

THE Freethinker

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There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public.—WILLIAM HAZLITT.

Advent.

THIS is the first day of the fourth Ember Week in the year, or, speaking ecclesiastically, of the first Ember Week in the new year, and the loyal members of the Anglican Church are commanded to fast during this week, especially on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. This is also the middle of Advent, the first season of the ecclesiastical year, including the four Sundays immediately preceding Christmas, instituted as a special preparation for the Feast of the Nativity. Ember Week suffices modern Christians to get ready for the proper celebration of that supreme event, though their forefathers in the Middle Ages needed to fast for the whole of the season. Advent was then as strictly observed as Lent, all places of amusement and entertainment being severely closed. How different things were in ancient Greece! The Festival of Dionysus at Athens was celebrated at the theatre adjoining his temple. On such an occasion theatre-attending was an act of worship. From the first, Christianity has frowned upon innocent pleasure, and insisted upon the observance of frequent periods of fasting, humiliation, and repentance. One would have thought that Advent would have been a time of unbounded rejoicing; but instead of that it has been, and is, ecclesiastically a period to wear sackcloth and to repent in dust and ashes. In spite of themselves, often, parsons are professional kill-joys. Only the other day a prominent Nonconformist minister said, "I am a good bit of the Puritan, and dancing does not appeal to me." Not long ago children were not allowed to play on Christmas Day, the gladdest day in all the year, it was alleged, except Easter Sunday.

The idea of devoting four weeks to the commemoration of an event said to have happened nearly two thousand years ago strikes one as irresistibly comical; and yet ministers of all denominations are just now delivering what they call Advent sermons, the object of which is to convince the hearers afresh that a supernatural birth did actually occur nearly two millenniums ago, the belief in which is admitted to be contrary to nature. Left to their own inclinations, the people would ere long drop the belief altogether. The mission of the clerical profession is to restrain the natural proclivities of human nature, and to form within it anti-natural habits. The more enlightened among the clergy are perfectly aware of the truth of that statement, and so they throw dust into the eyes of their hearers by speaking of the nativity stories as "art and poetry." But what the preacher describes sophistically as "art and poetry," the ordinary listener regards either as literal fact or as fiction. Common sense declares authoritatively that the event occurred or did not occur; and if it did not occur, what on earth is the use of calling it "art and poetry"? while if it did happen it is not "art and poetry." The vital point, however, is that if the supernatural birth of Jesus did not actually take place, the Gospel Jesus must be dismissed as a

myth. Some other Jesus, born in the ordinary way, may have lived and taught, though we have no means whatever of knowing anything about him. Dean Inge naturally holds a brief for the historicity of the superhuman Gospel Jesus, but ludicrous in the extreme is his attempt to establish his historicity. It is frankly admitted that a considerable portion of the Gospel Jesus' message was entirely falsified by the event. He fully shared the superstitious beliefs of his time, and never once rose above them. He entertained wholly erroneous views as to his own future, and indulged in prophecies that have never found fulfilment. There is now a theological school which avowedly holds that the substance of the teaching of Jesus was of that mistaken nature, all the rest being "stop-gap morality, or invented by the Church later." As reported in the *Christian World* for December 3, Dean Inge said:—

"That theory was sedulously, though insidiously, advocated by men who called themselves Christians, and threatened to trip us up whenever we went to the Gospels for spiritual guidance. Arguing against this view, Dr. Inge said it was a psychological impossibility that 'a deluded prophet' could have given us incidentally a rule of life which humanity has ever since accepted as a perfect morality and an example which we all feel to be the ideal perfection of human nature."

The Dean proceeded to discuss these predictions of Jesus, "the failure of which might have been expected to discredit him who uttered them"; but, true to his cloth, when confronted by a formidable difficulty, the very reverend gentleman fled for refuge to what he called "the spiritual interpretation" of such predictions. That is the coward's city of refuge, and, beholding him taking his flight thereinto, the genuine critic can only laugh in his sleeves. The theologian's game is up when recourse is had to "art and poetry" and "spiritual interpretation." It is a ruse to cover a retreat.

Dean Inge has no right to throw the responsibility of his theological foibles on the shoulders of humanity. It is utterly false to say that humanity has accepted the rule of life given by Jesus as a perfect morality. It is a well-attested fact that a larger percentage of mankind has adopted the rule of life elaborated by the Buddha as a perfect morality. Even Christendom approves of Christian morality only in theory, not in practice. In theory, nothing is easier than to eulogise the Sermon on the Mount, as a well-known divine recently did with moving eloquence. He dwelt with enraptured delight upon its spontaneity, beauty, and truth; but he knows as well as we do that in practice it is the dearest of dead letters. Christendom completely ignores it. Dr. T. R. Glover has just delivered a lecture at Cambridge on "Christianity and War," in the course of which he explained that "the question of the relation between Christianity and war was to him really a question of Christ and war." He is reported as having spoken thus:—

"Could the speaker of such words as Matthew v. 39, 'Resist not him that is evil,' endorse war? Does society's dependence on war invalidate Jesus Christ? We are living in a world of fact, and the ultimate test of any opinion is its correspondence with the world of experience. We believe that the facts of life and experience are of God's ordinance, that our progress depends on getting into touch with the whole body of God's facts. The question is, Does Jesus Christ clash

with our experience, negative all the facts we know about race and nationality, or does he help them?"

Assuming the accuracy of the report, we are bound to affirm that Dr. Glover has put his foot in it very nicely. We are told that it is impossible for Christ to endorse war. Then we are assured that "the facts of life and experience are of God's ordinance." It logically follows that war, being beyond doubt a grim fact of life and experience, is of God's ordinance, and that, consequently, on the subject of war God and Christ are at loggerheads. Christ's teaching does incontrovertibly clash with our experience and negative all the facts we know about race and nationality. Judging him by the Sermon on the Mount nothing can be clearer than that Jesus is an uncompromising enemy of war, but judging him by society's perpetual dependence on war, we must pronounce him unquestionably and most utterly invalidated.

We rejoice to learn that Dr. Campbell Morgan is now slowly progressing towards complete recovery from his severe attack of typhoid fever, but regret to find that he is as incorrigibly superstitious and illogical as ever. From his sick-bed he has sent a Christmas message to his people at Westminster Chapel, in which the following passage occurs:—

"The Incarnation is the supreme demonstration of the fact of the government of God in his universe, and assures us that God will not be defeated, whatever forces may be ranged against his kingdom. Therefore, never were we so glad for Christmas."

It is the same old story in practically the same old words. Dr. Morgan has assured us again and again that with him facts have not a feather's weight against his belief in the absolute sovereignty of God. While unwaveringly holding that faith, he is not prepared to speak of the fact of war as being of God's ordinance. War is of the Devil, not of God; but as long as the Devil exists and engineers wars, God's sovereignty cannot be absolute. But, assuming its absolute character, in what way was Christ's advent in the flesh its supreme demonstration? What has he ever said or done to prove that God "doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth"? Most emphatically we claim that he has never reigned as the Prince of Peace; never drawn all men unto himself in fulfilment of his own prophecy; never set his enemies under his feet; and never made the difference in the world which his self-styled ambassadors so glowingly depict. In other words, his predicted saviorhood, his reign in righteousness and love, his conquest over all the fell forces of evil, all have been, and are, but beautiful dreams of the over-credulous, dreams that are no nearer to coming true to-day than they were nineteen hundred years ago.

With all these significant facts before us, we have no choice but to relegate the lovely story of the Advent to the limbo of all forlorn hopes and discredited theories. Numerous beyond computation are such adverts in ancient mythology, and the Christian story differs on no essential point from all the others. They all belong, without distinction, to the same category. Neither Dean Inge, nor all the divines combined, can alter that fact. It is indelibly engraved upon the face of the Nature of Things. Nature knows nothing of either Father to send or Son to be sent. Her only great Advent is the advent of the sun from one hemisphere to the other once a year, and this advent for the North occurs this month, and is laden with all the sweet promises of spring, and the rich and glad fulfilments of summer. The depressing gloom of winter now receives notice to quit, a notice that has never yet been disregarded. Neither war nor peace either delays or hastens the processes of the sun. Nature never breaks her word, is never a second behind time, never disappoints those who intelligently wait upon her.

J. T. LLOYD.

Atheism and the War.—II.

(Concluded from p. 779.)

MR. SPURR affects great jubilancy over the decline of Freethought, the terrible straits in which Freethought journals find themselves, and the increase of religion; all, it must be remembered, owing to the War. I shall not waste time and effort by calling on Mr. Spurr to prove the truth of these statements, because I am certain he would not attempt to do so; and I am also certain that he would fail if he did attempt it. To take only one instance. I suppose the *Freethinker* has stood the shock of the War as well as any paper in Great Britain—and better than most. Scores of papers have suspended publication altogether. Others have considerably reduced their size, or the number of pages, in order to curtail expenses. The *Methodist Times*, to take one example out of many, dropped from about twenty-four pages weekly to eight pages. Personally, I should not dream of twitting the *Methodist Times* with this. But the *Freethinker* has at least maintained itself both as regards quantity and quality, in spite of the War. And the real reason for this is that the overwhelming majority of its readers do not belong to a flighty class that has its interests completely divorced from serious intellectual matters, even by the shock of a great war.

I am not going to seriously contest any of Mr. Spurr's statements about the decline of Freethought. That, of course, could be done, and has been done. I purpose exhibiting on a different plan this gentleman's muddled state of mind. I think it can be shown that, assuming Mr. Spurr to be right about the growth of religion and the decline of Freethought as a consequence of the War, that would be a compliment to Freethought and to the discredited of religion. Instead of gloating over it, Mr. Spurr ought to be ashamed of it—that is, if Mr. Spurr were someone else with a more rational brain and more intelligible principles. One need only give him enough rope for the proverbial consequence to follow.

Mr. Spurr rejects with loathing Bernhardt's teaching that war is a "biological necessity." So do I; although it is only what scores of people in this country have been teaching for years, and what the bulk of the clergy are teaching under another form from the pulpit to-day. For all the eulogies of the military life to which we are treated, the sermons and writings pointing out that by war people are taught duty and loyalty to their country, devotion to each other, and a readiness to sacrifice self in the service of others, are only the Bernhardt doctrine in other forms. Bernhardt said—as Lord Roberts said—that a nation cannot keep biologically fit without war. The others, who are cursing Bernhardt, say that society cannot keep morally and mentally fit without war. The one thesis is only a variant of the other. If one stands the other stands. If one is false the other is false.

Now, I will assume that Mr. Spurr is rational enough to agree with me thus far. I will assume in rejecting Bernhardt's teaching that war is a biological necessity he also believes that a state of war does not make men more humane, more considerate, more responsive to the higher ethical and intellectual obligations. He need not look very far for proof of this. Theoretically, it does not appear very likely that man develops kindness by shooting, stabbing, throwing bombs, or firing great cannons. Theoretically, it would seem that war cannot even create courage and a sense of duty, since it is upon courage and a sense of duty that warfare depends. War may call for the exercise of these qualities, but they must be bred apart from war, and—of equal significance—maintained apart from war. For the striking fact is, that human nature, being what it is, cannot stand the strain of war without being demoralised. Soldiers long at war may become careless of hardships, but they also become careless of other things. The final and conclusive count against militarism is

Every church cries: "believe and give."—*Ingersoll*.

that it cannot even maintain the qualities that make militarism—for a time—possible. It is parasitic through and through.

So much for theory. From the practical side the evidence is just as conclusive. Germany, we are told, is seething with hatred of England. The statement may be true enough, and it is, therefore, not very strong evidence of the purifying effect of war on the Germans. I do not think the hatred of Germany in England is so intense that we could say England was seething with hatred of the Germans; but it is here. People hate Germans who never hated them before, and those that did, cherish a still stronger hatred. People's minds are, quite naturally, filled with war. We accept the slaughter of thousands of the enemy with glee, we hail it—if we are religious—as an example of God's goodness to us. Evidently the War does not make for kindness of disposition in England. But beyond welcoming the death of our enemies, there are the deaths of our friends, of our sons, brothers, parents. At the beginning of the War the first list of casualties was received with horror. Then we began to get used to it. We take our daily dose of thousands killed and wounded over our breakfast as quite a matter of course. We are, of course, sorry that such things should be, but we are getting accustomed to it. The War is hardening us at home, as it hardens those who are doing the actual fighting. Meanwhile, the higher life of the country is, if not at a standstill, seriously retarded. Social reform is stopped. Publishers will not issue books of a serious character; there is no public for them, they say, until the War is over. We have the lower elements in command of the field.

Wartime is, then, a period of demoralisation, and, ultimately, of degradation. Either that is so, or Bernhardt is right, and war is really essential to the health of a nation. I ought to say, by way of interjection and to prevent misrepresentation, that accepting the truth of what has been said above does not mean either that England was not justified in going to war, or that no one should volunteer to do the fighting. That is quite a different position. A particular war may be inevitable; a country being at war, it may be anyone's duty, or everyone's duty, to take a hand in the fighting, since we are all part of the same society, and must share in its profit or its loss. All it means is that we shall recognise, clearly and distinctly, from whatever cause a war may exist, whether it be our fault or someone else's, or the fault of both combined, that war demoralises, it degrades, it sacrifices the higher to the lower. It does not even take away from the respect one may feel, and ought to feel, for the many thousands of young men going to the War in response to what they believe to be the call of duty. It only means that we recognise here, also, while some young men may pass through the ordeal comparatively uninjured—mentally and morally—none are made better by it. War involves a coarsening and a hardening here as elsewhere.

I need not labor the point further. Under penalty of accepting Bernhardt's teaching, Mr. Spurr is bound to believe that warfare involves a process of hardening, of coarsening, of demoralisation, and of degradation. If he does not believe this, all his fulminations against militarism are so much bombastic insincerity.

Now, Mr. Spurr claims, and it is very unekilful for an advocate, and dangerous for a Christian minister, that during the time that higher things of life are in abeyance, and the national taste and temper is undergoing a progressive coarsening, "men who have not darkened the doors of churches for years are now appearing at services for intercession. It is easier for many men to preach than it was a year ago"; there is abroad "an atmosphere more congenial for worship and prayer." Now, I am not saying this is not so, although I have only Mr. Spurr's word for it. But, if it is true, what follows? Mr. Spurr draws from this the conclusion that Atheism has broken down. Well, when he brings forward Atheists who have been converted, we may

pay attention to him. What really does follow from this creation of a favorable atmosphere for worship and prayer, is that religion tends to flourish in any period when the higher ethical and intellectual aspects of life are undergoing an eclipse. That is where our preacher really lands himself in the end.

And I, as an Atheist, as one who has devoted himself to the propaganda of Freethought, am not inclined to seriously disagree with him. So long as this War continues on its present basis, I do not expect to see any considerable growth of Freethought. I do not anticipate any losses; but neither do I anticipate any gains worth bothering about. We shall mainly be marking time. After the War there will be a different tale to tell. With a healthier social atmosphere, with men and women whose minds are free to play round questions that involve the higher aspects of life, Freethought will once more go forward. This War, great as it is, will not write *finis* to civilisation. Its advance will only be arrested.

But, I repeat, I am not inclined seriously to disagree with the position that when the tone of social life is lowered, religion gains ground. I would even go farther and say, that if you could get the social state, by a process of retrogression, low enough, and maintain it in that condition long enough, Freethought would die out. If it will give Mr. Spurr any comfort, I am not only pointing out that Freethought is theoretically vulnerable, but I am indicating how it may be destroyed. I must admit that here, unconsciously, Mr. Spurr led the way. He points out that under a state of warfare, which he must believe degrades social life, religion gains strength. I am only following him in pointing out that if you could get the social state low enough, if you could harden and coarsen human nature sufficiently, if you could only check interest—as this War has checked it—in scientific, philosophic, and literary pursuits, religion would once more reign supreme. That is all I am pointing out—following Mr. Spurr.

Mr. Spurr is welcome to the conclusion that follows from his statements, and to any comfort he may derive therefrom. The essence of militarism is barbarism. That is what we are all proclaiming against Germany, and it is true of militarism everywhere. It involves a negation of the higher and more cultured aspects of social life. It is ultimately an appeal to force as against reason. It involves social demoralisation, as Mr. Spurr says is the case in Germany. But he also finds that this state of things induces a better atmosphere for worship and prayer. This I am not inclined to dispute. For religion, as I have pointed out, belongs in its essence to the barbaric or the savage state. Anything that revives barbaric feelings is likely to strengthen religion, with which it is so closely associated. Religion and militarism, for this reason, have always gone hand in hand. Both are primitive in outlook, both appeal to the same primitive feelings. It may be true that in days of darkness, ignorance, and degradation many turn to God. It is enough that with progress and enlightenment men turn to reason and humanity.

C. COHEN.

Fresh Fruit from an Old Tree.

"In our fat England the gardener, Time, is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them?"—GEORGE MEREDITH.

AMONG modern English writers whose fame would seem to be assured, Mr. Thomas Hardy occupies the foremost place, and it is pleasant to reflect that he is an "intellectual." Indeed, the attentive reader cannot fail to notice the essential Freethought embedded in his admirable books. Even in the earlier stories, amid their picturesque color, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scents and sounds, we find a frank Secularism. As the author advances in reputation and grows in intellectual power, the note has deepened, until, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and afterwards, in *Jude*

the Obscure, a great sob of pain. These two books are noble and significant works, worthy in every way of this great living English author. They are an arraignment of Providence, and as we read we recall the words of the blinded Gloucester in the greatest of all tragedies:—

“As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.”

It is a further proof of Mr. Hardy's genius that he has achieved success in poetry no less than in prose, and as he gets older he turns more and more readily to the muses, and writes with all the zest and enthusiasm as if he were a young poet beginning his career instead of a veteran who has enriched the literature of his country with masterpieces of poetry and prose for two generations. And Mr. Hardy has the Shakespearean quality of unlocking his heart in his verse. We do not for a moment underrate the novels. These remain, by virtue of the author's genius, among the finest literary works of our time. In the poems, however, we have Mr. Hardy's own passion, and, so packed with emotion are the verses, that, instead of having worked on the book, the author has worked straight on us. He defies, like Whitman, our æsthetics, and proves that the greatest thoughts are just those which are quickest dismembered and absorbed by the reader, and turned into part of himself.

To open Mr. Hardy's new volume of poems, *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries*, is to be confronted with a book of singular power and one full of the pure stuff of poetry. Rarely has anyone combined with such poetic gifts as the author possesses, the keen and subtle intellect of the philosopher. His highest poetry arises from the combined action of two faculties, often separated widely, for he has the power of vision and the power of understanding. Take, for example, that fine and imaginative poem, “God's Funeral.” The author pictures a slow procession moving across a plain at twilight, and bearing a strange form, that seems now appearing man-like, and then seeming cloud-like. He listens to the lament of the mourners for the being they have themselves created, and whom they cannot any longer keep alive:—

“Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled.
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And long suffering and mercies manifold.”

“Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon” follow the mourners, and some of them refuse to believe that all is over; and, “dazed and puzzled twixt the gleam and gloom,” the scene closes. It is a daring piece of work, comparable to Heine's vision of a dying god having the last sacraments of the Church administered to him, albeit there is none of the bitter irony of the German singer.

Mr. Hardy has other melodies, strange and alluring as a linnets' song in the pauses of the wind. Listen:—

“Yes, I accompany him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares show their faces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto.”

In still another mood the poet sings:—

“We two kept house, the Past and I,
The Past and I;
I tended while it hovered nigh,
Leaving me never alone.”

Sometimes there is a touch of regret, as in the lines:—

“Every hearth has a ghost, alack,
And can be but the scene of a bivouac
Till they move perforce—no time to pack.”

Contemporary literature is so sugary, so full of romantic imaginings, that such writing brings a sense of largeness; a reminder of the great winds and waters and wide horizons of the West Country, where men and women know how to live and how to die, not submissively but fiercely. Modern drawing-

room readers of poetry are ill-prepared for Mr. Hardy's virile verse, and primly straighten themselves as his muse passes. They are a little afraid of Mr. Hardy's plainness of speech, his probity, and his emphatic gestures. But others there are who perceive the beauty of fact which underlies his stern verses, and understand the distinction conferred on English literature by the writings of a rare poet who is also a philosopher.

In these verses of an alert and capacious mind the world, however, is not all immitigable gloom, and the poet's mood is sane enough. His advice to us is to face the facts of life, and to trust humanity:—

“The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced
With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.”

These vivid verses bring out with admirable clarity an aspect of the world which, though often overlooked in the hurry of modern life, challenges the consideration of all lovers of literature, for their author is among the select few who, among the many writers of to-day, are likely to challenge the verdict of posterity.

MIMNERMUS.

A Chapter of My Autobiography.

THE SECULAR CHARTER.—III.

An Interlude.

IT is difficult to make some people understand one's meaning, particularly when they have a rooted objection to understanding anything you say in a sense that does you any honor. It may be remembered that in the first section of this history (p. 757, col. 2) I pictured ill-wishers of mine showing how I had arranged the payments of legacies to my own advantage. This I showed to be an impossibility. As a matter of fact, I said, “money had to come through the Society's bankers by cheque, endorsed by the Secretary and two Directors, of whom the Chairman was not necessarily one.” I might be one of the two, or I might not. It was all a matter of chance. If I signed it was not as the Chairman, but simply as a Director. The only signature that was *compulsory* being the Secretary's. As to my own signature being fairly frequent, it is easy to see that it would be so. I was Chairman all the time, and generally present when such business had to be taken.

The oddest thing is that the person who challenged my statement, through the secretary, wanted to know why it was that they had always seen Mr. Foote attach his signature after hers. And thereby hangs a tale. The Chairman's signature, as Chairman, does come first on the Company's cheques; which is merely an internal rule between the Board and the Bankers.

The formula between inverted commas in the advertisement of the Society appearing so frequently in the commercial columns of the *Freethinker* is not a direction but an assistance. It does not belong to the Society's Articles. People can make gifts or bequests to the Society in any other language they please, as long as it is legal; but most people are glad of a little help in legal phraseology, and to save them from confusion and distraction Mr. Harper drew up a sufficient form—not a necessary form of bequest. It was really meant to lessen the trouble of both sides in postal communications.

It is not a pleasant thing for the chief of any establishment to have to show that burglary is not as easy as traducers of his have been so fond of representing it, but even disgusting things have to be done at times in the way of duty. The other day a Marquis was carrying slops in Dr. Haden Guest's French-English War Hospital not far from Paris. Somebody had to do it, he said, and, as it was all for France, why not he as well as another?

I come now to the Boulter case in 1908-9, the inci-

dents of which are fresher in the minds of my readers. It will be remembered that I took up the case at Mr. Boulter's request, as President of the National Secular Society, and all the costs (over £200) were contributed by the readers of the *Freethinker*, who accepted my assurance that Mr. Boulter's language may have been "blasphemous" enough, but was certainly not "obscene." The part played by the Secular Society, Ltd., was technically slight but really considerable. Having received several legacies, it was in a rather prosperous condition, and it undertook to lend first £100 and afterwards £200 to the National Secular Society in order that the expenses of a first-class legal defence might be assured.

This put a fresh face upon the whole case. Mr. Boulter had been refused a postponement of trial at the Old Bailey. Who was he? Obviously a person who had no money. But as soon as it was found he had moneyed friends behind—as soon as it was seen that Mr. Atherley Jones, as senior counsel, demanded delay in the name of justice—the case was altered, and another month's leisure was placed at the defendant's disposal.

It may well be imagined that I sat out the whole of the trial in a very crowded court, which had often rung to the eloquence of voices pleading for freedom. Defendants, or prisoners, are generally called last into court, and there are other occasions for observing the jury.

Some of the jury may have been indifferentists, but on that occasion, and for that purpose, they were probably all Christians. They all took the usual oath, so there was no Jew among them—at least, no orthodox Jew. And, in spite of the seriousness of the situation, I could not help noticing its humor. Twelve Christians in a jury-box, one Christian on the bench, and one Christian acting as counsel for the prosecution—fourteen of them altogether—were assembled to try a solitary poor Freethinker for "blasphemy"—that is, for treating their own faith with insufficient respect. There were also three Christian witnesses, all policemen, including Chief-Inspector Jenkins, who carries on a sort of mission of his own in North London. These seventeen Christians, all helping to try one Freethinker for offending their faith, took their business very gravely. Nothing but the bitter spirit of persecution could have enabled them to keep their faces. Had they possessed a sense of humor, or given way to it so far as to see the real character of the situation, they would have laughed at the farce and told the "blasphemer" in the dock to go home to dinner with his trembling wife, or even invited him to dine with them at a neighboring restaurant. Oh that blessed sense of humor! What a different world we should be living in if it were only more common! Bigotry and persecution would die a natural death. No man who saw a joke, and enjoyed it, could ever sit with sixteen pious friends to try another man for criticising their common faith in an "offensive" manner. Seventeen butchers might as well try a sheep for offensive vegetarianism.

Of course the Christian jury found the Freethought sinner guilty. They were asked if he had offended their feelings; they said he had; he was therefore guilty of the otherwise indefinable crime alleged against him. He *was* Guilty. And the Judge also had his opportunity.

As the judge began—"Harry Boulter," after the verdict of "Guilty," my mind went back to that Monday night at the Old Bailey, twenty-five years before, when I stood up, with a full knowledge of what was coming and heard Judge North say "George William Foote." The whole scene from that long past flashed across my mind in a second. I saw the crowded, excited court; I heard, and I despised, the cold malice in the judge's voice; I half saw myself as I confronted him with a face that answered his challenge and was calmer than his own; for I was filled then, and in prison afterwards, with a high and even gay disdain of the bigots who had me in their toils—and I knew what George Fox

meant, in spite of his theological language, when he said that God lifted him up above his persecutors and they were as dead men under his feet. But that flashing picture did not last as long as I have taken to describe it. I never lost a word of what Mr. Justice Phillimore was saying. I noticed his changed tone of voice, and I saw in a moment what was going to happen. He had got his verdict of "Guilty," but he hesitated to sentence the "blasphemer." And that very fact showed what a change had taken place in twenty-five years.

Now I come to a point of vast importance. I differed in our consultations from both solicitor and counsel in one respect. They held that the law of blasphemy was really what it used to be before 1883, and that if the old law had become obsolete the offence of "blasphemy" had ceased to exist. I agreed with them as a matter of logic, but not as a matter of fact. Those who remember my controversy with George Jacob Holyoake, not very long before his death, will recollect how firmly I argued that the Secular Society, Limited, which I devised (and which the Rationalists copied) was perfectly secure. My starting-point was Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's summing-up at my third trial (for I was tried no less than three times) in 1883. He laid it down as the law *then*, whatever it had been *before*, that—"If the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without a person being guilty of blasphemous libel." That one sentence gave me the key to a legal frustration of the Blasphemy Laws from a financial point of view. I asked consulting counsel, I asked the late Dr. Hunter "Would any judge, on his own responsibility, go behind that dictum of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge?" They had to answer, however reluctantly, "No." "Very well then," I said, "that is the rock on which I propose to build." The result was the Secular Society, Limited, which has secured thousands of pounds (through wills) for the Freethought movement, which would otherwise have been lost. And now we see Mr. Justice Phillimore accepting Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's dictum, and even going beyond it; for he released a convicted "blasphemer" on his undertaking to abstain, not from attacking Christianity, but from the use of "shocking" language in doing so. "A man is free," Mr. Justice Phillimore says, "to think and to say and to teach that which he believes about religious matters." Lord Coleridge provided the rock on which I built the Secular Society, Limited; and Mr. Justice Phillimore declares that this rock is immovable and indestructible. So far, then, the new "blasphemy" trial was a great victory for Freethought.

But while I have held that we are perfectly safe, collectively and financially, I have also held that we are not safe individually and personally. This is one of the anomalies of a changing order of things. And it is by no means to be neglected. It furnishes an excellent reason for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. None of us are safe until that is effected. Even the superfine, respectable Freethinkers are not safe—unless they are innoxious enough to be useless; in which case they will always enjoy the safety which results from contemptuous indifference on the part of "the enemy." Blasphemy, in spite of the language of indictments, is now laid down to consist in the *manner* and not in the *matter*. If you attack Christianity you must do it in a way that Christians will not resent. Now, this is a law against wit in favor of pedantry; a law against the bright-minded in favor of dullards. You may attack Christianity with *argument* but not with *ridicule*. But *ridicule* is an argument. It is the *reductio ad absurdum*. It is employed by Euclid himself, who often ends a demonstration with the words "which is absurd." Moreover, it is only in regard to religion that controversy is regulated by law; and the regulation is only applied to Freethinkers. Christians may be as vulgar and offensive as they please; it is only the Freethinkers who must mind their "P's" and "Q's."

For this very reason the late Mr. Justice Stephen said that every law of blasphemy rests upon "the principle of persecution." If the law," he said, "were really impartial, and punished blasphemy only because it offends the feelings of believers, it ought also to punish such preaching as offends the feelings of unbelievers." Mr. Justice Stephen also pointed out that a law which says that you may discuss religion but may not ridicule it, takes away with one hand what it gives with the other, and tends to "confine the discussion to a small and in many ways unimportant class of persons." I know that these unimportant persons regard themselves as extremely influential; it is a way they have—but they are mistaken. I appeal to the verdict of history.

The upshot was, that Incorporated Societies, such as the Secular Society, Limited, were perfectly secure; and that the Blasphemy Laws are still a menace to individual propagandists. That had been my publicly expressed view for the previous twelve years, and I invited those who differed from me, sometimes rather maliciously, to take note of the fact. I am liable to be mistaken, as other men are; but I differ from many other men in taking the trouble to think (as far as I can) all round a matter I want to deal with.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

LORD WESTBURY.

This great legal luminary, who, if half is true that was said, was really a Freethinker. As Richard Bethell he was very sarcastic in speech. He used to say that he owed his success in law and in life to the practice of the Christian virtues. A precisian in language, he said this as if the words "by others" were understood. Of one of his clients he observed, "He had changed what he was pleased to call his mind." Gladstone and Bishop Wilberforce were his two great opponents when he carried the Divorce Act against all the weight of the Church. Of Gladstone he said: "If the right honorable gentleman had lived—thank heaven, fervently, he had not—in the Middle Ages, when invention was racked to find terms of eulogium for the *subtilissimi doctores*, how great would have been his reputation"; while his reference to the Bishop of Oxford as "saponeous" gained for Wilberforce the *sobriquet* of "Soapy Sam" for the rest of his days. He opposed, too, Wilberforce's scheme for constituting foreign bishoprics without first procuring the license of the Crown. Curiously enough, these opponents both died at the same time—in July, 1873.

There was little love lost between Westbury and Wilberforce. W. P. Frith, R.A., tells in his *Autobiography* how, when he painted his picture of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, "when the Lord Chancellor sat for me, his eye caught the form of the Bishop of Oxford, and he said, 'Ah, I should have thought it impossible to produce a tolerably agreeable face, and yet preserve any resemblance to the Bishop of Oxford.' And when the Bishop saw my portrait of Westbury he said: 'Like him? Yes; but not wicked enough.'"

His criticism of Darwin's *Origin of Species* was keen. He said that, while he was convinced it was impossible that all forms of life had come from one and the same creative act, the greater difficulty was to suppose that they had all come from one and the same creative mind.

On Westbury's elevation to the Woolsack someone remarked that, after the heated atmosphere of the House of Commons, he might fancy himself in Paradise when presiding over the peers. "I might, indeed, do so," the Chancellor replied, "but for the predominant and excessive display of lawn sleeves, which at once dispels the pleasing illusion." On a later occasion he objected to a Bishops' Resignation Bill, giving as his reason, "The law in its infinite wisdom has already provided for the not improbable event of the imbecility of a bishop."

One of the best legal anecdotes is told, not of him, but of Lord Bramwell. Someone asked him if he could draw up an indisputable will. "No," he answered; "God Almighty tried it, twice; but people have been wrangling about his testaments ever since."—*J. M. Wheeler*.

A negro woman who was a cook had a Chinaman for a beau, and the mistress of the house, to discourage the marriage, asked the negro woman if she had ever thought what their children would be. "Oh, yes," said the negro woman, "we has talked it all over, and knowed the children would all be Jews; but we don't kear."

Acid Drops.

We commented, a week or two ago, in our Correspondence, on a recent utterance of Rev. R. J. Campbell in connection with Secular Education. Here is what he actually said:—

"If I had my time to come over again I would never vote for the relegation of religious instruction to a subordinate place in the day schools. We want not less of it, but more. Character is more important in a teacher than accomplishments; the moral should come before the mental; we do not want to grow a nation of sharpers, but of earnest God-fearing men and women."

We reproduce Mr. Campbell's exact words because a correspondent writes wondering whether we have not misrepresented Mr. Campbell. It will be seen that Mr. Campbell's own words place him in a more objectionable light than our summary of what he said. Then we were content to say that his talking about Secular Education relegating religion to a subordinate place in the schools showed that he had never even understood what Secular Education meant. For Secular Education does not propose to place religion in a subordinate position in the schools. It means leaving religion out altogether as a subject with which the State has no right of interference. That implies neither inferiority nor superiority. The State remains simply neutral. And as a matter of fact the Education Act—while it does provide for religious instruction—actually places it in a subordinate position. It can only be introduced during a prescribed time, and must not be introduced during five-sixths of the school time.

Mr. Campbell is not bound to agree with secular education—although, as a "Free Churchman," he ought to be strongly opposed to the State teaching religion anywhere or to anyone. Still, as a public teacher, he is bound to try and understand it, and also not to misrepresent those who believe in it. And his remarks that he considers character of importance, and that we do not want to turn out a nation of sharpers, with the implication that secular educationalists do not believe the one and achieve the other, is no more than a piece of slimy Nonconformist impertinence. Whatever may be the value of the elementary schools as trainers of character, that value is certainly not lessened by the removal of religion. And not a few of the very best of the teachers in this country believe they will find their power in developing strong and desirable characters to be enormously strengthened when religion is cleared out, and the time given to that devoted to rational methods of character training. And apart from the principle of non-interference by the State in matters of religion, one count against the present system is that it does not turn out the character that should be turned out, and, in addition, turns many hundreds of teachers into hypocrites. No one wants to turn out a nation of sharpers. Besides, the thing is a sheer impossibility. You might have half a nation of sharpers, but the other half must be fools or the sharpers would starve. And Mr. Campbell belongs to an order that has always seen to it that there shall be no scarcity of the class that provides the possibility of the sharper's existence.

Mr. Blatchford offered some criticism of Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Common Sense About the War*, to which the latter replied in the *Weekly Dispatch*. In the course of that reply Mr. Shaw said:—

"I have demanded several things for the soldier which Mr. Blatchford also demands, and two things that he has not demanded. One is that our soldiers should not be deprived of their rights in the Prussian manner, the other is that men of Mr. Blatchford's opinions concerning religion should be enabled to enlist without having their consciences outraged by being forced to take an oath in which they do not believe. Anybody but Robert Blatchford would be grateful to me for standing by him. But Robert regards it as a liberty on my part to meddle. I am sorry, but I shall go on meddling."

So far as the last point, at least, is concerned, we hope that Mr. Shaw will keep to his word. It is well not to think of the soldier as mere "cannon fodder," and we are afraid that praise of the soldier often goes little further than this. If we want men for soldiers, the surest way of achieving our ideal is to treat them as men, once we have secured them.

The Rev. R. S. King, rector of St. Clement's Church, Leigh-on-Sea, suggested in a recent sermon that "it might be the sheer wickedness of man that had brought calamity to the whole earth." Does the reverend gentleman think that the two Kaisers are God's destroying angels?

The Bishop of Chelmsford, speaking at St. John's Church, Southend, said that the force causing men to sacrifice their

lives in the service of their country was due to Christian teaching. Of course! To the shoemaker, there's nothing like leather.

The restraining power of religion is often spoken of by the clergy. At a sale of work, in connection with the Southend Girls' Shelter, recently, the Rev. F. D. Pierce said they had members of the Greek, Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed Churches, as well as the Church of England, under their care. Apparently none of these religious institutions can prevent girls taking the wrong turning.

The Young Men's Christian Association is asking people to give £300 buildings for the War camps, one hundred of which are "wanted at once." This looks as if the Y.M.C.A. had given up the spiritual work of soul-saving for the secular delights of a building society.

"God himself is on trial" during this War. It is not we who say this, or it would be downright blasphemy. It is taken from a leading article in the *Christian Commonwealth*. The writer is very anxious to know what God thinks about the War, although the clergy have been telling us ever since the War began that they know, and that he quite agrees with us. Still, this writer is not quite easy, and he confesses to a feeling "like a bad dream" that "God cannot really care, or he would not allow things to go such lengths that are happening now. No human father would let things go to such lengths as our heavenly father does." Now that, we take it, is a good example of normal human feeling warring against theological teaching. All England is blaming the Kaiser for causing or permitting the War when he might have prevented it. And yet the same people refrain from blaming God, who surely might have prevented the War more easily than the Kaiser. Nay, they not only refrain from blaming him, but they actually go on their knees and compliment him on his wisdom and benevolence. We agree with the *Christian Commonwealth* that no human father would act as our "heavenly father" does. And we add that if he did, all decent people would shun his company.

But of course, being a Christian, the *Commonwealth* writer dare not push his opinions to their logical conclusion. Instead of doing this, he falls back upon the absurd position that "It is more reasonable, as well as more religious, to believe that God holds the reins than to believe that there are no reins to hold." How on earth can this be more reasonable? Certainly it is the more horrible of the two. It is bad enough to think of the present state of Europe, and to reflect upon the madness of nations that can bring about such a War as the present one. But at least we can see that it does result from human stupidity and greed and cruelty and ambition, and we can hope for improvement some day. It is only an undeveloped human nature that we have to fight against. But to believe that someone is holding the reins, that all this is part of a plan, that these millions of men—hardly one of whom owe those they are seeking to kill any individual ill-will—to believe that all the blood and horror of this war is brought about by a God who is "holding the reins,"—why, to believe this is almost to invite suicide or insanity. No one ought to be able to hold such a belief and remain sane. And no one could hold and realise what such a belief involves without going insane—at least, we hope not, for the sake of common human decency.

It may be disheartening to British Christians, but there is undoubtedly a marked tendency in the German world of piety to treat the War as a religious one. British Christians will naturally resent this as they resent the Kaiser calling on God. They appear to believe that as Britain rules the waves, so she dominates heaven. Heaven is not exactly a British colony, but it is within our "sphere of influence." Germany, however, seems inclined to contest this. The *Times* tells us that "a religious wave has swept through the country since war broke out, the Kaiser leading the way. In every telegram, in every message, the Almighty's name is mentioned." The writer of the above adds: "I have never witnessed a more touching service than in Cologne Cathedral one Sunday morning in the middle of October. The priest happened to mention the destruction of the Cathedral of Rheims, and a heartrending sob was heard among the worshippers. There was a long silence, and then the priest knelt down and ended his sermon with a prayer for peace." Devotion and destruction, piety and plunder! There is more than an alliterative connection between them.

As we are assured that religious feeling is being everywhere strengthened since the War began, it is well to note its influ-

ence in inducing kindly and humane feelings. Most people are aware that in Russia the Jews are confined within certain provinces, beyond which travelling is forbidden. This area may be contracted or enlarged at the discretion of the authorities. This means that every Jew is deprived of a right which other Russian subjects can only lose by committing a crime. Now the beneficial influence of the religious enthusiasm, which we are told is sweeping over Russia like a wave, may be gauged by one or two points from an article by Prince Paul Dalgorkoff in a Russian magazine dated November 1. He points out that although trade in Poland has been brought to a standstill, Jews are not allowed to go outside the "pale" in search of work. They must starve with their co-religionists. Worse than this is the fact that although wounded Jewish soldiers are distributed all over Russia, their relatives are not permitted to see them, as that would mean their travelling beyond the pale. To do justice to Russia, we ought to point out that there is one condition which enables a Jewish woman to travel outside the pale—that is, if she registers herself as a prostitute. And, as a matter of fact, this has been done by respectable Jewish girls in order to be able to study at some of the Russian Universities.

As another sample of Russia's love of religious freedom, we may mention that Pastor Fetler, a Baptist minister, has just been sentenced—after a trial behind closed doors—to four months' imprisonment. The charge against him is that of proselytising.

Rev. J. D. Jones, who has just returned from a visit to Australia, says:—

"The Churches are up against the spirit of materialism, just as in England—perhaps more so. Climate, plus prosperity, makes the work of the Churches pretty difficult. They may not have the same fight against social unrighteousness, and they have no problem of poverty, as we have. But there is the climate difficulty, and the problem of prosperity presents itself in that materialistic temper. The climate encourages open-air life, and that constitutes a difficulty for the Churches."

This seems a long way round to say that religion doesn't flourish where people are contented and prosperous. And yet that is all Mr. Jones does say. In England preachers complain that people are drifting away from Christianity because of the injustice of social conditions. In Australia it seems they are drifting away because the injustice is not there, or at any rate, is not so acute. Strange it doesn't strike the very profound J. D. Jones that the people will gradually leave Christianity whether economic conditions are good or bad. It is part of the general effects of intellectual development.

Why doesn't someone travel about with the Bishop of London, and so save him from saying many stupid things? He is now shrieking for Great Britain to imitate the example of Russia, and prohibit the sale of intoxicating drinks. The poor man appears to be under the impression that the ukase prohibiting the Government sale of vodka applies to all alcoholic drinks. This is not so. It is vodka alone that is prohibited. The sale of beers and wines continues—and has increased.

Another clerical follower of Bernhardt! Rev. W. Sutherland, of Bath street U. P. Church, Glasgow, says that the War "is going to bring to the Church of God, to the Empire, and to Europe, that revival for which we have been praying and striving. Over the bloodstained fields of France and Flanders the seed was sown, and the harvest would be nations purified in their moral and spiritual lives. Could they not see the signs of triumph in the self-sacrifice, the national unselfishness, the fair lily of patriotism, and the earnestness displayed in supporting our righteous cause?" We are under the impression that the New Testament denies the possibility of getting grapes from thistles. Mr. Sutherland knows better.

A little while ago the Archbishop of York scandalised a number of people by protesting against the vulgar abuse of the Kaiser, and blamed his advisers for bringing about the War. This has upset a good many very earnest Christians, who have since been writing to the papers, protesting in the name of Christian patriotism against any consideration being shown the German Emperor. The Vicar of Clitheroe, for example, says he read the report of that speech with disgust, although he professes to believe in a religion that teaches love to one's enemies, and to treat with kindness those that spitefully use you. A suggestion was made at a Conference of the Whalley Rural Deanery that we should pray for our enemies, but it is reported that the suggestion met with a hostile reception. Some have written suggesting in a roundabout way that it is only the Archbishop's position

that prevents his being mobbed. All of which is a very delightful illustration of the Rev. Spurr's statement that Atheism cannot stand the strain of the War. It really looks as though Christianity is breaking down under the strain.

We like to recognise common sense wherever it appears, and *apropos* of what has just been said, we venture to quote the following from a leading article in the *Church Times* :—

"However much English statesmen strove at the critical juncture to keep the peace—and we believe they left no stone unturned, however earnestly the English people tried to avoid war—and our lack of preparation is warrant for that, it is either self-deception or hypocrisy to pretend that national jealousy, national vanity, and national ambitions on our side have nothing to do with the development of those circumstances which led to inevitable war. Vulgar abuse of the Kaiser, as the sole author of evil, is a drug for our consciences. It implies a paltry untruth. Englishmen are now heartily ashamed of the indecency with which caricaturists bespattered Napoleon a hundred years ago. To repeat the offence now is worse. Napoleon was a man of commanding genius, if of deplorable character, and he did himself almost control the vast forces which he launched, time after time, against the peace and the liberties of Europe. The Kaiser is a second-rate man of ordinary abilities, whom accidents have made conspicuous in the gigantic movements of to-day. To make him the chief mover is to make oneself ridiculous."

Common sense is always useful, and it was never of more value than at the present time.

The *Evening News*, in a recent issue, asked scathingly "who thought that the German nation was enlightened? Those, presumably, who regard Atheism and enlightenment as synonymous." Even a penny-a-liner might have heard of "The Messiah," the "Dead March" in "Saul," the "Spring Song," and countless hymns by German composers, all of which, obviously, are the work of "wicked atheists."

Mr. Bernard Shaw's pamphlet, "Common Sense and the War," has aroused a veritable hornets' nest. His opponents have called him "Von Bernhardt Shaw," and his admirers retort with "The Great St. Bernard."

"At what point in the stupendous series of animate existence is immortality evolved? Is the baboon immortal? The elephant? The dog? The canary?" These questions are asked by Mr. William Archer. This reminds us of Voltaire's jest, that, if fleas be immortal, he hoped that they would be self-supporting in the next world.

The Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell says that at the time of the Boer War "a good many preachers, of all denominations, raved like recruiting-sergeants." Why drag in the sergeants?

"The Church had very little opposition until she did the Devil harm." This exquisite language was used by the Bishop of Chelmsford, and represents the high-water-mark of culture of the English Government religion. A critic might suggest that it was not markedly different to sentiments used frequently by medicine-men on the Gold Coast.

In an article deriding German "culture," the *Evening News* refers to Mr. Bernard Shaw in the following elegant terms: "the malign ass who gabbles of the glories of his Superman is not wholly removed from amongst us." An unkind critic might suggest that Carmelite House courtesy was indistinguishable from vulgar abuse, and that the office-boy need not be employed, necessarily, in lampooning an author of European reputation.

"In the matter of reconciling religious enemies, the God of Battles succeeds where the Prince of Peace has failed. Christians and heathens fight side by side, the German Lutherans and the Austrian Catholics besides the Mohammedan Turks, the Protestant English beside the Hindoo. The blood of comrades in arms is thicker than that of the blessed sacrament and holy communion."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Kaiser has just taken a step which gives one more proof of his devotion to the Christian religion. The *Catholic Times* points out that on learning that some of his Irish Catholic priests desired their religious needs to be assuaged by Irish priests, at once applied to Rome to satisfy their religious requirements. As a result, some well-known Irish priests have left Rome for the prison camps in Germany, and the *Catholic Times* contrasts this conduct of the Kaiser

with that of the British Government which, it says, has failed to send enough Catholic chaplains to the front. Evidently the Kaiser is more pious than our own Government.

After working the spy business almost to death, Mr. William Le Queux has now turned his attention to prophecy. We do not think Mr. Le Queux has any novels dealing with prophecy, although he has several dealing with spies. Anyway, he is now engaged in a controversy with Miss Marie Corelli over a prophecy of Father Johannes, said to date from the year 1600, which foretold the present War and the destruction of the Kaiser and his army. The lady laughs at the prophecy, and Mr. Le Queux says he can "smile" at her. The *Daily Call* has opened its columns to a discussion on the subject, and Mr. Le Queux is backing the prophet. On the whole, it is a pity that Mr. Le Queux found his astonishing revelations about spies so generally laughed at—people were beginning to wonder how on earth he knew all about them; that might have saved him, at least, from such an idiotic obsession as that of prophecy.

If this War does not convert us into a nation of soldiers, it bids fair to turn us into a nation of beggars. Funds of every conceivable kind are afoot, and in addition begging is taken up as a hobby by thousands of people, some of it of a very questionable character. Thus, in one case that came before a London magistrate, it transpired that a girl who was summoned for obstruction, was selling for the benefit of the Belgian refugees. How much the Belgians benefited may be gathered from the fact that out of every 5s. the makers of the article took 2s. 4½d., the seller took 2s. 6d., and the Refugees received 1½d.—that is, assuming they got all that was arranged for them. As an illustration of another method of collecting money, we may cite the case of a lady author who writes to the *Daily Telegraph* that she sold twenty-one copies of a shilling book, by herself, and was sending the proceeds to the *Daily Telegraph* Shilling Fund. The title of the book sold was given in full, so doubtless the advertisement was well worth the outlay.

The "Agony Column" of the *Times* and other papers offer numerous instances of individual begging—with the War as a pretext. At the rate of at least six shillings per announcement one "officer" advertises for kind friends to assist him in buying a sword, and another one for half the cost of his military outfit—which may be anything between twenty and seventy pounds. The most objectionable begging is that which is going on for soldiers, not merely for luxuries, but apparently for the necessaries of the campaign. If these are really required it is little short of a scandal to the whole of the nation. In any case, it is a most objectionable form of acquiring things that are necessary to the comfort, if not for the health, of our troops. That is clearly the first business of the Government, and if the people were wise they would take care that this duty was not neglected. The scandal of sending soldiers out on such a campaign as the present one, and then trusting to private charity to see that they are properly looked after, is only equalled by offering a soldier's wife as "relief" or charity that which the nation owes her as a debt of honor

It was a worthy pastor
Who saw with grief and care
His congregation go to sleep
Or which was worse—elsewhere.

He pondered long and deeply
This wise and pious man,
And at last hit on a simple
And most effectual plan.

Next Sunday, of his sermon
The text when he had said,
He slid adown the pulpit stairs
And stood upon his head.

By thousands flocked the people
That preacher great to hear,
And the trustees raised his salary
Five hundred pounds per year.

A lady of rank, whose Sunday duties had long been neglected, was moved one day to attend, with her daughters, the morning services at the little chapel of St. James's Palace. Unluckily, there was no room; every seat was filled. "Well, never mind, dears," said my lady to her girls, as they turned away. "Anyhow, we have done the civil thing." She had paid her "call."

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £237 16s. 6d. Received since:—J. Paul, 1s.; A. Sheil, 10s.

J. G. BRIGGS.—We do not see how a sharp division can be drawn between physical and mental labor. They make each other fruitful. Physical force without mental force produces nothing—and vice versa. There is no unskilled labor; the fact is that some labor is more skilled than other; and, in the long run, the more skill the more value. Of course, we cannot answer questions by disquisitions in this column.

WELSH SUPERSTITIONIST.—Not only ignorance and superstition, but all human failings, go to the making of war. It is possible that in some cases a certain moral good is done, but in such cases there must be great room for improvement. Read your *Shadow of the Sword* if you can.

OLD REPUBLICAN.—We are as Republican as we were in 1869-'70 and '71, but we are not in such a hurry to realise the millennium as we were then. We have been working at ways and means instead of ends during that interval. The world is rather better than worse on the whole, and we see no vanity in hoping that our humble but earnest efforts may have produced a small share in the total good result. We do not expect any recognition from "Artifex" of the *Manchester Guardian*. We need not join in the general cry for justice and generosity to the Belgians; that might have injured them; but we were pioneers of toleration when Spanish progressists fled to England from the tortures of Montjuich, etc. Swinburne's *Mater Triumphalis* sent waves of passion surging through our breast when we first read it in our ardent youth, and the passion itself has never changed except in its power and intensity, which, alas! are at the mercy of time and mutability. He who has once thrilled at the glorious cry "My voice is up before the lark with thee" knows the meaning of what the later, more numerous, and more popular apostles of freedom and justice can never understand. "Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

"MARTIAN."—"Civilised warfare" is fighting under a sort of "Queensberry Rules" designed for better things ostensibly, but usually resulting in robbing the underdog of his last chance of a bite, which must clearly depend on accident.

A. R. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for the Voltaire story, but it was published in these columns soon after it appeared in the *English Review*.

W. SPIVEY.—We are obliged for the list of addresses. Specimen copies will be sent as desired. We are always pleased to receive names and addresses for this purpose.

C. CLARKE.—Received. May make use of it later.

W. L. ROWE (Montana, U.S.A.).—Your letter with enclosure received, which has been handed over to our shop-manager.

"EARBY."—The *Bon Sens* of the Curé Meslier is of no commercial value—not more than a couple of shillings, but it is a book that had a great influence in its day.

B. DUPREE.—*Bible Romances* is for the present out of print, but the 6d. edition of the *Bible Handbook* is still in stock. You must press your newsagent to get what you require.

A. STAPLES.—See "Sugar Plums." The incident is a very regrettable one, and we will consider what can be done in the matter. Most probably the N. S. S. Executive might be inclined to deal with the matter.

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

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

WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (December 13) in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. There will doubtless be the usual good audience, and the subject, "The God of Battles and the Prince of Peace," should prove of interest to many others besides Freethinkers. The lecture commences at 6.30.

Mr. Cohen wishes us to state that he is responsible for an error in last week's issue in connection with the Honorarium Fund. Subscribers to this Fund will doubtless have congratulated all concerned on noting last week's total. This was given as £272 6s. 6d. And in such a year as the present there would have been every reason for

congratulation. But, alas, things are not as stated. The real total of subscriptions received and acknowledged—and every subscription received is acknowledged—was £236 6s. 6d. There was an error in addition—or by inadvertently writing a wrong figure in the total—of £36. The Fund is still over sixty pounds short of the amount of £300, although most of this will probably be made good before the year closes.

The London Freethinker's Annual Dinner has been fixed for the second Tuesday in January. The place is the same as on the last occasion—Frascati's Restaurant, Oxford-street. There is, however, one alteration in the program rendered necessary by the new early closing order. The dinner this year will commence at 6.30 instead of 7.30. The number of tickets is limited, and early application is advisable for many reasons. Tickets this year will only be sent to those who apply for them, and it will be quite impossible to purchase tickets on the evening of the dinner, as was done on previous occasions. There will be the usual musical program and speeches by representative Freethinkers, concerning which particulars will be announced later.

A lecture on "Nietzsche and the War" will be given by Mr. J. T. Lloyd at the Humanitarian Society's meeting-place, Fife Hall, Kingston-on-Thames, to-day (December 13). Admission, we believe, is free. We hope to hear of a good meeting.

The *English Review* for December contains a lot of interesting matter, but the shadow of the great War is too much over it all, and the writers are all too ready to explain this great catastrophe. It might do some of them good to have it suggested that they may be mistaken. At present the world seems almost to owe an apology to Messrs. Hyndman and Belfort Bax for not heeding the teaching of Socialism, which has collapsed like a house of cards in a gale of wind—as we expected; just as suffragette arson and slaughter disappeared when the real thing came upon the scene. Folly and ill-temper seem, after all, the residual psychology of this unprecedented contest. But there is room for hope yet. Hundreds of German prisoners, the other day, were marching through the principal street in Southend-on-Sea towards their floating prisons at the end of the pier. They presented all sorts of human nature, but rags and misery were the prevailing types. Some of the more hooligan population, at a certain corner, were for greeting the captives with groans and jeers, but they were shamed out of that by the manly protest of one human voice. Here and there an Englishman offered his unfortunate German brother a soothing cigarette, which was accepted with a grateful smile. There is the secret of the world's salvation. Neither keys nor statesmen will do it. We have nothing to trust to but the multiplication of the kind-hearted. At present they are only "the remnant." Not War, but Wisdom drives man towards his Millennium.

"No sword
Of wroth her right arm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word
She shook the world."

We notice in another column Mr. Bernard Shaw's timely demand that soldiers who do not believe in any of the stock religions of the country shall be treated by the powers that be as though they possessed a conscience. We have received many complaints from both soldiers and sailors in respect to this question, and the general burden of them is that whatever "religious freedom" is promised them on joining, these promises are treated as a mere "scrap of paper," to be torn up when convenient. The latest complaint we have received is from one of our battleships, and is a peculiarly offensive case of bigotry. A sailor who joined the Navy as a boy was duly entered as belonging to the Church of England. With maturity came a change of opinion. Having served his time in the Navy, he became one of the Naval Reserve, and was called up on the outbreak of war. He at once made a request to his captain that the description on his paper should be changed from Church of England to that of Freethinker. "What do you want to change your religion for?" asked the captain. He was told that the man had ceased to believe in Christianity. "What religion do you want to change to?" was the next question. To this the answer was made, "None at all; I am a Freethinker, sir." The reply was, "Not granted," and the man was dismissed. So that in this case an avowed Freethinker will be punished if he does not attend "Divine Service," after having respectfully requested to play the part of a honest man and not that of a hypocrite. We venture to suggest to both the military and naval authorities that this kind of treatment is not calculated to attract the better type of character into either Army or Navy, and still less to imbue the men with any strong faith in the reality of British freedom.

Autumnal Fires and Festivals.—II.

(Concluded from p. 774.)

IT is a noteworthy feature of these semi-religious festivals that, in the various accounts that exist of their quite modern celebration, men as well as lads participated in their grand anniversary. But as these Hallowe'en festivals had always borne a suspicious resemblance to Pagan customs, in addition to the fact that they were frequently the occasion of boisterous and unseemly behavior, the Puritan divines were therefore enabled to set their severe countenances against them with an easy conscience. From being the serious regard of adults of both sexes, who danced and sang round the roaring flames, the fire festivals of All Hallows' Eve declined into the mere amusements of school children, and even in the homes of their most honored observance their one time solemn significance has been practically forgotten. Fortunately, the hand of the antiquary has recorded much of the evidence of their former importance, thus affording invaluable help to the folk-lorist who sifts and weighs the records in question, and which, in the larger light of modern anthropology, enables the evolutionary philosopher to, in some measure, restore the strayed history of the past.

From this standpoint alone it is fortunate that the lighter side of these celebrations has, to some extent, persisted in the fireside pastimes of Hallowe'en. The fires that formerly blazed and shone on the open heath have been replaced by the hearth-fire, around which the house-dwellers, with their invited guests, long continued to assemble to commemorate with chat and pastime the departed splendors of an aforesaid seriously important anniversary.

In the district of Buchan, in North-Eastern Scotland, Hallowe'en fires were built to burn the witches. Not only the rustics, but the farmers themselves regarded the bonfires as something essential to their lives. The boys begged at each cottage door for a peat to burn the witches. In many districts the lads collected straw, furze, and other inflammable materials, which they made into a mound, to be afterwards set ablaze. Each lad in turn lay as near the burning mass as he conveniently could without being singed by the flames, while the others rushed through the smoke, and leaped over their recumbent companion. When the fire was exhausted, they scattered the ashes in every direction, and it was a point of honor to see who could scatter most. With reference to the Scottish celebrations, Dr. Frazer quotes an old writer to the following effect: "The Hallow-even-fire, another relict of Druidism, was kindled at Buchan. Various magic ceremonies were then celebrated to counteract the influence of witches and demons, and to prognosticate to the young their success or disappointment in the matrimonial lottery." As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, the Braemar Highlanders carried flaming torches round their fields at Hallowe'en to promote their fertility in the coming year.

Superstition naturally flourishes longest in remote districts, and in the Scottish Highlands the faith in divination was very firmly entrenched in the minds of the people. Even now the fancy is deeply fixed in the average Celtic Scot. This figment of the imagination was by no means confined to the natives of Northern Britain; it was equally in evidence in the Lowland counties. Regarding the beliefs immortalised in Burns' poem, "Hallowe'en," Dr. Frazer suggests that his Lowland countrymen may have imbibed these beliefs, not from their Saxon ancestors, but from the customs of the Celts, who were subdued by the Teutonic settlers in Scotland. On the other hand, it seems equally feasible that these superstitions—at least in their fundamental forms—were once the common property of the entire Aryan race.

In both the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland the youth of both sexes assembled on the Eve of All Hallows to indulge in pastimes, which were thinly disguised forms of Pagan divination. The wedded

bliss, the wretched or joyous bachelorhood, the perpetual spinsterhood, and the riches or poverty of the couples mingling in the games, were then decided. Another curious Hallowe'en custom was to steal unobserved into a neighbor's kailyard, and with closed eyes to pick up the first kailstock the hand encountered. Unless the cabbages were purloined without the knowledge or consent of their proprietor, they were worthless for divining purposes. It was also essential that the owner of the stolen cabbages, whether man or woman, should be unmarried. When the above conditions were complied with, the pilfered kail was carried home and inspected, and from its weight, form, and features, were to be inferred the length, breadth, and beauty of the future spouse.

"The taste of the *custock*, that is, the heart of the stem, was an infallible indication of his or her temper; a clod of earth adhering to the root signified, in proportion to its size, the amount of property which he or she should bring to the common stock. Then the kailstock, or *runt*, as it was called in Ayrshire, was placed over the lintel of the door; and the baptismal name of the young man or woman who first entered the door after the kail was in position would be the baptismal name of the husband or wife."*

Girls also scattered hemp or lint seed in the fields, crying aloud that the seed was sown, and that he who was destined to wed her must come and harrow it. Then the maiden would glance over her left shoulder and dimly distinguish the figure of her future lord in the gloom.

Many other quaint Scottish customs prevailed at this period, such as those of the winnowing-basket, the thrown shoe, the wet shirt, and the clue of blue yarn. All of these modes of divining the coming misery or bliss of the parties concerned were conducted in the open air. Several others were confined to the house, before the grateful glow of the fire. At Hallowe'en certain marks on the white of eggs placed in a goblet of clear water enabled the performer of this rite to completely answer the awkward question which Mrs. Harris put in vain to Mrs. Gamp. There was also a widespread Celtic belief that babes born at Hallowe'en were endowed with the wonderful power of perceiving and conversing with supernatural beings. The fireside customs included the simmering nuts, the milk and the meal, and the salt herring among others, all of which were designed to reveal what lay pregnant in the womb of the impending year. Robert Burns refers to these gatherings where he writes:—

"Some merry, friendly country folks
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, and pou their stocks
An haud their Hallowe'en."

The Hallowe'en fires were very popular in North Wales less than a century ago. The bonfire was kindled on the most commanding site in the neighborhood of the dwelling, and when the blaze had died down, all present flung a stone into the embers. Each stone was marked for subsequent identification. This ceremony completed, the people prayed round the ashes, and then retired to bed. As soon as they arose next morning they collected the stones, and should any one have disappeared, the person who had thrown it was certain to shuffle off this mortal coil before Hallowe'en came round again. A writer of a hundred years ago informs us that the

"Autumnal fire is still kindled in North Wales, being on the eve of the first day of November, and is attended by many ceremonies; such as running through the fire and smoke, each casting a stone into the fire, and all running off at the conclusion to escape from the black short-tailed sow; catching up an apple suspended by a string with the mouth alone, and the same by an apple in a tub of water; each throwing a nut into the fire, and those that burn bright betoken prosperity to the owners through the following year, but those that burn black and crackle denote misfortune. On the following morning the stones were searched for in the fire, and if any be missing, they betide ill to those who threw them in."

Dr. Frazer notes that Sir John Rhys held that the

* *Balder the Beautiful*, vol. i, p. 235.

Hallowe'en fire festivals probably linger even now in Wales, and that old people were recently to be found, and may be living still, who remember the practice in vogue in their youth of waiting until the flames had burnt themselves out, when a sudden rush would be made, everyone shouting "The cropped black sow seize the hindmost!" This assuredly appears like a humanised modification of an original sacrifice of one of the celebrants. It is also significant that in Carnarvonshire the name of "the cutty black sow" is sometimes utilised as an easy expedient for scaring children.

The Welsh Hallowe'en divining customs so closely resemble those of Scotland that there can be little doubt of their common origin. The ladder of yarn employed by Welsh girls to divine the coming spouse was a mere variant of the Scottish "clue of blue yarn." Another mystical Welsh ceremony consisted in arranging three basins on the table. Clean water was poured into one, dirty water into another, while the third remained empty. The maidens usually, and occasionally the boys as well, then proceeded to ascertain their fate. Their eyes were bandaged, they were guided to the table, where they groped their hands towards one of the bowls. "If they happened to dip into the clean water, they would marry maidens or bachelors; if into the dirty water, they would be widowers or widows; if into the empty bowl, they would live unmarried."

In an eighteenth century account of the Hallowe'en ceremonies of Ireland, variants of the Welsh and Scottish customs may be seen. Brave preparations were made for the annual feast, which bore a striking resemblance to the Christmas celebrations as they existed down to Pickwickian days. It was the great season for foretelling the future, and for divining the identity of one's destined partner. The similarity of the picture presented by the writer, General Valencey, to that drawn by Burns in his poem, points to a close kinship between the Irish customs and those of the Ayrshire peasants.

In County Leitrim and in Queen's County the Irish girls ascertained the nature of their future husbands with the help of cabbages, just as in Scotland. The boys silently gathered ten green ivy leaves, one of which they rejected and set the remaining nine under their pillows, so as to dream of their own true loves at Hallowe'en. A further form of divination was to place a nut and a ring in a cake, which was baked and eaten. The lucky one whose slice contained the ring would be first wed. The finder of the nut would mate with a widow or widower, but if the nut proved to be a mere shell, the lad or lass would die unwed.

"In County Roscommon, which borders on County Leitrim, a cake is made in nearly every house at Hallowe'en, and a ring, a coin, a sloe, and a chip of wood are put into it. Whoever gets the coin will be rich; whoever gets the ring will be married first; whoever gets the chip of wood, which stands for a coffin, will die first; and whoever gets the sloe will live longest, because the fairies blight the sloes on the hedges on Hallowe'en, so that the sloe in the cake will be the last of the year."

In Celtic Manxland the celebrations of this season were kept up on a lavish scale till comparatively recent days. The Hallowe'en fires were kindled and the observances designed to disarm danger from witches, imps, and fairies were religiously commemorated. The Manx youths traversed the Isle at night, and at each house-door they chanted a rhyme which means "This is Hollantide Eve," Hollantide being a Manx modification of the Old English *All hallowen tide*. A medley of vegetables and fish, skilfully mixed with butter, was the customary dish for this occasion in the Isle of Man. Here, again, divination is in evidence. The mistress of the house "fills a thimbleful of salt for each member of the family and each guest; the contents of the thimblefuls are emptied out in as many neat little piles on a plate, and left there overnight. Next morning the piles are examined, and if any of them has fallen down, he or she whom it represents will die within the year." Relics of a fast fading period

are these quaint superstitions, but how instructive concerning the toilsome ascent of the human race through the terrors of a dark religious past!

T. F. PALMER.

"The Great Liberator."

A GLANCE at the number of memoirs and biographies in publisher's lists, leads one to agree with Carlyle that this class of literature must have an inordinate interest for mankind. In 1900 the bibliography of Abraham Lincoln ran into 185 pages, and showed some 800 titles of books and pamphlets, to say nothing of thousands of magazine articles, sermons, panegyrics, etc. The latest edition is a "Life," by Rose Strunsky, recently issued by Methuen. We are told nothing new by Miss Strunsky, indeed she admits that, since the monumental work, in ten volumes, by Nicolay and Hay (the secretaries of Lincoln) was issued, nothing has been added to Lincoln biography. Yet her biography has this advantage, that we get the salient points of "the great liberator's" career. The stories of the old log cabin, the backwoods, and similar episodes are all interesting in their way, but they are of small import to the world at large. These incidents in his life are no different to those of thousands of others. Lincoln's place in American history is that of "the great liberator," and this Lincoln is all that really counts. Miss Strunsky apparently realises this, although she does not say as much.

Temperament influences mental as well as physical life, and Miss Strunsky does well to devote so many pages to this factor. Lincoln was a temperamental *libertaire*, and every phase of thought that was agreeable to his temperament, stimulated and quickened the organs of volition and action. Thus Lincoln, in his antipathy towards religion and Christianity, must necessarily be taken into account by any serious biographer, since it was meat and drink to him, temperamentally.

Notwithstanding that Nicolay and Hay, together with Lamon (who stand for Lincoln as Moncure Conway does for Paine) have given us, not "gospel truth," but "documented truth," of Lincoln's heterodoxy, pious biographers still continue to claim him as a religionist, if not a Christian. Indeed, since America teems nowadays with Lincoln museums, societies, fellowships, etc., nothing short of an annual reprint by Congress of Remburg's *Abraham Lincoln—Was he a Christian?* will stop the halo of religion which Christian America is artfully weaving around the head of Lincoln. Walt Whitman once took these parsons severely to task for their impudence and arrogance in claiming all and sundry, even to "seizing the keys of the bedroom and closet," as he said. If he had lived to see the way the clerics are "staking their claims" for Lincoln, one can imagine him saying: "Damn it, they've even pushed their way to the tomb."

The new "Life" of Lincoln by Miss Strunsky is fortunately not of the class referred to. This lady speaks frankly of his heterodoxy, and endeavors to show that, like his political philosophy, it was bound up causally with his temperament. Freethinkers cannot too often emphasise the *credit* of their "captains," as Whitman would say, and therefore I venture to quote Miss Strunsky's words regarding Lincoln's religion:—

"Fatalistic, he had no personal God. Herndon says he never used the name of Jesus or Christ. He had no creed. In his later speeches the word God entered, and in his second Inaugural we find, 'If it be the purpose of the Almighty,' but it is evident that he used the phrase in the classic conception of Fate. It is interesting that the suggestion to use the name of God in his State papers came from Chase, which Lincoln accepted.....His ardor made him religious in the sense that he bowed humbly before the great events of life which he could not control, yet he had no vision of a cosmic order. He was brought up among the sceptics

and disbelievers of the pioneers. In his youth he read Volney and Paine. At twenty-six he wrote a small work on infidelity which unfortunately was burned by a zealous friend. As late as 1854 he made Herndon erase the name of God, which he wrote in a speech. In his race for Congress in 1847 he was accused by his opponents of being an Atheist, a charge he never denied. 'He would die first,' he said to Herndon."

That is an honest and straightforward statement, with no hedging; and if any parson has an anniversary sermon for Lincoln next February or April, perhaps he will "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" this passage before he closets himself within his study to write it, unless he buys his weekly wail by the yard from the usual vendors.

There is, however, one point in Miss Strunsky's book that must be challenged, and that is the Gettysburg speech. Lincoln's most reliable biographers have pointed out that many of his speeches and papers have been "Bowdlerised" to suit the Philistines, and notably this famous speech. In one portion of this there is a well-known interpolation, which surely must have been patent to the knowledge of Miss Strunsky. Here is the passage as she quotes it:—

"This nation, *under God*, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The words that I have italicised are an acknowledged interpolation, and since Miss Strunsky considers the speech "one of the basic documents of American history," surely some sort of comment should have been made. Not that it was unlikely for Lincoln to have used such phrases, as we have seen. Indeed, we know that he once confessed to Wendell Phillips that he had to do all sorts of "soft soaping" to please the religionists, for he wanted to save the Republic, and religious strife added to the political would have been fatal. Yet in this particular case Lincoln did not use the pious phylactery.

But I suppose the true Gettysburg speech (*sans* "under God") is beyond the hope of repair in America. It is learnt, nowadays, by heart by every child at school, and the "under God" is accepted as "sure" as the truthful Washington story, which has also been authoritatively denied. However, concerning the latter, that a lie was never known to pass the lips of George Washington, I have been assured by a friend, that the story is true after all, since the Americans talk through the nose.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

Christian Apologetics.

THE REV. Z. B. WOFFENDALE (NO. 3).

IN commenting on the Rev. Woffendale's third proof of the Resurrection—"There is the honest testimony, thirdly, of the Apostles, who were also eye and ear and hand witness to his Calvary wounds and risen bodily condition"—I had remarked, after naming all the apostles, "Where are we to look for the *honest* testimony of these? Where are we to look for *any* testimony of these twelve men? As a matter of fact, we have *no* testimony that can truthfully be affirmed to be that of the apostles." In reply to these statements Mr. Woffendale, in his own journal, said:—

"Well, if Abracadabra is really so ill-instructed as not to know, we must perforce enlighten him. James begins his Epistle by declaring in clearest words that he was 'a bond-servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ,' and ends by attributing to Christ a still living, divine, and superhuman power in regard to healing the sick: 'The Lord shall raise him up.' This is undoubtedly the language of an apostle, and it is a decided testimony to the risen Jesus."

"Next, Peter, in his first Epistle.....begins by saying that he is 'an apostle of Jesus Christ,' and he blesses 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' who 'begat us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' Here, then, we have, in

addition to James, Peter's testimony.....Again, surrounded by the Apostles, and speaking in their midst, and as their mouthpiece on the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and testified publicly to the multitude in Jerusalem that 'Jesus of Nazareth.....whom lawless men did crucify and slay; whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death.....whereof we are all witnesses.' In the face of such clear, emphatic, and public testimony from Peter, speaking in the name of 'All' the apostles, we ask once more, What are we and our readers to think of the knowledge and fairness of an adversary who asks, 'Where are we to look for *any* testimony of these twelve men?' By this time even our Agnostic readers must begin to realise the meretricious value of the mental furniture of Abracadabra," etc.

My reply (here much abbreviated) to the foregoing was as follows.

First, as to the Epistle of James. Here, it will be seen, the rev. gentleman first assumes that the writer of the Epistle was an apostle; and, next, that "the Lord" who would heal the sick was Jesus. Now, the writer, throughout the Epistle, speaks of the Hebrew deity as "God," "the Lord," and "the Lord of Sabaoth" (i. 5, 7; v. 4, 10; etc.). It was not Jesus who was to raise up the sick, but the god Yahweh.....Moreover, the writer of the Epistle nowhere says that he was a witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Every word he has uttered might have been written by one who was merely a believer in that event. Again, the fact that the authenticity of the Epistle of James was questioned by the early Church, though it afterwards secured a place in the Canon, is entirely against its apostolic authorship.

Next, respecting the Epistle ascribed to Peter, Mr. Woffendale makes the same assumptions he does to that attributed to James. The writer, he asserts, was the apostle Peter; mention is made of "the resurrection of Christ from the dead": therefore, he concludes, we have the testimony of Peter to the reality of the Resurrection. By this way of looking at evidence, any Christian believer who speaks of the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ as an actual fact is a witness to that event. Yet, for anything the rev. gentleman knows to the contrary, the Epistle was not written by Peter at all, nor even in apostolic times. If this be the case, where are we to look for the "honest testimony" of that apostle? Oh, says Mr. Woffendale, you will find it in "the Acts," where "surrounded by the apostles.....Peter stood up and testified publicly" to the reality of the resurrection of his Master. And not only have we the "testimony" of Peter, but we have that of "All" the apostles; for they did not contradict Peter, or, if they did, Luke has discreetly omitted to record it. The rev. gentleman appears unable to see that in this story we have neither the testimony of Peter nor that of any other apostle. At the very most, we could only have the testimony of the writer, Luke. But we have not even that; for Luke does not say he was present on the occasion. All he does is to give a place to the incident in his book. We cannot even ask him whether he took the story from some apocryphal writing, such as the "Acts of Peter," or whether he fabricated it himself. We *do* know, however, that the long speeches placed in the mouths of Stephen, Paul, and Peter in "the Acts" were composed for the different occasions by Luke himself. This fact has been fully proved by sound criticism. And such being the case, where is the "honest testimony" of Peter and that of "All" the other apostles to the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Echo answers, Where?

Returning to the Epistle of Peter, I select from it the following passages:—

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins.....being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.....For unto this end was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet. iii. 19; iv. 6).

These passages prove the Epistle to be post-apostolic. The words quoted are not those of an apostle who relates an event of which he had been an eye-

witness; they are the utterances of a credulous Christian teacher of a later age, who was acquainted with, and fully believed, the story contained in the apocryphal "Gospel of Nicodemus." According to this story, Jesus Christ, during the time his body lay in the tomb, descended in the spirit into Hades, the abode of the spirits of the dead, and there preached to the spirits of ancient Biblical men, including Adam and other antediluvian patriarchs, and David, Jeremiah, and others of a later age. There cannot be the slightest doubt as to the fact that the writer of the Epistle of Peter referred to this story; nor can it be doubted that he was as ignorant and credulous as another alleged apostle—the writer of the "Epistle of Jude"—who believed and quoted from the lying book of Enoch.

The Rev. Woffendale ought to have had some knowledge of his subject before he presumed to speak upon it. He should also have stated that "Christian antiquity" does not date earlier than the end of the second century. But the most amusing feature of this discussion is that the rev. gentleman appears to have really believed that his flimsy arguments, based upon unwarrantable assumptions and an absurd and irrational idea of evidence, have effectively disposed of my "baseless, shallow, and untrustworthy" contentions. In his third reply he boasted that "the Philistine giant of Agnosticism has been met in fair combat, and thoroughly defeated. He may wince and try to wriggle off the point of the spear upon which we have impaled his arguments; but he will find that all his contortions will be in vain."

This reverend gentleman, as will be seen, excels in the game of Brag and Bluster, like many of the outdoor speakers connected with the so-called Christian Evidence Society—which Society, having never had any "Christian evidence" to offer, and not even knowing what constitutes evidence, spends most of its time in heaping abuse upon the heads of those whom it calls "Infidels."

ABRACADABRA.

"The Cosmic Roots of Love."

BY REV. HENRY M. SIMMONS.

(Published by the World Peace Foundation, Boston, U.S.A.)

ONE of the latest papers published by John Fiske is his Phi Beta Kappa address on the ethical aim in Nature. It is entitled "The Cosmic Roots of Love and Self-Sacrifice." It seems, however, to leave these roots quite short of cosmic. It locates them in the prolonged infancy and close motherhood of mammalian life. But, surely, they reach lower than that. The hen is no mammal, and her infants walk the first hour; yet she shows so much "love and self-sacrifice" that even Jesus took her to illustrate his own. Poets back to Euripides have praised the devotion of birds for their young. Nor is it limited to their young, but we read of them dying of grief for mates; and Darwin tells of pelicans and crows, old and blind, but faithfully fed and cared for by their companions. Here seems a foregleam of the benevolence that builds our hospitals for the aged and infirm. Even the parental devotion in every bird's nest shows the growth of love already begun.

Below birds it has begun, and Romanes says "parental affection" is found among reptiles and fish. Back in the old Jurassic swamps and Devonian seas there was some virtue. Even below vertebrates, in the insect world, there was something like it. Bees sacrifice themselves for their community, dying for their hive as patriots for their country, or attacking another as devotedly as Christian armies sack Chinese towns.

So the ant is praised by even the Bible as an example for men; and not only "sluggards," but most citizens, might "consider her ways" and be wiser. Professor Everett said, "In the ant-hill there is a civilisation very like our own,"—and in

some respects it seems better. An ant community may contain more members than there are men in Louisville; yet Lubbock says they never quarrel, but are all "laboring with the utmost harmony for the common good." They may have no moral sense, but they do their duty better than many a man who boasts of his. They may have little sympathy; but Lubbock says there are "good Samaritans among them," helping wounded sisters with something like "humane feelings," while all show extreme devotion to the larval infants that are not even their own. When we think further of their vast numbers—more in a square mile than there are men in America—all and ever busy in work which Spencer calls "almost wholly altruistic," we see that "the roots of self-sacrifice" not only reach far below mammals, but pervade a vast world of social insects.

Lower still this social and altruistic principle may be traced down the animal scale, to the very sponge, which is a genuine society, made of many individuals united in service of each other and their community. Such societies may have no ethical or even conscious life, but they already proclaim the ethical principle of mutual service for the common good. They show the "roots" we are searching—only roots, indeed, and with no hint of the rich fruit to come, but already started in life so low that it used to be thought vegetable.

Even in vegetable life they have started. The plant, too, is a sort of society, with varied members united in mutual service and sacrifice. Leaves give their lives for the tree, like good families for the State. The flower is a family, botanists say, with even the wedding of sexes and parental sacrifice for the offspring. The flower may not be conscious of its virtues—and we often wish that some human families were, in this respect, more like it. But in it the ethical principle is on the way to consciousness.

It is on the way far below the flower. Down among the moulds and microscopic algae we see two cells of different sexes, giving themselves to each other and their offspring with something of the same principle and process seen in the bird's nest and the human home. To such unions even so unfastidious a scientist as Haeckel ascribed the origin of love, tracing its source back to what he called "the elective affinity of two differing cells." Even so orthodox a writer as Drummond, using the same term as Mr. Fiske, and somewhat before him, spoke of their "self-sacrifice," and said, "Love is not a late arrival," but "its roots began to grow with the first cell that budded on this earth." So do they reach to the lowest foundations of life.

Do they not reach even back of life to the inorganic world? The same principle of union and co-operation is found in everything there. In every rock and crystal of the mountains and drop of the sea, molecules have united in systems; and each molecule in turn is called a marriage of atoms. Not only Haeckel's "affinity of differing cells," but all chemical affinity, is at least prophetic of that which unites us in societies and families.

(To be continued.)

Her organ was pumped by a self-willed old sexton, who had his own ideas as to how long an organ voluntary should last, and would shut off the wind when he thought there had been enough. One Sunday the organist thought she would forestall any such accident by writing an appeal in the early part of the service, and giving it to the sexton. The old man received the note, and supposed it was for the minister. In spite of her frantic beckonings, he went straight to the pulpit with the note, and the astonished preacher read this message: "Oblige me this morning by blowing away till I give you the signal to stop."

A little girl going to church with her mother one Sunday saw some men working on the street-car tracks. "See those men breaking the Sabbath," said her mother, thinking to suggest a moral lesson. The little girl watched them gravely. Then she looked up into her mother's face and said, "And God can't mend it."

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