

# THE Freethinker

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*The destroyers of the old are the creators of the new.*

—R. G. INGERSOLL.

## The Lord of Hosts.

THE Christian Deity is the Lord of Hosts. He is also a man of war. He taught David's hands and fingers to fight. He planned those awful campaigns of the Jews against the original inhabitants of Palestine. He ordered the indiscriminate slaughter of captives, in which neither age nor sex was spared. He also ordered the massacre of the males and the married women, in some cases, and the retention of the virgins by Jewish soldiers and priests. On one occasion the Lord's share of the lust-devoted maidens was thirty-two. It is not to be supposed, however, that they passed into his harem. Of course, they were appropriated by his clerical representatives. These gentlemen stayed at home while the fighting was on, and prayed for victory, and when it was won they took their share of the spoil, whether it was gold and silver, or sheep and cattle, or "pretty virginities."

The Old Testament reeks with blood. Jehovah was quite the Jack the Ripper of antiquity. No wonder that the first great Christian bishop of the Goths would not translate into their speech the worst part of the wars of the Jews. He was afraid of heightening the blood-thirstiness of his people. But no such scruple damped the translating zeal of others, and every Christian nation now reads in its own tongue the foul story of Jewish barbarity, and the fouler story of all that wickedness being commanded by God.

This "blessed book" may almost be regarded as the murderer's manual. Yet it is put into the hands of boys and girls without the least reservation. Nay, it is forced into their hands, in spite of the protests of those who wish them to become conversant with a loftier morality than that of bandits and cutthroats. Is it surprising, then, that Christian nations are so ready to draw the sword? They are the greatest disturbers of the world's peace. They have carried the art of slaughter to the highest degree of perfection. They appear to feel that, if the Lord loves a cheerful giver, he has even more love for a cheerful fighter. They consecrate their battle-flags, they ask God to bless their arms, they beg his favor when they proceed to bloodshed. At such times they forget all about the sweet maxims of peace and goodwill which they make such a boast of in the intervals of their quarreling.

Whenever did Christianity prevent any nation from going to war if it felt disposed to do so? Directly the war-fever rages a considerable number of the clergy fan it, and most of the rest confine themselves to talking cheaply about attending to justice and mercy when the fighting is ended. Very few of them stand up and champion the cause of peace. They know how they get their livings, and they want to stand in well with their countrymen.

One of the strongest arguments against the existence of God is that he never interferes on behalf of progress. When man is bent on playing the beast,

his deity gives him free play. He even allows his worshipers to pray to him for success in murder, without telling them that they ought to be ashamed of themselves. Any decent God would tell them, when they put the matter to him pointedly, that they are fools and wretches for trying to kill each other, and worse fools and wretches for asking him to bless them in their criminal madness.

Suppose half-a-dozen boys came to their father and told him that they were going to divide into two parties and fight each other to a finish. Suppose they said that one or two of them might get killed. Suppose they asked him to supervise the engagement. What would that father say? "Wait a minute, boys," he would say, "while I get that big whip. When I come back you will all want tough breeches."

It is about time we dropped that old deity who is "strong and mighty in battle." The world has had enough of him, or rather too much of him. He is really an old savage idol, painted and decked to look like Jove. Give him a chance, and he shows his blood. Off goes the modern raiment, and the naked savage is on the warpath. There is blood and lust and destruction. And when the orgy is over the old fellow puts on his cast-off clothes, and sits with a fine, bland smile, to receive the adoration of his devotees.

A change of gods would be better than nothing. But the best thing would be to have no God at all. Whatever deity men worship only echoes their own passions. He is an Edison machine, speaking back what is first spoken into it. He never says anything new or original. He informs us of what we know, and never tells us of anything fresh. He corroborates our opinions, flatters our emotions, and pats our characters on the back. He is never ahead of us. And why? Because we make him. We are not *his* creatures—he is *our* creature. And those who worship him, we repeat, are worshipping an idol. Far better would it be if we framed our ideal consciously and deliberately. It would then be always up to date, and somewhat beyond. It would be the essence of our best thoughts, our deepest principles, our noblest aspirations. Communing with that ideal, bringing ourselves to its test, even looking at it from time to time, would do us more good, and raise us higher in the scale of being, than could ever be done by bowing to the personification of the lower conceptions of our forefathers. They made their God; let us make ours, if we must have a God; or let us dismiss all gods, and worship, if need be, in the Temple of Humanity. It is simply farcical at the present moment for whole nations to be asking the same God for the same victory.

Meanwhile, let all Freethinkers wage war against the Christian superstition. Whatever good it may have done when it reflected the current ideas, it has long outlived its usefulness. It is no longer anything but a hindrance. It is powerless to help forward the real progress of the world. It is one of the many causes of discord and division. It leaves men and women at the mercy of a faulty, inherited ideal; and, by saving them the trouble of thinking and the responsibility of forming just judgments, it is ever drawing them back to the dark past instead of urging them forward to a brighter future.

G. W. FOOTE.



### "At It Again."

IN the *Freethinker* for September 20 I called attention to the mixture of piety and jingoism which the editor of *John Bull* had served up for the benefit or entertainment of his readers. Coming from such a quarter, the piety was more remarkable than the jingoism. It was so completely gratuitous. It was not necessary to bolster up the English case against Germany. That was strong enough without it, and it is always a mistake to saddle a strong case with doubtful elements. It was not needed to encourage the fighting spirit of the nation. That is strong enough of itself; and whether God gives us another chance or not—as Mr. Bottomley would say—it is fairly certain that the British people mean to see this thing through, and will beat Germany, at any cost, if that is at all possible. From all points of view the piety was unnecessary, and one can only conclude that as piety and militarism are both primitive and relatively uncivilised sentiments, both hang together, and a strengthening of one leads to a strengthening of the other.

In the issue of *John Bull* for October 3, Mr. Bottomley returns to the subject with what is really an apology for his pietistic outburst. "Piety," he says, "is not in our line." With this I quite agree, and hinted as much in my previous article. Only when a man is clear-headed enough to recognise what is not in his line, it is a pity that he does not keep off it. Professional pietists cut a sufficiently silly figure when they apply their Godism to current affairs, and where a professional fails an amateur is not likely to succeed. Mr. Bottomley further says he will not be deterred even though the *Freethinker* and other journals (I have not observed any other journal beside the *Freethinker* dwelling upon this point) tell him he is "running the Kaiser close in working the pious lay." This may be magnificent but it is not sense. No one is quite exempt from blundering, and although it may look courageous it really is not so. There is more courage in confessing a fault than there is in persisting in one. It is really wiser to confess one's faults and have done with it.

In passing, let me also express a regret that Mr. Bottomley sees fit to join in the now fashionable game of pouring abuse upon Nietzsche. Most of those who are engaged in this task have not read Nietzsche, and the few who have do not understand him, or fail to realise that Nietzsche himself had a whole-souled contempt for the modern German. They have certainly quite failed to grasp Nietzsche's gospel of superman. To write that Nietzsche aimed at setting up a "monstrous beastly idol of brute force and pitiless rapine," is to quite misunderstand his aim; or to say that the "crazy brain of its author.....rotted in its own filth.....in a Prussian madhouse," is to venture criticism in a field which I hardly think Mr. Bottomley is qualified to express an authoritative opinion. The great Vico died insane, so did Schumann, so did Swift, so did others that one might name. Tasso, Schopenhauer, Comte, Rousseau, Heine, Leopardi, Poe, Dostoiéffsky, Newton, Southey, Cowper, all were undoubtedly neurotics. No one, however, attempts to belittle the genius or to set aside the work of these men on that account. One cannot argue that abuse of a genius, who is at the same time a neurotic, means degeneration; but it does seem to evidence want of judgment.

Mr. Bottomley denies that he has "got religion," but "at the risk of being further misunderstood," he affirms his faith, "firm and immovable" in "God's decree and providence." Not, he points out, in "the personal, puny God of orthodox creeds, but the infinite Deity of the Universe—the unknown, unknowable, incomprehensible, beginning and end of everything—the Godhead Infinite, Boundless, and Everlasting." Certainly there is nothing "puny" about this God, but why call it "unorthodox"? It is really a very orthodox kind of Deity. If Mr. Bottomley will read the Athanasian creed he will

find that, so far as his Godhead is concerned, it is a fair modern summary of it, for that also says, "the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible," to which one may add, and Mr. Bottomley incomprehensible. There is a still further likeness, for Mr. Bottomley says that "the man who in these days could use the name of God, and all that it connotes, in any spirit other than one of reverence and awe, is deliberately calling down upon his head the wrath of Heaven and the abhorrence of mankind." Which again reminds one of the Athanasian Creed with its "who-soever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith, except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." So, unless we treat Mr. Bottomley's god with "reverence and awe" we shall call down upon ourselves "the wrath of Heaven and the abhorrence of mankind." To a beginner, the threat is no doubt terrifying. As, however, I have been running the risk for twenty-five years, I am afraid that I am case-hardened. At any rate, I am unmoved. God does nothing; and mankind can get on fairly well without him. It is, however, interesting to observe how difficult it is for a man, once he gets mixed up with gods, to avoid "cussing" those who disagree with him.

Like theologians in general, Mr. Bottomley having commenced by positing an unknown, unknowable, incomprehensible deity, proceeds to explain him. Really, if one believes in an unknown and unknowable something or other, the only sensible plan is not to know anything about it—not even that there is anything to know about. But Mr. Bottomley's God is so far known—to him—that he is aware of what are his plans. And those plans are that Britain is to lead the world with other nations—summed up as the Latin race—as helpers. Mr. Bottomley knows, also, that "He is directing the bloody battle of the nations now raging, which must end in accordance with a destiny written on the skies for all mankind to read." There it is! British, French, Germans, Russians, Belgians, Servians, Austrians, are all so many pawns in the game. It is God who is directing the battle. "He" inspired the Germans to go to war, "He," inspired the Allies to resist." "He" inspired it all, and our praise of the Allies is so much wasted breath. God is using us to wreak vengeance on the Germans; it is, says Mr. Bottomley, "His will to employ human instruments, and so he is using us to punish the Germans—whom he has previously made what they are, so that they might be punished." This must be so, or God would not be "the beginning and end of everything," certainly he would not be Mr. Bottomley's God, who is "directing our lives, and the lives of Peoples and all the Worlds, in the infinite, the fleeting Present, and the eternal Future." It would seem as though there were inevitable conflict between logic and a display of capital letters.

It would also seem, in spite of all that has been said, that Mr. Bottomley is not free from a sense of uneasiness that he has been talking rather too familiarly of God's plans about this, that, and the other, for he explains that when he invokes the name of God:—

"With us it signifies the X of the universe—the originating, vitalising, restoring, ruling Force, whence flow all Life and Destiny. If, in orthodox fashion, mankind clothe it with the form of man, that is because they are men, and, in the depths of their conceit can think of nothing nobler. For ourselves we dare not give it form.....We will recognise that our poor head is not up to the task of grasping the problem and will shelter ourselves in God. And if we speak of 'Him' and 'He' it is simply because that is the only way in which we can express our conception of the highest embodiment of Being."

Now Mr. Bottomley is, as the children say, "getting warm." He is on the track of truth, but he doesn't seem to follow it up. Man does endow universal force, or forces, with human attributes—not by way of a compliment to the universe, or by way of expressing idealistic yearnings after a higher life, but



wholly because to human ignorance the forces of the world *seemed* alive. Gods improve with the advance of civilisation simply because man himself improves, and he does not care to worship anyone worse than himself. But the "highest embodiment" is not God, but man. Man is actually the highest being we know. He is even the highest being we can think of. For when we talk of higher beings than man, all we really think about are beings higher than the men we know—that is, more perfect men. Even Mr. Bottomley's God is not higher than *man*; he is not better than *man*. He is only a superior kind of man. He acts as Mr. Bottomley's ideal man would. And therefore, quite naturally, he selects Britain for the leadership of the world.

Seriously, Mr. Bottomley would be well advised to leave the gods severely alone. Blather about God on the one side is no better and no wiser than blather about God on the other side. Where all, and if all, are carrying out God's will, what is the use of one section claiming superiority on that account? If I may venture to quote a German—Goethe—"If God is what he is, the world is what he would have it be." If there is a God, we are all part of the "plan." And a God who can arrange *such* a plan is really too contemptible to bother about. The Czar calls on God, and is sure of his favor. King Albert of Belgium also invokes God, and is certain he will respond. The Emperor of Germany is quite sure God is leading his armies—through him. King George is equally ready to call on God, and is just as convinced that he is in the good graces of Deity. They are all at it; and now Mr. Bottomley joins the chorus—not as one calling upon God for help, but as one who merely explains what are God's plans. Of all the crew, Serbia alone seems to let God alone. She seems able to look after herself.

War is a business that is bad enough, and black enough, and withal stupid enough, without its being made still more objectionable by quite gratuitous nonsense. To rail at the Kaiser for having "blasphemously invoked the God of Battles," while at the same time using the same invocation, is pietistic cant of the worst description. And it is sheer playing to the cant of the moment to write that the contest is between "the ethic of the Galilean and the bestialities of Pagan culture." What we are seeing is a struggle of brute force, pure and simple, in which each side deludes itself with useless talk about "ideals." We are convinced that our objects are pure and unselfish; our opponents are also convinced that they are fighting in defence of a high ideal. The sensible observer is apt to reflect that there never has been a war in which exactly the same jargon has not been in force. What we are witnessing is not the contest between the ethic of the Galilean and Pagan culture; we are witnessing the consummation of international contests in land-grabbing in all parts of the globe, and of a wild competition in armaments—on the one side to retain territory already "acquired," on the other to grab territory now held by other nations. And this by nations which have been saturated in "the ethic of the Galilean," nations that have for centuries been narcotised by the belief in God, in order that they might be at the mercy of the cupidity of man. If there is a lesson to be drawn from a Europe blinded with ideals of military greatness and brain-bemused with religion, it is that the less we have to do with the gods the better. By himself man is certain to blunder enough and to be savage enough. But with the gods added he becomes infinitely worse. For they, in a civilised community, are little more than the embodiment of man's past errors and barbarities.

C. COHEN.

### Vain Delusions.

THE *British Congregationalist* for October 1 is worthy of all commendation because, in its leading article, entitled "The Evolution of Barbarism," it disowns and refutes the belief cherished by so many leading

divines in this country that Nietzsche and his philosophy must be held largely responsible for the war. We are delighted to transcribe the following sensible passage:—

"Anyone who knows Nietzsche, knows also that he was unmerciful in his satire of much that the German philosophers of to-day and the Prussian element in Germany hold dear; that he abused and poked fun at the stupidity and egoism of his own countrymen in no unsparing fashion. He most assuredly has not been a favorite writer with the Kaiser, though doubtless the latter has studied him. He has been repudiated lock, stock, and barrel by the professors who have, during the last few years, written in support and have taught the Gospel of German development at the cost of honor, weaker neighbors, and civilisation generally."

Mr. Robert Blatchford evidently knows neither Nietzsche nor his philosophy. In his otherwise admirable article in the *Weekly Dispatch* for September 27, he says that "Germany has been inoculated with the virus of Nietzsche's cult of the blonde beasts." Then Mr. Blatchford adds, with an air of infallibility: "Nietzsche, an insane genius, taught that the State was founded by a race of blonde beasts." Now, if our friend had read and pondered *Beyond Good and Evil*, particularly the eighth chapter, entitled "Peoples and Countries"; *Ecce Homo*, which abounds in scathing denunciations of the German people; and *Human, All-Too-Human*, especially Part II., he could not possibly have written that sentence, because it contradicts in the most positive manner the teaching of Nietzsche, who never lost an opportunity to express his abhorrence of "State supremacy," "atavistic attacks of patriotism and soil-attachment," and the persistent disregard of the dictates of reason. He had a great admiration for France. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (p. 213) he tells us that "even at present France is still the seat of the most intellectual and refined culture in Europe, and is still the high school of taste." A few pages farther on occurs this remarkable sentence:—

"There is also still in France a pre-understanding and ready welcome for those rarer and rarely gratified men, who are too comprehensive to find satisfaction in any kind of fatherlandism, and know how to love the South when in the North and the North when in the South—the born Midlanders, the genuine 'good Europeans.'"

Does that look like the product of an "insane genius"? Not having studied Nietzscheism himself, but relying upon extracts published in the *Times*, without their context, Mr. Blatchford possesses no qualification to sit in judgment on the Nietzschean philosophy. And how shockingly unjust it is to call Nietzsche an "insane genius," his insanity occurring only *after* his published books were finished. Mr. Blatchford's chronology even is quite wrong when he says that "Nietzsche was followed by Professor Treitschke." Nothing of the kind. It was Nietzsche that followed Treitschke. Before the former was known at all the latter was zealously preaching Pan-Germanism in Berlin, having derived his politics from Prussian contemporaries; and, as we have affirmed more than once, Treitschke was not an advocate of a new religion for Germany. He was so enthusiastic a Lutheran that he was convinced that the whole of Germany would eventually adopt Lutheranism.

All this has, of course, a direct bearing upon the barbarous war that now floods Europe with human blood. Mr. Kingscote Greenland, writing in the *Christian Commonwealth* for September 30, asserts that "the governing idea is that Germany must now wrestle, not as in Luther's day against Rome, but now against Christianity." But most assuredly that is not the governing idea at this moment. There are most vigorous opponents of Christianity in Germany, it is true; but it is false to say that they are the *raison d'être* of the present war. Treitschke was a Christian, and so are Bernhardt and the Kaiser. Now, in direct opposition to practically all Christian preachers in Great Britain, we venture to declare, without the slightest fear of any intelligent objection, that war is perfectly consistent with Chris-



tianity, whether in its Catholic or Protestant form. Let us recall an interesting illustration. Henry V., King of England at the beginning of the fifteenth century, was an exceptionally pious man, whose piety manifested itself in the persecution of the Lollards. Their books were confiscated and their persons burnt. Henry was an excellent divine:—

"Hear him but reason in divinity,  
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish,  
You would desire the king were made a prelate."

But this pious king, despite the Galic law, aspired to the throne of France, though, because of his piety, he at first doubted whether he ought to go to war for it. Who were the chief instigators of a fight with France? Not mere politicians, but the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely. Listen to his Grace, as Shakespeare interprets him for all time. He is addressing the king:—

"Gracious lord,  
Stand for your own; unwind your bloody flag;  
Look back unto your mighty ancestors;  
Go, my dread lord, to your great grandsire's tomb,  
From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,  
And your great uncle's, Edward the Black Prince,  
Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy,  
Making defeat on the full power of France,  
While his most mighty father on a hill  
Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp  
Forge in blood of French nobility."

So spake that eminent servant of the Prince of Peace. The Earl of Westmoreland reminded his majesty that—

"Never King of England,  
Had nobles richer and more loyal subjects,  
Whose hearts have left their bodies here in England,  
And lie pavilioned in the fields of France."

Hearing that the Archbishop waxed extremely bold, and with swelling pride exclaimed:—

"O let their bodies follow, my dear liege,  
With blood and sword and fire to win your right;  
In aid whereof we of the spirituality  
Will raise your highness such a mighty sum  
As never did the clergy at one time  
Bring in to any of your ancestors."

The Bishop of Ely endorsed every word spoken by his Grace of Canterbury, with the result that Henry went over to France with an army. It is not necessary to tell the story of that bloody conflict on the fields of France nearly five hundred years ago, our only claim being that that war was entered upon at the direct instigation of the Christian Church. Henry's great consolation, before the battle of Agincourt, was the knowledge that all England was praying for his success. Having spent a long time in fervid prayer himself, he addressed his men thus: "Now is good time, for all England prayeth for us, and, therefore, be of good cheer."

When we say that Christianity has failed, our meaning is that it has never done anything for the world's highest good. Buddhism has always been an enemy of war, and when in power abstained from bloodshed. Christianity, on the contrary, has had more experience in persecution and war than in any other form of activity. The sword has been at once its greatest friend, and humanity's worst foe. "Oh," some people object, "it is not Christianity that is responsible for these stupendous evils, but the lack of it, Christianity having never been tried yet." That is an old objection, and as worthless as it is old. It is a familiar adage that scarcely any two Christians agree as to what Christianity is; but it is an absolute certainty that nobody knows what that Christianity is which has never yet been tried. Professor David Smith confesses that, sometimes, when he considers what has been said and done in its name, the wonder with him is that Christianity has survived, and in its survival under such circumstances he discovers an evidence of its Divine origin; but we maintain that what has been said and done in its name has been said and done under its spell. We do not believe that the Kaiser is a hypocrite, and he solemnly declares, in unmistakable terms, that he is at war to establish the kingdom of God on earth; but what we contend is that the Christianity professed by him and his countrymen

is precisely the same as the one professed by King George and many of his subjects, and that it can be made to support any form of government under the sun. Dr. Smith asserts that Christianity is eternal and invincible; but where on earth is it if its absence is responsible for the war? If a God of love sitteth as king for ever, how are we to account for the fact that hate is supreme in Christendom? It can only be accounted for on the assumption that the God of love and the Savior of the world are nothing but myths. We frankly admit that, as a human system, Christianity has been a tremendous success. It has set mankind at variance with one another with a vengeance. But, as an infallible remedy for the world's maladies, it has been a colossal failure. Its doctrine of Divine love redeeming the human race is the veriest dream ever heard of.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Battlefield Book.

"To bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;  
That is the top of sovereignty." —KEATS.

TIMES of war and stress are usually supposed to be fatal to philosophic calm, and it is curious that the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the great book animated by high purpose and fortitude, should have been largely written at odd moments in a tent on the battlefield. Indeed, many of the maxims in the *Meditations* were jotted down in the actual theatre of the present war—as, for instance, at Carnuntum, on the Danube, a few miles from Vienna.

Monarchs have rarely been philosophers. Frederick the Great delighted in the society of Freethinkers, and attracted the best brains of Europe to his court. The Empress Catharine of Russia befriended Denis Diderot, and Marguerite, Queen of Valois, to her eternal credit, held out her hand to the "intellectuals" of her day, at a time when to avow heterodox opinions was a matter of life and death. Once only, however, has a philosopher sat on the world's throne and realised the dream of Plato, who sighed for the fulfilment of his ideal of a philosopher-king.

Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor, was no feather-bed soldier, nor did he review his troops solely within the safe purlieus of the parade-ground. His philosophy was thought out amid the storm and stress of actual battle and the elation of real victory. What others learnt in calm, he learnt in tempest. The most perfect expression of "the gospel of those who do not believe in the supernatural" was produced to the dread monotone of war. Far away on the wide Roman marshes might be heard the endless, ceaseless sound of beating horses' hoofs and marching feet of men. The barbarians were gathering in multitudes, and no man could say what the morrow would bring forth.

The Emperor died in the camp. "Why weep for me?" were his last words, characteristic of the noblest Roman of them all. His legacy to posterity was his book of *Meditations*, which was never intended for publication, and in which he recorded his reflections on life and death. Burdened with the weight of Empire and of Rome, he penned such words as these—not to be read at the distance of twenty centuries without an accession of strength: "Every moment think steadily as a Roman and a man to do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity." And again, "Do every action of thy life as if it were thy last."

This life, he tells us, is all that concerns us:—

"Though you were destined to live three thousand or, if you please, thirty thousand years, yet remember that no man can lose any other life than that which he lives now, and neither is he possessed of any other than that which he loses."

Epicurus bade his followers depart from life as a satisfied guest from a banquet. Marcus Aurelius, in sterner language, bids us leave life's stage as an actor who has performed his part. It is the same



view of things which has caused the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius to become one of the most prized of books. It is this wise Secularism which takes tired people back to Marcus Aurelius when all other religions and philosophies have failed them. What a book might be written of the great men who came to the *Meditations* in the bad moments, when fame and fortune and honor itself seemed unreal. For, by the irony of fate, this austere wearer of the imperial purple has become the great consoler of men. His golden book of the *Meditations* is one of the most precious heritages handed down the centuries by the masters of the world.

Oh! the charm of Marcus Aurelius. He was more than a mere writer, for he bound men by something stronger than a chain of roses, the thrill of the dance, or the sparkle of Falernian wine. It is not his grace of language that causes men to read his book to-day. It is not merely his philosophy that causes men to turn to him from all other wisdom. It was not to Lucretius, with his world-grip of human destiny, or Virgil, with his tears of mortal fortune, or Horace, who sings so well of banquets, the laughter of women, the joy of summer days, but to the austere soldier-emperor, that men turned in the last resort to which they are pushed so often "with close-lipped patience for their only friend."

The waters of thought slip silently away, and it is not a little amazing to realise that the ideas of this Roman Emperor should still have sufficient vitality to fire the hearts and brains of men and women of our own generation. It is a splendid achievement—power over millions of all ages, races, and sympathies. Small wonder that Renan, a writer of nice distinction, has spoken of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in terms of more unmixed eulogy than he has ever bestowed elsewhere.

The *Meditations*, be it remembered, were never intended for publication. They are simply the Emperor's commonplace book, where he entered his reflections, often quite unconnected, on life and death, and the questions that knock at every man's heart. The little volume was considered for long a literary curiosity. It fitly headed the very brief list of the writings of kings, a class not in any way remarkable for literary genius. Critics talk of the Greeks as being the teachers of Marcus Aurelius. It is true; but the golden book of the *Meditations* could only have been written by a Roman. The strength, the tenderness, the humanity, the resignation, these are the gifts of the lords of human things, the masters of the world.

Matthew Arnold pointed out that the *Meditations* are counsels of perfection. But they do not claim to be other than self-communings. The maxims should be read, as they were written, one at a time. Aurelius addressed them, not to any reader, but to himself, as the sentinels and supports of a conduct of life. The present moment is one in which such advice is priceless, for in all the world's literature there is no other book so full of perfect sanity. It is because the *Meditations* are a bracing tonic in a time of moral slackness that the book ranks among the assets of our day. The pomp of Rome has long faded "like snow upon the desert's face"; but the great Emperor's words of wisdom remain a most precious legacy, because he saw life steadily and saw it whole.

MIMNERMUS.

### Credibility of the Old Testament Scriptures

WHAT memorials remain to give us light into the originals of nations and the history of those ages we commonly call the first ages? The Bible, it will be said—that is, the historical part of it in the Old Testament. But even these divine books must be reputed insufficient to the very purpose by every candid and impartial man who considers either their authority as histories or the matter they contain. For what are they, and how came they to us? At the time when Alexander carried his arms into Asia, a people of Syria, till then unknown, became known to the Greeks. This people had been slaves to the Egyptians, Assyrians,

Medes, and Persians, as these several empires prevailed; ten parts in twelve of them had been transplanted by ancient conquerors, and melted down and lost in the east, several ages before the establishment of the empire that Alexander destroyed; the other two parts had been carried captive to Babylon a little before the same era. The captivity was not indeed perpetual, like the other; but it lasted so long, and such circumstances, whatever they were, accompanied it, that the captives forgot their country, and even their language—the Hebrew dialect at least, and character—and a few of them only could be wrought upon, by the zeal of some particular men, to return home when the indulgence of the Persian monarchs gave them leave to rebuild their city and to repeople their ancient patrimony. Even this remnant of the nation did not continue long entire. Another great transmigration followed, and the Jews that settled under the protection of the Ptolemys forgot their language in Egypt, as the forefathers of these Jews had forgot theirs in Chaldea. More attached, however, to their religion in Egypt (for reasons easy to be deduced from the new institutions that prevailed after the captivity among them) than their ancestors had been in Chaldea, a version of their sacred writings was made into Greek at Alexandria, not long after the canons of these scriptures had been finished at Jerusalem; for many years could not intervene between the death of Simon the Just, by whom this canon was finished (if he died during the reign of Ptolemy Soter), and the beginning of this famous translation under Ptolemy Philadelphus. The Hellenist Jews reported as many marvellous things to authorise, and even to sanctify, this translation as the other Jews had reported about Esdras, who began, and Simon the Just who finished, the canon of their scriptures. These holy romances slid into tradition, and tradition became history; the Fathers of our Christian Church did not disdain to employ them. St. Jerome, for instance, laughed at the story of the seventy-two elders, whose translations were found to be, upon comparison, word for word the same, though made separately, and by men who had no communication with one another. But the same St. Jerome, in the same place, quotes Aristæus, one of the guard of Ptolemy Philadelphus, as a real personage.

The account pretended to be written by this Aristæus of all that passed relating to the transaction was enough for his purpose. This he retained, and he rejected only the more improbable circumstances which had been added to the tale, and which laid it open to most suspicion. In this he showed great prudence and better judgment than that zealous but weak apologist Justin, who believed the whole story himself, and endeavored to impose it on mankind.....

Thus, when we consider these books barely as histories, delivered to us on the faith of a superstitious people, among whom the custom and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably, we may be allowed to doubt whether greater credit is to be given to what they tell us concerning the original, compiled in their own country, and as it were, out of the sight of the rest of the world, than we know, with such a certainty as no scholar presumes to deny, that we ought to give to what they tell us concerning the copy.....

Apion, an Egyptian, a man of much erudition, appeared in the world some centuries afterwards. He wrote, among other antiquities, those of his own country; and as he was obliged to speak very often of the Jews, he spoke of them in a manner neither much to their honor nor to that of their histories.....

The Jewish history never obtained any credit in the world till Christianity was established. The foundations of this system being laid partly in these histories and in the prophecies joined to them or inserted in them, Christianity has reflected back upon them an authority which they had not before, and this authority has prevailed wherever Christianity has spread. Both Jews and Christians hold the same books in great veneration, while each condemns the other for not understanding or for abusing them.....

These scriptures (the Old Testament scriptures) are come down to us broken and confused, full of additions, interpolations, and transpositions, made we neither know when nor by whom, and such, in short, as never appeared on the face of any other book on whose authority men have agreed to rely..... I will venture to say that I do not assume so much as is assumed in every hypothesis that affixes the divine seal of inspiration to the whole canon; that rests the whole proof on Jewish veracity; and that pretends to account particularly and positively for the descent of these ancient writings in their present state.

It is strange, but it is true; not only the Jews differ from the Christians, but Jews and Christians both differ among themselves, concerning almost every point that is necessary to be certainly known and agreed upon in order to establish the authority of books which both have received already as authentic and sacred. So that whoever takes the pains to read what learned men have writ on this subject, will find they leave the matter as doubtful as they took it up.



The creation of the first man is described by some as if, pre-Adamites, they had assisted at it. They talk of his beauty as if they had seen him, of his gigantic size as if they had measured him, and of his prodigious knowledge as if they had conversed with him. They point out the very spot where Eve laid her head the first time he enjoyed her. They have minutes of the whole conversation between the mother of mankind, who damned her children before she bore them, and the serpent. Some are positive that Cain quarrelled with Abel about a point of doctrine, and others affirm that the dispute arose about a girl. A great deal of such stuff may be easily collected about Enoch, about Noah, and about the sons of Noah; but I waive any farther mention of such impertinences as Bonzes or Talapoins would almost blush to relate.....

No scholar will dare to deny, that false history, as well as sham miracles, has been employed to propagate Christianity.

Sure I am that experience, from the first promulgation of Christianity to this hour, shows abundantly with how much ease and success the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same text and plausibly defended by the same authority.—Lord Bolingbroke, "On the Study of History."

### Acid Drops

A few weeks ago we referred to a patriotic "round robin" signed by Professor Haeckel and other eminent Germans in science, literature, art, and philosophy, denouncing England, and her hatred and jealousy of Germany, as the cause of the present terrible war. A portion of the "round robin" was published in the *Times*, and Professor Haeckel was certainly amongst the signatories. We have been asked whether Haeckel was not a misprint for Harnack. Our reply is "Certainly not." It will be remembered that we offered a few words of criticism pointing out that the "round robin" in question overlooked all the diplomatic proceedings and correspondence leading up to the war, including Germany's attack on France and the violation of the neutrality of Belgium. We added that Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, who was then in London, had written to Professor Haeckel, asking if this document represented his ideas of the situation.

In spite of the fact that a long list of distinguished Britishers replied, as it were, to the German professors with a sort of "you're another" round-robin, it occurs to a contemporary of ours that the quarrel would be incomplete without *his* word on the bold, bad Haeckel. There was a time when the firm to which our contemporary belongs almost lived on the publication of English editions of Haeckel's works, but that day is a good deal past, and an opportunity presents itself of illustrating La Rochefaucauld's definition of "gratitude." This is what we read:—

"All Rationalists in this country warmly repel Professor Haeckel's violent and wholly unwarranted attack upon England.....But in consideration of the great services which he has rendered to the cause of Freethought, our personal view is that no action should be taken in the matter until the equilibrium of Europe is once more re-established."

Since Æsop's frog was there ever such a case of personal distention. But that will go down. Haeckel's size is natural.

The distention calls for surgical treatment in another way when the same writer refers to "our good friend, Mr. Eden Phillpotts." We don't know how Mr. Phillpotts takes this, but we know how his admirers must. There is a puff, too, of Mr. Blatchford's famous pamphlet as "the nearest approach to correct prophecy in the whole annals of literature"—when Mr. Blatchford distinctly states that he was not a prophet at all, that he published nothing original, but merely put into popular English for a popular audience what the military and naval experts had been saying for years.

"Vanoc" of the *Referee* is good enough to admit that "England is worth fighting for." Thank you, "Vanoc," thank you! We say that as an Englishman. You are also good enough to add that your eulogy is "in spite of hooliganism, atheism, class hatred, shams," etc. Thanks again, "Vanoc,"—this time as an Atheist. We should have been very sorry to gain your praise.

History used to be a fairly frequent accomplishment amongst educated people. We believe it must be very much rarer now. A poet in the *Times* (rather a rare thing) the other day coupled Cæsar and Attila. Gods! What a desecration! Cæsar was one of the greatest of men—Attila

merely one of the bloodiest. It will not surprise our readers to learn that the poet in question was pious; there was nothing of the infidel about him.

The smug and super-hypocritical Protestantism of this country is not to have it all its own way in attributing German militarism to Materialism and Atheism. The *Catholic Times* crops up with the theory that the German atrocities are really due to Protestantism. Its argument is that Protestantism makes for the breakdown of religious authority, and so opens the way for all kinds of evils. It says that the German Catholics will be horrified when they realise the horrors committed. As though Catholics had not a hand in perpetrating these horrors! We may remind the *Catholic Times* that Catholic soldiery in times of war have shown themselves among the most brutal in the history of the world. Witness the "Wars of Religion" during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.

The "unco guid" are shocked at the pious callousness of the Kaiser's troops, yet the spirit in which Samuel "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord" is the spirit in which Louvain and Termonde were made ruins. Christians are like the Bourbons, "they learn nothing and forget nothing."

The leader-writers attribute the Kaiser's downfall to his devotion to the "Bismarckian gospel of blood and iron." They might also add the Christian gospel of blood and fire.

"The only ideal of the German Emperor is an ideal of iconoclasm," says the pious *Daily Mail*. Yet the Kaiser ever has the name of "God" upon his lips, and the belts of his soldiers bear a pious inscription.

No one with the least spark of sympathy in their nature can feel anything but horror at the devastation—whether deliberate or accidental—of Belgium and certain parts of France. But we are quite at a loss to see why it should be called "Anti-Christian" or "Unchristian." Christian wars have always been accompanied by similar scenes, and often worse scenes than even the present war has furnished. It is, indeed, a truism that the more religious the war the more brutal and unrelenting the slaughter. In these wars in which religion has played a large part, the area over which the present war is now raging, has been more than once involved. Here is a sample, taken from Motley, describing the taking of St. Quentin in the sixteenth century:—

"To a horrible carnage succeeded a sack and a conflagration still more horrible.....The women.....were stripped almost entirely naked, lest they should conceal treasure which belonged to their conquerors, and they were slashed in the face with knives, partly in sport, partly as a punishment for not giving up property which was not in their possession. The soldiers even cut off the arms of many of these wretched women, and then turned them loose, maimed and naked, into the blazing streets.....The streets were already strewn with the corpses of the butchered garrison and citizens; while the survivors were now burned in their houses. Human heads, limbs, and trunks were mingled among the bricks and rafters of the houses, which were falling on every side.....The work of killing, plundering, and burning lasted nearly three days and nights. The streets, meanwhile, were encumbered with heaps of corpses, not a single one of which had been buried since the capture of the town. The remains of nearly all the able-bodied male population, dismembered, gnawed by dogs, or blackened by fire, polluted the midsummer air."

From the Crusades to the Balkan War no better guide for a soldiery bent on pillage and murder could be found than a short *resumé* of all those wars in which Christian feeling has played a prominent part.

President Wilson's invitation to all Christendom to join him in praying to God for peace contains the following passage:—

"I, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, do designate Sunday, the 4th day of October next, a day of prayer and supplication, and to request all God-fearing persons to repair on that day to their places of worship to unite their petitions to Almighty God that.....he vouchsafe His children healing peace again and restore once more that concord among men and nations without which there can be neither happiness nor true friendship, nor any wholesome fruit of toil or thought in the world."

This is very nicely put, but surely a man like Dr. Wilson cannot exactly believe all this nonsense. He may believe it as President of the United States; a man in that position has to believe all sorts of things officially; but does he believe it as a scholar and a philosopher? We have our doubts. It must have crossed his mind, if it has done no more, that God's intervention would be more efficacious in



preventing war than in stopping it after it has broken out. Holding a horse in check before he starts running away is far easier, and far more sensible, than pulling him up half way down a steep hill.

What a magnificent description of his father Hamlet gives in the wonderful closet scene with his mother:—

"See, what a grace was seated on this brow;  
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;  
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;  
A combination and a form indeed,  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
To give the world assurance of a man."

The loftiest part of this glorious passage was brought to Mr. Robert Blatchford's memory (see last week's *Dispatch*) by—well, what does the reader think? Nothing less—and nothing more—than the high heels of a French girl's boots! Was it not Thomas Paine who said there was only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous?

Anyhow, it is as well to quote Shakespeare correctly. Such a passage in such a poet deserves at least that compliment. "Heaven-kissing hill" appeared in the *Dispatch* as "heaven-kissed hill," which spoils both the meaning and the music. The responsibility for this bad blunder may rest upon the newspaper officials. But it may not rest upon them. It may rest upon Mr. Blatchford—who once confessed (in a passage of arms with the editor of the *Freethinker*) that he had difficulty in recognising much meaning or music in Shelley. Shelley!

The *Daily Chronicle* will have to look to Harold Begbie, who aspires to be the poet of "the greatest war that ever was." "By Their Fruits," a "poem" of his in Monday's issue, contained the following stanza—one of five, all about as good—or bad:—

"Prussian Vulture,  
Scream of culture  
O'er the ashes of Termonde!  
Satyr searches,  
Maids and churches  
Violated, like your bond!

This is not poetry, but it is sailing devilish near the wind. At this rate there will soon be a demand for an illustrated edition of Mr. Harold Begbie's poetry, but his success (in this line) may prove the *Chronicle's* undoing.

The following story, the *Indiaman* (September 18), on the authority of the *Empire*, says is strictly true:—

"A pious missionary went to a remote village and started bazaar-preaching. The simple villagers, who had never seen a white man, came by the hundred to listen to him; they also found his halting knowledge of the vernacular somewhat amusing. But there were days when he could not go, and the Catechist took his place, and the crowds vanished. Then the good man's wrath was kindled, and he rebuked the poor Native Christian for his lack of zeal in preaching the good tidings. 'How is this, Nogen Babu,' he demanded, 'when I preach there are hundreds present, but when you take my place there is hardly anyone present?' The trembling Catechist replied: 'Sir, have you never seen a bear-dance in our village? When it is a brown bear there is hardly anyone present, but when a white bear dances there are hundreds present.'"

Nogen Babu was no fool.

We cut the following from the *Daily Mail* (Sept. 29):—

"A remarkable service was held in Hereford Cathedral yesterday in celebration of the eightieth birthday of the Bishop of Hereford. The service was led by the Rev. A. Duncombe, aged 85; the first lesson was read by Canon Copes, aged 83; the second lesson by Canon Palmer, aged 84; the Epistle by Prebendary Lambert, aged 82; and the Gospel by Prebendary Hanbury, aged 85. Their total ages totalled 419 years. Among the congregation were Mrs. Bather, aged 92; Mrs. Giles, aged 87; Mrs. Littledale Smith, aged 86; and Mrs. Hanbury, aged 84."

What an inordinate time some of these good Christians do keep out of heaven!

A few poor professional Christians culled from the "Wills and Bequests" of recent numbers of the *Times*: Rev. Henry Danvers Macnamara, the Rectory, Queenhithe, Upper Thames-street, left £5,008; Rev. Charles James Bradshaw, Whitechurch Rectory, Ross, Herefordshire, left £7,060; Rev. James Drew, 2 Brandon-villas, Bristol, left £1,954; Rev. Francis Percy Hutchesson Powell, Union Hall, Co. Cork, left £10,296; Rev. Charles Cusac Halley, West Malling, Kent, left £2,820; Canon Alexander Grimston, Stillingfleet, York, left £5,498; Rev. Robert Williams Thrupp, West

Worthing, Sussex, left £49,784. "Blessed be ye poor"—especially Thrupp, the forty thousand pounder!

A number of well-intentioned Christians are still busy discussing whether war is right or wrong, justifiable or unjustifiable, and whether killing an enemy in warfare is "murder" or not? None of them seem to realise that their trouble originates in the utterly impracticable nature of Christian teaching. We emphasise "teaching" because Christian practice has got over the difficulty by ignoring it. To the man of common sense war may be either right or wrong; killing a man may be either justifiable or unjustifiable. There are easily conceivable circumstances in which no one would hesitate to take life; and what is true of the relations between individuals is equally true of the relations between nations. This would be plain enough even to Christians if they were not saddled with an absurd and impracticable mass of teachings. It is perfectly true that love is, ultimately, more powerful than hatred, and is more enduring; but it requires suitable circumstances for operation, and these must sometimes be secured by force.

The absurdity arises when people, not content with justifying a particular war, begin to talk of the "moral uplift" of war, of its "purifying" effects, and of its influence in making both individuals and nations better. This is a very plain absurdity. Whether justifiable or not, all warfare involves a certain amount of de-civilisation. It may be necessary, in self-defence, or in defence of one's home, to kill a man, but it is absurd to argue that one is made better by killing. And it is just as ridiculous to assume that by drilling and arming thousands of men, filling them with lust for blood, and encouraging them to kill those against whom they bear no individual ill-will, that we are purifying them or providing them with a "moral uplift." War may be necessary, and so far justifiable, but the price we pay for it is that of individual and national retrogression. And we fancy that none are so ready to recognise this as thoughtful men who know war from actual experience.

Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett makes, in the *Daily Telegraph*, an interesting—although unintended—comment upon those who imagine that the horrors of the present war will be enough to prevent wars in the future. He says:—

"The whole thing is becoming too ghastly to be really true. The whole civilised world is becoming so acclimatised to death that the mere news that another 2,000,000 human beings, each armed with a weapon capable of firing ten shots a minute, and supported by every form of infernal death-dealing cannon, are about to exterminate one another, excites but a mild interest. It is accepted as an everyday event, like a football match or a boxing championship. Such is the struggle before Cracow which is now commencing."

Those who argue that the horrors of war will end war are blind to both the teachings of history and the facts of human nature. Gentleness is not born of brutality nor peace of war. The peace that succeeds war is really the lethargy that follows exhaustion, but it does not breed a genuine desire for peace. People may become habituated to horrors as to everything else, and the proof of this is seen in the fact that already, as Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett says, we are accepting the slaughter of thousands as an everyday event, and treating that of hundreds as a trifling affair hardly worth consideration.

The present state of affairs offers a fine opportunity for ill-informed people to publish anything that they dislike. Atheism and Materialism have naturally come in for special attention. Germany is Atheistic and Materialistic; hence all its faults. Others have fallen foul of Mr. Norman Angell, with a very obvious non-understanding of what he teaches. Nietzsche is blackguarded generally—often by ill-informed newspaper scribblers who have not read him, and wouldn't understand him if they did. Even Darwin has not escaped. Some geniuses have discovered that the worship of brute force is a logical application of Darwinism, and that, therefore, Darwin is partly responsible for the ideal which Germany has set before herself.

It is all very silly, and we hardly think it was necessary for Major Leonard Darwin to have gone to the trouble, in the *Times*, of vindicating his father from any such charge. Darwin taught that the fittest survives, but he was the last one to believe the best kind of fitness is that which is summed up in brute force. Fitness seldom expresses more than mere biological efficiency, and is so far little more than the statement of a truism. To say that an animal survives because it is the fittest, and that it is the fittest because it survives, are practically identical statements. The problem for the moralist is, first, what actually constitutes fitness in



a given environment, and, second, what qualities are best, and so ought to acquire the quality of fitness. In other words, how can we make "fitness" and "best" identical? Now, Darwin was the last man in the world to ignore the fact that mere physical fitness as represented in brute strength was involved in human evolution. As human society advances, "fitness" becomes more mental and moral, and, proportionately, less physical. The brute gives place to the man. Those who do not already know Darwin's opinions on the subject should read the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of the *Descent of Man*—chapters which by themselves are enough to establish Darwin's reputation as a thinker of the first magnitude.

Nothing like cheek! The *Catholic Times* asks:—

"Is there left enough moral force in Europe to look upon the Government of Europe from the moral point of view? Can the Christian Churches unite, if only in the matter of pursuing and ensuring international peace, repressing armaments, curbing kings, and encouraging the reign of the principles of Christ? Can the Christian Churches so far forget their divisions as to invite the Papacy to become the head of a European Federation charged with the duty of checking ambitions and preserving peace?"

For cool impudence this is almost unbeatable. Fancy anyone seriously suggesting that the only way to inaugurate a better state of things is for all the Churches to unite and invite the Papacy to become the head of a European Federation! As though the Churches ever could unite for such a purpose! And even if they did, it is certain that the last state would be worse than the first. There is plenty of moral force left in Europe, but its healthiest expression is outside all the Churches, and that will always operate to keep any Church from assuming a position of supremacy.

The *Christian World* says that when the war is ended, it will be important for all the Churches of both Germany and England to be at one in working for the suppression of militarism. We do not see why it is specially important for the Churches to be on hand when the day of settlement arrives, and we do not fancy they will be consulted. In any case, unless the Churches falsify all their past history, they will do very little towards suppressing the curse of militarism. The clergy are generally on hand in every military pageant, when war is in the air they usually do their best to fan the war spirit, and are never slow to furnish justification for any and every war that comes along. Just before the present war broke out German and English clergymen were fraternising and professing unbounded love and admiration for each other, but the war came just the same. German theologians of prominence have issued manifestos denouncing England and justifying Germany, and English theologians have done exactly the same. In these matters, so far as any real good is concerned, the clergy of either country count for very little. They can usually be found dancing to any tune that the passion of the moment or the interest of their church calls for. Find out what is popular and profitable, and one can pretty well guess what the clergy will have to say.

A writer in the *Sphere* observes:—

"A large part of every clergyman's salary is paid to him for saying 'Thou shalt not kill,' and 'Turn him the other cheek,' without any consideration of extenuating circumstances whatever. Hence, during war time, if he is also recruiting or beaming on recruiting meetings, he is not earning his money. One may honor him for these military efforts—but one must be permitted to ponder a little, too."

Of course, this writer does not exactly blame clergymen for acting as recruiting agents, but he does make it plain that a clergyman's profession inevitably makes for a certain amount of hypocrisy, and that is certainly clear to anyone who considers their teaching and their practice with an unprejudiced mind.

American papers say that a scientist has discovered a method of bleaching the negro's skin, and under this treatment it will become as milk. The Christian Church claims that it can whitewash the colored man's soul, and this scientist says he can modify his complexion. This happy union of science and religion should enable the American Christian to grasp the African's hand instead of kicking him under the coat-tails as heretofore.

"Ninety-seven per cent. of the admiration that is now felt in this country for the Emperor of Japan is due to the fact that in going to war he did not announce a special partnership with Almighty God!"—*New York Herald*.

The Yellow Press drops into truth much as Silas Wegg dropped into poetry. Writing of the Kaiser's piety, the

*Daily Mail* says "Nero is never more dangerous than when he mounts the pulpit and tickles our ears with the maxims of a trite morality." It is so very safe to write in that strain of the Kaiser—but are there no others?

The Bible is supposed to circulate without external assistance, and purely on account of its inherent value. The income of the British and Foreign Bible Society last year was £275,447, and there are many other similar organisations financially interested in circulating the scriptures. Yet, in spite of this enormous outlay, backed by "Omnipotence," the Bible is becoming "a back number."

It is reported that the Pope has telegraphed to the Kaiser, "When you destroy the temples of God you provoke the divine ire, before which even the most potent armies lose all power." We should have thought that a God worth bothering about would have been more concerned at the destruction of homes and the loss of human life, but we are, perhaps, mistaken. Much as we admire the artistic merits of the old cathedrals, there seems to us something radically wrong when the world shrieks with horror at their destruction, and accepts as a matter of course the slaughter of many thousands of human beings.

We are glad to see that the Hindoos, the Japanese, and the Senegalese are so generously combining to save European civilisation from smashing up. At present they are aiding Christian Europe by force of arms. But we have no doubt that they will realise the necessity for missionary work of a more peaceful kind once the war is over, and we may expect to see some sort of a league formed in order to instruct the Christian world in the art of civilisation. There are times when each nation is called upon to give of its best, and there is a certain moral responsibility devolving upon the "heathen" which we hope they will realise and effectively discharge.

In spite of the war the missionary societies continue their appeals for funds, and point to the necessity for carrying the Gospel to the heathen. Naturally, the "Heathen" when they see the beneficial results of the Christian Gospel in Europe, will greatly long for a share in the blessings it produces. As the lantern and the cinematograph are now both in use in missionary work, we would suggest that a series of pictures straight from the seat of war would prove an invaluable adjunct to the missionary.

The British and Foreign Bible Society announce that they issue the Scriptures in embossed type for the blind in thirty-five languages. They omit to add that the ordinary editions are suitable to the mentally blind.

"Doubtless many books are bought for no better motive than the sake of appearances," says a writer in *T. P.'s Weekly*. Including, we presume, dainty editions of the Bible and of the Anglican Prayer-Book.

A number of Salvation Army officers have been attached to the Canadian Army as "chaplains." The non-militant Salvation Army officers will have a chance of seeing real "blood and fire."

Almost the entire English press turned Catholic for half-an-hour in order to write pious nonsense concerning Rheims Cathedral, which was partially destroyed by the Kaiser's holy Huns. To English Protestants, the real value of the building was architectural, and not religious. Had Rheims Cathedral been a jerry-built tabernacle, there would have been no need for jeremiads.

"Old Moore" has published his forecast for 1915, and the prophet promises a quiet year. We hope he is right; but the present state of affairs is enough to wake up the shepherds on the back hills, and to frighten the winkles out of their shells.

"The Japanese have shown," says a contemporary, "that they are masters of the art of waiting." This will be news to the patient Christians, who have been waiting for the second coming of Christ for nearly two thousand years.

It is said that the handsome soldiers of the Czar carry icons into battle, under the belief that they afford protection during the conflicts. Doubtless, they answer prayer as readily as "The Prince of Peace."



### To Correspondents.

- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £215 2s. 0d. Received since:—E. Pinder and Friends (Leicester), £1 3s.; C. Heaton, 5s.; F. M. L., 10s.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Bethnal Green Branch, 5s.
- E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.
- E. RICHMOND.—We quite understand.
- H. J. H.—You will recognise your initials when you see them. We thought it best not to be more explicit.
- W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.
- W. D. CARVER.—*John Bull* is, at least, not like the mean part of the press that fears to recognise our existence.
- J. M. WOOD.—It is a question of what would interest the bulk of our readers. There are enough of the oily, self-seeking "gospel preacher" species over here. When we run short of them we will borrow illustrations from your part of the world. We would prefer, if you don't mind, to receive news of progress from your locality. Thanks for your good wishes. And recollect that in this old country, with all sorts of conventional claims on the pockets of people who have got anything in them, it is always difficult to raise money for advanced causes.
- L. BARKER.—We only see the name of one working-class member on the Prince of Wales's National Relief Fund committee. The upper classes know how to keep the administration of "charity" in their own hands. Their use of the Prince of Wales's name (poor lad!) in this case was a clever dodge for disarming criticism.
- B. T. HALL.—We ceased acknowledging the Ramsey Fund for reasons assigned. It is no part of our business to watch and check such lists.
- E. RICHMOND.—Of course there are other causes at work. There always are. We cannot find any actual solution of continuity in nature. We make it ourselves—mentally.
- E. PINDER.—Thanks for your pleasant and encouraging letter.
- A. J. MARRIOTT.—Thanks for the reference, though it is rather late.
- G. BROADFIELD.—We go by public facts. If the Kaiser believes all he says about himself and God he is mad—your opinion notwithstanding. And our business is to attack Christianity as we find it in the utterances and actions of conspicuous Christians. Other monarchs are mad, too, in their degree. We are quite impartial.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—We fear it cannot be dealt with in that way. They wouldn't let you lecture on the war, and what else (directly or indirectly) would fill the Town Hall at present?
- R. NORTH.—We note the misprint of A. F. Orage for A. R. Orage, who is the editor of the *New Age*, but not the author of *National Guilds*.
- R. TARRUM.—We are very pleased to hear from so old a Freethinker—old in both years and service—and still more so to learn that your health continues satisfactory. We hope that good health will continue. Thanks for your good wishes on our behalf. We are not exactly in need of encouragement, but the sympathy of one's friends is always appreciated.
- C. HEATON.—Pleased you derive so much enjoyment from reading the *Freethinker*.
- H. GARTHWAITTE.—Very sorry your Obituary notice was received too late for insertion in this week's issue.
- OWING to unexpected circumstances we are obliged to hold over a good deal of correspondence until next week's issue.
- WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's Queen's (Minor) Hall lecture is "off" after all. Just when we thought there was to be fine weather a bolt fell from the blue in the shape of a returned cheque and a refusal to sign the agreement. From the first the Queen's Hall people had stipulated that Mr. Foote should not "refer to the war." This seemed *too* strict, in the case of an old and tried user of the place, and a remonstrance was made to that effect. To lecture on the war, or about the war, was one thing, and we can quite understand the management objecting to the hall being used for that purpose in the present heated state of the public mind; but to

refrain even from referring to the present war, even by way of impartial illustration on another topic, seemed quite too much for human flesh and blood on both sides of the platform. However a *via media* was suggested and seemed likely to be acceptable. Mr. Foote proposed to lecture on President Wilson's neutral invitation to the whole Christian world to pray to God for peace on one and the same day (Oct. 4). But the Queen's Hall people wouldn't have "Praying for Peace" at any price. We don't complain—the Queen's Hall people are justified in looking after their own interests. On the other hand, Mr. Foote cannot expect the public to show a frenzied desire to hear him just now on some old stock subject like the Antiquity of Flatirons. His exclusion from the public platform is therefore likely to continue for some time. Fortunately, the Leicester Secularists have a hall of their own, and Mr. Foote is due to lecture there on November 8.

We are delighted to learn that Mr. W. Heaford is making more rapid recovery than was expected. His doctor hopes to pull him through by Christmas.

We don't exactly see what the Bradlaugh Fellowship has to do with the Ramsey Testimonial, but we are asked to announce that the latter will be presented at a Social Meeting of the former in the Borough of Shoreditch Radical Club, 43 New North-road, N., on Wednesday evening, October 14, at 8.30.

Mr. Palmer's second article on "The Evolution of Flowers" stands over till next week. It cannot be fitted in this week's make-up.

A British soldier, who happens to be utterly unorthodox, was in the trenches under heavy fire on September 14, 17, and 21 (we must not say where), though we would like to know the feelings of an Atheist in that situation. We make the following extracts from his letter:—

"I have seen men killed on either side of me, also taken part in the burial of numerous dead (English and German). I may not give the name of the action, but I will do so later. Although we all carry name (identification) plates, and a nominal religion, religious rites are not usually performed, and no one seems to care much or be the worse. The behavior of all, as you have often pointed out, varies with temperament, some being more nervous than others. Personally, I've not felt frightened yet. Only regret that I should be taking part in these brutalities. I did not think of them as such in years back, when I enlisted. I am writing this during an evening's shelling of the trenches, and although I have thought over things during the past few days, I still do not feel the need of a God, and do not believe in a future heavenly existence, and find but little to regret in my life."

This correspondent, helping to bury the dead near cross-road crucifixes, says he was struck with the irony of the Prince of Peace smiling down on the victims of war.

Viscount Bryce's fine letter on "Neutral Nations and the War" in Monday's *Daily Chronicle* reminds us that he was for some years our much-respected Ambassador to the United States, and long before that the author of a classical book on the *Holy Roman Empire*. It speaks well for the United States that what it asks of us is not a titled simpleton or a purse-proud millionaire, but a man of genius and character, and it is prepared to do its best to return the compliment, which it has generally been able to do—just as able as we have, one thinks. Something good was expected on the war from "Mr." now "Viscount" Bryce, and the hope of his admirers was not disappointed. Here is a noble passage:—

"It is only vulgar minds that mistake bigness for greatness, for greatness is of the Soul, not of the Body. In the judgment which history will hereafter pass upon the forty centuries of recorded progress towards civilisation that now lie behind us, what are the tests it will apply to determine the true greatness of a people?

"Not population, not territory, not wealth, not military power. Rather will history ask: What examples of lofty character and unselfish devotion to honor and duty has a people given? What has it done to increase the volume of knowledge? What thoughts and what ideals of permanent value and unexhausted fertility has it bequeathed to mankind? What works has it produced in poetry, music, and the other arts to be an unending source of enjoyment to posterity?

"The small peoples need not fear the application of such tests.

"The world advances not, as the Bernhardt school suppose, only or even mainly by fighting. It advances mainly by Thinking and by a process of reciprocal teaching and learning, by a continuous and unconscious co-operation of all its strongest and finest minds."

This is better reading, even for working men, than Blatchford's worship of "the little brown rifle."



### Primitive Marriage.—III.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER)

(Concluded from p. 637.)

IT is both interesting and instructive to note the extent to which procuring wives by capture prevailed in ancient times, and among modern races in a low state of civilisation, and survivals of which may be found in the marriage customs of all countries. Abduction is the common theme of ancient story, as in the Ramayana and the Iliad. "Beauty and Booty" were the allied watchwords of the Homeric age. The Bible contains an instance in the twentieth chapter of Judges. The women of the tribe of Benjamin had been destroyed; and as they could not marry Gentiles, and the other tribes would not give wives, the difficulty—which Israel made its own difficulty—was solved by the wholesale slaughter of the inhabitants of Jabez-Gilead, whose population yielded 400 virgins; and next by the men of Benjamin enacting a rape of the Sabines for themselves, each man seizing and carrying off one of the daughters of Shiloh to be his wife, on an occasion when the women met for a festival. These were the days when each man "did what was right in his own eyes." Sir George Grey says of the natives of Australia:—

"The early life of a young woman at all celebrated for beauty is generally one continuous series of captivity to different masters, of ghastly wounds, of wanderings in strange families, of rapid flights, and of bad treatment from other females among whom she is brought a stranger by her captors."

Abduction is, however, looked on as a kind of homage, and to play at it is the favorite sport of boys and girls.

J. A. Farrer, in his *Primitive Manners*, contends that the form of capture is mainly a concession to maiden bashfulness among early races. Yet, as I have already indicated, there are but slight indications of this native modesty, which itself has been rather the result of severe repression and punishment for "going astray." He also says that the custom sometimes affords a bride a real chance of escape from a bridegroom she dislikes. I fear, however, that the instance of this found in the *Travels of Dr. Clarke* (vol. i., p. 433) is almost as unusual as it is interesting. Dr. Clarke says:—

"The ceremony of marriage among the Kalmucks is performed on horseback. A girl is first mounted, who rides off at full speed. Her lover pursues; if he overtakes her, she becomes his wife, and the marriage is consummated on the spot; after this she returns with him to his tent. But it sometimes happens that the woman does not wish to marry the person by whom she is pursued; in this case, she will not suffer him to overtake her. We were assured that no instance occurs of a Kalmuck girl being thus caught, unless she have a partiality to the pursuer. If she dislikes him, she rides, to use the language of English sportsmen, 'neck or nought,' until she has completely effected her escape, or until her pursuer's horse becomes exhausted, leaving her at liberty to return, and to be afterwards chased by some more favored admirer."

Among the Tunguzes and Kamschatdales a matrimonial engagement is not to be considered definitely concluded until the suitor has overcome his beloved by force, and torn her clothes—the maiden being bound by custom to defend her liberty to the utmost. Also, among the Bedouin Arabs, it is necessary for the bridegroom to force the bride to enter his tent. Burckhardt says:—

"Among the Sinai Arabs a bride defends herself with stones, and often inflicts wounds on the young men, even though she does not dislike the lover; for, according to custom, the more she struggles, bites, kicks, cries and strikes, the more she is applauded ever after by her own companions."

A similar custom existed among the French, at least in some provinces, as late as the seventeenth century, and some of our own rustic beauties have been known to consider kicking and screaming as almost as indispensable as tears. Among many races it is a

point of honor to the bride to resist and struggle, however willing she may be.

Among the Kols of North-east India, in public market, a young man with a party of friends will carry off a girl, struggling and screaming, but no one not interested interferes, and the girl's female friends are apt to applaud the exploit. Among the Eskimo of last century the form of bride-lifting was in use, nor was its serious meaning forgotten, for sometimes a Greenlander, desirous of a second wife, would simply pounce upon an unprotected female, or, with his friends' help, carry off a girl from a dance. The custom of stealing women, especially heiresses, prevailed in Ireland and Scotland down to the seventeenth century, and "is glorified in a whole literature of songs and ballads." (Lecky, *History of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii., p. 366).

Lord Kames, in his *Sketches of the History of Man* (vol. ii., p. 59), has noticed the curious and significant marriage custom which lingered in Wales even in his own day, perpetuating the memory of ancient violence:—

"On the morning of the wedding-day the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends on horseback, demands the bride. Her friends, who are likewise on horseback, give a positive refusal, on which a mock scuffle ensues. The bride, mounted behind her nearest kinsman, is carried off, and is pursued by the bridegroom and his friends, with loud shouts. When they have fatigued themselves and their horses, the bridegroom is suffered to overtake his bride. He leads her away in triumph, and the scene is concluded with feasting and festivity."

In the *Description of Westmeath*, Sir H. Piers, writing in 1682, says of the Irish:—

"On the days of bringing home, the bridegroom and his friends ride out and meet the bride and her friends at the place of meeting. Being come near each other, the custom was of old to cast a short dart at the company that attended the bride, but at such distance that seldom any hurt ensued. Yet it is not out of the memory of man that the Lord of Howth, on such an occasion, lost an eye."

The idea of capture is, of course, more discoverable among a race like the Tartars, where the bridegroom is pursued with stones and javelins, than among ourselves, where the happy man is only pelted with rice or slippers.

A review of the instances, to which a large number indicating further links of transition might have been added, which may be found in Sir John Lubbock's *Origin of Civilisation*, and in J. F. McLennan's *Studies in Ancient History*, induces us to think that abduction in spite of parents was the earlier form, that next came the making of compensation to escape vengeance, and that this grew into the making of presents beforehand and the system of purchase. In Homer we find the capture of wives from opposing tribes, their purchase from those who are friends, and the interchange of marriage presents, which is the germ of matrimonial contracts, and, later, develops into an organised system of dower.

The substitution of purchase for capture points to such an improvement in the condition of life as is implied by the existence of commerce by barter. It seems to have become usual whenever men have passed from the hunting into the pastoral stage. As representing the transition period between capture and purchase, we may take the Kirghaz and Circassian tribes, among whom capture exists generally as a form, but on occasion as a fact; the ceremony of capture being always gone through, and actual compulsion resorted to if the lady's parent should not accept the price offered for her hand. In Afghanistan a man may, by either the rape of a lock of his sweetheart's hair, snatching away her veil, or throwing a sheet over her, declaring at the same time that he claims her as his wife, secure her, provided he can pay the stipulated sum.

Among the Toorkmans, the necessity of paying a high price for a bride leads to frequent elopements. The parents and relatives, however, pursue the lovers, who have made for the nearest camp and become united, and the matter is adjusted by an intermarriage with some female relation of the



bridegroom, while he himself becomes bound to pay so many camels and horses as the price of the bride. The young lady, after her Greta Green union, returns to her parents' home, and passes a year in preparing the carpets and clothes which are necessary for a Toorkman tent, and on the anniversary of her elopement she is finally transferred to the arms and establishment of her lover. We here see a stage of transition from the system of actual abduction to a mere symbolism, of which stage traces remained in Sparta in historic times. In Sparta the young wife was not, immediately after the marriage, domiciled in her husband's house, but cohabited with him for some time clandestinely, till he brought her to his home. Burckhardt tells us of a custom which prevails among the Mezeyne tribe of Arabs in the Sinai peninsula. A girl, after being carried off and wrapped in a cloak, is permitted to escape from her tent and fly into the neighboring mountains. The bridegroom next day goes in search of her, and remains often many days before he finds her, while her female friends are apprised of her hiding-place, and supply her with provisions. If the husband finds her at last (which is sooner or later, according to the impression he has made on the girl's heart), he is bound to consummate the marriage on the spot, and to pass the night with her in the mountains. The next morning the bride goes home to her tent, that she may have some food, but again runs away in the evening, and repeats these flights several times, till she finally returns to her tent. She does not go to live in her husband's tent till far advanced in pregnancy. Unless pregnant, she may not join her husband till after a full year from the wedding day.

The transition to the honeymoon trip may be seen among the Soligas (India), where, "when a girl consents to marry, the man runs away with her to some neighboring village, and they live there until the honeymoon is over. They then return home and give a feast to the people of their village" (Buchanan, *Journey from Madras*, vol. i., p. 178).

In all cases the girl is carried off by the man; but among the Garos of Bengal we find a similar custom, only it is the bridegroom who is abducted. He pretends to be unwilling, and runs away, but is caught by the friends of the bride, and then taken by force, in spite of the resistance and counterfeited grief and lamentation of his parents, to the bride's house. So also among the Ahitas of the Philippine Islands. If her parent will not consent to a love-match, the girl seizes the young man by the hair of his head, carries him off, and declares she has run away with him. In such a case it appears that marriage is held to be valid, whether the parents consent or not.

The obtaining of a wife by purchase indicates, as I have said, a great improvement. For one thing, there is less female infanticide where the daughter is a marketable commodity, and in course of time the flocks, goods, or money which were given as an equivalent for the surrender of paternal rights become a provision for the daughter's own use. Yet in this stage the position of woman is still a very degraded one. Her lord and master can say with Petruchio:—

"She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,  
My household stuff, my field, my barn,  
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything."

The Bedouins think it scandalous to demand the daughter's price, or, rather, polite to keep it in the background. Burckhardt goes so far as to say that the Bedouins are perhaps the only Eastern people who can be entitled lovers. This is incorrect; yet even among them woman is regarded as much inferior to man, and when once married becomes a mere servant. Their position among Christian Slavs is not better. The Albanians consider that as they purchase their wives they have despotic power over them, and that they may not only beat them at pleasure, but dismiss them on paying a fixed sum—ideas which have been known to crop up in Western Europe. In ancient Russia, as part of the marriage ceremony, the father took a new whip, and after striking his

daughter gently with it, told her that he did so for the last time, and presented the whip to the bridegroom, to whose tender mercies she then passed.

Among the Mongols marriages are arranged by parents without consulting the parties most concerned; and when all is settled they say, "I have bought for my son the daughter of so and so"; or, "We have sold our daughter to such and such a family."

When the price has been paid the daughter becomes the property of the purchaser, but she remains with her family until the time for performing the marriage ceremonies, which include the "capture" of the bride by the friends of the bridegroom.

In China the woman has no concern in the choice of a husband. When married he is her complete master, and may strike her with impunity, may starve her, sell her, or let her out for a longer or shorter period, as is the common practice in the province of Tche-Kiang. Divorce is almost at the husband's pleasure, being allowed for barrenness, adultery, disobedience to husband or his parents, talkativeness, theft, ill temper, or inveterate infirmities. No wonder the women are devotedly religious, for they hope they may thus become males in their next stage of existence.

In Babylon and Assyria wives were to be purchased by auction, pretty maids fetching high sums, while it is said some ill-looking ones had dowries presented with them. The Thracians bought their wives in the time of Herodotus, and Aristotle asserts it was once customary in Greece. Moses allowed a father to sell his daughters for slaves or concubines, provided the purchaser were an Israelite (Exodus xxi. 7). It is probable that in early times the Hebrew wife had no power of obtaining a legal divorce, as, even at the date of the Talmud, the wife could do no more than compel her husband to give her the letter of separation, which he on his part (according to Deut. xxiv. 1) could use against her at any time. Even in Rome, so clearly, says Gibbon, was woman defined not as a *person*, but as a *thing*, that if the original title was deficient, she might be claimed like other moveables, by the use and possession of an entire year. In one of the forms of marriage among the Romans capture survived as a form, and in another, purchase survived as a fact.

In Saxon England marriage by purchase is referred to in the laws of Æthelbirht as though it was the usual custom. The principal ceremony was *hand-faestnung*, or pledging hands, which was done in the presence of the friends of the bridegroom and bride, and then the former received his wife from her father in return for the price which had previously been agreed upon. If a man found, after marriage, that he had been deceived, he was entitled to send back the lady to her parents, and claim a return of the money he had paid for her. The mercantile nature of the transaction was afterwards sought to be concealed by calling the sum paid by the husband *fosterlean*, as though it were a return for the father's expense in providing food and education of his daughter; and it was expected to be paid at the time of espousal, instead of marriage. In the ninth and tenth centuries a great improvement was made, women of the upper classes acquiring the right to dispose of themselves in marriage. Sir Thomas Smith, however, in his *Commonwealth of England*, bk. iii., ch. 8, gives the following custom of old English law as remaining as late as 1549: "The woman at the church door was given of her father, or some other man of the next of her kind, unto the hands of her husband, and he laid down gold and silver for her upon the book, as though he did buy her." Among the Germans marriage was anciently a purchase, the suitor paying over the price to the person in whose power the maiden or widow chanced to be (J. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*). It was so in Ireland and Norway. In the Netherlands, in Spain, and in Longobard law, traces of the purchase of brides still exist. In France it was the law before the Great Revolution, "le futur époux devrait offrir



une somme aux parent de la fille" (the future husband should offer a sum to the girl's parents). It is perhaps scarcely necessary to add that buying and selling in marriage is not yet extinct in Belgravia.

### The Monk and the Woman.—II.

*A Public Address by M. M. Mangasarian  
to the Free Religious Association (Rationalist), Chicago.  
(Continued from p. 633.)*

WOMAN was educated by the Church, and the Church never educates a woman to play a great part. What betrayed the identity of the monk was liquor. It is well-known that in many of the monasteries the inmates spend a considerable part of their leisure in the manufacture of cordials. A very substantial income is derived from this source. Instead of writing text-books to enlighten the world's ignorance, or inventing machinery to lighten the world's toil, they make of the monastery a quasi brewery or distillery. Father Antoine had left his prayer-books and rosaries behind him when he escaped from the monastery, in fact everything that might reveal that at one time he was a monk he had cast aside, but he had not been able to part also with the liquor he used to make and drink when he was a holy man. His weakness in this matter proved his undoing. The guests at his tent, drinking of the Trappist concoction, discover that their host was at one time a monk. "You," exclaims the merchant traveller, who suddenly recognises in Father Antoine the Trappist monk who had contracted to pray for him, "You promised to pray for me. You have broken your contract with me and your vow to God," and he casts upon him a withering look, a look of disdain, a look of contempt—of horror and of execration. A viper might have provoked his pity, but a monk who has broken his vow, never. And the whole audience seems to arise and point its finger of scorn at the apostate monk. The whole Roman Catholic Church seems to be there on the stage with its awful anathema against the renegade. A shudder falls upon sun and moon even, and heaven and earth stand aghast at the spectacle of a priest who has renounced his vow. A terrific storm, the like of which even the desert had seldom experienced, is invoked to express the protest of the elements against the unholy marriage. The night Julius Cæsar was assassinated there was not half the commotion that there was on this occasion. In short, the coming of a monk and a woman together almost wrecks the universe. But what was all this about? A monk marries. Is there anything extraordinary in that? Is not a monk a man? Can cowl and cloak suppress human nature? But the purpose of all this theatrical fuss was to strike with terror any other priest contemplating his emancipation. It was meant, also, to impress the spectators with the solemnity and sacredness of Catholic teaching, and to warn them from ever disobeying its commandments by listening to the voice in their own souls.

When we analyse the situation, however, we find that there was not the least foundation for all this ado. What, for instance, were the charges against the monk? He was accused, in the first place, of having broken his promise to pray for a certain merchant. Suppose the monk had said *this* to his accuser before that vast audience: "You say, Sir, that I promised to pray for you, and that I am to be condemned for not keeping this promise. Pray for yourself henceforth. Will not God hear your prayer as he will mine? And if you can pray for yourself, why should you ask me to do that which you can do for yourself?" There seems to be an idea that the efficacy of prayer lies not in the thing asked for, but in the man who asks for it. But that would make of the Deity a capricious Oriental ruler, who has to be approached through his courtiers or favorites before he will hear any petitions for help. In the Orient, a man's plea may be just and reasonable, but that is not enough. He must have what, in political par-

lance is called "a pull," at the Divan. On the other hand, his request may be unjust, but if he has the right backing at the royal court he may hope for success. But if God is not like an Asiatic Sultan, why hire anybody to pray for us? If our request be just, will he refuse it? If unjust, could he be made to favor us for the sake of the priest or the pope? To ask a monk to pray for us clearly proves that we are not sure that God only considers the reasonableness of the request, irrespective of the person who makes it. But that is the kind of infidelity we should be afraid of. I would rather have the heavens empty than that such a God should reside there. But ignorance looks upon the priest as the mediator between God and man. The Latin word pontiff means a bridge. The Pope is pontifex maximus, or the chief bridge. The purpose of a bridge is to span a chasm. Between man and God there is an impassable gulf—an abyss, and the priest is supposed to be the bridge that connects the divided shores. The Deity, too, must cross this bridge to communicate with us. He needs the priest just as much as we do. God and man are represented as separated that the priest may bring them together. The Deity is unapproachable without a priest. He is a consuming fire, and is located on the summit of a smoking and burning mountain, in order that the people may fear to appear in person in his presence and employ the offices of the priest. Now we understand why people hire "holy" men to pray for them.

In reply to the second charge, the monk could have said: "You accuse me of having broken my vow to God. But I am not sorry for that. What I am sorry for is that I should ever have been so weak, so uninformed, so indolent, so selfish, and so dead to the challenge of life, to the promptings of the life-force in me, as to have taken such a vow. Hundreds of others, among them some of the world's foremost men, flung aside their vows and ceased to be monks that they might become men—Bruno, Erasmus, Luther! I had vowed never to speak. Well, I am afraid of a religion that would punish me for breaking such a vow. I had also vowed never to love—to live like a withered branch, to sit at a sepulchre all my life, instead of watching at a cradle. I am sorry for the religion that would compel me to fulfil so foolish a vow. It was wrong to have exacted such a promise from me in the first place, and doubly wrong to make it binding on me now that my eyes have been opened, and my heart has been touched." Oh, if that tremendous audience could have heard something like that from the lips of the accused monk! And then turning to the woman, soon to be a mother, which evidence he could have used as a proof that heaven, instead of frowning upon his union with the woman he loved, has blest it, suppose he had said to her: "You are more to me than church or creed. I would not live on earth without you, and heaven without you would be a hell." But the monk does not talk like that. He, too, has been educated by the Church. Had he been a Pagan acting on the Greek or Roman stage, he would have expressed himself in some such way as I have indicated. Or, had he even been on the French stage, at the Odeon in Paris, or at the Theatre Francais, he would have risen to the full stature of his newly gained freedom. But on the American stage, with its puritanical atmosphere, handicapped by political considerations, he can only stammer with trepidation of the heart, and crouch and cringe like a slave who feels upon his bare flesh the sting and smart of the lash. A thousand pities! If you wish to see how the parochial schools can whip all manhood, all independence, all defiance and initiative and high spirits out of a man, see that play. If you would have your son or your daughter brought up to be the sport of superstitious fears, send them to the parochial school.

Prevailed upon by his convent-trained conscience, and his superstitious wife, the emancipated monk returns to his cloister. That is to say, to his vow of silence and celibacy. I call the vow of eternal silence immoral. Think of any man with red blood



in his veins swearing to hold his tongue, when even the stones are eager to burst into speech. But to hold the tongue is the best way to destroy the mind. The tongue is the mind's chief instrument. Without it the mind might as well not exist at all. Let us never make our peace with a religion that would gag us if it could.

But it is the woman who helps the Church to catch the runaway monk. It is the woman who delivers up the escaped prisoner to his jailors. It is the woman who orders the doors of the cloister to turn upon their rusty hinges and shut in, this time for ever, the man whom love and the light of the big world outside his monastery had set free. I ask you to look at the hand that caught the liberated monk and locked him up again. Look at that hand. It is soft and gentle, with tapering fingers like a woman's. It is a *woman's hand!* To capture the bird that has flown the cage, to smother the mind that has been awakened from its slumber, the Church uses the hand of a woman. The heart and the hand of woman have been the great allies of the Church during the long centuries. A way might be discovered to prop up the planets without the law of gravitation, but neither the Catholic nor the Protestant Church can stand without woman. It is one of the strangest facts of history that in return for what woman has done for religion she has received only insults and injuries from the Church. The world's great religions have not been fair to women. In almost everyone of the creeds woman figures as the tempter of man and the wrecker of the world. According to the Bible, Eve pulled Adam and the whole human race out of paradise. But for her, man would have remained a god to this day. Observe again, the contemptible rôle which the Bible assigns against the machinations of both Jehovah and Satan, the most formidable combination ever formed against any one person, his wife, instead of lending him a hand, instead of encouraging him in his unequal combat against a Jehovah-Satan combination, taunts and teases him: "Curse God," she says, "curse him and die." Shame on the authors of that questionable story! Yet that is the rôle which most religions assign to woman. She is meant to drag man down, to cause him to slip and fall.

(To be continued.)

Dean Ramsey relates that the Earl of Lauderdale was alarmingly ill, one distressing symptom being a total absence of sleep, without which the medical man declared he could not recover. His son, who was somewhat simple, was seated under the table, and cried out, "Sen' for that preaching man frae Livingstone, for fayther aye sleeps in the kirk." One of the doctors thought the hint worth attending to, and the experiment of "getting a minister till him," succeeded, for sleep came on, and the earl recovered.

### The Kaiser's Remonstrance With God.

To God thus murmured Kaiser Billy:  
 "Come, now, you're treating me but illy,  
 And not, God, as you ought to:  
 Not like the Atheist French am I,  
 I never did your power deny,  
 And never failed to glorify  
 You as my patron and ally,  
 And still in prayer besought you.

Am I, your devotee so long,  
 Who never failed to make a song  
 About your friendly 'havior,  
 To be deserted in my need,  
 And left in vain my cause to plead?  
 If so, I must revise my creed,  
 Your over-lordship supersede,  
 And find some other Savior!

It isn't fair to me, you know  
 (Just think how much to me you owe!)  
 So scurvily to treat me;  
 To let my schemes all go awry,  
 My cunning plots my hopes belie,  
 Russia and France my power defy,  
 And Britain all my threats decry,  
 And little Belgium beat me!

You can't think this the proper way  
 The constant service to repay  
 Of your friend and idoliser;  
 Grateful you surely ought to be,  
 To be so often linked with me;  
 Then why not issue your decree,  
 And favor me as formerly?—  
 Your disappointed Kaiser?"

B. D.

### Sonnet to Mr. Will Crooks, M.P.

*On his leadership of the House of Commons, when the Home Rule Bill became law.*

[Mr. Whitley (Deputy-Speaker) then informed the House that the Royal Assent had been given to the Government of Ireland Act. Mr. W. Crooks (Lab., Woolwich) called out, "Mr. Deputy-Speaker, will it be in order to sing 'God Save the King'?" Receiving no reply, he took silence for consent, and started singing the National Anthem.]

WHEN that historic moment had passed by  
 Which brought us, on its long-awaited wing—  
 So long, it seemed for ever tarrying—  
 The glorious dawn of Ireland's liberty;  
 And when, inspired to hear some noble thing,  
 Men paused, and looked around expectantly—  
 'Twas then that Crooks (ah, bathos deep!) did cry:  
 "Permit us, sir, to chant 'God Save the King.'"  
 Thy King should take thee, Will, to be his fool,  
 His Court's prime jester. Who so fit as thou  
 To move the mirth of royalty and rank?  
 With cap-and-bells let Labor make its bow,  
 And, for reward, reap that just ridicule  
 Which mocks the democrat turned mountebank.

S.

### Correspondence.

#### SOLDIERS' RIGHT OF AFFIRMATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Some time ago, in a note on "Religion in the Army" in the *Freethinker*, I said that *I was of opinion* that a Freethinker desirous of joining the Army had a legal right not to have a religious denomination imposed upon him, by taking advantage of the Oaths Act (1888) at his attestation. This I now find to be correct, as I have come across the following statement in the *National Reformer* for June 16, 1889. It occurs in Charles Bradlaugh's presidential report to the N. S. S. Conference for that year, and reads as follows:—

"There being some misapprehension as to the affirmation of allegiance amongst soldiers, militiamen, and volunteers, the Secretary of State for War has recently recorded his decision, in accordance with the Oaths Act, and this is now circulated in Army Orders."

This information may be of some service to prospective recruits for Kitchener's new Army of a million and a half.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

### Obituary.

We regret to report the death, in his fifty-seventh year, of Mr. John Thomas Walters, of Ingersoll House, Gilfach, Bargoed, Monmouthshire, which occurred on September 24. Mr. Walters was a valiant Freethinker, and a constant reader of our journal, and for many years rendered invaluable service as an ardent propagandist. Like every other Secularist of strong convictions, he had to suffer much persecution for his advocacy of Freethought. But no opposition had the effect of cooling his zeal in the spread of "the best of causes." Such was his honesty and sincerity, however, that even his opponents were obliged to respect and admire him. His neighbors and friends, in great numbers, paid their tribute of admiration for his sterling character by their attendance at the funeral, which took place on Tuesday, September 29, when a Secular Service was conducted at the grave-side—E. M. VANCE.



**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

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

**LONDON.****INDOOR.**

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Cowell's, 44 Jenner-road): Monday, Oct. 12, at 8.30, Business Meeting—*Re* next season's plan of propaganda, etc.

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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