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*The errors of a wise man make your rule,
Rather than the perfections of a fool.*

—WILLIAM BLAKE.

“Christianity Triumphant.”

SUCH is the title of the leading article in the *Christian Commonwealth* for December 30; and the absurdity of the title is sufficient evidence of the worthlessness of the article. We readily admit that Russia, Germany, France, Belgium, and Great Britain are Christian countries; but to imagine that Christianity has triumphed in them is to be intellectually blind or dishonest. The article naïvely says that “it would be, indeed, a confession not of weakness but of actual infidelity if we felt that the war has proved the failure of Christianity.” Of course it would; but does the writer really mean what he says? Is it better to cherish and give repeated utterance to an unmitigated lie rather than avow “actual infidelity”? As a matter of fact, Christianity has undeniably failed; but the article maintains that we must not say so, or else we shall be known as Infidels, the most to be dreaded of all misfortunes. Then the writer consoles himself by falling back upon the obvious fallacy that “a faith which has persisted for nearly two thousand years” must be true and cannot be overthrown by the present European crisis. This is silly as well as fallacious, because, as Professor Bury points out, if it proves anything it proves too much, establishing the truth of everything that has persisted for a long period. The curious thing is that, during the period of its persistence, the Christian faith “has witnessed not merely alternations of ages of sensuality and ages of faith, not only innumerable wars and revolutions, but the decline and fall and fresh births of successive empires and kingdoms as great in their day as any that exist in our time.” Observe, Christianity has been simply a witness, or spectator, of history, not its maker. All sorts of evils have flourished before its very eyes. It has seen innumerable wars and revolutions; seen, not prevented, them. Indeed, the majority of wars and revolutions in Christendom have been inspired by and conducted in the name of Christ. The Kaiser is by many believed to be chiefly responsible for the present War; but not only is he himself a devout Christian, but he commands his soldiers to remember that they too are Christians, and that if they wish to be good soldiers they must also be good Christians. His Majesty sat down to his Christmas dinner with nearly a thousand officers and men at the Great General Headquarters in Northern France, and in the hall was set up an altar, in front of which was a manger containing a figure of Christ. A Christian minister delivered an address, and the Emperor made a short speech, in the course of which he is reported to have described Christmas as this “Holy Festival,” saying:—

“God has decreed that the enemy should force us to celebrate the festival here. We have been attacked; we are defending ourselves. May God grant peace from this festival. With him for us and for our country will arise the spirit of victory which we shall ultimately reach after heavy fighting.”

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Wars and revolutions, this writer tells us, are but episodes. However terrible and ghastly they may be while they last, they are soon forgotten. It is not natural thus to regard them. The article assures us that:—

“It takes an imaginative and philosophical mind to see the parts as parts, but with a feeling of the whole. Yet the plain truth is that if these European Empires were now to be blotted out for ever in blood, if they were to disappear more completely than the Roman Empire, the Christian Church would survive, and would still be only in the infancy of its career. It would survive not as some strangely think as a monument of its own failure, but as an everlasting testimony to the truth that no material kingdom, however august, however mighty, can stand unless it has Christ for its ally and its allegiance. It would prove that while human history was a field strewn with failure and with the ruin of every structure not founded in God, the Church of Christ remained irremovably firm and Divinely great, prophesying against the children of men, and pointing a flaming finger at the futility of all our secular and godless ambitions.”

Now, in the whole of that extract what we see is the fancy flitting about unguided by the reason. It is quite possible, very probable in fact, that the Church, in some form, may survive the present War, but there is nothing whatever to show that its survival would be a boon to the race. In point of fact the race has outgrown it already. It is its utter impotence as a moral factor that accounts for the present tragedy in Europe. It has never prevented a war yet, while it has been the direct or indirect cause of multitudes. There was a time when it possessed and wielded enormous power, though for the most part a malign power; but to-day its claim to power is rudely ignored. Pope Pius X. died of a broken heart because the rulers of Christendom paid no heed to his passionate plea for peace, and the present Pontiff was flatly refused the trace of God for the “Holy Festival” of Christmas. The Church does not count in the life of to-day, nor will it in that of to-morrow. Outrageously strong it was for centuries, but great, never; and in the days of its strength it was a cruelly tyrannical institution. From the beginning it has been the most active enemy of freedom of thought, and it is now persecuting Professor Bury for having the courage to say so in his capital little book on the subject. Its main mission, according to the editorial article under consideration, is that of “prophesying against the children of men and pointing a flaming finger at the futility of all our secular and godless ambitions,” and we know with what amazing success it once fulfilled that malevolent mission; but now the children of men are becoming sufficiently enlightened to turn deaf ears to its narrow-minded and bigoted prophecies, and to pursue their secular and godless ambitions without consulting its dogmatic utterances.

It is easy enough for a religious newspaper to denounce those people who regard the present War as a proof of the bankruptcy of Christianity; but the author of the article we are criticising looks upon the War as a proof of “the bankruptcy of everything that is not Christian,” thereby giving his case entirely away. If his view is right, it follows that this bloody conflict is a demonstration of the triumph of Christianity. What we maintain is that the War is one more clear evidence of the complete inability of the religion of the Cross to fulfil its own promises.

When the Gospel Jesus was born, it was authoritatively announced by the heavenly choristers that his advent would inaugurate the reign of peace and love among men, and it was by means of peace and love that he was to draw all men unto himself; but no sooner did Christianity become powerful under Constantine than it buckled on the sword, unsheathed it, and said: "To the dust with all the enemies of the Cross." How was official Paganism suppressed? At the edge of the sword. Who tore the learned and beautiful Hypatia to pieces in the city of Alexandria? The disciples of the Prince of Peace. Who put upwards of ten thousand heretics to death in Spain within the space of eighteen years? The messengers of the God of love. It is safe to affirm that from Constantine's day to this, the Christian Church has been a militant institution, so that judging the present War by the history of the Church, it cannot be condemned as either anti-Christian or even un-Christian. But if by Christianity is meant, not historical Christianity, but the simple religion taught by the Gospel Jesus, all we have to say is that it has totally failed to win the world, and that Jesus has not succeeded in keeping his word with mankind.

The writer of the article under discussion closes his eyes to indisputable facts. He says:—

"If anything can ever convince the world of the triumphant power of Christianity, if anything can avail to vindicate our faith in the eyes of the nations, it is the recurring, unending, inevitable collapse of every Christless civilisation.....What we find proved to the hilt is the colossal failure of Materialism and its abundant secularities."

That extract must have been written by a person profoundly ignorant, or hopelessly prejudiced, or both. Every civilisation involved in the present War is decidedly Christian. "Materialism and its abundant secularities" have never been in the ascendant in any country in Europe. Materialism has never failed, because it has never been tried. It is an unforgivable falsehood to assert, as many divines do, that Prussia is dominated by Atheism. The truth is that Nietzscheanism is under a ban in Germany. In the current number of the *Hibbert Journal* Professor Dawes Hicks informs us that the representatives of German philo-osophy reject, with freezing contempt, what he politely calls "the vagaries of Nietzsche's dilettantism." "A Blond Beast," in the October number of the *English Review*, asserts that "the Germans, as a nation, are not and never will be, Nietzschean." This is fully confirmed by Professor Henri Lichtenberger, who avers that "in Germany, above all, the diffusion of Nietzsche's doctrines, and the foundation of a Nietzschean school, are denounced as public dangers." This writer ought to know that, according to the religious statistics of 1890, the Protestants and Catholics formed the ratio of 989 to 1,000 German inhabitants; and it is to be borne in mind that in this ratio there is no account taken of the Dissenters and Jews. Beyond all doubt the civilisation of Germany is distinctively Christian, whether British Christians approve of the form it has taken or not. As to the civilisation of Russia, France, Belgium, and Great Britain, no question has been raised.

Granting, for argument's sake, that "Christianity has not succeeded in Christianising the great empires of the world," our writer asks, "Is not their irreligiousness the final evidence of the impotence of the Christian spirit?" He cannot answer that question in the affirmative because, by so doing, he would be driven to the conclusion that Christ himself, the Apostle Paul, and the martyrs and saints of the Church were all impotent. We hold that such a conclusion would be perfectly consistent and reasonable. As purely human agents, Christian workers have not been impotent; but if they are looked upon as persons entrusted with a Divine mission, with omnipotence at the back of it, then there is no escape from the inference that they always have been and are stupendous failures and, consciously or unconsciously, gigantic frauds.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Fallacy in Seven Chapters.

TWO or three weeks ago, I dealt at length with Sir Oliver Lodge's address on "Help from the Unseen." This lecture was one of seven delivered during a single week at Browning Hall, Walworth. These seven addresses have now been issued in one volume under the general title of *Science and Religion*, with a Preface by an unnamed editor. This Preface explains the object of what was called "Science Week" at Browning Hall. It was intended to carry out the same purpose that inspired the "Labor Week" of previous years. Six years ago, says the editor of the volume, "there was an idea prevalent far and wide that the Labor movement and the advocacy of drastic social reform were hostile to the claims of religion"—which is rather putting the cart before the horse. The idea prevalent was that religion—that is, organised religion, for unorganised religion is mere individual caprice, and is, so far, incalculable—was hostile to the Labor movement and to drastic social reform. This idea was supported by hosts of facts. All advanced opinion had grown up apart from organised religion. All proposals for drastic social reform had originated apart from organised religion. And all over the world the greatest opposition to these proposed reforms had come from religious quarters. Conservative tendencies and vested interests are everywhere backed up by the Churches. Were it not so, the Churches, with their machinery for getting at millions of people week after week, would count as the greatest reforming agencies in the country. As it is, everyone knows that the only way to get the Churches to countenance any drastic social reform is for the demand to become so general and so insistent that it can no longer be ignored. And then, because a mere handful of clergymen out of some 50,000 talk more or less aimlessly about social reform, we are asked to put religion in the front as a social pioneer!

But this idea, says the editor, "was exploded by the Labor Week. The world found, to its amazement, that the most trusted leaders of the British Labor movement, and the advocates of the most extreme social change, were followers and evangelists of the Christ." It gets "curioser and curioser." In the first place, if one may say so during war-time, there are other places besides Great Britain, and the Labor movement is not merely national. It is a world movement with national expressions. And all over the European world—excepting Great Britain for the moment—the majority of the leaders of the Labor movement are Freethinkers. This is true of France, Russia, Spain, Italy, Belgium and elsewhere. If the same does not hold with equal truth of Great Britain, Labor leaders abroad are at no difficulty to explain the phenomenon.

Secondly, one cannot but admire the ingenuous policy of the Browning Hall editor. All Labor leaders were not asked to speak, but only those whom it was known would profess to be religious—so long as no precise definition was required. And so it was easy to get together a number of speakers who proclaimed that "genuine Christianity" and social reform were synonymous. Really, the world was not at all amazed at this. Everybody knew this could be done. But it still remains true that the motive force of social reform is decidedly non-religious. What is the use of parading a man like Will Crooks as a Labor leader? True, he is a Member of Parliament, but that is a proof of neither ability nor leadership. What kind of intellectual leadership do fervent Christians of this type bring to the movement for reform? What sort of leadership could they provide on a critical occasion. This class of men do not constitute leaders at all. At most they are the product of an agitation that commenced long before they appeared in public, and of a movement which carries them along as it carries many others. Take the Freethinking element out of the European reform movements, and they would collapse like a pricked bubble. Every vested interest in Europe

knows this full well; that is why Freethought is hated so bitterly.

After "the forces of hostile unbelief" had been "completely demolished"—by Browning Hall!—it was suggested "in cheap prints and reprints of anti-Christian literature" that "religion was an outworn superstition, a morbid sentiment, or a phase of hysteria, all of which had been exploded by modern science." Of course, "these misleading and harmful impressions need to be dispelled," and, as the editor remarks, "the best way of dispelling them is to let science herself speak through the lips of her chief exponents." So seven scientists were invited to lecture at Browning Hall. And, as was only to be expected, they were all *safe* men. That is, they all believed in religion, to commence with. Each speaker was to deal with the subject in his own way, but special care was taken that the way of each should be the way of all—that, in fact, there should be only one way. A genuine desire to place the truth before the public would have seen to it that at least one of the seven scientists should have been a Freethinker. But no; they were all of the one way of thinking. The jury that was to try the case was packed. There was to be a pretence of an impartial inquiry, but the verdict was settled beforehand. That is what Browning Hall understands by a free inquiry. And that is what it has the impertinence to call scientific testimony. It is nothing of the kind. It is an expression of individual opinion from scientific men, all asked to give an opinion because it was known beforehand what that opinion would be. And other scientific men were not asked because it was known that their opinion might have been of quite an opposite character.

There is another curious, but suggestive aspect about this selection. The seven—seven was always a sacred number—comprised two physicists, an electrician, a botanist, a geologist, a chemist, and a biologist. There was not a psychologist among them, nor, a still more noteworthy omission, was there an anthropologist. Now, the last one particularly would have had something to say of importance on the subject of religion. Neither the botanist, nor the biologist, nor the chemist, nor the physicist, come into direct and necessary contact with religious ideas and beliefs. The studies of each one is absolutely apart from religion. They all leave religion where it was. They simply cannot give religion any support; they only oppose it when religious teaching trenches on their particular provinces. But the anthropologist simply cannot avoid religion. He encounters it in all stages of development. He sees its cruder beginnings, he is bound to note the manner in which it reacts on social customs and institutions. Every anthropologist is more or less occupied in building up a history of the origin and development of ideas. And yet with the magnificent results of over fifty years of scientific anthropology, the Browning Hall people—either accidentally or by design—omitted an anthropologist from their list. Was it accident? Was it design? Was there a fear that if he had been invited, the cat would have been out of the bag with a vengeance?

Perhaps the explanation of the mission lies in the too restricted conceptions of science formed by both the editor and at least six out of seven of his lecturers. With them, chemistry and physics, with the physico-chemical phenomena exhibited in botany and biology, appear to exhaust what they mean when they talk about science. And this, of course, makes it so much easier to point out that there is no contradiction between the object of religious worship and science. God and the soul clearly cannot come under the heading of either physics or chemistry, and so the physicist and chemist may say that there is nothing in their departments bearing upon the question. But whether a phenomenon is called physical, chemical, vital, or mental, is no more than a question of grouping. Certain classes of facts are segregated from other facts and labelled physical or mental, as the case may be. But, as one of the lecturer's put it, "Facts are facts," and "have nothing to do with

any particular religion, any more than the multiplication table has. There is no such thing as Jewish oxygen, or Trinitarian milk, or Methodist magnets, or Catholic chlorophyll.....Facts are facts, whatever the religion of the man who discovers them or uses them." Quite so; but when the lecturer, Professor Silvanus Thompson, adds, "Neither religion or metaphysics has any place in scientific research," he quite unnecessarily limits the scope of science. Facts are facts, and facts form the material with which science works. But there are physical facts and there are mental facts, and these both form part of the subject-matter of science. And the facts that come under the head of "religious" are essentially psychological and anthropological. In their widest scope they are part of the science of sociology. What, then, is the use of asking the chemist or the physicist about them? His reply should be, "My opinion on this subject is only that of a layman. For an expert scientific opinion you must go to those who have made mental and sociological facts their special study." As it is, the Browning Hall people have merely secured the opinions of a number of scientific men on a subject concerning which they are no authorities whatever.

But they had got their seven scientists. And with what results? The two physicists—Lodge and Thompson—very carefully abstained from drawing evidence for religion from *their* department. All that they said could just as well have been said, and has been said, by men without any scientific training whatever. The biologist, Professor Sims Woodhead, explained very elaborately that we did not know how life originated—which may or may not be true; but, if true, does not prove anything in favor of religion. The chemist, Dr. Harker, found no evidence in chemistry for either God or a soul—at least, he produced none. The geologist, Professor Hull, now in his eighty-sixth year, did not think geology contradicted the Bible—of course, if you understood the Bible rightly. The electrician followed the others in failing to produce any evidence based on electrical phenomena. If the question had been put to all these gentlemen, "Have you any evidence, derived from your branch of science, that supports religious teaching?" the answer would have been, "No." Six branches of science were represented, and the result was—nothing. They simply stood there night after night and made a confession of personal faith. And that was quite unnecessary. No one doubts that there are men of science who are religious, just as there are men of science who are not religious, and others who are Conservatives or Radicals, Freetraders or Protectionists. But these are expressions of individual opinion. And these men were not made religious by their science. They were religious before they were scientific. The most that can be said is that their science has not destroyed their religion—that is, not all of it. To parade their testimony as the testimony of science and religion, is more than absurd, it is dishonest. It is the commonest and oldest of Christian Evidence tricks. It is a game that is now almost worn out even on the outdoor platform of the Christian Evidence Society. But it is evidently part of the "advanced" and cultured platform of Browning Hall.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Is Christianity a Failure?

THE most frightful tragedy the world has known is emphasising, as nothing else could have done, the utter failure of Christianity as a civilising and humanising religion. The great Christian nations are at last united—united in deadly conflict with each other, millions of Christian soldiers arrayed for mutual slaughter, and this in the year of our Lord 1914. After nearly 2,000 years of Christian teachings the question is being asked by a Christian

minister, "Does the world grow better or worse?" A question which of itself ought to be sufficient to give pause to every professed believer. Both the pulpits and the religious Press are endeavoring to persuade themselves and their readers that the War is the direct outcome of the godless and materialistic tendencies of the age, forgetting that the suggestion is itself as grave an indictment of Christianity as could well be set out. Unless history be utterly untrustworthy, the last twenty centuries have been the most sanguinary the world has known, and for the greater part religious rather than racial hatred has been the most potent cause of war. All this is, of course, ignored by those who are persistently endeavoring to attribute the present conflict to the neglect of religion and forgetfulness of God on the part of the nations.

No one will seriously question Buckle's assertion that "The second greatest evil known to mankind—the one by which, with the exception of religious persecution, most suffering has been caused—is unquestionably war." For the past three months we have had ample means for estimating the sufferings caused by war, sufferings which have fallen so heavily on the courageous little nation whose soil has been drenched with blood—whose cities have been laid in ruins, and whose fair landscapes have been turned into blackened wastes by the German hosts. What has Christianity to say to all this? Is it not the Kaiser's boast that he is a constant reader of the Bible, and that he endeavors to shape his private life, as well as his public conduct, in accordance with its teachings? What pagan nation has ever shown itself less mindful of treaty obligations and pledged words, or more brutally savage in its modes of warfare than Christian Germany? Again and again Christian ministers have told us that apart from the fatherhood of God there can be no such thing as the brotherhood of man. The statement has become a pulpit platitude, lacking even the semblance of truth. What has belief in the fatherhood of God ever done to promote brotherhood among men? The world has had ample proofs that when men profess to love each other for God's sake, they often end in butchering each other for God's sake. The fact is the fatherhood of God has turned out to be neither more nor less than a delusion, a delusion which the present struggle will do much to dispel.

But the War is not the only means by which we may measure the failure of Christianity. In a recent number of the *Outlook*, we are assured that so far from the great majority of the people being within the gates of the Church, they "seem able, apparently, with entire comfort, to dispense with the Church's worship, and ignore its testimony." In England, it appears, seventy-five per cent. of the people are outside organised Christianity, and the *Outlook* goes on to say, "The situation in New Zealand is much less serious; but who that has first hand acquaintance with the facts can deny the slenderness of the hold the Church has upon the great masses of the population." Within the gates the position does not appear to be much more satisfactory than without, for we are told, "every minister and office-bearer knows that the vitality of our congregations is centred in a comparatively small number of men and women; the majority are a dead weight." Still further emphasising the seriousness of the present position, the Rev. Dr. Gibb—for he is the writer of the article from which we quote—says:—

"There is for faith to-day no greater burden than the problem suggested by these unhappy facts. We believe in one who was raised from the dead by the power of God. Who claimed that all power was given to him in heaven and on earth, and who, in the might of that power, bade his followers go and make disciples of all nations.....But one asks, why if Christ be the living Christ, are we so helpless? That is the problem."

But is it not one of those problems that Christian ministers never fairly face? If they did so would they not learn that the difficulty is of their own making? They persist in maintaining beliefs that

are inconsistent with the most obvious facts both of the world and of life; and then, finding the situation hopelessly muddled, gravely tell us that the answers to the question "Why with a heavenly Lord and infinite power at our disposal we are so impotent?" are all alike inconclusive. And the answers must necessarily be inconclusive, for the question itself is rendered unintelligible by the contradictory nature of its terms. If the Churches really had a heavenly Lord and infinite power at their disposal, their deplorable and humiliating condition, as depicted by Dr. Gibb, would be an utter impossibility. It is sheer inanity to assert that we have "let die out of our life the fear of the Lord, and substituted for his service the pursuit of an inane and bootless pleasure." What is "infinite power" doing that it can be set at defiance in this fashion? And what sort of a Lord is it that thus lets his subjects take matters so entirely into their own hands?

It is an indisputable fact that nearly all the great movements which have had for their object the promotion of peace, goodwill, and brotherhood amongst the men of all nations have originated in minds which made no pretence of familiarity with a heavenly Lord, and which certainly laid no claim to the disposal of infinite power. In all Christian nations men who have been first and foremost in endeavoring to lift the people above racial antipathies and religious animosities, have been denounced as enemies of both God and Man. It has been well said that ethics are independent of theological mysteries, and will exist when Christianity and every form of superstition have utterly vanished, that the moral law has been made known to us neither by prophets, evangelists, nor priests, but by the natural force of reason. But the development and effectiveness of natural ethics, which have been declared unchangeable even by the fiat of Omnipotence, have been retarded by teachings respecting the source and motives of all ethical principles; teachings which have enabled credulity to usurp the throne where conviction alone should rule. And now Christian teachers are themselves drawing attention to conditions which we are justified in regarding as the logical result of trifling with truth and clouding morality with the verbiage of superstition, till it has ceased to be effective for natural and rational guidance. "The spectacle," says Dr. Gibb,—

"which human society presents to-day is of the educated and well-to-do more and more devoted to the things of sense and feverishly striving to acquire in order that they may spend the more on the complicated scheme of their pleasures. Influenced by this evil example, as well as instigated thereto by the cravings of their own hearts, the masses of the people have apparently come to the conclusion that enjoyment is the true ambition and end of life. God, and the will of God, as the supreme regulative principle of human existence have gone into eclipse, and we stand confessed Hedonists, whose God is material prosperity."

With the truthfulness, or otherwise, of this description of present day society, we are not now concerned. It is a Christian minister's description, and we may regard it as a twentieth century reply to the words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." For centuries religious wars literally transformed the earth into a human slaughter-house reeking of gore; to-day, Christianity, which was to have established God's kingdom on earth—"a kingdom which would compel mankind by its moral and spiritual majesty," stands convicted, even from the mouths of its own preachers, of having failed, and failed utterly, as a regenerating moral force. Truly none other than an affirmative answer can be given to the question, "Is Christianity a Failure?"

W. W. COLLINS.

—"Examiner," Christchurch, New Zealand.

During a trial a young lad who was called as a witness was asked if he knew the obligation of an oath, and where he would go if he told a lie. He said he supposed he should go where all the lawyers went.

The Loves of the Birds.

GREAT Mother Nature was in genial humor when she resolved to adorn the tree of life with the feathered fauna of our earth. Birds are in many respects the most winning and lovable of all evolved things. Their splendid plumage, their musical gifts, their skilfully constructed nurseries, and, above all, their affectionate interest in their defenceless young, combine to endear them to our hearts. Birds and blossoms have probably exercised more influence over the minds and emotions of the poets than any other theme save that of wayward humankind itself. Shelley's skylark, Wordsworth's green linnet, Keats' nightingale, immediately arise in the memory in confirmation of this fact. Longfellow, Emerson, Beethoven, and Wagner are other instances of the manner in which human composers have responded to the music of our feathered songsters.

Yet beauty of plumage and sweetness of song were, in the matured judgment of the great Charles Darwin, the developed products of sexual selection. Herbert Spencer, on the other hand, traced the evolution of brilliant coloration and song-power in birds to surplus energy. These characters are almost invariably confined to the male, and our great philosopher argued that, as they are at their best at that period of the year when food is most abundant and when organisms are at their maximum of vigor, they serve to illustrate the power of superfluous activity and growth.

Natural Selection, which appeared to explain so much, quite failed to account for the secondary sexual characters of the animal kingdom. Every organism varies, and, to any animal or plant variation which possesses survival value, Natural Selection is, without doubt, an important factor in preserving and accentuating the variations in question. But it cannot be claimed that such sexual characters as resplendent plumage or singing power furnish any advantage in the struggle for existence. Many ornamental appendages might be instanced in male animals, none of which is necessary to the maintenance of the race. The genital organs themselves are, of course, essential to reproduction, and the mammæ of the female are indispensable in the rearing of the young. But it is plainly far otherwise with the secondary sex organs, and to account for these Darwin advanced his hypothesis of sexual selection.

There is, however, a certain resemblance between Natural Selection and sexual selection, inasmuch as the former factor tends to eliminate those organisms that fail to adapt themselves to their environing circumstances, while the latter seeks to preserve only the more beautiful or melodious organisms from destruction. But it is to be observed that while the selective factor confers an advantage on those organisms that best respond to their *general* surroundings, in sexual selection the female decides as to the fitness of the organism to survive. In terms of the theory it is she who, captivated by the more vigorous, prepossessing, or ornate male, accepts his embraces, and as a consequence of the continuous repetition of this selective process there results a progressive evolution of the chosen types. Many animals—fierce birds among them—fight for the favors of the female at the breeding season. But with the majority of birds the cocks content themselves either with a display of their musical powers or of their highly decorative dress.

Before adducing evidence of these phenomena, we may consider some of the objections that are urged against Darwin's theory. Spencer's hypothesis has already been referred to, and it must be admitted that, unlike the doctrine of Natural Selection, the subsidiary theory of sexual selection has failed to command the assent of naturalists in general. Dr. Herbert does not overstate the case when he asserts "that on the whole, sexual selection as proposed by Darwin has not withstood the test of time, and stands condemned in the opinion of most authorita-

tive writers on evolution." This is, of course, nothing against evolution, as Dr. Herbert, himself a convinced evolutionist, very plainly states. In truth, all biologists have long since been evolutionists, and the only differences of opinion that exist among them relate to the nature of the factors involved in bringing about those transformations which the animal and vegetable kingdoms have demonstrably undergone.

Although some female animals are gaily colored or otherwise ornamented, the vast majority of decorative appendages are confined to the male sex. This fact has to be accounted for, and Wallace's theory that the ornamental superiority of male animals is due to its utility as a means of recognition among organisms of the same species is hardly tenable. The song of birds also, according to Wallace, is to be regarded as a—

"recognition call between the two sexes. As for the differentiation of color between the male and female, the dull tints of the female are the results of protective coloration produced by natural selection on account of the female's greater need of protection, since upon her the task of breeding and rearing the young generally devolves."

This explanation is ingenious, but its logic is unsound. If the female enjoys an advantage from her sober plumage while hatching her eggs or guarding her brood, the protection thus gained unquestionably helps to maintain her inconspicuousness, since any feather variation in the direction of more striking color would prove a decided disadvantage to a bird where so many dangers abound. But to prove that this lack of color is to be attributed to the influence of Natural Selection does by no means disprove that the brilliantly colored plumage of the male is to be traced to the agency of sexual selection, particularly as the reasons so justly assigned for the plain dress of the hen cannot possibly apply to the rich garments of the cock. Again, the theory of male surplus-energy, which was also held by Wallace, fails utterly to explain the immense wealth of detail which makes up the extraordinary ornamental appendages which many birds display. From the standpoint of utility—and Natural Selection is concerned entirely with utilities—these ornamental extravagances are positively detrimental to the birds that bear them. Many of these adornments are truly magnificent when viewed from an æsthetic standpoint; but as they render their wearers extremely conspicuous to their enemies, and incommode their flight, they appear to form a hindrance rather than a help in the battle of life.

More serious objection to the theory of sexual selection is to be found in the fact that the sexes of birds are approximately equal, and that very few fail to find mates. The only final solution of the problem is likely to emerge when we cease to attempt to explain these complex phenomena with the aid of any single factor in organic evolution. It appears patent to the writer that innumerable causes have conspired to promote the evolution and perpetuation of organic ornamentation, and that one of these factors, and one of no mean importance, is that of sexual selection. Also, it must not be forgotten that the agencies which have led to the elaboration of beautiful or ornate plumage and vocal power are physiological in their nature, and that, other things equal, the possessor of unusually brilliant plumage or song-strength is likewise the possessor of a more vigorous constitution than the average bird. This fine constitution he transmits to his progeny, and thus endows them with prospects of prolonged life.

Various supplementary suggestions have been brought forward to explain the evolution of sex characters, but none is sufficiently comprehensive to command any wide biological acceptance. On the whole, Professor L. Plate's conclusion best sums up the case when, in reviewing Darwin's theory, he writes: "It is better than any other hypothesis advanced so far, and has to serve us until a more adequate one is found."

The art of courtship among our feathered friends is a very serious matter. In the springtime their

thoughts turn intensely towards love, and each species of bird has evolved some special mode of courtship and marriage. Male birds of many species seek to secure the approbation and affection of their females by posturing and parading before them, while exposing to the best possible advantage their highly decorative or gorgeously colored plumage. Some strive to attract the fair sex with their antics alone; others, such as the blackbird, the thrush, and the linnets, pour forth their sweetest songs at this season of the budding year. Other vocal efforts there are, such as the musical call-note of the cuckoo, the piping of the curlew, the raven's dismal croak, and the rook's pleasing caw. There are birds that gather in great flocks and then sing in concert. That excellent bird observer, Mr. H. Hudson, has described such an assembly of singers. The crested screamers of South America congregate in crowds, and frequently perform a birds' concert between dusk and dawn.

It is a fair hypothesis that the true songs of birds—for there is an important difference between songs and call-notes—have been evolved from the primitive emotional and communicative cries of their ancestors. The sweet melodies and harmonies which combine to form the loveliest song of all the feathered family—that of the blackbird—are composed of notes which appear to convey feelings of affection, sadness, grief, hope, and ecstasy. And in listening to the maiden efforts of a last season's mavis in the early spring, one may almost imagine, as the song ascends, the progressive evolution of this splendid performer's musical powers. To the nature-lover who sits silently near the tree or bush in which the song-thrush repeats his song thrice over, the hen bird may show herself as she notes the music her lord pours forth in triumph.

That sober-plumaged birds are the sovereigns of avian song, and that brilliantly colored birds rarely sing, are facts that are instanced in support of the contention that these respective characteristics are the outward and auditory signs of their superfluous vitality. It is extremely likely that there is more than an element of truth in this theory; but that hen birds are attracted and influenced by the wealth of song, the feathered splendors, and the singular antics of their lovers there is every reason to believe.

During the season of courtship, the common British snipe employs his tail feathers for the purpose of producing a remarkable sound, which unquestionably appears to please the female. At this period, says Darwin, the cock snipe flies "perhaps a thousand feet in height," and, after turning about in the air for a time, he returns to earth in a curved line, with all his plumage arrayed to the greatest advantage. The bird ascends in silence, and the curious sound is emitted solely during his rapid descent.

The male guan of Guatemala, in South America, gives forth a similar sound, while the manakins—little perching birds of the same continent—produce a remarkable noise, the initial sharp note of which resembles the crack of a whip.

A few years ago the love antics of one of the largest of British birds might have been witnessed in several of our counties. This bird, the great bustard (*Otis tarda*), was a dweller of our heaths and lowlands, but the agricultural encroachments of recent days, aided by the murderous proclivities of the so-called sportsman to slay every rare and beautiful creature he encounters, have driven this interesting bird from our shores. "When the male wishes to attract the attention of the female bird," states the eminent ornithologist, Dr. Sharpe,—

"he first approaches her with short steps, lifting his feet from the ground, and rustling his wings. His next proceeding is to throw his tail over on to his back, and to spread his shoulders out, so that, by crossing the ends of the long primary quills, he is enabled to keep the tail down, and he then ruffles up all his back feathers and scapulars so as to completely hide the wings and the tail together."

With these and other extraordinary antics he parades before his wondering and doubtless appreciative spouse.

Captain Bendire has given us a most interesting account of the courting customs of the pinated grouse. He saw these birds assembling in the early morning, in parties of from a dozen to fifty, on comparatively open ground, where they could make the best of themselves before their critical females. This they accomplish by distending their air-sacs like so many turkey-cocks, while they ruffle their plumage and spread their wings towards the ground. They then rush forward at a great pace towards the apparently indifferent females, at the same moment pouring forth a most powerful sound, which carries to considerable distances. "Every few minutes," says the Captain,—

"this display is repeated. I have seen, not only one, but twenty cocks going through this funny operation at once; but they seem careful not to run against each other, for they have not yet got to the fighting-point. After a little while, the lady-birds begin to show an interest in the proceedings by moving about quickly a few yards at a time, and then standing still a short time.

"The party breaks up when the sun is half-an-hour high, to be repeated the next morning, and every morning for a week or two, before all make satisfactory matches. It is towards the latter part of the love season that the fighting takes place among the cocks, probably by two who have fallen in love with the same sweetheart, whose modesty prevents her from selecting between them."

Various other instances of birds that have developed performing powers are on record; but we must now pass on to those wonderful plumage exhibitions in which so many magnificently attired male birds indulge, more especially when their partners are present at the spectacle.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops

Although there were outbreaks of fighting with renewed ferocity during Christmas-tide, in some places—if we can depend upon the unofficial accounts that have appeared—German soldiers and those belonging to the Allies came out of their opposing trenches and concluded a brief treaty of peace on their own account. They shared "smokables" and drinkables, and sang songs together. In one of the letters home it was said that if the officers didn't look out they would find peace made without them. There was, at any rate, about this cessation of hostilities a gratifying and significant human touch. The mass of the people of one country bear no active hatred against the folk of another country. It is the self-styled "leaders" all over the world who are responsible for this. The people are played upon by newspapers, by politicians, and by diplomatists. It is a veritable fact that in almost every case the people are simply "jockeyed" into war. If they were left alone there is not a country in Europe in which a vote in favor of war could be obtained. What are called "waves of popular passions" are nearly always worked up by those at the head of affairs. Nor is the truth of this affected by the fact that a war may be forced on one country by another country. It merely shifts the blame from one side to the other.

Rabelais might have sung the "divine bottle" that drew English and German troops peacefully together at some of the war trenches on Christmas Day. The rival soldiers made up the truce themselves, leaving their superior officers to like it or lump it as they pleased. They simply walked out of their trenches and fraternised, treating each other with the various niceties that they had been able to get together. But the most attractive flagstaff seems to have been a bottle of whisky. Wielded by a strong hand, it was a mighty centre of attraction. Then a few more bottles turned up from the other side, and hours of peace were consecrated by usquebaugh and tobacco. Three cheers for the bottle! Religion causes a thousand times more fighting in the world than whisky does. John Barleycorn is a greater friend of peace than Jesus Christ.

The Pope has announced that he is not at all discouraged over the failure of his appeal for a cessation of fighting over Christmas, and that he intends to persevere until peace is obtained. The Pope's wishes are bound to receive gratification sooner or later, just as prayers are sure of an answer

if one waits long enough. But the day has gone by when a Pope's influence, as the head of a Christian Church, counts for much in national affairs. The Pope lamented that there was a time when, at his request, warring nations would have laid down their arms. This is rather an exaggeration of the actual facts, though it is true that once upon a time papal influence for war or peace counted for much more than it does at present. And the value of that influence was shown by the almost chronic state of war in which Mediæval Europe was plunged. The condemnation of the influence of the Church lies in the fact that having such a power over the nations of Europe for so many centuries, it failed to initiate, or even encourage, conditions of life and frames of mind that would have caused the dying out of war by sheer disuse. In the case of the duel—which is only war between individuals instead of nations—its decline came, not from Church influence, but from the growth of saner views among the Secular part of the community.

The real influence of Christianity on war appears to have been in the direction of giving it a sacred character, without divesting it of its horrors or making it less frequent. Again the example of the duel may be cited. The duel existed in pre-Christian times—although not so commonly as in the Christian period. But it was then an undiluted expression of individual hatred. Under Christianity, the disappearance of the old judicial forms and the substitution of trial by ordeal, the duel took on the character of a solemn appeal to heaven, and God was really expected to protect the innocent man in a duel, as in walking blindfold across heated bars of iron. So in the case of the soldier and the profession of arms generally. As part of the general attempt to control the whole force of society, the Church made the profession of the soldier almost a sacred one. And the supernatural element that was implicit in the duel was held also to be implicit in contests between nations. It was an appeal to God on a larger scale; and we see the survival of this in the same appeal being made by all Christian nations to-day when going to war. And there is simply no disputing the statement that by giving war a religious aspect the frequency of war became assured. For several centuries—from the tenth century onward—religion was one of the commonest causes of war; and all the fanaticism and savagery arising from religious conflicts became inseparable from them. Religion regularised and sanctified war without making it less common or less bloody.

Sunday, December 3, was a day of intercession. A special form of service was authorised by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, but we do not hear of much successful result in any case. The Germans appear to be doing quite as well as the British this last week or so. Indeed, they are very proud of their sinking of the *Formidable*, which seems to show that the Lord is on their side; and not on the side of those wicked English.

We now learn from reliable sources that services for prayer and intercession are being held all over Germany, and that the people do not hesitate to plead for a speedy and complete victory. There is among them a practically unanimous belief in the absolute righteousness of their cause. Britishers are equally convinced that they and their Allies alone are fighting for the right; and from this country also the heavens are deafened with countless supplications for triumph in the War. Now, on the assumption that there is a God who hears all these conflicting petitions, on what principle is he going to determine which side he ought to favor? Both sides are equally certain that they are in the right, and on both sides there are persons equally competent to judge what the right is, in consequence of which the Lord is placed in a most awkward and difficult position; and the worst of it is, that those on either side are alike his own people, for whose salvation his only begotten Son suffered death. Whichever side he takes, the other side will be painfully disappointed and tempted to charge him with favoritism.

Again, if in the end the Lord gives the victory to the Germans and Austrians, or to the Allies, the question naturally arises, why did he not determine the ultimate issue of the conflict before it commenced, and so prevent it? If God is to be brought in at all, why not introduce him at the beginning, rather than at the end of the campaign? Besides, if the War is, in any sense, his operation, if he is on the throne and reigns, then why interfere with him in the execution of his own holy purposes? From every conceivable point of view there is forced upon us a solid conviction of the unutterable folly of prayer.

Mr. H. G. Wells, in his latest story, "The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman," says that great literary men were "a

collection of miscellaneous scandals—Bacon, Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley—all the stars." Dickens was "more than a bit of a rip." We should like to hear Mr. Wells's candid opinion of the Old Testament heroes.

Mrs. Alec Tweedie says for one woman who spends £3,000 a year on clothes, thirty thousand spend £30, and sixty thousand 30s. Dear! Dear! Ladies are extravagant nowadays. The latter amount was more than Eve used to spend on her costumes.

A kiss for a blow is too much to expect from ordinary Christians, but a good story is told of some German soldiers who were captured at Ypres and taken to the rear. In one town the women were so angry that they struck at the prisoners, but a German relieved the situation by throwing a kiss to the demonstrators, and the whole squad followed suit. The demonstration ended in laughter.

The Baptists were expecting that the decline in membership would have ceased this last year, even if no increase were reported. As a matter of fact, the slump has continued. The number of Church Members has decreased by 1,058, teachers by 286, scholars by 2,850, local preachers by 113. Allowing for increase in population, the relative decline is, of course, much greater than these figures show. The curious thing is that, with a decline of members and preachers, there has been an addition of 17 new churches and chapels.

The *Catholic Directory* for 1915 reports 7,184 conversions in the United Kingdom during the year. We do not know how far these figures are reliable, but we see no reason to doubt that the Catholic Church does make a number of converts. The thing we are sure about is that these conversions do not represent a loss to Freethought. They represent the drain upon the various Protestant Churches. And this is part of the normal course of events. Catholics become Protestants, and Protestants become Catholics. Each one is continually gaining at the expense of the other. Meanwhile, Freethought gains at the expense of both. And what Freethought gains it keeps.

We pointed out some weeks ago that the alleged revival of religion in France since the outbreak of war was more or less of a bluff. Our analysis of the situation is borne out by the Paris correspondent of the *Catholic Times*, who points out that the Government still "remains aloof from public demonstrations of faith," and also that "anti-clericalism is awed by circumstances, but it is not dead, and after the great war is over it will certainly once more raise its head." On the other hand, in the editorial notes of the *Catholic Times* we read that the Catholic bishops and clergy "are speaking out openly as the real representatives of the nation." The significance of this appears to be that, while the Freethinkers of France have been content to remain quiet during the course of the War, the Church is ready to take advantage of any circumstance that will promote its interests. Doubtless the French people will have their attention called to this, once the War is over.

Canon Newbolt, preaching in St. Paul's a few Sundays ago, said of the War: "We have no doubt about the ultimate issue. God reigns, his pledges are without repentance, and his eternal laws of Justice and Truth can never in the end be broken." Now, on the assumption that God reigns, does it not follow that he reigns in Germany as well as in Great Britain, and that, if he reigns in all countries alike, this War must be, as Dr. Orchard alleges, "God's operation"? Again, if God's eternal laws of Justice and Truth cannot be broken, does it not logically and ethically follow that all engaged in this mighty conflict are in the right, because all alike are but the instruments by whom God executes his glorious purposes? Thus the assumption that God reigns inevitably lands those who adopt it in all sorts of unthinkable absurdities, which the divines haven't the courage to face.

What an infinite farce Christmas is, after all! It celebrates the birth of the Divine Prince of Peace, commemorates the appearance upon earth of the Omnipotent Deliverer of mankind from all evil; and yet in the contemplation of the nineteen hundred and fourteenth anniversary of so stupendous an event Canon Newbolt makes his appeal, not to the Prince of Peace, but to the ancient God of Battles, exclaiming, in the words of an old Hebrew militarist, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge." Yes, truly, Christianity is the most hypocritical and farcical religion under the sun; and its present champions are all hopeless decadents.

A writer in the *Constructive Quarterly* complains of the little influence Christianity has had on international relations. Now, that strikes us as decidedly ungrateful towards the Christians of all countries. In Russia, England, and Germany, official prayers have been offered with a view to influencing these very relations. And in France private prayers have been offered to the same end. Any victories met with on either side have been partly attributed to God, and he has been duly thanked for them. Moreover, in England, the nation has been assured that we are fighting a Christian fight in defence of Christian ideals, and it is only Christianity that has enabled us to bear ourselves with the courtesy and chivalry that has been so extolled in the newspapers. And to say, after all this, that Christianity has had little influence on international relations, almost looks as though the writer of the article—a Christian clergyman, by the way—does not believe that all this praying has had the slightest effect on the course of the War.

If the writer means that the impotency of Christianity is shown by the War occurring, we admit that from one point of view there is much to be said on behalf of this view. But that overlooks two important points. First, although the collective life of a nation is not exactly the sum of the individual lives forming the nation, still, in a general way, we may say that the relations between nations depends upon the individuals forming these nations. If there are stupid individuals, international relations will be stupid—if sensible, the relations will be proportionately wise. Therefore, if the non-existence of desirable relations between nations is due to the impotency of Christianity, it follows that Christianity has been equally impotent as regards individuals. Indeed, it has been more of a failure in this respect with the nation's leaders than it has been with the bulk of the population. For their highest ambition has been to get the country into such a state of military preparedness that no other country would dare to make war upon it. They have declared this to be their object, and have gloried in it. Not only the statesmen in this country, but the statesmen in all Christian countries; and none of them have had the wisdom to see that this policy breeds war sooner or later. To prepare for war in times of peace is to make war certain. We may not be able to avoid the preparations, but we might at least be sensible enough to face the issue that we have raised.

The second point is, that the objection does not do justice to Christianity—that religion has had an influence upon international relations. That much is certain; the only question is as to the nature of that influence. How could it be possible for so many millions of Christians, so many thousands of churches and ministers, to exist without exerting an influence? The thing is simply inconceivable. The influence is there all the time, and the present situation only demonstrates that its influence has been of the wrong kind. And it is not difficult to see why that influence has been generally unwholesome. It has favored artificial in place of natural relations between groups of people everywhere. Its division of people into Catholics and Protestants, and Methodists and Baptists, and all the other odds and ends of religious Babeldom, has been so many fatal obstacles to the free play of normal social feelings. We can see how upon the level of social action the tendency is everywhere to unite, on the level of religious action the tendency is everywhere to divide. In addition, the nature of the social forces has been obscured by religious teaching, and the energy and thought and affection that might have gone far towards making war an impossibility have been squandered on theology. We are really not witnessing proofs of the impotence of Christianity. We are seeing the effects of Christianity as it has worked itself out in the lives of the peoples of Europe.

"Schoolmistress (who fancies she recognises the father of two of her pupils): 'Excuse me, sir, but are you not the father of two of my children?' Indignant Stranger: 'No, madam, your mistake.'"—*Winter's Pie*, 1914.

German Archbishops and Bishops have issued a manifesto stating that "the Germans are innocent of this war." All the world knows this. We congratulate the clericals on their accuracy.

Thus saith Rev. E. Shillito, M.A.: "Of the immediate future, which depends upon many contingencies, they are sure; of the far future, which depends in the last resort upon one thing, the character of God, they are not sure." Therefore is the Rev. Shillito sore vexed. And yet this is only as it should be. The immediate future we can all read

in some fashion. We know what the past was like, we know what the present is like, and we can read a little of the future in the light of that knowledge. But how can anyone read the far future in the light of the character of God? Does anyone know what that character is? Are not all the churches and chapels and creeds quarreling about it? Is there even a God with any character, good or bad? Can anyone answer that question with certainty? And yet Mr. Shillito is certain about the far future; he is only doubtful about what lies near at hand. The more remote the object of knowledge, the more certain he is about it. So like a parson!

Mr. Shillito has, quite unconsciously, pointed out the chief reason why religion has always failed as a moralising force. People are influenced by two considerations as to consequences—certainty and nearness. A bad consequence may be ever so certain, but if it is sufficiently remote they will generally chance it, providing there is any immediate gain. Or, if it is uncertain, they will also chance a punishment in favor of an immediate reward. To be vitally influential, consequences must be both certain and near. There is no doubt that if people could believe in the reality of future rewards and punishments, and if they could be made sufficiently real and powerful to counterbalance immediate temptations, then religion would succeed in driving human nature along a predetermined path. But this can never be the case with great masses of people, and can be the case only at intervals even with certain individuals. That is why what theologians call the lure of the world is always ultimately stronger than the teaching of religion. Heaven and hell, God and the Devil, are too far away; their action too uncertain and too remote. Religious morality always breaks down because it lacks the prime condition that makes morality workable.

It is not absolutely necessary to tell lies—even about one's enemies. Germany, says the *Sunday School Chronicle*, "has repudiated the Christian faith." Now, this is not true. The Kaiser is really a very sincere Christian—that is part of his trouble. So was Bernhardt a sincere Christian. So are the majority of the German people. They have attended their churches and prayed for success just as people have in Great Britain. Their soldiers have gone into battle with Bibles in their pockets just as our soldiers have done; and no doubt they have warded off as many bullets. Germany has never repudiated the Christian faith. At most it has only interpreted Christianity to suit itself. And that Christians have always done, both at home and abroad.

The strange thing is that the same writer goes on to explain that this War is helping to create a new manhood in Great Britain, and that "this war is a necessary stage in the evolution of a new humanity." Then why complain about Germany? If it was necessary that the War should be, if it was essential to the evolution of humanity, if it was part of the "Divine Plan of evolution," why on earth accuse Germany of lack of faith? Evidently Germany is a mere agent in the hands of God. He and the Kaiser are working the plan between them—for the benefit of the world in general. There is something in "Gott and me" after all!

The mission of Sir Henry Howard to the Vatican has caused a considerable flutter in the Protestant dovecotes. Protestants like Dr. Clifford protest against the Government recognising the temporal power of the Papacy, and foretell grave dangers if the Roman Church is allowed to obtain an official foothold in this country. All of this may be very true, and we should be the last to deny that for the Roman Church to possess official power in this country would be a very bad thing indeed. All we desire to point out to these good Protestants is that the only thing that makes the Roman Church a danger is its religion. Abolish the religious difference between Protestants and Catholics, and they would be just as bad or as good as each other. If the Protestant is correct, it is his religion that makes the Roman Catholic a less desirable citizen than, as an individual, he might be. And if the Protestant is wrong, it is his religion that causes him to act unjustly towards his fellow-citizens. In either case, we see what a beautiful thing religion is. Our own view—often expressed—is that any Church placed in a position of supreme power would be nothing short of a national disaster.

A Prittlewell soldier, serving with the Essex Regiment at the Front, who had eleven bullets hit him, had his life saved by two tins of tobacco which he carried in his pack. Had the bullets hit a pocket Bible, there would have been a beautiful and affecting moral.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £260 16s. Received to Dec. 31.—J. O. Restall, 2s. 6d.; R. D. Voss, 10s.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Several subscriptions have been received for this fund, but individual acknowledgements will not be made until a general statement—which will appear shortly—has been made.

E. B.—A happy new year, and may you continue to supply us with useful batches of cuttings.

FREDERIC W. WAISH.—Were waiting for leisure to write you by post, as we hope to presently. A line in a paper seems too little in your case.

R. D. VOSS (S. Africa).—Sorry to hear the War has hit you so severely. It is indeed world-wide.

EDWARD ANDEBSON.—Your good wishes are reciprocated.

J. G. BARTRAM.—We join with you in regretting the death of so excellent a Freethinker as J. T. Jameson. Still, death takes its toll of all alike, irrespective of creed or color. Thanks for your New Year wishes. We do not see any insuperable obstacle against your reading *Freethinker* editorials a quarter of a century hence, but we doubt if they would be ours.

W. DODD.—We reciprocate your good wishes for the New Year. The two Days of Intercession—one in Germany and one in England—is a bit of a joke, although long exercise enables the parsons in both countries to keep a straight face.

W. KEENAN.—We rather doubt the Carlylean authorship of the passage, although we cannot place it at the moment. But it lacks the Carlyle touch. Having his name at the end of the passage must surely have been an error. We are glad to have your appreciation of the *Freethinker*.

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.

As we go to press on the Tuesday of each week, it will not be possible for us to record next week the result of the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner on January 12. In a subsequent issue, however, we hope to be able to record one more successful gathering to be added to those of previous years. It only remains to be seen how far the general condition of the country will affect this function. For our part, we are looking forward to a good gathering and a pleasant evening. Frascati's may be trusted to minister well to the creature comforts of the diners, and those who prefer a vegetarian diet may be accommodated if they will take the trouble to acquaint Miss Vance of their desire. So far as the "higher" pleasures are concerned, there will be speeches from the Chairman—which usually takes the form of a general review of past operations and a foreshadowing of future ones—from Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, and others. There will also be a first-class program of vocal and instrumental music.

It has been suggested that the time of starting—6.30—will make it awkward for some, and may preclude others altogether. This is really not the fault of those responsible for the arrangements. The new regulations close the Restaurant at 10 o'clock, and the only thing to be done was to get in the time at the other end. Still, this Dinner is only once a year, and we hope that the inconvenience will be properly put down to the War, without its being the cause of any absentees. If, however, it is quite impossible for any number to be on hand by 6.30, and they will write Miss Vance to that effect, arrangements will be made for these late-comers to be served later—up to 7 o'clock. Although the number of tickets is limited, there are still some on hand, and application should be made for these at once. Miss Vance will be pleased to send out tickets provided those not used are returned by the evening of Saturday, January 9.

Tickets may also be had from the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

We see that one of the religious weeklies complains that it has received a heavy blow since the War broke out, and that its position is now a very "anxious one." We believe that it is not the only paper in that position. The mortality amongst periodicals of all sorts has been very severe. We have weathered the storm so far much better than we expected: but it is, perhaps, rather early to cry "All's well!" Still, we would remind readers at the opening of a new year that a paper such as the *Freethinker* is never kept alive without strenuous effort and some amount of sacrifice. And although the present is not an ideal time to gain new subscribers, it is not a hopeless one. Our offer to send specimen copies for a month or six weeks to possible subscribers is still open, and we shall be glad to receive names and addresses for that purpose. Much may also be done by personal introduction. That is perhaps the most efficient way of all. One day we hope to be in a position to embark on a scheme of advertising that will serve to give the *Freethinker* the prominence it deserves. Until that time arrives, however, we must continue to trust to the enthusiasm of our present circle of readers.

Mr. Foote is much obliged to the members of the Secular Society, Ltd., who sent him their proxies for the yearly meeting in December. They were more than sufficient for his purpose, but he did not use them. The time for reorganising the Secular movement has evidently not arrived yet. There promises to be much venomous opposition to any sort of change. Mr. Foote will therefore not throw himself into this herculean task until the litigation connected with the Bowman bequest is ended—and for several reasons beside the one just stated.

Calumnies fill the air every time Mr. Foote talks of changes. This has been the case ever since the N. S. S. Conference, when fresh developments were mooted which would have been begun by this time if it were not for this terrible War, which makes all progressive work impossible. Most of these calumnies may be left to stew in their own juice at present, but there is one so viciously contrary to the truth that it should be branded at once as a malignant lie before it does any more mischief—that is if possible—for these Zeppelins are not very easy to bring down when they once have a good start.

It is said that Mr. Lloyd has been "kept back"—financially and otherwise, we presume. The bulk of this charge must, of course, be intended for ourselves. We therefore give it an absolute denial, and we are quite sure that Mr. Lloyd's denial would be as indignant as our own. When he joined the Freethought Party, we welcomed him with open arms, he became a member of, and soon a Vice-President of the National Secular Society (the Secular Society, Ltd., he has never joined) and a place was found for him on the regular staff of the *Freethinker*, which was not even paying its way. He has not suffered a moment's dictation; he has written on whatever he liked, and signed his articles; and the sum agreed upon rather as an acknowledgement than salary has always reached him with clockwork regularity. We wish it could be more, but such as it is it is paid. That is how we have kept Mr. Lloyd back. For the rest, we are happy to say that not the least cloud has ever passed over our friendship with Mr. Lloyd. It is the smaller people, not men of his calibre, that delight in "a row with the President." And all we are concerned in is the prostitution of his name by others.

There was a nasty railway smash at Ilford the other day, resulting in ten persons killed and over twenty injured. In ordinary times this accident would have caused a general thrill of terror. Under present conditions it was passed by as a mere incident. We are so used to reading of thousands killed and wounded, that a mere thirty cannot be expected to give rise to a mere perfunctory expression of sorrow. This is an example of the tenderness and compassion and development of the higher feelings generally, which so many of the clergy tell us is one of the consequences of the War. The truth is that sensibilities are blunted—not intensified—by continuous contact with horror. And we quite overlook the fact that whether ten or ten thousand are killed, there is no material difference in the problem involved. Suffering is in all cases individual, and nothing is added to the fact of suffering by a larger number. It only appeals to those who cannot realise its meaning unless there are a large number involved. And this imaginative insusceptibility is responsible for much that the world is continually lamenting.

The Great War.—III.

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

THE only justification for the invasion of Belgium by the Germans is the one given by the imperial chancellor, Dr. Bethmann-Holweg—*necessity*. All the other excuses, namely, that the French had already violated, or were going to violate Belgian neutrality, or that the Belgians themselves had entered into a conspiracy with England against Germany, or that the German Empire had never agreed to Belgian neutrality, etc., are beneath notice. Dr. Bethmann-Holweg, with admirable frankness, gave the only excuse that could be respected: "It was wrong to invade Belgium," he said, "but necessity compelled us to do this wrong." That was enough. The chancellor said more without strengthening his case. The plea of necessity was sufficient. If it could be shown that the preservation of the Empire depended upon the invasion of Belgium, Germany was justified in invading neutral territory. It is too bad to be compelled to do wrong, but we have to choose between two evils, and there is not an individual or a nation that has not been lashed by necessity to do just what Germany has done. Of course, I am not admitting that this necessity existed—that it was a case of "sink or swim, survive or perish" with the Germans, or that they had to strike at once or perish for ever. Nor am I competent to say that such a necessity did not exist. The future historian will no doubt be able to enlighten us on many points, and that will be one of the most vital.

Another interesting question is presented by the spectacle of England and France, the two pioneer democratic governments in Europe, joining interests with Russia, which is the very incarnation of autocracy, or absolutism in politics. There is no division of opinion about Russia's backwardness. It is perfectly intelligible why Germany feels bitterly disappointed that in its struggle against Russia—against what Dr. Bethmann-Holweg described as a "half Asiatic and half cultivated barbarism"—both England and France should be arrayed against her, the land of Goethe. This is a strong point. Russia, despite Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky, Turkenyeff, Kuropatkin, and Gorky, is in politics, in literature, in art, in science, in commerce, in invention, in exploration, and in the reform movements which help to steady as well as to protect civilisation, by no means a leader. I am sure Russia, too, will have her renaissance, and there are many signs that the sun is rising in that Sahara of Europe, too, and that it is daybreak from Warsaw to Siberia. Yet if Germany may seek the sympathy and support of Turkey, that grave of progress, that dark empire, unilluminated by a single star—why may not the French and the English count upon the co-operation of Russia? Moreover, is Austria, the ally of Germany, and the most Roman Catholic country in Europe, very much in advance of Russia, either in politics or in culture?

This raises another delicate question. Was it right for England to invite Japan, an alien in race, to fight the Germans; or for France to have pitted against Europeans the blacks of Africa? Why not? In America we grant the Negro the ballot, and we certainly expect him to fight for the country that protects his rights against whoever our antagonist may be. Moreover, the plea of necessity would be a sufficient justification for it. If treaties may be brushed aside as "a scrap of paper," so may treaties be entered upon with Turks, Negroes, or the Nipponese—from necessity. It is better to have the blacks fight for you than for you to be wiped out of existence.

Another phase of the War which interests us is the attitude of men like John Burns and John Morley, "the two honest Johns," as they are called. Both of these parliamentarians resigned from office immediately after England declared war upon Germany. There were, of course, others who pro-

tested against the War—Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the Labor Leader and publicist, and Mr. Keir Hardie, the Socialist, for instance. Mr. Macdonald's position, as expressed by himself, is that, in his opinion, it would have been better to see Europe groan under militarism for another ten years than to have exposed a British regiment to the deadly fire of the modern guns. This was more sentimental than sane. How does Mr. Macdonald know that militarism, using the word in the evil sense in which he uses it, would wait for another ten years before striking, or that it would not last longer than ten years? Has he any assurance that at the end of that period the modern Moloch will of its own accord give up the ghost? Let us beware of the illusion that causes will not have effects, or that effects can be exorcised—cast out—by fine phrases.

But I liked Macdonald's and Keir Hardie's *speaking* much better than the studied *silence* of John Burns and Lord Morley. While I was in London, an elaborate speech purporting to have been made by John Burns appeared in the newspapers, translated from the Berlin local papers; but there is no record of John Burns ever opening his mouth in public on the subject of the War. The speech attributed to him was denied, and I would be very much interested to know what evidence the Berlin papers have that the speech they published was delivered by John Burns. However, the alleged speech appeared in the English papers and was circulated in England as it was in Germany. John Morely has been equally dumb on the present War. I said that I preferred the outspoken Keir Hardie and Macdonald to the discreet Burns and Morley. You are, of course, aware of my great esteem for Lord Morley—not only because he is a writer and a diplomat, nor even because he is a Rationalist, but because he is a man of noble ideals—a modern man.

But what is a person to do when he is not prepared to support a war which he considers unjust? There are only three courses open to him. First, he might reason that there are times when all rules break under the force of circumstances, and that his duty in such a situation would be to sacrifice his convictions to his country. Having done all he could to prevent the War, he might decide to give his country the benefit of the doubt, and help it all he can. Second, he might decide to join the enemy and fight against his country, which an eccentric might find amusing. The third course would be, for the protestant to retire into privacy—to attend to his own business or pleasures, smoke his pipe, cross his legs, eat, sleep, and keep mum. What! and let others shed their blood to protect him in the enjoyment of peace and pleasure? If a man can accept comforts which are costing his neighbors their lives, his scruples about taking part in an unrighteous war cannot very well command our respect.

But I have yet to touch upon the causes which have brought Europe and civilisation to an *impasse*. Let me begin by calling attention first to the general or remote causes which have made a powder magazine of Christendom, and then discuss briefly the specific or immediate causes which applied the spark to the accumulated powder and set the world ablaze.

Every State or Society is based on force. Having acquired our possessions through conquest, that is to say, through seizure of the property of the weak, we are compelled to resort to force in order to prevent some other nations, stronger than ourselves, from doing to us what we did to the weaker than ourselves. What is the "Yellow Peril," for example, but the fear that Japan or China might do to us what we did to them when they were weak? What is the "German Peril" but the fear that Germany with a great Navy and Army might do to the British what the latter did to nearly one-half of the globe? War gave birth to everyone of the modern empires, and if we are to have empires, war alone can preserve them. Let me give you an illustration: We subdued the horse by introducing a piece of iron into his mouth, by throwing a halter around his neck, or by fastening a chain to his feet. Can we hold the horse

without bit, halter, or chain? That is the way Alsace and Lorraine were first subjugated by the French, then by the Germans. Neither nation consulted the peoples of those provinces any more than we did the horse. Hence halters and whips, "blood and iron" are necessary to keep Poland, Bohemia, Armenia, India, Ireland, confined to the stalls we have assigned to them.

Reflect, in the next place, how this policy causes a clash between our history and our hopes—between our practice and our profession. We act the conqueror, but we think the humanitarian. That is the thorn that pricks us daily. Our practice is a sort of outrage upon our ideals. We dream of peace while we are building dreadnoughts. We aspire to brotherhood while we are engaged in mutual slaughter. The battlefields on the Meuse, the Oise, the Somme, the Marne, the Vistula, and in the Carpathian Passes, are an imitation in flesh and blood of the conflict between our lower and higher natures, between the animal in us which has just emerged from the swamp or the cave, and the human, charmed with the vision of the good, the true, and the beautiful. The mud and mire of the past clings to our feet; the future draws us like a loving kiss.

Another source of discord is in the unequal division of the globe. Just as there is constant friction between labor and capital, between the *haves* and *have-nots*, there is between nations who own and control colonies, territories, and dominions in all parts of the wide world, and those who have them not but want them. Is not that the cause of the clash between England and Germany? England has all she wants, all she needs; Germany has not. Naturally, England wants peace—war might dispossess her of some of her territories; and just as naturally Germany wants war, even as England did when she was after colonies. Germany sees in war her only chance for expansion. I left Liverpool on a British ship, and after sailing or steaming westward across nearly three thousand miles of water, I reached Canada, but I was still in the British Empire. Some of my fellow passengers intended to board a train at Montreal for Winnipeg, and others for Vancouver, which meant another three thousand miles; and when they arrived at their destinations they would still be in the British Empire. One of the passengers was going to take a boat across the Pacific, which would mean another three thousand miles or more before he reached his destination, New Zealand—which is still in the British Empire. Thence to Australia, westward to Africa, to Egypt, Gibraltar, and back to England, and one is still in the British Empire. No wonder England does not want to fight for any more territory! Germany, on the other hand, young, virile, and growing fast, feels the cramp, the pinch, the pain of compression. She feels herself a giant caught in a pigeon-hole—squeezed into one of the pockets of Europe. Is it any wonder that she puts out her head now and then watching for a bigger place in the sun!

Germany's great misfortune is her geographical position, which is a serious handicap to her in the economic struggle. Her coal and iron fields, as the Hon. George Peel explains in his *The Future of England*, are removed from the seaboard, and while the Rhine offers an easy transport for her boats, the lower course of this great stream is in Holland, to which Germany is compelled to pay toll for using the river. "The very part of the Rhine," wrote Treitschke, "which is materially most valuable to us, has fallen into the hands of foreigners," and he urged the Germans to leave no stone unturned to secure the estuary of the Rhine. But how?

A mediocre race might consent to live in a cramped condition without chafing under it, but not so with a people who entertain a high opinion of themselves. The Germans believe themselves to be equally worthy, if not worthier, to possess and administer the estate of the world. Germany has a population fifty per cent. larger than that of the British Isles, and admittedly better educated; Germany is increasing in population while France is

decreasing. Hence the German menace to the less educated English and to the declining French.

Another element of constant international friction or irritation is the inequality of culture among the various races. The fact that the Mongolian or the Negro is not so advanced as the Teuton or the Saxon necessarily puts the superior races on the defensive against incursions or invasions from the lower races. Europe, for example, can never disarm so long as there is an Asia to beware of. That, in a measure, accounts for "German militarism." To Germany the Slav peril has all the terrors of a nightmare. She believes it is her mission to protect Europe against a Slavonic deluge. Austria shares with Germany the fear of Pan-Slavism.

But on the other side of the line, Pan-Germanism gives to the Slav the same palpitation of the heart. Both *isms* watch each other with a nervousness which must be a taxing strain on Russ and German alike. It is this fear which creates armies and navies, and converts Europe into a depot for explosives. Add to this the *revanche*, or revenge idea of the French, and to that the fear of England that Germany's greater fleet is meant to be used some day against her coast and colonies, and then you have an armed Europe, with the different nations as so many military camps.

(To be continued.)

Bible Kaiser.

DAVID was the ideal King of the Jews. The documents which record his career are semi-legendary, and contain the embellishments of after ages. But these very adornments are characteristic. They reveal the essence of the race. David combines all the qualities which the Jews have prized and displayed. He is intensely patriotic, generous to friends, cruel to enemies, fond of his children, brave, shrewd, shifty, grasping, tenacious, sensual, hypocritical, and, above all, pious.

This national hero so affected the imagination of the Jews that the Messiah was to descend from him, resemble him, and restore his throne. Hence the ridiculous genealogies of Matthew and Luke, which connect Christ with David through Joseph, although his real father was the Holy Ghost.

David is even called a man after God's own heart. He was the kind of man Jahveh liked, and Jahveh was the kind of God the Jews liked. Every people's gods are idealisations of national character. Judging men by the company they keep is not a surer rule than judging them by the deities they worship.

When Samuel first quarrelled with Saul, he informed him that the Lord had "sought him a man after his own heart" to supplant him as king. This eulogium of David is repeated in the New Testament, where God calls him "a man after mine own heart." Holy Writ also informs us that "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Words could not more plainly stamp the life of David with God's approval. He has one flaw to show he is human, but all the rest is perfect. To improve on David, therefore, would be—

"To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet."

Thus the case stood in olden times. But "the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns." Morality develops like intelligence, and the ideals as well as the beliefs of one age are contemned by another. David is now seen to be a very shady character, and the champions of the Bible are obliged to "torture one poor word ten thousand ways" in order to absolve Jahveh from the vices and crimes of his favorite. Leland maintains that the text in Kings is less inclusive than it looks. The "design" is, not to assert that David only committed one fault, but to assert that in no other instance did he presumptuously and wickedly depart from God. This apology is worthy of Leland's lumbering

intellect. Warburton's apology, as may be imagined, is more dexterous. "It is of importance to the cause of truth," he says, "to know that this character was not given him for his *private* morals, but his *public*; his zeal for the advancement of the glory of the *theocracy*." There speaks the theologian and the priest. David never fell into idolatry; he worshiped the god of the Jehovist priests who wrote the history, and he steadily maintained the wealth and privileges of "the Church." Surely such public virtues are enough to cover a multitude of *private* sins!

Unfortunately for Warburton's plea, David's public life will not bear a rigid scrutiny. His friendship for "the theocracy" is undoubted, but his cruelty in war is almost matchless, and his dying counsels to Solomon were grossly malignant. "It is not possible," wrote Shaftesbury, "by the muse's art, to make that royal hero appear amiable in human eyes, who found such favor in the eye of heaven. Such are mere human hearts that they can hardly find the least sympathy with that *only one* which had the character of being after the pattern of the Almighty."

Milman, with his usual audacity, blames those who take the expression *after God's own heart* "in a strict and literal sense," and urges that allowance must be made for David's age and country. He forgets that the historian and the theologian cannot adopt the same standard of judgment. According to the Acts, the Lord called David a man after his own heart, over a thousand years after his death, and it is presumption to doubt the literal accuracy of such an authority.

David's name in Hebrew signifies *Beloved*. It is a Phœnician name, the same as that of Dido, Queen of Carthage. According to the usual chronology, he reigned over Israel from 1055 to 1015 B. C. But Dr. Robertson Smith says the computation is uncertain. Ewald places David ten years earlier, and other critics so much as thirty and fifty years. His history, as we have it, "is extracted from various sources of unequal value, which are fitted together in a way which affords considerable difficulty to the historical critic." Renan shrewdly observes that nearly every story is told as David would have liked it.

Judah had produced no remarkable man before. David shed a lustre on all his tribe. His father's name was Jesse, and he was the youngest of eight sons. The Rabbis tell a curious story of his birth. It is mentioned by Bayle in his famous article on David, and given in Latin by Baring Gould, to spare the modesty of his readers who esteem the filth of the Bible as divine. David is supposed to say of himself "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness; and in sin did my mother conceive me." From this text the puerile ingenuity of later Rabbis developed the following romance. Jesse had a maid-servant, whom he solicited to impurity; but she, being chaste and faithful to her mistress, told her of the fact. A clandestine meeting was arranged, the mistress put herself in the maid's place, and David was the result of this cohabitation. A similar story is found in the literature of nearly every people under the sun; yet several writers have argued whether David's escutcheon had a bar sinister. St. Jerome was of opinion that Jesse committed no actual sin, and the only defilement on David was that which he drew from his mother. Bayle, who is sarcastic about "illustrious bastards," remarks that if David shared the vigor and talents so often ascribed to illegitimates he must certainly, in the circumstances, have derived the blessing from his father.

Some Rabbis say David was born circumcised. Others say he was not circumcised until he was fourteen. The dispute is therefore entirely Jewish. These wiseacres likewise affirm that David had no soul until his fifteenth year, and he would have died at birth, only Adam, who was entitled to a thousand years, relinquished seventy to give him an innings. They further relate that David was red-haired and diminutive, but he grew rapidly when Samuel anointed him, and was soon as lofty as Saul. They do not

tell us whether the holy oil had any effect on his carroty locks. Certainly it did not affect his vision, for he retained his gift of the evil eye. His visual organ was excessively malignant. Merely by looking at people he could give them the leprosy and other dreadful disorders.

That David was "ruddy" the Bible informs us, but it adds that he was "of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to." Such varieties appear among the Semitic races, and their very eccentricity renders them attractive. Nor is it surprising that mental peculiarities should accompany the physical—

"There are sometimes born, in that Semitic orient, habitually hard and stern, prodigies of grace, elegance, and intelligence. David was one of those charmers. Capable of the greatest crimes, when circumstances called for them, he was also capable of the most delicate sentiments. He knew how to make himself popular; when people knew him they became attached to him. His type of face stood out against the swarthy visages of his tribesmen. He had a pink complexion, fine and amiable features, and a pleasant and easy eloquence."

Renan's picture of David is idealised, though it contains elements of truth. David's power of attaching people to his cause is indisputable. His "delicate sentiments" are at least open to question. He loved his offspring, but that is primarily an animal passion; and his friendship for Jonathan is perhaps a later fiction, designed to bridge a chasm, in the kingly succession, by transferring Jonathan's hereditary rights to David.

Saint David is introduced to us in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel. By God's direction the prophet went to Bethlehem and anointed the "ruddy" youth in secrecy as king of Israel. Doubtless the story is a fiction, but it may be taken to indicate that Samuel favored David's pretensions and assisted him in his rivalry with Saul.

Before the end of the same chapter David is introduced to Saul. He is brought to court as a skillful harpist to charm away the "king's evil spirit." Already he is "a mighty valiant man," and Saul makes him his armor-bearer. But in the very next chapter Saul does not know David. After the slaying of Goliath, the king asks, "Whose son is this youth?" Abner, the general, replies: "I cannot tell." No one knew the youth who, in all Israel, had found a medicine for the king's disease!

Profane wits have inquired whether David played upon the little harp peculiar to his nation; but such frivolous questions are beneath the dignity of the subject.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

SECRET DIPLOMACY AND THE CONDEMNED CLERICAL SCHOOLS IN LONDON.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Some few weeks ago an article by myself brought to the notice of the readers of the *Freethinker* a few of the mean, sordid, yet official facts concerning the 124 Clerical Schools in London which have been condemned by the Board of Education.

I should now be grateful for the opportunity of further emphasising the great need in this matter, of vigilance on the part of all those who wish to see in this country a truly national system of education in which all schools publicly supported shall be publicly controlled, with Secular Education only, and entirely freed from the control of Clericalism.

As the result of an agitation, concerning the condemned schools, carried on during the past six months among the rank and file of the organised working class movement, there are some slight indications of movement in high places.

From a Sub-Committee of the L.C.C. word has been sent forth to a Trade Union Executive that "the Managers of the Schools have the facts under consideration"; also, that "where necessary, Conferences are being arranged between representatives of the Board of Education, the L.C.C., and the Managers, in order to assist in a decision being arrived at as to the steps to be taken to remedy the defects of the premises."

A reply in practically identical terms was given by the Minister of Education to a question put by Mr. J. King

in the House of Commons on November 26; and I confess I personally do not regard it as reassuring to find a Liberal Minister of Education apparently at one, on so important a question, with a body which, in its education policy, is so notoriously reactionary as the L.C.C.

I submit that this is a question in which the public has a right to demand that all cards should be placed upon the table. The schools are supported from public funds; and the Managers, in return for the great privilege of controlling them, are by law compelled to provide the school buildings.

It is to be hoped that Rationalists will take every opportunity of pointing out to ratepayers in London the importance of demanding that the result of such conferences shall be made public, and that the Managers of the schools in question shall be compelled to discharge their legal obligations.

The cost of rebuilding the schools will no doubt be great, and we find that, from ecclesiastical circles, appeals are being sent forth asking that, in view of the War, the Board of Education shall not press the demand for the rebuilding and repairing of unsatisfactory Clerical Schools, not only in London, but in many other parts of the country.

I hope Educationists, not only in London, but elsewhere, will remind the wealthy ecclesiastical forces behind the denominational schools, that precisely because we are engaged in a devastating war, in which life is being so freely spent, the children become more than ever the chief asset of the nation. Our growing social consciousness, our patriotism revolts at the thought of allowing them any longer to be "educated" in surroundings which must result in their physical, mental, and moral deterioration.

The National Society, a powerful political organisation which attends to the education politics of the Established Church, has (according to the *Daily Mail Church Yearbook*) an income of £20,000 a year, and has spent £1,500,000 "in educating the children of the poor in the principles of the Established Church." Will this wealthy society and the highly paid bishops and other church dignitaries take part in this mean, contemptible plea of poverty at such a time as the present, when the needs of the country and of the children are so great? Will the "advanced" clergy support this cowardly plea?

Up to the present they have been singularly silent. As far as I can ascertain, even Bishop Gore has not spoken, in spite of the fact that at the time the report on the condemned schools was published, he was booked to preach the "official" sermon at the Trades Union Congress, which, had it not been for the War, would have been held at Portsmouth in September; in spite, too, of the fact that during the month of July, his Lordship was hailed as a Socialist by the *Daily Citizen*. This paper, it may be mentioned, has also been silent on the public scandal under consideration, and its parliamentary correspondent omitted to draw the attention of its readers to the searching questions on the condemned schools put by Mr. J. King, M.P., to the Minister of Education.

Dean Weldon also has had nothing to say, although he might reasonably be expected to tell us whether the replacing of disgraceful denominational schools by up to date school buildings is to be a condition of that alliance between organised Labor and the Church, to which the Dean has endeavored to show us events have been tending. I have long been expecting a pronouncement on this question from the Church Socialist League, many of whose leaders have been members of other Socialist organisations—one, indeed, the Rev. Conrad Noel, as a "clear cut, class conscious, revolutionary Social Democrat"; having sat on the Executive of the British Socialist Party. This organisation, together with its leaders, and its official organ *Justice* has, like its ally the Church Socialist League, given no lead on the question of the condemned schools, and thus has failed to follow the example of Trade Union journals like the *Railway Review*, the *Lancashire Cotton Factory Times*, and the *Yorkshire Factory Times*, whose assistance in the campaign on behalf of the 54,545 children concerned I gratefully acknowledge.

That little children belonging to wealthy denominations, which can boast gorgeous cathedrals and churches, should be condemned to spend school recreation time in foul-smelling W. C.'s and "in tiny yards containing the offices," is a crime which the nation could not afford to condone, even if such schools were not supported out of public funds.

Not in such an environment can we hope to train members of a democracy capable of playing a worthy part in the great work of reconstruction which lies before us. The leaders of the organised working class movement must break their long silence on the question of the condemned Clerical Schools, otherwise we shall begin to wonder how far, if at all, their policy on this matter differs from that of the high ecclesiastical forces which control them.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest as a subject worthy of consideration by intelligent research students of education

politics in England, the following question: "How far has the advent of organised labor, as a political force, furthered the acceptance of the great fundamental principle of democratic education politics—viz., popular control of State supported education—which at the General Election of 1906 the Labor and Socialist candidates were pledged to support?"

MARY BRIDGES ADAMS.

Bebel House Working Women's College.

Facers for "Bible Punchers."

GOD AND MAN AND BEAST.

Christians only deal with "God's" attitude towards man, they never mention "his" attitude towards the lower animals. That is doubtless because men are more or less responsible creatures, some of them being endowed with intelligence. All of them have power to act in a manner distinct from animal instinct. Thus, when a man is afflicted with boils or chilblains and he complains, "Damme, Parson, I thought the Bible God was a God of infinite mercy and loving kindness! If that's true, why the Devil does he give me these infernal things?" The Parson can reply, "Ah, deah brothah, it is because he is a God of infinite mercy and loving kindness that he sends you chilblains to guide you to the path that's right." That is how the "Devil Dodger" dodges facts when they relate to man.

But when we tackle him on the question of the G. I. M. and L. K.'s chastisement of the lower animals, who are irresponsible creatures, pawns of circumstances and natural law, mere bundles of animal instinct which can do nothing except that which is their inherent nature to do, when we question him on that subject, he is "done."

I say to this, "I saw a horse die in great agony to-day; I wonder what devilment it had been up to, to merit the Almighty's divine wrath. Do you think it has neglected its prayers, or swindled its neighbor, or played cards on the Sabbath, or, perchance, had it subscribed to the National Secular Society?" What can he reply except that "the ways of the Lord are mysterious and wonderful"?

THE PARSON'S SUBTERFUGE.

Which last remark reminds me—"Christian professors are sly humbugs; they have two parrot-cries which they use to burke argument and adverse criticism. They are something like this: "Such and such an evil is sent by God to test our faith or punish us for our sins," and "The ways of the Lord are mysterious and wonderful."

Thus, when I fall ill and am seemingly on the point of death, I might say to a Parson, "If God is kind and just, why is he going to kill me?" The Parson will reply, "Because of your sins the Lord will cause you to die." Then along comes an M.D., and by his skilful treatment I am cured. Then I say to the Parson, "If God wanted to punish me, why did he let the doctor cure me; if, on the other hand, God didn't wish to punish me, why was I ill at all, seeing that he is a God of infinite mercy and loving kindness?"

Then out comes the other parrot-cry, "The ways of the Lord are mysterious and wonderful."

THE INSTABILITY OF UNREASONING BELIEF.

It is a remarkable fact that whilst devout Christians never, or very rarely, read Secular literature, Freethinkers are seldom averse to perusing the diatribes of theologians.

It is evident that the former recognises that his Creed is so weak and "wobbly at the knees" that should he read any intelligent criticism or contradiction of its ethics and dogma, his faith would be in sore danger of evaporating. Whilst the other knows that his convictions are so firmly built on reason, experience, and observation, that the purite vaporings of Theists only serve to strengthen him in his rejection of the immoral and absurd.

H. C. W.

Obituary.

It is my painful duty to record the death of Mr. J. T. Jameson, who died from influenza at Sunderland on December 21, after an illness of four weeks. Deceased was 52 years of age, and was well known to our friends of Newcastle, South Shields, and neighboring districts. Joining the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. some twenty-five years ago, his genial manner and sterling qualities soon won the respect of all with whom he came in contact. On his removal to Sunderland some twelve or more years ago, Newcastle lost one of its most zealous workers for Secularism. Although we could still rely on his cheery presence at all our picnics, etc., where his excellent camera always attempted to stay the hand of oblivion from effacing many pleasant memories. Many readers of the *Freethinker* will share the grief of Mrs. Jameson and family in the sad loss of so worthy a husband, father, and friend.—J. G. BARTRAM.

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