

A Scholar Who Shook the World.

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Instead of being made—make yourself. —Herbert Spencer.

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ERNEST RENAN, scholar and philosopher, never cared for the applause of the world, but he would have smiled his kindly smile if he had known that in February, 1923, people would be celebrating the centenary of his birth. Renan had, during life, a large share of popularity, and his influence was continuous from the publication of his famous *Life of Jesus*, in which he wrote the life of the young Jewish fanatic whom he had served in his youth. What a storm the book provoked! For years it rained pamphlets. Fifteen hundred replies were published within a few months of its appearance. Whether men applauded or criticised, none could deny its power. Priests might rail and the pious might sigh, but they both have had to reckon with it. Not even the most reactionary of the commentators on the Gospel legends have written as they would have written had Renan's book never been published.

It was a famous victory for Freethought, and none the less effective because it was bloodless. For Renan's kid-glove method is as fatal to religion as Strauss's critical thoroughness. Airily and daintily the French scholar explains away the glamour and wonder of the Christian fables. The result is as deadly as the frontal attack of the German scholar, although Renan does with a smile what Strauss does with grim determination. Always under the velvet glove was the steel gauntlet.

The man who could alter the faith of thousands was well equipped for his task, for he was a great writer as well as a complete scholar. In many hundreds of pages Renan showed the sarcastic power of the French language in hands that can evoke its subtleties and wield its trenchant power. In his hands it was as effective and deadly a weapon as that handled by Edward Gibbon, although many tracts in the thousand years of history seem as if they had been made to suit the genius of the greatest of all historians, who wrote amid the quiet acacias of Lausanne. With his scientific bent on the one side, and his early clerical training on the other, Renan was still at heart a Voltairean. He even suggested that Jesus at Gethsemane may have looked back with a sigh to the black-eyed maidens of Galilee, who, under happier conditions, might have made his bliss. The sentiment was popular, for many sympathetic lady-readers of the Gospels have lamented that the founder of the Christian religion was not a marrying man.

Renan's own pilgrimage from Rome to Reason is told frankly and fully in his own incomparable language in *Souvenirs* and *Fragments*. In these two books he tells the story of the sufferings he endured as he shook off his beliefs. The series of letters addressed to his friend, the Abbe Liart, show step by step how he lost hold of his faith. In the final struggle he is driven to the Bible and to Pascal. In Pascal he finds that a great apologist "hardly dared to affirm anything." In the Bible he finds legend and superstition. Then there were domestic troubles, for there were foes in his own household. How Renan's heart-strings were tugged, for his mother was looking forward to his ordination in happy security. This was a difficult knot to unravel. He says pathetically:—

I exerted all my ingenuity in inventing ways of proving to her that I was still the good boy as in the past. Little by little the wound healed. When she saw me still good and kind to her, as I had always

been, she owned that there were several ways of being a priest, and that nothing was altered in me but my dress, which was indeed the truth.

The way was smoothed by Renan's brave sister, Henriette, and the touching dedication of the *Life of Jesus* expresses in a few sentences what he owed to her. The story of his mental development is told in his inimitable way in *Souvenirs*, but that is the memory of a man looking back upon the past, with the fragrance and sadness of the days that are no more. One thing emerges from all his writings, and that is his complete honesty. Truthful in his own despite, it was this uncommon quality that laid the foundation of his maturer influence and universal understanding. The real importance of such a man as Renan will be found as much in the processes of his quest as in what he discovered.

In all the little ironies of literature there are few things more interesting than that Renan's favourite subjects are chosen from a race of men, as he himself remarks, as different as possible from himself. But where his theme is one of the heroes of philosophy, Marcus Aurelius or Spinoza, his eyes kindle, and his smile is graver. For Renan was imperturbable. Through all the charlatanism and devilries of superstition he went his quiet way, humming softly to himself. Far off, the murmur of the busy and noisy world sounded but dimly; but the scholar wrote his books and brought his dreams of the redemption of humanity within the realm of reality. He was content, for he worked at the loom of the future. MIMNERMUS.

The Protestant Reformation.

III.

(Continued from page 91.)

To over-estimate the moral corruption of Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century is almost impossible. Luther, who came to see the City of the Saints, found in Rome the sink of all abominations, the very lair of anti-Christ.—J. A. Symonds, "*Renaissance in Italy*" (*The Revival of Learning*), 1882, pp. 406-408

It was clear that all the currents adverse to the Papacy were, so to speak, waiting for the coming of one man, who should unchain them with his powerful hand..... Luther arrived on the scene with his terrible voice, pressed all the elements of the storm into his service, and, launching a defiance of which the world had never before heard the like, succeeded in winning an immense success for the standard he had raised.—Hartmann Grisar, "*Luther*," Vol. I, p. 56.

If Luther—now Brother Augustine, of the order of Hermits of St. Augustine—thought to find release from his fears and terrors by adopting the religious life, he was greatly mistaken, in fact they seemed rather to increase than subside. Besides the study of the Mediæval Schoolmen and the Church Fathers, he applied himself to a thorough study of the Bible, a copy of which, bound in red leather, he found in the monastery, which was, later on, given to him by the Superior. So expert did he become in his knowledge of the Bible—so he tells us—he was able

to show the wondering brothers the exact spot in his ponderous red volume where every subject, nay even every quotation, was to be found.¹

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His brother monks regarded his austerities with amazement, "casting reproach upon his gloomy deportment and obstinate silence."³ Far from receiving sympathy in his distress, he tells us :—

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At the end of his twelve months as a novice he took the vow "to live without property and in chastity until death, according to the rule of our Holy Father Augustine," and finally, as it seemed, renounced the world and all its works. A year later, on May 2, 1507, he was consecrated a priest.

During the year 1510 a crisis arrived in the affairs of the German congregation of Augustinians. The Order was ruled by a General of the Order at Rome, whose German representative was a Vicar-General named Staupitz, the monasteries under his control numbering about thirty. Staupitz wished to bring about an amalgamation with several non-observant monasteries, and, after sounding the Pope, he published a Papal Bull approving this union. He was met with opposition by the Congregation, as it was feared that the union would lead to relaxation of discipline as the proposed new-comers were less strict in their observance. Seven of the monasteries, among them that of Erfurt, opposed the measure and decided to appeal to Rome. Looking round for a representative to present their case they decided they could not do better than appoint Luther, the brilliant young monk of Erfurt. This was the cause of Luther's visit to Rome in the autumn of 1510, he being then twenty-seven years of age.

Highly elated at the thought of seeing Rome, which he always imagined as the very seat of holiness, Luther set out on his journey and crossed the Alps into Italy. On the road he was received into a rich convent of the Benedictine friars in Lombardy :—

The splendour of the apartments, the elegance of clothing, and the delicacy of the viands, equally excited the astonishment of Luther. The polished marble and the soft silk, with every superfluity required to complete the refinements of luxurious life, formed a strange spectacle in the eyes of an humble brother of the poor convent at Wittenberg.⁵

Luther was amazed, but he kept silence until the Friday, when, instead of keeping fast, he found the tables loaded with the usual abundance of food; then he inflicted a sharp reprimand on the brothers. The Benedictines, highly indignant at this rebuff from one whom they regarded as an uncultivated German boor, thought the best remedy was to get rid of him. The porter therefore hinted to Luther the possibility of dangerous consequences should he prolong his stay. Luther left in haste for Bologna, where he was seized

with one of those alarming attacks of sickness which so often brought him to the verge of death. All the terrors he had suffered at Erfurt returned with redoubled virulence. The conviction of sin and the thought of God's judgment again filled his mind with agony. Recovering from this attack Luther resumed his journey, consoling himself with visions of the holiness he would find in Rome, the City of Saints and Martyrs.

The reality of the Holy City by no means corresponded with the glowing visions of Luther's fervent imagination. "Blessed Rome," he cried as he entered the city gate, but he fled the place the moment he was at liberty as though it had been Sodom and Gomorrah rolled into one. Luther declared that the sins and infamous deeds committed in Rome were unbelievable, they must, he says, "be seen and heard to be credited. Thus it was usual to hear people say: If there be hell, Rome is built over it; it is an abyss out of which every sin issues forth."⁶

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Luther tells us that he heard the Papal courtiers themselves declare: "It cannot go on much longer, it must break up."⁹ This was another potent force working for the Reformation. As Froude observes :—

The laity were shocked and scandalised at the outrageous doings of high cardinals, prelates, priests, and monks. It was clear enough that these great personages themselves did not believe what they taught; so why should the people believe it?¹⁰

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adorn and make beautiful the city. Modern researches go to prove that much of the praise given to his successor, Leo X, is really due to Julius II.

Vast sums of money were required to carry out these great ideas and the nations groaned under the exactions of the Papal See. It was the discontent caused by these exactions, more than anything else, which led to the revolt against Rome. It alienated the people and their rulers, and led them to welcome any reform in their religion which would abolish the rule of the Pope.

However, in spite of the sights Luther had seen in Rome, his allegiance to the Pope was in no way shaken. Although he wished to reform the Church he had no thought of disputing its authority. The visit to Rome took place in 1510. Writing in later life, Luther tells us that even seven years later :—

When I began the affair of the indulgences at the first, I was a monk, and a most mad Papist. So intoxicated was I and drenched in Papal dogmas, I would have been most ready at all times to murder or assist others in murdering any person who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the Pope.¹²

A fine example of the fruits of loving God in preference to one's fellow-man.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

Quips and Queries.

THERE are two survivals of barbarism that exist in our civilization to-day—Religion and War.

A defeat of the Church has accompanied nearly every great step in the progress of the world.

How to become a Christian : Read the *Catholic Herald* and the *Church Times*.

How to become a sceptic : Read history.

I once heard a Salvation Army orator declare that Christ's principal reason for coming to earth was to destroy the works of the devil. Why didn't he destroy the devil?

Talking about the devil, a little brainwork will reveal the fact that the devil and hell are one of the numerous inconsistencies of the Christian system. If you were to commit a crime knowing that you would be caught and sent to prison for life, we would be justified in regarding you as "loco." Now the devil knows quite well that he is to be cast into eternal fire, and yet he keeps on at his old tricks. Why doesn't he reform himself and go around doing good? The answer is obvious. Either there is no devil, or there is no hell.

Whenever anyone mentions the theory of Spontaneous Generation the Church lifts its voice and shrieks : "Where did man get his reason?" And yet they ask us to violate this very reason to believe things in the name of religion that would be called insanities under any other heading. They ask us to believe that the Giver of this reason is guilty of ignorance, brutality and blood-lust. They ask us to stifle this reason and believe things against overwhelming evidence. Consistency, thou art a jewel.

Here is a little thing that does not seem to have been noticed yet. When Christians are asked to explain the meaning of "these last days" or the creation of the world in six days, etc., they usually plead that a day in the sight of the Lord is anything from a thousand to a hundred million years. But they forget that the account of the creation in Genesis is the basis of the Fourth Commandment; and if the days in one do not mean any specific length of time, neither do they in the other, and therefore non-Christians are entitled to spend Sunday as they please. It might be well to bring this point before the notice of the Sabbatarians.

HUBERT SHERIFF.

Toronto.

Acid Drops.

At the Lincolnshire Assizes Mr. Justice Sankey had before him the case of a Christian scientist who was charged with manslaughter for neglecting to call in medical advice for his child aged twenty-nine months. The Christian scientist explained that he depended upon prayer, and in his summing up the judge made several comments that deserve a word of notice. One of these was an expression of regret that the counsel for the defence had quoted the miracles of Jesus Christ. He said it was one thing to believe that Christ could work miracles (a belief held by the Judge), but quite another to believe that ordinary men and women could do so. Mr. Justice Sankey should read his New Testament again. He would then find that Jesus Christ knew of no cure for disease other than that of supernatural agency; and his promise to those who heard him was emphatic : "In my name" they were to cure sickness and cast out devils. Of course, we do not believe it, and Justice Sankey does not. It is part of the humbug of the whole thing that a judge can sit solemnly rebuking a Christian counsel for citing the Christian Scriptures as an example to be followed.

Mr. Justice Sankey also said that "the duty of prayer was not disputed, but there was no question of the accused having broken a Divine law, but a human law which was not in conflict with it." Now here is a splendid mental muddle, and from a judge who, if he is to do justice, must above all things have a clear intelligence. The accused had not merely not broken a Divine law, he was carrying it out, and it was for depending upon it that he was charged. He was charged with breaking a human law, which the Judge said was not in conflict with it. But if the Divine law said trust to prayer and the human one said you will be charged with manslaughter if you do, what is that but a direct contradiction? Presumably Mr. Justice Sankey believes that you must pray, but you must also physic, and while the law will not bother if you do not call God Almighty to your aid, it will imprison you if you do not call in a doctor. Upon whom then does the Christian depend most? The bottom truth is that these men are being punished because they are honest enough to carry their beliefs into practice. All Christians believe that prayer will cure disease. But let one of them put that belief into practice and the rest of the Christians turn round and imprison him for being silly enough to give the game away. If Mr. Justice Sankey were intelligently sincere in his religious belief he would decline to sit judging a man for having carried out one of the plainest of New Testament teachings.

Some of our readers will have noticed the accounts in the *Daily Mail* of the "Atheistic Orgies" carried out in Russia during Christmastide. It now appears, says the *Manchester Daily Dispatch*, that these "orgies" were the customary Christian Christmas processions that have always taken place in Russia, and in the spirit of the old Saturnalia, from which our Christmas festivities directly spring, there is some amount of licence allowed with the general population. Of course, it may have been that the *Daily Mail* writer was ignorant of Russian customs, and so innocently misrepresented some of the facts, although some of the statements were pure inventions. But when we remember how the same paper, and the group to which it belonged, worked the stories of the municipalization of women and the boiling down of the dead by the Germans, one may be permitted some scepticism on that point. The spirit of Lord Northcliffe still lives, and the old ladies, of both sexes, who delight in the *Daily Mail* prefer to have their stories served up nice and "bluggy."

Mrs. Miller, of Bower, Caithness, who is 101 years of age, lives with her younger sister, aged 90. This is very tame reading for Christians, who ought to believe that Adam and Methuselah both lived nearly a thousand years.

Burglars at Botwell Roman Catholic Church, Hayes, Middlesex, stole a priest's bicycle. Those thieves will be

¹² Milner's *Church History* (1860), p. 684.

mentioned when the priest wrestles at the Throne of Grace.

Two Rockefeller Institute scientists, Doctors Gates and Olitsky, have found the germ of influenza, which hitherto has eluded all research. As the "flu" has killed many millions, it would be as well to present the germ to the Christian Evidence Society.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell states that "worry is thinking over things that never happen." For example, thinking of the poverty of bishops.

Sir Robert Kennedy, K.C., M.G., told a Belfast audience the other day that the discoveries in Egypt might throw light on the Bible. So they might; so they do; but not in the way Sir Robert implied. What they do show is that at a date when the earlier generations of Christians taught creation had only just taken place there existed a highly developed civilization in the Nile Valley—and civilizations do not develop in a day. The artistic nature of the discoveries made, together with the implied applied science that was developed, does cast a light on the Bible story. Place these remains of actual development in art and culture alongside the primitive Jews and we have the latter reduced to their proper level—that of a wandering tribe of Semitic semi-savages, hardly above the culture level of many of the Central African tribes to-day. The greatness of God's chosen people in Bible days is pure myth. We could make as great a nation of any African tribe if we took their legends and had them worked up by a committee of specialists with instructions to make all they could of them; and if we had a huge priesthood established to continue the myth, with every attempt to expose the fraud suppressed, it would not be long before this manufactured story would be accepted by a new generation as literal history.

Here is another bit of evidence from ancient Egypt which should open the eyes of Christians. It is taken from Gerald Massey's *Ancient Egypt*, a work which Massey regarded as the crown of his life's labours and gives an outline of a story that is sculptured upon the ruined walls of one of the Egyptian temples:—

The story of the Annunciation, the miraculous conception (or incarnation), the birth and the adoration of the Messianic infant had already been engraved in stone and represented in four consecutive scenes upon the innermost walls of the holy of holies (The Meshken) in the Temple of Luxor (which was built by Amen-hotep III) about 1700 B.C., or some seventeen centuries before the events depicted are commonly supposed to have taken place. In these scenes the maiden queen, Mut-em-Ua, the mother of Amen-hotep, her child, impersonates the virgin-mother who conceived and brought forth without the fatherhood. The first scene on the left hand shows the god Taht as divine word or logos, in the act of hailing the virgin queen and announcing to her that she is to give birth to the coming son (that is, to bring forth the royal Repa in the character of Aten, the divine heir. In the second scene the ram-headed god Kneph, in conjunction with Hathor, gives life to her. This is the Holy Ghost or Spirit that causes conception, Kneph being the spirit by nature and by name. Impregnation and conception are apparent in the virgin's fuller form. Next the mother is seated on the midwife's stool, and the child is supported in the hands of one of the nurses. The fourth scene is that of the Adoration. Here the infant is enthroned, receiving homage from the gods and gifts from men. Behind the deity, who represents the holy spirit, on the right three men are kneeling offering gifts with the right hand, and life with the left. The child thus announced, incarnated, born and worshipped was the Pharaonic representative of the Aten-sun or child-Christ of the Aten cult, the miraculous conception of the ever virgin mother imaged by Mut-em-Ua.

Of course, Nature is full of repetitions, and it is just possible that having staged and arranged a virgin-born saviour-god in ancient Egypt, God Almighty might have reacted the performance in Judea a couple of thousand years later. All the same the last performance should have been announced as a revival, and not put forward as original.

We like the manner in which biblical history is built up. In the *Times* account of the Egyptian discoveries we are told that in the time of the Pharaohs the banks of the Nile must have been covered with a thick growth of papyrus and other vegetation; and (from that, apparently, it follows) "it was within an easy stroll of the king's palace that Moses was hidden in the bulrushes." That is delightful! If only we could find preserved one of the bulrushes of 3,000 years ago it would furnish unmistakable evidence of the truth of the biblical story.

Freethinkers will soon be unemployed and unnecessary. Mr. John Bromley stated in St. Mark's Church, Kennington that: "Neither praying nor preaching were enough. We ought to alter the present position of affairs, and we had the power to do so if only we would exercise it." If this would only send up the sales of the *Freethinker* it might give leisure to a few of the leaders in the movement and enable them to take a 'bus ride occasionally. Even the "Wurrukers" leaders, such as Mr. Henderson, can go to the Riviera and at the same time lead the dispossessed.

It is also worth noting that the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, which is narrated in the Bible as sober history was current as a folk-tale centuries before among the Egyptians. The Christian Church had a very good reason for burying ancient culture. Its preservation would have made quite clear the kind of fraud it was perpetrating on the world.

The Committee of the National Liberal Club has decided to permit card-playing and billiards on Sundays; and now the fat is in the fire. No one would have objected could the playing have been kept quite secret outside the Club. But some of the members anticipate trouble in the constituencies, and the members are now being canvassed to call a general meeting at which the action of the Committee may be over-ruled. It would never do for those who appeal to the Nonconformist conscience for support to permit card-playing on Sunday. For Sunday is the one day in the week when the Nonconformist merchant can sit quietly at home and work out schemes by which he may exploit his fellows during the rest of the week. When it is games in the park the opposition is because it will mean more work and interfere with those who are out walking. When it is games in a club it cannot be opposed because it means more work or interferes with the general public. Some other reason must be found, and we are afraid that in this case the Sabatarians will be driven to honesty in their opposition because nothing else is possible. It is hard, but there is the fact.

Canon Adderley declares that "Sunday recreation is positively Christian." He should be invited to address the Romford Urban Council, who have vetoed a proposal for Sunday games in the local parks.

A fire in St. Jude's Church, Herne Hill, destroyed the organ, choir vestry, and part of the roof. It is believed to have been caused by thieves, as several bottles of communion wine had been opened and emptied. The divine displeasure has not so far had fatal results.

Commissioner David Lamb, of the Salvation Army, considers Salvation Army bandsmen superior to others because they are "saved, non-drinkers, non-smokers," and also unpaid. Unfortunately, these bandsmen consider such tunes as "The Bells of Hell" as being the last words in music.

There is no doubt but that we owe a great debt to the Press, not merely for enlightenment, but for self-enlightenment. Thus, we learn that the nation was awaiting with "tense expectancy" the birth of Princess Mary's baby—and as one of the nation we must have shared this tense expectancy. Then the nation received the news with heartfelt joy. Still more remarkable are

the revelations that the Queen, being only the mother of Princess Mary kept in touch with her daughter during the whole of the day on which the birth was expected—even the King made enquiries. After the birth—wonder of wonders—there was much discussion among the members of the family as to the child's name, and the Queen (we have this on the authority of the *Daily Chronicle*, "held the little boy in her arms" while the names were being discussed. After that we should not be surprised to learn that the King kissed both Princess Mary and her baby. At any rate we hope that in the future humbler members of the British nation will do what they can to imitate the fashion so splendidly set going by the Royal family.

We have considerable sympathy with the criticism which "Artifex" of the *Manchester Guardian* offers of Mr. Wells' letter on the collapse of the Church, with which we dealt in a recent issue. "Artifex" says of that deliverance much that we said, but of course, from another point of view. It is true that Mr. Wells does not face the real issue, but then neither does "Artifex." Each of them writes as though it were to-day only a question of the reasonableness of certain dogmas, but it is more than that. What we should like "Artifex," or some other prominent Christian to deal with is the bearing of all that we know of the origin of religious ideas on current Christian beliefs. If all that anthropologists have to say on this matter is true, then Christianity stands condemned as a survival of savage ideas, and without the slightest justification in the light of modern knowledge. If the Christians, even of the most liberal type are right, then all that Tylor, Frazer, Spencer, Wundt, Durkheim, and others have taught us is all wrong. But the two cannot stand. The choice before the world is exactly that which faced men and women when the real nature of insanity was discovered. It is now, as then, a choice between the savage and the scientific interpretation of certain phenomena.

For the case with which Christian leaders are able to avoid the issue, and the way in which they are able to throw dust in the eyes of their followers, men of the class named are largely to blame. Invariably these men, who speak with an authority that could not be questioned, fail to drive home the moral of their labours, and this is the bearing of primitive ideas and customs on modern institutions and beliefs. What is the use of knowing what savages thought of the world if all that thought is quite dead and gone? The importance of knowing their thoughts is that it enables us to realize the history of numerous current ideas and so test their value. This is precisely what our leading anthropologists fail to do. Can anyone doubt that if a man like Sir James Frazer pointed out in a set speech—and if his example were followed by others—that in the Christian doctrine of the Mass and the Eucharist we have a survival of the primitive rite of religious cannibalism; that the doctrine of a saviour-god is a relic of the same culture stage, that the whole belief in God and a future life rests on no better and no other basis than a blunder made by the ignorance of primitive man, if these things were plainly stated, what would be the effect on the outside world? Would our religious leaders be able to play fast and loose with the meanings of religion? Would men like Mr. H. G. Wells be able to indulge in yards of clotted verbalisms merely to avoid saying quite plainly that they have no religious belief? All that is required to end this reign of confusion and humbug is plain speech on the part of those in authority. At present it is papers such as this one which do the plain speaking, and our speech is unfortunately addressed to a too limited audience. With an adequate circulation we would undertake to pull the Churches around the ears of the parsons within the next generation.

The chief grievance that "Artifex" has against Mr. Wells is that he assumes the clergy to be either ignorant, stupid, or wanting in intellectual integrity. But what other conclusion can a sensible person come to? It must be borne in mind that in speaking of the clergy in

these terms one need not measure them by the most stupid, or the most ignorant members of the community. They are a body of men who have been educated, and they must be judged by the standard applied to other educated classes; and the fact is that with a limited number of examples they compare very unfavourably with these in either ability or knowledge, and in the remaining quality they cut a still poorer figure. For it is undeniable that the clergy do not tell their congregations all they know about religion, and also that many of them doubt far more than they say. The truth of this is seen in the fact that when, after much fighting, certain new views of religion are forced on the public there are always forthcoming expressions of relief from numbers of the clergy at being allowed to say more than they have hitherto done. Thoughtful men and women cannot avoid noticing that it is never from the ranks of the clergy that the advanced views come, it is always from outside, or from those who have had the courage to come out from the ranks of the clergy altogether and say what they believe to be true.

An undenominational service is being held in the County Kinema, Sutton, every Sunday evening "for young men and their sweethearts condemned to roam about the streets." The object is to remove the said young men and women from the temptations of aimless roaming. This is a left-handed confession of the evil done by the enforcement of Sabbatarianism, and from that point of view we are glad to see it. But if it is good to hold these entertainments in the name of undenominational Christianity, one would like to know on what grounds the clergy justify their opposition to ordinary and legitimate entertainments and sports on the Sabbath? The truth is that Sunday is only one of the ways in which Christianity has demoralized the people. There is a good deal to be said for the proposition that you cannot moralize and make people religious at the same time. If you really do the one you are almost certain not to do the other.

On the other hand the Bishop of Durham, with other clergymen of the county, has been protesting against cinemas being open on Sunday. He protests with all the greasy unctuousness with which we are familiar, that a day of rest and quietness is essential to the well-being of the people; and he adds that while Sunday is asked for in the name of the poor it is the well-to-do that usually take advantage of Sunday entertainments. We should like to know whether Sunday entertainments have led to the demoralization of the well-to-do? We can hardly think of a bishop of the Church of England saying so. Why cannot the Bishop act honestly in the matter and say outright that what he really objects to is that Sunday entertainments keep people away from his place of business and therefore injures the industry in which he is interested. There is something in the New Testament about a generation of hypocrites.

The Chief Constable of Southend has informed the licensing authorities that the Sunday opening of cinemas has reduced the rowdyism in the main streets. Other chief constables have reported the same results, but that does not affect the parsons who oppose Sunday entertainments. They would much rather have rowdyism with church attendance than good behaviour without it. It is the religious belief of the people they are concerned with, not their moral improvement.

A revivalist preacher in a Richmond church sang, "What's the Good of Worrying?" in the pulpit. Usually the bread of revival preachers is very well buttered on both sides.

Lord Hugh Cecil, speaking at the National Assembly of the Church of England, said: "It is a characteristic of the episcopal mind that they so often like to do a thing for one reason and say they are doing it for another." His lordship ought to know. He is a welcome guest at so many bishops' palaces.

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.

M. B. COUPE.—We are sending the paper as directed. If you would let us have the names and addresses of some of these visitors we would send them some free literature. We do what we can in this direction, and would do more, but what we can do is, unfortunately, very limited. Anyway, we know from our letter bag that a number of these foreign visitors carry home more Freethought than they do religion. They thus help to leaven the lump of native superstition.

H. AMEY.—The idea that one needs a parson to come round to look after one's moral improvement is a piece of impudence. We wonder it is not resented as an insult. Imagine the ordinary curate coming round to improve one!

J. MAC.—Thanks for cuttings. They are always welcome as they enable us to keep in touch with happenings that are of interest to Freethinkers.

R. A. PHIPSON.—You have quite misunderstood our meaning. We do not think that the teacher is better fitted than the clergyman to give religious instruction in the school. On the contrary, if religious instruction ought to be given the parson is probably the better one to do it. Our case is that religion should not be taught in the schools by anyone.

J. MOLYNEAUX.—It is astonishing how ready any one of the Churches is to see the evils of the others. What needs to be seen is that the evil is inherent in all Churches; and it ought not to be forgotten that during the time when the British people were being reduced to virtual slavery, the Wesleyan Church was in the hey-day of its power directing the full attention of the masses to the next world and the salvation of their souls.

J. ALMOND.—The answer, as they say in the House of Commons, is in the negative. The rudimentary mammæ have no such significance.

V. POWELL.—Beyond the newer interpretation given to the old theory of vitalism the meaning of your first question is obscure. You will find the whole question of Determinism discussed in Mr. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* The question of evil is also discussed by the same writer in his *Theism or Atheism?* We need only say here that the existence of evil is no more a problem than the existence of good. It is a puzzle to the Theist because he has to harmonize its existence with that of a good and wise deity.

C. C. DOVE AND A. PALIN.—Thanks for articles. Shall appear.

J. S. HUTCHINSON.—Your order for literature to hand. Will you please supply us with your address in order that goods can be forwarded?

F. BECKER.—There is no objection to anyone translating Mr. Cohen's articles into any language they please. As a matter of fact, many are translated. But they are written to be read and the more numerous the readers the better.

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 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.

To-day (February 18) Mr. Lloyd will lecture twice, at 3 and 7 in the Co-operative Hall, Plymouth. We believe this is Mr. Lloyd's first visit to Plymouth, and we hope to hear that the hall is filled on both occasions. It will be a capital opportunity for Freethinkers to bring their Christian friends along.

Next Sunday (February 25) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Birmingham, and will take for his subject, "Why Christianity has Failed." As the seating capacity of the hall is about three thousand, there is here also an opportunity for friends doing a little advertising during their spare time. There will be a limited number of reserved seat tickets at 1s. each, otherwise admission will be free.

Not all of those who questioned their members on the importance of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws sent us notice of the answer to their question. In view of the introduction of a new Bill it is important that we should know all who promised to support, and we should be obliged if those who have favourable replies from elected members, and who have not yet informed us, will do so without delay. A postcard from all would not be amiss in case we have managed to mislay any replies received. The Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws intends to get a Bill introduced with the least possible delay.

The National Secular Society's Executive has forwarded to the L.C.C. a resolution protesting against any limitation, or abolition, of the existing opportunities for Sunday games in the public parks, and we have also received notice of similar resolutions having been passed by the West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. and the North London Debating Society. We believe others have been sent, but we have not received formal notice of these. However, we trust that all organizations will see that resolutions are sent in, otherwise they may find the Sabatarians scoring a victory owing to the friends of a healthy Sunday being caught napping.

Mrs. B. Bayfield, of Manchester, will visit Birmingham to-day (February 18) and will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, at 7 on "The Future of Religion." We hope that Birmingham friends will make the meeting as widely known as possible.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Corrigan had a very good meeting on the occasion of his first visit to Leicester. There was a good audience and a little questioning at the end. Mr. Corrigan will doubtless be a regular visitor to Leicester in the future.

Our South African correspondent, "Searchlight," has for some time been carrying on a very vigorous correspondence in a South African paper, and has been engaging some very prominent men in the Church there. "Searchlight" has argued his case with restraint and ability, and it will have opened the eyes of many readers. We fancy that most editors in their fear of offending their pious readers do not always realize that controversy of this kind in their columns is far more interesting to a large number of their subscribers than much that appears. The fact that it so often draws protests from the religious side, who fear public discussion above all things, is in itself a proof that the matter is a "live" one. We put it on the ground of interest because we really believe that with the vast majority of papers the sole consideration is circulation. The old fashioned paper that was run for the sake of certain opinions is practically dead, except so far as journals of the class of this one is concerned; and then they have the fatal defect of having no money in them.

The International Movement of Freethought.

FREETHOUGHT IN JAPAN.

THE impending decision of the Japanese Diet to recognize the Vatican as a live force in international politics—a temporal as well as a spiritual force—by appointing a representative to the Papal Court, is naturally arousing the suspicions and fears of all good Freethinkers in that young and enlightened country. They hold with Rousseau that Catholicism is a religion which gives men two masters, the State and God, and is for that reason the most anti-social of all religions. But other religions are anti-social and are a danger to the State as soon as they get wealth and power. Protestantism is less dangerous to civil liberty only because it tends more easily to split up into competing sects. Where this tendency is in abeyance, as in Protestant Ireland, it is as ignorantly arrogant and intolerant as Catholicism. However that may be, I fancy that our Japanese friends are unnecessarily disturbed by the astute move on the part of their Government. Papal politicians may be able to hoodwink an English or French ambassador who is pretty sure to be a good son of Holy Church, but they will find the impenetrable Oriental more difficult to beguile, and he may, if he is lucky, get the better of the Jesuits. It is a case of diamond cut diamond. My Japanese friend takes a more serious view of the case, as the reader will judge from the letter to me which I print below :

Yokohama,

December 25, 1922.

DEAR UNDERWOOD,—Within a week from now we see the end of another year, and I am glad to inform you and other Freethought friends in the West, through your courtesy, that we have at least done something by way of criticism in the papers to protest against religion and religious superstition.

As Stannard Baker says in *The Spiritual Unrest*, "a world-wide liberalism is shaking ancient institutions, old walls are everywhere tottering"; there is also a tendency among people here to reject all forms of religion and bureaucracy, and to free themselves from thralldom. Yet our Government has decided to shake hands with the Pope of Rome, and is about to convey to him the most respectful compliments. A Japanese newspaper tells us that: "The necessity to appoint a diplomatic representative to the Vatican has been recognized for some time, but for financial and other reasons an appropriation made by the Foreign Office for the purpose has hitherto been voted down by the Cabinet." But it has been privately decided that Mr. You Matsuoka, manager of the South Manchurian Railway will shortly be appointed the diplomatic representative to the Vatican. We Freethinkers opposed this private appointment and attacked Romanism from the Freethought standpoint. But Japanese bureaucrats and elders were deaf and blind. Some papers were also irrational enough to urge the Government to make the appointment. It is certainly a dishonour to credit any movement of Roman Catholicism, and therefore it will be seen that here the pretence of a broad and human spirit is merely an added hypocrisy. We did not hear any protest from the Protestants when our Government decided to make friends with the Pope.

However, I am pleased to say that many Freethought friends have interested themselves so far as to attack and criticise Romanism.

It is said that Japan is on the way to better, broader, and more progressive ideas. While it is true that a large portion of the people of Japan seems to be drifting away from religions, some definitely towards anti-religious thought, it must be admitted that the movement is not as rapid as it might be. The dust of unprogressive superstition still lies heavy on us.

Most of the leading newspapers are quite liberal, and I appreciate their attitude; but still our educational writers open with shallow-minded, thoughtless discourses on religion and education. They do not know that the dreadful state into which things sank in the Middle Age was a prolific source of conflict. One paper serves up to its readers, ignorant folk, a dish of decayed chestnuts, the countless household superstitions, such as *Hakke* and *Kynsei* (fortune telling) or belief in the power of the fox to do harm, or other mysterious happenings and mischievous pranks.

Thousands of sick people are convinced that they can be cured by incessantly repeating the formula *Nan Myo Horeng Kyo* or *Namuamidabutsu*. It seems that Japanese bureaucratic government is encouraging bad reasoning, such as healing by prayer, faith, religious treatment and relics. The deadliest enemies of Japanese society are bureaucracy and religious superstition.

In conclusion I must say that our propaganda is in a fair way, and I am sure that we will gain a final victory over the enemy.

Greeting you from the Far East in the same thought,

I am, my very dear friend,
Yours sincerely,

YOSHIRO OYAMA.

I am sure that we Freethinkers of England wish our Eastern co-workers for intellectual liberty the success they deserve.

GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Pity the Poor Parson.

So long as I can remember, and I can go back quite half a century, the clergy have always been the subject of ridicule in the drama, the press, and the music-hall, the curate or vicar being regarded as the kill-joys of every form of innocent amusement and wholesome recreation of the people; and they have brought this ridicule upon themselves by the absurd attitude they have taken towards every new form of exercise or amusement chosen by the masses of the people. At one time they railed against the theatre as "the sink of iniquity," as the "broad road leading straight to Hell." Then they denounced dancing as a wicked form of amusement, and expressed their displeasure with those who preferred bands in the parks on Sunday to quiet meditation in church or chapel; and to-day, when the parson has nothing to teach that cannot be better taught by the school-master or by the Press, no duties to perform that cannot be more efficiently performed by health visitors, district nurses or medical officers, they are crying out that they are inadequately paid, indeed, that they are living on starvation wages—but nobody gives heed to their cry except those who are interested in the profession of keeping the people in ignorance and trading upon their fears, their prejudices and their superstitions.

Before the war, it must be confessed, the unfortunate curates were paid a scandalous pittance by their rectors for their services, and since the war their salaries have not been augmented in proportion to the increased prices of commodities. At one time the clergy sent out a demand for a salary of at least £300 a year, but they did not say whether this was to be clear of rent, of house and other conveniences, and how much the poor curate was to be paid out of any increase received by the rector or vicar. Now they have increased their demand to £350 per annum exclusive of house and other emoluments. The other day, at one of their conferences, one of the "poor parsons," in narrating the difficulties under which he was trying to make ends meet, said that sometimes he was driven to turn the mangle in order to help his wife economise in the matter of the laundry. Another poor

parson said that he was wearing the same old coat on Sunday that he had been wearing for the past ten years.

Now there is a certain loss of dignity in having to turn the mangle, if one has to do it as a matter of necessity. But as an exercise it is a really healthy occupation, and I know more than one man in a fairly good position who turns the mangle in order to help his wife get through her domestic duties, and enters upon the task with great zest. As to wearing an old coat, there is not much loss of dignity in that, unless the coat has become green with age or shiny with constant wear, and I don't suppose Jesus troubled himself about either shabby coats or mangles, for he was a homeless wanderer and had not where to lay his head. But these remarks refer only to very poor parsons. Thousands of parsons connected with the Established Church are in receipt of very good incomes, ranging from £600 to a thousand a year, and in addition many of them have fine substantial houses thrown in as part of the living. And when they have the misfortune to leave "this vale of tears" our daily papers record the fact that many of them leave large sums to their relatives and friends which they are unable to transfer to banks in the heavenly regions where they expect to live in happiness among the angels for ever and ever.

When we consider the salaries of the Bishops we cannot help acknowledging that there are still some very substantial prizes to be obtained in the profession of the "Sky Pilot," for those who are fortunate enough, either by merit or influence, to obtain them. His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury seems to be quite content on £15,000 a year and two palaces to live in, for we never hear of any complaint from that quarter. The Bishop of London, however, is not quite satisfied on £10,000 a year, and has more than once declared that though he is a bachelor, and therefore with no family to keep, his official expenses more than swallow up the whole of his income; indeed, he is out of pocket at the end of each financial year. And now we have the Bishop of Winchester who finds that he cannot pay his way on £6,500 a year. His expenses are so great that it costs him £2,000 a year to keep up the castle of Farnham, and for the credit of the Church he cannot abandon it.

Considering the hundreds of thousands of working men who are out of work at the present time, and have only got about thirty shillings a week as an allowance, out of which most of them have to pay ten or twelve shillings a week for rent for wife and family and at least two shillings and sixpence a week for coals to keep themselves warm, is it wise for these bishops to let the starving ex-service men who have the misfortune to be out of work know that they spend £40 a week to keep up mansions that are of no earthly use to them, especially when they profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus "who had not where to lay his head"? For my part I would sooner share the poverty of the poor parsons who are reduced to turning the mangle to keep down expenses, or wear the same old shabby coat Sunday after Sunday because they cannot afford to buy another, than live in luxury in costly mansions while thousands of their fellow Christians are on the verge of starvation. If bishops are prepared to preach the doctrine, "Blessed be ye poor," surely some of them ought to have the courage to practise it?

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Religious Reaction and Democracy.

We believe that democracy will work out its own salvation, and will in due time establish itself as the organizing principle of a wiser and a lovelier world.

—William Archer.

It is a common assumption, nowadays, that religion is an ally of democracy. Christian Socialists pooch-pooch the idea that religion is in any way a menace to democratic progress and assert that the ideals of democracy are essentially religious ones. To this the Freethinker replies, in the words of our Editor, that Socialism and Religion have about as much relationship as a merry-go-round has to civilization—"they may co-exist but neither is dependent on the other."

Clearly, democracy can never hope to establish itself unless it is founded on moral principles. The whole aim and object of democratic reform is to effect the self-government of the people and in this way to ensure "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." The guiding principle of democracy is therefore moral; but to go further and assert that this being so it is therefore essentially religious, is to distort language and to use the word "religious" without any regard for its historic meaning and development. If religion merely stands for the unswerving allegiance of man to moral principle, if the promotion of human happiness and well-being is indeed the fundamental aim of religion, then our ideas need to undergo considerable revision, and all the creeds from Roman Catholicism to Spiritualism should join forces in doing the will of their Father which is in Heaven—a will which they have, hitherto, completely and successfully obscured.

It will be granted that organized religion no longer displays its old intolerance of advanced movements, but this is due to the growing strength of those movements and its own waning power. It is also true that the Churches are devoting themselves more and more to social problems—so much so as to cause my friend Mr. Arthur B. Moss to declare that in twenty-five years Christianity will cease to be a supernatural religion—in fact the Churches are little more than social organizations to-day. But with all this "progress" religion is as much opposed to the building up of a new social order as ever it was. Orphanages, soup-kitchens, slumming parties; these are the extent of Christian "reforms," and so long as they are true to the principles of their founder they will never rise above them.

Opposition to the founding of a new social order does not come from wealthy bishops and die-hard Tory churchmen alone but from some of those who belong to the so-called "better elements" of religion. Mr. Harold Begbie for instance. Under the suggestive pseudonym of "The Gentleman with the Duster," Mr. Begbie has been expressing his firm faith in our present system in the pages of that eminently religious journal *John Bull*—and incidentally decrying all those who aim at establishing a better system. In a letter to the *Times* (that great organ of democracy), he deplores the fact that the lavatory attendants in the employ of the Newcastle Corporation receive 56s. a week, whilst the Tyne shipyard labourers only get 38s. 6d. a week. In order to minister to the divine discontent of the labourers he thinks the lavatory attendants should have their money dropped, adding, "Nothing could so helpfully minister to the unrest in the labour world as a wholesale lowering of wages in every branch of the public services!" This from the author of *Broken Earthenware!* Mr. Begbie can go into hysterics over converting sinners in the slums, but judging from his attitude he would be piously indignant if one suggested converting the slums into decent dwellings.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime.—Thomas Paine.

The reactionary and sinister Fascisti movement is essentially a religious one. Sir Percival Phillips (in the columns of the *Daily Mail*) says that it stands for "Christianity, patriotism, loyalty to the State, liberty of the individual (!), social morality," etc. Later on he says:—

The man who wishes to jeer at the Italian flag should first make his will. Not so long ago the King was openly spoken of with contempt by the servants of Moscow—even in the House of Parliament. To-day such an insult ensures painful meditation in a hospital, if not the seclusion of the grave.

This should give the Christian Socialist furiously to think.

Mr. Stanley de Brath, the Spiritualist, is another friend of democracy. In a recent issue of *Light* he tilts at the Socialist movement; in his opinion the majority of Socialists are "selfish and ambitious men who seek to establish by purely material means a peace and prosperity that can only come by high character" [incidentally he cites *Ireland* as an instance of materialistic depravity!] adding, "this high character is inseparable from religion."

Coming from a Spiritualist this high-handed method of dealing with the aspirations of democracy is singularly ill-placed, for there is no movement of modern times that has sheltered more charlatans and rogues than Modern Spiritualism; men who have not hesitated to exploit the deepest sentiments of the human heart. If Mr. De Brath wishes to find men of high character, if he wishes to witness deeds of humble heroism by men and women who live and strive and die "unhonoured and unsung," he need look no further than the Labour movement. He will find there something that will inspire him far more than anything he might witness in the fetid emotional atmosphere of the seance room.

Mr. De Brath's article reminds me of a scene I witnessed a short time ago in a small town in the Midlands. The filth, squalor, and poverty of the place appalled me. It seemed incredible that such a place could exist in England in the twentieth century, within the reach of all the fruits of modern science. Along a dark, narrow passage, I espied a tumble-down hut, and a sign over the door informed me it was a Spiritualist Hall! I can just imagine the look of scorn that these ethereal minded transcendentalists would bestow on any blatant materialist who suggested that possibly soap and water and an improved drainage might be more beneficial to the inhabitants than dubious information concerning some pantomimic future state.

Finally, the Christian Socialist would do well to study the opinion of the great American evangelist, Billy Sunday, concerning Socialists and Democrats. Says he:—

Weasel-eyed, hog-jowled, good-for-nothing, God-forsaken, iniquitous, rapacious buffoons and charlatans and mountebanks and poltroons and marplots and moral perverts. Why, if the devil were their daddy, Emma Goldman their mother, and hell their birth-place, they would disgrace their sire, dishonour their dam, and pollute their spawn.

The language is not quite so restrained as Mr. Begbie's or Mr. De Brath's, but there is a remarkable unanimity in the attitude of these gentlemen towards those who, scorning the mansions in the skies promised by the theologians, are steadily working to build *this* world a little "nearer to the heart's desire."

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The history of philosophy is the narrative of its emancipation from theology, and its final constitution through the transformation of science.—G. H. Lewes.

The Truth of Fiction.

Most story-tellers would maintain that their tales are true representations of life. From the popular writers like Charles Garvice and Ethel M. Dell to the intellectuals, this rule would presumably hold good. There is room in the world for all classes of men, for all types of character, for all kinds of action, but the concern of novelists is not so particularly to present a true picture of life as it is, as it was, or as it might possibly be, as to provide an entertainment for the reader.

In order to be entertaining their stories must be convincing, and the convincingness of any story does not depend upon the fact that the characters are acting as any man or woman would act; it depends on something quite different, and that something is the manner of presentation. Most improbable stories make themselves completely credible if they are properly presented; the most credible stories become quite unbelievable if the writer is so unfortunate as to state them in an unreal manner.

The fiction that a novel is a representation of a cameo of life, of a history of a man and his relations to his fellow-men, or a reasonably comprehensible study of an historical event, should be, judging by the product of the last few years, an exploded theory. The truth of any writer's novels depends upon how consistently he presents his own point of view, or a point of view he has adopted for the purpose of his art.

For instance, Mr. Hugh Walpole is quite convinced that an individual can create an atmosphere of terror, that indeed terror lurks around the corner of everybody's life, thus leading modern practical civilized man, who is too fully occupied to have any real concern with his subconscious, occult tendencies, back into the barbaric middle ages when man's chief concern was with these things. Mr. Walpole's ability as a novelist is such that when he takes us on his wild trips to Cornwall or to the less distant mysteries of the great houses of Mayfair, we share with him the fears which he so sincerely believes to exist.

Mr. Joseph Conrad is interested in quite another phase of life, the action and reaction of individuals each upon the other, and his meticulous examinations of these workings of the human mind are so close that he can give importance to utterly unimportant matters. This, however, though it may be regarded as realism, by which is meant truth to life, is not realism at all; it is the realism of art, a realism created by a method, and quite distinct from the ordinary actions of man.

The same thing can be found in practically all the novelists. Take Scott for instance, the imperturbability of Mr. Francis Osbaldistone is supposed to be characteristic of the Englishman. Possibly it may have been characteristic of the Englishman of Scott's day; it cannot be said to be characteristic of the Englishman of to-day, who is a being most easily swayed by his emotions.

Dickens presented a multifarious collection of extraordinary human beings, and everybody realizes how true they are. Everybody has met some of Dickens' characters, but no one can be found who will admit that these Dickens characters in real life are so seriously Dickensian as the people of the novels. The truth of the characters in the books is once more the truth of art, and not the truth of what we are obliged to describe as Nature.

The historical novel is well known for its inaccuracy, that is to say, historical novels rarely agree in all their detail with the circumstances as related by historians, but they are nevertheless convincingly true, more convincingly true than the screeds of historians. History is indeed the delusion of man in the present in regard to man in the past, and the historical novel is perhaps

the description of a greater delusion about the past. Those stories which deal with famous highwaymen, who were great scoundrels, convert them into popular heroes, and they are sufficiently convincing to serve their purpose. They contain the truth of art, so that nowadays it is impossible to feel indignation at the robberies of Claude Duval and Dick Turpin.

Modern realism in its generic form is no more representative of life than is romance. It is merely by its convincingness that it creates an atmosphere of truth. Fiction is not concerned only with human beings as they are, it is concerned as all the arts are, with the production of pleasure, and it is doubtful whether pleasure could be obtained if fiction were an accurate transcription of life. Most people are so bored with their own method of existence that memory alone can provide them with all the representations that they require. It is to escape from life as it is that man takes to art, and fiction necessarily does not attempt to portray life. Writers know that if they did this no one would want to read their exceedingly dull books; they therefore endeavour to create an ideal atmosphere by the selection and suppression of facts and by the distortion of happenings, much in the manner of a mirror designed to distort.

The public, however, insist upon pretending that they want to read about life as it is, and the artist by the exercise of his art convinces them that they are doing this, and that they are really reading a description of a series of events which might possibly have happened.

G. E. FUSSELL.

The Canon's Rest "Cures."

HE entereth the annual vestry meeting with solemn, ecclesiastical tread and an august mien, as who should say: "'Tis duty calls me, 'tis true; but I am one accustomed to tread delicately on most pellucid, Olympian air. Mayfair and St. Stephen's are my portion. Yet, behold, I come!" Looking oddly like commoners awaiting accolades are some of St. Agnes's parishioners.

To him, as Canon and Rector, is tendered an outstretched hand—that of Shuttlecock, recognized as one of the sons of the outer [Labour] darkness who has at sundry times spoken at street corners against the Canon's amiable tendencies towards pluralism and a much-to-be-deprecated lack of leisure to attend to his parochial duties. With a far-away gaze transcending all common things, the Canon seeth not the hand, but passeth on to touch with stately formality that of Mr. Barbed-whisker, churchwarden-in-chief of St. Agnes's, and *ex-officio* something about St. Martin's Abbey.

Ah, better for the Canon that he had eaten coke than ignored that hand! For Shuttlecock, no mean adherent of the local Labour Party, has sworn to raise the question of the Canon's pluralism in the forthcoming session of the House. His determination is now ten times envenomed. Never, says he, is the Canon seen about his parish. The poor are unvisited (though it is whispered this is not altogether to their misliking, and saves them the trouble of accidentally being found on their knees in prayer in anticipation of possible canonical visits and trifling presents). The hungry, poor scholars of St. Agnes's look up and are not fed, spiritually. The parish has all gone to pot, while, it is alleged, the Canon is looking after the flesh pots and gadding about at functions arranged at the houses of some of the best people to be found mentioned in the Court Guide and the Blue Book.

Too late, the Canon will find that hell hath for him no fury much worse than Shuttlecock scorned. The

adversary has compiled a list of the rather numerous, not to say lucrative, light, very light labour benefices enjoyed by his pastor. Even a City gentleman would not sneeze at these emoluments.

From his canonry of St. Martin's Abbey, the reverend gentleman receives a trifle of £1,000 per annum, whilst his rectorship of St. Agnes's brings him in a modest £550 yearly, *plus* a nice little house (rent free, and worth another £500 a year) situated in a quiet close where he can lie a-bed of a morning listening to the soul-stirring chimes of St. Stephen's and the Mother of Parliaments. If one adds to these the £400 a year derived from his chaplaincy to the Duchy of Lancaster, one may say the Canon receives a certain £2,450 a year, all told, but exclusive of an indeterminate amount of "boodle" (as Shuttlecock quaintly saith) accruing from Archdeacon's Visitation fees (one guinea for each church visited), and from certain handsome presents slipped into his hand by bridegrooms at St. Agnes's numerous and fashionable weddings.

What though the Right Rev. Lord Billy, driven by the high cost of living at £5,000 a year, together with the charge of a ghost-haunted palace, may "pop" his lawn-sleeved shirt and ride about his diocese on a bone-shaking bicycle—our Canon winketh his canonical eye and taketh the money, leaving the white elephant palaces to others!

As we said above, St. Agnes's is the recognized clinching-place of marriages made in Mayfair, and on such occasions as that on which the soap-baron's boy wedded the youngest daughter of old and impecunious Lord Hanover, the Canon has had £50-£100 (cheque or, preferably, Bank of England notes) slipped into his palm by the enraptured bridegrooms.

Discreetly murmuring: "For the poor-box or the restoration fund," the Canon pockets the money. For ourselves, we scorn to take notice of the base calumny of an envious world which alleges that the poor never see the colour of this money, or the church its restored clock or chancel wall.

"Don't do as I do," seems to be the motto of the reverend gentleman, which perhaps explains why the old church-sweeper and pew-opener, Mrs. Bow-and-scraper, has been docked of her tips on these occasions, though she has waded ankle-deep in confetti and been hit by other folks' old shoes. "Doles of this kind.....," says the Canon with a stifled sob, "most depraving for the labouring classes! It would break my heart if she were allowed these pauperizing gratuities!" So poor Mrs. Bow-and-scraper has lost her veils.

On the occasion of the last State function at St. Stephen's it is whispered our Canon was a figure in a curious incident which caused some to shake their heads with grave dubiety, others to burst into profanity (according to whether one lived in Westminster or Whitechapel).

High upon the belfry of St. Agnes's, commanding a fine view of the State ponies and their panoply, stood one Comrade Bogey, a mayor of some borough east of Aldgate pump and nigh to Dockland. The comrade was said to have distinguished himself in his capacity of local (Labour) Education Committee-man by threatening to dock off their free school-tea all children whose fathers (dock labourers) did not voluntarily subscribe to a gift for a royal princess. It is possible that the comrade's fame had reached the Canon, procuring him an invitation to see the show. But a more dreadful supposition blanched parochial cheeks—"Was the Canon in secret a Bolshevik?"

Some gravely shook their heads in doubt; others suggested that, as misery made strange bed-fellows, so, perhaps, the Canon was miserable; but a gentleman who said he lived at "Ahnsditch," and numbered no ruddy Canons among his acquaintances, expressed

himself somewhat unjudicially that he was "d—sure Bowgey warn't nothin' but a — trytor!" And there we will leave the matter as one for the consciences of the Comrade and the Canon.

Now, though the Canon, following more famous recent examples, would probably call himself passing poor on some thousands a year, his lady-wife, relic of a Rand magnate, is popularly reputed to wallow in wealth well-gotten. Here again, slanderous tongues with which, as a country rector recently told us, most parishes do abound, assert that the Canon's lady has nominated her woman-secretary to the post of clerk of St. Agnes's. The same tongues further allege that the fees appertaining to this office are received by the lady as part payment of her secretarial salary. Hereupon, with loud and raucous voices, the parochial mob of St. Agnes's roar in crescendo that the post be taken from the woman and given unto one of those wretched ex-service men whom we seem always to have with us.

What can the miserable Canon do to still these tongues which are even threatening to penetrate to those exalted circles wherein, as was recently said by an apologetic churchwarden, the Canon delights to be! "He likes moving about in good society." In his younger days the Canon had a temporary cure of souls in the East End, and though he is no Gospel shark to talk into salvation the famishing in shirt sleeves, he may, perhaps, have acquired sufficient of the picturesque diction of the back street to be able to bid his adversaries: "Go to!"

A rumour, for whose scurrility we blush, has recently run the round of St. Agnes's. The Canon, it is said, intends to fix a hatchment over his front door in the quiet close whereon all comers may mark the motto, "Get all, and follow me!" and observe the device, a gory hand rampant over a field ensanguined with *or*. It is said he has got them from the College of Heralds at the reduced rates applicable to churches and ecclesiastics.

H. T. WILKINS.

Correspondence.

OUT TO KILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I congratulate Mr. Fred Whitby-Edwards for his spirited protest against the "sport" of hunting? It is a shame and a disgrace that in these days such a "sport" should be tolerated. As a lover of all animals, both tame and wild, I think it quite time that fox-hunting, tame stag-hunting, and similar degrading "sports" should be ended.

A WORKING-MAN.

SIR,—May I supplement my letter which you were good enough to find room for in the current issue of your valuable journal with a condensed quotation from *The Field* regarding the exploits of the Essex Union Hunt one day last week:—

Passing Dunton Church, Reynard, now "running short" [*i.e.*, his eyes starting from his head and glassy with terror, his heart like a hammer that must break] doubled back to the railway where the hounds "rolled him over" [camouflage for rent him in pieces] in the open.....Just before the kill, present, a "first-season bitch" [not a "new season's lamb"] drew out by herself and tackled the fox in view of the field, including Mrs. W. Wilde who "walked" the puppy last year. It was a graceful and appropriate compliment when the master presented the brush [a token of her iniquity?] to the lady.

How awful if this lady should one day catch a cold and toothache. The pain is generally acute! I am aware that the educational value of this letter is nil with regard to your constant readers, but I intend that copies shall be received by many "kind Christian folk."

FRED WHITBY-EDWARDS.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on post-card.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, S.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Debate—"Socialism an Imperative Necessity if Society is to be Preserved." Affirmative, Mr. Percy Friedberg; Negative, Mr. A. Eager.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Where Recent Research in Science has put God." Discussion Circle meets Monday, February 19, 8 p.m., Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road. Mr. Walter B. Wingate will open.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Moral Ideal and 'Business as Usual.'"

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mrs. B. Bayfield, "The Future of Religion."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Mr. W. H. Macewan, "Discussion." Silver Collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., "The Slave Basis of Ancient and Modern Civilization."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Rusholme Public Hall, over Free Library, Dickenson Road): Mr. William Marriott, 3, "That Fraud Spiritualism"; 6.30, "Those Fairies—Psychography and Spirit Photography."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Frankfort Street): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "The Love of Life"; 7, "The Bankruptcy of the Christian Religion."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 6 Room, Dockers' Hall): 6, Committee Meeting.

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