

# THE Freethinker

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*Human rights are the only Divine rights.*  
—GARTH WILKINSON.

## Notes and News.

I had saved all the front-page space this week for finishing what I had to say about my old friend, Bertram Dobell, who died, it will be remembered, some weeks ago. But I have to devote most of this space to other things, and my article on *him* must be deferred; there being this consolation, however, that it will be none the worse for that.

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I shall, in particular, be able to mention a beautiful portrait of Dobell, which his sons have sent me, and which does credit to all concerned; to the sons, the artist, the printers, and (in a way) to Dobell himself, for inspiring such an admirable piece of work.

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I wish to say a word or two about the late Mr. Thomas Harper, whose death was mentioned in the *Freethinker* last week. He was introduced to me by Charles Bradlaugh, whose legal work he was doing when the latter, whose reputation in that line was famous, was too busy to do it himself. He always referred to Bradlaugh with veneration, and positively refused to include W. R. B. in the Hall of Science Libel Case. Nothing could induce him, he said, to agree to connect the name of Bradlaugh with such a case. He extended this to the whole family. We therefore proceeded against the *real* printer and publisher, and got a verdict against them, with damages, which has been a cause of complaint by W. R. B. ever since. He lost nearly the whole value of the greatest opportunity of his life.

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But to return to the late Mr. Harper. He did a good deal of legal work for me, first and last—nearly all, of course, connected with the Freethought movement—and he always did it well. Whatever others may think or say, I am of opinion that he was a competent lawyer; he was conscientious and attentive; you could always trust him implicitly; and how much that counts for when a man has public affairs to look after! I am rendered poorer in many ways by the death of Thomas Harper. His is one of the faces I shall miss when I look back, from time to time, in imagination through the memory gallery of my past.

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There were only two men who knew and understood the Law of Blasphemy from top to bottom, and through and through. One of them was (and is) myself. There is no egotism in this statement; it is the simple truth. I say it as confidently and calmly as I should state my physical height or weight. The other man was Thomas Harper. He helped me in establishing the Secular Society, Ltd.;

he was our solicitor in charge of the Hall of Science Libel Case; he was our solicitor in charge of the Boulter Case; also in inferior matters; and he died with the defence of the Secular Society, Ltd., in his capable hands during its first hostile challenge since its birth in 1898.

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The Bowman Bequest matter remains in the hands of the Harper firm still, and I am doing my best to help in letters and consultations and subsequent reports to the Board of Directors at their monthly meetings.

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In writing of the Bowman Bequest I must be very careful, partly from respect to law and justice, and partly from a wish to avoid what is called Contempt of Court. I don't want a gentleman with an impossible wise face and a sort of Egyptian wig to be able to tell me that I have said a great deal more than I ought to, and send me to prison for several thousand years in consequence. I must be careful, I say, but I am entitled to say *something*. We are not under military law (not yet) in relation to matters arising in the ordinary courts of justice. So I will say this, at any rate, that having this very day (Tuesday) read through again the chief documents in this case, and one fresh document just to hand, I am more than ever satisfied that our position is perfectly satisfactory. I do not say we are *sure* to win. Nothing is sure elsewhere, except it may be in war. Litigation is more precarious. It sometimes happens, as the old Greek proverb says, that the lawyers get the oyster and the clients only the shell between them. But I believe it will turn out better in this case.

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Whether I will or not, I am bound to play a large part in these litigations. I pay the penalty of being well known. It is a pity, perhaps; less-known people might have done the work ever so much better; but it cannot be helped. The challengers in the Bowman case have practically decided to fight through *me*. They say, in effect, that I am the villain of the piece; having been imprisoned for "blasphemy" and similar wicked things, and that a Society led by me *must* be contrary to the good of human society; and the books we publish prove it, if possible, even more conclusively.

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All these objections to the Secular Society, Ltd., were discussed and considered before it was established. Subsequent events have so far been all in favor of the Society's belief in its own security. We hardly think the judgment of Lord Coleridge, Sir W. Phillimore, Mr. Justice Darling, and other high-court judges, is going to be upset by any occupant of the Bench that Mr. Calder Woods may meet with. But we don't want to be dogmatic. We must wait and see.

G. W. FOOTE.



## Teaching the Young Idea How to Shoot.

"TEACHING the young idea how to shoot" used to be a figurative expression. It implied no more than a figure of speech, and expressed the ideal of turning out boys—and girls—from school able to use their brains in the best and most serviceable manner, and with characters calculated to serve them well in the battle of life. It was essentially a schoolmaster's ideal, and it was a quite worthy one. But of late years the symbol has with many schoolmasters been taken quite literally. The mania of militarism, which has not been without its representatives in every country in Europe, has seized many school teachers; and military drill has been introduced into many schools, and military ideals held before the boys as altogether admirable. Brigades have been formed—particularly in connection with Church schools—and we have had the spectacle of thousands of boys being impregnated with militarism in the name of the "Prince of Peace."

A few weeks ago a paragraph in "Acid Drops" called attention to a resolution that was to be moved at a forthcoming conference in London of the headmasters of secondary schools. The resolution ran:—

"That in the opinion of this association instruction in the elements of military drill and the use of the rifle should form part of the education of all boys in secondary schools."

This resolution stood in the name of a master of a very old and well-known public school, and every effort had been made beforehand to get it well supported. Those who thought that the headmasters of secondary schools would have been level-headed enough to resist the intrusion of militarism into the schools were doomed to disappointment. The resolution was carried with only 13 dissentients. The mover no doubt felt that he was doing his duty to the nation in bringing forward the resolution, and was prepared to support it with much talk about patriotism, the duty of national defence, etc., etc. And yet I have no hesitation in saying that no resolution could be further removed from a sane educational ideal than this one. None could be in the true, and not in the cant, sense of the word less patriotic. It cannot make for the bettering of the country, but must ultimately make for its worsening. It means not less militarism, but more militarism. It means the sacrifice of the ethical value of the schools in the interests of the recruiting sergeant.

What does the intrusion of military drill and the use of the rifle into the schools mean? It means that the schools are to be used as a preparatory step towards the Army. There is no other meaning to it, and there is no sense in it apart from this. If the boy does not leave school inspired with the military ideal, and ready to become a soldier—if, in short, his military drill and use of the rifle make him less ready to join the Army—then it is all waste of time, and, from the point of view of the militarist, has done more harm than good. It must help to make soldiers. The schoolmaster is to become a semi-official recruiting sergeant. He cannot, obviously, be giving his boys military drill and teaching them the use of the rifle, and at the same time point out how barbaric and brutal it all is. That would undermine his authority altogether. He must prepare his boys for the military life and for military rule. He must be able to say to the recruiting sergeant, when the boys leave his hands: "I have done my best to make them ready for you. They know how to shoot; they have been trained to militarism. Rest assured that if the Government wishes war, I have done my best to see that it shall not lack soldiers."

Now, I am not arguing that soldiers are not necessary. So long as nations will fight, so long self-defence compels those to resist who see how brutal the whole business is. I am only arguing that it is not the business of the schoolmaster to provide soldiers. His duty is to see that his boys think straight; it may be the duty of other people to see

that they shoot straight—but whoever's duty it is, it is not his. I am not arguing against drill—physical drill—in schools. That, I believe, is not the least useful thing a boy gets at school. I am merely protesting against its being given in a military form, and associating the idea of physical fitness with a readiness—which often begets the desire—to kill someone. I am not even arguing against children being inculcated with a love of country and a sense of duty towards one's own country. But I do protest against these being associated with a nascent hatred and suspicion of other countries. And without hatred and suspicion, militarism is really left without "visible means of support." I am merely pointing to the obvious truth that you can't teach boys the use of the rifle and, at the same time, keep their minds full of the belief that it is as peaceful a recreation as cricket. Let the schoolmaster stick to his work of turning out intelligent boys with a bent for clean, peaceful living, and if the nation really needs defenders it will not lack them when the occasion arises.

For five months the newspapers and magazines have been full of articles and paragraphs telling us how Germany prepared for the War. We have been told—what I quite believe must be the case—that this War would have been impossible had not the mind of the German public been carefully drilled for years to the end of war. Schools and universities, teachers and professors, have vied with each other in preparing pupils and students for war, and reconciling them to militarism. The "mailed fist" has been held up for their admiration. The soldier has been paraded as the type of the perfect man. A Germany clad in armor has been pictured as the end of civilisation. And the result of this has been Prussian militarism. Everybody in England has been denouncing it, and here is an association of headmasters ready to imitate it! In the name of all that is sensible, why? If English school-teachers and professors take to preaching and teaching militarism, will the consequences be so vastly different in England from what they have been in Germany? Given time and persistence, and I do not believe they will be. There is nothing fundamentally different between German human nature and English human nature. It is all a question of institutions and of training over several generations. We have not a little German human nature in England, from the throne downwards. And how account for the difference but on the lines of training, tradition, and institutions? What teachers have done for the German people, teachers can do for the English people. And the introduction of militarism into the schools is one of the first steps towards that transformation.

We are out to fight Prussian militarism. So say our leaders, and no one wishes them success with greater heartiness than I do. But if we can only keep Prussian militarism down by creating a stronger militarism all over Europe, in what way is the world benefited? That is not crushing German militarism. It is adopting it; it is admitting that the German teachers are right; that civilisation rests upon force, depends upon the soldier, and that every nation must live in constant readiness to show itself stronger on the purely physical plane than any other nation. For you cannot have both things strong at the same time. You cannot have a people fully convinced of the blessings of peace, of the irrelevancy of war and, at the same time, filled with the military ideal. If you strengthen the one, you weaken the other. You may select which you please, but you cannot have both.

In a circular issued to the teachers of England in August last, Mr. Joseph Pease, the Minister for Education, said:—

"We are trustees for posterity. We guard the lines of communication between the present and the future. In the educational system for which I speak there are more than seven millions of pupils and students, most of them of tender age—an army comparable in numbers with the forces which now stand armed in the European conflict. These seven millions are the future England. .... We must see to it that neither we nor those who



come after us lose faith; that the seven millions may grow up still believing in national honesty and goodwill, in generosity, in humanity, in the supreme blessing of peace. It is to them that we shall hand over the national and international polity which emerges from the present struggle—a form of society, we may hope, broader and more firmly based, freed of the secular heritage of racial hatred and military aggression which Europe is now expiating, but assuredly more exacting—demanding of its members larger faculties, more highly trained aptitudes, a clearer realisation of the common duty and destiny of man."

That is a noble aspiration, nobly uttered. And the reply of a conference of headmasters is to agitate for military drill and the use of the rifle in public schools! Is that going to free Europe from its heritage of racial hatred and secular aggression? Will that give us a society broader and more firmly based? For remember that the training of these boys in militarism cannot by any means affect the present War. They are not old enough to fight. Their training can only affect future wars. It is their preparation for them. It is the schoolmaster's preparation for the future peace and progress of the European peoples—at least, it is the contribution that some schoolmasters have to offer. They wish to take half the seven millions of pupils—assuming the sexes to be equally divided—and to familiarise them with military ideals and implements during the most impressionable period of their lives. That is their contribution to the work of strengthening the belief "in national honesty and goodwill, in generosity and humanity, in the supreme blessing of peace." Humanity at the end of a rifle! Peace at the mouth of a cannon! And these people denounce the German professors for teaching militarism! They should honor them as their spiritual superiors.

What is the surest way of getting war? To be always talking about it, writing about it, familiarising people's minds with it. All experience proves the truth of this. Everything that has occurred before and after the outbreak of war proves it. And what is the surest way of securing peace? Obviously to think about that. It is no disproof of this to say that we must be prepared to resist aggression. It only proves that these aggressors have brought about war by following the plan that militarists tell us secures peace. If this War has blown one theory to atoms, it is the theory that preparations for war means peace. Preparation for war means war sooner or later. And to take the boys in our schools and accustom them to the rifle as the supreme arbiter in national affairs is to train a generation that will be ready for war at any time. And, on the other hand, to take the millions of schoolboys in England and France and Germany and Russia, to keep them free from the blight of militarism, to teach them the power of reason, of ethical ideals, is to launch on the world a powerful force for peace. Militarism in adult life is bad enough. Militarism in the schools is infinitely worse. It is corrupting national life at its source. If we really wish to kill militarism, let us commence as early as possible. If Germany used her schools to disturb the peace of Europe, let us at least see that the next generation will not be able to bring that charge against us.

C. COHEN.

"Christian Prayer."

THE War has had the effect of rescuing genuflection from the state of desuetude into which it had fallen in nearly all the Churches. As long as peace prevailed the prayer-meeting was the least popular of all ecclesiastical functions. Now, however, Christians are on their knees everywhere, and intercessory services are attended by crowds of excitable worshippers. Public prayer has become fashionable. In St. Paul's there was held a prayer-meeting that lasted twenty-four hours. Day by day is God passionately besought to intervene in favor of the petitioners' country, whether it be Germany or that of any of the

Allies. What all want is victory, and for this all pray, irrespective of the side to which they belong. The contention is that "the value of intercession in prayer for others is incalculable," and that in answer to prayer God often changes or modifies his purpose. Consequently, "prayer is the greatest gift and privilege of mankind," and not to engage in it is the most heinous of sins. Dr. Orchard declared that, "for his part, he would rather pray as the Emperor of Germany prayed than not pray at all." The Dean of Durham, in a sermon entitled "Christian Prayer," which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for January 13, deals with the range and the method of intercession, which, he tells us, are matters on which "ardent believers are rarely careful to measure their language." "Ardent believers" are people with whom Dr. Henson is wholly out of touch. He says:—

"Too often they speak as if there resided in Christian prayer a certain force which operated irresistibly, and, so to speak, automatically; as if no limits could be set to the effect of believing petition; as if, in fact, the course of Providence were really directed by human volition.....They surrender themselves to facile, pious emotions, and seek from language rather a stimulus to devotion than an aid to intelligence; and in times of religious excitement there is little disposition within the Christian Society to bring the practice of the pious under the criticism of the thoughtful."

The Dean is convinced that the War will prove of no real service to religion. On this point he is at variance with the great majority of his brethren, who maintain that already the War has occasioned a marvellous revival of religious experience. The Dean, also, admits that a revival is taking place, not of religion, but of superstition. In the prevailing atmosphere men are predisposed to superstition, become extremely credulous, and are "swept easily into the acceptance of crude and even debasing notions and procedures." Indeed, "all the interests which rest on superstition stand to gain by war"; and one of those interests is prayer. It is superstition that is driving the crowds to prayer-meetings. It had been asleep for a long time in myriads of minds, but the European pandemonium has awakened it again, with the result that many churches and chapels are full of "ardent believers" on bended knees. Like the Gospel Jesus, Dr. Henson despises the prayer of ostentation, pronouncing it utterly sterile. Then he undertakes to give us what he calls "a right doctrine of prayer"; but in attempting to do this he merely manages to convince us that the only difference between him and the people he condemns is that he is somewhat less superstitious than they are. In our judgment, religion and superstition are synonymous terms. The Dean says that "everything turns on the theory of God which finds expression in prayer"; but we hold that all theories of God are alike false, because God himself is a purely mythical being. To say that "Christian prayer rests on the fact that God is our Father" is to give expression to a superstitious belief, the truth of which is insusceptible of demonstration. The Divine Fatherhood, of which Mr. Spurr declares that he is absolutely certain, is an unethical and illogical figment. The absurdity of the belief in it is fully illustrated by one of Dr. Orchard's recent utterances, which is as follows:—

"If we look at terms like England and Germany as God looks at them, we shall see that each consists of men, women, and children, each of whom is loved infinitely by God, and that for every one of them—the most depraved and the most responsible for all these ills of war—Jesus Christ died and would die again to win them to God."

Now, this all-loving Father occupies the throne of the Universe, and this devastating, murderous War is his "operation." It is he who thus slaughters so brutally the children whom he loves infinitely and for whose salvation Christ died. The Dean confidently assures us that "the Almighty Father looks with equal love on all his children"; and yet he allows, or instigates, them to butcher one another by the million. If a human father permitted such scenes of horror in his family he would be execrated



as an inhuman monster. And yet, although fervently believing that this savage, barbarous conflict is God's "operation," the divines calmly speak of our Father in heaven who loves us all with an infinite, deathless passion. Let us draw near to him in prayer, they say, and concentrate our whole minds on the certainty of his presence and his love; but surely he whose "operation" this bloodiest of wars is, cannot be the all-just and all-loving Father of the race.

Canon Rawnsley seems to think that the War has done the people of Great Britain an infinite amount of good. Before it began they neglected prayer, ignored the Bible, thought they could get along very well without God, spoke lightly of the Christian religion and its founder; but now they have become serious-minded and discovered God, with the result that they flock to the Houses of Prayer and call upon the name of the Lord of Hosts; and the Canon has the temerity to assert that the Lord of Hosts is our refuge and strength in this country now. The War has come to deliver Europe from the curse of Paganism; but, if Germany wins, "semi-Paganism triumphs, and Christ is cast down." There are Pagans among ourselves, but in Germany Paganism is supreme, and must be overthrown. The British people have taken the sword; they "are defenders of the body of Christ against the gross attack of brutish force"; and they are exhorted to pray, not merely for the freedom of Europe from a military despotism, but "for the possibility of the ethics of Christ to have full sway in the body politics, and the possibility of the spread of the gospel of Right as superior to Might." We are to bear in mind that the prayer is to be addressed to the Lord of Hosts, with the view of inducing him to take sides with the Allies and give Germany a thorough beating. And, last, we are instructed to come before God "with thanksgiving, thanksgiving for this new awakening out of sleep, thanksgiving for the unity of the Empire at such a crisis, thanksgiving for the heroic deeds of our men by sea and land." Then comes this remarkable sentence:—

"Nor least must we thank him that so far he has helped us to foil the enterprises of the invader, and has not allowed us, as Belgium and much of fair France, to be a prey unto his teeth."

The inevitable inference from that extract is that the Lord of Hosts has helped the invader to make Belgium and much of fair France a prey unto his teeth, and has so far enabled Great Britain to foil his nefarious enterprises. What had Belgium and France done to deserve such drastic punishment, and how have we earned his protection up till now? Is it not almost incredible that a sane person could give expression to such an absurd and self-contradictory view? At first the Lord of Hosts permitted Germany to carry all before her. In a wonderfully short time she overran Belgium, and got within a few miles of Paris. Then she was driven back a certain distance; and now for many weeks both sides have been alternately giving and taking a little ground, the Lord either hesitating to take either side, or being, to a certain extent, simultaneously on both sides. His people in this country are holding innumerable prayer-meetings, at all of which he is implored to take the side of the Allies and bring Germany down to the dust, while they who profess his name in Germany are as earnestly claiming him as their Ally. Is it not a fact that simply to state such a doctrine is to expose its unspeakable silliness, its inexcusable childishness? The God of the Christians just now is in every respect an intolerable monster, who takes special delight in making infinite fools of his own children. Is it any wonder that so many millions of mankind find it absolutely impossible to believe in him, and consider it a cruel waste of time and energy to pray to him? Is it any wonder that the War is already manufacturing Atheists by the score? To think at all just now is to cease to believe.

Both Dean Henson and Canon Rawnsley preach a God to whom thoughtful people cannot pray. Neither the loving Father of the one, nor the Lord of Hosts

of the other, has ever declared himself, directly or indirectly, in the history of the world, and from the beginning until now prayer has been the supreme folly. Never has it been a spontaneous human exercise. The habit has to be laboriously learned in early childhood, and the natural tendency all through life is to drop it, and once it is abandoned through conviction of its uselessness it is never missed. At no point whatever in history is there the slightest evidence of any act of supernatural intervention. The fortunes of war have never been affected in the smallest degree by the praying of the Churches. The destructive raid on the East Coast occurred within the twenty-four hours which God's people devoted to continuous prayer at St. Paul's. The professional advocates of prayer persuade their followers to believe that God answers it in his own way and time, not in the way and time desired by those who offer it up. We affirm, however, that all the so-called answers to prayer are capable of bearing a perfectly natural explanation, while it cannot be proved that a single prayer was ever supernaturally granted.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Christian Apologetics.

THE REV. HENRY WACE (NO. 2).

IT will perhaps be remembered that the great orthodox scholar, the Rev. Henry Wace, undertook to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the Four Gospels by means of one of them—that according to Luke—his first step being to show that the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles were composed by one and the same writer. This being done, his next step was to show that the Book of the Acts was written by a fellow-laborer of Paul, who accompanied that self-styled apostle on some of the journeys recorded in the Acts; and finally, that this co-worker was the Luke named in some of the doubtful Pauline Epistles. Our reverend apologist had noticed that in the majority of the narratives in the Acts the writer had spoken of Paul and his colleagues in the third person, as "they" and "them"; but also that in certain other narratives he wrote in the first person, and employed the pronouns "we" and "us," thereby showing that he had accompanied Paul on those particular journeys.

Having reached this point, our very confident apologist next says that "there is no other known companion of Paul, save Luke, to whom the circumstances mentioned in the Acts are appropriate." Hence it follows that Luke was the writer. But had Dr. Wace read the "we" narratives a little more carefully, he would have perceived that the writer, when he said "we" and "us," did not mean himself and Paul, or himself and Paul and Paul's colleagues, but referred to himself and a friend, or to himself and two or more friends. The "we" and "us" do not include Paul or Paul's colleagues—which is another proof that the writer, whatever his name, was not a fellow-laborer of Paul. We will now look at the "we" portions of the Acts. These sections are the following: Acts xvi. 10—40; Acts xx. 4—xxi. 19; Acts xxvii. 1—xxviii. 16.

The Book of the Acts was compiled by a second century Luke from some pre-existing apocryphal writings, which, after that compiler's day, ceased to be copied. These writings were: the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Paul, the Travels of Peter, the Travels of Paul, and the Travels of Peter and Paul. The first twelve chapters of the Acts were taken from the writings relating to Peter; the remainder of the book from the writings relating to Paul. But within the last-named section are dovetailed some narratives written in the first person—the "we" and "us" portion—which were taken from another apocryphal source. The latter I take to have been the "Travels of Peter and Paul." If such were the case, it was Peter and Peter's colleagues who were the "we" and "us." We know from Papias and Irenaeus

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that Peter was said to have gone about preaching, accompanied by an interpreter named Mark; and we know from other sources that Peter and Paul were said to have travelled together, and entered Rome together, where each suffered martyrdom. We have thus two parties—Paul the leader of one, and Peter of the other—who meet, then separate, then meet again, and again separate, and finally sail together in the same ship to Rome. Bearing these facts in mind, we will now see how they harmonise with the "we" narratives.

The Pauline party (Paul, Silas, and Timothy), after passing by Mysia, came to Troas (Acts xvi. 8), where it was joined by the "we" party.

"Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi..... And as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain maid..... following after Paul and us, cried out, saying, These men are servants of the most high God..... [For casting an evil spirit out of this maid Paul and Silas were scourged and put into prison, but released next day]..... and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed" (Acts xvi. 11, 12, 16, 17, 40).

The "we" party apparently remained at Philippi unmolested. Paul, Silas, and Timothy went on to Thessalonica, and then to Berea. Paul went alone to Athens, and from thence to Corinth, where he remained "a year and six months," after which he "sailed thence for Syria," and "they came to Ephesus" (xviii. 19); whence he went to Cæsarea, and afterwards to Antioch, where he "spent some time." Setting out again, Paul and his colleagues passed through Galatia and Phrygia, and came to Ephesus, where he remained teaching for two years and three months, after which he "came into Greece," where he "spent three months," and then commenced "to return through Macedonia." And here the "we" narrative again comes in.

"And there accompanied Paul, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus (xx. 4). But these had gone before, and were waiting for us at Troas. And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came to Troas, where we tarried seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow, and prolonged his speech until midnight..... even till break of day, he departed..... But we, going before to the ship, set sail for Assos, their intending to take in Paul..... And when he met us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene..... and the day after we came to Miletus..... we came to Cos..... Rhodes..... Patara..... and landed at Tyre (xxi. 3)..... And having found the disciples, we tarried there seven days; we arrived at Ptolemais; and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him (xxi. 8)..... And after these days..... when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry" (xxi. 19).

After reading the foregoing, it becomes evident, first, that the "we" party was composed of at least two persons; and next, that this party did not include Paul. It also becomes evident that the two "we" narratives—which Luke has separated in order to insert some fresh Pauline travels from another source—are connected, and form one continuous narrative. The Pauline party and the "we" party first met at Troas, and travelled together to Philippi. There Paul was cast into prison, but when released the next day, he and his colleagues left that city, leaving the "we" party behind. The latter party remained at Philippi for some days, keeping the Passover with the Jews in that city; but when "the days of unleavened bread" were over, they sailed away from Philippi," and came to Troas, where Paul and his seven colleagues awaited them by appointment—made when Paul was leaving Philippi, though omitted by Luke when dividing the journey. At Troas, Paul and his colleagues again separated from the "we" party, the latter taking

ship to Assos, where Paul joined them and entered the ship, his colleagues not being of sufficient importance to be named. At Tyre the "we" party found some of the Jewish Christian church, and remained with them seven days. At Ptolemais this party found some more of "the brethren" and "abode with them one day." At Cæsarea the "we" party entered the house of Philip the deacon, and "abode with him." Finally, when the "we" party came to Jerusalem, "the brethren"—that is to say, the apostolic church in that city—"received them gladly." Here it is evident that the "we" party were well known to the church at Jerusalem, and were no doubt themselves apostolic. And where was Paul? Well, he was left out in the cold. He had also come to Jerusalem, but not being a member of the Jewish Christian church in that city, he had not the right to enter their place of meeting. However, the next day, when the elders of the Nazarene church had assembled, the "we" party, acting as sponsors, led Paul into their meeting place, and introduced him to the president James. Later on, when Paul set sail for Rome, the "we" party accompanied him, and entered Rome with him. There the "history" ends.

Who, now, were the "we" party? They were certainly not fellow-laborers of Paul. Taking into consideration the mention of "the days of unleavened bread," they were Judaizing Christians, like all the apostolic party. They met "disciples" and "brethren" to whom they were known, and stayed with them; they lodged with Philip, one of the apostolic church, who was unknown to Paul; they had the entrée to the inner circle of the church at Jerusalem; they were known to James and to the elders of that church, and were welcomed as brethren; they were higher in the estimation of that church than Paul or any of Paul's colleagues. Who, then, were the "we" party? Now, taking into account the fact that Peter and Paul were believed to have travelled together, and to have sailed to Rome together, and that these two leaders were represented in a fraudulent Christian writing as having done so, there can be little doubt, I think, that the "we" party consisted of Peter and a companion—the latter being the legendary interpreter Mark. If such were the case, Mark, being a Greek scholar, would be represented as doing the writing, and his "we" and "us" would refer to Peter and himself. ABRACADABRA.

### Freethinkers at Frascati's.

#### TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL DINNER OF LONDON "SAINTS."

THERE was an excellent attendance at the Twenty-Fifth Annual Dinner, under the Auspices of the National Secular Society, at the Restaurant Frascati, Oxford-street, W., on the 12th inst., when the chair was occupied by Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the N. S. S., and Editor of the *Freethinker*. The repast was served in the Alexandra room, and a reception was held prior to the banquet by the President. During the evening an attractive musical program was rendered by Miss Minnie Leslie, of the Aldwych Theatre, Mr. Gay Le Feuvre, of the Gaiety Theatre, Mr. Will Edwards, the popular comedian, and Madame Saunders, pianist.

At the outset Mr. Foote put everyone in a good humor by saying "grace," and he quoted some telling lines of Shakespeare with the happiest effect. The President was in fine form, and his "Chairman's Address" was much to the taste of the large and appreciative gathering.

Mr. Foote said they had to meet the Puritanic objection that they ought not to be enjoying themselves whilst so many men were in the grip of possible death. If, however, they did not eat till the War was over, they would all be remarkably thin at the end. It was no dishonor to the soldiers abroad that the soldiers at home should be in good company. Freethinkers agreed that war was a curse to the world; but it was also agreed that fighting had to be done. If Great Britain did not conquer, German militarism will have conquered us. Charles Bradlaugh, years ago, publicly protested against the Egyptian War, and nearly lost his life. The only time they could ensue peace was during peace. There must be something wrong if statesmen have no other



method of gaining their ends than the bloodshed of stricken battlefields. Burke said that statesmen should command wider vision than others. Leaders should hold up the eternal principles of humanity, without which, mankind was simply vermin—the more the worse. The great Freethinkers, Voltaire, Paine, and Bradlaugh were all men who worked for peace, and the Freethought Party had always stood for the principle of human brotherhood. Justice was the only principle that could govern the world righteously. The question was between the ruling of charlatans or statesmen. Reason can alone reform and purify the world. That had been his own life's mission; not so long a life now as it was thirty years ago. He hoped the Freethought Party would never be without its fighters. The tradition of Charles Bradlaugh was the tradition of the Party. It was the people that had to be appealed to, whose vision would be widened by the absolute common sense of Freethought.

The veteran, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, in proposing the toast of "The National Secular Society," said that, although it was claimed that the present War was the greatest of all campaigns, a still greater war was the battle of Freethought against superstition, which had lasted throughout the centuries. Freethought taught men to help one another instead of killing one another. The task was to get people to think, to bring humanity into rational moods, and strive for the permanent happiness of the people.

A witty reply was given by Miss Edith Vance, the N. S. S. Secretary, who said, like the curate, she would not call the guests ladies and gentlemen, because she knew them too well. Freethought had succeeded, and that was why clerical opposition was so determined. Secularists were used to being referred to as "a contemptible little army." Like British soldiers, they took rations when they could, and, at other times, did without. Secularists had no allies and fought a lone hand; where they led others followed.

Mr. C. Cohen, in proposing the toast of "Freedom," said although Freethinkers had the most right to talk of freedom everybody was said to be fighting for it to-day, including British, Russians, French, Belgians, and Germans. For years Europe had been reactionary, and German militarism was part of that wave of reaction. The present colossal War was inevitable; but war always meant barbarism and degradation. The end of the conflict will see Europe fifty years further back. Only one man in a thousand sees the truth, and only one man in a million speaks out. Secularists stand for freedom, and that was why they opposed religion, which rent men asunder. Parsees, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Christians fought and died together; but they would not pray together. The message of Freethought was intellectual freedom.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd responded, and pointed out that freedom was the one thing lacking in the freest country under the sun, and freedom was an impossibility so long as superstition prevailed. Children were taught lies, and if anyone ventured to regard them as lies they were persecuted. Intellectual freedom was the proudest possession, and the most difficult to acquire. Those who obtained freedom had to suffer for it, but the time was coming when freedom would gain the victory.

A notable personality among the guests was that wonderful old man, Mr. Side, of Walworth, who is in his ninetieth year, and who enjoyed the banquet and concert with all the gusto of a young man. On Christmas Day this veteran sat down to dinner with his family, thirty-two in number, all of them Freethinkers. This is a proud record, and one which should hearten those who have to fight the battle of Freethought against overwhelming odds. Another veteran present was Mr. Thurlow, formerly a well-known lecturer. A goodly number of guests came long distances, quite a party travelling from Southend and Westcliff.

Since the far-off days of Holyoake and Charles Southwell, down through the stormy times of Charles Bradlaugh to the present time, the Secularists have always had the finest orators, and the speakers of to-day easily maintain the proud reputation of their honored predecessors. It is one of the chief fighting weapons of a party, which has done more for intellectual emancipation than any other organisation in the English-speaking world. Anyone listening to the dignified and finely-phrased speech of Mr. Foots, the eloquent tongues of Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Moss, and the felicitous utterance of Miss Vance at the Annual Dinner, must have recognised that a party possessing such orators must, sooner or later, emancipate the nation from the "lie at the lips of the priest." The serried ranks of guests, too, which included so many ladies, shows that the old prejudices against Freethought is fast dying out; and that the "contemptible little army" of Secularists has brought victory within the grasp of the realities of the future.

C. E. S.

We must laugh at men to avoid crying.—*Napoleon.*

## Acid Drops.

Having got over the Day of Intercession, without its having made any perceptible difference to the course of the War, the Churches are now proceeding with their "Come to Church Campaign" for the end of this month. Everybody in the country is to receive an invitation—or has received one—and it is hoped that the churches will be full for once in a way. Mr. F. B. Meyer told a *Daily News* representative the other day that things were getting very serious. "Church statistics are declining, denominations are losing members, scholars, and local preachers"—hence the campaign. Thirty tons of "campaign literature" has been sent out, which includes 50 000 cards per day. This will help the printing trade through what is rather a trying time, and it is possible that some may be induced to attend church who would otherwise remain absent. Mr. Meyer recommends all preachers to make their sermons short, which is rather hard on some of them. If they do get a full church once in a way, it is hard to advise them not to take full advantage of their opportunity.

There is nothing that so impresses one with the unreflectiveness of ordinary human nature as "campaigns" of this character. One can understand a business firm spending a lot of money on advertising a new thing, or an article which it is admitted people can do very well without. But the claim is that religion is neither new nor dispensable. It is one of the oldest of things, and everybody knows it is there. The churches are there, and everybody knows that the clergy are anxious for the people to come in. The clergy are there, and they assure us that people cannot do without religion, and that if they try to do without it their whole nature cries out for it. And yet religion simply cannot live without these numerous artificial stimulants to interest. There must be one long, perpetual round of exhortations, missions, and more or less theatrical displays to keep some people up to the attendance point. And only one here and there seems to realise that all this elaborate machinery is proof positive that religion is not really indispensable. It is something that nearly everybody can do without with the greatest of ease. And when they have gone without it, they never know that anything is missing until the parson comes along and points out that something is wanted. And if going without religion did not involve going without *him*, he would not realise the tremendous loss either. Whoever heard of a parson troubling about a religion that could be believed or practised without a parson?

Nature will, as usual, buck up in the Spring, and devote all her energies to the creation of human and other life. Kaiser William, whose brilliant victories, especially over "General Freuch's contemptible little army," have wearied him for the time, and induced him to take it easy, is also going to buck up in the Spring. He announces that the slaughter will begin again with fresh vigor. We know who will win. Nature *must* win, in the long run. Men will get tired of destroying; Nature will never get tired of reproducing.

A force of 5,000 Turkish soldiers was said to have left Jerusalem the other day *en route* for Egypt. The time the Jews took to accomplish that journey—in the reverse direction—was forty years. In that instance the caravan was under the leadership of God. Unless the Turks can improve upon that record it will be time enough for the Government to look out for the invading army about 1955.

The clerical mind, like the clerical "god," passes all understanding. Here is a profound thought from Canon Lytleton, "I fancy that since the casualty list began its record, there has been less talk of death being the end." M'yes! Yet if the Canon's creed be true, death means the beginning of eternal torment for many a gallant soldier and sailor.

"When you arrive in England, the first thing you look for is Shakespeare's statue. You find Wellington's," said Victor Hugo. This shows that the distinguished Frenchman had not discovered Leicester Square.

Mr. Max Beerbohm says "English society is always ruled by a dandy." It is very strange that society folk should be so reverential towards old Father Adam, who was not distinguished for his fine clothes.

It has been suggested by a well known writer, Mr. E. Kay Robinson, that seeing we have men of all sorts of religions

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opinions fighting with the Allies, it would be a good thing to establish a Church or Temple in which all might unite in common worship, with King George V. as the centre-piece. This is precisely one of those insane suggestions that religious men are constantly making, without being the least daunted by its impracticability. Of course, men of all religions are fighting together, just as they may walk together, work together, or talk together. But the one thing they will not do is to worship together. Religious worship is a common thing, but it is never observed in common.

Dr. N. J. Whynant writes in the current issue of the *Islamic Review* on "Atheism in the light of Philosophy and Psychology." Its value may be gauged by the remark that "If one gets down to the true nature of things, it is extremely doubtful if any man in reality could be called an Atheist." This is, of course, sheer nonsense. Atheists might at least be permitted to know *what* they are. And its meaning has always been precise enough and definite enough—to Atheists. If it has not been definite enough to believers, this is because they have never taken the trouble to find out its meaning. Dr. Whynant seems to consider it as synonymous with the denial of a "prime cause"—which in itself is a metaphysical conundrum, and has no necessary connection with either Atheism or Theism. And on that point an Atheist would observe that he does not *believe* in a "prime cause," because such an expression is ultimately meaningless. If only people would find out what they mean by leading terms, or whether they mean anything at all, the world's controversies could be brought within a comparatively small compass.

A recruiting advertisement says "What will you answer when your children grow up and say, 'Father, why weren't you a soldier, too?'" This appeal should "pull in" a few thousand unmarried curates.

At Old Brentford Church a prayer-book, alleged to have saved a soldier's life, is being exhibited. The volume was carried in the man's trouser-pocket, and stopped a bullet. The clergy might find room in their little museum for that tobacco tin which stopped two bullets in another soldier's chest.

There were 11,706 books published last year. Fiction heads the list with 1,941 publications, and theology, which is largely fiction, made a good second with 1,020, whilst educational books only numbered 546. English Christians like plenty of romance in their books as well as in their theology.

A rifle range has been established in the crypt of Kennington Parish Church. A neighboring church at Brixton has had one some time. If Holy Mother Church cannot teach men the value of peace, she can instruct them how to blow each other to pieces.

A writer in the *Academy* says appreciation of good food comes with middle age and matures in later years. It is curious that Adam, who lived to be near a thousand years old, should have a schoolboy's liking for apples.

*John Bull* calls attention to the fact that during 1914 the income of the various Bible societies amounted to £300,000, while Home and Foreign Missions received £3,500,000. Charities for the Blind received £90,000, and General Hospitals £750,000. We paid, says the editor, "nearly four millions to ensure human salvation after death, and about three-quarters of a million to relieve human suffering in life. Which is not religion." We agree with the complaint as to the proportion spent on this world and the next, but we demur to the conclusion. It is religion. That is what religion has always meant; and if we take away the desire to secure salvation after death there is nothing left in religion—particularly the Christian religion—worth talking about. And in defence of the missionaries we would point out that a great deal of the money does not go in securing salvation after death. A fair proportion goes towards securing comfortable jobs for missionaries on earth.

Inoculation is not compulsory in the Army—at least theoretically. How it works out in practice is shown by the following from the R. G. A. Company Orders—quoted by *John Bull*:—

"It is brought to the notice of all ranks that no leave can be granted to N. C. O.'s and men who have not been inoculated against enteric fever." Presumably, commissioned officers may do as they please without punishment. We should be glad to see *John Bull*

giving full publicity to another way in which Army officials set aside a "scrap of paper" when it pleases them. Not a week passes without our receiving complaints from Freethinkers in the ranks, who are compelled to attend Church service in spite of their protest that they do not believe in it. Others, who gain relief by sheer persistence, are put to perform duties during Church service that are usually imposed by way of punishment. Perhaps when Parliament reopens some member may be found independent enough to raise the whole question in a way that will force the Government to see that its undertakings towards the men who enlist are carried out, both in the letter and in the spirit.

For five months mere man has been showing what he could do in the way of destruction. And now "Providence" is evidently getting jealous, and is bent on showing how much greater are its powers in that line. Last week Italy experienced an earthquake which wiped out above a score of towns and villages in about the time that German or British gunners would have taken to bring a battery into action. One town of 11,000 inhabitants was practically wiped out. At the time of writing the casualties are estimated at about 12,000 killed and 20,000 wounded. It is enough to make Krupps' green with envy. Man's destructive efforts are puny when compared with these "acts of Providence," and it is enough to make Germany and the Allies give up their work in disgust—unless they take it as a hint to follow the example of "our heavenly Father," and redouble their destructive efforts.

A well-known novelist, writing in *T. P.'s Weekly*, says that the British public "loves villains." There is a fine assortment in the Bible.

Enthusiastic workers for the men in the fighting line have asked permission to knit in places of worship during sermon-time. The clergy have to knit their brows to explain God's attitude in the present European War.

According to the papers, one of the British regiments has been presented with a small pony, an elephant, and a stag-hound as "mascots." The colonel will feel something like poor, old Noah when he was forming his famous collection.

The ha'penny press announces that the new baboon at the Zoological Gardens has been "christened." We should like to know who performed the ceremony.

Mr. R. J. Campbell's suggestion that the Pope should be asked to convene a council of the Churches to organise the peace of the world is creating some discussion in the religious press. It concludes that the Roman Catholic Church is the only one that occupies a commanding position in the Christian world—which we have always said was the case. And it also justifies Bradlaugh's statement that the Roman Church is the ultimate enemy that Freethought will have to meet and conquer. We have little doubt or fear as to the issue of the conflict, but it is as well for Freethinkers to bear this in mind. The Roman Church was the first, and it will in all probability be the last. It is the most really comprehensive Church; it is fundamentally more human than other Churches in its methods; it is better organised; and for all these reasons the most dangerous of all. Local conditions in this country compel us to pay first attention to Protestantism, but we do not forget which is our oldest and our deadliest enemy.

Of course, a number of the Protestants in this country are averse to doing anything that would seem to acknowledge the authority of the Pope, and we feel pretty certain that the proposal will end where it began—as a proposal. Such a conference would be bound to result in the Roman Church getting the largest advertisement, and that is precisely what all the other Churches are after. For years there has existed in Europe movements for the securing of peace, and all the Churches have stood practically aloof. Rev. F. B. Meyer said, in reply to a request for his opinion on Mr. Campbell's proposal, that "if the Church of Christ in Europe—and in the world—were united it could stop this War in a week." We daresay; but if the Christian Churches in Europe had been steadily united against war for only the past hundred years, this War would have been an utter impossibility. As it is, not only have the Churches not opposed war, but religious feeling and religious belief have been powerful ingredients in most of the more important wars of the past two centuries. Many other prominent clergymen have replied to the effect that Christianity ought to make a united effort to prevent wars in the future. This is a



pious aspiration, and it is framed in such a way that every one can agree with it. And pious aspirations are all that any Church Council is likely to give to the world.

A poem on the War has been published with the quaint title "The Trade of the Angels." We have heard of the streets of heaven, but were unaware that they possessed a shopping centre.

A violent earthquake has shaken Rome, accompanied with loss of life and considerable damage. The Pope has ordered prayers to be said. Perhaps some enthusiastic Catholic will suggest the use of praying-barrels, as in the East. The priest could work them in eight hours' shifts.

Some time ago, that pious publicist, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, tried to associate the present European War with Atheism, overlooking the trifling fact that there are ten millions of his co-religionists under arms, whilst the Greek Church and fancy religions absorb the bulk of the remainder. Now Mr. Cecil Chesterton has published a book with the same object, entitled, *The Prussian Hath Said in His Heart*. Honest Atheism has no more to do with talking hearts than talking asses.

Some people have been asking Archdeacon Wilberforce "Why does not God stop the War?" The Archdeacon replies that "Such interference on the part of an external world-ruler would frustrate the whole purpose of life's education. These hideous atrocities which have shocked the whole world are, in effect, in the immutable law of evolution which works unfailingly, in the long run, for universal improvement." Well, if Archdeacon Wilberforce is certain of this, why on earth does he blame the Germans for forcing on the War? The War is part of life's education, and if it results in universal improvement, there is no justification for wishing that it had never occurred. Our own complaint about German aggression is based upon the plain consideration that the world could have done very well without the War, that it is education in quite the wrong direction, and that instead of making for universal improvement, it bids fair to end in universal demoralisation. But then we do not consider the purpose of God, and that makes a world of difference.

"Billy Sunday," America's great "soul-saver," has just opened a campaign in Philadelphia. A huge tabernacle has been built, capable of holding 20,000 people. The evangelist's oratory and method is thus described in an American paper:—

"He entered the tabernacle at great speed, leaped at a bound to the top of the table on the stage, smacked his hands together with a report like a rifle shot, and raised his voice to a shriek, crying: 'Come on, you forces of evil in Philadelphia, that have made the Church a doormat to wipe your dirty feet upon; come on, you triple extract of infamy; come on, you assassins of character; come on, you defamers of God and enemies of His Church; come on, you bull-necked, beetle-browed, hog-jowled, peanut-brained, weasel-eyed, four-flushers of false alarms and excess baggage! In the name of Almighty God, I challenge and defy you. I'm here for nine weeks; come on, and I'll deliver the goods express prepaid.'

"Then Billy Sunday's voice died away to a whisper, his breath came in gasps, sweat streamed from his face, he let himself down from the table top, caught up a pitcher of water, and drained the glass at a gulp."

It is rather difficult for decent people to adequately realise the type of mind that can take delight in such exhibitions, but it throws a strong light upon the amount of crass superstition and barbarism current in "civilised" society. It is said that Sunday's income reaches a very large figure, and that he insists on cash payment. We believe that some clergymen in America have publicly protested against Sunday, his methods, and his language. It is a pity that they do not bear this in mind when they are dwelling upon the beneficial influence of Christianity on character.

Rev. Wilfred Lawson Broadbent, living at Delaney-street, Camden Town, a London missionary, was brought up at Bow-street before Sir John Dickinson, for talking offensively to some soldiers and a female outside Holborn Restaurant, where they had been dining. One of the reverend gentleman's epithets was too bad to print, and the magistrate said he was unfit for his occupation. He was bound over to be of good behavior for three months.

Rev. James Eager, of Barscough, Ormskirk, Lancs., left £17,919 net, and left a beer-house to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool. It is to be used, if possible, for the benefit of the Mission at Barscough. We suggest

that a copy of our *Bible and Beer* should be bound in sheepskin and presented to the Archbishop.

Father Bernard Vaughan is fighting, or cheering on England to fight for "an everlasting peace." That's a very long peace indeed. Longer than the way to Tipperary. Father Vaughan will never live to see it through.

Statistics for 1914 for the Congregational Church show an increased membership of 1,635. This is not a very large increase when one remembers that these figures make no allowance for the increase in population. A greater discounting of this increase comes, however, from the fact that the Sunday-schools show a decrease of 12,877. This is striking at the very source of the supply. It is indeed safe prophesying that were religious instruction kept from the children for two or three generations, religion in this country would be a negligible quantity. The *Christian World* says that this decline in the Sunday-schools is "a grave matter, and calls for serious consideration." It suggests that one cause is that the Sunday-schools are too uncomfortable when compared with the day-schools—to tempt children. We would suggest that one very powerful cause may be that parents are less ready than they were to force religion on children. And that is a symptom of the general weakening of religious belief.

#### FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

Christianity has had nearly 2,000 years of trial in which to turn Europe into a Paradise upon earth, to so thoroughly dominate nations and rulers that they must obey its teachings in every hour. Let us not forget that Christianity has been all-powerful; no one dared lift a voice against her, and she ordered things as she chose. What is the result? Is Europe peaceful, beneficent, moral, and just? Do men live in harmony and concord? Are the weak safe from the strong? We have the sorry spectacle of the greatest empires of modern times flying at each others' throats, despatching thousands of men to the field of battle, spending millions of pounds on material of destruction, turning peaceful fields into a very hell upon earth, and each side praying for victory. No wonder that learned men ask, "Why does not Christianity speak with authority to Christendom to-day?" The answer is not far to seek: Christianity has lamentably failed. She is supposed to possess the hearts of these peoples; nominally, they are followers of her teaching, but in reality they follow their own selfish ways. Just think for a moment of the terrible havoc in poor Belgium. She is a shuttle-cock for her stronger neighbors, and in her territory to-day, as in the days of the great Napoleon, despite the desperate valor of her sons, she is trodden under foot by the invader. Can any amount of compensation pay for the losses she has suffered? Would all the gold in the world be of any use to her to bring back again a single life lost in her defence? Martyrs all in the sacred duty of protecting their motherland against a strong foe; may their souls rest in peace! How like unto them are those brave men who fought so pluckily only a short time ago in Morocco, in Tripoli, in Turkey, fighting to keep their land free from the alien invader. Europe, can you realise exactly what they suffered? You have the same picture in Belgium to-day; but whilst you name the Belgians "patriots," you called those Eastern warriors "fanatics": why, only the complex system of logic obtaining in "civilised" lands can explain. Think of all men have suffered through war, think of the lands plundered and ravaged, the homes rendered desolate, the precious lives lost in this seething cauldron of blood! Europe has been always turbulent: each country has fought with the other until there was no longer any land to tempt them to a piratical expedition.—*Khalid Sheldrake, "Islamic Review."*

#### HEAVEN AND THE WAR.

God was worried. The Kaiser assumed that he did as he wanted; the Germans—or at least the German women—prayed to God for victory, and so did the French priests and the Russians and the Belgians and some of the English and Austrians and King Nicholas of Montenegro. Obviously God could not please all; and some of those who used to be his chosen people were fighting on one side and some on the other.

So at last God asked Satan's advice. "Don't take any notice of prayers or newspapers for a month at least," said Satan. "Go away and have a thorough rest. I will look after the souls till you come back."

And God took Satan's advice. And so people connected with the War (and particularly the enemy) lied and got drunk and committed the most disgusting atrocities and Hun-like things—just as they did when God was at home.—*P. G. B. Jourdain ("Open Court," Chicago).*

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To Correspondents.

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.**—A general statement concerning this Fund, as well as last year's, will be made next week. A number of subscriptions for 1915 are already to hand, and these will be acknowledged when the Fund for this year is formally inaugurated.

**N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.**—Miss Vance, Secretary, acknowledges:—Mr. and Mrs. King, 8s.; Mr. A. H. Mitchell, 5s.

**G. BETS-LYNN.**—Sorry we cannot find space for such a discussion.

**E. PARKER.**—What you think you have found in "testing Spiritualism" is not worth the trouble of the search. Still, if you are satisfied, we have no wish to complain.

**W. W. S.**—You rhyme "walk" and "pork" in the first two lines, which are otherwise about as bad as could be.

**R. ALLEN (N. Z.).**—A dreadful trouble to find suitable premises—as you rightly imagine.

**A. C.**—Every article in the *Freethinker* is signed by the author, and he alone is responsible for all the opinions expressed therein. The editorial responsibility only extends so far as the articles are properly written and express a point of view worthy of publicity. For the rest, Mr. Mangasarian's point of view is there to speak for itself, and we are of opinion that his opinions are always expressed with sufficient clearness to obviate the necessity for any further interpretation.

**H. MOZLEY.**—We have never asked for more than justice all round, and we hope that we shall never cease to ask for less—even for Germans. We have expressed our disgust, over and over again, at the reported brutalities of German soldiers, and no one can detest the whole system of German militarism more than we do. But we try to keep a level head ourselves, and would like others to keep a level head also. We agree with a recent leading article in the *Times* that "It is not true that everything British is good because we are now fighting the Germans, or even that everything German is bad. When we have finished agreeing that the reputation of Germany in all the arts of peace has been greatly exaggerated, let us take equal trouble to discover what elements in German civilisation are still sound, and are needed as contributions or examples to our common European life."

**M. ROGERS.**—(1) We cannot continue such correspondence by post. You will get what you want as well done where you reside as you will in London. You evidently don't understand the cost of printing. Publishing six copies of so large a pamphlet would be just an expensive whim or luxury. Anyhow, we do not undertake any outside printing beyond our own; and we only do that for our own security and to defy the bigots if necessary. (2) The writer you refer to was probably satirical. Even if it were a blunder it would not be worth following up. Life is not long enough.

**J. PARBRIDGE.**—It is kind of the Birmingham Branch to take so much trouble, and its suggestions shall be considered, but our hands are full just at present. What the *Freethinker* needs most of all, as you say, is advertising, which is unfortunately very expensive.

**C. NIXON.**—Your compliment almost makes us blush. Still, it is something to earn appreciation from plain, honest men; and we hope that we have done something to earn it.

**J. A. REID.**—Thanks for good wishes to "self and staff."

**J. H.**—We fancy you would prefer to be answered under initials. We appreciate your surprise at the "freshness" of the *Freethinker* week after week. We believe that only writers who have their heart in the work could achieve this. What a man really feels he will usually express well—not always elegantly, but well.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

The *Freethinkers'* Annual Dinner this year showed some falling off in point of numbers. The large room at the Restaurant Frascati was, however, comfortably filled, and the size of the gathering was, in the circumstances, very gratifying. Among visitors from the provinces we observed Mr. Bailey, Manchester; Mr. Alward, Grimsby; Mr. Brown, Oxford; Mr. Elstob, Newcastle; and Mr. and Mrs. Caunter, Margate. The Army was represented by Captain Lathom, and Mr. Macdonnell, of the new Canadian Contingent. Mr. W. Heaford, were sorry to learn, had not yet sufficiently recovered from his recent illness to be present. Captain Taylor and Mr. and Mrs. King—familiar figures at these functions—were prevented at the last moment from attending.

So far as the Dinner itself was concerned, it may be pronounced a complete success. Owing to the restricted time

—due to the new closing regulations—the speeches were few, and commendably brief. Mr. A. B. Moss and Miss Vance dealt with the toast of "The National Secular Society," and Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd with that of "Freedom." Miss Minnie Leslie, of the Aldwych Theatre, won much applause by her song, "The Persian Rose," and Mr. Guy Le Feuvre, of the Gaiety, earned an encore by his singing of a couple of negro folk songs. A couple of songs by Mr. Will Edwards, whom the Chairman described as an "institution," were late but very welcome items in the evening's entertainment. A fuller report of the proceedings will be found in another column.

We were glad to see Mr. Side, the venerable veteran of Walworth, again at the Annual Dinner. He is already in the nineties, and looks as if he might reach the century. He is a bit deaf, but his eyesight is good, his voice is sound and clear, and he stands up as straight as a rod. May he "cheat the Deil" for many a day yet. He is a teetotaler, a vegetarian, a non-smoker, and Atheist; but whether the same regimen will result in the same longevity we are unable to say.

The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd., held a Special Meeting at Frascati's before the Dinner, to formally consider the situation in view of the death of Mr. T. Harper, of the old legal firm of Harper & Battcock, who, by the way, used to do work for the late Charles Bradlaugh. Mr. Harper co-operated with Mr. Foote in establishing the Secular Society, Ltd., in 1898, and had been the Society's solicitor. He had the law on the subject of "blasphemy" at his fingers' ends, and he had a deep and wide acquaintance with the Bowman Bequest Case. He drew up Mr. Bowman's will himself, as it happened, in consequence of the *Freethinker* advertisement. Considerable progress had been made with the case, after discussions with Mr. Foote, and the solicitor who is lending his aid to organise the old firm on a new basis finds everything clear and plain enough. Discussing the matter over with this gentleman once more one sees how satisfactory our position is. But we must not risk contempt of court.

In the *Manchester Guardian* there recently appeared a very powerfully written article—probably from the pen of Mr. L. T. Hobhouse—on the dearth of great men in the European War. He points out that up to the present there is no commanding voice, either in this country or elsewhere, that has been found to say the right thing which will command the attention of the world and compel it to admit the rule of something higher than mere force. As to the clergy, with their talk of peace, Mr. Hobhouse offers a test of their sincerity and power. He says:—

"Let the Germans see one of their ecclesiastical authorities ordering the Kaiser out of church until he will make good the wrongs of Belgium, and they will very speedily be convinced that a religion which can so inspire its leading exponents must at least command respect. Let our people see the clergy setting themselves against the mania for hunting up German affinities in a back street of East London. Let them see ministers of religion recalling their neighbors from the cruelty of panic to the just precautions of good sense, and our people, too, after a moment of fury, will learn once again to respect the religion which can put a bridle upon them."

Mr. Hobhouse does not mean that this would cause men to believe in religious doctrines. He is too great a student of philosophy not to be fully aware of the fact that a large part of the educated intellect of Europe has parted with religion for ever. But he points out that this would at least cause men to respect religion and religious teachers. And with that we agree. We ourselves can look back with respect upon some of the great religious teachers of the past. They were men of ability, of power, and of earnestness. We detest their religious teachings, but we can respect the men. But who can respect the men of our present-day clergy? There is here neither ability nor courage. Only a readiness to seize on any cry that promises popularity, and a willingness to tone down any doctrine or teaching that threatens to offend a sufficiently large number of their congregation.

Our shop manager informs us that he is continually adding new subscribers to his list as a consequence of sending specimen copies to addresses furnished by those who are already readers of the *Freethinker*. Of course, new subscribers must be found for every paper that is to hold its own against the inevitable "wastage" from death and other causes, and this is a form of propaganda in which every well-wisher to Freethought can join. The *Freethinker* is not kept alive for commercial reasons, and if all our readers would bear this in mind, and do their best, we see no insuperable obstacle to doubling the circulation of the paper within a fairly brief period. What the *Freethinker* needs is to be known.



## The Spirituality of Freethought.

WITH the above title as a finger-post, the charge of heresy may be incurred; but, patience, readers, and you shall see the book of Truth opened, and the Angels of Liberty shall sing sweeter than a thousand nightingales in the groves of Arcady. The drab-colored birds are the best songsters; but crows are black, and we imagine that their tuneless noise inspired parsonic intonation. We confess a love for the modestly dressed singers; we think no less of their song for the parsimony of nature in not decking the thrush out in the garb of the humming-bird, or the nightingale in the riotous colors of the peacock. It is their song that matters. A robin on a branch, a nightingale in the woods, a lark beating its wings in the free air of heaven—what thoughts of profit in this world, or the world to come, have they as their notes of joy are flung with a recklessness as freely as the stars shine, or as dew is scattered on the grass? And you answer none. No profit, no garnering of riches, no oppression of other birds in wood or meadow, no swinging of incense; with a prodigality to put the human race to shame they seem to say, "I am going to sing, hell take you if you do not rejoice with me, here is my song." A nightingale does not sing for one year in that hallowed spot where Keats heard it, and then, in the next, change its living with one in Saffron Walden. Neither does the blackbird receive a call to sing in Lancashire, and forsake the ploughed fields of Somerset. Poor things, they are only birds, and not so clever as a certain useless section of our society.

"There is no Hell," says the lark; "caw-caw," says the crow, "I know, I know, there is." "You shall not stop my song," says the lark; "you may cage me, you may clip my wings with the Blasphemy Laws, but I tell you, along with many other things, there is no proof of Hell." "Caw-caw," says the crow; "damn your liveliness; less of it, or I will get all the other birds to boycott you." But still the lark sings, and his song is not inspired by profits, and that explains its persistence, that explains the vitality of Freethought, from the time of Euripides onwards.

There are some things which money cannot buy, and for this state of things we thank whatever gods may be. Money cannot buy noble minds. Money cannot inspire noble thoughts; hence, we arrive at the position of the true Freethinker who cannot be bought in the same manner as those who merited the scorn of Milton:—

"Enow of such as for their bellies' sake  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
Of other care they little reckoning make,  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;  
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to  
A sheep-hook, or have learned ought else the least  
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!  
What recks it them? What need they? They are  
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But, swoll'n with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing fed;  
But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

Is this true to-day? These, these my brethren raise their nose, and say of Freethinkers, "base Materialists," vulgar Atheists; whilst, at the same time, they are outside the sphere of anything approaching spirituality by their position, their wealth, and their arrogance. They gather up riches on earth. Their insolence and ignorance would make a cat laugh. Their sense of importance in comparison with men of science and philosophers excites the derision of those who see the impotence of their teachings kept alive by the stimulation derived from blankets and soup and lordly patronage, and that beastly virtue known as charity. Away with the whole caboodle!

Up, up the lark is singing. Life is noble, insult is not with twaddle of blood sacrifice. For my sins I answer, and I alone, and I do not want Christ to die for me. You, you tiny specks in the region of eternity, what have you done for Christ? With your fat livings and temporal power you have insulted and mocked his name. You mean-souled wretches have made him a commercial asset; you have rioted in pastures where you have not worked, and you are not worthy of your common ancestor, Adam. With your place and power you dare to talk to me of a soul. Out upon you! You have not reached the humane level of common sense. Your ritual is nothing but that of the ancient medicine-man encompassed by modern architecture, and your dogma is so faulty that you dare not place it in front of a man. You must seize on the young mind or all is lost. You deny a soul to the sun who greets me at the eastern gate, you forbid it to the stars shining over my bed in the bracken; yet you, the ugliest race in history, claim your overfed bodies as houses for the soul. Certain numbers of your tribe believe that by battering the house about, you can make it more worthy as a dwelling-place for the soul! Pretty fellows to take spiritual command over others. Down the lark comes like an arrow from the bow of Apollo. His song has ended. With just enough food to keep him fit, with clear, cool water to drink, and with the blue sky as a roof, to his house his natural freedom brings contentment.

Fellow-Freethinkers, marvel not, we shall yet point the way to true Christianity, and the best of the seekers may yet merit the title of vulgar Atheist; when that time comes common sense will be as plentiful as bath-brick, there will be a soul in every daffodil that blows, and then we shall all wonder why we allowed the mist-gulpers, called priests, to talk to anyone of the soul, when their own lives were a negation of those things for which Christ stood. Material poverty is the irrevocable lot of Freethinkers, and we seriously doubt whether they would will it otherwise; to our eternal glory let it be said that we sang of truth and were satisfied with the modest consequences, for the approach to spirituality cannot be essayed in the purple and fine linen of a gigantic profit-making concern called "the Christian Religion."

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

## The Bible Kaiser.—III.

(Continued from p. 45.)

THE same story is worked up more artistically in a later chapter. Much of the language is identical in both. It is impossible to believe in the two occurrences, and both may be fiction. Whatever happened, David must have been the relater. He is depicted as generous, but Saul's account is, unfortunately, lacking.

Samuel being dead, David haunted the wilderness of Paran with his banditti. Nabal, a very rich farmer, lived in the vicinity; and at shearing time David sent to him for a big present. The reason given was as strange as the request. David protested he had robbed Nabal of nothing, and regarded this as a legitimate claim on his gratitude. It was like Bill Sikes demanding a Christmas-box on the ground that he had not committed a burglary on the premises.

Nabal tartly refused, and David set out with four hundred men to exact vengeance as well as meat. His intention was to kill Nabal and every male on his estate. The word *male* is not used, but an obscene paraphrase which we dare not repeat.

Abigail, the beautiful wife of Nabal, hastened to meet David with a fine present. She implored his mercy, and called her husband a rogue and a fool. David was mollified, Abigail returned home, and ten days afterwards Nabal died. Scripture says "the Lord smote" him, but his death was singularly opportune. David married the pretty widow, and took possession of the estate. Godliness, especially on David's method, is great gain.



Michal was given in marriage to Phalti, it being, as Renan observes, against the custom of the time for a woman to remain without a husband. David, however, who had no idea of mortifying the flesh, took Abinoam in Michal's place. He had, therefore, two wives and some wealth. David was getting on.

Saul being still on the trail, despite the adventure in the cave, David again repaired to Achish, King of Gath. Ziklag was given him and six hundred bandits to reside in, and they dwelt there for sixteen months. During this period they made raids into the territory of the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites, who were friends or allies of Achish. Being questioned as to his movements, David replied that he had raided in his native country; and, to cover the lie, he piously slaughtered every man, woman, and child in the villages he attacked, lest any survivors should "bring tidings to Gath." Dead men tell no tales, and David flourished in wealth and reputation. We can picture him, after a successful day's robbery and murder, quaffing his wine, twanging his harp, and singing praises to the Lord.

When the great battle occurred between the Philistines and the Jews, which resulted in the death of Saul, David was ready to fight against his own countrymen. But the Philistine princes wisely objected to his presence in the army, lest he should prove a traitor. Returning home to Ziklag, he found the place sacked by the Amalekites. The town was burnt, and all the women were taken prisoners; but, less bloody than the man after God's own heart, the victors "slew not any, either great or small."

Steeled against the sight of other people's sufferings, David and his gang wept over their own misery. The ephod was consulted, and, the answer being favorable, they pursued and slew the Amalekites. All the spoil and the women were recovered, and much additional booty. David was now so wealthy that he sent presents to the elders of Judah. It was a good investment, for they presently made him their king. They had no crown to give him, but they anointed him regardless of expense.

Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, reigned over the other tribes, but there was strife between the two kings. At length Abner, the famous general, seceded to David; Ish-bosheth was assassinated, and David was anointed king over Israel. He was then thirty-seven. He had reigned seven years and six months over Judah. Elsewhere it is given as seven years only. The Rabbis account for this discrepancy by saying that David suffered six months from leprosy, during which time he may be reckoned as dead.

Saint David got Michal back from Phalti. By this time he had married four fresh wives; having seven in all, and children by six of them. Afterwards he "took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem." He was a rare old polygamist, and the worthy father of Solomon. Eastern traditions assert that David had ninety-nine wives before he married Bathsheba; likewise that he divided his time into three parts, attending one day to the affairs of his kingdom, on the next to the service of God, and on the last to family matters. Probably he did not spend his whole time in the harem in singing. Yet, in order to keep the women in due subjection, he may have had some prayer-meetings as well as love-feasts. Very likely he led the singing, for which he was well adapted. They say he had such a beautiful voice that the birds listened to his strains; while it was of such compass that he could drown the thunder or warble as sweetly as a nightingale.

David next turned his attention to the Jebusites, whom he drove out of Zion after some severe fighting. Occupying the fort, he built a wall to circumscribe a new "city of David," and "the Lord of Hosts was with him." The founding of Jerusalem as a capital was an excellent stroke of policy. Saul created the Jewish army, and David created the metropolis; two essentials to a young nation. Bringing the ark to Jerusalem sanctified the city, and made it at once the religious and political centre of the state.

David's first attempt to fetch the ark failed. It was sent on a new cart, and serenaded along the

road; but it tottered at one point, and Uzzah, who tried to steady it, was smitten dead for touching the fetish. Jahveh's action "displeased" David; and, being afraid of such an irascible deity, he decided to leave him there; but three months later, hearing that the ark was blessing the house of Obed-edom, he brought it up to Jerusalem.

Jahveh's triumphal procession to the new capital was a big affair for that age. There was much shouting and trumpeting, and a large quantity of oxen and fatlings were sacrificed. The proceedings ended in a popular beanfeast. The multitude, without distinction of sex, was regaled with bread and meat and wine.

David himself, as master of the ceremonies, was in a fine state of hilarity. Stripping off his clothes, and putting a linen ephod around his middle, he "danced before the Lord with all his might." Leland, and other writers, pretend that David wore a linen robe, which reached to his feet, and was girded round with an ephod. But this is not countenanced by the text. Milman describes him as wearing "a simple linen tunic." Shaftesbury, in commenting on the antics of this royal *saltimbanque*, remarks that "though this dance was not performed quite naked, the dancers, it seems, were so slightly clothed that, in respect of modesty, they might as well have worn nothing; their nakedness appearing still by means of their high caperings, leaps, and violent attitudes, which were proper to that dance."

Religious dancing is universal among barbarians, and it survives among the lowest sectaries in civilised nations. Professor Hartmann describes a captive gorilla as dancing wildly, often overbalancing himself, reeling to and fro, and whirling round as if intoxicated; and he remarks that the medicine-men, shamans, sorcerers, and rain-doctors of savage races "assume ape-like attitudes in their contortions, leaps, dances, and other gestures inseparable from their trade." Tylor also notices that savages "dance their joy and sorrow, their love and rage, even their magic and religion." According to Robertson, the historian of America, the Indians danced on every important occasion in public and private life. The Peruvians regarded dancing as a religious demonstration. The devil-dancers of Southern India are well known. Among the Veddahs of Ceylon the exorcists dance themselves into a paroxysm, which is taken for inspiration. The Patagonians select those afflicted with the St. Vitus' dance for magicians. Dancing was a prominent feature in the religious festivals of Greece and Rome. Miriam danced and sang at the head of the women of Israel after the destruction of Pharaoh's army, and the Jews danced naked round the golden calf in the desert. Indeed, the Hebrew word *chag*, which is translated *feast*, really signifies a dance. David's capers before the ark were, therefore, in accordance with the spirit and manners of his age. His loin-cloth was a slight advance in decency, for the primitive fashion was absolute nudity. Greater decorum was subsequently introduced, but the sacred dancing was never abandoned. At the close of the Feast of Tabernacles the members of the Sanhedrim, the rulers of the synagogues, and the doctors of the schools, leaped and danced with torches in their hands for a great part of the night, while the people watched their performance. Nor was dancing dispensed with in the early Christian Church. Special provision was made for dancing in the choir. Scaliger says the bishops were called *Prasules* because they led the dance on feast days. The practice fell into discredit with the Agape. But it lingered in the Church for many centuries; and even as late as 1813, at Seville, twelve young men danced before the sacrament on Holy Thursday. Revivalists are always prone to displaying their agility. Whitfield's Welsh followers, the Jumpers, took for their text, "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy." Down at Brighton the Army of the Lord used to worship in its Glory Hole, where women, as well as men, danced until they dropped exhausted, and exhibited an indecent amount of stocking.



Queen Michal, looking through a window, saw her royal husband "leaping and dancing before the Lord," and she "despised him in her heart." When they met she upbraided him. "How glorious," she exclaimed, "was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself."

Like a patriarchal polygamist, David would not stand reproach from one of his bedfellows. He told Michal that his family was better than hers; that he would be viler and baser still; and that the maidservants would honor him all the more. This prophecy was, perhaps, only too well grounded. David appears to have known the character of the "maids" about a court.

Not satisfied with this elegant retort, David divorced Michal from his bed; and therefore she "had no child unto the day of her death." This was a terrible punishment, for to be childless was the greatest curse that could befall a woman. Bayle remarks, with equal justness and point, that "many ladies would merit sterility, if all that was necessary to deserve it were to share the taste of Michal."

Scripture is brutal, but not consistent. According to a later chapter, Michal had five sons. The Authorised Version tries to cover the contradiction by saying she "brought up" these children "for Adriel," but the Revised Version honestly allows that she "bare" them. Josephus differs from both accounts. He alleges that Michal had those five children by Phalti, who married her again after David put her away.

David had set up a palace at Jerusalem. Scripture calls it a house, and it was probably a small affair. But the chosen people were so backward in all the arts of civilisation that the carpenters and masons were imported from Tyre. Having provided for himself, David's next thought was to do something handsome for Jahveh. The God of Israel was still dwelling in a tent, but this seemed beneath his dignity, and the king offered to build him a house. Nathan the prophet conveyed the message to Jahveh, who declined the offer; telling David to mind his own business, and declaring his intention to continue living in a tent, as he was opposed to new-fangled ideas.

Like the shipwrecked sailors who, being unable to sing a hymn or pray, decided to make a collection, David was resolved to do something religious. He therefore went to war with the Philistines. Moab was next attacked. Its inhabitants were divided into two halves; one was spared, and the other massacred. David likewise "smote" Hadadezer, king of Zobah; capturing a thousand horses, and savagely houghing all but a hundred. David was fortunately able to "dedicate" much "silver and gold" unto the Lord, and piety covers a multitude of sins.

Scripture informs us that he "executed judgment and justice unto all his people." This is belied, however, by succeeding events. His throne was supported by force of arms, despite the discontent of his subjects. How otherwise can we account for the rapid success of Absalom's rebellion?

David's next war was with Hanun, king of Ammon, who had insulted his ambassadors. General Joab besieged Rabbah while the king "tarried still at Jerusalem," where he amused himself by debauching a married woman and murdering her husband.

From the roof of his house, one evening, David saw a beautiful woman washing herself. She was the wife of Uriah, a valiant soldier at the siege of Rabbah, risking his life in the king's service. Such a consideration should have been the best protection of his honor, but David listened only to the voice of passion, and, sending for the woman, he "lay with her."

Adam Clarke suggests that Bathsheba tried to entrap David into an amour. "How could any woman of delicacy," he inquires, "expose herself where she could be so fully and openly viewed? Did she not know that she was at least in view

of the king's terrace?" But this is only a special pleading to diminish the king's guilt. Bathsheba was probably as ignorant of being watched as Susannah; and what the text does not hint, it is unfair to assume.

Dr. Gill, catching at a sentence in the fourth verse, gives a pious and prurient turn to the story. Bathsheba was washing herself, "not for health and pleasure, and to cool herself on a hot day, but to purify herself from her menstruous pollution, according to the law in Leviticus x. 9." This is the reason "why she the more easily consented, and he was more eager to enjoy her. She was the more apt for concept, as Ben Garson notes."

Bathsheba proving with child, David endeavored, by a most contemptible trick, to father the bantling upon Uriah. The poor husband was summoned home, and David told him to sleep in his own house instead of spending the night in the palace. But Uriah declined any personal indulgence while his comrades were bearing the brunt of war. David then made him drunk, but even in that condition Uriah was capable of self-restraint. The wretched strategy had failed; the cuckolded husband had not shared the couch of his dishonored wife, and the king's bastard could not be saddled upon the abstemious soldier.

Saint David was in a fix, but he had not exhausted the resources of piety. There was one remedy left—the murder of Uriah. This he resolved on. With his own hand he wrote a letter to General Joab, and dispatched it by the hand of his victim. It contained this execrable order: "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." The order was obeyed, and Uriah was basely done to death. Josephus says he fell bravely, surrounded by enemies, many of whom he slew. According to a Rabbinical tradition, he was actually set to guard the Ark, whose champions could not fly, but were obliged to conquer or fall. Happily the poor fellow was spared one pang. He died ignorant of his wife's dishonor. Perhaps the vision of her beauty hovered before him as the blood coozed from his veins and the death-film clouded his eyes. Perhaps the voices of his children stole softly through his dying brain, and his last breath expired in a fancied kiss of beloved lips.

Uriah's corpse was probably eaten by jackals and vultures, but they were less pitiless than his treacherous king. Should there be a day of judgment, how will Saint David look as Uriah the Hittite strides up to denounce him?

Bathsheba became David's wife. But the thing "displeased the Lord," who sent his prophet Nathan to rebuke the sinner. David repented when he was threatened. The Rabbis say he cried so much that every now and then he drank a cupful of tears; indeed, during forty days and nights he shed more tears than the whole of Adam's posterity.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

### World-Wide Prayer.

"There is prayer all over the world. There is prayer on sea and land. Every soldier in the trenches puts up his prayer at night. A recent visitor to Russia wrote home, 'I have come here to see a nation on its knees.' Our country is not yet on its knees. When it is we shall see the light break."—SIR W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

THIS is a stupendous statement—one of those audacious deliverances that gain credence by their very boldness. It exemplifies the truth that a sweeping assertion is most successful, being so far removed from all considerations of fact, reason, or plain common sense, that it disarms criticism by its sheer ineptitude. It transcends discussion, because it is outside the bounds of controversy. Logic demands that we shall have some material grounds on which to base our arguments, but in the face of Sir William Robertson Nicoll's superlatives we can only bow the



head and murmur, "Allah is great, and Nicoll is his prophet."

Recovering from the shock, we may submit Sir William's thesis to a judicial examination.

Passing over the unmathematical and unliterary arrangement of the assertion—for if there is prayer all over the world, the subsequent details are superfluous, and one is untrue, on the axiom that the whole includes the part; and the paragraph falters till it reads suspiciously like bathos at the end—we will consider the separate heads of this prayer-proposition seriatim.

"There is prayer all over the world." Is there? The increase in prayer in Great Britain has been almost imperceptible. The official prayer-day on January 3 was received without enthusiasm, and religiously the nation seems to be going on as usual—indifferently, except for the professional prayer-mongers.

The ignorant majority of the Russian people have always been fanatically religious. We hear nothing of France praying for victory, and the large number of Freethinkers in Belgium is ignored by those who prate of Roman Catholic Belgium.

Our Eastern allies, the Japanese, do not pray at all in the Western sense of the term. They only pay reverence to the ancestors of the Emperor and themselves.

The swarming millions of India do not ask for God to interfere. They take all that comes, good or bad, as being heaven-sent, and prostrate themselves before the gods, who are too wise to need direction or to heed supplication from human beings.

The religious enthusiasts seem singularly silent about Serbia. Are the Serbs praying?

Prayer all over the world is a fantasy of heated imaginations. It is what they would like to see. Would they look at realities they would see only millions of cunning animals using all the inventions of mechanical science to slaughter one another. "And yet God has not said a word!" sang Browning very aptly.

The most religious nation in this War, next to Russia, is Germany; and Austria is the spoilt child of the Papacy.

On that memorable occasion, at the beginning of the War, when the Berlin crowd glorified the Kaiser, his speech to them culminated with the injunction to pray. And without doubt Germany has done so. The few people who get through are agreed on telling us that. The great cathedral at Cologne is daily thronged with praying crowds. The eagle, which marks military property in Germany, is encircled by a scroll bearing the words, "Gott mit uns." One of the best-written chapters in Bernhardi's *Germany and the Next War*, concerns religious education. The beautiful sentiments expressed there would meet with the approval of the most saintly person.

The plain actuality, proved repeatedly by history, is that religion and war go hand in hand—a holy alliance of delusion and destruction. Religious wars there have been galore. Never an irreligious one. The man who can live without God can also live at peace with his neighbors. A mental intoxicant is required to send the masses to war—the German Junkers are well aware of this, and religion has proved itself one of the most toxic agents. The whole world at prayer would be the prelude to the whole world at war.

What are they all praying for? Success to their arms? If so, God must be playing fast and loose, for neither side has yet scored a decisive victory. And if victory is the result of prayer, why keep mighty forces by land and sea? Those soldiers and sailors would be better engaged on the knee. What will be the attitude of the losers toward the prayer-answering God?

Are they all praying for peace? Then why does it not come? Or is God, like a very gallant sportsman and mighty hunter, enjoying the spectacle of the slaughtered thousands; do the cries and groans and death-agonies of men please him better than

psalms or hymns, so that he will only give peace when his jaded appetite is satisfied?

Let the prayerful turn to their Bibles and read the eighteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings, marking particularly verse twenty-seven: "Elijah said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." If there is prayer all over the world, surely God must have heard ere this!

Sir Robertson Nicoll writes: "Every soldier in the trenches puts up his prayer at night." This I flatly deny. The English soldier is not given to praying, neither is the class from which he is drawn. If that is Robertson Nicoll's knowledge of the soldier, then one must pity his ignorance, and hope that he will make the acquaintance of some soldiers. Let Sir William stop any group of soldiers he meets, and talk to them about prayer—in the trenches or elsewhere. I should like to be present to see the smile of incredulous scorn that would creep across their faces. The good Knight would find that he had badly blundered, and would depart disillusioned—a sadder and a wiser man.

He makes one true statement—which contradicts his first—"Our country is not yet on its knees." True, pleasantly true; and, we hope, abidingly true; in spite of the twenty-four hours' service which the Anglican Church held. Shakespeare knew when he wrote, "And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries." A twenty-four hours' service! It reminds one of the continuous house at the cinema, from where, no doubt, the bishops copied the idea.

Finally, Sir William says that when our country is on its knees, we shall see the light break! What is this light, and from whence will it break? For nearly two thousand years Christians have prayed for this light to break, and it has not broken yet. Perchance the dynamos of the celestial power-station are not yet running at full speed. Is not this praying for light dangerously akin to treason when the authorities are darkening London? But perhaps that is the reason for Sir William's hope. The "break" that would best suit the case would be an outbreak of Homeric laughter at the foolishness of those who put their trust in prayer.

The whole affair gives one a feeling akin to shame, like is felt when a child prattles too freely of domestic incidents. The idea of praying for help is namby-pamby. Better the self-reliant spirit of the old Viking, who exclaimed, "Who is Thor that I should fear him? Let him fight, and if he is stronger than I, he can kill me. If not, I will kill him."

But enough of Sir William Robertson Nicoll. Such a prayerful state of mind leaves one bewildered. It shows such painful ignorance of all that anthropology and comparative religion have revealed. We will hope, for sanity's sake, that there are no more like him. Such lucubrations compare sadly with the wisdom of Omar Khayyam:—

"Lift not thy hand to It for help—for It  
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I."

A. R. WILLIAMS.

### Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Thomas Mitchell, of 34 Wray-crescent, Tollington Park, London, who had attained to the ripe age of 83 years. Mr. Mitchell was a lifelong Freethinker, who availed himself of every opportunity to promote the interests of "the best of causes." Nothing afforded him greater pleasure than to take his place as a brave soldier under Freedom's banner. He was an ardent admirer and staunch supporter of Mr. Bradlaugh, with whom he enjoyed the privilege of being on terms of close acquaintance. He was also for many years a loyal member of the National Secular Society, on behalf of which he labored zealously until prevented by advancing years. On Thursday, January 14, his body was cremated at the Crematorium in the City of London Cemetery, when a Secular Service was conducted. To his bereaved widow and children we tender our sincere condolence.—J. T. L.



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