban's branch of the Christian Evidence Society writes a very doleful letter to the press. He informs the public that he has been acting as an official for three years and has written a "vast number of letters" asking for financial and other support. These have been nearly all ignored, and his contributors' list is limited to thirty names. Therefore he is disappointed. Perhaps the people to whom he has written think that a religion with God Almighty at the back of it ought to be its own evidence. If so, we agree with them. A supernatural religion which can only keep itself alive by the methods of the patent pill advertiser doesn't seem so much of a miracle after all. Or if there is anything miraculous about it, it must be the fact that people are silly enough to be taken in by it.

An examination of any of our religious weeklies, or of the reports of sermons or meetings of religious bodies which appear in the daily Press, will reveal curious items of interest. The *Streatham News* (May 20) reports a sermon by Rev. E. Brook-Jackson, which is entitled "The Message of Whit-Sunday," and in which the modest claim is made that "the first day of the Pentecostal festival was the birthday of modern civilization." The same issue contains the report of a sermon by Mr. G. H. Denny, Christadelphian, who declared that the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglicans needed revision, and that the ancient gospel of the Baptists could only be heard to-day from the Christadelphian platform. The same issue contained a letter from Mr. R. S. Yockney declaring that the principal orthodox doctrines of the Churches, including the Trinity, the Immortality of the Soul, and Eternal Torment, are not Biblical. Further, the Christadelphians challenge anyone—a bishop greatly preferred—to a public debate on the scriptural authority for their doctrines, and they offer to pay all expenses. We confidently predict that the bishops are "not having any."

The Bishop of London said, referring to the ministry of women, "I am most terribly in disgrace with women; they used to believe in me, but now they do not." As Christian congregations are so largely composed of ladies, we hope that the Bishop is correct in his surmise.

The kind-hearted clergy have been helping Providence by blessing the crops in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and other counties. We hope Omnipotence is duly grateful.

One of the strangest ceremonies in religious history took place at the Union Church, Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, when the pastor stood at the communion rail and read the ritual admitting to membership "the spirit" of Frederick Hofer, who had died previously. We are wondering how the church secretary collected the membership subscription from that particular bogey?

The effect on character of all effort to reconcile irreconcilable principles is disastrous. The most convincing evidence of this is the continuous mass of apologetic "literature" which, we presume, finds a market of some sort somewhere. In 1914 the S.P.C.K. was early in the field with books showing the baneful influence of Nietzsche's philosophy upon the mind of the German people. In other Christian quarters it was Germany's exclusive devotion to science that was condemned. Yet only two years before the war the S.P.C.K. published a small work of Professor Emil Fischer, in which no opportunity was lost of extolling the Kaiser's services to German science. *Nature*, in reviewing the Right. Rev. Dr. Mercer's *Some Wonders of Matter*, published by the Society, says: "We judge that its author has not a first-hand acquaintance with science." The *Challenge* was even more unkind in questioning the scholarship of some of the S.P.C.K.'s theological output: "We had occasion in a recent issue to comment severely upon the poor quality and inadequate scholarship of certain of the recent volumes of theology published by the S.P.C.K." The moral to be drawn from a study of Christian apologetic is that it is a business which should never be undertaken except by those who have been brought up to it.

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.

D. MACCONNELL.—You make two assumptions, neither of which is warranted by the facts. We do not say all we do in such matters, nor have we any intention of doing so.

M. F. BEESLEY.—Very pleased to learn that the meeting went off so well. We have hopes of visiting Nottingham during the coming autumn.

E. E. STAFFORD.—Article received and shall appear as early as possible. Sorry to learn that you, too, have been unwell. Like the Lord, influenza is no respecter of persons.

ATHOS ZENO.—Thanks for magazines. They are very useful. Have noted contents of your letter.

COSMO.—We already supply a number of public libraries with free copies, and we will send to as many more as would place this paper on their reading tables. If they pay for the paper so much the better, but we should not allow the matter of payment to stand in the way of their getting it.

H. E. WILLIAMS.—We already have posters in stock advertising the *Freethinker* which we shall be glad to send to anyone who will display them or get them displayed.

E. W. JAMES.—We can only congratulate the people of St. Albans on the fact that they have not given the Christian Evidence Society the support they might have given.

R. ELMES.—We have not lost sight of it, but as we have only one pair of hands, and as there are only twenty-four hours of the day, some of which must be given up to sleeping, all things cannot be done at once. There is, too, the question of capital to be considered. Had we more at our command, more could be done. But we shall get everything done in time—unless time is done with us before we finish.

B. W. BOYLE.—Merely saying you know there is a God may be interesting as a piece of biography, but it is of no value whatever as evidence to anyone else. There is always the possibility of your being mistaken.

G. BARR.—Rev. William Hayes, in speaking of Richard Jefferies as "an Atheist who found God," is building on the Sunday-school story that was circulated of his conversion. The story is quite without foundation and belongs to the usual "converted order." Mr. Thorne's pamphlet on Jefferies, on sale at this office, will give you the point of view from which Jefferies looked at the world.

H. E. L. VOUGHT.—We are pleased to see that you are keeping up the attack in the *Thanet Gazette*. We like the straightforwardness of your letter in the issue for June 4, and should like to see others take a hand in the correspondence. We do not mean by this that there is any improvement needed in the presentment of the case from our side, but a larger number of writers is more impressive so far as the enemy is concerned.

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. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

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

Sugar Plums.

When Milton wrote his famous tract in favour of the unlicensed liberty of printing, he was protesting against an Act which provided that "no person whatever should presume to send by the post, carriers, or otherwise, or endeavour to dispense any unlicensed book." The present government has not yet reached the point of re-enacting that Act, but by the difficulties it puts in the way of the transmission of literature through the post by the method of steadily raising the price of postage, it is doing what it finds possible. And it is the easier for it, because when it comes to promoting its own particular political opinions it does not scruple to print pamphlets at the public expense and distribute them at the cost of the same inexhaustible purse.

Thus, all forms of propaganda have already been heavily hit by the increases in the postage rates. And now the abolition of the penny postcard, and the increase in the printed matter rate adds yet another blow. To struggling parties like our own, and to papers like the *Freethinker*—already run at a loss—every increase, no matter how small, is a consideration. They place obstacles in the way of the free circulation of opinion, and we haven't the least doubt but that this is one of the objects that the government wish to achieve. Of course, it will not stop our propaganda, it only creates one more difficulty to get over, and we are quite used to that task. In fact, if we hadn't them we fancy we should die of boredom.

"It is intensely hated, but it is also intensely loved." This is as true of the *Freethinker* to-day as when its founder, G. W. Foote, first made the statement. The boycott continues, and it is literary as well as commercial, for even those who find our columns excellent mines to dig from have little desire to advertise them. We do not complain. It is equally true that the devotion of the "saints" everywhere to this branch of our work is as eager and active as ever it was. During the past few weeks our budget of correspondence has included communications from South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Mohammerah (Persian Gulf), to say nothing of those from different parts of Europe and U.S.A. Freethought is a world-wide movement, and wherever its votaries are found the *Freethinker* is a welcome guest. The Great War is still proceeding, and it is one in which our organ counts for something solid.

"Viator" writes:—

Your recent reference to Sir Robert Stout, the Atheist Chief Justice of New Zealand, takes my mind back more years than I like to reckon. In 1885, when I was in Dunedin, he took the chair for Gerald Massey, who lectured on "The Devil of Darkness in the Light of Evolution." A few years later I was introduced to him in Christchurch by a prominent supporter of the movement for the nationalization of the land. Stout, who was a native of the Shetland Islands, was a schoolmaster in his younger days, earning £80 per annum. On more than one occasion he has, from the bench, warmly eulogized the influence of New Zealand's system of secular education on the moral life of the community.

An American Tea has been arranged by Mrs. Wilcox and friends of the Manchester Branch N. S. S. and will be held at No. 8 Lightoaks Road, Pendleton, from 3 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, June 18. Eccles, Monton, Worsley or Peel Green cars via Eccles Old Road from Deansgate to Stott Lane, Pendleton. Members and friends of the Manchester Branch specially invited. Presents and other contributions can be sent on before hand. Proceeds in favour of Branch Funds.

Nothing can be more absurd than the idea that we can do something to please or displease an infinite Being. If our thoughts and actions can lessen or increase the happiness of God, then to that extent God is the slave and victim of man.—*Ingersoll*.

The Relativity of Knowledge.

IV.

TIME.

As the continuity of matter involves space, so does its permanence imply time. But it may, I think, be safely said that neither of them would ever become constituents of knowledge from these attributes. It was the granular state—the segregation—of matter and its further integration into objects that discloses the existence of space. Similarly, it is the interruption and change of sensation which breaks up experience into more or less rounded events that reveal time.

It is the sense of difference that awakens consciousness to the cognition of existence as it is the sense of likeness amid this difference that engenders that intellectual satisfaction called knowledge.

A perpetual day, with no event, no change and no action in it would give us "no suspicion of time." But human experience, and, indeed, that of all sentient life, is as discrete and granular as matter is. If matter were a "plenum," as the ether is supposed to be, space could never become "known" to man, with his present equipment of sense-organs; and if we take into account the nature of energy it is more than doubtful that a sense, capable of doing it, could ever be evolved.

And in like manner, if life's experience was a "continuum" or uniformity, the idea of time would never become part of consciousness; in fact, there would be no consciousness of which it could form a part.

Time has two characteristics, *succession* and *duration*. While change is in progress a phenomenon is known as a performance, action, operation, or process. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end; that is, it has duration. But when it is viewed as completed and past, its duration, whether it be short or long, vanishes from thought, and is looked upon as a thing without dimension. It is called a deed, an incident, or an event, and as such, a phenomenon has only "succession" as its constituent element in the composition of knowledge.

Now, if one examines his own life during any definite period, say a day, a week, or a month, he will find that it consists of a series of changes, of doings and experiences; or when past, of deeds and events, which succeeded each other much as waves do on the sea-shore. No sooner does one break and vanish on the beach than, in the distance, another emerges into view. They are separated by definite intervals, while each wave endures from its emergence to disappearance. Thus from day to day, as well as from year to year, our life is a string made of duration and succession, and is beaded with doings and events.

We may point out, in passing, that though space and time are not sense-perceptions, and are seen only by the eye of reason, yet their existence is inherently implanted in the nervous and muscular systems of every living creature.

By means of language in the artificial process of education the horizon of our knowledge of the contents of time can be enormously enlarged in all directions so as to include an area vastly in excess of that which is possible to individual experience. In this respect, all histories do exactly with regard to time what a knowledge of geography does in respect to space. It informs you of processes and events which lie not only outside the experience of the individual, of his age or nation, but also of that of his race. It gives speech to the rocks to tell what transpired before the advent of life, or even the birth of the planet. Such are the triumphs of reason in its survey and study of the contents of consciousness.

It may be profitable, before we quit this part of the subject, to compare and contrast the characteristics of space and time, with a view to discovering their differences as constituents of knowledge. One difference is seen in the ease or difficulty with which they are registered in the mind. Objects are easily remembered; events are not, except to the extent that they involve visual elements. "Yesterday," "the day before," and "last week" are ideas which the child learns only very slowly. The "now" in time corresponds to the "here" in space. But the "here" and "there," *i.e.*, co-existence, may be seen simultaneously, and therefore photographed together in the mind, whereas "yesterday" and "to-day" do not form part of a common experience, consequently, "succession" cannot be registered at the same instant. The former depends entirely on memory, hence the slowness in learning time-relations.

Another fundamental difference is seen in their respective susceptibility to measurement. Space is in reality the only measurable thing known, as nothing else can accurately, or even approximately, be measured in *terms of itself*. We cannot make a unit out of "duration" and measure time with it. We are, therefore, compelled to measure it, as was noticed in our last article, in terms of space on the dial of a time-piece, or by some other spatial device. We can no more fix on a unit of duration than we can on a unit of pain with which to measure a tooth-ache or the agony of grief.

Duration is magnified or diminished according to the nature or character of the sensation involved. A painful feeling lengthens a second into hours or days, according to its intensity, and a pleasurable one correspondingly shortens it. A week of excruciating agony is to the sufferer a century, while a painless sleep blots it out of existence. The difference between them is, however, more fundamental and intrinsic still. They may, without abusing the meaning of terms, be regarded as the two complementary dimensions of existence—space, of substance and constancy; and time, of energy and change.

Space is essentially *cubic*. To break it up into its dimensions is simply a piece of artificial dissection, but a convenient device. Length, breadth, and height are, individually, no more space than is the head, the trunk, or the limbs, the body of the animal organism.

Time, on the other hand, is essentially *linear* (to borrow a spatial metaphor, as we needs must.) It is the dimensionless channel along which the waves of change, due to the everlasting redistribution of energy, follow each other throughout the realms of space, whether they are or not mirrored as feelings or sensations in the consciousness of a sentient being. Space is a void in which substance resides, while time is the ever-travelling, non-existent tape, the spools of which are two eternities, the past and the future, on which the incessant *changes* of this substance are for ever being recorded as it speeds along to the oblivion of the eternal past by the die of Fate.

KERIDON.

The Abuse of Education.

SINCE Locke postulated the *tabula rasa* of the child mind, the psychologists have been unable to discover any fallacy in his argument. In spite of the eugenists' examination of inherited tendencies and qualities of mentality nothing has been discovered which really interferes with Locke's postulate. All that has been done is to find that there are variations in the quality of intelligence due to the fact that the child's parents and forbears may have belonged to the toiling, underfed, badly housed many, or to the well-fed, carefully tended few.

On this *tabula rasa* of the child mind it is, therefore, possible, within the limits of the quality of intelligence, to write whatever family environment, followed by education, may please. It is by taking advantage of this incontrovertible fact that the modern mass mind has been retained in a position of minute development.

With the best intentions in the world the child is brought up by its parents in the way it should go, and its natural development is arrested or stimulated in accordance with the type of mind possessed by those parents. Elementary manners and morals are entirely dependant upon the lessons of the parents however much they may be modified by later experience. The object lesson of the selfish child, screaming with temper at the negation of a trivial desire, and the considerate child is a sufficiently precise example of this fact. In most families, other than those of the most debased class, fairy tales and nursery rhymes are a common use both for interesting and amusing the child and for instructive purposes. The lessons of the Hebrew scriptures are also introduced at a very early age, when the emotion of reverence is very strong, based as it is on lack of experience and fear of the unknown which may possess powers greater than the Olympic parents even as the child is instructed. It is obvious that these impressions, the first which are made, beyond the actual physical contacts received by the senses, must be very deep.

And these primitive lessons are continued at school, as it is, indeed, quite natural that they should be. The child is emphatically taught that so is so. He is not shown why these pseudo axiomatic statements are correct. He is merely impressed with and forced to accept them. He is instructed, not in the methods of learning, but in facts, or what are presumed to be facts, and quite usually these facts inculcated are designed to lead the mind to the same conclusions as those which have been reached by the pedagogue. The whole range of education leads only in this direction, the direction of acceptance rather than the direction of critical examination before acceptance. Theology, which is part and parcel of education, though it should not be, assists in the good work, for it is only by means of blind acceptance on the part of the pupil that this "science" can persist.

Following upon the experience of school, with all its didactic and dogmatic instruction, comes the experience of life and the contacts with similarly educated people which living connotes. The exchange of ideas does take place, but it is the exchange of ideas which are for practical purposes uniform in their agreement or disagreement. All the externals of life are designed to add to the conventions of ideas which already exist. The newspapers, the periodicals, the cinema, the drama, such as it is, all inculcate precisely the same ideas as the fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and bible stories of the earliest days of our childhood. Literature, art, and the drama in their highest developments are mere curiosities which are ineffective beyond the range of a very small circle.

The acceptance of these universal ideas is almost complete. Practically the whole of mankind has been so completely inoculated with the virus of acceptance without examination that it has lost the power of judgment. Consequently, that which is most emphasized and is the most frequently repeated is most popular. It is the easiest method of not thinking which postures as thought. The assumption of the majority is that one of two systems must be right; the introduction of a third system is not regarded as an impossibility, but an individual who sees that infinitesimally larger portion of truth which is sufficient to shake the foundations of the accepted canon is at once execrated. It is impossible to tolerate such a deviation from the normal, and, indeed, it is only by

the most severe mental effort that it is possible so far to shake off the effect of the years and years of steadily inoculated ideas.

The penalties of variation are ostracism, and the man who would endeavour to develop independently of the mob intelligence, who does not fall into line with one or other of the accepted dogmas, within the limits of which he is allowed to disagree with all others, becomes immoral and more than immoral: a peculiar person. No greater condemnation can civilization find than that. It is the most heinous crime not to be as other men are.

That crime is visited with all sorts of penalties, not the least of which is the material one that it does not pay to differ from one's fellows or they will not deal with you. Out of this arises a great deal of conventional thought. Those who might be prepared to criticize, to examine and form their own conceptions, find that if they do so the amount of material welfare they gain is less than it might otherwise be. No encouragement of thought is to be found, and the cause of this attitude is the negative education with which the mass mind has been imbued. The line of least resistance offers itself, and since in a physical world man lives upon material things the effort of the system of education is reinforced by another, possibly unwilling, recruit.

Apart from the necessity of gaining from an unjust civilization as much as may be to sustain life, and the consequent restraint upon critical thought exercised because of this necessity, there is the infinite result of repetition. However the adult mind may endeavour to keep itself free from the taint it cannot wholly do so. Repetition in its multitudinous forms goes on from day to day. It begins in babyhood; it continues in childhood, progressing through adolescence to maturity, and its constant presence and pressure must be felt by the most egotistic. The world fails to be egocentric even with the most completely isolated individual, and in civilization too many and too multi-form influences are at work to allow this.

Consciously or unconsciously some part of the conventional teaching is assimilated, even by the adult intelligence, which is striving to free itself from the forms and dogmas of its youth. The whole system of civilization appears to depend upon the acceptance of the virtue of things taught, and the fear of the consequences of examination is so present in the mass mind that it will not, it cannot, it dare not permit criticism. If it did the end would come.

Thus the truisms or apparent truisms which were accepted during the period of education and in which the adult mass mind continues to believe take on the appearance of eternal verities. They are in the character of eternal verities simply because everyone accepts them, and that being so, they must be the outcome of universal experience.

Of course, on examination this is a fallacy. These truths own their virtue merely by means of having been inscribed very firmly upon the *tabula rasa* of the child mind, and in the course of the development of that mind these inscriptions have been kept clear and distinct. That is the abuse of education.

G. E. FUSSELL.

In Christianity the moral laws are regarded as the commandments of God; morality is even made the criterion of piety; but ethics have nevertheless a subordinate rank, they have not in themselves a religious significance. This belongs only to faith. Above morality hovers God, as a being distinct from man, a being to whom the best is due, while the remnants only fall to the share of man. All those dispositions which ought to be devoted to life, to man—all the best powers of humanity, are lavished on the being who wants nothing.—*Feuerbach*.

God Interrupts.

SCENE: *A room in a Club.* PRESENT: *A Military man; a Lawyer; a Clergyman; and an Atheist.*

Atheist.—No, my friends; in spite of all your arguments, you are the very last people to convince me of the existence of God.

Clergyman.—Permit me to enquire, Sir, why we, as representatives of the Church, the Law, and the Army, should be the last?

Atheist.—You have answered your own question. Because, to begin with, you, like the God you worship, are survivals: each of you belongs to an outworn profession, and I assume, naturally, that your ideas are as threadbare as your callings.

Military man.—What! You dare to affront me by suggesting that the noble profession of soldiering is outworn? Outworn, you say, and Germany, Ireland, India, and a dozen other countries, threatening at this very hour the stability of the British Empire?

Lawyer.—And you have the audacity to imply that the lofty vocation of the Law, as practised in this civilized island of England, is outworn? You venture to annihilate Justice?

Clergyman.—Sir, when you apply the adjective "outworn" to our holy calling of the Church, I can only remark that you speak out of a great ignorance. I assure you that the Theological Colleges are as crowded as ever; and people continue to remember in their wills the Houses of God.

Atheist.—Yet what I say is true; all three of you are dying; and one of you has to be born again. (*He bows to the Lawyer.*)

Clergyman.—I shall pray that God may purge your heart of the spirit of unbelief.

Atheist.—First then, you must make me believe in this God, whom I regard as a myth, even as Jupiter, Bacchus, Moloch, and Santa Claus are myths.

Lawyer.—Sir! This is slander!

Atheist.—Myths, gentlemen, all myths; together with a thousand more whose sculptured images have outlasted not only the gods they represent, but the very races that worshipped them. Go to the museums, and see for yourselves.

Military man.—But, if there be no God, who created the Universe?

Lawyer.—And how do you explain the Missing Link?

Clergyman.—Or the Gospel miracles; the Incarnation; the Resurrection from the Dead?

Atheist.—I hear not the voices of to-day, but the echoes of yesterday..... These questions have been answered long ago in books for children..... Let your God appear again on earth, and I will believe in him. Let him enter this room now, and I will worship him.

Clergyman.—A most flippant and inexcusable suggestion.

Atheist.—Why? Do you doubt your God's ability to visit the earth he created? Is he not omnipotent? Can omnipotence be over-ruled?

(*Enter God.*)

Clergyman.—I fear our interesting discussion is to be interrupted by a stranger.

Military man.—Who is this hoary old man in a dressing-gown, with a tame pigeon on his thumb?

Lawyer.—An escaped imbecile, I fancy—somebody's grandfather who had to be shut up.

Atheist.—(*Rising.*) Gentlemen, rise, and prostrate yourselves! It is God Himself! He heard my words; I admit my error. Can it be that, after all, you fail to recognize Him?..... Glory be to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Clergyman.—Really, Sir, you are needlessly profane. Not even an infidel should permit himself to

jest about holy things..... This old gentleman is undoubtedly insane, or he would go to a barber.

Military man. Confound that bird. It pecks. He ought to keep it in a cage.

Atheist.—Holy! holy! holy! Lord God Almighty!

Lawyer.—(*To God.*) You must excuse the extraordinary behaviour of our friend. He is an Atheist; so what can you expect?

God.—Sir, I see nothing extraordinary in the spectacle of man worshipping his Creator. The extraordinary thing to me is that three of you should not know me—you, who are made in my own image. Surely you have seen my portraits in the Renaissance Galleries? The Holy Ghost also has been painted by the Old Masters. I heard you arguing with an unbeliever, and, wearied of the ceaseless harps of Heaven, descended to Earth that I might myself convince your companion of my existence. It is with pain and amazement that, after the many prayers you have addressed to me—some of which I have answered—and the countless services at which you have praised me, I hear you describe me, when I stand before you, as a lunatic. (*To Clergyman.*) You, at least, ought to have recognized me.

Clergyman.—I beg you, Sir, not to blaspheme. I am a priest, and your words are very painful to me. Even one who has had the misfortune to lose his reason should know better than to be sacrilegious.

Lawyer.—This must have been a very benevolent old person before he went out of his mind.

Military man.—Surely there must be a keeper somewhere; or has he really escaped from an Institution.

Atheist.—I cannot understand you, gentlemen. Is it possible that, after all your arguments and protestations, you do not believe in God?

Holy Ghost.—Coo-coo, ooo-ooo.

God.—Holy Dove, I am afraid they will not understand you.

Lawyer.—This is evidently one of those famous madmen who believe themselves to be some very exalted character—a king; a pope; or God himself.

Clergyman.—(*To God.*) I will pray that Our Lord may restore your scattered wits. Meanwhile, God bless you.

Military man.—He must be given in charge of a policeman immediately, and motored back to the Asylum where he belongs.

Atheist.—(*Kneeling.*) Our Father, hallowed be thy name.

God.—It's a wise son who knows his own father. I am touched and gratified that on earth I found one reasonable man. But, since it appears that with most of my supporters seeing is no longer believing, it is better for the sake of my reputation that in future I remain in Heaven, (*To Atheist*) where, for your sake, I shall heartily welcome all Atheists and reasonable men. Gentlemen, good evening.

(*Exit God.*)

A. P.

Correspondence.

THE SCHOOLMASTER ON HIS DEFENCE.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Schoolmasters, like other officials, have such a peculiar method of meeting criticism that it is difficult to know how to expose their delinquencies, since, so far from expressing any gratitude, regret, or sympathy with the sufferings resulting, they invariably assume an attitude of opposition and defiance, and instead of disproving the charges or explaining their methods, indulge in scurrilous personalities, not perceiving that this very obstinacy is the best possible proof of the truth of the complaints made against them. I have simply stated facts, either known to me personally or gathered from the newspapers, and, therefore, common knowledge, and have not direct

interest in the matter at all, since neither I nor my children have ever suffered from such cruelties on the part of teachers as do those attending the State schools, so that my disclosures are absolutely dispassionate and unbiased. Of course the usual exclamation is made that they are a libel on an honourable class of men. Well, I am also proud of belonging to the honourable profession of artists, but if an outsider finds fault with my, or others', paintings, I do not cry out that he is slandering the artistic body, though if an artist were savagely to attack and maim one of the numerous boys who so persistently annoy those who sketch in the open, and who are quite as irritating as any insubordinate schoolboy is to a teacher, much more if he so attacked a little girl, I should consider no language to denounce this conduct too "venomous," and, indeed, he would probably get more than language from the parents, not being sheltered from such retaliation as the schoolmaster is by his official status. No doubt there are many kindhearted and sympathetic teachers, one friend of mine assuring me, indeed, that his pupils are free to confide in him as a father, while another one who had been reprimanded by his committee I found to be quite blameless, but such an enormous aggregate of cruelty goes on that I cannot consider it "exceptional," and, indeed, anyone can find instances without accepting my word for it, who will take the trouble to interrogate the children. "The power to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done," and I blame less the teachers themselves than the official rules which render such atrocities possible. They rightly complain of the unwieldy size of the classes, let them also demand the right on the part of the children (conceded to the vilest criminals in our prisons) to complain of any injustice or cruelty, either on the part of teachers or stronger pupils, to be treated with the respect which is the birthright of any British citizen, small or great, and at least compel the total abolition of corporal punishment, as an outrage unworthy of modern civilization. There should be a committee of kindly ladies appointed to visit all schools and hear reasonable complaints *in camera*. The truant officers should also be women, who can appreciate a mother's difficulties as no man could. The term "Freethought" surely applies not merely to religious, but also economic, social, and educational matters, and it is anything but an "abuse" of any paper's space to expose inhumanity. As G. B. Shaw aptly points out, no sooner is a body of officials constituted than it immediately starts to set itself in opposition to the public, and a prominent want of the age is a parents' union which would take up with energy any case of cruelty in a fashion somewhat similar to the peremptory manner in which the N.U.T. supports its members however much in the wrong. The electorate, too, in this as in other matters, are grossly culpable for their apathy as regards their nearest and dearest interests, although, of course, pending the introduction of the Initiative and Referendum, they have small chance of giving effect to their real wishes in such matters, all else being subordinate to high political questions. Anyhow, why should teachers be exempt from the criticism boldly dispensed by the *Freethinker* to parsons, priests, and politicians?

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

SIR,—It seems to me that Mr. Clayton Dove has been entertaining himself somewhat cynically by picking out all the lemon nuggets in our excellent Catholic pudding—why are there lemon nuggets in any pudding?—and serving them up alone for the delectation of your "simple minded" readers. It is quite true that the chair of St. Peter became an object of ambition only too early in the Christian era, and, in fact, not long after the terrible Roman persecutions. Catholics believe the Church to have been divinely organized by the original message of Christ to the Apostles, and especially to St. Peter as "primus inter pares," but it was left to human agents (as regards their office, in Apostolic succession) to carry on the work of development in accordance with the needs of succeeding times and conditions. The Apostles themselves were so absorbed in the expectation of the speedy return of Christ that they did not feel called on to make provision for the instruction of subsequent generations. This later development is no accretion, to be covered by a pearly substance, no mere accumulation of forms and

ceremonies but the natural and inevitable expansion and definition and application of the primary ideas and commands. The structure of the Church, as we believe, is completed with the last and latest of the Papal decrees, the Dogma of the "Infallibility," promulgated in 1870, which is in effect a veritable rampart built around the citadel of God. Your contributor speaks of "the measures taken by the priests to keep their people in darkness." This certainly is not the case in modern England. Any of your readers can learn precisely the aim, the claim, the scope and the practice of the Catholic faith and the power of the Papacy to its most infinitesimal degree and arguable quantity by frank inquiry. In this connection I may mention the "Catholic Evidence Guild," which has its headquarters in "The Hut," on a plot of ground adjacent to Westminster Cathedral. Here there are lectures every Wednesday of the week, open to all comers, expository of the Catholic faith. Opponents are welcome and can heckle the lecturer to the best of their ability, observing, of course, the ordinary courtesies of debate and not getting too excited. On other days there are classes and special courses for Catholics only. It is true that the Church claims to be the custodian and interpreter of the Scriptures, the reasons for this safe course are fairly obvious. Faith must come first. Doctrines must be purified before morals can be touched. The Church has always acted on that principle and always must. Unity of belief is the essential ground work of the whole system. A house divided against itself will fall, hence the need for a leader and head of the Church. The Catholic Church does not rely on the Scriptures alone, which may be termed its "Articles of War," but depends equally on "Tradition," known to Catholics as "the living memory of the Church." I must also remind your contributor that no man is more bound by law than the Pope, and the code of ecclesiastical discipline. No man is more bound by every definition in faith and morals that the Church has ever made, and this is a fact known plainly to every bishop and priest in Christendom. The chair of St. Peter is no sinecure, as many of its occupants have testified. Finally, the writer says: "Pope Gelasius taught that priests, in virtue of their spiritual power, are superior to kings, firstly, because kings are consecrated by priests and priests cannot be consecrated by kings, and secondly, because priests are accountable to God for the actions of their temporal sovereign." If they are Christians and Catholics, Yes! All this is excellent and I think would be accepted as technically correct by any Catholic to-day, but let me add this passage, also from the same Roman Pontiff: "The sacred ministry ought by no means to arrogate to itself the administration of secular business, and those who have the government of such business cannot, without violence, interfere in the affairs of heaven." Can anything be more explicit than that? It was Pope Gelasius, by the way, who in 494, by his supreme authority, declared the number of the Canonical Books, thus confirming the decisions of Hippo and Carthage.

H. O. BOGER.

DR. LYTTLETON'S CHALLENGE.

SIR,—We all admire the Rev. and Hon. E. Lyttelton, and it seems he also has a certain admiration for us. So long as an Atheist leads a worthy life and is an Atheist because he cannot honestly accept the Theistic position, I take it the reverend gentleman would deem him worthy of respect. Now, what I should like to ask him is this: what is to happen to such a man in the after life—presuming there is one? To venture the hope that our worthy Atheist might find happiness in the next world (and I cannot imagine the Rev. and Hon. Lyttelton consigning such a man to the "Eternal Fires"), would be to ignore one of the fundamental dogmas of the Christian faith. More than this: it would confirm some of our suspicions that the worthy divine is more truly good than the God he serves.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

SIR,—I agree with Mr. Cutner on one point, *viz.*, to what "desperate straits" orthodox commentators are put to harmonize the four Gospels on the resurrection of Christ, and, I make bold to say, they are chiefly responsible for the "contradictions" which Mr. Cutner presents in such "delightful abundance." But he must be like me, *unorthodox*, or, *change his glasses* (either will

do). He asks, "Do the Gospels in any way suggest they are recounting different visits at *different times*, etc.? Certainly they do. Matthew, for example, records what happened in the end of the *Sabbath*. Mark, the *next* morning at the *rising of the sun*; Luke, "very early in the morning (at *deep twilight*, Greek, *Batheos*), and John, "When it was *yet dark*." Surely, we have different times set forth here as plain as can be. But, with regard to the first, Mr. Cutner says, I *conveniently missed* "as it began to *dawn*" towards the first day of the week (Matt. xxviii. 1). Well, let us examine this. The end of the Sabbath is at *sunset*. Dawn is at *sunrise*, or near. Clearly something is wrong here. It cannot be morning and evening at the *same time*, can it? A "pretty problem," indeed; but here is the solution. The word "dawn" is a wrong translation. The same word in Luke xxiii. 54 is translated "drew on." Now let us put these two words in Matt. xxviii. 1 instead of the word "dawn" and note the result. "In the end of the Sabbath as it began to *draw on* towards the first day of the week." Here we get true harmony. That it *must* be so translated is proved by the fact that it is "towards," not *on*, the first day. Further, in both cases the same *time* of day is meant. In Luke xxiii. 54, "the Sabbath *drew on*." In Matt. xxviii. 1, the first day "drew on." As one day nears its end, the succeeding day draws near. I maintain, therefore, that Matthew records what happened about *ten hours before* what John xx. 1 records, and it is "not" cool assumption on my part, but plain common sense. With reference to the earthquake which, Mr. Cutner says, nobody else knew anything about. That is "cool assumption." The two women and the guard *did*. The latter, according to Bishop Porteous, consisted of *sixty* soldiers, and some of these "told the chief priest *all the things* that were done," Matt. xxviii. 1, 11. But if Mr. Cutner means by "nobody else" Mark, Luke and John, the same term applies, for the omission from their records is *not* evidence they did not know. Such omissions occur in all the Gospels. Coming to the question of the stone rolled away and the bringing of the spices, Mr. Cutner seems to have misunderstood me. He asks, with reference to the women of Mark, "Does 'Unorthodox' seriously mean to tell us that the women would have actually said anything so silly (Who shall roll us away the stone, etc.?) had this been their fifth visit?" No, I don't. It was *not* their fifth visit, but their *first*. It was the fifth visit in order up to *that time*. See my last letter. What appears to have happened is this. All the women arranged to meet at the tomb (say, at sunrise) on the first day to embalm the body. They would not reside in the same house and so came from different parts of the city. Those of Luke arrived first, had their experience, and went away. Then those of Mark arrived *not knowing* what had happened. Hence their query, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" is perfectly natural. Mr. Cutner's assumption that *all* the women *knew* of the resurrection or disappearance of Christ at the time they arrived at the tomb is erroneous. There is the case of the two women of Matthew only, and these were *not believed* by the *apostles*. Coming to the appearance of Christ and Luke's omission to record the appearance in Galilee. Well, it is simply an omission, but that is not a *contradiction*. But that Jesus *did* show "Himself alive after His passion by *many* infallible proofs being seen of them *forty days*," is clear evidence that Luke, although ending his Gospel with three important appearances only (see chapter xxiv. 15, 34, 36), and all on the first day after the resurrection, leaves room for *all the other* appearances recorded in the other Gospels and in 1 Cor. xv. 5-8. In proof of this see Acts i. 3. As a matter of fact Luke here makes good the omissions in his Gospel. That Luke knew nothing about the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene is "cool assumption" on Mr. Cutner's part. He may, or may not, have known. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 5-8 does *not* contradict the four Gospels. He names the *principal* appearances to *principal* men in the church for the assurance of the Corinthians. He does not say Jesus *first* appeared to Peter. The name of the twelfth apostle was Matthias, Acts i. 26. As to the then *total* number of disciples that is not known to anybody. One hundred and twenty (about) were then assembled at *Jerusalem* and very probably most of them were of the "five hundred" to whom Jesus had previously appeared. Mr. Cutner must not be so careless in his statements, and

he should read more critically both his Bible and my replies to his charges against the four Gospels. The contradictions *still* "vanish away like snow in the sun," and if there are "heaps more," let them be fewer at a time, please Mr. Cutner, because the Editor has mighty power, and, *I have experienced it*. Let that excuse my very brief replies. "UNORTHODOX."

[We have been obliged to slightly abbreviate the letter of "Unorthodox," but nothing essential to the argument has been omitted—Editor.]

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: Mr. Jackson and Mr. Ratcliffe, "Immortality."

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

OUTDOOR.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6, Mr. G. Whitehead, "Christ Criticised."

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

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