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Every great change is effected by the few, not by the many; by the resolute, undaunted, zealous few.

—J. H. NEWMAN.

Christmas.

MITHRA, we are mythologically informed, was born on December 25, and it is well known that Mithra was a sun-god, whose birth synchronises with the sun's passing the winter solstice. Dionysus and Adonis, though Vegetation Deities, were also born on December 25, as was, likewise, the Egyptian Horus, which proves that these were also sun-gods. The birthday of Jesus Christ, however, lacked a fixed date for many years. By some it was observed in May, by others in January, simply because the actual date was entirely unknown. Ultimately, December 25 was chosen, with the object of plagiarising and of Christianising the Roman Saturnalia. When Jesus was born no one knows, and there is no possibility of making any discovery on the point; but it is an undeniable fact that the worship of Mithra was exceedingly widespread in the Roman Empire in the first half of the second century, from which cult the Christian propagandists did not hesitate to borrow in the most bare-faced fashion. It is a highly significant fact, to say the least, that the birthday of Jesus happened to be identical with that of so many Pagan divinities. This is a question Christian apologists generally ignore, on the ground that the date of the Savior of the world's birth is quite immaterial, the only vital point being that he entered the world through a supernatural door. As Sir William Robertson Nicoll puts it, in the *British Weekly* for December 10, the all important fact is that the Son of God, "for our sakes, deigned and consented to be born" in the manner related in the Gospels, or as the hymn that will be sung in all churches and chapels in our land next Friday informs us, the message of Christmas is this:—

"Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new born King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the Angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'"

Sir William goes a step further, and states that "he who, for our sakes, deigned and consented to be born, for our sakes also deigned and consented to die." He came into the world by a supernatural birth, and he left the world by a supernatural death. Sir William continues: "He was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day he rose again. He ascended up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, from thenceforth expecting till his enemies shall be made his footstool."

Such, according to the theologians, is the message of Christmas to mankind, but it is a wholly lying message. The promise of "peace on earth and mercy mild" has been completely falsified by the event. We are amazed at the temerity which enables Sir William to ignore the facts and say of Jesus:—

"He is on the throne to-day, caring for that world which brought him down to die. We have not only

his Gospel but his Presence. His Gospel is the Gospel of the Divine Self-Sacrifice and the Divine Passion. The Christian Gospel of sacrifice rests on history, and is a manifestation of the eternal purpose which was fulfilled in the Incarnation."

Does Sir William really and honestly believe that a Being charged with omnipotent love is caring for the world and desiring its salvation? Can he with open eyes and ears conscientiously declare that the Prince of Peace is on the throne to-day, reigning supreme over the countries which are waging this fiendish war upon one another? Does he not rather perceive that the glorious Gospel of the blessed God exists only in his own brain, and has no effect whatever, except a deleterious one, upon mankind? We challenge him to prove that any eternal purpose whatever was fulfilled in the so-called Incarnation.

Sir William is a noted advocate of the reality of sin. A few years ago he could not find words strong enough to condemn Mr. R. J. Campbell because he thought and spoke so very lightly about sin, which, in the reverend knight's opinion, is the secret of the world's degradation and misery. Well, it apparently does not occur to Sir William that, in thus speaking about Jesus, he is flagrantly discrediting the Gospel of which he is an ordained minister. Many a time has he assured us that Jesus lived and died on purpose to save the world from sin, to destroy the works of the Devil, and to cleanse the earth from all iniquity; but if what he says about the prevalence of sin and the works of the Devil is true at the present time, it follows that Christ's mission remains unfulfilled, and that the Cross of Calvary is nothing but an empty name. We maintain, on the contrary, that sin is an invention of the fancy, or, as Nietzsche calls it, "the most perilous and fatal masterpiece of religious interpretation." It is true that if this view of sin were generally adopted "it would make Christianity superfluous and the world contented"; and what a priceless boon that would be. The evils from which the world is suffering are not sins against God, but symptoms of human imperfection, or so many indications that the evolution of social life has not yet reached the desired goal. Nothing is easier than to pour contempt upon the heads of men like Renan, and nothing more difficult to Christians than to be just to them. It is true that Renan was temperamentally light-hearted and joyous, and that in this sense he had a "volatile intellect" but to charge him with having a "shallow heart" is to wickedly misrepresent him. No one can scrupulously read his letters to his sister and accuse him of shallow-heartedness.

Sir William's remedy for the evils of the world is a remedy that has signally failed in all ages and countries alike. The evils are still as rampant as ever after nineteen centuries of the quack specific. "A preacher of the last generation wisely said that religions had to be tested in the street," and we hold that Christianity has been tested in the street and found egregiously wanting. Sir William dwells pathetically upon the case of a fallen woman upon whom shame and misery, want and the fear of want, remorse and despair, have done their work. Of course, the majority of prostitutes enjoy their life, and know nothing of remorse and despair; but if and when one of them is the victim of lugubrious thoughts and guilty fears, the only thing that can

really help her is, not the love of Christ, but human sympathy, the kind, cheery word out of a heart suffused with fellow-feeling. If the advent of Christ had ever taken place there would have been no fallen women and fallen men to-day; Christ would long ago have made their existence a literal impossibility. The persistence of evil is a positive proof that the Christian Gospel is a gigantic sham.

Sir William points to "the cultured gentleman whom education and civilisation have somehow failed to cure of selfish and cruel lust." We beg to point to the Christian gentleman whom the grace of God and the love of Christ have somehow failed to cure of selfish and cruel lust. What do we find to-day? The Christians of Germany looking down upon and denouncing the Christians of Great Britain with unmitigated contempt, and the latter Christians returning the compliment with compound interest. Again and again has Sir William Robertson Nicoll been guilty of this great fault. Indeed, the whole of the article under consideration is an implied bitter attack upon German Christianity. We distrust all forms of the Christian religion; but we utterly fail to see that the British brand is any improvement upon the German.

Sir William avers that "Christianity is not defeated because there has emerged in history the visible work of Satan"; but, surely, common sense declares that if Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the Devil, and the works of the Devil are in strong evidence everywhere to-day, it follows that Christ has conspicuously failed and Christianity been openly defeated. "What have we to set against all this?" asks the reverend knight, and answers, "Nothing but the Christmas message." But the Christmas message has been constantly proclaimed for nigh two thousand years, and yet the works of the Devil are as much to the fore as ever. It is all very well to assert that "God in Christ has taken the field against the principalities and powers of evil, and that he must prevail"; but men of God have been saying that from the beginning at Jerusalem and Antioch; and yet it is safe to say that the principalities and powers of evil have never been mightier than they are at this moment. Is it thus that God in Christ prevails? Surely, Sir William must see that he is talking sheer nonsense. His Christian faith seems to deprive him of the capacity to see things as they are.

"Christmas in Time of War" is the title of Sir William's article, and this is what he says:—

"The descent of the Eternal into the world of Time was a special Divine interposition. Shall we not say the same about this War? If we could not, our hearts would fail us. The reign of Christ and his ultimate triumph are no vain figments, but profound and consoling truths. We do not believe that this World-War is to be explained by the action of natural laws and forces.....Above Nature is the Personal Will of God. He allows men to go on till they begin to think that he is silent and heedless, and then he suddenly arises from his throne and brings them to the consciousness of his rule.....The God of judgment, who is also the God of salvation, had to send us this fiery trial that we might be purified. We say it reverently, but it seems as if God had no other way of calling men to the remembrance of his law, his Gospel, his judgment, and his mercy."

How easy it is to speak in the name of a being concerning whom absolutely no knowledge is obtainable. It is Sir William's total ignorance of God that enables him to be so dogmatic as to what he does or does not do. Christmas is a farce, the message of Christmas a lie, and the Christian Gospel a contradiction in terms. Fancy believers going up and down the world this coming Christmas Day, singing "Glory to the new-born King, peace on earth and mercy mild," while the children of God are brutally murdering one another in thousands almost daily in their Father's holy name. The Churches may keep such a god and welcome; we will have none of him.

J. T. LLOYD.

Sir Oliver Lodge and Immortality.

A GREAT deal of attention has been paid by the press to a recently reported utterance of Sir Oliver Lodge as to the reality of a future life. That in itself contains a moral. For Sir Oliver said nothing that scores, nay thousands, of others have not said before him. He affirmed the reality of a future life, he declared that he possessed proof of its reality, that he had actual evidence that it was a fact. Now, there was certainly nothing unusual in this. There has always been "clouds of witnesses," who have said these things, and some have believed them, while others doubted or smiled—or smiled *and* doubted. The significance of the pronouncement lay wholly in the position of the man who made it. Sir Oliver Lodge is a prominent man of science, and the importance attached to what he said did not lie in the fact that he produced evidence. He did not. It was entirely due to the fact that it was a very unusual thing for a scientific man to say. And the moral of the fuss made is the admission that the general run of scientific men lean very strongly in quite the opposite direction. Sir Oliver stands alone, or has, at most, a mere handful of scientific men with him. The vast majority, as he himself admits, are very strongly opposed to him. His pronouncement cannot, in any way, be called a scientific pronouncement; it is a mere expression of belief from a man of science, whom other men of scientific attainments ask vainly to produce reliable evidence.

The address, in the course of which Sir Oliver affirmed that a future life was "scientifically proved," was delivered in Browning Hall, Walworth, on November 22, and a verbatim report of it appears in the *Christian Commonwealth* for December 9. Now, after reading that address, I beg to say, and with a full sense of the value of every word said, that it is not an address such as one has a right to expect from a man of science. It is not a scientific address at all. It does not follow scientific lines; it does not subscribe to scientific rules of guidance. It offers no evidence; it does not tell one how or where the evidence may be obtained; it is a mere tissue of statements, led up to by a dwelling upon the indisputable fact that, in spite of our knowledge, we know very little of the universe in which we are living. It is really what one may call a tendency lecture—that is, the whole purpose of five-sixths of the lecture is to get the hearers to agree with the concluding sixth part, on behalf of which no evidence is given, and which has no organic connection with what has gone before.

What are the rules of scientific procedure, and what are the characteristics of scientific evidence? All scientific procedure is from the known to the unknown. It does not, as Sir Oliver reminds us at great length, deny the existence of the unknown, but it insists that the only way to explain or to understand the unknown is in terms of the unknown. We must proceed from what we know to what we do not know, verifying each step of our progress. In this way we affiliate each advance made to the knowledge we already possess, and so make the whole perfectly coherent, so far as it goes. In the next place, there is nothing occult about scientific knowledge. There is no esoteric side with which only certain gifted adepts are acquainted. There is no necessary appeal to faith or to our confidence in the teacher's honesty.

Mark, I say this is not *necessary*, although we may place a great deal of faith in our teacher's honesty. Still, that is not essential, because the conditions of a scientific demonstration is that the proofs are patent to all normally conditioned minds, and anyone who cares to give the necessary time and labor may verify the result for himself. The genuine scientific teacher is not telling you about something which has occurred to him, and an account of which is backed up by some society's report. He is telling you how each one may pass through exactly the same experience as himself, and under identical conditions. It does not matter, for example, whether a

teacher of chemistry or physics, is a confirmed liar or a notorious swindler. His facts and deductions are quite apart from his character. The personal equation is, in a scientific statement, reduced to an absolute minimum.

Now let us see how far this address of Sir Oliver Lodge complies with these conditions. A very large part of his address is taken up with an elaborate emphasis of the ignorance of mankind. This may be, at times, a very useful lesson, but it adds nothing to Sir Oliver's case—except against those hypothetical and almost inconceivable individuals who believe that they already know everything. But it is strange Sir Oliver Lodge does not recognise that he is really more open to the charge of pseudo-omniscience, that is, the disbeliever in a future life. For, ultimately, his position amounts to this: certain things have happened to me, and, so far as I can see, the only way to explain them is that communications have taken place between myself and certain "dead" friends. The sceptic replies: "I do not, or at least I need not, deny the reality of your experiences. I may accept them as either objective or subjective happenings. But I hesitate to accept your explanation. It may be that some other explanation is possible. And wider knowledge, a more complete acquaintance with all the phenomena described by you may render your animistic explanation quite unnecessary. At any rate, there is a difference between my not being able to explain your experience in terms of known forces, and accepting your explanation as being the only one possible."

Now, surely, under such conditions it is coming very near the ridiculous to turn round on the sceptic and lecture *him* on the folly of pretending to know everything, and telling *him* that he really understands but little of the universe. That is precisely part of his case against Sir Oliver Lodge. He does not claim that he understands all that is to be understood about natural phenomena. And he warns the believer in a future life against being rash enough to encourage in himself any such delusion. It is the sceptic who is setting the believer an example of intellectual caution and modesty.

There are people who believe, says Sir Oliver Lodge, man's existence

"is very ephemeral; that there is nobody to look after him, nobody that understands the universe better than he does; that he understands all about it, that he could have made it, if he had been called in, and that he represents the highest product of evolution—as, in fact, he is the highest product of terrestrial evolution at the present time—and that, therefore, nothing higher can exist."

Now, I am not aware of anyone who believes that he could have made the universe if he had been asked—although many have suggested improvements—nor do I know of anyone who claims to know all about it. If Sir Oliver's departed friends have no more solid existence than these suppositious sceptics, they are hardly worth bothering about. Nor is a sceptic called upon to deny the bare possibility of there being in existence—on some other world—forms of life higher than the human form that graces, or disgraces, this planet. Like most religious pleaders, there is very often little connection between Sir Oliver's premises and his conclusions. Of this, the following passage—offered as a comment on that already cited—is an illustration:—

"We know that there are other worlds, and that there may be beings on them. And are those all the beings that exist? Is it to be supposed that every intelligence in the universe must be like us, have bodies like us, made of matter? There is no such limitation likely; certainly there is no such limitation proved.....If you are making assertions of that kind you are stepping outside the scientific world and dogmatizing in a negative direction."

Now, granting all this to be true, one may well wonder as to its connection with the belief in a future life—except so far as it is calculated to numb one's critical faculties and prepare one for the reception of what is to follow. It is like an anæsthetic that precedes an operation. Sir Oliver asks us to

admit the possibility that on other planets there are forms of intelligent life—although he asks us also to grant the quite inconceivable proposition that they are without bodies. But, at any rate, this is not what he is trying to prove; and an admission of the likelihood of intelligent beings existing on other planets will not help him in the slightest degree. What he is trying to prove, what he asks us to believe, is that our intelligence—the personality of John Smith or Tom Brown—will exist after death. To say that there may exist somewhere in the universe non-terrestrial intelligent beings has not the remotest connection with the question of personal survival. They may exist, and if so they may be born and develop and die as we are born and develop and die. And if we think about them at all, we are bound to think of them as being like the forms of life we know—at least in their essential constitution. Sir Oliver says, very dogmatically, "I tell you that there are higher intelligences to which we are as the ants." Very well; but it is not a question of there being higher intelligences in existence, but whether these higher intelligences are born and die, and above all whether *my* intelligence persists. To tell me that there are in existence beings as much higher than me as I am higher than the ant seems a presumption against immortality—unless it is claimed for the ant.

Sir Oliver proceeds with another dose of the anæsthetic:—

"What does science show? It shows a magnificence of law and order in world upon world. The revelation of the skies is typical of a grandeur of existence that we might easily have missed. It is very instructive to remember that if the atmosphere had happened to be opaque—or, rather, had been permanently a little more opaque than at present—we should have known nothing of any other worlds. Fortunately, we have seen something of the infinitude of creation. I will not dwell upon the astronomical facts; they are overwhelming when you try to realise them. Your conceptions are benumbed when you try to penetrate into the infinitude of space and realise that there is no end, and that worlds upon worlds without limit to infinity is apparently the actual truth of things; and all governed by law, all regulated by the same laws that we know here."

Please note that in the very act of administering the anæsthetic Sir Oliver Lodge introduces a piece of counsel that should act as a restorative. All this wonderful display of "worlds upon worlds," etc., etc., are "all governed by law, all regulated by the same laws that we know here. The same physics and chemistry are found in the most distant stars."

Really, I might almost stop at this point, and, like a counsel before a judge, say, "M' lud, that is my case." Everywhere we find the same laws expressed—in the most distant star as in the nearest planet, on the earth as on the earth's sister globes. And surely in that case it is safe to say that what holds true of the chemistry and physics of other planets will also hold good for any forms of life that may exist thereon. They may be of a different color or size to those on earth; they may be more or less intelligent than human beings; but they will be "all regulated by the same laws that we know here." Therefore, the question of immortality may be—indeed, must be—decided by a study of life as we know it around us. And all this talk of other worlds and other intelligence is wide of the mark; it has nothing to do with the question at issue. It merely dazzles the uncritical and satisfies the unthinking, and so prepares them for a quite irrelevant and illogical conclusion.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Christian Apologetics.

DEAN FARRAR.

A SMALL, but somewhat pretentious book, entitled *The Witness of History to Christ*, from the pen of the late Dean Farrar, furnishes an excellent illustration

of the spirit in which apologetic works were written two or three decades ago. In this book one would naturally expect to find, from the title, matter relating to early Pagan and Jewish evidences; but not a scrap of anything of this nature is given. The title is misleading; Dr. Farrar brings forward no historical witnesses to the historicity of Jesus Christ—nothing, in fact, but the Gospels themselves. These anonymous writings are simply assumed to be history. In dealing with the Gospel miracles in this volume, our great apologist says (p. 15):—

"The central doctrine of Christianity is based upon a miracle, and in no small realm of literature the impossibility of miracles is calmly insisted upon as a discovery which needs no demonstration.....Nay, unshaken amid the storm of contemptuous assertion, *we reply* that it requires a loftier height of intelligence to believe in miracles than to reject them, because it involves the realisation of loftier than mere material verities, and the recognition of wider than purely physical laws."

It is quite true, as our reverend apologist states, that in many quarters "the impossibility of miracles is calmly insisted upon." Renan, for instance, says:—

"It is an absolute rule of criticism to give no place in historical documents to miraculous circumstances.Facts of that kind can never be verified. All the pretended miracles that we can study closely resolve themselves either into illusions or impostures," etc.

Rational statements like the foregoing are what our rev. apologist calls "contemptuous assertion." That such statements, though unquestionably true, should be powerless to shake his orthodox convictions may not, perhaps, be very surprising; but that "it requires a loftier height of intelligence to believe in miracles than to reject them" is a statement which is not in harmony with fact.

In the age in which the Gospels were written, all Christians—both Jews and Gentiles, including the Gospel writers—believed, not only that miracles were possible, but that they were of daily occurrence, and could be wrought by Satanic agency and magical arts as well as by the power of God. They further believed that epilepsy, rheumatism, insanity, and other afflictions were caused by invisible demons who had taken up their abode in some of the cavities of the human body, and that when these "evil spirits" were ejected the disease or afflictions departed. These beliefs, as everyone knows, were due simply to the ignorance and superstition prevalent in that age. Yet, if we credit the very confident assertion of Dean Farrar, the Christians of the apostolic age possessed "a loftier height of intelligence" in believing in the working of miracles than does any of our present-day scientists in rejecting them. Our orthodox Dean, moreover, ranks himself amongst those who are possessed of this "loftier height of intelligence," by the possession of which he is able to believe, with Tertullian, that an alleged miraculous occurrence must be true "because it is manifestly impossible." It is, no doubt, his "loftier height of intelligence" which impels this apologist to speak of laws "wider than purely physical laws," and to make fatuitous suppositions. There *may*, of course, be anything one chooses to imagine; there *may* be a race of two-headed men living in the moon, or that satellite may be composed of toasted cheese. No one can deny—at least, in theory—what is beyond our means of verifying; and it is for the latter reason that Christian apologists talk of "higher laws" which may suspend the action of the ordinary or natural laws. If these individuals be asked for an instance of the operation of the "higher laws," or to point to some fact that may tend to support their absurd contention, all they can do is to refer to stories of miracles recorded in the Christian Scriptures, which stories were written by ignorant and credulous men in pre-scientific times.

Our clerical apologist knows, of course, that what is called a "law" is merely a record of what has been invariably found to happen under certain conditions, and which consequently may under the same conditions be expected to happen again. This being the case, the idea of "higher laws," or laws "wider than purely physical laws," which can suspend the

action of the ordinary laws, is pure nonsense. Experience has shown, for instance, that a stone, or any solid body, if thrown up in the air, invariably comes down again. The fact that it has always been found to do so is called a "law," and this has been known to be the case ages before science discovered the cause. The upward course of the stone continues only until the impetus with which it was thrown is exhausted or overcome by the attraction of the earth; it then inevitably descends. It is thus simply impossible for any solid body or material substance to get away from the earth. Bearing this fact in mind, we know without descending to argument that the stories of Elijah and Jesus Christ ascending beyond the clouds are fables (see 2 Kings ii. 11; Luke xxiv. 31; Acts i. 9). Hence, the absurd contention of a "higher law"—one unknown to scientists—which would enable the before-mentioned personages to leave the earth, will be seen to be a mark, not of "a loftier height of intelligence," but of scarcely any intelligence at all.

Further on (p. 37), our great apologist endeavors to draw an argument in favor of miracles from the fact that science has not discovered the cause of all known phenomena. He says:—

"It is the nature of things to gravitate towards the centre of the earth, and yet a balloon of vast weight, and containing many persons, will rise majestically and rapidly to the clouds.....To a savage the result might well appear to be miraculous, nor would it be easy to make him understand that the balloon rises in virtue of the very same law which makes the pebble fall. May it not be so with the acts of God?"

Here I must remark, in the first place, that our scientists are not in the position of the savage in the foregoing illustration. If they do not know everything, they have at least discovered sufficient facts to prove Dean Farrar's suggestion of "higher laws," which suspend the action of natural laws, supremely ridiculous. The balloon is but another example of the invariability of the laws that govern the universe. If a savage, beholding the ascent of a balloon, believed that the law of gravitation had been suspended by some higher law "wider than purely physical laws," he would be mistaken. Nothing is known of any such "higher laws." Dean Farrar himself does not know; he simply makes foolish suggestions. If the "acts of God" are dependent upon laws "wider than purely physical laws," then no miracles were ever performed at all.

With regard to the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ, our reverend apologist says (p. 40):—

"You pronounce it impossible that, after the rigor of death and the flaccidity of corruption, the veins should flush once more into healthy life; how is it more possible that, in the womb of her that is with child, should begin the systole and the diastole of the beating heart, and the unapproachable individuality of the living soul? The event is in no respect greater, it is only different."

With regard to the last statement it would be useless to offer an opinion. The question is, not which of the events named may appear the greater, but which is in accordance with the known laws of nature. It is certainly a most wondrous fact that seed, whether animal or vegetable, should reproduce its own kind, but this being known to be one of nature's laws, no surprise is felt at the occurrence of such events. When, however, a person who has been medically examined and found to be dead is three days later declared to have been restored to life, the case is different. The latter alleged event is not in accordance with the operations of nature; neither in the present day, nor at any past time, has such an event been known to have taken place. Hence, before seriously considering a case of this kind, we naturally ask upon what evidence the alleged restoration to life is founded. And, with regard to Jesus Christ, the answer is in every instance the same. We have no evidence whatever; no one ever witnessed the event, and the originators of the seven conflicting stories of his resurrection and of his appearance to his disciples are unknown. This applies to every case of alleged restoration to life recorded in the Old or the New Testament.

ABRACADABRA.

"The Cosmic Roots of Love."—II.

BY REV. HENRY M. SIMMONS.

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(Continued from p. 797.)

Is not the earth itself member of a society which is something like a family? Even the most prosaic astronomers call the planets a "sisterhood," which have all sprung from the solar mass as a common mother, and have in turn given birth to a score of satellite daughters. All these worlds form a family; and, though they have separated so far, they are still held together by a sort of family affection, which is none the less real because named gravitation. Under its rule, each daughter world not only bends her onward impulse into a filial orbit around her mother, but turns from her course to greet every passing sister planet. Even the wayward comet's sons come back from their wide wanderings to be welcomed and warmed again at the family hearth.

A foolish fancy, of course, but yet a fact! The very gravitation which unites the solar system is another of these mutual attractions which we have been tracing. Nor is it limited to our own, but is seen in many a system of double or triple stars moving about each other or around their common centre. It not only moves worlds, but gathered and globed them to begin with, astronomers say; and in the spiral streaks of many a nebula we seem to see the movement starting, and matter slowly drawing together to shine in new suns and systems.

So does this attraction and union, in one phase or another, pervade the universe—a cosmic principle. It is ever attended by the opposite one of separation, but is the more creative of the two. It blesses everywhere, from the gathering and warming of worlds in systems up to the gathering of animals in societies and of men in families warm with sympathy and love. In it, rather than in the mere prolongation of infancy, would I see the "cosmic roots of love"—reaching back of mammals and of all motherhood, back of Haeckel's cells and oldest suns, running through the wreaths of the nebula, threading every atom, thrilling through the infinite ether, already alive in that mysterious gravitation which, like the spirit of God in the Biblical story, first moved on the face of the abyss, and said, "Let there be light."

I fancy there may yet come some poet-philosopher who will commence his ethical study, not with scripture, not even with human souls or lowest cells or solar systems, but, back of them all, with the first movement of matter toward union. He will read in the lines of the gathering nebula a heavenly scripture already revealing the law of love, and in every star a text in prophecy of Christ. He will simply trace this cosmic principle of *union* through its advancing phases in creation.

It is ever opposed by repulsion, separation, strife; but is ever harmonising the strife. Just as, in gravitation, it gathered diffuse matter into globes, and the separating globes in systems, so on our globe, in the finer chemical affinities, it combined atoms in molecules, and these in compounds ever more complex. In condensation and cohesion it brought liquids and solids. In crystallisation it built the myriad shapes of beauty in the rocks. In more marvellous vital organisation it combined compounds in cells, and these again in the countless forms of life.

Among these individual forms came that cruel competition and strife which pessimists make so much of, and which has indeed given to nature a tragic aspect. But in melioration of the strife our principle took a *social* form, uniting individuals in societies of mutual help, which pessimists forget. This social principle has everywhere prevailed, not only in the vast insect world, but in animals of all sorts, from buffaloes on the plain to beavers in the pond, bringing swarms, schools, flocks, herds, and myriads of minor co-operations, like those told in Kropotkin's book. He holds that, even "as a factor

of evolution," the fraternal principle of mutual aid has been much more important than "mutual strife," and has thus largely redeemed Nature from the common charge of cruelty.

Most of these animal societies seem to be merely utilitarian, with little real sympathy. But this comes with the higher union of the *family*. The family begins low, as we saw, and its affection is long and feeble. Even conjugal love is at first fleeting. Among some insects the bride does not hesitate to slay her husband when the nuptials are over. Maternal love may be no stronger. Even among vertebrates, eggs and infants are widely left to perish, as they may well be when there are so many of them. When the progeny of a single herring would soon fill the ocean solid, maternal care would hardly be a virtue. But, with higher organisation and fewer offspring, that care increases. In birds it becomes proverbial; and the mother, if not loving her neighbor as herself, at least loves her infants as herself, and so seems almost to have begun to be a Christian. Her love is very limited, however, and lasts only a month, after which, her moral law is suspended till another season.

But the mammalian structure carries that union further—unites mother and infant much more closely and longer. At length the delicate human body and brain so prolong the helpless infancy that the union has to last for years, and thus becomes a habit to last through life. The family becomes permanent, and its affection fixed. Its permanence also extends the union—holds together parents and children and children's children in a widening circle of kinsmen. So we reach one of those clans, gens, or little tribes, in which society seems everywhere to have started. This cosmic principle of union, working from atoms upward, has at length unfolded its higher meaning, and brought, not merely a utilitarian society of animals, but a human brotherhood inspired with sympathy.

This little *tribe* often shows that brotherhood perfect between its own members, however cruel to others. Boyle says that even the Dyaks, so famed for ferocity and murders, were yet, among themselves, "humane to a degree that might well shame" us. Some refuse to believe this of savages, especially of heathen. But why? Why think affection impossible among barbarians, when it abounds among birds? Why think self-sacrifice impossible among the heathen, when it is the law of every ant-hill? Why think Pagans cannot keep the Ten Commandments, when the mere moon keeps every one of them, except that of the Sabbath? Kindness comes by nature, and even by necessity, for the tribe cannot hold together without it. It is still confined to the tribe, however, and perhaps is fiercely hostile to outsiders, only the narrow harmony of a hornet's nest.

But our principle works on through history to extend the harmony. It unites little tribes in larger, and these in larger still, until a *nation* is formed. The nation keeps new peace within, and cultivates the juster ideals seen in ancient literature. Plato wrote, "May I, being of sound mind, do to others as I would that they should do to me"; and already the sentiment was familiar from Athens to the end of Asia. This brotherhood, however, was only national. Even the comparatively humane Greeks did not try to be so to foreigners; and Plato, in giving the Golden Rule, did not mean for a moment that it was to be practised toward barbarians.

But the principle worked on, joining nations in larger union and extending the *humanity*. In the West this extension came through the Roman rule, uniting peoples from the British Isles to the Euphrates, and giving to ethics a cosmopolitan tone. In the century before Christ, Cicero and the Stoics preached universal brotherhood; Varro, in giving the Golden Rule, no longer left it local, but said it should embrace all the nations of mankind. In the time of the Apostles, the Pagan, Lucan, predicted that the world would soon cast aside its weapons, and all nations learn to love. In practice, too, there

was for two centuries, in the *Pax Romana*, such a world-peace as earth never saw before or since. The Romans, however, were not the people to perfect that union. They had brought it through vast wars, and still kept class divisions and cruel wrongs that made the Stoics' precepts seem a mockery.

But now came from the nation of *Israel* a movement to further that brotherhood, and, still more important, to identify it at last with religion. That nation itself well illustrates this law of ethical growth. It had started, according to the Biblical story, in one of those primitive families, with not even the domestic virtues yet fully established. Jacob robs his twin brother and deceives his dying father, and is incited to this by his mother; and his sons, the fathers of the tribes of *Israel*, seek to slay their best brother and finally sell him into slavery. These tribes, too, though fairly united within, had fought each other, and had well-nigh exterminated Benjamin. But they had at length united in a nation, reached a larger justice, and learned the Decalogue. The justice, however, had been only national. Even eminent saints in *Israel* denied the Decalogue in dealing with other peoples. They burned town after town even in the name of the Lord, and "utterly destroyed all that breathed." Of course, we need not believe it was really so bad as this; and the Bible often shows these annihilated towns and tribes reappearing right afterward, active as ever. But the stories show no less the low ideals of the authors, in both morals and religion. These ideals, however, continued to rise, until the great prophets of the eighth century B.C. not only plead passionately for brotherhood within the nation, but even predicted the union of nations, when swords should be beaten into ploughshares and the world should learn war no more.

But, most important of all, this brotherhood was made the essence of religion. It was taught that the Lord cared little for their ceremonies and prayers, wanted no more blood of animals or men, but only that they should "do justly and love mercy." This teaching, though of course unheeded, continued among the best Jews. Rabbi Hillel, in giving the Golden Rule, called it "the substance of the law"; and Jesus called it both "the law and the prophets." Jesus' Beatitudes are only ethical, and do not hint that religion is anything more. They give the highest blessings to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," to "the meek" and "the merciful"; and, if God is mentioned, it is "the pure in heart" who shall see him, the "peace-makers" who shall be called his "sons." It is the simple religion of righteousness and brotherhood. Jesus seems to have cared for little else. He preached "mercy and not sacrifice." He ordered men to leave the altar until they were reconciled to others. This reconciliation was itself the best prayer: "for if ye forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you," and he will not otherwise. Forgiveness was the true religion, and must be repeated "seventy times seven" times. This was also taught among his disciples, one of whom wrote that, "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us," for "God is love." Love was itself God and the only way to find him. Saint Jerome tells how John, when an old man, kept repeating "Love one another"; and how, when asked why he said no more, he replied that no more was needed. So did early Christianity promise to perfect the union which the Roman empire had brought.

But the promise failed. Between barbarians without and corruption within, that uniting empire went to pieces. Even before it fell, Christianity fell worse—fell from its high ideals of harmony to things that divided. It separated into sects quarreling over theological questions. It opposed the social sentiments with ascetic practices, and sought sanctity by fasts and bodily penance rather than by brotherhood. Many a holy hermit abandoned his own children to save his soul, and a nun was said to have been sent to Purgatory for loving her mother too much. Formal observances were again exalted until they seemed holier than innocence itself. Baptism, which

Paul once thanked God he had practised so little, came to be thought more important than purity; and ceremonies to atone for a crime seemed more meritorious than not to commit it. Such opinions prevailed for centuries, and Jesus' religion of love was so buried that his professing followers sometimes sought to serve him by slaying each other.

Yet, all this time, the tendency to union was also active, and was aided much by Christianity. Whatever the quarrels of the Church, it still taught brotherhood. Amid all the divisions of the falling empire and of the feudal system, the Christian name and organisation kept alive the feeling of unity. Even then Crusades helped to unite Europe, and the wars which followed them were partly redeemed by gathering conquered peoples into great nations again.

But the union has been furthered more by the secular forces that revived with the Renaissance. The arts undermined intolerance. Learning linked men of even different religions and races in a common cause and sympathy. Advancing science softened bigotry, and the Agnostic spirit began to show the folly of quarreling over questions about which neither side knew anything. Increasing commerce joined the nations ever more closely, and economics slowly learned that the interests of each were the interests of all.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops.

As we are nearing Christmas some of the papers are reviving a story of the Franco-Prussian War which may or may not be true. It is said that on Christmas Eve a French soldier stepped out from the trenches, in full view of the enemy, and sang a Christmas carol. The Germans ceased their firing, and both sides maintained a truce while the song lasted. Then the singer stepped back and the firing recommenced. The story is being retold because in some unexplained way it is supposed to support the power of Christian faith. How it does this it is difficult to understand. It did not put an end to the fighting, it did not make the Christians on either side less ready to kill each other, and it did not affect the issue in the slightest degree. It is just as likely that had the soldier stepped forward and sang a secular song, the enemy might have refrained from shooting. To our mind the story illustrates the impotence rather than the power of Christianity. The common religious belief of French and German could not prevent that or other wars. It could not prevent those wars being pursued to the bitter end. It could only add the fanaticism of religious feeling to feed the already powerful malignancies of national hatred.

The value of the talk about this War ending all war may be seen in what is taking place in America. It is probable that the United States has less cause than any other nation in the world to fear an invasion, or an attack from other great Powers. Yet the Navy Department, having but just placed orders for three new battleships, which are to be the largest in the world, has decided to ask Congress to authorise two more, as well as six destroyers, eight or more submarines, and other odds and ends. It is proposed to spend £29,000,000 during the coming year. The aim is to have the strongest navy in the world, and there is to be a corresponding increase in the army. It looks as though the present War will only break down Prussian militarism to establish universal militarism. For no nation is likely to possess a powerful navy or a large army without others following suit, and at least one of them is bound to be the cause of trouble sooner or later.

We have a cheap press; but what about a free press? Last week four Irish papers were suppressed by the military authorities, and others were threatened for using plain language concerning the European crisis. The *Times* calls the papers concerned, "rags," but the question of free speech is bound up with such action, and all the *Times* can do is to call names.

Mr. A. G. Gardiner, editor of the *Daily News*, says, "It does not pay to go against the popular tide." That is the testimony of the editor of a mild Liberal paper, which has a large circulation. What would he have said had he edited a paper such as the *Freethinker*, which has championed

unpopular ideas for thirty-three years in the teeth of a tempest beside which the still waters of Liberalism are but a mill-pond.

Christians resemble the heathen Chinese on occasion. The Southend Education Committee recently had to deal with the question of the opening of a recreation ground on Sundays. The donor had expressed his wish that it should be open; and so they passed a resolution that the place should be opened from 4 p.m. till sunset, which, at this time of the year, means but a few minutes. Maybe, they hope, tremblingly, that Providence is too busy with the War to notice that recreation ground.

"Should Christians ever go to War?" is still being discussed in the religious papers. They ought to begin with the preliminary question, "Have Christians ever ceased to go to War?" In all the Christian centuries there has never been a single generation, during which Christians have not been fighting with each other. The soldier has never been worshiped as the Christian nations have worshiped him, and it was left for Christians to turn the chief energies of civilisation into military channels. And Christians have been so impressed with the importance of the military life, that it has entered into their hymns, and figures largely in their symbology. Religious leaders, like the late General Booth, understood that the most powerful mode of appeal to a Christian public was by way of military terms and a military organisation. And even the teaching that war is a biological necessity and makes for the health of States—of which teaching Bernardi is quite wrongly made the parent—could only have gained ground among a people that have been brought up to reverence the military ideal.

The impossible Waldron, Vicar of Brixton, of course joins in the discussion, and adorns it with his usual puerilities and absurdities. He concludes that Christians ought to go to war when it is a just war—as if any nation ever engaged in an unjust war. Each one claims that justice is on its side, just as each side is claiming the support of God in the present War. He also discovers that the War is bridging the gap between the rich and the poor—we shall see how effectively when the War is over. He also illustrates the power of Christianity by pointing out that "the trenches have accomplished more for Christian humanitarianism than all our social legislation." What a confession for a Christian minister to make! Fancy admitting that even war, with all its brutality and suffering and destruction, is yet more powerful to encourage humanitarianism than are Christian influences during times of peace! Anyone would expect that people would see in this a proof of the impotence of Christianity. Mr. Waldron sees in it a proof of the power of the Christian faith.

What a fine thing religion is for inducing feelings of kindness and brotherhood! Rev. A. C. Dixon, of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was invited to join in the City Temple Intercession prayers, which are carried on daily. But Dr. Dixon would have none of it. He could not bring himself to pray in the same building with men who had denied the supernatural birth of Christ, and he informed Mr. Campbell that if he would confess his sin before God, that would do more to help the Allies than a lifetime of daily prayer. This is wholly delightful from every point of view. Here is Dr. Dixon believing that God will decline to help the Allies because he is offended with Mr. Campbell, and then we have Mr. Campbell dilating on the love that religion breeds with Dr. Dixon's letter before him. Really, it seems almost plain enough for a blind man to see that religion is the one thing that never does serve to induce brotherly feelings. People will sink their differences on any other subject, when occasion demands, but they will continue venomous on religion right up to the end.

Whilst the Bishop of Chelmsford was at Bethnal Green, daily prayer was resorted to in order to obtain money for the restoration of the church. Two ladies responded with sums of £18,000 and £3,000 respectively. Next time we hear of the poverty of Bethnal Green we shall remember those two "sisters in the Lord."

The Bishop of Chelmsford says "the churches of the country are not full." Thank you, my lord! An unsolicited testimonial to the *Freethinker*.

The clergy do not give much away. They buried Lord Roberts in St. Paul's Cathedral, and now they are "booming" the late Field-Marshal as the example of a great

soldier "who had family prayers for fifty-five years." It may catch the fancy of spinsters who work beaded slippers for curates; but even schoolboys know that Napoleon and Frederic the Great did not waste much time in prayers—family or otherwise.

The Canadian Government has appointed January 3 to be a day of prayer "for the speedy ending of the War." This does not mean, necessarily, that "Our Lady of the Snows" has "cold feet."

The *Daily Telegraph* refers to the "day of public prayer already fixed for France by her bishops." This is not altogether inaccurate, but it is misleading. There is no day of public prayer fixed for France. Only the Government could do that, and the Government has nothing to do with religion. It is the bishops who have asked all their followers to pray on a given date. These may be all over France, but they are not France. The day of prayer is a purely private religious venture.

"It is true to say that the German Kaiser is fighting a community of saints," writes a Roman Catholic Army Chaplain in the *Daily Mail*; "General absolutions to regiments, or very large bodies of men, have been the order of the day." Heigho! If the hundreds of thousands of Catholics in the German and Austrian regiments have also received absolution, "saints" are fighting "saints."

The Gospel Temperance movement has been at work for a great many years, and, in spite of the alleged support of "Omnipotence," has achieved little success. The military regulations, and compulsorily limiting the hours of selling drink, has had a marked effect in reducing drunkenness. Secularism is always better than Supernaturalism.

A striking cartoon appeared in the New York *Evening Sun*, depicting the figure of Faith pointing to a battlefield strewn with corpses, and bearing the ironic question, "Why?" It would puzzle the clergy of the Christian world to answer that simple query.

The Comedie Francaise and the Opera Comique in Paris gave their first performances since the beginning of the War on Sunday afternoon. The religion of the Man of Sorrows is alleviated by gaiety in the country of Moliere and Voltaire.

Owing to the number of the dead being excessive after a recent battle, the Army Chaplains arranged for a Jewish Rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a Government religion minister, to conduct the funeral services. Priority was given to the Rabbi on account of his age—and it was due, as his religion bore the same relation to the others that butter does to margarine.

Owing to mechanism being employed to produce wind for church-organs, the organ-blowers find themselves less in demand than formerly. They may find consolation in the parson's bellows.

The Young Men's Christian Association has succeeded so well with its hut-building that it proposes to erect more huts and reading-rooms in France. Let us hope, prayerfully, that Roman Catholic regiments, who have received "absolution," will not be the tenants.

"Who Owns the Air? British Government Recognises no Sovereignty." These are two headlines in an English Tory newspaper. It is comforting to think that the ownership is in dispute, otherwise we should all be charged two shillings per 1,000 feet for air to breathe.

The Pope is endeavoring to bring about a truce in the European War during the Christmas season, but there is little hope of its succeeding. Poor Papa! He is the only Christian of any consequence who sticks to his colors.

At Acton recently a woman said she had not seen a half-crown during the thirteen years she had been married. She was nearly as poor as the founder of the Christian religion, who was sold for thirty shillings.

"Germany must win, God cannot desert his children," said a Teutonic professor. Commenting on this, the *Daily Mirror* says, "If they fail, Gott will have to undergo the same criticism as the Prussian generals; for what is he but

a Prussian general glorified, this tribal demon of theirs, this dreary Gott of their insolence." The *Daily Mirror* does not write in this strain in the piping times of peace.

In Sunday's *Weekly Dispatch* a third of the front page was devoted to the momentous war-news that the Kaiser's hair was turning white. Perhaps some self-denying Christian will send the Emperor a bottle of hair-dye.

"Baronet in the Dock" is a headline in the newspapers. This should not cause much sensation in a country where most people believe that "God" was once in the same position.

Christian veracity is not a conspicuous virtue, but orthodox editors not only leave truth at the bottom of her well, but put the lid on and padlock it. In a recent issue, the *Daily Mail* referred to the German Kaiser as "the coolest Rationalist." The German Emperor is not "cool," and he is not a "Rationalist." Otherwise, the statement is correct.

The Bishop of Manchester has authorised a prayer for "the humble beasts" for use in his diocese. This anxiety for the welfare of animals is somewhat belated, for the Christian world generally agrees with St. Paul's contemptuous remark, "Does God care for oxen?" And the bullock bellows dolefully over the balmy meads.

We rather like the way one of the religious weeklies winds up the notice of a new book, published at 10s. 6d. It describes the headings to the chapters, and then adds, "These finally leave to God." There you are! A kind of Cook's tour to Deity; and all for half-a-guinea. Why, many a man has spent a fortune over the business, and then failed.

In the course of a protest against British military aviators flying over Switzerland, the Swiss Government has put in something like a claim for the sovereignty of the air. Against this Great Britain has quite properly, and quite naturally, protested. If not exactly a British possession, Christians in this country have always looked upon Heaven as coming within the British sphere of influence, and to have passed over the Swiss claim without protest would have been to forgo one of our dearest traditions.

An American paper says that we ought to give the Turk some credit. He hasn't announced that Allah is on his side.

Now that the word "culture" is so much in evidence, many will be glad of a definition. Here is one supplied by Rev. Dr. Jowett. True culture, he says, "is the reverent and diligent co-operation of the will of man with the holy will of God." Bravo! Now all we want to know is, What is the will of God? and then we shall at least have a definition that is intelligible—even if we do not agree with carrying out the will of God. But at present Germans, British, Turks, and Russians are engaged in killing each other to carry out the will of God, so the definition does not really help us very considerably. Perhaps it would be better to leave such a doubtful quantity as the "will of God" out of consideration altogether.

The military and local authorities between them are preparing work for the doctors at Southend-on-Sea. Servant girls and soldiers parade freely in the evening, and the lights are turned out or down soon after daylight. This is considered a very pious arrangement, especially as the public-houses are closed at eight-thirty. Medical men are not flourishing now, but they expect to be busy in due course.

A rather curious article—curious, that is, because of its author—appears in the *Daily Chronicle* of December 10 from the pen of Mr. Eden Phillpotts. The subject of the article is "English and German Ideals of God." With the greater part of the article we find ourselves in agreement, but the conclusion is strangely ambiguous and undecided. Mr. Phillpotts says that the English and German ideals cannot both be of God, because they contradict each other. We do not see that this is conclusive. A man's god is, after all, no more than a cluster of ideas, to which he gives the name of God (we hardly think that Mr. Phillpotts believes in an actual objective deity), and to say that these ideas clash is to say no more than that they are discordant. The question of which is true, or which has the larger measure of truth, must be decided on some other principle than that

of an appeal to God. There are all sorts of gods in the world, and, consequently, all sorts of notions as to what they really desire.

There is one clear point scored by Mr. Phillpotts. All the neutral nations believe in God, and yet "No King, no President has allowed enthusiasm for humanity to open his mouth and record a whisper of protest from any nation in the enjoyment of peace. They know that moral influence is as powerful as the sword, but abstain from exerting it, since at present to state their opinion of Louvain or Rheims, or the massacre at Ardenne would be an unfriendly act. The neutral ruler sells his soul for his country's peace, and in the name of politics. As politics are constituted, that is often the sudden sacrifice they demand, and few be they who will make it." This is indeed an aspect of the case that deserves stressing. If war is to be conducted even within the rules that "civilisation" protests against their infraction, to be effective, must come from neutrals. It is useless one of the belligerents protesting. And yet, in spite of the undoubted crimes committed during the present war, not one of the neutral, and Christian countries, has had the moral courage to raise a voice against their continuance. That is one test of the value of their Christian training.

But we do not think that Mr. Phillpotts is on equally strong ground when he argues that the truth about the world's belief in God will emerge from this war. Whichever side triumphs, the religious on both sides will see the "will of God" declared, either to chasten or to reward. Of course, the logical conclusion from this belief would be, as Mr. Phillpotts says, that all would accept the issue and be content. But logic does not rule in such matters, and the outcome cannot fail to be more ill-will than existed before the War. Hatred for defeat on the one side, and an unjustifiable sense of superiority, springing from conquest, are emphatically not the conditions that lead to goodwill, to fellowship, to co-operation, and so to genuine progress. These can only be secured by nations—as is the case with individuals—meeting on a basis of common humanity. And war very seldom helps in this direction. Most generally it means an interruption of the civilising forces already at work. And the only part played by the belief in God is to provide a semi-ethical excuse for passions that without religion would most likely be recognised in their true nature.

At a recent meeting of "Our Dumb Friends' League," a society for the promotion of kindness to animals, a mongrel in the vicinity disturbed the serenity of the proceedings by prolonged howling.

Over 300,000 copies of Princess Mary's Gift Book have been sold in a week. The Bible Society, which publishes the book of "The King of Kings," will be almost green with envy.

Mr. Arthur Machin says "we have languished now for many years under the intellectual rule of the Twopenny Antichrists." It is appropriate that such a sentiment should be published in the halfpenny *Evening News*.

"The Reformation of St. Katherine" is a paragraph heading in the daily press. We do not know the lady, but a number of the saints were "nuts" in their earlier days.

A report on "The Care of Ancient Churches" has been issued by the Archbishops Committee. We advise them to have it translated into German, and to have copies sent to the Teutonic generals, most of whom would appreciate the gift.

"What is the Western civilisation, after all?" asks Mr. Uchimura, a well-known Japanese educationalist. And he answers:—

"War, war—war upon the slightest pretext—that is their cry and inborn propensity. To say that their civilisation is based upon the Gospel of Peace is the grossest falsehood. The present conflagration of Europe is the veriest evidence, written with hell-fire upon the face of the sky, that theirs is a sham civilisation, beautiful upon the surface, but within dead vacuity. Like thunderstorm on a summer afternoon, the two poles of human wrath come to earth to spend itself, to leave the sky clear for the better and more beautiful thing."

Neither the Japanese nor the Chinese welcomed Christianity before the War. They will now be able to point to a striking object-lesson of its utter worthlessness as a civilising factor. Meanwhile the missionary societies, who seem quite dead to the realities of the situation, are appealing for funds to carry the Christian Gospel from the lands of the Allies to China and Japan.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £238 7s. 6d. Received since:—A. D. (Glasgow), 10s.; E. A. H., 5s.; R Bell, 5s.; F. E. W. Hicks, 10s.

F. GATESHILL.—You would find little but disappointment during the War. Glad you and your friends esteem the *Freethinker* so highly. We should say that Jack London, the novelist, is undoubtedly a Freethinker.

A. P. (Glasgow).—There is no objection, so far as we can see, to every Provincial Branch of the N. S. S. having its own Annual Dinner, nor to the Scotch Branches following. But so far as the Society's Annual Dinner is concerned, that must be held somewhere, and London—if only because the Society's headquarters are there—seems the fittest place. You must try and induce your fellow-Freethinkers in Glasgow to arrange an Annual Dinner if you think it would exert a "brightening influence" on the Branch. You have our best wishes in the matter.

G. LOCKWOOD.—Not quite up to the standard, but we are in agreement with your sentiments, and that is a matter of much greater importance.

R. BELL.—We agree with you as to its being almost impossible to drive sense into some people's heads. But the fact of our contributors dealing with certain well-known clergymen does not in the least imply that they hope to "convert" these gentlemen, or that they have an extravagant opinion of their importance. Still, they are well known in the religious world, they are so far representative, and serve to add point to an argument.

G. BRADFIELD.—There seems to be a bit of a misunderstanding. Mr. Foote's view of the German Emperor does not differ materially from your own, or from that of the views expressed in the paragraph of which you approve. We note your appreciation of the *Freethinker* articles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

The Annual General Members' Meeting of the Secular Society, Ltd., will be held at the Society's registered address, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C., on Tuesday evening, at 7 o'clock. Members are earnestly requested to attend, by person or proxy. Proxy forms, which should be sent with the Report and Balance Sheet from the Office, should be filled in and returned to the Secretary at least two clear days before the date of meeting. It should be noted that the stamp, duly obliterated according to the proxy form, is indispensable; so, also, is the witness's signature. Probably most proxies will be made out in favor of Mr. Foote or (in his absence) Mr. Cohen. There are important reasons why this should not be neglected on the present occasion. Any member who fails to receive his (or her) Report, Balance Sheet, and Proxy Form, at least by December 18, should apply for it without further delay, and also see that the receipt for current subscription is duly received.

Mr. Foote cannot yet resume his story of "The Secular Charter." He has been made one of the chief witnesses in the Bowman Will Case, and he finds it impossible to state many things in a public newspaper that he has, or may have, to give evidence of by affidavit in a Court of Justice. Some of his readers will remember a certain Contempt of Court included in a certain libel action, in which the Christian enemy sought to strike him down by means of that law, of which he barely realised the existence—*then*. Had the

judge's place at that time been occupied by a bigot, it would have been an easy new way of punishing Mr. Foote as editor of the *Freethinker*. It was known that the prosecution counted on £100 fine and a fortnight's fresh experience of the royal hospitality.

Tickets for the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner are now on sale, price 4s. each, and can be had on application to Miss Vance, the Society's General Secretary. Only tickets that are applied for will be sent, and, as the number is limited, it is advisable to apply early. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, will be in the chair, and will be "supported" by Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. A. B. Moss, Miss Kough, and other well-known Freethinkers. All we can say about the musical program at present is that it will be a good one. Those who have attended previous dinners will need little assurance on that point.

Apropos of our note last week on the manner in which Freethinking recruits are treated in the New Army, we may cite the following letter which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of December 11:—

"SIR,—It is quite possible that at the end of the War the Church of England may claim to have had a vast preponderance of members of their Church serving in the War; possibly the following might be the explanation: My son, when enlisting in a regiment yesterday, was asked what his religion was. He answered: 'I am an Agnostic.' The officer asking the question said: 'Oh, we have not got that, so I will put you down Church of England.'—L. S."

We fancy that many military officers are still a long way off treating soldiers as if they were really human beings. They seem to regard them as things to be praised when they deserve it, to be cared for and looked after so far as mere animal necessities are concerned, but that a soldier might have opinions, and that these might be the better part of him, never strikes them as possible.

Rev. William Carlile, chief of the Church Army, sends us a begging letter in which he calls us one of his old supporters. We were not aware that we possessed the honor.

The period covered since the outbreak of War has been a very trying one for all advanced movements. Some societies appear to have suspended operations altogether, and in all cases there has been a falling off in the number of meetings held. From reports to hand we are pleased to learn that wherever Freethought meetings have been held, the attendances have been as large as ever, and in some cases larger. In some towns there is a difficulty in obtaining halls—owing to these being taken for military purposes, but apart from this there seems no reason why the Secular Societies throughout the country should not prepare for a vigorous campaign in the New Year. People's minds cannot be always monopolised by a single subject, even that of war. Sooner or later other interests clamor for attention, and those who are responsible for the conduct of Freethought propaganda would do well to bear this in mind.

In the course of a fine article on "Thoughts on This War" in *Scribner's*, Mr. John Galsworthy has the following scathing indictment of Christianity:—

"Three hundred thousand church spires raised to the glory of Christ! Three hundred million human creatures baptised into His service! And—war to the death of them all! 'I trust the Almighty to give the victory to my arms!' 'Let your hearts beat to God, and your fists in the face of the enemy!' 'In prayer we call God's blessing on our valiant troops!'

"God on the lips of each potentate, and under the hundred thousand spires prayer that twenty-two million servants of Christ may receive from God the blessed strength to tear and blow each other to pieces, to ravage and burn, to wrench husbands from wives, fathers from their children, to starve the poor, and everywhere destroy the works of the spirit! Prayer under the hundred thousand spires for the blessed strength of God, to use the noblest, most loyal instincts of the human race to the ends of carnage! 'God be with us to the death and dishonor of our foes' (whose God he is no less than ours)! The God who gave His only begotten Son to bring on earth peace and good will toward men!

"No creed—in these days when two and two are put together—can stand against such reeling subversion of its foundation. After this monstrous mockery, beneath this grinning skull of irony, how shall there remain faith in a religion preached and practised to such ends?"

Inevitable or avoidable, in defence of national freedom or in pursuit of schemes of national aggrandisement, the indubitable fact remains that Christianity has done nothing to make such a conflict as the present one impossible, and has done much to make it sooner or later certain.

Newspaper Culture.

I THINK it was Plato who said that the eyes of the majority of mankind were not strong enough to behold Truth. And I am of the opinion that some lesser light in the history of our untidy planet said that truth should be spoken behind closed doors. It would appear that the dissemination of truth was a delicate and difficult project, fraught with all the dangers and penalties of a voyage through Hell in a boat made of wax. We may truly ask, granted that the truth be dangerous, to *whom* is it dangerous? As we shall never get an answer to our question from the army of molecatchers in our midst, we may say at the outset that a knowledge of truth is dangerous to religious authority—in fact, it is dangerous to authority of any nature which is founded on ignorance.

Truth being planted, as it were, in a quagmire, if we are to believe our later-day soothsayers and magicians, we may fairly expect that the spirits who set out to discover it may reasonably experience abuse, misrepresentation, slander, and even death. The search for truth is a deliberate tilt at authority. Let no man buckle on armor who prefers peace of mind; let him rather follow in the track of those who make Sunday a day of feast and prayer. Prayers on a full stomach are very soothing—we might call the combined sensation the pinnacle of happiness, the height of ambition, or celestial translation. Any of the three terms would satisfy the aspiration of those whom Plotinus termed as people possessing the political virtues; that is, a people loving comfort. The people of this nature occupied a low place in the classification of mankind as formulated by Plotinus; and, as we believe that types of man never vary, the people with the political virtues of the present day are represented by the suburban newspaper-cultured Christians. And this brings us to the matter of our argument.

Some may consider Caxton as a benefactor of mankind. Well, for our part, we think he was responsible for the bringing of scatter-brain ideas of Nietzsche to the above-mentioned class. That they should hate him is natural; that they should misunderstand him is quite feasible when we remember that they receive him second or third hand; that is, through the doubtful conduits of journalism, and, it is with no idea of defending Nietzsche, that we say the hired journalists of a kept press, whilst not even whispering truth behind closed doors, have wantonly cried out lies from the housetops. With a few honorable exceptions, we might say they have remained true to their modern tradition. In time of peace they were an insult in print; in time of war, like the leopard, they could not change their spots.

Nietzsche was, and is, anti-Christian. For that I, as an insignificant writer and Freethinker, honor him. He chose the path of solitude, of comparative poverty, and he made the grandest and most sublime mistake that endears him to all men who are not modern eunuchs or—journalists; he tilted at authority in more than one form, and the comfortable class, true to their type, stoned him. In effect, we hear them say he is not one of us; he says, "There will be no remorse in man's heart any longer"..... "but the Christian religion is essentially a product of the slave class."....."One only needs to read any one of the Christian agitators—St. Augustine, for instance—in order to realise, in order to *smell*, what filthy fellows came to the top in this movement." In our imagination we can see battalions of the feast and prayer class stooping down to pick up stones to level at his head. And the journalists will instruct them in their good old Biblical game of stoning the prophets.

This, then, was one of the men who influenced the Christian Emperor of Germany in his lust for war. By the wooden shoes of St. Joseph, it is a paradox that could only emanate from the mind of one who can swallow whole the Athanasian Creed! It reminds the present writer of something he saw in a

curio shop in Boulogne in happier days than the present. In the middle of the shop window was a plaster cast of Christ on the cross; on the right-hand side was a bust of Voltaire, with the head turned towards the pathetic figure on the cross, and the lips of the scoffer were parted in that well-known grim, sardonic smile—commercial adversity makes strange bedfellows; and to say that Nietzsche was one of the causes of the War is the same as saying that Voltaire crucified Christ.

Abuse of Nietzsche has declined somewhat at this stage of the War, and we are almost tempted to think that the muddle-headed journalists, saying the wrong thing by instinct, have overshot the mark. A lie may be used to kill an idea; but if the idea did *not* exist in the mind of sane thinking people, journalistic flimflam was superfluous. In fact, these studied distortions of the truth about Nietzsche may be the means of getting people to inquire about the writings of one who has a permanent place in philosophy, and he will still occupy that place when Fleet-street is used as a menagerie for the imbeciles of falsehood. That Nietzsche was aware of all that Fleet-street stands for may be gathered on reading this one sentence: "We mistrust any form of culture that tolerates newspaper reading or writing." To our everlasting credit let it be said of the Freethinker that no *newspaper* speaks well of us; when they do, there will be good grounds for suspicion.

It was a great and telling argument of Nietzsche's, that, as animals and birds were the color of their environments for self-preservation, so the masses of mankind adopted what he termed "herd morality." In other words, "do as others do, and no one will laugh at you." Publishers would scarcely look at his works, and in later life, with the exception of a few friends, he spent his days in isolation, more, we think, as payment for his anti-Christian ideas than his morose temperament. The herd, with their leader's crook in hand (*apt simile*), cannot tolerate one who ridicules their so-called sacred institutions; to hell or Coventry with him. He has ventured too far in the search for Truth. He has flouted us, and tweaked the beard of our leaders; let us give his body to the dogs. Let us canonise Sankey and Moody, the Pilgrim Fathers, and Simeon Stylites, but this man Nietzsche shall not thrust forward with his ideas—write him down as the cause of this war.

To conclude, the search for Truth is not profitable. It has long been a cherished idea of the present writer that Freethinkers are more spiritual than Christians, and, with abundant proof to hand, we shall continue to think it is so. We could not imagine Nietzsche being encumbered with too much of the world's wealth, as are our clever divines with shares in armament concerns: "Verily, not to a nobility which ye could purchase like traders with trader's gold; for little worth is all that hath its price." And, again, "Let it not be your honor henceforth whence ye come, but whither ye go." No Freethinker would stoop to pick up stones to hurl at the writer of that, and, if Nietzsche is misrepresented, let us in charity assume that it was caused in a decadent Christianity by that last word in civilisation, the "modern journalist."

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

The Terrors of Superstition.

THAT religions arose through terror, were maintained by fear, and would perish with the departure of supernatural bugbears, were convictions eloquently expressed by the greatest of all Roman poets, the rationalist, Lucretius. These allegations have been hotly disputed by priests and metaphysicians, and have not infrequently been questioned by semi-sceptical writers. But of their substantial accuracy there can be but little doubt, as modern anthropologists are more and more willing to allow. Professor Westermarck has already unreservedly proclaimed his adherence to the view enunciated by

Lucretius, and that Professor Frazer's judgment is of a similar character is to be easily discerned in many passages of his magnum opus, *The Golden Bough*.

There are various indications that comparative religionists are steadily returning to the theories of Tylor and Spencer as to the potent part played by the beliefs in baleful spirits in shaping the theological speculations of mankind. The ghosts of the dead constantly confront us in every department of anthropological study, and Dr. Frazer has himself admitted that it is quite possible that all the gods may ultimately prove to be the deified ghosts of departed men. It is somewhat significant that the spirits of the dead are the essential characteristic of that dangerous malady, modern spiritualism. And the same may be said of that baneful aspect of savage superstition which Sir Oliver Lodge and other half-emancipated people are struggling to restore. Perhaps, to complete the picture, it may be necessary to include social bugbears as powerful instruments in the preservation of theology, for it must always be remembered that, however cold men's feelings toward religion may really be, outward conformity to the current creed is still demanded by the organised hypocrisy of the hour.

It is indeed difficult for the contemporary educated European to realise to what an extent life has been made miserable among savage, barbarous, and even civilised races by the superstitious dread of ghosts and goblins. As Dr. Frazer, in a striking passage, reminds us:—

"Bred in a philosophy which strips nature of personality and reduces it to the unknown cause of an orderly series of impressions on our senses, we find it hard to put ourselves in the place of the savage, to whom the same impressions appear in the guise of spirits or the handiwork of spirits. For ages the army of spirits, once so near, has been receding further and further from us, banished by the magic wand of science from hearth and home, from ruined cell and ivied tower, from haunted glade and lonely mere, from the riven murky cloud which belches forth the lightning, and from those fairer clouds that pillow the silver moon or fleck with flakes of burning red the golden eve. The spirits are gone even from their last stronghold in the sky, whose blue arch no longer passes, except with children, for the screen that hides from mortal eyes the glories of the celestial world.....Far otherwise is it with the savage. To his imagination the world still teems with those motley beings whom a more sober philosophy has discarded. Fairies and goblins, ghosts and demons, still hover about him, both waking and sleeping. They dog his footsteps, dazzle his senses, enter into him, harass and torment and deceive him in a thousand freakish and mischievous ways."*

All the ills that overshadow human life, all the accidents of our earthly career are attributed by uncivilised man either to the spells cast upon him by his enemies or to the spiteful trickery of the spirits. To rid himself of his ghostly persecutors the savage has devised innumerable methods. When prayers prove unavailing, primitive people adopt the more drastic measure of driving their invisible adversaries away.

It is not, of course, contended that aboriginal man dwells in an environment of unrelieved gloom. He has his bright intervals like the rest of us, but the imposing array of evidence accumulated by Dr. Frazer points only too plainly to the truth that the lives of uncivilised races are ever accompanied by apprehension of ever impending evil.

Among the Australian natives supernatural beings on all sides abound, and these perverse spirits cannot resist the temptation to injure and alarm the inoffensive people. In Africa, the Negro stands in daily dread of the wicked demons who sleeplessly await their opportunity to do him harm. The god of the Bantu negroes of West Africa is credited with the act of creation, but that feat accomplished, his interest in human affairs came to an end. As this divinity heeds not the Bantus, they heed not him. But the sinister spirits that dwell in the country are

far from indifferent to the doings of the people. Their interest is better known than appreciated, and the natives in their prayers implore them to depart and return no more. The Ewe peoples appear to possess a dim conception of a superior divinity, which is, perhaps, due to missionary influences, but the gods that really count with these African savages are the good and evil ghosts. A competent observer, Zündel, informs us that:—

"The people are much more zealous in their devotion to the evil spirits than in their devotion to the good. The reason is that the feeling of fear and the consciousness of guilt are much stronger than the emotions of love and gratitude for benefits received. Hence, the worship of the false gods or spirits among this people, and among the West African negro tribes in general is, properly speaking, a worship of demons or devils."

Again, among the Boloki of the Upper Congo, a missionary admits that the occupation of that powerful personage, the medicine man, would be gone were his potent spells not deemed necessary to outwit and overcome the malignant spirits that swarm on the creeks and streams, in the shadow of the forest, and in every available nook and cranny.

In the New World, the same phenomena are to be seen. The famous anthropologist, Sir Everard im Thurn, tells us that in South America, among the native races of Guiana, the entire continent is peopled with supernatural creatures. He says:—

"If, by a mighty mental effort, we could for a moment revert to a similar mental position, we should find ourselves everywhere surrounded by a host of, possibly, hurtful beings, so many in number, that to describe them as innumerable would fall ridiculously short of the truth."

These Indians dread the dark, and on the rare occasions in which they venture from the camp fires by night, they bear burning brands in their hands to enable them to watch their ghostly foes. The chief duty of their sorcerers is to disarm these ghosts and goblins, and, as a matter of fact, this savage spiritualism is "the main belief of the kind that is generally called religious of the Indians of Guiana."

Passing from the genial climes of Southern America to the desolate coasts of Labrador, we meet with a people equally enslaved by imaginary beings. The Eskimo believe that every detail of their lives is controlled by spirit agencies. These ghostly powers are the deputies of a greater goblin, and each native has his attendant evil genius who watches, with unwinking eyes, for an opportunity of inflicting harm upon his innocent victim. These impish spirits are propitiated by offerings of food, drink, and dress. And, in addition to these guardian spirits, there is a multitudinous assortment of ghosts which haunt the sea, the land, the sky, the clouds and winds, in fact, everything in nature. All these spirits are baneful, but some are more spiteful and vicious than others, and these last are those that receive the major part of the prayers and gifts of the people. The lesser spirits are all subordinate to the great spirit, the Tung ak.

"The shaman (or conjuror) alone is supposed to be able to deal with the Tung ak. While the shaman does not profess to be superior to the Tung ak, he is able to enlist his assistance, and thus be able to control all the undertakings his profession may call for. This Tung ak is nothing more or less than death, which ever seeks to torment and harass the lives of people, that their spirits may go to dwell with him."

The religion of the Polynesian Islanders of the Pacific is, at first sight, less melancholy than those above mentioned. Every natural phenomenon is guided by an invisible spirit. Sun, moon, and star, the gale and the whispering breeze, the mountain, the rocks, the vale and the rushing river, all are abodes of spirit intelligences. Yet these spirits are seldom, if ever kindly, towards man. And as regards the ghosts of the dead, these primitive islanders, in the words of Ellis,—

"imagined they lived in a world of spirits, which surrounded them night and day, watching every action of their lives, and ready to avenge the slightest neglect or

* *Golden Bough*, "The Scapegoat," pp. 72, 73.

the least disobedience to their injunctions as proclaimed by their priests. These dreaded beings were seldom thought to resort to the habitations of men on errands of benevolence."

The Tahitians, as Captain Cook testifies, attributed all their misfortunes to one or other of their devilish divinities. The deities of the Maories again were, without exception, of sinister character. With the Pelew Islanders the gods are invariably of malevolent disposition, whose perverse nature can only be appeased by propitiation and magic. In the Philippine Islands the religion of the natives consists in a very firm belief in demons, who are responsible for all the woes of human life. Among the Melanesians of New Britain the gods, in the opinion of the people, are—

"entirely perverse, deceitful, maleficent, and ceaselessly occupied in injuring us. Diseases, death, the perturbations of nature, all unfortunate events, are imputed to them. The demons exist in legions; they live everywhere, especially in the forests, desert places, and the depths of the sea."

The dark cloud cast on the lives of the people by the baleful beliefs indicated above, holds equally true of the other Pacific races. The Papuan pantheon is populated with a multitude of divinities much more diabolical than beneficent. Not only in Dutch New Guinea and "German" New Guinea, but in British New Guinea, the natives are never happy unless their goblin gods are inactive. These deities appear incapable of a single benevolent act.

In the Malay Archipelago it is much the same. The ghosts are not to be trusted; they are good or evil, just as the fancy seizes them. In Timor, Borneo, Celebes, Bali, Java, Sumatra, and elsewhere, the calamities of human existence are all ascribed to the rage or malevolence of the ancestral and other ghosts. Writing of the Battas or Bataks of Sumatra, a Dutch missionary remarks that—

"if there is still any adherent of Rousseau's superficial theories about the idyllically happy and careless life of people 'in a state of nature,' he ought to come and spend a little time among the Bataks and keep his eyes and ears open. He would soon be convinced of the hollowness and falsehood of these phrases, and would learn to feel a deep compassion for human beings living in perpetual fear of evil spirits."*

Throughout the Eastern World, fear and the ceremonies born of fear may be said to constitute the religion of all savage and barbarous races. The Nicobar Islanders spend a large part of their lives in ceremonial observances, designed to drive off or appease the spirits. A feeling of terror of the native ghosts is so deeply ingrained in these savages, that two hundred years of missionary effort has signally failed to impress it. The religion of the Mantras, an indigenous people of the Malay Peninsula, seems to consist entirely of plans to frustrate the machinations of the demons that everywhere abound. In far off Kamtchatka, where a native or artificially introduced belief in a high god appears to prevail, the evil spirits are far more feared and revered than the chief divinity.

(To be concluded.) T. F. PALMER.

The Undiscovered Country.

The Unknown Guest. By Maurice Maeterlinck. Translated by A. T. De Mattos. (Methuen; 1914.)

SINCE M. Maurice Maeterlinck was compared with Shakespeare, it has been hard to be just to him. It is never safe, nor is it consistent with sound criticism, to pick up some popular favorite of the day and compare him with one of those intellectual giants whose work has survived in undiminished splendor the lapse of centuries. M. Maeterlinck's gifts are few and simple and distinct, and hardly anyone can be blind to them. Nor have we any wish to under-

rate his persuasive gifts, his delicate artistry in words, and his dainty imagination. His voice is musical, and what he has to say is always worth saying.

Some time ago M. Maeterlinck issued a treatise on *Death*, in which he sought to show that the terrors of dissolution arise largely from associations which are accidental, and urged considerations justifying cheerful anticipations. The dread of death, he said, arises from its strangeness, and we should strip it from the terrors of the imagination. But M. Maeterlinck is a charming poet as well as a brilliant philosopher, and he could not help decorating his ideas, as when he spoke of the last struggle "which hurls us suddenly, disarmed, abandoned, and stripped, into an unknown that is the home of invincible terrors." In another passage he urged us "to look upon death with the same eyes that look upon birth." In order to glorify the future, he disparages the present. "It seems fairly certain," he said, "that we spend in this world the only narrow, grudging, obscure, and sorrowful moments of our destiny." This seems the rhetorical echo of a theological platitude; and, for the rest, the speculation is sufficiently fanciful for the pulpit. As a fact, M. Maeterlinck's book contained less about death than speculation concerning immortality. The poet was always elbowing aside the philosopher, and jumping from the springboard of actuality into the waters of fancy. The chief value of his book, however, was that the ordinary Christian conception of a hereafter, comprising a paltry paradise for the minority and a horrible hell for the majority, was no longer held by cultured persons.

Since the publication of his book on *Death*, M. Maeterlinck has again returned to the subject, and, in *The Unknown Guest*, he states the case for a survival hypothesis. As he is largely in agreement with the Spiritualists, and often quotes from the "Proceedings" of the Society for Psychical Research, his book has a wide interest. It is not M. Maeterlinck's fault that, though his book is concerned with the large question of man's immortality, it is full of talk of telepathy, psychometry, phantasms, and "The Elberfeld Horses." In the last analysis the Spiritualists base their case for the soul's immortality on these things, and M. Maeterlinck but follows their lead.

As explained in the clear and beautiful language of M. Maeterlinck, the newest and most up-to-date Spiritualism is very like the old. The hand may seem the hand of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob. Behind all the verbiage of telepathy, clairvoyance, automatic writings, precognition, the "mathematics" of "educated horses," there is always "Sludge the Medium." Krall's horses may have put M. Maeterlinck to mathematical shame, figures having always inspired the poet with "invincible terror"; but, like the British sailor drinking lager beer, we get "no forrader." Reduced to a plain statement, the Spiritualist position as explained by M. Maeterlinck is that "the best part of life" is that it leads to death, but that what death is nobody knows. It is a conclusion sufficiently humorous to wrinkle the faces of the "educated" horses with smiles.

In spite of "Sludge the Medium," new or old, the riddle remains unanswered, the sphinx is still silent. Couched in scientific language, presented with all the resources of persons who have devoted their lives to the subject, it is yet in the last analysis but an appeal to emotionalism. Heine hit the right nail on the head when he smilingly hinted that the idea of immortality may have suggested itself to a lover in the arms of his mistress, or to some Nuremberg burgher sipping his beer in the cool of the evening. It is, in the last resort, but a desire for personal continuance, to be for ever as we are. In spite of man's importunity throughout countless centuries, "the rest is silence."

The new Spiritualism gives no better answer than the old, and the later "messages" from the "other side" are as unconvincing as the earlier. The poor

* Quoted by Frazer, "Scapegoat," pp. 87, 88.

Indian dreams of his happy hunting grounds; the Mohammedan peoples his paradise with houris; the Christian imagines the jewelled streets of the New Jerusalem; and Sir Oliver Lodge and other cultured gentlemen are satisfied with "spooks." The world is no nearer a solution than in the far-off days of Lucretius, or in the even earlier time when primitive man cowered in his cave in mortal fear of the lightning. The oracles are contradictory with regard to a next world. All we know for certain is that man is mortal, but nature is immortal. The world grows old and we grow old with it; but nature is ever fair, and young, and eternal. The flowers of the spring return year by year, lads and maidens are ever wandering at eventide. The love of husband and wife is ever consecrated by the coming of new life springing from their own. Though our personality be blotted out by death, our influence goes to swell the volume of human worth. As for the undiscovered country beyond the grave, no traveller has ever returned to reveal the secret of the universe.

MIMNERMUS.

I Would Not Be an Angel.

*Yes, of the earth and earthy, I,
And Pagan to the inmost core;
I love the things beneath the sky
That common men have loved before.
And two things stand in Time and Space,
Amid the things that fade and fleet—
The beauty of a woman's face,
The pathos of a baby's feet.*

I would not be an angel,
For ever to intone
Loud sycophantic praises
Before God's awful throne.
I crave no life eternal
Beyond the mortal span;
I would not be an angel;
I choose to be a man.

Within the pearly portals
I do not seek to pass;
I ask no golden highways;
Give me earth's living grass!
I'd barter all your cherubs
For an earth-babe, black or tan;
I would not be an angel;
I choose to be a man.

I would not be an angel
And shout with holy glee
While groaned Hell's countless victims
In deathless agony.
The good can know no Heaven
While Hell holds even one;
I would not be an angel;
I choose to be a man.

Dark are the ways of Heaven!
Ah, who can with them grapple?
Who knows another Adam
Won't eat another apple?
Heaven may end as badly
As Paradise began;
Let those who will be angels,
I choose to be a man.

I love this dear old earth-home,
Its sunny sky above,
Its children's frolic laughter,
Its woman's holy love.
To make it fairer, freer,
Is life's divinest plan;
Let those who will be angels,
I choose to be a man.

When falls the last great darkness,
And I have done my day,
Give back the dear earth-mother
The gift she gave, and say
But this: "Forgive his failings,
His errors gently scan,
For though he was no angel,
He tried to be a man."

WALLACE CELSON.

Night.

I COUNTED the clouds in the western sky
As they stole up troubled and grey;
And I stared at the sun with an aching eye,
But his crimson has died away;
And the bats, like phantoms, go whirring by
In search of their tiny prey.

I watched the petals of many a flower
Fold up in the eventide, [shower
And the grass parched and dead as it watched for the
It had prayed for before it died;
And the trees in the dusk that like ogres tower
Up into the heavens wide.

I counted the lights of the stars that crept
Thro' the chaos of cloud and night;
And I heard a bird cry like a woman that wept
With fear at some hideous sight;
And the rest of the universe seemingly slept
In the grip of an anodyne tight.

But where is my God in the midst of it all?
Does he sleep with the flowers in the gloom?
For the earth is as still, save that woman-like call,
As the eve of the morning of doom;
And nothing but nature's thieves hover and crawl
In the heart of this sky bounded tomb.

The flowers are sleeping, the night becomes chill,
And the brown grass is dripping with dew;
And a ground mist's white billows drift silent and still
O'er the whole of the landscape in view;
But a thousand forms lurk in the darkness to kill,
And a thousand more tremble anew.

Yet they told me to look to the wonderful earth
If I wanted to find God again; [birth
And I look: and it seems that each form that finds
Is born to less pleasure than pain;
And I fancy the smaller the creature's girth,
The surer it is to be slain.

The night is the night, and the day is the day:
But which of the two is God's own?
The night is assigned to the creatures that slay;
And the day? God leaves that alone;
And the pleas for his pity when breaking hearts pray
Are lost on their way to his throne.

JAMES L. RAYMOND.

The Battle of Reason.

A GENTLE knight comes riding o'er the plain,
No armor rich doth deck his supple frame,
No retinue of rogues, no thirst for gain,
But Love and Hope are all his heart can claim,
And these two joys no gods above can blame;
For Fortune gives and likewise takes away
Her gifts: to one much gold, another shame.
Thus doth she in her fickle fancy sway
With gifts of gold, or place, or power; but none can stay.

Forth to the country of despair he rides,
And many knaves and scoundrels on the way
Are scourged or slain; but still in mounting tides
His foes arise, to curse, to jeer, or pray
That he may never live to see the day
When this bleak land shall 'gain resound with song.
When once again the minstrel's pleasing lay
Shall soothe all ears and drive sad night along;
When Right shall sit enthroned, supplanting vicious
wrong.

WILLIAM REPTON.

The saloon on the corner was burnt,
And the ministers prayed next day,
Telling the Lord he was just and right
In moving the pest away.

But the lightning struck the holy church,
And burned it to the ground;
Then the liquor people thanked the Lord
That he passed such things around.

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BY
G. W. FOOTE.

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