

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIV.—No. 49

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1914

PRICE TWOPENCE

Man's intellect only is immortal and bequeathed unimpaired to posterity.—WILLIAM HAZLITT.

The Kaiser at Jerusalem.

[Reprinted from the *Freethinker*, 1898.]

EMPEROR WILLIAM is perhaps the most pious monarch in Europe. His father was somewhat tainted with Freethought, as well as inclined towards Liberalism in politics—if the two do not always go together. But there is none of this nonsense about William. He never speaks of his father, at least in public. He prefers to forget that unfortunate link in the Hohenzollern chain. His ideal is his grandfather and namesake, the first William; that pious and pipe-clayey old gentleman, for whom Bismarck supplied brains, foresight, and timely resolution. William has a tremendous belief in the efficacy of the Christian religion, particularly as an invisible but powerful support of the Hohenzollern throne. He says prayers at home and on board his yacht. He has even preached in the absence of a professional exhorter. Still more exemplary, if possible, is the piety of his wife. The Empress has devoted much of her time and means to the cause of religion. She had added considerably to the number of churches in Berlin. What she cannot do is to fill them. The people of Berlin are not churchgoers. They prefer spending Sunday in the beer-gardens, listening to good music, instead of being shut up in a dismal house of God, and undergoing dreary discourses about the day of judgment and the wrath to come.

One result of William's piety, however, is that religion is rather more ostentatious in Germany than it used to be, and Freethought a little less exuberant. The old law of blasphemy has of late years been frequently enforced, and several Freethinkers have been fined and imprisoned for saying what is thought by one-half of the whole male population of Germany. Still worse is it in respect to the law against "insulting the Emperor." No such sensitive vanity as William's has occupied a throne since the days of Nero. It is not safe to doubt his being as great a poet as Goethe, as great a musician as Beethoven, as great a soldier as Napoleon, or as handsome as the Apollo Belvedere. Hundreds of men have been imprisoned for speaking of him with what is called a want of proper respect. Loyalty in king-deluded Germany—as Shelley styled it—must be more than negative; it must be positive, or it becomes *disloyalty*. Some years ago the editor of the principal comic paper in Berlin was sent to gaol for a mild satire on William's declaration that only Christians could be good soldiers. The shades of Alexander and Julius Cæsar—pre-Christian warriors, and of Napoleon and Frederick the Great—both sceptics, were simply made to smile at this imperial utterance. William cultivates the high and mighty attitude. I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my lips let no dog bark! It is almost a case of "me and my God." He likes to fill the stage and monopolise the footlights, and woe betide anyone who is caught grinning.

It was only natural that pious William should desire to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and

see the various spots that were hallowed by the real or imaginary feet of Jesus Christ and his twelve Apostles—including, alas, the mercenary and miserable Judas; after whose death, we suppose, the Master had to perambulate the country afresh before ascending, in order to reconsecrate the aforesaid spots, just as a church has to be reconsecrated after it has been desecrated by a suicide. William set out on this glorious expedition with his wife, a large escort, and a heavy baggage, which taxed the powers of the largest railway engine. The King of Heaven visited Palestine, *via* Bethlehem, in a far less striking fashion; creeping in, so to speak, through a stable in the company of camels and jackasses. But the King of Prussia cannot cut such an ignominious figure. He goes with pomp and ceremony. Instead of having one poor garment, like Jesus Christ, he has a large assortment of costumes, some of which are specially designed for this pilgrimage. It is said that he has been photographed in one suit, in no less than forty different positions. This is an exhibition of modesty that could not be paralleled from the lives of mere Pagan rulers, such as Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius. Those benighted emperors did not understand the philosophy of the wardrobe. They labored under the heathen prejudice that their duty was to live simply and devote themselves to the welfare of their people. No doubt they would smile at William's photographs, but this only shows their backward and un-Christian state of moral cultivation.

There is, however, one touch of low comedy in this high imperial enterprise. William was taken round Palestine by Mr. Cook, and the great German Emperor sank into a personally-conducted excursionist. Of course it is all for the best, but it is rather grotesque. We should have imagined that the Archangel Gabriel—the elegant personage who made that delicate announcement to Mary—would be proud to descend from heaven once more, in order to show Emperor William round the old haunts of the leaders of the first Salvation Army.

Egypt was to have been visited *en route*, but the opportune discovery was made of an Anarchist plot, to assassinate Emperor William, who is thus relieved from the difficult task of comporting himself so as to avoid offending either England or France. No doubt the Anarchist plot was real, but perhaps there is more substance in the problem of Fashoda.

But the imperial pilgrim has not missed Constantinople. He has "done" the sights of that incomparably situated metropolis. He has seen what it is that Russia aspires to possess. He has been cheered by Turkish soldiers, who were probably paid a month's back salary for shouting. He has helped the Sultan to spend half a million of money. He has dined with "the Great Assassin." He has allowed his wife to go about arm-in-arm with "Abdul the Damned." He has exchanged cordial civilities—nay, fraternal greetings—with the man whose hands are red beyond all cleansing with Christian blood—red enough to incarnadine the multitudinous seas.

This is piety! This is diplomacy! This is Christian statesmanship! Emperor William forgets the poor Armenians. He has no thought for the men who were massacred, the wives who were outraged and then tortured to death, the girls who were pol-

luted and left to bear their moral agony. What are these things in the great game of international politics? Germany stood aside cynically while England, France, Russia, and Italy took charge of the Cretan question. But the Turks at Candia made the fatal mistake of killing some English soldiers and sailors; which put Admiral Noel's back up, and in he went with his ultimatum and his watch in his hand—the finest sight in those parts for a long while; and, oh irony, while William and Abdul were fraternising at Constantinople that English admiral was just settling the Cretan question, with the cordial co-operation of his brother salts of the three other fleets.

We rather like the good old sailor methods: ship-shape, up to time, no damned nonsense. Had the four Admirals been given a free hand, they would have settled the Cretan question many years ago. They didn't understand the tricks of diplomacy, but they had common sense, and they knew that the one indispensable thing to be done was to clear out the Turkish garrisons and disarm the whole population.

But let us get back to Emperor William at Constantinople, where we left him while we dashed off to Crete. We have not mentioned that the Empress visited the Sultan's harem, and was welcomed by the particular lady who is called the Sultana, the other ladies being discreetly ignored. William was not privileged to accompany her. Had he done so, he would probably have investigated the establishment more thoroughly, in order to see what comparison it bore to Solomon's—the wisest fool that ever lived, the gentleman who had seven hundred wives and (as Ingersoll says) three hundred other ladies he was acquainted with.

Emperor William had a "high old time" at Constantinople, and he and the Sultan made a good impression upon each other. Semi-official Turkish journals sang the Kaiser's praises lustily. Barring their own Padishah, he was certainly the greatest man in the world—strong, brave, and manly, highly accomplished and universally informed, a mighty ruler of men by genius and cultivation; indeed, a perfect miracle of statesmanship. Semi-official German papers have said much the same of the Sultan, in whom they detect surprising resemblances to the Kaiser—a compliment which we hope the latter appreciates at its full value.

Leaving the Sultan's capital with the Empress, who was loaded with costly presents—paid for, God knows how!—Emperor William set sail in his gigantic yacht for the Holy Land. This part of the world has had more lies told about it than any other, and the Kaiser is bound to be somewhat disillusioned after seeing it for himself. It is, as Gibbon sneered, of about the size and fertility of Wales; yet it once supported at least three million Jews, and seven other nations mightier than they—that is to say, between twenty-four and thirty millions of people, at the very lowest estimate. Its inhabitants, too, were wonderful warriors. They thought nothing of killing a hundred thousand of the enemy before breakfast. In one battle they killed as many as six hundred thousand—more than twice as many as the whole military force of Great Britain in every part of her empire. When a census was taken, if we may judge by the story of Christ's birth in Luke, all the Jews took to tramping, and the roads of the Holy Land swarmed with men, women, and children, all making tracks for their native towns and villages. This was the very perfection of clumsiness, but the Jews were naturally awkward at that particular business. They never quite got over their national fright on the occasion of the first census in their history, when Jehovah slew seventy thousand of them to commemorate the event. Such a divine visitation was enough to addle their wits in this direction. The shrewdest of them turned imbeciles when they heard the fatal word "census."

Railways and other modern innovations have considerably revolutionised the Holy Land. It would startle Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles—even

including Judas, who was fairly fly—if they were to come to life again and hear the train guards shouting "Through for Jerusalem" or "Change here for Jericho." But we understand that the country still retains its old character for the opposite of cleanliness. Jerusalem itself is no exception to the general rule. Mark Twain searched in vain for the pool of Bethesda, and finally concluded that it was all over the Holy City, for the mud was two feet deep everywhere. And who does not remember the story of the man who declined to believe the story of Noah's menagerie, which contained eight antediluvians—to say nothing of six dogs, cats, and monkeys—and only two fleas? Now without wishing to insult the Jews, of whom there are now a good many in Palestine, we are bound to say that they enjoy the reputation of being rather hospitable to these parasites. Was it not Thackeray who, describing the scene on board a ship in a storm in the Levant, the said ship's deck being the sleeping-place of several poor rabbis—was it not Thackeray, we say, who wrote—

"Then all the fleas in Jewry
Jumped up and bit like fury?"

And from all we have been able to ascertain, the holier the city the more numerous and aggressive the fleas. Palestine swarms with them; it is their classic country. Kinglake felt this, and gave the world warning in his delightful *Eothen*:—

"Never think of attempting to sleep in a 'holy city.' Old Jews from all parts of the world go to lay their bones upon the sacred soil, and as these people never return to their homes, it follows that any domestic vermin which they may bring with them are likely to become permanently resident, so that the population is continually increasing. No recent census had been taken when I was at Tiberias, but I know that the congregation of fleas which attended at my church alone must have been something enormous. It was a carnal, self-seeking congregation, wholly inattentive to the service which was going on, and devoted to the one object of having my blood. The fleas of all nations were there. The smug, steady, importunate flea from Holywell-street—the pert, jumping 'puce' from hungry France—the wary, watchful 'pulce' with his poisoned stiletto—the vengeful 'pulga' of Castile with his ugly knife—the German 'floh' with his knife and fork—insatiate—not rising from the table—whole swarms from all the Russias, and Asiatic hordes unnumbered—all these were there, and all rejoiced in one great international feast."

Well, if nothing else can drive Emperor William home again from the Holy Land, the fleas will do it.

The Kaiser has visited Nazareth, the home of Jesus Christ's childhood; a place, however, absolutely unknown to the Old Testament, to Josephus, or to any other ancient writer; the name of it being probably manufactured by fictionists who thought it was the place where the Nazorites lived—although the Nazorites were only teetotalers with a craze for shaving their heads. Bethlehem, where Jesus Christ was born, has also been visited; but the Kaiser was unable to catch a glimpse of the Star of Bethlehem—which really ought to have been lighted up for this great occasion—or of the chimney over which it anchored. William has also been to Jericho, and perhaps a good many Germans would not have worn mourning if he had stayed there. He has seen Jerusalem, about which the Jews bragged so in their sacred scriptures. There was no city like it—which was probably true. It was really what the Americans call a one-horse town, containing fifty or sixty thousand inhabitants at the outside; and its boasted temple must have been of very moderate dimensions and no very grand architecture. Unfortunately, its greatest curiosity is no longer visible. We refer to the famous Jerusalem Ghost. All that William could do was to go to bed and dream, and see Jesus in a vision, as Paul did. The flight of the Jerusalem Ghost had occurred; it had left earth for heaven, and occupied a side seat close to the throne; but Paul was not to be done, he was not going to be inferior to any other captain of the first Salvation Army, so he had his vision, which nobody could dispute, and he went about saying, "I also have

seen Jesus"—which William may do likewise if he only rises to the occasion.

Many of the places of interest in and about Jerusalem are in duplicates; that is to say, there are two of each, and both authentic. There are two holy sepulchres where Christ was buried, and no doubt he slept in both if he slept in either. The famous Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built round one of these spots, is used by the Greek and Latin Christians; one lot on one side, the other lot on the other—and a row of Turkish soldiers between them to keep the peace! That spectacle alone ought to set Emperor William thinking, unless he is in too much of a hurry for such a useful exercise. Christianity is the most quarrelsome religion on earth, and Christendom is always full of war or rumors of war. Christ came to bring peace, but he must have forgot it and left it behind. Perhaps he ascended to fetch it, but he never returned. He was to have come again shortly, but he has not arrived yet; and peace is nearly as far off as ever, in spite of the Czar's manifesto. Yes, if Emperor William has any head worth speaking of, his visit to the Holy Land may do him good. It may set him thinking over many things, and make him less a Christian and more a man.

G. W. FOOTE.

Atheism Unmasked.

THE Rev. Frederic Spurr asserts, in an article in the *Christian World* for November 25, that "the war has unmasked Atheism." We did not know that Atheism ever wore a mask, or made use of any disguise whatever, and we are quite sure that the reverend gentleman cannot prove his wild statement. There is certainly nothing in this article to substantiate the strange allegation. Mr. Spurr seems to delight in making assertions that are incapable of verification. He tells us that "the best Rationalists find their fine program torn up," and that "it is time to begin again, and on sounder lines"; but his article shows that his knowledge of Rationalism is extremely superficial. We deny that any Freethought program has been torn up since the War began. It is true that Secular lectures are not so numerous this season as they used to be; but that is due, not to lessened interest in Secularism, but to the difficulty of securing halls wherein to deliver them. Most halls are owned by Christians, whose bigotry, stimulated by the War, sees to it that they are not let to Freethinkers. The Secular Societies which are fortunate enough to possess halls of their own hold meetings as usual, and are well supported. Mr. Spurr confesses that he has read Freethought journals "for years with not a little amusement and often with not a little indignation," but that "never before has he observed such a chastened tone in the editorial articles as at the present time"; but he has perused them to very little purpose if he discovers "a chastened tone" in them, or learns from them that the "Freethought crowd is thinning." It may be true that churches and chapels are better filled now than they were a year or six months ago; but we can assure the reverend gentleman that they are not filled from the ranks of Freethought, but from those of the Indifferentists. It is the backsliders who have returned for a brief season, because the War has frightened them and roused into fresh activity their slumbering belief in the supernatural. It is safe to predict that when the present excitement comes to an end the places of worship will speedily empty again.

Mr. Spurr hates Atheism, and naturally wishes it to perish, but he is entirely mistaken when he says that "the repudiation of Atheism as the real cause of the War is the result of superficial observation and thought." We maintain that the attempt to hold Atheism responsible for this bloody conflict is in the highest degree dishonest. Mr. Spurr succeeds in doing so only by blinking the facts. He calls the author of *Germany and the Next War* "an Atheist, a

hard materialist, an anti-Christian." Even in that very book Bernhardt claims that his doctrine of war is in full harmony with the teaching of the Christian Church. Luther held precisely the same view, and expressed it in the strongest terms at his disposal. In like manner this preacher avers that to "claim the Kaiser as a New Testament Christian is silly;" but, in reality, it is Mr. Spurr who is silly in denying the claim. His Majesty's conception of Christianity may differ from that cherished by the reverend gentleman, but that would not entitle the latter to declare that he is not a Christian. Prior to the War Professor Harnack was regarded as one of the greatest theologians, and his name was constantly on the lips of ministers in their pulpits. Nobody doubted the sincerity of his profession of the Christian religion. Will Mr. Spurr say of him also that he is not a Christian because he openly approves of Kaiserism? Listen to what the *Christian World* says of him:—

"We have been second to none in our respect for Dr. Harnack's learning and contributions to theology, but, at the present time, we can only regard his moral balance as quite upset, and his moral sense as perverted by a blind patriotism."

We are of opinion that Professor Harnack is as good a Christian to-day as he was a year ago, and that Kaiserism is neither *anti-Christian* nor even *un-Christian*. Christianity and war have always gone hand-in-hand hitherto, and there is no indication just now that they are likely soon to be divorced. Physical force has invariably served as the most valuable supporter of the Gospel of Divine love.

In the *Daily News* for October 10 there appeared an exceptionally inaccurate and misleading article, entitled "The Return of Odin and the Religion of Valor," in which it was asserted that "through all the contradictions of Nietzsche the gospel of brute force runs like a thread of steel," which gospel, the writer said, the German soldier carries about with him in his knapsack. We are not concerned just now with the inaccuracy of that description of the Nietzschean philosophy, but, rather, with the statement about the contents of the German knapsack. Dr. Oscar Levy, the editor of the complete and authorised English translation of Nietzsche's works, does not think that the German soldier has a copy of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in his knapsack. Mr. Earle Harrison, Special War Correspondent in Belgium for *Nash's and Pall Mall Magazine*, supplies us with the following information in the November number:—

"I saw a German prisoner brought into Antwerp, and in a little bag which he wore at his breast, suspended by a cord hung round his neck, there was a prayer-book—a special edition for the German army. In the same little bag were four bloodstained rings, which he laughingly admitted he had torn from the fingers of a bludgeoned and dying woman."

Like the Kaiser, the German Army is profoundly religious, much more so, evidently, than the British Army. Does Mr. Spurr imagine that an Atheistic country would publish prayer-books for the use of its soldiers in a time of war? Does he really think that an unbelieving monarch would be perpetually claiming and offering thanks for Divine help to his troops? He says that the Kaiser has never yet, in all his public utterances, named the name of Jesus or Christ; but that proves nothing. Has he never read a volume of sermons delivered by the Emperor on various occasions, which are characterised by their exceeding orthodoxy?

Mr. Spurr, while regarding Atheism as the cause of the War, believes that the War is going to destroy its own cause. He says:—

"The few professional Atheists of the country have the mortification of seeing the tide running away from them; and they have been telling us that the tide was destined to be for them in perpetual flood. The War will probably kill the Rationalistic propaganda. The conscience of humanity cannot permanently suffer degradation at the hands of men who, in the sacred name of reason, seek to slay the finest instincts of the

soul. Man, being 'incurably religious,' is bound to assert himself as a religious being."

A more brilliant idea never entered a man's head. It required a truly great man to perceive that an Atheistical war turns out to be the death of Atheism. In other words, German Atheism is destined to kill British Atheism. Already "the few professional Atheists of the country have the mortification of seeing the tide running away from them." The fact is that there is not an atom of truth in that extraordinary passage just cited. The tide is not running away from our Atheists, nor is the War at all likely to kill the Freethought propaganda. While it lasts it may limit the circulation of Secularist literature, as it has lessened the circulation of religious journals and of most books; but it has not reduced the number of Freethinkers in the land. Man is not "incurably religious," as tens of thousands of our fellow-beings are prepared to testify. If he were "incurably religious" there would be no need for Mr. Spurr's profession. The business of clergymen is to prevent man from becoming irreligious; but in spite of all their assiduity in the discharge of their onerous duties, irreligion is spreading. Irreligion abounds around them while they fight with all their might against it; but irreligion is by no means synonymous with immorality. The soul and its finest instincts are creations of the religious imagination. Man possesses exceedingly fine instincts, many of which religion seeks to slay or enchain. Religion says "Do not" when Nature says "Do," with the result that the life of a religious person is incomplete and unnatural. His chief duty is to suppress himself, to crucify his flesh. Religion seeks to develop an imaginary soul and culpably neglects a real body. The moment a man begins to "assert himself as a religious being" he loses his self-respect and longs to be nothing. To assert himself as a religious being he must suppress himself as a natural man. The natural man is positively non-religious. Mr. Spurr predicts that the time is coming when our country shall glory in its allegiance to God, when the prodigal son cries, "I perish with hunger; I will arise and go to my Father." He adds:—

"Such a moment is now dawning for our nation. The things we trusted in, and of which we were so certain, have failed us. The ideal of a world self-governed and happy, under the sole guidance of 'Science' and 'Culture,' has been shattered, and we are back again at the beginning of things, to face God afresh, and to settle our accounts with him who, the supreme Master, has been left out of our reckonings."

Nobody can tell what the future holds for us, but we are pretty sure that it does not hold the fulfilment of Mr. Spurr's prophecy. The only things that truly matter are the things that make for the welfare of society, and religion is not one of them. Religion is a sower of social discord and jealousy and malice. It is religion that sets Mr. Spurr against so many of his fellow-beings. It induces him to look down upon and despise unbelievers as if they belonged to another race. Secularism, however, engenders the sense of universal brotherhood, and does full justice to the life that now is.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christian Apologetics.

THE REV. Z. B. WOFFENDALE (NO. 2).

IN reply to my contention that "we have no evidence that the Fourth Gospel was written within a hundred years of the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ," Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, in his own journal, characterised such a statement as "an Agnostic balloon" inflated with "pretentious assertions," and then he proceeded to take the wind out of it by producing nine "testimonies" which, he declared, "furnish cumulative and overwhelming evidence that the Fourth Gospel was written by John the apostle, and in the apostolic age." Having duly delivered himself of his nine wonderful "testi-

monies," he finished up by saying: "We now see how baseless, shallow, and untrustworthy is the preposterous assertion of our antagonist, that 'we have no evidence that the Fourth Gospel was written within a hundred years of the alleged Resurrection.' No wonder that, after inflating and sending up such a tattered paper balloon to mislead, Abracadabra has to mask his identity."

I now give these nine remarkable "testimonies" in the Rev. Woffendale's own words, and, to economise space, I give my reply to each witness before he leaves the box.

1. "That Christian antiquity has been unanimous in transmitting this book to the Church as the work of the personal friend of Jesus—viz., John, the son of Zebedee."

REPLY.—This is true; but the "antiquity" only dates from the time of Irenæus (A. D. 185), who is the earliest writer who names the four Gospels..... Mr. Woffendale has to show that the Fourth Gospel was in existence within a hundred years of the Resurrection—viz., as early as A. D. 130.

2. "That not only the Church, but the sects most opposed to it, are agreed upon this subject."

REPLY.—We have not the testimony of any sect to the existence of the Fourth Gospel prior to A. D. 130.

3. "That in the second century the Judæo-Christian party used this narrative from a book whose statements had not been called in question."

REPLY.—No Harmony or other book containing a portion of the Fourth Gospel is known to have been in existence before the time of Irenæus—though one is erroneously ascribed to Tatian (A. D. 170).

4. "That Marcion, who came to Rome A. D. 140, acknowledged in a letter that he, in common with all the Church, had made use of the Fourth Gospel until he had rejected its authority, but not its authenticity."

REPLY.—No writing of Marcion is extant. All we know of that arch-heretic is derived from hostile writers of a later age, who have sought to blacken his character. These stories cannot be admitted either as the evidence of Marcion or as dating from his time.

5. "That the Montanists and Gnostics who separated from the Church all made use of this book as the fulcrum for their heresies."

REPLY.—This is only true of a time subsequent to A. D. 130. The Montanists did not arise as a sect until after A. D. 170.

6. "That Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, quotes the Fourth Gospel frequently as part of the undoubted 'Apostolical Memoirs,' which are read, said he, every Lord's Day in all the Churches of Christendom."

REPLY.—It is true that Justin quoted from what he calls "Memoirs of the Apostles"; but these writings cannot be shown to have been the canonical Gospels—not one of which is named. The only book Justin mentions by name is an apocryphal Gospel—the "Acts of Pilate." His earliest work is dated A. D. 150, and it contains no quotations from the Fourth Gospel.

7. "That, a little later, an African writer, in the Muratorian fragment,.....designates the Gospel of John as the Fourth," etc.

REPLY.—The Canon of Muratori is admitted by nearly all critics to have been written not earlier than the last quarter of the second century; many place it at the beginning of the third. Its mention of the Fourth Gospel is therefore no evidence of the existence of that Gospel as early as A. D. 130.

8. "That Irenæus, about the year 180, testifies to the apostle John being the author of the Fourth Gospel. And when it was remembered that this Irenæus had, in his early days, lived at Smyrna, under the Christian teaching of Polycarp, who had lived with the apostle John, it is impossible for any sane man to doubt that Irenæus knew the real fact, and stated honestly the truth about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel—namely, that it was written by John."

My reply to this took up two columns, in which I showed: (1) That Irenæus had not lived "under the Christian teaching of Polycarp"; but that he once saw the latter when he was a boy. His words are: "whom I also saw in my early youth." (2) That Polycarp had not lived with, or been taught by, the apostle John, as stated by Irenæus. (3) That Irenæus knew nothing whatever about John the apostle; what he does say is unhistorical. He is a witness only for the existence of the four Gospels in his day (A. D. 185)—and, by inference, for some decades previously.

9. "Add to all these testimonies the witness of the 21st chapter of John that 'This is the disciple whom Jesus loved (verses 20—23), which testified these things,

and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.'"

REPLY.—Mr. Woffendale does not say who the "we" in this passage are; but he knows perfectly well that before he can adduce any of the statements in the Fourth Gospel as evidence, he must first prove the authenticity of that Gospel. This he has failed to do. It will now be seen that, of Mr. Woffendale's nine "testimonies" which, he asserts, furnish "overwhelming evidence" of the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, only one of them—the second-hand testimony of Irenæus—has any bearing at all upon the subject. That one, also, is found upon examination to be worthless. Hence, though the rev. gentleman has the effrontery to characterize my statements, given above, as "baseless, shallow, and untrustworthy," it is he himself who has been constructing a balloon inflated with "pretentious assertions"—and a very big balloon it is too.

ABRACADABRA.

Autumnal Fires and Festivals.

IN the two fascinating books which conclude the herculean labors of Professor J. G. Frazer in connection with his ten-volume work, *The Golden Bough*, *The Fire Festivals of Europe*, and *The Doctrine of the External Soul*, are considered with immense wealth of detail.* With the first of these interesting themes these articles are concerned, more especially with the autumnal fires of Northern Europe, thus leaving a survey of the fire ceremonies of Christmas for later treatment. That these observances were originally of solar import was an opinion which Dr. Frazer was led to accept on the high authority of Mannhardt. This view he has now abandoned in favor of the hypothesis more recently advanced by Professor Westermarck, which is certainly supported by extremely weighty evidence. Dr. Frazer says:—

"The true explanation of the festivals I now believe to be the one advocated by Dr. Westermarck, namely, that they are purificatory in intention, the fire being designed not, as I formerly held, to reinforce the sun's light and heat by sympathetic magic, but merely to burn or repel the noxious things, whether conceived as material or spiritual, which threaten the life of man, of animals, and of plants.....Dr. Westermarck based his criticisms [of the solar theory] largely on his own observations of the Mohammedan fire festivals of Morocco, which present a remarkable resemblance to those of Christian Europe.....So far as Europe is concerned, the evidence tends strongly to show that the grand evil which the festivals aimed at combating was witchcraft.....If that was so, the wide prevalence and the immense popularity of the fire festivals provides us with a measure for estimating the extent of the hold which the belief in witchcraft had on the European mind before the rise of Christianity, or, rather, of rationalism; for Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, accepted the old belief and enforced it in the old way by the faggot and the stake. It was not until human reason at last awoke from the slumber of the Middle Ages that this dreadful obsession gradually passed away like a dark cloud from the intellectual horizon of Europe."

Dr. Frazer then proceeds to utter a timely warning to those who cherish the delusion that the Free-thought fight is won. We are mistaken in supposing that this baleful belief is extinguished in the minds of the masses. As a matter of fact, "it only hibernates under the chilling influence of rationalism," and would soon reassert itself if that influence were withdrawn. Much of our safety lies in the growth of urban life, where circumstances are less favorable than in rural communities for the re-emergence of dark and dangerous superstitions.

Be the ultimate explanation of these seasonal ceremonies what it may, and probably no single theory suffices to lay bare their secret, the fire festivals themselves form an instructive chapter in the history of human culture. The great festival of midsummer certainly coincides with the arrival of the sun at the highest point of his annual journey through the sky, and was, apparently, regulated by

the solar clock. In any case, the growth of animal and plant life, with which this midsummer ceremony is associated, always appears at this season in the plenitude of its powers. Therefore, we may conclude that the ceremonies of this season were directly connected—whether consciously or otherwise—with the maximum splendor of the solar orb. But while this holds true of the primitive races of Central and Southern Europe, other factors appear to have intervened among the Celtic peoples of North-Western Europe.

The most important festivals of the Celts have no obvious connection with the sun's light and warmth-giving powers. The two chief Celtic celebrations which still survive are but the shadowy relics of former glory. The first of these is the Eve of May-Day and the Day itself, while the second is the Eve of All Hallows, October 31, and they appear rather to indicate the beginning of the two seasons into which the year was divided in pre-historic times, rather than to commemorate the majestic march of the sun. Nor do they coincide with the most important periods of the agricultural year, the sowing of spring and the harvesting of the autumn. Long prior to May-Day the seed of the future harvest has been sown, and by the time that dreary, dripping November is due, the grass and the grain and the fruits have been gathered. May-Day, above all, Old May-Day, saw spring in its verdant splendor and arrayed with full promise of the fast-coming summer, while November bears all the outward and visible signs of approaching darkness and death. Now, as Mr. E. K. Chambers has shrewdly noted, while these particular seasons are of little moment to the tiller of the soil, they perform an important part in the herdsman's calling. Commenting on this happy hit, Dr. Frazer says truly enough, that it is when the summer is near, that the herdsman drives his cattle into the open fields to graze the new green herbage, and it is on the verge of winter that he sends them to shelter from the storms of the cold season. This custom, consequently, appears to date from periods of remote antiquity, before the races of Britain had merged their earlier pastoral life with that of the later cultivation of the earth. It is also undeniable that—

"even in Central Europe, remote from the region now occupied by the Celts, a similar bisection of the year may be clearly traced in the great popularity, on the one hand, of May-Day and its Eve [Walpurgis Night], and on the other hand, of the Feast of All Souls, at the beginning of November, which, under a thin Christian cloak, conceals an ancient pagan festival of the dead."

Hallowe'en was seemingly the herald of the New Year. At all events, in the Isle of Man, whose inhabitants so long presented a sullen front to Saxon influences, November 1 was regarded as New Year's Day right down to modern times. The Manx land tenure terminates on November 1, and on that day the farm laborers enter into their term of annual service. Moreover, the Manx mummers were wont to wander on Hallowe'en and proclaim the incoming year.

Further testimony is forthcoming from ancient Ireland, where a fresh flame was each year kindled at this season, and from this holy fire the hearths of Erin were relit. That Hallowe'en was honored as the commencement of another year is also illustrated by the old Celtic custom of then divining what the future held in store. Again, throughout Europe it was at Hallowe'en that the souls of the dead revisited the scenes of their living days to bask in the genial glow of the house-fire and to partake of the good cheer provided by their surviving kinsfolk before returning to the spirit land. Dr. Frazer argues that as the herds came home from the pastures at this period to the friendly care of their owners, so the ghosts of the dead were also permitted to share in the hospitality of their kindred's hearth and home.

But in addition to these annually welcomed guests there were others of more sinister aspect. The witches careered through the air on their broomsticks, or rushed over the country on brindled cats

* *Balder the Beautiful*, 2 vols. Macmillan.

transformed for this special occasion into very dark horses of wondrous speed. Also, the fairies were abroad in endless numbers, and the ghosts and goblins lurked everywhere on mischief bent. In Cardigan, on November Eve, every stile had its attendant bogie. Not only in Wales, but in Ireland and Scotland, all these beliefs abounded as articles of faith among the superstitious rustics. The Irish fairies, hobgoblins, and fiends wandered at their own sweet will on Samhain Eve or Hallowe'en. In the Scottish Highlands the good and evil fairies dedicated this great occasion to dance and music, but were none the less dangerous to intruding and inquisitive mortals on that account.

Hallowe'en appears in all Celtic lands to have been the right and proper season for diving into coming events. The Druids were great diviners, and their powers were at their highest at this period. The Eve of all Hallows was in Wales the weirdest of the Spirit Nights of the year. As the wind sighed in the air or sobbed in the trees, the names of those destined to die in the new year could be heard on the breeze. In the conventicles the Welsh women assembled to divine each one her fate from the flickering candle-flame which she bore in her hand. They were at the same time made acquainted with the names, or saw the coffins of those whom death had selected for the coming year. Judging from the emotional outpourings of a modern Welsh revivalist meeting, these uncanny proceedings at Hallowe'en must have left a morbid stain on the minds of these highly sensitive women. And in Northern Scotland the morbidly inclined could gratify their unhealthy curiosity by sitting on a three-legged stool at three cross-roads at the hour of midnight at Hallowe'en, and as the kirk-bell tolled the hour the identity of those over whom an early death impended was disclosed by the passing wind.

With the evolution of modern thought, with the growth of towns and cities, and with the increased facilities for travel latterly afforded, the dark and gloomy spirit associated with Hallowe'en has materially declined. The brighter side of the observances has lingered, while their more sombre aspects have receded into the background. The celebration of this season is now more generally festive in character in those remote retreats where the custom still survives. The November fires on Egdon Heath, mentioned in Hardy's *Return of the Native*, were relics of this anniversary, and our Fifth of November guys and bonfires, although nominally associated with Gunpowder Plot, really date to days before the Romans landed on our coasts.

Traces of the Hallowe'en customs have lingered in Lancashire right down to modern times. The Lancashire witches

"used to gather on Hallowe'en at the Malkin Tower, a ruined and desolate farmhouse in the forest of Pendle. They assembled for no good purpose; but you could keep the infernal rout at bay by carrying a lighted candle about the fells from eleven to twelve o'clock at night. The witches tried to blow out the candle, and if they succeeded, so much the worse for you; but if the flame burned steadily till the clock struck midnight you were safe. Some people performed the ceremony by deputy; and parties went about from house to house in the evening collecting candles, one for each inmate, and offering their services to *late* or *leet* the witches, as the phrase ran. This custom was practised at Longridge Fell in the early part of the nineteenth century."

In other parts of Northern England kindred customs were to be met with.

But to return to the bonfires of Hallowe'en. In the Scottish Highlands each homestead was provided with its own heap of dry faggots, ferns, and other combustible matter, which was set ablaze so that the whole country was lit up with bonfires, which lent a wonderfully impressive appearance to the surrounding scenery. In some districts the Hallowe'en fires were encircled with stones and, on the following morning, November 1, the people gathered round the dead fires and surveyed the stones with eager interest. Where a stone was displaced, or where

anyone's footprint stood near a stone, it was seriously supposed that the person whom it represented would die within the year. In the eighteenth century this custom was falling into desuetude, as a writer of that period intimates when he says: "The Hallowe'en fire is still kept up in the Low country; but on the Western coast and in the Isles it is never kindled, though the night is spent in merriment and entertainments."

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops

Mr. Harold Begbie is in America, on behalf of the *Daily Chronicle*, to report on the American attitude towards the European War. He reports that an American business girl said to him, "I can't understand why you should write about religion." We feel inclined to believe that Mr. Begbie misunderstood what the American girl said, which was probably, "I can't understand *what* you write about religion." And in that respect she would have had many sympathies with her on this side of the water. For very few can understand what Mr. Begbie writes about religion—until they understand Mr. Begbie. Then they will probably realise that it is not really meant to be understood. It is designed to entertain. A large section of the religious world must be continually entertained with emotional slush expressed in terms of religion, and for that class Mr. Begbie is a very successful entertainer. But so far as the study of religion goes, that American girl may rest assured that none outside the class mentioned, whether they are religious or non-religious, take Mr. Begbie seriously.

But incidentally Mr. Begbie gave some inkling of what he thought religion to be. (At least of what he thinks religion to be while he is in America, for it is quite probable he will discover it to be something different when he returns home.) He inquired if this young lady was not curious about the mystery of existence. "The mystery of this immense universe. Its significance. Its origin and its purpose. Our own conscious and self-conscious life. Why is there any universe at all, and to what end is the progress and travail of humanity? Think for a moment that we are in the midst of an infinity which is without beginning and without an end." Mr. Begbie, then, thinks that thoughts about these things constitute religion—or, at least, the material of religion—and, by implication, those who are not religious do not think, or ought not to be thinking, about these things. Which is all very amusingly absurd. "The mystery of the universe," etc., etc., all belong quite as much to the non-religious as to the religious. The ceaseless questioning of non-religious science proves it. It is not the existence of these questions that makes religion, but the answer that is given to them. And the only answers given them up to date that are of any real value are those that have come from the non-religious side.

Mr. Begbie's conclusion is that "religion, at any rate the disciplinary and dogmatic religion of a past generation, is in a bad way in America." The modern American "has washed his hands of the old religion of his fathers. Puritanism, I should say, if not dead, is at any rate on its last legs." We fear that Mr. Begbie here, as elsewhere, exaggerates. We should be only too glad to think otherwise. But it is almost impossible for a man of his temperament to give a scientific survey of the facts. There is plenty of religion in America, just as there is in this country. The state of things both here and there prove it.

According to the press Sheikh-ul-Islam has published a fetwa, according to which every Musulman must, as a religious duty, fight against the Allies in the present War. This means the "Holy War" for the whole Islamic world; whilst the earlier "Holy War," initiated by the two pious Kaisers, has turned Europe into a slaughter-house.

The daughter of a baronet is among the hospital nurses in France and is acting as "probationer general scrubber" in one of the operating theatres. Of course, the "ha'penny press" is horrified, although English people profess to worship a Carpenter-God.

Mrs. Esther Davies, of Llanelly, has died at the age of 104. At that tender age Adam and Methuselah wore pinafores and trundled hoops.

A new novel has been published with the title, *The Woman Who Looked Back*. We wonder if it refers to Lot's wife, although that yarn has to be taken with an extraordinary pinch of salt.

The Southwark coroner recently complained that local poor people do not look upon marriage as a necessity. That looks as if Holy Mother Church was fast asleep, in spite of the fact that many thousands have been spent upon Southwark Cathedral.

"Only one other Englishman has attained to anything near the place which Lord Roberts filled in the hearts of the Indian soldier, and that was John Nicholson," says the *Evening News*. Nicholson was deified after his death by his faithful followers. Shall we have another god?

The *Evening News* recently had a leading article "To Prove Our Faith." It contained no reference to Christianity, but was an appeal for further recruits to the British Army. It is a long way from Mount Carmel to Carmelite House.

Rev. J. Tolfree Parr says that there is more than the breed to account for the courage of our soldiers in the trenches. The reason for it is that "the great bulk have gone through our Sunday-schools." That accounts for it. Only we are quite surprised to learn that the bulk of the British Army has been through the Methodist Sunday-schools. If the facts were not guaranteed by a parson, we should be inclined to doubt it.

The Dean of Norwich has been laying down the ethics of war. He says that "war, regarded as the punishment of a wrong-doer, is perfectly right and Christian; whereas war, regarded as retaliation, is absolutely wrong and anti-Christian. The purpose of all punishment is the ultimate good of the punished, and hence punishment must be regarded as a truly Christian obligation." This is a very comforting doctrine, but it has its drawbacks. To begin with, we do not know that any country ever does consider itself the wrong-doer in a war. It is always the other party that is in the wrong. Each country sets out to punish the wrong-doer, and generally in a thoroughly Christian spirit. We feel that it is a Christian obligation to punish the Germans, and the Germans feel that they have a Christian obligation to punish us. Meanwhile, the outsider is apt to reflect that a little less Christianity all round might have made the nations of Europe better fitted to live together on the same planet.

In the days of the old *régime* in France, a certain lady expressed the opinion that God would think twice before he damned people of "our quality." The editor of the *Hibbert Journal* has much the same opinion of God and Great Britain in the present War. He cannot believe that God will be indifferent to our cause in the War—which is exactly the way that the Germans feel in the matter. And it looks as though God will be the only party that will gain credit from the War. If the Germans were to win they would praise God for the victory, and if the Allies win they will also praise God. And the losing side will not have the courage to blame God for their defeat. It will be attributed to their shortcomings, to the chastening wisdom of God, etc. In these matters it is with God "Heads I win, tails you lose." Neither side appears to have the sense to realise that, even though God may not be indifferent to the result of the War, he has evidently been indifferent to the development of conditions that made the War inevitable; and that is surely the crowning offence. A God who can allow preparations for war to go on year after year, knowing all the time that these preparations must lead to war, cannot escape responsibility by not being indifferent as to the result. If he can determine the result, he must have been equally potent to prevent the conditions that led to it. If he was indifferent to the one, we do not see any reason for believing he is less indifferent as to the other.

The British public who buy Christmas cards this year will notice that the Prince of Peace has been ousted by the soldier in khaki, for on a very large number of these articles of stationery warlike figures and verses have usurped the customary pacific figures. What an elastic religion is Christianity! When the god is changed from Christ to Mars, the worshipers do not seem to mind in the least.

That hero of a hundred tea-fights, the Bishop of London, exploited the late Lord Roberts at a meeting at Queen's Hall recently. He quoted the remark of the late Field-Marshal that he "had family prayers for fifty-five years." What a

victory for Holy Mother Church! It was ever better than Kandahar.

In the course of an article on German culture in the *Evening News* recently, a saying of Frederick the Great's was used with a reference to that monarch's "accustomed piousness." The probity of our contemporary is as remarkable as the "piety" of Frederick.

A morning paper protests against the tearful eloquence which is becoming popular amongst clergymen. Does the editor think that anyone can worship "The Man of Sorrows" with impunity?

An American dentist claims that by pressure on a patient's thumb and finger joints he can induce insensibility to pain in the teeth. It will add to the charm of a visit to the dentist's when they all keep thumbscrews—like the Inquisition in the "good old days."

Sir Oliver Lodge, opening a "Science Week" at the Browning Hall, Walworth, recently, spoke on the question of the soul's survival. Some of the proofs, said the speaker, for communication after death are being withheld for a time, but will be published later. This is a religious dodge, for scientists believe that demonstration is the highest means of proof.

Sir Oliver Lodge has been challenged by a writer in the *Times* to produce his evidence in favor of a future life. As he has just declared that this is now a demonstrated scientific truth, one would have thought that this request would at once have been complied with. Instead of doing this, Sir Oliver declares that while a few scientific men agree with him "more or less," the majority are hostile—which is hardly what one would expect in the case of a demonstrated scientific truth. He says, also, that "people cannot receive proof so long as they shut their minds to the evidence," which is quite true, although people cannot keep their minds shut when genuine evidence is produced. Then Sir Oliver Lodge says that the beginning of the proof is telepathy. So that we must accept this before we can be offered proof of the other. This means, something that is highly speculative must be accepted as a demonstrated fact, and on that Sir Oliver is prepared to prove something else. Seriously, this is only a new variant of the old religious cry that we must have faith first—then all things are possible. But, what with the Germans burning cities and shooting people in the interests of "Culture," and Sir Oliver Lodge asking in the name of science for a blank cheque on the Bank of Credulity, some people will hardly know presently whether they are on their heads or their heels.

Talk about pot calling kettle black! Here is the *Church Times* complaining that Sir Oliver Lodge's information about a future life is not sufficiently circumstantial, and hinting that more detailed information is necessary if it is to be accepted. Now, we wonder what kind of circumstantial evidence the *Church Times'* own statements about a future life rests on. So far as we know, they only say they believe it. Well, Sir Oliver also says that, and adds that he has proof. Certainly we should very much like to see these proofs; but it is a dangerous game for a religious paper to set up the same demand. Like all people who have set up in this business, Sir Oliver Lodge asks other people to believe because he has had what he considers evidence. And that is exactly what every priest does. He asks us to have confidence in *him*, forgetting that a genuine truth carries its own conviction to all rational minds alike. Anything short of this is open to doubt, and is little better than speculation.

The *Schoolmaster* records the case of a lady who is able to tell the exact time whenever called upon. It is said that she sees the face of a clock, with the hands pointing to the time. We do not think the case is so precise as is stated, particularly as it is noted that it is "only when she answers on the instant is her answer correct." There is evidently room for a certain degree of inaccuracy. It is also obvious that the time is not read from the visualised clock. The time is judged first and the clock is visualised afterwards. Most of us, if we start guessing the time, will find that we see the clock face more or less distinctly, because this is practically the only way in which we tell the time.

The Vicar of Burton-on-Trent magnanimously admits that there is not the slightest reason to suppose that, in his religion, the German Emperor is a hypocrite. Of the sincerity of his worship of God there can be no doubt; but, unfor-

unately, he worships the wrong God. The reverend gentleman charges the Kaiser with having made God in his own image; but is not the vicar himself guilty of the same charge? There are as many gods as there are worshipers, and they are all equally non-existent. The religion of the Kaiser may be "tragic and twisted," as this vicar says; but is not all religion the tragedy of a twisted human nature?

The men of God are waxing bolder and sillier every day. They say now that we would have won this War long ago had it not been for our national sins. Because of these, God prolongs the bloody conflict, thereby permitting and becoming directly responsible for the slaughter of millions of innocent men. Prebendary Webster is reported as saying that "God would not answer our prayers for victory because the nation was not yet right with God." "The war had not yet taught us our lesson," the Prebendary added. Another man of God, the Rev. C. B. Bardsley, informed the Lord in prayer that our national sins are the neglect of Sunday, of prayer, and of public worship, and the love of pleasure. Just think of it. The Almighty keeps the most brutal war ever known going on so long simply because the British people do not sufficiently support the parsons!

What a wonderful conceit of themselves Christians cherish and openly express! The Rev. C. E. Darlston, of Crouch End, London, speaking at a City Temple intercessory service, said:—

"Like spectators stretching over the ropes to see some great procession, so creation waits and looks and watches for what the sons of God will do. We are the sons of God. We cannot say it glibly and without humility, still we must say it."

How woefully disappointed creation must be, for the so-called sons of God have never done anything worth waiting and watching for, while they have done much to be profoundly ashamed of.

How scared the newspapers are in admitting that any well-known man is a Freethinker! Even the *Times* does injustice to itself in this matter, for, in reviewing Mr. Thomas Hardy's latest book, it says "You might call him a pagan." We might be saved from similar exhibitions if all press articles were signed, for no man worth his salt would subscribe his name to such nonsense.

"Girl Burned to Death" runs a headline in a daily paper. If the Christian superstition be true, countless millions of human beings are being burned for ever. That is, evidently, not worth a paragraph, let alone a headline.

At a meeting of the Southwark Diocesan Conference last week, a resolution was carried pledging the Conference "to keep the morals and manners of the country as good as possible." A nasty snub to poor, old Providence.

Archdeacon Escreet, interviewed by the *Weekly Dispatch* stated that he believed in "one man one wife." Just so! And if the Archdeacon had been born in Turkey, and his parents had been Mohammedans, he would have had a different belief.

Evidences in favor of Christianity steadily accumulate. The world has seen a bottle of the darkness that overspread Egypt, the portrait of Jesus on a napkin on which he wiped his face, the tail of the serpent that tempted Eve, and numerous other proofs of a similar character. Now we learn, from the *Daily Telegraph* of November 26, that Dr. C. M. Coburn, Archæologist to the World's Bible Conference at Baltimore, has announced the discovery of the rock that Moses smote in the wilderness. We do not know how identification was established, probably Dr. Coburn saw the mark of the blow, in any case, we may take it that the evidence is quite satisfactory to the World's Bible Conference. Dr. Coburn also dwelt upon the relics of early Israelite civilisation, including the mummy of Joseph, which are in the possession of the Mohammedans, and which are "quite inaccessible," and of which "no one is allowed a glimpse." That is as it should be. *Inaccessible* evidence that no one is allowed to see is the kind that cheers the believer and confounds the sceptic.

The bullet-deflecting New Testament is not to have all its own way. One of the morning papers last week gave a photograph of a bullet-stricken Jewish prayer-book that had saved a German soldier's life. On the same day an evening paper published a photograph of a cigarette case that had served the same purpose. This war is shattering

many things, and among them the life-preserving character of the New Testament. When common cigarette cases and Hebrew prayer-books serve the same purpose, it looks as though Providence had been neglecting its duty. Presently we shall hear of a wad of the *Pink 'Un* doing a like service.

The *Hartford Courant*, the oldest living newspaper in the United States, has just celebrated its 150th anniversary. It has lived through two American revolutions—that which saw the birth of the United States, and the other which threatened the existence of the Union. It is a proud record for any periodical. Two outstanding figures in these gigantic events, Thomas Paine and Abraham Lincoln, were both Freethinkers.

What educated men journalists are! In a recent article in the *Evening News*, written with the obvious purpose of belittling Germany, that newspaper jumbles together quotations from Goethe, Frederick the Great, Sir Alfred Mond, Sir John Brunner—and Mr. Cadbury. Perhaps we expect too much hustled history for a ha'penny!

Mr. Harold Begbie has been described as a young man in a hurry. It seems as if the jest were true, for his latest work is entitled *The Proof of God: a Dialogue with Two Letters*. There are so many gods; is Mr. Begbie going to settle each of them with a dialogue?

The Young Men's Christian Association is establishing a number of soldiers' club-houses, and an appeal has been made for gifts of gramophones, ping-pong, puzzles and other games, and pianos. Ping-pong and piety! What Secularists these Christians are!

Commenting on the new tax on tea the *Catholic Times* has the following, which we think contains a truth that is too often ignored:—

"We wish the Chancellor had not taxed tea, which is a necessary of life, especially in the world of labor. But if the tax helps to convince the women that war is a waste and an evil, and often a crime, it may lead them to realise that they, who mould the young idea, can do a great deal to ensure peace in future by teaching their children to hate war. Women are said to love soldiers, when more probably they only like uniforms. Anyhow, war affects women as well as men, and this tax on tea, which hits women and children so hard, will prove beneficial if it awakens the understanding of women to the duty of teaching their children the blessedness of peace."

It is so often assumed that woman's influence makes for peace, that many are inclined to take it at that without further examination. Yet constant experience shows that women welcome militarism in general, at least as much as men, and face the prospect of war with as few misgivings. Undoubtedly, women have it in their power to play a great part in the promotion of peace, but up to the present that influence has not been conspicuously exercised. We agree with the *Catholic Times* that if the horrors of the present War arouse women to a sense of what may be done by them to end war, that will be one great compensation that the world will receive from this catastrophe.

God preserves his own! We are called on to admit the fact, even while we question the judgment displayed in the people preserved. Colonel Fornechou reports that in Rheims, although shells were demolishing buildings, and bombs from aeroplanes destroying people, he and other Salvationists remained unhurt. The people around said, "God protects the Salvationists." The Colonel calls this "a remarkable testimony." Very remarkable! It shows that the type of mind attracted to the Salvation Army is much the same in England as in France. Less egotistical people might wonder why the favors of God are not more widely and more generally dispersed. There are plenty of opportunities in the North of France.

Warden: "So you got rid of your pastor?"

Elder: "Yes; he was a good man, but he was too dry in his preaching—always giving us a history of the Jews. But we don't like our new pastor very much, either."

Warden: "What's the matter with him?"

Elder: "Well, he preaches with tears in his voice all the time."

Warden: "I see. The old pastor was too historical, and the new one is too hysterical."

A "down South" colored philosopher recently remarked: "Life, my breddern, am mos'ly made up of prayin' for rain an' then wishin' it would cl'ar off."

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £272 6s. 6d. Received since:—James Davis, £1; Ernest, 10s.

J. D.—Sorry for delay.

GEORGE BRADFIELD.—We can't follow the Kaiser round the world with a shorthand notebook. We must trust the newspapers in some things. Besides, he has always been talking in the way you don't believe him guilty of. We have referred to the same thing during many years. Addressing his soldiers forming a part of the Punative Expedition to China, he told them to deal with the Chinese as the Jews were ordered to deal with the Amalakites. He talked in a similar way when he visited Jerusalem, and again when he visited Constantinople and walked with Abdul Ahmid. And didn't you hear of his letter to President Wilson and his justification of the horrors of Louvain? You are really *too* incredulous where your idol is concerned. We don't propose to answer any more such questions.

E. B.—You are quite right about the letter of Sir Lawrence Gomme, quoted in "Sugar Plum." It appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of November 13, not November 12, as stated. It occurs on col. i., p. 4. Sorry the date should have been wrongly given.

J. C.—Pleased to read your interesting and even encouraging letter. After all, is not the writer's signature the mark of honest journalism—not how much he is paid for his work? It may not always be a certain guarantee even then, but it is the nearest you can get. "We" is no deception, of course, when the writer's name stands at the bottom or the top. It is a question of etiquette.

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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.

Mr. Lloyd lectures to-day (December 6), afternoon and evening, at Abertillery, Mon. Admission to both lectures are free. We presume that the local train service will admit of those Freethinkers in the district, who desire to hear Mr. Lloyd, doing so. In that case there should be crowded meetings.

A cynic once said that Mr. Blatchford wouldn't be a bad writer, if he only knew anything. This is a way cynics have, but there is at least an element of truth in the criticism. Mr. Shaw is a born writer, a wit, a humorist, and full of originality. No one will ever call him a second Cobbett or a second anything else. He is too much like himself to be like anybody else; which sounds like an Irishism, though it isn't. But we mustn't go on in this way. Our object is a different one. Both these gentlemen have been writing, characteristically, on the War, both are old Socialists, both are at daggers drawn in their views of the War, and both say the Socialists are the only people who are right—now and evermore. So we shall let them differ; partly because we don't deal with common politics, and partly because, whether he is right or wrong, Socialists are always unpleasant people to discuss with. But both Blatchford and Shaw are Freethinkers; and, characteristically again, Blatchford is most a Freethinker when he is addressing Christians, and Shaw is most a Christian when he is addressing Freethinkers; and there is a certain moral in this if you can only dig it out. But all this is by the way.

Shaw gives many digs at Christianity in his *Common Sense About the War*. Here is one:—

"THE CHURCH AND THE WAR.

"And now, where in our society is the organ whose function it should be to keep us constantly in mind that, as Lassalle said, 'the sword is never right,' and to shudder with

him at the fact that 'the Lie is a European Power'? In no previous war have we struck that top note of keen irony, the closing of the Stock Exchange and not of the Church. The pagans were more logical: they closed the Temple of Peace when they drew the sword. We turn our Temples of peace promptly into temples of war, and exhibit our passions as the most pugnacious characters in the community. I venture to affirm that the sense of scandal given by this is far deeper and more general than the Church thinks, especially among the working classes, who are apt either to take religion seriously or else to repudiate it and criticise it closely. When a bishop at the first shot abandons the worship of Christ and rallies his flock round the altar of Mars, he may be acting patriotically, necessarily, manfully, rightfully; but that does not justify him in pretending that there has been no change, and that Christ is, in effect, Mars. The straightforward course, and the one that would serve the Church best in the long run, would be to close our professedly Christian Churches the moment war is declared by us, and reopen them only on the signing of the treaty of peace. No doubt to many of us the privation thus imposed would be far worse than the privation of small change, of horses and motor cars, of express trains, and all the other prosaic inconveniences of war. But would it be worse than the privation of faith, and the horror of the soul, wrought by the spectacle of nations praying to their common Father to assist them in sabring and bayoneting and blowing one another to pieces with explosives that are also corrosives, and of the Church organising this monstrous paradox instead of protesting against it? Would it make less atheists or more? Atheism is not a simple homogeneous phenomena. There is the youthful atheism with which every able modern mind begins: an atheism that clears the soul of superstitions and terrors and servilities and base compliances and hypocrisies, and lets in the light of heaven. And there is the atheism of despair and pessimism: the sullen cry with which so many of us at this moment, looking on blinded deafened maimed wrecks that were once able-bodied admirable lovable men, and on priests blessing war, and newspapers and statesmen and exempt old men hounding young men on to it, are saying 'I know now there is no God.' What has the Church in its present attitude to set against this crushed acceptance of darkness except the quaint but awful fact that there are cruder people on whom horrifying calamities have just the opposite effect, because they seem the work of some power so overwhelming in its malignity that it must be worshiped because it is mighty? Let the Church beware how it plays to that gallery. If all the Churches of Europe closed their doors until the drums ceased rolling they would act as a most powerful reminder that though the glory of war is a famous and ancient glory, it is not the final glory of God."

"It is no use giving tracts to a missionary" is another of Shaw's witticisms. We believe it is true, but we wonder if he has tried.

"OBSOLETE TESTS IN THE ARMY.

"Another matter needs to be dealt with at the same time. There are immense numbers of atheists in this country; and though most of them, like the Kaiser, regard themselves as devout Christians, the best are intellectually honest enough to object to profess beliefs they do not hold, especially in the solemn act of dedicating themselves to death in the service of their country. Army Form E 501a (September, 1912) secured to these the benefit of the Bradlaugh Affirmation Act of 1888, as the enlisting soldier said simply, 'I, So-and-So, do make Oath,' etc. But recruits are now confronted with another form (E 501, June, 1914), running, 'I, So-and-So, swear by Almighty God,' etc. On September 1st, at Lord Kitchener's call, a Civil servant obtained leave to enlist, and had the oath put to him in this form by the attesting officer. He offered to swear in the 1912 form. This was refused; and we accordingly lost a recruit of just that sturdily conscientious temper which has made the most formidable soldiers known to history. I am bound to add, however, that the attesting officer, on being told that the oath would be a blasphemous farce to the conscience of the recruit, made no difficulty about that, and was quite willing to accept him if he, on his part, would oblige by professing what he did not believe. Thus a Ghoorka's religious conscience is respected: an Englishman's is insulted and outraged."

Freethinkers are all glad to hear Mr. Shaw denouncing superstition in this way. Lord Kitchener appears to be able to defy even the law in the interest of his own religious belief.

Mr. Shaw refers only to the treatment of Freethinkers on enlisting. But since the opening of the War we have had many letters from soldiers in the various camps relating to the injustice done them *after* enlisting. All soldiers are legally absolved from attending a religious service in which they do not believe. We hear, however, that a common trick—for it is nothing more than a trick of the most contemptible kind—is for an officer to order some kind of work to be done while the rest of the regiment is at church. This is clearly a punishment for non-attendance, and some of those who have written us have expressed their determination to bring the matter before their superior officer. If this is done we hope the officer will be sufficient of a gentleman to put a summary stop to what is no more than an expression of stupid bigotry.

We are asked to announce that a meeting of the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. will be held in the Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram-street, at 12 o'clock to-day (December 6). The subject for discussion will be Mr. J. T. Lloyd's paper on "Nietzsche." Admission is free.

The December number of the *English Review* contains an important article on "Socialism, Materialism, and War," signed by H. H. Hyndman and H. E. Belfort Bax. The review copy has not reached us yet.

We feel there is a great deal in the following resolutions of the Humanitarian League that is worthy of consideration. We also feel that very little publicity will be given them in the ordinary press in the present state of affairs, which is our main reason for inserting them here:—

(1) Upon whatsoever Government the immediate responsibility shall rest by the verdict of history, the ultimate cause of the outbreak of war will be found to be much deeper than the action of this or that nation during the last few weeks which preceded it, for that cause lies in the ideas and methods common to all European nations. An international system based upon selfishness, and upon the exploitation of the weaker by the stronger, is always liable to produce the results from which we are at present suffering.

(2) Atrocities which have occurred are not wholly the outcome of any particular way waging war, but are to a large extent inherent in what is known as a state of war.

(3) The expression 'Civilised Warfare' is a contradiction in terms. War is necessarily brutal and dehumanising. What is needed is not the destruction of this or that European military system, but of any system, by whatsoever nation maintained, which makes aggressive war possible for any purpose.

(4) Assuming that the present war, and the participation in it of Great Britain, were alike inevitable and just, the attitude of many British people with reference to it, now it has broken out, is much to be regretted. As instances, the Committee specially note the private compulsion of men to enlist; the clamor for the indiscriminate treatment of aliens—even when naturalised—as potential spies and combatants, especially when it takes the form of calling for the discharge on to the streets, penniless and friendless, of boys and girls, regardless of what may become of them; the indecent eagerness to capture enemies' trade, even at the risk of depriving individual aliens of their livelihood. These, and other proceedings which might be mentioned, discredit Great Britain in the eyes of belligerents and neutrals alike."

Atheism and the War.

THERE is a certain clergyman—his name is F. C. Spurr, and he is, I think, a Baptist by occupation, although his particular brand is of no moment—whose great occupation in life appears to be that of killing Atheism. This, it may be said, is the occupation of all clergymen, and so it is, but this parson sets to work in a cold-blooded and deliberate way that almost places him in a class by himself. He announces beforehand that he is going to do it, then he goes away and does it (I am relying upon his own statements for this), finally he returns and invites people to come along and inspect what he alleges to be the corpse. The only criticism ever offered on such occasion comes from the corpse—which the bad taste of Atheism permits to the end. But Mr. Spurr is unaffected. He publicly buries Atheism—and then straightway sets out to kill it over again. He reminds me very strongly of Mark Twain's coroner who held an inquest on an Egyptian mummy, and charged compound interest from the time of Moses.

Some years ago Mr. Spurr heard there was a deal of Atheism in Australia. His crusading spirit was aroused, and he left for the Antipodes, publicly announcing that one object of his visit was to stem the tide of unbelief there. He went, he preached, he returned, and Australian unbelief does not appear to have been seriously affected by his campaign. Then he returned to England; and one of his earliest discoveries here was that "Rationalism" was bankrupt; and in the course of a very muddle-headed article in the *Baptist Times* he offered proofs—or rather *proof*, because only one was given. Forty thousand pounds had just been raised for the Y.M.C.A., and, said Mr. Spurr, Freethought organisations were crying out for funds. Could there be any doubt that Freethought was once more dying? The proof was absolutely convincing—to Mr. Spurr. An institution that could raise £40,000 must have

something in it. And other clergymen agreed. A fortieth part of that sum would have convinced them.

Now, once more Mr. Spurr has turned up with his usual song of victory over an enemy that he is never tired of killing, and which is, apparently, never tired of being killed. This time it is on the subject of "Atheism and the War," and he makes two discoveries, each of which cancels the other. That is what one would expect from Mr. Spurr. Most writers, even though they may be wrong in what they write, manage to keep consistently wrong for at least a single article. Mr. Spurr is above such juvenile consistency. That a paragraph shall be consistent with itself is, apparently, all he demands of himself. For a whole article to be consistent with itself would be absurd; it might be even dangerous, for some people might suspect Mr. Spurr of being tainted with "Rationalism," or even Atheism. And if any popular preacher can say, in the spirit of the parson who thanked God there had never been a pleasant Sunday afternoon in his church, "Thank God, I have never tried to rule my life by Reason," it is Mr. Spurr.

Atheism is responsible for the War. That is the first of Mr. Spurr's discoveries. The War will probably kill the Rationalist propaganda. That is the second, and they are both equally true. How does Mr. Spurr find out that Atheism is the cause of the War? The Czar of Russia, the German Emperor, the King of England, the Emperor of Austria, are all Christians. There is no doubt of that. The vast majority of the people in all the countries engaged in the War are Christian. There is no doubt of that either. Does Mr. Spurr mean that the minority of Atheists have been powerful enough to plunge the world into one of the greatest wars in history? If so, what becomes of the powerlessness and ineffectiveness of Atheism? You really can't have it both ways. Even Mr. Spurr should be able to see that if he sticks to the one thesis he must give up the other.

It all, apparently, turns on two men—Nietzsche and Bernhardt. Mr. Spurr, it will be observed belongs to that class of profound thinkers who believe that a nation can be plunged into a war such as the present by a single individual. And, of course, when a man believes that he ought to be able to believe anything. Individuals *express* social tendencies; they do not create them. Clever, strong personalities take advantage of these tendencies, but the fact that they can utilise them proves that they are dealing with forces that lie beyond their own personality. And the very people who place the responsibility for the War on the Kaiser are the ones who also point out that this military tendency in Germany dates back to at least the time of Frederick the Great. Germany, they say, was always the same at bottom. This may or may not be true; but, if it is true, away goes the theory that Germany has been led into this War by the Kaiser. If he can do what he is credited with doing in Germany, then we may be quite sure that he represents the dominant tendency of German life. The only real leaders of a people are those who represent them—not merely in the political sense, but in the deepest sense of all.

This, however, I am afraid, will be lost on Mr. Spurr, so I return to his indictment. It is Nietzsche and Bernhardt who are responsible for the War. Nietzsche was unquestionably an Atheist, and Mr. Spurr admits that there is a good deal to be said for him in the character of a pacifist. More, "It would not be just to his memory to saddle him with the direct responsibility for the War." But after Nietzsche comes Bernhardt, and he—although Mr. Spurr does not say so—was a Christian. On the contrary, he calls him—no matter what he called himself—"an Atheist, a hard Materialist, an Anti-Christian." He translated into militarist language what Nietzsche preached as a philosopher. War is to him "a biological necessity," and "both Bernhardt and Nietzsche crystallised into severe forms

the Atheism which, for a generation, has cursed German life."

Now, I am not defending this thesis of Bernhardt, that war is a biological necessity, and without it a race grows decadent. I do not believe it, and have often given my reasons for thinking it false. But why saddle Atheism with this teaching? Why even blame the German, Bernhardt, more than other militarist writers in every other country? For instance, here is an American, General Homer Lea:—

"As physical vigor represents the strength of man in his struggle for existence, in the same sense military vigor constitutes the strength of nations; ideals, laws, and constitutions are but temporary effulgences.....The deterioration of the military force and the consequent destruction of the militant spirit have been concurrent with national decay."

From Mr. Roosevelt:—

"In this world the nation that is trained to a career of unwarlike and isolated ease is bound to go down in the end before other nations which have not lost the manly and adventurous qualities."

Lord Roberts, widely enlogised as an ideal Christian soldier, declared, almost in the words of Bernhardt, that "War prevents decadence and effeminacy." And Canon Knox Little denies that war, as war, is wrong:—

"Christ's approval of the military profession admitted of no contradiction.....When speaking of war as not being forbidden by Christianity, but commended in its proper place, it must be remembered that the history of nations was the history of their wars, and that nations were the creation of God's providence.....War might only be the means, under God, of reforming corrupt communities, and of clearing out what was evil and bad. It was God's scourge, God's writing in the temple."

Now, what is all this but Bernhardt's teaching pure and simple? What is the teaching of men like Spenser Wilkinson and other militarists in England, America, and France, but identical with Bernhardt's "War is a biological necessity"? And what of the scores of sermons preached since the War opened, extolling the military as a school of virtue, and without which certain virtues could only exist in an attenuated form? The truth was properly summed up by the late Professor William James: "Without any exception known to me, militarist authors take a highly mystical view of the subject, and regard war as a biological or sociological necessity." That is militarism; and it is, unfortunately, not confined to Germany. It is there in a more pronounced, and therefore more dangerous, form than elsewhere; but it exists wherever a militarist party is; and that we have a militarist party in this country none but fools or knaves will deny.

Bernhardt said that war is a biological necessity. This is quite false, and irretrievably stupid, since it is not the biologically fittest that survive in war, but the biologically unfittest. We deliberately select the fittest for the firing line, and keep the unfit at home. This is so plain that it is puzzling to see how the military mind—dull as it is—could escape its realisation. But, as a mere matter of fact, we have had since this War began, and in practically all the pulpits of this country, Bernhardt's doctrine taught under another form. We have been told by preacher after preacher, and writer after writer, that war is a great school of virtue. It develops sacrifice, love of country, devotion to duty, loyalty to comrade, etc., etc. Well, if all this is so, we are really saying that war is a psychological and sociological necessity. We are saying that the nations that go to war will increase in these virtues, and that without war these qualities will decay. Substitute "psychological" or "sociological" for "biological," and we have Bernhardt's formula repeated and endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the clergy of Britain. And the one formula is as false as the other. War does not develop the higher psychical qualities any more than it develops the biologically fittest. War utilises qualities that have been developed by other means. Man is not made better by warfare; its in-

evitable and invariable outcome is demoralisation—even when war is unavoidable. If Mr. Spurr and the rest of the clergy have wisdom enough to see this, and courage enough to say it, they can make an honest attack on Bernhardt. But until that occurs they are all supporters of the Bernhardt doctrine.

But what has all this to do with Atheism? Mr. Spurr admits that "many professed materialists and militarists and Rationalists are ardent pacifists," and, if he knows anything of the European Peace movement, he must also know that an overwhelming majority of European Freethinkers are anti-militarists. In this country, I should say that Freethinkers are anti-militarists to a man. Suppose Christians in anything like the same proportion had been anti-militarist; should we in that case now be in the midst of a great war? Such a result is inconceivable. In spite of all the froth and fume of Mr. Spurr, there is that solid fact before him. The overwhelming majority of Freethinkers are always in favor of peace; the overwhelming majority of Christians are always ready for war. How else would war be possible? How else would it be possible for the people of Germany, of Russia, and even of England, to manifest, not merely a readiness for war, but to so glory in it. Compare the pomp of the funeral of Lord Roberts, and the universal eulogies paid his memory, with the manner in which Britain buries a great thinker, and you may see the *genuine* sentiments of a Christianised public. C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

A Chapter of My Autobiography.

THE SECULAR CHARTER.—II.

THE Secular Society, Limited, being registered without a hitch, much to the disgust of certain ill-tempered pessimists, a good deal of preparatory work had to be done before it could be properly launched on the ocean of life. Despite the fact that the first year's subscription was ten shillings, we got some hundred and fifty members together: Miss E. M. Vance was appointed Secretary, and I was quite naturally elected Chairman of the first Board of Directors. It was understood that I should do my utmost to keep all the Directors members of the National Secular Society, so that there might be no collision or collision of interest; an object in which I am happy to say I have always succeeded.

During the summer months following the registration of the Society I was very active on the Free Press Defence Committee, and when I settled down I found I had excited the interest of a financier, Mr. Henry Hess, editor, and I believe owner, of the *Critic*. He was good enough to call me "a man of strong personality and great ability," but I was apparently all the more dangerous on that account.

Mr. Hess argued, however, that I might reasonably be asked questions respecting the Secular Society I had incorporated. He contended that I "asked people" to support it, and that this gave the Press the right to be inquisitive. But did I ask "people" for support? I asked the Secular party only, and solely through the columns of the *Freethinker*. Nevertheless, as this is perhaps a point which is open to discussion, I will deal with what Mr. Hess said about the Secular Society, Limited.

Mr. Hess admitted that the National Secular Society "lacked specific provision for possible sources of income—legacies and the like." I am in a position to add that thousands of pounds were lost to our movement in this way. This, indeed, was my chief reason for devising a scheme which would practically circumvent the Blasphemy Laws, at least as they were universally interpreted before the judgment of Lord Coleridge on the occasion of my trial in the Court of Queen's Bench. Incidentally, of course, the Incorporated Society involves certain other advantages. It does place both work and funds on a

basis of legal security; and the fact that I, and I alone, had provided the Secular party with this legal instrument is a sufficient answer to those who affirmed, either honestly or malignantly, that I desired to profit by a state of illegality and confusion.

I have now to say that I hope Mr. Hess studied the Memorandum and Articles of other Companies more profoundly than he had studied those of the Secular Society, Limited. He stated that the Society "had this week [Sept.] taken definite form." As a matter of fact, which can be verified at Somerset House, I registered the Society on May 27. It is also alleged that I gave it "much booming in the columns of the *Freethinker*." Where else could, or should, I boom it? And why should I not boom it? Is it not my duty to use the *Freethinker* for the promotion of an object of transcendent importance to the Freethought party? Mr. Hess allowed that he could "find no particular fault with the prospectus of the Secular Society, Limited," and then he proceeded to find fault with some of the very provisions which are its highest merits. That as to the admission of members he described as "curious"—a word so elastic as to be quite unintelligible in this connection. Now what is this provision? Intending members have to be proposed and seconded in writing, and admitted by the Board of Directors, who are elected at the Annual Members' Meeting. Surely this is the veriest common-sense. It excludes no one who ought to be included. I may add that not a single application had yet been rejected. Mr. Hess also applied the word "curious" to the "absence of dividend," but this only showed that he had not grasped the elementary principles of the scheme. By providing that no member, as such, is to derive any sort of profit from the Society, by way of interest, bonus, dividend, or otherwise, all the advantages of a trust are secured. The funds must be used, absolutely and entirely, in promoting the objects set forth in the Memorandum of Association, and those objects include all the essentials of Secularism. It was easy for Mr. Hess to sneer at "altruistic" language, but what else did he expect in the prospectus of a non-commercial Society, established for impersonal ends? Certainly the language of the prospectus is of severe simplicity. It passed the careful and protracted examination of a thoroughly competent solicitor, and the close criticism of an eminent counsel.

I confess I did not understand Mr. Hess's remarks on "allusions to the property" of the Society. He said that this was a "trifle premature," and that the Society "apparently had no property, nor seemed likely to have any." Now this was worse than "premature." How did Mr. Hess know that the Society would never have any property? How could he tell whether Freethinkers would or would not leave it substantial bequests, or give it substantial donations? To my knowledge several Freethinkers had already put the Society in their wills for legacies which are substantial enough in the eyes of a comparatively poor party. Mr. Hess further sneered at the allusions to debts and liabilities as perhaps "sadly prophetic." But he knew very well that such allusions were inevitable. They were necessary formalities in a document that must contain provision for every possible contingency. Such criticism was really a waste of words.

One great advantage of this Incorporated Society was glimpsed by Mr. Hess. It established "an unimpeachable trust" for receiving, holding, and expending money for Freethought purposes; and if I have achieved nothing else for our party, I am entitled to a little gratitude for this. Not only have funds been guarded by legal security, which no one will infringe, either without or within, but Freethought leaders will be largely relieved from the possibility of certain sinister accusations. Bradlaugh received several personal legacies in his time, and it was always open to anyone to say or insinuate what could not, from the nature of the case, be

disproved, that such legacies were *meant* for party purposes.

Soon afterwards, when the Society settled down at its registered office in the Strand, I wrote an Open Letter to Mr. Justice Wills in the *Freethinker* on his imprisonment of one of the Peculiar People for obeying the Bible. I was asked to allow it to be printed as a pamphlet for general distribution. I gave permission for this to be done, and it *was* done—gratuitously, as far as I was concerned. Yet the editor of the *Critic* referred to it as "Mr. Foote's commencement of the exploitation of the Secular Society, Limited." Mr. Hess appears to have thought I was of the same nature as himself. He has "done time" himself since then, but it was for a worse crime than "blasphemy."

Some enemies and traducers of the Society forget that I never was exactly an ass. It would not have occurred to me to supplement one illegal (or rather non-legal) society by another. What I wanted (how many times must I say this?) was legal security and nothing else. It is suggested that *my* law, and my law *only*, stands at the Society's basis. Mr. Hess was not caught with that nonsense. He admitted that the Secular Society, Ltd., constituted "an unimpeachable trust."

The fact is, as I told my readers at the time, that Mr. Thomas Harper, the solicitor who aided me in giving the project legal form, had helped me afterwards in obtaining eminent counsel's opinion (Mr. Brett). Two or three alterations were made at his suggestion, and then he gave us, in writing, his opinion that the scheme would stand at law. He could not be absolute and peremptory, because there was no precedent; but short of that his own opinion was distinctly in favor of the scheme's legality.

(To be concluded.) G. W. FOOTE.

The Touch of a Snake.

SOMETIMES strange difficulties obtrude upon the man who seeks to see Humanity living a reasonable life. There are times when all his ideals fall into the mire; times when it seems as if the ugly in Nature were really the predominant factor; as if the brute in man were unconquerable, and the ideas that sparkled like stars in the darkness of his dreams only the fireflies of thought.

It is as if some unknown Goddess with cold and deathlike face, whose lips are set hard with cynicism, and whose metallic voice sounds like an echo, had come from the innermost recesses of Nature to bid him cease fooling. He lives in a fool's paradise, she says. He romances, thinking himself a prophet, the harbinger of good tidings of great joy to men. He has metamorphosed the values of Nature and rejoices in absurdities. He worships man as the master of things, forgetting the awful majesty of the flea. He glorifies reason while the blood of his veins is lustful. Around Humanity he hangs the cloak of communal brotherhood, while in the deeps of his heart there lies the instinct for fighting. Striving to subdue Nature, he forgets he is but a minute part of the whole. He is a fool-man, even when most rational.

Petrifying his desires and chilling his longings, the visitant departs. She has stricken his enthusiasm with palsy, and his mental life has become as the skeleton of a leaf. The fire of his spirit has burned out in her presence. With her coming and going the vision has changed. Where once he saw a luxuriant Humanity living the life of his dreams, he sees now only the cold nude body of the unknown Goddess. The lightless eyes have cast a sense of desolation upon his mind. The closed lips, about which played no lively lines of affection, have impinged upon him a feeling of repugnance. Into his heart creeps a sorrow-sickness; and hopelessness, grimly repellent though it be, forces his soul into the

depths of stagnation. He shudders; for a snake has touched him.

And then, after a while, he begins slowly to wonder. Looking out, in broad prospect, over the vast plane of Nature named Humanity, he sees things that have often amazed him, and have often fanned the flame of endeavor in his heart. Priceless energy and effort he sees being poured profusely into the mass, to be swallowed up and lost. Sacrifice, terribly tragic, too intense to be recorded in words, he sees—individual sacrifice that should bear some fruit; but the human portion of Nature seems as relentlessly morally, immobile as the inhuman. Lives are being immolated on the altars of causes. For what? The drops in the ocean of Humanity are but drops, and the ocean itself is but an infinitesimal part of Nature.

A few scattered drops would move the mass! What nobility of nature! What egoism! What conceit! What cheek!

But the determination of the endeavor is no flickering emotion; it is steadfast, keen, obdurate, and convincing. It is no spasmodic outflowing of heated fancy, nor is it fever bred by folly. Thought pits itself against overpowering odds, and yet retains a native royalty that brooks no taunt of foolishness. Ideas suffer no obstacle to daunt them, no barrier to retard them, no apparent self-insignificance to make them cower. Against the whole force of Nature an idea never quails; and those men and women drops in the little ocean of Humanity possess a magnificence that makes their folly serious, the magnificence of thought. So he once imagined; but now his old dreams float wearily upon a sea of stricken visions. Everything is cold.

Courage unexampled in military histories, bravery that no soldier ever rivalled, daring unparalleled in national myth, he sees; and there is no song sung for the courageous. The little people who do the great deeds and think the great thoughts are the fools of Nature, doing and saying vainly the things wise men say are of the future. Animated by a passionate earnestness, they struggle against the inevitable, and are laughed at and mocked by those they would serve. Enthused by dream-zeal, they toil to open the minds of the average; they labor to widen the safety-valve of Nature; and the average looks and listens, but never moves. They are fighting Nature as man never fought man, and the great mother of men performs not one cycle more nor less. She regards the endeavor indifferently; for they, too, are but detail parts of her, and their ministrations have no more or no less importance than the workings of the meanest parasite.

His mind quickly travels over his knowledge of the history of man. Back in the misty regions he sees development. One modification in an æon of time, one step forward in a span whose terminals cannot be marked, one advance with a thousand new disadvantages, he sees. And then, after many gradations, man was as he is, the plaything of customs that had grown around him, customs full of the forces of Nature, social habits that gave power to the strong and slavery to the weak, that segregated Humanity, like the animals and plants, into factions whose life-interests were and are antagonistic. There is no glimmer of hope there.

Heroically have the fools striven to subdue the forces that kept Humanity within the bounds of its shores. Grandly have they struggled to widen and deepen the one little portion of Nature that seemed to them to matter. Admirably have they assailed the average, attempting to impregnate it with ideas that would extend its operations into a presumed more glorious joy. Far back into the picturescope of human history he sees men who, for an instant, raised their heads above the waves, and their voices above the noise of the waters, calling upon their fellow-men to think and be free. But it was only for an instant; for the waters soon engulfed them, and he could see no signs of change in the vast ocean of Humanity.

The shades have melted for him into a normal. Environments, customs, nationalities, colors, have faded into an average. Physical and mental strength have merged into calmness. Good and evil have fallen into negation. The ugly and the beautiful have no value. Time characteristics have dropped away, leaving only a dull level. He sees no purpose in anything; and man's puny purpose is a thing to be scorned, so foolish is it in this great unethical mass of turgid mankind.

In the transmogrification the knowledge and enthusiasm of the so-called pioneers, all their bravery and labors and spirit and passion, become as falling pieces of glass in a river; and the irrationality against which they fight sinks like a heavy stone into the ocean.

Man cannot rise above Nature's limitations, her averages. The depth and perspicacity of his mind are the shallowness of his dreams, and the reaches of his heart but the little tottering steps of a child who cannot grow up. Between the greatest thought and the meanest physical necessity the distance can never be measured; there is none. Between the ape-man and the civilisee the difference is one of imagination; the natural values are the same. Best and worst are but nightmares, or the two sides of the tinted bubble of morality, the air-bell of many colors that is never still, the diaphanous globe of ethic conceit that a breath of wind from the forest past can blow out.

And so he raved to himself in his own way, as so many people are raving in their own way in these days of unclothed barbarism. War had not much affected him physically; but in his mind was the picture of the Goddess, and in his heart was the hopeless sadness she had brought; and the sense of failure and a touch of cynicism were there to keep it company. And there were times when he shivered as if a snake had touched him.

ROBERT MORELAND.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOV. 26.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Bowman, Brandes, Cohen, Cunningham, Davey, Judge, Lazzarick, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Thurlow, Wood, and Miss Kough.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted to the Society.

After the transaction of routine business, the proposed issue of a pamphlet in relation to the War was discussed, and the President expressed himself as not altogether satisfied with the MS. It was concluded that the best interests of peace could not be served by writings advocating peace whilst this terrible war was in progress. Many suggestions were made as to the issue of tracts on the various aspects of the War, and it was finally decided to delay the publication.

The discussion then turned upon the liberty of the press, and the following resolution was passed:—

"That this meeting protests against the Censorship being operated in England, at her own expense, and by her own delegated authority, as if she were a conquered country."

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

Nurse (to moribund patient): "Why won't you take the brandy the doctor ordered? Surely you can lay aside your teetotal scruples at such a time as this."

Patient (to parson—faintly): "Do you think the angels 'll smell it in my breath?"

Willy: "Do animals go to heaven, parson?"

Parson Goodman: "No, William, probably not—or, at least, we have no reason to think so."

Willy: "Then the milk and honey in heaven must be canned goods, I suppose."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Bunham's, 56 Richmond-road, Barnsbury): Monday, Dec. 7, at 8, Business Meeting—*Re* Next Season's Lecturers, etc.

COUNTRY.

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THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

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