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PRICE TWOPENCE

Does not the history of every oppression teach us how the oppressor ever seeks his own justification and support by appealing to a FACT of his own creation?

—MAZZINI.

A Grumble—and a Reply.

A WEEK or two back I received a very pessimistic letter from a reader of the *Freethinker*. Like a great many others, he was greatly depressed over the present position of affairs. He had borne a part—so far as his circumstances permitted—in many advanced movements, and was pleased to note what he considered signs of advance all round. And then in a week everything seemed topsy-turvey. Controversy was being carried on by means of cannon, and advance was reckoned in terms of dead and wounded, instead of ideas propounded and accepted. Except for the costliness and deadliness of the weapons employed, the world suddenly reverted to the barbaric stage. And, says my correspondent, the evil will not end with the War. The forces of reaction once let loose are difficult to enchain. Things will not be after the War as they were before. In all probability they will—for some time, at least—be changed for the worse.

And while he was at it, this gentleman indulged in a still further grumble. He asked whether we Freethinkers do not, after all, over-estimate the power of our ideas. The Churches are still powerful and well-organised. Their revenues are large, and they are unscrupulous in their strength. They are making some headway owing to the War, while Freethought is losing ground. Moreover, Freethought is ill-organised, and the ground won in one generation is sometimes lost in the next. By this, the writer means that the children of Freethinkers, if they do not become religious, very often cease to take an interest in Freethought; and this, as he says, is so much gain to the Churches. Altogether, the letter contains a good, all-round, *healthy*, and suggestive grumble.

I have summarised a lengthy letter because, although I do not agree with the writer's pessimism, it yet expresses things that many others are feeling, and suggests questions worthy of a serious answer.

First, as to the reaction. That this exists is quite beyond question. A state of war is itself evidence of reaction. When States appeal to the arbitrament of force it is proof positive that reason has, for a time, abdicated its supremacy. All the talk of the advance made by war is sheer delusion. It no more advances social progress than shooting a burglar promotes honesty. The most that can be said for either course is that it is necessary. But when the soldier has done his work the clash of reason recommences, and at the same point where the crack of the rifle interrupted it. When the actual fighting between Catholics and Protestants ceased, the arguments between Catholics and Protestants remained for settlement. No physical force could settle them. And when the armies of the Allies and of Germany have finished, all the real and vital questions in dispute between the various nations will

still remain for settlement. War really settles nothing that is of first class value.

War, then, is really a suspension of the operation of the higher forces of life by the lower. And during this time, everything of a reactionary character finds an opportunity for development. This, as I have before pointed out, is all that is involved in the alleged strengthening of religion by the War. This does not mean that there is less Freethought, or fewer Freethinkers about now than before the War; it only means that the religious man feels more religious than he did. The general spirit of retrogression creates a more congenial environment for his ideas and beliefs. War and religion are old-time friends, and anything that strengthens the one is likely to strengthen the other also. But that cannot decide the issue between Religion and Freethought, any more than the physical contest can decide the essential issue between Germany and the Allies. When the War is done the issue remains, and the intellectual fight recommences. It cannot settle the dispute; it can only suspend it for a season.

Moreover, the reaction was bound to come, and has, in fact, been long on the way. Several years ago, at the Brussels Freethought Congress, I pointed out that Freethinkers, in priding themselves upon the spread of advanced ideas, were apt to overlook the strength of the forces opposed to them. These were, and are, of enormous power; and it could hardly be expected that they would surrender without at least one great struggle for mastery. We were safe only so long as the hostile forces remained uncombined. Given a growth on our side sufficiently powerful to seriously threaten the power of the Churches, or a state of things that favored a combination of the religious sects, and we should be, numerically, snowed under. Our strength lies, obviously, in the power of reason, not in that of mere numbers. On that plane the Churches could beat us easily. Our superiority only becomes apparent with the rationalising of life.

Then as to organisation. It is true that Freethinkers are not nearly as well organised as are members of the Churches. It is also true that they never will be so well organised, that is, as Freethinkers. In the first place, the fact of their being Freethinkers makes this very difficult, if not impossible. A certain independence of judgment, an individuality of view, is implied in a man being a Freethinker. And this in itself makes organisation difficult. It was a true instinct that led the New Testament writers to compare the Christian to sheep and the heretic with goats. Nor is mere organisation a good thing for Freethinkers to aim at. Those who complain at our lack of organisation are impressed with the sectarian strength of the Churches. But to fight the sectarian spirit in one place, merely to establish it in another, cannot well be counted a gain. Sectarianism in intellectual matters—whether secular or religious—is an undesirable thing. And it is to the credit of the spirit of Freethought teaching that it should so far have, of its own initiative avoided that danger. The strength of Freethought must always lie in its power of permeating life. This is not a showy way, but, in intellectual matters, it is the only safe and proper one.

It is, unfortunately, true that the children of

Freethinkers do not always—perhaps do not usually—take the same interest in the fight against superstition as did their parents, although it is folly to talk of the ground won in one generation being lost in the next. But this, while regrettable, is easily explained. Propagandist zeal rarely runs in families—even in matters of religion. In the case of heresy, whether social or religious, it is folly to expect that to be hereditary. Socially, the heretic is to the general population what the "sport" is in the biological world. He is, in fact, a mental "sport," an intellectual variation that may or may not breed true to type. At any rate, to expect that the same variation is going to occur, generation after generation in the same family, is to expect the impossible. Heresy is a mental variation, and a variation, in the nature of the case, is something exceptional.

Further, in the biological world—and the same thing is true of variations in other directions—whether a variation can perpetuate itself or not depends upon the nature of the environment. If that is favorable to the new type it may succeed in perpetuating itself. If it is unfavorable the type will not be destroyed, but it will be prevented becoming a normal form. Now, so far as the general social environment is concerned, in every country the balance of power is in favor of religion. It may not secure conviction, but it is powerful enough to secure a measure of outward conformity, or, failing that, to prevent an expansion of active hostility. Normally, then, the social environment works against the heretic. In business, in politics, in social life, no one's prospects are improved by heresy; and they may be seriously impaired. Religion still dominates our social institutions, and every one, from the cradle to the grave, is subjected to the play of forces that are the harder to fight because they are largely impalpable. And we have simply no real warrant for the assumption that Freethinking in any family will increase in a geometrical or even in arithmetical ratio. If we weaken the power of religion in each generation, that is all we can reasonably expect.

Optimism is a good thing, but too much of it is apt to form an introduction to pessimism. To expect to conquer the world in a day is to forget altogether what the world is like. The strongholds of superstition, like the kingdom of heaven, are not to be taken by violence. They can only be carefully invested and patiently besieged. The real question is not whether Freethought rules the world, but whether Freethought is making its influence felt. And in spite of the present situation, it has certainly done, and is doing, this. Religion has been forced into the apologetic stage. It very often exhibits all its old arrogance; but, on the other hand, it very often asks merely to be let alone. Its defences have become not so much a defence of ideas on which religion rests, as an appeal to the institutions with which it is associated. And that is clearly the beginning of the end. For just in proportion as we succeed in rationalising social institutions, so we succeed in taking from religion its last means of defence.

The truth is, that this war against religion bears a great resemblance to the European conflict. It is not a war in which great and decisive victories can be won. It is a war of trenches. The enemy we have to fight is strongly entrenched, and behind him are enormous resources. Every step of the way is hotly contested, and advance must be slow, if only in order to be sure. We are face to face with the weight of tradition, with the inertia of unreasoning conservatism, with the sleepless vigilance of threatened vested interest. We advance step by step, but we do advance. How much cannot be seen by looking at the battlefield day by day; you must contrast today with a generation, a century, ago. And although the advance is slow, it is sure. A position once won for Freethought is never lost. The history of the conflict is a history of advance on the one side and of retreat on the other. Complete victory is still far off. None of us may see the end of the struggle;

but, then, none of us saw its beginning. The battle was on when we arrived. The gods were already in possession. They will probably be in possession when the present generation of fighters are carried from the field. But our reward lies in the consciousness that our fighting has hastened the day of ultimate victory.

C. COHEN.

Portentous Prophets.

"The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies."—*Lucretius*.

"The carpenter said nothing but
'The butter's spread too thick.'"

—*Alice in Wonderland*.

CONSIDERABLE interest has been aroused by the publication of pictures of the sealed box containing the prophecies of Mrs. Joanna Southcott, prophetess of Exeter, which that lady directed was to be opened a hundred years after her death, which took place in 1814. We, who are not numbered among the elect, know as much as we want to know about Joanna, from her birth at Gittisham in Devonshire, to her death in Manchester-street, London. She was but one prophetess among many in those far-off days when the leaders of the French Revolution and the great Napoleon were each identified as the "beast" in Revelation. Joanna was a very bold lady, and she predicted that she would be mother of the Messiah—a prediction that proved to be due to the non-celestial disease of dropsy. Before she died she left plenteous examples of her artful prophecies, of her long-winded wranglings with Old Nick, and of the intolerable verse that flowed from her saintly quill, that not even divine inspiration could make grammatical.

Another nineteenth century Messiah was the half-pay Naval lieutenant, Richard Brothers, whose portrait was engraved with rays of light descending on his crazed head. The word came to Richard that he would be revealed to all men as the King of Jerusalem and Ruler of the World. But the message fell on stony ground, and the world proved obdurate. After Richard had courteously invited King George the Fourth to deliver up his crown, and had ordered the Houses of Parliament to meet for receiving his message, the Messiah was led away into that house of bondage where so many sons of heaven have suffered restraint at the hands of unbelieving keepers and sceptical doctors.

Pious people of a later generation revered the utterances of that portentous prophet, the Rev. Dr. Cumming, who demonstrated that the prophecy of the locusts, whose sting is in their tail, was fulfilled by the fact of a Turkish general having taken a horse's tail for a standard, that the Pope was "Antichrist," and that the French people were the very people predicted in Revelation. This nineteenth century Jeremiah preached before Queen Victoria, and the avenues of his church were as crowded as the passages to the opera. But nemesis came at last, and he fell from his pinnacle of popularity. In a moment of religious recklessness he named the year 1861 as that in which very terrible events were to take place. The year was not uneventful, but it failed to fill the prophet's awful program, and from that time his fame declined. His admirers subscribed handsomely to place him above difficulty and want, and he passed his last years in peace and comfort, "basking in the sunshine of the countenance of God."

The prophet's mantle was not unknown in the later years of the century. For many years the late Rev. W. Baxter's name was a household word in certain religious circles. To multitudes he was the heaven-sent seer, commissioned by a benevolent Deity to receive the light of prophecy and throw it over a naughty world. Goody-goody people reserved a warm corner in their hearts, over and above their loyal obligation to the House of Hanover, for a spiritual guide who taught them precisely to whom

they might point as "the whore of Babylon" and "the beast of Revelation." That quintessence of nonsense, *Forty Coming Wonders*, was purchased with unabated credulity, although the error of Baxter's pretensions to be regarded as a seer was proved again and again by the irresistible logic of facts to the satisfaction of all reasonable persons.

Few prophets would find it easy to go on year after year delivering a succession of silly prophecies destined to utter failure. But his dupes were the most greedy credulous of their kind. Baxter gravely announced the ascension of 144,000 Christians, without dying, in 1896, the great Persecution from 1897 to 1901. The Second Advent of Christ was fixed for the same year. The prophet once had an amusing adventure with the City Corporation. He applied for the lease of a site belonging to the Corporation for a newspaper office, and it was pointed out that he had asked for a lease extending a quarter of a century beyond that which he had fixed in his prophecies for the end of the world. But nothing daunted the prophet, who was familiar with thrones, principalities, and powers.

These are notorious cases. Agreeably to the law of supply and demand, prophets have in all times arisen to foretell events, smooth and otherwise, usually at prices absurdly cheap considering the value of their services. From the days of the augurs, who could not look one another in the face without laughing, down to those of the modern fortune-teller, who giggles in her dainty sleeve until an infidel magistrate usurps her calling and prophecies that she will spend three months in prison, an unbroken line of more or less inspired personages has existed.

The entire universe, moreover, has been ransacked for information on coming events. The stars that glitter millions of miles in the empyrean, have been thought of as deeply interested in the career of the inhabitants of Dunghill-on-the-Snazle, and the sediment at the bottom of a paltry tea cup has been held to be fraught with profound meaning to blushing maidens and proud suitors. Comets have been obligingly imported into the solar system obviously for the purpose of warning people of approaching disaster, and minute insects are naturally commissioned to prepare persons for approaching dissolution by "tapping" in the woodwork of old houses. Even dogs kindly consent to hold weird conversations with their distant friends in the "wee small hours" for the same dread purpose.

The apparently inconsequent nature of the events that befall mankind engendered the idea of a supernatural control which, of course, according to the prophets, was to be bribed. The rain-doctors and prophets of uncivilised peoples are kept to their contracts. They are expected to bring rain when it is required, and if they do not, the consequences are summary and unpleasant. But the rain-doctors in civilised countries retain all the advantages of their savage prototypes without any of the attendant risks and dangers. The civilised dupes allow the prophet to play his little game on the principle, "Heads I win, tails you lose." If the prophet is unsuccessful, they ignore the mistake; if he is correct, they put it to his credit, or he puts it to his credit—which is much the same thing.

Cumming and Baxter found fortune-telling a pleasant and a profitable hobby. They did not advise ladies how their lovers might be made to propose, or furnish any of their congregations with the names of "winners." They made bolder dashes into futurity, and their courage met with its golden reward. Fortune-telling means imprisonment for poor vagrants, but the careers of these clergymen show how it may be turned to the best account by Christian gentlemen who remembered the soothing fact that a large number of their co-religionists were fools. Savages prophesy one way, and frock-coated, top-hatted Christians another, but the nature of the act and the results are very much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

Christian Apologetics.

MR. JOHN PAGE HOPPS (No. 2).

MR. JOHN PAGE HOPPS, it may be remembered, has written a work in which he professes to give us "A Scientific basis of Belief in a Future Life"—near the end of which he says that he considers his "basis" to be more than a theory or a hypothesis, because it is "grounded on solid, though as yet, little comprehended facts and laws." Proceeding with his demonstration, he quotes Professor Tyndall as saying:—

"Granted that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ.....which would enable us to pass, by a process of reasoning, from the one phenomenon to the other. They appear together, but we know not why."

Well, it is very remarkable that whenever we have a definite thought, there should occur at the same time "a definite molecular action" in the brain. But Professor Tyndall, whatever he may have thought, does not say that the action of one is produced by that of the other. It seems to me, however, that in the gramophone we have two very similar simultaneous actions, and one of them is certainly produced by the other. The record, with its minute indentations, would represent the brain; the speech, song, or sound of musical instruments, would take the place of thought, the exact method of the production of which is, as yet, unknown. Commenting upon Professor Tyndall's statement, Mr. Page Hopps says:—

"Thought may be, and probably is, accompanied by some corresponding change or movement in the substance of the brain; but it does not follow that Thought is produced or secreted by that change or movement. Changes and movements in the substance of the brain may be necessary for the manifestation of thought on a certain plane, but it by no means follows that the thinker is necessarily dependent on such material conditions."

Here our scientific apologist begins to part company with "solid facts," and does so without adducing a particle of evidence for his action. Changes in the substance of the brain, he says, "may be necessary" for the manifestation of thought "on a certain plane"—whatever the latter may mean—but it does not follow that such changes are necessary in another world or on some other plane. But when we take into consideration the fact that a new thought and new molecular changes in the brain occur simultaneously, there can, I think, be little doubt that thought is actually created by those molecular changes.

Next, after referring by several examples to what he calls "the limitations of the senses," and devoting some further pages to comments upon those limitations, Mr. Hopps arrives at the following conclusion:—

"It is, then, almost forced upon us to infer the continuity of Thought as well as of Matter. It seems unnatural to suppose that the lower should persist, and the higher fail and perish—that Matter should be able to ebb into the Unseen and flow again into the Seen, and Mind alone rise and fall on one solitary shore—begin and end on this tiny spot of earth."

Mr. Hopps has adduced no evidence to show that the continuity of Thought "is almost forced upon us," nor any reason for thinking that Thought will not "fail and perish" after the death of the body, save that he thinks such an ending would be "unnatural." He further says that man has an instinct or intuition "which leads him to hope for life beyond the grave, to prepare for it, and to live with reference to it," and that "we find our scientific basis of belief in Spirit-existence now and in an Unseen Universe."

To the foregoing statements I need only say that primitive man found his "hope for life beyond the grave" in dreams and a desire to live for untold ages; and that it was religion, not "instinct or intuition," that taught the later man "to prepare for

it, and to live with reference to it." But when I read that "we find our scientific basis of belief in *Spirit-existence now* and in an *Unseen Universe*," I almost gasped with astonishment. Mr. Hopps has nowhere shown that there is scientific evidence for "Spirit-existence now," though he has several times quoted from a book entitled *The Unseen Universe*. As I have not read that work, I can say nothing about it. On page 28 Mr. Hopps quotes Professor Huxley as saying:—

"Sensations are, in the strictest sense of the words, immaterial entities. Thus, the most elementary study of sensations justifies Descartes' position that we know more of mind than we do of body; that the immaterial world is a firmer reality than the material."

Commenting upon this, Mr. Page Hopps says: "The concluding sentence is singularly suggestive. Let the callow materialist pause. It is not a tiresome spiritualist, but a seasoned scientist who assures us that, as a matter of science and logic, the Unseen is more of a reality than the Seen." This is the only place in which Mr. Hopps has made any reference to spiritualism; and his statement that "there is Spirit-existence now" might indicate that he is a believer in that "ism." I have, however, no intention of discussing that subject in these columns for several reasons. One more extract from Mr. Hopps's "Scientific basis," and I shall have done with it. That gentleman says:—

"The Spirit is that unity of Consciousness and Thought which vivifies and uses the various functions of the body.....which Spirit persists amid all the changes that happen to the body.....And, just because it has attained vital or spiritual Personality, this Spirit will, we are entitled to say, survive the dropping away of the physical structure, and find itself at home in the Unseen Universe beyond."

This is the grand conclusion at which Mr. Page Hopps arrives. And what is the scientific evidence from which such a conclusion is deduced? There is absolutely none whatever—not the smallest scrap. Mr. Hopps's "scientific basis" is nothing more than what Mr. Hopps thinks ought to be the case—"It seems unnatural to suppose that the lower should persist, and the higher fail and perish." The "lower," the brain, though it may change its form, is indestructible, being material; the "higher," Consciousness and Thought, being immaterial, perishes with the death of the body. Why, then, is it "unnatural" to suppose that the mind should cease to exist when the brain that produced it was dead? This fact seems to me to be perfectly natural—that is, assuming my last statement to be fact. Moreover, the "spirit" that is said to persist "amid all the changes of the body" during life is nothing more than Memory, which, like Thought, still awaits a scientific explanation—though both, I feel sure, will some day be found.

Mr. Page Hopps thinks that his "Scientific basis" is more than a theory or a hypothesis. It is not; neither is it even a scientific theory. In studying Science, if a theory is found to be not in harmony with well-known facts, it is at once set aside as untenable. But Mr. Hopps has only looked at one set of facts—those favorable to his theory. All others he has ignored. He has quoted, as we have seen, a passage from a certain Address by Professor Tyndall; but he carefully omitted the following:—

"Divorced from Matter, where is Life? Whatever our faith may say, our knowledge shows them to be indissolubly joined. Every meal we eat, and every cup we drink, illustrates the mysterious control of Mind by Matter."

This is, of course, perfectly true. Consciousness and Thought are only found in connection with a living brain; and just as physical exercise exhausts the muscles of the body, so continuous thought exhausts the nervous substance of the brain. Long-sustained intellectual work is also accompanied by a loss of substance of the brain, which loss has to be made good—just as in the case of the muscles—by suitable food. Again, arterial blood (derived from the food) is absolutely necessary for repairing the waste tissue of the brain, without which mental

activity ceases. Complete rest, especially dreamless sleep, is to the brain what needful repose is to the fatigued limbs—the necessary condition of health.

In cases of a fracture of the skull, or a blow on the head, by which a portion of the cranium is made to press on the brain, the person stricken remains unconscious, and the mind is a blank, until the depressed portion has been removed, however long the period may be. When this has been done and consciousness returns, the man can remember everything that happened to him up to the moment of receiving the blow, but nothing whatever during the weeks he lay unconscious until the moment the pressure upon his brain was removed. Then this return to consciousness appears to him to immediately follow the time he received the blow, and if he happened to be talking to anyone at that time, he continues what he had been saying the moment he regains his lost consciousness—and in some cases he even finishes the sentence he had begun when the blow rendered him senseless. Now, during the time he lay unconscious his brain was alive and well; but consciousness and thought had ceased, and were non-existent. Why was this? Simply because the brain which produced those sensations had not, by reason of the pressure upon it, the freedom to swell out and continue its molecular action. It is thus perfectly clear that the Mind or Spirit is dependent upon the brain, and could have no independent existence apart from it.

Now, the foregoing elementary facts, if they stood alone—they are but some of the most obvious, as they occurred to me—are sufficient to show that Science gives no support to the theory that a man's "spirit" survives the death of his body. Yet Mr. Page Hopps, who must have been acquainted with them, thought it right to completely disregard them. In his search for a "Scientific basis" for belief in a future life he has ignored all the known facts which might disprove his pet theory, and has selected only those which appeared to him to favor it. What he calls "spirit" is, in my humble opinion, nothing more than the sum of all the physical and mental activities of the body during life. When the body is dead, these activities cease; there is no living "spirit" which survives and dwells in an Unseen world apart from it. Such is the verdict of Science. In conclusion I may add that all the arguments for a future life in the case of man apply with equal force to the lower animals; the two must go together for the difference between the "spirit" of man and that of beast is solely one of degree.

Note.—In the last paper (p. 125) the word "consciousness" has erroneously been twice rendered "conscience" in a quotation from Mr. Page Hopps.

ABRACADABRA.

God's Plan in Nature and Man.

MINISTERS of religion seem incapable of leaving the War alone, although the more they talk and write about it the more manifest becomes their utter inability to reconcile it with any conception of a just and merciful Deity. One of the latest illustrations of this is to be found in a lecture by Dr. Horton, published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for February. This is by no means Dr. Horton's first discomfiture upon the War, but it is certainly the most astonishingly absurd and self-contradictory. He starts with the proposition that "God is the Lord of all the earth and supreme over everything that happens," and that the more you realize this "truth," "the less you will be inclined to say that war is not in the plan of God, because it has continued from the earliest records of human life until to-day." This is at least perfectly logical. Given a God who is "supreme over everything that happens," there is no loophole for escape from the conclusion that war is included in his plan of the Universe. Assuming the truth of that proposition, Dr. Horton is logically

bound to admit that it is wrong to blame Germany for the present international conflict. If God is the Lord of all the earth, it necessarily follows that he is "supreme over everything that happens" in Germany, as well as in Russia, France, Belgium, and Great Britain; but instead of making that candid admission, the reverend gentleman flies off at a tangent to detail two arguments employed to justify the inclusion of war in the Divine plan. He says:—

"The first argument is drawn from the fact that Nature presents to us in the organic world an almost ceaseless struggle between species and species for existence. There is a warfare that is continued for the very existence of animals all through the world, and any attempt to depict the ceaseless vigilance which is required by almost all animals to defend them from their tormentors and persecutors and devourers will present just the picture which is described by the poet as 'Nature red in tooth and claw.'"

That is a true picture of life under Nature. Just here is introduced a long quotation from Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, which has no bearing whatever upon the argument. It is entirely immaterial whether or not "the evolution of life on the earth has worked out along two lines bifurcating from a common source," the all-important fact being that the struggle is not confined to the line of Arthropodes, but is equally active in the line of Vertebrates up to man. The reverend gentleman is told that there are 200,000 species of the arthropodes, culminating in the ants, and he is devoutly thankful that they are all so exceedingly small, for had they been of enormous size they would have exterminated the human race long ago. As it is, "it requires some nerve for us to sink in imagination down into the region of insect life, and to realise how terrible one species of insect is to another." Then comes an allusion to the scene of carnage enacted in the nest of a wasp in July. Every minute a huge army of victorious invaders flies into the nest, "laden with flies and caterpillars which they have secured by their doughty deeds."

"The wasp that builds on the house wall carries in paralysed caterpillars which she twists in bundles and hangs up for her offspring to eat. The ant-lion coops a funnel in the sand and sits watching for the unwary ants to fall in. The tiger beetle larva sits at the mouth of its den, waiting for its prey in the same fashion. And the mantis, that curious insect which lifts its limbs so as to seem as if it were folding its hands in prayer, looking like a flower, is always watching to catch the unwary insects that visit it, thinking it to be a flower. There are insects which kill men, such, for example, as the pellagra fly, that produces a fatal and painful leprosy not altogether unknown in our own favorable climate. These insects which kill men serve to remind us how the insects are for ever killing one another."

With the accuracy or inaccuracy of those descriptions we are not at present concerned, our only object being to emphasise Dr. Horton's proposition that all such horrors are provided for in God's plan. All these poor insects have been created, or evolved, on purpose to devour one another. More than that, it is highly providential that they do consume one another, otherwise they would so multiply that the earth would be possessed by them alone. What a sad reflection on the wisdom and goodness of the infinite intelligence at the back of the evolutionary process! In reality, Dr. Horton's sermon is a most eloquent plea for the mechanistic interpretation of life, for it makes God look exceptionally foolish and callous.

The reverend gentleman indulges in the following specific statement of the argument:—

"If God controls evolution—and no believer in God can deny it—war of a kind must be in his plan. He has ordered the struggle for existence. This internecine strife by which life goes on at the cost of the individual, and the species survives by successful conflict with competing species, must, on any argument, be accepted as part of the plan of God. The whole organic world cannot be outside his plan, and in these warring tribes of insects, and in the ferocious attacks of animals upon one another, we have not to do with the sin of man, or the punishment of sin; we have to do with the fundamental

plan of life on the planet, and that plan is, apparently, war."

Well thought out and splendidly expressed, dear preacher, is that passage, because it so beautifully gives your whole case away. God and his plan are a myth of your own creation, which is shown by nothing more clearly than your own statement. Now follows an enthusiastic eulogy of war, in the form of a second argument for its inclusion in God's plan. War is redeemed, we are informed, by the many virtues and heroic deeds which it inspires. At the roots of manhood are always lying dormant the martial qualities. How plainly we see that, practically, all our boys are born soldiers. Why, the American Civil War has been the maker of the present United States. Yes, "the effect on countries where war has broken out is almost startling in its grandeur." Great nations are all the outcome of victorious warfare. The unity of Italy grew out of the battle of Novara. The German Empire resulted from the successes of Prussian arms at Sadowa and Sedan. Mark, these sentiments come not from Treitschke and Bernhardt, the German champions of war, but from the Rev. R. F. Horton, M.A., D.D., ordained minister of the Prince of Peace! It is an ambassador of the God of peace who thus expatiates on the benefits which accrue from the wholesale slaughter of millions of innocent men! Belgium is a heap of ruins, and thousands of its inhabitants have been brutally slain; but this twentieth century representative of the loving, Heavenly Father assures us that for the long-suffering Belgium people this frightful War has been "a moral revival." Recapitulating his views, the reverend gentleman speaks as follows:—

"Thus, there is a strong argument, looking at the facts of history and at the state of the world to-day, to show, or to suggest, that God, who orders human affairs, and holds even the hearts of kings in his hand, includes war in his plan, whether because certain results are achieved in that way, which could not else be achieved, or because it is the greatest scourge that he can inflict upon mankind, and he uses it to punish us for our follies, our neglects, and our sins."

Enough! Is it any wonder that, after reading some such effusion, a Christian lady exclaimed recently, "I believe this War will make me an Atheist," and that a gentleman, who knows the people well, said, "This War will make lots of Atheists, the God-question is all the talk." We are firmly convinced that such sermons as this by Dr. Horton will greatly help to hasten the spread of Atheism in the land. Surely, after delivering such an oration, the reverend gentleman will never again have the face to impose the responsibility for the War upon the back of Prussian Atheism.

Curiously enough, this remarkable lecture closes with a strangely inconsistent commendation of "the next stage of evolution," in which "the abolition of war is also included in the plan of God." The reasoning on this head is puerile in the extreme. Man, he tells us, is capable of becoming a personality, and a personality naturally transcends Nature, and rises above the possibility of war. But man has been a personality for thousands of years, and yet war has not been abolished, nor is there at present the least likelihood of its being done away with. Are not Germans personalities who boast of their culture and civilisation, and the glory of whose army is that it is composed of Christians? Here, again, God and his plan are laughed out of court by the facts. They are both conspicuous only by their absence. God's chief attributes are silence and inactivity. Millions of his so-called children have been passionately praying for peace, but he heeds them not. Yes, truly, the War is destined to "make lots of Atheists."

J. T. LLOYD.

A book has been issued with the attractive title, *Hell's Playground*. It is stated to have been "kept back on account of the War." Otherwise it appears to us to be a very timely publication.

Facers for "Bible Punchers."

ANSWER TO PRAYER.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury, England's chief witch-doctor, who takes £15 000 per annum lest he should be mistaken for Jesus Christ, the poor and lowly, calls on "God" to grant the Allies the victory, he knows, sly dog, that his prayer is pretty certain to be answered, for "God" is invariably on the side of the biggest battalions; and in this War the Allies represent the biggest battalions. Had Britain alone been fighting Germany on land, "Randall Cantuar" would have kept his pious mouth shut, because Britain's comparatively small Army would have been swamped by the vast German organisation. But as we have the assistance of the powerful Russian and French armies, this prince of the Church is safe to vamp and cant about "answer to prayer" when the Allies have won.

Rather more than forty years ago Prussia conquered and humiliated France. Why?—Because Prussia was godly and France was wicked? No, but because Prussia was a rising, enthusiastic Power, with a well-trained and disciplined army, whilst France was chaotic, unprepared, and more or less effete.

Later, England went to war against the South African Republics. The man-god fetish whose Gospel "Randall Cantuar" preaches for a consideration, gave England the victory—which is not surprising considering the vast resources in men and money which the British Empire possesses. We sent our trained, disciplined troops, armed with the latest and most powerful death-distributors, over to South Africa, and they beat the Boers, who were only motley bands of farmers and ranchmen, impecunious and unorganised. This is how "God" answers prayer. Then Russia and Japan "had a go" at each other. Strange to relate, the nasty, little, yellow heathens, the unbelieving Japanese infidels, "wiped the floor" with holy, psalm-smiting, incense-slinging, Jesus-ridden Russia. Another answer to prayer—but the wrong way about. Now, supposing Russia had won, how the Christians would have crowed! But as it was, the pious ones lost, and their co-religionists in this country had to lie low and say nuffin'.

I am not trying to demonstrate the superiority of the Japanese religion over Christianity, for I know very little of the former—although I am informed that it is less stupid and much more beautiful than Christianity, but I merely wish to point out that the foregoing facts prove that victory or defeat goes to the stronger or weaker in arms, as the case may be. "God" has nothing to do with it, simply because there is no God—at any rate, no God in the sense which means an Omnipotent Being who directs all things for somebody's good or somebody's chastisement.

If "Randall Cantuar" had not an "eye on the dibs," he probably would not pretend to believe that there is.

THE BIBLE AND OTHER FAIRY BOOKS.

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to the remarkable similarity which exists between some of the incredible events recorded in the Bible and incidents taken from the pages of various childrens' fairy tales—which shows that those who wrote highfalutin flights of fancy for the simple, undeveloped minds of children found ample copy and stimulus in that funny old book which some do call *The Black Book of Blue Fairy Tales for Young and Old*.

1. A wolf speaks to Little Red Riding Hood.—An ass speaks to Balaam.

2. Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother is swallowed whole by a wolf, but is afterwards delivered unhurt.—Jonah is swallowed by a whale, but comes up later, alive and kicking.

3. Birds bring leaves to cover the Babes in the Wood.—Birds bring flesh to feed Elijah in the wilderness.

4. The witch in the wood turns a man into stone.—"God" turns Mrs. Lot into salt.

5. Jack plants a giant beanstalk, which grows right up into another world in the skies.—A discontented people build a gigantic tower which is to reach to a place in the skies called "Heaven."

6. Jack the Giant Killer, a mere boy, kills a giant.—David the stripling kills the giant Goliath.

7. Alladin had untold wealth.—So had Solomon.

8. Alladin had a magic lamp.—Elijah had a magic mantle.

9. Cinderella's fairy godmother turns a rat into a horse.—Moses turns a rod into a snake.

Dragons, cockatrices, unicorns, seven-headed sea-leopards, and other fabulous monsters are common in both the original fairy-book and later imitations for children. So are fanciful semi-human creatures such as witches, magicians, and giants. Charmed and magic articles, supernatural protectors, devils, and fantastic curses, etc., also play parts in the Bible and in Grimm's and Hans Andersen's works.

H. C. W.

Acid Drops.

The *Challenge* replies to the *Freethinker* of a fortnight ago that Democracy was a fact in the world long before Puritanism was heard of. The historical facts are, it says, that Puritanism in its struggle against a State-protected hierarchy emphasised in a new and astonishing degree the value and the freedom of the individual. Thus a breach was made in the old order, through which poured many new theories about the freedom of the secular individual—the human individual as such. With regard to the first point, we need only refer our contemporary to the political history of ancient Athens. There, nearly every form of political government had its day, and, among these, democracy. Rome, also, had its democratic phase. And it is highly significant that in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries all those who favored genuine democratic developments went back to Rome and Athens for their inspiration. The Christian period had nothing to offer.

For the second point it is true that the Puritan revolt against the State Church—it was not a revolt against a State religion—undoubtedly led to important developments in the field of politics and sociology. But it is idle to place these to the credit of Puritanism. All that any movement deserves credit for is that which it consciously aims at. For that matter, when the Puritans attacked the State religion, they helped to prepare the way for the growth of Freethought, but that was certainly not their object. In the same way, when Butler pointed out the inherent weakness of Deism, he was helping to promote the growth of Atheism; for in showing that every objection against the God of the Bible held good against the God of nature, he helped logical minds to see the absurdity of both positions. But that, again, was not his purpose. Every criticism of established opinion of necessity favors the growth of Freethought; and this is all that can be said on behalf of Puritanism. Could the Puritans have foreseen what these criticisms ultimately involved, they would have been as shocked as were the upholders of the Established Church. For the rest, every great social or political change must be preceded by a criticism of established opinion. And this is the great and ultimate justification of the Freethought attack on religion as preparatory to the work of social reorganisation.

Rev. Gifford Nash, in a letter to the *Times*, explains why he held wheat till it brought him fifty-six shillings rather than thirty-six. He made the best of his market, like all the other Christians, who would have been glad to make him sell at the lower figure. We suspect that the reverend gentleman had been specialising in the story of Joseph, although he was not working for Pharaoh, nor even Egypt, but entirely for himself. The Bible is not inspired, but it contains some things that are precious, and a clergyman has as much right to be selfish as other professions.

The Rev. James Robert Mitford Mitchell laid up treasure on earth to the extent of nearly £30,000. We wonder how he and Christ will meet.

Some publications in America have a high opinion of the Kaiser. In one of them there is the following quotation: "He shall be strong to do all things, because the light of God guideth his steps." At Brussels, Louvain, Rheims, etc.

Mr. Barry Pain has been visiting America, and has come across two notable things at Philadelphia; one, Independence Hall; the other, Billy Sunday. Mr. Pain is a little astonished at the conjunction of the ex-pugilist preacher and the pious edifice, but perhaps it shows the hand of God in serio-comic productions.

A little Christian girl has expressed the pious wish that the dear angels should throw bombs on the hated Germans. We commend the idea to the warlike Bishop of London, that he may invoke the Throne of Grace.

The London *Times* has been poking fun at the efforts of pious people to prove that the Kaiser is the "beast" mentioned in Revelation and suggests that the pastime is as easy as to get cryptograms out of Shakespeare's or Bacon's works. It also adds that similar efforts were made in the case of the great Napoleon. It is, however, comforting to add that in all the earlier efforts the press treated the subject with due solemnity, whereas to-day it is a subject for laughter.

Mr. Lot Clarke, aged seventy-seven, died suddenly in church at Exmouth recently. This was a happier fate than that which befell his distinguished namesake, Mrs. Lot, who was turned into a pillar of salt.

In a recent issue of the London *Times* the obituary column included eighteen persons aged seventy and upwards. A few days earlier there were eight aged eighty-two and upwards, and nine aged ninety and over. The average of the seventeen persons was over eighty-eight years. This is said to constitute a record. It is a small one compared with the Biblical records of Adam 930 years, Methuselah 960, Lamech 777, and Noah 950.

Several English writers have been pointing out that German territorial ambitions out of Europe have been helped by the agency of missionaries. We do not for a moment doubt this. All we can do is to congratulate ourselves that British missionary activity is quite unconnected with anything of the kind. Not that Providence has allowed the British Empire to suffer on that account. For missionary activity has usually been the forerunner of territorial "protection," or annexation. But that does not mean that British missionaries behave as do the wicked German agents. It only means that Providence watches over our work and takes care that we do not lose by our unselfishness.

Religious writers and preachers are still keeping up the cry that the spread of militarism in Europe, and ultimately the War itself, is due to the decline of religious faith and the growth of "Materialism" and scepticism. And this in face of the fact that the German Kaiser, the Russian Czar, the Austrian Emperor, and the Kings of England and Belgium are ostentatiously religious. They are all sure that God is with them, and, presumably, would not have gone to war had they believed otherwise. On the other hand, some of the most ardent workers for peace for years before the War broke out were Freethinkers. Indeed, generally speaking, the Freethinkers all over Europe represented a force that made for peace. That they were powerless to prevent it is nothing to their discredit. As the world stands, the power for peace or war rests with Christians; and if they had been really in favor of peace war would have been impossible. The conversion of Christians is more needful than ever.

Here is an apt illustration of the hypocrisy of the British pulpit on the subject of war. The Rev. Frank Legatt, of Manchester, declares that the best motto the Church can take in war-time is this spoken by the prophet: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts"; but if such a motto is true, why on earth does the Church advocate recruiting, and pray for victory to our arms? In theory, Christians depend for success upon the Spirit of God, but in practice put all their trust in the power of the sword, believing with Napoleon that the Deity is on the side of the biggest and best-trained battalions.

The Chinese have a method of paying doctors when they are well, and stopping payment while they are ill. They apply this principle to morals also. When a young man does wrong they immediately blame—and sometimes punish—his parents and teachers. There seems sound sense in both plans. Doctors are paid to keep people well. The duty of parents and teachers is to see that children receive a good, sound training, and if the child turns out badly, some of the responsibility certainly lies at their door. We should not mind if the same principle was applied to European politics. All over Europe the conduct of national affairs rests with groups of "Statesmen." They are well paid and greatly honored. It is their business to see that national affairs are properly managed. And if they were promptly punished when things went wrong, the world's state might be different to what it is. The War, for instance, is a glaring example of how statesmen have mismanaged affairs. And if, when a war broke out, we applied the Chinese principle, and shot all the statesmen who could not manage things so as to avoid war, it is just possible that war would not occur at all. As it is, we pay them increased honors for having brought things into such a deplorable muddle.

When the War is over, says Mr. Robert Blatchford, it will pay us to find a new lot of men, because we shall then need men of "brains and grit." Now that is very uncomplimentary to the present lot of men. And we were under the impression that one consequence of the War had been to transform all our statesmen into heaven-sent geniuses, and all our civilians into heroes and gentlemen.

Some Christians admit frankly that the European War is in direct conflict with the tenets of their faith. In an interview with M. Sienkiewicz, the author of *Quo Vadis?* published by the *Daily News* correspondent, it states that the War "is against the Bible, against the New Testament, against the will of God." Such charming simplicity requires no comment.

That holiday soldier, the Bishop of London, in full khaki uniform, attended a regimental concert of the London Rifle Brigade at their headquarters, Bunhill-row, London, E.C., recently. In a brief speech he said that the present "was a great day of God." For once we agree with the Bishop, for the present world-conflict clearly shows the moral bankruptcy of Christianity.

In view of the scarcity of fish, the Bishop of London has excused Churchmen at the front from the Church's rule of fasting. It would take many "fish," the size of Jonah's whale, to feed the British Army at the front, without reckoning the troops who follow fancy religions.

The Peculiar People have often been in conflict with their fellow-Christians, and now it looks as if the Quakers are likely to come into collision with the more warlike followers of the Prince of Peace. At Doncaster, Mr. ex-Alderman Clarke, who is a well-known local Quaker, has been voicing the pacific views of non-resistance, and the orthodox local newspaper, the *Doncaster Chronicle*, refers to these opinions as "pathetic nonsense." Mr. Clarke might retort that he did not originate the command "Thou shalt not kill."

"If the Eden story could be forgotten to-morrow, the Churches would be still unfriendly to all demands for freedom and social equality between the sexes. Their Eastern origin prescribes it," says Mr. Keighley Snowden, the well-known novelist. Professor Huxley complained many years ago that the way of the scientist was blocked by the Adam and Eve legend. These statements show some of the mischief caused by the stereotyped ignorance of the Churches.

Rev. H. S. McClelland confesses that he smokes and plays golf, but he does these things "because they provided opportunities to get near to a man—to that common humanity that made them all one." We raise our hat to this dear, good man. Some men—most men, in fact—smoke or drink or play golf because they like to. Mr. McClelland bravely descends from the heights of his natural virtue, actually acquires habits on a lower plane, in order to make creatures of poorer clay feel at home with him. The dear, good man!

Religious conversion is sometimes sudden. A regimental notice stated recently, "Change of Religion: 3 Catholics, 2 Wesleyans, 1 Presbyterian, to the Church of England." Was this conversion by order?

The Bishop of Ely thinks that "cheerfulness is one of God's best gifts." If the clergy participated more in this great gift they would look less like tired funeral horses.

The late Mrs. Frances Van Alstyne, formerly known as Fanny Crosby, has died at the age of ninety-five. She wrote over 6,000 hymns, including the popular "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." The lady's arrival in heaven should be welcomed by the angels, for they must be slightly tired of singing the monotonous hymn reported in Revelation.

A coroner at West Ham Court paid a tribute to a deceased member of the Peculiar People by describing him as a "thorough John Bull." Presumably it is very uncommon for Christians to take the Bible seriously, as do the Peculiar People.

At the Convocation of Canterbury the Bishops of the Church of England have agreed to make one hundred and forty-three alterations in the Prayer Book. There were 162 recommended, but the former number was considered sufficient. This looks as if the Government religion was in the melting-pot.

Some people—specially some Germans—have a wonderful idea of their own importance. Here is Deputy Erzberger, one of the leaders of the Centre in Berlin, writing as follows: "If we could discover a means of annihilating London in its entirety, that would be more humane than to allow a single German to bleed on the field of battle." There is no quarreling with such arithmetic. No wonder the poor

Germans are starving. A little later on this German politician says that "England spares nothing." What does our German friend spare? With him one Hun outweighs all London in the balance, and he would not spare man, woman, or child. Really the gentleman should publish a common arithmetic. Whether many copies would sell in the doomed City of London is more than we can decide.

Canon Alexander tells us that "when Christ was born, war, like slavery, was doomed." Christ was born nineteen hundred years ago, and yet the worst war that ever took place is going on just now, and the nations engaged in it are all disciples of the Prince of Peace. "But the day will come," exclaims the Canon, when war shall cease for ever; but that prophecy is nearly three thousand years old, and the signs of its fulfilment are still wholly lacking. Faith in Christ has never yet brought peace into the world, but it has been the cause and the occasion of many bloody conflicts.

The Canon pronounces war "a temporary evil," and yet, like Dr. Horton, he sings its praises with no uncertain sound, seeing in it "the mother of great virtues." It deepens character, braces the moral fibre, and occupies the mind with higher interests and more serious thoughts. The fact is that the Church has always been, and is now, the most warlike institution in the world. War is an evil, Canon Alexander admits, and then hastens to assert that "it is not wholly evil if it brings a nation, even by the cross of suffering, nearer to the reality of God." Militarism is usually characterised by noisy pietism, "God" being a word continually on its lips. German militarism differs chiefly from that of the British Churches in that it is a great deal less hypocritical. The German pastor, as well as the German soldier, says straightforwardly that war is a positive good, and not an evil at all, while the British divine denounces and praises it in the same breath, seeing in it at once both an evil and a good, a strange mixture of the Devil's work and God's.

"Tracts are usually forbidding or threatening in their titles," says the London *Times*, "We have heard of one given to a child with the title 'Mother, is Father a Goat?'" That is not so bad as distributing a tract to patients in a hospital with the cheery title, "Prepare to Meet Thy God."

The clergy are asserting constantly that the Germans are Atheists, but the facts are all against the pleasant theory. At Southend, the Salvation Army is conducting evangelical services on the detention ships, on which some thousands of German prisoners are interned. Real Atheists would not delight in the ministrations of "General" Booth's pigeon-chested warriors.

When Winwood Reade called the Christian virtues "lick-spittle," and Nietzsche described the Christian ethic as a "slave morality," both were emphasising the fact that Christian teaching was well adapted to promote the interests of a few at the expense of the many. And, as a mere matter of fact, the ruling classes have always found this teaching admirably adapted to their purpose. But it would not do to openly preach a slave morality. It must be "dignified" and disguised in such a way that those who suffer most from its prevalence will be induced to think they are benefited by it. The slave must be taught to hug his fetters; otherwise he may throw them off. That is why the preaching of humility and meekness and obedience have always been accompanied by promises of great reward in the next world, and theories as to their great value in this.

The Dean of Wells is a gentleman who can afford to preach humility. He is paid to do it, and it pays him to do it. But he must discover some general moral benefit from it, and this is how it is done. Suppose, he says, that instead of a man setting himself to be the master of all, he should set himself to be the slave of all. "Can it be that the idea of the slave is, after all, the more fruitful for humanity as a whole than the idea of the master?" "Is self-advancement the downward path, and self-effacement the upward path?" For our part we dislike both ideas. The idea of the master is almost as objectionable as that of the slave; and it never seems to strike the Dean that there is another idea better than both. Nor does he reflect that the idea of the slave involves that of the master. How can one man submit to the fact of slavery unless some other person is there to play the part of the slave-owner? But that is the historic Christian teaching. Humility, meekness, self-sacrifice, slavery. That teaching has been freely provided by a governing class as ruthless and unscrupulous as the world has yet seen. And the fruits of it is shown in the fact that the nations who have

taught it have been foremost in the worship of wealth and the wielding of brute force, and are now engaged in one of the bloodiest wars in history.

At the meetings of the Convocation of York the Archbishop of York complained that there was a shortage of chaplains at the Front. We have heard of no complaint on that head from the soldiers. They write home for more cigarettes and socks and chocolate and matches and mufflers, but none of them say "Send us more chaplains." It is the clergy only who discover that there are not enough of their representatives present. But that is their way. They are naturally attracted by the firing line.

It is a curious thing that the lay Christian never joins very heartily in this cry for more clergymen at the Front. The vast majority say nothing at all about it. They do say we need more men and more guns, but not that we need more parsons. In fact, if it were proposed to send the whole of the clergy into the fighting line, we fancy that Freethinkers would be the only persons who would support it.

The sisters of the Army Guild appeal for funds to provide more "Huts of Silence" for the use of soldiers in the home camps. Now, if the clergy would undertake to live in them, say, for twelve months, we would open a subscription list in these columns. And we fancy it would be well supported.

"Billy" Sunday.

AN associate member of our Society has sent me the Philadelphia papers, which are just now full of "Billy" Sunday. He has taken that city of churches by storm! Sixty-five thousand people rushed to welcome him! The collection for the first day was nearly eight thousand dollars! How is the "Billy" Sunday vogue to be explained?

1. The newspapers have done much for "Billy." They have given him not only columns, but whole pages enriched with illustrations. And "Billy" has done much for the newspapers. His "copy" is the kind they can use.

2. Sunday is representative. The thousands who flock to his tabernacle recognise in him their fellow. They don't have to look up to see him. He is the crowd writ large. He is the ordinary man magnified. Class consciousness drives his kind to his support.

3. The extremity of the church gives Sunday his opportunity. A drowning man will cling to a straw. Sunday is the straw.

4. "Billy" is a curiosity, and people will go to a tabernacle as they would to a tent, to see a curiosity. Once a swearing baseball player, now a swearing gospel "pitcher"! Who can resist the attraction? He is a curiosity also in the matter of his sermons. He is about the only "hell and damnation" preacher of any loudness left in Christendom. The change from the milk and water of the churches to the fire-water of "Billy" is sensational enough to draw a crowd.

5. Sunday is a born showman. He is a genius in that line. A showman must be spectacular. Give me a brass band, a few elephants, caparisoned in oriental gold, and two dozen feathered and painted Indians following me through the streets on horseback, and if I don't pack the Coliseum, I'll make a present of the building to the city! Of course, to keep up the crowds I must not stay too long in one place. A show must travel in order to live. Sunday preaching in one city for two or three years at a time, would soon sink into oblivion. One of the spectacular personages parading in Sunday's show is the Devil, with real hoofs and horns, and a roar that brings everybody to the windows!

6. But Sunday is also a consummate actor. He is himself the best part of his show. The Philadelphia papers describe his antics: "He sat in his chair, his lips chattering as if shaken by a fever, his eyes gazing into space." What was he doing? He was making a silent prayer visible! And "He bit his thumb." What was that for? To show he was mightily in earnest—teeth and all. "He danced about like a mad, pain-stricken creature." Why that? He was trying to act the part of the damned in hell, suggests his reporter. Then he jumps on his chair to jump down again, but this time clear across the platform,—a jump that made the audience hold its breath. Then he climbs upon his chair a second time, and from there he jumps upon the pulpit, and planting his feet on the velvet cushion that holds the open Bible, he cries, while shaking his fist in the face of the audience, and perspiring profusely, "Some of you are so low down that you need an airship to go to hell!" That is the climax; after that, the collection.

M. M. MANGASALAN.

To Correspondents.

- W. DENTITH ("Somewhere in France").—See "Sugar Plums."
—Very pleased to hear from you, and hope that good fortune may be yours to the end.
- W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.
- L. BILLAMY.—We are sorry that you have not been able to obtain the *Freethinker* at Wakefield or in the district. You might order it of Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son at the station bookstall.
- F. AKROYD.—Thanks for your new year's good wishes. The other matter will be dealt with elsewhere.
- E. B.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- R. CHAPMAN.—We very much regret the death of Mr. Bow, whom we knew many years ago as a very ardent worker for the Freethought cause. We can well believe that his death means a heavy loss to Northern Freethought.
- J. HAYES.—We quite agree with your estimate of Rev. T. Mathew's sermon. If the report you send does him justice, he appears to be in his proper place—the pulpit. Out of it even the general public would probably not care to listen to him.
- J. A. REID.—Thanks for card. The youngster looks a fine, sturdy, and intelligent boy, and we hope he will grow up as his father would desire. If physiognomy goes for anything, he should make a "bonnie fechter" in any cause he takes up.
- A. WATMARK.—Slips will occur with the best.
- T. C. ANDERSON.—Cheque received, and allocated as you desire. We are afraid that the assumed approach of a future life never did make Christians more peaceful. Generally, it has seemed to produce quite the opposite effect.
- E. H. JONES.—We hope you will have success in your venture. The Part-Song "War (a plea for peace)" is very suitable for all kinds of audiences, and should specially commend itself to those of an advanced character. We fancy that nearly all movements in the fighting stage of their existence exhibit the feature you note in connection with Freethought.
- 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.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley writes in the issue of *John Bull* for February 20:—

"We are being frequently taken to task by one or other of the brilliant writers on the *Freethinker* for our 'flirtations' with religion, and last week there was a very courteous, and caustic, criticism from the pen of Mr. Arthur B. Moss—to which we propose to reply in our next issue."

We shall look forward with some curiosity to Mr. Bottomley's defence of his "flirtations," and we feel he is in quite safe hands with Mr. Moss.

In a "War of Freedom"—one in which so much is said of the value of "scraps of paper" and the duty of government to honor their undertakings, one would have imagined that our own Government would be particularly careful on this head. Attention has already been called to the conduct of the military authorities in the matter of inoculation. They gave a written undertaking that inoculation against typhoid shall be purely voluntary. Immediately men enlist all sorts of underhand pressure is brought to bear upon the men to secure inoculation, and they are openly told that their not being done means a bar to their promotion and the enjoyment of certain privileges. This is not a question of the rightness or wrongness of inoculation; it is wholly a question of the military authorities, and, ultimately, the Government, keeping pledges that have been deliberately given.

The treatment of Freethinkers is another case in point. Men join under the impression that their opinions on religion and about religion will be treated with respect. It appears that once in the ranks their opinions are completely ignored. They are ordered to prayers exactly as they are ordered into the firing-line. If the officer is a real gentleman—and not a mere paste-board imitation—he may find means of evading the Army Regulations and relieving the soldier of attendance at church. Otherwise, the *Freethinker* is ordered to service, and if he does not go, may be punished for disobeying orders. Rev. J. N. Simms, who is a "Chaplain-in-charge," says, "There is no such thing as Church Parade, which men attend under orders. Men come to the services if they like—and they generally do." We are afraid that Mr.

Simms is saying that which is not true. We have had many statements to the contrary, and only the other day we received a letter from a soldier who had been at the Front since August 24, and who writes under date of February 14:—

"We had a Church Parade this morning, and they asked for volunteers. No one volunteered. Then they compelled ten men out of each sub-section to go. This was not so bad, because they always compel you to go to church in the Army. But they had the cheek to have a collection, this is the limit."

One day, perhaps, the authorities may discover that soldiers may be none the worse for being treated as responsible beings, capable of attending to their own "spiritual" needs without the help of the drill-sergeant.

Our correspondent encloses his full regimental number, which is, at least, some guarantee of his genuineness. He adds that had he not been an Atheist before the War, the War would certainly have made him one. He is good enough to say that the *Freethinker* comes to him as a "weekly treat," and for our part we hope that he will continue to be there to receive it. We have many readers at the Front, as elsewhere, and some of them, even in the midst of "war's alarms," manage to find time for a little useful propaganda.

We see that a member of the London Scottish has been protesting against the small amount of religious liberty there is in that regiment. His complaint is that a Presbyterian chaplain is imposed on the regiment because it is called "Scottish," whereas many of them are members of the Church of England. When Church Parade is ordered, they are all marched to a Presbyterian place of worship. The complaint is a just one. We cite it here because it attests the genuineness of the *Freethinker's* complaint noted above. We wonder, though, how far this "London Scot" would support the *Freethinker* in his attempt to get fair play? We are quite sure the *Freethinker* would support him in his claim to go to the Devil in his own fashion.

We are asked to announce that on Sunday, March 7, at the Good Templar's Hall, Ingram-street, Glasgow, Mr. Ogilvie will lecture on "Woman and the Supernatural." The lecture is fixed for 12 o'clock, and admission is free.

A *Manchester Evening News* representative recently visited the "Pals" camp at Morecambe. After making various inquiries of some of the recruits, one of them was asked about religion. In reply—

He chuckled. "I will tell you something about that," he said. "Each man is asked to state his religion. A sergeant came to our lot—an old soldier—and this is what happened when he got to one man.

"What's your religion?" he asked.

"Haven't got one."

"Not got one? What do you call yourself?"

"An Agnostic."

"A what?"

"An Agnostic. Don't believe in creeds of any kind."

The sergeant blinked. "Ow!" he said. "Don't you? Well, you've got to have a — religion in the army, see? Church of England, you are. Parade for service, nine sharp, Sunday morning."

In the cross-eyed manner peculiar to religious reasoning the destruction of old churches by the German bombardments have been taken as proof of the extent to which "Materialism" has seized hold of Germany. (The other armies have had no chance hitherto of showing what their gunners would do on a foreign soil.) It is taken for granted that Freethinkers naturally welcome the destruction of such buildings. Nothing could be further from the truth. As buildings, the *Freethinker* merely desires to put them to a good use. As monuments of art, he would be the first to advocate their preservation. Christians should remember that the destruction of beautiful buildings used by an alien creed—like the burning of books—is a peculiarly religious diversion. At the Reformation, the first thought of the Protestants concerning the Catholic Churches was to destroy them. And destroyed many of them were. The very word "Iconoclast" became familiar from a body of Christians who went about smashing the statuary they did not like. As church-smashers, Christians have a record that is big enough to make the most effective German battery despair of eclipsing.

We came across a calculation the other day that over 500 separate publications dealing with the War were published up to the end of December. And still they come. It is enough to make the Germans sue for peace at once. For a people that can stand all this are not likely to flinch at German artillery.

Ever Living and Ever Learning.

If the doctrine of God were a successful agent of civilisation, its success would not philosophically prove its truth, but it would, at any rate, shift theological controversy to the study of Dr. Dryasdust. But has the doctrine been successful?

Take one most vital test. Has the doctrine established a sense of unity among the races of mankind?

This is a perfectly plain question, and can be answered by Yes or No. Other questions, such as, Has the doctrine developed personal and social morality? call for a vast deal of historical research and critical insight; and the man in the street may be pardoned for not coming to a ready conclusion. But on this issue there need be no hesitation. Look round the globe, beginning with the ruins of Belgium, passing to the rivalry of Islam and Hinduism in India, and, ending at the American Methodists who perpetually apprehend a Catholic "peril," and you can arrive, without difficulty, at the reply, No, the doctrine has not blended men into a brotherhood.

In the earlier days of Theism, this disunity was quite understood as a consequence of the variety of gods. Each nation had its God, just as, to-day, each nation has its flag. There was no human unity; nobody wanted it, except some rare dreamer. Hence, the Bible is full of expressions which imply conceptions of tribal and proprietary gods. "Let us go and sacrifice to our God," said Moses, spokesman of the Israelites, to the despot King of Egypt. "We have forsaken our God," sighed the penitent Hebrews, in the age of the Judges. "I will not be your God," cried the prophet Hosea, upbraiding the Jews in the name of their God, Yahwè. "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," ran the First Commandment of the Ten. "The God of Gods" is a title given to the Hebrew deity by the writer of the legendary book of Daniel.

As there was competition among the gods, so there was strife amongst the nations. If you pick up a Bible, and run your eyes along the tops of the pages of Jeremiah, you will see the evidences of this international hatred: "The overthrow of divers nations foretold," "The destruction of the Philistines," "The Judgment of Babylon," etc. Every one of these condemned nations had its God. Perhaps, indeed, that fact embittered the jealousy.

Monotheism, or the doctrine of the one God, developed in due time, and is supposed to hold the intellectual field to-day. But ask a Christian if his God is the same as the Mohammedan God, and he will either say "No," or he will say "Yes," with a lack of enthusiasm, and with anxiety to make various qualifications. "May I take it," asks the German Kaiser in a Parisian cartoon, "that you, O Lord, are really on my side?" The particular Lord addressed replies, "I cannot do business with you; apply to Allah at the office opposite." The Kaiser, therefore, has to carry his question to the God of the Turks, who are his loyal and respectable Allies.

But why debate such questions at all? If we did not adequately know it before, the month of August, 1914, made the melancholy truth clear, and began the drama which, by means of shrapnel, torpedoes, shattered bodies, and broken hearts, unrolls the tragedy of human discord. If there are many gods, how in heaven can they explain these ghastly facts to one another, let alone to us below? If there is one God, is the supreme heart torn by conflicting emotions, like Hamlet's?—

"The time is out of joint; O cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!"

The Church cannot even agree upon a common language in which to couch prayer. A few days ago, the Convocation of Canterbury decided to issue alternative Books of Prayer, since the old volume was proved to be a cause of dissension even among the orthodox. The believers in God can neither pray in unity, nor form a social and political union. It may safely be prophesied that the United States of the

World, yet to be inaugurated, will permit no theological dedication at its opening festival.

Where, then, is the principle of unity to be found? I will answer in the proposition of Blaise Pascal (born 1623, died 1662):—

"The whole succession of men during so many ages should be considered as One Man, ever living and ever learning."

Those few words constitute, in my opinion, one of the noblest utterances ever framed by human thought and lips.

In that conception you have unity, without any pretence at absolute wisdom and perfection; for the human race is constantly learning. It learned in the days of flint weapons, the utilisation of fire, and the first taming of animals. It went on learning in the days of the Pyramids, and the building of Babylon. It went on learning in the age of Plato and Socrates. It went on learning while Cæsar conquered, and Cicero charmed with his eloquence. It went on learning through the Middle Ages of Charlemagne and Roger Bacon. It went on learning when Columbus beheld the shores of America, and Magellan's ship circumnavigated the globe. It went on learning when Shakespeare wrote, Molière set France laughing, and Leibnitz philosophised. It went on learning when the United States founded its splendid Republic, Paris saw the Bastille fall, and Paine issued *The Rights of Man*. It learns to-day through war and agony. It will go on learning through those distant ages when armies have become as obsolete as slavery and theology.

It is this One Man, the genius of humanity, who will solve all the puzzles of competition, exploitation, and war. I freely allow that many virtues are exhibited in military conflict. But there is one virtue which war can never illustrate, or even understand, and that is the willingness to recognise the virtue and fundamental humanity of the foe. If you read the newspapers during the present unhappy Civil War (for such it is), you will see that the enemy nations are constantly making horrible pictures of the people they are fighting against. They feel it a natural necessity to imagine the Germans, or the English, as the case may be, as entirely wicked and barbarous, in order that they may feel justified in proceeding to the utmost length of fury and destruction. It would be ungenerous to assert that the priests of this or that faith, Catholic, Protestant, Moslem, Hindu, Jewish, are indifferent to this misery. They are not, indeed. I shall always think with respect of the Abbé Landrieux, of Rheims. When some of the French soldiers, angry at the German bombardment of the cathedral, were about to shoot the German wounded who had been sheltered within its walls, Landrieux sprang forward, and cried, "Don't fire, you would make yourselves as guilty as they!" The soldiers obeyed.

War will never end till man learns the last great lesson of civilisation; that is to say, till he learns to respect his fellow-man as once he respected God. Norman Angell's school makes a useful contribution; Socialism makes a contribution; science makes a contribution. But the central need is this reverence for humanity as such; this perception of the cardinal glory of the idea that all men are "One Man, ever living and constantly learning." It is not an ideal that can be grasped through the utterance of good maxims merely. We may repeat "All men are brothers" a thousand times each twenty-four hours, and come no nearer to the universal peace. We must discover the One Man by a careful and life-long study of history and psychology. Centuries will pass before the many nations of this dear old earth can rightly appreciate one another's records, achievements, and values. Happily, they learn a little of this admirable book of humanity every day. Men understand one another better to-day than in the times of the Crusades, or the fearful collision of Christians and Moors at the battle of Tours, or in the age when the hosts of Egypt clashed with Persians and Hittites. To-morrow, we shall know more; the next day after, more still.

I have travelled in many lands, and seen great scenes; yet I have never caught sight of anything so healthy, so cheerful, so lofty, as the simple truth, expressed by Matthew Arnold: "The same heart beats in every human breast."

F. J. GOULD.

Hymeneal Ceremonies in Northern Africa.

WHATEVER other conclusion may be drawn from Professor Edward Westermarck's intensely interesting volume,* it is at least certain that the nuptial customs of Morocco entail a huge waste of human energy. Were the marriage ceremonies of Western Europe as exacting as those of the Mohammedan peoples of Northern Africa, illegitimate offspring would be far more numerous than they are. In the busy industrial countries of Europe and America no ordinary citizen would ever be able to spare the time demanded by the matrimonial observances of the Moors.

In his standard work, *The History of Human Marriage*, first published some twenty years ago, Dr. Westermarck devoted very little space to the ceremonies which attend matrimony. This omission he has more than rectified in the volume before us. Profiting by the criticism of Mr. E. Crawley that he had failed to recognise the magical significance of hymeneal observances, and that these were intended, as Professor Frazer had previously maintained, to minimise the risks and dangers which accompany the act of coition, Dr. Westermarck spent some six years in Morocco in search of sociological data, and his work is the outcome of his inquiries into the beliefs and customs of the Moors. Dr. Westermarck is mainly concerned in presenting the facts he has collected. He advances few theories, and is chiefly contented in describing the marital phenomena as he observed them, or as he obtained knowledge concerning them from the more or less friendly natives among whom he dwelt. This first-hand investigator was sometimes compelled to pursue his studies at considerable risk. He was occasionally obliged to disguise himself as a native, but with the assistance of a Moorish friend, he successfully overcame all the numerous obstacles that confronted him. Wherever possible, Dr. Westermarck furnishes us with facts he himself witnessed, and many were the tribes visited and studied. Where direct knowledge was not available, information was sought and secured from members of the tribes whose customs are described. One exception to this excellent rule must be mentioned, and this refers to the Ait Nder, whose ceremonies are mainly recorded on the authority of an old Berber, who had resided for a long period with the tribe in question. As Westermarck himself states:—

"My descriptions of wedding ceremonies are thus very largely drawn from oral information, which I have obtained both from men and women. This is true even in the case of tribes where I myself have been present at a wedding, either as an invited guest or as a spectator in Moorish disguise, since I, obviously, could not see everything which took place."

From all of which it is clear that the scientific spirit in which these inquiries were prosecuted is beyond all praise. And, as his work shows throughout, the investigator's first and last concern was to obtain the pure and unadorned truth.

Those physiological processes which minister to the maintenance of the race are shown to be responsible for a large number of most extraordinary observances, which Dr. Westermarck pictures with an unflinching pen. The greater part of his volume is, however, taken up with the fantastic customs which relate to the prolonged preliminaries to the marriage ceremonies themselves. These include the betrothal and marriage contract, the dowry and

presents, the ceremonies in the bridegroom's home before the bringing of the bride, the ceremonies at the bride's dwelling, the bringing of the bride and her arrival and reception. Then come the meeting of the bride and bridegroom with the doings of the following morning, to the continuation and conclusion of the wedding. The later ceremonies and tabus are considered in the penultimate chapter. With the tenth chapter the volume closes, and in this the author summarises the entire work, and submits his explanations to the judgment of the reader.

As Dr. Westermarck reminds us, the Mohammedan law regards matrimony as a civil contract, which is binding upon the married pair. But, among the Moors, a modified system has been adopted. With them the consent of her guardian, son, grandson, father, or, failing these, her nearest male relative is required when a woman desires to bestow her hand. The guardian's consent is supposed to protect the female from the wiles of artful adventurers, and to secure her against an improper union. Where the woman is still under her father's control, her power of choice is non-existent. These regulations, however, differ in the various tribes. In one, the parent's right to dispose of his child as he pleases ceases when the girl reaches puberty, while in another, the paternal power remains supreme during the father's lifetime, or he may permit her emancipation from the restrictions to which she would otherwise be bound.

But despite all theory, the invariable practice in Morocco is for the parents to marry their daughter without troubling themselves about her particular inclinations in the matter. Nor does this custom apply to the female only; the son's partner is frequently chosen for him by his elders, and public opinion may compel him to agree with their arrangements. With many of the Moorish tribes the sexes are strictly separated, so that there is small opportunity for falling in love, and the troubles which commonly arise through unsuitable unions find a fairly easy mode of settlement in the great facilities afforded for divorce. Again:—

"In tribes where the father actually sells his daughter, his disposal of her is naturally influenced by the price offered. In a country like Morocco, family connections are of great importance, not only for a person's social position, but even for his safety."

Marriages between cousins are popular in Morocco, and the male is considered to possess a prior claim on his cousin's hand. Westermarck was told that in Andira the male was entitled to receive information of his cousin's projected marriage with another, and when this was withheld from him, custom allowed him to stop a marriage, even on the wedding-day. Instances are on record in the Rif where the uncle has been slain by his nephew for marrying his daughter to another man. These cousin marriages have their economic aspect, as they serve to secure the property to the family. They are also alleged to lead to domestic happiness, and they undoubtedly serve to render the wife more obedient to her lord, for should she run away from him, her father or brother will compel her to return. And there is the further advantage that the woman,—

"cannot curse her husband by cursing his ancestors without implicating herself in the curse. It confers religious merit on a man to marry his cousin—by doing so he will not be punished on the day of Resurrection; and, at the same time, it is a kind of duty."

Yet the sky is not always clear even in these happy arrangements. The opinion was expressed at Fez that cousin marriages are the easy occasion of family jars. Hence, maidens who wish to wed visit the sepulchre of a saint, and supplicate him thus: "O Sidi Mbarak ben 'Ababu, give me a husband without friends." The offspring of these unions are also supposed to be sickly, and the families unlucky. And, bearing in remembrance his ably-championed theory that the almost universal horror of incest has been evolved by the sexual distaste that so generally exists between children who have been reared in each other's company, Westermarck notes the question once put to him by a Berber, "How can

* *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco*. Macmillan. 1914.

a man love a woman with whom he has grown up since childhood?" Elsewhere in Morocco the view was expressed that it is disgraceful to wed a woman one constantly saw. So that a certain independence of opinion appears to exist even among these intensely religious people.

There are lucky and unlucky periods for matrimony, and marriages are nearly always celebrated on special days, and usually in the autumn, when the grain has been gathered into the granaries. Some tribes never depart from the autumnal wedding, but others have occasional vernal ceremonies, while others again, still less rigorous, may time the wedding to suit the convenience of the bridegroom. Thursday seems an auspicious day everywhere for nuptial ceremonies, but other times are regarded by several tribes as equally allowable. By some it is deemed of good omen if the bride arrives at her new home as the flocks and herds return from the pastures. On such occasions, all sorts of small details may decide the coming happiness or misery of the contracting parties. The bride's face is painted with henna, but it is a blue look-out if "the painted parts become very red when they are rubbed clean the next morning." Empty utensils on tables are of sinister portent at weddings. In sober truth, superstition overshadows every act performed by the bride, bridegroom, and all the other participants in the matrimonial ceremonies.

Our ancient friends, the ghosts, are mainly responsible for the mischief. Many of the marriage observances are to be traced to the fear that both bride and bridegroom are viewed with marked aversion by the mischievous spirits. They, consequently, require special protection and purification if these evil creatures are to be frustrated. This appears the only conceivable explanation of the careful cleansing of the bride and bridegroom, the donning of new apparel, the painting and purification of one or other or both, the music and singing, the discharge of guns, the burning of candles and the use of incense, the scattering of salt, concealing the bride in a box, attiring the bride in a man's garments and the bridegroom in a woman's, and the innumerable charms and other interminable tricks, apart from which no Moorish union of bachelor and maid is complete. Later regulations, among a multitude most religiously observed, are the rules which forbid anyone to speak to the bride, and compel the bridegroom to place,—

"his right foot twice over the threshold of the nuptial chamber before he makes his entrance by a third step, that the candle or candles burning there must not be extinguished by anybody, that the slippers worn by the bride or bridegroom must never be repaired, and that the slippers and girdle which the bride has worn since the wedding must be removed on the fortieth day, and never again be used by her."

All these, and a legion of other regulations, must be carried out, so that getting married in Morocco is no mean trial, even to the most patient of people. It seems as if the spirits must be hoodwinked and overcome at every turn.

While Dr. Westermarck admits the influences of the spirits, he advances other interpretations of many of these quaint customs. The question arises as to why the contracting couple are thought to need so much protection, and why the bride is regarded as such a source of danger to others. In the first place, we must remember that marriages are far more numerous among the Moors than with us. Easy divorces, subsequent remarriages, and the polygamous practices of the people amply account for this. "I once had in my service," states Westermarck, "an elderly Berber from Sus who had had twenty-five wives, though never more than two at a time, and of these he had divorced twenty-two, and two had died." Among the Berbers, polygamy is very general; with them the blood-feud obtains, and it is deemed highly desirable to possess many sons. In one tribe, a man will willingly permit the intrusion of a stranger among his barren wives, and will pretend to the world that the children are his own.

A detailed study of the marriage customs of many tribes makes plain the fact that the protective ceremonies which accompany the unions of maids and bachelors are dependent upon their previous state of single blessedness. A bachelor bridegroom is,—

"subject to the same ceremonies, whether the bride be a virgin, a widow, or a divorced wife, whereas these ceremonies are omitted in the case of a bridegroom who has or has had another wife, quite independently of the state of the bride; and a bride who has not been married before is subject to the same ceremonies, whether the bridegroom be a bachelor, a widower, or a polygamist, whereas these ceremonies are, if not altogether done away with, at all events, much reduced in the case of a bride who is a widow or a divorced wife, quite independently of the state of the bridegroom."

These remarkable observances, then, appear to have sprung, at least in part, from the mystery which surrounds the sexual act. Coition is regarded as an act of defilement, and women are viewed as vestibules of sin. No holy spot must be profaned by any sexual deed. Prayers are profitless, in fact, any sacred rite is nullified unless the worshipers are free from sexual stain. The Moors declare that a scribe is never afraid of sinister spirits, save when in a state of sexual pollution. The husbandman must be free from defilement when he touches the corn, or it will suffer from blight, and the weeds will flourish in the fields. These, and various other customs and beliefs, all point to the conclusion that danger is ever lurking in the neighborhood of the procreative act. Continence is required before proceeding on a journey, lest it prove unlucky. The unclean pass troubled nights, for their guardian spirits forsake them, and the evil influences haunt them as they lie.

While allowing that these superstitions largely relate to the "mysterious propensities and the veiled mystery which surrounds the whole sexual nature of man," Dr. Westermarck also assigns their prevalence to the low estimate in which woman is held among orthodox Moslems, as among ourselves, right down to recent times. By the Moors in general, the female sex is regarded as the embodiment of depravity. Women are the colleagues of the Devil, and are frequently more wicked. They are controlled by malevolent spirits, who lend them their aid in practising witchcraft. Their very eyes are evil, and their curses are most potent for ill. Women are not permitted to set their feet on the threshing-floor when the corn is there, because their presence will do it injury. Prohibitions are also placed upon them during menstruation, and for forty days after childbirth. There can be little doubt that, to the Moors, woman appears as the fountain of all sexual stain.

There are innumerable things in this most interesting volume upon which one might linger. The work is to be commended to all students of anthropology. Dr. Westermarck is one of the foremost representatives of this branch of science. And, in company with his *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* and his *History of Human Marriage*, this clearly written and most highly original work is likely to occupy a very commanding place, for many years to come, in the rapidly increasing literature of the science of man.

T. F. PALMER.

In Three Days.

THE comical element of the War drama is being supplied mainly by the apostles of the Lord of Peace. Some of them are on this side, some of them on the other side. Most of them say, regardless of nationality, it is a righteous War. A few of them refuse to be patriots in opinion, because patriotism simply means blasphemy. Others are writing epistles to Christ's disciples everywhere in the endeavor to reconcile the irreconcilable sons of God. Some are in the trenches, or near enough to give the warriors a dose of spiritualistic

gladness whenever the opportunity seems favorable. Others are in pulpita telling lies about German philosophy and science, as if philosophy and science were foolishly nationalistic in nature, or spinning yarns about the coming of the Lord in a chariot of fire, the same carriage being manufactured in metal, drawn by a traction-engine, and characterised by its power of spitting forth so many death-shells in so many seconds.

Difference of opinion may be a vital necessity towards mental clarity from a social viewpoint; but, religiously, it spells disaster in comedy.

The preacher whom I was privileged to hear belonged to the righteous War variety. He reviewed the familiar and consequently superficial grounds that led to the outbreak of the struggle. He spoke with great gratitude upon the nation's recognition of honor in the face of so grave a danger. It was something to be proud of that Britishers knew what honor was, and were willing and eager to defend it. We should thank God for that. Then he referred to wrongdoing, to the punishment of the dishonorable; but it seemed to me that God was to be left to forgive while we undertook his duty of chastisement. We Britishers, of course, have a reputation world-wide for supererogation. The preacher forgot that whom God loves most he chastens most; and if our prophecies of the speedy annihilation of the German forces become realised, then the Kaiser and Company are really nearer God than the others, after all, and the Kaiser knows it.

Although his sermon was packed full of implied suggestions like these, my preacher was most certainly sincere. Evidently he possessed, while in the pulpit, the faith that could remove mountains if it once made up its mind to have a try. Despite his sad, white face and toneless voice, he was an optimist. He believed that God spoke in the cannon thunder. He believed that everything, even the terrible tragedy of war, worked co-operately by the grace of God and the love of Christ for the world-wide realisation of Christianity here upon earth. But he did not explicitly aver that it was a misuse of words to say the tragedy of war: we should say the joyful poem of battle. He did not definitely remark that if God were working in the War, then it was a blessing and not a curse—a joy, not a sorrow. He did not say plainly that our faith should conquer those tendencies to use wrong words, and should conquer, also, our blasphemous liability to wail when, *via* a shell, the Lord took one of our sons to his bosom. But he was an optimist. He meant those things.

Judging from his sermon, a man can look into hell and be full of hopes of heaven. In the battle smoke he saw the face of Jesus Christ. The groans of the wounded and dying were hosannahs. The destruction of patiently accumulated social wealth meant the raising of the temple of righteousness. In the crash and crumble of falling ideas, the upbuilding of many long years of peaceful propaganda, he heard the sounds of the new erection of Christianity. In the putrefaction he smelled the perfumes of paradise. In the horribly inhuman crudities of fighting he saw the tender, loving fingers of the crucified Christ. In the hideously massacred remains of men he saw angelic forms; and the dirty blood was as pure as snow. He was an optimist, this preacher of mine; and all because Jesus Christ is supposed to have said that the temple might be destroyed, but that in three days he would build it up again.

We were asked to go in thought to Belgium. Cardinal Mercier's words were read to us. What did it mean? It meant, said the preacher, that the very temples of God were being ruthlessly destroyed. It meant that the altars of God were being callously shattered. Destruction had penetrated to the Holy of Holies. Nothing was sacred to the destroyer. Of course, he, being a Protestant, conveniently forgot that the tabernacles were Catholic houses of worship; forgot also the many uncharitable things he had said about Catholic idolatry. However, we live in a time of great mental stress and strain.

It might be, he said, that the grandeur of the old cathedrals could never be restored. Their hearts, their noble beauties, were buried in the dust. But what of their spirit? Did that perish? Nay; for, in three days from the time of their ruin, stone by stone had they been rebuilt in the memories and loves of those who once worshiped God in them. In three days the religious power of them had developed tenfold. God triumphs even in darkness and dreadful destruction.

And, then, were not the temples of the homes of the people being destroyed? Where desolation now hung in heavy smoke-clouds there once were fruitful fields and pleasant pastures. Happy homes had been razed to the ground, and families sent awandering upon the earth. It was too terrible for words; and yet we could find comfort in the teaching of the Lord; for had he not said the temple of the home might be destroyed; but in three days he would build it up again. And his words were true; for in the hearts of the Belgians had risen a love of home tenfold greater than ever it had been. Their sorrows had tempered the steel of their regard. In their littleness they had become mighty. Perhaps it is quite true; but decency should have forced him to thank the German militarists for accomplishing this stupendous task. Why don't these ministers read their *Freethinker*?

Instancing a few more ideas along similar lines, he reached the star of his optimism in the conviction that Christianity would emerge from the din and darkness in a glory it had never possessed since the days of Christ. People would flock back to the faith of their fathers. There would be a re-birth of religion with the death of German militarism. This War would be a great purifying force.

And he finished off with a few cheap phrases about the prophetic vision of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the text when he said the temple might be destroyed, but in three days he would build it up again.

According to my preacher, Germany was another Judas Iscariot. At least, that was the implication; and some day, perchance, when Christians become inoculated with the life-giving germ of reason, they may raise a statue to the modern national Iscariot, through whose agency, seemingly, so much good will accrue to Humanity in general, and Christianity in particular.

Optimism is an excellent mood; but when one gets it in such a flood, as I have faithfully endeavored to picture it, and of such a quality, then it resembles the raptures of a rat caught by its tail in a strong trap.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Obituary.

Mr. David Russel Bow, a well-known Tyneside Free-thinker, died after a short illness on Sunday, February 14, aged 57, at his residence, 1 Brookfield-terrace, Pelaw, and the remains were interred at Heworth Churchyard on Wednesday, February 17, in the presence of a large gathering of mourners, among whom the Freethought party was represented by Messrs. Elijah Copland, G. M. Peacock, G. White, T. Horsman, R. Chapman, and others. A Scotsman by birth, Mr. Bow's introduction to the movement took place at Sunderland, and afterwards for several years he was an earnest worker in the ranks of the South Shields Branch. Later he moved to Pelaw, where, as estate agent and tradesman, he became a well-known and popular figure in various local enterprises, but still continued from time to time to lend useful help to South Shields and Newcastle friends. For Sunday trading at Usworth Colliery, where he opened a temperance bar, Mr. Bow appeared at the Courts almost weekly from 1909 to 1913, occasionally snatched a victory, and finally triumphed completely over his persecutors. Without any pretence to formal lecturing, Mr. Bow often appeared on the platform, and was never at loss for a good story. A pathetic feature of his somewhat sudden end was the fact that his only son was lost in the armed merchant vessel *Viknor* a few weeks ago. Hence at the graveside there were two widows and a little orphan grandson to bid the las farewell.—R. C.

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