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Any blockhead has an ambition capable, if you encourage it sufficiently, of running to the infinite.—CARLYLE.

Atheism.—English and French.

THERE is a story concerning David Hume with which many readers of the *Freethinker* will be familiar, but which will bear retelling. During a visit to Paris, Hume was at dinner with a number of the group of writers who became famous as the encyclopædists. The conversation turning on religion, Hume expressed doubts whether there were any real Atheists in existence. He was quietly informed that he was dining with half-a-dozen of them.

The story, though old, is not without application to-day. It is one of the "tricks" of Christian controversialists to profess the same doubt, and to pretend surprise when an Atheist presents himself. One ought to say that doubt and surprise are never professed when the Atheist is found poaching on religious preserves to the extent of committing a criminal offence. Then his Atheism is admitted and proclaimed. But if the Atheist is a good man, the usual policy is to speak of him as an "Atheist, so-called"; or to say that he is a Christian without knowing it, and thus keep up the pretence of the rarity of Atheism. And it is extremely probable that from keeping up this pose for so long many have quite forgotten that it is a pose, and nothing more.

A recent article in the *Times* raises the question of the frequency of Atheism—and, incidentally, of the quality of Atheism—in a way that calls for a word or two of comment. It remarks that in France "the number of Atheists is not the fabulous rarity" that "he is to many people in England," and follows this up with a discussion on what it calls "positive" and "negative" Atheism. Of that, more presently. At present, one may ask whether it is the case that the Atheist is more common in France than in England? That there are more declared Atheists in France is obvious. At a recent census some six millions wrote themselves down as Atheists. In England, it may be doubted whether a million would make this open declaration. Why is this so? How are we to explain the difference? Is it because there are fewer Atheists in England? Or is it because there is less frankness of expression here than on the other side of the Channel?

No one who studies the question carefully can doubt that the latter is the true answer. In France, thought—certainly in relation to religion—is more logical, and its expression more straightforward. The French intellect has a habit of seizing the essential problem at once, and having seized it, is not lacking the courage to put its ideas into practice. Look at France and the Dreyfus affair. There is nothing remarkable in France having this scandal. Any other country might have had it, and most countries have experienced similar scandals. The noteworthy fact is, not that France had a Dreyfus scandal, but that it settled it, and settled other matters along with it. If the same thing had occurred in England, there would have been plenty of people to have championed the injured party, and so far as he

was concerned, we may say confidently that his injuries would, so far as was possible, have met with redress. But there we should probably have stopped. Not one Englishman in a thousand would have reflected that the wronged man was a mere incident, a symbol of something greater and more important; and we should have found, after the affair had been closed, all the old machinery and institutions that were responsible for the scandal just as they were before it opened.

The French mind worked differently. To it Dreyfus was a mere symbol. It recognised the challenge and the menace of the Church. It was a challenge, because behind it lay the strength of the Church as against the strength of the Secular State. It was a menace, because if religious influence triumphed, secular progress would be arrested for generations. In England we should have found some kind of compromise, a something-to-put-in-its-place piece of legislation that would have been solemnly and preposterously ineffective. The French accepted the challenge. In a little over a year it took a Church that was hoary with age when our own Church was in its infancy, a Church that was older than the French nation, and had never ceased—save for a brief few years—to be in close alliance with it, and disestablished it. It led the way amongst the "Great Powers" in establishing a Secular State. Other nations will follow, sooner or later. To France belongs the honor of leading the way along a path that probably every responsible statesman in Europe knows all other nations will one day have to follow.

It is because the French mind possesses this quality of directness, and of practicality, that French life is without the number of compromises that distinguishes life this side of the Channel. In England we are still tinkering about with Cowper-Templeism in the nation's schools. When English statesmen had a chance of settling the religious question once for all, they lacked the courage to do so. They preferred a compromise; and after forty-five years' experience of the trouble caused by it, and of the injury done to education by it, they are still busy at the same game of passing new compromises, or swearing by the old one. The French settled that question in the only way in which it ever will be settled. English people say this is because the French do not understand the value of compromises. Not so; it is because they understand their real value that they realise how useless they are in many directions. They see that some compromises give nothing to the cause of national progress, and everything to the forces of reaction. And they realise that however bitter the fight, it is better to have it, and be done with it, than to compromise along lines that spell national inefficiency and disaster.

Atheism is probably but little less common in England than in France—that is, the frame of mind for which Atheism stands; but professed Atheism is not so common. Of that there can be little question. In France, if a man does not believe in a God he, with rare exceptions, calls himself an Atheist, and the matter is ended. In England, there are half-a-dozen aliases under which he may disguise himself. He may call himself an Agnostic, or a Rationalist, or a believer in "Ethical Religion," or he may—more commonly—say nothing at all about it. And he will

not only use these aliases, but he will protest with all the vigor and expression of horror of a sincere Christian accused of the "sin against the Holy Ghost," if anyone dares to suggest that he is an Atheist. Stranger still, he will defend the use of these aliases on grounds that a French thinker would meet with a lifting of the eyebrows or a shrug of the shoulders. People, he will say, do not like such a term as Atheism, or they consider it offensive, and therefore some other term must be found that is acceptable. He does not realise, apparently, that it is his duty, not to give the people what they like, but to teach them to like the right kind of things; and that by pandering to the religious world in this manner, he is helping to perpetuate the very mental faults he should be most anxious to destroy.

This aspect of the matter was well put by a very shrewd observer of English life.* The writer says, in order to illustrate a characteristic of the English mind:—

"Huxley said somewhere that though offensive and coarse, Atheism shocks the English; Agnosticism, a mild Atheism which clings to forms, neither offends nor convinces them. A single and very simple objection upsets this doctrine and its arguments. 'It is not practical, it has no present application; we are pledged, the necessities of life concern and occupy us.'.....The majority of the English are unconscious of this little inward monologue; their faith is protected by a sort of *cant* which cannot be analysed nor abruptly displaced. Moreover, the two thinkers, who in France would have been professed Atheists, have been particularly careful to avoid disturbing the traditional beliefs of the public to whom they address their writings in the hope that they will be read to the end. John Stuart Mill interprets his Positivism in such a manner that the question of the spiritual world, though eliminated from science, is still a subject of legitimate speculation to those who have a taste that way.....He believed he could conciliate the majority of his compatriots by this concession.....Still more characteristic was the manner in which Herbert Spencer treated the idea of God when he encountered it on the summit of his metaphysics. He endeavored, with characteristic insistence, to show that the God of evolution is infinitely superior to the mechanical God of Paley.....It was a strange necessity which compelled him to set up, not only for himself, but for others, an absolute, substantial, and more or less individualised Being, which could be adored, and to which religious people might raise temples and altars."

In France, Mill and Spencer, with other leading thinkers, would have been called Atheists. No one would have thought of them otherwise, and they would have been thought none the less of by the unorthodox world on that account. Their being called Atheists and their recognising themselves as such, would have had a stimulating influence upon the crowd of lesser heretical writers who now adopt some alias or the other, and also upon the religious world itself. The *Times* is quite correct when it says that "Because Atheists, positive and militant, are not uncommon in France, we must not suppose that we are therefore a more religious and believing people." We are not. We are not more religious; we are only more timid in our thinking, and less honest in our speech. We garnish our heresy with hypocrisy, and excuse our intellectual timidity with the plea of expediency.

(To be concluded.) C. COHEN.

"The Task of Joshua."

THE Rev. Professor David Smith, D.D., devotes his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for May 27 to a discussion of an inquirer's difficulty to justify his slight connection with the War in the face of the teaching of Jesus to do good to them that despitefully use you and to love your enemies. This inquirer has been "compelled to pause and think of two Christians meeting face to face in deadly combat on the battlefield," and says that it troubles him sorely to be placed in

* Emile Boutmy, *The English People*.

such a position. Then he asks, "Am I justified in being where I am, in the light of God's Word?" The Professor answers him thus:—

"Pray dismiss your scruples. Thank God that you are privileged to be where you are, and in his name strike whenever you have the chance, and strike straight and hard. I envy you your opportunity. Never until last August have I been tempted to be rebellious against the accident which maimed me in my boyhood, unwilling me to bear an active part in this great and terrible Day of the Lord. I would joyfully sacrifice all that I possess to be with you now, and if I felt otherwise, I would account myself a traitor to our fathers' God."

It is noteworthy that Dr. Smith cherishes this ferocious, warlike spirit in the name of his fathers' God. It is as a believer in that Divine Being, as a servant of the Most High, that he regrets his inability to take his full share in the task of killing the Germans. He even glories in his brutal disposition, and is quite convinced that the Highest shares it. When he reads in his morning paper that the Allies have won a glorious victory, he is the happiest man in the United Kingdom. Asked to reconcile this savage attitude with the precepts of the Gospel Jesus, he tells us that those precepts are not relevant at all; that they do not apply in the least to the existing situation; and that even if they did apply, loyalty to the God of our fathers would necessitate our setting them aside. The truth is, that at the present moment the God of Jesus has been abandoned in favor of the God of Hosts, and the Professor is perfectly right in calling the latter our fathers' God, because Christians have been the greatest promoters of war in history. Eusebius informs us that when the Emperor Constantine was in prayer on his march to Rome, about noon, as the day was declining, a flaming cross appeared in the sky with the words "In this conquer." During most of its history the Christian Church has worshiped at the shrine of Jehovah, and utilised the Cross as its most significant symbol.

Dr. Smith is unfair as well as ferocious, and his unfairness flows naturally from his ferocity. The inquirer is deeply pained by the sad spectacle of "two Christians meeting face to face in deadly combat on the battlefield," but the Professor asserts that in the present conflict, such a supposed case is impractical. He says:—

"Think of the torture of Belgium, the poisoned folk of France, the North Sea fishermen, the *Lusitanians*. It is not war; it is not assassination; it is not savagery; it is open devilry, and no Christian could have a hand in it. If there were a Christian in all the Kaiser's host he would fling down his arms. It is the Devil and his angels incarnate that we are fighting, and compensation is worse than folly; it is disloyalty to God and his Christ. The task of Joshua is ours."

"The task of Joshua is ours." What was that? It was a task of utterly unscrupulous destruction. Joshua entered town after town, and city after city, and razed them all to the ground. Of Jericho we read:—

"And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.....And Jericho utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword."

Here is another record:—

"So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and of their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded."

The Book of Joshua abounds with wholesale massacres of men, women, and children, and all other living things. Joshua's task was to utterly destroy the seven nations of Canaan; he was to smite them out of existence, making no covenant with them, not showing them any mercy; and this, Dr. Smith declares, is to be the task of the Allies in the present War. The Germans are the enemies of God and his people, and complete extermination must be their just punishment. Listen:—

"The task of Joshua is ours, and, terrible as it may appear, the Mosaic code is the only satisfactory method

ment. It was God's remedy for the iniquity of the Amorites, and it is his remedy now for a worse iniquity." Surely, the reverend gentleman has allowed his judgment to share the fate of his temper. His wrath burns with such intensity that he cannot weigh his words, with the result that he makes statements in-escapable of substantiation. He describes the horrible atrocities perpetrated by the Germans as "open devilry," in which no Christian could have a hand; but he urges the Allies to commit similar atrocities as an expression of loyalty to God and his Christ. He wants us to imitate the cruel warrior of the Old Testament, and treat the Germans as Joshua treated the seven nations of Canaan.

We find fault with Dr. Smith, not because he is anxious to smash the Germans, but because he advocates our doing it in honor of our loving Heavenly Father and the Savior of the world. He tells us that no Christian could have a hand in the blood-curdling deeds attributed to the Kaiser's army and navy; but is he not aware that deeds quite as dark were done by the Israelites at the express command of Jehovah, and that he himself is exhorting his readers to regard the Mosaic code as the only remedy for the iniquity of the Germans? The torture of Belgium, the poisoned fields of France, and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, prove that the Germans are *not* Christians, but we are to smite them hip and thigh because we are Christians! Such is the Christian wisdom that comes to us from the Presbyterian College at Londonderry!

"Joshua's task is ours." Jehovah was a man of war, and Joshua was his servant, who only did his bidding, and whose task of extermination was bloody in the extreme; but the Christian God is defined as love, and Dr. Smith is his ordained minister, whose mission is to preach the Gospel of peace, which, in the present article, he not only ignores, but positively contradicts. And in this the Professor by no means stands alone. The overwhelming majority of clergymen agree with him, though few may be prepared to endorse his falling back upon the Book of Joshua. They all admit that if the Sermon on the Mount were put into practice there could be no war; but most of them affirm that it contains no condemnation of war. Dr. Smith maintains that Jesus did not legislate for nations and states, but for individuals. When he said, "Love your enemies, bless and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," he did not intend the words to be of universal application, nor to be taken literally even by those to whom they did apply. The case which they "contemplate is that of an individual subjected to personal contumely. To this extent they are absolutely obligatory, and I trust I have grace enough to remember and obey them if I were insulted or wronged." When Jesus said, "Resist not evil," he did not mean that public outrages were not to be resisted, or that oppression, injustice, or the torture of the weak by the strong, were to be quietly endured. To international disputes the saying bears no reference whatever. Dr. Smith is of opinion that when "justice or truth is assailed, when innocence is tortured and weakness trampled down, it is an imperative obligation, not only of manhood, but of religion, to resist and quell the iniquity with every available weapon." We agree; but such a doctrine is not to be found in the Sermon on the Mount. This is the contention of the Friends, in whose sight all war is anti-Christian and anti-human. Their young men of military age decline to enlist, because they take Jesus seriously and love his law more than life. The Rev. Richard Roberts, who, though a Presbyterian, is in full harmony with the Friends on this subject, declares that "even under the very best conditions, military necessity requires the use of methods that are unethical in their nature, and from which no ethical results can follow—unless, indeed, grapes may grow on thistles." The oftener Christian ministers speak or write about the War, the more apparant it becomes that the Christian religion is of no account whatever in

the lives either of individuals or of nations. Its ministers have no message that comes home with power to the minds and consciences of the public; and on almost every question of national and international interest they invariably show their lack of true insight and understanding. As a matter of fact, nobody knows what Christianity is or stands for; and when a trainer of young preachers tacitly admits that the Gospel of Christ is no remedy for the evils of the world as crystallised in the present War, and claims that we must have recourse to the Mosaic code and employ Joshua's methods, we need no further demonstration of the foolishness of preaching and the political blindness of the Church.

J. T. LLOYD.

Famous Freethinkers I Have Known.—V.

MRS. HARRIET LAW.

THE pioneers of all movements have had to tread "the steep and thorny path" that leads to progress. Sometimes they stumble; often after they have wandered through the thick undergrowth of the forest, bruised and cut through their perilous adventure; at length they emerge into the open fields, only to be met with further obstacles, which they bravely encounter, and, in the end, come triumphant to the goal for which they have so diligently and persistently fought.

The pioneers of the Freethought movement, in all ages, have had a most arduous task. A man or woman might commit all the crimes of the Decalogue and be forgiven by their fellow-Christians, but if either of them dared to call in question the truth of the Christian faith, nothing but social ostracism and cruel persecution awaited them at every turn.

I remember the mental anguish I suffered when it first became my duty to announce to my dear mother that I could no longer believe in the Christian faith. My mother considered that "much study had made me mad"; and she thought that in time, with kind attention, I should return to the fold. But of course I did not. I was prepared to face my father, and my other Christian friends, and argue the matter out with them, but it grieved me much to wound my mother's feelings.

But if this was the case with a strong, self-willed young man like myself, how much more painful must it have been to Mrs. Harriet Law when she first had to sever her connection with all the Christians with whom she had been working, and break the news gently to her sorrowful parents.

Mrs. Harriet Law was born at Ongar, in Essex, in the year 1832. Her father was a farmer and refreshment contractor, but through reverses in business, the family migrated to London. Harriet early in her career joined the Baptists, and became a strict and ardent Christian, of the sect of which the famous Charles Spurgeon became the bright particular star. Harriet was so conscientious in her belief that she would neither work on Sunday nor let anybody work for her. Indeed, she carried her conscientious scruples to such a point that she invariably had cold dinner on Sunday, and slept at night in an unmade bed. While in this state of religious fervor she was moved by an irresistible impulse to attend some Freethought lectures at Philpot-street Hall; her object being to attempt to convert the "Infidels" who were carrying on their propaganda at this hall. In this building, on various occasions, she opposed Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, Mr. John Watts, Mr. J. P. Adams, and other Freethought advocates; but she found to her dismay that after each attempt to win the Freethinker over to her cause, she lost ground, and had to discard, one after another, some of the most cherished beliefs of the Christian faith.

It was here, at this old Freethought hall, that she first met her future husband, Mr. Edward Law, who was at that time a Christian, and who passed through a similar experience before becoming a pronounced

Freethinker. I first had the pleasure of hearing Mrs. Law in 1876, at the Hall of Science. She was then a fine, well-built woman, slightly over forty years of age, rather small of stature, with a strong face, a massive head for a lady, and a most impressive personality. She was a very fluent speaker, with great natural talent, and had a wonderful command over an audience. She also possessed a remarkable memory. I have watched her as she sat by the table on the platform listening to an opponent. With her head resting on her hand, her elbow on the table, she would listen to a speech of a quarter of an hour's duration in opposition to her lecture without taking a single note, and then reply to every argument advanced against her position, without missing a single point. Further, she had acquired by practice, the art of stating an opponent's position more clearly than he was capable of putting it himself, and her knowledge of Bible texts was simply marvellous. If her opponent quoted one passage of scripture in support of his argument, she was invariably able to quote another to upset it. She was also very clever in exposing the frauds of the Spiritualists of her day. She did not, however, lecture very often in London, but spent most of her time in the provinces and Scotland, where she was well-known and much appreciated. Her daughter, Miss Alice Law, who has supplied me with many of the details of this biographical sketch, informs me that her mother on several occasions lectured in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, to very large audiences, sometimes as many as twelve to thirteen hundred persons being present. Here is a quotation from the *Grimsby Herald* of March 1, 1867:—

"If a flaming meteor had appeared in the firmament it would have caused just such amazement as was occasioned by the visit of Mrs. Harriet Law. Scarcely anything else occupied the minds of the people; it was the burden of conversation in almost every house, in every street, and of almost every couple you met. Night after night, until the course of five lectures was completed, the excitement increased. The Oddfellows' Hall was crowded, and great numbers crushed and struggled together, unable to obtain admittance. Evening after evening, for about three hours on each occasion, did Mrs. Law make her daring attacks on religion, and triumph in discussion, unexhausted, and ready for further contest."

The life of a lady Freethought lecturer in these early days was particularly strenuous and full of adventure. On several occasions she was subject to attacks by Christian mobs; sometimes a stone thrown by a Christian bigot would smash the window of the cab in which she was riding. At other times she was hustled and assaulted by the mob; but in all cases her courage and self-possession brought her successfully through the ordeal.

Moreover, she always stood firmly to her purpose, and returned to the charge; and finally succeeded in getting a hearing and inducing the Christians to abandon their uncivilised and barbaric practices. Well, that was something to the good. She could not, however, civilise them altogether; but she was able to demonstrate that many of them in practice were a great deal better than their creed.

Mrs. Law was always a militant Freethinker. She said what she meant, and meant what she said. Here are a few of the titles of her lectures:—"Who is on the Safe Side—Christian or Freethinker?" "Jesus and Mohammed; or, Cross and Crescent," "Is the Bible a Good Book?" "A Secular Sermon from Matthew: 'By their fruits ye shall know them,'" "The Lions of Science and the Lambs of Theology." Mrs. Law was especially clever in debate. Among the gentlemen she debated with during her career were the Rev. John Campbell, M.A.; Mr. Turpin, secretary of the Bible Defence Association; Mr. J. H. Levy, a Freethinker and a writer on the staff of the *National Reformer*; the Rev. W. Stephenson and the Rev. R. Shepherd; and many others.

In the early 'eighties Mrs. Law became editor of a Freethought journal, called the *Secular Chronicle*, upon which I had the privilege of becoming a regular contributor. Many other well-known Freethinkers

wrote occasional articles, and the paper supplied useful information of the progress of Freethought Societies in the provinces. After a long life of strenuous effort, Mrs. Law retired into private life, and, when the end came, died as she had lived, a confirmed Freethinker. And when we sing the praises of the great heroes and martyrs of Freethought, we must not forget the splendid work of Mrs. Harriet Law, for undoubtedly she sowed the seeds which to-day are producing good fruit and making the path smooth for the rising generation of Freethinkers in every part of Great Britain.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Fourth Gospel.

WHO WAS THE WRITER?

IN the series of articles, some time ago, on "The Gospel History a Fraud," I could find space only for one paper on the Fourth Gospel. This was, of course, insufficient to demonstrate the fraudulent character of that Gospel. Taking leave of the "Christian Apologetics" for a short time, I now propose to deal a little more fully with that subject, more especially since I find increasing evidence that Biblical critics either ignore or flatly deny the possibility of such a fraud.

In commencing an examination of the Fourth Gospel the first question to decide is—Who was the writer? This question is, however, much easier asked than answered. According to orthodox critics the writer was the apostle John, who, they say, lived to a very advanced age, and wrote his Gospel in the last decade of the first century. This opinion is based upon unreliable statements made by some of the so-called "fathers" of the Church—which do not commence until after the year A.D. 180. The earliest reference to the "Gospel of John" is given by Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (A.D. 181) who says in one of his Letters to Autolyceus:—

"— and so teach all the spirit-bearing men, one of whom, John, says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'"

This writer does not, however, say who the John named was. The first that ascribed the Fourth Gospel to one of the followers of Jesus is Irenæus (A.D. 185) who says:—

"John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence in Asia.....The church in Ephesus founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the time of Trajan [A.D. 98—117] is a true witness of the traditions of the apostles" (Heresies iii. 1, 1; iii. 3, 4).

According to the latter statement, John, who had arrived at man's estate in A.D. 28, lived at least seventy years after that date. Writers after the time of Irenæus, as might be expected, know more about the apostle John. We are told, for instance, that when at Rome in the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81—96), John was placed in a cauldron of boiling oil. The fire under the cauldron, it is stated, was kept up until every drop of oil had boiled away, and when the vessel was empty John stepped out unharmed. Domitian then, perceiving it was useless attempting to put the holy John to death, banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he remained until the emperor's death. The absolute truth of this narrative is vouched for by Tertullian (A.D. 200) who says:—

"How happy is the church at Rome, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood, where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's, and where the apostle John was first plunged, unharmed, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island exile" (Prescription xxxvi.).

The Church historian Eusebius (A.D. 330) tells us that the apostle John was head of the church at Ephesus during his later years, and that while there he was shown copies of the other three Gospels, which, after reading them, he admitted to be cor-

rect, but incomplete; and being pressed by the church there to write a Gospel himself, did so, chiefly in order to supply their omissions (Ecol. Hist. iii. 24). This statement is taken seriously by Biblical critics, who assume without evidence that the canonical Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written, and were in use in the churches long before the last decade of the first century. This, of course, would have been the case had the Gospels been original and the writers apostolic: but no traces of a Gospel of any kind can be discovered prior to A. D. 180, and then it is not a canonical Gospel, but one of a more primitive type—*viz.*, the writings from which a large portion of the canonical Gospels was derived. It is thus simply impossible that John the apostle could have seen the three Synoptics, even if he had lived to the beginning of the reign of Trajan.

Now, John, the supposed apostle, is stated to have been a fisherman; so that to ascribe to him a Gospel, written in good Greek, is manifestly ridiculous. Josephus tells us that very few of the Palestinian Jews in his day acquired the art of writing in Greek, he himself being almost the only exception. But Josephus was an educated man before commencing the study of that tongue, not an illiterate rustic or fisherman. Hence, the claim made for the apostle John is too absurd to be seriously considered. The only evidence, then, that the Fourth Gospel was written by John the apostle is the statement made by Irenæus a century and a half after the death of Jesus—which statement is repeated and amplified by later Christian writers.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (A. D. 180—150) knew nothing about the apostle John having written a Gospel, though he had been told by a presbyter of his acquaintance (who was named John) that Matthew had written "the Sayings"—probably the so-called "Sermon on the Mount"—and Mark a short, incomplete Gospel.

Justin Martyr (A. D. 150) quotes or refers to a large number of events or circumstances found in the Synoptic narratives, as given by Matthew and Mark; but he took them from what he calls the "Memoirs of the Apostles." He does not appear to have ever heard of the Fourth Gospel. In one place, however, he says:—

"And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him, that the believers in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem" (Dialogue 81).

The Book of Revelation was written by a Jew of the first century, probably by "John the Essene." Justin evidently refers to it as the only book known to him which had been ascribed to John, "an apostle of Christ." Respecting the teaching of Jesus, Justin says:—

"Brief and concise utterances fell from him, for he was no sophist, but his word was the power of God" (1 Apol. 14).

This statement furnishes further proof that Justin was not acquainted with the "Gospel of John." Had he read the long rambling discourses in that evangel, he could not have called them "brief utterances"—though his statement describes accurately the sayings in the Sermon on the Mount, many of which he has quoted.

With regard to Papias, it should be stated that Eusebius, writing with that bishop's book before him, says that some of the matters contained in it were taken from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and others from tradition, and that he had made quotations from the "Epistle of John." The last statement shows that the Fourth Gospel, which was not then already written, was on the way, and would soon be in the hands of the church at Ephesus. One of the most obvious facts in Biblical criticism is that the "Gospel of John" and the "Epistle of John" were written by the same hand, or were excogitated by the same brain. The Fourth Gospel is a work of the second century, and was written by a Gentile Christian in the time of Papias: the only person of whom we have any knowledge who was likely

to be the writer was Papias's friend—the Presbyter John. Assuming the latter to have been the author, he thought it safer to place the Epistle in circulation first, and gave his friend Papias a copy. The latter bishop was just the sort of man—"of very limited understanding" Eusebius says—to be utilised by one who was perpetrating a literary fraud. In neither the Gospel nor the Epistle is the name of the supposed writer mentioned: the ascription of the Gospel to the apostle John was accomplished by simply adding the title—"According to John"—the disciple of that name being of course implied.

Even when the forger makes a personal appeal to his readers (xix. 35, xx. 31, xxi. 24) he is careful to avoid giving his name. Had his fraud been discovered, his plea was ready: he had merely made a copy of an ancient document which he believed had been written by the apostle John. The following are allusions to the supposed writer of the Gospel:—

John xix. 35.—"And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true."

John xxi. 20, 24.—"Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following.....This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things."

From the last paragraph (xxi. 20—24) we learn that the Gospel was written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The question, then, is: Who was this disciple? And is it a fact that Jesus loved one of his disciples more than any of the others? Search the first three Gospels from beginning to end, and no such fact is discovered—or even hinted at. It is true that upon several occasions Jesus permitted only Peter, James, and John to accompany him; but it is nowhere suggested that he cared for one of these more than for the other apostles. For this absurd statement we have no other authority than the forger of the Fourth Gospel—who does not even say who this beloved disciple was. How, then, was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" known to be John the apostle? Simply because it is stated that this disciple was the writer of the Gospel (xxi. 24), and the superscription of the Gospel is "According to John." Erase the title, and the writer is unknown. This remarkable statement reads as follows:—

"This [*i.e.*, he whom Jesus loved] is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true."

Now, so far from this passage establishing the apostle John as the writer, it shows conclusively that he was not. John the apostle would have no need to make such a statement. He would be known to the whole body of Christians in Asia as the last surviving apostle and eye-witness of the Gospel events, and this fact alone would suffice to cause his book to be everywhere received as history. Presented to his own church at Ephesus, copies would be made for the use of all Christian churches throughout Christendom. He would have no need to write: "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things"; nor to ask the presbyters of Ephesus to add: "We know that his witness is true." These two statements were evidently meant to influence readers who were disposed to question or deny the apostolic authorship of the book: they could therefore only have been inserted by a forger who had palmed off upon the church his newly written Gospel as a copy of an old document of the apostolic age, recently discovered, bearing the title "According to John."

Again, if the apostle John had written a Gospel and had delivered it to the church at Ephesus, that church would have been in possession of one of the greatest treasures in connection with the Christian religion—an original MS. written by the hand of an apostle. Such a treasure, after copies were made from it, would have been carefully preserved by the church, wrapped up in lavender, and exhibited with holy reverence on special occasions. But no original MS. of a Gospel has ever been seen or known. These mythical documents existed just long enough to have had copies taken from them, and then disappeared for ever. No Christian "father"

has ever set eyes on one, nor even heard or known of any one who had seen one. This fact is of the deepest significance, more especially when we bear in mind the durable nature of which MSS. were composed in early times. We have at the present day two MSS. that were made from copies of the Gospels in circulation in the fourth century, and another MS. made from a copy in the fifth century. Yet the original MS. of the "Gospel of John," written near the end of the first century, was never seen by anyone who lived or wrote in the second century, as was likewise the case with the other three Gospels. Copies, and copies only, were seen from the very first. The original MSS. of the Gospels are like the plates from which the religious impostor, Joseph Smith, wrote the Book of Mormon. No living person ever saw one of them.

ABRACADABRA.

Freethinkers in Council.

THE N. S. S. AND "TWO DISASTERS."

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was overclouded by the European War, and by the absence, through illness, of Mr. G. W. Foote, the leader, who had presided over its destinies for a quarter of a century. Despite his long illness, however, Mr. Foote has done notable service to the Freethought cause during the past few months, and this was endorsed by the Conference on Whit-Sunday at the Queen's Hall, London, when Mr. C. Cohen, one of the ablest of Mr. Foote's lieutenants, presided, and the following resolution was proposed by Mr. A. B. Moss, seconded by Mr. Victor Roger, and carried unanimously:—

"This Conference desires to place on record its sense of the profound importance to British Freethought of the decision of Mr. Justice Joyce in the recent lawsuit—The Secular Society, Limited, *versus* Bowman—and desires further to congratulate its President, Mr. G. W. Foote, upon the triumphant vindication of his foresight and skill in devising and founding a Society which promises to overcome the financial obstacle that has for so long retarded organised Freethought propaganda."

In proposing this motion Mr. Moss pointed out that Freethinkers had been robbed by Christians for very many years. A deep debt of gratitude was due to Mr. Foote for the extremely able manner in which he had helped Freethinkers to the full rights of citizenship. This was seconded by Mr. V. Roger, who said that there was still a severe fight in front, but they had no fear as to the final result. Mr. Willis, of Birmingham, supported.

Prior to this, the following letter from Mr. Foote was read by the Chairman, and received with applause:—

"To the 1915 Conference of the National Secular Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—

"Two disasters have occurred to me this spring: a long and dangerous illness, and a consequent inability to attend the annual gathering of a Society representing what the late George Meredith, in a letter to me, called 'the best of causes.'

"Fortunately, my illness is abating, but I am not able to travel to London yet, nor to perform a day's hard work when I get there. I hope, however, to be in a reasonable condition of health before very long, and as I am nominated for re-election to the Presidency, I may venture to hope that you will give me another opportunity of serving you in a position which I have held for twenty-five years on the nomination of the great Charles Bradlaugh, whose life and ideals are still a conscious inspiration to myriads of the real soldiers of Progress.—G. W. FOOTE."

The election of President followed, and on the motion of three London Branches—Bethnal Green, North London, and Kingsland—Mr. Foote was unanimously re-elected to the position he has filled so long and so ably. It was also resolved unanimously that a message of sympathy be sent to the absent President.

The question of the Blasphemy Laws was raised by Mr. C. Cohen, who proposed the following resolution, which was seconded by Mr. A. B. Moss and carried:—

"That this Conference calls the attention of Freethinkers to the fact that, despite the recent legal decision, the Blasphemy Laws still obtain, and may still be used as an instrument of Christian bigotry to hamper freedom of expression in relation to religion; and trusts, therefore, that Freethinkers in all parts of

the country will do their utmost to secure the complete repeal of these remnants of mediæval tyranny and superstition."

Mr. Cohen pointed out that many people were under the impression that recent legal cases had done away with the Blasphemy Laws. This was not so, and they were still a menace. Formerly, these laws were used to attack Freethought leaders; but this was not the case nowadays. Only untrained and irresponsible men were attacked, and the Church pointed at them as examples of leading Freethinkers. A determined effort should be made to influence Members of Parliament, so that these Laws may be repealed.

Mr. A. B. Moss said that the Disestablishment of the Church, which would result in putting all religions on an equality, would be an important factor in securing full civic rights for Freethinkers.

An animated discussion took place on Secular Education. Messrs. Moss, Cohen, Davidson, Chapman, and Willis taking part, and the following resolution was carried:—

"That this Conference, while fully recognising the difficulties of domestic legislation during the continuance of a great European War, nevertheless reaffirms its confidence in the policy of Secular Education as applied in the nation's schools, and hopes that the Government, on the conclusion of peace, will decide to bring in a Bill that will put an end to a quarrel that has obstructed educational progress for more than a generation."

A topical note was introduced by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who drew attention to the compulsory attendance at religious services enforced in the Army and Navy. An interesting debate followed, to which Messrs. Clark, Willis, Davidson, Moss, and Williams contributed. Mr. Lloyd proposed the following resolution, which was seconded by Mr. T. A. Thurlow, and carried:—

"That this Conference, in view of the many complaints received from Freethinkers serving in the Army and Navy concerning compulsory attendance at religious services, protests against this denial of the elementary rights of citizenship to soldiers and sailors, and urges to the authorities concerned that in a War waged in the name of freedom every respect should be paid to the conscientious convictions of men who are risking their lives in their country's service."

Another glaring injustice was dealt with by Mr. T. Shore, who raised the question of the disregard paid to Freethinkers, concerning their interment. Mr. Shore pointed out that Freethinkers' wishes were ignored by pious institutions, and he proposed the formation of a society, on the lines of a burial club, which should safeguard the interests of members. A discussion followed, in which Messrs. Cohen, Willis, and Neate, and Miss Vance, took part, and eventually the following resolution was carried on Mr. Shore's proposition, being seconded by Miss A. Stanley:—

"This Conference is of opinion that some arrangements of a more satisfactory nature than at present exist should be made, whereby the wishes of deceased Freethinkers, concerning their interment, could be carried into effect; and that the plan outlined by Mr. Tom Shore in the *Freethinker* of March 20, 1910, should be taken as the basis of a scheme to be elaborated, printed, and distributed among Freethinkers, and that this Society should do all that lies within its power to substitute cremation for earth burial."

A motion by the Edmonton Branch, proposed by Mr. Davidson and seconded by Mr. Chapman,—

"That all resolutions referred to the Executive of the Conference, shall be dealt with at the following Executive Meeting,"

was carried.

To facilitate business relations between Branches and the Parent Society, it was resolved, on the proposition of Mr. Neate, seconded by Mr. T. Shore, that all officers and committees of Branches must be bona-fide members of the N. S. S., and the forms of membership application include fuller details, so as to secure continuity of action between individual members and the N. S. S. in the event of Branches becoming dormant.

A further decision, relative to propaganda activity, embodied in the resolution, proposed by Mr. Chapman and seconded by Mr. T. Shore:—

"That this Conference advises the holding of Public Demonstrations in places where, for various local causes, the position is considered unsatisfactory."

It was also resolved, on the proposition of Mr. Willis, seconded by Mr. T. Shore, that the Annual Report be printed as a separate publication for distribution and for a permanent record. A vote of thanks to Mr. Cohen for the preparation of the Report was also proposed, and carried unanimously.

The following vice-presidents were elected:—Messrs. W. Bailey, Jackson, R. H. Rosetti, and Wallace Nelson; and those re-elected included:—Messrs. W. Bailey, W. H. Baker, J. C.

Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charboanel, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, W. Dodd, T. H. Elstob, R. G. Fathers, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, Eugene Hins S. L. Hurd, Miss Kathleen B. Kough, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neato, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. T. Ross, Miss Mary Rose, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, S. Samuels, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Miss Alma Stanley, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, F. E. Willis, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, G. White.

Messrs. Savilo and Jones were re-elected auditors. Amongst the Provincial Members and Vice-Presidents at the Conference were Mrs. Bayfield, Mrs. Shore, and Messrs. J. Latham, S. M. Peacock, W. Dodd, Mr. and Mrs. Roleff, C. Cade, and J. Williams. Delegates were also present from the following Branches of the N. S. S.—Bethnal Green, Birmingham, Camberwell, Edmonton, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Kingsland, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, North London, South Shields, West Ham, etc.

The Chairman, in bringing the Conference to a close, congratulated the delegates on the spirit in which the discussions had been conducted. There had been differences of opinion, but that was inevitable in an assemblage of men and women who called themselves Freethinkers. But there had been due recognition of the fact that underlying all differences was a common desire to advance the common cause; and so long as that feeling remained operative, discussion made for agreement instead of dissension, and ensured intelligent co-operation in the work that we had in hand.

C. E. S.

Acid Drops.

When will Christians realise that Freethinkers, whether foreign or English, are not quite imbeciles, and that their Freethought rests upon some better basis than a dislike of priests? Here, for example, is Mr. Philip Gibbs telling the readers of the *Daily Chronicle* that French Freethinkers are learning many lessons in the trenches. They are becoming more tolerant of priests and nuns, because they are fighting in the same trench with the village curé, whom they find is a jolly good fellow, etc., etc. And on the other side it is pointed out that these young priests have learned some much needed lessons of tolerance from Freethinkers. They have listened to their point of view, and have learned to appreciate their "spirituality."

So far as the priests are concerned, it is obvious that personal contact with Freethinkers was necessary, and is beneficial all round. For they needed intercourse with Freethinkers to realise how unwarrantable are all the traditional stories concerning what happens to a man when he gives up his religious belief. But with Freethinkers the case is different. They know religious people, they know priests, and it is no rarity for them to have intercourse with religious folk; often enough their own family life supplies it. They have consequently nothing to learn in this direction. Nor is their Freethought in any way connected with the personality of this or that priest or parson. If every minister of religion turned out to be thoroughly irreproachable, the Freethinker's case against religious doctrines would remain as strong as ever. Life in the trenches, or elsewhere, may lead to forming friendships between priest and Freethinker. But that cannot alter in any way the fundamental antagonism between those ideas for which each stands. And if this intercourse leads to greater courtesy and charity in discussion, the Freethinker will not complain. For in this direction, too, he stands to gain much and to lose nothing.

Mr. H. G. Wells is in a very satiric vein in his latest book, *Evolution*, and he pictures a militant Agnostic, who "every night looked under his bed for the deity, and slept with a large revolver under his pillow for fear of a revelation." Presumably, a large revolver would be needed for the triune deity.

"Every religion is literature," says Mr. H. G. Wells. It is very evident that this popular novelist has never attempted to read the verses in the *War Cry*.

Christians were always noted for their cadging propensities. Recently we received a circular from a South London Branch of "the Salvation Army" asking us to assist them financially, and so as to give "the poor of the district an opportunity of purchasing at very small cost goods and

clothing that will be of service to them, then coolly asks the ratepayers to supply them with clothing, books, carpets, cycles, furniture, mail-carts, musical instruments, sewing machines, umbrellas, etc., and adds that "representatives of the Army will wait upon the ratepayers at their houses in a day or two for gifts." What infernal cheek, in wartime, too, when ratepayers want every penny to make ends meet.

Following close on the heels of "the Salvation Army" comes a circular from the Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalen, Peckham, asking for funds to make up a deficit on "our Parish Funds," and a small envelope is enclosed for donations for "Thanksgiving Days." The circular says "we have much to thank God for, especially in sparing us from the ravages of War, and therefore earnestly appeal," etc. We suppose the vicar imagines that his prayers have saved the parishoners from having bombs dropped on their heads; but if he lived at Southend or Ramsgate he would have to plead to a very different tune. If the vicar thinks the Lord has been so kind in not inflicting upon us the ravages of the Huns, what does he think of the Lord for allowing these ravages to be inflicted upon his fellow-Christians in France and Belgium? Assuredly "the Christian God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

For sheer inanity the clerical mind is unrivalled, and bishops are as open to criticism in this respect as the stupidest of the curates. Dr. Cowgill, the Catholic Bishop of Leeds, has unburdened himself at Selby, Yorkshire, on the subject of the European War, which he considers is caused by God's revenge for the French nation deserting Catholicism. There's a picture for you! In order to give the French Freethinkers a Roland for their Oliver, "God" kills tens of thousands of Catholics, Protestants, members of the Greek Church, Moslems, Buddhists, Sikhs, and other religionists. One wonders that Yorkshire people could stand such nonsense.

Dr. Cowgill, has also been repeating the usual twaddle about "Prussian Materialism," which he considers responsible for the German desire for domination. The Bishop's ideas concerning Freethinkers are very hazy, when one remembers that German soldiers have their belts inscribed, "God with us!"

What delightful idealists Christian preachers are! Here is Dr. Clifford talking of the War, and telling us that "the flower of our young manhood has looked into hell." His ministerial brethren, meanwhile, are explaining very carefully that there is no hell, and the idea is all a very sad mistake. It is all as tiring as that theological inexactitude—the tangle of the trinity.

Three years ago Mr. Cecil Chesterton joined the Catholic Church, and he has been an active defender thereof ever since. The *Catholic Herald* for May 29 reports a lecture he recently delivered, entitled "The Faith and its Critics." Mr. Chesterton regards Protestantism as an enemy of the Faith, but rejoices in the fact that Protestantism is rapidly declining. Rationalism is another opponent of the Faith; but the lecturer is quite mistaken when he asserts that Rationalism is fading. There never was so much Freethought in the world as there is to-day, and it is still spreading.

Mr. Chesterton is in error on another point. Whilst admitting that the Church has been "very heavily bombarded by the teachers of Rationalism," he affirms that the main effect of the bombardment is "a tremendous resurrection of belief in the supernatural." As a matter of fact, belief in the supernatural is slowly dying out everywhere. Spiritualism is not necessarily a form of that belief, many Spiritualists being ardent disbelievers in the Christian religion. The late Dr. Russel Wallace was a firm advocate of Spiritualism, but he did not recognise the existence of the supernatural. Sir William Crookes, another Spiritualist, is strongly of opinion that psychic phenomena are correlated to physical phenomena.

The Pope has authorised the clergy in Italy to pray for an Italian victory. Outside Italy, we presume they may do as they please; and in Germany they are praying for an Italian defeat. If revelations were not out of date, we should expect to hear that heaven had declared itself to be strictly neutral, and threatened to intern any of the angels who were found taking sides.

It seems that the German clergy are profoundly indignant at doubt being cast upon Germany's "spirituality" and devotion to Christianity. For ourselves, we can honestly

plead "Not guilty" to that charge. Not only have we never doubted the Christianity of Germany; we have asserted it. Pastor Heyn, one of the leading preachers in Berlin, says that "the German nation during the past nine months of its history has developed a profundity of religious sentiment beyond anything in its former history." They have taken to reading the Psalms, they immerse themselves in the Old Testament, and they "read with pleasure the writings of these old sacred fighters." They feel that God is with them, and will protect them and the true faith. We sympathise with Pastor Heyn, for we feel that the German people really have been libelled. Its soldiers may have ill-treated and murdered old men, women, and children. They may have burned houses wholesale and slaughtered non-combatants on both land and sea. But they are, nevertheless, religious. There is no reasonable doubt of that, and this should be placed to their credit—or otherwise.

So far as Freethinkers are concerned experience in Germany confirms experience in this country. Both here and in Germany there was, at first, much jubilation over an alleged revival of religion. Now, in both countries, it is confessed that the expected has not happened. The Moderator of the District Church of Berlin regrets that he is unable to confirm the belief that the War has strengthened religion, and says that attendances at church are worse than ever. "Religious people who are really religious still hold their prayer-meetings, but their number is not increasing."

Some of the clergy in this country have been talking about bringing Billy Sunday here to run a series of revival meetings. In the *Daily Chronicle* of a recent date, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe gives, among others, the following choice specimens of Sunday's oratory:—

"I'm disgusted with having people think Jesus Christ was a dough-faced, pudding-headed nonentity, who let everybody use him as a cuspidor (spittoon). He didn't come to the Temple and say, 'Please go away from the sanctuary.' Not on your life. Jesus had the punch."

"Oh, Jesus, I stagger back at your love and mercy. If I was God for fifteen minutes, I guess I'd strike 'em dead, Jesus!"

"When Solomon found out that there was nothing in these things, he went and tried wine. He hit up the booze. He tried a lot of things.....He loved many strange women. That's where he dropped his candy. They got his goat, sure."

If these utterances originated in a Freethought meeting there would be a shriek about their indecency and profanity. As they originate with a Christian evangelist, they are winked at. And if Billy Sunday came to England, we do not doubt but that large numbers of the clergy would give him a warm welcome. Anything that makes business is acceptable.

We are now credibly informed, on the authority of the International Tract Society, that on one point, at least, the Bible is now an antiquated document. In Bible times, all records were made in writing, and preserved in books. There were books in heaven, written by angels, in which were recorded, for future reference, all the words and all the deeds of men on earth. Certain angels served as reporters; they came down to listen and observe, then returned to report; and there was in heaven a recording angel, whose duty consisted in writing down all such reports. In course of time, the heavenly books became practically innumerable. These books were to be used as irrefutable evidence at the Day of Judgment, when they would be opened, and when the dead, come back to life, would be judged out of the things written therein, and read aloud by the recording angel (Dan. vii. 10; Rev. x. 12).

But to-day all that is changed, and it behoves Freethinkers to be specially on their guard as to what they say and do. The discoveries of modern science have revolutionised even heaven itself. In a tract, entitled *Angel Writing*, we are thus warned:—

"It is a solemn thought that, wherever we go, and whatever we are doing, the lens of an unerring camera is focussed upon us, that every word we speak is spoken directly into the receiver of an angel's phonograph, and makes there its indelible, unchangeable record; and that these evidences have gone to represent us in the judgment, faithful delineations of ourselves."

Thus would the hopelessly superstitious frighten the simple-minded and unwary ones into becoming equally superstitious and silly with themselves. Happily it is too late in the day to lead many astray by such unmitigated nonsense, such unspeakable trash.

Talk of pot calling the kettle black! Here is the *Church Times* protesting against the growth of superstition as

shown by the wearing of mascots. We wonder what essential difference there is between the wearing of a mascot and most of the doctrines and beliefs that the *Church Times* upholds? We are told that with the decline of religion in England there has come a development of superstition which proves that man cannot be satisfied without faith. This is a curiously squint-eyed way of stating the case. The mascot craze is not due to a decline in religion, it is rather evidence of its strength. What it means is, that the power of organised and official religion has declined with religious people. And these, instead of being content with the authorised superstitions, fall back upon unauthorised ones. The distinction between religion and superstition is fundamentally absurd. Hobbes, long ago, put the whole case in a nutshell: Superstition allowed is religion; religion disallowed is superstition. No one has ever been able to improve upon that.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have written a pastoral letter on the European War "in response to a request by the diocesan bishops of England and Wales," in which they state that "the spirit arrayed against us threatens the very foundations of civilised order in Christendom." One can always trust the clergy to see the obvious.

Bishop Mercer, formerly Bishop of Tasmania, speaking at St. Mary's Church, Prittlewell, Essex, said that "the Holy Spirit was a living, working person to-day, and his work could be seen in the world." We wonder if he included the fighting lines on the Continent in that remark?

Canon Scott Holland's justification of the War has the merit of being perfectly original, at any rate, though based upon a palpable falsehood. His contention is that if a war is for a nation we are not entitled to condemn it. He says that "a national war is justified because nationality is a sacred thing which we owe to Jesus." But nationality existed thousands of years before Jesus was heard of, and is to be found to-day where Christianity is practically unknown. Nationality is a product of the evolution of mankind. Indeed, Bishop Boyd Carpenter declares that the maxims of Christianity are addressed to individuals, not to nations. It is true that a nation ought to fight for its own existence when threatened, but it is absolutely false to claim that any nation is indebted for its existence to Jesus.

Canon Scott Holland is wrong on another point. In an address published in the *Church Times* for May 28, he speaks in glowing terms of the patriotism of Jesus; but there is certainly no evidence whatever of his patriotism in the Gospels. The Canon says that "his whole boyhood was flamed at the sight of the Holy City" when he was taken there in his twelfth year. He loved it so much that he forgot father, mother, home, and everything else in contemplation of it. Of this there is no trace in the story. It was simply his intercourse with the doctors in the Temple, and his patriotism, that accounted for his breaking away from his parents and friends.

The Rev. D. Ewart James, the new President of the Congregational Union, speaking at Maldon, Essex, said that in the European crisis "the Christian Church had to stand on one side. Statesmen did not consult her, but it had been possible for the Church to bless every man going to the war." What a confession! The Church of the "Princes of Peace" is compelled to bless the standards of murder. The Church had better delete "Thou shalt not kill" from the Decalogue.

From a *Daily Telegraph* book review: "If all that M. Anatole France did were unpopular, it would scarcely be necessary, or business-like, to include a discussion of his work in a series of volumes on 'Writers of the Day.'" There is the essence of British journalism and the spirit of our glorious free press in a sentence. And it is expressed although no one outside a lunatic asylum could possibly fault with it. Not whether a writer's work is worth discussing, but whether he is popular, is the decisive question. Has the writer a large circle of readers? Does he, that is, command the approval of the greater—and of necessity the sillier—portion of the population? If so, he is a man to study, to write up, and in whose interest "popular" columns of a newspaper. But if a man is not "popular," then, though he have the genius of a Shakespeare, it is neither "necessary nor business-like" to trouble about him. And these are the guides and directors of public opinion. One would like to see critics of this type exhibited in a public place with their rule of procedure hung round their necks for intelligent people to read. But that would leave them the admiration of the mob; and so, even then, they might still be happy.

NOTICE.

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

To Correspondents.

- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15 : Previously acknowledged, £42 7s. 7d. Received since :—
- T. CHARTER, 10s.
 - J. RICHAM.—Sorry your military duties prevented your coming to the N. S. S. Conference. Better luck next time.
 - W. F. RYAN.—Your letter, however admirable it may be on its own ground, is hardly suitable to this journal. We have a special purpose to serve, and it is best, we think, to keep to that purpose. Moreover, under present circumstances, you will not lack plenty of opportunities for publicity in the ordinary press.
 - E. S. LLOYD (Winnipeg).—We are always ready to insert letters objecting to the views expressed by our contributors, but when a letter commences by telling a writer that he is insane, and goes on to say that he is telling lies, the most fitting place for it is the waste paper basket. We acknowledge your letter here in order that you may know it has reached its destination.
 - Ms. H. F. PORTER, of Ash Tree Villas, Goxhill, Lincolnshire, has a quantity of back numbers of the *Freethinker* which he is willing to send to any N. S. S. Branch for distribution, the recipient to pay carriage for the parcel.
 - E. B., AND W. P. BALL.—Thanks for useful batches of cuttings.
 - A. ALVES.—The law is always an uncertain quantity, but we have every confidence that the decision of Mr. Justice Joyce will not be reversed when the case is reopened on appeal.
 - A. LEIPER.—We sympathise with you in the protest you have seen fit to make, and will write more fully on the matter next week. Your communication reached us too late for the present issue.
 - N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—The Secretary acknowledges :—Mr. T. Charter, 5s.
 - 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.
 - Letters Notices must reach 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
 - Persons who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
 - Articles 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.

I INTEND to continue these "Personals," at more or less length, until I am able to bear my fair share of the duties of the paper, which I have edited for over thirty years, and which my friend, Mr. Cohen, is taking down in my health this year. Let me remark first of all that, as a perfectly personal matter, a second Zeppelin (you know I described the first) has visited Southend, and passed right over my residence, which now seems to be on the established route. I do not know what the Germans hope to gain here. They have killed two ladies in their second call, and one child, and other little ones are badly injured; but how does this recompense for attempting to bring within the scope of an international conflict, and against all the rules of war, a quite unfortified town?

My family and I contracted no good by getting out of bed again in the very early morning. As it happened there was not much danger to escape. The Zeppelins have not turned out to be more vicious, but who knows beforehand? Bombs, bolts, and shrapnel fly about regardless of young or old, rich or poor. But they are a long way up, farther than the aeroplanes, and to take aim seems one of their remotest possibilities. For my part, however, I have seen two Zeppelins quite recently, and I have no ambition to behold a third.

I will here call attention—I think I ought to do so at once—for it seems to have dropped rather into abeyance—that the President's Honorarium Fund is getting overlooked, if not neglected. I dare say we are none of us to blame for this. This Fund is one of my chief sources of income, and I have suffered a considerable loss during the past five months. I find that these appeals are but poorly responded to, if one does not make them oneself. If I am well enough, therefore, I shall as soon as possible set about resuming the operation and control of this Fund, while thanking Mr. Cohen most heartily for what he has done, and what nobody appears to exceed except myself—not even the Committee—for nearly all the three hundred pounds per annum they proposed to raise was sent direct to me. There is nothing new in this. It was so in Bradlaugh's time; it has been so in my time, and will no doubt continue in the next leader's time.

One thing *does* seem strange. The famous Bowman case, which I had in hand from 1898 to 1915, has been practically fought to a finish in the Law Courts. Congratulations of the highest value have reached me from everywhere. At this stage, in fact, it is quite unnecessary to do anything in the way of blowing my own trumpet. Others have blown it for me, and I thank them as far as is necessary. Hundreds of pounds have been, or will have been, spent on lawyers. How much my bill should be for my share, including the very birth of the babe, and money out of pocket to sustain it when threatened in various ways, is more than I wish to estimate myself, and I do not know who else is competent to do it. But, surely, I am not the least deserving of all who have been devotedly or usefully bound up with this great cause of the Secular Society, Ltd., and it is strange that I should be worse off now than I was before the splendid victory in the Law Courts.

It seems *strange*, I say, and I am wondering about it until I hear of the next subscriber. I hope I shall be able to say something more cheerful next week. Meanwhile, I may say that I know something—more than any man living in this part of the world—of being in the fighting line of Freethought, and out of it, and in it again. I am feebly trusting just now to the great, strong, sweet arms of the mother, but I am progressing every week, and I believe I have gone through all the worst. It was thirty odd years ago that I was knocked out of the fighting line and interned by the Christian Huns in Holloway Prison. Then the agents were bigots and persecutors; now it is the work of the god of the same people, squeezing his birds flat until he lets them fly.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen had two excellent meetings at Abertillery on Sunday last. Visitors were present in good numbers from the surrounding districts, and judging from their enthusiastic attention, felt themselves well compensated for their journey. We should really like to see Freethinkers in South Wales more active than they have been of late years. There is no lack of Freethought all over this large industrial area, but it is at present running to seed. The district is quite ripe for the work. All that it needs is proper organisation. Perhaps Freethinkers in Cardiff and elsewhere will take the hint.

Among the congratulations which have poured in upon Mr. Foote, it is pleasant to meet the following—which he hardly

expected. It appears in the new (June) number of the *Literary Guide*:—

"All sections of Freethinkers have welcomed with intense gratification the vindication of the legal status of the Secular Society, Limited. And, without the slightest reserve, it is gratefully acknowledged that the honors of the fight are primarily due to Mr. G. W. Foote, the Chairman of the triumphant Society. It was his foresight and discriminating judgment which conceived the formation of an incorporated society empowered to finance Freethought propaganda within the law. Indirectly, and to a large degree, the great life-work of Charles Bradlaugh made the task much easier than it would otherwise have been; and, coming to more recent times, the world-wide propaganda of the R. P. A. reaching all classes of the community, contributed its share to the beneficent advance in the recognition of toleration for all honest beliefs. The Affirmation Act legalised heresy, and from the moment of its enactment the Rationalist was no longer an outcast without the protection of the State. If the Bowman case be taken to the Court of Appeal, there is every reason to think that the decision of the lower court will be upheld.

Our readers will regret to hear that Mr. Foote has been seriously ill. He is slowly recovering, and it is to be hoped that his magnificent victory in the law courts will assist to hasten his convalescence. The 'best of all causes' can ill afford to dispense with even one of its all too few leaders."

This is well conceived and expressed. It is, perhaps, a little late, but regrets and congratulations are never too late.

Subscribing £5 to the President's Honorary Fund, Mr. W. Collette Jones writes to Mr. Foote:—

"I was at the meeting at Queen's Hall last night and a real good one it was; but was sorry to hear that you were unable to be there, and so was everybody. The provincial delegates were a great success. Take good care of yourself and get well soon is the sincere wish of yours truly."

Every advanced movement has suffered more or less during the War, and we are sorry to announce that one Society which is at present in urgent need of funds is the Secular Education League. Many of its supporters have been unable to renew their subscriptions this year, owing to the many calls upon them in other directions, and others have lessened the amount given. All Freethinkers are vitally concerned with the welfare of the League, and, as Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen are upon its Executive, they have a guarantee that there is no paltering with principle in the pursuit of those objects for which the League was founded. There must be very many readers of the *Freethinker* who have not yet joined the League, and we would remind these that their membership would be a very valuable assistance in the present state of affairs. Those who do not care to join, or who have already joined, may find themselves able to assist by subscribing to the League's funds. The Secretary is Mr. Harry Snell, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C. He will forward all information concerning the League to anyone who may desire it. Of course, the cause of Secular Education does not bulk very largely in the public mind just now, but it is one of first-rate importance to all Freethinkers, and we trust that the League will not be allowed to suffer for want of a little timely help. What is needed is membership or subscriptions, or membership and subscriptions—and at once.

Mr. A. B. Moss and Mr. W. Heaford both complete, this year, forty years' work in the Freethought cause. This is a very lengthy term of service, and it is being made the occasion of a complimentary dinner, which is to take place on Thursday, June 17, at the Boulogne Restaurant, 27 Gerrard-street, Wardour-street, W. A number of well-known Freethinkers will be present, and there will be speeches, music, and singing during the course of the evening. The dinner is under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, and application for tickets—price two shillings—should be made as early as possible to the Secretary, at 62 Farringdon-street, E.C. The accommodation is strictly limited, and we hope that the gathering will be a representative one. It is something to have worked forty years for Freethought, and no one can expect to do that more than once in a lifetime. The function is timed to commence at 7 o'clock.

We are glad to see that Mr. M. M. Mangasarian is still carrying on his vigorous Freethought work in Chicago. His Rationalist lectures in the Majestic Theatre on Sundays at 11 a.m. are on all sorts of important subjects, and attract very large meetings. Our own readers will often find an extract from one of these in our own pages, and now and then, the reproduction of an entire lecture. We understand that Mr. Percy Ward is also lecturing in Chicago, but we get no reports of his meetings, except very occasionally when something special is on the tapis.

Science and the Bible.

"The Book of Genesis has no voice in scientific questions. To the grasp of geology, which it resisted for a time, it at length yielded like potter's clay; its authority as a source of cosmogony being discredited on all hands, by the abandonment of the obvious meaning of its writer."—PROFESSOR TYNDALL, *Fragments of Science* (1876), p. 545.

"These endless schemes of attempted reconciliation of Scripture and Science have totally failed, and deserved to fail. Scripture is falsified to meet the demands of Science. To twist the statements of Genesis into apparent agreement with the last results of geology, the ingenious expositor has represented days not to be days, and morning and evening not to be morning and evening, the deluge not to be a deluge, and the ark not to be an ark."—DEAN STANLEY, *Sermons on Special Occasions*.

It is often the experience of the Freethinker to be told that he is wasting his time in attacking the science of the Bible. He is told that the Bible was not intended to teach science, or, to use an expression much in vogue among latter-day apologists, "The Bible was not written to teach how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven." But why this anxiety lest the Freethinker should waste his time? Do they really wish him more success?

If the German General were to send word to the General French that he was wasting his time by his methods of carrying on the campaign, would the French be likely to alter his plans to oblige his opponent? Not likely.

It is quite true that the cultured classes know the truth about the Bible. The clergy of the Church of England also know that it is impossible to reconcile the Bible with modern science, as we shall show. But, then, they take very good care not to allow this truth to escape from them to their congregations.

The truth is, that although the Bible is not generally regarded with the veneration and awe that attached to it thirty or forty years ago, yet there are multitudes of people who still believe it to contain the only true account of the origin of the world, of animals, and of man.

I well remember one occasion, when I was a child, while looking through a large volume along with my playmates, and we were laughing over some of the pictures, when suddenly an aged aunt, who was dozing by the fire, half rose, clutching the arms of her armchair, and said in a horror-struck voice: "Walter, is that the Bible you are laughing at?" Having satisfied her that the big book was not the Bible, my aunt sank back with a sigh of relief. I have never forgotten the look of mingled fear and anger with which she asked the question. I never remember seeing my aunt read the Bible, and she was very imperfectly acquainted with its contents, yet to her it was a sacred volume containing the very words of God. It was a fetish, and taboo, not to be touched by profane hands under peril of imminent disaster. And this belief still lingers among the multitude. People who never think of reading the Bible yet would regard with horror the mutilation or destruction of a Bible, believing that such an act would be swiftly followed by divine vengeance.

For the last fifty years the truth about the Bible has been known to the educated public. No one conversant with the work of Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, and a host of smaller men who popularised the work of Darwin and Spencer, can have the smallest doubt that the old view of the Bible as scientifically true and inspired by almighty wisdom is absolutely false. And yet the majority of the working and lower middle class still believe in it, and the clergy are striving with all their might to maintain it in the schools under the plea of its literary merits, but really because they know it is the basis and foundation of religion in this country.

The Bible is still believed by multitudes of people to contain the truth concerning the creation of the world and the origin of animals and man. Examined any child being taught at a County Council, Church, or Denominational school, and you will find that the child knows about the origin of the world.

based on the first chapters of Genesis. Among adults, the older members of the Churches—Non-conformist and Church of England—following early Victorian orthodoxy, are largely of the same opinion. The followers of the late Mr. Spurgeon, now ministered to by Dr. Dixon, the Salvation Army, and many other sects, still hold the belief in its integrity. And although I have met many working men who do not believe the Bible creation story, yet the working man's wife still believes in it, and thinks it is wicked to doubt it.

The present writer has worked in many of the industrial centres of England, and in due course received professional visits from the clergy of the district where they preside. They readily admit, to those who already know, the unscientific character of the Bible; but if you ask them why they do not tell the truth about the Bible to their congregations, they are quite shocked. They object; that the pulpit is not the place to teach science. Moreover, they ask indignantly, "Would you have me destroy the faith of the poor old souls in my congregation who have put their faith and trust in the good old book all their lives, and deprive them of its help and support in their old age? I could not think of doing such a thing." Having delivered himself of this highly moral burst of indignation, he generally finds that he has other calls to make, and departs.

So, by the teaching of the Bible in the schools and the "dear old souls" at home—who train the young ones in their own superstitions—the game goes merrily on, and the truth concealed from generation to generation.

The hypocrisy of this argument is revealed by the fact that no such tenderness is shown to the religious beliefs of other peoples. Missionaries are sent to all parts of the world to destroy the faith of the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Confucian, the Hindoo, and a multitude of others whose beliefs are as sacred to them as the Christian's are to him.

Then, again, the Government do not want the former classes to know the truth about religion, and have always used their power to suppress it when they could do so with impunity, because they do not know what the effect would be; the working classes, in their view, being an inexplicable and powerful mass of individuals, liable to sudden fits of fury, who must be humored and coaxed, and from whom it would be a very dangerous proceeding to remove the restraints of religion.

Added to all this, a certain sentimental regard attaches to a book bound up with the earliest memories of childhood which would be engendered for any book—say the *Arabian Nights* or *Robinson Crusoe*, if they were set apart as divine and inspired; absurdity, however palpable it may be, which may not be fixed in the minds of all men, if it is inculcated before they are six years old by continual repetition.* The clergy are well aware of this fact, hence their desperate resistance to excluding the Bible from the schools.

The Catholic Church claims to expound the Bible, the Church being the highest authority. The Protestant Reformation consisted in repudiating the authority of the Church and substituting that of the Bible. As the historian Hallam remarked, the Protestant Reformation was merely "a change of masters," Luther declaring that "one letter, yea a single tittle, of the Scripture is of more and greater consequence than heaven or earth."† When Luther heard of the discovery by Copernicus of the motion of the earth round the sun, he observed: "This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth."‡ Calvin, in his *Commentary on Genesis*, quoted the first verse of the ninety-third Psalm, "The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved," and asked, "Who

will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?"*

As Professor Draper has well said, "The Reformers would tolerate no science that was not in accordance with Genesis.....So far as science is concerned, nothing is owed to the Reformation. The Procrustean bed of the Pentateuch was still before her."† John Wesley believed the Bible to be absolutely infallible. Writing in his *Journal*, August 24, 1776, he roundly declares that "if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of Truth." Columns could be filled with similar quotations, from the time of the Reformation down to Spurgeon, who declared that "One word of God is worth more than libraries of human lore. 'It is written' is the great gun which silences all the batteries of man's thought."‡ And again:—

"I hold one single sentence out of God's Word to be of more certainty, and of more power, than all the discoveries of all the learned men of all the ages. I might have seen the Alexandrian library burned without losing a night's rest, for the mass of its contents must have been mere rubbish; but were there one single verse of the New Testament which it were possible to blot out from human memory and record, one might be willing to lay down his life to save the glorious sentence."§

Not only was the Bible held to be far above all other books in its moral and literary qualities, but it was also held to be scientifically correct in the minutest detail, the Rev. Professor Eadie, in his *Biblical Cyclopædia*, declaring that, in the first chapter of Genesis, "a child may learn more in an hour than all the philosophers in the world learned without it in thousands of years."

Now, although the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo led many to doubt the infallibility of the Bible in scientific matters, which was accentuated by Newton's discovery of the laws of gravitation, which in turn led to the founding of the Nebular Hypothesis of Laplace and Kant, yet there was, before the time of Darwin, no satisfactory explanation of the origin of plants, animals, and man. There were plenty of hypotheses, like Lamarck's, but they were only ingenious guesswork, and provided no proof. Huxley has told us how he used to amuse himself among his friends by taking up the defence of the creation hypothesis—in which he did not believe—and pulling to pieces the various natural explanations proposed in place of the supernatural.

Darwin, in fact, supplied the scientific proof for which all the philosophical naturalists in Europe were searching; hence his great success. Now, although the theologians—who, as Voltaire said of Habakkuk, are capable of anything—had managed to digest and incorporate the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo as to the movement of the earth round the sun, by means of an allegorical interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, and were well on the way to assimilate the Nebular Hypothesis by similar means, of which Professor White gives the following amusing instance of what he describes as—

"that form of surrendering theological views to science under the claim that science concurs with theology, which we have seen in so many other fields, and, as typical, an example may be given, which, however restricted in its scope, throws light on the process by which such surrenders are obtained. A few years since one of the most noted professors of chemistry in the city of New York, under the auspices of one of its most fashionable churches, gave a lecture which, as was claimed in the public prints and in placards posted in the streets, was to show that science supports the theory of creation given in the sacred books ascribed to Moses. A large audience assembled, and a brilliant series of elementary experiments with oxygen, hydrogen, and carbonic acid was concluded by the Plateau demonstration. It was beautifully made. As the colored globule of oil, representing the earth, was revolved in a

* Schopenhauer, *Essays*, p. 160.
 † Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (1886), p. 337.
 ‡ White, *Warfare of Science*, vol. i., p. 126.

* *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 127.
 † Draper, *The Conflict Between Religion and Science*, p. 215.
 ‡ Sermon, *The Infallibility of Scripture*, p. 148.
 § Sermon (No. 1,814), *Commendation for the Steadfast*, p. 680.

transparent medium of equal density, as it became flattened at the poles, as rings then broke forth from it and revolved about it, as some of these rings broke into satellites, which for a moment continued to circle about the central mass, the audience, as well they might, rose and burst into rapturous applause. Thereupon a well-to-do citizen arose and moved the thanks of the audience to the eminent professor for 'this perfect demonstration of the exact and literal conformity of the statements given in Holy Scripture with the latest results of science.' The motion was carried unanimously, and with applause, and the audience dispersed, feeling that a great service had been rendered to orthodoxy. *Sancta simplicissimus.*"*

Scores of theologians, says the same writer,—

"chief among whom, of late, in zeal if not in knowledge, has been Mr. Gladstone, have endeavored to 'reconcile' the two accounts in Genesis with each other and with the truths regarding the origin of the universe gained by astronomy, geology, geography, physics, and chemistry. The result has been recently stated by an eminent theologian [Dr. Ryle], the Hulsean Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. He declares, 'No attempt at reconciling Genesis with the exacting requirements of modern sciences has ever been known to succeed without entailing a degree of special pleading or forced interpretation to which, in such a question, we should be wise to have no recourse' (vol. i., p. 19).

As we have said, the theologians managed to assimilate the movement of the earth and the Nebular Hypothesis, but the Darwinian theory was a larger order altogether. Luther, following the account given in Genesis, says of Adam:—

"God formed him out of the ground as the potter forms, in his hand, the pot out of the clay.....Adam therefore, before he is formed of the Lord, is a mere lifeless lump of earth, lying on the ground. God takes that lump of earth into His hand, and forms out of it a most beautiful creature, a partaker of immortality."†

Not only did Darwin's theory flatly contradict this statement, but, in tracing his origin from the animal world, the question arose, Where did the soul come in?

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

Cursing and Swearing.

THE European races, at all periods, seem to have called upon the names of their Gods on solemn and other occasions. The Greeks and Romans swore often by their numerous deities, and "by Jove," and "ye gods," are in popular usage to-day, particularly by people who want to say something strong, yet do not like to name the Christian Gods.

Students of Elizabethan history are struck by the freedom and readiness with which the great men of that time uttered God's names, particularly the adventurers and mariners, who rarely spoke, or at least wrote, without liberally interlarding their utterances with holy names, as anyone who has read the letters and other records surviving from that period can testify. Readers of Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* will remember the ample use of religious allusions in that work, and one amusing passage springs readily to memory, wherein Amyas Leigh, describing how he captured an officer during a night assault, says he came upon him swearing like the mouth of the pit, whereby he knew him to be a Spaniard or an Italian. But they spoke of God in all seriousness, as John Sparke, who describes Sir John Hawkins' second slave raid, refers to "God's help and the Captaine's diligence," and to "Almighty God, who never suffereth his elect to perish," and when they narrowly escaped being all entrapped, he remarked, "But God who worketh all things for the best would not have it so, and by him we escaped danger, his name be praised for it." There is no doubt they really felt and meant these pious remarks, and it survived through the Civil War, being kept very

much alive by the Puritans. The Restoration, the scepticism of the eighteenth century, and modern Materialism have nearly destroyed pietistic speech and writing, though there is yet a dwindling number of people who ascribe all phenomena to Divine Providence, and say so.

As Sterne makes Uncle Toby say in *Tristram Shandy*, "our soldiers swore terribly in Flanders, and have done so before and since then, 'swore like a trooper' being a considerably older expression than 'swore like a bargee.'"

Nevertheless, swearing to-day is very prevalent more so than most good people will admit or receive, or are even aware of. But modern cursing and swearing in no way resembles that of the Hebrew prophets, the classical nations, the mediæval saints, the early Protestants and Puritans, or the hired soldiery of the Continental Wars. It is coarse, profane, and blasphemous, and usually associated with ignorance and vulgarity. Still, there is an enormous amount of swearing done. One cannot go anywhere where numbers of people congregate without hearing much of it, and many of the expressions used are largely survivals from the ages of faith. Omitting mere dirtiness, indecent and immoral and suggestive language, and lewdness, which pervade our cities like a filthy and injurious blight, apparently almost eradicable, consider swearing in its usual sense, not taking, the uttering of sacred words to strengthen an assertion made. Such language is general, despite the Jesuine injunction, "Swear not at all," the majority of persons seeming to find "Yea, Yea: Nay, Nay," insufficient for their purpose.

"God" is frequently heard, as are compounds of "God." For example, "O God," "God Almighty," "God help us," often reduced to "Gorelps," "God save us," or more usually "Save us," "Great God," "Good God," "Good God in Heaven," "God deliver us," "God bless my soul," "God bless us," or "Bless us," "God forbid," can all be heard any day during a stroll through a town, as are "Mon Dieu" by the French, and "Dew" by the Welsh. "Gad" and "Gad" are frequently employed corruptions, especially almost unconsciously, as if the user were unaware of their origin.

The often heard "'S truth" and "'S blood" are derived from "God's truth," "God's blood," and the latter is often debased to "Sod."

"Strike me," or "Strike me dead," is a popular assertion of veracity, the speaker meaning, "I will strike me dead if I am not speaking the truth." "God's own country" is a vulgarism for the United States of America, and a skit on the Yankee boast of patriotism, and "God's own people" is used to denote the upper classes, especially the "nuts."

Charles Dickens has called attention to the gabbling and garbling of the termination of the police court oath, "So help me God," which has variously become "So 'elp me God," "S'elp me God," "Swelp me," "Swelp me God," "Swelp me," and, finally, "Swop me bob," and any other variation patently wit may invent.

The line of the well-known Methodist hymn, "The Name of Jesus with you," often receives very literal application, "Jesus" being a popular word as are "By Jesus," "Holy Jesus," and "Glorious Jesus." It is one of the most unpleasant words to hear used profanely. The word "Jesus" has a smooth, soft sound, and is used by swearers as a word of contempt. A mild invertebrate fellow, one with no "guts" in him, or a man who is sneering or cringing to the "bosses," is often called by his workmates a "Gentle Jesus," or a "jumping Jesus." To hear it said is a lesson in scornful disgust. The nearest dictionary equivalent, which only mildly presses it, is "poltroon."

"Christ" is more often used than "Jesus." It has a stronger sound than "Jesus," being used to denote pain or surprise. "No, by Christ," or "No, he Christ," is a favorite emphatic negative. For some strange reason it is much loved by boys and girls, and often shorten it to "Crikey."

* White, *The Warfare of Science*, vol. i., pp. 18-19.
† Luther, *Commentary on the First Five Chapters of the Book of Genesis* (1858), p. 116.

"Holy Mary" and "Holy Virgin" are sometimes heard, but less frequently than others.

Of all the impolite expressions which so often pass many people's lips, one of the commonest is "bloody." Some can hardly speak without using it. It is one of the earliest acquired expletives of children, and may be regarded as the distinguishing word of our town streets. It can be coupled with any noun in the vocabulary, and is often used with "hell" or "ell," denoting then anger, impatience, or sudden surprise. Generally it is an adjective, and anybody or anything may be "bloody." Amongst the filthiest-minded its use is constant, being associated with certain other words which are the most horrible in the language. Its origin is uncertain. It may be used simply because of its strong and forcible and suggestive sound, or it may spring from the insistence of religious people on the atoning sacrificial bloodshed of Jesus Christ, or, as is usually explained, it is derived from "By our Lady," corrupted down through "By'r Lady," "B'r lady," "b'lady," to "bloody." Palstaff says "By'r Lady" on every possible occasion, which is doubtlessly the form in which Shakespeare heard it about the streets of Stratford and London, as he did most of the strong expressions scattered about his plays, as Shaw heard "bloody."

Curiously enough, no one has called attention to the fact that Shaw uses "bloody" wrongly in "Pygmalion." He makes Eliza Doolittle say "Not bloody likely," using "bloody" as an adverb, which is very rare. It is an adjective, and she would have said, as thousands do every day, "No bloody fear," to signify that she was determined not to do the action in question.

"Lord," "Lor," "Lors," "Law," "Lawks," and "Lor' now," are more used by women than men, and "Lord have mercy on me" has become "Lord ha' mercy on me," "Lor' a' mercy me," and, finally, "Lor' a mussy me."

"Heaven," "Heavens," and "Merciful Heavens," are mild, and can be safely used by quite respectable people.

One rarely, if ever, hears the Holy Ghost invoked in this manner. Appeals to God and his attributes naturally suggest the reverse, and swearing, blessing, and cursing being closely connected, the powers of evil are conveniently apostrophised.

"Hell," and formations from it are very common—"ell," "O hell," "hellish," "hellishly," "like hell," "I go to hell," "go t'ell," "hell fire," "hell let loose," "hell for leather," etc. "Hell" is a comparative term. A warm place, or a tight corner, or an unpleasant situation is as "hot as hell." A hot motor will go "like hell," and cavalry frequently will be "hell to leather," or the consequences of a "Pandemonium" is a nice sounding circumlocution, but the man in the street prefers to compare a row with "hell let loose," or "hell on earth."

"H's" are usually omitted in these diatribes. "Devil" is as popular as "hell," and as capable of as wide application. "Devilish," "devilishly," "devilment," "the devil," "very devil," "go to the devil," "seven devils," "the devil to pay," "devil take it," and so on, as the fancy or the exigencies of the case suggest.

"Blast," "blasted," and "blast it," are common enough. With the possible exceptions of "damn" and its variants, "damned," "damn it," "I be damned," "you be damned," etc., "bloody," and "devil," "hell" seems to be the first curse-word of children. One often hears quite tiny children shout "g't'ell," preferring it either with "you" or "I" as necessary.

Besides all these, there is a number of milder expletives, usually of sacred origin, in wide and fairly general use. Such are "Jerusalem," "Great Saint George," "dash," "blow," "well I'm blasted," "bless us," "bless me," "I be blowed," "curse it," etc., etc. That quaint old-woman phrase, "All me

eye and Betty Martin," is corrupted, so we are told, from the Latin "Ah mihi, beati Martini."

All these expletives and interjections, with many more, can be heard in constant use in public places, streets, workshops, factories, and homes, anywhere where there are people together. There is an enormous amount of cursing and swearing, ribald, profane and obscene language, jokes and puns on sacred subjects, improper and disgusting expressions, vile terms, and general "smut," as well as the serious and deliberately uttered oath, used among all sections of English people, for it is not confined entirely to ignorant, degraded, or drunken people, but pervades all classes, and one is often astonished and shocked to hear objectionable words coming from apparently respectable persons. No doubt a man, and a woman, must relieve his or her feelings occasionally by something more strong than polite, but let it be a plain and emphatic oath or curse, with no foul or filthy accretions.

ALFRED ROWBERRY WILLIAMS.

Correspondence

"SHAKESPEARE'S SCEPTICISM."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reading the excellent article on "Shakespeare's Scepticism," by "Mimnermus," which appeared in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*, I was reminded of a passage by M. Taine, the great French critic and historian of literature. This eminent writer, if not an orthodox Christian, was certainly not an avowed enemy of Christianity. In his *History of English Literature*, referring to the Elizabethan age—I quote from Van Laun's translation, book 2, chap. i.—M. Taine says:—

"It was paganism which reigned in Elizabeth's court, not only in letters but in doctrine, a paganism of the north, always serious, generally sombre, but which was based, like that of the South, on natural forces.

"In some men all Christianity had passed away; many proceeded to Atheism through excess of rebellion and debauchery, like Marlowe and Greene. With others, like Shakespeare, the idea of God scarcely makes its appearance; they see in our poor human life only a dream, and beyond it the long sad sleep.

"For them death is the goal of life; at most a dark gulf, into which man plunges, uncertain of the issue. If they carry their gaze beyond, they perceive, not the spiritual soul welcomed into a purer world, but the corpse abandoned in the damp earth, or the ghost hovering about the churchyard.

"They speak like sceptics or superstitious men, never as true believers. Their heroes have human, not religious, virtues; against crime they rely on honor and the love of the beautiful, not on piety and the fear of God."

Potter, Kan., U.S.A.

J. E. REMSBURG.

A Woman's Heart.

Of the pangs that women bear,
Doth God know, or doth he care?
Look ye priest! This still white thing
To your altar's gate I bring.
View his cold grey fingers clenched;
Mark his face by anguish blenched.
He was mine, the half of me.
I require his blood of thee.
In thy Maker's name I cry,
"Abol's blood pleads to the sky."
When the futile statesmen failed;
When the feeble rulers quailed;
When the gloating fiends of hell,
Wove their fetid magic spell.
Then, oh God, to think that ye
Slumbered at Gethsemane.
Yet, I think, your God did know
Of your emptiness made show.
That your feeble mouths were shut
Till the lords of hell were glut.
As the futile statesmen failed;
As the feeble rulers quailed;
Ye shall earn your silver coins;
Ye shall gird your scathless loins;
By a million nameless graves,
Kneel and pray as Moloch's slaves.

JOHN J. GURNETT.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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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OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15 and 6.15, L. B. Gallagher, Lectures.

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KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road) : 7.30, J. W. Marshall, "Allegory and its Uses."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park) : 11.15, F. Schaller, a Lecture. Parliament Hill : 3.15, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture. Regent's Park : 3.15, A. D. Howell-Smith, M.A., "Saviors and Salvation."

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By C. COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

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