

# THE Freethinker

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In this world it much beseems the brave man, uncertain about so many things, to be certain of himself for one thing.—CARLYLE.

## The Gospel of Peace and the War.

THE Gospel Jesus, prior to his decease, assured his disciples that his legacy to them would be his own peace, and that his object in speaking to them was that in him they might have peace. When his Apostles went forth in his name they preached peace through him. His Gospel was to be known as the Gospel of peace, and the God behind it is described as the author, not of confusion, but of peace. Indeed, the great, central, all-inclusive term of the New Testament is peace. Believers are solemnly enjoined to "live peaceably with all men," and their faithful discipleship is to yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." The constant exhortation addressed to them is to be at peace among themselves. The God of peace is the giver of peace to all his people. Basing their religious faith upon this plain teaching of the New Testament, the people known as Friends declare that all war is unchristian. They are zealous advocates of non-resistance, pure and simple, in all international affairs. This was the doctrine most uncompromisingly proclaimed at the annual meeting of the Peace Society held only a few days ago. Dr. Evans Darby, Mr. Joseph King, M.P., Sir John Pease Fry, and the Rev. Richard Roberts lifted up their voices, with the utmost unanimity, in eloquent condemnation of war under any circumstances whatever. According to a brief report in the *Christian World* for May 20, Mr. Roberts, a Presbyterian minister of high standing, "admitted that, judged by ordinary political morality, Germany was the chief culprit in the present War; but that, as a Christian, he could never regard any war as righteous." The Rev. Dr. Orchard was also present, and sadly confessed that if asked "What could we have done?" he would have been able only to say, "I don't know." "He only knew that the thing we did was the wrong thing." It will be remembered that, on a former occasion, Dr. Orchard called the War "an operation of God." With only two dissentients, this largely attended meeting passed the following resolution:—

"That this annual meeting of the Peace Society reaffirms its unshaken persuasion that all war is utterly incompatible with the spirit and tenor of the Gospel of Christ; and that no plea of necessity or of policy, however urgent or peculiar, can avail to release either individuals or nations professing his name, from the duty of unflinching opposition to all war. It is also firmly convinced that in the Divine hand, but available for men, are all the recourses, and in obedience to the Divine will, all the conditions, of permanent and universal peace."

All honor, we say, to the men and women who have the heroic courage to remain loyal to such convictions in such terrible times as the present. Specially worthy of respect are such clergymen as the Revs. Richard Roberts and A. Fyfe, who, in a denomination officially in sympathy with and working for the War, stand up, at great personal sacrifice, for what they believe to be Christian principle. We are convinced that their faith rests on nothing but a myth; but consistent fidelity to a mere myth is infinitely better

than the hypocritical allegiance to it professed by Christendom as a whole, while in practice giving the direct lie to it every day.

Take, for example, the anomalous position which the Rev. R. J. Campbell defended at the recent meeting of the Congregational Union. He read a paper entitled "The Christian Attitude to War," in which, according to a lengthy report in the *Christian World* for May 13, while avowing the greatest sympathy with the pacifists and the deepest respect for the principle on which they insisted, he did his utmost to reconcile Christian principle with the use of armed force. He frankly granted that the apparent irreconcilability between the two was causing serious heart-searching to many professing Christians. He alluded to one of his own young men at the City Temple who had said to him: "I feel that I must fight for England, but I feel equally that in doing so I am not acting as a Christian." What had the reverend gentleman to say in reply? In effect only this: "If you resolve to fight for your country and for our version of Christianity, you will but imitate the example of Christian peoples during nineteen centuries; and you may rely upon it that in so doing you will be giving the most accurate interpretation to the *spirit*, however you may contradict the *letter*, of our Divine Master's teaching." Is not this casuistry at its lowest and worst? Does it not prove that the profession of Christianity is, at best, but a specious form of hypocrisy, for which there can be no valid excuse? Some years ago Professor Vernon Bartlet, of Mansfield College, Oxford, delivered a lecture on "How and Why the Gospel Won Europe," in which he attempted to show that in a few centuries Christianity "penetrated and finally won the Roman Empire." Now, what did the religion which thus "penetrated and finally won the Roman Empire" signify? According to Dr. Bartlet, these three things: "An ideal of love as the secret and motive of goodness, in contrast to selfishness in all its myriad forms, as the spring of action"; such a realisation of this ideal of love as included "not only the world of our senses, but also and still more that which lies behind the material and bodily, and gives to these all their higher or human meaning"; the dignity of man which, "in the light of relation to God, is something going deeper than a man's earthly lot or condition, all ranking alike in their intrinsic manhood"; and the rebaking of "the haunting doubt whether the personal sacrifice of time and effort in the service of men who often seem to yield but little harvest, be after all worth the labor spent upon them." Such was the religion which, we are told, "penetrated and finally won Europe"; and the question naturally arises, What did this religion of ideal love, of appreciation of human dignity and value, and of the beauty of vicarious service, do for Europe? Did the belief in the universal Fatherhood of God result in the practical realisation of the universal Brotherhood of Man? Did the ministers of the Gospel of peace establish and practise peace in Christendom? It is true that the earliest Christians, the Paulicians, the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and the Quakers positively refused to take up arms, the latter of whom are with us still. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, and Basil violently opposed war as being quite unlawful for the followers of the Lamb;

and it is a well-known fact that Maximilianus, having been enrolled as a soldier under Diocletian, suffered death solely because he declined to fight on the ground that he was a Christian. It may be granted that thousands of others bravely faced a similar martyrdom, as suggested by Gibbon (vol. ii., p. 138), but the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of the subjects of the Prince of Peace, in all ages after the first few centuries, have been lovers and promoters of war. War has been looked upon as the school of the heroic virtues, and its moral grandeur has been loudly acclaimed from innumerable pulpits.

Now, because it has been the practice of the Church either to directly wage, or to lend its material and moral support to, war, Mr. Campbell draws the strange conclusion that the mind of the Lord, as expressed in the New Testament, has been invariably misunderstood by the pacifists. The Quakers are in error because they interpret the sayings of Jesus without reference to the practice of the Church, whereas the Quakers themselves stoutly maintain that the practice of the Church has been a ruinous violation of both the letter and the spirit of the Savior's teaching. But Mr. Campbell gives his whole case away in two vital senses, and the Congregational union unanimously followed suit. In the course of his paper the reverend gentleman makes the following remark:—

"Were the Gospel completely victorious there would be an end of war. It was because in times of peace they did not rise to the level of moral enthusiasm and sacrifice they found in war that they had war at all."

In that case, Professor Bartlet was entirely mistaken when he asserted that the Gospel had finally won Europe. It has not won it yet. It is an infinitely long way from winning it. The Prince of Peace has never reigned upon earth. Does it not follow, then, that to interpret Jesus in the light of the practice of the Church is to totally misinterpret him? That naive admission of the City Temple oracle implies that had the Church been but obedient to her Lord from the beginning, there would never have been a war in Christendom.

Mr. Campbell gives his case the go-by in another way. The appeal to physical force, on the part of Christians, deals God a violent blow in the face. They pretend to believe in prayer, and they go through the form of praying for victory; but this is all empty pietism, as is abundantly testified by their practical reliance on their armies and navies. If in all wars the best armies and the most efficient navies win, in what manner does prayer justify itself, or where does God come in at all? In his controversy with Celsus, Origen "maintained that the prayers of the Christians were more efficacious than the swords of the legions"; but what war was ever won by a side that employed prayers rather than swords? There has never been such a war. The British Churches declare that their cause is just and that God is on their side, and they hold innumerable services to pray for speedy victory; but in practice God does not get a single chance. Quite recently, the military correspondent of the *Times*, then at the Front, stated positively that "the want of an unlimited supply of high-explosive shells was a fatal bar to our success," showing most clearly that, despite all religious professions and recourse to prayer, our complete reliance is on shells, shells, and more shells.

In all generations, the Gospel of Peace has been an egregious farce, and all appeals to God in prayer have been absolutely in vain. How readily our men of God put on khaki, and how proudly they hold up their heads and strut about in their military uniform! The Gospel of Jesus has never once been seriously tried, while the Gospel about Jesus, or the Gospel of Christ, as exemplified by the Church, has at last converted Christendom into one huge, revolting, and horribly bloody battlefield which already records the sacrifice of millions of innocent lives! O for the reign of common sense, for the awakening of Monarch Reason out of long ages of drugged slumber!

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Ethic of Unbelief.

THE more commonly a word is used, the more likely it is to be misunderstood, and even abused. The fact of its being used in every-day intercourse hides from most people the need for definition, and in course of time the word takes on a host of secondary meanings that are fatal to clear thinking; and sometimes these implications are not merely secondary—they may be antagonistic. Let anyone observe the use made of such words as "belief," "unbelief," "doubt," and he will have at hand a first-class illustration of what has been said. Take up almost any sermon or religious writing that comes to hand, and it will be found that doubt and unbelief are treated as of almost equal value, with unbelief discussed as though it were, to use a cant phrase, a string of empty negations. The unbeliever, it is said, is nothing to the world's power for progress; his function is purely critical and destructive. It is only men of strong convictions that count; and we must pass through seasons of doubt and unbelief; the best thing is to treat them as mental ailments and effect a cure as speedily as possible.

This attitude is not really justifiable even in relation to doubt; it is still less justifiable in relation to unbelief. So far as religion is concerned, there is always a positive aspect to doubt which the clergy find it convenient to ignore. Something must suggest doubt; there must be some flaw in the evidence presented, or some perception of a truth of an opposite character. In its lowest term, doubt may imply indecision; in its higher, it may foreshadow the growth of a very positive opinion against the thesis presented. If a jurymen finds the evidence for and against a prisoner so equally balanced that he is unable to come to any definite decision, he doubts; but his state of mind will be that of a slight suspense. If the evidence on one side is of a slightly stronger character, but not sufficiently strong to be conclusive, he will still doubt; but in this case there will be present a positive element in the shape of a strong presumption in favor of either guilt or innocence.

Doubt, then, is a state of mind produced by the perception of conflicting evidence, or by recognition of the fact that the evidence produced is insufficient to warrant a rational conviction. The popular phrase, "honest doubt," not only serves to hide the truth, but suggests an entirely erroneous conclusion. Doubt cannot be either honest or dishonest. Speech may be; and one may pretend to doubt—but that is all. The only rational meaning to such an expression as "an honest doubter" is one who honestly tells you so, and in that case it refers to honesty of expression.

Doubt, not disbelief, is the real opposite of belief. Popular thought, again encouraged by the clergy for interested reasons, treats disbelief and belief as opposites. This is really not the case. Belief and disbelief are two sides of the same mental state. I assert that twice two equal four, I assert by implication my disbelief that they equal any other number. The belief in a flat earth asserts disbelief in its roundness. Belief and disbelief are two aspects of the same mental state. Each implies a definite conviction. That is why the strong disbeliever is also a sturdy believer. And when we are told that the world's saviors have been men of strong belief, we can cheerfully endorse the statement, merely adding that they were, of necessity, strong disbelievers also.

And, as with doubt, it is absurd to speak of honest or dishonest belief. An honest unbeliever can only mean an unbeliever who acts honestly; but "honest" refers here to his conduct, not to his belief. No man can believe what he will; he must believe what he can. He may be led to a false belief through carelessness, or by constitutional inability to weigh evidence; but the fact of his belief remains untouched by these considerations. Or he may be led to believe or disbelieve from interested motives. But in that case he is simply a hypocrite, and his

would deny that these are more numerous in the religious than in the non-religious world.

I do not mean by what has been said that it is of no consequence, or of even little consequence, what a man believes. The social importance of beliefs remain quite unaffected whether belief is voluntary or otherwise. I believe that man's beliefs are among the most important things about him; they determine very largely what he does; and the historian, the sociologist, and the politician must always reckon with them if they desire to either understand or direct events. The really important question is, What is that we believe or disbelieve? and looked at from this point of view, it can be shown that while the professed beliefs of the Christian world imply disbeliefs of a deplorable character, the disbeliefs of the non-religious world imply beliefs of the highest social importance.

Let us take first of all a question that marks the deepest and oldest division between the religious and the non-religious world—that of the natural *versus* the supernatural. We unbelievers have no doubts on this question. Our disbelief in it is of the most positive and decided character. We see no reason for believing that at any time in human history has there been any manifestation of supernatural power in the affairs of man. We see things that are attributed to the supernatural in one generation coming under the category of science at a later date. Our disbelief in the supernatural is, therefore, only the reverse aspect of our firm belief in the omnipotency of natural forces and the universality of natural causation. Remove this and the foundations of our unbelief is gone. But ours is not a "bare negation," it is the strongest and most positive of affirmations. It involves a belief without which all science becomes an impossibility. It is the religious believer who, by his belief, is committed to scepticism concerning a generalisation which has stood every test that can be applied to it, and in the absence of which a same ordering of life is inconceivable.

With regard to specific religious doctrines there is the same moral to be drawn. Every Christian professes belief in the divine birth of Jesus. In some mysterious manner, out of all the thousands of millions born into the world, this one individual was born without the aid of a human father. The unbeliever asserts that the laws of birth which held good for John Brown or Thomas Smith, and which are admittedly so for every individual in every part of the globe, hold good for Jesus Christ also. It is not a question of how many people believe to the contrary, it is simply a question of sanity of disposition, and of the reliability of human experience. Our *belief* here, again, is in the universality of the principle of causation. The disbelief of the Christian is in methods of reasoning, without which life would become a veritable idiot's tale, unreadable and unreliable.

The Christian has a certain belief about the Bible; so has the Freethinker. We do not accept his belief, because we have a very decided one of our own. We see that these supernaturally inspired religious writings or utterances crop up in all parts of the world, and that they become fewer and more negligible as civilisation develops. The Red Indian has his medicine man, the Siberian savage has his shaman, the African his witch doctor, they all declare their utterances inspired, and whether these inspired utterances are written or oral is a mere matter of detail. Seeing these things, the unbeliever declines to discriminate between the Bible and other religious writings. We believe that they all have the same origin, and that their value must be determined, not by the circular method of appealing to people's belief in them, but by what we know of natural law, human nature, and social evolution. We are not uttering a negation; we are affirming a principle. Or if it is a negation, it is of the order that every truth makes when confronting a falsehood.

It is the same with other matters. In a dozen different ways Christian preachers are found assert-

ing that religious doctrines—the belief in God, in a soul, in a future state, are essential to right living. The man who forsakes these beliefs loses his hold on all that makes life worth living. Put in plain language, there is here the belief that human nature is such that without a bribe or a threat man is a beast—if not worse than a beast. This involves the denial of the possibility of any marked degree of excellence in the absence of a coercive external force. Man must never be allowed to stray beyond the vision of a watchful policeman—on earth or in heaven. The Freethinker disbelieves this, but his disbelief carries with it the belief that poor as human nature is, it has at least enough inherent goodness to carry out its legitimate domestic and social functions without being bribed by belief in heaven or terrified by belief in hell. The Christian is fond of talking about the pessimism of unbelief, but, whether it be right or wrong, there is certainly greater nobility in a teaching that takes man at his highest and appeals to the best that is in him, than one that treats him as a compound of fool and felon, incapable of recognising where his duty lies, or of carrying it out.

It is absurd to speak of opinions as opinions, or being either good or bad. One might as well talk of the color of a sound, or the size of a smell. But it has been part of the policy of the clergy for ages to identify special opinions with undesirable social qualities, and the trick has been played for so long that it is no easy matter nowadays to expose the deception. But if it is ever justifiable to speak of a mental state as being immoral or dangerous, it must surely be of that set of opinions which, rejecting all human experience and sane science, reduces reason to a mere delusion, and morality to the repression of criminal instincts, under fear of punishment or hope of reward.

C. COHEN.

### William Ernest Henley.

"For proud and fiery and swift and bold—  
Wine of life from heart of gold,  
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled  
Full-billowed through his veins."

—JAMES THOMSON.

In the steady flow of new editions is evidence of popularity, it is clear that the works of William Ernest Henley are growing in public favor. He was a most delightful writer. Nearly everything that he has done is vital. He may offend, but he never tired his readers. There is no suspicion of the lamp. It may be reckless, robust, untamed; but it has always the breath of life in it. We can trace the influence of many greater writers in Henley's work, especially of Heine and Whitman; but for all that, both as critic and poet, he was a man of separate and dominant personality. He wrote as no one else wrote, and he saw everything quite fresh and straight with his own eyes, careless of established reputation or the canons of opinion. Courage was the motto of his life and of his work.

Because of his individuality, he had to make his way slowly, and to wait for recognition. In his Preface to the first collected edition of his poems, the author said: "After spending the better part of my life in the pursuit of poetry, I found myself, about 1877, so utterly unmarketable that I had to own myself beaten in art, and to addict myself to journalism for the next ten years." What Henley did for journalism and literature as editor of the *National Observer* and the *New Review* was remarkable. Indeed, the *National Observer* was long recognised as the most brilliant literary periodical of its time. It was audacity itself; the last work in cocksureness, in contempt for its enemies, in originality of treatment. It did not signify that the paper was professedly true-blue Tory. On its purely literary side it was always very advanced, and on the side of the "intellectuals." Its so-called Liberal opponent, the *Speaker*, was, in comparison, the hindmost of the reactionaries. To glance over a list of Henley's con-

tributors is almost to reckon up a decade of writers. Here it was Robert Louis Stevenson printed his scathing "Open Letter" regarding Father Damien. When Harper's objected to an outspoken chapter in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* it found, promptly, a warm welcome in the pages of the *National Observer*. In the same paper, appeared Rudyard Kipling's rollicking *Barrack Room Ballads*. Sir James Barrie wrote much for Henley's paper in its earlier days, and we remember that it was in an article by the editor that *The Little Minister* was hailed first as "a book of genius." Andrew Lang wrote delicious verses for the paper, and among the other poets of the journal were W. B. Yeats, T. E. Brown, Katherine Tynan, and Alice Meynell. The late G. W. Steeven's finest work, *Monologues of the Dead*, appeared in the same pages. In short, the *National Observer* appealed to critical tastes, to the cream of English intellect. Many a man whose name stands high to-day, had to thank Henley for wise and strong encouragement, for his first start. He was unwearied in aiding his contributors; he would work up their articles and stories himself, if necessary, until perfection came.

This strong-souled vehement man, who suffered much, undisheartened and undismayed, was a born singer. His work was never garrulous or flat. He never sang except when the mood was on him. His earliest published verses, *In Hospital, Rhymes and Rhythms*, showed the man's nature, and revealed that mixture of realism, defiance, and a depth of tenderness that characterised the whole of his work. We see the surgeons, the patients, and hear the heart-beats of those awaiting the sentence. It was while in the Edinburgh hospital that Stevenson first came to see him.

To compare Henley with other poets would be idle, even if comparison were our purpose. He is so unlike any of them that we are stopped on the threshold by his peculiar manner. Henley has filled his work with pregnant phrases, and there is enough in him to make the reputation of many poets, whose gifts are less solid, but more showy. If anyone doubts Henley's poetic gifts, let him read his *London Voluntaries*. Try this description of a spring day in the Metropolis:—

"There is no man, this deifying day,  
But feels the primal blessing in his blood.  
There is no woman but disdains  
The sacred impulse of the May, [her veins,  
Brightening like sea-made sunshine through  
To veil the ensigns of her womanhood."

Or this, describing a drive at dawn at Chelsea:—

"And in the piles the water frolics clear,  
The ripples into loose rings wander and flee;  
And we—we can behold that could but hear  
The ancient river singing as he goes  
New mailed in morning to the ancient sea."

Henley grasped as no poet before him the genius of the greatest city in the world. Take this searching picture:—

"Out of the poisonous East,  
Over a continent of blight,  
Like a maleficent influence released  
From the most squalid cellarage of hell,  
The Wind, Fiend, the abominable— [and light—  
The Hangman Wind that tortures temper  
Comes slouching, sullen and obscene,  
Hard on the skirts of the embittered night;  
And in a cloud unclean  
Of excremental humors roused to strife  
By the operation of some ruinous change,  
Wherever his evil mandate run and range,  
Into the dire intensity of life,  
A craftsman at his bench, he settles down  
To the grim job of throttling London Town."

That is London in the grip of the east wind. Here is the great city on a bland October afternoon:—

"For earth and sky and air  
Are golden everywhere,  
And golden with a gold so suave and fine  
The looking on it lifts the heart like wine.  
Trafalgar Square  
(The fountains volleying golden glaze)  
Shines like an angel-market. High aloft  
Over his couchant lions, in a haze  
Shimmering and bland and soft,

A dust of chrysoprase,  
Our Sailor takes the golden gaze  
Of the saluting sun, and flames superb,  
As once he flamed it on his ocean round."

Now take this by way of contrast:—

"Thro' the gloamings,  
Under the rare, shy stars,  
Boy and girl wander  
Dreaming in darkness and dew.  
Oh, the brilliance of blossoming orchards!  
Oh, the savor and thrill of the woods,  
When the leafage is stirred  
By the flight of the angel of rain."

Henley takes his place beside Rudyard Kipling as a poet of the fieriest patriotism:—

"They call you proud and hard,  
England, my England:  
You with worlds to watch and ward,  
England, my own!  
You whose mailed hand keeps the keys  
Of such teeming destinies,  
You should know nor dread nor ease  
Were the Song on your bugles blown, England,  
Round the Pit on your bugles blown!"

On the subject of death, Henley always wrote with dignity. One remembers Stevenson's appreciation of certain memorial verses, which conclude:—

"So be my passing,  
My task accomplished and the long day done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,  
Let me be gathered to the quiet West,  
The sundown splendid and serene,  
Death."

It would be possible to cite a score of noble and inspiring passages. For example:—

"The pomp and power  
Of round on round of shining soldier stars  
Patrolling space.

Generous thoughts  
And honorable words and deeds,  
That make men half in love with fate!"

The lines which uttered his own proud defiance of fate are already on the road to immortality:—

"In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud;  
Under the bludgeoning of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.  
It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll;  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul."

There could be no fitter summary of a life courageously, defiantly spent in battling against disease, opposition, and many buffets of fortune. On this note of manly defiance let us take leave of him.  
Hail, and Farewell!

MIMNERMUS.

## The Evolution of the Solar System.—II.

(Concluded from p. 331.)

As the just-given passage from Sir David Gill proves many systems other than our own display evidences of stellar development. Herschel long ago brought forward an array of facts pointing to the gradual transformation of nebulae into stars. That famous philosophical astronomer, as a consequence of his survey of the evolutionary phenomena which the heavens present, arrived at the conclusion that the suns of outer space and our own luminary, with its circling planets, were the outcome of the systematic operations of an orderly process of evolution, through the agencies of which "inhabitable worlds endowed with warmth, light, and life were brought forth out of primitive gaseous matter."

It must be granted that nebulae exist in the heavens in every stage of development demanded by the Nebular Hypothesis. Some nebulous clouds appear utterly indifferenced; others have reached the stage in which a nucleus has become barely discernible; while others, further advanced, display a nucleus quite clearly as a beautiful star-like point. Still further progress may be witnessed in those nebulous masses which reveal the presence of a hard

star, while nebulous stars pass by graduated stages into ordinary glowing suns. Thus we may trace in an ever-ascending series the passage of a nebulous haze into a star or family of stars. The existence of innumerable nebulous masses which combine to display every essential aspect of ascending change is unquestionably fraught with the deepest meaning. With Herschel and other clear-thinking astronomers, we are truly entitled to mentally picture the never-ceasing but unspeakably slow changes which ultimately render possible the wealth of life and mind such as our tiny planet contains.

The matured judgment of a profound and dispassionate astro-physicist, the late Professor Simon Newcomb, was delivered in the following terms:—

"At the present time we can only say that the nebular hypothesis is indicated by the general tendencies of the laws of nature, that it has not been proved to be inconsistent with any fact, that it is almost a necessary consequence of the only theory by which we can account for the origin and conservation of the sun's heat, but that it rests on the assumption that this conservation is to be explained by the laws of nature as we now see them in operation. Should anyone be sceptical as to the sufficiency of these laws to account for the present state of things, science can furnish no evidence strong enough to overthrow his doubts until the sun shall be found growing smaller by actual measurement, or the nebulae be actually seen to condense into stars and systems."

Another way of viewing the problem before us is admirably expounded by Sir Robert Ball, who has drawn a very realistic picture of the method in question. We commence our inquiry by considering the sun as it now exists, and then proceed to note its constantly increasing expansion as we journey back across the countless centuries which cover the genesis and development of our luminary and his whirling worlds.

As is well known, the daily expenditure of solar heat almost baffles conception, and this never-ceasing outpour furnishes a far-reaching argument in favor of the Nebular Hypothesis. "The amount of the sun's heat has been estimated," states Ball,—

"but we receive on the earth less than one two-thousand millionth part of the whole radiation. It would seem that the greater part of the rest flows away to be lost in space. Now what supplies that heat? We might at first suppose that the sun was an intensely heated body radiating out its heat as does white-hot iron, but this cannot be admitted, for there is no historical evidence that the sun is growing colder. We have not the slightest reason to think that the radiation from the sun is measurably weaker than it was a couple of thousand years ago, yet it can be shown that, if the sun were merely radiating heat as simply a hot body, then it would cool some degrees every year, and must have cooled many thousands of degrees within the time covered by historical records. We, therefore, conclude that the sun has some other source of heat than that due simply to incandescence. It might, for example, be suggested that the heat of the sun was supplied by chemical combination. It would take twenty tons of coals a day burned on each square foot of the sun's surface to supply the daily radiation. Even if the sun were made of one mass of fuel as efficient as coal, that mass must be entirely expended in a few thousand years if the present rate of radiation was to be sustained."

It cannot, therefore, be granted that the source of the sun's heat is to be looked for in any kind of chemical combination which occurs within its mass. In what direction, then, are we to seek for this extraordinary power to expend heat? Only one extraordinary source has been seriously suggested. The immense number of meteors which are constantly showered on the sun doubtless furnish a certain quantity of heat, but the amount of heat that is generated by the fall of shooting stars upon the solar orb cannot conceivably supply the quantity expended with such reckless prodigality. On well-determined physical principles it is easy to prove that—

"unless a quantity of meteors in collective mass equal to our moon were to plunge into the sun every year, the supply of heat could not be sustained from this source."

Now, there is no reason to believe that meteors in anything like this quantity can be supplied to the sun, and therefore we must reject this source also as inadequate."

Owing to a complex combination of circumstances, there are strong reasons for thinking that the sun's heat is dissipated with extreme slowness. The solar orb is a giant body which is still in a state of incandescence. And as a consequence of its enormous size, and as a result of one of the laws which govern cooling masses, the sun is able to maintain its excessive temperature with scarcely appreciable diminution. It is a generally recognised principle that when energy disappears in one place, it is restored in another; and when this principle is applied to the sun, the long-standing problem as to the manner in which it maintains its tremendous heat is practically solved.

As the solar globe parts with its heat, contraction takes place, and its constituents therefore become more closely pressed together than they were before. The outer parts of the sun are continually falling towards its centre, and this exercise of gravitational force is at present sufficient to generate all the heat required, to compensate for what is being expended. Helmholtz estimated that a contraction of about 100 feet per annum from the solar surface towards the centre would meet the yearly expenditure of energy. Later and more elaborate investigations have increased the original estimate to nearly 200 feet. But this amplification in no way invalidates the general conclusions necessitated by the earlier calculation. If we double the original figures, the amount of shrinkage demanded is so insignificant in comparison with the enormous girth of the sun that our luminary could constantly contract at this rate for 6,000 years without betraying any diminution whatsoever under the most powerful telescopes we possess.

According to widely accepted estimates, the volume of the sun is now shrinking to such an extent that the solar diameter decreases about ten miles every century; but when we realise that this diameter approaches a million miles in extent, such a shrinkage is almost negligible. It must be admitted, however, that a time must ultimately arrive when the sun will be able to shrink no longer. It will reach such a state of solidarity that no further contraction will be possible. Then the lord of life and light will begin to grow cold; but there are now good grounds for suspecting that radio-active substances also play a part in maintaining the excessive temperature of the solar orb. If this be so, the sun's beneficent activities may be almost indefinitely prolonged so as to embrace hundreds of millions of years of future time.

Now, if we admit the substantial accuracy of the estimate that the sun is shrinking at the rate of ten miles every hundred years, and also bear in mind the truth that it has been continually contracting for untold ages, then certain striking conclusions are rendered imperative. In the first place,—

"a thousand years ago the sun must have had a diameter 100 miles greater than at present, ten thousand years ago that diameter must have been 1,000 miles more than it is now, and so on. We cannot perhaps assert that the same rate is to be continued for very many centuries; but it is plain that the further we look back into the past, the greater must the sun have been."

All that is necessary is to bring into play the scientific use of the imagination in order to form a fairly definite picture of the past history of our sun. In glancing back across the long-departed centuries, we then see a steadily expanding ball of fire. At a comparatively modern period of solar development, we can imagine, without the least violence to universally recognised natural laws, an age—remote enough in comparison with the appearance of the higher plants and animals on our dædal earth—when the solar globe was a majestic luminary enthroned on the entire orbit now occupied by the sun's nearest neighbor and youngest child, the rapid-running Mercury himself. At a still more ancient date the sun must have extended his embraces to the path

now pursued by the lovely Venus; while at a period earlier yet he must have reached his arms to the orbit followed by our Mother Earth. Thus, stage by stage and step by step, we can imagine our luminary gradually increasing his dominions until he had occupied that stupendous space through which Neptune spins on the confines of the solar system, as he makes his revolution of nearly 165 years around his primary.

Although the entire solar system is but a speck in the ocean of infinity, it is, from the purely human viewpoint, immensely vast. If an express train were set running around the earth's equator, without stopping to replenish its fuel, it would finish its 24,000 mile journey in seventeen days. This is assuming that it ran at a uniform speed of sixty miles an hour. The same train, travelling under the same conditions, would cover the distance between the earth and the moon—a distance of 240,000 miles—in about six months. But it would require 178 years to enable the sixty-mile-an-hour train to reach the sun. And if the express were to start from the sun, and make a non-stopping journey in a straight line to the known limits of the solar system—that is, to the orbit of the planet Neptune—the distance could not be traversed in less than a little over 5,000 years. Well may Dr. Dolmage say:—

"That sixty miles an hour is a very great speed any one, I think, will admit who has stood upon a platform of a country station while one of the great mail trains has dashed past. But are not the immensities of space appalling to contemplate, when one realises that a body moving incessantly at such a rate would take so long as 10,000 years to traverse merely the breadth of our solar system? Ten thousand years! Just try to conceive it. Why, it is only a little more than half that time since the Pyramids were built, and they mark for us the dawn of history. And since then half-a-dozen mighty empires have come and gone!"\*

Yet all this vast space must have been at one time filled by the nebulous star we call the sun. Obviously, therefore, our luminary could not have undergone an expansion so immense without becoming almost inconceivably more rarefied than he is now. Thus, by reasoning from the present to the ever-receding past, we are irresistibly led to the conception of the primæval nebulous cloud from which our system has been evolved.

The Meteoric Theory of Sir Norman Lockyer is to be regarded as a modification of Laplace's Hypothesis. For, whereas Laplace postulated a highly diffused gas as the starting point of solar and planetary evolution, Lockyer, on the other hand, holds that the nebulae are in reality immense swarms of meteors.

The advocates and adherents of the Nebular Hypothesis began with the nebulae, but made no attempt to explain their origin. A few years ago, however, two American authorities, Professors Chamberlin and Moulton advanced another theory, which not only supplements the Nebular Theory, but suggests an explanation of nebulae themselves. These two professors hold that the stars are moving in every direction at tremendous velocities, and that sooner or later collisions are certain to occur. Out of these collisions the nebulae arise, and the spiral nature of most nebular masses is to be accounted for by the manner in which the stars collide. The acceptance of this theory cannot be said to lessen the claims of the Nebular Hypothesis. As a matter of fact, this new theory—the Planetesimal Hypothesis—places the Nebular Theory, as at present held, on a firmer foundation than before.

The precise plan adopted by Nature in fashioning her suns and worlds may be in some other age revealed to the astronomer, when—

"heaven's utmost deep  
Gives up her stars and like a flock of sheep  
They pass before his eyes, are numbered, and roll on!  
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;  
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,  
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none."

T. F. PALMER.

## National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

### EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.

THE twelve months covered by this Annual Report has been a peculiarly trying time for all movements of an advanced character. Less than three months after this Conference last met the principal countries of Europe became engaged in one of the largest and most disastrous wars in all history. The public mind everywhere became concentrated on the subject of war, and intellectual matters were, in consequence, if not dead, in a state of suspended animation. In the circumstances, nothing very heroic could be attempted; or, if attempted, could have met with but small success. Consequently, for more than three-fourths of the period covered by this Report, your Executive has been engaged in the not very inspiring task of marking time. Everything that could be done in the way of furthering the Society's objects has been attended to, but this has necessarily been little. At the close of such a period it is something to say that we are still alive, and in no worse position than when the War commenced. Many movements are unable to say as much, although it is to be hoped that some of them are not beyond the chance of revival. To vary a well-known saying by one who had passed through the stormy period of the first French Revolution: We have lived, and that is, in its way, an achievement. This Report should, therefore, be considered in the light of these circumstances.

It is unfortunate, also, that the Secular Society, Limited, has not been able to give, during the past twelve months the same generous financial assistance it has given in previous years; while the many calls, consequent upon the War, on the Society's subscribers, have made it more than usually difficult to secure the financial help that might otherwise have been given. With the close of the War this last difficulty will be removed, and there is every prospect that in the not very distant future the Secular Society, Limited, will again be in a position to materially aid this Society in its work.

At the conclusion of the March quarter, your Executive was compelled to remove its offices from 2 Newcastle-street to its present address. This was not due to a disagreement of any kind between landlord and tenant. The premises which accommodated the *Freethinker* publishing and editorial offices, the Secular Society, Limited, and the National Secular Society, was needed for rebuilding and the lease having expired, there was no other alternative but to seek a new home. It was not possible to secure a building capable of accommodating these three related, although independent, branches of Freethought work, but accommodation has been secured for the Societies' new door to the *Freethinker* publishing office, and our new position overlooks the main thoroughfare, thus securing whatever advertising advantage may accrue from the situation.

During the past year the Society has lost, by death, two of its old and esteemed Vice-Presidents. Mr. Richard Johnson, of Manchester, had been a member of this Society for many years, and was a welcome and cheerful visitor to these Annual Conferences. The large number of Freethinkers throughout the country who had made his acquaintance in this way will have heard of his demise with some regret. Mr. Joseph Barry was not, perhaps, so well-known to provincial members, although his was a familiar figure to Freethinkers in the metropolis. He also was a member of many years' standing, and owing to his residing in London was able to take part in the practical work of this Society, and of the Secular Society, Limited. His interest in everything that affected Freethought was keen and sustained to the end. In Richard Johnson and Joseph Barry the Society has lost two sincere friends and useful workers.

The Executive has also to regret the ill-health of your President, which for several months past has prevented his taking any very active part in the Society's business. The Presidency of the N. S. S. is a post that involves continuous work, not unmixed with worry; how much of each consequence expressed itself in a very serious breakdown in February last, which necessitated abstinence from all work except that of the most urgent character. Recovery from so severe an illness is necessarily slow, although, in the circumstances, Mr. Foot's recovery has been much more rapid than his friends anticipated or his medical adviser had dared hope for. He is now on his way to restored health; and although at the time of preparing this Report his attendance at the Conference is still uncertain, your Executive has strong hopes that before long the President will resume his place at the head of affairs, and lead the Freethought party to new victories in the future, as he so often has guided it to victories in the past.

\* *Astronomy of To-Day*, p. 49; 1909.

Mr. W. Heaford, one of your Vice-Presidents, has also experienced a very severe breakdown during the past few months. Mr. Heaford's energy and youthfulness was so marked a feature of his character that some of us had overlooked the fact that he was not immune to nature's assaults. We are, however, pleased to say that he has recovered sufficiently to be up and about, and before long it is hoped that he will be restored to complete health. His absence from to-day's Conference may, therefore, be taken as due to his having been unwell, rather than to present illness, and to the wise decision to avoid all needless risks of a relapse.

The health of your Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, has also given her friends cause for uneasiness of late. The worry, and, in her case, inconvenience of removal to new premises, added to a rather anxious year, have doubtless been contributory factors to her indisposition; but now that she has settled down in the Society's new offices, it is hoped that the next few months will see all cause for uneasiness removed. It is only right to add that although Miss Vance has been unwell she has not been absent from duty. The Society's business has been attended to by her in her usual manner.

No new Branches of the Society have been formed during the past year; but, on the other hand, it is gratifying to be able to report that there is a steady accession of new members, which should provide the material for new Branches in the future. Your Secretary also reports that a marked proportion of these new members is secured through the generous advertisement of the Society which appears almost continuously in the *Freethinker*. This, together with the fact that even "the great War" has been unable to seriously affect the circulation of the *Freethinker*, augurs well for the future prospects of militant Freethought.

In London, the outdoor propaganda was well maintained during 1914, and, with promised assistance from the Executive, will continue unabated during 1915. Two outdoor demonstrations were held during September last in Finsbury Park and Regent's Park with conspicuous success. It may, perhaps, be possible to do something in this direction during the present summer season. The audiences at these open-air stations show an increase, rather than the reverse, since the War commenced, and the only obstacle to their extension is a financial one. Expenses, however small, must be met; and when these fall upon a handful of poor persons they become oppressive. The Executive desires to place on record its sense of the value of the services of so many men and women who cheerfully give their time Sunday after Sunday to this work—and even pay for the privilege of doing it.

Both Metropolitan and Provincial Branches have felt the drain of men in consequence of the War; although, from letters received, it appears that propagandist zeal is not lacking in the trenches. Discussions on Freethought take place amid the boom of the guns. The *Freethinker* continues to follow readers and subscribers into the firing line, backed up by small parcels of tracts, etc., from the Society's office; and it is probable that many who leave these shores as Christians will return with opinions on theology modified, if not completely changed. We are under no fear of the conversion of Freethinkers as the result of these discussions.

The enrolment of so many Freethinkers in the new armies, coupled with the fact of those already serving in both branches of the service, has brought into prominence a long-standing grievance in both the Army and Navy. Attendance at religious service is, in practice, compulsory. The Editor of the *Freethinker*, and your Secretary, have received numerous complaints on this head, and the *Freethinker* has given all possible publicity to the existence of this injustice. It is one of the satires of the situation that in a war in which the words "freedom," "liberty," and "justice" are so freely used, our Government should deny to those who are risking their lives in their country's service, a privilege which all enlightened minds regard as an elementary condition of civilised social life. Your Executive is, naturally, powerless, except to give the fact publicity, and a record of cases reported is being kept, and whatever pressure can be brought upon the authorities to secure proper respect for the conscientious convictions of soldiers and sailors, will be done.

With reference to provincial propaganda there is little to report. Local work appears to have been maintained more or less effectively, but there has been very little special lecturing. This was not the fault of the Provincial Branches, since, in addition to the expense of hiring halls, travelling, advertising, etc., obviously involving risk of heavy loss while the public mind is so pre-occupied with war, in many places it was found impossible to get halls of any kind for lecturing. This applies to both London and the provinces. Thus, the Queen's (Minor) Hall was under consideration for a couple of Sunday lectures by your President, but the con-

(Continued on p. 346.)

## Acid Drops.

Yet another nation has joined this horrible War. Italy has definitely thrown itself on the side of the Allies, and to that extent it is to their benefit. But we confess that we are unable to see in this a clear proof of injury to Germany. It may even be that to drag the whole world into war, now that victory for her seems out of the question, may be part of the deliberate policy of Germany. For there is a point at which mere numerical odds become of small importance. Where the smaller number runs into many millions, the larger number loses a great deal of its value. Over twenty millions of men are already under arms; but twenty millions cannot fight at once, and if the number were forty millions, not many more would be fighting than are fighting now. So long as each side can present an unbroken front, and find enough soldiers to man that front, the number behind can make no great and immediate difference.

This is really the consideration that gives point to the phrase, "a war of attrition." It is a case of one side wearing down the other side. But it is also clear that the efficiency of an army is determined by its support from home. The life of the nation to which it belongs must be kept going; otherwise the army wastes away. And this consideration seems to hold good of the relation between nations. So long as the neutrality of other nations is guaranteed, it is a question whether the cause of the Allies would not be better served by this policy, than by their entering directly into the War. For when a nation is at war, a large part of its useful productivity ceases. It begins to use up its resources; and to the extent to which it does this is unable to feed other nations. Thus, it may well be Germany's policy of despair to bring the world into the War, and by thus securing a general exhaustion, get better terms than it would otherwise. On any other principle it seems hard to explain Germany's disregard of the rights of neutral countries during the last six months of the War.

The English papers are not complimentary concerning Billy Sunday, the Yankee revivalist, who intends to visit this country to stir up the irreligious. The *Daily Chronicle* says that "his preachings are coupled openly with a diligent care of the dollar." Parsons on this side of the herring-pond are just as keen; but, perhaps, they do not rattle the cash-box so loudly and persistently.

Billy Sunday will not create a prairie-fire in England, for the temper of the people has changed since the Moody and Sankey invasion. The *Daily Chronicle* says that Sunday "coarsens every theme he touches." One of Billy's subjects is "the fountain filled with blood."

A man in America is said to have climbed a tree, pulled it up after him, and never been seen again. Since the European War, in which 21,000,000 Christians are doing their best to murder each other, the sincere believer in Christianity must expect his religion to share the fate of that American.

"Cheer up, everybody! There will be no kultur in the next world," says the *Sunday Pictorial*. The journalist who wrote that ought to go to church, for he has forgotten the red-hot-poker department in Hades.

The Rev. H. M. Rose, of Westcliff-on-Sea, says that if he had turned his efforts in other walks of life, he might have been a very well-to-do man. No one could accuse him of being a blush-rose.

Mrs. Bramwell Booth, trying to raise the hair of a pious audience, said that "few people realised that there were 37,000 illegitimate babies born annually." What about it? Religious folk believe that God was born on the wrong side of the blanket.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer considers that the courage of the British soldier is due to Sunday-school training. Like the shoemaker in the adage, he thinks there is nothing like leather.

Following the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the air-raid at Southend-on-Sea, anti-German riots have taken place all over England. Unfortunately, the rioters have not discriminated between foreigners, and Russians, French, and Jews have been attacked. Indeed, so strong is the feeling

against aliens that even the twelve disciples would not be safe in this Christian country at present.

One of the "fat" livings in the city of London, that of St. Alphage's, London Wall, has become vacant by the death of Prebendary Nash. The living is worth about £1,000 a year, and the congregation averages six. The deceased clergyman will not find so "soft" a job in heaven, for the old hymn tells us that there "congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths never end."

It is a source of endless amusement to watch the profane and blasphemous ways in which the divines exploit their God. Great fault is found with the Kaiser for never opening his mouth without claiming him as his unfailing ally; but the theologians are fully as guilty of the same offence. Pastor Lösch is confident that God is the patron of Germany, because its people alone are sincere Christians, the British Christians being dubbed "a company of Pharisees and hypocrites." Here, on the contrary, the contention is that the Supreme Being is Britain's friend and protector, the Germans having degenerated into "a company of Atheists and Materialists." Unfortunately, however, British divines are at sixes and sevens among themselves. Some Anglicans aver that the War is a punishment for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the State Church in Wales, while others are equally certain that it is an expression of the Divine disapproval of the Irish Home Rule Act. The only point on which all the men of God are agreed is that the War is a judgment inflicted upon us because of our national sins, which may be summed up in our impious secularisation of the Lord's Day, and our stubborn, wicked refusal to take the parsons at their own valuation. Thus is God exploited by his own alleged servants to serve their own selfish, sectarian designs!

The Catholic Bishop of Leeds has just spoken on the same subject, and is, on the whole, in agreement with those who regard the War as the wreaking of Divine vengeance upon a godless world. Naturally, Dr. Cowgill, out of loyalty to his own Church, spoke thus, according to a report in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* :—

"God had been forgotten in a great measure; had been ignored by one of the great nations joined to us as an ally, the French nation, once called the 'eldest daughter of the Church.' Its Government and those in high places had turned against God, driven him from the schools, the courts, and as far as possible out of all public life. Now he was allowing that nation to be punished for its forgetfulness of him."

While being thus exploited in the selfish interests of the various conflicting sects which all bear his name, God takes no notice, either in approval or disapproval. Perhaps Maeterlinck, after all, is nearer the truth than all the divines when he speaks of a "God who sits smiling on a mountain, and to whom our gravest offences are only as the naughtiness of puppies playing on the hearthrug," which is only a polite way of saying that there is no God at all.

Truth sometimes appears in unexpected places. In an article on the widespread Anti-German riots, the *Daily Mirror* said, "This Shem, Ham, and Japheth rubbish, for which there is not the slightest historical or biological justification, prevailed." Freethinkers pointed this out long ago; now popular journalists echo the strain—and take the credit.

"Chestnut" Sunday was observed on May 16. A lot of theological "chestnuts" are retailed in churches every Sunday in the year.

In an open letter addressed to the German Kaiser, a writer in the *Sunday Pictorial* says, "with Herod in eternity, you stand condemned to compare notes on the massacre of the innocents." Why drag in Herod? The innocents, in the case of Herod, are the people who believe in the horrible story.

A Sunday newspaper quotes the line from Barrie's play, *Peter Pan*, "Dying will be an awfully big adventure." Provided, of course, that the Christian superstition is true.

A man, over seventy years of age, had to answer the charge of stealing a tin of pineapple at the Thames Police Court. It was his first offence, and he had risked fifty years' excellent character. The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve risked the welfare of the human race for an apple.

At the West London Police Court a man appeared in the dock without any trousers. It was stated that he was found

drunk. Had he been a little more festive, he might have appeared in the state in which King David danced before the ark.

"To the exigencies of a Devil-ridden world the gentle principles of Olivet can have no literal application. We must rather invoke the wrath of Jehovah and the thunder of Sinai." Thus writes Mr. Horatio Bottomley in the *Sunday Pictorial*. What a convenient religion!

Mr. Stephen Phillips writes in the *Poetry Review* of Shakespeare and Milton :—

"The amazing thing is that at this stage of English literary history the claim that Shakespeare was a Christian could ever have been put forward at all. No writer of more essentially pagan in the best sense ever wrote, apart altogether from other considerations, the reason why Shakespeare is so far more a dominant force than Milton. The day lies in the fact that he touched on the issues that were, and ever will be; and did not embroil himself in the arguments which, however lofty, are subject to the ebb and flow of the wavering human judgment. With what little effect the 'Christianity' of Milton could intervene to mar another flawless achievement in verse can be seen, apart from 'Paradise Lost,' in 'Lycidas,' where the poet suddenly loses control of himself, and bursts into a quite absurd 'religious' frenzy which is in no way part of his theme, and which has the effect of disturbing and entirely disgusting the already fascinated reader of that most perfect of poems. Milton, then, was essentially an heroic figure, a magnificent descendant of the great Greeks and Romans, a magnificent pagan with imperfections due to Christianity."

A little more plain speaking of this kind from some of our leading writers would do something to stop the more or less dishonest exploitation of great English writers in the interests of Christianity.

Pious folk contend that we are living in the last days of the world. It seems like it, certainly. Recently, a cartoon temporarily announced, "The Carpathians Fighting." This seems a variation of the Biblical statement of mountain "skipping like rams."

The *Daily Mail* recently had some startling headlines: "Men and Women Burnt Alive. Fiendish Atrocities." The accompanying letterpress related to the awful acts of German soldiers. No respectable journalist ever refers to the Christian hell in such unguarded language.

The Salvation Army is a good advertiser, and rarely loses a chance. At Southend-on-Sea it organised a meeting for the victim of the German air-raid. It would be more to the purpose if it petitioned the Throne of Grace to prevent similar horrors in future.

The horrors of the European War are causing men to think furiously. The dear, pacific *Daily News* says that the German conception of the State is that of "a sort of Supreme Being, soulless, cruel, venous." This is not bad for a Nonconformist newspaper.

"There are still some tribes of men who ignore the rules of arithmetic," says a writer in the *Daily News*. All Christian nations are hazy on arithmetic concerning the tangle of the Trinity.

A War Exhibition is to be opened in London shortly. It ought to be under the patronage of the Christian Evidence Society.

In a bookseller's catalogue, under the heading of new books, the following were announced: *The Ideals of the Prophets* and *Napoleon III. and the Women He Loved*. This is not the first time that girls and Godliness have been associated.

A portrait of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has been unveiled at the Kingsway Hall, London. Perhaps some wealthy Wesleyan will present a portrait of the "Atheist" Shoemaker to hang beside the other one.

What nonsense public men can talk on occasion! Here is Mr. Lloyd George claiming that Wales, during fifty years, has produced a larger number of first-rate orators than any other country in the history of the world. Neither Lewis Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and Foote any association with the Principality. All being Freethinkers, they are too widely known for any advertisement. But Mr. Lloyd George knows what a religious audience wants—and he gives it to them.



NOTICE.

The business of the "FREETHINKER" and of THE PIONEER PRESS, formerly of 2 Newcastle-st., has been transferred to 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

To Correspondents.

EDITOR'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Passionately acknowledged, £41 19s. 7d. Received since:—"Ernest," 5s.; J. Brodie, 3s.

P. HARDING.—We are sorry that we did the Daily News—quite without intention—an injustice in saying that it took no notice of the Bowman case. We can only plead in extenuation—copying a well-known apology—that the report was "a very small one," and the few lines escaped our notice. With regard to the other matter, the society you name is evidently more or less of a money-making affair. Of course, some people give their services; they are the dupes. But such organisations are mostly kept going for the sake of a few officials.

H. YOUNG.—You are misinformed. The only Freethought Societies to which Mr. Cohen has ever belonged are the National Secular Society and the Secular Society, Limited. He has been a member of the latter since its foundation, and of the former for about twenty-five years. He appreciates the high opinion of yourself and friend.

P.—Is there any reason why you should? Of course, in a general way, it is the duty of a Freethinker to expose Christian falsehoods when he has the opportunity of doing so, but there are so many of them, and so many people telling them, that one may be excused a little discrimination in the expenditure of one's energy. And replying to some people is to advertise them, not to crush them. It is often the better policy to leave them in their deserved obscurity and to their own folly.

M.—Very interesting, and contains a good idea, besides being in sympathy with the spirit of Lucretius. But hardly, we think, up to our standard.

G. GORZ.—We have passed on your correction. Glad to have your appreciation of the paper, and also your help in increasing the circle of our readers. We wish that every one of our readers were as energetic in this direction.

J. LIVINGSTONE ANDERSON.—Yes, Mr. Foote is well on the way to recovery—although, as we have before said, he has a long road to travel. We are afraid that the younger men of the movement do not always, as you say, appreciate the labor it has cost and the price that has been paid to bring Freethought where it is. Perhaps we had better console ourselves with the reflection that their ease of mind is one of the proofs that the older workers have of the success of their efforts.

W.—The only Church that has any real claim to universality is the Roman Catholic Church. Other Churches are by their nature selective, and therefore exclusive. They may preach what they call a Catholic Gospel, but their policy and their practice is quite the reverse of this.

R. W. COX.—Mr. Hilaire Belloc is undoubtedly a man of ability, but he never forgets that he is a Christian and a Roman Catholic—or should one say a Roman Catholic and a Christian. This is what makes many of his utterances "suspect."

G. P. TAYLOR.—We agree with you that Mr. Lloyd-George's praise of the late Hugh Price Hughes almost reaches the point of being in falsetto, and foolish, adulation. We do not know whether Mr. George ever saw Mr. Foote's exposure of that gentleman, but falsehoods when told about Freethinkers are often counted to Christians unto righteousness. It is a curious comment to say of Hugh Price Hughes that "Heaven, Hell, and Satan, damnation," etc., etc., were not theories to him, but "downright realities." To take that as a mark of greatness in a man living in the latter half of the nineteenth century is to demonstrate how shallow is the culture—or sincerity—of some of the nation's leaders.

J. CARR.—We hope, for your own sake rather than for ours, that your card is the outcome of feeling rather than reason. The Editor does not hold himself responsible for the accuracy of every opinion expressed in the Freethinker, but he has been in the habit of congratulating himself on the fact that his readers were accustomed to give to others the same freedom of expression which they claimed for themselves. And our columns are always open to a courteous and relevant reply from those who differ from the opinions of our contributors.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 62 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 62 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Letters for the Editor of the Freethinker should be addressed to 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon-street, London, 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.

Personal.

THE National Secular Society, on Sunday, did me the honor to re-elect me as its President. I return it my warmest thanks. My heart is too full to say more, and I have no time to write it this week. The whole situation will be clearer to me (and others). In the meantime I let the report tell its own tale.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Conference was held on Sunday last in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, London. We print this week the Executive's Annual Report, together with a brief summary of the Evening Public Meeting. A report of the business transactions of the Conference will appear in our next issue. In point of numbers the Conference was rather larger than usual, and very keen interest was taken in all the subjects brought forward for discussion. Some of the familiar figures at these gatherings were missed this year, but the difficulties in the way of travelling had much to do with this—and alas, none of us get younger.

In the absence of Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen presided at both the morning and afternoon business meetings. Mr. Foote's non-attendance was deeply regretted by all present, and on the unanimous vote of the Conference, a telegram expressing sympathy with him in his illness, and hopes for his speedy recovery, was sent him. His re-election to the Presidency was a matter of course. Everybody felt, and some said, that so long as he is able and willing to lead the Freethought Party, there is no other leader desired or desirable.

The evening meeting in the Queen's Hall was both large and enthusiastic. Mr. Lloyd acted as Chairman, and in opening the meeting paid a graceful and obviously heartfelt compliment to the absent President. All the speakers were in excellent form, and their points were well put, and loudly applauded. Mr. Wallace Nelson, who is on a visit to France, was unable to return to London in time for the meeting, but an addition to the announced program was made in the persons of Messrs. Willis and Williams, of Birmingham. Their speeches, though brief, were excellent, as also was the speech of Mr. R. H. Rosetti, one of our younger London lecturers. Of the other speakers there is no need for comment. They were themselves; and those who know them will appreciate what that means. Mr. Harry Snell, in a very forceful and thoughtful speech, closed a meeting that was alive from beginning to end. And to say that of a two hours' meeting on a lovely summer evening is in itself a compliment to all concerned.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (May 30) at Abertillery, Mon. The time of the meetings is—afternoon, 3 o'clock; evening, 6 o'clock. Admission we believe is free, and that should contribute to the size of the audience, if not to the financial profit of the meetings. We hope there will be a good gathering of both Freethinkers and Christians.

We have been looking at some highly indignant Christian denunciations of the terrible gases with which the Germans try to heighten the death-pangs of their enemies. The story is awful. Let it be admitted, but what about hell? Isn't that ancient establishment worse than any recent place of torture? What is more, will you ever put it out? Ay! There's the rub!

EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.—*Concluded from p. 343.*

ditions imposed, in view of the War, were such that the project fell through. In Newcastle-on-Tyne a hall had been taken for a couple of lectures by Mr. Cohen, and the posters were actually on the walls, when the military commandeered every hall in the city. In June last your Executive was approached with a request for a speaker to be sent to Portsmouth in September, in connection with a Trades Union Congress, and Mr. Cohen was requested to represent the Society on that occasion. With the outbreak of the War the meeting was abandoned. Inquiries made by the N. S. S. Secretary to secure halls in the neighborhood of London also resulted in failure. On the other side of the account it is pleasing to record that Mr. Lloyd has addressed large and appreciative audiences at Abertillery and Leicester, which latter place also received a visit from Mr. Cohen.

While, however, quite alive to the difficulties besetting indoor lecturing during so stormy a period as the present one, your Executive feels it right to warn Branches against a too lengthy adherence to a policy of quiescence. There is no lack of lecture attendants, and it is possible that the cessation of lectures in other directions may provide even larger audiences than are obtainable under more normal conditions. It is, therefore, to be hoped that, during the coming winter, every effort will be made by Branches to conduct a vigorous propaganda.

Of outstanding importance, not only to the N. S. S. but to the whole world of British Freethought, was the decision of Mr. Justice Joyce in the Court of Chancery on the question of a legacy to the Secular Society, Limited. Under the will of the late Charles Bowman, the Society became the residuary legatee to an estate of the value of several thousands of pounds. When the time came for realisation, the bequest was challenged on the ground that the purposes of the Society were illegal and contrary to public policy. The case against the Society was argued at great length by Mr. Cave, K.C., M.P., but the real issue was never in doubt for a moment. Without calling upon the Society's Counsel to reply to Mr. Cave, Mr. Justice Joyce, in the strongest possible manner, affirmed the absolute legality of the Society's Memorandum of Association, and declined to consider any other point.

This litigation had all the importance of a test case. It was not sought by the Society; neither was it evaded. During its existence other legacies had become realisable and paid over without question. This was the first time the legality of the Society had been called into question, and it resulted in a victory for the Secular Society, Ltd. The Judge allowed a month during which notice of appeal might be given, and at the last moment this has been done. The case is, therefore, not yet finally decided, but your Executive feels confident of ultimate victory. The issue is joined, and the Secular Society, Limited, may be trusted to fight the battle with courage and discretion. And it will do this with the confident assurance that behind it stands the full strength of militant Freethought. Freethinkers were never backward when their cause was threatened, and in this case they may be trusted to act up to their traditions.

Your Executive, bearing in mind that the Secular Society, Limited, was conceived and founded by your President, has placed upon the Agenda of this Conference a resolution expressing its appreciation of his services. But it may also be permitted to express here its sense of the service performed by the President to militant Freethought. Even in the very unlikely event of the appeal being successful, the care and thought in founding the Secular Society, Limited, and the good already done by it would remain. But it is highly improbable that any judge will reverse the principle expressed in Lord Coleridge's famous judgment, endorsed as that principle has been by every subsequent judge who has had a blasphemy case before him, and further endorsed by Mr. Justice Joyce in the Bowman litigation. In founding the Secular Society, Limited, your President showed how full advantage might be taken of the new statement of the Law of Blasphemy, and up to the present, events have only served to show the soundness of his judgment.

This is the year of the "Great War," and it is only fitting that something should be said as to its bearing upon the immediate work of this Society. Very soon after the outbreak of War, reports began to appear in the religious press concerning the great revival of religion that was taking place. The logic of events made plain the real value of this alleged revival. It was soon confessed that the increase of religion was purely local. Then it was admitted that there had been great exaggeration; finally it was declared that people were as careless about religion as they were before the War commenced, if not more so. And if proof be needed of the fictitious nature of this alleged revival of religion, it is furnished by the annual returns of the various Churches, which make plain the fact that the decline of membership that has been going on for some years still continues.

The truth is that Freethought ideas and principles are not too deeply rooted in the social and intellectual life around us to be permanently, or even seriously weakened by a sudden outburst of primitive passion, even in connection with so extensive a war as the present one. With the first organisation of life and thought, consequent on the outbreak of war, the group of primitive feelings to which theology belongs, naturally received an increase of strength. But as the more normal habits of civilised life began to reassert themselves, this momentary advantage was lost, and whatever ground had been won by the forces of organised superstition, was soon retaken. It should, however, be noted that in no sense was this advance in religion a capture of Freethinkers or of Freethought positions. It was at most a more than a momentary strengthening of religious feeling amongst those who were already, in theory, on the religious side.

It will have been observed that your Executive did not in its way to take any direct action in connection with the War itself. The usual policy of this Society in standing apart from party or political questions and issues forbade it, and to have passed mere pious resolutions in favor of peace, while nearly all Europe actually at war, would have bordered on the ridiculous. This Society has always stood for peaceful intercourse between nations, and for the settlement of such disputes as will inevitably arise between nations, by the peaceful and rational method of arbitration. Nothing has occurred during the past ten months has weakened this conviction, and much has happened to strengthen it. We are as convinced as ever that a cessation of warfare is to be brought about, not by a piling up of armaments, or by the cultivation of a narrow spirit of nationality, but by the growth of enlightenment, by placing reason above brute force, and by statesmanship that is inspired by the recognition of the interdependence of nations and the brotherhood of a common humanity.

Two resolutions were, however, passed by your Executive bearing upon the War. One dealt with the Censorship, and was reported in the *Freethinker* for December 6, 1914. The other was concerned with the violation of the Rules of the Hague Convention by the German Armies. War, at its best, is a demoralising and dehumanising thing, but when a nation departs from the customs of what is sometimes facetiously called "civilised warfare," ignores treaty obligations, butchers non-combatants, bombards undefended cities, and sinks ships of peace with a complete disregard for the loss of life involved, the horrors of war become multiplied, and its dehumanising power increased tenfold. Your Executive felt justified, therefore, in passing a resolution upon this subject from a purely humanitarian standpoint. This resolution will also be found in the *Freethinker* dated October 4, 1914.

Although it is not at all likely to produce any effect on the Christian pulpit of this country, the Executive feels it to be its duty to protest very strongly against the assertion widely made by Christian preachers and writers that this War is the outcome of the growth of Freethought and Materialism in Germany and elsewhere. Exactly the reverse of this appears to be the truth. The countries engaged in this War are overwhelmingly Christian in point of numbers; Freethinkers representing but a small minority of their national populations. The rulers of the three principal nations engaged are not only ostentatious in their display of piety, but are related by family ties. In each country the most fervent appeals have been made to religious feelings, and each has denounced the unchristian conduct of the other, while the War party in Germany are in the main avowed upholders of the value of Bible-reading and of Christian education. In addition to these facts, there is behind each of the nations engaged, Christian training extending over many centuries, and it is surely a permissible hypothesis that had this training and tradition been of any value as a force for peace, such a war as the present one would be an impossibility. The War has, therefore, all the characteristics of a Christian conflict. Had the majority of Christians in each country been in favor of peace and the peaceful solution of international difficulties, this War would have been impossible. Had Freethinkers been in the numerical position of Christians, then, also, the War would have been impossible. Its occurrence is only an additional proof of the complete breakdown of Christian teaching as providing a satisfactory moral basis for the conduct of international relations, and the necessity for resting both national and international claims upon the solid foundations of intelligence and justice.

Under existing circumstances there is little to say concerning the Freethought movement abroad. In the belligerent countries, propaganda is naturally in a state of suspended animation, although one or two of the Freethought papers continue to appear. In our more sheltered position, we can but feebly recognise the difficulties that confront our Freethought brethren on the Continent, but we admire their courage in doing so much as is being done, and

express our confidence that the end of the War will find them as ready as ever to renew their fight against the historic enemy of freedom and enlightenment. In New York the *Truthseeker* still maintains its position, and the War in Europe seems to have even intensified its fighting spirit. In Chicago, Mr. Mangasarian still keeps Freethought in a commanding position, while Mr. Percy Ward continues a more popular propaganda in the same city. In New Zealand, the *Examiner*, under Mr. W. W. Collins' able editorship, well represents our common cause. Australia is still without a successor to Mr. Joseph Symes, but it is evident that both here and in South Africa there are ample opportunities for building up Freethought organisations if only men willing to do adequate to the work are to be found.

But everywhere, at home and abroad, a decisive forward movement must await the conclusion of this ghastly War. This, however, furnishes occasion for preparation, not for despair. The number of Freethinkers steadily increases, and it is our duty to effectively organise them. In Scotland, although the Glasgow Branch continues to hold the Society's flag aloft, the greater part of the country stands in need of propaganda that can only be effectively undertaken with the cooperation of headquarters. On Tyneside, as in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the number of towns in close geographical relation, offer splendid opportunities for fruitful work. The whole of the West of England and of South Wales are ripe for an effective scheme of Freethought work. It must be well organised and persistent. Merely spasmodic or individual efforts are costly, and fail in producing adequate results. Converts are made, but owing to lack of continuity they are lost sight of, and to that extent our work is a failure. The immediate call is for systematisation and co-ordination. Time and the tendency of civilisation is on the side of the principles we represent. Thousands upon thousands of men and women are yearly drifting away from Christianity, in spite of all that the Churches can do to retain them. It must be the Society's main task to reach these, to capture them, and enlist them as active participants in the really "great war" against ignorance, superstition, and tyranny, with all their attendant and inevitable evils.

### Freethinkers in Conference.

#### STIRRING SPEECHES.

#### STRIKING TRIBUTES TO MR. FOOTE.

Freethinkers have ever received a more sincere and hearty welcome to the esteem in which they were held by their fellow-Freethinkers than did Mr. G. W. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society, at the Annual Conference, held on Monday last at the Queen's Hall, London. Owing to illness, Mr. Foote was unable to be present, but the following note was read from him by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, the Chairman of the preceding meeting, which was open to the public:—

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,  
I have for twenty-five years always looked forward to presiding over this public meeting in connection with the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society. A severe and dangerous illness prevents me from occupying the chair. I cannot even occupy a chair in the body of the hall. I cannot yet travel, although I hope to be able to do so very shortly. I hope you will have a grand meeting; that our cause—the best of causes, as George Meredith called it—will go on triumphing and to triumph, and from victory to victory. I hope to see many of you again, and some of you may be pleased to see me again; but whatever happens to you or me, let us all keep our hearts up in these sad and difficult times, and cry with one voice, 'Three cheers for Freethought!'

G. W. FOOTE."

When Mr. Lloyd, himself one of Mr. Foote's ablest assistants, said that sincere sympathy would go out to Mr. Foote from full hearts, and all hoped that he would before long resume his proud position at the front of the Freethought Army, the effect was electrical; and when he asked, for a public manifestation of that sympathy, a forest of hands was raised in the crowded meeting in response to his appeal.

In a burst of real eloquence, Mr. Lloyd said that all gratefully remembered Mr. Foote's magnificent services for nearly twenty years to the cause of liberty. All were proud of his record, and the resourcefulness of his genius. As for his work on the *Secular Society, Ltd.*, his name will be associated with it in the minds of men for generations to come. May he be for many years yet the courageous and uncompromising advocate of Freethought that he has ever been.

A sincere tribute to the absent President was also paid by Mr. C. Cohen, the brilliant colleague of Mr. Foote, who said it was strange to find a new face at the Chairman's table,

after seeing one honored head there year after year for a quarter of a century. Mr. A. B. Moss, a Freethought veteran of forty years' service, also alluded to Mr. Foote's work as a pioneer of the movement. This was indeed the keynote of the meeting; honor for the veteran leader, and a steady determination to carry on his work in the face of all difficulties.

A pleasant feature of the meeting was the presence on the platform of two provincial delegates, Messrs. T. E. Willis and Clifford Williams, of Birmingham, both of whom gave speeches of marked ability. Mr. R. H. Rosetti, one of the younger lecturers, made his first appearance on a Conference platform, and acquitted himself admirably. Mr. Harry Snell, the Secretary of the Secular Education League, gave the last speech of the evening, and spoke with great eloquence and epigrammatic charm. Some of his utterances were particularly happy, such as the gibe at "the poisoned gas from the pulpits," and of the Church being "the bulwark of everything that a democrat wants to break down." Equally effective was his remark that "the present condition of the Christian world was such that three gods were not too many to put it right."

Indeed, the level of oratory was very high. The recent contest in the law courts seems to have roused the old fighting spirit of the Freethinkers, and every speaker seemed determined to do his best in the unavoidable absence of the trusted leader of the movement. Both Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Cohen spoke with unusual eloquence, and Mr. Cohen's magnificent peroration on the evil effects of Christianity, "which had blotted out two civilisations, and nearly destroyed a third," was a thing to be remembered. The enthusiasm of the crowded meeting, too, was a sure index of the continued activity of the propaganda of the National Society of organised Freethought.

The first speaker was Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who presided. He said the object of the National Secular Society was to promote freedom of thought, and to rationalise liberty in all things. Faith was the child of stupidity, but knowledge was the offspring of thought. He had heard of a Christian minister who prayed to be delivered from the sin of thinking. Freethought implied thought, unfettered by bias or prejudice. Some Christians pretend they are Freethinkers, but their title is rendered void by their pursuing real Freethinkers with anathema and persecution. Freethought does not seek to undermine morality, but to overthrow error, evil, and misery, and aims at the downfall of superstition, and the substitution of truth.

In Christendom people were slowly casting off the yoke of superstition, and there was a lack of confidence in Churches and clergy. Even Dr. Horton said "the whole current of things was against Christianity." The Churches were wailing to-day, for the whole trend of events was away from priestly tyranny. The infamous Blasphemy Laws could not be passed to-day, although Parliament was slow in repealing those most inhuman laws on the Statute Books of this country. Not until Love was the consort of the monarch Reason would the world have lasting peace.

Mr. Willis, of Birmingham, said it was owing to the Freethought pioneers that made it possible for this meeting to be held. To-day social ostracism had taken the place of direct persecution. Christians might multiply their churches and chapels, but they could not fill them with worshipers. It was the bounden duty of everyone to speak out plainly, and if all did that there would be an end of social ostracism for Freethought opinions.

Mr. A. B. Moss said the great work before Freethinkers was to civilise the gods, who were never better than the men who made them. At one time the gods did everything; now they did nothing. Christianity was untrue in theory, and unworkable in practice. Theological ignorance was one of the worst enemies of human progress. The schools of the country must be secularised, as well as all other institutions. Freethinkers at present cannot hold public offices without paying a great price. What was wanted was more honesty, and yet more honesty. When that was attained, there would be no drag on the progress and the happiness of the people.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti said the clergy hated knowledge, for its diffusion meant the capture of the business of clericalism. The remedy for religion exists only in fertile minds. Twenty centuries of Christianity had only resulted in that religion being left to the baser minds of the population. Supernaturalism must in the long run succumb to Naturalism. Freethought was an intellectual movement. Many people were too stupid to be Freethinkers, but no one was too foolish to be a Christian.

Mr. C. Cohen said great things had been done by Freethought, but they were not out of the wood. People were only civilised on the surface, and there was an immense mass of uncivilised opinion which was a real danger. Christian papers poked fun at mascots as being evidences of superstition, but treated crucifixes and statues of the saints

with respect. Tear off the label, and what was the difference? Riding in tramcars, using electric light, and other refinements, did not make people civilised. There were as many savages in London as in so-called uncivilised tribes in out-of-the-way corners of the earth. Think of the shameful treatment native races were subjected to! They were filled with gin; their land was filched from them; they were set fighting; and when they were ruined, the Christians thanked God that the natives were civilised at last.

Secularists were fighting for equality of opinion, but opinion was bolstered by vested interests. Religion was forced on children before they understood. The Church, like a very astute trading firm, actually breeds customers to like and to buy its goods. It was infamous to take advantage of the innocence of childhood.

It was said that the European War was due to German Freethought. Had the outbreak been between two Mohammedan powers, we should have been asked to look at the result of their religion. The present happy family of good Christians was evidence that all the centuries of Christian training had failed to teach religious folk to settle their differences in a rational manner.

Papers published pictures of crucifixes that have been saved in this awful War. Two thousand years ago the peace of the world was maintained by an army of less than half a million armed men. To-day twenty millions of soldiers cannot secure peace. Christianity was a failure. The cross of Christ spread death and destruction wherever it had been raised. It had blotted out two civilisations, and nearly destroyed a third, and its followers should hide their diminished heads from the indignant gaze of civilised humanity.

Mr. Clifford Williams, of Birmingham, said the fight between reason and unreason was coming to a climax. The increasing popularity of Freethought had altered the views of the public with regard to religion. None of the countless hordes of cardinals, bishops, clergy, and ministers had ever done anything for human emancipation. Let us continue to plant the flowers of Freethought, so that the garden of life should be a grander and a nobler heritage for the children who come after us.

Mr. Harry Snell said that two thousand years ago Christianity inherited a world of light. Had reason been her guiding star, the twentieth century would have been a haven of peace, and not a hell. The present condition of the Christian world was such that three gods were not too many to put it right. The Church was the bulwark of everything that a Democrat wants to break down. The Church's doctrines never were true. Everything Thomas Paine demanded had been surrendered; all that Spurgeon defended has been abandoned. Now the Church was intellectually bankrupt. Dogmas were as dead as the honor of politicians. All that apologists could say on behalf of Christianity was that it was a useful cement to prevent modern society from slipping back into the barbarities of Plato. The condition of the Christian world to-day was not a measure of the Church's success, but of her failure. There was more poisoned gas from the pulpits than from the trenches, and the unrestrained savageries on the Continent spoke more eloquently than any words of the colossal failure of the Christian Church.

C. E. S.

## God and Man.—II.

(Concluded from p. 333.)

THE great power of the Romish priest lies in his religion, which enables him to say: "Go to mass or go to hell." That command gets the poor, frightened Roman Catholic every time, and he goes to mass. The word "hell" has made more history than any word in our language, and it is still on the job. If you can get a person scared of something he cannot see, you can get his heart, soul, and pocket-book. The priest gets this trinity just by saying: "Go to mass or go to hell."

Now, what we must do is to convince the pallid worshiper that no priest or minister holds man's fate in his hands, that the brain of man is free and belongs to himself, that the highest mission of the brain is to find the truth, and that the only atmosphere in which it can think and act is the atmosphere of liberty.

The sky is brighter to-day with all that makes a man than ever it was. We need to understand that everything good is a prophecy and a promise of something better, and that prophecy does not refer to

some sweet bye-and-bye after we are dead, but refers to some sweeter here and now while we are living. Man to-day is not caught by the old religious gag that if he will deny himself for God on earth, he will get his reward in heaven. Every Church is based on that old lie, but rational, sensible men prefer to come home here to a room or a tenement in the "house not made with hands" hereafter.

There are still a few things that men and women need to learn. There may be many things that would benefit them, but a few things are really needful. One thing is that the men who are promising heaven to those who believe certain religious statements have no heaven to give them. Another thing is that the men who threaten others with hell who cannot believe their religious statements, have no hell with which to punish the unbelievers. Heaven is only a saying. So is hell, nothing more. The world is scared at the priest's say-so. Heaven and hell are merely words they are not facts. Let men and women learn that and the Church will lose its worshipers.

There is no door in the air which opens to heaven, and no door in the ground that opens to hell. No man holds a key to either of these imaginary realms, unless it be an imaginary key. The places of nature are not locked from man's investigation. Intelligence, human genius, is the power which finds the hidden treasures of this universe. Everything is open to man's inquiry and search, and the authority which would put a ban upon the hand, the foot, or the brain of man, is the enemy of humanity.

Why does anyone want to talk about a hell hereafter to persons who have nothing to eat, nothing to wear, nowhere to sleep, and nothing to enjoy? Their lives are empty of pleasure, empty of satisfaction in every way? Is not such a condition hell enough for any human being? Why add another pain, another terror to the already suffering mind? One hell here on time is enough.

The brain of man is trying to find a way out of the horrors of religion—this Siberia of the mind—to put some sense into human heads, or to get rid of nonsense out of them. Religion has not one thing which appeals to the eye, ear, hand, head, or heart of man which can be found. The whole of the supernatural is pure fiction. I appeal to facts, from dogmas to doubts, from miracles to the supernatural to the natural, from God to man. Man we know, man we can see and understand, and it is in man that we put our trust. He is our only help in time of trouble. We live on this earth, and we have no knowledge of any other place where human beings dwell. The brain of man is working to improve our earthly living, and it is man alone who has brought us thus far on the road to happiness. If there is any further joy to be found for men, women, and children, man will find that joy and give it to his fellow-creatures.

When a man bawls out that he wants a God, what does he want him for? What will a God do for him? Has any God who has been kept alive by men ever done anything for man? Not a thing. All the gods of the past have been paupers. Not one of them had the strength enough to pull a drowning child from the water; or to save a burning mother from the flames; Not one of them had a thing to give to man; not a thing to give to starving man or woman; not a thing to give to ragged man or woman; not a thing to make a human being. That is the true record of all the divinities that have pestered the earth. The making of gods is out of fashion. To-day we unmake them. As man progresses, the gods are abandoned. Man who calls upon a god in this age goes a long way far back. There is another spell upon us. We have found the gods unreliable. We are now relying upon knowledge, upon science. The great call to man in this century is a call to know. The whole universe is open to human investigation. Nothing is too hard for man to know.

It is well to remember that the religion that gives a God, a Savior, and a heaven with happiness for a few men and women, gives a Devil, a hell, and

annation for ever to the great majority of human beings. How a man with a heart in his breast can sincerely and seriously offer such a religion to his fellow-men surpasses my comprehension. All that is honest, brave man wants hereafter is what he gets here—an equal chance.

You may rest assured that there is no God in the universe who will follow you if you do not believe the dogmas of the Church, or who had his only son sacrificed for your benefit hereafter. There is no god in such a dirty business as that, in such a small, contemptible business as that.

I stand for the brain of man, for the common sense of man, for the discoveries and inventions made by man and for the mighty freedom which the brain of man has wrested from his enemies. The greatest liberty which man possesses is the liberty which enables him to stand on such a platform as this and all the truth about the tyranny of the Church and the wrongs done by the priest. That liberty has cost mankind millions upon millions of the brightest and bravest hearts that women ever bore. The person that we have yet to fear above all others is the priest—the man who does the least for the world who wrongs it the most. I ask the priest who says he is a good citizen of these United States if he is willing to destroy the public school is being a friend of this nation? I ask the priest to tell what institutions of this country he is upholding and urging upon parishioners to support. I ask the priest to say when, where, and how he has defended the liberties of our people. I ask the priest to tell wherein his Church stands for anything American. I wish to see all the priests in the land, big and little, that the world of man than their whole Church and all its rituals, ceremonies, and embroideries. I wish to tell the priests in the land that the public school has more for the characters of our men and women than have all the religions on the earth. I would like to have some priest show how Roman Catholicism influenced this nation. I am reminded here of an incident which took place in the Boston school ago. One of the students was sentenced to write an essay upon "The Influence of Christianity on Civilization." When he finished reading his article which to my mind was false in nearly every sentence—I smiled a smile which could be seen and seen through, and the professor quickly said: "Your face and read your essay to the class next week." I did so. Here is what I wrote: The influence of civilization on Christianity has been to wipe off the earth.

I admit that I have no respect for the priest; I do not like his business; I do not like what he does, nor do I like the things he does. Do you think I could respect a man who makes his god and then eats him? Do you think I could respect a man who has a god he could carry around in his vest pocket? If I have a god I want one that is too big to wear my clothes. The dogma of transubstantiation, of making a god out of an oyster cracker, is accepted as a mystery. There is no mystery in it; it is a lie. Transubstantiation is a big word with nothing in it.

I have a teddy-bear that knows just as much about divinity as does a Roman Catholic cardinal, an Episcopal bishop, a Methodist minister, or a sergeant in the Salvation Army. It is needless to say how much I do not like that.

There is one other world for the brain of man to conquer and expose, and that is the world of mystery in the realm of humbug. This is the world of Roman Catholicism.

I am not knocking at the door of any church. I am not asking anybody to save me, for I am in no danger of being lost. I am going straight ahead, no matter where it leads me. I have made up my mind to one conviction. It is this: There is just one thing that makes a man and only one thing. It is not faith, it is not wealth, it is not position, it is nothing a man has inherited, nothing he has received

from others, it is what he has done, what he has stood for in the community in which he lives; it is that great, grand thing that is not visible in any possession, but which is apparent in all he does—it is *character, MANLINESS.*

There is not in Illinois a monument that stands as high as Abraham Lincoln, nor in Massachusetts as high as Ralph Waldo Emerson, nor in the United States as high as Robert G. Ingersoll, nor in the world as high as Thomas Paine. These men stood for something that counts in the civilisation of the human race; something that prompts the hands to applaud when their names are spoken; something that grows and blossoms in the sunshine of freedom; something that everyone feels and admires and longs for; something great in a manly way; something beautiful in a womanly way; something fair and bright as the stars; something warm and sweet as the summer's sun, and something that represents the three great loves that all great men stand for—love of right, love of truth, and love of man.

On the brows of these men was the crown of manliness—the jewel of character. They stretched their hands, not to God, but to man. They worked not for a king and priest, but for the toiler and the slave. They worked for something better to come, something that would enlighten the lives of men with the light of liberty.

Great men look forward; little men look backward. The brain gets no fire from ashes, no inspiration from dried leaves.

There are too many persons who watch the sunset, and not enough who look for the sunrise. The Christian believes in the past, in the graveyard, in history, in books that are dead and holy, but Freethinkers believe in the future, in the cradle, in the homes of men and women, and in the brains of the living. The past is gone. We appreciate what it has left to us, but we cannot allow it to bind our hands and feet and brains. Our destiny is ahead of us, not behind us. The setting sun calls man to worship, but the rising sun calls him to work.

I want everyone that comes into this world to find awaiting him seventy years of a better life, seventy years of a better fate, than any human being has yet enjoyed.

Then I want everyone, after having lived well, to leave the world a better place than he found it, and to leave it willingly, glad that he has lived, and glad that he has left a better world for those who come after him.

How often have we heard a man or a woman, upon leaving a theatre or concert, say: "Well, I've got my money's worth." We ought all of us to be able to say the same thing at the close of every day we live. We ought to so enjoy life—its vast outdoor panorama of beauty and wonders, and its sweet indoor companionship—as to say every night; "I've got my money's worth," and, at last, when this life is over, and the lights are being turned down, and the doors are being closed behind us, we still ought to feel that we've had our money's worth. If I were to give a toast to a Freethought audience like this, I would say: "Here's to the health, freedom, and long life of the brain of man—the only leader, the only reformer, and the only savior of human beings."

—*Truthseeker* (New York). L. K. WASHBURN.

CASE OF WASTED CHARITY.

All cases, naturally, are not worthy cases. It was but the other month a Dalton philanthropist, visiting a destitute family, had his heartstrings torn with pity, and, drawing out his wallet, he said: "Here, Calhoun, take this dollar and go and buy a chicken for the Christmas dinner." Calhoun, the young son of the house, accepted the banknote gratefully, and the poor widow, with tears in her eyes, bowed the philanthropist out. But the garden walk wound by an open window; and, as the departing philanthropist passed the window, he heard the mother say: "You Cal, you jes' gimme dat dollah an' go git dat Christmas chicken in de natcheral way."

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Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture. Parliament Hill: 3.15, W. Davidson, a Lecture. Regent's Park: 3.15, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

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THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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