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It is the suppression of truth that gives falsehood its edge.—WILLIAM HAZLITT.

The Dynasty of Death.

CONSIDERABLE interest appears to have been aroused by the announced engagement of the Hon. Venetia Stanley, youngest daughter of Lord Sheffield, to Mr. Samuel Montagu, son of the late Lord Swaythling, better known as Samuel Montagu. Marriage between Jew and Gentile is not at all uncommon, although the fiction is still preserved that this is the case, and in this instance interest has been accentuated by the fact of the bride-elect becoming a convert to the Jewish faith. Some light is thrown on this conversion by the following clause in the will of Lord Swaythling:—

"I declare it to be my earnest wish and solemn injunction that no child of mine shall at any time or under any circumstances abandon the Jewish religion or intermarry with any person not of the Jewish religion."

How far participation in the immense estate left by Lord Swaythling was dependent upon observing the conditions contained in this clause I am not quite certain, but one may assume that some penalty was attached to its infraction. Wealthy people have an obvious motive of securing obedience—even after they are

dead. I am not really concerned with whether the Hon. Venetia Stanley's conversion had a mercenary motive or not. If it were so, the case would not stand alone. Changes of religious faith from motives of self-interest are quite common, from those of misadventure bought for a weekly dole to a royal carriage. While religious belief is really with some a matter of life and death, with the majority it is no more than a mere convention, a profession dictated by a love of ease or desire of gain. Exactly the same motives that are responsible for some people calling themselves Christians would lead them to profess Mohammedanism or Judaism providing the "inducement" were strong enough.

The Montagu-Stanley case is interesting only because it illustrates the working of a very important principle. By itself their engagement or marriage is of no greater social significance than is the pairing of any two other human beings. But their obedience to the whim of a dead man illustrates a principle of very great significance, and one which has its more dangerous aspects accentuated by the ignorance and striking example of the rule of the dead hand, and in connection with a subject in which that influence is exercised in a specially dangerous manner.

There are, I imagine, very few religious people who will see anything at all objectionable in this. They will mostly take it for granted that to "stick to your religion" is a good thing, and that every parent is justified in seeing to it that his children do not break the religion in which they have been trained. These parents do not say that they desire their children to be Jews or Christians so long as they believe Christianity or Judaism to be true, such a proviso would clearly be superfluous. If they believe a particular religion to be true, they will continue to

profess it—provided they are honest. What the injunction really means is, that whether they believe a particular religion to be true or false, they will continue to profess it. It is their support, not their conviction, that is the principal thing. The parent, who should guard his children from error so far as is possible, becomes the source of their greatest danger. He is a corrupting influence in their lives. Religion is like an entailed estate to him. He received it from his parents, and he will hand it on to his children. He never sought to make any improvement in it, and does not desire that his children should either. In that direction they must continue as stupid as he, just as he was as stupid as those who went before him. The inheritance of religion thus resolves itself into, primarily, the perpetuation of ignorance and folly, and, ultimately, the development of cunning and deceit.

It may be said that it is not alone in matters of religion that the dead impose conditions on the living; and that is perfectly true. More or less it meets us on every hand. The administration of property depends far more upon the wishes of the dead than upon the needs of the living. Our laws of primogeniture enforce the ideals of a dead generation, and the living one hides its slavery under a carefully devised but specious phraseology. We all take our rules of decorum from the past, and frown upon the man who dares to set them at defiance. From the cradle to the grave we are dominated by the dead, and this dynasty of death is strengthened by the passing of every generation, while the strength of its chains is intensified by their invisibility. We cannot abolish the rule of the dead, we can only, at most, limit its scope by intelligent revision of its decrees. In connection with most subjects few people will nowadays challenge the wisdom of so doing. It is in connection with religion that such a purpose becomes criminal.

All religion is, as a matter of fact, and no matter how disguised, a worship of the dead. Go into any church or chapel, and the man who can look beneath the surface finds himself in a veritable charnel-house. The phraseology used is that of the dead. The sentiments expressed are the sentiments of the dead. The priest officiating, his clothing, his postures, his phrases, have all been selected by the dead. None of these have been suggested by contemporary life and thought; none are called for by contemporary needs. For my own part, whenever I see a body of people engaged in religious service, I cannot escape the weird feeling that I am watching an assemblage of mediæval corpses that have been restored to life in order to practise ceremonies that may have meant something to them, but which are quite meaningless to us. And beyond even these I see the ghost of the primitive savage in whose fevered brain was born the image of the first god and the first devil, and whose successor now sits in an episcopal chair, voicing the ideas of the cave-man in the language of Shakespeare.

We maintain a huge army of priests. We give them an official position in social life. Why is this so? No one can claim that if the present generation had not found these priests in possession that its own intelligence would have led it to create a priesthood. Why, then, have we a priesthood? There is only one valid answer, and it is that the priest is

here to-day because ages ago he stood between man and his gods, and was credited with a magical power of affecting the relations between the two. That is the only foundation for the rule of the priest. His power is based upon the dead; he perpetuates their rule as the condition of maintaining his own. If the whole of the peoples of the world were to revise their social constitutions in the light of current needs and knowledge, there is not one that would continue to maintain a priesthood. They would be "scrapped" without the least compunction. They are here as so many servants of the dead—interested agents for the perpetuation of their rule.

At the present moment a number of clergymen, with the Bishop of London at their head, are trying to exploit the War for the purpose of reviving Sabatarianism. Immediately, of course, to promote their own class-interests; ultimately, at the behest of our dead-and-gone ancestors of thousands of years ago. Because a hundred or more generations before we were born a certain day became "taboo" for purely superstitious reasons, we have for centuries done our best to convert a day of rest into one of gloom and demoralisation. It is in the name of the dead that we taboo enjoyment and recreation on Sunday, and offer as a sacrifice to the spirits of the past one-seventh of our moral and intellectual life. Human sacrifice, in its physical form, is a thing of the past. Sacrifice of the mental and moral life of the people, in the name of our tribal ghosts, continues.

It was a French writer who said that the greatest tyrants humanity has known have always been the memories of its dead. That is a melancholy truth, sadder because this posthumous tyranny tends to be greater in proportion to the goodness of the man while living. The rule of the bad man ceases with death. Its evil is patent, its remedy obvious. But love and admiration for the good man blinds us to the evil of accepting his wishes or his ideas as inflexible rules for succeeding generations. It may be urged in defence that if the past dominates, it also guides. The same channel that transmits evil tendencies gives us good ones. And that is true enough; only it is also true that the cupidity and ignorance of man acts with greatest power on the side of mere slavish imitation. Let us do what we will, the influence of the dead will remain great. Every generation adds to its power, and at any time the reformer has this to fight. But when to this necessary obstacle there is added a consciously organised movement as represented by wills, institutions, and ceremonies to keep past ideas alive, we are saddling the living with a weight that may well become crushing. The great lesson we have to learn, and the one that most people seem to find most difficult to master, is the one that, while the past is valuable for guidance, it is very largely evil when we seek to fashion our lives by its decrees. Each generation presents its own problems in its own way, and they are to be successfully dealt with only by the aid of considerations that rest upon contemporary knowledge and necessities.

C. COHEN.

"The Victorious Church."

IN the *Christian World* for July 22, from the Rev. J. D. Jones, M.A., D.D., of Bournemouth, there is a striking article with the above heading, in which it is frankly admitted that "we are witnessing a complete breakdown of civilisation," and that "we are witnessing this breakdown after Christianity has been at work in the world for nineteen centuries." The only rational inference from this confession is that Christianity itself has been a total failure in its influence upon human society; but such an inference Dr. Jones characterises as "a perverse and wrongheaded interpretation of the facts." Then he naively adds:—

"What the present appalling War does represent is a complete and absolute failure of materialistic civilisation. What it does prove is that neither science nor

culture nor education nor common sense can tame the savage and wild beast in man."

Twenty-four years ago, when Mr. Robert Buchanan issued his famous blast against the Christian religion, the pulpit of that day expatiated upon the transcendent excellence of European civilisation, claiming it as one of the most convincing evidences of the Divine origin and triumphant power of the Cross. Christian civilisation, it was proudly asserted, was infinitely superior to any other under the sun. To-day, Dr. Jones unhesitatingly announces the entire collapse of that very civilisation, laying Materialism, as the greatest of sins, to its charge, but scorns the suggestion that there is any "evidence of the utter and abject failure of the Christian faith." No, he argues, the downfall of civilisation "cannot be by any stretch of imagination be represented as the failure of Christianity, for the simple reason that Christianity has never been fairly tried." The italics are our own, and their purpose is to call attention to the fact that in the very sentence in which Dr. Jones emphatically denies the failure of Christianity, he virtually admits it. If Christianity has been at work in the world for nineteen centuries and has not even yet been fairly tried, does it not inevitably follow that Christianity is the most colossal failure in history? It has failed even to secure for itself a fair trial. Its work in the world has been utterly in vain. The cold, unvarnished fact is that the nations behave just now as if Christ had never appeared, as if the Sermon on the Mount had never been preached, as if the Cross had never been set up on Calvary's hill. Dr. Jones feels the logical force of this undeniable fact, and endeavors to evade it by what appears to us to be a culpably disingenuous ruse; and here it is in his own words:—

"Why is it that Christianity has never been fairly tried? Why is it that national diplomacy and national ambitions remain so frankly and unashamedly materialistic? Why is it that the great Christian ideals and ideals have so little hold upon the minds of men? Christ has chosen to make himself dependent upon the Church. The spread of the Christian faith depends upon the loyalty and consecration of the Church."

Let us examine this point for a moment. The Church claims to be a Divine institution, founded by the God-man prior to his ascension, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. She is believed to have supernatural powers at her command, and the God-man himself promised to make her abide to the end of time. And yet Dr. Jones organises her as if she were nothing but a human organisation, subject to all the limitations of restrictions of all things purely human. He is forced to concede that, as seen by us to-day, she does not in the least answer to the New Testament descriptions of the prophecies concerning her. He quotes Ephesians 2:25-27, and asks, "How does the Church we see to-day know compare with that gleaming and beautiful ideal?" He is honest enough to acknowledge that she falls disgracefully short of that magnificent conception. But from what cause? What accounts for her dismal impotence? That it is a fact is beyond dispute, as no one to-day would be rash enough to assert that men are arrested by the Church's splendor. To a believer, this fact is humiliating and mortifying in the extreme, but nobody dares to deny it. Faced by the ideal, the actual Church is beyond words contemptible, being a sham of the deepest dye; but why is she thus discredited and dishonoured by the facts of her history? This is a point which Dr. Jones is discreet enough to avoid altogether. The truth is, however, that the New Testament descriptions of the Church are absolutely false, and that all the ages have been woefully misled by them. The Church has never been what Paul and others affirmed that she was and would be until she conquered the whole world. Her head as well as her body has been specifically human in character, and her achievements have not transcended her character. Christ is said to have loved her and given himself for her that he might present her to himself as a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any

such thing. But the historical Church, so far from having been holy and without blemish, has been disfigured by many ugly spots and deeply furrowed by countless wrinkles. Dr. Jones does not seek to hide this unpleasant truth, but candidly admits that there is so little practical difference between the Church and the world.

Instead of boldly attempting to assign a valid reason for the deplorable character and deeds of the Church during nineteen centuries, the reverend gentleman flies for refuge to apostolic times, and says:—

"This is what I read about the primitive Church: 'Neither was there among them any that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.'"

As far as it goes, that is exceedingly pretty, whether we call it Socialism or Communism; but Dr. Jones knows as well as we do that it is not a full portrait of the early Church. To render the picture more complete, the reverend gentleman should have gone on with the quotation thus:—

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Saphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"

Thus there were liars in the primitive Church, who did not hesitate to deceive the inspired apostles themselves. These two hypocrites are said to have been supernaturally struck down dead just where they lied. "And great fear came upon the whole Church, and upon all that heard these things." To complete the portrait of the primitive Church, we must cite a few more passages, such as the following:—

"For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. i. 11, 12).

"It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you hath his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that ye that had done this deed might be taken away from among you" (1 Cor. v. 1, 2).

There never was a time when the so-called Church of God was pure and without blemish, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing. There never was a time when she was free from bitter wrangling and venomous disputations and degrading divisions. There never was a time when she did not sit in abusive judgment upon the world outside and deny that world the right to judge her. There never was a time when she loved outsiders with the love God was said to cherish towards all mankind. When she was weak she angrily denounced and consigned to the flames of hell all who refused to pronounce her abominable, and the moment the reins of power came into her hands she adopted persecution and murder as the main part of her Divine calling. Theodosius won lasting renown by putting Pagans and heretics to death, believing that by thus cruelly exterminating all who were in opposition to the teaching of the orthodox Church he was serving God.

For two or three centuries now the Church has been losing her oppressive and coercive power again, and her leading champions agree with us that at present she does not count so far as the transaction of the world's affairs is concerned. Listen to Dr. Jones once more:—

"No one can look at the Church of to-day and say she has no wrinkle. Her face is seamed with lines of care. Something has furrowed deep her cheek and brow. She is not a confident and lighthearted Church. She is an anxious and harassed Church. She confronts the Heathenism of foreign lands and she is worried. She goes on with the work, but there is no dash or elan or abandon about it. Every missionary society's report

reveals wrinkles on the Church's brow. She is worried in face of the indifference at home. There is a note of despondency and querulousness in her speech. Anyone who reads the unending discussions on 'How to win the masses,' 'How to keep the children,' etc., can see the wrinkles on the Church's brow. And at the moment she is worried about the future of the world. She is distracted and harassed by the questions raised by this War. She is a poor, troubled, distressed, strained, and wrinkled Church. She does not show the world a young and smiling face."

That passage might have been written, and multitudes like it have been penned, by a Freethinker. And yet, after uttering those pessimistic statements about the Church of to-day, Dr. Jones has the temerity to allude to the Church of to-morrow in the most glowing and optimistic terms. For nineteen centuries she has been a depressing disappointment; but in the twentieth century, freed from spots and wrinkles, she "shall be revealed before the eyes of all men as a glorious Church—regal, splendid, magnificent." The War, which was entered upon without consulting her, and which shall be brought to an end without her assistance, is yet to prove her salvation. Already Dr. Horton, on the authority of a nameless young man, assures us that there are no Atheists in the trenches, and the Bishop of London is equally positive that on the return from the Front, at the conclusion of the War, the remnants of our men will be models of piety. We have seen so many parsonic prognostications falsified by the event, that we look forward with confidence to seeing the present ones overtaken by the same fate. At any rate, as the Prime Minister is in the habit of saying, we shall wait and see, free from fear.

J. T. LLOYD.

Our Greatest Historian.

"When I contemplate the common lot of mortality, I must acknowledge that I have drawn a high prize in the lottery of life."—EDWARD GIBBON.

"Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer."—BYRON.

"There can be no gainsaying the sentence of this great judge. To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's."—THACKERAY.

THE perfervid praise which Macaulay bestowed upon Boswell is applicable to Edward Gibbon: "He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere." Admittedly, Gibbon is the most famous historian in the English language. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is a masterpiece of genius and labor. It is a monumental work, bridging the gulf between the old world and the new. The wonder is that it should have proceeded, not from an academy of scholars, but from the brain and hand of one man. With what mastery has he arranged his vast and incongruous material, gathered from the whole range of Classical, Byzantine, Mediæval, and Oriental literature, into one luminous and consistent tableau! What weight, majesty, and splendor in his language!

It would be a pardonable exaggeration to declare that the reading of the *Decline and Fall* is an education in itself. That this encyclopædia of thirteen centuries should ever be displaced is nearly impossible. Gibbon died in London in January, 1794, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six, after a short illness, in the fulness of his intellectual power. The great work of his life was done when he was laid to rest in a remote village in Sussex. During the succeeding century his reputation has been continually growing larger and firmer. The civilised world has now agreed to acknowledge the *Decline and Fall* as the grandest historical achievement ever accomplished.

Gibbon is not only our greatest historian; he is also, if we put poets aside, one of our foremost writers. His style possesses an extraordinary pomp and richness; his language never flags. He walks for ever as to the clash of arms, under an imperial

banner. A martial music animates his magnificent descriptions of battles, of sieges, of scenes of old-world splendor. He owes many readers to other than historical merits. Probably, no English writer equally old has so many readers to-day, if we except Bacon, Goldsmith, Defoe, or Boswell. If this is so, it is to the man of letters, and not to the historian, that it is due. It is not so much by what he tells us as by his incomparable way of telling it, that he attracts us. Like all great artists, he has given us himself as well as his subject.

If we return again and again to his historical masterpiece, it is less for the sake of Byzantine emperors and Gothic invaders than for that of Gibbon himself. We feel the presence, behind every page, almost behind every sentence, of a great and original personality. Gibbon set a high value upon style. He would take several turns round his study-table before he could settle a period to his satisfaction. Having something of weight and importance to say, Gibbon was determined to give it all the advantages of a stately and splendid presentation.

Gibbon was a master of irony, and his acidulated humor has bewildered many otherwise estimable people. George III. found the *Decline and Fall* beyond his depth, and when he met the historian on the publication of the second volume, could only gasp out, "What! Another big book, Mr. Gibbon!" The irony, however, is one of the features in Gibbon's writings, which most of his readers most clearly remember, and with which they would least willingly part. One of the most perfect examples will be found in his jibe at the early Christians: "It was not in this world that they expected to be happy or useful." Indeed, the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the *Decline and Fall* are full of perfect irony. In them Gibbon sketches the early spread of the Christian Church, and they reveal the great historian as a Freethinker. Let us realise Gibbon's position. He seems to be giving an account of the early Christians from the orthodox standpoint, and at the same time he throws doubt and discredit on the whole story. Here is an example:—

"But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses. During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alteration in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history."

There is less evidence in a big folio volume written for or against Christianity than in the deadly irony of these lines. Gibbon is ostensibly censuring the sages for overlooking the Christian miracles. In reality, he is denying their occurrence by slyly pointing out that there is no contemporary record of them from disinterested sources. Hundreds of books, pamphlets, and reviews have been provoked by these stinging caresses of the great historian. But the victory remains with Gibbon; and even Cardinal Newman, a most reluctant witness, is compelled to admit this. Gibbon was not fortunate in his early critics, such as Chelsum, Davies, and Travis, who learned what it meant to attack upon his own ground a consummate master of controversial dexterity and historical erudition. He was justified in saying that a victory over such antagonists was a sufficient humiliation. They were not worth breaking on the wheel.

Having no case, Christian apologists charitably accuse Gibbon of having no "heart." It is a charac-

teristically malignant lie. His friends did not find Gibbon lacking in affection. When Godfrey Clarke lost his father, "the infidel" Gibbon was the only man he wished to see. To his father, his step-mother, his aunt, and his few friends, Edward Gibbon was all that a son, a nephew, or a friend should be. He sacrificed, not merely his leisure and tastes, but something of his prospects and fortune, to gratify his father. For Mrs. Gibbon he showed his unselfish nature by a perfectly voluntary increase of her income. For "Aunt Kitty," whose ways and character lay so far from his, he proved his affection by many acts of kindness. Only a man who had real depth of heart would have thought, as he did, of asking his host that "Aunt Kitty," when she went to Sheffield-place, might have the room in which he usually slept. This little act of thoughtfulness is characteristic of the man. His attachment to Lord Sheffield and his family forms one of the most constant and beautiful types of friendship embalmed in literature. Such letters as those on the death of young Holroyd, on the death of Lady Sheffield, on the loss of Dryverdon and De Severy give the lie to those traducers who seek to defame the character of the great Freethinker.

We like to think of Gibbon writing his immortal history amid the acacias of Lausanne. That beautiful and serene atmosphere is unsullied by the presence of libellers, and we will leave him in that haven of peace. He was a profound scholar, a great historian, and one of the most splendid writers in the grand roll of English literature. Above all, he was the untiring opponent of the Christian Superstition:—

"Ay, sharpest, shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
To death Imposture through the armor-joints."

MIMNERMUS.

Famous Freethinkers I Have Known.—VII.

JOSEPH SYMES.

MANY Christians are unable to understand how it is that so many of the most prominent members of the Freethought Party were, at one time of their life, sincere and ardent believers in the Christian faith. When, however, it is understood that Freethought as an intellectual attitude is only a higher evolution of religious belief, that is, it does away with belief in the supernatural, and makes *belief in the known* the basis of a real ethical philosophy, it will be seen in time by those who seriously consider the matter that the Freethinker has reached a higher stage of mental evolution than the ordinary believer. Freethinkers have been drawn from all the sects; some were ministers of the Gospel, some prominent members of the Church of England, others Nonconformists, and one or two priests or monks in the Roman Catholic faith.

Joseph Symes, the subject of this article, was born of pious Methodist parents as long ago as 1811, at Portland. He became a candidate for the ministry in 1864, was sent to the Wesleyan College, Richmond, and in 1867 went on circuit as a Wesleyan Methodist preacher. He had, however, too big a brain to remain in such a narrow circle for long. Soon he began to develop doubts in the orthodox faith, and once the doubts took full possession of his mind there was an end to all belief, and he soon found himself writing to the *National Reformer*, and in 1872 he resigned his position in the Wesleyan Church and came over by gradual stages to the Freethought movement.

In 1876 he delivered his first Freethought lecture at Newcastle. Then he began to write frequently for the *National Reformer*. I remember reading his contributions with great pleasure and interest. He was very learned, had more than a smattering of Hebrew and Greek, and was able to confound the theologians with his knowledge and ability. I remember going to the Freethought Hall in Walworth, soon after he came into the movement. There was a platform,

from which I and other Freethinkers had spoken many times, but when I went to hear "Joe" Symes, as he was called, he fought shy of speaking from it. He preferred to speak from the body of the hall, as he wanted, he said, to be more on an equality with his audience. He was a fine specimen of a man, considerably over six feet in height, with a remarkably intelligent face and head. He delivered a splendid lecture; in fact, we were all pleased with it, though there was still a kind of Wesleyan-parsonic tone about the style of his address; but we liked his unaffected manner; there was what we should call "no swank" about him; he spoke like a man and a brother; and most of the Freethinkers I spoke to that evening said they were certain he would make for himself a name in the Freethought movement. Soon after that he became a regular contributor to Freethought journals. He wrote some clever and suggestive articles on "Philosophic Atheism," "Man's Place in Nature," "Hospitals Not of Christian Origin," "Christianity a Persecuting Religion," and "Blows at the Bible," which were not only scholarly productions, but made excellent pamphlets for propagandist purposes.

When he started as a regular lecturer he soon attracted a following, and established himself in the provinces as one of the leading lights of the Freethought movement. To add to his usefulness as a Rationalist teacher he established a kind of Freethought School in Leeds, and gave the rising generation some useful knowledge, based upon science and human experience. His great aim, however, was to uproot the weeds of superstition; and, consequently, he found himself constantly engaged in preaching the gospel of Freethought or in debating with the clergy and ministers of the various Nonconformist bodies the question of whether Christianity was either true or useful to mankind. As a controversialist he was very successful. He knew both sides of the question, and could expose the frauds and follies of the Christian faith as few debaters knew how. As he often said, "I am in the know; I have been through the mill. You cannot tell me anything about Christianity that I do not know."

Joseph Symes did not disdain to speak in the open air. I remember once hearing him addressing a very large audience on Mile End Waste. A fair proportion of his audience were of the Jewish persuasion, and he was giving his hearers a very useful lesson on the cruel and vacillating character of the Jewish God. Having finished his address, he called for questions concerning any remarks he had made, but there was nobody present, either Jew or Christian, prepared to confront him.

I once heard him deliver one of the most daring atheistical lectures I have ever heard in my life, at the Hall of Science. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner was in the chair (she was then Miss Hypatia Bradlaugh) and the subject was "A Challenge to All the Gods." Mr. Symes began by saying that he was like a young man who was not engaged; none of the gods had any attractions for him. He then went on to refer to the episode mentioned in the Bible where Elijah derided the Baalites on their lack of faith, and told them to call louder on their God if they wanted him to hear or answer their prayer, for peradventure he was on a journey or asleep. Your God, said Joseph Symes, is presumably in this hall to-night. Here we are, hundreds of Freethinkers assembled together, willing to listen to the voice of the Lord. Will he answer? Let us put him to the test. We will call upon the gods to answer to their names, and give some proof of their existence. Then he called over the names of a number of gods of ancient mythology, Father (Old Jahveh), God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Ghost, when somebody with a shrill, small voice, in the gallery, called out *here*—which, of course, caused some amusement. But Mr. Symes went on with his list of names, and when complete, he said very gravely, "We will now pause for a reply. We have asked the gods to answer, and are willing to be converted, but the gods are dumb. In other words,

there is no God; if he existed he would not let such an opportunity pass." After another pause, he said, "This is final. *There is no God.*" I had been a Freethinker for some few years, but I confess that I was rather shocked at this method of dealing with the subject, and could not help thinking that if I had been listening to a Freethought lecture for the first time, I should probably have been so astounded as to never have attended another.

A few years later, I was going to the North of England to lecture, I think to Halifax, and Joseph Symes was booked for Bradford, so we travelled together. I found him most delightful company. He was an ardent student of astronomy and possessed a very valuable telescope, and he told me some of the wonders of the stars that he had found out by his own observations. To my astonishment I found that he was also a lover of good poetry and admired Thomas Hood, the author of the "The Bridge of Sighs." We were in the train four hours, and on the journey back we met again, the time seemed to pass so rapidly, we enjoyed ourselves so much.

I was present at the Hall of Science when we bade Mr. Symes "farewell," previous to his departure for Australia, and though he was over six feet high, and a powerful man at that, he could not help shedding tears when all the kind words were said of him by Mr. Bradlaugh and his numerous friends.

While he was in Australia he achieved for himself a great name; he was called "The Bradlaugh of Australia," and fought many of the great questions that Bradlaugh had fought in this country, such as the Freedom of the Press, the Blasphemy Laws, etc. Of course, he was a very different man to Charles Bradlaugh. Bradlaugh was a trained lawyer, also a man of great tact and discretion.

Joseph Symes had plenty of ability and great argumentative skill, but he often lacked discretion. Just where Bradlaugh would win by persuasion and tact, Symes would lose by defiance and want of discretion. Joseph Symes did not seem to think that diplomacy was as important in advocacy as in other matters.

When Mr. Symes returned to this country he was met at Tilbury Docks on Sunday, August 5, 1906, by Mr. and Mrs. Foote and Miss Vance. His first lecture was delivered in the Queen's Minor Hall on September 2, 1906, and I had the pleasure of being present. His subject was "My Twenty Years Fight in Australia," and a most interesting lecture it was. I heard him two or three times after this. He always carefully prepared what he had to say, but he never seemed to me to get to understand men and the affairs of daily life from a practical point of view.

One of the most unselfish of men, he devoted his life to the welfare of his fellows with a passionate zeal that was beyond all praise. His end came with tragic suddenness. He died, after a very short illness, on Saturday evening, December 29, 1906, and his remains were cremated at Golder's Green on Friday, January 4, 1907. He was a real fighter for human emancipation, and his name will undoubtedly go down to posterity as one of the great heroes and warriors in the cause of Freethought.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Dove of Man's Mind.

THE preacher's dogmatic style prompted criticism. Opinion with him was completely submerged in judgment. Nothing short of finality satisfied; and he enunciated conclusions with all the majesty of a holy prophet. It would have been folly to argue with him. He was a man who could answer your most logical five minutes with the remark, the love of God is the salt of the soul; and follow it up with equally unanswerable truths of a similar kind.

He started with the War, and reached, of course, a something he called Materialism. It seems that a wave of this peculiarity, prior to the War, was

sweeping over the European countries. The dirty waters of Materialism were rising in Britain, were preparing for the rush of the approaching mountainous wave. Everything portended harm. Everything was full of the fever of nearing strife; we were to be carried off our feet by the great wave, and hurled into a land of sin and death, a land that denied God and laughed at Jesus Christ, a land that was Materialistic, first, last, and always. Suddenly, God sent an obstacle to the terrible wave; and, lo! against that obstacle it thunderously flung itself, the hydra-headed horrors of its hate and wrath smashing and crushing themselves in a vain endeavor to reach the peace behind the barrier. Britain was saved. The wave of Materialism would never regather the scattered grains of its power. It was breaking its back on its own knee.

For all this cheerful rendering of the situation, the preacher wept over the spread of Materialism. He drew a terribly tragic picture of the downfall of virtue, forgetting that in a country where so many millions of men were honorable, and good, and just, and never, like the horrible Huns, violated women, the downfall of virtue was an insult of a phrase. His tongue burned with the repetition of that choice mouthful, pernicious doctrines. He lamented the loneliness of God, forgetting that with so many men serving God and the King on one side, and God and the Kaiser on the other, it was folly to suggest God was lonely. Also, by this time, there are very many lonely women and children who are appealing to God for help because they can get it nowhere else. God, it seems, is working overtime these days.

The preacher prayed passionately that the base, beastly, brutish things that hardened the heart, and sickened the soul to death, and coarsened the fibre of man's spirituality, would be overwhelmed by the grace of God, as it worked through man's imagination. He prayed that a little imagination might be vouchsafed to man; and then he enumerated the blessings to be enjoyed from the possession of it.

Imagination, we were told, was the dove of man's mind. It saved him from Materialism. It went out and returned with glad tidings of dry land.

Resentment moved me to disagree with him entirely. He was not necessarily right. He was merely expressing an opinion. Dogmatism may show conviction; it may prove loyalty; but conviction and loyalty are not supports on which a rationally minded man will put much weight. Conviction is not everything; and it proves nothing. We may loathe a whole nation, and be dogmatically convinced of the sense, and righteousness, and beauty, and truth of our hate. We may despise a whole nation because a few individuals of it are extremists in the practise of beliefs they sucked at their mother's breasts. We may grind under the studded heel of contumely a whole nation because they were foolish enough to be born of that nationality, and foolish enough to speak that nation's language, and think that nation's thoughts; but this does not mean we are growing the roots of wings in our armpits.

The dogmatism and conviction that make me out a traitor because I am no patriot, may expand itself in vilifying a German soldier for enjoying himself with the body of a Belgian woman; but can it also expand itself over the strong-minded politicians who force a brave soldier's widow into the shambles of commercialism? The conviction in the first case may be admirable; the very suggestion of the second is a libel.

Ephemerality may authenticate an opinion; but history may repudiate the same opinion on the same matter. Some people may benefit; Humanity may suffer. What we oppose with one hand because it is evil, we may assist with the other, and it may also be evil in the same sense. The philosophic mind knows human affairs cannot be reckoned by mathematic rule; knows that conclusions are fractious children; knows that dogmatism, within so much doubt, is egoistic weakness. The preacher did not possess the philosophic mind.

Reasoned argument might contradict his statement that people do not use their imaginations. Perhaps

the reverse is true. Even the quibbler might deny the assertion that the average man lacks imagination. He might say, with equal justification for dogmatism, that the visionary capabilities of the ordinary person are over-developed. His second sight is too keen. His feelings are too acute. He sees too far: he sees from here to heaven. He hears too well: he hears the low tones of the voice of God. His emotions are too sensitive: the sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ still receives nourishing food. His sense of smell is too doglike: he can olfactorise the social or religious heretic with little difficulty. It is totally untrue to say people lack imaginative powers. They have an overdose of them.

In less spiritual things, the average person still believes in priests, in politicians, in quacks of all kinds. The religious sense is not yet dead. The imagination of the commonplace person is on as high a level as that of the savage. Both, using their imaginations, believe it is necessary to kill in order to cure. Both believe in a shadowy officialism. Both are submissive to a vague social power that is impersonal. Both are deluded by a false security founded as much upon weakness as upon the greatness of their powers of imagination. Beneath the grumbling of the modern social savage there is a strong belief in a permanence that is antagonistic to his well-being; and the ease with which he can be drawn into an international pigstye is wonderful in its simplicity. His gift of imagination is so great that he sets up signposts to assist his leaders.

Undoubtedly the average man is a figure in a puppet show, occupying his position by the strength of his over-developed imagination, made to sing and dance according to the wishes of those who pull the strings, made to play the fool by actors whose art is self-seeking. At least, sometimes it seems to be so; but one cannot afford to become imperatively conclusive in days when everything is standing on its head, seeing glorious visions on hopelessly black clouds.

While the preacher lavished all his poetic powers upon the beauty of the dove of man's mind, my thoughts drifted slowly along in the opposite way; and when the congregation was lustily singing our barbaric National Anthem, at the end of the service, and the minister was busy silently praying to God, I wondered whether, after all, imagination was a dove or a sparrow-hawk.

Afterwards, as we walked home, between hedges covered with red and white roses, all brilliantly revealing their purity in the rays of the summer sun, and flooding the atmosphere with a fragrance that tempted one to idealism, I passed my doubts over to Mainie for solution.

"The solution is easy," she said. "It is your own lazy way of escaping difficulties. Everything is both or all the things you think it is. When you come down to elemental facts," she quoted, with a smile, "you can segregate and classify and find satisfying truth on which to base opinion. If you stay up you remain amongst airy fancies and airier nonsense. You float through sunbeams with the dove of man's mind."

ROBERT MORELAND.

HOW BISHOPS ARE MADE.

The Bishop of Stepney has been telling of a certain street urchin who addressed him as "Dick Turpin." There is no record of a highwayman becoming a bishop, but history bears record of a pirate who rose to an even higher ecclesiastical office. Launcelot Blackburne, who was appointed Archbishop of York in 1724, had, in his younger days, served under the famous pirate, Redmond of the Red Hand, and risen to the rank of captain. Having amassed a considerable fortune, he took the odd fancy to come home to Cambridge and study for the Church. His money proving useful to the political powers of the day, his preferment was rapid.—*Daily Chronicle*, July 15.

"Religion never kills a man," said a revivalist. That is an open question, but it sometimes makes other people want to.

Acid Drops.

Another Day of Intercession was ordered for July 25. The people were advised by the Bishop of London to pray and repent, and the solemn farce and humbug of previous days of intercession have been repeated. What effect this is supposed to have on the course of the War no one can explain, because no one knows. If prayer was of any avail, it might have brought the War to a close months ago; or, if it still, might have prevented the War ever breaking out. Such exhibitions are, ultimately, either stupid or criminal. They are stupid if people expect them to have an influence on the War, and they are almost criminal if, having the power to end or prevent war, they were not used instead of building up armaments.

The *Daily Telegraph*, in commenting on the Day of Intercession, says its purpose is not "to endeavor to persuade the Supreme Controller of events to change his mind after the decrees of fate." In that case, why pray at all? Prayer neither causes the Deity to modify his intentions nor alter the course of events, what is the use of it? Things will be, when we have finished praying, just as they were before we started, and we have gone through this solemn ceremony for nothing. Why, then, do we pray? The *Telegraph* says we pray "for wisdom in council, fortitude of mind, largeness of understanding, largeness of purpose, charity in judgment, and the spirit of justice." But to what end? If these qualities are of value in directing the course of our lives—and no one doubts that—and if we have them in greater measure after praying than we had beforehand, our prayers have, after all, altered the "decrees of fate"; and if God has, in answer to our prayers, given us a greater measure, then we have altered his mind in relation to us. One or the other must be true. Either prayers alter the "decrees of fate" or they are useless.

The *Christian Commonwealth* is responsible for the following:—

"Dr. Horton, on Sunday morning, said: 'I had a letter last night from one of our boys at the Front; he tells an almost incredible story of the horror and terror through which he has to pass, and then, after mentioning one of the most extraordinary escapes, he says: "You know there is no such thing as an Atheist in the trenches. If you should come across anyone who professes to be an Atheist you should just ask him to join the ranks out here, and I guarantee that he will soon change his views."'"

Dr. Horton's elaborate endorsement of the Mons myth, cannot be accepted without the strongest possible corroboration. We do not doubt that he has received letters from one of our boys," but either he has misrepresented the content of the letter or "our boy" intends showing that the Mons myth is quite safe in his hands.

We have had scores of letters from Atheists in the trenches, in addition to the British troops, there are the French. Are there no Atheists among them? What of the six million Frenchmen who deliberately wrote themselves down as Atheists? Were none of these eligible for military service? Or have they all been converted? If Dr. Horton thought to at least see that there is an air of probability about the stories. That is a duty he owes to his congregation. The Bishop of London goes out to the Front and discovers that the troops are burning with religious zeal. Then he returns and says that there is no such thing as an Atheist. It looks as though they were taking part in a conspiracy for the mantle of Ananias.

Some Borough Councils seem hysterical concerning the War. Recently a Metropolitan Council withdrew the *Daily Telegraph* from the public library, and has now followed this up by removing the *Manchester Guardian*. If this policy is vigorously pursued, the unhappy readers will be restricted to a choice between the Bible and the Post Office Directory.

There are few smarter journalists than Mr. Israel Zangwill. In a recent newspaper article he described Herr Ernst Lubauer as "a Jew converted to the religion of Love, who sings 'The Song of Hate.'"

Many persons think that the European War may affect the Jewish race adversely. Discussing this matter, the *Daily Telegraph* says "a Jew converted to the religion of Love, who sings 'The Song of Hate.'"

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few Jewish children had to attend a church school, the *Daily Telegraph* might discuss the matter more seriously.

At the City Temple, the Rev. R. J. Campbell intimated to the congregation that he intended to spend part of his holidays visiting the fighting lines in France. He will have an opportunity of seeing how Christians love one another.

The newspapers state that Dr. Campbell Morgan has arranged to visit the troops in France. This announcement follows the news that the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple, is about to take his holidays in the same district. The troops will have reason to think the Campbells are coming.

In spite of the complete exposure of the story of the "Angelic Guard at Mons" devout Christians continue to work it for all it is worth. While we write, several communications from various parts of the country lie before us, all bearing witness to its continued circulation as a narrative of fact. Some Christians say frankly that as the story is an "edifying" one, they ought not to cease to use it merely because the evidence for it is unsatisfactory. And all of them, strangely enough, ignore the fact that we know it is not true, and that those people who spoke of possessing evidence were—to put it quite plainly—lying. A lively correspondence on the topic is running through the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, and Mr. J. Breeze makes some very good capital out of the *Freethinker* comments on the yarn. He also invites the readers of the *Mercury* to become readers of the *Freethinker*—which is good advice, whether they take it or not.

Most of the clergy appear to be sticking to the Mons vision, evidently regarding it as good for trade. The Dean of Durham's denunciation of it as pure myth is, on that account, the more worthy of note. The Dean is shrewd enough to see that making much of such a ridiculous incident opens the way to "a sceptical reaction." Other clergymen, less far-seeing, are ready to chance the future for the sake of an immediate gain.

It is interesting to know that the President of the Psychological Research Society, Professor Gilbert Murray, in his presidential address, speaking of the story of the angels at Mons, stated that what disappointed him was that an educated clergyman could be found to believe it. It did not disappoint us at all, because a man who believes that a young woman once gave birth to a baby-boy without knowing a man can believe anything. The Mons story once started, the parsons saw that it would bring grist to their mill.

The Bishop of Stafford, who died on April 8, left unsettled property valued at £26,534. His will states that he had in his lifetime given as much of his income as he could afford to charitable objects, and therefore made no bequests of that nature. We suppose we must take it for granted, but the worthy bishop had evidently not left his old age unprovided.

"John Bull's satanic intention to starve Germany," says a leading German paper, has been frustrated. It seems that the prolonged drought threatened the harvest, but prayers for rain were ordered in the dioceses of Southern and Western Germany, and rain has fallen "pretty copiously." We suppose this is very wrong on the part of Providence; but we quite believe that the prayers of the German Churches have been as effective in bringing the rain as similar petitions in this country.

Canon Simpson, of St. Paul's, despises and wants no more dallying with what he calls "the gospel of mere efficiency and visions of supermen." Does he, then, believe in inefficiency and inferior men? Does he imagine that a weak and badly equipped army is likely to win in this War? Let him read and ponder over the Epistle of James, and he will see how silly and worthless his gospel is.

"We hear," says a daily paper, "of men who send their only sons to the Front in the spirit of Isaac the Patriarch, who laid his first-born on the altar." The journalist appears to have forgotten Abraham, but, perhaps, he had been dining at Sam Isaacs.

Mr. R. J. Campbell says that "the Christianity that counts is the Christianity of the 'needs must,' the thing you cannot doubt but may refuse to obey." As a matter of fact, such a Christianity doesn't count. If a man *must* believe it to be true and yet *may* refuse to obey it, how on earth can it

be said to count? But the reverend gentleman is talking sheer nonsense. All the Christianity there is not only may be, but actually is, doubted by myriads of the greatest and best people living to-day. It is not only doubted, but positively rejected as untrue.

The conversion to Jesus Christ of our Army on the Continent is now a certainty. The Church of England chaplains out there are about to be under the oversight of a live bishop. With the concurrence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Kitchener has just appointed the Bishop of Khartoum to the post of acting Bishop at the Front. After all, this is an expensive and useless appointment, and the same thing is true of the appointment of all the chaplains, because, according to Dr. Horton, the moment the hardest Atheist that ever lived enters a trench he becomes a Christian. God himself is the only preacher required at the Front, and his sermons are composed of asphyxiating gases, high explosive shells, the heaped-up slain, and all the other horrors of the battlefield. It is a shameful waste of men and money to send parsons to the Front, when the Lord of Hosts can do the work so much better without them.

The Pope is said to be the Vicar of Christ, and pretends to infallibility. For eleven months he maintained a discreet silence on the savage methods of German warfare; but in a recent interview, published in a French journal, the Pope shows his desire to take both sides in the dispute. He was not convinced that the Germans had done all these dreadful things; but he had been told that the Russians had done things quite as bad. Poor old Benedict aims at being a diplomatist. He will share the fate of the man who tried to sit on two stools at one time.

We understand it all now. God has not answered the nation's prayers for victory because the nation has not approached the Throne of Grace in the spirit of penitence. When the nation learns to say from the heart, "I repent in dust and ashes; O Lord, forgive, and grant our righteous cause thy gracious protection," the War will come to an end, but not before. So we are assured by Cyril Hopher in the *Church Times* for July 23, who tells us that the nave of Winchester Cathedral was crowded lately with three thousand people, who came first for penitence, and then for intercession.

The Bishop of Winchester, in his address on the above occasion, "declared that an easy victory might have been a moral calamity." God was waiting till we were sufficiently humbled by his chastisement before giving us our hearts' desire. We must pray in genuine repentance, not in wild panic, if we really expect to be answered. Perhaps God was now teaching us penitence and prayer by the terrors of the War. If we learn the lesson he will, in his own good time, crown our cause with glorious victory. The marvel of marvels is that sane people can tolerate such sickening piffle!

Dr. Waddy Moss, President of the Wesleyan Conference, says that the chief aim of the Church at present ought to be to "keep the nation effective as an instrument of God." Of course, God is on our side, and our supreme duty is to be on God's side by fighting the Godless Germans. In due time he will manifest himself as our deliverer, but we must be patient with him. Like the Government, he resents criticism. He takes his time, and we mustn't hurry him. He cannot answer our prayers at once, however much he may desire to do so. The necessity of his own nature prevents him from immediately attending to our affairs. Such was the pious trash that found favor at the Birmingham Conference. Using our common sense, can we honestly characterise such pronouncements as anything but worthless and ridiculous stuff? Nothing is easier than to speak in the name of the Lord when the Lord never speaks in his own.

"Sentiment's day is over; men from the Front will never be content with the sentimental sermon," said Dr. R. Waddy Moss. We are glad to hear it, for very few of the clergy can preach without gushing.

Mr. Muir, at the Old Bailey, ought to know that since Bradlaugh's Oaths Act was carried, every person entitled to swear in a Court of Justice is equally entitled to make affirmation instead of the oath, if he prefers to do so. A jurymen, at the Old Bailey, who had refused to be sworn on the Testament, on the ground that he had no religious belief, was objected to by Mr. Muir on the very ground that a man with such views should not be allowed to try a serious case, and the man's services were there and then dispensed with. Mr. Muir was himself breaking the law. The man

had a perfect right to affirm instead of swearing, and neither Mr. Muir nor anybody else had any legal or moral right to prevent him. What a time it takes for some people who administer the law to learn it and understand it. We suggest that the Lord Chancellor should set an examination paper for these gentlemen, and that Mr. Muir should receive one of the earliest copies.

A sentimental picture, which is very popular in the shops, depicts a dead soldier, with Christ looking at the corpse, and underneath the text, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." The text is incorrect, but, according to an advertisement, "thirteen bishops have written in its praise," and "clergyman and ministers of all denominations have preached on it." Do these people ever read their Bibles?

By some of our "spiritual leaders" it has been declared that our soldiers are fond of singing hymns, and this has been taken as proof of their intense religiousness. But the Bishop of Birmingham points out that they are also fond of comic songs. They sing either hymns or comic songs with equal enjoyment, and the *Church Times* wonders what connection there is between the two. We believe the connection lies in the fact that the ordinary soldier—like the ordinary man—likes something with a "swing" to it, something that—as he would say—"goes" well. The Salvation Army recognised this when it adopted the airs of popular songs to its religious services. The ordinary soldier thinks as little of the sentiment or the matter of the hymn he is singing as he does of the sentiment or matter of "Tipperary." If some of our bishops were to investigate as to what words are often sung to hymn-tunes, they would probably cease to take the fondness for certain tunes as an indication of piety. We have both seen and heard some very curious versions.

"General" Booth says that "Without God, guns and men would not amount to very much." So far as one can judge, both our military and political leaders seem convinced that without men and guns God won't amount to very much either.

From some of the July wills:—Canon Gillow, Durham, £9,577; Rev. W. Walsh, Folkington, £3,010; Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, £61,441; Rev. A. Williams, India, £8,233; Canon W. Wilson, £56,852; Rev. R. Parker, £4,904; Rev. W. S. Boyle, Exeter, £18,607. All the above bore their burden with becoming fortitude, and only surrendered their load with death. Such is Christian fortitude!

Mr. Bernard Shaw's use of strong language is being imitated, and Mr. H. G. Wells, in his latest novel, *Sea-land*, makes a Lord Chancellor indulge in a "swear-word," which is sure to flutter the clerical dovescotes. Mr. Wells does it in a roundabout way. He does not write "hell," but informs us that the Lord Chancellor "uttered one brief topographical cry."

Speaking at a meeting of the Upper House of Convocation, the Bishop of London described the Front as a huge diocese with no bishop. The Catholic bishops will be overjoyed at his lordship's compliment.

Speaking at a meeting in support of the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society, Prebendary Radolf said "there were 50,000 children in this country who had no chance of growing up to be good men and women." What an indictment of a Christian country!

At Christie's sale-rooms, London, an old silver porridge-pot was sold for £69, a small teapot for £41, a coffee-pot for £69, and a dish for £42. This is sufficient to arouse the cupidity of the manufacturers of pious relics, and we may hope to see the crockery used at the "last supper" put up for sale.

Our popular contemporary, *John Bull*, devotes half a column to the story of the "Angelic Visitation at Mons," which was first criticised in the *Freethinker*, but there is no mention of the latter fact. Oh, *Horatio*!

A writer in the *Sunday Pictorial* complains that "there is too much blood in the novels now published." The Bible is open to the same criticism.

"There's always the devil to pay when the temperature climbs up over eighty degrees," says the *Sunday Herald*. Why not? The clergy collect money for fighting the Devil all the year round.

To Correspondents.

FRANKFURT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Previously acknowledged, £106 18s. 10d. Received since:— R. Stevenson, 5s.; T. Hayes, 5s.; T. Charles, 2s.; W. A. Williams, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Harden, £2; E. O., 2s. 6d. Per Miss Vance: R. D. Side and Family, £8 10s.; W. Kensett, 10s.

G. G. QUIRK.—We quite agree with you that "there are hardly a score of papers in Great Britain that dare speak the truth, and even fewer that dare permit the truth to be uttered in their columns by others." This is without doubt true in relation to Freethought, and nothing will ever break down this conspiracy of silence except increasing the number of Freethinkers who take some pride in their opinions. We are glad to learn that, as an old contributor to the press, you have done what you could to break down this press boycott. We fancy that if Freethinkers would let newspaper editors know that they are not so negligible a quantity as they seem to imagine, they will adopt a more straightforward and a more sensible policy.

"GENEVICUS" desires to correct a slight error in his recent article, "The Sleep of Death." The word "eluded" was printed as "clouded" in the quotation from Swinburne's elegy on Beaudelaire.

H. P. MARSHOT (Owdtshoorn, S.A.).—It is inspiring to find a man of your years, and in such a place, carrying on active warfare against Christian superstition. Your letter indicates that even in the most religious portions of South Africa Freethought is making headway.

N. RAYSON.—We are glad to have encouraged you to the point of gratitude. The verses shall appear. Thanks for the other enclosure.

E. LEWIS.—Thanks for the trouble you have taken in the matter. We quite appreciate the newsagent's point of view. Still, this paper can be had on sale or return, and the newsagent who cares to display copies need suffer no loss, even if they are unsold. Perhaps we ought not to say that we think your appreciation of the high standard reached by the Freethinker is deserved, so we will content ourselves with saying that we will buy and deserve it. The idea that the Freethinker is a "vulgar" journal is a convenient fiction, kept alive for interested purposes.

"REASON".—You seem to require a couple of articles rather than a brief answer in this column. It seems to us a truism that the forces that have hitherto affected human affairs cannot escape responsibility for the present state of affairs; and as religion has played so large a part in the history of Europe, it must bear its share of that responsibility. At the best, it has failed to civilise; and at the worst, it has helped to decivilise.

W. HAYOT.—Religion does die slowly, but we are not sure that men of the world secretly cling to it. We think the reverse is nearer the truth. They parade their religion, and hide their dissent from it. Your other suggestion is a good one, but we are afraid impracticable for the present.

B.—Thanks for calling attention to the article. It shall receive attention.

A. WILLIAMS.—We trust it will have the effect you desire; but in a time such as the present, one must not be surprised at some people overlooking the normal calls upon them. The credit to such as bear them in mind.

MR. AND MRS. HARDEN, enclosing cheque for Honorarium Fund, Freethinker is one of the best of papers, and seems to get better every time." Thanks.

"WARRFUL".—We don't know who "A. Causton" is, but his suggestion on "The Angel Vision at Mons" is worthy of preservation, if only on account of its stupidity. As you say, superstition is hard to kill," but one must consider the long part it has had.

W. HAYOT.—There has been no "official" utterance from either the N. S. S. or the Secular Society, Limited, concerning the War. Such a deliverance does not come within the scope of either Society. What leading Freethinkers think about the War has been made pretty plain in these columns, and that would give guidance to anyone who needs it.

G.—Intention and the right spirit count for everything in such a matter.

A. RED.—Perhaps the King thinks very little about the matter. The religion of kings is selected for them. It goes with the post.

Mrs. BARNEZ ADAMS.—Crowded out of this issue. Next week.

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

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

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

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Personal.

I SEE by a circular letter from Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago, that he is not coming to Europe this year. I shall, therefore, not have the pleasure of meeting him in 1915, as I had hoped. It would also have been pleasant to read the philosophic account of his travels to which he is accustomed to treat his readers. Mr. Mangasarian is detained in America by more than the danger arising to international travellers from the reckless brutality of the Germans to non-combatants in this War of Wars. On June 6 of the present year, he married Miss Mary Edna Glendon, which made a trip to the Old World further dangerous. Besides, they found it impossible to be married as they had designed, in the presence of a large number of their friends, who are presented, instead, with a copy of what is called "The Rationalist Marriage Ceremony." It is an interesting document, but I do not know that it has received the formal sanction of any organised body of Freethinkers. Some would probably object to the promises it contains. It is a little difficult to understand how a man can promise to love, say five years, three months, and two weeks hence. The chronology is definite, but is not the promise optimistic? For my own part, I am not dogmatic on this point. One admires the spirit of everlasting love between two human beings, but even God—at least we are told so in the Bible—fell from his own grace of eternal affection; frequently hated those he had once loved without giving a reason that anyone but himself could understand, and prepared a hell of living fire to show them that his changes of attitude were real enough in all conscience. So when I think of the God who started by loving all his people and afterwards made a hell to roast the most of them for ever, I begin to mistrust all the world-without-end affections, to borrow a phrase from one who appears to have understood everything that ever existed. Why cannot we be content with the present? Why make rash vows in the midst of happiness? The future is so uncertain. To quote the greatest of all poets again, "Who can control his fate?" * * *

Who that has read it can ever forget that adorable chapter, "A Diversion Played on a Penny Whistle," in George Meredith's *Richard Feverel*. "We were made for each other," Lucy says, and Richard seals it with a silent kiss. How long was it before Richard was in the hands of Mrs. Mount? How long before Lucy held his fatherless child against her husbandless heart? Oh, those eternal verities! Let us be more humble in matching ourselves against the universe. * * *

By the way, to descend a bit, I may note that Mr. Mangasarian's printers play him some nasty tricks at times. The name of a well-known countryman of his own ought to have been properly spelt, for it is certainly not long enough to be impossible. Talmage ought not to be spelt "Talmadge." Let every man have his own name. * * *

I am sorry to say that my friend, Mr. Henry S. Salt, of the Humanitarian League, is still more pessimistic over the influence of this War of Wars upon the general state of Europe for years to come. "What can anyone do," he says in a recent letter to me, "while the storm rages, and how many years will it take to repair the damage done? I am afraid that every form of superstition and barbarity will be fortified by this mad war." After some remarks about my recent illness, and more recent recovery, he refers to Mr. Howard Williams, who, he says, has also been ill, and "we have not so many good friends in these evil days, that we can spare them, even for a time." I heard the same remark from Mr. Halley Stewart, the other day, in relation to the Secular Education League.

The following paragraph appeared under the heading of "Sugar Plums" in last week's *Freethinker*:

"The New York *Truthseeker* announces Mr. Foote's recovery from a long and serious illness, and congratulates him on his return to 'editing the *Freethinker* with force and dignity.' This is a pleasing compliment, but not altogether true. Mr. Foote has been writing in the *Freethinker* for many weeks, but Mr. Cohen is still the responsible editor."

Somehow or other, this paragraph got into a place unsuitable for it. To suppose it to have been written by Mr. Cohen would have done him a great injustice. It would have made him correct a serious mistake in a sarcastic way at the expense of a colleague, of which, I venture to say straight off, he is quite incapable, either awake or asleep. The fact is, I wrote the paragraph myself, wishing not to put such an unpleasant correction in another man's hands, and I could not leave it alone because it contained a gross blunder in point of fact, and neither Mr. Cohen nor I wish to profit or lose by misleading statements. The truth won't injure him or me, and the curious thing is that the compliment was meant for both of us.

* * *

Will the weather beat the War, or will the War beat the weather? It sounds odd, but both are possible. If the weather goes on as it is, nobody will be able to fight at all, and if it changes by some rapid and miraculous stroke, there will be very little time left to work the miracle. I saw one worked, however, this summer. Everything was parched in my gardens, which are not of tremendous size. At the front you may dry a handkerchief; in the back one a shirt. Fortunately, it was the front one which most felt the deluge of rain. I was astonished. In one night it had produced a perfect blaze of lilies and roses. It took my very breath away. Supernal loveliness abounded where only a few hours before everything had been mean and sullen, no brightness anywhere. Then came Mother Nature, and in a short summer night filled, with her nectar of rain, bole and branch and stem, and adorned them with an abundance of the loveliest flowers in creation. Oh, the colors! Oh, the perfumes! They almost made one faint with pleasure. It was the work of Mother Nature in a few short hours. Glorious! Divine! And what was man doing somewhere about the same time? Shedding his fellow-man's blood. War never creates, but always destroys. That is its fundamental character. No matter what its object or purpose, its method is destruction, and he gave the best description of it who did it in three words, "War is violence." There is nothing else in it. And man will never be civilised while he imitates the rose with blood, and the lily with fear.

* * *

I promised to say more on the Bowman case, and I will. I have the fear of the law before me, and the decision of the judges is not yet delivered, so the matter is still *sub judice*, and my mouth is closed, except so far as it has been opened already on the subject. I hope there will be no unnecessary delay. If the judgment is taken beyond July, I suppose we shall have to wait until October, which would be very irksome to those who are fighting on the Secular side if Mr. Justice Joyce's decision should be sustained. I am writing on Monday night. I must, therefore, wait, and so must my readers.

G. W. FOOTE.

In spite of the presence of God in their midst, the Wesleyans are not multiplying and replenishing the earth. For nine years they have been decreasing in numbers. During last year their Sunday-school scholars decreased by 16,846, making a total loss of 90,618 since 1905. The secretary found grim comfort in the fact that this decrease was not peculiar to Methodism, but was shared in by all the Free Churches. This serious decline was attributed to everything but the gradual decay of religion in the land. The thought of it was painful chiefly on the ground that the Sunday-school was the recruiting-ground of the Church.

Studies in Supernaturalism.—II.

(Concluded from p. 475.)

IN a fine essay entitled "The Boldness of the Celts," Sidney Hartland advances a formidable array of facts and illustrations which provide powerful support to the thesis maintained in the preceding paragraphs of our article. In folk tales, and in classical myths and legends, men match themselves not merely against minor supernatural creatures, but proceed to threaten or constrain the great gods themselves. From Homer we learn that when Diomed assailed and injured Aphrodite, the goddess went wailing to her mother. Dione consoles Aphrodite by recalling the names of the many Olympian deities who had been worsted in their combats with wayward and turbulent men. The Scandinavian divinities fought with human foes. The national god of the old Hebrews shared all the vices and weaknesses of his stiff-necked worshipers. The angel with whom Jacob wrestled at the ford of Jabbok seems to have been one of the gods, if not Jahveh himself. Innumerable religious legends all the world over plainly indicate that the gods, although mightier and more mysterious than ordinary mortals, were nevertheless always open to flattery and gifts, or in the last resort to coercion.

Xerxes, according to Herodotus, endeavored to control the supernatural powers which governed the Hellespont through the exercise of force. In seasons of severe drought the ancient priestesses of the Canary Islands chastised the waters with rods, so that the sea god should suffer for not sending rain. The divinity of the Nile was similarly punished by Pheros when on one occasion the river rose to a height it had never reached before. In Barmah and elsewhere it is still customary to castigate the waters of a stream for its sin should anyone be drowned.

In various parts of the earth, both in ancient and modern times, it was and still remains the recognised practice to threaten with curses and to hurl arrows at the god of the sky during thunderstorms. Among the Congo State natives "it is common to hear people running about at night and shouting insults at Maloki, a malignant spirit who has made them ill, or caused the death of a relation." The Bechuna of South Africa curse with a most terrible curse of the spirit which presides over the weather, when that goblin god allows hailstorms to damage the crops. With the Zulus, Bakwena, and Hottentots, the weather and earthquake gods are subjected to the direst imprecations in times of trouble. Some of the Hottentots, however, try to coax the thunder and lightning spirits into a better frame of mind.

In America, both North and South, peoples in a similar stage of culture to that of their African brethren hold similar beliefs, and practice similar rites. Eclipses of the sun and moon are almost universally attributed among the lower races to the sinister activities of some powerful creature, who is determined to destroy the heavenly orbs. When the eclipse is over, the people plume themselves on their success in scaring away the evil being that threatened to devour the king of day or the queen of night.

A Christian saint with many sorrows was Anthony. It is related that during a voyage some Portuguese sailors prayed to St. Anthony to send a favorable breeze. As their entreaties were ignored, the enraged mariners removed the saint's image from its shrine and lashed it lightly to the mast. The much wanted wind refused to blow, and the saint was fastened tighter and tighter to the mast as the time wore away. The navigators—

"were not in a mood to stand any nonsense. The instant before which they had knelt in prayer a few hours earlier was now the object of curses and derision; and every day the wind was delayed a new cord was added to bind the sacred victim more tightly."

The wind changed to the desired direction at last, and the saint was released from his undignified position and restored to his niche. The sailors then thanked St. Anthony for his services, but they

reproaches with their gratitude when they commended him that his long delay in complying with their prayers compelled them to proceed to rigorous punishment. This same St. Anthony is expected by the superstitious Spaniards of New Mexico to perform miracles, and when he fails, his image is suspended downwards in the most contemptuous manner. A very comic instance of Catholic credulity comes from France. In the neighborhood of the village of Belle, on the main road from Antun to Château de la Salle, the peasants have set up a Calvary. In a grotto a place is reserved for the image of the saint St. Merri, the parish patron. Among other qualities, St. Merri enjoyed the power to confer fertility. A deeply devout woman from an adjoining village visited the saint to implore him to grant offspring to a married daughter who longed for the blessings of maternity. The old lady had a second daughter who was still a spinster, and the young saint in all innocence sent the child to the married girl. Infuriated by the saint's blunder, an angry woman revisited St. Merri:—

"Bitterly reproaching him with his mockery of her prayers, she took a stick and inflicted on him a sound punishment, breaking his arm, and rolling him over on the ground, where he long remained, a witness to his own unseemly jest and her righteous indignation. The inhabitants at last made a collection to buy a new saint, which is now placed on a pedestal in the foreground of the grotto, where the old and guilty saint is now relegated shamefully to a corner, and still bears the scornful title of the Weeper."*

Stories akin to the foregoing have been gathered from every quarter of the earth. They all teach the same lesson. The supernatural beings created by our worshippers all participate in the passions and weaknesses of their begetters. Even the animal spirits are endowed with human attributes of kind or other, and it is universally believed when prayers and offerings fail to secure their desired offices, there remains no other alternative save of applying more drastic methods of treatment. Their fear and reverence for the mysterious extremity to take their courage in both hands and grapple manfully with the recalcitrant gods. according to their legends, was a pronounced characteristic of an old European race, and this truculent boldness occasioned Hartland to entitle his study "The Boldness of the Celts."

Sidney Hartland's study, *The Haunted Widow*, deals with the world-wide superstition that the deceased husband or even the defunct wife may return to the pleasures of married life with the surviving partner. Many instances of this uncanny phenomenon are on record, both in ancient and recent times. In China, the spirits of the dead of both sexes seem at all times to have been deemed capable of maintaining connection with the living. The same superstition prevails in India, while Ancient Egypt, Persia, Canada, Iceland, Transylvania, and Britain furnish examples of it.

The classic mythologies of Greece and Scandinavia afford many evidences of its influence. In Persia the belief was well nigh universal, and throughout the Dark Ages of Christian ascendancy, and satyrs, under the designation of incubi, and innocent women at every favorable opportunity. The great Catholic philosopher, St. Augustine, reminds us, was so impressed by the apparently overwhelming proof of the belief that he considered it impudent to doubt its truth. To this day, such fancies may still be met with in various districts in England itself. A terrible story is told of the horror and anguish occasioned by a similar belief.

Hartland notes an amazing instance of the survival of this superstition in which a legal tribunal in a civilized country in the twentieth century seriously

weighed the alleged evidences of haunting, and shaped its judgment accordingly. In the United States of America, at Macon in Georgia, on February 16, 1912, a second husband was granted a divorce, because the testimony submitted in the case was held by the court to prove that the jealous ghost of the first husband haunted both the petitioner and his wife. These spiritual attentions became so troublesome that the continuance of married relationship between the couple was rendered impossible:—

"It was not, of course, given in evidence that the ghost committed assaults.....The advance of civilisation since the seventeenth century has softened the manners even of ghosts. But it was stated that the wife had promised her former husband that she would not marry again; she violated the promise; and it was solemnly testified in court that the first husband's spirit appeared nightly with groans and reproachful glances, and only ceased to do so when the lady left her new husband. In our country the luckless husband would find that the posthumous jealousy of his predecessor in the ménage is no ground for divorce. Since the days of the witch-trials our courts have remained unmoved by ghostly perturbations. They have even been known to refuse assistance to the tenant of a haunted house. But Europe is effete."

Among the lower races it is frequently considered prudent to appease the spirit of the deceased husband if the widow is to escape his haunting proclivities. Say what the objectors to the "ghost theory" of religious origins may, the stubborn fact remains that no matter to what department of religious phenomena our inquiries are directed, the spirits of the dead are seen to have exercised an enormous power in shaping the superstitions of the human race.

All manner of disguises are adopted to deceive the ghost of the husband or wife recently dead. As a normally constituted living man is apt to regard any interloper within the domestic domain with feelings of unfriendliness, so is the spirit of the departed supposed to be animated by jealous emotions, and woe betide the widow who omits to take proper precautions to ward off the resentment of her deceased spouse should she take a second partner to her bosom. As a consequence, innumerable devices are encountered among the races of the lower culture, the strict observance of which is absolutely imperative if the unwelcome visitations of the ghosts of the dead are to be avoided. Even among the peoples of cultured Europe it is customary for the widower or widow to refrain from a second matrimonial alliance for a certain recognised interval after the loss of the first spouse. This is now regarded as showing proper "respect" for the dead. But if we may judge from African analogies, the real explanation of this observance is found in the fact that it was originally regarded as a necessary precaution against the bad behavior of the defunct partner's ghost. Significantly enough, with some savage peoples the period of probation is shortened when the deceased spouse has been executed for some criminal offence. Hartland's shrewd conjecture that strangulation is thought to so seriously maim the spirit that "its interference is not to be dreaded" merits remembrance. It is unquestionable that the manner in which savages meet their death, and the mutilations to which the corpse may be subjected are very widely looked upon as materially influencing the dead in the land of the spirits.

There are three other extremely interesting and suggestive essays in Mr. Hartland's volume, "The Philosophy of Mourning Clothes," "The Rite at the Temple of Mylitta," and "The Voice of the Stone of Destiny," with which the work concludes. To these we may return on some future occasion, as the subjects dealt with are all of moment to the great science of Comparative Religion.

T. F. PALMER.

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.—Milton, "Areopagitica."

* Ritual and Belief, p. 183.

Thomas Paine.

THOMAS PAINE was the greatest writer of his day. He was one of the foremost patriots of his time, and America owes him a great debt of gratitude and devotion.

While to me Paine's chief claim to immortality lies in his efforts to free us from the shackles of religious and political superstition, yet in looking over what he achieved or proposed, I find that he is entitled to the gratitude of all mankind, in that he, first of all men, proposed American Independence; suggested the Federal Union of States; proposed the abolition of negro slavery; suggested protection for dumb animals; proposed arbitration and international peace; advocated justice to women; pointed out the reality of human brotherhood; suggested international copyright; proposed the education of children of the poor at public expense; suggested a great republic of all the nations of the world; and urged the purchase of the great Louisiana Territory.

But for more than a century the world ignored this brilliant mind or else heaped obloquy on his name. It looks now, though, as if the name of Thomas Paine will soon occupy that niche in the world's Temple of Fame where it properly belongs. The Thomas Paine National Historical Association, which was organised several years ago in New York City, has done splendid work in bringing to Paine a just measure of recognition.

It no longer suffices to dismiss him as a "filthy little Atheist." We now recognise such persiflage as pure piffle, indicative of its muddy source. Thinkers everywhere are proclaiming Thomas Paine the great statesman, philosopher, and patriot. In the celebration at the Paine Monument in New Rochelle last Memorial Day, among the speakers on the program I noted these: Doctor Henry Neumann, Leader of the Society for Ethical Culture; Henry W. Wilbur, Secretary of the Religious Society of Friends; Dr. Sait, of Columbia University; and the Rev. Dr. Wiers, of Montclair, New Jersey. Surely light is breaking in the East.

The genius of Paine was a flower that blossomed slowly. But life is a sequence, and the man who does great work has been in training for it. There is nothing like keeping in condition; one does not know when he is going to be called upon. Prepared people do not have to hunt for a position—the position hunts for them. Paine knew more about what he was getting ready for than did Benjamin Franklin, when, at twenty, he studied French at evening and dived deep into history.

The humble origin of Paine and his Quaker ancestry were most helpful factors in his career. Only a working man who had tasted hardship could sympathise with the over-taxed and oppressed.

Paine's schooling was slight; but his parents, though poor, were thinking people, for nothing sharpens the wits of men, preventing fatty degeneration of the cerebrum, like persecution. In this respect the Jews and the Quakers have been greatly blessed and benefited.

Very early in life Paine acquired the study habit. And for the youth who has the study habit no pedagogic tears need be shed. There were debating clubs at coffee-houses, where great themes were discussed; and our young weaver began his career by defending the Quakers. He acquired considerable local reputation as a weaver of thoughts upon the warp and woof of words. Occasionally he occupied the pulpit in Dissenting chapels.

These were great times in England—the air was all athrob with thought and feeling. A great tidal wave of unrest swept the land. It was an epoch of growth second only in history to the Italian Renaissance. The two Wesleys were attacking the Church and calling upon men to metho-dise their lives and eliminate folly; Gibbon was writing his *Decline and Fall*; Burke, in the House of Commons, was polishing his brogue; Boswell was busy blithering about a book concerning a man; Captain Cook was sailing the seas finding continents; the two Pitts and Charles Fox were giving the King unpalatable advice; Horace Walpole was setting up his private press at Strawberry Hill; the Herschels—brother and sister—were sweeping the heavens for comets; Reynolds, West, Lawrence, Romney, and Gainsborough were founding the first school of British art; and David Hume, the Scotsman, was putting forth arguments irrefutable.

And into this seething discontent came Thomas Paine, the weaver, reading, studying, thinking, talking, with nothing to lose but his reputation. At a coffee-house in London Paine met that other great thinker, Franklin. They became fast friends. Franklin recognised the genius of Paine and urged him to come to America, the land of opportunity, a country where thinkers were needed. He gave Paine letters of introduction and recommendation, and November 30, 1774, Paine landed in the "New World."

Paine was a writing man; the very first American writing man—and I am humiliated when I have to acknowledge that we had to get him from England. He was the first man who ever wrote these words, "The American Nation," and also these, "The United States of America."

Paine is the first American writer who had a literary style, and we have not had so many since but that you may count them on the fingers of one hand. Note this example of antithesis: "There are but two natural sources of wealth—the earth and the ocean—and to lose the right to either in our situation, is to put the other up for sale."

During 1775, Paine edited the *Pennsylvania Magazine* and in its pages appeared several notable essays from his pen, among them his pleas for the abolition of slavery, for justice to women, for the suppression of duelling.

His writings from the first commanded profound attention. During the latter half of his first year in America he wrote *Common Sense*, that precious pamphlet that awakened the colonists to a realisation of their best interests, separated from their "mother-country"—independence.

Common Sense was published early in January of the following year. It had an enormous sale, and was directly responsible for the Declaration of Independence six months later and the successful revolution that followed. Paine had no financial profits from his work, but gave all to the revolutionary cause. The pamphlet was published anonymously—"Written by an Englishman."

In France, John Adams was accused of writing *Common Sense*. He stoutly denied it, there being several allusions to it stronger than he cared to stand sponsor for.

In England, Franklin was accused of being the author, and he neither denied nor admitted it. But when a lady reproached him for having used the fine alliterative phrase applied to the King, "That Royal British Brute," he smiled and said blandly, "Madame, I would never have been as disrespectful to the brute creation as that."

Common Sense struck the keynote of popular feeling, and the accusation of "treason" hurled at it from many quarters only served to advertise it. It supplied the common people with reasons and gave statesmen arguments. The Legislature of Pennsylvania voted Paine an honorarium of \$3,000, and the University of Pennsylvania awarded him the degree of Master of Arts, in recognition of eminent services to literature and human rights. John Quincy Adams said Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, crystallised public opinion and was the first factor in bringing about the Revolution.

Rev. Theodore Parker once said: "Every living man in America in 1776 who could read, read *Common Sense*." Thomas Paine. If he were a Tory he read it, at least a little, just to find out for himself how atrocious it was; and if he was a Whig he read it all to find the reasons why he was one. This book was the arsenal to which colonists turned for their mental weapons."

When Independence was declared, Paine enlisted in private, but was soon made aide-de-camp to General George Washington. He was an intrepid and effective soldier, and took an active part in various battles.

In December, 1776, he publishes his second book, *Crisis*, the first words of which have gone into the electric type of human speech: "These are the times that try men's souls." The intent of the *Crisis* was to infuse courage into the sinking spirits of the soldiers. Washington ordered the book to be read at the head of every regiment, and so done. On June 8, 1780, Paine started a subscription list and headed it with \$500, all the money he had, to feed Washington's starving army. The total sum subscribed was a little over \$1,500,000. This sum averted disaster and the loan was secured from France.

Rights of Man was Paine's third great work. *Age of Reason* was the last volume given to the world by this great thinker.

Every American should acquaint himself with the career of Thomas Paine, patriot, philosopher, statesman, liberator, and humanitarian. Had Paine given to the world more than that matchless phrase which he adopted as his motto, "The world is my country; to do good is my religion," I should still feel that he was indeed entitled to a supernal position in the galleries of Fame. The breadth of Paine's soul may be measured in his splendid retort to Franklin remarked, "Where liberty is, there is my home." Paine replied, "Where liberty is not, there is my home."

Liberty was Paine's keynote. As early as 1775, eight years before Lincoln's emancipation proclamation, Paine published an eloquent appeal in behalf of the negro slave. He advocated the immediate abolition of the system of human bondage. Paine also wrote in favor of universal peace and an end to all war and militarism. Paine's wise counsel been heeded and slavery abolished at the birth of the American Republic, the Civil War, with its frightful toll of more than a half-million lives sacrificed, had been averted. Had the world heeded Paine's advice...

most European War of 1914, and all other wars since Paine's time, had never taken place.

Among Paine's writings on the subject of war occurs this passage:—

"When we consider the calamities of war and the miseries it inflicts upon the human species, the thousands and tens of thousands, of every age and sex, who are rendered wretched by the event, surely there is something in the heart of man that calls upon him to think! Surely there is some tender chord, tuned by the hand of the Creator, that still struggles to emit in the hearing of the soul a note of sorrowing sympathy. Let it then be heard and let man learn to feel that the true greatness of a nation is founded on principles of humanity, and not on conquest.

"War involves in its progress such a train of unforeseen and unimagined circumstances, such a combination of foreign matters, that no human wisdom can calculate the end. It has but one thing certain, and that is to increase taxes.

"I defend the cause of the poor, of the manufacturer, of the tradesman, of the farmer, and of all those on whom the real burden of taxes falls—but, above all, I defend the cause of women and children—of all humanity."

Reason, fidelity, grace, imagination, energy, earnestness, and Paine's work. No wonder is it that Franklin said, "Paine can rule, many can fight, but only Paine can write in the English tongue." And Jefferson, himself a great admirer, was constantly, for many years, sending to Paine a manuscript for criticism and correction. In one letter to Jefferson adds this postscript: "You must not be too elated and set up when I tell you my belief that you are the only writer in America who can write better than an obliged and obedient servant—Thomas Jefferson."

In 1791-2, *The Rights of Man*, Parts i. and ii., the greatest revolutionary political treatise ever written. Paine was outlawed by the Government of that day, and was also burnt in effigy for his pains. The thinking men of England now revere the memory of Paine for his great work in the nation's behalf. It is most important of the many reforms England has undertaken in the century that has elapsed since it outlawed Paine, have been brought about by Paine's masterly

work. In 1794, Paine published his *Age of Reason*, considered by many persons to be the most vital of all Paine's works. This theological treatise is founded all modern Biblical criticism. The clergy nowadays frequently quote this book, and indeed do they credit the source of their

opinions. In writing *The Age of Reason*, Paine, a deeply religious man, but a thinker who rejected the so-called religion that was popular, was branded an Atheist. Only in recent years, and very largely through the work of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, has the world come to a better understanding and appreciation of Paine.

There have been many prevarications concerning Paine and his work, and those who profess a life of love, kindness, and humility. But we should remember that all this vilification is really the tribute that mediocrity pays to escape censure one only has to move with the

mob with the mob, do nothing that the mob does not do. You are safe. The saviors of the world have

often been crucified between thieves, despised, forsaken, rejected of men. Socrates poisoned, Aristides

crucified, Peter crucified head downward, Savonarola

crucified, Spinoza hunted, tracked, and cursed, and an order that no man should speak to him or supply him food

was given, Bruno burned, Galileo imprisoned, Huss, Wyclif, and Tyndale used for kindling—all this in the

name of religion, institutional religion, the one thing that has caused more misery, heartache, bloodshed, war, than all other causes combined.

Men who know history and humanity and have reasonably got off easy; he had so much benefited. Men who discover continents are destined to be in chains. Men who discover continents are destined to be in chains. That is the price they pay for sailing on,

and on. The pen of Paine made the sword of Washington possible. Paine's book, *Common Sense*, broke the power of monarchy in America, and *The Rights of Man* gave free press to England, so did *The Age of Reason* give pause to the juggernaut of orthodoxy. Paine paved the way and made it possible for men to preach the message of reason. He was the pioneer in a new age of superstition.

—ELBERT HUBBARD in *Thomas Paine*.

The Atheist supposeth that there are no Gods; and the Superstitious wisheth there were none, and believeth against his will, for he is afraid to disbelieve.—*Plutarch*.

Correspondence.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The article on William Morris by "Mimnermus" the other week appears to me to call for some remark. The question of humor is raised. "Of all modern poets," writes "Mimnermus," "he approaches most closely to the 'sweet-souled master,' Chaucer, although Morris wanted the humor of the old bard." I have read all I possibly could on Morris, but this is the first time I have heard him charged with lack of humor. In my opinion a serious charge to make. It is lack of humor that makes the fanatic. The same charge was levelled against Bradlaugh—after he was dead, of course—and worked up at the time for all it was worth, and solemnly moralised upon by the followers of one who was never recorded to have made a genial remark, or even to have smiled. Had the charge been made against Jesus Christ, or even the Kaiser, I should have had nothing to say; I didn't know the one, and don't know the other. Morris I did know. For eight or ten years I met him constantly. I look upon it as one of the great privileges (and pleasures) of my life to have so frequently met him in genial comradeship. His humor was at once attractive and contagious. Long faces broadened in his company. If I might be allowed to call a witness in support of my contention I would mention Walter Crane, who affirms:—

"It is noteworthy that one who excluded humor from his own work, whether literary or artistic, had a keen appreciation of it in the work of others. Few, who only knew Morris through his poems, romances, and designs, would imagine that among his most favorite books were *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, and *Uncle Remus*. I have often heard him recall passages of the first-mentioned book with immense enjoyment of the fun. He was, besides, always an admirer of Dickens."

There is, however, one small work by Morris which is exceptionally humorous—*The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened*.

One other point in the article I should like to remark. "Mimnermus" writes, "While Morris looked upon the world with a smile upon his lips, the tears were very near his eyes." This is an over-statement of facts. Serious, at times he was, as I have seen him; but a weeping Morris is beyond my imagination.

Just one more point, a matter of historical correctness, and I will conclude. It was not, as "Mimnermus" tells us, at the time of the Trafalgar-square riots, but at the Dod-street affair, two years earlier, that Morris appeared before the Thames Court magistrate. The memorable remark was more the result of impulse, caused by the excitement of sudden and summary arrest, than that of pride.

A. G. B.

BUCHNER'S "FORCE AND MATTER."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Perhaps it will interest your contributor, W. Mann, and the readers of his able articles, entitled "Science and the Bible," to know that Ludwig Buchner's *Force and Matter* is not, as Mr. Mann states, out of print. A reprint from the fourth English edition is issued by the New York Labor News Co., 45 Rose-street, New York. This publishing company, though avowedly Socialist, are the publishers of several works of an advanced character, which, for reasons various, have fallen under the ban of orthodox critics and publishers. Included among these is Eugene Sue's monumental work, *The History of a Proletarian Family Across the Ages*.

A. E. Cook.

Obituary.

We regret to report the death of Mr. Charles Shepherd, of 37 Homer-street, London, which occurred on Wednesday, July 21, in the sixty-third year of his age. Mr. Shepherd was a valiant Freethinker, who availed himself of every opportunity to promote the interests of the cause. It was his delight to attend Freethought meetings of all sorts, and to contribute his full share to their effectiveness. His cremation took place at Golder's Green on July 26, when a Secular Service was conducted. We tender to the bereaved family our sincere sympathy.—J. T. L.

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, Mr. Burke, a Lecture; 6.15, Debate, Mr. Burke and Mrs. Quin, "Christianity v. Secularism."

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 7.30, F. Schaller, "Christian Cant."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill: 3.15, Stephen Hooper, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

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