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Views and Opinions.

On Education.

It is an unfortunate fact that very large numbers of people in this country do not take education very seriously. As an abstract proposition all will admit that children ought to be educated, but that granted, the whole question is put on one side as of not very great consequence, and as being mainly a question between faddists of various schools—one on which “practical” men cannot afford to waste their time. (An exception must be made on behalf of the Scotch, who certainly take education more seriously than we do.) But a large proportion of our own working-class are only too eager to take their children from school and set them to some occupation by which a few shillings may be earned, and among the better off classes the desire to send their children to a “good” school is quite as much a matter of social prestige as it is of a desire for a genuinely good education. The depressing advertisements of “schools for the children of gentlemen” which disfigure so many of our English landscapes, and the support of small private schools, where the education is generally of a poor quality, will always give the thoughtful student of life material for reflection. Again, during the war, when economy was the general cry, education was the first thing economised, in spite of advances in the salaries of teachers. And now that the war is over, while we can afford to build battleships at six millions each, or pour out millions in military adventures, school staffs are cut down and classes enlarged, which mean a lower and poorer education. If the Germans cannot or will not pay for the war the children must. At any rate they have no votes, and so “Make the children pay for the war” is a safe policy for politicians to adopt.

* * *

The Clergy to the Front.

The clergy of the Established Church have always been hostile in spirit to genuine education among the masses of the people—and they of the other Churches are none too fond of an education which should really be worth having; and this spirit, like murder, will out. Dean Welldon quite recently, and, presumably, in case there should be any lingering doubt of the wisdom of this policy of economising on education, rushed into print with an account of what some business friends

had told him, backed up with certain of his own observations. His friends complained that the education the boys received did not fit them for their work in the factory or in the office, they were deficient in good manners, and it was doubtful if the schools were even turning out good citizens. And, naturally, the ordinary member of the public will reason that if these statements are true then we are not getting value for the money we spend on education. Our educational system is a failure. The Dean has said so—even the working man no longer treats dignitaries of the Church with the respect they should and would if they were properly trained. And yet I fancy that all the Dean says might be quite true without it seriously affecting the value of our educational system, so long as it effected certain other things. It largely depends upon what we conceive the aim of education to be. As a parson, and one whose income and status is wholly dependent upon the *kind* of education the rising generation receives, Dean Welldon naturally inclines to the good old instruction which told the children of the “lower” classes that it was their Christian duty to honour all who are in authority—whether they be good or bad—and “to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters, to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters.” That is the plain teaching of the Catechism. It is also the spirit of the teaching of the New Testament and the Christian Church; and it explains why the people have always been well supplied with churches and chapels, whatever they may have gone short of in other directions. If one wishes to breed a nation of slaves, one’s ethical teaching must be in accord with one’s aim.

* * *

What is Education?

Now it would be of benefit—to some—if a boy when leaving school had been so drilled that he was quite fitted to take up his duties in the office or in the workshop. But would it be to the benefit of the boy? On that I have my doubts. It would, of course, be an efficient education, but so would any kind of training, viewed as mere efficiency, whether it taught a boy to play his part well in the battle for a better life, or in the industry of a thieves’ kitchen. But mere efficiency is not exactly what most have in their minds when they speak of a good education. Nor do I think it is the business of the school to turn out “hands” for the merchant or the manufacturer. The business of ing suitable servants is theirs. If they cannot do their claim to be called leaders of industry is forfeited. They who think otherwise belong to the type who can see no good in training a Faraday or a Darwin because there is no money in it. And, after all, to become a good office hand or a good mechanic should not be the end of education, even though a really good education will make a more efficient clerk or a better mechanic. These are the means to an end; they are not ends in themselves, and the society that forgets this is harbouring the seeds of decay, even though it may turn out characters that quite fill the programme of the Catechism.

The "Good" Citizen.

When all is said and done concerning manners this must always remain mainly a question of home influence. Even there manners cannot be taught in set lessons. One may be taught how to use one's knife and fork, how to enter and leave a room, with all that young ladies' schools used to describe as "deportment," and yet these may all leave one essentially bad-mannered and vulgar. Really good manners must come through a cultivation of the imaginative and sympathetic qualities, and Dean Welldon's criticism is quite as much directed against the value of the Christian home as against anything else. Nor am I convinced that it should be the aim of education to turn out what is called "good citizens." Who is the good citizen? Is it the Freethinker? Or the reformer? Or the man who is seeking to establish some new form of government, or is fighting against some established institution? In the eyes of a governing body, and certainly in the eyes of a governing Church, none of these would deserve the name. The conventional "good citizen" is the one who obeys orders when they are given, who never tries to disturb established opinions, and who bears himself reverently to those in authority; and of all the citizens he is the one who does least for the betterment of the world. We cannot, of course, all be agitators and reformers, but it is absurd to aim at an education that forms the opposite type. That would probably suit Dean Welldon, who is merely a projection of the less civilized past into the more civilized present, but it would certainly not make for social progress.

* * *

The Aim of Education.

So I conclude that it should not be the aim of education to turn out good clerks, good workmen in specific trades, or even "good citizens." A really good education would enable a boy to become anyone of these just as his inclination led him, but that is all his education should do. But that will mean a radical alteration of the official view of education. We must pay more attention to quality and less to quantity. Not what a boy knows, but what his education enables him to learn and master must be the test. A mere cramming with facts is not education at all. A man has not received a scientific education because he has loaded his mind with a multitude of curious and interesting facts, but only as he has learned to think in a scientific manner, and that is a quality which very few of our so-called scientists display. Education is in essence a training of capacity; it is, therefore, more a drawing out than it is a putting in. The best of our teachers are beginning to realize this, and I fancy it is realized as strongly in the elementary school as in the higher ones, and certainly more than in the "schools for the children of gentlemen." Some of the biggest fools I have ever met have been what the world calls educated, and some of the keenest intellects among those who could boast very little of that quality. If we can see to it that our children leave their bodies well nourished and their minds well developed, or thinking—for doing their own thinking—well developed, if we can excite the same desire for mental recreation, we shall have gone a long way towards making the really good citizen. But it will not be the good citizen of the government office or of the church. He will be too thoughtful, too critical, too little afraid of authority for that. But he will be able to look at the world with the eye of a trained intelligence and with the supreme aid of mental independence. That may mean the end of a great many things which we now look upon as indispensable, and the beginning of others that we now treat as wild imaginings; but the world will be the better for the comings and the goings, for it is what goes out of the

world no less than what comes into it that makes for progress. The laws of life and death are not fundamentally antagonistic. In the deepest and truest synthesis they are complementary, and that is as true of ideas and institutions as it is of organisms.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Broad and Narrow Ways."

DEAN INGE is unquestionably one of the most brilliant men in the Anglican Church at the present time. Intellectually it can scarcely be said that he has a compeer. His Thursday articles in the *Evening Standard* are, for the most part, literary gems of the first water, and thousands eagerly look forward to their appearance week after week. Theologically he is a mystic, vague, ambiguous, vapoury, like most other mystics in all countries and ages. Judged in the light of the theological schools it is impossible to say where exactly he stands. At times it seems quite clear that his sympathies are with the Modernists. Heresy hunts are an abomination in his sight. The Bishop of Zanzibar is a vehement obscurantist, who has nothing but flaming curses for broad Churchmen to whose appointment as bishops or deans he most bitterly objects; and Dean Inge quotes the following limerick, which he should like to have written himself:—

There was once a Zanzibarbarian
Who thought that some Bishops were Arian;
So he wired to Randall
For bell, book, and candle;
But Randall—well, Randall's a wary 'un.

Dean Inge shows his Modernist leanings by defending his friend, Dr. Rasdall, Dean of Carlisle, against the furious attacks made upon him by prominent members of the Catholic party, chief among whom was Bishop Gore. Dr. Rasdall's views he characterizes as "not really 'dangerous.'" The following passage affords us some idea of where he stands:—

Official religion does not amputate its dead branches; it leaves them to drop off quietly. Nobody any longer believes in modern miracles, or in witchcraft, which even John Wesley accepted. The discoveries of geology about the age of the earth and of physics about the heavenly bodies, have been admitted, though their implications have been very imperfectly realized; the doctrine of evolution may now be avowed even in the pulpit.

And yet the Dean is not a Modernist in the theological sense of that term. He is to a great extent a non-descript divine, but to his finger-tips a Christian divine. In a short sermon, published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of December 14, he gives expression to some prejudices common to the parsonry. The text is the well-known verses: "Enter ye in at the straight gate, for.....strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life," and "Thy commandment is exceeding broad," and the preacher's first observation is that "there is no subject, no idea, which Christ has touched without giving it a new breadth, a wider and larger scope." The discourse consists in a series of alleged illustrations of that observation. The Dean takes first the idea of God, and says:—

What had become of this idea in the ancient world? Each nation had its god, narrow, exclusive, and jealous; sombre in the peoples of the north, majestic and beautiful among the Greeks, nebulous abstractions among the Romans, sanguinary and voluptuous monsters in Asia. If there were philosophers who had risen to the idea of one God, that God was not a Father in heaven. He was hardly a God to whom they could lift up their hearts in prayer. Christ came and levelled these barriers.

There is much truth in what the Dean says, but he seems to forget that what he is dealing with is the

evolution of the idea of God. Do we not learn from the Greek religion that Zeus was regarded as the Father of gods and men? Is it not an indisputable fact that the Greater Prophets describe Jehovah as the God of the whole earth and the Father of his people, although originally he was as narrow, exclusive, jealous and monstrous as any Gentile deity ever was? The truth is that the Gospel Jesus had nothing new to say about God, though he may have put greater emphasis upon his Fatherhood than had hitherto been done; and even this was but one slight stage in the long process of the evolution of the idea. It is easy enough to assert, as Dean Inge does, that modern thought cannot pass beyond the New Testament conception of God; but the fact is that modern thought is not concerned about God at all. Modern thought devotes itself to a scientific study of Nature and her laws, which study yields no evidence whatever of the existence of an infinite, omnipotent Father, who sitteth as king for ever, and doeth according to his will throughout the universe, and particularly in human affairs.

Then the Dean takes the idea of humanity, and claims that in Christianity it has reached its perfect and final development. He says:—

The nations were separated, like their gods. The Greek divided humanity into Greeks and barbarians; the Roman into citizens and subjects; the Jew into Israelites and Gentiles. Christ now said: "Ye are all brethren, for ye all have the same Father in heaven." St. Paul told us what this means: "In Christ there is no longer male or female, Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free. Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

In that short extract the Dean misrepresents both Paganism and Christianity. Has he forgotten the social and moral maxims of the Stoic philosophers? Did they not teach in most emphatic terms that all men were equal because they were all brothers? Did they not discover that ideal universalism which banished nationalities, condemned slavery, and made war an absurdity? Two famous scholars, Uhlhorn and Harnack, agree that they did; and we maintain that their teaching on this subject was superior to Paul's. What Paul insists upon is not the oneness of humanity as such, but of Christian believers. The brotherhood he extols is the brotherhood of the saints, not of mankind. The solidarity of the race was never a Christian sentiment, although many present day preachers, imbued with the modern socialistic ideal, falsely proclaim it as a Christian doctrine.

Equally misleading are the Dean's observations on the enlargement of the destiny of the individual man by the Christian religion. On this point the preacher gives vent to a flood of emotionalism, ending by saying that "this is a good world for us," thereby contradicting St. John when he deliberately and solemnly warns us against loving the world or the things that are in it. But it is the hope of immortality that gives wings to the Dean's imagination, though he knows full well that the effect of cherishing it has generally been retirement from this world and its duties to meditate in solitude upon the next and foretaste its joys. Among its most prominent creations are monasteries and nunneries, which for centuries were cesspools of immorality and wickedness.

This brief discourse is also remarkable for its astounding admissions. The following are samples:—

There are so many moralizing and civilizing agencies, so many veiled priests and prophets, so many volunteer guides offering their services, that we are able to pick and choose, and we like to do so.

Some of the ablest and most stimulating of our teachers do not profess to be Christians.

We may hope that the kingdom of heaven will contain many who followed Christ without recognizing

him, who even disowned him with their lips while they walked in his footsteps; and he will not reject those who were content while on earth to bear the cross without thinking that they would ever wear the crown.

That last sentence, beautifully and generously conceived, is in reality unutterably silly, and the people it contemplates cannot but regard it as an insult. The people the Dean has in mind are those who lead good, noble, and useful lives without what is called saving faith in Christ, perhaps without even believing that the Gospel Jesus ever actually lived at all. Of these the reverend gentleman declares that they are Christians without knowing it; but why should they be called Christians rather than Buddhists or Confucians? They do not follow Christ, neither do they bear his cross. They follow the law of their own nature, and bear the cross laid upon them by their own awakened hearts and consciences, being only indirectly indebted to any ethical teachers, and not at all to supernaturalism. The world contained many such people thousands of years before Buddha, Confucius, or Christ, made their appearance, and even before the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* was written. Humanity is, at heart, always good and noble, and capable of endless improvement by the use of its own resources alone.

Dean Inge supplies us with a definition of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." He says:—

Holiness is, I know, a formidable word; the layman always shies at it from motives which do him credit; but it simply means self-consecration to the cause and the ideal which we believe to be the highest—self-consecration carried out thoroughly. It is not, we may say boldly, what the typical cleric means by holiness; it is certainly not sanctimoniousness. Christ himself shocked the clerics of his day by mixing in general society, eating and drinking like other men, and breaking many of their pious rules. In fact, they sent him to the cross because his teaching and example were too unclerical.

That definition of holiness may not be the one adopted by the typical cleric, but at the same time it is typically clerical in its character. It is a purely religious definition. Carlyle, in his Address as Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh, elaborated an entirely different definition of holiness based upon the etymology of the word. Holiness, according to him, means health of both body and mind. To call a man holy is the same as to say that he is in good health; and surely no one needs anything else. A healthy man of necessity lives a healthy life, and no life can be healthy unless it is lived in the service and for the benefit of the community. Christ is not the gateway to such a life, but sound reason touched by a warm heart.

J. T. LLOYD.

GIORDANO BRUNO.

O fiery-souled and daring-hearted lord
Of all the martyrs of the whole wide world,
Thou by whose hands the banner was unfurled
By priests and despots utterly abhorred,
To which each true man consecrates his sword;
Bruno, the flames that round thy body curled
After thy taunt was at thy tyrants hurled,
Gleam through the years and make thy name
adored.

They could not fright thee with the Church's ban,
Dungeon nor torture could thy spirit tame,
Nor hell on earth wring from thee plaint or cry;
No weeping woman or disciple came,
None shared thy seven years' Gethsemane;
Alone thou stood'st against all men for man.

—G. W. Foote,

A Democrat in the Dark.

Master who crowned our immelodious days with flowers
of perfect speech.
—William Watson.

Swinburne was the greatest of our lyrical poets—of the
world's, I should say, considering what a language he had
to wield.
—George Meredith.

WHEN Swinburne died in 1909 there was stilled a voice that had sung vigorously, melodiously, and with wonderful freshness for half a century. His genius, indeed, dazzled us so much that his own reputation has suffered to the extent of his being regarded rather as a singer than as a seer. But for his outspoken views concerning priestcraft and kingcraft, he must inevitably have succeeded Tennyson as Poet Laureate. As it was, Swinburne was the last of the great poets who dominated the imagination of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Swinburne's own impression of the sprightly Mrs. Procter who, when near ninety years of age, "walked like her own granddaughter," is something like that left upon the reader by the various accounts of the poet's life. For Swinburne attracts one as a child, and one likes the precocious poet from the time he goes to school hugging a volume of Shakespeare under his arm. Lord St. Aldwyn, who was at Eton College with him, remembered his big red head and pasty complexion, but other witnesses are kinder in their recollection.

From Eton, Swinburne went to Balliol College, Oxford, where he drew the attention of Jowett, who had a keen eye for talent. Oxford, that "home of lost causes," had little attraction for the fiery young poet, who was already a red Republican. He tried his 'prentice hand at verse, but failed to win the Newdegate with a poem on *The Discovery of the North-West Passage*. As an undergraduate he was almost as much of a failure as Shelley, and he left the university without a degree. So fervent was his Republicanism that he hung a portrait of Orsini, who attempted to assassinate Napoleon III, in his sitting-room. This alarmed Swinburne's parents, who would not allow the poet to go to Paris until he had promised to do nothing against the French monarchy. Swinburne's views were known, and he was invited to stand for Parliament by the Reform League, but, on the advice of Mazzini, he very wisely declined to give up divine poetry for dusty politics.

Swinburne fluttered the doves of respectability with his *Poems and Ballads*, although some of the poems had already appeared in the *Spectator*, and Ruskin had given the book his august blessing. "In power and imagination and understanding," Ruskin said, "he simply sweeps me away before him as a torrent does a pebble." Indeed, the volume aroused as much excitement as Byron's *Don Juan* had in a previous generation. Robert Buchanan voiced the respectable view in a pamphlet, entitled *The Fleshly School of Literature*, and complained that *Poems and Ballads* were unsuitable reading for maiden ladies. Swinburne retorted hotly and with crushing effect: "I do not write for school-girls, I leave that to the Buchanans." The accusation of fleshliness was ill-founded, but it served to advertise the book, which was a masterpiece among masterpieces.

Swinburne's vogue became extraordinary, despite the boycott of the libraries. Some idea of the poet's influence may be gathered from Canon Scott Holland, who says young men shouted the poems, sang them, flung them about to the skies and winds. Not only the curled, perfumed darlings of the universities were affected by Swinburne's verses, for G. W. Foote has told us how the poet's lyrics roused him like a trumpet-blast. One memorable day the future Freethought leader, then a young man, recited Swinburne's *Mater*

Triumphalis on the hills outside Edinburgh, while his life-long friend, Joseph Wheeler, lay on the grass at his feet and applauded. Nor is this to be wondered at, for Swinburne has surpassed all other poets in the ardour of his devotion to Liberty:—

The very thought in us how much we love thee
Makes the throat sob with love, and blinds the eyes.

It is not the least wonderful phase of that amazing mind that, amid the drawbacks due to a deafness extending over thirty years, Swinburne could still pursue his ambitions and write his books, when other men would have found existence intolerable. Deafness was in his family on both sides, and his brother, eleven years his junior, was also afflicted. During later years Swinburne could hear nothing, unless it was said *tête-à-tête*, slowly and deliberately, Swinburne had no ear for music, but he knew the music of language. He prided himself on his taste in words with perfect justice. There has been no such metrical inventor in English. He enlarged the frontiers of poetry, although men of rare genius had ransacked verse for centuries before he was born. He blew all things to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius.

An avowed Freethinker and an unashamed Democrat, Swinburne always stood in the front of the battle. It was a most animating message that the leaders of the French Revolution bequeathed as a legacy to the nineteenth century. Equally inspiring is the message which this great poet of the nineteenth century brought to the twentieth as a gift. MIMNERMUS.

The Religion of Robert Burns.

OF the making of books about Robert Burns there is no end. Their range varies from the idolatry of the tender-minded Scot to the cold analysis of the tough-minded Southerner. In the criticisms of the man and the poet extremes meet, and writers at the one end may be as mistaken as those at the other. After all Burns was a man, perhaps a quite ordinary man, with talents far beyond the ordinary, talents which illumined and consumed the baser elements of his person and period. His was a voice crying in the wilderness of his time—not necessarily a voice from heaven, more sensibly and intimately, more usefully, a voice from the stirred heart of old mother Nature of whom he was the darling child, learning the humanities at her shrine in all the seasons of the year in all the varied lot of brother man: a voice obscure and outlandish as that of him of Israel, a voice which was destined also to re-echo round the world, and which, if it has not yet drowned the voice of Jesus, has largely helped to rationalize his teaching. There is also in the teaching of the Scottish Messiah a freshness, naïveté and naturalness which may well confound the higher critics; a simplicity, honesty and strength, with some of the splendid subtlety of the great mind, that eludes the popular estimation.

So much is primarily suggested to me after a careful reading of *The Real Robert Burns*, by J. I. Hughes, LL.D. (W. and R. Chambers, Ltd., 6s. net). It is a handsome volume of 216 pages, printed on good paper in large type, full of interesting matter, clearly arranged and admirably told. Everywhere in the book Dr. Hughes insists on the nobler conception of his hero, and finds abundant evidence in the poet's prose and verse of a profoundly religious mind. Now, although I am intimately familiar with the life and work and local atmosphere of Burns, I am not concerned to dispute the claim. It may even be indisputable without thereby conferring additional prestige upon religion, on the one hand, or detracting from the "uninspired" excellence of purely mundane and human qualities on the other. Incidental, in-

evitable, in his training and temperament, even a strongly-marked feature of his mind, religion was with him but one more elusive mingling shade in the mantle of his genius. It was at most a religious bias, or what Matthew Arnold calls "morality touched with emotion; and even though he could say, in a letter to the pious Mrs. Dunlop, "An irreligious poet would be a monster," every schoolboy knows that before and since the time of Burns there have been many irreligious poets, perhaps the greatest, from Lucretius to Swinburne, the Roman poet gravely, sternly, morally, philosophically, spiritually opposed to religion, calling it "that foul thing," an opposition arising from what in him was humane, compassionate and intelligent. This also Dr. Hughes may call religion, thus paying himself with verbal counters. This is perhaps what Burns and his biographer in some confused way may have meant by the word religion. If this is religion, then every good man is religious, which surely no serious student of psychology would admit. Were I as eager to claim Burns as irreligious as another is to see in him a new Messiah, a revealer of true religion, a purifier of impure, I might quote abundantly from his writings to show he was not as religious as he thought he was, or as Dr. Hughes claims him to have been. "The Prayer in Prospect of Death," and "A Prayer Under the Pressure of Violent Anguish," if not irreligious, are plainly unevangelical. His rationalism is evident within his professions of belief:—

I am a sincere believer in the Bible; but I am drawn by the conviction of a man, not by the halter of an ass (Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, July 9, 1790).

In a letter to the same excellent and pious lady, speaking of the alleged fact of Christ and his mission, he reveals in one significant sentence the struggle within him of faith and reason, with reason deplorably triumphant, when he exclaims: "Would to God I as firmly believed it as I ardently wish it!" Un-biassed analysis—if such is possible—might easily show us that the poet's religion, such as it might be, was truly neither here nor there, at best, as in most people, an idle quantity, only, as already suggested, in the case of Burns, giving a mystic sheen to his "spiritual plaid," or putting in his mouth "the pompous language of the Hebrew Bard."

The impressive grandeur of the natural world, the hidden wonders of the heart of man, have imposed upon wiser men; perhaps on the civilized peasant of Scotland as on Pope's "poor Indian" who—

Sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind—

a conceit quite as wise and dignified as Wordsworth's
"In the Light of Setting Suns."

Even I, looking up from this delightful task, see a heavenly sight that inspires me with joy and quite "religious" emotion: Southward the November sky has cleared in tranquil azure space save for one great ragged cloud, very like the great jawbone of a whale, with the sun behind its massed apex turning its edges to glowing silver; above, the ineffable azure space, below, a yellow radiance falling on the hills and sea; the sun emerges and the splendour is gone for a little; only as the sun nears the horizon, to be succeeded by all-suffusing crimson glories more splendid, more exquisite still. Nor is yet the evening scene complete; the clouds have changed their place and shape and joined hands, as it were, round little lakes and eyelets of soft, pale yellow light, grey, dusky, motionless there, as the day dies out of the sky, and the silvery moon pours down her beautiful borrowed light on the sun-deserted hemisphere. Dry, matter of fact, scientific analysis would only spoil the picture, be little in harmony with the beneficent spectacle, and quite foreign to the poetry of the religious or the irreligious poet. Or take a picture from memory of a little urchin coming out of school—just as Shakespeare and Burns

in their boyhood may have come—and seeing away, beyond his pastoral valley the hither slopes of a dim, mysterious mountain land, ravines and shades of awe and austere solitudes, part of the Southern Highlands of Scotland, then with no geographical habitation and a name, but the dread yet desired awe and wonder of the infinite unknown. Without this kind of "religion," and not as he describes it, the "enthusiastic idiot piety" of Burns as a child, life would be a poorer thing. Fuller knowledge here is even something to regret, as in Tom Hood's retrospect:—

The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm further off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.

The infant mind with its restricted but poetic outlook lives in an atmosphere favourable to religious impression. Religion is indeed a childish thing, and precious to many on that account alone. It is always found, or fostered, in the infancy of the individual or in that of the race. The young mind is misled by those who have been misled in their turn. The fact remains, backed up by quite overwhelming evidence, that human life can be as sublime and splendid and happy without it as with it. More might be claimed, but the point need not be strained. Mingled as it is, but having a primitive and natural origin quite distinct from its casual allies beauty and morality, religion may endure yet a while, but we see the original ideas ever tending to become more vague and attenuated, as I feel sure they were become in the mind of Robert Burns.

In my days of life I, too, have known many excellent people who were sincere Christians, amongst whom, having read his charming book, I might place the writer of *The Real Robert Burns*; but, one, the best beloved of them all, who often wept for others' sorrows, and who with those gracious drops had in her gentle, simple way—

A deep unquestioned awe and fear
Of powers supreme beyond the sky.

Religious people, lay and cleric—and some Free-thinkers—whom I have addressed in such a strain have at once and avidly claimed me as, if not already religious, as happily and hopefully tending towards that desirable consummation!

It is admitted, then, that Burns was religious in some vague meaning of the term. Admitted also—and here we are on surer ground—that morally he was, as Carlyle said, "one in ten thousand," the questions may still be asked: Was his religion responsible for his virtues, or did his purely human qualities give him his refined religion? Why was he religious at all? Would not the poignant, pathetic human drama being enacted all round him have reacted as powerfully on that great heart and mind of his even without religious belief; nay, but give added emphasis to the cry of humanity, the martyrdom of man? Would not the sunrise and the sunset, the glowing noon, the night and stars, the varied landscapes of the rolling year, friendship and the dear voluptuous breast of thrilling, happy love—would not all these, and all the rest, have inspired, depressed him just the same? Love and religion! Hypatia and Cyril! Philosophy and bigotry! True the poet purified religion or rather invented and proclaimed a new one. Burns found in the religion he destroyed a residue of good, of guidance, solace, beauty, or romance, and in the personal loyalty and logic of his mind retained what he thought best and indispensable, and all for Auld Lang Syne—his country's history, its poetry, its patriotism, its religion. No one, and certainly not a man like Burns, "throws away his religion." He outgrows it, or he

retains it—if only in part. Let us say, as in Hamlet's injunction to his sinful parent, he threw away, or rejected with scorn, the "worser part," still the Mauchline Holy Willies who retained the whole of it were more in harmony with their Holy Writ than he. But even Burns, a man of many moods, was not *always religious*. Like the bright answer of the tipsy man, who, told in native salutation, "Ye're gettin' hame," answered "Whiles!" so Burns was *whiles religious* :—

Whiles dazed wi' care, while's dazed wi' drink,
Wi' jauds an' masons;
And whiles—but aye ower late a think—
Braw sober lessons.

There is a dirge-like music in some of his best songs that bespeaks a deep melancholy in his nature and without which sombre element his finest songs would lose half their haunting charm. For example the lover of poetry may turn to such heart-easing snatches of lyric beauty as *Ye Banks and Braes, My Nannie's Awa'*, and others, or to the poem *Man Was Made to Mourn*. It is not in those splendid moments of elemental and sublime melancholy that we find the religious Burns; and, of course, not in such rich blendings of humour and satire as *Death and Doctor Hornbook*; not in his wild and "wicked rants" when he "cared-na' de'ils (or gods) a boddle"; nor in his clearest, profoundest heart-searching philosophy was he on the "upward road"; but most religious in his frequent grovelling *mea culpa* moods, when "the magnificent Robert Burns," quite mistakenly, felt himself a miserable worm, prostrate, but never for long, before that awful being of whom he said :—

Thou knowest that thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And listening to their 'witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Which, in any plain meaning of the lines, makes God at once the accuser and the accused—a divine contradiction that confronts all religious inquiry, even of the simplest man; a supreme stumbling block in the path of piety, and must have been especially obvious to the clear and vigorous logical mind of Burns. In another place, and with the same thought, he exclaims :—

And yet the light which led astray
Was light from heaven.

This is a striking and beautiful metaphor which no poet could resist even though the source of the "light" were questionable and its implications all too obvious.

I may venture the perhaps that Burns was at least religiously inclined, say, a "religious sceptic," in his more daring, perhaps more enlightened moments, a scornful Atheist. Why he was religious at all, were space available and the reasons less apparent could be easily and cogently demonstrated. My chief objection to Dr. Hughes' position is that although he gives us very charmingly, freely and broadmindedly, his impression of Robert Burns, he never goes quite to the root of the matter. What are the conditions which favour such *beliefs* as Burns may have had? As one of our closest modern thinkers has recently remarked :

Three-fourths of the problems in philosophy would never exist were one to question the terms in which they are stated. This is noticeably the case when the subject is one of religion.....we know now the nature of religion We are no longer groping and wondering.....we know the conditions that led people to believe.

Other aspects of the poet are attractively and skilfully handled by Dr. Hughes. The religious aspect, while it may be the least important of all, is the insistent note all through the book, to which I have mainly confined my article, and, I fear, within all too meagre limits. For the rest, there seems just a

tendency on the part of Dr. Hughes to over-refine and over-ennoble the already over-refined and over-ennobled Robert Burns. Some of us prefer him "just as he is and as he was" :—

"Hear it not Wallace in thy bed of death!" Hear it not Burns! Rather would you dwell in your Immortality in your habit as you lived!

In conclusion, thanking Dr. Hughes and his publishers for the opportunity and the treat afforded me by the perusal of his book, I am still of the opinion that the truest and the best thing that has even been said—in small compass—about the poet is the *Ingersoll Essay* (Dresden Edition of Works, Mitchell Library, Glasgow), which, if not the most "classic" oration, is certainly the nearest approach yet made to *The Real Robert Burns*.
A. MILLAR.

The Wealth of Superstition in Ireland.

To tell an Orangeman in the slums of Belfast that King Billy and the Pope were chums at the Battle of the Boyne would be courting sudden death. Just as it would be to tell a Southern Roman Catholic that it was a bench of bishops of their own Church that threw Joan of Arc into the flames. Ireland is rapidly turning out another Spain; the "poor clerics" are capturing, commandeering or buying up the estates, mansions, and castles of the old landlord class, and are exploiting the workers and peasants in the name of God and King Capital. For instance, a community of Belgian nuns, known as the "Dames of Ypres," or Irish Benedictines, were driven from that country in 1915 by the "Huns." They settled in Ardmine House, County Wexford. The staircase alone in that mansion was valued at £2,500. After a short residence there, instead of going back to Belgium to help at "re-construction," the poor nuns, in honour of the "Infant Jesus," found over forty thousand pounds to buy up the fairy palace of the Connemara Mountains, "Kylmore Castle," the former seat of the Duke of Manchester, and purified and sanctified it by the new title of "Kylmore Abbey," with an attempt to let its fishing and shooting rights to anyone able to pay spot cash for their sport. Also as a proof of their poverty they tried to do the auctioneer out of his commission.

The British Government ringed Dublin in with forts, barracks, guns, etc., but now that power is gone, and Dublin City and County is completely surrounded by a huge army of occupation, composed of regular, irregular—and a vast following of parasites—clergy, male and female, with huge buildings, chapels, industrial schools, convents, monasteries, Christian Brothers' Schools, with full control of the so-called National Schools also. The wealth of this enormous army must run into millions. The people, like the Spanish peasants, are bled white by this foreign Church which, posing as Irish, takes its orders from Rome *via* the aristocratic English Tory Cardinals maintained by the British Government in the Vatican for the sole purpose of keeping Irish slaves "humble, lowly, and obedient."

Quite recently I met three Roman Catholic boys, who attended William Street National School, North Strand, Dublin, for *nine years*; two of them could not read or write; the third could write his name, but could not read. They stated that "prayers" were their education. This is the fate of hundreds of thousands of poor Irish boys.

In County Meath they run graveyards on purely capitalistic lines and are all supporters of the ranching system, which forces the people into the slums or emigrant ships.

Their laundries in Dublin are run on the sweated labour of broken-down prostitutes working for shelter, and the cost to their customers is higher than those paying trade union rate of wages. Before the advent of convents into Navan the poor people used to make a living taking in washing, only working three days per week. The convent laundry broke up the home work and took the girls in at 3s. 6d. per week for six days' work.

Every Roman college, school, etc., in Ireland is run on British Government grants, and after every rebellion or rising, the British raised the grant to Maynooth College,

the headquarters of the best "moral police force," as Richard Lalor Shiel called the Irish priesthood.

When Michael Davitt tried to save the people on the land, the Irish Bishops cursed him with "bell, book, and candle," and threw the fires of their "hell" at his followers. Every movement for Irish freedom was sabotaged by those anti-Irish, Irish-Roman scoundrels, and to-day they are hard at it again, with the result that "free-thinking" is spreading to such an extent that those well-fed parasites are shaking in their shoes. Finally the men called by the great lying Press "Irregulars" are all Roman Catholics, and are making a desperate fight against superstition and slavery—superstition, the "Child of Slavery and the Mother of Ignorance," as Ingersoll termed it. We Freethinkers here in Dublin will be watching out for your comments on this rude sketch, and we hope that the time is near when we can express our opinions in the open, without fear of hunger and the persecutions of priestcraft.

P. MURPHY.

Acid Drops.

Dr. Glover has just published a book entitled *Progress in Religion in the Christian Ages*. The *Daily News* heads a review of the work with the title of "Man's Discovery of God." That is quite a good title, if it were only used in a rational and justifiable manner. But the meaning given to it by the *Daily News*, and also by Dr. Glover, is that man has gone all along discovering the true nature of God, and getting rid of all the errors concerning him; and that is certainly not true. How man discovers God is quite well known, and it belongs to the same class of discoveries that a child makes when it discovers a giant prowling round the garden after night-fall. But we do not write about how a child discovered the giant—there is none who do but Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. What we do is to explain how it happened that the child believed there was a giant there. It is a mental phase that needs explanation; we are not concerned with a narrative of the discovery of an objective fact. It is neglect of this consideration that makes most books written about God so much waste paper.

When we get beyond the stage of primitive mentality at which man believes that he has discovered God, ever after man is engaged in getting rid of him—piecemeal. He drives his god from one department of activity after another, he strips him of one quality after another until he resembles nothing at all, and does nothing at all. If that is discovering God, it is a process which threatens soon to leave nothing to find out. What man really finds out is his own ignorance of anything about God, and what the religious apologist calls discovering God is in actual truth the recognition by man that all he has thought about the gods has been vain imaginings. Man only finds god at one stage of his existence—the most primitive. After that he finds him out, and that is fatal to all shams.

In a new book, purporting to give the post-mortem experiences of the late W. T. Stead, it is stated that, after death, the great journalist "was still so near the earth" that he could see "everything going on there." Some eyesight!

A portrait of the King and a crucifix are to be placed in every Italian school. Altar and throne are usually associated.

Southend-on-Sea magistrates declined to allow Sunday concerts at one of the local theatres. Such decisions are inevitable when there is too much churchwarden on the Bench.

A memorial is to be erected in Hyde Park to the animal victims of the war. The animals to be commemorated range from the mice used in poison-gas experiments to

the elephants killed on transport work. There were 364,130 British horse casualties in the war. The memorial should bear the sacred text: "Doth God care for oxen?"

The death of Pierrepont, the public executioner, reminds us that he was formerly assistant to Berry, who, after being hangman for years, became a Free Church preacher, and subsequently toured the United States with much acceptance. A public executioner preaching on hell must have been almost as exciting as attending a theatre.

The Pope of Rome has had a new tiara presented to him by the Lombard Catholics. It contains over 2,000 precious stones, and cost £3,000. If Papa ever gets into financial difficulties, such toys should be useful.

In an article on "Catholicism and Roman Catholicism" (*Church Times*, December 15), Bishop Gore says that "unscrupulousness of statement is an almost constant accompaniment of autocratic authority." His lordship has hit the nail right on the head; but his statement is as true of the Establishment and the "holy scriptures" as it is of the Roman Catholic Church. The only difference is that the last mentioned institution has been more logical and consistent in its claims to "authority." In practice, all these forms and systems, organized for soul-saving, mean persecution where there is the power to persecute. Where this power is lacking, and the "authority" has to be reconciled with man's growing knowledge and reason, we have *Bridgewater Treatises*, and train-loads of learned rubbish on such subjects as "Moses and geology."

The correspondence columns of the *Yorkshire Post*, during a considerable part of December, have contained letters on the subject, "Why people do not go to church." Surely now that materialism is bankrupt, and the frank acceptance of a progressive revelation has taken the wind out of the sails of the old-time anti-Christianity, the churches ought to be crowded. But no, the man in the street, and the woman likewise, will wait all night to hear a first-class murder trial, and a considerable time even in the month of December to see "Charley's Aunt," but there is no pushing and elbowing to get through to the pews. Perhaps the professional soul-saver shrinks from publicity and thus makes himself unattractive. "Layman," however, in his contribution to the correspondence in the *Yorkshire Post*, does not accept this view. "We are not edified," he says, "to see duels between parsons as to whether one of them is teaching schism, or whether another is teaching Romish doctrine." In other words, it does not matter very much nowadays what they preach in the way of doctrine, and that is just why people don't go to church. A progressive revelation means a progressive decline in the exchange value of men's and women's souls.

Cardinal Bourne, speaking at Brighton recently, said that England was "yearning for the faith." He contrasted sharply the perplexity of those outside the fold with Rome's "sure path through life guided by the beacon of religious belief." On the same occasion Father Bede Jarrett indulged in a fling at the Anglo-Catholics. They were not Catholics at all, because they did not acknowledge the papal supremacy. "The mere acceptance by other bodies of bits of Catholic doctrine made them no more Catholics in their eyes—members of the true Church of Christ—than people were who rejected with scorn most of the tenets of the Catholic faith." If the mere branding of a particular form of superstition with a particular mark of authority confers infallibility, Rome should be able to make her way in the world with much less effort. She certainly offers safety—of a kind. But royal roads to salvation are not so popular as they used to be. We are afraid, too, that Father Jarrett's magisterial utterance will make little impression on Anglo-Catholics. Indeed, this sort of dictatorial preaching on the part of the "one true faith" has been directed

against them so long that they regard it as a compliment to their orthodoxy.

According to Press reports, a new star of the first magnitude is said to have been discovered in the constellation Vega. Astronomers are inclined to be very sceptical about the alleged discovery. It is, however, interesting to compare with such reports the various accounts in our journals of the Second Advent movement in the United States. Among the Ascensionists it is the custom for each member to keep in his (or her) wardrobe a special "ascension robe" to be donned the moment the last trumpet sounds. Where will they then ascend, and at what rate will they travel? Travelling at the rate of a hundred miles a second, night and day, it would take them a few solar years to reach any part of Vega, and we presume heaven must be beyond that constellation. It will be an interesting trip and we hope the passengers will take plenty of provisions.

In a "silver collection" taken after a musical service in a Sheffield chapel were included over 400 threepenny pieces, and two brace-buttons. The donors of the latter remain undetected.

At Ivyhatch, Kent, services have been held in a barn for thirty-five years. If the Gospels are true, the Christian religion started in a stable.

"Carolling is a terrible nuisance," says a Slough (Bucks.) magistrate. Like so many other nuisances, there's money in it.

After addressing a missionary service at Carmel Chapel, Maesteg, Mr. John Lewis fell dead. No moral!

There is a publication called *No More War*, the aim of which is admirable, but which is so saturated with nonsensical chatter about Jesus and the God of Love as to give one an uneasy feeling in the pit of the stomach. If the conductors of the journal were only blessed with enough intelligence they might reflect that ever since there has been a Christian Church the world has been filled with talk of exactly the same description; and if it has failed to bring peace when talked from the pulpit, how on earth is it going to do the trick if it is talked in the columns of a weekly journal! After all the people who deliberately desire war are not so very numerous in the world, and if wars depended upon them for their being they would not be nearly so numerous as they are. And if the editor of the journal will only cease to nourish himself upon volumes of sermons, and will look to the facts, he will realize that it is the followers of the Prince of Peace who have been the main cause of war at any time during the past thousand years.

It is useless replying to this by saying they did not follow their Lord in the proper spirit. They were quite convinced that the wars they encouraged would make for the greater glory of God. Every war they encouraged was always a righteous war, and it was always in the interest of religion and morality and civilization. It is really pitiful when the world so sadly needs educating in this matter to find people trotting out the old "gags" that have done in so many thousands of sermons and so many thousands of churches. And when the editor prints a sermon in which a certain clergyman is said to "boldly" denounce war, and who remarks that war is "practical atheism," we beg to remark that this is not boldness at all. It does not need boldness in a Christian country to slander one's opponents. That is mere orthodoxy. A correct description of it would be religious blackguardism.

It is this kind of thing that makes the average Christian so impossible a person. First of all he quietly an-

nexes all the human virtues and puts his own sectarian label on them. Then he collects all the vices he can think of and blandly presents them to his opponents. Ever after, whatever they do right is due to his example or influence. And whatever he does wrong is in some way due to them. Such is the sheeplike quality of many people that they lack the courage to stand up and tell this gentleman exactly what he ought to be told. Instead of that they adopt his phraseology and talk about true, as distinguished from false Christianity, and true religion as distinct from the spurious article. And all the time it is religion, and it is true Christianity which perpetuates so largely the mixture of mental cowardice and intolerance from which the world suffers. In fact the *truer* religion is the more disagreeable it is. It only becomes tolerable when it is mixed with a number of things that are not religion at all.

Sir Berkely Moynihan was one of the speakers at a church bazaar opened the other day at Knaresborough. Sir Berkely said that it was appropriate that one of his profession—the medical—should speak on such an occasion as both his profession and that of the Bishop of Knaresborough, who was in the chair, came from the same root. Religion and medicine were descended from magic. We do not think that the sentence would have been very greatly appreciated by the Bishop although it contained a truth. It is a pity, however, that the speaker did not go on to point out that for very many years—for centuries in fact—the greatest enemy to the progress of surgery and medical science was the Christian Church. The plain truth is that quite apart from the fact that the practice of medicine weakened the faith of people in the operations of God, the doctors were interfering very seriously with the profits of the Church. Every man who went to a doctor for treatment involved a loss to a church which drew so much of its income from shrines, magical statues, and relics. The opposition between the Church and the doctors was once so pronounced that the maxim "Out of three doctors, two Atheists" became a commonplace.

The Bishop of Chester thinks it disgraceful that a cinema artist should have a greater reception than would be given to a man like Marshal Foch. We are not in love with the hero worship of the cinema artist, but neither are we convinced that the worship of the soldier is any more desirable. And it is what one would expect from a Christian Bishop. Historically, Christianity and militarism have always gone hand in hand, and they will continue close companions to the end of the chapter.

How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. And the paper and the Cause is worthy of all that each can do for it.

To Correspondents.

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

OWING to the Christmas holidays we have had to go to press twice in one week, the present issue being made up on Dec. 22. On the evening of the 21st we posted a letter from home to the office containing various answers to correspondents and other paragraphic matter. Although only seven miles from the office the letter had not been delivered by three o'clock on the 22nd. We are therefore obliged to leave a number of enquiries unanswered this week.

G. E. WEBB.—Received with thanks, and handed to shop manager. We are not inclined to credit any of the political parties—by whatever name they may go—with an overdose of honesty. The game of vote-catching and seat-retaining seems to undermine the morality of most. We appreciate your good wishes, and hope that the New Year will be a pleasant one for you. We can all do with things a little brighter than they have been.

WILL Mr. Hutchinson, of Stockton-on-Tees, please send the Editor his correct address. A letter containing MSS. has just been returned as not known at the address to which it was sent, and which was, so far as we could make out, the one given.

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.

We are hoping to see a good muster of London Freethinkers at the annual dinner at the Midland Hotel on January 16. After so long an interval we should much like to see as many of the old faces present as possible, and there are almost certain to be many new ones. Both will be heartily welcome. Mr. Cohen will preside, and in addition to an excellent concert there will be speeches from the President, Mr. Lloyd, and others. The tickets, strictly limited in number, are 8s. each, and may be obtained either at the offices of the *Freethinker* or the N.S.S.

The usual fortnightly meeting of the N.S.S. Discussion Circle was held on Tuesday, December 19, when Mr. Robert Arch introduced the subject, "Is there an Historical Jesus?" Next Tuesday, January 2, Mr. Goodman will open the discussion, and has chosen for his subject, "Design in Nature."

We are very near the end of the old year, and as we shall not have another opportunity of wishing our readers a happy New Year before it actually arrives, we do so now. Most of us will see the end of 1922 without any very great regret, and it should be easy enough for 1923 to improve on its predecessor. At any rate it is to be hoped that the improvement will take place.

During the coming year we intend making a special effort to bring the *Freethinker* into touch with fresh readers. We can do very little in the way of ordinary advertising, but what funds will permit will be attempted. Some of our friends are doing what they can to induce newsagents to display copies of the paper for sale. If that were done generally an improvement would soon be effected. And it should be impressed upon newsagents that the paper is sent out on sale or return. There is no risk run, therefore, in displaying it.

Those who do not care to help in that way may in another. There are many thousands of people in the country who would take in the paper did they know of its existence, and some of these must be known to most of our readers. We will, therefore, send copies of the *Freethinker* for six weeks to any name and address that is sent us, with the postage—one penny per copy. The advertising will not be expensive, and it is almost sure to be fruitful.

The pity is that the *Freethinker* has never had a circulation of one-tenth of what it really deserves. The boycott is mainly responsible for this, but we are of opinion that if all our readers were to set seriously to work that might be weakened considerably. Things are not what they were, even with bigotry, and it is easier to get this paper displayed by newsagents than it was twenty years ago. We are ourselves making arrangements wherever we can to get it shown in prominent positions, and we are willing to do what we can to make it worth while newsagents showing the paper where possible. All our readers can help us considerably in getting the paper displayed if they only will, and with the present state of things every little help tells, from both the financial and propagandist points of view.

There appears to be a very vigorous native propaganda against Christianity going on in India, particularly among those papers that are carrying on work on behalf of Buddhism. Among these attacks we note that the *Buddhist Chronicle* (Colombo) reprints the whole of one of the National Secular Society's tracts, *Because the Bible Tells Me So*. There should be a great future for Free-thought in India.

There seems no limit to the credulity of the believers in Spiritualism. In addition to the gross extravagances of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, we have now an account of the next world from the late W. T. Stead. His account of the after world does not agree with that given by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's spirits, but that matters little. It is of the essence of faith to swallow contradictions—there being no merit in faith otherwise. So the ghost of the late Mr. Stead informs us that many of those who were poor in this life live in magnificent palaces in the next. These palaces are given them in order that they may make up their lack of development, and if at the end of a certain time they have not used their opportunities, well they lose their palaces and must re-qualify for them, and so on. It is very wonderful, but we are open to wager that if the people through whom these messages come were cross-examined it would be found that it was the kind of heaven which they think ought to exist. As a study in folly one has to go far to beat these spirit revelations.

Politics and the pulpit are the two directions in which the largest quantity of irredeemable ignorance may be most successfully employed. And the power of both depends upon the ignorance and helplessness of the general public.

The Sin of Muriel Clark.

WHETHER the sin of Muriel Clark can be forgiven is a difficult question. Some grave and reverend masters of theological learning may quote the following text from the Apocalypse :—

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall ADD unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.

The plagues are earthquake, fire, flood, locusts, etc. The grave and reverend masters might say that the principle thus laid down will logically apply, not merely to the Book of Revelation, but to any part of the New Testament. If so, then Muriel Clark will need all the help her friends can give her, for the plain truth is that she has made additions to the Four Gospels. That is to say, she has invented—deliberately invented—tales in which the Gospel Jesus figures, and in which this Jesus talks and acts in plausible imitation of the Son of Man and Son of God described by *Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*. Her sin will be found in a book recently published.¹

Some time ago I made comments in the *Freethinker* on a most remarkable volume of *Legends*, written by the Polish author Niemojewski. In this work of veritable genius (unfortunately only obtainable in England in Esperanto²), Jesus appears in dramatically told scenes, but he is never mentioned by name. Miss Muriel Clark cannot be called a genius, or even a lady of talent. Nevertheless, her sin (like, I suppose, that of Niemojewski) remains, and the plagues will fall due if the grave and reverend gentlemen already alluded to are correct in their judgment. However, I will produce a few examples in order that the reader may form his own opinion.

A woman named Mary takes her four children to be blessed by Jesus—Baby Lois and three older ones :—

The baby toddled forward, the others walked up to him, and, sitting on a grassy mound, he drew them to him. He held out his arms for the baby, and Mary let her go, willingly, proudly. Her dark little head nestled against his bosom, and she was quite content. The boys bent their heads, and Judith clasped her tiny hands while the Master prayed in a low, quiet voice that his Father would bless these little ones. As he prayed, Baby Lois patted his hand, and lifted it and kissed it.

And so on. The invented incidents are simple enough, and Muriel Clark might plead that no harm is done by relating them. But what are we to say when she inserts a Healing Miracle all on her own? A young girl, Esther, has never in her life been able to walk, or even stand; so her father carries her, in an act of faith, to Jesus; and then Muriel Clark, with or without blushes, concocts this anecdote :—

"Put her down," said the Great Physician, "let her come to me."

Never in her life had Esther been able to stand upon her feet, but not for one moment did the father hesitate. Very gently he put his little girl to the ground. And then Esther, her face lit up with wonder, walked from her parents' side and paused before him. With infinite tenderness he took her by the hand and blessed her.....

The sun had set when the little party went back to their home again. The hearts of all of them were stirred as the child climbed the hill for the first time.

Nor is this the only wonderful cure. Muriel Clark apparently feels no difficulty in producing cases. The

¹ *Long Ago in Galilee*, with preface by J. Stuart Holden (1922); 101 pp., Pub. by The Carey Press (19 Furnival Street, E.C.).

² Sold by the B.E.A., 17 Hart Street, Bloomsbury.

restoration of sight, or rather the giving of sight to a child, Miriam, born blind, is a feat easily performed on this "Long Ago" stage. Miriam's father had called in an oculist from Jericho, a second from Samaria, and a third from Damascus, and they all failed. At length, the tall, black-bearded Uncle Benjamin rushes in and announces that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Out they all go, and are presently listening to the Prophet, who is talking of the power of prayer and belief. Then the father whispers to the blind girl :—

"Miriam," he said earnestly, "do you believe that this man can give you your sight?"

"Yes, father," answered the child at once. "Uncle Benjamin said that he could".....

The Master turned to Miriam. He took her two soft little hands and looked into her sightless eyes. Then he laid his fingers upon them, and as he looked up to heaven his lips moved. He took away his fingers.

"Child," he said, "what do you see?" There was a deep silence in the group. "I see you," replied Miriam, slowly and clearly, "Jesus of Nazareth."

That will satisfy any twentieth century sceptic; and, if it does not, Muriel Clark is no doubt prepared to manufacture more examples at short notice.

It is worthy of remark that the Additional Jesus (if one may so term this singular creation) teaches much the same sort of contentment with poverty as the Original did. For instance, the girl Phœbe comes home from gleaning, and is dreadfully tired. Jesus meets her, and invites her to sit on the grass, while he, enthroned on a fallen tree trunk, consoles her. Phœbe says :—

"I am often tired in my body, when I am utterly weary; and tired in my mind, when I wonder why Lydia, the merchant's daughter, and Rebecca, the ruler's niece, should have such nice clothes, while my clothes are poor."

Howbeit, her chat with the divine friend modifies her social outlook, and, though next day is hot and gleaning tires her as before, Phœbe's mind is "not disturbed any more by the thought of Lydia and Rebecca in their nice clothes."

The twelve stories from which I have quoted some random passages are commended by Dr. Stuart Holden (minister of St. Paul's, Portman Square) as eminently fitted as a gift book for children, and he observes that :—

Once having discovered them, the children will soon re-introduce them to their parents, and set them high amongst the treasures of the household.

Set them high! You would have expected a minister of the Gospel to have suggested a prosecution of Muriel Clark for blasphemy and falsification. Instead of that he accepts her made-up novelettes and labels them "treasures of the household." Ought not Muriel Clark's flights of imagination to be checked? Will not the Christian Evidence Society hear the call of duty? Could not a deputation to Mr. Bonar Law be arranged?

I can ask no more questions, I will pause to recover my balance, and here mark four stars.

* * * *

And now, having, in a manner of speaking, put a four-star fence between myself and the problem which I trust the Christian Evidence Society will consider, I will use my freedom to declare that I am delighted to see this book published. It is perfectly clear to me (I do not pretend to guess at the opinion of K.C.'s and other such giants of thought) that Muriel Clark's intentions are good. She wishes to convey lessons in right thinking and right conduct on a Gospel basis; and yet, knowing that children get a bit sick of hearing the old legends so often repeated at the

mother's knee (this knee not being an institute of original research), she does her best to impart freshness to the worn materials, and new paint to the faded scenery. I raise no objection to Muriel Clark's fabrication of stories for (as she conceives) supreme moral purposes. She has as plain a right to do so as Matthew, Mark, Luke or John had. F. J. GOULD.

Does the Fourth Evangelist Pose as the Beloved Disciple?

DID the Fourth Evangelist wish to be regarded as the Beloved Disciple? The existence of the Beloved Disciple is attested both in the work and in the appendix (chapter xxi), and the latter declares, "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things." Unless the last clause be an interpolation, it supplies evidence that the author of the work was regarded as the Beloved Disciple, though when or where, or by whom, is not stated, and cannot be ascertained. The author himself, however, never says that he was the Beloved Disciple, and neither he nor the writer of the appendix discloses the name of the person. Nevertheless, all conservative critics, and almost all liberal critics, hold that the author desired to be identified with the Beloved Disciple, and therefore considered as a witness of the things he represents him as witnessing. Doubtless this judgment has been influenced by the declaration in the appendix, and by a late tradition before referred to, which may after all be nothing more than the echo of the former statement, but even when these aids to faith have been duly weighed, the impression of the work itself must be taken into account. Without the assertion in the appendix and the tradition supporting it, the author would probably never have been credited with such a design in later times, but there is enough in his methods to corroborate the ancient clew. He introduces the Beloved Disciple so mysteriously, and takes such great pains to glorify him at the expense of the rest, that he must have been seeking to render him an object of special curiosity and veneration. The query of the Ethiopian Eunuch, "spake he of himself or of another?" puts the matter in a nutshell. If he did speak of someone else why did he cover him up instead of declaring him to the world. It could not be modesty, it could not be vanity, it could not be fear. The conduct of a hero-worshipper is not in question. For one of this class would certainly have given the name of his idol, and probably have claimed him as his acquaintance. Hence although the author never says, either directly or indirectly, that he was the Beloved Disciple, it is possible that he wished to be taken for him by those who should read the work.

The methods he employed are remarkable. There is a striking want of straightforwardness in the references to the Beloved Disciple. It is as if the author had some mark before him, and were willing to hit yet afraid to throw. Certain critics imagine that modesty led him to adopt a circumlocutory way of revealing his identity. Others, however, contend that as a simple disclosure of his name and qualities would have been far less conspicuous, it must have been vanity which induced him to act as he did. It may also be urged that he attempted to give himself a false identity in order to win credit for his work; and that he thought it prudent to do this by insinuation rather than by declaration, because in the former case if found out he could pretend to have been misunderstood. If this were so it is most likely that he took advantage of a similarity in years, and other circumstances existing between him and someone else, so as to pass off for the latter under conditions rendering the dis-

covery of the fraud improbable, and that he even secured himself against this improbability by the cautiousness of his procedure.

But the simplest explanation would be that he did not desire to impersonate anybody, and only sought his own glory. Before composing the work, he may have created the necessary atmosphere, as the saying is, by dropping out hints, or even making express statements with respect to his high position in the esteem of Jesus, and the exceptional opportunities which he had had for knowing what Jesus taught and what happened to him after coming into view. Some critics even imagine that he himself wrote the appendix. This, however, seems very improbable. All that can be said on behalf of it is, that perhaps he had reasons for concealing his identity when preparing the work, and that these may have vanished before he wrote the piece at the end; or that he wished people to discover his identity from the work, and finding they had missed it, he put it in the appendix.

Against the above theory there are very serious objections. According to the writer of the appendix, the remark which Jesus addressed to Peter about the Beloved Disciple, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" gave rise to the belief that the Beloved Disciple would live to see the coming of his Lord, though in reality Jesus had said nothing to warrant such a daring supposition. This fact, as we before observed, suggests that there may have been someone whose hoary hairs occasioned the thought that he was being miraculously preserved to witness the above event, so earnestly desired by all Christian people. But it is infinitely more probable that the man in question shared or even originated this belief than that he took measures to destroy it. For when once the idea of being immortal had got into his head, the longer he lived, the more he would think he was going to keep on living. If, as is possible, he had spread abroad a statement to the effect that Jesus promised to let him see his return, it would be a very lame way of withdrawing this statement to say that at last he had discovered it to have been based upon a misunderstanding. The author would hardly try to pose as the Beloved Disciple except at a time when he could do so plausibly and safely, that is at a period not too soon and not too late for his purpose. The decade from 70 to 80 A.D. seems the one most eligible in this respect. Peter and Paul were gone. The friends of Jesus had flown to Pella beyond Jordan. The Holy City lay in ruins. The Church was full of parties, each invoking the authority of the Master. Thus a work purporting to come from one whom he knew and loved in the days of his flesh would have a good chance of success and be likely to exercise a great influence, if the age and standing of the author only supported him in his claim, and there were none to refute it. A posterior time, such as the turn of the century, need not be considered, for people would have laughed at anyone who had advanced pretensions which his very appearance belied.

These remarks relate simply to the present case, and do not hold good with respect to the theory that the author sets forth the Beloved Disciple as someone for whom he had no wish to be identified. In the latter instance a later, though not much later date than the one just named, would be more likely, to wit, the first ten or fifteen years of the second century, the original witnesses, and the original depositaries of evidence having passed away by then, and the traditions though rapidly fixing, being not yet inflexible. Of course, if the author did attempt to pass himself off as the Beloved Disciple, he was a thoroughly dishonest man, and his conduct will only be justified by those who resemble him in turpitude. The gravity of the charge, however, should make us cautious in bringing it; and so despite all appearances and beliefs, we lay stress on

what was said before, namely, that the author in the twenty chapters attributable to him does not distinctly say or even clearly hint, that he was the Beloved Disciple. If he pretends it, he pretends it so slyly that he cannot be brought to book. As for the affirmation contained in the chapter, or part of a chapter, which contains the appendix, it may have been interpolated, and in any case it comes from an anonymous witness, so that to press it in a matter of such importance, is out of the question.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

The Fulfilment of Self.

FROM the earliest ages religion has had sacrifice as its corollary. Both ideas had their origin in fear. Men fear what they do not understand, and to the primitive intelligence Nature was full of mystery and even of malevolence. Almost imperceptibly, the conception of all-powerful forces forced itself upon the consciousness of the clan, forces which man could not control or even comprehend, which, though invisible, could strike a man or blast a tree with a flash of flame; could raise the waters, or sweep man's handiwork into nothingness with a gust of wind. With fear went, of necessity, the imperative need of placating the forces which possessed so great a capacity for evil, and thus sacrifice was born.

At first, of course, men believed that the strange forces, or, as they were later termed, the gods, would not be satisfied with anything less than the best. Human sacrifices were the vogue, and it is impossible to realize the number of the earth's best and bravest who have had their breasts cut open by the sacrificial knife to placate the bloodthirsty deities of man's imagination. This phase of belief endured, no doubt, during several millennia, and we may safely say that, in the whole of that vast period, hardly a day went by but some man, woman, or child died to save the community. Jesus of Nazareth, dying for the sins of the world, is but one of a vast procession which began its march before the dawn of history and whose roll-call is not yet completed. Gradually, however, men began to realize that the gods, terrible though they were, were capable of being deceived. The spoils of the chase were substituted for the favourite children, and humanity advanced a considerable step on its long road. Throughout the centuries we can trace the development of this idea of sacrifice, a development which entailed a gradual belittlement of the nature of the victim. The root conception is, however, still the same. The doctrine of the efficacy of blood is still preached day after day, and the most respectable and peace-loving of Christians will glory of having been "washed in the blood of the lamb." It was inevitable that the sacrifice of human beings should make way for the sacrifice of the beasts of the field. But religion has carried the idea one step further. The sacrifice of self is now taught as the most acceptable gift the deity can receive, or man can offer.

I am not concerned in this article with the conception of "self." As human beings we are conscious, not only of our existence in the mass, but also that we are individuals, that we move in little inner worlds of our own, which no others may or can enter. Taking so much for granted, we may agree with modern psychologists in saying that the idea of self-assertion and its opposite, the idea of self-depreciation, are primary instincts of human nature and form two of the prime movers in all human activity. Let us deal, firstly, with the idea of self-assertion, an idea which is fully manifested throughout the whole of Nature. It is generally called forth in those situations when we feel that we are in the presence of inferiors of whatever kind. A baby in its cradle will crow and

gurgle and "show-off" generally, when it observes that it is the cynosure of all eyes, but once it finds itself neglected or unnoticed, it subsides into quietness. A peacock will only display the glories of his tail when he feels that it will receive its proper share of admiration. Particularly in the mating season, both of men and other animals, the desire to assert oneself is particularly marked, although, of course, we can formulate no absolute rule on the matter and say that self-assertion is the necessary accompaniment of love. It cannot be claimed that a tendency to assert one's superiority over one's neighbours is a popular one, or indeed, in every case laudable; yet at the same time we must not forget that self-assertion leads very often to a right and rational form of self-love, which, in turn, has as its fruit self-culture of an advanced and valuable type. It has been claimed by Christian apologists that their faith teaches the right and proper kind of self-love. Thus, in an article in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, it is declared that "Self-love is a duty implied, first in the revelation of the archetype of manhood in the incarnate Christ, secondly in the royal law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" If such be the case, we must admit that the average believer very effectively hides his good deeds behind a pronounced attempt to save his own soul at all costs, and, if possible, his pocket into the bargain:—

The discipline of self begins with conversion and repentance, i.e., with an effort of will in the direction of self-purification: with the process Saint Paul describes as putting off the old man. We may observe that here emerges the distinctively Christian idea of a new self, which is to be "put on" as a garment. The process of casting away the old nature is, in fact, crowned by "the putting on of Christ." In connection with this subject, the threefold ordinance of asceticism needs consideration. Prayer, fasting, and alms-giving are duties expressly commanded by Christ himself as efficacious aids to holiness.¹

With the manner of self-love described in this extract we are not concerned. As Freethinkers, we realize the absurdity and futility of prayer; we scorn the conception of a deity who is pleased because men eat only fish on Fridays, or fast during Lent. We refuse to believe that the poor are always with us for the express purpose of enabling us to obtain kudos in heaven by liberal donations. Monasticism and poverty, ignorance and credulity, are fit bed-mates, and there is no room for freedom of thought between the same sheets. We are concerned with a rational system of self-love, a system which finds expression in self-culture. In such a system the proper care of the body takes its place, and the iron bracelet of the late Cardinal Vaughan is regarded with amused contempt. The intellect and the imagination will be trained, not by the products of Jewish writers of two thousand years ago, but by the masters of modern thought. Taste and judgment will be exercised and the character developed, not with a view to an eventual citizenship in "Jerusalem the Golden," but to enable men and women to play their part in the cities and villages of the present.

Self-culture of this type results necessarily in self-expression. The whole of Nature is but the result of countless millions of creatures attempting, very often blindly, but none the less surely, to give voice and effect to their potentialities. In the plant world, seed develops into flower, and the flower passes again into the seed. The wheel of life is always revolving, and each turn represents the life of an individual organism. One of the most extraordinary arguments for the

¹ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings; Vol. XI, p. 355, 1920 Ed.; Article, "Self-love."

existence of God assumes that the world was created as an outlet for his energies ; and the life of every man and woman is but a record of attempts at expressing his or her individuality. Every week-end sees thousands of city-dwellers taking a respite from the daily grind at the desk or the machine and engaging in some kind of sport. Others find an outlet for their creative ability through pen or brush, or in the world of music. One of the chief reasons for the present great wave of industrial unrest is a deep-seated feeling that too much of our daily life runs in grooves or according to programme, and that the chances for the employment of initiative are becoming fewer and further between. Men no longer fear what lies beyond the grave ; they do feel, however, that in view of the short space of time allotted to each individual life on this planet, there should be increased facilities for self-fulfilment and self-expression.

Religion would have us believe that the ultimate aim of self-realization lies in reconciliation with the deity, in the merging of the human into the divine. Abnegation has been inculcated for thousands of years, and we can trace the chain of thought from Hinduism and Buddhism, through the Alexandrine philosophy and Essenism, to Christianity. For nineteen centuries the idea of Christian renunciation has struggled along, with, as a candid observer will admit, but small success. Some forms of self-sacrifice are, of course, inevitable. Lovers lose their selfish desires in their affection ; the mother forgets self in maternity ; many a man lives a life devoted to the service of his fellows. But such self-sacrifice is in reality self-realization, and it is only when we come to discuss the self-sacrifice taught by the various religions of the world that we can appreciate the difference. For instance, Christianity would have us live lives devoted to the service of the Church ; she would have us believe that church-going is essential to salvation, and that belief in certain creeds and dogmas is necessary for the health of the soul. She would have us sacrifice not merely our bodies, as do, to a certain extent, the members of the religious orders, but also our minds. For the Christian, only those forms of self-fulfilment are permissible which do not clash with the teachings and traditions of his especial brand of Church. Such an idea is wrong and unnatural. Freedom of thought is indispensable for all men and women who desire to live their lives to the fullest extent and to the best of their ability. Not the license practised by certain of the Cyrenaics ; not the liberty and lust of the brute beast ; but a rational self-realization is best both for the individual and the race.

E. ROYSTON PIKE.

LIFE AND DEATH.

The wish behind the thought is the soul's star
Of faith, and out of earth we build our heaven.
Life to each unschooled child of time has given
A fairy wand with which he thinks to unbar
The dark gate to a region vast and far,
Where all is gained at length for which he has
striven—

All loss requited—all offences shriven—
All toil o'erpassed—effaced each battle-scar.
But ah ! What heaven of rest could countervail
The ever widening thought—the endless stress
Of action whereinto the heart is born ?
What sphere so blessed it could overbless
With sweets the soul, when all such gifts must fail,
If from its chosen work that soul were torn ?

—Christopher Pearse Cranch.

Out to Kill.

THE morning broke promisingly fair and with just a tiny sprinkling of snow and frost on the ground. It was one of those delightful mornings when the "call of the wold" seems to have an irresistible appeal to one, and when it is possible to jump out of bed (without any preliminary "thinking about it") with such alacrity and feeling of suppressed energy as though "to be up and doing" is—absurd idea—the main factor of one's existence. It was one of those extremely rare and precious mornings when one feels almost instinctively that cold water for washing is preferable to hot and, afterwards, that for warmth's sake, a good sharp walk or run across crisp and sparkling meadow-land is better by far than the usual homely fire and sometimes irritating newspaper preambles. Had the air not been quite so sharp one could have taken it for an early spring morning so deliciously refreshing and exhilarating did all things seem.

Having partaken of a hasty breakfast I wandered forth. To have walked along without whistling or humming a tune would have been almost sacrilegious, and my blood warmed as did my appreciation of all the things of Nature I came into contact with that morning, as I reflected that to live and to comprehend life is just the grandest thing going.

I was in love. In love with myself and the world around me. After a while, unfortunately all too soon tiring of my joyous ecstasies, I rested by the roadside leaning my back against an antiquated gate and gazed over the leafless yet not too barren landscape in a contemplative but highly elated mood. As I rested I heard in the distance a dog bark, then, a little nearer, another, soon to be followed by the barking of apparently every other dog in the neighbourhood, and turning expectantly to my right I saw coming towards me round the bend of the road as fine a pack of hunting hounds—out, like me, for their morning run—as one could ever wish to see, accompanied by two whippers-in. How indescribably lovely did those dogs appear as they ran, sniffing enquiringly along the hedgegrowth and quivering with life ; one dodged curiously through an open gap in the hedge into a field beyond and then, at a sharp reprimand from one of the horsemen, obediently returned, while another truantly stayed behind to investigate some interesting object by the way, only relinquishing its inspection on being called by name. And the horses ! How superbly lissom they looked ! And how glossy and beautifully cared for, with their shapely and well-placed limbs and with their breath showing clearly on the cold air. And the men ! Could anything be more picturesque than their green coloured tunics, so symbolical of spring and life, and their absurdly shaped caps, or anything more wonderful than their almost uncanny knowledge and understanding of those hounds which, one thought, must inevitably be their friends ?

I watched with interest for few things intrigue me more than the sight of animals which, having had much human care and attention lavished upon them, still retain all their natural beauty. The pageant passed all too quickly, and when it was out of sight I slowly resumed my way, yet somehow my high spirits and contented mind had considerably abated. When, oh when, I pondered, shall we, who claim to be civilized people, break away entirely from what are after all but relics of the primitive cruelties and insensibilities of bygone days ? When shall we begin to realize the fact that progress has brought us to a stage when the taste of blood is, or should be, foreign to our lips, and that fair play is a worthy and admirable policy even in our dealings with dumb animals ; and

when, oh when, shall we cease to regard murder as a necessary concomitant of sport and pleasure?

Surely, I thought, it is possible and more humanely preferable to indulge in healthy and beneficial enjoyment without resorting to such barbaric methods, although the verb "to hunt" when applied to living creatures makes one despair almost of ever seeing one's dreams realized, especially when one sees a fox-hunt in full cry with its elaborate paraphernalia of snarling hounds, steaming horses and numerous followers on, all chasing one small and practically defenceless animal and giving it hardly a sporting chance of escape; and I could not help shuddering when I remembered that so many people exist even now who can still look forward with pleasure to having "a kill" as the final object of what would otherwise be a commendable diversion from the daily routine of life. It is, I suppose, one of the inconsistencies of this life that we should still be able to derive pleasure from the act of destroying a less able bodied animal than ourselves, and at the same time consider it a "civilized" recreation, and it must be a lamentable phenomenon that our otherwise extensive English vocabulary should be lacking to the extent of making it necessary to give so great a diversity of meaning to the word "sport." Perhaps it is one of the penalties of being too sensitive that a sight so common as that should be sufficient to start a chain of thought and desire to probe to the root of things with a view to seeing if those of them which grate against one's higher sensibilities cannot possibly be made a little more compatible with what after all I like to think are naturally evolved ideals, and thus disturb that peaceful and irrational acceptance of all things as they are which otherwise one might be tempted to indulge in. When I reached home I found that my peace of mind had been, alas! superseded by tumultuous thought which for a long time I found impossible to subdue.

It may be that we, as a race, are entering a new era in which the old law of "love thy neighbour" will be construed as having a somewhat broader meaning than it has hitherto enjoyed, and that we shall gradually throw off these last vestiges of primitive savagery which somehow seem to cling so tenaciously to us, and I think I may be pardoned for observing that the sooner this rather Utopian state of things is achieved, the sooner will those of us who are so deplorably sensitive enter into a more satisfactory period of comparative quietism and rest. FRANK W. ROBINSON.

Correspondence.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There seems to me only one sound argument against capital punishment, truly a very powerful one. You may make an irreparable mistake, imprisonment for life is a far more brutal punishment than taking the life of an assassin. There is, of course, no need to hang, some more merciful and less degrading death may be substituted. But the argument that hanging did not deter from petty crime, and therefore is useless against murder, is of all arguments the most absurd. The man who has no means of staving off starvation but by crime will, with exceptions more or less numerous, commit crime. Most so situated will choose crime falling short of murder. Make all crime capital and you will thereby increase the crime of murder enormously. To form a true idea whether capital punishment deters or not we should have comparative statistics of countries where it has and has not been abolished and of the same countries before and after abolition.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

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