

THE Freethinker

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If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there, and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us.

—H. D. THOREAU.

More About the Mons Myth.

The two protagonists of the angel guard at Mons myth are the Rev. R. F. Horton and the Vicar of All Saints, Clifton, Bristol. They made themselves responsible for the truth of the story by stating that they possessed, or had seen, letters from soldiers relating their experiences. When Mr. Machen exposed the whole thing as a pure invention of his own, both of these gentlemen might have cleared their characters by producing the evidence upon which their statements were based. Neither have done so, and so it is fair to assume that neither can do so. They furnish examples of the way in which statements of this kind are put into circulation by men who are convinced that any method is a good one where religion is concerned, and who are strengthened in this conviction by the feeling that the better type of Christians will remain silent for fear of bringing discredit upon their community, and that Freethinkers cannot affect them because they appeal to a too limited audience. Dr. Horton said in the *Evening News*, "I should not myself call them miracles." Neither should I. To be exact, if not courteous, I should use a shorter word. And that word is not sufficiently uncommon for it to provide a suitable subject for a guessing competition.

So far the more personal aspect of the matter, upon which I have already said sufficient. There remains those non-personal aspects without which the whole subject would be of little or no importance.

There are millions of Christians in this country who profess to believe in the existence of supernatural beings—gods, devils, angels, and the spirits of departed human beings. Since this War commenced millions of these believers have prayed for supernatural help and intervention. Assuming this belief to be genuine—to be of the kind, that is, that would lead one to risk something on it—what is there surprising in the story of the angelic guard? Clearly, nothing. God is there, the angels are there, the British—who are the special favorites of God—are in trouble; what, then, more credible than some kind of supernatural intervention in behalf of the Allies? It is the kind of thing that simple and sincere belief would expect to happen, and which it has a right to expect would happen.

But it seems that even Christians have expressed their doubts of the truth of the story, and have demanded proofs. These proofs the Vicar of All Saints, Mr. Gillson, declines to give. Further, he expresses his surprise that so much astonishment should be shown. "It is," he says, with charming innocence, "precisely what we have been praying for all along should take place." And with the most complete relevancy he asks:—

"Why should it seem more strange that a regiment of Prussian cavalry should be held up by a company of angels, and their horses stampeded, and our infantry delivered from a hopeless position, than that an angel

with flaming sword should have vanquished Balaam, or that St. Peter should have been delivered from the hand of Herod by the intervention of an angel?"

Why, indeed? The only possible explanation is that the people have only a bogus belief in supernatural intervention. If they really believed in it they would expect it. Their demand for proof is thus symptomatic. It suggests the nature of the conditions which gave stories of angelic visitation reality. For at no time in human history was there any proof of supernatural visitations. It was the belief which furnished the proof, not the proof that commanded the belief. As Mr. Gillson says, there is nothing more remarkable in a band of angels beating off the German soldiers than an angel appearing to Balaam. The difference is not in the incident, but in us. Two thousand years ago—five hundred years ago, the story would have seemed to religious ears eminently credible. It is incredible to-day precisely because we have realised the nature of the conditions that give such stories vitality.

Dr. Horton believed that the story of the angelic guard was "eminently credible," because "such phenomena are a constant fact in history; we have many instances of supernatural beings appearing and exerting an influence on human life." They are nothing of the kind, and we have nothing of the kind. All we have is evidence that people have believed in these appearances and in their influence. And that is a vastly different thing. But, then, that statement is not in dispute. No one denies that people have believed this kind of thing in all ages, and if proof be needed, it is there in the person of Dr. Horton himself. But the essential question is not the existence of this belief in all ages, but why people held that belief. The inquiry is not one of evidence, it is one of history and psychology.

And, quite naturally, Dr. Horton puts the cart before the horse. He takes as evidence for the truth of Mr. Machen's invention a fact which contains, substantially, its disproof. The appearance of angels at Mons in 1915 is to be accepted as genuine because the same thing is said to have occurred in earlier ages. But in matters of this kind, we do not judge the present by the past; we judge the past by the present. The beliefs of the past are tested by the knowledge of the present. Thus, it is a fact that people believed in demoniacal possession. If Dr. Horton will consult his New Testament he will find that Jesus Christ believed in it. And all the facts upon which that belief is based are with us to-day. The New Testament description of the behavior of people who were "possessed," fits exactly the state of people now. And with what result? We do not say that these people we know are possessed, neither do we deny that the New Testament characters may have foamed at the mouth or fallen unconscious to the earth. All we do is to frame an explanation that will cover both the ancient and modern cases, with the result that the Devil disappears, and a simple case of mental derangement is there in its place.

Thus the question of whether the angelic appearance at Mons is true or not is not a matter of evidence at all. It does not turn upon whether the testimony of certain officers is reliable or not (as a matter of fact, we know that this particular evidence was manufactured by Dr. Horton and others—or

others), it is solely a matter of understanding the mental conditions that give rise to a genuine belief in the miraculous. And the type of mind that lends easy credence to the supernatural is, unfortunately, not yet extinct. It is less powerful and less prominent than it was, but it is still with us, disguised though it may be in a more elaborate terminology and a more civilised dress. That is at least one of the lessons that the circulation of such a ridiculous story carries. And if a visitor from another planet were to pay us a visit, he might well wonder by what right people who could believe such a story called themselves civilised. Educated they may be; civilised they certainly are not. Their outlook on life is still that of the primitive savage; for between the savage praying to his tribal god for help and seeing the activity of tribal ghosts in the affairs of life, and the twentieth century parson affirming the reality of hosts of angels between a retreating army and its pursuers, the difference is substantially *nil*.

In the next place, the story provides a useful lesson in the growth of religious legends. Let us bear in mind that this story appears in an age that prides itself upon its education. It is an age in which natural science has made enormous developments, when nearly everyone is able to read and write; an era of cheap books and newspapers, when apparently every possible check exists to the growth of myth and legend. And if, under such conditions, it is still possible to invent and circulate as true this fantastic tomfoolery, how much easier must it have been to manufacture and circulate stories of the miraculous at a time when newspapers were unknown, education the privilege of the few, and the whole social atmosphere saturated with supernaturalism? In the light of this story, what cause is there for wonder at belief in the miracles of the Old and New Testament? The wonder is not that these things were believed; the wonder is rather that people were brought to the point of disbelieving them. It is not the stupidity, but the intelligence, of man, that provides cause for wonder.

Finally, there is the strong light thrown upon the ethics of the Christian pulpit by this story. One can well understand people of a deeply religious mind, and under the stress of great excitement, imagining they saw supernatural beings interposing between themselves and their enemies. One can further understand a number of people believing that it occurred. There is nothing here but mere credulity and an overwrought imagination. But what are we to say of two men like Dr. Horton and the Vicar of All Saints, who not only repeat the story, but profess that it is supported by such evidence that its truth is placed beyond doubt, and that they have actually seen the letters describing the appearance of the angels? One might even have believed that these letters were actually in existence but for Mr. Machen's timely confession that he invented the whole story. He actually told this to Dr. Horton himself. Dr. Horton did not question his authorship; he did not say he was sorry at having misled the public. All he said was that such things had occurred before—and I agree with him. It is not the first time in Christian history that stories have been concocted in order to support Christian teachings. It is not the first time that Christian clergymen have deliberately manufactured "proofs" of the stories so concocted. Neither is it the first time that they have faced exposure with a brazen effrontery perfected by long practice.

I have dealt at great length—it may be at too great length—with this legend at Mons because I feel sure that we have not heard the last of it. It is too good a tit-bit for the clergy to easily let go. All the authoritative denials have not prevented the clergy circulating the story of Queen Victoria declaring the Bible to be the source of England's greatness. All the ample disproofs offered have never prevented them circulating the lies about the last hours of Paine, and Voltaire, and Bradlaugh, and other great Freethinkers. And the "angelic guard" of Mons is pretty certain to turn up again. So it is

well to have placed upon record the fact that the story was invented by a London journalist, that his claim has not been contested, and that the letters and testimony in support of the appearance offered to the public by prominent clergymen never existed outside their own imagination.

C. COHEN.

Baseless Assumptions and the War.

It is well known in the Christian world that Principal Alexander Whyte, D.D., LL.D., possesses an exceedingly vivid and highly original imagination. As both preacher and author, it is his luxurious imagination that gives him his pre-eminence among his brethren. His booklet entitled *The Four Temperaments* is a literary gem of the first water. His brilliant and illuminating works on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding* are rightly estimated as among the very best interpretations of the Bedford man of genius. But in whatever capacity Dr. Whyte comes before us, it is his gorgeous imagination that makes him such an outstanding character. Sometimes, however, the imagination runs away with men who are in the habit of throwing the reins upon its shoulders, and commits them to uncritical, un-historical, and misleading conclusions. Of this, a lamentable instance is to be found in the leading article in the *British Weekly* for July 1, which is entitled "The Remorse of James: Another War Sermon," and comes from the ingenious pen of Principal Whyte. In this eloquent discourse, the reverend gentleman's imagination simply runs unrestrained by any curb, and treating mere fancies as established facts. Dr. Whyte takes it for granted that the writer of the epistle of James was a brother of the Gospel Jesus, and then pictures him "for thirty years eating every meal at the same table with Jesus Christ, the Son of God; working the six days of the week in the same carpenter's shop with him; going up on the Sabbath day to the same synagogue with him; and once every year going up to Jerusalem to the same passover with him." Now, in spite of that thirty years' intimate companionship, when Jesus entered upon his public ministry, James, so far from being sympathetic, is represented as sitting in the seat of the scornful, and as joining with his other relations in calling him mad (Mark iii. 21). According to Dr. Whyte, James "did his best to get this wayward brother of his to leave off his so-called Messianic ministry, and to come home to his proper work," and in this attitude of unbelief and hostility he patiently persisted until after his brother's crucifixion and resurrection. Such being the alleged case, the Principal asks, "With such painful and unpardonable memories in his mind, how could James possibly keep a bitter and a poignant remorse out of his apostolic style?"

Thus we see that Dr. Whyte's imagination has run away with him with a vengeance. The foregoing delineation of James's career is entirely fanciful. It is highly doubtful whether Jesus had any brothers and sisters at all. The Principal cannot be ignorant of the fact that this is a hopelessly perplexed question upon which scholars of distinction are in variance. Jerome was fully convinced that Jesus had neither brothers nor sisters, and that those styled in the Gospels were but cousins. As Farrer says, "Each person can form upon the evidence a decided conviction of his own, but it is too scanty to admit of any positive conclusion in which we may expect a general acquiescence" (*The Life of Christ*, p. 84). That this is a controversy upon which whole volumes have been written, no hearer or reader of Dr. Whyte's sermon would even remotely suspect. But even assuming that Jesus had a brother called James, who became an apostle and head of the Jerusalem Church, there is absolutely no evidence that he wrote the epistle that bears his name. Indeed, there is much internal evidence that this epistle does not belong to the apostolical group of writings.

As Professor Orolo wisely says in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* :—

"The lamentable condition of the churches which is depicted—too much teaching, the unbridled tongue, worldliness, deference to the rich and scorn of the poor, an eagerness for trade and gain, jealousy and faction, wars and fightings, and the absence of the wisdom that is from above—is not by any means that of Primitive Christianity."

Professor Bacon, of Yale University, holds the same opinion, saying that "James and Jude were probably not the real names of the writers of the 'general' or 'catholic' epistles (*Making of the New Testament*, p. 190), and characterising the same as "Pseudo-Apostolic Epistles." Ignoring this conviction of eminent scholars, Christian divines like himself, and assuming, in the absence of any proof, that James, the Lord's brother, was the author of the epistle, Dr. Whyte draws upon his imagination thus :—

"I may be quite wrong, but I never read the epistle of James that I do not think that I detect an ever-present pungent personal remorse in the style of James.As I study James and his apostolic epistle it becomes as clear as day to me that, looking back on his unbelieving and unconverted days in his mother's house in Nazareth, James now sees himself to have been at that time full of those hateful and woe-working lusts of the mind and of the heart that he now writes about so experimentally, so autobiographically, and so remorsefully."

After reading the whole epistle several times with the utmost care, we are totally unable to find the slightest trace of the autobiographical and remorseful element so confidently spoken of by the erudite Principal. Indeed, apart from two allusions to "the Lord Jesus Christ" (i. 1; ii. 1), there is nothing in it of a distinctively Christian character, and Spitta regards those allusions as interpolations. Whether they are such or not, the rest of the little book might have been written by a Jewish non-Christian. In the early Church it fared very badly, being omitted by the Canon of Muratori. Until we arrive at the time of Irenaeus, there is not the remotest sign of acquaintance with it, and it is not certain that even Jerome actually quotes from it. Tertullian treats it as either non-existent or spurious, while Eusebius puts it among the controverted books, admitting that it was generally reckoned spurious. Jerome recognises it as a genuine New Testament document, but contends that it was composed by someone unknown who wished to add to its authority by attributing it to the Lord's brother.

The point of supreme importance in this connection is that, with the two exceptions already mentioned, the epistle of James contains no specifically Christian passages. It deals only with moral and social problems. Many of its sayings are wholly true and wise, and applicable to all times and peoples. "Is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy." In its absence we always have jealousy and faction, resulting in confusion and every vile deed. If a man is wise, the fact will verify itself in his good life and his works; but the prevalence of bitter jealousy and faction in the heart testifies to the entire absence of wisdom. Being a believer in God and the Devil, the writer acknowledges another type of wisdom, which he describes as "earthly, sensual, devilish"; but this we look upon as the quintessence of folly. Then follows this important pronouncement :—

"Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasure that war in your members? Ye lust and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war" (iv. 1, 2).

We frankly recognise the truth and temperateness of that extract, and we find the same sentiment more beautifully and forcibly expressed by many Pagan philosophers. We claim that the source of the wisdom which condemns war as an evil originating in blind lust is human, earthly, neither divine nor devilish; and the same remark is equally true as

applied to folly. But the usually mild and gentle and polite Dr. Whyte loses his temper and raves, employing wild, exaggerated language which no wise man in full possession of himself would ever condescend to use. He refers to the various books issued—white books, yellow books, and blue books—in explanation of the cause of the War, but he expresses his preference for "another kind and color of book, even the white book of the New Testament," particularly the epistle of James. Then comes this angry outburst :—

"At the same time, in our day, all the books of all the colors are at one with the apostle in tracing home to the present Emperor of evil-minded Germany, and to his evil-minded counsellors, the real cause and the true origin of this infernal War. And, indeed, with this present Scripture open before us, and with our ears open to the past and present utterances of the Emperor, we cannot get past the clear proof of where the awful blame of this present pandemonium lies."

It never occurs to the reverend Principal that the Kaiser may be as honest, as sincere, and as God-fearing as himself, nor that this Emperor, that Chancellor, the military advisers, the professors, and the diplomatists of Germany are not necessarily godless, unchristian, malignant, poisonous, and satanic simply because they believe in and assert the justice of their cause. Having cursed the Kaiser and his military counsellors in the most extravagant language at his disposal, Dr. Whyte gives us this choice, very Christian, bit :—

"Even so, there are other men who will have a much heavier account to settle on that day [the Day of Judgment]. Speaking for myself, I would far rather be the fatally misled Kaiser on that day of account than I would be his favorite Court preacher."

Had the Emperor of Germany but had for a chaplain a preacher and faithful witness of the truth like Moses before Pharaoh, and a whole host of similar brave, unpurchasable heroes down to John Knox before Mary, Dr. Whyte "cannot believe that he would have been the God-forsaken man he is to-day." But why has God forsaken William II. and the Fatherland he loves so much? Why has the Supreme Ruler of the Universe allowed a finite being like the Kaiser to plunge Christendom into "this diabolically conceived and diabolically conducted War"? Is the German Emperor, or the Devil behind him, stronger than, and can prevail against, the omnipotence of Heaven? Merely to ask such questions is to betray the utter absurdity of the position taken up by this Edinburgh ambassador of the Prince of Peace!

We hold no brief for Germany and its cause; but we do most emphatically condemn as fundamentally irrational and unjust their denunciation of the shadowy authority of the alleged brother of Jesus Christ. Germany may be, probably is, very culpably in the wrong, but certainly not as the outcome of being God-forsaken. If an all-powerful, all-just, and all-loving Father has forsaken Germany, then he, and he alone, not the Kaiser and his ministers, must be held responsible for this savage War.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Oracle.

THE present lamentable Civil War (for such it is essentially) is putting five persons to a severe test, namely, the Militarist, the Diplomatist, the Capitalist, the Idler, and God. Civilisation will probably rid itself of all five at much the same time. But, as I am aware that this proposition approaches delicate political ground, I will drop the disrespectful reference to the Idler, Capitalist, Diplomatist, and Militarist—without any apology to them—and discuss the remaining element of the unhappy group.

The belief in Gods is not a sort of superficial idea which can be knocked out by smart argument, just as naughty boys remove the stone balls at the entrance-gates of villas. It is a habit ingrained by the traditions and practice of ten thousand years;

for I suppose it may be said that theology is somewhere about ten thousand years old, not reckoning the period of fetishism and magic out of which the Gods were slowly evolved. This belief was, in effect, a belief in an Absolute; that is to say, belief in a providential will that was always trustworthy, a divine wisdom that never made mistakes, and a supernatural good sense that invariably adjusted itself to difficulties, and outwitted opposition, whether from Fallen Angels, or the Heathen or French critics.

So long as the human mind—that is, the collective mind of civilisation and of its barbaric relatives—lacks self-reliance, so long will it pray to the Absolute, and appeal to the Absolute for guidance and sanction. Conversely, so long as the human mind prays to the Absolute (God, Allah, Brahma) and appeals to the Absolute for guidance and sanction (Bible, Koran, Vedas) so long does it acknowledge its quality of dependence and even servility. That excellent military critic and devout Catholic, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, has quite rightly warned us of the danger of the Servile State; by which he means a social order governed by bureaucrats, Government clerks, and fussy inspectors with suburban intellects. But, as a matter of fact, the Western world is just emancipating itself from the Servile Order of theology; and when the emancipation is complete, the bureaucracy will also disappear. Both theology and bureaucracy imply an Absolute Right—the God whose rule is perfect—and the superior class of gentry whose breeding and whose University degrees render them immaculate organisers of the proletarian mass. This is another way of saying it is no use merely to argue a man out of his theological belief. You must train his nature (or, if you cannot do it, the experience of the centuries will) out of the ancient spirit of subservience.

Weakness goes to oracles; strength forms its own judgments. Weakness relies upon God, Revelation, Gospel, the Foreign Office, the *Times*, the Inspector. Strength studies the human situation, estimates the human forces and possibilities, and plans a course which cannot claim to be the Absolute Right, but the Relatively Best in the circumstances.

The ancient Greeks had too fine a sense of humor to venture on publishing a divine Scripture: hence, there is no Hellenic Bible. But they had oracles, of which the typical example was the Pythian oracle at the temple of Delphi. The Pythia, or priestess, was led by her interpreter, or *Prophetes* (prophet) to a tripod which stood over an opening in the ground, whence issued a cloud of natural fumes. In reply to the anxious questions of pilgrims and deputations, she shrieked inarticulate sounds which the Prophet explained in more or less intelligible Greek. The Prophet most likely announced an oracle which had been previously agreed on by a committee of judicious Delphic priests. Very often, the oracle shrewdly and usefully met the case in point, as when, for instance, the Greek ships were about to engage the huge Persian fleet, and Delphi declared that the safety of Athens lay in her "wooden walls"; and the battle of Salamis confirmed the sensible proposition.

If even the witty and wise Greeks, not having yet attained adequate command of natural and scientific resources, felt the need of an Absolute, it is no wonder that Europe has taken so many ages to release itself from the bondage of the oracle.

The European War is a powerful factor in this release. It has revealed the impotence of the Absolute. It throws us violently, but beneficially, upon the native value of human instinct, reason, and mutual aid. Theology is dying in a storm, to the melancholy strain of *Gott Strafe England*.

Take the problem of Universal Service, commonly, but erroneously, called Conscription (which is choice of soldiers by lot). Ought England to follow the example of her Allies, and compulsorily enrol every fit young man in a military register, and require him to undergo military training, and, at given call, to go out to do battle with the enemies of the country?

I do not propose to state my own opinions on this subject; but I will indicate the two methods of dealing with it; the one involving an appeal to the Absolute, the other being Relative and Human.

The Absolutist, whether Tolstoyan, or Quaker, or Ultra-Nonconformist, will say something like this: "To-day my fellow-man is contrary to the law of God; hence, I would sooner face the wrath of man than disobey the Divine Governor of the Universe." If you ask him how he knows what God's law is, he opens the Bible, and closes the argument. A number of people who just now worship at the altar of the *Labor Leader*, or commune with one another in the Anti-Conscription Fellowship, use this theological language. I respect such persons; but I respect them less than the Foxes and Penns of the early generation of the Society of Friends. In those seventeenth-century days, the genius of liberty, religious and political, was far more dependent upon individual energy and conviction than it is at the present moment. In our age, we work in groups, associations, and allied forces, and with a far deeper sense of responsibility to the social whole. Dissent is necessary; but all life is more organic than formerly, and dissent and Freethought must be more organic; that is, they must be tested and checked at every turn by a consideration of the public welfare. But your Absolutist places God higher than the public welfare. In other words, he tends, conscientiously enough, towards anarchy in relation to man, and loyalty in relation to God. Society, however, cannot allow its interests to be dominated by honest people's interpretation of the will of God. The theological sanction has far less value for social action than in the age of Fox and Penn; and the man who objects to arbitrary service in the name of God is trying to do the business of virtue in depreciated paper. He may be entirely sincere, but he has offered us the wrong currency.

A candid logic obliges one to add that we must likewise reject the plea of the Atheist or Agnostic who makes his conscience the sole basis of refusal. Whoever does this is erecting conscience to the place of the Absolute, supreme and infallible. Most certainly, we must consult conscience; but we must not always consult it with perpetual reference to the views and needs of the community of which are the offspring and servants. I do not suppose there are many Absolutists of this class; but I believe there are some.

Civilisation is now closely approaching the point of self-reliance. This implies that the health of mankind, physical, intellectual, and moral, has reached an immensely higher level than that of the Christian age, or the ages of polytheism and magic. We are almost prepared (I dare not say quite so) to administer the globe by a Relative Truth arrived at in the chamber of discussion rather than by an Absolute Truth announced to kneeling vassals by an oracle from behind a screen. The question of military service, therefore, like all other commonwealth questions, must be decided after careful pondering over its political aspects, its economic aspects, its moral aspects, its international aspects. On none of these aspects can an isolated conscience speak with authority. You and I and the others must interchange thought. Happy shall we be if we can perform that interchange with as few words as possible, with as little ink as possible, with as much good humor as possible. From our debate, conducted through conversations, parliaments, press, and all sorts of ebbs and flows of ideas and passions, we shall get at a conclusion which, relatively to time, place, and education, is the most advisable and helpful for the republic. The method of Relativity is the more economical. It saves labor. If a dogmatic sally out with the Bible, and tells you the military service riddle is solved by that authority, you are condemned to waste time in finding counter-texts to those which he cites, or in arguing points of Biblical criticism and origins. I submit, also, that the method of Relativity is more honest, because more patient. With a little reluctance, I must say that

the man who relies on Absolute Truth ("the Bible says so," "Jesus Christ declares," "conscience dictates," etc.) betrays the weakness of impatience. He shouts "Truth!" and bangs the door in your face; which is not only rude, but a sign of laziness, because he is evidently unprepared for the toil of examination, reflection, and critical test. Far be it from me to censure the old Greeks who resorted to Delphi, and offered sacrifices and gifts in hopes of a favorable reply from the oracle. Socrates himself did not disdain the compliment which the Pythia paid him. But to-day our resources are vaster, our outlook wider, our manhood stronger. Not to the Mosaic tables, not to the Bible, not to Pythia on the tripod, not to the hermit conscience which is a law unto itself, does modern civilisation go for light and direction. It matures its decisions relatively, imperfectly, but with increasing sureness and sanity, by applying the lessons of its own evolution, and appealing to the suffrages of the world.

F. J. GOULD.

William Morris.

The Collected Works of William Morris, edited by May Morris. 24 vols. Longmans.

The publication of this handsome edition of Morris's works, which would have pleased the poet himself, furnishes an opportunity to call attention to a very remarkable man. For Morris's claim to wide recognition is not exclusively a literary one; it is in a large sense democratic.

William Morris died nearly twenty years ago, and during his lifetime he was overshadowed by the greater figures of Browning and Tennyson. Even yet the main body of readers have but a slight acquaintance with his work, and lie under the delusion that he was an able but monotonous poet and a fearless iconoclast, with a weakness for fine printing and artistic wall-papers. Such is the impression still prevalent regarding a writer whose ability is hardly noteworthy than his versatility in the world of letters, and respecting a man who so largely moulded the minds of his generation. Much of his work may prove of transient interest; but when time has done what criticism can but feebly attempt, and severed the gold from the dross, there will still remain a precious legacy to this country. Concerning his artistic work there need only be a passing remark here. Its influence has been, and will continue to be, one of profound value.

Morris's literary works fill twenty-four volumes, his verse occupying about half. A poet who comes before the world with so vast a body of verse must have no insignificant claims in order to justify his pretensions. Morris's merits lie, for the most part, upon the surface. In the art of story-telling in verse he is without a modern rival, and he is eminently readable. Like Macaulay, in prose, the reader is never for a moment in doubt of the writer's meaning. His verse demands no intellectual effort. His ideas are never smothered beneath the jewelled panoply of alliteration. He never sacrifices the spirit to the letter, alliterating not wisely but too well. Of all modern poets, he approaches most closely to the sweet-souled master, Chaucer, although Morris wanted the humor of the old bard. *The Earthly Paradise*, like *The Canterbury Tales*, contain a number of stories linked together by a thread, and is singularly adapted to Morris's genius, for his perfect mastery of language, the splendid ease with which he tells his stories, and his fidelity to nature, leave no doubt with whom his place must be in the appreciation of all those who love real literature.

The Life and Death of Jason is a poem of over ten thousand lines. Another goodly volume contains *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*. *The Defence of Guenevere*, *Poems by the Way*, and *Love is Enough* would each have made the reputation of a lesser poet. His translations of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Homer's

Odyssey increase the bulk and value of Morris's poetical works.

In his prose writings he also left the stamp of a vigorous individuality. His sustained energy, his fearlessness, united to his genius, were sure to assert, sooner or later, the influence he had fully resolved on exciting. He never shrank from advocating his Socialist views. He saw there were wrongs to redress, and he came forward as the champion of the sufferers impotently struggling under the onerous conditions of a commercial civilisation. At the time of the Trafalgar-square riots, he found himself in the prisoner's dock of a London police-court, and, when asked his name, proudly replied, "William Morris, a poet well-known throughout Europe."

It is the work of every poet to go through the ideas current in his generation, and sort out the good from the bad, the true from the false, and establish by his artistry the universal truths which are in such constant danger of being lost, or abused, or foresworn. And it is the poet's vision which enables him to tell which are good, regenerative ideas and which are merely spurious, worn-out mendacities that have accumulated in process of time, and which have come to be accepted as true only because no one has had the courage to question their falsity.

Morris beckoned us away from the Christian superstition, which had never a fascination for an intellect that admired the more vigorous qualities of the older mythologies. Secularism permeated his thought, and it was ever united with a love of simple things, and a warm and generous heart ever open to sympathy for the poor and misused, to stupid, stumbling, and broken humanity, to the beggar at the gate, the slave in the factory, the captive in the shop. He saw that life can be a harsh, ugly, cruel, and unreasonable adventure, and its pitiless injustice often breaks through his imagination, and forces from him a cry of pain.

Morris's Freethought comes out clearly in his treatment of death. He is as materialistic as Swinburne in regarding it as "the popped sleep, the end of all." To him there is no life beyond the grave. This thought is expressed constantly in his verse. The wanderers, who having vainly sought an earthly paradise, found instead that their wasted lives ended—

"Where all things end in death at last,"

are still eager to gain some pleasure out of the dregs of life; for:—

"Since a little life at least was left,
They were not yet of every joy bereft."

In *The Doom of King Acrisius* there is a beautiful picture of two lovers thrilled with a finer tenderness by the idea of the final parting. "O love, to think that love can pass away" is the sad thought of Andromeda, still flushed with joy; and Perseus, in reply, says if she needs must think of the black night creeping on, then let her hold closer to her bliss. The same thought is the burden of a song in *Ogier the Dane*:—

"Kiss me love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death."

While Morris looked upon the world with a smile upon his lips, the tears were very near his eyes:—

"O thou who clingest still to life and love,
Though nought of good, no god thou may'st discern,
Though nought that is, thine utmost we can move,
Though no soul knows wherewith thine heart doth yearn,
Yet since thy weary lips no curse can learn,
Cast no least thing thou lovedst once away,
Since yet, perchance, thine eyes shall see the day."

The apathy of age lulled to rest the seekers after the earthly paradise:—

"Lo!

A long life gone, and nothing more they know—
Why they should live to have desire and foil,
And toil that overcome brings yet more toil,
Than that day of their vanished youth, when first
They saw Death clear, and deemed all life accurst
By that cold overshadowing threat—the end."

Again and again he urges this view with sweet compassion:—

"Ah! what begetteth all this storm of bliss
But Death himself, who crying solemnly,
E'en from the heart of sweet forgetfulness

Bids us 'Rejoice, lest pleasureless ye die,
Within a little time must ye go by,
Stretch forth your open hands, and while ye live
Take all the gifts that Death and Life may give.'"

Such was Morris's view of death—the view of a man whose mind dwelt among noble memories and imperishable ideals; whose sole business in life was to bring culture to those of his fellow-men who were contented with lesser recollections and ignoble desires:—

"No braver, no trustier, no purer,
No stronger and clearer a soul
Bore witness more splendid and surer
For manhood found perfect and whole
Since man was a warrior and dreamer
Than his who in hatred of wrong
Would fain have risen a redeemer
By sword or by song."

MINNERMUS.

The Fourth Gospel.

A NEW PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS.

ACCORDING to the three Synoptical Gospels, Jesus Christ came from Galilee to Judea, and was baptised by John the Baptist in the river Jordan; after which he fasted forty days in the wilderness of Judea, and was there tempted by the Devil. Then, after the Baptist had been cast into prison, he went back to Galilee and commenced to preach his new gospel (Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14). His public ministry which followed is generally supposed to have lasted about a year; but, whatever its duration, it was carried on up to within a fortnight of his crucifixion, solely in the northern province of Galilee. During his ministry, it is true, Jesus is stated to have several times crossed in a boat to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, and to have returned in the same way; but these excursions do not in any way affect the question of his ministry in Galilee. He never once left the northern province to visit Judea or Jerusalem until less than a fortnight before his arrest and trial. His departure from Galilee is recorded in Matt. xix. 1, Mark x. 1, and Luke xiii. 22: his entry into Jerusalem is mentioned in Matt. xxi. 10, Mark xi. 11, and Luke xix. 45. He continued his ministry while travelling, and, as will be perceived by comparing the departure and arrival chapters and verses, Luke has devoted more than six chapters to his teaching during the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus was arrested six days after entering the holy city.

We now turn to the "Gospel of John." In the public ministry recorded in this Gospel, the writer has made Jesus spend nearly all his time in Jerusalem or some other part of Judea, with only three flying visits, lasting but a few days, to Galilee.

In the first of these (John ii. 1—12) Jesus came to Cana of Galilee, in which village he turned water into wine; then he went to Capernaum, where he "abode not many days": after which he went back to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Passover. The miracle of turning water into wine was wrought before John the Baptist was cast into prison (John iii. 24); that is to say, before Jesus had begun to preach in Galilee in the three Synoptic accounts, and before he had chosen any disciples. Yet the writer of the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as having his disciples with him, and says that they "believed on him" after witnessing the miracle.

In his second visit (John iv. 43—54) Jesus is stated to have come again to Cana of Galilee, and while there to have healed a nobleman's son, who was lying sick at Capernaum, by saying "Go thy way; thy son liveth": after which he went up to Jerusalem to be present at "a feast of the Jews." The three Synoptists knew nothing of "Cana of Galilee," or of the two miracles which the pseudo-John records as having been wrought there.

In his third visit (John vi. 1; vii. 9) Jesus suddenly appeared near the Sea of Galilee, and there miraculously fed five thousand persons and walked on the sea, as recorded by the three Synoptists. On the

morning Jesus made a long oration to the multitude: chiefly about eating his flesh and drinking his blood—a subject upon which the Jesus of the Synoptics never once opened his mouth—and, the feast of Tabernacles being at hand, Jesus again went up to Jerusalem.

The three foregoing paragraphs comprise the whole of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee recorded in the "Gospel of John": all the rest of the twenty-one chapters having to do with Jerusalem and Judea. Now, if we erase from the ministry in Galilee recorded in the three Synoptics the events related in the foregoing paragraphs of John, we shall see how much of that ministry—or rather, how little—is recorded in the Gospel of the pseudo-John. We have, then, but to strike out Matt. xiv. 13—34, Mark vi. 30—53, and Luke ix. 10—17—that is to say, less than one chapter in each of the Synoptics. Hence, while Jesus, according to the Synoptical Gospels, is choosing disciples, wandering up and down Galilee, preaching in Capernaum, Nazareth, and other cities and villages, healing the blind, the lame, the deaf, and the lepers, casting out "unclean spirits," raising a widow's son and a ruler's daughter, walking through cornfields, instructing disciples, upbraiding cities for their unbelief, teaching the people by means of parables, feeding four thousand, causing himself to be transfigured, and preaching and healing in every part of the province—while Jesus is thus employed in Galilee in the first three Gospels, he is, according to the "Gospel of John," either in Jerusalem and its temple, or in some part of Judea, arguing, wrangling, or quibbling with all the Jews he meets, and making ridiculous speeches upon matters which the Jesus of the Synoptics never uttered a single word.

Now, it goes almost without saying that the Gospel Jesus could not be in two places widely apart at one and the same time. It is therefore perfectly certain either that the accounts in the three Synoptics are pure fiction, or that the narratives in the Fourth Gospel are fabrications. Of course, the three Synoptic accounts, as well as that of the Fourth Gospel, may all be fictitious; but since we are compelled to reject one or the other, it must be that of the Fourth Gospel. The three Synoptists, as we know, drew the main portion of their narratives from a more primitive Gospel which had been in existence for several decades, and two of them—Matthew and Luke—took additional matter from later apocryphal writings; but the narratives peculiar to the "Gospel of John," not being found in either of these sources, they must have been concocted by the writer of the Fourth Gospel himself. From this obvious fact there is no escape.

Orthodox Christian writers have compiled what they call "Harmonies" of the four Gospels, in which every chapter or important paragraph in each is placed in chronological order. The chief difficulty in the construction of such a "Harmony" is to find places for the narratives in the Fourth Gospel. This can only be done by ignoring positive statements in the Synoptics and making breaks in their narratives. Take, for instance, the following:—

John ii. 13.—"And the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

John iv. 43.—"And after two days Jesus went forth from thence into Galilee."

John v. 1.—"After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

John vii. 2, 10.—"Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of Tabernacles was at hand.....then went Jesus also [to Jerusalem]."

In the three Synoptics Jesus never once left Galilee to go to Jerusalem—save when he left that province for good, a few days before his death. Then, after having come into Judea, the few days which preceded his arrest and trial were so fully occupied, that there is no place for the insertion of all that the writer of the Fourth Gospel has represented him as saying and doing in Judea and Jerusalem. Hence, as already stated, the three Synoptic accounts of the public ministry of Jesus in Galilee completely exclude that

which the pseudo-John has described him as carrying on in Jerusalem and Judea.

THE CALL OF ANDREW AND PETER.

The fraudulent writer of the Fourth Gospel conceived the idea, amongst other details, of making Jesus commence his public ministry before the time when that personage is stated to have done so in the primitive and the Synoptic Gospels. The events in chronological order recorded in the first three Gospels are as follows:—

- (1). Jesus came from Galilee to Judea.
- (2). *He was baptised by John the Baptist.*
- (3). He fasted forty days and nights.
- (4). He was tempted by the Devil.
- (5). *John the Baptist cast into prison.*
- (6). Jesus returned to Galilee and began to preach.
- (7). He called Andrew and Peter to be disciples.

It is unnecessary to go farther: the two Gospel events given in italics are all that need be kept in mind. It is between those two Synoptic events that the pseudo-John has placed all the imaginary events and circumstances which fill his first four chapters. He knew perfectly well that Jesus did not return to Galilee and commence his ministry until after the Baptist had been cast into prison: but he thought he had disarmed criticism by saying: "For John was not yet cast into prison" (John iii. 24). The last three of the foregoing events in the first three Gospels are thus briefly recorded:—

"Now when Jesus heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum.....From that time began Jesus to preach and to say, Repent ye, etc.....And walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left the nets, and followed him" (Matt. iv. 12, 13, 17—20).

Here it will be seen that Jesus, after his fasting and temptation, remained in Judea until he heard that the Baptist had been cast into prison. Then, he did not until then, he decided to commence preaching himself, and went back to Galilee alone, having no disciples. Soon after reaching the northern province, however, he called the brothers Andrew and Peter to follow him. Though it is not expressly stated, it is clearly implied that these two fishermen had never seen Jesus before, nor he them: it is also quite certain that the two were not disciples of Jesus until called to that position near the Sea of Galilee. Bearing these facts in mind, we will now notice some of the events which the pseudo-John has recorded as having taken place on the day after the baptism of Jesus—while the latter was in the wilderness of Judea just commencing his forty days fast:—

"On the morrow [after the baptism of Jesus] John the Baptist was standing, and two of his disciples; and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples turned.....And they said unto him, Rabbi, where abidest thou? He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see..... And they abode with him that day.....One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth his own brother, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah. He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of Joanes: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation Peter)" (John i. 35—42).

"On the morrow" of the foregoing day, the fraudulent writer makes Jesus find two more disciples, Philip and Nathanael, and then he goes back to Galilee accompanied, apparently, by the four. Now, according to the Synoptics, Jesus had not even these two days free to walk about where John was baptising; for as soon as his baptism was completed by the descent of the dove upon him, he was led by the "Spirit" into the wilderness to commence his forty days fast:—

Luke iv. 1.—"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted by the Devil," etc. (also Mark i. 12).

It will thus be seen that the narrative by the pseudo-John flatly contradicts the Gospels that were in existence in his day. He knew that in those Gospels Jesus did not commence his ministry in Galilee—or anywhere else—until after the Baptist had been cast into prison, and that the call of Andrew and Peter did not take place until after that. Though he knew well these alleged historical facts, he could not resist the temptation of trying to concoct a better story than the old traditional one—and he did so.

ABRACADABRA.

Acid Drops.

We were very pleased to see in the *Daily Mirror* a strong protest against the stupid use of the word "Pagan" by our politicians and parsons. Ever since the War commenced we have been told day after day that we are fighting for the Christian doctrine of Right makes Might—backed up by Dreadnoughts and high explosive shells—against the Pagan doctrine that "Might is Right." The *Mirror* is roused to protest by the special utterance of the Bishop of London, who may safely be trusted to give the crowning dose of stupidity to anything he handles, and it points out that wherever the Germans got this doctrine from, it was certainly not from the Pagan world. And it gives this sharp rap on the knuckles to Bishop Ingram:—

"You might as well say that they got it from St. Paul, for St. Paul says: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.' How easy for Treitschke to transform that fatalism into 'might is right,' since it only says, in so many syllables, that it is right to recognise might! We need not so interpret it, but neither need we so misinterpret 'paganism'—so insult it—as to suppose that its wise men, its leaders of thought, its philosophers, its statesmen, would give the smallest moral support to the essentially Teutonic arrogance of to-day."

This is distinctly good—there is nothing here that will be new to our readers, but to the average Christian reader of the daily newspaper it will be news indeed.

In these days of cheap editions of translations of the Greek and Roman classics, it wants some amount of courage to repeat this libel on Paganism. Mr. Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides are within reach of everyone, and essays on the various schools of Greek and Roman moralists abound. All of them are simply saturated with the teaching that mere brute force and arrogance brings disaster sooner or later, and this is the note of Aeschylus equally with Euripides. Even on the religious side the ethical note in Greek and Roman religion was stronger and more pronounced than it was with Christian theology. That brought degradation here as elsewhere. There is full warranty for the *Mirror's* comment that in this use of the word "Pagan," "It needs the complete forgetfulness or Lethe that descends upon the Englishman's reading of the ancients after schooldays, to allow our great personages so to display their ignorance of the best in the ancient world, from which we could afford, alas! to borrow so much, that we cannot even attempt to do as well as they."

There is, however, more than forgetfulness here. In part it represents and illustrates that policy of misrepresentation, slander, and deliberate untruthfulness that has always been prominent in the history of the Christian Church. For centuries it has been the set policy of Christian speakers and writers to paint the old Greek and Roman world as the quintessence of all that was vile, in order to make the Christian world appear bright by comparison. Thanks to this persistent policy of slander, "Pagan" has come to mean not only something unchristian—that were, in its way, a compliment—but a synonym for brutality, greed, and bestiality. It stands as such in works even by first-class writers; and as the mass of people take their ideas from the "leaders" of the people, it has in this form become familiar to the ordinary man or woman. A "Pagan" meant originally nothing more than a villager. Later it became identified with non-Christian, because the old religion lingered on in the villages long after it had ceased to exist in the towns and cities. And then, because of the truly Christian plan of slandering everything that is not Christian, it became a synonym for everything that was beastly and brutal. Of course, men of genuine culture know better; but men of genuine culture are few, while the clergy are many, and—taking them in the lump—of much the same stamp from the first century to the twentieth.

The well-known hymn asks Christians to "stand up for Jesus," and one of the faithful has dared to stand up against a profane non-commissioned officer. At the Primitive Methodist Conference, this unknown hero, who "refused to allow the 'non-com.' to swear at him," was eulogised. It is said that he was "promoted the next morning." Certainly he deserved the distinction.

Sir Arthur Markham has the credit of making the finest Parliamentary "bull" of the year by his announcement that the military huts on Salisbury Plain are "a mass of holes from top to bottom." It is quite as good as the famous theological "bull" concerning the "bottomless pit."

The late Mr. Corlett, editor of the *Pink Un*, a facetious sporting periodical famous for its naughty anecdotes, was a very religious man. "He read the lessons in Sutton Church, and took great interest in ecclesiastical matters," says one of the newspapers in an obituary notice. Why not? There is a striking resemblance between the blue stories of the Bible and the racy yarns he used to print in the *Pink Un*.

"There is," said Lord Bryce recently, "no country in Christendom where religion exercises such power as in Russia." Just so! And the "intellectuals" who have been sent to Siberia know it.

An elaborate Government Blue Book has been issued which deals with animal tuberculosis, and which is illustrated with many diagrams showing the stages of the disease. The publication should prove of use to the defenders of the Benevolent Design Argument, and to the peripatetic patrollers on Christian Evidence platforms.

"War is £ s. d.," says a daily paper. Is it? Many regard it as simply hell.

On June 29, at the Mansion House, Mr. Asquith inaugurated a National Thrift Campaign. Everybody is exhorted to practice the most rigid economy until the conclusion of the War. The *Church Times* thinks that in this respect the clergy can help by adding "the sanction of religion to the claims of patriotism." Not to be behind the *Church Times* we venture to add our "little bit" by suggesting that the clergy could commence by abolishing Church collections, and collections for missionary work both at home and abroad. We are inclined to think that if the clergy were to preach that until the end of the War no more subscriptions were to be given in either of these directions, the advice would be acted upon generally and immediately. This would liberate a very large sum for investment in the War Loan, and we feel quite sure that most Christians would prefer a return of four and a half per cent. in certain Government stock to any dividend that is payable only in the New Jerusalem.

After all, and with all seriousness, if economy is a national duty, economy in expenditure on religion should take precedence. It is little less than imbecility to ask for the most careful economy in personal expenditure, and at the same time spend about three millions annually on Foreign Missions, and over twenty millions on religion generally. This is waste, and criminal waste, in times of peace, let alone in time of war. If all the money and time and energy spent on religion during the last fifty years by the nations now at war had been spent in forwarding rational social development, this War might never have occurred. Foreign Missions do not prevent war, they tend to create it. Religion does not stop war, it creates, and perpetuates, and sanctions barriers such as make war inevitable. If we must economise, let us therefore commence with what we need least, and can do best without.

George Jacob Holyoake once got into serious trouble with the authorities by suggesting that "God" should be treated like retired military officers and placed on half-pay. Not to be outdone, we suggest knocking off the other half.

"If we do not win this War I do not think that I shall have any diocese left," says the Bishop of Pretoria. Have all the Afrikaner men and women joined the colors?

In an article on Carlyle and his excursions into German history, Mr. William Archer asks if Carlyle was to blame for the present situation. Mr. Archer has made a bad shot, and must bend his bow again.

A London newspaper has been complaining that women do not often get a chance of occupying pulpits in the churches, and says that the clergy object. Of course they do. Don't they wear potticoats themselves?

Mr. A. G. Hales, the famous war-correspondent, has been indulging in the pleasant pastime of bishop-baiting. Writing in *John Bull*, he says "Some of our bishops have been to the fighting Front, and have come back screaming like a pack of old women." Did Mr. Hales expect their lordships would lay the Germans out with blows from their croziers?

"The war-prophets have all been wrong," says a London paper. They are very like the religious variety.

Our contemporary, *London Opinion*, has a good jest on the clerical boasting concerning the War. "The Bishop of Durham predicts a great religious revival as a result of the War. Already we hear of consols being converted whole sale."

"The influence of religion has never been so great," says the Bishop of Birmingham. Perhaps his Lordship was thinking of the compulsory attendance of soldiers and sailors at divine service.

The Theistic Church, for so long identified with the late Charles Voysey, is leaving its old quarters in Swallow-street, Piccadilly, and seeking a fresh home. With true Christian kindness, the *Church Times* hopes that, as there are more than enough English sects, the Theistic Church will painlessly expire. We remember an old adage to the effect that example is much better than precept, and in the present instance we should like the sect represented by the *Church Times* to lead the way.

A question was asked the other day in the House of Commons concerning the advisability of suppressing a group of persons calling itself a Peace Committee. The Attorney-General, Sir J. Simon, said that the matter was under consideration. Whereupon Mr. Outhwaite pointed out that this group professed to take as a guide the book which says "Blessed are the peacemakers," and suggested the need for suppressing the New Testament at the same time. The Attorney-General made no reply.

"This War is to be won not merely by high explosives, but by personal piety, and by the prayers of the saints," says the Rev. H. B. Chapman, Chaplain of the Savoy Chapel. Unfortunately, the prayers of the saints, which are alleged to move mountains, cannot shift the enemy fast enough.

The clergy are in the confidence of the Deity. Here is the Rev. H. B. Chapman telling us that "God cannot bless this country until all have learned the text, 'Little children, love one another.'"

Perhaps it would not be quite true to say that the scientific man turned religious talks more stupidly than the one who is religious all through the chapter, but it is true that it sounds more absurd. This is doubtless because one expects better things from a professed teacher of science. At any rate, here is Sir Oliver Lodge endorsing the stock absurdity that this War illustrates the revolt of Germany against Christianity. And why? Well, because Christianity says the weak shall overcome the strong, and Prussia worshipped strength. Therefore the Allies are championing Christianity against Germany. Could anything be more ridiculous? The War is not a contest of weakness against strength, but of strength against strength; and, as usual, the decision will rest with the strongest battalions. German guns have to meet French, British, Russian, and Italian guns. The physical force of one side is matched against the physical force of the other. True, there are other kinds of force, but here, again, there is the same contest. Moral and mental strength are matched against moral and mental strength. The average German is as convinced as can be that he is fighting in defence of his fatherland. So are all the rest. There never was a war to which the same generalisation did not apply. And why not face the fact that, misled as we believe the German people to be, there is the same physical, mental, and moral conviction behind their fighting that lies behind ours? What is the use of belittling the forces against us? How much better, and in the long run much more profitable, to face the facts and have done with it? But it seems that once religion is introduced, it is next to impossible for a man to pursue a topic with intelligence.

To Correspondents.

records of his own folly and crime. I regard Mr. Salt as one of the first of British reformers.

I read Mr. Moss's article on Mrs. Annie Besant last week with great interest, especially as the lady is still living. He praises her highly, more highly than I should do myself, in spite of her gifts and graces. The most undeniable thing about her is her personal generosity; but I am not pressing that now. Some day or other, when I am writing my own autobiography, she will come under review in a spirit, I hope, as generous as her own nature. That she was drenched with calumny was rather a tribute to her character than almost anything else that can be conceived. As the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church—which is no flimsy fancy, but an eternal truth in the language of metaphor—so the leaders of Freethought may show the most odious libels upon them as testimonials to their courage, their purity, and their truth.

During my own Freethought work, which now extends a good deal over forty years, I have myself been accused of nearly every crime in the *Newgate Calendar*, and some that are still out of it. The only accusation I escaped, I think, is that of murder; but an accusation of murder necessitates the production of a corpse, and as I have certainly not made one yet, this accusation presents an insuperable difficulty. Still, if everything hangs on this, I am willing to oblige the Christian enemy by the disappearance of one of their own friends; the same kind of evidence being considered sufficient which was so triumphant in the court that tried and settled the founder of Christianity. I dismiss this aspect of the case in the words of one of Shakespeare's characters. Go to! "Shall we have incision? Shall we imbrow?"

Mr. Moss mentions the general circumstances of Mrs. Besant's separation from her husband, and in a fair way generally. She was abominably treated in the separation from her child, but was there not something to be said for the husband's side of the case? When a Church parson's wife goes through a country village advocating Atheism, surely the elements of a tragedy are present, without more odious accusations on either side, or from that "ghastly, grim, and ancient" public, which has displaced its malignity at least ever since the days of Lucian's *Dialogues*. The situation of both parties was intolerable and impossible.

Curiously enough, Mr. Moss omits all mention of Moncure Conway, who had very great influence over Mrs. Besant, and was her friend in many ways before she met Bradlaugh at all. It is not quite true that Mrs. Besant followed or "succeeded" James Thomson, the poet, on the staff of the *National Reformer*. There was a quarrel. Thomson wrote a warm letter to Bradlaugh about it, and ceased to contribute. More need not be said now. Poets are proverbially irritable, and editors are proverbially haughty.

Opinions differ as to Mrs. Besant's eloquence. Mr. Moss's opinion will not be endorsed by everyone. I do not endorse it myself, but I cannot do more than say so in the present paragraph. Unfortunately, any criticism of Mrs. Besant bristles with difficulties and dangers. Towards the end of his eighth paragraph, Mr. Moss pays me—yes! poor me—a most extraordinary compliment. As it appears in the *Freethinker*, I need not reproduce it. It refers to a speech of mine in the Birmingham Town Hall in the early ages after one of the N. S. S. Conferences, Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh being amongst the list of speakers. One cannot repel such a compliment, neither can I embrace it at the expense of old colleagues. I leave it as and where it stands. Mr. Moss has a right to his own judgments, and a right to express them.

G. W. FOOTE.

Donor's HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Previously acknowledged, £95 11s. 1d. Received since:—McMullen, 5s.; T. Warwick, 10s.; "Jersey," £1; A. Hopkins, 5s.; W. Hickman, 2s. 6d.; A. J. Marriott, 2s. 6d.; G. Smith, 10s. 6d.; C. F. Simpson, 10s.; F. G. Margetson, 5s.

—We do not quite see the point of your letter—at least so far as it concerns us. We have never hidden our hatred for Prussian militarism, nor our conviction that the swaggering peace of the "Mailed Fist" party constituted a real danger to the peace of Europe. Neither have we hidden our conviction that the first and most pressing duty of this country is to resist aggression whenever it is directed against it. But the conviction that Germany is in this War the arch-offender need not blind us to the fact that the general policy of all the nations of Europe has been for years of such a kind as to make war always a dangerous possibility. We have simply tried to keep a level head, and to assist others in doing the same. That is our aim. And a level head is best indicated in being alive to our own faults as well as to those of other people.

—Glad that you found the article and the notes on Law so interesting. It is only by old Freethinkers indulging in reminiscences that the memory of some of the pioneers of Freethought will be preserved.

—Order handed to shop manager. Please try and be moderate towards even the Bishops. The poor men must say something, if only to keep themselves before the public. And can they say anything—as Bishops—under present circumstances without making themselves ridiculous? If people will maintain "medicine-men" in the twentieth century, one must expect them to behave as such.

—Mr. Foote has not abandoned his project of a book on Shakespeare, but that, with other things, must remain in abeyance until he is able to get back to work. We are pleased to have your appreciation of the *Freethinker*, and at the risk of being thought conceited, we venture to say that its staff deserves the compliments you offer them.

—writes asking if it is not time that a branch of the N. S. S. was formed in Edinburgh. Certainly, it is time, not only in Edinburgh, but in many other places in Scotland. If those interested will make a start, we shall be pleased to help all we can to assist.

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—If you send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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Personal.

The Humanitarian League brings out one number only and August, which is not a bad idea when you are pinched, as all advanced societies must be while the war-fever is raging. You halve your expenses in one stroke, and probably retain most of your readers to pay the bill with. I hope this at least is the experience of the *Humanitarian* under the direction of Mr. H. S. Salt; but subscriptions are evidently very acceptable, as I see from the report of the League's annual meeting in the new number of its monthly organ.

Mr. Salt has spent his life in progressive movements, and we know of no reformer who is better worth honoring. His work has always been based, upon the eternal principles of the moment, but upon those principles which man always finds regarding him with a mingled look of benign wisdom and sad reproof when he has closed a new chapter of the

Sugar Plums.

We print in another column a letter from Mr. Harry Snell, Secretary of the Secular Education League, to which we hope some of our readers will pay prompt attention. Readers of the *Freethinker* do not need telling that the work of the League is of first-rate importance, and that its collapse would be little short of a national disaster. The constitution of the League is of the most catholic character, while the presence on its Executive of Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen is a guarantee that its work is carried on with unflinching devotion to principle. Moreover, we feel that when once the War is over, the work of the League will be more urgent than ever. A great social reconstruction is desirable, and in that work the nation's schools should be used as the foundation. Until the War does end, however, the Secular Education League will have to struggle hard for existence; and while its needs are not large, they are urgent. Men do not die for want of a seven-course dinner, but for want of a crust of bread; and that is also true of movements. Many of our readers can help the League, and a little timely assistance now will bear handsome interest in the work to be done in the—we hope—not very distant future.

Mr. A. Hopkins, in sending a contribution to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes:—

"Your life has been a hard one. You might have chosen a far easier, and certainly more profitable career; but I do not think that you could have filled any other position in life more worthily. You have given of your best; no man could do more. I believe you stand higher in men's esteem than you are probably aware of. Please accept my own personal thanks."

To know that one has gained the esteem of honest men and women offers compensation for much with which the advocate of Freethought has to contend.

A correspondent, who does not desire publicity, regrets that there is no intention of reprinting in pamphlet form Mr. Cohen's articles on the "angelic guard" at Mons, but offers to subscribe towards the cost of doing so if the reprinting can be arranged. This correspondent assures us that in his part of the country (West of England) the story is spreading with great rapidity, and he expects it to be used more widely after the War. Perhaps the question of reprinting may be worth reconsideration.

Apropos of this Mons myth, the *Westminster Gazette* of July 3 publishes the following:—

"Four or five months since a Scottish religious magazine with a large circulation published a story, primarily intended for children, concerning Scottish soldiers praying together in a house surrounded by Germans. The climax of the story, introduced with some skill, was the opening of the room door by a German soldier, who, seeing the Scottish men praying, closed it softly and left them. The daily papers throughout the country quoted the story as if it were actual fact and had really happened at the Front, much to the astonishment of the editor of the magazine."

This is really a variant of a much older story that used to be a favorite with Christian Evidence lecturers. But religion will never die for want of a little necessary lying.

A correspondent points out that we were not quite accurate in saying that in noting the deaths of Mr. De Caux and Mr. Brackstad the press avoided mentioning that they were Freethinkers. It seems that this fact was duly and properly noted in the *Star*. We are sorry that the paragraphs in question escaped our notice, and so led to our doing this newspaper an injustice.

We have received from the *Truthseeker* Company (New York) a very handy little volume, entitled *The Christian Mythology*, by Brigham Leatherbee. The purpose of the book is to "put upon the stand another witness to the Pagan origin of the Christian system of religion, and further evidence of the spurious nature of its dogmas, ceremonies, and rites." This task seems to have been very successfully accomplished by Mr. Leatherbee, who may be congratulated on having done a useful piece of propagandist work. There are a number of plates in illustration of the text—which add to its value. The volume is published at 75 cents.

"I am God's representative," says the dear, old Pope. It is not a unique position, for he shares the honor with so many other clerical gentlemen.

Science and the Bible.—VI.

(Continued from p. 427.)

"The next thing we are told by this inspired gentleman is that God created light, and proceeded to divide it from darkness. Certainly, the person who wrote this believed that darkness was a thing, an entity, a material that could be mixed and tangled up with light, and that these entities, light and darkness, had to be separated. In his imagination he probably saw God throwing pieces and chunks of darkness on one side, and rays and beams of light on the other. It is hard for a man who has been born but once to understand these things. For my part, I cannot understand how light can be separated from darkness. I had always supposed that darkness was simply the absence of light, and that under no circumstances could it be necessary to take the darkness away from the light. It is certain, however, that those who believed darkness to be a form of matter, because I find that in another place he speaks of a darkness that could be taken away from the light. They used to have on exhibition at Rome a bottle of the darkness that overspread Egypt."—COLONEL E. G. INNES, *Some Mistakes of Moses* (1882), pp. 22-3.

AFTER showing the mutual inconsistencies of the reconcilers and the violence they do to the words of the Bible, Goodwin proceeds as follows:—

"It is evident that the bare theory that a 'day' means an age or immense geological period might be made to yield some rather strange results. What comes of the evening and morning of which each day is said to have consisted? Was each geological day divided into two long intervals, one all darkness and the other all light? and if so, what became of the plants and trees created in the third day or period, when the evening of the fourth day (the evenings, be it observed, precede the mornings) set in? They must have passed through half a seculum of total darkness, not even cheered by that dim light which the sun, not yet completely manifested, supplied on the morning of the fifth day. Such an ordeal would have completely destroyed the whole vegetable creation, and yet we find that it survived, and was appointed on the sixth day as the food of man and animals. In fact we need only substitute the word 'period' for 'day' in the Mosaic narrative to make it very apparent that the writer at least had no such meaning, nor could he have conveyed any such meaning to those who first heard his account read."*

Goodwin made it clear that the account of the creation as recorded in Genesis is utterly irreconcilable with science, and that the various attempts to bring it into harmony was only so much plunging the sand. Further, he remarks:—

"Physical science goes on unconcernedly pursuing its own paths. Theology, the science whose object is the dealing of God with man as a moral being, maintains but a shivering existence, shouldered and jostled by the sturdy growths of modern thought, and bemoaning itself for the hostility which it encounters" (p. 211).

For several months after the publication of the *Says and Reviews*, nothing happened. The theologians were busy fighting Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which had not long been published, and the reviews were busy with the same exciting topic; added to which the effect of the central and fighting essays was masked and damped by those of a milder and more neutral character, like Dr. Temple's essay on the "Education of the World," which, as Mr. Benn remarks, "looks as if it had been placed first in the series to disarm criticism by its safe and respectful tone. If so, it very nearly succeeded. But it came too late. A force had been let loose which could neither be recalled nor controlled."†

The match was applied by Mr. Frederick Harrison of the *Positivist*. It consisted of an article contributed to the *Westminster Review* (October, 1860)—the most advanced magazine of that time—entitled "Neo-Christianity," in which the writer—who, his master, Comte, the founder of Positivism, believed that Christianity was rapidly approaching extinction—welcomed the unexpected help of these ministers of the Church towards its destruction. The title of the article, "Neo-Christianity," was singularly appropriate. It was intended to represent a parallel with the attempts of the Neo-Platonists

* C. W. Goodwin, "Mosaic Cosmogony," *Essays and Reviews*, p. 240.
† A. W. Benn, *History of English Rationalism*, vol. II., p. 117.

of nearly two thousand years ago to adjust and bring into line the ancient fables of the Greek gods, which were at that time, like Christianity to-day, becoming discredited by the growth of knowledge and morality. It is true that the writer attributes the extreme views of the more advanced writers, to all the contributors to the essays, which, of course, added to the scandal.

The order had gone forth from Oxford that the work was to be ignored, as it could not be suppressed or controverted; but the publicity given to the work by the article in the *Westminster Review* rendered the course impossible. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, who only a few months previously had made a violent attack on Darwin in the *Quarterly Review*, contributed another on *Essays and Reviews* to the same periodical, in which he denounced the work as "towards infidelity, if not to atheism"; and the writers had been "guilty of criminal levity." He was especially bitter against Professor Jowett's interpretation of the Scripture like any other, and insisted that Goodwin's treatment of the whole account of the origin of man "sweeps away the whole basis of inspiration and leaves no place for the Incarnation." The article was well sprinkled with the words "infidel," "atheistic," "false," "heresy," and the essays described as "full of pantheism and scepticisms."

The most immediate effect of this onslaught was a great demand for *Essays and Reviews*, which was demanded on every hand, edition after edition being called for. "At this," says Dr. White,—

panic began, and with the usual results of panic—much folly and some cruelty. Addresses from clergy and laity, many of them frantic with rage and fear, were poured in upon the bishops, begging them to save Christianity and the Church; a storm of abuse arose; the seven essayists were stigmatised as 'the seven oxen-lamps of the seven lamps of the Apocalypse,' 'the seven champions not of Christendom.'"

The Archbishop of Canterbury headed a declaration signed by the Archbishop of York and a long list of Bishops, expressing pain at the appearance of the book, but doubts as to the possibility of any constructive dealing with it; which only made matters worse. The old-fashioned believers decried it as irregular, and the advanced denounced it as irregular.

The storm howled on. In the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury, Archdeacon Denison attacked on the greatest severity being dealt out to the authors "for the sake of the young who are misled, and corrupted, and thrust almost to hell by the action of this book," at another time declaring:—

"Of all books in any language which I ever laid hands on, this is incomparably the worst; it contains all the poison which is to be found in Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*, while it has the additional disadvantage of having been written by clergymen."

In the Upper House of Convocation, Bishop Wilberforce "insisted on the duty of the Church to clear itself publicly from complicity with men who, as he gave up God's Word, creation, redemption, and the work of the Holy Ghost."

The matter was brought to a crisis by the prosecution of two of the contributors to *Essays and Reviews*—one brought by the Bishop of Salisbury against the Rev. Dr. Williams, the other against the Rev. Mr. Wilson by another clergyman; the result was that both were sentenced to suspension from their offices for a year. Against this sentence the two clergymen appealed, and a judicial committee was appointed, consisting of the Lord Chancellor (Guthrie); Tait, Bishop of London; the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; with some lay judges. This court reversed the sentence of the two Archbishops dissenting; Tait—sympathised with the Essayists—uniting with the Lord Chancellor and the lay judges.

One of the charges against Mr. Wilson was that he had denied the doctrine of eternal punishment, and a cynic remarked that the court had "dismissed with costs."

An alliance was now made between the more zealous High and Low Churchmen. Dr. Pusey and Archdeacon Denison were among the leaders, and a declaration expressing belief in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and in everlasting torments was sent round to every clergyman in England, Wales, and Ireland, with a letter entreating him "for the love of God" to sign it. It obtained eleven thousand signatures, "won perhaps less by the love of God than by the fear of man." Says Mr. Benn, "Numerous, however, as were the signatories, the balance of authority, as measured by position and learning, went heavily against them. Out of thirty Deans only eight adhered to Pusey's declaration; out of forty Oxford Professors only nine; out of twenty-nine Cambridge Professors only one,"* Bishop Thirlwall caustically remarking that he regarded the eleven thousand names headed by that of Pusey "in the light of a row of figures preceded by a decimal point, so that, however far the series may be advanced, it never can rise to the value of a single unit."†

The last main echo of the whole struggle was heard in the House of Lords, when the Lord Chancellor characterised the ecclesiastical act as "simply a series of well-lubricated terms—a sentence so oily and saponaceous that no one can grasp it; like an oel, it slips through your fingers, and is simply nothing."‡ The word "saponaceous," says White, "necessarily elicited a bitter retort from Bishop Wilberforce," who was known privately as "Soapy Sam."

Lord Westbury, Chancellor of England, who played such a prominent part in these proceedings, died in 1873, upon which a wit composed the following epitaph:—

"Richard Baron Westbury,
Lord High Chancellor of England.
He was an eminent Christian,
An energetic and merciful Statesman,
And a still more eminent and merciful Judge.
During his three years' tenure of office
He abolished the ancient method of conveying land,
The time-honored institution of the Insolvents' Court,
And
The Eternity of Punishment.
Toward the close of his earthly career.
In the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council,
He dismissed Hell with costs,
And took away from Orthodox members of the
Church of England
Their last hope of everlasting damnation."§

During the whole controversy, and for some time afterwards, says Dr. White, "the press was burdened with replies, ponderous and pithy, lurid and vapid, vitriolic and unctuous, but in the main bearing the inevitable characteristics of pleas for inherited opinions stimulated by ample endowments" (p. 847). Froude sums up the effect of these works upon the laymen who were neither officials in the Church nor professors of science. He describes them as "the professional commonplace of a close guild, men holding high office in the Church, or expecting to hold high office there; in either case with a strong temporal interest in defence of the institution which they represent." He observes that the scientists, the historians, the educated laymen, and the clergy who know, are silent—

"The professional theologians alone are loud and confident; but they speak in the old angry tone which rarely accompanies deep and wise convictions. They do not meet the real difficulties; they mistake them, misrepresent them, claim victories over adversaries with whom they have never crossed swords, and leap to conclusions with a precipitancy at which we can only smile. It has been the unhappy manner of their class from immemorial time; they call it zeal for the Lord, as if it were beyond doubt that they were on God's side—as if serious inquiry after truth was something which they were entitled to resent. They treat intellectual difficulties as if they deserved rather to be con-

* Benn, *History of Rationalism*, vol. ii., p. 134.
† White, *The Warfare of Science*, vol. ii., p. 346-7.
‡ *Ibid*, vol. ii., p. 347.
§ White, *The Warfare of Science*, vol. ii., p. 348.

* D. White, *The Warfare of Science* (1896), vol. ii., pp. 342-3.
† White, *The Warfare of Science*, vol. ii., p. 344-5.

demned and punished than considered and weighed, and rather stop their ears and run with one accord upon anyone who disagrees with them than listen patiently to what he has to say."*

Two years after the publication of *Essays and Reviews*, Bishop Colenso's onslaught upon the first five books of the Bible shook the Church; and although it formed a very important contribution to the liberation of thought, it treated the subject more from an historical than the scientific standpoint which we are dealing with at present.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Man and his Mother Earth.—II.

(Continued from p. 422.)

FISHING peoples do not necessarily feed on fish for preference, but because piscatorial nutriment is most easily secured. The habits of primitive fisher folk are conditioned by their environment. They dwell along the river, around the lake, or near the coast. Their lives are less active than that of the wandering hunter, as they are practically chained to their fishing grounds and the immediate area.

We all think best in moments of repose. Free-thought and shoemaking—a distinctly sedentary occupation—are notoriously associated. To fishing tribes, whose opportunities for reflection are far more numerous than those of the active and excited hunter, we may look for the beginnings of agriculture. Fish and vegetable foods now being found in company, a deeper attachment to the surrounding soil asserts itself. A larger social organism is now rendered possible, and the comparatively large populations of the ancient lake settlements in Switzerland and elsewhere indicate that man's closer connection with the soil enabled him to attain to a higher stage of evolution. The remains of these prehistoric lacustrine peoples prove them to have been far in advance of the hunting phase of development. Those extant races that combine fishing with agriculture seldom stray very far from their fields or streams:—

"Stanley found along the Congo large permanent villages of the natives, who were engaged in fishing and tilling the fruitful soil, but who knew little about the country ten miles back from the river. These two generous means of subsistence are everywhere combined in Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia; there they are associated with dense populations, and often with advanced political organisation, as we find it in the feudal monarchy of Tonga and the savage Fiji Islands."†

There is, therefore, some connection between fisher life and progress. Even in those habitats where tillage is precluded, a permanent relationship with the land is established, and the fishing station evolves into a trade centre. In British Columbia and Southern Alaska the various native tribes have "portioned out all the land about their sea-board villages among the separate families or households as hunting, fishing, and berrying grounds." We here witness the incipient stage of private estates as these lands descend from generation to generation. Rent is charged to outsiders for the use of these private domains. Each salmon stream has its special proprietor, and his habitation is placed where the fish are most abundant. A form of feudalism has arisen in these village communities as the result of the rise of a class distinguished by the possession of landed estate.

With pastoral peoples a still firmer bond between the land and the tribe is established. The distinct use which the soil now subserves aids in defining its frontiers. The nomad passes his summer on the soil which yields pasture to his flocks and herds, while in more protected spots the scanty winter herbage must be sought for. His few rude sowings are made in spring, and he returns in the autumn from his summer quarters to his cultivated patch to reap his poor but precious harvest. Thus the sense of

landed possession becomes steadily stronger as the nomad grows more and more dependent upon special areas for his means of subsistence. From the thirteenth century onwards travellers have noted similar phenomena in various parts of the Old World.

Although nomadic tribes occupy a considerable range of territory, their agricultural methods are so wasteful that every acre is drawn upon in the course of the year. In periods of peace, the social bond between the members of the tribal community is loosely held, but the appearance of enemies serves to unite them in defence of their tribal domain. Social differentiation also develops when it becomes necessary to apportion the use of particular areas to the several members of the expanding community, while extreme pressure of population will generate friction and estrangement, with the consequent migration of those who are dissatisfied with the prevalent conditions.

The more primitive a people the wider the territory essential to its maintenance. A lowly savage tribe gathers from the surrounding country what comes to hand, and when there is nothing left wanders on until it reaches more virgin soil. From where wretched crops of roots or cereals are collected from a superficially scratched earth, one spot is as attractive as another, and the wanderers roam with little restraint. As already stated, the sense of the value of particular areas only arises with the appearance of the higher agriculture. And even then it exists in an extremely rudimentary form.

It is in the most advanced social structures that the land assumes its supremest importance to the community. All civilisation is ultimately nourished by the soil. A strictly agricultural country will maintain a relatively large population in a state of rude comfort, but it is with that division of labor which permits the growth of manufactures and commerce on a widely extended scale, that the most advanced civilised societies have emerged into being.

Peoples with a far-flung territory over which they exercise little hold, fall an easy prey to those nations who deem it to their advantage to occupy or administer their habitat. A clear instance of this occurred when a handful of English emigrants quickly overcame the sparsely peopled continent of North America. In the case of densely populated countries like China, other means are adopted by those aggressive and enterprising races whose necessities create an expanding market for their commodities. In India a few Europeans administer a vast and million-peopled peninsula by utilising the appliances of modern science, and by playing off against each other the religious superstitions and social and racial antagonisms of the many ethnic stocks which make up its native populations. The American Indians, with a poor hold upon their immense territories, have been driven to the verge of extinction, and the intruding peoples have become the lords of the land. In Asia, however, both in India and China, where huge populations are supported by the process of the soil, spheres of interest in the latter, and supremacy tempered by a modicum of justice and mercy in the former are conditioned by the attachment to the earth's surface which the cultural Asiatics display.

In the evolution of civilisation it was a tremendous stride from the hunting to the pastoral stage of society. It represented an advance from a stage of life when the tribe was almost entirely dependent upon the chase, to that mode of living in which man could constantly rely on his domesticated animals for part, at least, of his food supply. Careful inquiry has proved that on land of average quality the pastoral life will support from ten to twenty times as many people as the same acreage devoted exclusively to the capture of game. This great economic yield is in turn surpassed by the enormously enhanced yield of highly cultivated land:—

"While the subsistence of a nomad requires one hundred to two hundred acres of land, for that of the sedentary farmer from one to two acres suffice. In contrast to the

* Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (1867), pp. 210-11. This was written in 1863.

† *Influences of Geographic Environment*, pp. 56, 57.

land of the Indians living in the Hudson Bay territory in 1877 averaged ten square miles per capita."

As agricultural life progresses, not merely is a constant food supply assured, but more leisure and liberty become available for more exalted activities. The rude shelters of the savage are succeeded by the primitive dwellings which form the early village settlements, and from these the larger and more convenient towns and cities have been developed. The more intensive culture of the soil also permits its rapid growth of population, and the earth increases in its importance to the people.

Among the American red races hunting was combined with a primitive husbandry. These Indians deserted their superficially tilled soil when they wandered further afield in search of game. This primitive economic agriculture is still pursued by the unimproved Korkus of India, the rude races of Borneo, and others. These savages burn down a patch of forest and utilise the wood ashes as a fertiliser of the soil. The first season's crop produces a fair return, but the second is much poorer, and the fields are soon abandoned, and the rude agriculturalists seek fresh woods for their indifferently rewarded labors.

Similar unremunerative methods still operate among the Tartars of the Russian steppes. These nomadians are very little more advanced than the German peoples described by Tacitus two thousand years ago. Yet with the increase of population and the applications of scientific discovery, all land capable of yielding generous returns for capital and labor expended, is being steadily brought under the control of those more intensive forms of agriculture which have proved so immensely valuable wherever adopted. And in considering man's close dependence on the land itself, other incidental factors must not be forgotten. Where soil and climate are alike and a severe check is imposed on agricultural production. Little advance is possible "in the intense cold of Arctic Siberia and Lapland, or the alkilene soils of the Caspian Depression, or the inadequate rainfall of Mongolia and Central Arabia." In outward areas as these the inhabitants have been unable to pass beyond a backward pastoral phase of evolution.

In addition to adverse aspects of climate and soil, the absence or presence of faunal or floral forms also must be considered in its advance. The almost incredible rudeness of the native Australian races is, doubtless, in large measure due to the entire absence of any individual animal serviceable for domestication, and of the complete lack of any cereal plant on their island continent. Some races, however, are constitutionally unprogressive. The Eskimo never appear to have domesticated the reindeer, powerful as the inducements were for such a simple process. The neighboring Chukches were accomplished reindeer breeders, yet, with this object lesson before them, never domesticated the animal. Except in a single small case, the American Indians were unable to tame the llama. Mental as well as economic differences enter into the circumstances which control the evolution of the race. In South America the llama and the alpaca were domesticated in Peru, but an unfavorable geographical range of the ichu grass coincided with the range of the alpaca and llama whose main food it was.

"In contrast, the absence of any wild fodder plants in Japan, and the exclusion of all foreign forms by the successful competition of the native bamboo grass have very effectively eliminated pastoral life from the economic history of the island." Taken as a whole, the ancient continents were endowed with animal organisms suitable for service. The highest forms of pastoral life were, in consequence, developed in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The ox, ass, horse, camel, sheep, and goat were all domesticated in the Eastern World, and there is every reason to believe that all the

most advanced agricultural peoples of Eurasia and Africa have passed in their upward progress through pastoral stages of life.

Yet we cannot ignore the contributions of the American races to agriculture. Both the soil and climate of the two Western Continents were, in the main, very favorable to tillage. The potato, various corn plants, including maize; pumpkins and beans, among others, must all be remembered to their credit. All these plants were easily sown and harvested:—

"Hence many Indian tribes, while showing no trace of pastoral development, combined with the chase a semi-nomadic agriculture; and in a few districts, where geographic conditions had applied peculiar pressure, they had accomplished the transition to sedentary agriculture."

It is sometimes assumed that with the progress of human life man becomes steadily independent of the land-surface on which he dwells. That the very reverse of this is nearer the truth, the following facts will amply prove. For while every movement towards a completer civilisation has coincided with a progressive lessening of the amount of land essential to the subsistence of the individual, it has, at the same time, necessitated a constantly deepening connection between man and his material surroundings. Other things equal, the quantity of land available to each unit of the community decreases with every increase in population, and with every invention that intensifies the utility of any available resource.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

THE FUTURE OF THE SECULAR EDUCATION LEAGUE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The increased cost of living and the multitude of appeals for special objects connected with the War, have caused many of those who have regularly supported progressive organisations to withdraw their subscriptions, with the result that the very existence of societies whose work is of great and abiding value to the community is thus imperilled. Among them is the Secular Education League.

The League has now been in existence for eight years, and it represents the first systematic attempt to link together all who believe that religion should not be taught to children by the State and at the public expense, and its success has been most encouraging. On its Executive Committee, which has always worked together most cordially and with a single purpose in view, there are two Anglican clergymen, three Nonconformist ministers, several eminent politicians and Freethinkers like Mr. Cohen and Mr. Foote. Before the beginning of the War, more than three hundred clergy and ministers were members of the League, and on its General Council there were such stimulating names as Frederic Harrison, Israel Zangwill, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, W. M. Rossetti, Graham Wallas, Professor J. S. Mackenzie, the Right Rev. Bishop Mitchinson, and the late Mr. George Meredith.

The work of the League has already justified its existence; for not only has it put the case for Secular Education before many thousands of people in this country, but it has become the parent of similar organisations in Victoria and New South Wales, while in New Zealand its literature played a conspicuous part in the victory for Secular Education which was won at the elections in December last. With so much to its credit, there is no reason to doubt that the League has before it a great future whenever the question of State religious teaching again comes before the English Parliament.

The expenses of the League have been severely curtailed to meet the present difficulties, but in order to recover the losses on current subscriptions, and to enable the League to sustain its activities during the coming year, a sum of upwards of £100 will be necessary, and it would be a great encouragement to the Committee if readers of the *Freethinker* would assist in this effort by special donations, or, better still, by subscribing to the League as members. Those who are able to do so should send direct to me at the League's office at 19 Buckingham-street, London, W.C. The amount of the subscription to the League is quite voluntary, and begins as low as one shilling.—H. SNELL, Secretary.

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): 3.15, Debate between Messrs. Quin and Gallagher, "The Existence of God"; 6.15, Mr. Gallagher, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 7.30, W. Davidson, "Is Visions About?"

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, J. J. Darby, a Lecture.



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Determinism or Free Will?

By C. COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

A clear and able exposition of the subject—the only adequate light—the light of evolution.

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