

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXV.—No. 27

SUNDAY, JULY 4, 1915

PRICE TWOPENCE

Men cannot now be put off with promissory notes upon heaven; they now claim as their inalienable birthright the enjoyment of this earth.—HEINE.

Clerical Veracity and the Miracle at Mons.

THE story of the "Angelic Guard at Mons"—dealt with in my last week's article, possesses numerous features that are of both psychological and historical interest. In order to properly appreciate these, it will be as well to summarise the story and its sequel.

The story originally appeared from the pen of Mr. Arthur Machen, and was written as early as last September. It was, he assures us, pure invention. He had heard nothing from anyone about this host of angels, he had not, he says, "the faintest echo" of a rumor of any such appearance. All he had to build on was a legend that has appeared in history over and over again. In the Wars of Troy the gods were seen fighting. In the legends of Old Rome the same thing appears. Above all, there is the common belief of savages that the tribal ghosts may interfere on their behalf when they are fighting hostile tribes. And that is undoubtedly at the root of the whole matter.

With these legends in his mind, Mr. Machen imagined a hard-pressed British soldier praying to St. George for help, and help coming in the shape of the ghostly archers of Agincourt. But he never intended that it should be taken as a statement of fact; and, of course, he offered no evidence for its truth. This was in September, 1914, and there for some months the matter rested. The next appearance of the story was in a parish magazine issued at Bristol. There it appeared—without, of course, any mention of Mr. Machen—as a sober statement of fact. The Vicar of All Saints actually gave an alleged quotation from an officer's letter, who says he saw the angels, and also one from another officer in charge of some German prisoners. The evidence of the horses with the soldiers was also given in, inasmuch as they behaved in such a way that one must assume that—to cite Dr. Horton—"evidently the animals beheld what our men beheld." Then the "evidence" begins to accumulate. Instead of two men seeing the angels and reporting their vision, the witnesses are multiplied. Dr. Horton says the story is told by "so many witnesses" that the truth is completely established. A writer in the *Guardian* for June 17—written before Mr. Machen exposed the whole thing—says he heard the story "time and again." The British soldiers—

"ought to have been killed to the last man. They escaped, and their escape was not primarily due to their own skill and tenacity, but to the hand of God. Between the German pursuers and the retreating British a vision of angels was seen; the horses of the Germans stampeded and the pursuit was paralysed. This, in brief, is the story which I have heard from the lips of men who, some of them, were anything but predisposed to accept supernatural interpretations of earthly happenings. I have heard the story told in awed tones by men who preferred not to enlarge upon it. 'It was the solemn and sacred' said one of them to explain his reticence."

The writer adds that "the considered statement" of such a man as Dr. Horton "is not to be lightly set aside."

Now, bear in mind that Dr. Horton spoke of his "so many witnesses," the Vicar of All Saints wrote his story with the "faked" evidence of anonymous officers, and the *Guardian* writer gave his tale of hearing it from a number of men in "awed tones," before Mr. Machen wrote and claimed to have originated the story. His version had appeared eight months before as a casual newspaper article, and it was not expected that it would be recalled. Mr. Machen's claim disposed of the whole story. And let this be borne in mind, none of these people who professed first-hand evidence of the truth of the angelic vision have challenged Mr. Machen's claim to have created the legion of angels "out of his own head." The Vicar of All Saints has not produced the letters, the *Guardian* writer has not brought forward his informants, Dr. Horton has remained equally reticent. To put the matter in a nutshell, Mr. Machen told them all that when they claimed to have evidence for the truth of the story they were romancing—some would say lying. The story belonged to him, and no evidence existed. And since the exposure none of the parties implicated have pretended that any proof does exist.

The *Evening News* of June 21 says that Mr. Machen "proved to have written better than he knew, for various witnesses—officers and men who took part in the retreat—came forward to testify to seeing the vision which Mr. Machen had imagined." Not so. No one has come forward. All that happened was that Dr. Horton, and the vicar, and the *Guardian* writer said they had heard it from officers and men, and all this before Mr. Machen made public the fact that he invented it. *They have not said so since.* Not one of them has offered any public apology for having treated the public to all this manufactured evidence. And, curiously enough, no one seems to think that they ought to have done so. If the same kind of exposure had taken place in politics there would have been a demand for an apology. In the case of the clergy no surprise is expressed. It is a fine commentary upon the ethical spirit induced by Christian practice.

When a report of Dr. Horton's sermon appeared, Mr. Machen called upon Dr. Horton, and told him that he (Mr. Machen) had invented the whole thing. Dr. Horton did not contest the statement. He said nothing about his own possession of evidence. What he did say was this:—

"I was the more particularly disposed to believe in the story of the angelic apparition during the retreat from Mons, from what I myself heard from an Army reader. He told me that all those who were in that retreat were changed men. They had all prayed, and they had all felt a sense as of spiritual uplifting; and so the tale seemed to me congruous with their experience."

Observe that "the story repeated by so many witnesses," that their number commands credence, is reduced to an unnamed "Army reader"—someone who is in the same line of business as Dr. Horton; that is, if he exists at all. *And he said nothing whatever about an angelic apparition.* All he is alleged to have said is that "all the men.....were changed men"—which is not true, but which might mean anything or nothing. Their feelings were quite

"congruous with their experiences." With what experiences? The only experience in question is the angelic vision. All this—probably imaginary—Army reader said was that the men were "changed." The story of "so many witnesses" testifying to the cloud of angels, with the German horses stampeding, was a pure invention on the part of Dr. Horton. There is no other conclusion probable. A more deliberate falsehood was never concocted.

But it is not to be expected that even Mr. Arthur Machen's complete exposure of the whole story will prevent Dr. Horton—and other clergymen—repeating it. The clergy are many, and the people who tell the truth and who love the truth, are few. So, in an article published four days after Mr. Machen's exposure, Dr. Horton writes that when—

"soldiers, and officers who were in the retreat from Mons, say that they saw a batch of angels between them and the enemy, and that the horses of the German cavalry stampeded, and that thus our troops were saved from destruction, no thoroughly modern man is foolish enough to disbelieve the statement or to pooh-pooh the experience as hallucination."

Observe, once more, that in the interview with Mr. Machen, Dr. Horton said nothing about these soldiers and officers. Then his only evidence—unproduced—was an unnamed Army reader. Left to himself, and some days afterwards, he again resurrects the officers and soldiers—still without giving their names. And I should not be at all surprised, if Dr. Horton and other clergymen go on repeating the story, that some witnesses will eventually be found. Consider how many witnesses were found in support of the passage of a hundred thousand Russians through England last September. They were seen and spoken to all over England. And it is quite as easy to see a legion of angels as a Russian Army—if people are so disposed. Of course, Dr. Horton might set suspicion at rest by producing the names of responsible individuals who saw the angels. But possibly his fine spiritual sense would shrink from subjecting a miracle to so mundane a test.

The Vicar of All Saints, Clifton, who published the story, says he has "been told that it is my duty to make public the names and ranks of the officers referred to"; but, he adds, "I am not prepared to produce irresistible proof of the truth of these statements, given in good faith by officers and men who were eye-witnesses of what they relate; to me it seems a matter of comparatively small importance whether it happened so or not." That is quite the right note—the Christian note; one may add, the historic Christian note. It is no importance whatever whether the statements made are true or not. The important thing is that they should be stated as truth, and that people should accept them as such. And the vicar closes his defence by saying that "we live more or less in an atmosphere of unbelief, and we are bound to take precautions to protect ourselves." That covers everything, and it explains everything. The miracle at Mons is precisely on the lines of the other miracles by which the Christian Church has been supported. Credulity on the one side and cunning on the other. "Evidence" deliberately concocted to support Christian claims, and unblinking assurance when exposure is threatened. In other walks of life, if people are not ashamed of lying, they have at least the grace to be ashamed of being found out. The clergy appear to lack even this redeeming quality—poor as it is. "We must protect ourselves"! I do not say that the clergy would not prefer honest methods of defence if they were possible; but it is evident that if these are not available, other methods are not held in contempt.

C. COHEN.

The Cleansing Power of War.

THE pulpit seems to have exhausted itself on the subject of Prussian Materialism. Possibly it has, at last, learned how utterly absurd its attitude was; how completely the facts discredited its assertions;

and how, through ignorance encouraged by prejudice, it manifested its total incapacity for the function of public teaching. The clergy may have found out that Prussian Materialism was a myth of their own creation, though not one of them has had the honesty to confess that they were all guilty of woefully misleading their excessively docile hearers. Nothing can be more firmly established than the fact that the Kaiser's faith in God and loyalty to the Savior are beyond dispute, and that he prides himself upon having at his disposal an army of believers. It is his boast that "God is only with the armies of believers," that "the troops of our enemies have not the promise, and know not what they are fighting for." Mr. Austin Harrison, the brilliant editor of the *English Review*, whom long residence in Germany has qualified to speak with authority, assures us that official Germany is profoundly religious, while a writer in the *Cambridge Magazine* goes further still, and declares that a high wave of religious revival had been sweeping over that country for some years before the War broke out. In any case, whatever the true explanation of it may be, it is an undeniable fact that the attitude of the pulpit has been wholly changed during the last few months. It now informs us that the War is a drastic punishment for the sins of Christendom in general. God is now represented as frowning upon and scourging the world for having forsaken him. The Rev. A. T. Corfield, rector of Heanor, Derbyshire, believes that the War will not cease until we return to our loving Heavenly Father, and undertake to serve him with all our hearts. The Rev. R. J. Campbell expresses a somewhat different view, confessing, for once, his ignorance and consequent inability to be dogmatic. As reported in the *Daily News* for June 21, he says:—

"Why Christ and then the rack? Why the advent of the Prince of Peace and to-day the most terrible war of all the ages? Frankly he did not know, but he thought that he saw a glimpse of the reason. Every moral advance had to be paid for. There were no shortcuts to the Divine perfection."

Does the reverend gentleman really think that the War is God's method of helping mankind to advance morally? Is he honestly convinced that the Divine perfection is to be realised through a reckless and savage destruction of human life?

In the *Burton Daily Mail* for June 21 there is a lengthy report of a sermon preached by Canon Tyrwhitt at St. Mary's Church, Rolleston, of which he is rector. His text is Hebrews ii. 10, and the clause specially dwelt upon is, "Perfect through sufferings." The Canon says that he has had many questions put to him concerning the War, chief among which, perhaps, is this: "If God is a God of love, how can he permit all this terrible suffering to go on which is so rampant in the world to-day?" To this question he and Mr. Campbell return the same answer. Suffering is the price which must be paid for every moral advance, the condition on which the Divine perfection is attainable. Let us examine the answer in its relation to the War. We wish it to be clearly understood that we are by no means blind to the high disciplinary value of suffering. We are even prepared to endorse Nietzsche's statement that a man's rank is almost determined by the amount of his suffering, or that without "the discipline of suffering, of great suffering," all the elevations of humanity produced in the past would have been quite impracticable. Struggle is an essential condition of progress, and in all struggle there is more or less pain. We say this in order to show that we do not undervalue suffering. But war is not a titimate struggle, nor is the suffering entailed by it any true sense disciplinary. War is the negation of civilised existence, the denial of the solidarity of the race, and most of the suffering it causes is dehumanising. It is perfectly true that the world in which we live is not a bed of roses; it never was, and probably never will be; but does any sane person ever dream that war is calculated to rid it of one of its numerous crosses? War is a curse, not a cross, and a cross is not a thing to be endured with patience, but to be

abolished, destroyed, as quickly as possible. Even from the Christian point of view, the injustice to which it gives rise is appalling. It is incontrovertible that the present War has already hurled millions to eternity, and we are certain that Canon Tyrwhitt is candid enough to admit that not even a third of the slain were saved men; and if the Bible is true, all the rest have now their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Was it just to cut them off so suddenly while in a lost condition? Was it worthy of a loving Heavenly Father to allow them to be dropped into perdition in so heartless a fashion? Was it even fair to purchase the welfare of future generations at such a stupendous price? Fresh from witnessing heartbreaking scenes and hearing wondrous things at the Front, Mr. Tyrwhitt is bold enough to state that "suffering in the hands of God is one of the greatest blessings the world has ever seen, or ever will see." When asked on what grounds he arrives at such a conclusion, all he can say is that suffering has saved the world, and is the salvation of nations and individuals. We unhesitatingly challenge the truth of that astounding declaration. When was the world saved by the suffering attendant upon war? Instead of facing this difficulty, the reverend gentleman slips off at a tangent to assert that Christianity is by no means proved to be a failure because a most devastating war is permitted to go on under it. We submit that that is not the point at all, inasmuch as Christianity, according to the interpretation of the Church, has always favored and supported war. The point at issue is whether the world has ever derived any genuine good from war or not; this point the Canon does nothing towards settling.

Mr. Tyrwhitt avers that Christianity has not failed because it has been building up nations. This contention is the direct opposite of true. Christianity was incorporated with the Roman Empire early in the fourth century, and by degrees the Roman Empire fell, never to rise again. If Christianity were true, it would inevitably carry with it the complete demotion of nationalities. According to its ideal, all families are God's children, and rightly form but one family, God's family, all other divisions and distinctions being done away with in Christ. Its prophecy is that the kingdoms of this world shall be swallowed up in the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, that he may reign for ever and ever as the sole king. It is a religion for individuals, not for nations, its one aim being to save souls, not nationalities. What has Christianity ever done for nations? Canon Tyrwhitt himself virtually acknowledges that it has done absolutely nothing. According to him, there is not a single Christian nation under the sun. We totally disagree with him; but this is how he puts his case:—

"Anyone who had studied the life of the German nation would find that every class of the community, including even the clergy, had put aside Christianity in order to obtain material advantages and benefits. He had only recently been talking to a lady whose son occupied a high position in Germany. She had stated that she could not understand why Christianity had become so stultified in Germany. It was like a nation gone mad, and at the gates of hell itself."

What self-damned Germany in its God-denying state! What about Great Britain? Alas, "to-day Materialism was eating into the very heart of the vitals of the nation"! The same thing is true also of France, Russia, and Italy, as well as of Germany and Great Britain. On the Canon's own showing, Christianity has been building up nations which now disown their very Maker, which is equivalent to admitting that as a builder-up of nations Christianity has been a gigantic failure. With what sublime innocence and simplicity the reverend gentleman demonstrates the colossal incompetence of the religion whose well-paid representative and champion he professionally is.

Meantime, however, these God-forsaking nations, still under the spell of materialistic conceptions and ideals, are now undergoing their Baphometric Fire-Baptism, the loving discipline which only the most terrible war of all the ages could supply; and the

reverend Canon seeks to comfort us with the assurance that when this heart-searching discipline of the nations is complete, God will intervene, and every individual shall be different, because all will have become almost perfect through suffering! Was ever such unmitigated nonsense indulged in before, even in the name of God? If there were a God, he would hide his face for very shame on hearing such undiluted trash uttered on his assumed authority, and utterly disown such traducers of his holy character. Canon Tyrwhitt's temerity knows no check. It is undeniable that all the wars of the past did religion more harm than good. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 regenerated neither Prussia nor France, and ultimately the Churches lost much more than they gained. The same thing is true of the recent South African War, as well as of every other war of which we have record. But this War is going to be an exception to all its predecessors. Here are Canon Tyrwhitt's confident words on the subject:—

"When the War closed they would not return to the old England as it was. England would never again be the England it was before August, 1914. To-day, England was greater and purer than it had ever been before, and it would be even greater in the future."

As soon as the War is over the British people will have become "almost perfect through suffering." Such, we are told, is the cleansing power of war. The Bishop of London is somewhat more modest in his expectations. Even God, he tells us, cannot have his own way in everything. His omnipotence is simply a theological dream which has never been fulfilled in history. He can only get out of each age the morality of which the age is naturally capable, and he has always been obliged "to let his people choose the Gospel of the Second Best." Even the discipline of war never bears the fruit it ought to bear. We both pity and despise the Bishop's God; and we are satisfied that the cleansing power of war exists only in the religious imagination. It is as intangible and unverifiable as Dr. Horton's angels.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Sea and Literature.

- "The multitudinous seas."—SHAKESPEARE.
- "O fair, green-girdled mother."—SWINBURNE.
- "Who shall put forth on thee, Unfathomable sea."—SHELLEY.

AT a time when the British Navy is scouring the seas in battle array, it is curious to reflect that until a few years ago we never had a poet of the sea in the sense that we have had poets of chivalry, of love, and of the delight of battle. Let anyone recall the epics and romances, the narrative verse, the dramas, songs, sonnets, odes and lyrics that our poets have left us, and let him ask how much of this enormous amount of poetry has been written to glorify the sea, or to celebrate the romance of a sailor's life.

The sea, doubtless, has always come into English poetry. From the far-off days of Cynewulf onwards, the poets have never been able to forget it for long. But it is to men of the nineteenth century that we must incline our ears for intimate language of the sea, and for its imagery too. And fine sea poetry has invariably been written by landsmen. Sailors' chanties are delightful nonsense, in which the sea-voyage is but a means to an inglorious end—usually a dockside public-house or a light-of-love. The two English poets who had a real acquaintance with the sea were William Falconer and Thomas Lodge, both of whom were seafaring men. Falconer's *Shipwreck* is more Johnsonian than briny, and Lodge's masterpiece was *Rosalynde*, which is as nautical as *As You Like It*.

Among the great sea-poets, is he who perished in the sea. In Shelley we come very near fathoming the spirit of the sea. "Measureless," "unresting," "tremendous," "false," are some of Shelley's impressions of the ocean. The "deaf sea," the "homeless sea," the "abandoned sea," are a few descriptions of the

power which was to claim him at the last. Shelley's imagery is well-nigh perfect; we can hear the sea as his lines attack our memory. Who would not linger with the poet:—

"Where the pebble-paven shore,
Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea,
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy."

Listen to this magnificent passage from *The Ode to the West Wind*:—

"Far below,
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods, which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves."

Shelley from the first seemed destined by the sea for its own. From his boyhood he loved to watch the drifting of paper boats down a stream, and thought that drowning would be a beautiful death. Three times he escaped shipwreck, but the sea and the ships absorbed him with a fatal fascination. His first wife sought the same mode of death which at last fell upon the poet. Shelley prophesied his own death, though few have noticed it. In *Julian and Maddalo* he makes Maddalo, who was intended for his friend, Byron, address to him a jesting warning:—

"You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel—
A wolf for the meek lambs."

And the warning concludes:—

"Beware if you can't swim."

The recurrence of this thought in Shelley's poetry is singular. The last lines in *Adonais* might be read as an anticipation of his own death by drowning. In *Alastor* we read:—

"A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone death on the drear ocean's waste."

The superb *Ode to Liberty* closes on the same pathetic note:—

"As waves, which lately paved his watery way,
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play."

The *Stanzas Written in Dejection* echo the same thought:—

"And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony."

In a dirge written in 1817 he gives vent to the idea:—

"That time is dead for ever, child—
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever."

But above all English poets, Algernon Swinburne is the poet of the sea. His love of ocean is not merely sensuous. That delight he has rendered wonderfully in his *Tristram of Lyonesse*:—

"He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,
And felt the sound and savor and swift flight
Of waves that fled beneath the fading light
And died before the darkness, like a song
With harps between and trumpets blown along."

His finest sea pieces are born, not of sensuous enjoyment, but of imaginative insight and sympathy. None has so vividly rendered the magic of the dawn breaking over the rippled deep, or the terrors of the trumpets of the night. Among the cruellest abstractions of the cosmos he exults; he drinks the ether of space as men drink wine.

Byron was a famous swimmer, and his apostrophe to the ocean in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has the right ring about it:—

"His steps are not upon thy paths—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray,
And howling to his gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth; there let him lay."

Certainly the sea in storm makes the best poetry, and from those in peril on the deep the imagination turns naturally to the watching and waiting sufferers at home. Henry Kendal, in a pathetic poem, sums up the agony of such a vigil:—

"I am watching by a pane,
Darkened with the gusty rain—
Watching through a mist of tears,
Sad with thoughts of other years,
For a brother I did miss
In a stormy night like this."

But of the wreckage of the grey morning after the storm, few have written more tenderly than Charles Kingsley:—

"Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair?—
A tress of golden hair,
A drowned maiden's hair,
Above the nets at sea!
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes of Dee."

They rowed her in across the rolling foam—
The cruel, crawling foam,
The cruel, hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea.
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home,
Across the sands of Dee."

Tennyson's sea-pictures would make a study in themselves:—

"The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white.
Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung shipwrecking
roar,
Now to the scream of a maddened beach dragged down
by the waves.
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand,
Torn from the fringe of spray."

Coleridge, despite the "sunless sea" of *Kubla Khan*, and *The Ancient Mariner*, was too prone to moralising in the presence of the ocean. Wordsworth bids us:—

"Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
And hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

Keats thought of the great waters rather as a treasure of magic, a world which he could people with the creatures of his gorgeous fancy. He makes splendid use of this, as in his ever-memorable lines:—

"Like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

In other words he speaks of the ocean's "pure ablation round earth's human shores," and of "perilous seas in faery lands forlorn." In Matthew Arnold, we find the low Virgilian cry, the sense of tears in mortal things, that sobs in undertone through his tranquil verse:—

"Listen! you hear the grating rear
Of pebbles while the waves draw back and fling,
At their return up the high strand,
Begin and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in."

Among Rossetti's shorter poems the musical, melancholy *Sea Limits*:—

"Consider the sea's listless chime"
occupies a prominent place, but one of his sonnets contains the memorable lines:—

"From this wave-washed mound
Unto the farthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sails leagues and leagues beyond—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea."

There is a choice of dainty pictures in the verse of William Morris, such as:—

"And underneath his feet the moonlit sea
Went shepherding his waves disorderly."

Walt Whitman confessed that all his attempts to portray a ship in full sail had failed, but in his *Song and the Hills* who shall say that Kipling has not succeeded:—

"Who hath desired the Sea—the immense and contemptuous surges?
The shudder, the stumble, the swerve, ere the star-stabbing bowsprit emerges—
The orderly clouds of the trades and the ridg'd roaring sapphire thereunder—
Unheralded cliff-haunting flaws and the head-sail's low-volleying thunder?"

To Robert Bridges, ships and the sea are one and indivisible, and he has expressed the wonder and the witchery of the wanderers in great waters:—

"Whither O splendid ship thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent west,
That fearest not sea-rising nor sky-clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
Ah! soon when Winter has all our vales oppress,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hailing,
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furled?"

Yet the magic of the sea and shipping has been superbly expressed by a prose-writer. John Ruskin

has written nobly of ships in his *Harbours of England*, a book conceived in praise and illustration of Turner's magnificent drawings. Ruskin had the true sea-passion. He knew London and its good, grey river, and he had seen the splendor of the Adriatic at dawn. He was not a sea-rover like Herman Melville, and he was not born to stand at the wheel. But he saw as few men see, and wrote as few men can hope to write. There is in English literature no more stirring language concerning the magic of the sea and the rapture of the seaman. Boats had for him an endless fascination, particularly the undecked sea-boat. That represented a miracle of human achievement, the perfect adaptation of means to ends. The boat's bow, he says, is "naively perfect":—

"The man who made it knew not he was making anything beautiful as he bent the planks into those mysterious, ever-changing curves. It grows, under his hand, into the image of a sea-shell, the seal, as it were, of the flowing of the great tides and streams of ocean stamped on its delicate rounding. He leaves it, when all is done, without a boast. It is a simple work, but it will keep out water. And every plank thenceforward is a Fate, and has men's lives wreathed in the plumes. The nails that fasten together the planks of the boat's prow are the rivets of the fellowship of the world. Their iron does more than draw lightning out of heaven; it leads love round the earth."

There is more real beauty in the ordinary fishing-boat than in the decorated galleys. Says Ruskin again:—

"Nothing that ever swung at the quay sides of Carthage, or glowed with Crusaders' shields above the bays of Syria, could give to any contemporary human creature such an idea of the meaning of the word 'boat' as may be now gained by any mortal happy enough to behold as much as a Newcastle collier beating against the wind."

The fascination of the sea lies in the magic of the ships. They carry the imagination to enchanted islands and upon desperate voyages. They are the symbols of unconquerable endeavor, and, at the last, rest.

MIMNERMUS.

Man and His Mother Earth.

THE human family is as strictly terrestrial in its nature as the order of fishes is aquatic. It is admitted that as mankind has advanced in knowledge and power it has asserted an ever strengthening ascendancy over the rivers, lakes, and seas. But the great ocean highways and the navigable streams are alike employed mainly for the purpose of conveying man and man's commodities from one part of the solid earth to another.

To understand a people one must know something of its earthly environment. Mountain and valley, barren steppe and productive soil, tropical, arctic, or temperate climate, aridity or humidity of geographical surroundings, easy access to the stream or sea, the poverty or opulence of the mineral deposits of the neighboring area, all these, with countless other terrestrial phenomena unceasingly influence the lives of the dwellers in any particular habitat.

The social and economic conditions of a community are above all else dependent upon the nature and culture of its land. Pressure of population and the concomitant passion for national expansion, together with an almost instinctive human desire to annex the territory of another, are to be reckoned among the main generators of wars with all their aftermath of suffering and shame. In prehistoric and early historic times, primitive peoples fought and bled for the conquest or retention of favored regions of the earth. During the historical period, every State has made it a leading feature of its policy to safeguard its own frontiers, while never neglecting any favorable opportunity to encroach on the landed possessions of its neighbors.

The British Isles seem but a small speck on the world's map, but those countries and continents

marked red make up no inconsiderable portion of the earth's surface. Yet India, Africa, Australia, Canada, Egypt, and the other unconsidered trifles which collectively comprise the British Empire, have been successively added to the English Crown by the genius and enterprise of an overcrowded island race.

Land hunger played a predominant part in the colonial settlements of ancient Greece as also in the territorial expansion of ancient Rome. This factor operated in the wanderings of the barbarian Teutons and Huns who ultimately overthrew the Roman Empire. It is true that empire-building is not entirely conditioned by dire necessity for outward expansion. But the geographical circumstances of the home country are fundamentally responsible for the exploitation of weaker States.

The colonial policy at different dates pursued by Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and England was determined by the environmental requirements of the respective States. The career of latter-day Germany illustrates the same general law. The campaigns of Frederic the Great were directed to strengthen the rising Prussian power. In 1864, the same State again strengthened her frontiers but now increased her territory at the expense of Denmark. In 1866, Prussia crushed Austria in a five weeks' campaign, and although the victor demanded no territory, and sought no indemnity, the defeated Empire was forced to pay forty million thalers, and ceased to count as the leading German power. The way was thus prepared for the overthrow of France in 1870, which was followed by a terrible treaty which bereft our Gallic neighbor of two of her fairest provinces and imposed the payment of two hundred millions sterling. The much discussed problem of the balance of power in Europe is ultimately governed by the almost universal desire to encroach on the one hand while maintaining territorial integrity on the other. The Near Eastern and the Far Eastern questions both illustrate the same law, while a further example is furnished by the Monroe Doctrine, which makes so wide an appeal in the United States.

With the exception of Buckle, Draper, Spencer, and a few other historians and sociologists, social inquirers have seldom attached sufficient importance to the influences exerted by geographic environment on the rise and progress of the human race. The German scientist and evolutionary philosopher, Friedrich Ratzel, was deeply influenced by the sociological and biological teachings of Herbert Spencer, some of whose conclusions Ratzel set himself to work out with characteristic Teutonic thoroughness. Among his various contributions to anthropological science must be included his "Anthropo-Geographie." This extremely ponderous work sadly needed an interpreter, and Ellen Churchill Semple, in her highly important *Influences of Geographic Environment*, has placed the master's message before the English-speaking world in a large volume which is packed with arguments, illustrations, and facts.

The new science of Anthropo-Geography concerns itself with far-reaching phenomena, which include almost every aspect of human existence. An attempt will be made in these articles to survey this vast subject from one extremely interesting and by no means subordinate standpoint. In the words of Ellen Semple:—

"The anthropo-geographer recognises the various social forces, economic and psychologic, which sociologists regard as the cement of societies; but he has something to add. He sees in the land occupied by a primitive tribe or a highly organised State, the underlying material bond holding society together, the ultimate basis of their fundamental social activities, which are therefore derivatives from the land. He sees the common territory exercising an integrating force—weak in primitive communities where the group has established only a few slight temporary relations with its soil.....He sees it growing stronger with every advance in civilisation involving more complex relations with the land—with settled habitations, with increased density of population, with a discriminating and highly differentiated use of the soil, with the exploitation of

mineral resources, and finally with that far-reaching exchange of commodities and ideas which means the establishment of varied extra-territorial relations."

When a society has pressed into its service the most productive powers of its native soil and is able to adequately utilise its mineral wealth in the interest of its manufactures, the need for foreign markets for its surplus commodities renders imperative its extra-territorial expansion. Now, the success of a State is largely a matter of its environment. The arctic regions, the desert areas, and other handicapped countries furnish few opportunities for the evolution of civilised life. In our more fortunate isles, on the other hand, countless favorable circumstances have conspired to make our habitation the object of the wonder and envy of mankind.

It cannot be claimed that the Bible is the secret of England's greatness nor is it likely that the British have taken the place formerly occupied by the Jews as God's chosen people. Nor is it altogether true that our race's prized position is entirely due to its innate superiority in wisdom and morals. The explanation is found in things far more material than these. In relation to the earth as a whole, our geographical position is one of the finest in the world. Our people have enjoyed a prolonged period of profound internal peace. The last battle of consequence fought on our soil in the South was in the seventeenth century, on the stricken field of Sedgemoor. While Spain and Italy, Germany, Austria, and France have been in turn overrun by the conquering invader, the soil of England has remained unscathed.

Britain's Isles are not invulnerable, and never have been. The Roman colonisation of the South was of vast service to our race. The prehistoric and historic Scandinavian, Danish, Saxon, and Norman settlements enriched our blood, and it is to be observed that all these peoples wandered to our shores from the neighborhood of the North Sea.

To some extent the Romans reached us from the opposite side of the Channel, and the Normans were originally dwellers of the borderlands of the North Sea. Our absorption of the more progressive continentalers who later came to us to escape the persecution of their religious and secular rulers, not only helped to improve our stock but materially assisted in building up several of our most important textile industries, and aided in our agricultural evolution. Again, the British Isles possess one of the best of climates, despite all our complaints of the withering east winds of spring and the lowering skies that frequently oppress us at all seasons of the year. Our soil is immensely productive. English hops, apples, cereals, vegetables, and cherries are second to none. The olive and the vine are for sunnier lands, but British horses, cattle, sheep, poultry, and pigs are above and beyond compare. Coal and iron in the richest abundance, and a population which our rigorous and bracing weather conditions serve to keep strong and active, are a few of the factors which immediately occur to one as helping to elucidate the prominent position occupied by the British people.

Yet all these varied phenomena ultimately relate to the land over which the air sweeps, upon which the sun sheds his light and heat, and to which the clouds shower their copious contents. From the bounteous earth we derive all our food and drink and the mineral commodities which ultimately enable us to purchase from abroad all necessaries and luxuries of life of non-native origin.

When a primitive people is not well-rooted to the soil, the economic waste is enormous. Migratory hunting races are compelled to wander over vast tracts of country in search of game, and with these no deep attachment to any special area is possible. In a hunting tribe slightly more advanced, the early social landowner may be seen. Tribal ownership was clearly exhibited by the Comanches, "nomad horse Indians who occupied the grassy plains of Northern Texas." Giddings informs us that these savages regarded their plains as the common possession of the tribe, and they carefully guarded their

territory and its game from the incursions of foreign Indians. In the next stage of development the hunter combines a rude agriculture with the proceeds of the chase. At every ascending stage of social evolution the territory, to which the tribe becomes more and more attached, slowly imposes its soil value upon the people to an ever-increasing degree. Low as they were in the scale of savagery, the Australian races based their social structure on their landed possessions. Spencer and Gillen have shown that in North Central Australia, even with a very thin population, the natives of that region have succeeded in fixing themselves to the poverty-stricken soil, and that the tribal boundaries have become so settled that armed conflict between the tribes brings no change of territory. "Land and people," comments Ellen Semple,—

"are identified. The bond is cemented by their primitive religion, for the tribe's spirit ancestors occupy this special territory. In like manner a very definite conception of tribal ownership of land prevails among the Bushmen and Bechuanas of South Africa; and in the pastoral Hereros the alienation of their land is inconceivable."

For good or ill, a tribe of hunters can never become a large community. What domestic labor is required is performed by the squaw, while the savage devotes himself to the fabrication of weapons, to the pursuit of game, and the overthrow of human enemies. In such circumstances small cohesion is possible, and the hunting organisation soon experiences the pressure of an increased population and segregates into lesser groups. Thus we observe how the life of the nomadic hunter is determined by the faunal conditions of his territory, with which his very existence is inseparably associated. As game grows scarce, or as the tribe multiplies, the nomadic hunter is forced to seek new game haunts, as otherwise he will perish from lack of food.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

Lord Justice Phillimore was one of the speakers at the Church Reform League the other day. In the course of his remarks his Lordship said that what was needed was a big Parliamentary enactment that would enable the Church of England to manage its own affairs. We quite agree with this, and we suggest to Justice Phillimore that what is really needed is for the State to leave religion alone—really alone. But that, we imagine, is hardly what he desires. In connection with many Churchmen, what he wants is the State to support religion, to protect it, to favor it, and then leave the Church quite alone when it comes to the arrangement of its own doctrines. But if the State pays for religion, it is only common sense for the State to say what kind of religion shall be taught.

It is a pity that a man like Mr. Justice Phillimore does not give his support to absolute freedom of religion in the State, including the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. Instead of this, he appears to regard them as necessary and, in some form or other, admirable. We remember that in the Bousfield case he sought to counter the argument that the Blasphemy Laws were obsolete on the ground that a law was not obsolete until it was repealed. This is one of those pieces of legal wisdom that approaches very near folly. "Obsolete," after all, only means something that is out of fashion, and no one can deny that the Blasphemy Laws come under that category, even though they may be revived from time to time. And instead of a law never being obsolete until it is repealed, laws are constantly being repealed for the avowed reason that they have become obsolete.

Civilised clergymen and uncivilised medicine-men have much the same limited vocabulary. Dr. J. H. Jowett, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, who is visiting London, has unburdened his mind on the European War, which he says is "a resurgence of devilry."

The Church of Christ is compelled to move with the times, and Russian aviators now have their patron saint, the Muscovite ecclesiastics having designated the prophet Elijah

the that office because he was conveyed to heaven in a fiery chariot. We should have thought that the firework-makers deserved the honor better.

Not to be outdone by other religionists, the Jewish Chief Rabbi has donned khaki, and taken his chaplain with him on a visit to the Front. So they are all taking a trip, and after a day or so will come back with the air of seasoned warriors and pose as military experts for the rest of the campaign. And what a splendid object-lesson these visits are. At a time of national danger most people are ready to overlook differences and unite for a common purpose. Political and social differences are, for the time being, forgotten; and men live together, and, if necessary, die together. The petty and ridiculous walls separating Catholic and Protestant, Jew and Christian, Conformist and Nonconformist, must remain standing, and the leaders of religion do their share to see that no breach is made therein.

It is not fair to blame the clergy for not doing, or for not having done, anything for the nation during the present crisis. One must remember how hard they worked at denouncing the crowds of drunken workmen—who were not drunk, and their outcry against the many thousands of "war babies"—who only existed in their own imagination. These are services that deserve remembrance. And now, while the cry of national mobilisation is in the air, they are in the fore. The latest suggestion is for the mobilisation of religion. All that is meant by the phrase is not the mobilisation of everybody praying on his own, there is to be an *attack en masse*. When this is done we shall, in some mysterious way, have "mobilised our national strength," and things will go on in a more satisfactory manner. All we have to say is that when a nation can tolerate solemn tomfoolery of this kind, we fail to see any genuine justification for calling it civilised.

An earthquake has taken place in Germany, and the towns of Ebingen and Balingen have been shaken. As the report states that no great damage has been done, are we to conclude that Providence is still on the side of the big battalions?

We wonder if Christians ever read the Bible. The Bishop of Calneford refers to the "unthinkable atrocities" committed by the German armies. Does the Bishop ever read the Old Testament? so, he will find many of them detailed in the early books.

The *Daily Mirror* retails a story that Sir John French says that an army in which every soldier read his Bible would be the finest ever seen. It would be almost impossible in the Expeditionary Force, for it includes Jews, Catholics, Sikhs, Buddhists, and many other fancy religionists, to say nothing of Freethinkers.

A provincial paper, describing a well-known public man, said "his hair is completely changed into an old man, and now walks with his grey." Hair that walks is good, and it reminds us of the amusing description in Genesis, "He heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day."

The Young Men's Christian Association is clamoring, in their page advertisements in the daily newspapers, for cash to provide "sleeping accommodation" to serve as "centres of rest." We realised that the Church of Christ was fast asleep, but why advertise the fact so publicly?

A number of Christian bishops met together in solemn convocation in Calcutta, and issued a "Pastoral" on the War. One conclusion arrived at was that "War is the result of sin, and God permits war just because man is endured with free will." It is this kind of stupidity that makes one almost despair of human reason. War is the result of sin! Whose sin? And what relation is there between the "sin" of a people who cause a war and those who suffer from it? Think of all the ruined homes, and maimed lives, of all the horror and brutality of this War, and then try and realise the almost incredible idiocy of a congress of bishops solemnly inform the world that "war is the result of sin." And God permits it all so as not to interfere with man's "free will." The absurdity of this may be realised if we imagine society declining to arrest a thief or a murderer for the same reason.

The Bishop of Birmingham says that "if the Germans were victorious, we should be putting back the clock of Christian truth for centuries." His lordship must be suffering from the heat. The Germans cannot win, and the

mainspring of the Christian clock broke down at Jerusalem two thousand years ago.

According to the newspapers, "a handsome sum" has been realised for a book written by a domestic servant. There is nothing fresh in this. The clergy have made a heap of money from the "sermon" of a "carpenter."

The Rev. R. J. Campbell has been asking questions, and one is, "Why did the tide of divine love roll in so far and then roll back?" Little Paul Dombey asked a similarly useful question when he inquired, "What are the wild waves saying?"

Among the "Voices of the Day" quoted by the *Christian World* for June 24 is this pre-eminently false and foolish one from a student in a Yorkshire College: "Before the War England was a land of pleasure; now it is a land of prayer." Both clauses in that sentence are equally untrue. England was not a land of pleasure prior to the War, nor is it now a land of prayer. If anyone would take the trouble to watch the streets of London or Manchester between the hours of 7 and 8 on a Sunday evening, he would discover that the masses care nothing about prayer, and that while picture palaces are crowded, most churches and chapels are empty. Now, granting for argument's sake that the sentence just quoted is true, how amazingly incongruous is the sentence that immediately follows it: "Surely the Kaiser is to blame for this." If England has been transformed from a pleasure-loving to a prayer-offering land by the War, churches and chapels should pass a most enthusiastic vote of thanks to the Kaiser, instead of blaming him.

Dr. Jowett admits that, after nineteen centuries of the Christian religion, we are now "witnessing a resurgence of devilry which is truly appalling." If those words mean anything, they certainly convey the idea that God in Christ is a conspicuous failure, or that he has been dethroned by his Majesty of the Bottomless Pit. The reverend gentleman emphasises his admission thus: "The baser passions have been aggressively frightful, and a cruel animalism is at large, and it is like a raging, boiling sea which has burst its dykes." This being the case, why on earth does Dr. Jowett still act as an ambassador of a defeated and demolished Deity? The Prince of Peace has never had his day, and, judging by the signs of the times, he shall never have it. Consequently, the ministers of religion are useless and injurious survivals of the Ages of Faith.

Judging from the puff preliminary in the pious press, Brother Billy Sunday should be with us before long. Some biographical details of the revivalist appeared recently in the *Westminster Gazette*, and in it we were told that Billy was "happiest" while "battling with booze," and that "scores" of towns had "gone dry" in consequence of his preaching in America. If Billy uses the American dialect in his sermons in this country, he will drive people to drink.

Billy Sunday, like all Christians, admits that he is a "miserable sinner," and in his sentimental account of his old home he says that when he revisited the place "the long weary nights of sin and of hardship became as though they had never been." Only an idealist could twang the lyre in this fashion.

Writing of books used by officers on active service, a daily paper says "the Bible is easily first." Is that so? We thought almost every officer carried the Field Service Pocket Book, a summary of military text-books.

The *Baltimore American* suggests that "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" should be replaced by "Onward, Christian Submarines!"

Dr. Horton, by his sermon and articles on the angelic intervention at Mons and in the Dardanelles, has played beautifully into the hands of the arch-enemy he used to attack with such violent bitterness, the Catholic Church. The *Catholic Herald* for June 26 is delighted with his strange action, and politely reminds him that his persecution of Romanism is now a logical impossibility. It says:—

"A man who, like Dr. Horton, regards some of the reports of miracles on the battlefield as 'completely authenticated,' cannot logically dismiss as superstition the Catholic miracles which are better authenticated still. Truly, the greatest miracle of all is the change the War is making on Protestants themselves."

The curious thing is that Dr. Horton's "completely authenticated" miracle had never been heard of until after Mr. Arthur Machen wrote his legendary sketch last September,

and that absolutely no first-hand evidence is adduced in support of the belief in it.

In the same issue the *Catholic Herald* informs us that in the district of Earlsfield, S.W., only one person in eleven attends any place of worship, and that in the heart of Mayfair a large Anglican church can only muster eighty persons at a Sunday service. The same thing is true of nearly all other centres, which only shows how utterly false is the claim made by many prominent men of God that the War is bringing about everywhere a wonderful revival of interest in religion. As a matter of fact, the War is dealing religion the deadliest blow it has ever experienced.

The late Mr. James Duffield, of Cockermouth, who left a fortune of half a million, began life as a pitboy in a colliery. If there is any truth in the Christian religion, he will renew his acquaintance with coals in the next world.

The London Central Young Men's Christian Association appears to be extending its business. Its latest advertisement states that the organisation can deal with cases of "insufficient chest development." This should be tidings of great joy to the numerous flat-chested Christians.

Fearfully and wonderfully made are the servants of the God of Peace. One of them, the Rev. W. Kingscote Greenland, has the audacity to assert that "if it were not for its terrible side, there is nothing so fascinating as war." What is war? The *New Standard Dictionary* defines it as "a contest between nations or states, or between different parties in the same state, carried on by force and with arms." In other words, war is bloodshed on a large scale, the art of scientific killing. On all sides alike, which are all terrible, war is wholesale murder. And yet here is a minister of omnipotent and incarnate Love who coolly tells us that "there is nothing so fascinating as war." Indeed, Mr. Greenland goes so far as to say that as a cure for doubt and morbidity there is nothing to compare with "contact with the simple, hardy, affectionate nature of Kitchener's New Army." What next, O man of God?

Sir William Robertson Nicoll has returned to his piety, faith, and prayer, after his brief excursion into the camp of the materialistic politicians; and the tone of his leading article in the *British Weekly* for June 24 is characteristic of the man who puts his trust in God. In former articles, he had dwelt with great seriousness on the absolute necessity of providing our army with an unlimited supply of high explosive shells and machine guns, for lack of which our just, God-approved, cause might be finally lost during the next few months; but in the present article he emphasises his belief "that, if we do our part, we shall not be without reinforcements from the higher Will that rules." Does not Sir William see that, if there be "a higher Will that rules," it should vindicate itself by succoring the weak against the strong, by giving the victory to right and justice, however powerfully and fiercely they may be threatened by overwhelming might? If our Allies are strong enough to win the War by force of their superior arms, where and how does the "higher Will that rules" come in at all? If there be such a Will, it can only manifest itself by crushing might, however well equipped, when it aims at the overthrow of right. Has God ever so revealed himself?

The Dean of Durham thinks that one consequence of the War may be a religious revival, which will take the form of a return to long discarded superstitions. This is, of course, probable, and it is instructive to note that the Dean accompanies this statement with two other expectations. There is to be a period of acute social distress, and a weakening of social ties and obligations. Read together, the result is that with a setting back of social organisation, and the reduction of life to a lower level, there will come a revival of superstition. And provided the two latter things take place, we also would expect the first to become a fact. Life is a connected whole, and anything that affects a part affects the whole. Consequently, to effect a lowering of the level of social life means a move in the direction of those conditions with which religion is in natural alliance. No one who understands the nature of religious belief will question that. The question for the religionist to face is, Why religion should invariably weaken with the advance of civilisation, and regain strength with any return to lower social conditions?

The newspapers state that the Pope has two nephews in the Army. Poor papa! His principles and his petticoats prevent him fighting. Besides, he is beyond the age limit, unless the authorities form a Centenarians' Brigade.

How differently they do things in France. Commenting on the death of Lient. Warnford, who was killed in an aeroplane accident, *L'Auto*, Paris, said his career was "stopped by a cruel destiny." Here, in England, the plain journalists would have written that the deceased was "jeopardised to Jesus."

War-time economics are invading the Churches, and at a Primitive Methodist Conference at Reading an appeal was made that money should be spent at home among the members of the Church rather than on missionaries. Would the colored folk be glad to hear the news?

Miss Marie Corelli, writing in the *Daily Graphic* on the present position of women, says "they are realising that the cult of Abraham, which consisted in driving his women along with his cattle to the music of the lashing of whips, is now a thing of the past." We should like to hear Miss Corelli argue this matter out with Mrs. Sarah Abraham.

From the point of view of Churchmen, it is high time that some protest was made against the absurdities of the Bishop of London. From the point of view of Freethinkers, it must have bishops, men of the type of Bishop Ingram are most desirable. But Professor Scott Holland has just protested against the Bishop calling the War a "Holy War" and says, "We will not ask the clergy to become Mullahs preaching a Jihad," and another clergyman, Mr. Loch, says that the Bishop has lost all sense of proportion. A sense of proportion of anything Bishop Ingram never possessed, and his visit to the Front is likely to be for some time as disturbing to his easily disturbed mental equilibrium as were his preaching about onslaughts on Freethought in East London.

The writer of the leading article in the *Christian Commonwealth* for June 23 makes the naive admission that "in no country (with the possible exception of Russia) do the churches either hold or represent the voice of the people." A truer remark was never made. The people have abandoned the churches, and the churches have no real care for the people. In reality, all churches exist alone for their own sakes, and have no message whatever to the outlying world. Ministers often speak as if they ruled the world, whereas as a matter of fact, the world pays not the slightest heed to their pompous utterances.

"England expects the Clergy of all denominations will now do their Duty, using the pulpit as a platform to urge and inspire men to enlist or make munitions, and all women to help war-work organisations." So runs an advertisement in the *Times*, and it indicates yet another use for the Recruiting sergeants will have to wake up.

"The Bishop of London says: 'God can only get out of each age the morality of which the age is capable,' which seems a plain hint to the Almighty that he must not expect too much, even from the Bishop of London."—*London Mail*.

"Dagonet," in the *Referee*, is not so sceptical as he was years ago, but now and again he lets himself go. Here is a forceful remark worth quoting: "To meet the German frightfulness with the beautiful sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount is only to invite the same result that would attend the efforts of a Sunday-school to clear the jungle of wild beasts by singing Dr. Watts's hymns to them."

Some one remarked the other day that the War hitherto not been productive of any inspiring War Poetry. After reading the following by Canon F. G. Scott, dedicated to our soldiers fighting in France, we agree with that opinion:—

"Dear Christ, who reign'st above the flood
Of human tears and human blood,
A weary road these men have trod,
O house them in the home of God."

The last line is a gem! It sounds like a prayer for those who would be killed as quickly as possible, and is one that most Germans would heartily endorse.

The glorious free press of England is still occupied busy in spreading the information that the Germans are Athiests. One of the six daily papers, each with the largest circulation, recently stated that "Since her [Germany's] scientists and philosophers foisted upon Darwin their theory of the struggle for existence, and half convinced the world of its truth, they have repudiated Christianity and made war the chief end and cause of the State." We hope the half-million Christians were pleased with this farrago of nonsense.

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, £85 8s. 1d. Received since:—E. H. Gonn, £1; E. Adams, £5 5s.; E. Parker, 5s.; T. W. Hey (S. Africa), 10s. 6d.; E. Lechmere, 10s.; A. H. Deacon, 10s. 6d.; G. Paul Dewing, £1; D. L. Mapp, 4s.; Anno Domini, 10s.; Theodore Schroeder, £1.

AN OLD FREETHINKING FRIEND, now residing in the heart of Kent, writes: "I am glad to see by your letter that you are making quite a rapid recovery, and the full-page 'Personal' in this week's *Freethinker* is further evidence."

E. B.—Thanks. No room for it in this week's issue, but will find space in our next.

I. D. HOWELL SMITH.—Sorry that the length of your letter quite prevents our finding room for it in these columns. Moreover, whether a given passage from a speech is beautiful or not, is purely a question of taste, and the opinion has no necessary reference to its value as an essay in formal logic. Nor is the graveside a place where one ought to expect the reading of an essay of that character.

A. REID.—We hereby forward your good wishes to the Editor of this paper. Mr. Cohen greatly appreciates all you say, but modesty prevents repetition.

L. COLLETT.—(1) There is nothing in the Education Act which relieves a parent from sending his children to school on account of distance, but any court would certainly decline to make an order if the distance was an "unreasonable" one. (2) If a Council School was not able to take a child, you would have to send it to a Church School, provided that school was recognised by the Education Authority. In that case you could avail yourself of the "Conscience Clause." (3) As an alternative you could either send your child to a private school, or, failing that, call upon to prove that the education received came up to the standard fixed by the Code.

A. J.—As you will see, Mr. Cohen has written a second issue on the "angelic guard" myth, but there is at present no intention of reprinting either of them. Of course, their republication in pamphlet form might do good, but there are difficulties in the way.

THEODORE SCHROEDER.—Your being outside of Great Britain is a geographical accident; and Freethought is, we hope, superior to such boundaries. Whether on this side the Atlantic or the other, the enemy is the same and the fight is the same, and in that conflict we welcome appreciation and help from any quarter.

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.

For 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 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.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

Personal.

MRS. HARRIET LAW merits the attention she has lately been receiving from Mr. A. B. Moss and other writers in the *Freethinker*. I knew her very well in the early days of my own Freethought advocacy. She was far from a learned woman, but she had great natural ability, and had a powerful common-sense kind of eloquence, which shone particularly in public debate. I had the pleasure of hearing her often in London, and of lecturing myself on the same platform. I sometimes visited the family at a turning

a long way down the Camberwell-road, London. The name of the turning, which I have forgotten, and have no time to hunt up, is of no importance. They were very agreeable company, and I remember Mr. Law as a man who appeared rather soft, but was nothing of the kind. He was remarkably sharp in buying property and keeping it afterwards, especially from the perfectly honest depredations of his wife, who was somehow under the delusion that, besides being a good lecturer, she was also a good woman of business.

* * *

She made a great mess of the *Secular Chronicle*, which I believe she bought of Mr. Reddalls, and afterwards almost gave away. I had written for the paper myself under Reddall's management, but as the *Secularist*, which Holyoake and I started, was even then talked about, I could not transfer my services to Mrs. Law. She conducted it for some time—I don't remember how long—after the death of Reddalls, whom I knew, and often saw at Birmingham. His special qualification for running the paper was that he was a printer, and carried on a little publishing business. I helped to officiate at his funeral. I remember that Francis Neale was one of the mourners, and he had contributed some fine articles to the paper. Reddalls had lectured during his later years against Spiritualism. The Davenport Brothers had stirred an immense interest in this question, and Reddalls went about imitating their spirit performances by natural means. He did all sorts of things fastened up in a cabinet. I remember his telling me how hard it was to master the art of clicking with the big toe. He died of consumption, a little younger than Jesus Christ. I do not regard him as a genius, but he had plenty of activity and ambition. I may add of Mrs. Law that she was very good at repartee. This was sometimes painfully learnt by the more insolent sort of Christian Evidence speakers who ventured to attack her on the public platform. Woe to those who had never crossed swords with her before. She came up smiling, and they must have felt that "one may smile and smile and be a villain."

* * *

Mr. Herbert Burrows thanks me for the "kindly notice" of him I wrote in the *Freethinker* lately, but did it contain as much kindness as truth? He rightly says that, although we differ in many things, he and I "have worked together for years in the greatest of all causes—freedom of thought and speech and the abolition of theological bigotry and superstition." He hopes that we shall so work to the end—sure that the victory will one day come. So do I. Mr. Burrows trusts my health is improving. I assure him it is. I have spent a lot of time doing this to all and sundry, but some people (I do not include Mr. Burrows) will not believe it. I have always said I was getting better, and I say so now. How can I doubt it when I carry the evidence of it about with me? I am willing to convince doubters, at a shilling a head, from ten till four, the proceeds to go to the *Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund*.

* * *

I hope I shall live longer yet to deserve the sly compliment which Mr. Burrows fastens upon me. He looks for the recovery of my old (he calls it *accustomed*) "vigor of body, because the times are such that no brave man can be spared." Mr. Burrows closes his letter with a gallant reference to the breakfast he assisted at in my honor when I "came out of gaol." How long ago was that? We will not count the years.

* * *

I bade my friends to give no credit to the variety of accounts of my health which are being spread at all the points of the compass. What I say myself may be believed; what Mr. Cohen says, as interim editor of the *Freethinker*, may be believed. I do not say with the poet "the rest is lies"—"the rest is lies"—but I have no belief in them myself, and I advise all my friends—yes, and all my enemies—(heaven bless them!) to follow my example. Well then, I say that I am getting better, that I have made

a great improvement during the last week or so, and that I hope to visit London very shortly and see my new premises at 61 Farringdon-street. Everybody praises them, and my business manager, who has had everything to see to, including the fittings and decorations, thinks I am sure to do the same. This is not imagination, but fact—to quote from the great Goethe. Somebody said that I had been seen in London lately, but Mr. Ash may be sure, no doubt is sure, that I shall come to the new premises first.

* * *

I have paid everything connected with the new premises up to date, including the first quarter's rent, removing, fittings, and many other expenses. There is not a farthing of debt on any part of the enterprise, and I want to keep it going like that, but it will not be easy to do so considering the financial effect of this "war of wars," so I must once more ask my friends in particular, and my readers in general, to subscribe as promptly and as generously as possible to the President's Honorarium Fund. My last appeal produced a stir in what almost looked like dry bones, and I hope this one will have a still greater effect.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Most of our readers are aware—we repeat the information for the benefit of those who are not—that we are pleased to send copies of the *Freethinker* for six weeks, post free, to likely subscribers whose names and addresses are sent us. The advantage of this method may be seen from the following letter, which is only one of many:—

"I was extremely obliged for the six complimentary copies of the *Freethinker*, and think it is just fine. Before completing the sixth free copy I had already ordered it from my stationers, and now receive a copy of the paper each week. It is hardly necessary to say that I am vastly interested and very enthusiastic."

So long as the *Freethinker* is not displayed by newsagents in the same manner as other papers, this is the best method of gaining new subscribers, and it is a plan in which any of our readers may co-operate with the minimum of trouble. There is only one really satisfactory way of helping a paper like the *Freethinker*, and that is to secure new readers.

The Birmingham Branch is having its annual outing on Sunday, July 4, at Kinver, and the members will be pleased to come in touch with any friends in the district. Tea will be served at the Café Royal at 4 o'clock.

"The spirit of England is newly manifested in many directions in this time which is trying men's souls (to use Holmes's phrase)." So writes a *Daily Telegraph* reviewer. The mistake is almost an inexcusable one; for the expression, as every decently read person knows, is Thomas Paine's. The correct rendering is, "These are the times that try men's souls," and they form the opening to Paine's article in the *American Crisis* which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* in December, 1776. So famous a sentence from so famous an article by so great a man should be familiar to everyone who sets up as a literary critic. Why it is attributed to Holmes (what Holmes?) is a mystery. Perhaps the writer is ultra-religious, and thought it best not to use the name of so great a heretic as Paine.

Considered in the light of consequences, Paine's *Crisis* is one of the world's great historical productions. It was inspired by the circumstances of the moment, and met them in a superb manner. The Army of Washington was dispirited, and in retreat. Washington at once recognised its power, and ordered it to be read to groups of the soldiers. The scathing contempt poured on "the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot," the fire of such sentences as "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered," "The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph," did their work. Not only Washington, but every one of the leaders of the Revolution, recognised the power of Paine's work. The opening sentence, "These are the times that try men's souls," was taken as a watchword by the Army, and when in the last *Crisis* issued—the thirteenth—Paine wrote "The times that tried men's souls are over," he could fairly claim to have played a great part in bringing about the result,

Science and the Bible.—V.

(Continued from p. 406.)

"The hypothesis of special creation is not only a specious mask for our ignorance: its existence in Biology marks the youth and imperfection of the science. For what is the history of every science but the history of the elimination of the notion of creative or other interferences with the natural order of the phenomena which are the subject-matter of that science? When Astronomy was young 'The morning stars sang together for joy,' and the planets were guided in their courses by celestial hands. Now the harmony of the stars has resolved itself into gravitation according to the inverse squares of the distances, and the orbits of the planets are deducible from the laws of the forces which attract a schoolboy's stone to break a window..... Harmonious order governing continuous progress—the web and woof of matter and force inter-weaving by slow degrees, without a break in the thread, that veil which lies between us and the infinite—the universe which alone we know or can know; such is the picture which science draws of the world, and in proportion as any part of that picture is in unison with the rest, so much we feel sure that it is rightly painted."—PROFESSOR T. H. HUXLEY, *Lay Sermons* (1874), p. 282.

It is a widely prevailing opinion that the geological discoveries which so disconcerted the believers in Genesis were the work of "infidel" scientists, who triumphantly produced them in order to overthrow belief in the Bible. There is no foundation in fact for this belief, but there is much justification for it; for the science of geology was denounced from the pulp all over the country, and geologists were described as "infidels" warring against God and the Bible.

The fact is that the very men who made the geological discoveries were themselves believers in the literal sense of the first chapters of the Bible, and were greatly surprised and disconcerted when they found that the geological record could by no means be made to agree with the divine record if the Bible was taken literally. Hugh Miller—who was described by Herbert Spencer as a "theologian studying geology"—himself says, in his *Testimony of the Rocks*:—

"I certainly did once believe with Chalmers and with Buckland that the six days were simply natural days of twenty-four hours each—that they had comprised the entire work of the existing creation—and that the latest geologic ages was separated by a great chaotic gap from our own."

He goes on to say that at that time his studies had been practically confined to the palaeozoic and secondary rocks, but that during the last nine years after an examination of the later formations, he was reluctantly forced to abandon the idea that the work of creation occupied only six days of twenty-four hours each. To cite his own words:—

"The conclusion at which I have been compelled to arrive is, that for many long ages ere man was ushered into being, not a few of his humbler contemporaries—the fields and woods enjoyed life in their present haunts, and that for thousands of years anterior to even their appearance, many of the existing molluscs lived in our seas. That day during which the present creation came into being, and in which God, when he had made 'the beast of the earth after his kind, and the cattle after their kind,' at length terminated the work of moulding a creature in His own image, to whom he gave dominion over them all, was not a brief period of a few hours' duration, but extended over, maybe, millions of centuries.....and so I have been compelled to hold that the days of creation were not natural prophetic days, and stretched far back into the bygone eternity" (*Testimony of the Rocks*, p. 10).

Carl Vogt, the famous naturalist, writing in 1868, observes:—

"It is scarcely thirty years since Cuvier said: 'There exists no fossil monkey, and none can exist; there is no fossil man, and there can be none; and yet to-day we speak of fossil monkeys as of old acquaintances, and trace back fossil man, not only to the diluvian, but to recent tertiary formations, though some obstinate persons still assert that Cuvier's principle cannot be controverted.'"

It was easy to believe in the account given in Genesis before the geologists began to explore the

secrets of the fossil-bearing strata of the earth, just as it is easy for a Salvationist now to believe in it because he is absolutely ignorant on the subject. If the Bible said that all vegetation, including fruit trees, was created on the third day, fishes and birds on the fifth day, and animals, including "cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth" (Gen. i. 24), were created on the sixth day, there was nothing to contradict it. But things were changed now, to continue the quotation from Vogt:—

"It is scarcely twenty years since I learned from Agassiz: Transition beds, palæozoic formation—Empire of Fishes; there are no reptiles in this period, nor could have existed, as it would have been contrary to the plan of creation. Secondary formations (Trias, Jura, Chalk)—Empire of Reptiles; there are no mammals, nor could be, for the same reason as above. Tertiary strata—Empire of Mammals; there are no human beings, nor could have been. Present creation—Empire of Man. Where is at present this exclusive plan of creation? Reptiles in the Devonian strata, reptiles in coal. Farwell, then, Empire of Fishes! Mammals in the Jurassic formation, mammals in the Parbeck limestone, which some consider as belonging to the lowest chalk. Adieu, then, Empire of Reptiles! Man in the upper tertiary strata, man in the diluvium. Good-bye, Empire of Mammals!" (pp. 455-6).

As Professor Huxley pointed out, although "it is expressly stated that aquatic animals took their origin on the fifth day, and not before," yet "there is absolutely no fossiliferous formation in which the remains of aquatic animals are absent. The oldest fossils of the Silurian rocks are exuvie of marine animals." Again, he further observes, to agree with the Bible,—

"the order in which animals should have made their appearance in the stratified rocks would be this: Fishes, including the great whales and birds; after them all varieties of terrestrial animals except birds. Nothing could be further from the facts as we find them; we know of not the slightest evidence of the existence of birds before the Jurassic, or perhaps the Triassic, formation; while terrestrial animals, as we have just seen, occur in the Carboniferous rocks."

And, further, "we ought to have abundant evidence of the existence of birds in the Carboniferous, the Permian, and the Silurian rocks. I need hardly say that this is not the case, and that not a trace of birds makes its appearance until the far later period which I have mentioned."*

Agassiz was too deeply rooted in the old ideas to change his views. As Professor White says, "In his heart and mind still prevailed the atmosphere of the little Swiss parsonage in which he was born," † and the knowledge that, in upholding the old views, he was fighting a losing battle, embittered the last years of his life. Professor Tyndall relates meeting with Agassiz in the United States, at Mr. Winthrop's beautiful residence near Boston. Rising from luncheon, they halted in front of a window.

"Earnestly, almost sadly, Agassiz turned and said to the gentlemen standing round, 'I confess that I was not prepared to see this theory received as it has been by the best intellects of our time. Its success is greater than I could have thought possible.' " ‡

Carl Vogt, on the other hand, in the true spirit of science, accepted the new facts. He confesses:—
"This theory, as then advanced, certainly found me a violent and sincere opponent; but as it is now proved, I must confess that it appears to me to afford, better than any other theory, a clue to the affinity of individual types, and it seems in every respect a step in advance towards the knowledge of the truth. When I opposed the doctrine of the gradual transformation of types, I was certainly much prejudiced by received opinions, which obtrude upon anyone engaged in scientific researches." §

Up to this time—or, to be quite accurate, four years earlier, Vogt's work being published here in 1844—the Churches of all denominations, had shown a united front in opposing the advance of the new

* T. H. Huxley, *Lectures and Essays* (1902), pp. 19-20.
† A. D. White, *The Warfare of Science*, vol. i., p. 68.
‡ Tyndall, *Fragments of Science* (1876), p. 514.
§ Carl Vogt, *Lecture on Man*, p. 446.

scientific facts and ideas. But the wiser and more knowing ones, who knew the strength of the enemy, saw that ultimately this stubborn attitude would end in disaster. Besides, they had the example of the Catholic Church in its campaign against the movement of the earth; and they concluded that it would be better to capitulate to the inevitable, and make the best terms possible in the circumstances. This was the origin of the famous *Essays and Reviews*. The idea was to surrender what Mr. Gladstone later on called the "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," and concentrate their forces in defence of the idea of God and a future life, which most people believed in on the authority of the Bible.

The result was the appearance in 1860 of the famous volume of *Essays and Reviews*, which consisted of seven essays, six of them by the most learned clergymen in the Church, namely, Dr. Temple, Rev. Rowland Williams, Professor Baden Powell, the Rev. H. B. Wilson, Rev. Mark Pattison, and the Rev. Professor Jowett. Only one contributor was not in Holy Orders; this was C. W. Goodwin, who contributed an article on the "Mosaic Cosmogony," which more immediately concerns our subject, although it was not more drastic than Rowland Williams' review of Bunsen's *Biblical Researches* or Baden Powell's "Study of the Evidences of Christianity," which was denounced as thoroughly atheistic.

Goodwin sets out to show the utter impossibility of attempting to reconcile the account given in Genesis with the facts and investigations of modern science. He observes, "in a text-book of theological instruction widely used, we find it stated in broad terms, 'Geological investigation, it is now known, all prove the perfect harmony between scripture and geology, in reference to the history of creation'" (Horne's *Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*, 1856). It is this view that Goodwin sets out to destroy. He observes that "light and the measurement of time are represented as existing before the manifestation of the sun," and notices that "The work of the second day of creation is to erect the vault of Heaven, which is represented at supporting an ocean of water above it.....It is said to have pillars, foundations, doors, and windows" (p. 219).

After going through the six days of creation, he observes that there can be little doubt as to the literal meaning of the writer, and it is beyond dispute that for centuries "its words have been received in their genuine and natural meaning. That this meaning is *prima facie* one wholly adverse to the present astronomical and geological views of the universe is evident enough" (p. 223). But the most damaging part of the essay was the revelation that not only did the geological record flatly contradict the Bible record, but that the reconcilers of the Bible and science were in violent contradiction among themselves. Having agreed to abandon the obvious meaning of the text, they immediately began to quarrel as to what the meaning was. In fact, the reconcilers required a super-reconciler to reconcile them.

Dr. Buckland, for instance, in his "Bridgewater Treatise," felt at liberty to introduce millions of millions of years between the beginning in which God created the heaven and the earth, and the evening or commencement of the first day. Goodwin shows how Hugh Miller—who had adopted Buckland's suggestion—was obliged, after further investigation, to give it up. "Other geologists," says Goodwin, "have proposed to give an entirely mythical or enigmatical sense to the Mosaic narrative, and to consider the creative days described as vast periods of time" (p. 236); this in turn being rejected by Archdeacon Pratt in his *Science and Scripture not at Variance*.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

The dear *Daily News* recently quoted the words of an "artillery colonel" with regard to the Allies offensive: "The day will come when we shall shake heaven and earth with a stupendous rain of explosives." Feathers should be cheap on the day when heaven is shaken.

Famous Freethinkers I Have Known.—VI.

MRS. ANNIE BESANT.

FREETHOUGHT recognises no distinction in sex, color, or race in its advocates or adherents. From time immemorial there have been Freethinkers, male and female, who have devoted their lives to the service of the cause. The fair, wise, and beautiful philosopher Hypatia, consecrated her life to the service of Freethought. France has produced many lady advocates of Freethought, and so also has America. In this country the most famous I remember were Mrs. Annie Besant and Mrs. Harriet Law.

In a previous article I have recorded my recollections of Mrs. Harriet Law, in this one I propose to give some reminiscences of Mrs. Besant as I knew her when she was unquestionably the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most powerful lady advocate of Freethought that this country ever produced.

From J. M. Wheeler's splendid *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, I learn that Mrs. Besant was born on October 1, 1847. Educated in Evangelicalism by Miss Marryat, sister of the famous Captain Marryat, the novelist, she shortly afterwards turned towards the High Church by reading Pusey and others. A diligent study of the Gospels led her to recognise that they contained a number of very glaring contradictions, but she set her doubts at rest for a time by regarding her scepticism as a sin too wicked to entertain.

In 1867 she married the Rev. Frank Besant, a clergyman of the Church of England and brother of Sir Walter Besant, the famous novelist. Soon afterwards she read extensively the controversial literature on religion and science. A study of Greg's *Creed of Christendom* and Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* did much to increase and deepen her scepticism. She subsequently became acquainted with the Rev. Charles Voysey and Mr. Thomas Scott, the publisher, for the latter of whom she wrote an essay on "The Deity of Jesus of Nazareth," "by the wife of a benighted clergyman." This led her husband to insist upon her taking the Communion or leaving. She chose the latter course, taking, by agreement, her daughter with her. When thrown upon her own resources, she at first wrote several tracts for Mr. Scott, but she ultimately threw the weight of her brilliant intellect and extraordinary talents into the Freethought cause.

In 1874 she succeeded James Thomson (B.V.) on the staff of the *National Reformer* and wrote a weekly article over the signature of "Ajax." The following year she took to the platform, and being naturally very eloquent, she soon won for herself a place as the leading lady advocate in the Freethought movement.

In 1880 Mrs. Besant matriculated at the London University, and in 1882 she took 1st. B.Sc. with honors. A lady with such extraordinary talent was bound to make a name for herself in any movement.

I had the pleasure of hearing her first lecture delivered as a kind of introduction to the great Radical Party of this country, at the Co-Operative Society's Hall, Castle-street, upon "The Political Status of Women." Mr. George Jacob Holyoake presided and Mr. Bradlaugh had a seat on the platform. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, in her admirable life of her father, tells us that Mr. Bradlaugh was so impressed by Mrs. Besant's eloquence on that occasion that he considered it "as probably the best speech by a woman" he had ever listened to.

I heard her frequently. Naturally she was very fluent of speech, with a wonderful vocabulary of words, at once expressive and eloquent. She had a pleasant, cultured voice, a most earnest style of delivery, and a well-trained logical order of mind, which succeeded in convincing people of the truth and justice of the cause she pleaded by her powerful reasoning, her fascinating style, and the great enthusiasm with which she grappled with her subject. Her linguistic knowledge was simply marvellous. I

remember attending the International Freethought Congress in 1876 at the Hall of Science. On the Saturday evening Mr. Bradlaugh was in the chair, and, just before the rising of the meeting I rose to continue the discussion on "Secularism, Positivism, and Spiritualism," when he told me that I should have the first place in the discussion on the following Sunday morning at 10.30. I knew that it was important to be there in good time, because I had learned from experience that if I was not present at the moment he took the chair he would call upon someone else to resume the discussion. So I hurried home, wrote out my speech on the subject, and when the time came I mounted the platform and delivered it to the best of my ability, occupying exactly a quarter of an hour in delivery. Professor Louis Büchner, the distinguished German scientist and philosopher was in the chair. Immediately afterwards, Mrs. Besant rose and translated my speech into French—for the benefit of the French delegates—occupying about the same time as I had taken to read my paper. Then she translated a Dutch speech into English, and delivered a part of her own speech in German for the benefit of the distinguished German. Her most notable efforts at oratory, however, were no doubt when she spoke for two days on the social aspect of the Malthusian doctrine before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn in the trial of the Queen, Bradlaugh and Besant, and later when she appeared against the decision of the Master of the Rolls on the question of depriving her of the custody of her daughter on account of her heretical opinions. On each of these occasions she showed herself to be a perfect mistress of all the arts of oratory, argument, persuasion, wit, eloquence, and logical force.

On one occasion I had a chat with a theatrical manager—Mr. Joseph Arnold Cave—after hearing Mrs. Besant speak, and he said to me, "My dear Sir, if I could only get Mrs. Besant as the leading lady at my theatre I could make a fortune. Why, Sir, she would thrill the audience, and in a week my theatre would be all too small for me." As a matter of fact, Mrs. Besant's power of attracting an audience was almost equal to that of Mr. Bradlaugh himself. Mrs. Besant was very proud of her power of moving an audience. At one of the N. S. S. Conferences held at Birmingham in the 'eighties, the speakers at the evening meeting at the Town Hall were Mr. Besant, Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Thomas Slater, and Mr. G. W. Foote. All the speeches were extremely eloquent, but I think I can say without the slightest intention of flattery, that the finest speech delivered that evening, both for the matter and the manner, was in which he handled the subject, was delivered by the Editor of this journal. The polished, literary form of the speech, the splendid power of exposition, the great flights of oratory, the magnificent peroration, combined to make the speech a perfect masterpiece. Mr. Bradlaugh himself seemed very much impressed by it; but, as I have said, all the speeches were so brilliant that it was very difficult to judge between them. When Mrs. Besant got off the platform, she came straight to me and asked what I thought of her speech. I probably thinking I was a pretty good judge of public form eloquence. I replied in one word, "brilliant," and she seemed to be pleased with my single word of appreciation, which I gave with frank and manly sincerity.

In 1888 Mrs. Besant was returned as a Member of the London School Board for the Tower Hamlets Division. Shortly afterwards, I, as an officer of the Board, came in conflict with my employers, and was prohibited from delivering Freethought lectures on Sunday or selling any of my pamphlets or publications on that day. Mrs. Besant, in a masterly speech, defended my right to lecture on Freethought on Sundays, upon which day I was not in the service of the Board; and, as a result, the resolution was rescinded. I shall always feel grateful to Mrs. Besant for the splendid fight she made on this occasion in my behalf. She also fought splendidly for Mr. F. J. Gould, a schoolmaster under the

School Board, who was grossly persecuted on account of his heretical opinions.

When Mrs. Besant became a Socialist, her personal influence as well as her great argumentative power carried many Freethinkers with her out of our movement into the Socialist ranks, which regarded social questions of more importance than purely speculative questions on religion. When she debated with Mr. Foote at the Hall of Science on "Is Socialism Sound?" I had the honor of presiding one evening during the debate. And a very extraordinary thing happened. During the debate, the reporter who had been engaged to take verbatim notes, suddenly came over faint, and was unable to proceed with his work. This occurred while Mrs. Besant was speaking. I tried to call her attention to the fact, but failed, and when she rose to deliver her final speech she charged me with being unfair, and not allowing her an equal amount of time with her opponent. Now, anybody who knows me knows that I would not be guilty of doing an injustice to any man, more especially to a lady. I was willing that Mrs. Besant should take as much time as she thought necessary in her last speech, but when her fifteen minutes was up she resumed her seat, and I felt sorry that I had not publicly mentioned the incident, which only a few near the platform had observed.

I hope Mrs. Besant forgave me, for I had no intention of doing her an injustice. Mrs. Besant remained with the Freethought Party until she publicly pronounced herself to be a Theosophist, and then she asked us to carry on her work in a new sphere, and under different conditions. But we as Freethinkers should always be grateful for the splendid work she did for us while she was an advocate of our Cause; she won over to our movement hundreds of men and women who remain with us to-day, and bless the name of Mrs. Besant for having destroyed in them the poisonous germs of an insidious superstition, and enabled them to tread the narrow path that leads to truth, happiness, and progress. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Deus Loquitur.

TRANSPORTED by the Muses, in a trance I wandered vaguely in etheric space; The vast and shapeless region whence come dreams. And there, methought I marked two ghostlike forms Intangible as figures born in fog. The Supreme Spirits they, of heaven and hell: And as I viewed their insubstantial forms, Behold, a voice in sombre brooding tones! 'Twas he, the foremost, lord of heaven, that spake Unto his compeer, Lucifer the fell.

"Oft have I thought, O Lucifer! since we, Along with our creator Man, began Evolving into consciousness of self; Emerging from our first crude ignorance Of Time and Change and vast Eternity, What a most mystifying paradox Is that which is, and that which makes it be! What worth are all the things that ever were Throughout Eternity's unceasing change? What worth is Man who made us, in the vast In which he moves a moment that scarce counts In all that was and all that yet shall be, Of vortices of change unlimited? We two, his gods, are, but while still persist The phantoms of his own phantasmal mind; Creatures like him, that change with changing Time; Brought to existence in the flux of things; As insubstantial as his own vague dreams. Yet Man, who made us, deems that I made him Whose meaning he himself ne'er understands Incompetent unchangeability! Incomprehensibility profound! O wondrous fascination of mere sound! Yet makes me break a god's most primal law By making him, in mine own image true; With will as free as e'er he deemed mine own What cause for laughter, if 'twere not so grim With tragedy for his own happiness!

For though Man made us twain, he deems that I Am cause alone of all that e'er could be, And sway alike his greatest weal or woe; Yet his own priests, the midwives of our birth, Now tell him 'E'en Gods powers are limited; His will can only act when not opposed'; Vainly I try to understand the minds Of those who vow I have created them; They chant that I 'rule everything that is'; Yet me, through their free will, they can defy, And let you sway them wheresoe'er you will; Nature, they sing, makes manifest my will According to the laws that I have framed; Yet they ne'er blame me for her vagaries That often wreck their aims and dearest hopes; Tho' you, O Lucifer! they often blame, Although they say that I have conquered hell; They say my highest attribute is Love; Yet priests call bloody war 'A Day of God!' And eager urge them bend their highest powers To blast themselves worse than their dreamborn hell; Each ever claims that I fight on their side; Each swears that yours is their opponent's cause; Perceiving not how they themselves delude. They vow that I have power o'er every heart; Yet never marvel that I do not change Their tyrants selfish hearts from lust of power That wrecks on them black miseries untold; But watch aloft in dumb indifference, Doing, as I have ever done, no-thing. One could extend a catalogue like this, But that it bores worse than divinity. Truly, whatever sense they reft themselves With which, as added grace, me to endow, Their minds they must have shed of every scrap Of humor."

Then sounded mocking laughter That thrilled with sneer of cynical disdain; Silence ensued; there came a mighty gust, As though all space had heaved a weary yawn; And lo! the bard awoke to things of earth.

W. J. KING.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 24.

Present: MESSRS. Bowman, Britten, Cohen, Cunningham, Davidson, Gorniot, Heaford, Jackson, Judge, Leat, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Thurlow, Wood, White, Miss Kough and Mrs. Roleffs.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cohen was elected to the chair.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance; Benevolent Fund Committee, Messrs. Davey, Leat, Roger, Samuels, and Wood; Monthly Auditors, Messrs. Leat and Samuels.

New members were admitted for the Parent Society and the Camberwell and West Ham Branches.

Instructions were given for open-air Demonstrations to be held at Brockwell Park and Edmonton Green.

Notices of Motion, Nos. 9, 10, 12, and 13, remitted from the Conference Agenda, were dealt with, and Messrs. Davidson, Rosetti, and Shore were elected as a sub-committee to carry out Resolutions 10 and 13 (incorporated).

Minor matters of business were dealt with, and it was resolved that, in order to give longer time for discussion, future Executive meetings be held at 7 p.m.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

The official news of the War published in the newspapers has the same air of sober restraint manifested in the Go spite narratives. A good story of the effect of such reading is told by the Manchester Guardian. Two workmen were discussing the War, and one remarked it would be a long job. "It will an' all," replied his mate. "The Germans are taking tens of thousands of Russian prisoners, and the Russians are taking tens of thousands of German prisoners. Presently all the Russians will be in Germany and all the Germans in Russia, and then they'll have to fight to get home."

"Woman," says Miss Marie Corelli, "was not created by a Divine Intelligence to be a toy or a domestic drudge, but a comrade." What a pity the Divine Intelligence made so few hits and so many misses.

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.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., 3.15, "Washed in the Blood of the Lamb"; 6.15, "The Evolution of the Christ Myth."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Religion and War."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, F. Schaller, a Lecture. Parliament Hill: 3.15, Miss Kough, a Lecture. Regent's Park: 3.15, F. Schaller, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, L. B. Gallagher, a Lecture.



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