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**Views and Opinions**

**Gods and Ghosts**

I FEEL that I owe some of my readers an apology for having held up so long the continuation of the articles I commenced writing on an analysis of the words and phrases used in Freethought controversy. But each article, or brace of articles stood alone, and many other things have cropped up that were of a more topical nature. I think too, it is a compliment to the quality of *Freethinker* readers, and perhaps to myself, that so many found the articles interesting enough to send enquiries as to when I intended resuming the discussion. Well, here is another addition to the series, and the rest will have to take their chance.

It will be remembered that when dealing with "Agnosticism" (*Freethinker*, April 15 and 22), it was pointed out that in the customary discussions two distinct questions had been—for most people—hopelessly confused. One was the belief in God, the other the philosophical one of the "Problem of existence." There is no logical connexion between the two, and, as a matter of fact they have independent origins. The belief in gods begins in a "psychological" blunder, and dates from the most primitive era of human psychology. The belief in the question of "existence" belongs to a comparatively advanced stage of social life and ultimately centres round a theory of knowledge. But from various causes, the main ones—particularly in modern times—being timidity and muddled thinking, the two distinct questions have been lumped together as one. As was demonstrated in previous articles, they were so confused by T. H. Huxley and Leslie Stephen, and thousands of others have joyfully entered into their kingdom. The result to date is that we are constantly having philosophy ladled out as religion, and religion served up as philosophy with a complete misunderstanding of both as an inevitable consequence.

My present purpose is to attempt the untangling of a knot. I shall not follow a strictly chronological order, since that would require a volume; nor shall I

concern myself very much with names, I want to tell a story in logical sequence, trusting that by this plan readers will be able the easier to follow it to a happy ending. And I hope that all will remember what I had to say in previous articles as to the great value of having the patience and the ability to "split hairs." If people had only cultivated this habit of splitting hairs a great many split heads would have been saved, and a great many of our social troubles would never have existed. Nothing in this world can be had without payment, and stupidity is the most costly and the most extravagant form of dissipation with which I am acquainted.

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**Spiritual and Material**

We may begin with the fact that the distinction between the "spiritual" and the "material," commonly made to-day, is not primitive to human thought. Neither is that of the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Such distinctions belong to a later phase of life when positive knowledge is beginning to separate itself from the somewhat amorphous output of primitive intelligence. One may safely assume that primitive distinctions extend little farther than that between the usual and the unusual, the ordinary and the extraordinary, the painful and the pleasant. One may take a further step and conclude that it is the unusual and the painful that mostly attracts attention. It was probably this that Aristotle had in mind when he said that pain first set man philosophizing. So long as things run smoothly the primitive intelligence—even as it exists among ourselves—seldom enquires into causes. It is when disaster or trouble occurs that man meets them with an interrogation. It is significant that from the very earliest times it is the pains and miseries of life upon which religion has rested to secure its influence and to increase its power. About the only benefit that religion ever confers on man is to offer a doubtful solution to the problems it creates, and a questionable remedy for the troubles into which it has plunged him.

From this point of view—a strictly scientific one—religion may be regarded as a kind of "defence mechanism," which the human mind creates to protect itself against adverse natural forces. Man cannot guard himself by that ability to control natural forces which exists at a later stage, for to the primitive mind there are no *natural* forces to control; there is only, first a vague "power," and afterwards a series of personified powers on the good will of which man's own safety depends. This is not merely the feature of primitive religious thought, it is that of present-day religion. The prayers, the praise, the worship of the religious devotee are all ultimately expression of thanks for favours received or expected. There is a very religious flavour about the maxim



that gratitude is a lively expectation of favours to come. Take away this aspect of religion at any time, and how much of it would be left?

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#### The Power of Taboo

Religion is born in an atmosphere of fear and ignorance, and one of its earliest, its most powerful and most persistent manifestations is that of "taboo." A taboo simply stands for something that is forbidden. It has no moral significance. Early religion has nothing to do with morals, although as in primitive life religion covers everything, it is necessarily associated with the good as well as with the bad, the useful as well as the harmful. The action of "taboo" may be negative or positive. It may order that certain things may be done or that they may not be done; but in either case it is determined by the fear of "supernatural" agencies. Things devoted to the use of the gods must not be touched by profane hands, places are reserved for the gods, and they must be served by particular persons in a particular way. As a consequence of this belief we have sacred places, sacred books, sacred buildings and sacred persons. We have even the sacred person of a king, which is a direct consequence of the primitive taboo that surrounded the priest-king. The special dress of the priest in his present-day make-up gives the modern equivalent of the primitive paint and feathers. It is no great wonder that one may so successfully evoke the activity of primitive forms of thinking when we have so many offices, customs, and ceremonies that are intended to keep them alive. It also explains why it is so difficult to get these taboos set on one side, and also—a much more unpleasant phenomenon—why so many apologies for maintaining these primitive mental products are offered by those who, while quite conscious of their absurdity and even their danger, yet lack the courage openly to reject them. Physical courage has always been cheap and plentiful. Moral courage still remains comparatively rare, and there are few who are willing to dare the breaking of these ancient religious taboos. Much of this fear of the taboo is disguised by the pretext of respect for the ideas of other people. But it may be noted that this respect is paid only to *new* ideas. If a new idea is propounded men may laugh at it to their heart's content. No one will think any the worse of them. They may even gain a reputation for smartness in so doing. Every penny-a-liner had his fling at laughing at the ideas of Einstein, although he had not the faintest idea of what they were; and one has only to contrast this with the careful and "respectful" way in which men will deal with the biblical story of creation or the virgin birth to realize that this respect is to the established taboo, and to nothing else. One great lesson that life teaches us is that while it is never singular to be wicked, it is usually wicked to be singular.

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#### The Way of Safety

It is quite probable that many of my readers will think I am a long time getting to the point, but those who have patience will, I think, realize that in this case the old adage, "The longest way round is often the shortest way home," will in this case justify itself. It is very necessary completely to realize the conditions in which human thought begins in order to understand how it is that so many philosophers persist in expressing their ideas in the language of religion, and why so many theologians find it advisable to express their animistic ideas in the language of philosophy. The scientist or the philosopher purchases ease by paying a verbal homage to superstitions he does not hold; the theologian lays claim to a

rationality that is not his by clothing his advocacy of primitive superstitions in terms of modern science and philosophy. The scientist thus avoids discomfort and the theologian saves his face.

Take as an illustration the common expression that art and morality began in religion. It might as reasonably be maintained that cleanliness began in dirt or health in disease. Of course, art and morality must be formulated in whatever terms of expression exist, and the fact that art-forms have so often in earlier times a religious implication, is not more significant than is the fact that the children of English parents, living in an English society, do not grow up speaking Chocktaw or Chinese. It is as impossible to coin a completely new vocabulary, or even to think absolutely new ideas, as it is for a child to speak an absolutely new language.

What we have to bear in mind is the difference in origin of science and religion. The latter is born of fear and ignorance; there is no greater doubt of this to-day than there is of the origin of the markings on water-laid geologic deposits. It is in this general atmosphere created by religion that science is born. But when I speak of science I do not mean mere knowledge. A knowledge of things sufficient to enable him to live man must always have had. That kind of knowledge exists in the animal world, it merely assumes a more orderly and a more knowledgeable form in human society. But because of his religious environment man first expresses his knowledge in a religious form. The food grows, but it is due to the spirit of the corn; the boat flows down the stream, but this is because of the mysterious "Mana" that is resident in the boat. So with everything. Man knows that to get anything he must work, and that he must work in a particular way, but while man sows it is the gods that give the harvest. And that message is still declared in every fetish-worshipping place in the civilized world.

But part of the work of science consists in separating the casual from the causal, the essential from the non-essential, and its development depends upon tracing events, not to the agency of the gods, but to the operation of knowable and controllable forces, and the statement of their actions and reactions in terms of general law.

But the statement depends upon language, and in the use of language there is only at hand a vocabulary impregnated with religious ideas and implications. The scientist, therefore, when he is not *himself* under the influence of the words he is compelled to use, cannot help suggesting these religious ideas to those he is addressing. One may take just one example of this. The Greek philosopher, Heraclites, speaks of the "One and the Many." It is highly probable that all he meant to convey was the persistence of some primitive substance in the midst of continuous change. But the "one" gets printed with a capital letter, and presently is found doing duty for a God who underlies and sustains phenomena, and we are soon witnessing the birth of that philosophic nightmare the "thing-in-itself." The situation is inevitable. To be understood by his fellows the advanced thinker is bound to use existing terms. But these terms were coined to express meanings different from his own. He thus finds himself suggesting one thing and intending another. And of this situation, inevitably in all ages, the timid philosopher and the crafty theologian takes the fullest advantage.

This is rather a lengthy preliminary, but as I wish to deal with the refuge that modern religion has found in the "thing-in-itself," it is essential to what is to follow.

CHAPMAN COHEN.



## Under the Cap and Bells

"Le rire c'est le propre de l'homme."—Rabelais.

"Not a fantastical fool of them all shall flout me out of my calling."—Shakespeare.

FRENCH literature is one blaze of splendid scepticism from Abelard to Anatole France, and the name of François Rabelais is one of the best-known in this famous bead-roll. The popular idea of Rabelais coincides with Pope's oft-quoted line, depicting the great writer "laughing in his easy chair." He is pictured as one who laughs at most things; a hog for appetite; a monkey for tricks. His genius has many facets, and he has been described variously as a great teacher, an obscene writer, a mere buffoon, a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Freethinker. Yet, to paint him as a moralist alone is to overlook the innate drollery of his character. To set him up as a clown grinning through a horse-collar is to forget the stern reality that underlies his writings.

To treat Rabelais as destitute of all serious purpose in art or life is a great error. Whatever Rabelais may have been, he was not a trifler. He had seen priestly life from the inside, and he hated priests with every drop of his blood. He studied Greek when it was a forbidden language, and was an enthusiastic disciple of learning when scholars carried their lives in their hands. His zeal for intellectual freedom, untrammelled by Priestcraft, entitles him to rank with Erasmus and Von Hutten as an apostle of humanism.

Of middle-class parentage, François Rabelais was born in the fifteenth century near the lovely city of Chinon, on the Vienne, where Henry II. cursed his sons and died. Always he regarded Touraine, its cities, rivers, and vineyards, with affectionate admiration. "Noble, ancient, the first in the world," so he called it, with pardonable exaggeration, in the fullness of his heart. His father, an innkeeper, wished to make him a priest. Accordingly, little François was sent at nine years of age to the Benedictine monks at Scully, so young that the white vestment was put over the child's frock. Later, he was removed to the Franciscan monastery at Fontenay le Comte. The Franciscan vows included ignorance as well as celibacy and poverty. For fifteen years he remained there, taking priests' orders at the age of twenty-eight. Always inquisitive, he amassed that knowledge of books and humanity which he afterwards put to so good a use in his masterpiece, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

It is to this lengthy period spent among the bigoted, narrow, intolerant sons of the greatest Christian Church that we owe his life-long hatred of priests and priestcraft. It breaks out in nearly every page of his writings, here passionately, there sorrowfully, with a cry of rage, a sob of pain, or a mocking laugh of sanglante derision. He hated the "monk-birds," as he called them, more bitterly than even Erasmus, for his nature was stronger.

Rabelais' pilgrimage from Rome to Reason is peculiar and pathetic. At the age of forty he came from the sheltered cloister into the busy world a free man, at liberty at last to follow his studies, burning with an eager enthusiasm for the new learning. He threw aside the monastic habit, and became Secretary to the Bishop of Maillezais. Afterwards he went to the University of Montpellier with the object of getting a medical degree. When he attended the lectures he was within sight of his fiftieth year, and he sat side by side with men young enough to be his own sons. Two years later he went to Lyons, where he held an appointment as physician to the hospital. His friend, Etienne Dolet, the Freethinker, was already established as a printer in the town.

Rabelais' connexion with the Protestant reformers of France is certain; the extent of the association difficult to determine. He had no desire to be "butchered to make a Roman holiday." He never contemplated following Calvin into exile, or Berguin to the stake. As he smilingly explained, he was "too thirsty to like fire." His sympathies, too, were averse from all dogmas. "Presbyter," to him, "was but priest writ large." Luther and Calvin were tarred with the same brush as the other priests. The society of Des Perriers, Etienne Dolet, and the Lyon-nais Freethinkers, was more congenial to his habits of thought. Moreover, he had an intimate acquaintance with the power and machinations of Priestcraft, and of the malignity of its hired bravos and assassins.

Heretics were then handed over to the secular arm to be burnt for the good of their souls, and the greater glory of their god. Rabelais did not intend this to happen in his case, if he could help it. When he was denounced as a heretic, he challenged his enemies to produce an heretical proposition from his writings. They were unequal to the task, but, nevertheless, the heresy was there. Rabelais' caution was necessary if he wished to live. Some of his contemporaries suffered most severely for heresy. Dolet was burnt to death; Des Perriers was driven to suicide; Marot was a half-starved wanderer in Piedmont. Rabelais had every reason for not wishing to be "saved by fire."

His writings, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, which have kept his memory green through so many generations of men, are a series of satires in a vein of riotous and uproarious mirth on monks, priests, pedants, and on many of the solecisms of his time. With all their freedom of expression, which was not so strange in an age when men wrote only for men, they reveal a heart aflame with intellectual liberty, and a passionate desire for the reign of truth and justice.

It has been said, with considerable truth, that Rabelais despised women. He did not write till an age when the passion of youth had consumed itself to ashes. Love was killed in Rabelais by that hateful system of monkery, which has filled Christendom with unspeakable horrors. Poor Rabelais! Half of humanity was dwarfed and distorted in his mind's eye. Human love, the central fire of the universe, the source of most human joys and sympathies, the bond of society, appears in the accursed monastic system in which he was trained as corruption and depravity. This damnable discipline surrounded Rabelais from the time when he wore a child's frock until he was a disillusioned man of forty years, and the sweetest side of his nature was strangled by Priestcraft. He never loved, never even thought of loving. He had no more respect for the Desdemonas and Portias of the world than a eunuch in an Eastern seraglio. Nay, more, there had even been crushed out of him that love for his mother, which characterizes every man worthy of the name. As the old galley-slave used to be known by the dragging foot, on which had been the heavy iron fetter, so, when the unlovely years have eaten away manhood, imprisoned with its blind instincts and objectless passions, the monk is known by his sexless mind. Rabelais was poor indeed! The priests spoiled his life. The robe he wore was to him a bodily deformity, narrowing his view, corrupting his mind. Originally, his nature must have been very different; witness those exquisite chapters in which he describes the monks of Thelema, whose motto was "Liberty."

Tradition has it that the ribald old scholar died saying: "I go to seek the great perhaps." We may picture the rage of his opponents when the old man evaded so quietly their eager, clutching hands. The



Romish Church never forgets, and it was well for the old scholar that his life was not prolonged.

Rabelais went further than contempt for priests and the trappings of religion. His aloofness was not accidental, but intentional. He hoped to cure superstition by spreading knowledge, by bringing priestcraft into contempt, by widening the boundaries of human thought. It was his desire that his writings should be read, and many generations of men have smiled and pondered at his written words. Rabelais knew as much as any man of his time, but he carried his weight of learning with a smile. Liberty was Rabelais' sovereign specific for the ills of mankind. Finding his contemporaries bound with chains of their own manufacture, it was his life-purpose to break those fetters and set them free. In doing so, he revealed himself as one of the great creative minds of the intellectual world.

MIMNERMUS.

### Renan's Journey from Rome to Reason

ERNEST RENAN must ever be regarded as one of the great liberators of the human mind. Born in Brittany in 1823, his mystical temperament, studious inclinations and pronounced religious tendencies soon attracted the attention of the local clergy, and he was early chosen as one endowed with all those qualities which distinguish the ideal priest.

A region of dripping or uncertain skies, Brittany retains its fairies, witches, high places and sacred wells. Moreover, its megalithic monuments, deformed and stunted trees, its sea-swept moors and uplands are all in keeping with the mystic lore of its inhabitants.

Tréguier, Renan's birthplace is an ancient cathedral city with a port trafficking in fish and grain. The elder Renan was a mariner, and it is said that the Bretons make the best sailors in France. The father was a Republican, while the mother remained Catholic and Royalist. In a land of miracle-working saints, sapient old wives and fairies, the religiosity of the latter was almost inevitable. When Ernest first saw the light—a frail seven months' babe—his mother despaired of his life. But when a wise woman had dipped the infant's little shirt in a holy well and the garment expanded in the water, she returned with the joyful tidings that little Ernest would live, for this proved that the good fairies truly loved him.

Renan's prodigal father was drowned at sea, and his death disclosed his debts. Thus the family was reduced to poverty and distress. The household now consisted of the mother, Alain, the eldest son, and a daughter, Henriette, who was twelve years old when Ernest was born, and was destined to become the lodestar of his life. Henriette became the practical head of the household and afterwards left home to earn sufficient money to pay the family debts, so as to look the world in the face once more.

Trained by the priests at Tréguier College, Ernest proved a diligent pupil, an easy prize-winner, and was soon invited to Paris, where he might become an ornament to the Church. But the prodigy from Brittany, from whom the professors of the Seminary anticipated so much, disappointed them. His unprepossessing appearance, solitariness and diffidence, were largely responsible for this. Still, in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Paris, Renan's demeanour underwent a rapid change. As he himself said: "The Breton died in me!" The brilliantly ornate, semi-scientific Parisian Catholicism seemed so different from the ingenuous and austere piety

of the Tréguier priests. Renan now heard of Michelet and Victor Hugo. "I discovered," he wrote afterwards in his *Souvenirs*, "that there was a contemporary literature. I learned with stupor that knowledge was not a privilege of the Church. My masters at Tréguier had been far more advanced in Latin and mathematics than my new professors. But they dwelt sealed in a catacomb underground. Here in Paris, the air of the outer world circulated freely. New ideas dawned upon me. A new ideal swam into my ken. This, perhaps, was what I had longed for so vainly, so vaguely, in the dim cathedral aisles of Tréguier."

Educated in a convent, Renan's sister Henriette had gone into the world to help repair the family fortunes. Her life as a governess was very unlike that of the nun she had once desired to be, and the stern facts of her existence had led her to question the very foundations of the Christian faith. Consequently she became seriously concerned with Ernest's entry into the priesthood. She dreaded the mental stagnation that would follow ordination. Still, she preserved silence and journeyed to Poland to serve as governess at a good salary in an aristocratic family. Ernest, meanwhile, continued his studies which induced him to examine the philosophical speculations of Kant, Reid, Herder and Hegel. Yet, despite the doubts these readings aroused, he still regarded the priestly office as his legitimate goal. He longed for a career of scholarly ease. His sister constantly communicated with him from far-away Poland and earnestly advised him patiently to consider before he took an irrevocable step. But Renan strove to persuade himself that intellectual liberty was possible within the Church. In an epistle to Henriette he urges that even a priest may employ reason as a divine gift. "Such independence," he argues, "is open to all men, and why not to a priest? It is true that in the case of a priest this liberty is subject to a certain restraint from which other men are free. The priest must know when to be silent. . . . 'We must have a silent opinion at the back of our mind,' said Pascal, 'which is our secret standard in all things, while we speak the language understood of the people.'"

Further inquiry led Renan in the direction of complete scepticism concerning Scriptural authority and the claims of the Church. The Book of Daniel became plainly apocryphal, and no competent critic could contend that the second part of Isaiah was the work of the hand that wrote the first. The Pentateuch is obviously later than the time of Moses. Again, many of the dogmas of the Church are derived from erroneous renderings in the Vulgate. Thus, both Bible and Church lose all claim to infallibility.

The directors of St. Sulpice were deeply impressed with the ability of their heretical pupil, and urged the study of science as an antidote to the disintegrating influences of German philosophy. But Renan, strive he never so bravely to silence his doubts was impelled still more steadfastly towards Free-thought.

Henriette implored her brother never to forsake the paths of intellectual honesty. Yet, while he might break with the Church how, he asked himself, could he reveal his unbelief to his pious mother whose most ardent desire was his life's dedication to the service of God and his Ministry. "Oh, my God," he writes pathetically to his sister, "into what a snare hast thou led my feet? I can only free myself by piercing my mother's heart. Oh, mother! mother! I do all I can to paint the future, to cheer her as best I may, to soothe her fears. Her endearments break my heart; her day-dreams—which she is for ever repeating, and which I never find the cruel courage to gainsay—are a continual grief. Ah, if she only



understood! I would sacrifice everything to make her happy—everything save my conscience and my duty. Ah, why was I not born a Protestant in Germany! Herder was a bishop, and he was barely a Christian. But in the Catholic Church there is no room for heresy." (*Lettres intimes.*)

When Rénan returned from Tréguier to St. Sulpice he found that in his absence he had been promoted from pupilage to the post of Professor in the Archbishop of Paris' Carmelite College. Rénan saw that an acceptance would be tantamount to an admission of orthodoxy. To decline an offer so splendid seemed suicidal. Yet he frankly declared his doubts and misgivings to the scandalized Fathers of the Seminary and despite their chidings refused to temporize with the Church. The Breton's force of character asserted itself, and what Catholicism lost humanity gained. Rénan's friend, Darmesteter, has said of this decision: "It was perhaps a piece of child's folly to renounce the splendid fortune which awaited him in his chosen path, to affront extreme poverty, without resources, without prospects, sustained by the sole impossibility of living for aught else than a conviction. Those that think that the hall-mark of a man is his sincerity . . . will grant that on this occasion the child showed himself twice a man."

In his various writings, Rénan's concessions however ironical some of them were, were largely attributable to his profoundly religious temperament. Strange as it appears, even after his apostacy had been proclaimed at St. Sulpice, Rénan still went to confession and received absolution. The Jesuits attempted his conversion, and in a letter to his sister he strives to dispel her suspicions of the sinister character of the Order. Yet, Rénan himself soon saw through their artifices, and he left the Jesuit College at Stanislas when he realized his danger. It was time to fly, for in a letter to Henriette, he admits that, "they were very nearly taking me again in their net."

Rénan took a humble post as teacher in a school, and was passing a depressed time when he met the great scientist Berthelot, then a lad of eighteen, who was studying philosophy and mathematics. This proved the inception of a lifelong friendship. "We had the same religion," remarks Rénan, "and that religion was the love of Truth." This intimacy with Berthelot made manifest a universe previously unsuspected, and this wider vision of external Nature lessened Rénan's concern with himself.

Then came the revolutionary storms of 1848. Berthelot's father was a medical man, who practiced among the poor, and entertained strong Socialist and Republican opinions. These views he impressed both upon Rénan and his son. But Rénan's studies and his native tendency towards compromise made him an inapt pupil. When, however, Civil War raged in Paris, Rénan awoke from his indifference. For blood flowed in torrents, and a massacre said to be worse than that of St. Bartholomew, took place. And when in July the authorities had restored order, Rénan in his stirring letters describes the havoc: "In the Rue St. Martin, in the Rue St. Antoine, and in the Rue St. Jacques, between the Panthéon and the Quays, there was not a single house that was not riddled by cannon-ball. Some of them were perforated to sheer open-work! The fronts of the houses, all the windows, were pierced through and through with bullets—wide streaks of blood, broken and abandoned guns marked the places where the fight had been the fiercest. . . . The Place de la Bastille was the most frightful chaos: all the trees cut down or bent and twisted by cannon balls; on one side whole houses demolished or still in flames; on another,

veritable towers of defence, built out of beams of timber, overturned carriages, and heaps of stones. In the middle of all that, a crowd, dizzy and half out of its mind; soldiers worn out with fatigue, asleep on the pavement, almost under the feet of the people." And then the terrible reprisals! "The National Guard," continues Rénan, "has been guilty of atrocities I scarcely dare recount." Still, he saw and recorded enough to make one's blood run cold. So much for revolutions and barricades!

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

## Holy Kissing

"Salute one another with an holy kiss."

*Romans xvi. 16.*

"His kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread."—*Shakespeare, "As You Like It"* (iii. 4).

"Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Her lips suck forth my soul."

*Marlowe, "The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus"* (last scene).

"'Tis certain," said Dick Steele of kissing, "Nature was its author, and that it began with the first courtship." But this is incorrect. 'Tis certain that to many human tribes kissing is unknown. Instead of saying "kiss me," they say "smell me," and this, doubtless, represents an earlier form of salutation. The kiss is much later than the dance. It is still unknown among many races, and may be called conventional. I am not sure that it does not develop from sucking, licking, smelling, and spitting. Some nations yet smell and rub noses, like horses, in salutations; and, where two Frenchmen will run and kiss each other, two Central Africans will deliberately spit, by way of friendly greeting. Dr. Tylor says: "The idea of the kiss being an instinctive gesture is negatived by its being unknown over half the world, where the prevailing salute is that by smelling or sniffing, which belongs to Polynesians, Malays, Burmese, and other Indo-Chinese, Mongols, etc., extending thence to the Eskimo, and westward to Lapland, where Linnæus saw relatives saluting by putting their noses together."

The kiss is the salute by tasting, and it has to be taught to children. Preyer, in his excellent book, *The Mind of the Child*, states that, at first, they are averse to, and even fearful of, the performance. However this may be, it is certain that Europeans speedily take to it as though to the manner born.

Osculations were far more common in the good old times than at present. The custom which most delighted Erasmus, when in England, was that the girls all kissed him. When ceasing to be performed, some of these ceremonies leave their trace in language. Thus both Austrians and Spaniards say, "I kiss your hands," as a polite term for returning thanks. John Bunyan was a very different man from Erasmus, and in his *Grace Abounding* he says: "The common salutation of women I abhor; it is odious to me in whomsoever I see it." And to those who defended it as the holy kiss he pertinently asked, "Why they did salute the most handsome, and let the ill-favoured go?"

Sugar plums and sweets for perfuming the breath were formerly called "kissing-comfits." Falstaff alludes to them in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. When embracing Mrs. Ford, he exclaims: "Let it thunder to the tune of green sleeves, hail kissing-comfits, and snow eringoos."

It was an ancient custom to throw kisses towards the images of the gods, and towards the sun and



moon (see 1 Kings xix. 18; Hosea xiii. 2). Job says he was never guilty of this last lovely rite of nature-worship. It would, in his eyes, have been an iniquity "if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness. And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand" (xxxix. 27).

The early Christians kept kissing as a sign of fellowship. "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss," says Paul (1 Thess. v. 26). But Christians now-a-days no more think of conforming to this than to Christ's injunction to wash the feet of their fellow disciples.

Kissing in church, at marriage, was formerly part of the service itself, as appears from a Sarum missal. Thus Petruccio, in *Taming of the Shrew* (iii. 2):—

Took the bride about the neck,  
And kissed her lips with such a clamorous smack  
That, at the parting, all the church did echo.

The parson used to claim the first kiss. "Please, sir," said a yokel who objected to "maimed rites," "ye've no kissed Molly." Sometimes brides have been known to take the initiative. This is a relic of a still earlier rite, that of the *jus primæ noctis*, and this again of polyandry. It's a long way off, too remote to be dangerous, but one who has traced the evolution of kissing along "footsteps of the past" will hardly permit a parson or a groomsman to kiss his bride. It calls up too many horrible reminiscences. In the sixteenth century balls were usually opened with a kissing dance. It was called "a brawl," and, like many other dances, really represented old rites of a day when gesture was the only means of transmitting knowledge. The brawl got broken up, and only relics can be found in children's games.

The Catholic Church, which preserves so many interesting relics of old superstitions, has many kissing ceremonies. Thus, in the rite of High Mass the altar is kissed ten times, and nine times in Low Mass, the ten being a masculine, and the nine a feminine, symbol. In China the person admitted to the presence of the celestial emperor prostrates himself nine times, each time beating his head against the ground.

The kiss of peace was given by all communicants in the early ages of the Church, but it led to so many scandals that Pope Innocent III. abolished the rite, and to-day the priest kisses a metal plate known as *pax*, or peace, which is handed down to all the acolytes in turn. Those who will may trace in this a resemblance to Indian rites of the Śakti Puja, as performed by the ancient left-handed worshippers. When the Pope administers the Holy Communion, the partakers kiss the fisherman's ring before receiving it. Bishop's rings are also kissed at the rites of confirmation, when the girl receives her first communion. When cardinals receive from the Pope ashes or palm-leaves, they kiss his hands, and the priest kisses the palm branch as he passes it on. The aspersion of the holy water is also kissed. At grand masses the faithful used to kiss the hand of the priest when he brought the sacred wafer. Now they kiss the paten, but the deacon kisses the hand of the priest whenever he receives anything from him.

The emperor, Caligula, roused the spirit of free Romans by requiring the kissing of the foot. This, everyone knows, is done continually to the Pope. Of course the toe is not now kissed, but an embroidered cross on the slipper. But why is the cross there? Suppose it placed in the still less reverential part indicated by Rabelais. The kissing of the toe was an old rite paid to the Roman Pontifex Maximus, and in that capacity Julius Cæsar held out his foot to Pom-

peius Pænus to kiss in a slipper embroidered with gold. This, too, was the practice of the Arch Druid in Gaul.

The Persian kings, in this like the present Pope, only accorded the privilege of kissing their feet to highly-privileged persons. In the East the kiss of homage is usually given on the hands, sometimes on the knees. In Greece, in classic times, it was customary to kiss the hand, breast, or knee of a superior.

In Théophile Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* there is an account of the ceremony of kissing the Sultan's toe, an honour which is reserved for the vizier, ministers, and certain privileged pashas. This act of homage is performed with the utmost solemnity, being, in fact, the recognition of the Caliph as God's viceregent—the *Shadow of Allah* on earth.

Probably the most disgusting ceremony of fetish-kissing still extant in Europe is that of kissing, in courts of justice, the holy book, whose greasy covers have been thumbed and beslobbered by all the lowest rascals. Those with self-respect usually open the book at a clean page, if possible, and pretend to kiss it. There is a well-known dodge of intending perjurers to kiss their thumbs instead, there being a popular superstition that if kissing the actual book can be avoided the false witness escapes the risk of incurring the charge of perjury.

(Reprinted)

J. M. WHEELER.

## Acid Drops

Mr. Leonard Darwin, son of Charles Darwin, says in a letter to the *Times*, that as he gets older his faith in the veracity of man kind gets smaller and smaller. That is not surprising, although it should be borne in mind that the greatest harm does not come from the ordinary lies of ordinary men and women, which do not, as a rule do very great harm, and which are not often taken seriously. Chief harm is done by what we may call the moralization of lying, which is deeply engrained in all officialdom, and still more deeply in our religious system. Place men who are otherwise honourable in a public position and they will lie like the proverbial Cretan, and still feel that they are discharging a public duty. Cabinet Ministers will get up in the House of Commons and openly state what they know to be lies, because it is not in the public interest to tell the truth; and they who listen will not accuse them of lying because it is not the custom to do so. Parsons will lie in the pulpit in the interests of religion with a recklessness they would never display in ordinary life, and those who listen will not feel there is anything wrong being done, because it is on behalf of religion.

Mr. Darwin's chief reason for writing is to contradict a number of tales about his father, which, in spite of constant exposure, are still going the round. The latest of these is a ridiculous tale that Mrs. Huxley found her husband holding a baby while Darwin was sticking pins into it in order to note the baby's reaction. We should have thought this story to be too ridiculous for anyone to pay attention to; but we have heard the same story gravely related of the great Russian physiologist, Professor Pavlov, and swallowed with unquestioning credulity. The Psalms make David say, "I have said in my haste that all men are liars." But if human nature was the same in his day as it is ours, he might have said it at leisure and with considerable truth.

The stupidity of the petty judicial mind is one of the things on which we have often commented, and we shall probably do so many more times before we cease to comment on anything. But our latest example is the comment made on an inquest at Dover. The inquest was being held on a boy of sixteen, who was found hanging by a rope on a cupboard door. It was men-



tioned that the boy had been reading some books, one or two of which had stories of people who had hanged themselves. Thereupon the coroner suggested to the jury to make "some observations" in the form of an appeal to parents to prevent such books being brought into the house. The stupidity of the conclusion as to the boy's death, and of the influence of these boys' books would be startling in its gross ignorance if one were not often coming across such examples. One can only wish that the coroner had been liberally fed with such books when he was young. But what does he think of preventing boys reading a book in which the principal character is placed on a cross and has nails driven through his hands and feet? That certainly ought, if the coroner's theory be correct, be kept out of the way of the weak-minded people.

At Salisbury, another inquest was concerned with a case in which a man and his wife committed suicide in a pond. A son giving evidence said that his father made his mother and himself offer up prayers to God, and then pushed them in the pond, afterwards jumping in himself. The man and the woman were drowned, but the witness swam ashore. Now in view of the sapient remarks of the Dover Solomon we feel that the Salisbury Coroner fell short of his duty in not asking the Jury to advise people never to indulge in prayer. It preceded attempted murder and suicide.

A report of an open-air mission using village greens for evangelistic work says, "Here we tried to preach Christ as clearly, intelligently, and interestingly as possible." This gallant attempt at doing the impossible excites our admiration. A genius couldn't succeed in making the muddled ethics and superstitious fancies of Christianity clear, intelligent, and interesting. Only fools, filled with a desire to dodge Hell and to win special favours from Heaven, would try.

Mr. Herbert Gesork has written a Diary of his recent visit to the "Holy" Land. He was disappointed in the Lake of Gennesareth, which he says is so insignificant in size that it seems incredible it can ever be dangerous to sailors. But as the Bible says it is, well, there, that settles it. Tiberias, he says is old and ugly, and "the capital of the king of fleas. . . . This is the Lake which Jesus so loved." Apparently a plunge into ANY lake would be enjoyed in the circumstances.

When we read the nonsense of which intelligent men are capable, one almost ceases to wonder at the folly of fools. For instance, Sir Francis Younghusband, in a letter to *The Inquirer*, solemnly informs the world that Atheism is the product of the towns, not of the country, and as proof says:—

I have lived with country people in many lands, and everywhere they have had the sense of a mighty Power at work about them, and a Power for good.

Others beside Sir Francis Younghusband have noted that superstition is more rife in the country than it is in the towns, but, more intelligently than Sir Francis, they have also noted that religion flourishes most where the powers of nature are least understood and where man feels himself more helpless before the forces of nature. This is true of country life in civilized countries, and it is of course more evident when we are dealing with the less civilized peoples. A more acute mind than Sir Francis Younghusband would have drawn the conclusion that men feel themselves at the mercy of a great "Power" in proportion as they have failed to learn, as Bacon put it, to obey nature so as to become nature's master.

We don't know who John Verrall is, but he writes a letter to the *English Churchman* describing how at a meeting of the Secular Society in Brockwell Park he heard "a filthy attack on the birth of Our Lord." Mr. Verrall says he protested, and informed the audience that the speaker had been guilty of blasphemy. As a result of this in-

formation, he says that no meeting of the Society was held for some weeks. We do not know what Mr. Verrall considered "filthy"; in the mouth of a Christian, it would probably mean something with which he disagreed. But the picture of a Freethought speaker being so abashed at being told he was uttering blasphemy that he failed to come to the meeting again, and even that the meetings were abandoned after such an exposure, makes us realize what a wonderful—Christian, Mr. Verrall is.

"How Not to Worry" is the title of a sermon by the Rev. Archibald Fleming, who evidently believes in "casting all your care upon" somebody else. Dr. Fleming thinks as we do about a whole lot of preachers. He admits "Many a stupid and misguiding sermon has been preached." He even goes so far as to say that certain texts in his Holy Bible are "untrue—taken by themselves," "and, like all statements that are not true, can be very misleading and mischievous in their application." We could hardly put it more plainly ourselves.

"The House that God built" is the name of a parody of a familiar Nursery Rhyme appearing in the comic column of a religious newspaper. It is funny, but it lacks the "snap" of the original. This is one of its nine verses: "This is the Soul that governs the brain, that understands the emotions that enrich the energy, augmented by the sensory organs, elaborated by the glands, excited by the digestion, that works in the House that God built."

"You have no difficulty in knowing what to pray for," says a writer in the *Methodist Recorder*. Exactly. All the difficulty comes in knowing WHY to pray. Several prayer-meetings were held recently in the Churches close by the scene of a very brutal murder. Not only did God refuse to prevent the murder being committed, He has not, so far, restored the victim to life, nor in any way indicated that He cares how many more murders happen. What was the use of these prayers? A policeman on the spot is worth millions of Gods.

Bishop Cannon (of U.S.A.) now in England in the interest of prohibition, claims that six thousand people in the U.S.A., have pledged themselves to give American Prohibition a "come-back." The impudence of it. A hundred million people are to be tricked again in order that a few thousands of Christian tectotallers may hark back to the greatest fraud in American history.

The Methodists have been holding "impressive" Centenary Celebrations of the Emancipation of Negro Slaves. It is well that Methodists and all of us should be reminded of a most Christian institution which Christians introduced, and defended, as Christians. The Bible was the most popular text book in favour of this ghastly business, in fact it is difficult to find any book in wide circulation which slave-owners and dealers could quote as a moral, religious and business justification of slavery, more fully than God's Holy Word. The Rev. Hireson Morris "thanked God" for emancipation. He should have thanked Freethinkers like Samuel Romilly. In fact we do not know of a single Freethinker in history who has ever defended slavery.

The open-air missions on the sands at many sea-side resorts, is open to much criticism. Children who have escaped the sinister endeavours of the clergy to poison young minds in the churches, hear them in all their Calvinistic hysteria. Most children laugh healthily at the singularly primitive theology of these queer survivals. Cheery hymns sometimes draw infantile minds to these hell-fire preachers. "Nigger-minstrels" and old-fashioned "Pierrots" may be trusted to "uplift" the kiddies quite sufficiently, without blackbogy men trying to scare them into "the fear of the Lord."

Mr. A. E. Witham is a charming writer, sometimes. He is also a "distinguished minister," and, as he reminds us, "the full-grown man and the superintendent



of an important circuit." He says he feels sometimes "hot tears of shame, humiliation and anger," because of some misbehaviour of his beloved religion, or his Church perhaps. He says, "I know the black mood when I have thought her not a faithful spouse, but a disgraceful harlot." Then he remembers he has attached himself to her "for better or worse." Mr. Witham is to be pitied. Has he never heard of the Divorce Courts? Or a judicial (and judicious) separation?

Mrs. Hugh Price Hughes has taken a page out of Miss Joan Conquest's book, *The Naked Truth*. She advertises for money to support the West London (Methodist) Mission. And, to support her plea, she drags in the revelation of the ghastly slum life existing in the neighbourhood, where the Mission has erected a very handsome church. "Father, Mother and Five Children in One Room," is one of her headlines. Does the Mission do anything except dope the slum-dweller, and worse still, the owner of the slum, into believing that God can remedy these things if we pray hard and often enough?

Mr. Leslie Church has unearthed some striking phrases from early English editions of the Bible. The best perhaps is Tyndale's "And the Lorde was with Joseph and he was a luckie felowe" (Gen. xxxix. 2), and "When ye praye hable not moche" (Matt. vi. 7), and substituting "breakfast" for the silly un-English modern words "a mess of pottage" (Heb. xii.). There is a famous story about an enemy of Tyndale's, who told him frankly, "Better be without God than the Pope." If the authorized version is good literature, it has had to be very seriously "man-handled" to make "God" a readable author.

The small amount of common sense current in life, and particularly with those great business geniuses who bulk so largely in the public eye, may be gathered from the news that a large number of business men are coming over to England from America in order to travel back with the new Cunarder 534, so that they may say they have travelled with it on its first trip. It is explained that "there is a psychological effect on a man's business if he is able to say that he has just come over on the maiden trip of the world's supreme liner." What is one to do with the intelligence of a public whose decisions with whom they shall deal being determined by the fact of the owner of the business having just come home on a particular liner? No wonder that public offices are so easily filled, and that a change of official, from top to bottom, usually means no more than a different name, but a continuation of the same kind of tricky stupidity!

A very nice little row is going on at Wednesbury. The Bible Student's Association, otherwise "Jehovah's Witnesses" had arranged for some meetings in the public parks. But three opposition servants of Jehovah, to wit, the Vicar of the Parish Church, a Methodist parson and a Roman Catholic ditto, appealed to the Town Council to prevent these other witnesses giving their evidence. So the Council has prohibited one set of Jehovah's witnesses in order to please another lot, and the proscribed ones are conducting an agitation. They say that the religion of the other witnesses is "the greatest system of humbug," with which we agree. We do not know what these say of the Bible Association, but as it is most likely something far from complimentary, we expect we should agree with that also. The proscribed witnesses say that if the clergy were sincere they would take the Bible and declare their belief in it. But so they do—only what they understand by Bible teaching is not what the others understand. That is the best of having an inspired volume. Ordinary works are sometimes hard to understand, but an inspired one beats everything. Jehovah is certainly, up-to-date, the world's worst author.

Why should any government maintain clergymen in the position of Army and Navy Chaplains? Judging by a recent Wireless Talk by "The Flying Padre," we may

expect soon to hear of salaried "Chaplains" accompanying every aeroplane. A sort of Heavenly Air "Ministry" of "Sky pilots." Some day we must organize some Secular Chaplains in all the services, in prisons, in asylums and everywhere where mankind may need a friendly visitor who has no pious axe to grind.

The Rev. C. V. B. Clayton, of the Universalist Ministry in America, has resigned from the pulpit. His reasons were clear and unequivocal. Here are some:—

I cannot continue because I don't believe a single thing which Christianity teaches.

I do not believe there is an atom of historical evidence that such a man as Jesus ever lived. I deny the existence of deity.

The Christian Church is an obstacle in the war of bettering social and economic conditions.

Mr. Clayton is to be congratulated. No better reasons can be given for giving up Christianity, and it is a pity that more of his fellow-pastors have not his courage. A good many of them think very much as he does.

What must be a particularly hard case (for Lourdes) is reported in a Catholic newspaper. A seventy-year old cripple, who went on a pilgrimage from Birmingham to Lourdes, broke a thigh-bone there through slipping from a wheel-chair. Here was heaven-sent chance for the famous shrine to do its bit. Alas, she was immediately sent back to get cured in the Birmingham General Hospital; and we would (were we a betting man) wager anything this case will never be used by convinced converts as an iron proof of the reality of miracles in this materialistic age of ours. Nor as a proof for the efficacy of Lourdes.

The Rev. A. E. Baker considers that the "supreme opportunity for worship is the Eucharist. There we give worth to ourselves and our lives by offering them to God." If words have any meaning, it would be difficult to come across any idea much sillier than that enshrined in the above priestly gem. Of course, offering one's life to God really doesn't mean that, and what it does mean God alone knows.

Mr. Baker almost admits this, for he tries to explain the beautiful "symbolism" in this wise: "Christ, God and Man, suffered for us. In His most perfect faculties, so intense an hour as that on Calvary can never be made dull by time. . . . The divine consciousness is eternal, that is, it is not in time. How much more, then, in His imaging life, is Calvary always now. . . ." and so on. What does all this pious rignarole mean?

## Fifty Years Ago

If we look round us to-day we find that Christians are indifferent to progress in this world, careless about the general condition of their fellow-men in this life, just in proportion to the strength of their belief in the doctrine of "working out their own salvation with fear and trembling." The liberal Christian—that is the man who has taken the disease in a mild form—casts a few anxious glances that way; but his attention is not absorbed by the problem, and he has some to spare for the world. On the other hand, the Orthodox Methodists, and more especially the Salvationists, think of scarcely anything but "kingdom come," except for some devotion to the cause of teetotalism, which in their case, however, is little else than a form of fanatic asceticism, which is stimulated by the reflection that grog is tasty as well as damnable, pleasant to the flesh however perditious to the spirit.

This selfish gospel of Christianity is only a spiritual anodyne to the respectable classes. They regard it as their certainty in this life and their hope for the next; and they are naturally adverse to any criticism or new idea that threatens their plethoric ease.

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# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL:

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. S. SMITH.—Sorry we are unable to place the lines you quote.

PAUL GOLDMAN.—Thanks for new subscriber. Can recommend *Immortal Man*, by C. E. Vulliamy.

R. J. JENKINSON.—Thanks for address, paper being sent for four weeks.

A. HANSON (Shanghai).—If you will again read the passage referring to Russia, you will see that I am merely describing the various estimates in which that country—and others have been held by that mythical entity "public opinion."

FOR distributing the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 3s.

J. H. SHAW.—We did not say that Christianity "embraced" the Roman culture, only that it inherited it; and that is a statement of fact. But a man may inherit a million without using it wisely and well. Christianity was not a "cult in a new culture," it was one cult among many in the Roman world, and when the Church came to power there was no other cult tolerated.

J. BROADLEY.—We are very pleased to have your account of the excellent work Mr. Jack Clayton is doing in Blackburn and other places.

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosettl, giving as long notice as possible.

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 at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

## Sugar Plums

Another large edition of Colonel Ingersoll's evergreen *Mistakes of Moses* has just been issued by the Secular Society, Limited, through the Pioneer Press. It is probable that no other single pamphlet has ever been so effective as this one in scotching Bible superstition. The treatise bristles with the characteristic wit and wisdom of the great American Freethinker. It puts in a sentence or two what it takes lesser men pages to say. We cannot think of a pamphlet better calculated to do the Freethought cause service. It covers thirty-two well printed pages, and is issued at the price of twopence. We suggest that many of our friends would do well to secure a small supply for distribution.

The cause of the collapse of the Socialist and Democratic forces before the onslaught of Nazism in Germany is a question that has perplexed many, and hitherto we are not aware of any work that has given a satisfactory answer. Nor do we think that a completely satisfactory one is given in *The Secret of Hitler's Victory*, by Peter and Irma Petrof (The Hogarth Press, 3s. 6d.) although it is better than any other we have come across. Peter Petrof writes from within, and his experience in

both the Russian and the German Revolutionary movements entitles him to speak with a certain amount of authority. A born idealist, both himself and his wife are devoted to the cause of Freedom, as distinct from the dominance of a particular party or movement, and they have managed at least to make the tangled strains of affairs in Germany plainer than have most who have touched the subject. The story as told in this work shows how the democratic parties in Germany were completely out-maneuvred by those who pull the strings which move Hitler, and it also makes plain that the democratic forces in Germany are not even now completely crushed, although they must, for the time being, work in silence. The collapse of liberty, the suppression of the better life and higher life of the German people under the brutal rule of Hitlerism is, the authors believe, only temporary—a view which the recent elections strongly endorse, and the conclusion that below the Nazi display of brute power:—

Subterranean Germany ferments and simmers, undismayed and unconquered. Here are gathering the forces of resistance, all those whose most precious hope it is to put an end some day to Hitler barbarity, and to put Germany again into the ranks of civilized nations.

The high walls separating the different sections of the working-class movement are crumbling—common sacrifices against the common foe are serving as a strong cement, however much some emigrated leaders and the Communist International may try to counteract it.

We take that judgment as given by one who has as great a right as many to speak with the authority drawn from personal experience.

Meanwhile, although very little has been said of late against the operations of Fascism in Italy, it ought to be borne in mind that in that country also Fascism reached power, and maintains its control by the exercise of the same principles that govern in Germany, although Italian Fascism did not reach the same measure of cold-blooded brutality that manifested itself in Germany. But a reminder of what is taking place reaches us in the shape of a small pamphlet *Fascist War on Women* (Martin Lawrence, 3d.), which contains an account of the large number of women kept in prison and tortured without trial, either in the hopes of wringing confessions from them or to induce their men-folk to give themselves up to save them. Some of the stories told in this pamphlet are as bad as many of the stories that have reached us from Germany. But the public have short memories, and the murders and terrorism by which Mussolini achieved control of Italy are now almost forgotten by a newspaper-reading public, that can regard the Test Match as one of the most important and exciting events of the day.

Quite recently we gave the resolution passed by the Executive of the Association of Assistant Masters, protesting that the teaching of any form of religion was not the business of State-supported schools. There is a very good reason for this in the following, which we take from the *Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*:—

The new syllabus of religious instruction of the City of Wakefield Education Committee is likely to attract much attention since it marks a complete reversal of attitude to the teaching of scripture in Council Schools. From simple Bible teaching, not to mention the reading of the Bible without note or comment, to the complete and definite teaching of Christianity outlined in the Wakefield Syllabus is a long distance. Possibly no better illustration can be found of the change which has taken place in the relation between the representatives of the Established and Free Churches. Formerly the struggle was to maintain the freedom of the Provided Schools from interference by clergymen and ministers; the latest scheme shows how the ministers of the various churches have agreed to close their ranks and share the sphere of influence. Having failed to secure "right of entry" of clergy into the schools, an arrangement has been made to obtain the right of exit of scholars to attend the churches, either established or free. On six days in the year the scholars in Council Schools will be divided into Church of England or Nonconformist, and taken to different places of worship. The notes on the syllabus do not state whether they are to be accompanied by the



teachers and, if so, what steps will be taken to ensure that the staffs of each school shall include members of each section. With the elaborate provision made in the Service Book, which has been compiled for use in worship in the schools themselves, there appears less need here than anywhere for the attendance at churches of scholars from Council Schools. "It is suggested that normally Morning Prayer in Schools should consist of a Hymn or a Psalm, one or more verses of Scripture, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, if desired, two Collects taken from the Service Book provided, and a third to be chosen by the Head Teacher from some Book of Devotion, or alternatively the Head Teacher may offer an extemporary prayer." No reference is made in the Syllabus or Service Book, or any notes thereon, to teachers who may not be able conscientiously to teach this Syllabus or conduct these services. Religious tests for teachers was once a rallying cry; by many it is believed now to have lost its appeal.

From one point of view we do not greatly regret this. It should bring home to all teachers, that the only way by which freedom for teachers can be secured is by the policy of Secular Education. In substance this move on the part of the Wakefield Education Committee means religious tests for teachers. It means the parsonry in control of the schools, and the teachers will have themselves largely to thank. We hope that this move, which is being attempted in many parts of the country will awaken both teachers and others to the danger fronting them. But the teachers really hold the key to the situation, and it is for them to show that they place the cause of justice for the citizen and the child before everything else.

We understand the Glasgow police are again interfering with open-air meetings, and several speakers have been arrested and charged with "obstruction," a particularly useful word to the police. But seeing that where meetings are allowed, as in West Regent Street, an early time limit is imposed, and no collections allowed, nor literature permitted to be sold, it is very apparent that the ultimate object is the complete prohibition of open-air meetings. The situation needs more than watching, and unless the citizens of Glasgow stir themselves they may one day find that Police permission will be necessary for being in the streets at all. As will be seen by our Lecture Notices Column, the Glasgow Branch N.S.S. will continue to hold its meetings in West Regent Street and Millar Street on Sunday evenings.

Birkenhead Saints are reminded that Mr. G. Whitehead will commence a two weeks' lecture campaign there beginning to-day (Sunday). The forces and influence of religion are strong in Birkenhead, and in consequence the opposition at our platform may be truly Christian in character. Well-supported meetings are the best safeguard against disorder, and all local friends are asked to be present and give what help is needed. The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate at all the meetings.

The Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. will follow up Mr. Whitehead's open-air work with a syllabus of indoor meetings during the winter. A hall has been secured, and representative speakers will be invited to address Sunday evening audiences. Naturally the expenses will be heavy, and any friends desirous of contributing towards them may send contributions to the Branch Treasurer, Mr. F. Stevens, 14 Browning Avenue, Rock Ferry, Cheshire.

#### CHILD-BEARING

When woman, as a producer of humanity, becomes conscious of herself, she will rise up against the unfruitful fruitfulness that has been her lot. She will no longer bear a great number of children, half of which die for lack of vitality, or because the parents have not the means of bringing them up, the other half of which are quickly diminished in an industry that takes account only of the quantity produced, not of the human material involved. She will no longer bear sons to be used up for war.

Ellen Key, "War, Peace and the Future."

## The Spiritual Life

IN its necessarily dualistic teaching the Church pretends to be able to prove that there is a life separate and distinct from the natural and physical—that is the spiritual. This is the main issue upon which the Humanist and the Supernaturalist get into grips. The monistic position is that we possess evidences of only one life. While the Humanist may speak of the "spirit" of a man, he does not use the term in the restricted sense, and with the weirdly "make-your-flesh-creep" application that the supernaturalist does. Life is not the gift of any god. In its varied manifestations it still remains in origin and essence a profound mystery. But it is the duty of all to make the best use of it that can be thought of; and the best use of it can only be made by the elimination of self-seeking and personal greed.

How far have the Christian Churches assisted in this direction? Though we are asked to concede the claim of "Men of God," that they have an infallible commission to expound a revelation from Heaven, which shows the only true and salutary way to live—a concession which, if made, inevitably implies the possession by these men of a faculty or sixth sense which unbelievers cannot possess, namely "spiritual perception," the pages of history provide a revelation of the practical effects of the belief in supernaturalism. A remarkable book entitled *The Modern Idolatry*, which has recently been published sums up the case against the system of Capitalistic usury to which ecclesiasticism in every land has consented and bowed the knee. The largest Churches are maintained by huge financial resources; but in themselves they provide a lamentable instance of the maldistribution of these resources. One has only to point, on the one hand, to the princely incomes of the Archbishop and Bishops of the Church of England and, on the other, to the starvation wages of the curates and rural parsons who do the donkey-work of that widespread organization.

The author of the book referred to makes a naïve appeal to Churchmen to examine the financial basis of a system which faces millions of people in Europe to-day with the fear or actual fact of destitution. What sort of answer is he likely to receive to his appeal? He says if the system is rigorously investigated, churchmen will come to the conclusion that if Christ in his time expelled the money-changers from the Temple, the money-changers are certainly having their revenge to-day in a monetary system which is a vast elaboration of injustice—which does not say much for the continuing power of Christ on earth. No, you will always find priest and parson both on the side of the big battalions—whether in War or Peace. They have not yet even begun to learn the true significance of the term "Justice." A rich mug does not long remain rich. The comparatively few possessors of the wealth of the world are none of them mugs.

The ecclesiastical prattle we are continually hearing, larded with such expressions as redemption, justification and sanctification has no bearing upon the practical problems of life; and is no help towards the renewal of the deep-seated evils of life. Society needs a major surgical operation. When that has been performed by some skilful humanistic hand there will be devilish little of the virus of supernaturalism left in the system of Society!

The majority of the people, overawed by the pretensions of ecclesiastics, have too long made the blunder of taking these gentry far too seriously. However, if we are advancing slowly we are advanc-



ing surely; and the prospect of a bonfire of pulpits, penitent forms and confessionals is not so far off perhaps as some of the blind bats imagine. In these latter days, what people would be the better for is a dose of the temper of writers like Dean Swift and the author of *The Ingoldsby Legends*. The former was a mordant critic of ecclesiastical abuses, and the latter—little read nowadays, it is to be feared—flicked the Church of Rome with his lambent satirical wit. In *A Lay of St. Nicholas*, where the Devil in the guise of a beauteous maid, bent upon the seduction of the Lord Abbot, appeals to him for his personal protection, the Lord Abbot reassures his suppliant in these words:—

Holy Church denieth all search,  
'Midst her sanctified ewes and her saintly rams:  
And the wolves doth mock who would scathe her flock  
And especially worry her little pet lambs.

The "beauteous maid" is thereafter the guest of the Lord Abbot at a sumptuous banquet where the wine flows free, and there are love passages between her and the Lord Abbot, until the unholy proceedings are interrupted by the arrival of St. Nicholas in the guise of a poor dusty Palmer, who drenches the lady with a copious supply of holy water from his flask, whereupon she is at once changed again into her original character of a "horrible devil from Hell."

The underlying supposition in the minds of most Christian believers is that "Men of God" have an essentially Divine something in their constitution that distinguishes, differentiates and sets them apart from other men, though when some "saintly ram" breaks bounds or runs amok, believers are hard put to it to explain his falling away from Grace. But certain people will persist in continuing to deceive themselves and remain in the old ruts, despite all the evidences available to show that the distinction presupposed is wholly without any valid foundation. What is called the "spiritual life" is like every emanation of supernaturalism, and supernaturalism itself—a myth and a ghastly imposture. One recalls numerous characters like "The Chaplain of the Fleet." And who can deny the power of the song of the frail damsel in Burns' *The Jolly Beggars*, in which these verses occur:—

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,  
So the sword I forsook for the sake of the Church.  
He ventur'd the soul—I risked the body;  
'Twas then I proved false to my sodger laddie.

Full soon I grew sick of the sanctified sot,  
The regiment at large for a husband I got.  
From the gilded spontoon to the life I was ready—  
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.

In these times we have become mealy-mouthed and speak mincingly. The clerics may live what they call a "spiritual life" and commend it to their fellow-men; but it is not a healthy, natural, normal and human life. They are irresponsible and they have no fixed hours of work in the real sense—they claim the right to the confidence of all members of their congregations, male and female—and they enjoy ridiculously long vacations. There are, of course, exceptions. These merely prove the rule.

IGNOTUS.

Vast masses of myth, legend, marvel and dogmatic assertion, have been dissolved, and are now dissolving quietly away like icebergs drifted into the gulf stream. Modern science in general has acted powerfully to dissolve away the theories and dogmas of the older theological interpretation; and very powerful have been the evolution Doctrines of Darwin and Spencer.

Andrew D. White.

## Dialectical Materialism

### (II.—DEVELOPMENT BY CONTRADICTION)

WE have seen that Hegel's dialectical method was borrowed by Marx, and inverted to serve Materialism. Whether it assisted or handicapped has been a point of discussion among those who deviate from the Marx line.

Karl Marx was of Jewish extraction, and one authority (Mehring, *Geschichte der Deutschen Socialdemokratie*) has it that his ancestry showed a long line of rabbis. Born in 1818, of cultured parents, he quickly assimilated the best learning available, at the universities of Bonn and Berlin, with Hegel, then at his zenith, his master. At twenty-three he gained the degree of doctor with an essay on Epicurus, but instead of becoming a university tutor, as he intended, he was so disgusted at the State interference that he joined the opposition in becoming editor of the Cologne *Rhenish Gazette*, the organ of extreme democracy, which was later suppressed.

In turn Marx had to leave Germany, France and Belgium, and he finally settled in London in 1849, and stayed till his death in 1883. In Paris he joined the Socialist coterie, was joint editor of the German-French Yearbook, and met Proudhon, Heine in exile (whom he probably induced to write the famous *Wintermärchen*), and, above all, one who shared his opinions in their entirety, and with whom he spent nearly forty years in loyal comradeship, Friederich Engels. Himself the son of a capitalist, Engels had lived in Manchester, and in 1845 he published *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*.

The great example of Marxist practice is, of course, the Russian revolution and the Soviet Union, but in his own day he saw the formation of the Communist League, the International, and the German Social Democratic Party.

\* \* \*

A basic law of Dialectic Materialism is development by contradiction, or "The Unity of Opposites." The Greek eclectic, Zeno, is often regarded as the father of the dialectical method, and one of his arguments gives expression to the idea of the contradictoriness of motion. At any given moment an arrow in flight is situated motionless at a given point. Thus at each given point, at each and every definite moment in its path, it is motionless. How, then, does it come to move? In other words, our thought is at an impasse if the dialectical method is not employed, if the unity of opposites is not understood.

Thus, philosophy to-day does not recognize such given moments. The Newtonian space, with its unit points, and time, with its unit instants, are replaced by Einsteinian space-time, and point-instants thus become events, with duration and extension. (Cf. Bertrand Russell's *Neutral Monism* and other neo-Realistic philosophies). Unless we unite the contradictions to a higher synthesis, either motion disappears, or the object itself.

Contradictions exist universally in all spheres of science, from physics to social dialectics. Hegel's standard, we remember, was: Being opposed to Non-Being; synthesis, Becoming. Other examples are:—

- (a) From Physics: attraction and repulsion, positive and negative electricity (thesis, proton; antithesis, electron; synthesis, atom).
- (b) From Chemistry: the formation of combinations.
- (c) From Biology: a splitting into parts, procreation by sex, the struggle for existence.
- (d) From Psychology: Sensation is a result of the opposition of object to sense-organ. They must



"come together like flint and steel before the spark of experience will fly" (Geo. Santayana).

(e) From Sociology: The contradiction is between social production by the proletarian workers, and private appropriation by the propertied capitalists. The synthesis is revolutionary socialism.

"It is this dialectical movement which forms the subject matter for materialist dialectics" (Adoratsky). Development operates in every sphere, and dialectics generalizes to a *theory* of development. It also seeks to explain the "how" of development, i.e., *the origin of the new*.

Whence comes the motive? From outside (God, the Absolute, etc.)? or is it inherent?

It is inherent in phenomena. They carry their own principle of motion. "It is only because a thing contains a contradiction within itself that it acquires impulse and activity" (Hegel). Contradiction is the root of motion. Inherent contradictions are the source of movement—self-movement, not God-given, nor associated in any way with a "Vital Force," "Directive Activity," and so forth. The struggle of contradictory parts, mutually exclusive parts and their reciprocal relation, these are the dialectics of developing nature. Processes are analysable into contradictory tendencies, which interpenetrate and interchange.

The next basic law follows from development by contradiction. It is the transformation of quantity into quality.

### III.—DISCONTINUOUS LEAPS.

It is a maxim of materialistic science that although a phenomenon can be reduced or analysed into its constituent parts and processes, its behaviour in synthesis, as a whole, is not intelligible in terms of those constituents. Somewhat loosely, the principle is that the synthesis is more than the parts. Its qualities cannot be described in terms of those of its factors; new terms are needed.

Chemical action, e.g., depends on changes in temperature and electricity; organic life depends on mechanical, chemical, thermal, molecular, electrical, etc., changes. But these do not exhaust the nature of the synthesis. Life is thus qualitatively more than the physico-chemical processes in which it originates. Atoms, molecules, chemical substances, micellæ, chromosomes, unified cells, multicellular organisms, human society—each is more in its functioning totality than the sum of its individual parts, even if we take the relationship between the parts as one of the factors. "Some day," said Engels, "we shall . . . reduce thinking to molecular and chemical motions in the brain, but does this exhaust the essence of thought?" (*Dialectics of Nature*).

Thus we have different systems of law (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology), continuous yet discrete. They are continuous in that they embrace the lower forms as necessary subordinate elements, yet different in the matter of quality. The lower (simpler) law-systems are not superseded. They are included. For instance, plane geometry is incapable of dealing with spacial elements in three-dimensional bodies, being restricted in two dimensions; hence the need for solid geometry, with laws fit for three dimensions. But the laws of plane geometry do not cease to apply; on the contrary, they operate subordinately. Turning to algebra, the point may be expressed by mentioning that  $A^3$  includes  $A^2$ .

All this is expressly contended by Dialectical Materialism (a favourite instance is the pooling of farm implements by Russian peasants, leading to greater productivity), and one of its fundamental tenets is called "the transformation of quantity into quality."

"Within limits," says Adoratsky (*Dialectical Materialism*), "quantitative changes may occur without affecting the quality." "When quantitative changes go beyond a definite limit they result in a leap to a change in quality." His illustration is that from  $0^\circ$  to  $100^\circ$  C. water ordinarily remains a liquid. At  $100^\circ$  C. (boiling-point) water becomes transformed into a gas (steam). At  $0^\circ$  (freezing-point) it is changed into a solid (ice). "Thus arise new qualities." [The example is not a happy one, since qualitative, rather than quantitative, changes do occur between  $0^\circ$  and  $100^\circ$ . The change of quality ranges from "very cold" to "very hot." Let us assume, then, that he has in mind comparatively abrupt and definite changes of quality, i.e., "leaps."] With the appearance of the new quality, new quantitative changes come into effect.

At boiling and freezing points we have an example of minor revolutions in nature; the old forms are negated and the new forms created. Created, that is, out of the old, yet in complete contradistinction to it. Is evolution, then, merely a slow, simple, gradual, tranquil process? The answer of Dialectical Materialism is a decided No. Evolution is *gradual development broken by these "leaps" at "nodal points"*; and here we reach the core of the whole theory. Evolution must include breaks in the continuity, otherwise there is nothing really new, but only the growth of the old.

The act of birth seems an excellent illustration. Birth is an act of revolution. But for nine months the embryo has been forming gradually. At birth it, as it were, takes a "leap," and becomes an independent existence. This is supposedly typical of the whole of evolution—*taking a run for a leap forward*, just as the athlete carries out his long jump. It applies to social development, which has been punctuated by cataclysmic periods with class struggle, and it is to this question we now turn.

\* \* \*

We have now roughly sketched the groundwork of Dialectical Materialism. We have seen that it postulates dialectical movement resulting from the "unity of opposites," bringing development by contradiction and the "transformation of quantity into quality," evolution embracing not only gradual but sudden development. A specific case of this sudden development is the social revolution, bringing Communism.

Social dialectics follow from the dialectics of nature, for society is part of nature. Social dialectical laws are identical with other natural laws in essence, but not in expression.

Communism "is the revolutionary movement of the working class; organized struggle against capitalism and against the capitalist class. It is class struggle—a consequence of the contradiction between the social productive forces and the productive relations" (L. Rudas, *Labour Monthly*). Communism is the outcome of the "dialectical contradiction inside capitalist society, a revolutionary movement arising and growing on the basis of social development, the product of social dialectics" (*Ibid*). Dialectical Materialism is "the consciousness, the reflection of this in the heads of the vanguard of the revolution" (the Communist Party). It is linked with Communism as theoretical conviction with practical consequence. They stand or fall together.

The capitalist system is a unity of opposites, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and the dialectics of this contradiction are set forth in Marx' *Capital*. "The bourgeoisie and proletariat are opposites; but at the same time they comprise a definite unity. They are the classes of a single social economic formation



—capitalism—in a state of irreconcilable contradiction. This contradiction will be logically solved dialectically by the internal struggle, the proletarian revolution" (Adoratsky), and in the process of revolution "the proletariat becomes trained for the performance of its historic mission." "Revolutions," said Marx, "are the locomotives of history." As Capitalism arose in opposition to Feudalism, so Communism will arise, and has arisen, in opposition to capitalism.

Away then with developmental "constructive Socialism," says Communism. Don't plan to re-construct, says Adoratsky; don't plead with capitalism, don't tinker with a radically bad system, but organize the class struggle; help it on by your conscious efforts. "We must not only study history," comes the voice of Lenin, "we must make history."

It is not to be thought that the dialectical process is to end with Communism. The achievement of a classless society, and therefore the abolition of class antagonisms, does not mean the abolition of those contradictions on which dialectics depends. Class antagonisms to-day are rooted in the deeper-lying contradiction between social production and private appropriation. Of this they are the expression.

In the next, and concluding, article it is hoped to attempt some brief criticisms of Dialectical Materialisms,<sup>1</sup> not forgetting its merits.

G. H. TAYLOR.

<sup>1</sup> A good recent exposition is *The Outlook of Science, Modern Materialism* (Worrall, 1933).

## The Roman Catholic Church as an Anti-Working Class Organization

FROM time to time the Roman Catholic Church roundly condemns Socialism, and its working-class aims. Pius XI., the present dictator of the Black International, has written:—

Whether Socialism be considered as a doctrine, or as a historical fact, or as a movement, if it really means Socialism it cannot be brought into harmony with the dogmas of the Catholic Church. (*Social Order*, p. 53.)

While H. Somerville, a well-known Catholic author, wrote in the *Catholic Times* of February, 1930:—

Socialism is anti-Catholic. The Catholic Church is anti-Socialist. The conflict has raged ever since Socialism came into existence. Every Pope during the last ninety years has condemned Socialism by name.

The Catholic Church, however, does not only say that it is opposed to Socialism, but it actively opposes it. Opposes the movement which aims to abolish exploitation.

The root of the economic exploitation of the proletariat lies in the monopoly of the means of production. The capitalists by this ownership create and maintain the reserve army of unemployed which is a characteristic feature of Capitalism. Only when this monopoly is broken by a Socialist Party, when the large estates are confiscated, and the land made available to those who wish to use it, will it be possible for agricultural and industrial workers to meet employers on the labour market on equal terms.

The Roman Catholic Church does not analyse the position so.

*The Workers' Charter*, a Papal encyclical, which Roman Catholics say contains the basic principles of social justice, speaks of "the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the

masses" (p. 11), and of "the misery and wretchedness pressing unjustly on the majority of the working class" (p. 12). These facts the Roman Catholic Church cannot ignore. But its analysis of the situation and the cause it gives, and the remedy too, are hopelessly wrong.

It says:—

The first and most fundamental principle therefore, if one is to undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property. (*The Workers' Charter*, pp. 19, 20.)

and:—

Man's natural right of possessing and transmitting property by inheritance must remain intact, and cannot be taken away by "the State." (*Social Order*, p. 23.)

The Roman Catholic Church thus maintains the inviolability of private property, which, of course, means that it upholds the ownership of large estates, of the present economic system and all its consequences.

Naturally the Roman Catholic Church says it has a cure for the present exploitation, to the existence of which it cannot close its eyes. It believes that charity will solve the workers' difficulties.

A typical pronouncement on the subject is:—

Every minister of holy religion must bring to the struggle the full energy of his mind, all his powers of endurance . . . by every means in their power, they must strive to secure the good of the people, and above all must earnestly cherish in themselves and try to arouse in others, charity, the mistress and queen of virtues. For the happy result we all long for must be brought about by the plenteous outpourings of charity. (*The Workers' Charter*, pp. 50-51.)

Charity! The abomination of every independent-minded man and woman!

A Socialist does not ask for charity; he demands justice.

The furtherance of the class struggle is the daily task of the Socialist. This class struggle is condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. It even attempts, in its glorification of the Fascist or Corporative State, to deny its existence; it pleads for class collaboration.

Socialists who declare that there is no need to attack religion because it is a diversion from the class struggle, must ask themselves whether an organization such as the Roman Catholic Church, with over two million adherents in this country, and daily preaching insidious anti-working class propaganda, can be safely left out of account? And whether, by leaving such an organization alone, they are not permitting it to grow from strength to strength at the expense of working-class solidarity?

The Catholic Church most certainly does not ignore the Labour Movement. Numbers of its priests are specially trained for work in industrial areas, while at the Catholic Workers' College, at Oxford, "wage-earners are trained to become leaders of Catholic Social Action."

On the Continent it is Catholic policy to have their own Trade Unions, but here in England where they are not so numerically strong, they prefer to work inside the Trade Union Machine proper; and to further their own particular aims by means of guilds inside each organization.

These Catholic Guilds which exist in almost every Trade Union are definite threats to Trade Union solidarity. They are the puppet societies of Catholic priests; with aims quite extraneous to those of trade unionism, they are the nucleus of a disintegrating organization actually operating inside the unions. Their formation, from the very start, ought to have been forbidden by the Trades Union Congress General



Council, but with its pious personnel there is little hope of that body acting so courageously. However, there is one thing that could be done quite easily by all trade unionists, that is, to forbid all discussion on Catholic topics inside the branch meeting room.

There is one aspect of Socialism which is almost entirely ignored—that is, its cultural aims. Socialism has a far wider programme than a merely economic one. The idea that Socialism means only State-controlled industrial combines cannot be too strongly condemned. The base, materialistic outlook of large sections of class-conscious workers is a very big factor in the lack of the advance of Socialism.

It is manifestly impossible to call any country a Socialist country if the right to freedom of opinion, and the right to criticize does not exist. This lack of the right of the individual to freedom of thought and expression, and the lack of the right to reason for oneself, is a negation of the ideal of Socialism.

“The fullest equal freedom of thought, action and speech,” as formulated in the principles of the N.S.S., are integral parts of Socialism.

This being so, then the anti-clerical fight is part of the Socialist struggle to-day.

The Roman Catholic Church is the greatest spiritual exploiting agency the world has ever known. Three hundred million followers it claims, and it daily preaches:—

. . . without perfect, trustful, and blind obedience to an experienced confessor, there can be no cure for scrupulosity. This obedience should consist of two things; obedience of action which carries out all that the director prescribes; and obedience of the intelligence which believes all that it is ordered to be believed. (*Scruples and Their Treatment*, p. 5.)

It may be easy to condemn economic and political exploitation, but what can be said sufficiently strong to condemn the Catholic Church, when it takes the minds of children, smothers their faculty of reason, and produces a tool fit only for Catholic propaganda? But its greatest strength is the Roman Catholic Church's greatest weakness—the rejection of reason and the substitution of authority indicates a movement which cannot adapt itself to conditions of to-day—it co-exists with ignorance; it exists solely because of the weakness of the progressive forces which ought to oppose it.

The anti-clerical fight is the fight for a better civilization—it must be fought from inside the organized ranks of the N.S.S. And in every Trade Union branch, at every local and Parliamentary election, the fight against Catholic Social Action must be waged.

J. WALTON.

### Masks!

He happened to sit beside me on a seat in one of our Public Parks. He was unemployed; whilst I was knocking in the last day of a glorious vacation. He was an ex-service man, badly wounded, and had been having rather a rough time in civilian life through illness. We got on the subject of armaments, and I think his thoughts, as expressed to me, worth repeating.

“Yes,” he said, “let them get on building Air-craft, Ships and Guns, the better we are armed the less chance of anyone trying to come it with you, and this Gas business, look, here, Mister, I can see the day, not far distant either, when every mother's son, and daughter, will be the possessor of a gas-mask. All public vehicles, bus, train or tram will carry masks according to complement of passengers; public halls and all places of amusement will be forced to do likewise. Children at school will be taught, by competent instructors, how to adjust their masks in the least possible time, and what to do in case of gas-attack; adults will also receive similar in-

struction. Funny, you think, sitting on—say—a bus equipped with masks, suddenly the conductor shouts ‘Masks!’ and everyone gets the mask at his or her seat, fits it on, and sits tight; just a test, yes, but mind you very wise, just imagine some day it may be a real gas attack. What a hell of a business if we have nothing to face it with eh? No doubt folks thought it nonsense when ships carried life-belts at first; nowadays we would think it funny to board a ship that had none. Yes, I honestly believe that sooner than most folks expect, a law will be passed, making every household keep masks for mother, father, and the family; out of it all I see a chance for some of us lads getting a job as Mask Inspectors, you know, going round the houses, workshops, places of amusement, etc., testing the masks, to see they are in good condition, ready for action. What? You will have to go? Well, cheerio, Mister, glad to meet you, I hope I'll have the pleasure of examining your Gas-mask one of those days. Ha-Ha! I wonder!”

“BYCLAND.”

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Mrs. Barbara Wooton, M.A.—“The Meaning of Social Equality.”

#### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, A Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCHES N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mr. E. C. Saphin.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, September 2, Mr. C. Tuson. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, September 4, Mr. L. Ebury. Spinhouse Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, September 5, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Saphin, Tuson and Hyatt. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Collins and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin and Wood. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Collins. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park Gates, and Literature to order.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BLYTH (Clifton Hall): 7.0, Monday, September 3, A Debate—Rev. Schofield (Methodist Church) and Mr. J. T. Brighton (N.S.S.)—“Atheism v. Christianity.”

#### OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN (Market Square): 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, September 2, Mr. J. Clayton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level): 3.30, Mr. J. T. Byrne—“Moses' God.”

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Birkenhead Park Entrance): 7.30, Sunday, September 2, to Tuesday, September 4, Mr. G. Whitehead. Well Lane, Rock Ferry, 7.30, Wednesday, September 5, and Thursday, September 6, Mr. G. Whitehead. Birkenhead Haymarket, 7.30, Friday, September 7, and Saturday, September 8, Mr. G. Whitehead.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.30, Tuesday, September 4, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 7.30, Mr. R. T. White. Millar Street, 8.30, Mr. R. T. White.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): 7.30, Sunday, September 2, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, September 4, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

MORPETH (Market Place): 7.0, Saturday, September 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Wouldhave Memorial): 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Armoury Square): 7.0, A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue, Sunderland): 7.0, Mr. F. Bradford—A Lecture.

TRAWDEN: 7.45, Friday, August 31, Mr. J. Clayton.



*A Question of the Day.*

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