THE
Freethinker
Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXV.—NO. 1 SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 1915 PRICE TWOPENCE

A good deed is the best prayer. A loving life is the best religion.—INGERSOLL.

One of the Allies.

IT was a curious thing that I was too late to announce the death of Mr. Bertram Dobell in the *Freethinker*, and also too late to announce the time and place of his funeral. Tuesday evening, on each occasion, I found on arriving home, the paper having left my hands at the office, a letter from Mr. Percy Dobell, giving me the details which I had been obliged to omit from the paper. I say it was *extremely* curious. I knew my old friend must be dead, but I could not state it so as a fact of my own information. And I knew he must be buried, and I could not say where. A few hours earlier at either end, I might have had no breach of journalistic etiquette to explain or deplore.

My only reason for writing the previous paragraph is that I may not be suspected of neglecting my old friend. It was indeed a certain intimacy that caused all the trouble, if I may call it so. Mr. Percy Dobell wrote to me when his father was nearing his end; he wrote to the newspapers when the end had actually taken place; and the *Freethinker*, happening to be a weekly paper, had all the disadvantage of that form of publication. [Why I was written to specially will appear presently. It was of more importance than anything the newspapers printed about Dobell, although some of them were fairly generous, considering the demand made upon their space by the war-news from abroad.]

Mr. Dobell had been seriously ill for a month or so; he had taken to his bed and the doctor had given up all hope not only of ultimate, but even of immediate recovery. His doom, as the minor poets say, was upon him. In that state he did not "turn to God," but he turned to me—and, as far as I know, to others; but I am entitled to speak of myself. He dictated a letter to me one afternoon, the next afternoon he died, and a few days afterwards (on Friday) he was cremated at Golder's Green.

I did not go to the funeral myself. His own view of such ceremonies is indicated by the fact that there were "no flowers" by request. Besides, I live a long way from Golder's Green, and at such a time of the year and in such weather attending another man's funeral, especially at my age, is apt to be an invitation to your own.

It is not my intention to write a "biography" of Dobell. Neither his birth, his life, nor his death, were such as fill up biographical dictionaries. But he was, for all that, a noticeable man, and his connection with James Thomson ("B.V.") the poet, both as friend and publisher (or rather publisher and friend), besides the avowal of a perfect sympathy with Thomson's heretical opinion, gives him a place apart from the ruck of English publishers. It is of Dobell in this light I have something to say.

G. W. FOOTE.

(*To be continued.*)

Thomas Paine on War.

ON this question of war three things are to be considered: first, the right of declaring it; second, the expense of supporting it; third, the mode of conducting it after it has been declared. The French constitution places the *right* where the *expense* must fall, and this union can be only in the nation. The mode of conducting it, after it is declared, it consigns to the executive department. Were this the case in all countries, we should hear but little more of wars.

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As war is the system of government on the old construction, the animosity which nations reciprocally entertain is nothing more than what the policy of their governments excite, to keep up the spirit of the system. Each government accuses the other of perfidy, intrigue and ambition, as a means of heating the imagination of their respective nations, and incensing them to hostilities. Man is not the enemy of man but through the medium of a false system of government. Instead, therefore, of exclaiming against the ambition of kings, the exclamation should be directed against the principles of such governments; and instead of seeking to reform the individual, the wisdom of a nation should apply itself to reform of the system.

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Can we possibly suppose that if it had originated in a right principle, and had not an interest in pursuing a wrong one, that the world could have been in the wretched and quarrelsome condition we have seen it? What inducement has the farmer while following the plough, to lay aside his peaceful pursuits and go to war with the farmer of another country? Or what inducement has the manufacturer? What is dominion to them, or to any class of men in a nation? Does it add an acre to any man's estate, or raise its value? Are not conquest and defeat each of the same price, and taxes the never-failing consequence? Though this reasoning may be good to a nation, it is not so to a government. War is the faro-table of governments, and nations the dupes of the game.

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If there is a sin superior to every other, it is that of wilful and offensive war. Most other sins are circumscribed within narrow limits, that is, the power of one man cannot give them a very general extension, and many kinds of sins have only a mental existence from which no infection arises; but he who is the author of a war lets loose the whole contagion of hell, and opens a vein that bleeds a nation to death.

* * *

War can never be the interest of a trading nation any more than quarreling can be profitable to a man in business. To make war with those who trade with us is like setting a bulldog upon a customer at the shop-door.

The Outlook.

IT will need a considerable amount of optimism to find anything very cheerful in the outlook for 1915. That the War will not last out the year, and may end before the year has half gone, seems to me as probable as anything can be in a situation where no one can be certain what to-morrow may bring. That there should be a War at all, of the kind that exists, is enough to make one incline to pessimism over the future of the European nations. For years many of us have gone on preaching the superiority of reason over brute force; extolling the advances of science and the progress of civilisation, until we had got into the habit of feeling, rather than thinking, that war between the leading civilised nations of Europe was an impossibility. We knew that there would continue to be difference of opinion, that national jealousies would continue, and that the fire-eaters on either side would be calling out for blood. But we had unconsciously persuaded ourselves that in each country the more intelligent and really civilised people were influential enough to see that these differences never went farther than a diplomatic or newspaper agitation.

Then suddenly we find ourselves in the midst of war—a war on a scale such as the world has never before seen. All the knowledge that the world has gained, all its scientific skill, everything it possesses, is deliberately enlisted on the side of war. Nearly 20,000,000 men are engaged in the conflict. The overwhelming majority are members of the same religious faith, professing to believe in the same God, calling upon him to bless their arms, and each side certain that this God will assist in the destruction of its enemies. We are forcibly reminded that after all we may have overestimated the solidity of our civilisation. The genuinely intellectual may have overvalued both their strength and their importance. Perhaps they had drifted into a kind of mutual admiration society, and had overlooked the vital consideration that with the immense mass of people —and these not restricted to what is called the lower order—culture is at best only skin deep, and there exists immense reservoirs of primitive passion and feeling upon which the retrogressive influences in society may freely and easily draw. Of this we have not been without warning. Professor Frazer reminded us, some time ago, that the real danger to modern civilisation consisted in its containing a mass of primitive feeling and thinly disguised superstition. We have been dancing on the crest of a volcano, and a part of the crust has given way.

The striking feature of the War is that it is the product of ideals which are, if not primitive, deplorably and shockingly out of date. Nations are still obsessed with the notion of physical power as a test of greatness, just as they cling to the idea of "possessions" in colonies, oblivious to the fact that modern conditions are such that a nation does not, and cannot, "possess" a colony in any genuine sense of the term. Germany is supposed to envy us because of our colonies. But, as a matter of fact, our colonies are not possessed by us, and no English Government would dare to enforce against them the most elementary rights of possession. We cannot force them to trade with us, we cannot force them to support the mother country. Be our needs what they may, we could not raise a compulsory tax in any one of our colonies. They will give just what assistance they care to give, but that is all. Germans enjoy the same privileges there—or did, until a few months ago—that English people enjoy. They could go there, settle there, trade there. Germany really "possessed" Canada about as much as we did. To-day (in time of peace) the inhabitants of Europe go where they will, settle where they will, trade where they will. Nations can no longer "own" a colony of civilised human beings. And yet they are still fighting for colonies, and taking pride in the "possession" of colonies, as though we were living in the sixteenth instead of the twentieth century.

This War has brought home to the thoughtful the reality of a danger that is peculiar to modern civilisation. If we go back to ancient times, we see that the great danger to such a civilisation as that of ancient Rome came from the strangers without the gates. Civilisation then represented an oasis in the midst of a desert of barbarism. There was the civilised city, or country, or empire, and beyond that were the barbarian hordes ever threatening its security. To-day, civilisation is not faced by that kind of danger. There are no barbarians without that it need dread. The danger does not lie without, but within. It does not lie even in the existence of classes of people within the State that are obviously uneducated. The class that threatens the security of modern civilisation is drawn from all ranks of life, from the lowest social stratum upward; often it receives its strongest expression from those who are ostensibly at the top of the social ladder. They do not see that the narrow and unenlightened patriotism of the flag-wagging Jingo, whether German, French, or British, is essentially primitive, barbaric, or retrogressive. They do not realise that war, whether it be waged in canoes or dreadnoughts, whether it be with bows and arrows or modern rifles, is essentially savage and degrading. They are far from realising that the well-being of the modern State can only be secured by general co-operation, and never by a competition that aims at placing another State in a condition of irretrievable inferiority.

It has been said, over and over again, that this War is a war of ideals. And so it is, only, unfortunately, nearly all the ideals involved are of the wrong kind. Each side is claiming to fight in defence of liberty and civilisation, and on our side there is set up the claim that the Allies are protecting the principle of the right of small nations to govern themselves. But how far does this principle extend? Suppose any of the French "possessions" were to set up the claim to complete self-government. Would the French Government agree? Suppose Canada or Australia were to demand absolute self-government and complete independence. Would Britain agree? Should we not have at once the cry of the dismemberment of the Empire? The truth is that each nation is still obsessed by the ambition of being a great "world power," and a world power on the lower level of great "possessions" and physical force.

Suppose the War over; what are the prospects before the European peoples? Will there be any prospect of the mad military competition of late years coming to an end? I am afraid not. Suppose the German forces on the sea and in the field completely defeated, what then? A defeat will not kill German ambitions and German ideals. These remain, whether they are immediately capable of realisation or not. There is only one thing that will prevent Germany being a danger to the rest of Europe, and that is the development of new and better ideals among the German peoples. But here, again, their ideals depend very largely upon the ideals of the people. What people strive for is generally what other people admire; and this is as true of nations as it is of individuals. It is, therefore, not alone the German house that needs putting in order. The French, the British, the Russian, the house of every nation in Europe stands in equal need of reform. Our minds are concentrated on Germany because there exists there an aggravated, and therefore more dangerous, form of a disease that is common to every civilised nation. And so long as the disease is present one can have no guarantee that it may not at any time assume a virulent form.

I have written only of the War because the War dominates every other question. Nothing can proceed as usual while that is in being. And the unfortunate thing is that nothing will proceed after it has finished as it might have gone on had the War never been. I have pointed out the absurdity of believing that this War will mean a cessation of militarism. It will mean, on the contrary, its extension. It will

give the militarist his opportunity; and already there is a generally expressed opinion that we shall have to increase our standing Army in the future, and to maintain our Navy at least at its present standard. Apart from this, conservative tendencies will find themselves strengthened in two directions. In the first place, there will be less money to spend on schemes of social reform and on general improvement. No nation to-day can have a war without paying for it, and the infliction of an indemnity on the conquered is only one way of the conqueror disguising from himself the fact that he *is* paying all the same. Secondly, retrogressive ideas of all kinds will have greater power than hitherto. This is the normal consequence of all military activity. A year of a war such as the present one accustoms people to methods of suppression and repression. Governments assume autocratic powers they would not dare assume in times of peace. The public mind is habituated to seeing questions of first-class social and intellectual importance pushed into the background, and labelled as of no consequence. The process of hardening and coarsening incidental to war continues after the war is over. There is a fruitful soil for all kinds of retrogressive and repressive ideas, and there are always plenty to sow the seed and reap the harvest.

The past year has naturally been an unpromising one for advanced ideas, and Freethought has shared in the general slump. It is enough to say that during such a time one has managed to live. Not that this setback has been altogether unexpected. For some years it has been plain that the forces of reaction were gathering strength all over Europe. There have been advances during these years, true; but there have also been attempts at suppression in many directions. The numerous prosecutions for blasphemy and allied offences in this country are illustrations of this. And in this journal reformers have been warned over and over again not to delude themselves with the idea that the brunt of the fighting was over, and all that remained to be done was to chronicle the extent of successive victories. The setback was expected, and it has come, even though it has not come in exactly the form anticipated.

But of this we may be certain. Among those retrogressive agencies that will take the fullest advantage of the evil heritage of this War will be religion. Already it has taken advantage of the enemy being Germany to attack certain ideas on the ground that they received expression in that country. It is stupid, of course, but it is only what one may expect when the leaders of religion strive to enlist on their behalf a mass of uninformed public opinion. For some years I anticipate it will be easier than it has been to arouse bigotry, and more difficult to spread enlightened ideas. There is in this not a reason for Freethinkers to be quiescent, but one for much greater activity. For one great lesson of the War is that in every country in the world its real welfare is dependent upon the clear-sightedness and activity of the few. It is only the few who *see*; it is a still smaller number who speak. That few will not be likely to say, with the bombast of the foolish Jingo journalist, "Never again." Clear-sighted men do not talk in this way. But, powerless though they may be to avert these occasional disasters to civilisation, they will strive all the harder to make their recurrence increasingly difficult and improbable.

C. COHEN.

Christian Illusions.

To optimistic Christians Dean Inge cannot be an acceptable prophet. He makes too many admissions of disappointment, disillusion, and failure, to please those who, disregarding all evidence to the contrary, proudly proclaim the triumph of the Cross. He has been held up to ridicule in the newspapers because he has the courage not only to face the facts in private, but to state them with bold veracity in public. In a sermon published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for December 16, he candidly acknowledges the fact that "there is no law of progress, and no reason to believe that human beings, in themselves, are much better than they were centuries ago." From the ordinary Christian point of view, such a statement must be condemned as an intolerable heresy. No wonder that so many of his clerical brethren have dubbed him the doleful or dismal Dean. He tells us that he has "heard it said again and again that this War marks the bankruptcy of Christianity," and then adds:—

> "Some, however, will have it that it is not Christianity which is bankrupt, but some form of Christianity which they happen to dislike. If we take up our partisan religious newspapers—very unprofitable reading at all times—we find that, according to them, the Germans are wicked people because they are Protestants, or because they are higher critics. It happens that the sack of Louvain and the destruction of Rheims Cathedral are the logical application either of the Lutheran doctrine of justification or of the higher criticism. Surely, after such an object lesson, we shall give up these errors and return to orthodox Catholicism, the creed of Alva and Torquemada, or to the simple Bible Christianity of the gentle Cromwell."

In spite of such frank admissions and observations, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that Dr. Inge is still a Christian apologist, and, as such, does his utmost to account for the non-success of Christianity. There is no possible escape from the fact that, in this War, we are face to face with a deplorable "recrudescence of barbarism and savagery" after two thousand years of nominal Christianity. It is contended that if the Kingdom of God had come, according to New Testament promise, such a woeful state of things would have been impossible; and the problem with which the apologists are confronted is why that promise has remained so long unfulfilled. That is the problem tackled by the Dean in his sermon; tackled, but not solved. The solution he offers is that the slowness of the kingdom's growth was clearly foretold by its Founder. Jesus "compared his kingdom to the seed growing secretly, to the leaven hid in three measures of meal. He prepared us, that is to say, for slow and secret growth." The Dean makes the following remarkable statement:—

> "Moreover, when Jesus spoke of the narrow gate which leads into light, surely he meant us to understand that there is no likelihood of the majority of human beings accepting the Gospel. So it is too much to expect that the politics of Europe should be directed in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. A Christian state of Christian Europe is an ideal to be worked towards, not a thing we have any right to expect to see ourselves."

That strange extract has two serious faults. The first is that it misrepresents the teaching of the Gospel Jesus on the subject. He began his public ministry by "preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the Gospel" (Mark i. 14, 15). The shortness of the time is a New Testament characteristic, and the same remark applies to the Pagan literature of the period. The end of the world was universally believed to be close at hand. St. Paul declares that "the time is short," and the risen Jesus is represented as saying, "Surely, I come quickly." Now, when Jesus compared his kingdom to a mustard seed and to leaven, he certainly did not intend to convey the idea that its coming would be delayed for thousands of years, for he shared the belief of his day as to the end of the world. The second fault of Dr. Inge's statement is that it reduces the Gospel to the level of any human agency. And here, again, he grossly misrepresents the teaching of the New Testament. Jesus assured his disciples that if he were lifted up on the Cross he would draw all men unto himself. He instructed his apostles to "go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He predicted the advent of the Comforter to convict the world of sin,

of righteousness, and of judgment. In St. Paul's view the Gospel was not a human agency, but the power of God unto salvation. The Savior of the world is God himself in human form; and it is the proud claim of believers that the Church is a Divine institution, charged with omnipotent energy. Does the Dean really believe that the God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, did not intend that the world so loved should, in consequence, be saved? Does he entertain so base an opinion of the character of his loving Heavenly Father and of the saving capacity of his blessed Lord, as to be able to think and to say that, between them, they are powerless to redeem the human race? Because he has the courage to publicly confess that his blessed Lord has not won Europe, does he think it fair to draw the cruel inference that it was never his purpose to win it? Is it his serious conviction that "there is no likelihood of the majority of human beings" ever accepting the Gospel of Divine power, of which he is a divinely ordained minister? We greatly admire his audacity in facing the grim facts; but his attitude, as a Christian minister, towards God and Christ is to us utterly incomprehensible.

Let us examine that attitude for a moment. He admits that human beings are not much better to-day than they were centuries ago. This is exactly what Atheists maintain; but when a clergyman holds the same view, he is guilty of glaring inconsistency. What he says is perfectly true, but his profession denies him the right to cherish it. It is his business to tell what he knows to be lies. Innumerable times do millions of preachers exclaim, "God reigns, Christ is on the throne of the Universe," when they are fully aware that the exclamation is entirely false. All such silly pronouncements are an abomination in the eyes of Dean Inge; and we are in complete accord with him. He assures us that those who expect to see Christianity triumphant are laboring under a vain delusion. He does not hesitate to affirm that they are "deluded." The vivid "apocalyptic expectation" harbored by Jesus and his apostles, as well as by most Christians in all ages, he describes as "these illusions which are now being dispelled." In another part of the discourse he says: "There is, I think, a temper of disillusionment amongst us just now, a temper quite unconnected with any want of confidence in the ultimate result of the War in which we are engaged." The following passage is so heterodox as almost to take one's breath away:—

> "To the thoughtful man it must always seem very strange that natural religion should have grown out of the dreams of a romantic people of a small province, dreams, moreover, which were never realised. Greek philosophy came in later, and had an influence on the thoughtful Christian dogma, but Christ was worshiped as the Messiah of the Jewish people before he was identified with the Logos of the Greek philosophy.....What is true and valuable in this mode of belief is, of course, the element of hope."

Dean Inge believes in the kingdom of God and, at the same time, regards it as an impracticable ideal. When people pray "Thy kingdom come," they are offering a petition that can never be answered. It is highly improbable that Europe shall ever become a Christian State. But what are we to understand by the kingdom of God? *Simply an ideal state of society.* The curious thing is, however, that an ideal state of society is a thing which God is powerless to establish. We are told that Christ died on Calvary that he might become the Savior of the world, but, according to the Dean, he died absolutely in vain, because there is no likelihood of the majority of human beings ever accepting the Gospel of Salvation through faith in his name. Well, to a man holding such views, the only logical course is to drop the supernatural forthwith, throw up the clerical profession, and become a practical advocate of Secularism. The God and the Christ whom he preaches are not worthy of preservation, and belief in them can but degrade those who possess it. We know of no Divine realities; neither does the Dean. The kingdom of God is an empty dream, the only possible kingdom on earth being the slowly coming kingdom of man. Stripped of its theological associations, the following portion of Dr. Inge's sermon is worthy of acceptance, because it contains the Gospel of Freethought:—

> "Can we, out of the wrecks and ruins of those nineteenth century apocalyptic visions, construct some structure more durable and nearer truth? I think that we can, for what is the most vital and living belief among us just now? I believe it is this; the faith in the power of concentrated, purposeful effort, to ameliorate almost indefinitely the condition of society."

It is faith in the possibilities of human nature and in the need of awakening to a powerful sense of them. Human salvation is man's work alone, a work that can be accomplished only very, very slowly.

J. T. LLOYD.

Literature and Life.

"Daily Bread," "Fires," "Womenkind," and other poems by Wilfred Gibson. (Elkin Mathews, 1914).

So many people believe that in the scientific and commercial age in which we live good poetry is impossible, and the poets themselves help this delusion by seeking their subjects from the past. Instead of drawing inspiration from the world around them, they find themes in classic literature or mediæval legend. Thus we have the sham antique school of poetry, which appeals far more widely to readers than the work of those poets who have embodied in their verse the new material gathered by science, or have expressed the new conditions of industrialism. The average writer of to-day maintains usually a high level, and this is saying much, for poetry is not so easy as it once was. The public is more exacting, and would not tolerate a singer who merely chanted in mellifluous accents that the sky was blue or that the grass was green.

Among the younger singers who have responded to contemporary impressions, Mr. Wilfred Gibson's work arouses our curiosity. In his books, "Daily Bread," "Fires," and "Womenkind," he draws his material from everyday life, and succeeds admirably in infusing the spirit of poesy into the most unpromising phases of industrialism. The area of proletarian labor is almost an untilled field as far as the Muses are concerned, and a successful attempt to deal with it as literature deserves the highest praise. Indeed, the singer who can transmute the dross of the unpoetical into the pure gold of poetry has adventured to some purpose. Add to this that Mr. Gibson succeeds in endowing the commonest things, the most trifling actions, with a new dignity. It is only a high imagination which can so relate and ennoble things, and the mere fact that he has relied upon the essential primary conditions of life and elemental passion, instead of picturesque association and pasteboard romance, is worthy of commendation. He does not hold to the theory that the tunes of three centuries ago are better fitted to express modern thought and feeling than music made to-day. A poet who sings of the flower-girl in the streets, of the printer at his trade, is somewhat of a novelty.

According to the popular standard the sword is more poetical than the rifle. Cavalry may be mentioned, but to introduce torpedo-boats into poetry is to attempt too much. That a poet should utilise astronomy is taken for granted, but that he should sing of chemistry and biology is unpardonable. There is real need for contemporary poets bold enough to bridge the gulf between literature and life. Attempts to reflect contemporary life have been made many times. Years ago Walt Whitman made his readers thrill with his magnificent impressions of phases of American life. Tennyson, too, tried to reproduce contemporary thought in his clear-cut verse, as did Sully Prudhomme in France. Passages from "In Memoriam" and "The Two Voices," as well as from "Le Bonheur" and "La Justice," express scientific theories or metaphysical

arguments as accurately as a treatise, and prove that it is not necessary to be false in order to be poetical. What beauty and force the metaphors of science may give to literature, has been abundantly shown by Maeterlinck, but it requires a master hand to use the crude material of science or life. The average poet masks his incapacity by using words and thoughts which he knows are poetical because poets for generations have used them.

Mr. Gibson's muse deals with social life, and a large number of his verses deal with the struggle of the worker. A poem in "Fires" records the emotions of an overworked printer:—

"He was so dazed that he could hardly keep
His hands from going through the pantomime,
Of keeping even sheets in his machine—
The sleek machine that, day and night,
Through those glaring, flaring hours
In the incandescent light,
Printed children's picture books."

In another vein the poet gives us a realistic portrait of an elderly charwoman:—

"Suckler of a score or so of children—
'Children! Bless you! Why, I've buried six, sir.'
Who, in forty years, wore out three husbands,
And one everlasting, shameless bonnet."

A finer example of Mr. Gibson's method is found in "Geraniums," which portrays an old flower "girl," and the emotions roused in the poet by the blazing red of the flowers against the dark background of a London night:—

"And yet to-morrow will those blooms be dead,
With all their lively beauty; and to-morrow
May end the light lusts and the heavy sorrow
Of that old body with the nodding head.
The last oath muttered, the last pint drained deep,
She'll sink, as Cleopatra sank, to sleep,
Nor need to barter blossoms for a bed."

There is a fine piece of tragedy in "The Night shift," in which a collier's wife, who has given birth to a child, has delirious premonitions of disaster to her husband. The old mother says:—

"There's no hope,
For she hears something—
Something that I cannot.
The wife's heart hears
What the old mother's may not,
Because it beats too loudly."

Mr. Gibson has done well, for he has attempted to extend the domain of poetry. Maybe he occasionally passes over the boundary of poetry into prose, and even into the prosaic, in his use of the unconventional. He is not the "Bobby Burns to sing the song of steam," whom Kipling calls for. He is not a poet of the people, like Beranger, or a writer of music-hall songs. But he differs from most literary men in that he has caught a glimpse of the new poetry which our time demands. His success should stimulate our poets to develop the deeper meaning and hidden beauty of contemporary life. One feels that:—

"The mighty being is awake,
And doth with her eternal motion, make
A sound like thunder, everlastingly."

There is room for the Millet of literature, the Millet who paints other things beside "The Angelus." The poet who could sing of the life of our great cities with imaginative power, intellectual energy, and with wide sympathy, will inscribe his name among the great writers, for he would have modern life for his intellectual inheritance.

"New and yet old
As the foundations of the earth."

MIMNERMUS.

"Well, John," said a minister to one of his hearers, "I hope you hold family worship regularly?"
"Aye, Sir," answered John, "in time o' year o'r."
"In time o' year o'r! What do you mean?"
"Ye ken, Sir, we canna see in winter."
"But, John, you should buy candles."
"Aye, Sir," replied John, "but in that case, I'm afraid the cost would owergang the profit!"

Friedrich Nietzsche.

[The following is a verbatim reprint of an article which appeared in the *Freethinker* during 1895 from the pen of the late J. M. Wheeler. To-day Nietzsche is in every journalist's mouth. Fifteen years ago his was a practically unknown name in England; and this is certainly amongst the earliest notices of Nietzsche in this country—if it is not the earliest notice in any British journal. The *Freethinker* has never been slow in calling its readers' attention to the emergence of original thinkers, whether at home or abroad.]

I DEARLY love a crank. Not because "Great wits are sure to madness near allied, And thin partitions do their bounds divide," for the better opinion is that of Lamb, that "the greatest wits will ever be found to be the sanest writers," for which the names of Aristophanes, Lucian, Rabelais, Shakespeare, and Voltaire may suffice. But in your crank there are always vague possibilities. He gives scope for the larger hope. One who wanders out of the common road may open up new prospects. We may profit from his errors. Sanity is only the balance of the faculties, and the balance may be overweighted by a preponderance of the higher qualities, as well as of the lower ones. When Dr. Max Nordau instances men like Tolstoi and Ruskin as types of "degeneration," we may say there is a kind of insanity which rises above the common level, as well as an imbecility that sinks beneath it. Jesus, Mohammed, Joan of Arc, Francis d'Assissi, Jacob Boehme, George Fox, Emanuel Swedenborg, were all insane. They were visionaries who, in varying degrees, contrived to infuse into others the contagion of their own insanity.

A madman of a different stamp is Dr. Friedrich Nietzsche, for he has had a training in science, art, literature, and philosophy. On that account his madness is the more dangerous to this age. That he is mad few could read his latest and greatest work, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Berlin; 1883-91)—"Thus spake Zoroaster" (which he calls "a book for all and none") without admitting. But it is the work of a madman of genius. The king says in Hamlet: "Madness in great ones must not unwatched go." That of Nietzsche is claiming much attention. At Jena, H. Tuerck writes on *F. Nietzsche and His Philosophical Errors*. At Berlin, L. Stein has a book on *F. Nietzsche's View of the World and its Dangers*. Even at Glasgow a German teacher announces a work, *From Darwin to Nietzsche*, showing that he regards the latter as summing up the doctrine of the survival of the fittest; while the Anarchists are calling for an English edition of Nietzsche's works.

Dr. Nietzsche is a Saxon of Polish descent, born at Rücken, October 15, 1844. His father was a clergyman in Naumberg, but he lost him while young, and was brought up by his mother and sisters—a spoilt child, evidently. He studied under the noted philologist, Ritschl, at Bonn and Leipsic, and was, by his recommendation, appointed Professor of Classical Philology at Basel, when but in his twenty-fourth year. He had early thrown aside Christianity for Paganism, and his well-attended lectures showed preference for such subjects as Greek literature, Greek tragedy, and the dawn of Greek philosophy.

He already displayed a tendency to scepticism, cynicism, and intellectual self-exaltation, which I should call egomania—a disease which has finally sent him into seclusion; for in 1889 it was reported he was dead, the fact being that he was insane. In his portrait you can see the man of genius and the madman. His face is clear cut, of the German aristocratic type, with lofty forehead, heavy brows, deep eyes, wide nostrils; a head expressing proud, self-reliant *hauteur*, deep thought, and keen sensitiveness; the head of a musician, poet, philosopher, and crank. Nietzsche is all these. He gives the impression of a high-mettled, vicious horse, that will not bear the traces—a superb animal, but one that needs breaking in before he can run in harness. Alas, he is not broken in, but broken down. May he recover, having learnt the virtue of humility, the beauty of compassion, the worth of human service

Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer and many another pessimist genius, was born out of due time into a world unworthy of him. Haters of modern society are usually conservative reactionaries, lamenting the good old times, when their class lived in secure comfort, because the masses were ignorant; or radical Utopists, contrasting the existing social state with their ideal of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Nietzsche is neither. He despises the old *régime*. Individualistic and aristocratic by birth, training, and temperament, this Neo-Cynic allows that democracy is a defence against the pest of tyranny; but his *bête noir* is *der Pöbel*, the mob, the crowd of vulgar, sordid *canaille*, glorified as "the people." Equality, he declares, is not a fact; fraternity is a dream; and the only liberty he cares for is the liberty to develop into the Superior Man, and to rule inferiors. He would not go back to monarch or priest rule, but forward to a new aristocracy developed through Anarchism—the rule of the Higher Men, the Uebermenschen. He announces the death of God, the birth of the Superior Man. God is dead. He died through compassion for suffering he could neither prevent nor cure. The trouble is that the Superior Men are not of age and power to step into his shoes and take up all his deserted functions. So we lie twixt two worlds—one dead, the other powerless to be born. Man is a cable over an abyss, along which the animal may pass to the Uebermenschen. What is great in man is that he is a bridge, and not an end. Our business is to push on, whoever falls over. Patient sedentariness (*Der Sitzfleisch*) is the sin against the Holy Ghost. We must keep moving. For Schopenhauer's "Will," or blind instinct for life, he substitutes *Wille fur Macht*—will for power. What is the strongest medicine? he asks. Victory. Only the great ones count, he says; the rest are *der Pöbel*. A people is but a circumlocution of prolific nature to arrive at six or seven great ones. It would be well to sweep away a whole species to produce one better specimen. "What," he asks, "causes more sorrow in the world than compassion?" "Among the cowardly it is bad form to say anything against bravado, and callous men cannot endure anything said against compassion."

Nietzsche is frankly anti-Christian. He says, in effect: Blessed are the arrogant, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the strong, for theirs is the kingdom of man. Be strong, for to be weak is to be miserable. He dislikes philanthropists who cultivate the rotten potatoes of society. He scorns the weakness of compassion. Stamp out the unfit. Nothing has done us more harm than the extravagances of the compassionate. It is the petty men who are masters and preach up the petty virtues which enable them to thrive. The Superior Man disregards and disdains alike the petty morality and the petty immorality of mediocrities. "Who would be Creator must work in Good and Evil alike. He must first be a Negator. Evil belongs to the highest good — the creative." Nietzsche despises humility. Christian morality is that of slaves and the sick — the negation of life, the morality of the hospital. The morality of the Superior Man is affirmative, not negative. It is the symbol of prosperous, vigorous life, of the will for power become the principle of life. The one communicates of its fulness, enriches, brightens, and adds to the joy of the world; the other impoverishes, enfeebles, and disparages the world. Christianity is a malady, a denial of the Ego; but the morality of nature is a triumphant affirmation of the Ego. Christianity he regards, as Tacitus did, as a pernicious superstition; or with the aversion which Goethe expressed for "the cross and bugs." The cross is, in his expression, "the most venomous of the trees planted on earth." Priests are but invalids turned doctors, seeking to soothe their clients' sufferings by opiates and syrups, which never touch the root of the disease, and who would be promptly dismissed were the patients permitted to return to natural health. Christianity, he says, gave Love (Eros) poison. It did not kill, but turned it into Vice. In his hatred of hypocrisy, humbug, nad conventionality, he appears, like Moses at sight of the golden calf, ready to break all the Decalogue. He extols the motto of the Assassins, "Nothing is true; all is permissible." He girds at "Cowardice which masks as Virtue." To the Philistine he appears a dreadful apostle of intellectual pride and moral anarchy—the conscienceless assailant of all that is holy. This is wrong. Nietzsche says: "Laugh warmly, mischievously; but with good conscience." Beneath his cynicism surges an earnest, restless seeking after the best. He contemns the Pharisaic hypocrisy of the "unco guid," but preaches sincerity, courage, and self-reliance. Be yourself, bad as you may be, this will be the first step onward.

Many of his utterances are mere sportive malice. He writes in oracular aphorisms, full of cynical wit and paradox. Thus he says that Messiahs always get to their kingdom riding on asses. He asks: "Is man but one of the mistakes of God, or is God but one of the mistakes of men?" "Where the tree of knowledge is, there is always Paradise—so says the oldest and the youngest serpent."

His characterisations of men are sharp and cynical. Pascal he calls the "self-murderer of Reason"; Rousseau "the return to Nature in *impuris naturalibus*." Spinoza's Pantheism is "hocus pocus"; Kant he calls "cant"; Comte he terms "that clever Jesuit"; Victor Hugo "the Pharos on the Sea of Insanity"; Michelet "Ecstasy out of the Rock"; Schiller "the moral trumpeter"; Carlyle "the heroic moral interpreter of dyspepsia." Elsewhere he sneers at Carlyle as "an English Atheist who thinks it an honor not to be one." J. S. Mill is "clothed lucidity"; Renan represents "the loss of Reason through original sin" (his training as a Christian priest); Zola is "the love of stinks"; Liszt "the school of feminine fluency." First a disciple of Wagner, Nietzsche afterwards preferred the author of "Carmen." Bizet, he says, is Mercury; Wagner, Thor or Zeus; and the gods have light feet. His favorite authors are Machiavelli, Voltaire, Galiani, Emerson, and de Stendhal (Henri Beyle), whom he calls "the last great physiologist," and whose saying, "What excuses God is that he does not exist," is after his own heart. Schopenhauer he called the last German worth consideration. But "the first duty of a philosopher is to get beyond his day"; so as soon as heroes become popular he gives them up. Schopenhauer gives way before Zarathustra Nietzsche, who proclaims that *he* has given the Germans the most profound books they possess, and adds that he has good reason to believe that the Germans do not comprehend a word of them.

I have been unable to find any mention of two writers who appear to me to have much influenced Nietzsche—viz., "Max Stirner" (Kaspar Schmidt), Anarchist, author of *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum*, and "Philipp Mainlænder" (P. Batz?), pessimist, author of *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*. Both these are profound but little-known writers, who have scattered seeds bound to grow and fructify wherever they find fit soil. Nietzsche owes most to Stirner; but where Stirner is critical, even in proclaiming "I am the measure of Truth, and what I call my right is, in truth, only my might," Nietzsche is dogmatical—not the less so because he proclaims that his judgments are his alone, and need have value for no one else. In the saying of Mainlænder, "God is dead, and his death was the life of the world," we have the keynote of some of Nietzsche's own philosophy.

The higher race that is to take the place of the defunct deity hardly seems to include woman. Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, appears a misogynist. In his paradoxical fashion he says "Man has created woman—whence, from one of God's ribs—his own ideal." "There is ever something deceptive in love," he says; "but, then, there is always some reason in deception." He couples "the eternal feminine" with "the eternal fool." Feminine love is a kind of parasitism, always costly to the host. The Higher

Man is above all that. He is, in short, a god, above the common needs of humanity.

Such, if I understand it—which is doubtful, for Nietzsche is more a poet than a philosopher, and delights in paradox, phantasy, and the oracular opaqueness of a new revelation — is the gospel according to Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. Its dynamite is not less dangerous because hidden in darkness. It seems to logically include the abolition of conventional morality, the elimination of the unfit, the erection of a system of caste, and the rule of a new aristocracy. The militarism of Germany has made this possible as the program of one of its most original though most cranky thinkers.

My voice can hardly reach Dr. Nietzsche in his seclusion, or I might say: My afflicted brother, are you not learning that we are all dependent on the offices of the humblest; that for us not only the great ones fought and thought, but the poor ones have toiled and suffered? Is a sick person necessarily a parasite on society who should no longer be let live? Was Cæsar Borgia, that type of the "will for power," really greater than the unknown fireman or nurse who dies trying to save others? We are not gods, but men, among men, dependent, from our first breath, upon others. Think of all we owe to the past. Dive we ever so deep, soar we ever so high, we cannot escape our duty to our kind. Surely humility, compassion, brotherly love, and brotherly service befit us. We all need to partake of the holy human sacrament of sympathy. I, too, own *ni Dieu ni maitre;* but let us not throw away the baby along with the dirty water.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

Acid Drops.

Christian mythology tells us that 1900 years ago some wise men were watching the heavens for the star that announced the birth of the Prince of Peace. Nineteen centuries later the followers of that same Prince of Peace—with others—were watching the heavens also, but it was for airships dropping bombs, not for stars telling of glad tidings of great joy. The glad tidings to one set of watchers would have been the destruction of several hundreds of watchers on the other side of a narrow strip of ocean. Yet both sets of watchers are equally convinced of the blessings brought to the world on that first Christmas Day. They would explain in what a deplorable state the world would be without Christianity. Meanwhile "scoffers" point to the state of the world with it. Shepherds watching their flocks and looking heavenward for stars at the beginning; officers drilling their troops and watching the heavens for bombs at the end. Shepherds at one end; Zeppelins at the other. The progress is unquestionable.

Of course, the Pope's suggestion for a cessation of fighting during Christmas came to nothing. Doubtless both sides would welcome a rest, if each was quite sure the other would not take an unfair advantage of the pause. And, after all, it is of no genuine importance that in such a war as this one, fighting should cease for twenty-four hours. The only parties who would really benefit by such an armistice would be the professional preachers of Christianity. It would have been a formal acknowledgement of the influence of Christianity—so they would have said, and that, apparently, is all they wished to say. As it happened, the fighting during Christmas appears to have regained its old ferocity, and some of the soldiers who made a rough attempt to celebrate Christmas in the old style, were compelled to suspend their festivities while they pumped lead into their fellow-Christians. Probably each side hoped to catch the other "napping."

Away from the fighting line the soldiers kept Christmas as nearly usual as was possible. The German troops at Antwerp, so says a Central News telegram, celebrated Christmas, and a number of field-preachers travelled from Berlin to Antwerp to address the men and encourage them to persevere in the struggle. Their addresses are said to have brought tears to the eyes of the soldiers, particularly when reference was made to their wives and children at home. That is the human touch that gets home everywhere and with all men. Appeals to religion invariably make men more ferocious in their fighting, more implacable in their enmities. But "home" is a word that carries the same implications everywhere. Men may fight more desperately when they think of home, but they will not fight more ferociously. A man may be a worse neighbor because of his religion; he will invariably be a better one as he thinks of home and all its relationships.

Christmas sermons this year seem to have hovered round two points. One was the tendency to keep up the old Christmas—and Christian—cant about Christian love and peace and brotherhood; the other the desire to find a Christian moral in the War. Under ordinary circumstances it is not difficult for the clergy to play round the first point. It is not often that we have a war right at our doors, and one in which we are ourselves engaged. Most wars are a long way off, and if other people are engaged in it we can always indicate the superiority of English Christianity, which accounts for our being at peace. This enables people to overlook the fact that the Christian world never is at peace. Even if war is not actually being waged, it can hardly be called a peaceful condition when each country is engaged in trying to outreach all others in military and naval equipment, and each nation trying to outwit every other nation by all the tricks and artifices of diplomatic duplicity. Christian history, from this point of view, may be summed up by saying that whenever a Christian nation finds itself prepared for war, is fairly confident of victory, and feels itself likely to profit from the conflict, war on someone, somewhere, and on some pretext, will be declared. The truest text in the New Testament is, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword."

The second point, that of drawing *Christian* morals from the War, has been worked by nearly all the clergy, and it would be well for Freethinkers to bear this in mind when times change, and the clergy are piping a quite different tune. Active Freethinkers would find, if they were to classify the paragraphs in these columns—which might be done by taking an extra copy for cutting-up purposes—that by the end of the War they would have an armory of facts concerning the clergy of this country that would stand them in good stead in many a fight. Here, for instance, is Mr. Campbell saying—in the course of a Christmas sermon at the City Temple—that "out of the midst of carnage and terror the Christ spirit was causing beautiful things to appear. A great change had come over England, and, indeed, over the whole civilised world. War was wickedness, and a grievous curse to the land it afflicted, but there was a holy presence pervading it all, and making us nobler, tenderer, more compassionate to one another, more loyal to an ideal good, more ready to listen to the appeal of the unseen and the divine." Now, if Mr. Campbell really believes this, why on earth does he complain about war? If war makes people tenderer, more compassionate, more responsive to the call of high ideals, etc., etc., then war is not a bad thing, it is a good thing, and it is the plain duty of Christian preachers to encourage it. Moreover, Lord Roberts, when he said that war kept a nation healthy, and General Bernhardi when he said that war was a biological necessity, were both right. A nation cannot afford to do without war, and we ought no longer to blame Germany for forcing war on Europe. We ought to thank her for making men nobler, tenderer, more responsive to high ideals, and more ready to listen to the appeal of the divine.

This is, of course, assuming that Mr. Campbell and the rest of the clergy mean what they say; and so they may—now. But a year hence they will be saying and meaning something entirely different. In the pulpit it is a case of "Other times, other sermons." Luckily for the clergy, the vast mass of the people have very short memories. The great thing is to engage their attention for the time. In that lies the whole art of sermon-making and the ethics of pulpiteering.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference, in his Christmas sermon, repeated some of Mr. Campbell's nonsense, with a little of his own added. Like a great many others, he calmly ignored the fact that the more peaceful party in Germany, as elsewhere, were the non-Christians, and attributed the War to "Rationalism." Of course, while things that are German are anathema, nothing is simpler than to discount a thing you don't like by saying that it comes from Germany. And undoubtedly a great deal of what is called "Rationalism" in theology owes much to German scholarship and research. One would think that this should be counted to the credit of Germany rather than to its discredit. But Mr. Dinsdale T. Young concludes otherwise. The War offers a chance for every bigoted

clergyman to air exploded ideas, and this one is not slow to avail himself of the opportunity. Rationalism, he says, is most prominent in Germany. "One can see now what it has brought to the German nation and to the German Churches. It is a great menace to the English people. We must never submit to it."

One need not be alarmed. Mr. Young is never likely to submit to Rationalism. He is not built that way. And that is one reason why he delights in talking such arrant nonsense. Rationalism is no more than the claim to test every doctrine—theological, ethical, political, social—by the test of reason. Of course, man may blunder even then; but he will certainly blunder more frequently and more seriously on any other plan. And the fault of Germany is not that it has given way to Rationalism, but that it has not applied Rationalism effectively enough. If Germany had been governed by reason, how could it ever have plunged into a war such as the present one? Would a nation governed by reason submit to become the mere catspaw of a military gang? Save in the sense that men reason about all they do—even clerics like Mr. Young reason—it is precisely at the bar of reason that all war receives its severest condemnation. Religion, passion, greed, justifies war; Rationalism unhesitatingly condemns it. Not only is this true in the broad sense of reason as applied to human affairs; it is also true when used in the sense of opposition to supernaturalist doctrines. If Freethinkers had, in Germany, Russia, France, and England, held the numerical position held by Christians, the War would have been an impossibility. No one can reasonably doubt that who knows the part played by Freethought in encouraging feelings of humanity and justice.

Of course, a great deal of sloppy talk has been going on about the "Coming of the Christ Child" and the immense influence for good that resulted from the "first Christmas Day." Some improvement has, naturally, taken place since the date given for that legendary event. But, all things considered, it is surprisingly small. Look at the Greece of two thousand years ago and the Greece of to-day! How much better is the latter than the former? How much superior was the Rome of the eighteenth century to that of the first? What improvement has Christianity effected in the East—the "cradle land" of the faith? And suppose Christianity had never been; would improvement have been impossible? Mr. Lloyd George, in one of those bursts of absurdity into which his religious beliefs are constantly leading him, said recently that the care shown to the wounded in battle was all due to Christianity. No allowance whatever is made for ordinary human feelings, as such. It is assumed that the development which brought man from the anthropoid to the highest level of Paganism would have stopped dead had Christianity not appeared. That a man with such notions of history and of human nature can be a great figure in politics only serves to show what moderate demands politics makes on human capacity. If Mr. Lloyd George would calculate the possibilities for progress latent in Pagan culture before Christianity appeared, and then allow for a further two thousand years of development, he would be in a better position to estimate the influence of Christianity on the world, and the value of the rubbish about the "Christ Child" and its elevating influence.

The Emperor and Empress of Japan has just given £3,000 to the Salvation Army. Some day or other they will give as much or more to a Society that has a better motto than Blood and Fire.

During a discussion on a second breakdown of the London County Council Trams at Brixton, Mr. Prestige said they would all agree that the accident was "an act of God." That settled the matter. A motion for a committee of inquiry was lost by 32 to 42 votes. Inquiry is blasphemous when you know God did it.

Rev. John Reacher, Minerva-road, Kingston-on-Thames, said to be the oldest Wesleyan minister, left £5,902, simply because he couldn't take it. He would have carried off the "swag" if he could.

We are rather pleased to see a *Church Times* reviewer, in dealing with Mr. Drawbridge's *Common Objections to Christianity*, objecting to the easy division of objectors to Christianity into "common" and "academic." The division implies that freethinking is either due to the lack of education of common people or to the student "mazed" with scholarship. As the *Church Times* says: "There is no vulgar Atheist on one side and superior and refined Agnostic on the other"—that is, so long as we pay attention to realities rather than to labels self-assumed or bestowed. The difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic is not one of ignorance and learning, or that between genuine refinement and its absence. It is almost entirely a question of intellectual clarity and moral courage. For years the religious world attached to Atheism such epithets as "vulgar," "abusive," "ignorant," etc., with the result that timid people and those susceptible to a social boycott shrank from using the name. But as the break-up of religious ideas proceeded, even the formal profession of Christianity became obnoxious, and some other name, free from these obnoxious terms, was found necessary. Hence the creation and the currency of such a word as "Agnostic." And the illuminating factor in the position is the manner in which the Christian world has almost patronised the Atheism disguised as Agnosticism, in order to divert attention from the Agnosticism which boldly proclaims itself Atheism.

According to Mr. Stephen Graham, Moscow is "the literary capital of Europe." We fancy there are more "intellectuals" in Siberia.

Rev. John William Whiteley Taylor, Reading, left £60,054. This is how he took up his cross and followed Jesus.

Christmas has come and gone, and the great War still remains. The Savior of the world is far too busy to save it, and the Prince of Peace lets his followers go on fighting all over their share of the globe. Not a single Christmas has ever made much difference to the morals or happiness of the Christian world.

"Suffer little children to come unto me" says the New Testament, to which the Education Committee of the London County Council promptly replies, "And we will sort them out." This Committee recently recommended that all children of enemy aliens be excluded from the "Central" schools. We should have hoped that people who have in their charge so important a matter as that of education would at least have seen to it that the War was not carried into the schoolroom. The world gains nothing by anybody's children being less educated than they might be, whether these children belong to English or foreigners. We are glad to say that although the above-named view represented the majority on the Education Committee, a compromise was finally reached allowing the children of enemy aliens to enter if the places were not needed for English children. As was to be expected, Rev. Stewart D. Headlam opposed the original motion.

THE DEAD JESUS.

Dead, his crown of thorns beside him,
In his sepulchre he slumbers—
Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,
Never can he wake again!

Yet the lies his folly fathered
Live and multiply above him:
Lie the first! A life hereafter
Shall redeem the wrongs of this.

Lie the second! Love thy neighbor
As thyself! The dream, the fancy!
Were it true, each soul's existence
Would be proved by self-negation.

Lie the third! About the morrow
Take no heed—sufficient ever
Is the evil of the moment—
Take no trouble to redress it!

Lie the fourth! Lord God the father
Loves his children and redeems them;
He?—the loveless, pulseless, deathless,
Impotent Omnipotence!

Well, he staked his life and lost it!
Flock on flock of sheep have followed
The bell-weather of the masses
Into darkness and despair!

Love each other, help each other,
Juggle not with dreams and phrases—
Make ephemeral existence
Beautiful, in spite of God!

—*Robert Buchanan.*

"What is your brother Reginald doing since he left college?"

"Why, just at present he is very busy tracing back our family tree."

"Goodness me! Then he's got that Darwinian theory into his head, has he?"

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £249 17s. 6d. Received since:—A. J. Fincken, £5; Mrs. H. T. C. (second sub.), £1 1s.; H. T. C. (second sub.), £1 1s.; K. C. C. (second sub.), £1 1s.; J. de B. and Wife (S. Africa), £1 1s.; G. Thomas, 2s.; C. Bourchier, 10s.; H. T. (Renfrew), 5s.

H. T. C.—We quite expect to be at the Annual Dinner this year, and shall be very glad to see you all there.

H. C. WESTON.—Received just as we go to press. Some will probably be used later.

H. T. (Renfrew).—We reciprocate your good wishes for the New Year.

G. THOMAS.—Part of your remittance has been handed to our shop manager. The balance allocated as desired. We hope that 1915 will bring you better fortune.

C. BOURCHIER.—We must take the will for the deed—to some extent, at least. And in which direction your will lies you have already shown.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges a parcel of clothing from Mrs. King.

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 *Freethinker* leaves the editorial hands on Tuesday evening, and therefore can only acknowledge subscriptions to the President's Honorarium Fund up to December 29. The last two days' subscriptions will be acknowledged next week separately, and not mixed with any 1915 subscriptions. Considering that so many months have been covered by the great War, it must be allowed that the response to this Appeal has been very gratifying.

We hope to see a good muster of London Freethinkers at the Annual Dinner at the Restaurant Frascati on January 12. Of course, we should be pleased to see a good sprinkling of provincial Freethinkers as well, but of necessity the majority of diners live in London or neighborhood. The number of tickets sold this year will be strictly limited, and application should be made for these, to Miss Vance, as early as possible. There will be plenty of music, singing, and speeches from leading Freethinkers. The name of the Restaurant is itself a guarantee of a good dinner, and we hope that the gathering will be worthy of the occasion. The price of the tickets is 4s. each. Tickets will not be procurable on the night of the dinner.

With this issue we start a New Year, and a New Volume—the Thirty-fifth. To keep a weekly Freethought journal going for so many years is no light task, and in this respect the *Freethinker* has established a record. No other Freethought paper in this country has lived so long, and we may be excused a feeling of pride at our longevity. A man may reach old age because—well, simply because nothing has killed him. But for a paper such as this one to reach old age implies that there was a work for it to do in the world, and that it has done that work well. It must be remembered that the *Freethinker* has had none of the usual aids to circulation. It has never been a sensation monger. It has never been wealthy enough to indulge in lavish advertising; and it has never had the advantages that other papers enjoy, that of free circulation through trade journals. It has had to make itself known as it might, and to gain its supporters one by one. The gratifying thing is that when it gains a reader it nearly always keeps him—or her, for ladies are not the least devoted of its readers.

People have often wondered why the *Freethinker* was not a commercial success. Well, perhaps it might have been, had it been less uncompromising in its advocacy. And as the world goes, it is next to impossible to combine commercial success with the propaganda of a generally unpopular cause. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"; that is eternally true; sooner or later one must be sacrificed to the other. We did not found the *Freethinker* for commercial reasons, and we have not had commercial success in our eye during its existence. We have had, during the past thirty-four years, many anxious moments concerning it, but we may say with truth and pride that it has never lowered its flag. It has never pandered to a movement because it happened to be fashionable, nor hesitated to support one because it chanced to be unpopular. We have always tried to fight clean and straight, and if the testimony of our readers is any guide, to that extent we have met with success.

There is one other thing that ought to be said. The relations between the Editor of the *Freethinker* and its readers have never been those of an ordinary newspaper and its readers. They have been those of fellow-workers in a common cause. We were not writing to please purchasers, but to inspire evangelists. The consequence has been that in the majority of cases the *Freethinker* has reached its *clientele* as a weekly message of encouragement and inspiration. Editor and contributors have never hesitated to speak out their minds with perfect freedom, and readers have accepted as part of the normal order of events. The consequence of this has been that, although we have felt the influence of the War, so far as actual circulation is concerned we have probably felt it less than any other weekly journal in Great Britain. We have managed to keep the *Freethinker* at its old standard both as regards size and quality of paper. We might have used the War as a reason for diminishing expenses, but we preferred to keep on at the old level so long as was at all possible. And, with the hearty co-operation of our readers, we hope to pass through 1915 at least as successfully as through 1914.

This evening (January 3) Mr. F. E. Wallis will lecture in Ruskin Hall, Victoria-road, Aston, on "The Birth of the Prince of Peace." The meeting is held under the auspices of the Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S., and commences at 7:o'clock. Admission is free.

We are asked to announce that a meeting of the Kingsland Branch of the N. S. S. will be held at 56 Richmond-road, Barnsbury, on Monday, January 4, at 8 o'clock, for the purpose of electing officers for the year.

Mr. Mangasarian has returned from the South, where he went to see his sick son, who is now, we trust, on the high road to recovery. We note that Mr. Mangasarian's platform (or pulpit) has been occupied during his absence by Mr. Joseph McCabe and other lecturers.

The Independent Religious Society, to whom Mr. Mangasarian is lecturer, has no "creed," but welcomes "all who desire to promote the religion of truth, righteousness, and freedom." We rather fancy, however, that Mr. Mangasarian's personality has a good deal to do with holding the Society together.

RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION.

The philosophy of natural history in its most primitive orm is universally the philosophy of animism—or the philosophy which ascribes to all living things the attributes of the human soul. This having been clearly noted, the next thing we have to observe is that, with advancing culture, such philosophy departs from its primitive realism. The souls of living things, although they still continue to be regarded as personal, cease to be fixed to any definite corporeal abodes; they are now something more than spirits incarnate; they begin to assume the nature of gods. The sundry forces and processes of nature having been severally relegated to the dominion of personal deities, plants, and animals, although still invested with innumerable superstitious ideas surviving from more primitive stages of thought, now take a place in the general system of things subordinate to the over-ruling gods. Animism thus becomes transformed into theology, and the natural history of observation gives place to the natural history of myth.—*G. J. Romanes.*

Christian Apologetics.

DEAN FARRAR (No. 3).

IN my last paper we had a fair sample of the apologetic methods of the Very Reverend Dean Farrar with regard to the miracles ascribed to Jesus Christ in the Gospels. In page 51 of his book he had arrived at the conclusion that the credibility of miracles was "simply and solely a question of evidence," to which he added as a corollary that "consequently our belief or rejection of the Christian miracles must mainly depend on the character of the Gospels in which they are recorded." Then, instead of attempting to show that these Gospels were genuine and authentic, as he claimed them to be, he wriggled out of the task by saying: "Now into that question *we need not enter*, because for our present purpose it has been sufficiently admitted by the most strenuous opponents of the truths which they reveal" —a statement which is not in harmony with fact. Next, our Very Reverend Dean further asserted "that the three earliest Gospels at any rate, *in some form or other*, existed before the siege of Jerusalem," and that this was also admitted by opponents of Christianity—another statement not in agreement with facts.

The foregoing misstatements I have already commented upon; but here the Very Reverend makes a new departure. Having contended that the Gospels "in some form or other" were in existence before A.D. 66—70, he now says:—

> "And even *were it otherwise*, the genuineness of four at least of St. Paul's greatest Epistles is undisputed and indisputable.....We may start therefore with the unchallenged certainty that respecting the Person and the Resurrection of our Lord we possess the contemporary evidence of *men* who desired to know the truth, who had ample opportunities for ascertaining it, who were intellectually incapable of having imagined, morally incapable of having invented it."

With the last portion of the statement I am in complete accord. The early Christians were intellectually incapable of imagining, and morally incapable of inventing—"the truth." The stories they imagined and invented were of a totally different character, and, taking into consideration their ignorance of natural phenomena and everything now known respecting the universe, could not be otherwise.

With regard to the Pauline Epistles, it is quite true that the first four are generally admitted to be genuine; but it is also admitted that they contain some, and probably many, interpolations. The passage 2 Cor. xi. 32-33, is certainly one, and 1 Cor. xi. 23—26 is another. It should also be borne in mind that Van Manen's article in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* had not been written in Dean Farrar's time; so the "undisputed and indisputable" four Epistles, as stated by Renan and others, may be allowed to stand. But apart from this question, the four great Epistles of Paul do not indicate that the latter apostle was acquainted with *any* of the sayings or doings of Jesus which are recorded in the Gospels. Paul preached "Christ and him crucified," and Jesus raised from the dead, but very little else. His account of the appearances of Jesus after the alleged resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 5—8) flatly contradicts those recorded in the Gospels. Paul does not appear to have investigated any of these appearances, but merely to have received them on trust. The four Pauline Epistles, then, cannot truthfully be called "the contemporary evidence of *men*" who were acquainted with the events narrated in the Gospels. And though Paul may perhaps have had "ample opportunities" for ascertaining the truth—it is not certain that he had—he says himself that he learnt nothing from the apostles, that he kept aloof from them, only going to Jerusalem on two occasions during twenty years.

Neither, again, can we say that in the Gospels we have "the contemporary evidence of men" who "had ample opportunities for ascertaining the truth," who were "intellectually incapable of having imagined" the events narrated, or who were "morally incapable of having invented them." It is precisely upon these points, which the Very Reverend Dean so glibly assumes to be historical, that we require information.

The earliest Christians were members of a Jewish sect called Nazarenes, of which "Jesus the Nazarene" was also a member. Some time after the latter's death, many of the Nazarenes came to regard him as a prophet, and piously invented a story of his being filled with the "spirit of God"—which enabled him to work miracles. They further declared that he had risen from the dead, and had been taken up into heaven. Paul, having heard about this "Jesus the Nazarene," paid a visit to one of the elders of the sect named Kephas, with whom he staid a fortnight (Gal. i. 18), and heard all that Kephas chose to tell him. After this, believing everything he had been told, and, without any kind of investigation, Paul set himself up as a preacher, quite independent of the Nazarenes; but he represented Jesus, not merely as a man and a prophet (as did the Nazarenes), but as a divine Being, and he confined his preaching chiefly to Gentiles. Paul tells the Galatians that his gospel was "not after man," neither did he "receive it from man," but that it came to him "through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). This alleged revelation he received when he was "caught up to the third heaven" and heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 1—4). Paul had never seen Jesus in the flesh, and could therefore have known nothing about that personage, save what he had learnt from Kephas.

There were no Gospels in Paul's day; the sayings and doings afterwards attributed to Jesus had not then been excogitated. A new generation of Nazarenes had a Gospel of their own, written in Hebrew or Aramaic, which commenced with the preaching of John the Baptist—like the Gospel of Mark. The canonical Gospels were written some decades later for the use of Gentile Christians, the narratives common to the three Synoptics being taken from a Greek translation of the Nazarene Gospel. To this translation were added other narratives (including the Virgin Birth story) which were written in Greek by Gentile Christians, who followed the teaching of Paul and believed Jesus to have been divine. At a later day all the narratives of the latter class which had found no place in the canonical Gospels were rejected, and styled "apocryphal."

On page 78, our Very Reverend Dean, in referring to what he considered the undoubted reality of Christ's miracles, says:—

> "Yet Christ—surrounded as he was by the immense publicity of furious Jews, and haughty Romans, and sneering Greeks—not only claimed to have worked miracles, but his claim was undisputed by his deadliest enemies. Neither the Pharisees, nor the multitudes, nor Caiaphas, nor Herod, nor Celsus, nor Porphyry, nor Julian, dreamt of denying that he *had* wrought deeds apparently supernatural."

This grandiloquent statement is based upon the assumption that the Gospel accounts of the alleged ministry of Jesus Christ are historically true; for it is only in those narratives that Jesus is represented as working miracles before people who might be able to detect imposture. But what evidence have we that these wonders were performed before "furious Jews and haughty Romans and sneering Greeks," and that his claim to have worked them was not disputed by them? We have none whatever. Assuming that the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees mentioned in the Gospels were the "furious Jews," where in the Gospel narratives do the "haughty Romans and sneering Greeks" come in? Are we to say that the procurator Pilate and the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem were the "haughty Romans" who witnessed the miracles alleged to have been wrought by Jesus? These persons, according to the Gospels, knew nothing about this miracle-worker until he was arrested and handed over to be

tried; and during the trial which followed not a single word was said about his having wrought miracles. Had Pilate known that a professed miracle-worker was going about the country, drawing multitudes of the common people after him, and preaching a new religion, it would have been his duty to put down the innovation by the troops at his command. And he most certainly would have done so, had Jesus really appeared as an innovator, as narrated in the Gospels.

In the next place, where in the Gospels do we find the "sneering Greeks" who did not deny that Jesus had worked miracles? Here again Dr. Farrar has been drawing largely upon his imagination. He has told us that "neither the Pharisees, nor the multitudes, nor Caiaphas, nor Herod" dreamt of denying that "Jesus *had* wrought deeds apparently supernatural." How did our apologist know this? As a matter of fact, he did not know it; he merely noticed that no denials by these persons are recorded in the Gospels. This method of manufacturing evidence is, no doubt, the result of the "lofty height of intelligence" which, our Very Reverend says, believers in miracles possess. Had his intelligence been of a less lofty character, he would have known that no fabricator of the Gospel stories would have represented fictitious characters in his narratives as denying the reality of the miracles he had ascribed to Jesus. Though the original Gospel writers were grossly ignorant and incredulous, they had at least sufficient sense to know that such denials would detract from the apparent truth of their fabricated narratives. Moreover, miracles in that age were believed to be performable by Satanic and other agencies, as well as by the power of God—which fact gives the answer to Dr. Farrar's grand argument that "neither Celsus, nor Porphyry, nor Julian, dreamt of denying" that Jesus had worked miracles. Why, indeed, should any of these opponents deny the performance of miraculous acts—either by Jesus or by anyone else—which were believed in their times to be possible, and which, besides, they had no means of investigating?

Our Very Reverend Dean's "lofty height of intelligence" has led him to think that because Jesus is represented as feeding five thousand persons with five loaves, we have therefore the testimony of those five thousand to that alleged miracle. As a matter of fact, we have not the testimony of a single individual to that fictitious event. Had our reverend apologist's intelligence been of a more ordinary character, he would have perceived that the original writer of the Gospel could have made his hero do any wonder he chose to relate, and could at the same time have piously introduced Pilate, Herod Antipas, Caiaphas, or other deceased personages, as actors in his fabricated history. In the Gospels we have simply a number of fictitious stories written in a credulous and superstitious age for ignorant and credulous people. And the statement that the primitive Christians of this age were "intellectually incapable of having imagined, and morally incapable of having invented" such stories is incontrovertibly disproved by the existence in that age of a large number of lying Gospels which are now called "apocryphal."

ABRACADABRA.

Gods and Creeds on Trial.

NOTHING has occurred in Europe during the last half century so calculated to disturb men's belief in the Christian God, or, indeed, in the Christian faith itself, as the terrible War now being waged in France and Belgium and Poland by the soldiers of the various Christian nations engaged in this dreadful conflict. The pious people in each of the nations concerned are daily offering up their prayers to the Christian God, and this alleged "Heavenly Father," who is supposed to be all-wise and all-good, is so disturbed by the appeals of his numerous children, that, like King Claudius in *Hamlet*, he "Stands in pause where he should first begin, and both neglects."

But what kind of God can this Christian Deity be? From his heavenly abode he beholds the terrible carnage that is taking place, day by day, in both theatres of war in the East and the West. Within a few weeks he has witnessed the Belgian people driven from their homes, men shot down for daring to defend their wives and children from cruel outrage, their homes destroyed by conflagration, their loved ones maimed and killed; he has seen the beautiful buildings of Louvain razed to the ground; he has even watched the shells as they shattered the walls of his own Cathedrals at Rheims and Antwerp; and, as far as man is able to judge, he has done nothing. He has watched Christian soldiers destroying, by shot and shell, by sword and bayonet, hundreds of thousands of their fellow Christians, and neither by word nor sign has he done anything to prevent the awful slaughter. Is not such a fact as this enough to disturb the faith of any thoughtful Christian?

Plato, the Greek philosopher, used to say that "the gods only helped those who helped themselves"; but a God who desired to be regarded as "Our father, which art in heaven," could scarcely expect to receive the homage of his children, if he could not, or would not, help them in the hour of their direst need. A human father who would not try to stop such wanton and brutal slaughter would be worthy only of the execration and contempt of his children. It is, therefore, quite obvious to anyone who thinks and inquires, that Christians are becoming very disturbed about their belief either in the goodness, the wisdom, or the power of their God. Some of them, of course, try to explain this palpable inactivity of their Deity by alleging that he is so full of wrath at the wickedness of his children, that he allows all this slaughter and suffering to take place as a warning to the rising generation. But surely it is not compatible with his idea of justice that he should allow believers to suffer in order that unbelievers may receive a useful lesson? Does he punish the just as well as the unjust? Has he no discrimination? When an earthquake takes place and swallows up a nation of unoffending people, the theologians say that God cannot be expected to interfere with the ordinary processes of natural phenomena; that it is folly in man to build cities in the neighborhood of volcanoes. But when men come together in warfare with deadly weapons of destruction, surely that is God's opportunity to show his power and confound his adversaries.

If Christians are beginning to doubt the goodness or wisdom of God, what must they think of the creed they profess to believe in but fail so constantly to practice? What of the teachings of their lord and master, Jesus Christ? "Love your neighbor as yourself" sounds very well on Sunday, but on Monday and the rest of the week, in war time, how few Christians attempt to put it into practice. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," does not appeal to Christian soldiers on the battlefield; the doctrine most suitable in practice then appears to be "Blessed are the bold and courageous, for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"; and yet a Christian gentleman like Mr. Arnold White ("Vanoc" of the *Referee*) gloats hideously over the cruelty of Gurkha methods of warfare in their onslaughts on the Germans. He says:—

> "The Indian troops are getting into their stride. The work of the Gurkhas in the trenches is fine, now, and successful. They prefer their kukris to their rifles. Eyewitnesses tell me that preparatory to their night-stalking expedition against the enemy, the Gurkha takes his rifle, pats it, strokes it tenderly, and lays it down in the trench by the side of a trusted British comrade. Then a party of thirty or forty Gurkhas leave the trenches. In the lull between the volleys the British in the trenches hear a squeaking and a groaning of Germans. Then the triumphant Gurkhas return to the trenches smiling and happy with a string of German ears threaded on a cord round their waists."

This is fine, barbarous business for a Christian publicist to exult over. "Vanoc" is the Christian journalist who is constantly deploring the fact that Englishmen are gradually losing their faith in the supernatural. But he finds no reason to regret that Christians or Indians are as cruel as ever in their methods of human destruction on the battlefield.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." If there is any persecution to be done it is the Christians of every sect (except, perhaps, the Quakers) who are willing to persecute the unbeliever, and think they are performing a religious duty to which no sensible man should take any sort of exception.

"Blessed are the merciful"! German Christians do not appear to have manifested much of this quality. When the British sunk a couple of German destroyers in the North Sea, they gallantly went to the rescue of the German sailors, and saved many of them from a premature and watery grave; but when the German submarines torpedoed the *Hogue* and the *Cressy*, and the *Aboukir* came to the rescue of their comrades, the German Christians promptly torpedoed that vessel also, and sent over a thousand of their British fellow Christians to their everlasting sleep at the bottom of the sea. Very merciful, was it not?

I know a young British bluejacket who was on the *Hogue* when it was torpedoed. When the ship was sinking he jumped into the sea and swam about for half-an-hour, finally reaching the *Cressy*. For five minutes only, he remained on the deck of this battleship when that also was torpedoed. Into the sea the young sailor plunged again, and swam about for close on four hours before he was picked up by a Dutch fishing-smack. He was sent home after the loss of his ship, and remained at home for some weeks. At night he could scarcely get any sleep. In his dreams he was constantly plunging into the sea and clambering into ships, only to be flung into the roaring sea again; and this process seemed to go on for ever. When he recovered he went back to the scene of battle, this time on an English submarine, and being a Christian, he hopes to "get a little of his own back" on his cruel German brethren.

There is no doubt that warfare demoralises all who take part in it. What is called civilisation is only a thin veneer that covers up the brutal and destructive qualities of man. Every Freethinker who has studied the question is convinced, upon the most conclusive evidence, that man has come up from the lower animals, and that he carries within his organisation the scaffolding of his lowly animal origin. He also inherits many of the cruel and vicious instincts of his primitive ancestors. Christians, however, do not believe this. They believe that God made man perfect, and that it is only the sin of man which interferes with his progress towards his original perfection. Well, we have had nearly two thousand years of Christian civilisation, and when we let "the dogs of war" loose they are as cruel and as vicious as ever. When the history of the War comes to be written I believe it will be found that some of the most cruel and dastardly deeds have been perpetrated by soldiers who "professed and called themselves Christians," that have ever been committed in the whole history of warfare; and if the belief in Christianity fails to restrain men from the perpetration of such wanton criminality, what can be said of the moral and spiritual value of such a creed on the rising generation of mankind?

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Great War.—II.

A lecture delivered in Chicago, by
M. M. MANGASARIAN.

ONE day in London we were standing in front of the bulletin board and reading a quotation from the speech of Mr. Asquith. It said that no one would be compelled to enlist in the English Army. A woman who was reading the bulletin almost threw her arms around the young man accompanying her, because he did not have to go to war. But I am of opinion that everybody should receive military training. "What fools these mortals be," exclaims Shakespeare. There is a fool in everyone of us, and it is a most needed precautionary measure to be armed against *him*. We must not only claim rights, but be able to defend them. Every citizen ought also to be a *competent* defender of his citizenship. If he can't, or won't, who will? There is a great difference between offensive and defensive warfare; I believe in defensive militarism. We must be strong enough to compel "Napoleon" to sue for peace. Nature is aggressive, civilisation is defensive. The rain descends in torrents upon us; we protect ourselves by roofs and shingles. The winds rush upon us; we defend ourselves with doors, screens, and walls. The lightning aims its bolts at our dwellings; we meet it with the lightning rod. That's defensive fighting. In the same sense, we do not go about pulling down churches, demolishing altars, burning priests at the stake, to propagate modern thought—we resist the attack of the forces of darkness with truth and knowledge, against which, error breaks in pieces as the raging waves against the rooted rock.

A question closely related to the one I am discussing is, whether armaments and standing armies are a guarantee of peace, or whether they do not, on the contrary, provoke war. The pacifists are of the opinion that if the Powers could be prevailed upon to disarm, the peace of Europe would become permanent. They also insist that as long as Europe is loaded it is bound to explode from time to time. This attitude is based upon the reasoning that great armaments irritate or tempt governments to assume an aggressive attitude. But we might as well say that fire insurance tempts incendiarism, and that, therefore, it is better not to be insured; or that sanitary measures by the Government encourage carelessness on the part of the individual, and that, therefore, people would be healthier if there were no public sanitation or health boards. It would be equally foolish to argue that if there were no hospitals, no physicians, no surgeons, no drugs, there would be no sickness in the world; or that if we did not provide against storms, famines, earthquakes, and Asiatic plagues, these evils would not exist. I am not ready to endorse such a view. We can never devise an institution which shall be perfect. The best of institutions have some evil results. We have to choose, therefore, between the lesser and the greater evil. The fact that the different nations were prepared for war helped to prolong the peace of Europe for nearly half a century, and perhaps if England and France had been as wide awake as Germany, the present War might have been put off indefinitely. Moreover, Europe cannot disarm so long as Asia remains armed; and how may universal disarmament be brought about without armed intervention? If by education, that will, of course, require long waiting; if we are willing to wait, let us wait—but in the meantime, while waiting for education to bring about universal disarmament, let us be prepared.

Again, no kind of disarmament can possibly establish either physical or mental equality among nations, and so long as one nation remains stronger than another, there will be agression, against which the weak will protest in vain unless they can make their protest good. But it should not be inferred from this that war is a blessing. On the contrary, it is as great a disgrace as it is a scourge. I do not believe in earthquakes; I do not believe in cholera; I do not believe in panics; and war is worse even than all these together. But my belief is not enough preparation against such evils. To ask to be prepared for war is not an endorsement of war.

I had many proofs during the past summer of the fearful and almost irreparable consequences of war. Even in a city as large as London there was a perceptible decrease in the number of men. It was

the story of the *Titanic* repeated—women and children saved; the men sent to the bottom. War threatens Europe with what might well be termed a man-hunger. Of course, women suffer as much as the men do from war. In one respect they suffer more, because they share the pain but not the accompanying excitement or buoyancy which the fighters enjoy. It is all depression and very little exaltation in the case of the mothers, the wives, and the sweethearts left behind. And oh, the loneliness, the depression, the separation, the waiting for news from the front! Could death be more bitter!

Many stories of barbarities have reached us from the War zone. The Allies charge the Germans, and these, in turn, the Allies, with having broken all the rules of civilised warfare. We are not in a position to know the whole truth about these accusations and counter accusations. Lord Roberts' advice to the English not to abuse the Germans would be good advice also to the Germans, not to abuse the English. No doubt many frightful things have been done. But the phrase, "civilised warfare," is a contradiction. War and civilisation, that is to say, wholesale destruction of life and property, and conservation of life and property, are not reconcilable terms. Of course, there are degrees even in barbarism, but war is not a gentle game. Whenever a cathedral is hit, the act is denounced as vandalism. But when a town is being shelled, how can any building be spared from bursting shrapnel and exploding shells; and if the cathedral is used as a fort, or screen, or observatory by the enemy, it has to be fired upon. How can a people risk the success of their cause, or the defence of their country, to spare architecture? When the Germans were dropping bombs upon the city of Antwerp, and some non-combatants were killed as a result, there was a great outcry against such methods of warfare. I understand that a resolution has been sent to President Wilson requesting his support in behalf of a movement to prohibit the dropping of bombs upon cities. It was a very foolish request, for if the American President can stop airships from dropping shells into a city, he can also stop cannons from shelling a city. An editorial in the London *Times*, which I read when I was there, defended the Germans against criticism for dropping explosives into Antwerp: If a city may be bombarded, and it is granted that a city which will not surrender may be bombarded, then what difference does it make whether it is bombarded from the plains, the hilltops, or the clouds? Moreover, since even the non-combatants in a fortified city are likely to do all they can to assist in the defence of the city, they are therefore as much the objects of the enemy's fire as the forts themselves.

But the protest against cruelty in war shows that we have made remarkable progress during the past few hundred years. I saw a quotation from Motley, the historian, describing the capture of St. Quentin in the sixteenth century. If the villainies perpetrated upon the inhabitants of that unfortunate town by the Christian soldiers of those days were placed in a parallel column with the worst offences alleged to have been committed by the Germans or the Allies, or even by the Balkan nations in the recent war, the difference between them would be greater than that between light and darkness. For three days and nights, fire and the sword, and—worst scourge of all, human lust—did to the inhabitants of St. Quentin what no cyclone, conflagration, tidal-wave, or earthquake could ever have inflicted upon them. Women were stripped, slashed with knives, their arms cut off, and then turned into the blazing streets. And during all these frightful days, there gleamed in the sun, visible from a hundred directions, the Cross! But if such crimes are denounced to-day, it is not because we are more Christian than the Balkan nations or the Catholics in the sixteenth century, but because there is in Europe to-day a new power —modern thought—which had practically no existence at all in the sixteenth century. There was more cruelty in the Balkan War than there is in the Western War, not because there was less religion in Bulgaria, in Servia, in Greece, in Montenegro, than there is in Germany or France, but because there is more culture in Germany and France and England than in the Balkan States. And if we protest to-day against even the destruction of a cathedral, it is not because we have more religion than the Spaniards or the French in the sixteenth century, but because we have more culture than they had. And yet people hold culture responsible for the present War! That must be flattering to those who have no culture.

It has been repeatedly claimed that had Belgium consented to the peaceful passage of the German Army through their territory, that country would have been spared its terrible sufferings. Let us look at that matter as impartially as we can. We have in this a good opportunity to show whether or not we can be rational. Some years ago I delivered a lecture on "Can You Think?" Let us see now if we can. Suppose the Belgian Government had said to the Germans, "We give you the *entree* into our country; you have *carte blanche* to do as you please. Our railway stations, our trains, our bridges, our tunnels, our fields, are at your disposal. Use them as your own." Would not the French and the English have interpreted that as an act of hostility against themselves, and proceeded immediately to do to Belgium what Germany has done to that country? Again, if Belgium had permitted the Germans to enter their country, naturally the French and the English would have rushed to prevent the advance of the Germans, and in all probability the War would have been fought, as it is now being fought, in Belgian territory; and how could the worst war of the age be fought in that country without hurting the country? Is it possible to pour three or four millions of people into a little country like Belgium, without doing it irreparable damage—blowing up bridges, bombarding cities, annihilating villages, trampling down harvests, and imperiling the lives of men, women, and children? But the Germans promised to reimburse Belgium if they won. *If;* and besides, there might have been no Belgium left to be reimbursed. To have asked Belgium to permit the greatest and most ruthless war on record to be fought in their yard was practically inviting them to consent to their own destruction. Furthermore, it was also a proposition to Belgium to break faith with the Allies. If Belgium had secured the signatures of the Powers to protect her neutrality, she had herself given pledges to the signatory powers that she would remain neutral in case of war. A contract involves the giving and the taking of pledges. If the Powers agreed to defend Belgium, it was for a consideration, and that consideration was the promise of Belgium that in case of war she would remain neutral. Would she not have been breaking this pledge if she had granted the German request?

(*To be continued.*)

Obituary.

On Saturday, December 19, the relatives and friends of the late Mr. Richard Johnson, whose demise was announced last week, attended the Manchester Crematorium to pay their last tribute of respect. Mr. Johnson, who had reached the ripe age of 79, had been a confirmed Secularist for the greater part of his life. He was a vice-president of the N. S. S. and a member of the Secular Society, Ltd., and for many years the treasurer af the Manchester Branch. He was a man of sterling character and great energy, and a generous supporter of the Freethought cause. He was a great admirer of the leaders of our party, and a constant reader of the *Freethinker*. Despite his years, he was a regular delegate to all our Conferences, including those held at Paris, Rome, and Brussels, being quite the youngest spirit of the party. His genial personality and a keen sense of humor leaves a gap in the ranks of the "old timers," by which term he used jocularly to refer to his contemporaries. On behalf of the Society generally I tender the deepest sympathy to the relatives who mourn his loss.—E. M. VANCE.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President: G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary: MISS E M. VANCE, 2 Newcastle-st. London, E.C.

Principles and Objects.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be base on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

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Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

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The Improvement by all just and wise means of the conditions of daily life for the masses of the people, especially in towns and cities, where insanitary and incommodious dwellings, and the want of open spaces, cause physical weakness and disease, and the deterioration of family life.

The Promotion of the right and duty of Labor to organise itself for its moral and economical advancement, and of its claim to legal protection in such combinations.

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