

THE Freethinker

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Religion itself means intolerance. The various sects tolerate nothing but their own dogmas.—SHELLEY.

The Unreality of Religion.

NEARLY two years ago the Rev. F. B. Meyer prophesied, at a public meeting at Newcastle-on-Tyne, that in a few months this country would experience such a revival of religion as had never been seen before. Time has shown us how utterly false that prediction was; but his past failure as a prophet has not taught the reverend gentleman any wisdom. Two other prophecies have just fallen from his lips, the one being that one result of the War will be the restoration of Palestine to the Jews, which "will be a wonderful thing, proving that the Word of God stands for ever," and the other that immediately after the War we shall have a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness alone shall reign. God's covenant with the Jews was that the land should be kept for them, and that in due time they should return to it. In order that the covenant may be speedily fulfilled, Turkey has been Divinely inspired to join Germany in the present War, which will inevitably eventuate in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Then this modern prophet "declared that history revealed that the Almighty had entered into a covenant with us as surely as he had entered into a covenant with the Hebrew people, and that he was going to stand by us and see that it was not the mailed fist but the pierced hand of Jesus which should hold the book of Empire." We are convinced that all this talk about God and his covenants with certain people is mere cant and twaddle. The "mailed fist" is real, strong, and terrible, and most devastating are its blows; but the "pierced hand of Jesus" is unreal, impotent, and quite incapable of any performance, either destructive or constructive. If there is a God, he has hitherto befriended the mailed fist, the achievements of the German Empire having been phenomenal. He secured for it glorious victories in the wars of 1866 and 1870, and the empire founded by it has had forty years' uninterrupted prosperity. Without a doubt, the mailed fist has been a mighty power in the world, and is at the present moment doing wonders on bloody battlefields. Judging by the facts of recent history, the Almighty has smiled upon and supported German militarism, and the Kaiser has always led his people in his name. If this militarism is now doomed to disappear, its destruction will be accomplished, not because God is with the Allies, but because the allied forces are more than a match for the vast German army. We shall win not because our cause is just, but because we are strong enough and sufficiently well led to crush the enemy on the open field. The ministers of the Gospel know this as well as we do, and that is the reason why they act the part of recruiting sergeants.

The truth is that religion is as impotent in times of war as it is known to be when peace prevails. To unprejudiced people its unreality is an established fact. Recently Sir W. Robertson Nicoll entitled his leading article in the *British Weekly* "Prayer in Time of War," and now we learn that "in response to

many requests" Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton have published it as a pamphlet. Why were those numerous requests made? Simply because the majority even of religious people are not quite sure that prayer will do any good in such a crisis, which is a perfectly natural state of mind to be in. Of well-attested answers to prayer there are absolutely none, and as a consequence there are multitudes of professing Christians who doubt the utility of praying, especially for victory in war-time. Canon Adderley informs us that the object of religion is to help us to lead good lives, but it is a notorious fact that it has dismally failed to achieve that end. The nations engaged in the present war are all profoundly religious. The German campaign may be "a delirium of vanity and ambition," but Dr. Watkinson, the popular Wesleyan preacher, is fundamentally mistaken when he characterises it as "the most atheistical, sceptical, and ghastly" campaign that has ever been inaugurated. Why, in his first proclamation the Kaiser assured his people that God had always been on their side in the past, and would undoubtedly be on their side and give them the victory on the present occasion, if only they were united; and the name of God has been prominent in every message that has fallen from him since. Every war is "ghastly," but this one is anything but "atheistical and sceptical." But has the Christian religion succeeded in making these fighting nations "good"? If national and international relations had been good, this fierce struggle would have been impossible, and the only rational conclusion is that religion has signally failed to establish such relations.

The Rev. Lloyd Thomas, of Birmingham, contributed a remarkable article to the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 11 on what he calls the highest reality of religion, in which he declares that no religion can possess such reality unless it fulfils three conditions. "It must be true; it must be good; it must be beautiful." Then he proceeds thus:—

"These three conditions are fulfilled in that Eternal Being whom we worship. He is a holy and blessed Trinity of three Persons in one God; and the three *personæ* are Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. The True is the ideal of the intellect; the Good is the ideal of the will; the Beautiful is the ideal of the emotion; and these three are one. The quest of truth gives us philosophy; the devotion to goodness gives us morality; the love of beauty gives us art."

This new doctrine of the Trinity is not more acceptable to the reason than the orthodox one. We know of no Eternal Being in whom are fulfilled the three conditions just mentioned. Certainly the Christian religion does not impart truth, goodness, and beauty to those who profess it. It does not impart truth because it is not itself true. It is not true that the human race is fallen; it is not true that a God-man ever lived and died and rose from the dead on this earth, and thereby became the Savior of the world; it is not true that a just and good God sits on the throne of the Universe and governs it according to his own will; and it is not true that all existing things work for good to genuine believers. Such doctrines are mind-corrupting and heart-degrading lies, and belief in them has made people cruel. Neither does the Christian religion inspire high morality in its professors. Mr. Lloyd Thomas says that "the good received stern and austere expression among the Puritans." We candidly admit that the

Puritans were tremendously religious—so religious, indeed, that in their time, as Green puts it, “the whole nation became, in fact, a Church”; but their goodness was a highly doubtful quantity. Very beautifully does Milton sing in his *Comus* :—

“Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the spherical chime.”

But to the Puritans virtue meant godliness, and godliness was possessed only by themselves. What was their attitude towards non-Puritans? It was always one of supreme hatred and contempt, and when they were in power it expressed itself in acts of the utmost brutality. Their intolerance knew no bounds. With what avidity they put witches and Sabbath-breakers to death! Lecky says:—

“As soon as Puritanism gained an ascendancy in the country, as soon as its ministers succeeded in imparting their gloomy tenets to the governing classes, witchcraft assumed a gigantic magnitude. During the few years of the Commonwealth, there is reason to believe that more alleged witches perished in England than in the whole period before and after. Nor is this to be ascribed entirely to the judges or the legislators, for the judges in former reigns never shrank from condemning witches, and Cromwell was, in most respects, far superior to his predecessors. It was simply the natural result of Puritanical teaching acting on the mind, predisposing men to see Satanic influence in life, and, consequently, eliciting the phenomena of witchcraft” (*The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, pp. 106-7).

In his interesting little book, *Sunday: The People's Holiday* (pp. 62, 63), Dr. Hardwicke relates the following savage incident:—

“A Baptist minister in 1661, in London, was hanged and quartered, his heart taken out and burned, his quarters affixed to the gates of the city, and his head stuck on the top of a pole and set opposite his meeting-house in Whitechapel, simply for speaking against Sabbath observance.”

Piety the Puritans displayed in great abundance, but goodness or virtue, in the social sense of the term, was conspicuous only by its absence. The Christian religion and exalted morality are two wholly different things. Benvenuto Cellini was at once a devout Christian and a shameless criminal. And in the second decade of the twentieth century European Christians have been cruelly slaughtering one another for nearly four months. Yet, in face of all these facts, and thousands more that could be cited, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll has the hardihood to publish a book called *The Difference Christ is Making!*

Now religion, being essentially unreal, has done nothing but harm to mankind. Saintliness and humanity have often been entirely opposite qualities. And of all the great religions, Christianity is the most demoralising in its influence upon character. Dr. Meyer is confidently looking forward to a wonderful revival of this superstition, and is going to do his utmost to live ten years longer to see the happy time that will follow such a revival. We do not share that expectation, but are of opinion that this war will rather do more towards hastening the complete disintegration of supernaturalism than any other catastrophe known to history. J. T. LLOYD.

Religious Freedom.

NEARLY everyone is acquainted with the famous definition of a crab as “a fish with six legs that walks backwards.” Cuvier's reply to this is equally widely known, but it will bear repetition. He said that he agreed with the definition, except that a crab wasn't a fish, it didn't have six legs, and it didn't walk backwards. Otherwise, the description was accurate.

I was reminded of the above by a sentence in a leading article in one of the daily papers of a recent date. The writer said—just as though it were a matter beyond dispute—“Religious freedom has

made us increasingly religious,” etc. What went before and what came after the words cited, had no special bearing upon the opinion expressed, and so may be left on one side. I cite this particular sentence because it illustrates a very common fallacy, and one that seems an even greater favorite with latitudinarians than with those of pronounced religious convictions. What Cuvier said of the definition of a crab might be said, with a change of terms, of the opinion that religious freedom has made us more religious. We are not more religious than we were, and religious freedom does not, and cannot, make for greater religion. With these reservations this particular statement may be accepted as correct.

Let us take the last point first. What is meant by religious freedom? Presumably it means liberty to accept and express any religious belief we please. Each one of us must be allowed, as Heine puts it, to go to hell in his own fashion. It will be observed that I have confined the idea of religious freedom to a selection of one from amidst many competing religious ideas or beliefs. This has been done because, as a matter of fact, that is about all the average religious man has in mind when he talks about religious freedom. He does not include in the idea the liberty to *reject* all religion, and, at the same time, to state one's reason for such rejection. On the contrary, there is a fairly strong opinion current that if a man does not accept some religion he should at least keep silent. He ought not to talk about it. If he has not the faith to accept he should have the decency to be silent. And even those who do not go quite so far as this are to be found supporting the position that expressed dissent from religion should yield greater consideration for other people's opinions on religion than for their opinions on any other subject.

Of course, the full and complete definition of religious freedom would involve liberty to believe and worship as we please; or, if we please, not to worship at all. That is what the Freethinker has in mind when he talks about religious freedom, and it must be admitted that this kind of freedom is now greater than it has ever been. From the point of view of the Freethinker, this state of things is wholly admirable. But is it, or ought it to be, admirable from the point of view of the devout believer? Not only is it not so, but it is tolerably easy to show that freedom of religious belief exists only as a consequence of a very general impression of its uselessness. As a mere historic generalisation the truth of this may be fully demonstrated. To begin with, in all early stages of social life such a thing as religious freedom is absolutely unknown. It is not so much that it is denied, as it simply does not exist. Everyone is religious, and everyone is convinced of the necessity of maintaining the religious beliefs of the tribe. To doubt these, or to flout these, is not so much an intellectual offence as it is a social wrong. It is an offence against tribal well-being; and this is so generally and so deeply felt that no other offence calls down such prompt and severe punishment as that which afterwards becomes known as heresy. To this fact both the universality of punishment for heresy, and the deeply ingrained religious hatred of the heretic, is due.

In later stages of social development we see that wherever religious belief is at all uniform and general there is always resort to coercion when heresy shows itself. One may safely say that there is no instance known of a community that was uniformly religious and at the same time tolerant of religious differences. Sects may consent to religious freedom, but none of them desire it; and I know of none that, with the power to persecute, have refrained from doing so. The Protestant Reformation is a case in point. It is often said that this movement was an expression of religious freedom. This, however, is very far from the truth. The true significance of the movement of which Protestantism was a quasi-expression, was not religious, but social and intellectual. Socially, the vital question at

issue was whether the religious or the secular authority was to govern society. It was not so much a revolt against dogma that was in the air—no greater dogmatists than the Protestant leaders ever existed—but a revolt against the rule of the priest. It was a contest between the secular and the theological forces, a contest that is still with us, although the supremacy of the theological forces is now almost an impossibility.

On the intellectual side we have to count a series of forces, none of which were religious, and all of which made for a weakening of religion. The revival of letters, the growth of new conceptions in astronomy, in geography, and in physics, the rediscovery of the almost forgotten culture of antiquity, set in motion forces that made directly for the disintegration of religious beliefs. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were notoriously eras of a very widespread scepticism in religion; even some of the Popes did not escape suspicion. And while much is known, one may safely assume that a much larger amount of scepticism existed unexpressed and undiscovered. In the main, then, Protestantism represented the influence of this general spirit of unrest in the domain of religion. People did not become more religiously tolerant because they believed more fervently, but because the value of religion was declining in view of the numerous other interests that had been evoked. Those who were genuinely and intensely religious were not more tolerant of differences; but the very multiplication of sects, and the fact of these sects fighting against the supremacy of a single Church, familiarised the public mind with religious differences. Religious freedom was thus not a consequence of Protestantism; it was, at most, an accompaniment, and to all the leaders a very unwelcome one.

In both these directions—the social and the intellectual—the fact really governing the growth of religious freedom has been the realisation of the comparative unimportance of religious belief. At the beginning, as I have said, religion starts as a social force, and a social force of the first importance. Religion is the business of the whole community. It is everybody's business to see that everyone else believes rightly, because to offend the gods is to endanger the welfare of the tribe. At the other extreme we have the conviction that each man's religious belief is his own business, and that, right or wrong, religious belief is a matter that concerns himself alone. But between these two extremes there lies an enormous development. And the last position can only be reached when it is recognised that, so far as the State is concerned, so far as man's social duties and obligations are concerned, these can be completely and satisfactorily discharged without necessary reference to religious belief at any point. Religious freedom would be impossible in any community that sincerely believed right religious belief to be essential to the satisfactory discharge of social duties. So long as that is believed, so long the coercion of opinion remains certain. It becomes an act of social purification and of social protection. The community which says that men may adopt any religion they please, or, if they prefer it, go without religion altogether, is saying by that, so far as the State is concerned, religious belief is of little or no consequence. The measure of religious freedom is thus the measure of religious indifference.

On the intellectual side the same thing is apparent. In the first place, it may be noted that belief in religion stands on quite a different basis to belief in any scientific subject. If I do not, for example, believe in the law of gravitation, it makes no difference to anyone else, or to the fact itself. If it is a truth, I cannot ignore it in fact, however I may do so in theory. A scientific formula is based upon verifiable facts, and these sooner or later make themselves felt. There is thus, on the scientific side, no necessary tendency to coercion. The problem of the scientific teacher is simply to state the facts, and leave them to work conviction. With the religious teacher, on the other hand, belief is everything.

Beliefs are really his *facts*. If I do not believe in a God or a soul, then to me neither God nor a soul exist. Before God can influence me, I must believe in him. I do not believe in him because of the influence; I am influenced because of the belief. And, consequently, the aim of the religious teacher everywhere is to induce what he calls right belief—that is, not a belief that we are asked to accept as a logical conclusion drawn from verifiable facts, but a belief that is quite independent of verifiable data. The religious teacher cannot say, as the scientist can, "There are the facts, and I can leave them to tell their own tale and to exert their own influence"; he says, substantially, "Here are certain beliefs, and the more you question them, the less likely you are to accept them. The longer you are without them, the less likely you are to need them."

It is, then, absurd to speak of religious freedom making us increasingly religious. The world is not more religious than it was; the growth of non-religion is the constant lament of religious teachers all over the civilised world. Religious freedom results from, first, the multiplication of religious sects—itsself an expression of heresy—which makes the coercion of religious opinion increasingly difficult, and finally impossible; second, the development of social life which liberates the genuine social forces from the control of theology, and reduces religion to a mere speculation with which the State has no legitimate concern; and, third, the growth of knowledge, which, by offering a scientific explanation of one group of phenomena after another, leaves religion without any clear utility to the mental life of mankind. Freedom of religion and indifference to religion are thus two aspects of the same fact.

C. COHEN.

"The Untilled Field."

"I would rather have written *Salammbo* than have built Brooklyn Bridge. It was more difficult, and it will last longer."—EDGAR ALLAN POE.

PROBABLY the mass of English readers will never have the opportunity of respecting Mr. George Moore's art at its true value, for he enjoys the rare privilege of being one of the few English authors who are boycotted. It was for his sake that the lamented Mr. Mudie assumed the functions of the "Bishop of Rome," and started an Index Expurgatorius. But Mr. Moore has had his revenge, for he has reached the proud position where he can dispense with praise or blame.

It is an abuse of language to term Mr. George Moore's book, *The Untilled Field* (6s.; Heinemann; 1914), which has just been reissued, a novel, although the publisher and the booksellers alike persist in so labelling it. *The Untilled Field* is a series of pictures from Irish life, and it must rank as among the finest, if, indeed, it be not the finest from the literary point of view, Mr. Moore has given to the world. Many of these stories are pessimistic in tone, yet nevertheless strangely beautiful in their directness of utterance and exquisite craftsmanship of words. The author traces many of the woes of Ireland to the despotic rule of the priest, which has sapped the individual will-power of the Catholic laity, who find themselves unable to hold their own against the steadily increasing Protestant population. Thousands of Irish Catholics emigrate every year to escape the despotism of priestcraft. That is what Mr. Moore thinks; and the cultured writer, travelling by a vastly different route, reaches the same conclusion as the despised Freethinkers.

In the first story in the book, "In the Clay," and in the last, "The Way Back," Mr. Moore puts his views very strongly. He makes it plain through his characters, a girl and a sculptor, that Ireland will never be productive of anything great in art because of the dominance of a puritanical and fanatical Catholicism. The whole book seems to be written with the idea of exposing the Great Lying Church. Nothing

escapes the author. Even the chastity of the Irish Catholic is regarded as an unmixed evil. "There are no bastards in Ireland, and the bastard is the outward sign of inward grace." Says Mr. Moore, "There is as little free-love in Ireland as there is Freethought; men have ceased to care for women, and women to care for men. Nothing thrives in Ireland but the celibate, the priest, the men and the ox." Ireland for him is "a country without past or future, melancholy and ineffective as bog-water." Ireland's great churches, monasteries, and schools stand amid uncultivated lands, daily going to greater waste, and ruinous huts hourly falling into greater ruin. *The Untilled Field* is a powerful volume that will fascinate even those readers to whom the author's sentiments are anathema.

If the publication of *The Untilled Field* does but draw attention to one of the foremost of present-day novelists, it will have served its purpose. Since *The Mummer's Wife*, one of the finest realistic novels in the language first frightened a squeamish public, Mr. Moore has added masterpiece after masterpiece. His *Esther Waters* turned the tables on his detractors, and by the sheer force of genius compelled their unwilling admiration. *A Drama in Muslin*, *A Modern Lover*, *Celibates*, *Evelyn Innes*, *Sister Teresa* are among the notable works produced.

His greatest work, *The Mummer's Wife*, is a masterpiece by a master-hand. The central idea of the book, an elopement by a married woman, is not unique. Many of the blameless novels, freely selected by the libraries, have used this. But the erring wife of *The Mummer's Wife* is the wife of a middle-class shopkeeper, and the author shows in plain English the fatal decline, how the divorced woman becomes a dipsomaniac, and, step by step, loses propriety and decency, until she dies the dreadful death of a drunkard. Had she been depicted as a lady of title; had her sin against society been clothed in decorative phrases, and smothered in sentiment, then, probably, no outcry would have arisen. But because Mr. Moore chose the right method of depicting vice as it really is, the result disgusted some of Mr. Mudie's chaste subscribers, but it enriched English literature with a most powerful and realistic novel, and a superb picture of contemporary middle-class and Bohemian life.

Mr. Moore has other sides to his genius, and his unique and brilliant *Confessions of a Young Man* startled even his admirers. It is without a parallel in modern autobiography. Reckless and irresponsible in its criticism, it is wonderful how much truth underlies the biting epigrams. Its intimate knowledge, too, of the art of France, literary and pictorial, marks it off from other books. To consider *A Mere Accident* after this volume of brilliant criticism is a curious task. For in it the love of epigram and paradox has vanished. In its pitiless sequence of an awful tragedy, that, evolved from a mere accident, destroys one life and darkens others, it is true to nature, and a superb example of conscious art. Unhappily, publishers nowadays lack courage, and whilst the old Vizetelly edition of the book is complete, all the later issues of this tragic story have been mutilated to please the innocent and sentimental daughters of Mrs. Grundy, who are supposed to be the only readers of fiction in a nation of "God's own Englishmen."

Who need apologise for his admiration for Mr. Moore's magnificent work. His power of investing the common life of to-day with profound tragedy is surely the true romance. Content to leave all the machinery of the supernatural, to lay aside the well-worked properties of sensationalism, to abjure Dumas and Poe alike, and yet move his thousands of readers with the truthful record of elemental passion in modern life, is surely akin to great art. Perhaps, because of his reticence in quantity, the early reputation has been less in peril; and now with a group of novels and essays that show fully the power and the limit of his work, it is right he should receive recognition, not merely as books that have charmed away dull hours, but as mani-

festing a personal force in literature, which, to be candid, has mocked every imitator. Historians of English fiction will, one fancies, be compelled to consider the work of Mr. George Moore even more seriously than contemporary critics have done. Mr. Moore's detractors have called him "the English Zola." It is an unwilling compliment. It is precisely because France values her intellectuals, instead of smothering them with a grandmotherly censor, that she is so great as a nation. In honoring Mr. Moore by associating his name with that of Emile Zola, even his enemies have unwillingly set the seal of approbation upon a writer who most worthily carries on the intellectual traditions which have made the sons of France the vanguard of the Army of Progress.

MIMNERMUS.

Celestial Bombs.

IT is interesting to note the apologies offered by Christians for the inactivity of their God during this terrible War. They allege that he is everywhere present, in addition to being almighty; but somehow or other he could not prevent the German shells from falling on Rheims Cathedral and destroying the beautiful architecture of that ancient building, nor could he stop German bombs from knocking down a portion of the holy edifice of Notre Dame at Paris. Of course, German Protestants may say that it is God's will that this work of destruction shall go on, but French Catholics can neither see the necessity nor the wisdom of it. His Holiness the Pope shakes his pious head, and says that the Lord will be avenged on the wicked Germans for their dastardly deeds one of these days; but in the meantime German shells and bombs continue the work of destruction. Not content with knocking down God's churches, with supercilious disregard of consequences, these pious Christians have destroyed thousands of homes of their fellow-Christians in Belgium and France, and threaten to destroy the homes of Christians on this beautiful island of ours, if only the British Fleet will give them the chance of getting here. They don't propose to ask God's permission; they take that for granted.

Whether they pray for victory over their enemies or not, if their guns are powerful enough, and their shot and shell well directed, they succeed; and God, apparently, takes no notice. How different, this, to the good old Bible days! Then God answered the prayers of the faithful. He sent down fire from heaven and consumed the enemy. Take the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal as an example. The children of Israel were constantly changing their God; sometimes they followed old Jahveh, but when he appeared to neglect them, or they could not get as much out of him as they required, they forsook him and turned their attention to Baalim, and followed him. So Elijah decided to put the matter to the test. A great meeting was called at Mount Carmel, and four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal and four hundred of the prophets of the groves, which sat at Jezebel's table, and the children of Israel also, attended the meeting. And Elijah addressed the assembly, and said: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him." Now, nothing could be fairer than that. And so we read that the people answered never a word. But how were they to know whether the Lord was God? What was to be the test? Listen:—

"Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I, only remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken."

And I am bound to say that that is what I consider a fair test.

And so the proceedings began. The Baalites took their bullock and dressed it and put it on the altar, and began to call upon their God to send down fire from heaven. They called unto their God from morning till noon, "O, Baal, hear us!" "O, Baal, hear us!" but there was no response. And then Elijah began to mock them just like an ordinary, vulgar infidel who does not believe in any other gods but his own. And so we read that: "And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, 'Cry aloud, for he is a God, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or, peradventure, he sleepeth and must be awakened.'"

Then the Baalites got savage. They did not like their God to be jeered at in this fashion.

So they cried louder, and, in order to provoke the sympathy of their God, they cut themselves with knives until the blood gushed out; and they continued their cries until the evening, but their God was deaf to their appeal and blind to their suffering, and made no signs and no response.

Then came Elijah's turn. He called the people to him; told them to take twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, and build an altar; cut a bullock in pieces, place the pieces on the altar, and fill four barrels with water and pour it on the sacrifice and on the wood. This process he commanded to be repeated three times; and when this was done, he called upon the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to hear and let the children of Israel know that he really was God. And when the Jewish God heard the challenge, he responded in most convincing fashion, and sent fire from heaven, which consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord he is God—the Lord he is God."

But Elijah was not satisfied to let the matter end there; he thought that the most convincing ending to such a drama was a terrific battle and tremendous slaughter. And so Elijah said to the Israelites: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook of Kishon and slew them there. And in every age religious people, whether Jew, or Christian, or Mahomedan, have considered that slaughter was, in the last result, the most effective way of settling a religious dispute.

But while this terrible War is raging in France and Belgium, it has seemed to me rather strange that Catholic Christians have not prayed that when the terrible Germans send their shot and shell in the direction of Churches and Cathedrals, that their God should drop some *Celestial Bombs* from heaven, and put the guns and gunners out of action. Or they might pray that he drop one on the head of the pious Kaiser, and before that august being had time to exclaim "Mein Gott," he and his General Staff might be blown into a thousand pieces. Or he might be asked to change, with his magic wand, all the shot and shell into non-explosive dust, and thus render them all harmless—and then no doubt the Catholic Christians might proclaim that God was on their side, and the War would come to a speedy conclusion. On the other hand, if a light from heaven, in answer to prayer, struck M. Poincaré, the French President, or General Joffre, that might be considered in favor of the Protestants; but so far, without question, all the gods have remained neutral.

When I was a boy I used to go to the old "Vic" in the Waterloo-road (and I go now when there is an opera or a Shakespearean play to be seen), and I once saw an old melodrama there called *The King and the Deserter*, and, when the poor unfortunate deserter was brought on to be shot, George Yarnold, the famous old comedian of the "Vic," sent us into roars of laughter by changing all the gunpowder into black sawdust; and when the soldiers tried to shoot, they shot sawdust; and, to the unbounded

delight of the audience, the handsome young deserter received a free pardon at last at the hands of the king. Why cannot the gods transform shot and shell into useless bits of scrap-iron?

A few weeks ago a friend of mine was having a discussion with a local missionary on the War, and various knotty points were raised; whereupon the missionary said: "At all events, my friend, I am content to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the Lord." "My dear sir," replied my friend, "you could not leave it in better hands. He won't interfere."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Bowman Legacy.

THE late Mr. C. Bowman, who was a member of both the National Secular Society and the Secular Society, Ltd., made the latter Society residuary legatee in his will. On the death of his widow, a few weeks ago, the trust became liable to realisation and distribution. For a good while the Society had been practically threatened by the Trustees' solicitors—whose names we do not mention at present,—and litigation had been going on with regard to a side issue, which would, however, have indirectly led to the principal point which was to be tested. We cannot say more than this at present, though more may be stated hereafter, if it does not involve contempt of court, which we do not regard as very likely.

All we propose to say now is that Mrs. Bowman's death has deprived the Trustees and their Solicitor of any further non-legal defiance of the Society's position under Mr. Bowman's will. Our solicitor, Mr. Thomas Harper, who acted for Charles Bradlaugh, has always acted for us, and indeed prepared Mr. Bowman's will, has received notice that the Trustees have been presented with a claim from a nameless gentleman indicated "the heir at law and next of kin." Our solicitor replies that this has nothing to do with us from any point of view whatever. An action against the will is the concern of the Trustees. If a gentleman with no status under the will chooses to contend that *the Society is unlawful and against public welfare*, he is free to do so. But the question whether he can do so in connection with this will is quite another matter. We must wait and see. Not a single will benefiting the Secular Society, Ltd., has ever been challenged before. And for my part, I am under no anxiety now.

G. W. FOOTE, *Chairman.*

Many readers do not know what the Society really is. Its Memorandum is appended for their information:—

MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF THE SECULAR SOCIETY (LIMITED).

Registered Office:

2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

1. The Name of the Company is The Secular Society, Limited.
2. The registered office of the Company will be situated in England.
3. The objects for which the Company is formed are:—
 - (a) To promote, in such ways as may from time to time be determined, 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.
 - (b) To promote the utmost freedom of inquiry and the publication of its discoveries.
 - (c) To promote the secularisation of the State, so that religious tests and observances may be banished from the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary.
 - (d) To promote the abolition of all support, patronage, or favor by the State of any particular form or forms of religion.

- (e) To promote universal Secular Education, without any religious teaching, in public schools maintained in any way by municipal rates or imperial taxation.
- (f) To promote an alteration in the laws concerning religion, so that all forms of opinion may have the same legal rights of propaganda and endowment.
- (g) To promote the recognition by the State of marriage as a purely civil contract, leaving its religious sanctions to the judgment and determination of individual citizens.
- (h) To promote the recognition of Sunday by the State as a purely civil institution for the benefit of the people, and the repeal of all Sabbatarian laws devised and operating in the interest of religious sects, religious observances, or religious ideas.
- (i) To purchase, lease, rent, or build halls or other premises for the promotion of the above objects.
- (j) To employ lecturers, writers, organisers, or other servants for the same end.
- (k) To publish books, pamphlets, or periodicals.
- (l) To assist by votes of money or otherwise other Societies or associated persons or individuals who are specially promoting any of the above objects.
- (m) 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.
- (n) To co-operate or communicate with any kindred Society in any part of the world.
- (o) To do all such other lawful things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of all or any of the above objects.
4. Every Member of the Company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Company in the event of the same being wound up during the time that he is a Member, or within one year afterwards, for payment of the debts and liabilities of the Company contracted before the time at which he ceased to be a Member, and the costs, charges, and expenses of winding up the same, and for adjustment of the rights of the Contributories among themselves, such amount as may be required not exceeding £1.

According to a paragraph in one of the daily papers a Cambridge firm of booksellers has received permission to purchase certain scientific works from Germany. If this is true, it contains a sad reflection upon our home scientific equipment. Science is, of course, international—or perhaps one ought to say, super-national—and the interchange of scientific knowledge is desirable from every point of view. But we must confess that we should like to see this country perfectly independent of others, as we should like to see other countries independent of this one. This would in no way hinder helpful co-operation, it would only mean that all countries were marching abreast, each doing its part in the work of conquering nature, and each making its own all that others have achieved.

A great American newspaper, the *New York World*, has equipped a Santa Claus ship, loaded with over a million toys and gifts which have been subscribed for by Americans for the European children orphaned by the War. It is always man and not "God" who answers the orphans' cry for aid.

Robert Bridges, who supplies the nation in general, and the Royal Family in particular, with poetry when they want it, says that "This is a war of Christ against the Devil!" Yes! But which is which?

The *Weekly Dispatch* alludes to Friedrich Von Bernhardi as one of the men who caused the present European War. It is well to remember that Von Bernhardi is as pious as the two Kaisers.

A fire broke out at the Darwin Science Hall at Shrewsbury School recently. Once upon a time a moral would have been attached to this press paragraph by Christians, but now, like Brer Rabbit, they "lie low and say nothing."

The yellow press and the clergy have been claiming the late Lord Roberts as a Christian soldier. We do not complain, for, as a rule, the Christian soldier is represented in the theological battle by his wife.

Acid Drops.

War is a frightful demoraliser, but we did not suppose it would have such an effect on Mr. Horatio Bottomley. First it made him a theologian, and now it has made him "a poet." We liked him ill as a theologian; we like him worse as "a poet"; but we daresay he will settle down again when the War is over. Meanwhile, it is rather odd to see him railing at the Kaiser so violently. William's motto, of course, is "Germany Above All," and he is trying to work that out in practice. True, he has a clumsy and vicious way of doing it; but that is what he is up to, if he can only manage it. Mr. Bottomley is up to the same game (though not exactly in the same way) only he puts "England" or "Britain" or the "Anglo-Saxon" instead of "Germany." For the life of us we can't see the slightest difference between the two ideals, except the accidental fact that the Kaiser is a native German and Mr. Bottomley a native Englishman. Each thinks the highest of the country which he honored by being born in it.

Mr. Bottomley does not mince the matter. He says we are witnessing the birth of a new age, and the blood is flowing to realise a special intention of "God." To do this he has to "chasten" us—yes, *us*—by plunging us in a blood bath. When the day of judgment arrives Mr. Bottomley and his "Comrades" will be able to stand up and boast:—

"We fought like worthy foemen, on battlefield and flood,
And purified our spirit in seas of human blood."

This will please the orthodox Christian, who cannot be saved without being washed in the "blood" of redemption. But we are sorry to see Mr. Bottomley prescribing it as the best method of purification. "Seas of blood" may seem to him very sanative, while the War is on and the mob like it. For our part, we can imagine no filthier mess.

Some of Mr. Bottomley's old friends may say that they can hardly believe that he is quite as far gone as we represent. We reply that we are relying solely on his own words. Our first duty, as he lays it down, is "To prove this world we live in of all the worlds the best." Rather a big job, to begin with? And *are* there any other inhabited worlds, in the next place. The late Dr. Russel Wallace argued that there were not. Anyhow, whether this is the best or worst of the lot cannot concern us very much; we have to put up with it just as it is; there isn't likely to be any swopping. But let us proceed with Mr. Bottomley. He tells us what is the second duty of every patriot (English patriot, we mean):—

"And justify our object, to put in highest place,
O'er all the peoples of the Earth, the Anglo-Saxon race."

There you are. Mr. Bottomley and the Kaiser cherish the same ideal. The only difference is in their postal address.

We hope we shall be pardoned for saying that his ideal, like the Kaiser's, is rather a humdrum affair. A world full of Britishers is too many. A world ruled by Britishers would be too monotonous. The world is all the better for variety. No doubt the German commits a public nuisance by talking his own language instead of ours; but why should we lose Goethe, and Heine, and Lessing, and Schopenhauer, and other great writers? If some people find the German boorish and even brutal, other people sometimes find the Frenchman a little too polite. So there you are! The various races of the world have all been produced by geographic and climatic differences. If the world had been flat, without mountains and rivers, there would have been a greater similarity than there is amongst its inhabitants. That would have made room for Mr. Bottomley's Anglo-Saxon paradise. Fortunately, nature got in front of Mr. Bottomley. She declined to make the world flat. Mr. Bottomley's dream will never be realised.

Sydney Smith once paid a visit to a "swell" house with a well-mirrored drawing-room. He saw himself multiplied all round the place. "I thought I was in a meeting of clergymen," he said, "and was delighted! Of course!" Those who heard him say that "Of course!" declared it to be one of the finest things that even he was ever "guilty of." Mr. Bottomley will see the point; if not, he must get his "God" to help him. And we hope there will be no bad blood at the finish.

By the way, correspondents sometimes send us *John Bull*. It is kind on their part, but it is a waste of time and postage, for we take *John Bull* ourselves. Mr. Bottomley has recently said that he reads the *Freethinker* every week. We are glad

to hear it. We know of no paper from which he would be likely to derive more benefit.

How the Almighty must feel consoled for some of the nasty things said about him to-day—as, for instance, what he is doing while whole nations of his children are cutting each others throats, and all pretending to be doing it under his special blessing! Mr. George A. Birmingham, the novelist, and incidentally a Christian preacher, having been sent over to the United States in a sort of rivalry to Mr. Harold Begbie, ventures to put in a good word—perhaps we should call it a pious certificate—for “the one Above” “I have come to the conclusion,” he says, “that God counts for a good deal in the life of New York.” We see a smile of satisfaction breaking over the dour face of old Jahveh! For we suppose it is the Bible “God” that Mr. Birmingham is talking about.

At the Middlesex County Council Licensing Committee the other day the renewal of license was refused to a number of picture shows on the ground that they had kept their places open on Sundays. The Bench declined to renew unless the applicants agreed to conform to the clause in the license which stipulated for Sunday closing. Mr. Bodkin, on behalf of the applicants, said that if such a condition were imposed they would obey, providing such a condition was lawful. The undertaking was a very guarded one, and we should like to see cinema owners act with courage in the matter. If the matter were carried beyond the Licensing Court, we fancy it would be decided that no court has the right to impose any such condition; and Mr. Bodkin's guarded undertaking seems to indicate that he is of the same opinion. The Committee announced that the applicants would receive a reply by post, which strikes one as a rather undesirable way of doing business. We would prefer to see the decision announced in open court.

King George is a very good monarch in a country where “the monarch reigns but does not govern.” It is hardly to be expected, however, that he should be a genius in literary composition. But he might have been helped, by a friend or secretary, from congratulating “his” army under Sir John French on their “pluck and spirit.” There cannot be much difference between the two words, and “pluck” is good enough for the man in the street but not in the public letter of a King. It is enough to make Walter Savage Landor turn in his grave. How he hated it as one of the worst of vulgarisms!

Here is another “slip” of the King's. Addressing some of “his” men at Colchester, he said, “I should have been sorry to have missed them.” This blunder is common enough, but it should not be common amongst Kings. The two “haves” are wrong. His Majesty should have said “I should have been sorry to miss them” or “I should be sorry to have missed them.”

France has good reason to be proud of the work done in its schools since the reorganisation that followed the war of 1870. And even in the turmoil of the present War the French Minister of Education is not losing sight of the important work of education. In a circular issued to the teachers of France, he points out that on the material side the nation is spending its savings, living on capital that is not exhausted, and hoping that the enemy's capital will be exhausted before theirs.

“But in matters of the mind and the spirit a nation cannot store capital or subsist upon it. It is always living from hand to mouth, and any cessation of effort there must be paid for in the future. Whatever evil is done in the minds of men or children by this war is not a destruction of superfluities but of necessities. A nation may be rich enough to spend millions in killing its enemies; but no nation on earth is rich enough to neglect the education of its children.”

There are profound truths in this pronouncement, truths that are only too likely to get overlooked during the present crisis. The higher aspects of French education should be safe in the hands of M. Sarrout.

Mr. Dan Crawford, missionary, says he is in no hurry to get back to Africa now, because when he boasts about white civilisation, the Africans will want to know what the white men in Europe are killing each other for. Well, we suppose it will be a little awkward, but missionary ingenuity should be equal to the situation. It will be easy to paint the Germans as a nation of wicked Atheists, and the Allies as sincere Christians who go into battle with prayers on their lips and Bibles in their hands. We are getting almost that at home, and it should be so much easier to play the same card in Central Africa.

This is the way to do it. Rev. M. Watkinson told the London Methodist Council that the German campaign was “the most Atheistical and ghastly that had ever been inaugurated.” And yet Dr. Scott Lidgett told a City Temple audience that the Germans were better liars than we were. This really seems like an aspersion on some of Dr. Lidgett's clerical colleagues. Let us give honor where honor is due.

This is the way the *Christian World* describes the oratory of Mr. Lloyd George. “There was Burke's exquisite artistry in the phrasing, the unerring choice of the inevitable word, the wonderful aptness and force of the illustrations, the withering sarcasm. There was Gladstone's passionate declamation and his effective reinforcement of the spoken word by expressive and powerful gesture. There was Bright's matchless simplicity, his Anglo-Saxon drawn from the ‘well of English undefiled,’ and Bright's natural and yet most skilful use of the Bible.” That's all! A combination of Burke, Gladstone, and Bright. It's a long, long way to Tipperary—also a long way from Limehouse.

Bless those that curse you, pray for those that despitefully use you. Such is the advice given by the New Testament, and a curate at Tottenham was silly enough to think that Christians believed it. So he offered up a prayer “for the Germans.” Result: the bishop pronounced his conduct “unwise,” and the parishioners clamored for his removal. Now, if the Rev. Mr. Edwards had consulted Sir Robertson Nicoll, he would have been told that the New Testament cannot mean what it says, because Christians never do treat kindly those that despitefully use them.

There is no doubt about the German hatred of England, but we had always understood that it resulted from our position as a World-Power. This, according to the *Record*, is wrong. “The bitter hatred of England, whatever its pretexts, really is because as a nation she loves and honors the Bible, and is the home of Evangelical Protestant Religion.” And this with Germany's Kaiser keeping a Bible by his bedside, taking it as his guide in all things, and even rising at night to consult its inspired pages!

The latest one to join the ranks of the prophets is Rev. F. B. Meyer. This wiseacre knew that Turkey would join with Germany, “because it is a matter of prophecy.” In that case it would seem as though Deity, and not the Kaiser, is to blame. Mr. Meyer also has a turn at the Jews. They will go back to Jerusalem. The only difficulty about this would be the Jews. The man who seriously imagines that the Jews of England and France, to go no farther afield, are burning to get back to Palestine is a case for a specialist in brain disorders. If such a move were seriously contemplated there would be an unusually keen competition for agencies in Europe. Finally, Mr. Meyer declares that history reveals that “the Almighty had entered into a covenant with us,” and so was going to see that the “mailed fist” did not triumph—God and our Army of two million we presume.

Mr. Blatchford complains of the Censorship. His own writing actually fell under the official blue pencil. But what right has *he* to complain? The Censorship is an inevitable part of the militarism he is recommending to the British democracy—through the columns of a Tory paper. It is the *Weekly Dispatch* now; it was the *Daily Mail* before; it may be the *Daily Express* hereafter.

After chatter about “God,” Mr. Blatchford indulges in something equally unknown. This is how he started in the *Dispatch* last week: “After much cogibundity of cogitation our successful cabinet has decided, etc.” “Don't do it, Mr. Blatchford—don't do it!” This sort of play upon words requires learning behind it. There is no disgrace in being self-taught, rather the contrary. They call you a second Cobbett; that is, the Tories do, when they want to employ *your* pen in behalf of *their* principles. But Cobbett would never have been guilty of your opening line in the *Dispatch*. He always knew what he was doing, and always precise in doing it. He would have laughed at your “cogibundity,” and still more so at your phrase “cogibundity of cogitation,” and the pure English “much” in front of that. Even if you had got your first big word right, your whole expression is absurd. It means “much of much cogitation of cogitation.” And not even *your* pen can make this English or sense. We repeat, therefore, “Don't do it, Mr. Blatchford—don't do it.”

Mr. Lloyd George's “great speech” at the City Temple Convention of the Free Churches' Convention, proved quite

convincing—to an already converted audience. Nothing could be better done than the cool assumption that they were on God's side, or God on theirs,—it didn't much matter which. The Kaiser bawls out his partnership with the Almighty, with an air of "Damn everybody who denies it!" Mr. Lloyd George just mentions it as one of the best-known facts of life that are taken for granted and not open for discussion. Everybody was aware that God's favorite human being was the English Puritan. And tremendous applause followed the statement that we now had an opportunity of dealing with the Turk once for all. The Free Church meeting applauded that so fiercely that he felt bound to say at once that it was not because the Turk was a Mohammedan. We had too many Mohammedans in the British Empire to let that pass. "I am not thinking of him as an enemy of Christendom," Mr. George said; "there is no more futile method of settling the conflicts of creed than a war." This elicited a faint "hear, hear" from the Free Churchers, and Mr. Lloyd George was enabled to save his bacon.

A new novel has been issued with the title, *Incredible Adventures*. The title would be very suitable for that well-known work of fiction, the Bible.

"Scarcity of Coal in Paris" runs a headline in the daily press. If there is truth in the Christian superstition, there should be some risk of a scarcity of fuel in a warmer place.

Will the "soul" be the same after death as now? asks Mr. Campbell. It is a subject on which one may safely dogmatise, if one is built that way; and Mr. Campbell is certain it will be—because, he says, the fundamental self never changes, "the spirit never lets go what it has once possessed. The brain and the body forget, the spirit never." We are not quite sure what is meant by the "fundamental self," and we fancy it is with Mr. Campbell no more than one of those comforting expressions that sound so well and mean so little. The only sense in which the "spirit," or mind, of man never forgets an experience is that it becomes part of its texture. And in that sense the body also carries a record of its experiences. But so far as consciousness is concerned, we do constantly forget—life would, indeed, be unbearable were it otherwise. No man can possibly remember more than a mere fraction of his total experiences, although there is always a possibility of *isolated* experiences being recalled. Life itself is constant change, and when change ceases life ceases also. If Mr. Campbell were only half as certain about things he might know as he is about things concerning which it is impossible for him to *know* anything, he might be of more real help to those who come to him for assistance.

The *Catholic Times* says that the War has had the "excellent effect" in France of setting up a revival of religion. "A high percentage" of the French soldiers, it says, "have approached the Sacraments since hostilities." Of course, this *may* be so, but we should like some rather less prejudiced testimony on the point than the *Catholic Times*. We should also like to know what is held to constitute a "high percentage"? In all probability all that has occurred is that the religious portion of the French people have been a trifle more punctilious in the discharge of their religious observances. It must never be overlooked that a large majority of the French people still profess Christian opinions, although the majority of the leaders of French thought are definitely Freethinkers. It is significant that amongst the English troops—where such statements might be more easily tested—the *Catholic Times* laments that the War has *not* brought about an increase in religious devotion.

Rev. Albert Smith, aged 73, of the Vicarage, Wendover, Bucks, left £42,240. He left all and followed Jesus, and it paid him very well. Several smaller cases of the same trouble have appeared in the papers lately, but we have not had time to notice them.

It is a hundred years since the great Napoleon blessed or cursed the earth,—just as people happen to face. The German Kaiser holds the military field now. Everybody knows his justification of the most shocking atrocities committed by his troops, not only upon their enemies, but also upon non-combatants. It is a policy of terrorism. It makes things easier, in his belief, if his enemies are frightened out of their senses before the fighting begins; on which principle he might boil women and children with great advantage to the peace of Western Europe. Now the Kaiser is a good Christian—a Protestant Christian—a true-blue Christian. Napoleon never was a Christian. He was a Freethinker. But just compare his proclamations to the Kaiser's. Read

the following Proclamation to his Army of Italy on April 26, 1796:—

"All will wish when returning to their villages to be able to say with pride: I belonged to the conquering Army of Italy. Friends, I promise you this conquest, but there is one condition which you must swear to fulfil. That is, to respect the people whom you deliver. Without that you would not be the deliverers of Peoples, you would be their scourge! You would not be the honor of the French people, it would disown you! Your victories, your courage, the blood of your brothers fallen in battle, all would be lost, even honor and glory. As for me, and the Generals who have your confidence, we should blush to command an Army without discipline, without restraint, knowing no law but force.....I will not permit that brigands soil your laurels. I shall have rigorously executed the procedure I have ordered. Looters will be pitilessly shot."

Looters will be pitilessly shot! It ought to make the German Crown Prince jump in his boots. But it won't. He's a good Christian, like his father. How the Christian world has improved in a hundred years!

Napoleon issued another Proclamation to the Army of Egypt on June 22, 1798, which contains the following passage:—

"Have for the ceremonies prescribed by the Koran, for the Mosques, the same tolerance which you have shown for the Convents, the Synagogues, for the religions of Moses and of Jesus Christ. The Roman Legions protected all religions. The people among whom you are going treat women differently than we, but in any country he who violates a woman is a monster. Pillage only enriches a small number of men, it dishonors us, it destroys our resourcefulness, and it renders us enemies of peoples whom it is our interest to have as friends."

The Kaiser flatters himself that he resembles Napoleon. Yes, as an ape resembles a man. It is impossible to imagine him addressing his soldiers in that fashion. He knocks down Catholic cathedrals.

A very plain-spoken article on "The Causes of the War" appears in a recent issue of the *Yorkshire Factory Times*, from the pen of Miss Jessie Cockerline. There are a couple of paragraphs that should prove of special interest to our readers. Miss Cockerline notes the extent to which certain people are using Anti-German sentiment to attack things they dislike. She says:—

"Now, when the English sentiment is against everything German, the shattered pedants of England—or those noisy few of them with a hate of German science, those who buttress beliefs well-nigh untenable under the fire of outspoken continental scientists, and those who see an opportunity to re-erect their broken prestige—creep back and raise their ragged standards safe behind a national animosity. More than that, they hold up as German everything they detest, hoping a half-educated mob may make it a target of their fury."

There is a timely note of warning here that all would do well to bear in mind. Advanced ideas are bound to suffer more or less during war-time, and it is the duty of genuine reformers to see that they suffer as little as possible.

Miss Cockerline has the following observation on the tactics of those who use this Anti-German sentiment as a means of attack on Freethought:—

"At Shipley last week a speaker discoursed on the Atheism of force. Why should he link Atheism and force? History does not show Atheists and Agnostics as the advocates of forcible subversion. It is quite the contrary, and in the name of religion some of the most bloody atrocities have been committed. I don't contend that a person always makes a statement like the one I mention with a deliberate Macchiavellian purpose, but because he links everything which he deems good together, and also links everything which he deems bad, into separate classes. The one he considers the realm of God, the other he considers the realm of Lucifer."

We have often protested against the policy, but it is good to see an independent protest raised in an ordinary newspaper. Perhaps the *Yorkshire Factory Times* is not an *ordinary* newspaper. We think not, by the tone of Miss Cockerline's article.

Messrs. Partridge & Co. have published a book called *Angels in White*—"a book for the present time of distress." But why *White*? Why not *Khaki*? That is the holy color now.

In an appreciation of Lord Fisher, *T. P.'s Weekly* quoted some magnificent lines from Swinburne. Is it not high time that a popular edition of that great poet's works was put on the market? Present-day poets are so very pious, and piety and poetry seldom run in double harness.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £231 10s. 6d. Received since :—A. J. Marriott, 2s. 6d.

DORIS FINNEY.—(1) We never heard of the "Atheists of the working classes" in John Wesley's time before. They certainly did not persecute *him* even if they existed. He was bitterly persecuted by his fellow Christians. Southey's *Life of Wesley* is not, of course, quite up to date, but it is a classic in its way, and a readable edition can be bought for a shilling. (2) Glad to hear that, after reading the *Freethinker* for seven years, you still look forward to it every week.

S. T. ELLIS.—Glad to see the Sabbatarian clergy have had a setback at Belfast; also that you think "our views on the war are calm and collected, and a great contrast to the hysterical raving one reads so much in the newspapers."

J. G. BARTRAM.—The matter was referred to last week. We can quite understand how great a disappointment it was not to hear Mr. Cohen at Newcastle as you expected. We prophesied you would not get a hall for his lectures. The loss of posters and handbills is, of course, one of the pleasant things entailed by war.

A. MILLAR.—We have sent you a brief note to save time. We hope the explanation was sufficient.

S. W. L.—Sorry we cannot find room for your verse.

H. J. H.—Next week; too late for this week.

E. B.—Many thanks for cuttings.

F. C. HOLDEN.—We had not seen it. Thanks.

S. M. FARRELL.—Pleased to see your handwriting again and to read the enclosure.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

J. HUDSON.—Will consider your suggestions.

J. SCOTT.—There is no Branch of the National Secular Society in Portsmouth. We are pleased to know that you derive gratification from reading the *Freethinker*; but you are surely not "compelled" to go to church every Sunday if you decline on the grounds of this being contrary or opposed to your opinions. There is, theoretically at least, liberty of opinion in the Army, although we can quite believe that there are cases where it is not easy to realise it.

W. BRADBURN.—Sorry you found no meeting at Maryland Point, after going so far in the hopes of hearing a lecture. We do not think the person you name is worth bothering about. His filthy blackguardisms are well known to London Freethinkers, who generally treat him with the contempt he deserves.

D. P. STACHELL.—We do not think that your superior officer is entitled to inflict anything in the nature of a punishment for your not accompanying the rest of your battalion to church. A protest to your commanding officer might be advisable, and, in that case, we hope that he is sufficient of a gentleman to see that justice is done. We are, however, sending your letter on to one who has been "through the mill," and whose advice to you may be helpful.

W. EDMONDS.—We do not care to discuss *how* many Freethinkers have joined Kitchener's Army, and we have no means of furnishing reliable statistics on the point. We know there are many, from the number of letters we receive. Only a week or two ago we received a visit from one of the Canadian contingent, and he informed us that there were several other Freethinkers in his company. One may depend upon it that Freethought will not make a man less ready to fight for what he considers a just cause, and it may easily make him a better fighter—better, that is, in moral determination and consideration.

H. MASON.—Your policy of compelling the Christian Evidence lecturer to read from Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword* was a good one, and, apparently, effective with the audience. No one who really knows the speaker you confronted would take what he said seriously; but, then, everyone does not know him—worse luck. To be opposed to war in general need not prevent one seeing the justification for a particular war. We have never preached non-resistance, and never recommended it to others. That is a Christian teaching.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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.

Owing to the War, Mr. Cohen's visit to Newcastle-on-Tyne has been cancelled. This is not due to any fault of his or of the local Branch. The military authorities have commandeered every hall in the city for the use of troops, and no lectures, for the present, are possible. Unfortunately, the posters announcing the lectures were printed before the halls were seized, or that expense might have been saved. Perhaps the Branch may have better fortune in the new year.

Lancashire friends are asked to note that Mr. J. T. Lloyd will deliver a lecture at the Secular School, Pole-lane, Failsworth, to-day (Nov. 22). His subject is a topical one, and the views of a Freethinker on current affairs should be worth hearing. We hope that Manchester friends will do their best to give Mr. Lloyd the audience he deserves.

Mr. Cohen is kindly occupying the editorial chair again on press-day (Tuesday) this week, but Mr. Foote is almost himself again, and hopes to be completely so very soon.

No one will imagine that we are in favor of women frequenting public-houses at any time; but we must confess to something like a feeling of disgust at some of those busybodies who treat a soldier's wife as a suspected person, and who seem almost anxious to place her under police surveillance. For this reason we read, with much pleasure, a very human letter from Sir Lawrence Gomme in the *Daily Telegraph* of November 12, and from which we take the following :—

"What uncontrollable cruelty is enacted under the name of religion and charity! A great blow has come to thousands of poor women—women who have lost their men—husbands, brothers, sons, representing all that was best in their drab lives. I witnessed at Brighton a fortnight ago one of these women saying good-bye to her man. The train did not start at once after the closing of the doors. 'Give us another kiss, Bill,' she said, and entering the carriage she flung her arms round the man's neck. The man was ashamed before his mates at this exhibition of love. The woman moved off with bravely laughing mouth, with sadly tearful eyes. 'Come back to me, Bill,' she cried. 'What a fuss these blooming women do make,' said Bill to his companions; but as I sat next to him I felt the gulp in his throat. He was off with the lust of fight in his being. 'I'll kill some damned Germans first,' he said, 'even if I don't come back,' and his mates looked at him. This was all, and they fell to laughing.

Where was that poor woman going? Back to a home which contained her kids—a home dreary and miserable at all times; more dreary and miserable than ever now without her Bill.

On the way home, perhaps; on the morrow more likely, she enters a public-house—the only place where she can learn news, where she can talk to other women similarly placed. And she drinks too much.

Then come the State, and the Church, and the Chapel, and denounce her. They do not extend a helping hand. They don't give her a parish room where she can sit and talk in peace; they don't see to it that her home is clean and wholesome; they don't give her hope. They only condemn her unheard."

It is so easy to condemn; so difficult to understand.

Will Freethinkers in Nottingham and its vicinity who would like to assist in the formation of a Branch of the N. S. S. be good enough to send their names and addresses to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. General Secretary? A letter has been received requesting the formation of a local Society at Nottingham, and there is no reason why this should not be done if those who are interested in the work can be brought together. When the names and addresses are received, a meeting for business purposes can be arranged.

The November number of the *English Review* reached us so late that a lengthy notice would be rather farcical. We can only say that it is well up to its usual level, and can be warmly recommended to our readers' attention.

The November number of the *Positivist Review* contains an excellent article on "The Conduct of the War," by the Editor (Mr. S. H. Swinny), and other interesting articles by Frederic Harrison, F. S. Marvin, J. Carey Hall, etc. We hope this useful little publication will not suffer too much from the War. We fear it is bound to suffer to some extent. Fortunately, the Positivists are not, as a rule, amongst the poor or destitute classes.

Dives and Lazarus.

SOME Christian friend has sent to me—of course, for my edification—a copy of the first number of *The Bible Student's Monthly*, the leading article in which is entitled "The Rich Man in Hell; Lazarus in Abraham's Bosom." The writer states that this parable has been "greatly misunderstood"; but he undertakes "to make it plain," notwithstanding that he deplors the fact that "the masses, disgusted with all doctrines, no longer hope for anything reasonable or logical in religion." This last admission proves that Freethought is spreading widely. The text on which he founds his remarks is this: "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke xvi. 23).

The writer commences by saying "that in the parable the thing said is never the thing meant." This assertion utterly ignores the fact that all dictionaries state that a parable "is an allegorical representation of something real," a word-painting or illustration of something that is true, something that makes clear what otherwise would be obscure. He is careful, however, to say "that since our Lord did not interpret it, anybody has the same right as himself to make known an interpretation of it." In saying this he is simply following the lead of the late Archdeacon Farrar who, in his bulky volume *The Bible: Its Meaning and Supremacy*, declares that "he who chooses may believe that the most fundamental laws of the universe were arrested to enable Joshua to slaughter a few more hundred fugitives, and he who chooses may believe that nothing of the kind ever entered into the mind of the narrator." And so with Jonah and the whale, the talking serpent, the talking jackass, and all the other Biblical fables. That is, you may believe or disbelieve what you like, and then assert that the narrator was of your opinion.

The writer next proceeds to give his interpretation of the parable. He points out that nothing is said about "the rich man being profane or wicked"; nothing about the "good qualities" possessed by Lazarus; that "if Lazarus were in Abraham's bosom there would be no room for anyone else"; and that "the word hades and the Hebrew word sheol, rendered hell in our version, simply signify the death state, the tomb," and nothing more. He leaves the reader to infer, therefore, that he disbelieves in eternal damnation, and, consequently, doubts the truthfulness of Jesus Christ. For was not the parable uttered by Jesus Christ? And are the utterances of Jesus Christ—who, if the Gospels be true, turned water into wine, walked upon water, raised the dead, and made the elements obey him—to be placed in the same category as that of mere mortal men? Surely the being who is said to have possessed supernatural powers must necessarily have also possessed supernatural knowledge!

If the gospels be true, Christ taught implicitly that there is a Devil (Matt. iv. 5); that there is a hell (Matt. v. 29, 30); and that all men "except the elect whom he hath chosen" (Matt. xiii. 20) shall be tormented for ever in the "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). And did he not utter this parable, if he uttered it at all, to emphasise his doctrine of eternal damnation? Is Christ to be believed, or is he not? And if the statement in this instance, whether parabolic or not, be not true, what reliance can be placed on any other of the statements which he is said to have made?

Not long ago a well-known Anglican clergyman, when discussing in print the parable of "Dives and Lazarus," declared that "he could not conceive the idea of God doing stupid things." Neither can I! For God is omnipotent and omniscient, or he is not. If he be not omnipotent and omniscient, he is a myth and nothing more. But if he be omnipotent and omniscient, all the woes and miseries and crimes which torture mankind and blacken the pages of history must be attributed to him, and to him alone.

J. W. DE CAUX.

The Design Argument.—IV.

IN THE LIGHT OF ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY.

(Concluded from p. 733.)

NEXT, as to the eye being made of three coats which are opaque all over except the middle portion through which we see, and three transparent substances, through which refraction of the rays of light takes place; as also about the humors of the eye being transparent, in order that we may see, we shall consider them at length in our lecture on the eye itself. Suffice it to say here, if the aqueous humor is made transparent by God with the object of enabling us to see, why does he sometimes turn it turbid and opaque and blind the poor man? So, also, if God had made the lens transparent with the object that we should be able to see, how is it that the lens by various causes, and especially that of old age, loses its transparency and becomes opaque, making the man blind? The state of the opacity of the lens is called cataract. Apart from various other troubles of the eye, the cataract alone affords us a good argument against the ignorance or unreasonableness of the theologians in attributing the structure of the eye to the special providence of God.

They also say, God has made the socket of the eye round to enable it to turn easily; had it been made square, it would have been fixed. I say, not necessarily so. Even if it had been square, it could then have as easily turned as now, had the four angles of the square been packed up by some fatty matter. Had it been so evolved, the religionist would have said: "Oh, look at the kind and benevolent contrivance of God! The frame of the eye, *i.e.*, the socket, is made square and its four angles packed with fatty matter, not only that it may turn well, but that it may be guarded against external shocks also." They could say anything to serve their purpose.

Ninth. As for the processes of repair that go on in our body in healing wounds of various kinds, I say that it is not done as an intention on the part of any benevolent or malevolent being; but it is going on blindly, as a course of nature, not minding whether its going on is doing you good or harm. For instance, take the healing process called cicatrisation, as is instanced in point number nine. It is all very easy to say that this process of healing spreads from the edges, or from any islands of skin that may have been left, or that may have been grafted by the surgeon, and that it draws the margins together by what is called concentric contraction, and covers by a layer of epithelium, and so forth. But what of the further proceedings? If God had intended to do us good, after a cicatrisation was fully formed, he would really have stopped the process only there. But that is not the case. Even after a cicatrisation is fully formed, it continues to contract; this contraction may go on for months or years, and give rise to some of the most dreadful disfigurements that are met with in surgical practice—especially in the case of a severe burn. If the burn be on the neck, and cicatrisation takes place there, the neck will incline backwards; if on the side, it will lean towards the side or shoulder; if on the elbow-joint, the forearm will be contracted towards the arms, and the same will happen to the knee-joint, not only producing ugly deformities, but also causing great inconveniences. From this you will clearly see how the poor, helpless man is deformed the whole of his life, if he sits quietly with folded arms, believing that whatever is done is done for the best by the loving Father, and will not run to the surgeon—a man—to be remedied. Thus you will see that what is going on is going on blindly without the intervention or will or design of any being for your good or for your evil. How can one dare say that it is God who causes his own man, who is to glorify him, to be deformed all his life? Does God glory in deforming people? If not, why does he deform them? To say that God carries on the process of repair or healing, when the

circumstance of deformity is taken into consideration, is to blaspheme God—to admit that he is some whimsical, some unmeaning being.

Now, the last—the tenth—point is about bodily pain. It is said that pain gives notice of danger, and excites those endeavors which are necessary to the preservation of our lives. It is the unmistakable and the true monitor. It points out to us exactly where disease is, where destruction of the tissue or the mismanagement of the functions is going on; calling our immediate attention to the remedies. Well, so far as pain does this, apart from the presence or absence of God's design in it, I say, well and good, to some extent. But what if I prove to you that pain points to one place while the disease is really situated in another place? Is not that showing false ensigns, deceiving people by feints and false colors in time of danger? And is not that treacherous, is not that dangerous and immoral, is not that a lie and deception? And yet it must be admitted that it is exactly this, if, as theologians say, God does it. In disease of the hip, there is pain in the knee, although there is no disease in the knee at all; and there is no pain in the hip, although there is really disease there. So, also, when there is disease of the heart, there is pain down the left arm. In the inflammation of the liver, there is pain in the right shoulder. And in some diseases there is no pain at all. For instance, take the case of such a serious and dangerous disease as cancer of the uterus; there is no pain at all, as there is no nervous supply to it until the disease is pretty far advanced and spread to the adjacent parts, when the case is almost hopeless, and proves fatal in 95 per cent. of all cases. What sort of an arrangement do you call this? Now, the pain in the knee has become a common sign of disease of the hip with the medical practitioner. But what hardships must people have undergone for centuries before medical science discovered this fact, or rather this lie!

My friends, I have done with my theme. You can clearly understand how the so-called design arguments from anatomical and physiological facts prove no special design on the part of any being or beings, either for the weal or woe of man. What is all this arrangement, then, in our body? What is it the outcome of? In short, what is man? Man is the outcome of evolution which recognises no special design for anybody's good or evil. He is evolved from some lesser organism some hundreds of centuries since. And while he was being evolved through myriads of ages, his limbs and organs were developed according to the place, climate, and many other surrounding circumstances he was subject to, in the cycle of evolution, without anybody's special interference. In short, he was evolved, subject to the law of the survival of the fittest, which means the strongest in the war of Nature, which unmistakably governs the animated world.

Lastly, I shall consider only one point, and finish. Some one might ask, when a special design for the good of man by some benevolent providence is believed by so many people, why should I try to sweep away the foundation of their belief, the solace of their mind, however false their beliefs and however true your beliefs may be? In answer to this, I say that it is my firm belief—and that belief is as true as anything true can be—that if man is ever to be really loving, kind, and tolerant, and in short, happy, his mind must be washed clean of all the false beliefs, and true ones implanted in their stead. What does it benefit man to believe that there is some one to take care of him, to protect him against danger, to soothe him in his calamity, to stand by him in his distress, and to support him in his weakness, when really there is none to do so? We shall be totally ruined by such beliefs. And we have been seriously injured already. Our ignorance on many important points is largely owing to these false beliefs. The religionists have placed as many difficulties as they could in the way of science. False hopes and false beliefs are equally to be avoided. It is rightly said that to know where the danger lies is half-way to safety. Suppose we know the danger, but think

that there is some one to protect us from it or avoid it, when really there is none to do so, what would be our fate? It is decidedly disastrous to have such beliefs. It is always safe to have true beliefs, and true beliefs are founded only on facts, on proofs and reason, and never on delusive imagination. In truth alone we shall meet as brothers and sisters, in love and harmony, with unbiased minds, and pure hearts, and with unlimited toleration, without any shadow of orthodoxy or hate. It is rightly said that "there is no religion higher than the truth." Therefore let man really love the truth. Let man love man, and there will be truth and honesty, justice and piety, happiness and prosperity. Let us all have the "gates" of our souls widened and "way" broadened, and we shall surely have the pleasure of seeing the possibility of acquiring the real heaven of happiness for all. Let us throw away small-mindedness and banish old false ideas of the past to the bygone dark ages; let narrow views about men and things, God and Nature, be consigned to antiquity to be forgotten for ever; let the sun of enlightenment shine upon us, and let his clear, bright rays pierce the deep recesses of our souls; let everything that is dark in us be illumined, and let all human kind, giving up the dissensions of sectarianism, clasp hands of sympathy and embrace each other with the sincere love and affectionate feelings of true fraternity. Then, and then only, if ever, is it possible that even at the remotest age imaginable, quarrels between man and man will disappear, wars will cease, and nations—hundreds of different nations—will forget their differences and will be united into one blessed nation of real men and women, into one sacred nationality of the human family.

Invisible Helpers and Adversaries.—III.

(Concluded from p. 726.)

HAVING rendered justice to the neutral and friendly micro-organisms, we may pay some attention to a few of the all too numerous pathogenic germs which minister to our ill. In the opinion of the writer, the labors of scientific workers in unravelling the secrets of malignant microbes constitute a supreme achievement of medical humanism. No one conversant with the facts can any longer dispute that every zymotic disease—cholera, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and rabies among others—is to be attributed to the morbid agency of micro-organisms. Of course, many of the specific microbes remain to be isolated; but in several instances the particular organism which generates—directly or indirectly—degeneration and death has been tracked to its lair.

Malignant pustule, or woolsorter's disease, is one of these fatal maladies, and is justly dreaded as a human scourge. It is also rightly feared by the raiser of farm stock, as it becomes fatal to cattle in the form of splenic fever. In 1850, Rayner and Davaine, two French doctors, announced the discovery of small rod-shaped bodies in the blood of patients who had succumbed to anthrax; but nothing further transpired for over ten years, when interest was reawakened in these singular forms through the researches of Pasteur in 1863. But a farther fourteen years were destined to pass before Pasteur, in a celebrated memoir conveyed to the Paris Academy of Sciences, proved beyond all question that the rod-formed bodies observed by Rayner and Davaine twenty-seven years earlier were the generators of anthrax. Since Pasteur's demonstration, our knowledge of these bacilli has been greatly extended by Koch and other bacteriologists, so that we now possess a detailed acquaintance with their life-history. Nor are these inquiries yet exhausted, for fuller and clearer light is being thrown on their phenomena every year of our lives, with highly practical results.

It is now demonstrable that microscopic study of the blood of any animal that has perished from

anthrax discloses the presence of enormous numbers of these bacilli. If the smallest amount of this infected blood

"is introduced into the tissues of another animal capable of taking this disease, the inoculated animal becomes infected, and almost certainly succumbs; and if now the blood of this second victim be similarly examined, this also will be found densely populated with the same bacilli. We thus see that the disease is accompanied by the enormous multiplication of the micro-organism within the system of the victim, and that the disease may be indefinitely communicated from one animal to another."

It is also possible to cultivate this fearsome microbe artificially. All that is necessary is to take a drop of blood from an animal that has died from splenic fever and then place it in any ordinary cultivating medium to, in a short time, secure a rich colony of the anthrax bacillus, which is easily seen with the naked eye. In the blood of the animal smitten with this dreadful disease the bacilli seem unable to evolve spores, but as soon as they are removed from the restrictions imposed by the blood their spore-producing powers gain full play, and it is this spore-evolving capacity which endows the bacilli with such deadly influences. For example, if the bodies of animals that have suffered from anthrax are interred or permitted to putrefy near the surface of the soil, the micro-organisms develop spores in the earth, and other creatures will be infected through swallowing the spores with the grass on which they graze.

Nor does this end the trouble. As the hides and fleeces of animals to which the malady has proved fatal sometimes pass into commerce, their contained spores are very liable to cause death to the tanners and wool-sorters who work them long after their original owners have perished.

Cremation seems in any circumstances the only really satisfactory method of disposing of the dead. In any case, it is fairly obvious, in the light of the above facts, that the burning of the carcasses of anthrax-smitten quadrupeds is absolutely imperative, and that the farmer or cattle dealer who neglects these precautions is an unsocial unit of the community. The pity is that many who are in most constant touch with this malady are ignorant of its menaces. During the prevalence of this disease in England some years ago, "the butcher to whom the slaughtering of the affected animals was entrusted was quite unaware of the dangerous task upon which he was engaged, and only had his ignorance enlightened by himself falling a victim to the disease."

A malady which is far more general in man than anthrax—erysipelas—is also set up by an organism. It is not a bacillus in this instance, but a micrococcus. This microbe readily responds to artificial growth, and it has been definitely established by experiment that this micrococcus gives rise to the disease of erysipelas, not only in the lower mammals, but in man.

Possibly the greatest bacteriological triumph is that associated with the labors of Koch. This eminent investigator has settled beyond all cavil the exciting cause of tubercular disease, one of the most fatal forms of which is pulmonary consumption, a dire malady which sweeps away about one-sixth of the British population, and frequently selects as its victims the very flower of the human race. This pestilent disease is bound up with a minute bacillus, which is never absent from any of the numerous varieties of tuberculosis. The tubercle bacillus is also easily cultivated in artificial conditions, and it has been demonstrated that its presence in the body is always the precursor of tubercular disease.

The precise manner in which this scourge is spread is still an open question, but it is demonstrable that the sputum of consumptives is almost certain to contain the bacillus. This micro-organism also develops spores; so that, in addition to the serious risks of infection through sputum, the poison may find many other facilities for communicating the disease. It

is, however, to be observed that the conveyance of the tubercle bacillus from a consumptive patient to a healthy subject need not necessarily induce the disease, as a predisposition to the ailment is sometimes essential. This natural immunity to infective diseases is a very important matter, and the writer hopes to deal with it in a forthcoming article.

The connection between tetanus, or lockjaw, and the micro-organism which occasions the disease is one of the most astounding phenomena in the entire realm of bacteriology. Not until 1884 were Carle and Rattone able to prove that lockjaw was a disease liable to conveyance from one victim to another. They showed that rabbits inoculated with pus from the infested corpse of a human being who had succumbed to tetanus also died from the same disease. This discovery at once led to further inquiry. Nicolaier then found that certain microbes were the causative agents of this awful ailment. Rosenbach extended the inquiry; but all attempts to isolate the tetanus bacillus proved unavailing until Kitasato, the great Japanese bacteriologist, secured pure cultures of the refractory organism. His method of working is thus described:—

"Kitasato took some tetanus pus and inoculated it on to agar-agar, and kept it at a temperature of about 38° C. in an incubator; already within the space of twenty-four hours, an abundant growth was visible, and on examining this under the microscope he found various micro-organisms, and amongst them bacilli, which he at once recognised as those identified with tetanus by Nicolaier and others."

These bacilli produce their spores at the end of the rod-like bacillus, and thus bear the appearance of a microscopic club. They were ascertained to be strictly anaerobic; in other words, they will never grow in the presence of air; and this at once accounted for the inability of earlier investigators to free them from contact with foreign microbes.

The spores of this malignant bacillus abound, not only in garden soil, but in stables and other places of a similar kind. They are remarkably resistant to death, and retain their evil qualities for long periods of time. Everything considered, they are to be regarded as among the most sinister and relentless enemies of higher animal life.

Fortunately, in cases of this nature, fatal results may be prevented by the use of tetanus serum, which has been, and is still, employed both with man and the lower animals with very gratifying results in various parts of the world. In tropical and semi-tropical countries the risks of tetanus are much more serious than in our own temperate isles. As that eminent expert, Stewart Stockman, states, "there were places, like Calcutta, where tetanus was so common that bicyclists were warned to wear gloves along the roads. The protective use of tetanus anti-toxin for horses gave them no inconvenience, produced no fever, and never led to a fatal result."

A microbe that has been the occasion of much discussion is the "comma bacillus," which is regarded by Koch as the cause of Asiatic cholera, in which opinion he is supported by many of those best fitted to judge. That this bacillus is the causative agent of cholera is a belief resting upon an imposing array of evidence. The germ in question was detected by Koch in the dejecta of cholera patients in Egypt, Calcutta, and Toulon in 1883. Koch's findings were largely confirmed by Klein and Gibbs in Calcutta and Bombay, and other medical authorities subsequently found the comma bacillus in the stools of cholera sufferers. And although these, or similar, bacilli may be present without inducing the disease, the malady always appears to be attended by the comma bacillus.

The germ of typhoid fever, which must not be confused with typhus fever, is another bacillus which long refused to lend itself to that exact observation and experiment which is essential to precise knowledge of microbial connection with disease. But, for all practical purposes, Eberth's bacillus has been proved guilty of direct or indirect responsibility for typhoid fever. Prolonged and patient study is im-

perative to bring home to a micro-organism its complicity in death-dealing disease. In the case of tuberculosis, tetanus, malaria, plague, yellow fever, and other diseases the connection between the microbe and the malady has been demonstrated to all save those who refuse to understand.

In common with all other branches of science, bacteriology is a matter of evolution. The obstacles it has triumphantly surmounted are many, but many more remain to be overcome before full victory can be won. But its already splendid successes are of happy augury for the future. As that brilliant if ill-rewarded investigator of Nature's problems, Sir Ronald Ross, said, in his recent Huxley Lecture, with reference to science:—

"Her slaves are like laborers condemned to drive tunnels through mountains—working, perhaps for years, in darkness, and oppressed by the immense spissitudes of nature above them; but always encouraged by the hope that at any moment they may emerge into the sunlight and upon the vision of a new world."

T. F. PALMER.

AN ATHEIST'S PRAYER.

Who then are you? Speak out at last. The hour is come.
You can not always keep your tongue within your head.

Appealed to you have all men, wept and wailed have some,
Why have you nothing said?

Why stay you in the sky, huge bronze of livid hue,
With mocking smile on lips that all speech else avoid?
Impenetrable face and phantom form, are you
Of brain and heart devoid?

Why do you nothing say? Why do we see described
No wrinkle, stubborn spectre, on your brow austere?
Why that stupid air and aspect circumscribed?
Are you too deaf to hear?

If you speak not, then try at least to understand.
Despise me, if you will, but let me see, I pray.
Your face relax to show that I may lift a hand
And you know what I say.

To transform into faith the doubt that me o'erpowers
You need but put a yes into those eyes I spy.
You need but make a sign; my hate no longer towers;
It at your feet will die.

O Mystery proud, wrapped in your dismal veils,
He whom men call father should be one indeed.
If you are my creator, in the shades and vales
How can you see me bleed?

How can you see me humbly kneeling on the stone,
My arms stretched toward you, drowned my voice in accents wild,
And yet no tear beneath your eyelid trickling down?
Am I, then, not your child?

Alms give, in pity's name! So poor am I and weak!
I am not wicked. Good be thou, and look at me.
My poor love-laden heart has naught that it can seek
But to exhale to thee.

But no! I still see on your face that stupid smile
My cries, my tears, my insults bear no fruit, I fear.
No, you do not speak; you have no thoughts the while;
You have no ears to hear.

Then, after all, do you exist? When I sound space,
Within the infinite depths your shape I never miss.
Is what I see, perchance, the reflex of my face,
Mirrored in that abyss?

Is it my soul that lends a soul unto the world?
Were my heart's dreams no more an object of my thought,
Would you in vain, like image on the wild waves whirled
When sun goes down be sought?

Yes, yes, your haughty silence now is solved for aye.
But I too long have suffered; revenge is now my share.
These lips henceforth shall be of blasphemy the way,
Never again of prayer.

O God, thou floating fog above a field of lies!
O God, thou vain mirage of wishes here below!
Thy glory and thy pride but from our dreams arise,
Without us, thou must go.

—Translated from the French of Jean Richepin by
B. R. Tucker.

Correspondence.

BACTERIOLOGY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. T. F. Palmer, speaks of some amazing discoveries in the prevention and cure of disease by the study of bacteriology. Now, it is unfortunate that that study is usually entered into with preconceived notions, which lead to the most mischievous nostrums, to the detriment of the public health and the depletion of the public purse, being forced upon us. Any medical opinion opposed to the orthodox is treated with insult and persecution; just as the orthodox religionist treats the heretic. What chance would a medical student have of getting his degree if he had an independent opinion on vaccination or serum-therapy? What happened to Dr. Tebb for his outspokenness on vaccination? Next to dogmatic theology vaccination has been one of the greatest curses that ever afflicted humanity. Arm to arm vaccination spread syphilis and leprosy all over the world, and after years of denial the first fact had to be practically admitted by the substitution of what is called, euphemistically, pure calf lymph, which was simply a reversion to a treatment that was given up because it was unsatisfactory.

Any real test experiments would meet with the most strenuous opposition from the vested interests in disease, or else we might ask that at least one army corps should be kept free from vaccination and other inoculations long enough to give a fair comparison between it and the others who had undergone the medical rites which, in my opinion, do infinite mischief. Great care would have to be used in obtaining fair results, for vaccination statistics are deliberately cooked.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

"GENTLE JESUS."

Oh, what have sickly children done to share
Thy cup of sorrows? Yet their dull, sad pain
Makes the earth awful; on the tomb's dark stair
Moan idiots, with no glimmer on the brain;
No shrill priest with his hangman's cord can beat
Thy mercy into these—ah, nay! ah, nay!
The angels thou hast sent to haunt the street
Are hunger and distortion and decay.
Lord! that mad'st man and sendest him foes so fleet,
Who shall judge thee on thy judgment day?

—Robert Buchanan.

THE HOUR OF DEATH.

[The following is a fine translation of an admirable poem by the famous French poet, M. Sully Prudhomme.]
Kindly watcher by my bed, lift no voice in prayer,
Waste not any words on me when the hour is nigh—
Let a stream of melody but flow from some sweet player,
And meekly will I lay my head and fold my hands to die.
Sick am I of idle words, past all reconciling—
Words that weary and perplex, and pandor and conceal;
Wake the sounds that cannot lie, for all their sweet beguiling:
The language one need fathom not, but only hear and feel,
Let them roll once more to me, and ripple in my hearing,
Like waves upon some lonely beach where no craft anchoreth,
That I may steep myself therein, and craving nought,
nor fearing,
Drift on through slumber to a dream, and through a dream to death.

Obituary.

We deeply regret to announce the death of our well-known and esteemed friend, Mr. M. Jones, of 41 Co-operative-street, Ton Pentre, Rhondda, on the 7th inst., at the age of 59, after a few days' illness. He was of an exceptionally genial disposition—a typical Welsh-speaking Welshman; actively associated for many years with working-class organisations; and an avowed Freethinker. When Mr. Foote and Mr. Lloyd last visited Aberdare, he went over to hear them. He was unusually frank in the expression of his views, and his good character always gained him a hearing. I have the authority of his sons to say he died a Freethinker. His remains were interred at Treorchy Cemetery on the 12th inst., followed by a large concourse of friends and relatives.—RICHARD MORRIS.

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.

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OUTDOOR.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

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FAILSWORTH (Secular School, Pole-lane): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Truth Dearer Than Life."

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