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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Civilization and the Cross.—The Editor</i> - - -	273
<i>What is the Use of Religion?—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - -	274
<i>Richard the Lion Heart.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	276
<i>How Old is Conrad Noel?—F. J. Gould</i> - - -	276
<i>Buddhism and Rationalism.—E. Upasaka</i> - - -	278
<i>Shelley on Christian Communism</i> - - -	279
<i>Shadows and Unreal Mockeries.—Athos Zeno</i> - - -	282
<i>Electrons.—W. H. Morris</i> - - -	283
<i>The Resurrection.—G. W. Foote</i> - - -	284
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Civilization and the Cross.

I have been reading with considerable interest Professor Ferrero's latest work on *The Ruin of Ancient Civilization and the Triumph of Christianity*, and my first word on the matter is one of complaint against the publishers. To charge 12s. 6d. for a book which is only extended to 200 pages by the use of large type, liberal spacing, and wide margins, and which might easily have gone into little more than half that space is, even in these days of high-priced printing, too much to pass without a protest from those who value books as instruments of culture, and who can only purchase works of this kind by denying themselves in some other direction. The publishers might reply that such works have a limited sale, and they are in business for business reasons, not for philanthropic ones, and are therefore bound to fix a price which will pay them for the limited number that will be sold. That may be true enough so far as it goes, but it leaves untouched the larger question of how far sales are limited by the high price of books. To me it appears probable that publishers, knowing that there are a certain number of people who *must* have a new book on this or that subject, deliberately base their price on the number of these people without counting the potentially larger body of readers in the background. And this results in a two-fold evil. First, this limited number of people are heavily taxed because they must have the books; second, the reading of important works is restricted to a smaller circle than would otherwise be the case because of the prohibitive price at which they are published. I write feelingly, as one who knows what it means to be constantly wanting books and being unable to get them, but I also think that this protest is in the interest of a wider culture and a better educated public. It is a question that goes deeper than appears at first sight.

* * *

History on the "Cross."

This grumble is at the publisher and not at the author. And it is faint praise of a work on the decline of the Roman Empire to say that it is interesting. It could hardly be otherwise in the hands of a scholar with the smallest claim to historical imagination. Unfortunately, very many of the histories of ancient Rome are dominated by religious prejudice, and the cloud of misrepresentation with which Christianity has

covered everything when it was to its interest to do so has been particularly fatal to a right understanding of the nature of the Roman civilization and the cause of its decline. Nothing falser was ever given to the world than the picture of a whole civilization hopelessly corrupt, sinking finally beneath the weight of its own rottenness, to give place to a religion aiming at, and establishing, purity of mind and morals. On the face of it such a thesis is indefensible. A corrupt people are not attracted by pure things, and the Christian advocate consequently finds himself between the horns of a dilemma. If the Roman people were attracted to Christianity because of its purity they simply could not have been so corrupt as they have been painted. If they were so thoroughly corrupt Christianity cannot have been what it is claimed to have been or it would have failed to have gained converts. The truth is that both sides of the picture represent falsities. The Romans were not hopelessly corrupt, the Christians were not strikingly pure, nor was there any indication that their aim was the moralization of the world. The ancient Romans were not struck by the purity of the Christians, but by the retrogressive nature of their superstition and their fanaticism, and their intolerance. Yet Roman civilization did decay, Christianity did get itself established. These are undeniable facts, and their complete elucidation—thanks largely to Christian misrepresentation—has not yet been accomplished.

* * *

A Triumph of Barbarism.

It cannot be said that Professor Ferrero makes clear the cause of the decline of Rome, and I think this is because he is tied somewhat by the second half of his title, "*The Triumph of Christianity*." The two halves of the title are, indeed, significant, and in the general outcome, with one or two qualifications, the conclusion arrived at is in harmony with Gibbon's famous summing up of the nature of his work. "I have," said Gibbon, "described the triumph of barbarism and religion," a summary which is endorsed by his latest editor, Professor Bury, who points out that the development of human society from the second century was a history of retrogression "for which Christianity was mainly to blame." So we have a great deal of Professor Ferrero's work emphasizing the fact that the rise of Christianity went on step by step with the decline of culture and civilization, without which it could never have triumphed. On the purely secular side Rome began to work for its own decay when it developed Imperialism. That was inevitable, since all Imperialisms contain within them the seeds of their own destruction. The conquering process goes on for a time unchecked and then dissolution sets in. Apart from other factors, the subjection of alien peoples leads to decay at the centre, with consequent revolt, or the education resulting from a wise government ends in a natural demand for independence. In the case of Roman Imperialism it is not difficult to detect both processes at work. In many respects one of the wisest and most tolerant Imperialisms the world has known, it led to a too great development of luxury

with a concentration of maintenance of mere power, which paved the way for a sapping of Roman strength and on to the triumph of the Christian religion. The rise of Christianity to power was, indeed, the register of the decline of Roman civilization. The one was the reverse side of the other. The vitality of the Empire had to be lowered before a creed such as Christianity could establish itself. Christianity flourished amid conditions where a better religion would have failed.

An Awkward Fact. * * *

And when all is said and done, a fatal rejoinder to the Christian claims is that the Roman civilization *did* perish when it was not beyond the reach of salvation. If Christians were able to say that their Church took charge of a civilization that exhibited well marked stages of disintegration and saved it from its threatened fate, then there might be something to say for the cultural value of Christianity. But that we know was not the case. Whatever decay there existed before Christianity assumed anything like threatening proportions went on much more rapidly afterwards. Manners became coarser and more violent, cupidity continued at least as pronounced as before, intolerance became a marked feature of life, and there set in a hatred and a contempt for secular learning such as none of the ancient civilizations had seen. Indeed, Christianity seemed as fatal to the civilization of ancient Rome as it proved itself to be to that of South America centuries later. The aims of the pagan and the Christian statesmen are not badly set forth by Professor Ferrero in the following passages:—

For ten centuries the ancient civilization had worked untiringly to create a State which should be perfect, wise, human, generous, free, and just, and which should cause beauty, truth, and virtue to reign over the world. The perfect State had been the supreme ambition of Greece and Rome, of Republican as well as Imperial Rome. Warriors and statesmen, philosophers and orators, poets and artists had given their best powers for centuries and centuries to this immense task. Aristides and Pericles, Scipio and Augustus, Plato and Aristotle, Demosthenes and Cicero, Homer and Virgil, Horace and Tacitus, Vespasian and Marcus Aurelius, had been collaborators in this creative work.

And after pointing out that this was culminating in the political collapse of the Roman State, he says of the Christian ideal:—

It completely reversed the ancient point of view, affirming that the fact of a State being good or bad, just or iniquitous, wise or foolish, is a matter which is important only for those who govern and who do the evil, but is comparatively immaterial to the governed who have to suffer from the misdeeds of those in power. The supreme object in life is the moral and religious perfection of the individual; each can attain to that perfection by his own effort, no matter whether the government under which he lives and its institutions are good or bad.

That agrees well enough with the facts in putting the *passive* attitude of Christianity towards the State, but it takes no heed of the positive hatred of the Christians towards the non-Christian government and of the evil it worked in this direction. And I cannot see what justification there is for Professor Ferrero calling this "the grandest spiritual revolution the world has ever seen." There was nothing to admire in setting religious perfection as above secular development. That was a fairly common feature with many Eastern sects, and in the case of Christianity it bore its natural fruits in the ascetic epidemic, which, had it continued and become more general, would have ended in the depopulation of Europe. In any case, the spiritual revolution did not save the ancient civilization, nor did it erect upon its ruins a new and superior one. For when improvement came, some centuries afterwards,

it came, not from Christian sources, but from a revival of the ancient learning, which Christianity had done so much to crush, and from the impetus given by Mohammedan science and culture. And, on the face of it, the "spiritual revolution" could not save society, for the simple reason that it worked upon an entirely fallacious basis. Even granting that the chief aim is the moral perfection of the individual, it is the height of folly to seek to attain that without considering the individual as a member of a group and recognizing that his welfare is indissolubly bound up with that of the group of which he is a member. Individual perfection is, so to speak, a function of the group, since it is through the life of the whole that individuality is created and developed. In the ethical and social spheres that was one of the greatest and the most fatal mistakes made by the Christian Church. The Greeks had seen it, and in the mouth of Plato the analogy of man as a member of the social organism, as an arm or an eye is a member of the individual, the one faring as the other fares, had borne fruit. The most that Christianity did in this direction was to narrow it to a membership of the Church, thus replacing the social and humanistic conception with the sectarian one. The Church was thus retrogressive from the outset. It could not save Rome, and by its diversion of energy into barren theological channels it contributed materially to its ultimate decay. CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Concluded.)

What is the Use of Religion?

TWENTY-FOUR years ago the late Mr. Watts-Dunton published a novel entitled *Aylwin*, the object of which was to create the impression that any religion, however irrational, was infinitely better than none at all. Sixteen years ago Mr. H. W. Garrod, Fellow and Tutor of Merton College, Oxford, issued a book called *The Religion of All Good Men*. There is a large number of thoughtful people who, while unable to accept Christianity, yet believe that we need some sort of religion in order to enable us to make the most and best of life. Of course, religion is an exceedingly loose, indefinite, and vague term to which a vast number of different and conflicting meanings can be, and are being, attached. When the question is asked, "Does man need religion?" it can only be answered by asking another, "What do you understand by religion?" If, for example, it could be universally agreed that religion signifies the living of a straight, clean, and noble life, there would surely be the utmost unanimity of opinion that it is absolutely indispensable; but even then there would be room for differences. Kant defines religion thus: "Religion is morality recognized as a Divine command." Emerson, too, hailed the fact that his age had fallen away from theology to morals, regarding it as "an advance"; and yet the Concord sage was a Theist. The truth is, however, that to define religion as morality only confuses the issue, because, while all believe in morality, all do not recognize it as "a Divine command," nor does the repudiation of theology always imply a denial of God. Looked at from the historical and conventional point of view, religion signifies belief in and dependence upon supernatural agencies. Throughout Christendom it means Christianity, in comparison with which all other religions are pronounced defective, inadequate, or false.

Ealing is a benighted suburb of London in which there are neither Sunday cinemas nor Sunday League Concerts, but the Broadway Palladium is thrown open for the delivery of religious addresses by different speakers more or less eminent. On a recent Sunday evening the platform was occupied by Mr. Joseph

Hocking, minister of the Free Methodist Church and popular novelist, who, according to a report in the *Middlesex County Times*, spoke most powerfully and movingly upon the horrors and tragedies of a non-religious life. In his estimation, life without religion is the most terrible curse on earth. His theology is evidently fully as sentimental as his fiction. The report represents him as talking in the following fashion:—

Now, religion was either a good thing or a bad thing, a wise or a foolish thing. It was not a mere matter of words and names, of differences between churches or vestments, or of the letting of pews or of preaching; it was something fundamental, which touched the very springs of life. To say, then, that they had no use for it was to say what was not only foolish, but tragic, for it involved the crime of self-murder, the destruction of all that was worth living for. We might just as well say we had no use for the sunlight.

Was ever a more twaddling speech indulged in than that? It is a specimen of the reverend gentleman's "reasoning with the vast number of people who say they have no use for religion." We pity the audience if it treated what it heard as solid reasoning; it was nothing if not empty cant. Life without religion is not the ugly, inane, sapless, and tragic thing depicted by the theologians, and it is a black lie to characterize it as "the destruction of all that is worth living for." Some of the greatest and noblest men and women the world has ever seen lived entirely without religion. Was life the destruction of all worthy qualities for Epicurus, the Greek philosopher, because he not only lived it without religion, but used it for the bringing about of the downfall of all religious beliefs and practices? As Lucretius happily puts it:—

Him not the tales of all the Gods in heaven,
Nor the heaven's lightnings, nor the menacing roar
Of thunder, daunted. He was only driven,
By these vain vauntings, to desire the more
To burst through Nature's gates, and rive the unruven
Bars. And he gained the day; and, conqueror,
His spirit broke beyond our world and past
Its flaming walls, and fathomed all the vast
.....and now religion lies
Trampled by us; and unto us 'tis given
Fearless with level gaze to scan the heaven.

Epicurus lived a full and useful life, "immense in passion, pulse, and power," attacking religion all the time, but constantly urging his disciples to devote their lives to the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Most deplorably have the theologians generally misrepresented his philosophy, describing it as a system upon which was founded the adage, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." Two hundred years later Lucian appeared, who made it the mission of his life to laugh at the Gods and pelt Christian beliefs and practices with ridicule. He was the greatest Greek writer in the Christian era, undoubtedly a man of surpassing genius. It was as an incomparable satirist that he won immortality. But he lived wholly without religion; and yet he was not robbed of all worth living for. Coming down through history innumerable names occur to us of men and women who had absolutely no use for religion, but who, in spite of that, found life abounding in priceless treasures which they enjoyed immensely, though often subjected to the most brutal persecution. In recent times, we find Shelley, Keats, Swinburne, Meredith, and others, who, though utterly without religion, have made liberal contributions to the happiness of mankind. The overwhelming majority of men and women who have made science their life's study, have no use at all for religion; and yet their lives are brimful of peace and joy, and they are benefactors of the race. They acquire the knowledge that undermines faith, discover the facts which discredit the fables born

millenniums ago amid the fogs of primitive ignorance, and unveil the laws to which all alike are in subjection. No wonder, then, that at this time of day we can appeal to the theologians in the poet's words:—

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,
Can ye move mountains? bid the flower
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?
Can ye hold fast, for shine or shower,
One wingless hour?

Ye must have Gods, the friends of men,
Merciful Gods, compassionate,
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?
Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,
That ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure?
Or what thing have ye found on high
Past the blind sky?

Can Mr. Joseph Hocking answer? Doubtless he thinks he can; but can he? He knows positively nothing of either God or a hereafter. In reality, he is equally as ignorant as we are ourselves. He claims that religion is vital, eternal, tremendous, both for this life and the next. Then, in the report of his address, we come across the following curious passage:—

True, the history of organized Christianity was often painful reading; there was much that was wrong with the churches, and many so-called religious people were bigoted and were no better than others who made no profession. But that was not religion, for religion would exist if there were no churches. Were we animals, we should have no need for religion; but we are more; we have minds, consciences, souls, and it is these that make us feel the necessity of God.

Here again there is a total lack of reasoning; we only get blind, dogmatic assertions, some of which are self-contradictory. For example, he declares that religion would exist if there were no churches. Then why on earth allow the churches to continue in existence, whose history is often admittedly painful reading? It would be an unspeakable boon if all the churches were immediately destroyed. Again, if religion possesses such an indestructible vitality, then why, in the name of reason, do the parsons so violently oppose the introduction of the policy of secular education in the day-schools on the alleged ground that under it children would grow up Atheists? If religion's vitality is strong enough to survive the destruction of all the churches, surely it must be sufficiently tenacious to be independent of any system of education. It is only on special occasions, as in the case of Mr. Hocking at the Healing Palladium, that such an unconquerable vitality is attributed to religion. As a simple matter of fact, the churches exist for the sole purpose of keeping religion alive; and it is an open secret that, in spite of all their heroic efforts, it is steadily coming to an inglorious end. Even Mr. Hocking knows it, for he trembles with the dread of its decease. He expresses that fear thus:—

To live without religion was to fail to realize the grandeur of our manhood, and to kill the highest and most wonderful faculty within us.....Take away religion, and the whole standard of life was lowered, and London would become a cesspool.

Poor old London! But is not London already a cesspool under Christianity? We read that it is not safe for parents to send their children unattended to the parks, and we are bound to lock and bar our doors and windows through fear of burglars, and all this after fourteen centuries of Christian teaching and influence. Mr. Hocking was really talking sheer nonsense to a highly credulous audience. The facts are dead against him. During the ages of faith progress halted on palsied feet. It was with the advent of the New Learning and the gradual decline of faith that progress began to look up and to move once more; and whatever

advance it has made since, it must be borne in mind that it has made it while the churches have been undergoing a weakening process. With this fact in mind, are we not justified in suggesting that London *might* become much less of a cesspool were its many hundreds of churches to cease to be?

J. T. LLOYD.

Richard the Lion Heart.

The unsubduable, old Roman. The sound of it is like the ring of swords on the helmets of barbarians.

—Thomas Carlyle on Landor.

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,

Pioneers! O Pioneers!

—Wall Whitman.

In the darkest days of the Freethought movement one heroic figure emerges. It is that of Richard Carlile, whose battles are a part of the history of Freedom of Thought. The story of his struggles is a romance of a hero fighting at fearful odds against the embattled hosts of superstition, and in doing so leaving an imperishable name. Carlile's was the true soldier's temperament, supported by the unshakable principles without which no great purpose can be achieved. No misfortune disconcerted him, no defeat cowed his indomitable spirit. He could not be bullied or frightened, although Freethought was fighting for its very existence. Superstition, effectively disguised in the ermine of the judge, was very strong in the land, and contemptuous enough of the brave little band whose evangel has since revolutionised every branch of knowledge and rewritten the intellectual history of the world.

A son of the West Country, Carlile was self-educated. As a boy he collected faggots to burn in effigy Tom Paine, the Guy Fawkes of that period, whose virile writings were in after life to influence him so greatly. For he was twenty-five years old before he began to read Paine, whose books roused the young hero like a trumpet blast. Henceforth he was the dauntless champion of Freedom. Taxes were then placed on knowledge, and fine and imprisonment faced all who dared to speak or write of religious or political liberty. England was then ruled by a crazy king, a profligate regent, and a corrupt government; but Carlile, a poor man, defied the Cerberus of authority, and broke the fetters of a terrible despotism. Remember, to Carlile, the freedom of the Press was a great thing. To him, newspapers were not purveyors of dirt, nonsense, and scandal. They were vehicles of ideas, pulpits from which the evangel of Liberty could be proclaimed, and not the mere media for producing fat dividends for plutocrats.

Carlile was the ideal man to carry a forlorn hope to victory. Handcuffed and imprisoned, his courage was such that he roused the public conscience, and compelled the powerful authorities to cry "halt." It was impossible to suppress him; it was but punching a pillow. Carlile himself suffered nearly ten years' imprisonment for championing freedom of speech. His wife, members of his family, and shop assistants divided among them fifty years' confinement in gaols. When a score of people had been sent to prison for selling Freethought literature the forbidden books were sold by a slot-machine, probably the first of its kind. Among the tabooed books were Paine's *Age of Reason*, Annet's (Skilton's) *David*, Voltaire's pamphlets, and other outspoken works. When his stocks were seized by the authorities, Carlile read nearly the whole of the *Age of Reason* in his speech for the defence, so that additional publicity should be given to the tabooed literature. Nor was imprisonment the only punishment inflicted, for fines, amounting to thousands of

pounds, were imposed. To annoy his persecutors, Carlile dated his letters from gaol "the era of the carpenter's wife's son." Superior folk may lift their eyebrows at such audacity, but the fiery, restless courage which accounted for it is a quality which the world can ill spare. What it can achieve needs no record; it is written on history's page in a life as courageous as any in the pages of Plutarch. Fighting against awful odds, the victory remained to Carlile. Writing from gaol in the sixth year of his imprisonment he was able to say, "All the publications that have been prosecuted have been, and are, continued in open sale." What matchless courage! "The sound of it is like the ring of swords on the helmets of barbarians." Small wonder that the two greatest poets of his time, Keats and Shelley, recognized that he was a true hero battling for intellectual liberty.

Carlile's victory over his opponents was so complete that his later years were spent in comparative peace at Enfield, where he died in 1843. True to the end in his devotion to humanity, he bequeathed his body for the purpose of dissection and the advancement of knowledge. His funeral at Kensal Green Cemetery was the occasion of an exhibition of Christian charity. At the interment a person insisted on reading the burial service, in spite of the protests of Carlile's family.

Thus ended the career of one who, as Browning has it, was "ever a fighter," strenuous, eager, unsparing, often bitter and hard; but he had, as was said of Byron, the "imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength." Such heroism was not without result, for a generation after Carlile's death organized Freethought was an accomplished fact, and Carlile's dreams were beginning to be realized.

MIMNERMUS.

How Old is Conrad Noel?

I CAN only guess. But, approximately, I should put his age at 400. He looks younger, or did when I saw him last at a National Guilds League meeting in 1921, and I trust he will, for many years to come, feel as youthful as he looks; for, in spite of his eccentricities, he has an honest heart and a courageous spirit, and I wish him enormous success in everything except his errors. And even for his errors I am half inclined to give him Absolution, if I may dare to offer such a boon to a priest. If he offers Absolution to me for my sin in writing a few critical lines about him we shall be happy quits.

I do not pretend to scientific exactness in assigning the Rev. Conrad Noel's birth to about the year 1522, but I suspect I am as clever in guessing at things and dates unknown as Sir Oliver Lodge or Sir Conan Doyle. If, as the evidences appear to indicate, comrade Noel (he is a Socialist) was born in 1522, this would place his childhood and education in the period of Dr. Martin Luther (who died in 1546), and of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (Loyola died in 1556). It is well-known that Luther was a fervent admirer of Christ, as is Mr. Noel. It is well-known that Loyola was a fervent admirer of "Our Lady" Mary, as is Mr. Noel. Our comrade is Vicar of Thaxted, in Essex, and, as an Anglican, has certain connexions with Luther's Protestantism; and, as a Catholic (for so he loves to call himself), has certain connexions with Ignatius. Both Luther and Loyola possessed a large measure of devout obstinacy, and the "Here-am-I-and-here-I-stay-so-help-me-God" temper. Conrad Noel, in those stirring sixteenth century times, must often have heard enthusiastic Reformers praise Luther, and pious Romanists bless the soul of Ignatius. I imagine these recitals by the winter fireside, or on the village green in summer,

must have made a deep impression on Conrad's heart and memory. You see in him a duplicate of Luther and Ignatius.

But the engineers of Chatham and bands of rowdy university fellows from Cambridge have not appreciated Mr. Noel's sixteenth century virtues. They have frequently kicked up rows in his church, and torn down flags which he hung in that sacred structure. These were the Sinn Fein flag, coloured orange, white and green, and the Socialist flag, coloured red. The vicar had put up these banners in order to show his sympathy with Karl Marx and Michael Collins (or Ramon de Valera, I am not sure which). He now appeals to the public, and states his case against Cambridge, Chatham, and other sinners in a lively booklet.¹

In this prophetic volume he affirms that the Irish tricolour is "the flag of a devout Christian country and of a Christian movement." He also identifies Socialist ideals with the teachings of Jesus and of "Our Lady's" hymn ("My soul doth magnify the Lord"). If Ireland has difficulties on the road to Self-determination, and if Socialism has to encounter fearful opposition from the *Morning Post* and the world's bank-directors, it is a sign of human sin. Mr. Noel says of Christ:—

We have crucified him afresh, so that even now he cries "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The world may say our Christ has failed—his dream of the Commonwealth of Justice among mankind is nothing but an empty dream; and the world will be right, for it has our own Scriptures as well as the facts of life on its side. But a great revival can save the Faith, and save the honour of the Saviour. Come ye out from the Pharisees and be separate, abandon altogether their infidel Determinism, their passive lying-in-wait, their watchings without work. Christians, ally yourselves with Christ, ally yourselves with the vulgar herd of his followers, with their volcanic energies, with their deathless hopes, their unconquerable zeal; ally yourselves with those who have not shouted "Lord, Lord!" but yet are doing his will. Come in to the great International movement for the Redemption of the world, and range yourselves under its red symbol.

The Bishop of Chelmsford having begged Comrade Noel not to be so provocative towards his political antagonists, the vicar points to the example of Jesus, whose anger against exploiters and snobs is "almost beyond description." For instance:—

Our Lord announces that those who oppose his Good News to the poor will be cast into outer darkness. It will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgement than for those cities which reject him and his propaganda. The new world which he preaches will grind its opponents to powder. To the nations which have refused to recognize him in the hungry, the naked, the prisoners, and the foreigners, he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." He has come to cast fire on the earth and is eager to see it kindled. He brings not peace, but a sword. His gospel will break up families, setting the son against the father and the mother against the daughter.

Now, a good many of us go along heartily with the Vicar of Thaxted in his hatred of the laziness or the cruelty which permits the continuance of poverty in civilized countries. For poverty is as removeable as malaria and yellow fever—diseases which have been visibly lessening since the late Patrick Manson and the acute Ronald Ross traced their evil work to microbes in the mosquito.

But Conrad Noel's method is, relatively to the modes of thought of 1922, a bad method. His fiery celestial

sword may be wielded by Ulstermen and Tories as well as by Catholic Sinn Feiners and Christian Socialists. Both sides can, and do, light hell fires for the other party. Both can curse in Scripture language. Both can grind opponents to powder. Both can say "Depart," and carry out a boycott. And each side, by the very force of its faith in God, can add to the bitterness of its conviction and the fury of its attack or defence. If you call the Almighty to your aid, you are far more likely to blow up the flame of bigotry than if you are a Humanist, aware of your human limitation, your possible ignorance, and your liability to mistake in judging the value of the means of resistance you adopt, whether in language or in military rebellion.

These theological weapons are rusty. The cause of freedom, national, or economic, or intellectual, or in the realm of sex or of colour, is too noble to be spoiled by their use. I will not now blame Luther or Ignatius. Had I been born in 1522, as Conrad Noel was, I presume I should have bullied like dear Martin of Eisleben, or worked for Catholic education like Saint Ignatius of Loyola Castle in Arragon. Perhaps I should have bawled for joy as I stood among the Genevan crowd, and watched Servetus burn to death (1553). For I do not claim to be better than my fathers, or even so apostolic as our friend Conrad. But I was born in 1855, and that gives me an appreciable advantage over the Vicar of Thaxted. I was born in the life-time of Darwin, of Emerson, of Auguste Comte, of Huxley, of Mazzini, of Robert Owen, of Frederic Harrison, of Victor Hugo, of Renan, of Dickens, of Russell Lowell, of Walt Whitman, of Harriet Martineau, of Thomas Burt, of H. M. Hyndman, of George Eliot, of Florence Nightingale. I have had opportunities of going to a more modern school than my aged friend attended, and I have learned—if only in a primer or two—that the human heart and intelligence and energy are capable of dealing with the tragedies and riddles of man's universe without invoking the aid of divine wrath and blazes. Of course, I know we ought to respect our elders. But I cannot help feeling that a man of 400 may be a little too elderly in his creed. I apologise for saying it, but that is really how the case of the good old vicar appears to me.

F. J. GOULD.

It is clear that dogmatists love religion—for else why do they occupy themselves with it so much, and make it, most of them, the business, even the professional business, of their lives? And clearly religion seeks man's salvation. How distressing, therefore, must it be to them, to think that salvation is unquestionably annexed to a right knowledge of the Godhead, and that a right knowledge of the Godhead depends upon reasoning, for which so many people have not much aptitude, and upon reasoning from ideas or terms such as substance, identity, causation, design, about which there is endless disagreement! It is true, a right knowledge of geometry also depends upon reasoning, and many people never get it; but then, in the first place, salvation is not annexed to a right knowledge of geometry; and in the second, the ideas or terms such as *point*, *line*, *angle*, from which we reason in geometry, are terms about which there is no ambiguity or disagreement.—*Matthew Arnold*.

The current religion is indirectly adverse to morals, because it is adverse to the freedom of the intellect. But it is also directly adverse to morals by inventing spurious and bastard virtues. One fact must be familiar to all who have any experience of human nature. A sincerely religious man is often an exceedingly bad man.... Nor is there anything remarkable in this. Religion is merely loyalty: it is just as irrational to expect a man to be virtuous because he goes to church, as it would be to expect him to be virtuous because he went to court.—*Winwood Reade*.

¹ *The Battle of the Flags*, by Conrad Noel. (Labour Publishing Co., 3s. 6d.)

Buddhism and Rationalism.

A FAVOURITE argument of Christian missionaries among the "heathen" Orientals is that the development of Western culture, civilization and humanity is a consequence of their religion. This claim is the most untruthful of all the many mendacities whereby it is sought to maintain that great system of hypocrisy and falsehood which is called modern Christianity.

Anyone who possesses even a cursory knowledge of the history of Western civilization, and the part which the Christian superstition has played therein, is well aware that its culture and its humanity have advanced *pari passu* with the decline of faith in the conventional religion, and with the development of rational thought. Reference to such books as may be found in any good library dealing with social manners and customs, not a few centuries ago, but within the memory of living man, establishes the fact that the greater the faith the less the humanity.

We need do no more than merely point to the long and bitter struggle on the part of scientific knowledge and rational thought as against religious superstition and obscurantism; we need only refer to what is, or ought to be, common knowledge, that every measure which has made for political and social liberty and freedom of thought has met with the uniform opposition of organized Christianity, no matter what may have been the attitude of individual Christians who were better than their creed. Whether it was the abolition of slavery, of the death sentence for trivial offences, of flogging in the army and navy, of child slavery in the factories, of almost every one of the old, bad institutions which seemed to our forefathers part of the "divine ordering" of things, always, and everywhere organized Christianity threw its influence on the side of conservatism and reaction. As each step forward was made, and when the religious opposition was driven out of its trenches, the clergy, with an impudence which is almost incredible, have sought to claim the credit for themselves.

Some of the clergy to-day are wont to indulge in jeremiads over what they consider to be a moral degeneration. But, consider the brutal customs of the not remote past, the prize fighting with naked fists, the public executions and floggings, the gibbeting of corpses and ghastly severed human heads after the fashion of Dahomey and Benin, and compare them with the humanitarianism of our modern "unbelieving" times. The comparison is striking and instructive. Cruelty to animals in the days of faith and piety was a matter exciting little comment. But to-day a little mischievous boy who should tie a can to a dog's tail, or stone a cat to death, instead of providing diversion for a hilarious crowd would probably be chastised on the spot, with a possible fine in the police court to follow. Consider, also, the open, flaunting vice of our towns and cities not so long ago.

The truth is, taking a broad view, that the standard of public morals and of humanity was never on a higher level than it is to-day. And the true causes of this advancement are the decay of religious faith, or, as we prefer to call it, superstitious credulity, and the general broadening of mental outlook, and, therefore, of understanding and sympathy which accompanies the spread of rational thought. The churches are emptying because the people no longer believe in their teaching, and they are ceasing so to believe because it is realized more and more that the dogmas of the Churches are not true. An ethic which is based upon a falsity can never possess any real value. Such is the case with the Christian ethic which relies for its sanction upon a series of events two thousand years ago—events which never took place.

A state of affairs similar to what we find in modern

times existed some six centuries before the Christian era, but the process was reversed. Instead of a regeneration from priestcraft to rationalism, there was a degeneration from rationalism into priestcraft and its accompanying superstition. That lesson may have its value for some of us who think we have the "dragon" down and out. We must not be too sure, scotched he is, but by no means killed; and every effort is being made by his interested devotees to revive him.

When the great Aryan root race, from which we ourselves are sprung, entered India many more centuries than six before the Christian era, its religion was a simple animism which later developed into an elaborate polytheism. The powers behind all natural phenomena were supposed to be beings, somewhat resembling men, but very much more powerful and mobile, moving not only on earth and manifesting through the phenomena, but in realms other than this of earth. The propitiation of these powers was an important duty among our remote Aryan ancestors. The propitiation was by means of invocations, prayers, hymns of praise and sacrifice. At first this worship was a patriarchal affair, in which the heads of families officiated. But, by degrees, as the social conditions became more settled, and social functions differentiated, the priestly office became more and more that of a distinct class. The ritual became more elaborate, and ordered into set forms and words. In this way originated the Brahman, or priestly, case of India, with their sacred books and writings.

The authority to which the Brahmans point for the upholding of their pretensions is the collection of writings called the Vedas. These are, perhaps, the earliest examples of "divinely inspired" scriptures, and the Brahmans hold that they are so inspired in every sentence, word, syllable and letter. A very remote antiquity is claimed for them by the Brahmans, but modern criticism, not only European but Oriental, calls this claim very seriously in question. It is not known at what date the original Vedas were written, but the results of modern investigation show, as an Oriental critic says, that they were "redacted, recast, and re-edited several times to suit the Brahmans' interest at a late post-Buddhistic age, as and when Hindu revivals took place from time to time in the wake of the numerous Brahmanic and pro-Brahmanic kingdoms which came into existence."¹

But, even in the time of the Buddha, some six centuries B.C.E., the inspirational claim was questioned, as the following lines from the *Bhuridatta Jataka* show:—

These Veda studies are the wisacre's toils,
The lure which tempts the victims whom he spoils;
A mirage formed to catch the careless eye,
But which the prudent passes safely by.....
The Brahmans all a livelihood require
So for their gain they made the Vedas.....
Their obscurity but tempts the foolish mind
Which follows all 'tis told with impulse blind,
Doctrines and rules, absurd and vain, concocted.....
These greedy liars propagate deceit,
And fools believe the fictions they repeat.

This is fairly strong language, but it reflects what was thought of the Brahmans by the Buddhists of the period.

In the time of the Buddha Gotama, the caste system, although in existence, had not assumed the rigid forms that it did later. At that period there was a general freedom of thought and opinion which compares more than favourably even with modern times. Every form of religion and non-religion, from polytheism to monotheism, from "spiritualism" to agnosticism or even downright atheism, every school of speculative philosophy, dualism, monism, transcendentalism, materialism, flourished side by side. The remarkable thing about this period was the general spirit of toleration

¹ S. C. Mookerjee, *The Decline and Fall of the Hindus.*

which prevailed, and the amicable way in which philosophers of differing schools appeared to meet and discuss their various views. At any rate, we hear little of the persecuting tendency which later characterised Brahmanical Hinduism, and which has always been, and still is, a feature of the Christian religion.

Such an atmosphere was most favourable for the religion, or philosophy if one prefers so to call it, of Gotama the Buddha. Now, Buddhism, properly considered, is a true rationalism. Whatever accretions, importations or corruptions may have since served to stultify the essential teachings of the Buddha, there is no doubt that he based his teaching strictly upon reason and experience, as the following incident from the *Anguttara Nikaya*, one of the books of the *Sutta Pitaka*, proves.

It is there narrated that a young man came to the Buddha and said: "Master, every priest and teacher extols his belief as the only true one, and condemns that of others as false. I am worried by doubts. I do not know whom to believe." The Buddha answered: "Thy doubts are well founded, listen well to my words. Do not believe anything on mere hearsay; do not believe traditions merely because they are old and have been handed down through many generations; do not believe anything on account of rumours, or because people talk a great deal about it; do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to thee; never believe anything because presumption is in its favour, or because the custom of many years inclines thee to take it as true; do not believe anything on the mere authority of thy teachers or priests. Whatsoever, according to thine own experience, and after thorough investigation, agrees with thy reason, and is conducive to thine own weal and welfare and to that of other living beings, *that* accept as true and live accordingly." Elsewhere the Buddha applies the same rule to his own teachings.

(To be Concluded.) E. UPASAKA.

Shelley on Christian Communism.

The system of equality was attempted, after Jesus Christ's death, to be carried into effect by his followers. The practical application of the doctrines of strict justice to a state of society established in its contempt, was such as might have been expected. After the transitory glow of enthusiasm had faded from the minds of men, precedent and habit resumed their empire; they broke like a universal deluge over one shrinking and solitary island. Men to whom birth had allotted ample possession, looked with complacency on sumptuous apartments and luxurious food, and those ceremonials of delusive majesty which surround the throne of power and the court of wealth. Men from whom these things were withheld by their condition, began again to gaze with stupid envy on pernicious splendour; and, by desiring the false greatness of another's state, to sacrifice the intrinsic dignity of their own. The demagogues of the infant republic of the Christian sect, attaining, through eloquence of artifice, to influence amongst its members, first violated (under the pretence of watching over their integrity) the institutions established for the common and equal benefit of all. These demagogues artfully silenced the voice of the moral sense among them by engaging them to attend, not so much to the cultivation of a virtuous and happy life in this mortal scene, as to the attainment of a fortunate condition after death; not so much to the consideration of those means by which the state of man is adorned and improved, as an inquiry into the secrets of the connection between God and the world—things which, they well knew, were not to be explained, or even to be conceived. The system of equality which they established necessarily fell to the ground, because it is a system that must result from, rather than precede, the moral improvement of human kind. It was a circumstance of no moment that the first adherents of the system of Jesus Christ cast their property into a common stock. The same degree of real

community of property could have subsisted without this formality, which served only to extend a temptation of dishonesty to the treasurers of so considerable a patrimony. Every man, in proportion to his virtue, considers himself, with respect to the great community of mankind, as the steward and guardian of their interests in the property which he chances to possess. Every man, in proportion to his wisdom, sees the manner in which it is his duty to employ the resources which the consent of mankind has intrusted to his discretion. Such is the [mitigation] of the unjust inequality of powers and conditions existing in the world; and so gradually and inevitably is the progress of equality accommodated to the progress of wisdom and of virtue among mankind.—*Essay on Christianity.*

Acid Drops.

Mr. Robert Blatchford returns, in the *Sunday Chronicle*, to his criticism of Materialism, but without betraying any further or better understanding of the subject. He is still under the apparently fixed delusion that if matter is resolved into the electron, and the electron into the hypothetical ether, therefore Materialism is destroyed. In this matter he appears to be under the impression that repeating a fallacy is equal to proving that it is not otherwise than a fallacy. The cruel truth is that Mr. Blatchford is intellectually ill-equipped for a discussion of such a subject, and when a man without the necessary scientific and philosophical preparation starts discussing a subject of that kind he is bound to fall into confusion. After all, Materialism has a history, both in science and philosophy, and it is impossible for anyone to deal with it properly without a fair appreciation of what that history has been. Mr. Blatchford must not be misled because his repudiation of what he considers to be Materialism is taken notice of by the religious world. Christian papers are ready to welcome anyone who tilts at so hateful a thing, and anyone who does that assumes a position of importance for them in their sectarian warfare.

What Mr. Blatchford does is to read everyone a quite unnecessary lecture on things we do not know. And he has quite a long string of "What is—?" ending with "We do not know." This is quite unnecessary, and many of the things he says are quite wrong. We fancy that what he has in his mind is that we do not know the causes of some of the things he names, and that is a different proposition from the one he sets forth. And that section of his article might well have concluded with "What is Materialism?" "I do not know."

We cannot avoid giving one paragraph, because it so well illustrates what he has said above. Mr. Blatchford says:—

I am not satisfied that matter and motion account for the universe and for life. Why does motion move? Why do matter and motion obey natural laws? How did these laws originate? How did matter and motion evolve or establish order?

We are not going to enter into any discussion of these amazingly crude statements; as is often the case, it would require a deal of space to disentangle all the confusions that can be packed into a paragraph, but we think it would be good exercise for some science teachers to test the understanding of their pupils by giving this to them and ask for analysis. The man who can imagine that "laws" originate, or that "order" begins, as though there could be anything but order and law at any conceivable stage of cosmic existence, demonstrates that he has yet to master the alphabet of scientific method and principles. It will take more than a string of age-old conundrums and a number of non-scientific questions to upset Materialism, which, as even Sir Oliver Lodge sees, must remain the basis of scientific thinking.

The Lambeth Borough Council has the motto on its coat-of-arms, "Let us be judged by our conduct." It would be an appropriate motto for Lambeth Palace, the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

There are 5,705 cases of fever in the London hospitals of the Asylums Board, and diphtheria is very prevalent in Camberwell, Islington, Lewisham, and St. Pancras. Truly, a fine example of Christian evidence.

A missionary exhibition is to be held at Islington. Yet this select neighbourhood possesses an Angel of its own.

According to a publisher's announcement, "a true story of a girl's conversion after being brought up by her father as an Atheist" is to be issued shortly. The last distinguished convert was Mr. Horatio Bottomley.

The late Father Burke, of Gortnahoe, Tipperary, left £11,997; the late Rev. W. Hippisley, of Cameley, Somerset, left £4,661; the Rev. G. B. Powell, of Munslow, Salop, left £6,557; the Rev. P. W. Green, of Llywel, left £2,088; and Prebendary George, of Longton, Staffs, £2,222. The "starving" clergy do have a little pocket-money.

Except in North Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries Protestantism has never made any impression on Continental Europe. The Episcopal Church Commission in France, we learn from the *Daily Express* (April 12), has prepared a "boiled down" version of the Ten Commandments, nearly every one of which is shortened. In the new version the tenth commandment is curtailed to "Thou shalt not covet," and this is fairly typical of what has happened to the others. A day or two previously to this announcement the death was reported of Frank Puaux, one of the leaders of French Protestantism. His *Défence de la Réformation* is fairly well known, but it cannot be honestly contended that either Puaux or Sabatier has had any serious influence on the popular mind in France. The pious Protestant is a curious combination of characteristics rarely found in a single individual across the Channel. When a Frenchman or an Italian once shakes off the "spiritual despotism" of Rome he is not seriously concerned to find something else to put in its place.

The *Morning Post* (April 12) contains a short report of a meeting of the Helpers' Association connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society, at which Rev. Dr. Ritson said that the light of Christian knowledge was gradually weaning the most backward tribes "from heathenish and debasing customs." The same issue of our contemporary reports a speech in which the Agent-General for Victoria declared the "white Australia policy" to be of divine origin, and afforded an opportunity, never before available, "for one great dominant race to people a continent." Only the day before these utterances our Press was boiling over with indignation at the news of an "anti-Christian agitation among Chinese students." We English are truly a religious people, with a deep sense of fair play.

At the annual conference of the Strict Baptists' Northern Union, held on April 17, Mr. G. Healey regretted that many sermons nowadays had become mere dissertations on current topics, and Mr. W. Schofield declared that for many years there had been strife, contention and discussion among them, so that it was almost impossible for the denomination to live. If Mr. Healey is right—and there can be little doubt in the matter—why are the buildings devoted to such "dissertations" exempt from payment of rates, and why should the expounders demand, in their own professional interests, the special observance by the public of one day in seven? Comparing Mr. Schofield's statement with the outcry in the Anglican fold against the speeches at the Modern Churchmen's Conference a few months ago, one is led to think that some of the Christian organizations in England might practise a little union at home before clamouring for reunion with outsiders.

Professor Leonardo Bianchi's *Textbook of Psychiatry* is well-known throughout Europe. His recent investiga-

tions of the correlation of higher mental development with the activities of the brain have just appeared in English under the title, *The Mechanism of the Brain and the Function of the Frontal Lobes*. We are inclined to think that this work will not be hailed with unbounded enthusiasm by our latter-day demolishers of "materialism." After considering some of the earliest manifestations of psychic life, Professor Bianchi concludes generally (1) that thought is inseparable from an organ which may be regarded as the result of the highest grade of evolution of matter, and (2) that this matter is still in process of evolution.

The Bishop of Manchester says "Those who wish to gain knowledge read at least one paper with which they do not agree." To complete their education they should read the *Freethinker*, but the bishop did not say so.

During the period June, 1921 to March, 1922 sixteen persons were convicted of murder in England and Wales, of whom seven were hanged. So that, it seems, less than fifty per cent. of convicted murderers are executed, which is a curious commentary on the value of capital punishment.

We all know "the gloomy dean," but, it appears, there is now at least one gloomy vicar. The Rev. R. H. Makepeace, of Broadstairs, says in his parish magazine: "The world-war was going to make everything new and better, but most folk have hard work to find any improvement."

Services "by children for children" are given at All Saints Church, Streatham. It sounds like a novelty, but churches have always catered for intellectual infants.

We see that the Bishop of Manchester states in the *Pilgrim* that "Great Britain cannot permanently offer any solid contribution to European reconstruction while her own political structure is a deception that no longer deceives." When Madame Sarah Bernhardt was rebuked by the late Dr. Parker she wittily replied that two of the same trade ought not to quarrel. To say that we would rather trust politicians may sound startling; there is such a thing as shoddy politicians being kicked out of public life. The politician has to face results here and on earth, but those who believe priests can only refute them when they are dead. In fact, one may say that the politician has to be a shade better than the priest—in the same way that some third class railway carriages are a trifle better than cattle-trucks.

For fatuity—in print—see "The Dying Life of a Poet" in the *Times Literary Supplement*, April 13. The writer of it has the ignorance at this time of day to state that "no military victory, no political change, so much as approaches the importance" of the Crucifixion. Nearly a million of our countrymen were wiped off the face of the map—was it yesterday?—yet this blockhead, with the question begged, must write something popular. If it is bread and butter we forgive him; we trust that he fares no worse than the survivors of the Great War who were promised the Moon—and are going to get cheap emigration.

Alderman Cash, of Halifax, says that while there are complaints of empty churches there are no outcries about empty Catholic churches. They are well filled. We do not know how far this expresses the truth, and we are too well acquainted with the latitude people allow themselves when championing religion. On the face of it we should expect to find the Catholic Church holding its own better than the other Churches, although losing in relation to the population as a whole. And the Catholic Church is the one we shall have to deal with ultimately. It is the best organized of them all, and the most logical of them all—that is why it is the worst of them all. At present the ordinary Protestant churches are being eaten away by Freethinking on the one side and the incurably religious on the other. It is the latter from which the Roman Church draws whatever converts it makes.

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.

A. MILLAR.—We hope that you may be able, after all, to get to the Conference. It is well to meet as many friends as possible on such occasions.

V. J. HANDS.—We quite agree with you as to the importance of the subject, and will certainly write on it before long. And it is a subject that will keep.

B. C. SAPHIN.—It is not surprising that the reverend gentleman declined the offer of a debate. It is much easier to preach. But, after all, he was frank enough to admit that he had no qualifications for public controversy. That should be placed to the credit of his honesty. Most of them find some ingenious excuse for shirking an encounter.

D. DUNCAN.—Your lecture notice did not reach this office till Wednesday, April 19, too late to be of use. Please note that the first post on Tuesday is the latest for anything that is to go in the forthcoming issue.

R. A.—We have no present intention of publishing in separate form the section of Mr. Cohen's *Other Side of Death* dealing with Spiritualism. As it stands it forms an integral part of the work, and we think that most readers would prefer to read the book as a whole. There is not the slightest doubt as to the validity of a request to either the National Secular Society or to the *Freethinker*. The Bowman case in 1917 settled that question once for all.

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 made payable to "The Pioneer Press" and 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.

The *Japan Times Weekly* (March 4) contains a column of well written comment on the recent discussion of birth-control in the English Press. After drawing attention to the support accorded to this movement by Lord Dawson, Sir William Arbuthnot Lane, and Dr. Bernard Hollander, our contemporary pointedly adds that "this important branch of social economics would never have reached its present stage but for the bravery of the great Atheist, the late Charles Bradlaugh," who "braved public condemnation" and "much wearisome litigation." "Now everything is changed," the article continues, and even many Christians "outside the Roman Catholic community" admit the vital importance of the population question. "The society lady of to-day" and "the working girl" are urged to remember that they "both owe to

Charles Bradlaugh the change in public opinion that has made this possible." This reminder is by no means superfluous even in England.

Both the Liberal and Labour candidates for the Stratford parliamentary division of West Ham have satisfactorily answered enquiries as to their position on the repeal of the Blasphemy laws. This question must be forced upon candidates on all possible occasions.

The Bethnal Green Branch of the N. S. S. commences its open-air work in Victoria Park on Sunday, May 7. The meetings will be held at 6.15, and the first speaker will be Mr. McLaren. We hope that East London Freethinkers will muster in goodly numbers and so give the season a brave start. We should like to see a greater number of young men interesting themselves in Free-thought work in East London. There is plenty of scope for their activities.

The West Ham Branch also commences its open-air work on Sunday, May 7. The meetings will be held on Sunday evenings at 7 outside the Technical Institute, Water Lane, Stratford (Romford Road end). The speaker on May 7 will be Mr. Whitehead, and what we have said with regard to the Bethnal Green Branch applies to this one also. Many helpers make the work light and more enjoyable. Those wishing to join the Branch or to help in any way should write the Branch secretary, Mrs. H. Rosetti, 17 Garbutt Road, Upminster, Essex.

Many Freethinkers will be glad to have a short life of George Jacob Holyoake, one of the pioneers of the Secular movement in this country, and they will most probably find what they want in a *Life* by Mr. Joseph McCabe, which is being issued by Messrs. Watts and Co. this month. It will be published at 2s. in paper, and 3s. 6d. in cloth, and will be uniform with the life of Bradlaugh and others already issued. The work may be ordered through the Pioneer Press.

We received a letter from Mr. Gott the other day. He tells us that he is keeping as well as his complaint will permit. He appears to be making good use of the prison library, which is fairly well stocked with interesting works in history and fiction. Mr. Gott says that he is looking forward to the time of his release, when he intends to renew his propaganda. Perhaps by that time the authorities will recognize both the stupidity and uselessness of these prosecutions. One thing is certain, prosecutions for blasphemy do not stop the offence being committed, it merely fills one with a greater contempt for a religion that cannot support itself without the aid of a policeman.

The New York *Truthseeker* for April 15 contains a flattering notice of Mr. McLaren's pamphlet on *The Christian Sunday; its History and its Fruits*. It describes it as interesting and enlightened, and as being the most up-to-date treatise on the subject. We do not think our contemporary over-praises the work, and we think that as there is now going on a rather determined attack to stop the development of freedom on "the day of rest," if not actually to curtail it, some of our friends might find the pamphlet useful as an instrument of propaganda. It will be sent post free from this office for 3d.

During the summer months the Glasgow Branch is arranging a series of "Rambles." The first will take place on May 7. The visit will be to Philipshill, near East Kilbride. Members and friends who intend joining the excursion will meet at Clarkston car terminus at 12 o'clock. Tea will be procurable, otherwise each person must look after their own refreshment. We hope that by May 7 the spring will show some indications of its presence.

Shadows and Unreal Mockeries.

This is the very coinage of your brain;
This bodiless creation, ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

THE evil influence of the Christian religion is so widely spread, and it has so many different phases (and faces), that many daily issues of the *Freethinker* could be filled in dealing with the activities of the hydra-headed monster. A good-sized volume could easily be filled in treating even one particular form of the disease—such as the present-day cult of Spiritism.

I would remind our readers, should reminder be required, that the fight in which the Rationalist or Atheist is engaged is no academic or dilettante dispute. We do not attack or criticise the belief in non-existent spirits, gods, ghosts, Christs and devils, as we would discuss the question of the authorship of the plays of "Shakespeare." That is a question of merely intellectual interest, and no matter whether they were written by Shakespeare, Bacon, or a group, the plays are there for our enjoyment and inspiration. But in the case of superstition in general, and the Christian superstitions in particular, we are tackling the "historic enemy of progress," and the worst enemy of freedom and social well-being that exists to-day. The way has still to be cleared for every reform by the pen of Freethought—which is, indeed, mightier than the sword. The belief in non-existent spirits, gods, and ghosts is one of the most dangerous retrograde agencies. About the silliest and most futile "argument" that I have heard or read in recent years—even though advanced in a courtly and "apparently honest" manner—was that nobody attacks "belief in the non-existent." On every side we can see beliefs in non-existent spirits, gods, and ghosts exercising a very real and pernicious sway over the mind. The *Freethinker* ably exposes the blighting influence of these beliefs in the best interests of humankind—as did the noble band before. And that is why I, in my own little tin-pot way, wield my pen in the cause of Freedom and Humanity as best I can. "Though my name be all forgotten, and the tale of how I died" a little of my ink shall have gone to the making of the future City of the Free. So much in reply to one kind of kind and gentle critic!

I have already examined the causes of the present-day revival of spirit superstition, and some of the bad effects thereof have been revived. The "awakening of the moral fibre" resulting from this belief was touched upon, and, in connection with that, we have to note that the unhealthy atmosphere produced by the belief in spirits is not the least dangerous of its many bad effects. *The more sincere, the more earnest the believers, the more injurious is the belief.* Aye! in spite of the fact that it is a "belief in the non-existent." Instead of building upon knowledge by Reason, instead of developing the rational faculties, we find that the feelings, the emotions, the desires, the imagination reign supreme. These mental states and processes serve a sane and useful end in our life, but only so long as reason is the controlling guide. The emotional type—the sort of person that is swayed by her, or his, feelings, desires, and imagination—falls most easily victim to the belief in (non-existent) spirits.

"Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works." As a natural result the guiding power of reason wears weaker and weaker. I have known more than one lady who, seated by the fireside, "heard" messages frequently spoken to her by "spirit-friends," and who "saw" "spirit-forms" that came to visit her. Among other cases known to me I recall that of a young woman, nervously upset, who was afraid to sleep by herself because she fancied (the effect of spiritism) that she was visited by the ghost of a dead

relative. Nerves, brain, and body of the recipients stand to suffer severe damage from such wholly ghostly visitations in the night. And the bad effects are cumulative.

Spiritualists may say that great numbers of distressed people have derived comfort and consolation from the "visits" and "communications" of these "spirit-friends." Doubtless, that is true in many cases and in some degree; but so have thousands found mental, nervous, and physical relief in cocaine, morphia, whisky, or other deleterious essences.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear:
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
At's weary toil:
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Mrs. Piper's friends could do no more—if as much. It is equally true of spirits impalpable as of spirits potable. The "consolations" of both are equally independent of reason, and their final effects may be deadly. He who wrote that panegyric on Scotch spirits knew both varieties well, though he once said that "hillocks, stanes, an' bushes (he) kenn'd ay"

Frae ghaists an' witches.

Whether as a sedative or as a stimulant—either to soothe or to excite—there is much in common in spiritism, revivalism, drug-taking and spirit-drinking. The results, direct and indirect, immediate and ultimate, are very similar.

There's some are fou o' love divine,
There's some are fou o' brandy;
An' monie jobs that day begin,
May end in Houghmagandie
Some ither day.

There is an old story about a revivalist shouting from the platform, "No one here has ever heard of a perfect man." A sad-faced individual, who looked as if he did *not* wear the breeches, called out, "I have!" "Who was he?" asked the revivalist; and the answer came in lugubrious tones, "My wife's first husband." Stop and think how this sufferer's troubles would have been intensified had *She-who-had-to-be-obeyed* been a Spiritist! Nightly the spirit of the perfect one would pitch his ghostly tent beside the hearth and in the heart of *Her*; while *She* again would pitch the tale to *him*. The successive (though not successful) husband would have to exercise his wits in order to exorcise the perfect ghost. The neighbours might, in a spirit of levity, describe the scene as "a perfect scream." It would probably end in screams, when levitation of the poker and the tongs took place!

A striking part-proof of my theme is provided by the fact that religion, drug-taking, and spirit-drinking are three of the factors that fill our lunatic asylums. Imbecility may be *intensified* by these three evil forces, but lunacy is actually produced by them in many instances. All that I have described is bad for the adults, but it is many times worse for the young, especially for those at the age of thirteen to twenty. Chapman Cohen, in his *Sex and Religion*, has dealt at length with the impressionability of youth at this age, and of its great importance in the later life. That chapter in particular can well be recommended to all readers of this article. He points out how the susceptibilities and impressionabilities—longings and indefinite desires—of those decisive years are exploited by the priest and parson in the interests of their savage-survival religious beliefs. Consciously or unconsciously the same exploiting process is operated in the sphere of Spiritism. The sad fact, too, is that these influences have most effect where they are most dangerous; that is, in the minds of the more emotional types. Mr. F. J. Gould recently told us of his experiences at a Spiritualist meeting.¹ I have attended

¹ *Freethinker*, November 27, 1921.

many such meetings in different places, and I always waited for the "open circle" that usually follows the "merely" religious service. More than once, I have seen a medium picking out a girl of about seventeen years of age. The medium has told her that there were many spirit-forms around her, and that they wished to communicate. Then the girl has been asked, "Have you done much in this, I mean in Spiritualism?" When (as generally) the answer was, "No, I am only beginning to inquire, and know nothing about it," the medium has told her that she ought to follow it up, as she is sensitive to spirit influences and could develop her powers of mediumship. One could often "sense" the nervous excitement in the object of attack, and understand how deplorable the results might easily be.

When the orthodox faith failed Spiritism plausibly promised fresh faith and new proof. But the Summer-land, with its ghost cigars and spirit pegs, goes up in smoke, just as the New Jerusalem—with its Jews' harps, streets of gold, and "Holy, Holy, Holy," morning, noon and night—went out in sound and fury, in spite of William Booth of Blood and Fire. The "controlled" medium, in touch with the spirit-world, is, at least, as useless and as dangerous as the "consecrated" pope, priest, or parson, who interprets "God" to us.

The results of Spiritism are as pernicious as those of any other variety of Christianity. Along with all the other brands of superstition it stands condemned by reason as false, and by experience as mischievous. Men and women have vainly searched for happiness to come in other worlds and other lives than these we know. Fruitless efforts have they made to arrive at Truth by the power of imagination working on subjective experience. "Logical consistency and intellectual sincerity" bring us back to this world, here and now—to purely human effort, based upon accumulated human knowledge—guided by human reason, and striving towards equal freedom, individual happiness and social well-being—in a word, to the Triumph of Secularism.

ATHOS ZENO.

Electrons.

The early scientific philosophers conceived electricity to be a weightless, immaterial fluid, which had the power of flowing through metals and other conductors in much the same fashion as water flows through a pipe. And even as the smoothest pipes offer some resistance to the flow of water through them, so the best conductors offer resistance to the flow of electricity, some of the electrical energy being converted into heat. If the wire through which the current flows is of very small cross section, and is made of a substance such as carbon, which is not a good conductor of electricity, the heat produced may heat it to incandescence (as in the filament of an electric lamp).

The idea of electricity as being a kind of immaterial fluid, capable of being pumped under pressure through a metal wire, like water through a pipe, offers an explanation of some of the common applications of the electric current. But while mere inspection will tell us which way water is flowing, we cannot tell which way the immaterial electricity is flowing.

Of course, one main is called the positive and the other the negative, and there are certain easily distinguished differences between the wires. But does what we call electricity flow from the plus to the minus or from the minus to the plus?

Originally, two rival views were promulgated. Certain substances, such as glass, become electrified with what is conveniently termed positive charges on rubbing with silk; and others, like vulcanite rubbed with flannel, become electrified with negative charges.

Similar charges repel one another, and opposite charges attract. Some sought to explain these phenomena on the supposition that there was one electric fluid, which was a constituent of all matter, whether electrified or not. According to this theory, the state of positive electrification obtained when the matter possessed either less or more than the normal amount, the state of negative electrification being the reverse. Others assumed the existence of two kinds of electricity, which were the combatants of one another.

Now, what is the revolution of ideas which the closing decade of the last century witnessed? The material fluid, water, to the eye of the poet, the symbol of peace and rest, its flow a quiet, continuous, gliding movement, viewed through the molecular spectacles of science presents a picture, compared with which the most frenzied struggles of a fighting mob is almost absolute stillness. So the electric fluid, when it is forced into the limelight of searching inquiry, undergoes a similar transformation. No more than matter does it occupy space continuously. It consists of a myriad of separate small units or atoms, each leading an independent existence, like individuals fighting for their own hands. Whereas, however, we know over eighty different kinds of material atoms, we know only one atom of electricity which is, by convention, termed negative electricity.....The atom of negative electricity, which like the atoms of any one element are all precisely of the same kind, and so far as is known are not divisible into smaller units, is termed the *electron*. The electron is the smallest entity known to science. Just as the material fluids, liquids and gases, are made up of a vast swarm of minute particles, so the electric fluid, the flow of which in a conductor produces the electric current, is made up of a vast swarm of separate electrons (*Matter and Energy*, Professor F. Soddy).

A free electron, by virtue of it being an electric charge, "attracts" a molecule and attaches itself to it when it gets the opportunity, forming a negatively charged molecule (or *ion*).

The positive ion is always molecular in size, and is usually regarded as an electrically neutral molecule which has lost one or more of its normal number of electrons. But the negative ion, if produced in the absence of all molecules, in an almost perfect vacuum, for example, is not of molecular size, but an entity 2,000 times lighter than the smallest known atom, the atom of hydrogen.

The term *ion* was introduced by Faraday to explain the facts of *electrolysis* (i.e., the phenomena observed when an electric current is passed through a solution). The current was regarded as being carried through the liquid by the movement of molecules charged with electricity. The positively charged ions went to the negative pole, and then gave up their charges of electricity, the molecules being deposited, whilst the negatively charged ions went to the positive pole, and gave up their charges. Solutions of many metallic compounds conduct electricity, and the dissolved substance is decomposed, the metal being deposited as a film on the negative electron, by which the current is conveyed to the liquid. This principle is used in the industrial art of electro-plating.

Faraday found that on comparing two metals, such as copper and zinc, whose atomic weights are 63.6 and 65.3, a current that would deposit 65.3 gms. of zinc in one solution would deposit 63.6 gms. of copper in another. But in the case of silver, with an atomic weight of 108, the same current deposited 216 gms. of silver. Now silver is a monovalent metal and it can combine with only one atom of another monovalent element, whereas copper and zinc are divalent (in copper and zinc sulphate, at least), and can combine with two atoms of a monovalent element. There is, however, a series of copper compounds in which the metal is monovalent, and if these are electrolysed, twice as much copper is deposited by the current which

deposits 63.6 gms. of the metal from copper sulphate solution.

On the atomic theory of electricity such phenomena are explained in this manner:—

Faraday's ions are compounds of the atom or groups of atoms with an atom of negative or positive electricity, or an electron less or more than the normal number, in the case of the monovalent ions, with two electrons in the case of the divalent ions, with three in the case of the trivalent ions, and so on. To liberate an atomic weight in grams of a metal requires that just as many electrons should be sent through the solution, as electric current, as there are atoms in this quantity in the case of a monovalent metal. For divalent metals twice as many electrons are necessary, and so on, each material atom transporting one, two, or more electrons, but never functions of the electron.

But until the electron was isolated from matter nobody believed in it as a separate entity. How this was done must await a later article. W. H. MORRIS.

The Resurrection.

III.

(Concluded from page 269.)

It is a significant fact that all the appearances of Jesus after his Resurrection were made to the faithful. Not a single impartial person was allowed to witness a fact of which it was of the utmost importance for the world to have positive assurance. Yet it was easy for Jesus to establish the fact beyond all possibility of contradiction. Why did he only show himself to a handful of men and women whose testimony was sure to be treated with suspicion? Why did he not stand before Pontius Pilate and the Sanhedrim, and show them that he had risen from the tomb, and thus proved himself the lord of life and death? He might have made the evidence of his Resurrection not only conclusive but overwhelming. Instead of this, he left it in such obscurity that no rational man can believe it except by "an act of faith."

We are sometimes told that the sufferings of the early Christians is an attestation of the truth of their testimony. This is the whole argument of the first eight chapters of Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*. Nevertheless, it is a downright absurdity. Suffering for a conviction proves its strength, but not its validity; it proves the honesty of the man, but not the truth of his principles. Every religion and every philosophy has had its martyrs; and if the readiness or capacity to bear pain is a test of truth, the practice of torture should be revived in our criminal jurisprudence.

As a matter of fact, however, the sufferings of the early Christians have been grossly exaggerated. They were sheltered by the Roman tribunals against fanatical persecution. Not until the time of Nero is it pretended that they suffered any molestation from the civil authorities; and the butcheries of Nero, confined to the city of Rome, were only a brief spasm in the life of the empire. That the Christians were persecuted in the second century cannot be denied, but they were not witnesses of the Resurrection, and neither their sufferings nor their constancy affords any evidence of an event that is alleged to have occurred before they were born.

We are not called upon to affirm or to deny the alleged murder of Stephen at Jerusalem; but we agree with Gibbon that an "accurate inquiry will induce us to doubt whether any of those persons who had been witnesses to the miracles of Christ were permitted, beyond the limits of Palestine, to seal with their blood the truth of their testimony."⁴⁴ Every scholar is aware that the martyrdom of Paul is the only one for which there is even a shadow of evidence. St. Peter's martyrdom at Rome is so barefaced a tradition that a crowd of Protestant writers deny that he ever visited the Eternal City,⁴⁵ and the martyrdom of the other apostles is admitted by sober historians to be equally legendary.

⁴⁴ Gibbon, chap. xvi.

⁴⁵ Lardner, vol. vi., p. 253, etc.; Mosheim (Murdock Ed.), vol. i., pp. 70-72; Milman, Bk. ii., chap. iii., etc., etc.

It is sometimes asserted that the Christian Sabbath is a proof of the Resurrection. But it was simply the Sun's day (Sunday), which was taken by the Christians, partly because of its wide celebration, partly because of its mythical and ritual significance, partly as a protest against Judaism, and partly because they naturally met together for religious worship on the legal day of cessation from regular toil. That they should assign the Resurrection to that day was perfectly natural. But in the time of Justin Martyr, a century after the Crucifixion, there survived as one reason for meeting on the first day of the week the theory that Jehovah on that day began the work of creation. What the Christian apologist has to do is to furnish the links between the Christian Sabbath of the second century, and an event that is said to have occurred nearly seventy years before that century commenced. But this has never been done, and we confidently predict that it never will be.

Let us now turn to the Ascension, or the flight of the Jerusalem ghost. This was devised to round off the story of the Resurrection; it was also a part of the mythical conception of a Saviour. The first Christians who taught the Resurrection were clearly under a necessity of disposing of their Master, in order to avoid embarrassing questions. They therefore reported that he had "gone up" and taken a seat at the right hand of God. But their accounts of his ascension, as we find them in the Gospels and the Acts, are as harmonious and credible as their accounts of his resurrection.

Matthew and John, unlike Mark and Luke, are at least supposed to have been disciples of Jesus. They were therefore present at his Ascension, if it ever took place. Yet neither of them relates it, and the story comes to us from the two writers who were *not present*.

How are we to explain the silence of Matthew and John? Did they think the Ascension too trifling to be mentioned? Did they mistrust their own eyesight? Did they never hear of it? Or, having heard of it, did they reject it as falsehood or hallucination?

The second and third evangelists, who relate the Ascension, do not agree with each other. Luke informs us that Jesus ascended from Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem, on the very day of the Resurrection, or at the latest the next morning; while Mark, without any precision as to time, distinctly affirms that Jesus ascended from Galilee, which was at least sixty miles from Jerusalem. Now the Ascension could not have occurred at two different places, and, in the absence of corroborative testimony on one side or the other, Mark and Luke destroy each other as witnesses.

The author of Acts agrees with Luke as to the place, but differs both from Mark and Luke as to the time. He declares that Jesus spent forty days (off and on) with his disciples before levitating. This constitutes another difficulty.

According to the Acts, Jesus ascended in the presence of his disciples. No impartial person was allowed to witness this astonishing event. After making a brief speech, he was "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." He was in a cloud, and they were in a cloud, and the millions who believe it are also in a cloud.

This was a fitting occasion for a display that would have convinced the world, and silenced for ever the cavils of scepticism. The event might have been announced; deputations might have come from all parts of the globe, or at least of the Roman Empire; the Ascension might have been witnessed by a multitude of men of different belief, taste, temper, and speech; they might have returned to their several countries and reported to their fellow citizens, and their independent accounts would have established the Ascension upon an irrefragable basis of testimony. But this was not done, and the Ascension of Jesus Christ sinks into the place of legend and mythology.

For the most part Christians believe as they are taught, without a moment's reflection, and read their bibles as lazily as they smoke their pipes. Their creed is determined by the geographical accident of their birth. What was originated by imagination, developed by craft, and supported by imposture, is continued by authority and acquiescence.

We do not ask anyone to take our word for more than we can prove it to be worth. Let the Christian examine for himself, and we have no fear as to the result. A

belief in the New Testament story of the supernatural Christ does not seem possible to any man who candidly sifts and honestly weighs the evidence. Nearly all its opponents have been men who have lost in fortune or reputation by their advocacy; while nearly all its defenders have been the hirelings of sects and churches.

If Christians would pursue their investigations into the foundations of their creed, they would soon satisfy themselves that the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ are largely, if not entirely, mythical. The Crucifixion, if it ever occurred, like the Resurrection and the Ascension, must have taken place on a particular day. Yet Good Friday, as we pointed out in the previous chapter, never falls on the same week in two consecutive years. It is determined by astronomical signs; in short, it is only an ancient Pagan festival under another name. When the Christians are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, they unconsciously imitate the ancient "heathen," who commemorated at a period corresponding to our Easter the resurrection of the Sun, and his triumph over the powers of darkness. It was at this time, and not in the cold sterility of our first month, that they fixed the beginning of the year. When the moderns are preparing to celebrate the ascension of Christ, they are welcoming the ascension of the Sun. The great luminary is (apparently) rising higher and higher in the heavens, shedding his warmer beams on the earth, and gladdening the hearts of men. And there is more connection between the Sun and the Sun than is dreamt of in some people's philosophy.

According to the Apostles' Creed, Jesus descended into hell between his death and resurrection, just as the sun descends into the underworld, which is the real meaning of Hades. Misunderstanding this circumstance, the Church fabricated the monstrous fable that Jesus "preached unto the spirits in prison," as we read in the first epistle of Peter.⁴⁶ One of the apocryphal gospels gives a lively account of how he harried the realm of Old Harry, emptying the place wholesale, and robbing the poor Devil of all his illustrious subjects from Adam to John the Baptist.

It was forgotten that Jesus said to the penitent thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." One would suppose that Jesus should have said, "This day thou shalt be with me in hell," unless he forgot his destiny, and kept the poor thief waiting outside the pearly gates of heaven until his *chaperon* arrived, either on the Sunday or Monday following, or after an interval of forty days—according to which New Testament narrative is accepted.

Leaving the mythological for the more practical aspect of the case, let us press a question which has been put already: The resurrection of Jesus is the basis of Christianity. If he did not rise Paul thought all his preaching in vain, and told his co-religionists that if in this life only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men the most miserable. It is also evident from the New Testament that belief is necessary to salvation. Why did not Jesus Christ, then, establish the fact of his resurrection beyond all dispute, so that belief might be easy and simple, and heaven be filled with human beings at the expense of hell? Why did he not appear to his enemies as well as his friends? Why did he not act so that the whole world might have been convinced?

The only explanation of the secrecy of Christ's appearances is the fact that they are imaginary. Every statement about him was made by his own followers. To allege that he was seen by outside persons would have been to challenge criticism and incur refutation. Consequently this course was avoided. For even the grossest superstition has an instinct of self-preservation which bids it shun the light.

Miracles are derided at home and believed at a distance, and those of the New Testament have not escaped the universal law. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is accepted in foreign countries, but rejected in the land of his birth and the scene of his achievements. The Jews who lived in Palestine were not convinced of his supernatural character. They denied it; their descendants deny it to this day; and the denial has cost them ages of misery and rivers of blood. It is related that the great Czar Nicholas,

one Easter morning, when walking the round of his palace, came to a sentinel who happened to be a Jew. The lord of all the Russias gave the morning's salutation, "Christ is Risen." The Jewish sentinel grounded his musket, and said, "Christ is *not* risen." There they stood—the Christian Czar and the Jewish sentinel—gazing at each other, and typifying the conflict of centuries. "Christ is risen," say millions of aliens to the land of his birth. "Christ is *not* risen," says the descendants of his countrymen. They have asserted it amidst unparalleled persecution; amidst torture, outrage, and spoliation; amidst the ruin of their homes, the massacre of their families, and the violation of their wives and daughters; and amidst fires of countless stakes, where they were burnt to ashes for the greater glory of Christ. Denied the rights of citizenship, confined to special parts of a few cities, and restricted to despised occupations, the Jews lifted their heads with pride as they saw the superstition of their oppressors; and something of granite endurance rose within them as they remembered that they lived before the Nazarenes and might outlive the last of them.

Are they or their persecutors in the right? Does the truth in this matter rest with the bigot or his victim? Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ a fact, or a legend that comes to us from the far-off ages of ignorance and credulity? Let the reader decide the question for himself.

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

GOD AND SUFFERING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A week or two ago Mr. Baker, writing from Harrismith in the capacity of "a plain matter-of-fact citizen," twits me with talking nonsense when I imply that suffering is not altogether an evil. (This is not the same thing as to say it is an unmixed blessing.) Now, since the world began many truths have been dubbed as nonsense by "plain" citizens, some of them very "matter-of-fact," some very imaginative. Let us see if this is not a case in point.

Mr. Baker's instance is as follows: "No earthly father will consciously inflict suffering on his child." Is that so? Nor the schoolmaster? Let me tell Mr. Baker that if he were in charge of some hundreds of young Anglo-Saxons it would not be long before he would find himself inflicting suffering not only consciously, but of set purpose, and in active confidence that he was doing some youngster good. I once had a terrier pup. He mauled one of my ducklings. I laid on him smartly with a hazel switch, and had no doubt it hurt him. The terrier loved me devotedly from that day onwards, and I maintain that that suffering was a blend of good and evil, the good in it being inextricably bound up with the pain. Some "plain citizens" to-day boast that they never inflict corporal chastisement on their sons. If so, I am sorry for the sons, and still more sorry for the "plain" fathers; but even these people guided "by reason and experience" will frown upon a naughty child with intent that the child should feel pain. If the father refrained from the frown as well as from the rod I should hesitate to call him a philosopher, but would he not justly be styled an ass?

Imagine our lives without pain. It has often been pointed out that there would be no check to the spread of disease if all disease were painless. Millions of Englishmen are criminally careless about disease now, but suppose there were no pain to deter them; what then? Does Mr. Baker begin every day with a groan at having to get out of bed? A good many of us, I fancy, do so; but some few would acknowledge that if mankind had not, one and all, had to get out of bed once a day we should all have been in the pit long ago. Is it really so very "absurd" to say that in the pain of that daily effort there is an ingredient of good?

More broadly; we have to admit that life without contrasts would be a wretched, barren thing, duller than words can say. Now, by contrasts I mean such as sickness and convalescence; light and darkness; extremes of temperature and moderation; success after failure, etc. One of each couple has an ingredient of pain in it. But without that ingredient the opposite thing would soon

become a mere weariness. The joy of spring is due to the previous gloom of winter. Therefore, that gloom is not wholly an evil.

Mr. Baker ends by saying that he has been "disappointed" at finding no cogent arguments for Theism in the *Parson and the Atheist*. But why "disappointed"? I should have thought that after being a convinced Atheist for a quarter of a century, that is, not wanting a God, he would have been pleased to find the Theists have nothing to say. Does his disappointment mean that he is unconsciously seeking God all the time?

This question is not meant as an insult!

E. LYTTELTON.

ARTHUR LYNCH'S "ETHICS."

SIR,—While thanking you for a considerate and thoughtful review of my "Ethics," I beg a little space in order to refer to certain points which you have suggested, and which seem to me of wide general interest.

First of all, with regard to my chapter on the *Immortality of the Soul* and my search for *Purpose*, I do not, of course, profess that the reasonings here have the same definiteness and force as those by which I establish my foundations. The discussion of *Purpose* may be looked upon simply as a series of tentative speculations, in the search for some wide general law which would group together many of those explanation of phenomena which we call Laws of Nature.

Where you speak of my "versatility" you rightly take up the point that what might appear as versatility arises possibly from a central source of thought. Thus, for example, if a man grasps the general solution of a problem in mathematics, represented in an abstract way, he may apply his methods to a vast number of concrete examples which, to a casual view, might not seem capable of classification under one category. Now it is of the very essence of my psychology that I have formulated—by means of the Fundamental Processes—the general modes of working of the mind throughout the whole scope of thought. Since coming into full possession of my instrument I have re-read through some of my old studies, and I find that I see through quickly, and in more extended relations, problems which formerly gave me a great amount of toil.

It is infrequent, I acknowledge, that one publishes a volume of Sonnets, followed by a highly technical exposition of psychology, but there is no real antagonism. On the contrary, I hold that there is something deficient in a scientific man who does not feel some great impetus of poetry as the driving force of his work. All that seemed natural to the Greeks, and it is with them that I feel the closest sympathy, possibly affinity, both on the intellectual and moral sides.

The deep source of all my work is to be found in this emotional fount, but having seen that most of the ideas which I had thrown out in my literary work, including the Sonnets, had missed their intent, because they were unfamiliar, I resolved to set out in a manner of consecutiveness, exceedingly close, the reasons which had led me to these ideas. I do not say that that was the only line of speculation that led me to the formal exposition of my Psychology and Ethics, but it was not the least important of the various currents which led in that direction.

I call my work the Althian System, meaning thereby the "Truth System," but if it be taken as the True "System" I am prepared to accept that description, even if it be thrown out as a challenge.

At one time to have been called the successor of Herbert Spencer would have filled me with delight, for you will see in others of my writings how profound has been my respect for his work. I say now, definitely, however, that I have done something better. Had I not thought so, I would not have published either of these works. I have lately, however, been looking over Herbert Spencer again, and I have been surprised to find how loose his reasoning seems to me, even in the *Principles of Psychology*. That remark is true, especially with regard to various amplifications and corollaries, but it is also true in regard to the foundational lines on which he bases his work.

Finally, I beg you, and all readers, not to dwell too much upon points of difference you may have with me, for example, in regard to *Purpose*, but to see how

enormous is the scope of application of this work, and to observe in what manner I have established a mode of intellectual discipline that will bring the world at length to sanity. In this effort I want all men of good will to aid me.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

Obituary.

This intimation and slight tribute from an old and close friend has been unavoidably delayed. On February 20 last, in a London hospital, Alice Ada, wife of H. Stewart Wishart, was released from pain by death at the age of forty-nine. They had had twenty-one years of joy and sorrow, ups and downs, together, and were more to each other towards the end than even at the start. In the years when he was very actively engaged—forward in the fight for Freedom—Mrs. Wishart bore more than her full share of the stress and strain of the struggle. She suffered much. During the war the long, drawn-out, tragic illness, and death in 1917, of their daughter, Margaret Alice, was a physical and mental ordeal beyond description—with this finally fatal result to the mother. Many hopes died with their daughter's death, though she still "lives in minds made better by her presence"; and further hopes have followed now. Latterly, Mrs. Wishart had suffered sorely, but the end was painless. Unfortunately, Mr. Wishart was not in England, and could not say a last "Good-bye." For him—

With meditating that she must die once,
I have the patience to endure it now.

Husband, son and daughter remain to remember wife and mother—and carry on. For those who live, indeed "The Moving Finger writes"; but for those gone—

There are no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.

A. Z.

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 (241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 7.30 till 11 Grand Dance. Tickets 1s. 6d. Jazz Band in attendance. Discussion Circle meets every Wednesday at 7.30 at "Coronet" Hotel, Soho Street, W. Strangers welcome.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. C. Ratcliffe, "Sin, Conversion, Salvation."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Problems of Marriage."

COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's): 6.45 prompt, Mr. H. R. Youngman, Sir Ray Lankester's book, "Science from an Easy Chair—with some Misconceptions."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (12 Straker Terrace, Tyne Dock): 6.30, Mr. J. Hannon, "Workers' Education and Secularism." Conference business.

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