

# THE Freethinker

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It is beautiful that Force should have Right for a leader, that Progress should have Honor as a sovereign, that Intelligence should have Duty as a despot, that Civilisation should have Liberty as a queen, and that the servant of Force should be the Light.—VICTOR HUGO.

## Shakespeare and Mr. Muir on Swearing.

It was suggested a week or two ago in the *Freethinker* that it was time a circular was issued by the legal authorities to all magistrates and other Courts of Justice pointing out the provisions of the Oaths Act, and observing, incidentally, that its "author and finisher" was Charles Bradlaugh. There is now a strong tendency to suppose that the Oaths Act was partly intended to prevent Christians from taking the oath.

The fact is, Bradlaugh did not care a straw whether Christians obeyed Christ and refused the oath, or obeyed some other party and took it. His case was for his own people. They wanted to avoid swearing and to declare the truth like gentlemen.

It was a modest demand, just like an Atheist asking his own rights and never interfering in the degree with the rights of others. But the Christian would not give the Atheist equal rights to himself, and Bradlaugh was at last driven into drawing up a just and honorable Bill, which was permissive, and not compulsory. He did not say anything at all about those who liked swearing. He left it to them to act according to their own taste and conscience, but he insisted on the Freethinkers being allowed to do the same. It was a ticklish task for the cleverest man in the world. I don't say that Bradlaugh was that, but I do say that I have never seen any plan of doing it better. John Morley tried to do it, but I never heard that he met with the smallest success.

Well, then! Bradlaugh worked hard at his Bill, the Oaths Act of 1887. It provided that every one who had hitherto been entitled or required to take the oath might henceforth claim to make affirmations instead—not one or the other just for the fun of the thing, but for a definite and declared reason. It was not permitted to Christians to object to a Freethinker affirming as a Freethinker with all the rights of Christians in the matter of truth. Bradlaugh insisted on one thing and one thing only, that a Freethinker might affirm, and that a Christian might refuse to swear. In other words, that an Atheist might claim a conscience as well as a Christian, and act upon that presumption if he chose to make the fact as apparent as the Christian was accustomed, and even compelled, to do. It was Bradlaugh's intention to benefit. There were two grounds why a man might refuse to take the oath and claim whatever: (1) that the man had no religious belief whatever; (2) that taking an oath was contrary to his religious belief. These grounds of objection were intended for the benefit of non-believers. Now they are trying to make out that Bradlaugh wanted to enable Christians to prevent Freethinkers from swearing. If this is so, then they knew him a great deal better than I did. He was not a liar; he was not a fool. They try to make him out to have been both.

Mr. Muir, a gentleman who transacts large business at the Old Bailey, and wanted a juror withdrawn because a man with no religion was not fit to be a judge of serious business, might have consulted some older teachers than Bradlaugh, if he wanted to avoid making a fool of himself. Coleridge, for instance, said that "the present system of taking oaths is horrible." It directly promoted false evidence. "You may depend upon it, the more oath-taking the more lying generally among the people." Such was Coleridge's view of Mr. Muir's gentlemen fit for serious business. I will not quote the sterner language of Bentham, for he was an Atheist.

I see that the *Star* praises the *Jewish Chronicle* for denouncing Mr. Muir, who challenged the juror's right to affirm, on behalf of the Crown, whose case he was conducting. Judge Rentoul acquiesced in these proceedings, but, apparently, did not approve of them, and the matter was discussed in Court after the juror was dismissed. An article in the *Jewish Chronicle* was the cause of this discussion, the editor having published an article in condemnation of the alleged right of the Crown to challenge anybody for anything, even when a juror seeks relief to his conscience, to which he is entitled by a special law.

The *Star* endorses the *Freethinker's* hope that the Home Secretary or the Lord Chancellor, or both, will give information on these points to gentlemen who administer the law in our Courts of Justice, and put them in the right road. "If the incident is to be passed over without notice," the *Star* adds, "the Oaths Act will, so far as jurors are concerned, become a dead letter at the Central Criminal Court." The *Jewish Chronicle* further adds, it must not be forgotten that "years ago Mr. Bradlaugh fought and won a great battle for the right of a man to affirm in Parliament." I am afraid that this fact is too often overlooked.

There is one writer to whom it is always pleasant and profitable to turn, let the subject be what it will. Reynolds, the actor, declared that you could vote Shakespeare for anything. He had just bidden his hostess good-night, and was rather sad at parting with such good company. It was not a situation which lent itself to quotation of a recondite character, and the lady reminded him of his declaration about the Swan of Avon. "Madam," he said, "I once more take my leave under the shade of melancholy boughs (*bows*)."

Now, Shakespeare says a good deal, first and last, about these gentlemen fit for serious business. I have not time at present to go over all his plays, and mark where he represents oath-takers as the wickedest or meanest of men. Mr. Muir might feel inclined to do this for me, for I am a very busy man, and have lately been passing through a long and severe illness; but I doubt if he will do me the kindness, so I will jog along my own way, and take the first selection that occurs to me. Nay, it does not so much occur to me as force itself upon me. When the conspirators are met at night to plot the assassination of Cæsar, one noble spirit will help to kill the tyrant, but will not take part in an act of dirty desecration. Cæsar was his friend. He will help to kill him, not out of any disgusting hatred or envy, but for treachery to Rome and Liberty. Cassius suggests that the conspirators shall swear a common resolution, and

Brutus exclaims:—

"No, not an oath: if not the face of men,  
The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse,—  
If these be motives weak, break off betimes,  
And every man hence to his idle bed;  
So let high-sighted tyranny range on,  
Till each man drop by lottery. But if these,  
As I am sure they do, bear fire enough  
To kindle cowards, and to steel with valor  
The melting spirits of women; then, countrymen,  
What need we any spur, but our own cause,  
To prick us to redress? What other bond  
Than secret Romans, that have spoke the word,  
And will not palter? and what other oath  
Than honesty to honesty engag'd,  
That this shall be, or we will fall for it?  
Swear priests, and cowards, and men cautelous,  
Old feeble carriages, and such suffering souls  
That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear  
Such creatures as men doubt: but do not stain  
The even virtue of our enterprise,  
Nor th' insuppressive mettle of our spirits,  
To think that our cause or our performance  
Did need an oath; when every drop of blood  
That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,  
Is guilty of a several bastardy,  
If he do break the smallest particle  
Of any promise that hath passed from him."

The man in whose mouth Shakespeare put that magnificent outburst—one of the grandest pieces of composition in all English literature—was Brutus, whom he himself calls, through the mouth of Marc Anthony, "the noblest Roman of them all."

I have no more time to give to this subject at present, but it is evident at a single glance that there is a tremendous difference between Shakespeare and Mr. Muir—which, by the way, may not be surprising. Shakespeare's choice falls on the Freethinker, Mr. Muir turns him out of court.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Victory.

WHEN I wrote in the *Freethinker* of April 25 on Mr. Justice Joyce's decision in the Bowman Case, I gave my article the title of "A Great Victory." Some of my friends were afraid that I was rather premature. They knew there was a possibility of an Appeal against the judge's decision, and when notice of Appeal was finally given, they suggested that it would have been better to have been less confident, and so have avoided the possibility of having to admit that my judgment was ill-based. And, of course, to wait for a certainty before speaking, was a very safe plan. But that indicates neither courage nor judgment; and causes such as ours are best served by the exercise of both qualities.

Even though I had been wrong in thinking that the Appeal against Justice Joyce's decision would be dismissed, his verdict would still have represented a great victory. We should have won a battle, even though we had lost the campaign. The verdict of a judge of the High Court that the Secular Society, Limited was a perfectly legal Society, entitled to hold and receive bequests at law, would have been a considerable asset in a new campaign that would have been commenced.

Events have now quite justified the confidence that many of us felt in the soundness of the Society's position. The hearing of the Appeal came before the Master of the Rolls and Lords Justices Warrington and Pickford on July 13. On July 16, counsel concluded their arguments, and it was announced that the Court reserved judgment, but hoped to deliver its decision before it rose for the vacation. On Friday, July 30, judgment was delivered, and the judges unanimously dismissed the Appeal. There still remains the possibility, but not, I think, the probability, of an Appeal to the House of Lords. But with two such decisions, and bearing in mind the statement of the law as laid down by Mr. Justice Joyce, and by the three Judges of Appeal, that is, I think, a contingency not likely to arise.

The judgment delivered, while brief, was sweeping and conclusive. Each of the judges spoke, and the

whole judgment occupied rather less than forty-five minutes. Each of them travelled over substantially the same ground, and although the phraseology was a little different in each case, I do not think anything was said by any one of the judges that would not have been endorsed by the other two. For this reason I do not think it necessary to particularise the different opinions. Substantially, there was only one opinion, given in three voices.

To begin with, all three judges placed one side the mass of early precedents and ecclesiastical decisions that Mr. Cave, K.C., had so laboriously compiled. They were all out-of-date before Mr. Cave took them in hand; they are still more out-of-date now. The Master of the Rolls also cleared away another point upon which Mr. Cave laid stress both in Mr. Justice Joyce's Court and the Court of Appeal. Mr. Cave had argued that a bequest to the Society might be a perpetuity, and if that were so, the gift was illegal. How Mr. Cave came to urge that point puzzles me. A perpetuity can only be created by the express conservation of the capital, and Mr. Cave based his argument on the clause in the Memorandum of the Association which forbade any sharing out of the capital amongst its members should the Society at any time come to an end. But as there is nothing in the Memorandum to prevent the Society spending the whole of its capital, at any time it sees fit to do so, the argument for a perpetuity breaks down completely.

The two other arguments upon which Mr. Cave relied were that it was illegal to deny God and to attack religion, and that even if this did not constitute blasphemy, still the Courts ought not to aid it to the extent of enforcing a contract in its favor. Before considering these points, the Master of the Rolls laid down the principle that the Court was not justified in going outside the limits of the Memorandum of Association. The Secular Society, Limited, was a properly constituted body with defined objects. It was, consequently, the business of the Court to consider those Memoranda, and those alone. He quite declined to consider what the Chairman or anyone else had said or done. The Court was not warranted in assuming that the money would not be spent in the directions indicated by the Articles. Lord Justice Pickford also pointed out that the Court had no right to go behind those Articles. It had been argued that the Secular Society, Limited, was formed to subsidise the National Secular Society, but that was no concern of the Court. It had been pointed out that the money might be applied to illegal purposes, which was true, but the only question before the Court was, Were the Articles themselves illegal? He saw nothing illegal in them or in their objects.

This was Mr. Justice Joyce's ruling over against the Articles—that was the question—Were they legal or illegal? What the Society might do with its money, whether it spent that money in a legal or an illegal manner had really nothing to do with the subject. An Archbishop might commit blasphemy, but that would not disfranchise the Church. Any citizen might commit murder, or one of a dozen other crimes, but that is no reason for declaring him an outlaw from birth. As I said when writing an association a legal status is that it may be brought before a court if it spends its funds in an illegal manner. From the point of view of a layman, and evidently more absurd than to declare an association illegal because some of its agents might commit an illegal act.

Turning to Mr. Cave's argument in reference to what I have called positive and negative illegality, the Master of the Rolls said the governing clause in the Memorandum was Clause (a):—

"To promote in such ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon super-natural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action."

Mr. Cave had argued that this was Atheism, and

appeared to be under the impression that Atheism was an offence at law. All three judges agreed that, substantially, this was Atheism. It involved, they said, the denial of the providence of God, the value of religion, and the truth of revelation. But, they asked, was there anything in this Article, or in any other of the Articles, that could not be carried out in a perfectly lawful manner? They all agreed there was not. It had been argued that to attack religion was an offence, but, said the Master of the Rolls—and in this he was followed in express words by the other judges—a better view of the law is that laid down by Lord Coleridge, that provided it was done in a becoming manner, there was nothing illegal in attacking or denying the fundamentals of religion. And Lord Warrington cited this fine and telling passage from Coleridge's summing up in the case of Mr. Foote:—

"To base a prosecution for an aspersion of Christianity *per se*, on the ground that Christianity is in the sense of Lord Hale, Lord Raymond, and Lord Tenterden, part of the law of the land, is in my judgment to forget that the law grows like other things, that though the principles of law remain, yet that the law grows. And it is one of the inestimable advantages of the Common Law that it is so, that the principles of law have to be applied to infinitely changing circumstances and to growth—some people would say towards retrogression, but I should venture to say towards progression of human opinion."

The Master of the Rolls in almost scornful tones said that it would be almost shocking to hold in the twentieth century, in view of the various schools of thought and their representatives, that to teach there was no God was to be guilty of blasphemous libel. It was not illegal to deny the truth of religion, it was not illegal to promote Atheism, and there was not one of the Articles of the Memorandum of Association that could not be carried out in a perfectly legal manner. That was the considered judgment of three Lords of Appeal, and it was as sweeping and as unequivocal as our best friends could desire.

This is the first time that the legality of a bequest to the Secular Society, Limited, has been called in question, and I fancy it will be the last. No one—be his teeth ever so sharp—is likely to spend time again on biting that file. The importance of the case was recognised by the number of counsel in Court, and I am certain it will rank as a very important precedent. Important as the case is to the Militant Freethought Movement, its significance covers a larger area still, and many other societies will feel the more secure from the fight which the Secular Society, Limited, has carried through, as some have already benefited by its example.

Speaking before Mr. Justice Joyce, and again in the Court of Appeal, Mr. Cave said in rather an injured tone that the Memorandum of Association had been very cleverly drawn. Of course it had. It was drawn under the supervision of one who knew the Blasphemy Laws through and through, and who knew from experience how dangerous it would be to leave Christian bigotry the slightest chance of gratifying its malignancy. Bigots had used the law long enough to oppress freedom of thought and more worthy than themselves. The Secular Society, Limited, case may teach them that even the law grows, and that to the extent indicated above it can no longer be used to prevent the rational discussion of religious beliefs.

"Mr. Foote," said the Society's Solicitor to me on leaving the Court, "deserves to be congratulated. The case has been fought on his lines throughout. We acted with his advice from the start." That was so, I, of course, knew quite well, but it is well that others should know it also. He could not argue the case in Court in person; legal technicalities prevented that. But he could, and did, direct the course of the campaign, and the wisdom of this direction was seen in the result. And this was in accordance with the fitness of things. The Secular Society was devised and created by him, it was, as he has often said, his child. I prefer to say it is one of

his children; I am sure that the *Freethinker* itself holds a prominent place in his affections. Mr. Cave was not merely fighting the Secular Society, Limited, he was meeting also the wary old fighter who had discovered the weak joint in his enemy's armor, and who was taking full advantage of his discovery. We are all pleased, for the sake of "the best of causes," at this legal victory. But I may be excused expressing my personal pleasure that the last of the old Freethought leaders finds a long life of work crowned with this magnificent victory. C. COHEN.

## Intercession and the War.

THE fourth day of the current month was the first anniversary of our declaration of war with Germany, which was specially observed at St. Paul's by a great service attended by "the King and all the great leaders of the nation," the main object of which was "to inaugurate the second year of the War by invoking God's help." On the last Sunday afternoon in July an open-air service had been held on the steps of the Cathedral, preceded by a parade on the Embankment, at which some thousands of troops with massed bands rendered valuable assistance. For use at both services a Litany of Intercession had been prepared which, it was expected, was so worded as to produce a favorable impression upon the omnipotent Sovereign of the Universe. In connection with these fresh endeavors to persuade Heaven to befriend Great Britain in the War, the Bishop naturally occupied a prominent position, who had already addressed to the people of London a message to afford them guidance and direction in the effort of prayer and intercession which he called upon them to make. This message appeared in the *Church Times* for July 23, and is of such a character as to demand a critical examination. Of course, it was quite impossible for his lordship to address his people without alluding to his recent visit to the Front, and telling stories about the bravery, privations, and sufferings of our men there. Then he asks, "What are we doing at home? Is the message of Christ from the Cross to be the standard of mankind, or the modern German teaching that might is right"? He assures us that "nothing less than that is the issue before the world to-day." What Christ's message from the Cross is he does not inform us. As a matter of fact, nobody knows, and there is no way of finding out. Our concern, however, is with the Bishop of London's message, and its bearing upon the terrible situation.

His lordship begins by stating that there is one thing which everybody can do, namely, pray. Even this statement is false. There are thousands of people in his own diocese who cannot pray because they do not believe in prayer. Prayer has no value in their eyes because they do not believe in the existence of any being who can hear and answer it. To them the following assertion by the Bishop sounds unutterably absurd:—

"If everyone prayed, and prayed regularly, we should receive a spiritual force which would astonish the world."

Dr. Ingram knows how absolutely safe it is to make such an assertion, because of the absolute certainty that everyone will never pray. Christians have never received and exerted a spiritual force which astonished the world. True, the Bishop would admit; but then the time has never been when everyone prayed, and prayed regularly. Has it never struck the right reverend gentleman that it is the worst species of blasphemy to represent God as being determined not to vouchsafe the victory to Great Britain, though she is fighting for Jesus Christ, until "everyone prays, and prays regularly"? Either he calumniate the Divine Being most wickedly, or is guilty of praying to deaf ears. Furthermore, according to the Bishop, it is not the prayer of a righteous man that availeth so much in its working, but that of those among whom "there is none that

doeth good." To pray properly we must be great sinners who repent. "If we are honest with ourselves," his lordship adds, "all have much selfishness and love of comfort, to say nothing of other sins, to lay penitently before God." If we do so lay them before God, he will be gracious unto us and grant us a glorious victory; but if not, Germany shall win, though her cause is wrong, and ours right.

To secure the triumph of our just cause, everyone of us must pray, pray regularly, and pray penitently. That is the threefold condition of final success in the War. They who rely on big battalions, adequately equipped, are doomed to a bitter disappointment, for the word has gone forth that "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts," shall the fight be won. History and our own reason tell us that this is not true, and the Bishop of London says the same thing. If our prayers are to be answered, we must answer them ourselves. His lordship does not say this in so many words, but he says it in effect thus:—

"Prayer and penitence must lead up to service. 'I am among you as he that serveth,' was Christ's own declaration, and it sanctifies the great appeal made to the nation to-day for universal voluntary service. 'Am I making what I can out of the War?' or 'Am I giving all I can for the good of the common cause?' It is the answer to these questions which marks off a traitor from a patriot. The lads at the Front are doing their bit. What is my bit? And am I doing it?"

Orthodox theology teaches that "doing is a deadly thing," salvation being by faith alone, and prayer is independent of works, works being only the fruit of the answer to prayer; but the Bishop is heterodox enough to see that prayer, if alone, accomplishes nothing. Listen to this:—

"I must do more than serve, I must save. The nation has to save £1,000,000,000 a year to pay for the War, the Prime Minister tells us; then I must see there is no waste in my household. However small a sum it may be, I must save what I can and invest it in the War Loan to help my country.....These seem to me the resolutions we are bound to make—'I will pray, I will repent, I will serve, I will save.'"

It seems to us, on the contrary, that the first two resolutions completely nullify the second couple. If one prays and repents to secure a certain result, it would be rank impiety to endeavor to realise the same object through hard work. If prayer and work are simultaneous, it is impossible to determine what share, if any, prayer has in bringing about the desired effect. The Christians are now arranging for improved intercessory services, at which prayer is to be penitent as well as believing. Several such services have already been held in different parts of the country, and the clergy have certified that if the prayers are sufficiently regular and penitent we shall, in God's good time, come out of this frightful conflict more than conquerors through him whose servants we are; but the Minister of Munitions, though himself a believer in the efficacy of prayer, conducts the business of his department as if no God existed, as if prayer did not count. The fortunes of the War have not been affected in the least by the prayers of the faithful on either side. In two of his resolutions the Bishop seems to have faith in munitions, and yet he recommends his people to pray thus:—

"Stretch forth thy hand, thou God of Hosts, and decide between us and our enemies; give us fortitude and courage to endure hardness as good soldiers, and crown our labors with victory; for Jesus Christ's sake."

The Churches are divided against one another in their attitude to the story of alleged supernatural intervention at certain stages in the present War. Some ministers profess to believe that an angelic guard came to the help of our retreating Army at Mons, among whom are men of Dr. Horton's temperament. Others, such as the Dean of Durham, totally disapprove of the evident growth during the War of grovelling superstition and belief in miracles. Dr. Henson is reported as giving "as an instance of this the story which had been widely circulated in religious newspapers, and had found its way into sermons, of the presence of angels at the retreat

from Mons." He had no hesitation in pronouncing that story "a myth which had come from a journalist." The Rev. H. T. Knight, M.A., also, preaching at St. Mary's Church, Shortlands, referred to the same legend in very similar terms, affirming, in answer to the question, "If it helps people to believe in angels, is it not better to leave them with their faith rather than to take it away from them?" that "in the interest of faith itself, it is necessary to reject the [Mons] episode altogether." He points out that "the plea that because a belief is spiritually advantageous it ought to be upheld and cultivated, is a plea that leads straight to superstition." Dr. Horton, however, loves and revels in superstition. His instance of Divine interposition in the Dardanelles was the quintessence of superstition. It is not easy to realise that a sane person could believe that, in answer to the prayers of the sailors, bombs which aimed at the destruction of their warship were so deflected in their flight that they fell harmless into the sea. We do not doubt but that belief in such a legend might prove temporarily advantageous to religion, but Mr. Knight reminds us that positive falsehoods have often done the same.

As believers in and advocates of freedom, we would never dream of preventing, even if we had the power to do so, the holding of intercessory services. The Bishop of London has a perfect right to contradict himself in a series of four resolutions, and at one and the same time to summon his people both to pray and to work for victory; but we also claim the right to expose his inconsistency and warn the public against his fundamentally fallacious reasoning. We beg to recall the fact, which he may have forgotten, that while a twenty-four hours' prayer-meeting was being conducted in his own Cathedral, the Germans raided our north-east coast and killed scores of innocent men, women, and children. The truth is that if the Germans are to be beaten, the stupendous task must be performed by us and our Allies, without any assistance from either gods or their angels. In spite of all our prayer-meetings and intercessory services, we are still very far from winning the War; and even so stalwart a Christian believer as Sir William Robertson Nicoll admits that unless we utilise every ounce of our energy within the next few months we shall certainly be defeated. And he is right. We know the old Latin adage, "Pray and work"; but we much prefer the other proverb which says, "To pray is to work," which means that prayer as a religious exercise is only worthless, the only thing that matters and tells in real life being **WORK, WORK**. However much the Kaiser and his people may pray, and we have every reason to assume that they are much given to prayer, in the conduct of this War their exclusive reliance is placed upon the skill of their men and the frightfulness of their methods. Nothing else counts on either side. We are children of the earth, and our destiny is determined by earthly means alone. J. T. LLOYD.

### A Book from Shakespeare's Library.

"We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man without gaining something from him."—CARLYLE.  
 "Authors who have influence are merely those who express perfectly what other men are thinking; who reveal in people's minds ideas or sentiments which were tending to the birth."  
 —JOURNALS.

JOHN FLORIO'S translation of Montaigne's "Essays" is the one book we know for certain to have been in the library of Shakespeare, and this gives additional interest to a writer who has ever been a favorite with book-lovers. Few authors charm so much as Michel de Montaigne. Others may be greater, but none can stir the intellect more than this wise trifle, and few so surely reach the heart. It is over three hundred years since this old French Freethinker died, yet his memory is as green and affection for him as tender as if he belonged to our own time. Montaigne is the legitimate ancestor of all essay writing, that most

delightful form of literature. He first surprised and shocked his contemporaries, and finally became a popular author.

It was an age of pedantry and stiffness. Writers gave themselves the air of professors, and were almost as unreadable. But this old Gascon gentleman thought himself of writing, without restriction as to subject and manner, his experience of life. He broke down ceremony in literature, and first vindicated for prose the liberty of unscholastic writing. The result was the immortal *Essays*, which first astonished and then delighted those who read them. The writers who preceded Montaigne were, generally speaking, exclusive, bigoted, self-sufficient, and uncommunicative. But Montaigne brought a new note into literature. He laughed pedantry out of the world. His merciless mockery broke down the barriers of the old learning, which confined authorship within such narrow borders. He departed from that professional tradition of quotation for the purpose of showing the extent of the author's knowledge. If Montaigne cited a saying of Plutarch or Seneca, it was to show how it tallied with what everybody was still thinking or saying. If he quoted some magnificent lines of Lucretius, it was not to parade his intimate knowledge of a great classic, but because it touched with simplicity and truth some deep chord of feeling.

Montaigne did not disdain to turn from the grave themes of philosophy and theology to homelier and lighter subjects. He was not above writing on thumbs, coaches, old slippers, or even smells. An easy-going mortal, he would turn aside from a weighty subject to tell a Rabelaisian story. He cast a large and kindly glance on the world. His egotism, of which so much has been said, was in reality part of his protest against the pedantry and affectations of his time. Not only did he break completely with scholastic tradition, but he was one of the discoverers of the genius and powers of the French language. A buoyant and playful humor runs through his writing, now and again broken by a sob of pain. What laughter; and in the pity, what an accent of tears, as of rain in the wind!

Few men's lives have been so accurately reflected in their works as that of this immortal essayist. Living as he did through the terrible years of religious wars, when Europe was a cockpit of contending creeds, we learn less of battles and murders than of his personal likes and dislikes. In the terrible Civil Wars of the League, which converted every house into a fort, Montaigne kept his house open and without defence. Catholics and Protestants freely came and went, the courage and honor of this brave old Freethinker being everywhere esteemed.

Montaigne rarely rises to enthusiasm in his *Essays*, and only where his affections are concerned. There is something touching in his veneration for his father, a man of so different a stamp. Equally strong is the impression he leaves of his friendship with Etienne de la Boetie. It was a comradeship too early closed by death, but it remained to the old Gascon one of his most cherished and one of his noblest possessions. His great love in literature was for Socrates. In writing of him his cheek flushes, and his otherwise placid style rises to passion; so potent is the influence of genius.

The free play of Montaigne's intellect in his world-famous *Essays* was but an aspect of his freethought, which was so noticeable a feature that Emerson, writing nearly three hundred years later, in another continent, hails this great Frenchman as a perfect type of the sceptic. But Montaigne's crowning glory is that he influenced Shakespeare, the supreme genius in the world's literature. Nor is this to be wondered at, for Montaigne is the frankest and most independent of writers. He took as his motto a pair of scales with the words, "What know I?" and said that all religious opinions are the result of custom. Under the guise of a mere man of the world, expressing natural thoughts in common language, he concealed a spirit of lofty and audacious inquiry. Withal, he was a Humanitarian, and he was one of the

earliest men in Europe who questioned the sense and justice of murdering people for a difference of opinion. His denunciation of the conduct of the Christians in America does him infinite honor.

Montaigne's glory is that he thought human life, with its actions and its passions, a very important and interesting thing. He did not, like so many writers of his time, care only for the parade of knowledge. It was man he cared for, and the whole of manhood; its good and evil, its greatness and grotesqueness, its laughter and its tears. Under a calm exterior, his heart was in love with mankind, and he had a passionate desire for the establishment of truth and justice among men. To add, by any tribute of ours, to the fame, or to enhance the glory, of this many-sided man is impossible. He is one of the immortals of our race who live beyond praise. The language which he enriched is a perpetual memorial of him, and he has passed beyond criticism. He survives with Shakespeare and Cervantes in the memory and affection of men.

"From our plaudits greatly fled,  
They with diviner silence dwell instead,  
And, far beyond our vision and our hail,  
Are heard for ever, and are seen no more."

MIMNERMUS.

## The Fourth Gospel.

### THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.

AFTER passing through the province of Samaria the pseudo-John makes his new Jesus "come again unto Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine." While staying here, we are told, "a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum" came to him "and besought him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." To this appeal Jesus answered, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." The imaginary nobleman "believed the word that Jesus spake unto him and went his way." The point to be noted in this miracle is the circumstantial evidence adduced in proof of the cure.

"And as he [the nobleman] was going down [from Cana to Capernaum] his servants met him, saying that his son lived. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and all his house" (John iv. 51-53).

Could any miracle be more conclusively established? It is true that we have but the word of an anonymous second century writer for it, and that he wrote in the name of the apostle John. We know, also, that neither the two visits made by Jesus to Cana of Galilee, nor the two miracles said to have been wrought there, are mentioned in any of the other three Gospels, and that had these been known to the three Synoptists, one or more of the three would certainly have recorded them. Both Matthew and Luke have added new matter from apocryphal sources—the first two chapters in each being examples. Mark alone has drawn only from the primitive Gospel. Many of the apocryphal writings have come down to our day; but in none of them do we find any narratives that are now in the Fourth Gospel, or anything in the least like them. We thus arrive again at the only conclusion that explains the known facts—viz., that all the narratives in the "Gospel of John," which are not found in one or other of the Synoptics, were piously fabricated by the pseudo-John himself.

In concluding this fourth chapter the writer, speaking of the healing of the nobleman's son, says: "This is again *the second sign* that Jesus did when he had come out of Judea into Galilee." This statement places that alleged miracle (and also the chapters John i.—iv.) before the Synoptic Jesus had wrought any miracle in Galilee; that is to say, before the events recorded in Matt. iv. 23, Mark i. 21, and Luke iv. 31—though there is no place for those chapters in the Synoptical Gospels.

## THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

After the performance of the foregoing miracle we are told that "there was a feast of the Jews" at hand, and such being the case, "Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (John v. 1). Then follows an account of even a greater wonder, and one which, up to that time, was unknown to any human being save the pseudo-John himself. This account reads:—

"Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered [waiting for the moving of the water: for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole, with whatsoever disease he was holden]. And a certain man was there, which had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldst thou be made whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, *when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.* Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole," etc. (v. 2—9).

This narrative is of interest chiefly as showing the ideas which the pseudo-John held respecting the Christian God and the Christian Savior. He believed that the God whom he worshiped possessed the power, if he thought fit to exercise it, to heal all the sick people lying around the pool; but that in his compassion and loving-kindness he chose to heal but one—the person who first stepped into the water. The writer also believed that his Savior, following the example of his God, never gave a thought to the healing of more than one person, but went on his way leaving all "the sick, blind, halt, and withered"—save one—unhealed: and he made him do so. The Jesus of the Synoptics, we are told, "went about in all Galilee.....healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people" (Matt. iv. 23); but the Jesus of the "Gospel of John" did not trouble his head about such matters.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the foregoing story is a fabrication. In the first place, it was not found in the primitive Gospel from which the three other evangelists drew the main portion of their narratives. In the next place, no pool in Jerusalem at which an angel agitated the water for the cure of sickness or disease is mentioned by any writer known to history—including the Jewish historian Josephus. The Christian Church know the story to be a fiction; but not being able to erase it, they have in the Revised Version omitted from the text the words I have placed within brackets, and have relegated them to the margin. But this does not get rid of the statement that "at certain seasons" an angel agitated the water of the pool; for the words italicised in the reply of the sick man prove that the portion within brackets was an essential part of the story, which, in fact, cannot be understood without that portion. Writing in the second century, the pseudo-John had no fear of detection; for the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews throughout the Roman Empire would be thought to cause the divine intervention to cease.

After the performance of this miracle, it is further said:—

"Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place. Afterward Jesus findeth the healed man in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee" (v. 13, 14).

Here we have a sample of the dense ignorance prevalent in the days of the Presbyter John, who in the foregoing paragraph has placed his own ideas in the mouth of his imaginary Jesus. This Savior, according to the statement made, believed that the thirty-eight years of affliction suffered by the healed man was a punishment for some sin that man had previously committed. And this is the kind of Jesus that rational men of the present day are asked to believe was a divine Being and the Savior of the world.

## A NONSENSICAL DISCOURSE.

On the same day this pseudo-Jesus is represented as making a long discourse (v. 17—47), from which I have only space for some short extracts. The following, for instance, is one of the most remarkable statements made by the Jesus of this Gospel:—

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever the Father doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth" (v. 19—20).

Here the Fourth Gospel Jesus is represented as saying that he learnt the art of working miracles by watching his Father in heaven working them, and that only such miracles as the Father wrought was he able to work; that the Father loved the Son, and for that reason showed him how to perform all that he himself performed. Nobody with a grain of sense could imagine a divine person speaking in this way: this Savior talks like a little boy whose father, a professional conjurer, has shown him how to do some easy sleight-of-hand tricks. If, then, we wish to know the kind of miracles which "the Father" had wrought in heaven, we have but to turn to the Fourth Gospel and see what "signs" Jesus is said to have performed in that book. From this record we learn that "the Father" had turned water into wine, and had cured blindness, sickness, and diseases among the people there, and had even restored the dead to life: whence it follows that there were plenty of sick and afflicted folk, as well as dead people, in heaven. How grievously mistaken, then, are the Salvationists who stand at street corners shouting in stentorian tones:—

"In heaven above, where all is love,  
There will be no more sorrow there."

Again, in this discourse, according to the Authorized Version, Jesus is described as inviting the Jews to "search the scriptures" (*i.e.*, the Old Testament) if they wished to find further testimony of his divine nature. This is incorrect: the passage should read:—

"Ye search the scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (v. 39).

It is quite true that many learned Jews *did* search the Hebrew Scriptures; but it was not to find "eternal life." The Old Testament gives no information upon that point. This is found only in writings composed at a much later day—say, the apocryphal 2 Esdras (about 50 B.C.).

Continuing his absurd egotistical railing, the pseudo-Jesus says:—

"Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (v. 45—47).

In this short paragraph we have the clearest proof it is possible to have of the fictitious character of the Fourth Gospel Jesus. In the first place, we know beyond the smallest shadow of a doubt that the Jewish rabbis *did* believe the writings which were ascribed to Moses, and also that this belief did not cause them to recognise Jesus as one sent from God. We know, in the next place, that the statement put in the mouth of Jesus—"for Moses wrote of me"—is untrue. We know, also, that the account in this chapter of Jesus declaring himself to be "the Son" of the Hebrew deity, of his upbraiding the Jews for not believing him to be that "Son," and taxing them with a disbelief in the writings attributed to Moses—we know that this account is a fabrication composed by the writer himself. Had any historical Jesus acted as here described, he would most assuredly have been put to death on the spot as a blasphemer, in accordance with the command in Deut. xiii., as in the case of Stephen (Acts vii. 58).

It is almost needless to say that the Jesus of the Synoptics did not go about arguing and declaiming in the absurd manner of the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel; nor do the Synoptical writers appear to have

down of such a Jesus, or of the silly utterances and rambling discourses which are placed in his mouth in that Gospel.

Lastly, in order to find support for the statement "Moses wrote of me," some of the most ingenious of our Christian commentators have carefully scrutinised every line and word in the five "books of Moses," and after an exhaustive search they have selected the following passages as predictions referring to Jesus Christ: Gen. iii. 15—Gen. xxii. 17, 18—Gen. xlix. 10—Num. xxiv. 17—Deut. xviii. 18, 19. One of the passages is quoted as a prediction in Acts ii. 22, 23, and another in Gal. iii. 8—16; but in not a single instance does any one of the five refer to the Nazarene or to the Gospel Jesus. There is not one word in the whole five books of Moses that truthfully be applied to the Nazarene at all. And this being the case, what are we to say of the pseudo-Savior's denunciation of the unbelief of the Jewish priests and scribes in failing to recognise him as one predicted in the Pentateuch? "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me." In the second century this statement was taken on trust by the great mass of Christians; there were few scholars in that age, and fewer still who would be likely to possess a copy of the Pentateuch. Nearly the whole Christian Church of that period were dependent upon a small number of religious teachers like the Presbyter John, and reposed implicit faith in what these teachers told them. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

ABRACADABRA.

### Acid Drops.

An insulting remark to a juror at the Old Bailey—which was the subject of Mr. Foote's article in this issue—has, we are pleased to see, evoked a protest from more than one newspaper. In addition to the *Star* and the *Jewish Chronicle*, the *Globe* of July 28 had a strongly worded article on the subject. The writer points out that the Oaths Act was expressly intended to cover just such a case, and adds that if the counsel wished to challenge a juror, "he should have done so without giving a reason likely to conflict with the will of Parliament, and the judge should have known better than to have agreed with him." We quite agree. It is not at all an uncommon occurrence for a counsel to take advantage of his position, and display a want of taste for which he would be called upon to task if exhibited under different conditions. The extraordinary feature of the case is that the judge should have allowed the objection, or at least have failed to remind the juror that the juror was exercising a perfectly legal right in affirming, and so have given him that protection which every citizen is entitled to expect from a judge in a court of law.

When the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* was brought before Judge Rentoul on the charge of contempt of court for having made the subject of his article, he was asked that "such incidents happened in the courts concerned, and could happen every day in every case of felony." So far as challenging a member of the jury is concerned, that is true enough. But it is not that which was in question. It was the fact of the objection being made to the juror having no religious belief that gave rise to the comment, and that this objection was so far admitted that the judge ordered the juror to be discharged from that case. For that kind of thing we remember constantly we have no evidence; we do not know it ever occurring before in one of the higher courts—since the passing of the Oaths Act, of course—and should be surprised to learn that it ever has occurred. We can only hope that the Lord Chancellor will have his attention directed to the case, and will realise that if it is a precedent for citizens to treat the law with respect, it is a precedent that its administration should be beyond suspicion.

Curiously enough, this juror—his name was not given in any of the newspaper reports—turns out to be a member of the Executive of the National Secular Society, Mr. H. Cowell. We would be otherwise, of course, make the matter more serious than it is, but it does give the incident a closer personal touch, so to speak, to Freethinkers. We are rather sorry that Mr. Cowell did not at once, and publicly, protest

against the insulting remark of Mr. Muir, and demand the protection of the Court. This might have had the effect of forcing the judge to either correct the counsel's impertinence and contempt of the law, or saying himself that he agreed with Mr. Muir's view of the effect of an absence of religious belief on one's sense of justice. It would, perhaps, not be a bad thing if, when Freethinkers are again summoned to attend on juries, they were to cite this incident as a precedent, and ask to be discharged on the ground of having no religious belief. It would be interesting to have the comments of other judges on that point.

The *New York Times* has a good war story. Little Elsie, aged five, had been listening to her parents' talk of the War. At bed-time she said her prayers, and added, "And now, God, please take care of yourself, for if anything should happen to you, we should only have Mr. Wilson, and he is too proud to fight."

New Salvation Army headquarters, erected at a cost of £6,000, were opened at Nottingham by the Duke of Portland. The first Salvation Army never had so much money, and the managing director was sold for thirty shillings.

The daily press mentions that, owing to war conditions, railway employees are getting very shabby, new uniforms being unprocurable. Let us hope they will not be reduced to the simple uniform of Adam in Eden.

The War has evidently not interfered with the reading of novels, for the Public Libraries report business as usual, and the output from these institutions includes sixty per cent. of fiction. Maybe people go to church to hear fiction from the pulpit.

Truth will out in most unexpected places. In a new book on "Anatole France," Mr. W. G. George says, "Like many agnostics, Anatole France is more interested in religion than is many a believer." This truism has been expressed wittily by the Gallic jest that "it is so easy to believe in God if one does not define him."

Mr. Israel Zangwill has written an article on the Jewish question, entitled "The Hebrew Humpty Dumpty." The title would fit the Jewish god admirably.

The Rev. William Crouch is thankful that he is not sufficiently educated to disbelieve in the Mons miracle. We pity such a man and despise his credulity. He tells us that millions of Christians have been praying since the War began for the intervention of the holy angels. Even on his own showing, the response to such prayers has been on a pitifully small scale, and of a highly doubtful character. Many clergymen are sufficiently educated to treat the angelic guard at Mons as a pure myth. Like all simpletons, Mr. Crouch is a coward. He makes loud pretensions and refuses to substantiate them. The following sentence damns him absolutely as an apologist:—

"I could tell your correspondents [*Church Times*, July 30] who are so anxious for evidence, where the evidence could be obtained that would decisively prove or disprove the alleged apparition, but I would not do so for any consideration." We positively affirm that the reverend gentleman *refuses* to produce such evidence simply because he *cannot*.

The clergy are not all agreed that the Germans are Atheists. The Rev. F. H. B. Mackay, of All Saints' Church, Margaret-street, London, W., says, "However this War ends, whether the Allies win or Germany wins, it will deal the death-blow to Teutonic Protestantism." It should give a knock-out blow to the religion of the "Prince of Peace," whether Catholic or Protestant.

One of the bishops has been eulogising comic songs. Few of his brethren have so much humor. If they had a little more, they would be unable to recite the stories of "Lot and His Wife," "Jonah and the Whale," and other Biblical yarns, without bursting into smiles.

A former chapel in King-street, Baker-street, London, is now being used as a War-workroom, the pulpit being a desk for the typist. Another old chapel in Walworth-road, London, S.E., is now a picture theatre. "God" does not trouble any more about his "houses" than he worries about his children.

Jesus Christ must have had an infinitely broad and strong back, for Professor David Smith declares, in the *British Weekly* for July 29, that the sins of all mankind, from

the beginning to the end of time, were laid upon it and borne away. By so bearing, or suffering, for them, he procured for all sinners free pardon. Now, the pulpit informs us, that the sins for which Christ died shall abide upon and utterly destroy the impenitent for ever, which means that the same sins are punished twice; first, in the person of Christ; and, second, in the persons of those from whom Christ took them away. And this sort of thing is represented as illustrating the justice of God, who is said to be incapable of doing wrong.

The Rev. Dr. Homes Dudden, Vicar of St. John's, Notting Hill, following the example of the Bishop of London, calls the present European crisis a "Holy War." That proves nothing at all, for the Germans, the Austrians, and the Turks have adopted the same appellation. All the parties concerned believe that they are champions of the right, and that God is with them to lead them on to victory. We, on the contrary, are more consistent, holding the opinion that there is no God on either side, and that if this had been the view entertained by all, the War would never have taken place.

The Church of England has just initiated what is called "The Forward Movement in Intercession." Heaven didn't seem to pay any heed to the previous movement. Men and women prayed with the utmost sincerity for victory, but nothing came of it. It is confidently expected by the organisers of the new movement that it will so touch the heart of their Heavenly Father as to morally force him to come to the help of our cause. We are as sceptical as ever, but are prepared to wait and see.

According to the Bishop of London, the War is the most amazing miracle-worker the world has ever seen. Already it has enabled Belgium, France, Russia, Great Britain, and Italy to find their souls. Their sins, which were many, are blotted out. Great are the souls of all of them, but greatest of all is the soul of England. Belgium, France, Russia, and Italy are fighting quite valiantly; but his lordship believes that, "in this equally balanced contest on the Continent, it is the soul of England which is once again to free the world." Was drivel so sickening ever indulged in before?

The *Daily Mail* recently devoted a column to an exposure of the clerical yarn concerning the angels at Mons. Of course, it never mentioned the share that the *Freethinker* had in unravelling the tissue of invention. It is pleasant, however, to find that so many people read this paper.

From the *Observer* of a recent date:—

"An amusing conjunction of Tube announcements is mentioned in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—

INNS OF COURT OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS:  
THE DEVIL'S OWN.  
LONDON RIFLE BRIGADE:  
THE FINEST BATTALION GOD EVER MADE."

Some of our readers will remember the "incident" in the House of Commons when the well-known evangelist, Mr. F. N. Charrington, created a "scene" by attempting to seize the mace. Mr. Charrington may have had Cromwell in his mind, but there the likeness ends, for the evangelist was thrown out, "five M.P.'s being implicated in the assault." Mr. Charrington now writes, that finding "I have no redress in the ordinary courts," he intends to "treat the matter entirely from a Christian point of view," and will take no further action. Well, that is quite Christian—the humbug and cant of it—essentially so.

The National Anthem has been improved by a lady bearing the old English name of Blennerhassett, who has written an extra verse commencing "God save our splendid men!"

At the Wesleyan Conference the other day the Rev. C. Ensor Walters, formerly Superintendent of the West London Mission, made the saddest confession that it is possible for a Christian minister to make. He stated that there was not the least doubt but that they were going back, especially amongst colliery men and in the heavy trade industries. It was only necessary to study the life of any of their cities on the Lord's Day to be convinced of the truth of that statement. He had himself made the discovery that picture-palaces were full and churches and chapels practically empty on a Sunday evening. They had diligently wooed the working man and utterly failed to win him. They were clearly fighting a battle in which they were losing ground. Without a doubt they were being

defeated. What could they do to turn the tide? He recommended the earnest preaching of the old Gospel which their fathers loved, forgetting that it is against that very Gospel the people are revolting. It is Christianity itself that is losing its hold upon the masses, and no reconstruction or adaptation of it will ever attract them back to it.

Journalists forget frequently that they are living in a country where the Bible is supposed to be the repository of truth. In a London newspaper, recently, a paragraph appeared concerning three harvesters aged over seventy years. At that age, the Bible stalwarts, Adam and Methuselah, were playing leap-frog.

The Prince of Wales will be loaded with decorations when he returns from the Front, including a diamond cross from the Tsar. What a different fate to that of the "King of Kings," who is said to have been nailed to a cross.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, writing in the *Sunday Pictorial*, says: "In future, to a large extent, every man will be his own parson." Won't the Black Army be delighted to read this?

"The man who won't fight for England is not fit to talk the English language." So writes a contributor in the *Sunday Herald*. It is a hard saying, especially for the clergy, who talk such a lot.

"Trust in God and damn the consequences" was the advice of Dr. Hodgkin, presiding over a conference at Swanwick of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The Jews did this for a long time, and now they have no country at all.

At the Intercession Service at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, a new hymn was sung, one line of which ran, "Go forth with all our armies, Lord." As there are eleven nations at war, and all ask the same favor, the Lord will be very busy during the next few months.

Speaking at West Hartlepool, the Dean of Durham forgot temporarily, that he was a disciple of the Prince of Peace. He said that in the wake of the War there must come a description to this country, and it was to Switzerland, not to Prussia, that we must look for our model. There is one comfort. We cannot model our Fleet on the Swiss Navy.

According to Rev. F. B. Meyer, it is quite a mistake to suppose that any one or all of the countries engaged in the War brought it to pass. It was an act of God. God saw that we were leading lives of indulgence. The Sabbath had gone. There were more people going to golf courses or to the cinema on Sunday than to church. Then God said, "I am going to take your hoarded gold and claim from you three million pounds per day. I am going to burn up your accumulated income in grenades and powder, shot and shell." And God did so—at least, so Mr. Meyer believes. So when all is said and done, we must cease blaming the Kaiser for the War. It is God's work. Mr. Meyer says so.

There has been a revolution in the black republic of Haiti, and some of our newspapers are drawing therefrom the conclusion that the black man is quite unfit for self-government. We wonder what conclusion a disinterested spectator would draw from the present state of Europe. Or perhaps these newspaper sages are of opinion that the white man is privileged to commit murder on a general scale and call it "civilised" warfare.

"The Star of Peace—Sunk." This was a headline in a London newspaper, and it related to the sinking of a steam trawler, belonging to Aberdeen, by the Germans. A critic might suggest that the Prince of Peace was on board the ill-fated vessel.

Writing on "The Death of Dogma" in the *Sunday Pictorial*, Mr. Horatio Bottomley says that "In the Great Tradition Jehovah was always the Captain-General of Armies." It did not prevent the Jews being beaten badly, especially by the Romans.

Religious societies are all seeking to exploit the European War. The Pocket Testament League advertises that it is "anxious to reach soldiers, sailors, and munition workers with the Word of God." The Society does not explain why the Testament only is to be used. Is it because the other part contains the Divine command, "Thou shalt not kill"?



To Correspondents.

**TRUSTEES'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.**—Received from March 15 : Previously acknowledged, £118 15s. 10d. Received since :— C. J., £3 ; A. T. Henderson, 5s. ; J. Brooking, 10s. ; W. Dodd, £1 ; Ormyc, £1. *F. Rose, per Miss Vance* : B. M. E., 10s. 6d. ; H. E. Irving, 10s. 6d. ; H. M., 10s. 6d. ; E. W., 10s. 6d. ; N. M., 10s. 6d. ; L. N., 5s. 6d. ; J. Cohen, 10s. 6d. ; M. G. Cohen, 10s. 6d. ; O. Nicolayson, 10s. 6d. ; G. L., 10s. 6d. ; L. S., 5s. ; A. S., 10s. 6d. ; D. M., 2s. ; W. C., 2s. 6d. ; S. and A. C., 10s. 6d. ; F. Rose, 10s. 6d.

**GERMANY SUBSCRIBER.**—Thanks. We are pleased to learn that we have interested readers even in the Federated Malay States.

**E. H.**—Judges are in a privileged position, and it is very difficult to call them to account. This ought to make them more careful, and more solicitous for the feelings of others. Unfortunately, with some, happily only a few, quite the opposite effect is produced.

**F. BURTOFT.**—The Oxford Press publishes an edition of the Apocrypha that would suit you. There are such a number of encyclopedias on sale that it is difficult to advise. We think Chamber's is as useful as any. It runs into several pounds, but can be obtained, we think, on the instalment system. There is also an encyclopaedia issued in one of the shilling series of publications, in about twelve volumes. But the articles are of necessity scrappy.

**V. N. AND J. R.**—"Wires" received. Thanks for congratulations. We think we may now regard the matter as settled.

**W. J. GRANT**, who is at present serving with Expeditionary Force in France, would be glad to receive one or more copies of the *Freethinker* after their purchasers have finished with them. Address, 10677 W. J. Grant, No. 1 Section, 14 Lab. Company A.S.C., British Expeditionary Force, Le Havre, France.

**W. G. KIRLE.**—The Bible and bullet story is an old one, and has turned up several times since the War began. It belongs to a class that religious agencies appear to keep in stock for possible use. Glad you found the three articles on the Mons myth interesting and useful.

**P.**—Thanks. A friendly hand is always welcome, and we were conscious that some friendly influence was at work.

**P. SMITH.**—Obliged for cutting. May be able to use it next week.

**M. DESHOMBERT**, founder of La Société Morale Fondée sur les lois de la Nature, sends his congratulations on the upshot of the Bowman case. He considers it gives the Society a splendid advertisement. We think so, too, although the advertisement was not of our seeking.

**T. CHARLES.**—Certainly it is a good plan to display a *Freethinker* whenever and wherever possible, and we can quite understand your getting new readers by the plan you adopt. Our only difficulty is getting known. The paper itself does the rest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Limited, our solicitors expressed themselves as follows :—

"We are obtaining full transcript of the proceedings, which no doubt you will see in due course, and when we have the pleasure of seeing you we shall be pleased to discuss the matter further with you. We will only now venture to congratulate you on your foresight in establishing the Society, and we feel that you may look upon to-day's result as a great personal success of your own."

Other people have written me to the same effect, but this is the voice of the lawyer who gallantly took up the case where the late Mr. Harper left it, in concert with me. There is a very strong corroboration of this view at the end of Mr. Cohen's article on the last hours of the case this week. As the Society's solicitor was leaving the Court, he remarked to Mr. Cohen, "*Mr. Foote deserves to be congratulated. The case has been fought on his lines throughout. We acted with his advice from the start.*" The lawyer's testimony to the careful way in which Mr. Harper (alas, deceased) and I prepared that brief cannot be gainsaid, and there is the final seal of complete success of the Secular Society, Ltd., in the recent litigation.

\* \* \*

Mr. Cohen says that of course he knew this himself, but it was well that others should know it too, and so he joins his testimony to that of other authorities. I am glad to hear that Mr. Cave, K.C., counsel for the enemy, mentioned the fact, in an injured tone, that the "Memorandum of Association had been very cleverly drawn."

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It is pleasant, at least it is to me, to quote from a eulogist capable of exalted speech. Mr. J. T. Lloyd writes me under date of July 31 :—

"The victory is won, and I heartily congratulate you upon it. It is, before all, a *personal triumph for you*, which you so richly deserve, and for which you have worked so nobly; and then for our movement in general. People will now know on the most conclusive evidence that it is quite safe to bequeath money to the Secular Society, Ltd., and I doubt not but that many will avail themselves of this unanimous and emphatic judgment to remember the Society in their wills. I am sure that the strong words of the Master of the Rolls in particular will bring you great cheer."

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Mr. Isaac Jackson says it has been a great triumph for the Secular Society, and "we owe everything to you." "E. B."—a pseudonym once frequent in the *Freethinker*—sends me "congratulations on your grand victory, which has so completely vindicated your judgment as regards the legality of the status of the Secular Society." He believes the Appeal Court's decision will do me more good than anything else. Well! If my old friend is a true prophet, it is bound to appear in my work, and I ask him in somewhat famous words to "wait and see."

G. W. FOOTE.

P.S.—I have no space at present to deal with the many telegrams and letters sent me.

Personal.

Mr. COHEN, being on the spot, has written an account of what I hope is the last stage of the Bowman case. I should hardly think that the next-of-kin wants any more litigation. He can have it, of course, but it would be better to cease playing the fool with a lawyer like Mr. Calder Woods to help him. That gentleman may find that he has serious business enough in another direction.

\* \* \*

Writing to me after the Court of Appeal had pronounced its decision in favor of Mr. Justice Joyce's judgment in behalf of the Secular Society,

Sugar Plums.

The press behaved quite well, on the whole, over the reports of the Bowman case. The *Evening News*, the *Star*, *Daily News*, *Times*, *Globe*, *Pall Mall*, all published more or less lengthy reports of the case; and there were, we expect, others which we did not see. Once more, though, we have to point out that the finest report of all appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*. It was rather more than a mere report, it was written by some one who appreciated the vital points involved, and not every reporter is capable of that.

We are not reprinting the *Telegraph* report this week. For one reason, the intervention of Bank Holiday leaves us but time to do only that which must be done on press-day

(Tuesday). Another reason is that so soon as the short-hand notes have been transcribed, we may reprint the decision of the judges verbatim, and there is no need to print the same matter twice. Those who have not seen a newspaper report will find a summary of the case in Mr. Cohen's article in this week's issue.

For one of the reasons given above, we are unable to reply to all the congratulations that have been received on the upshot of the case. Mr. Foote, we see from his "Personal," has received many at his private address. Others have been received here at the office, and Miss Vance tells us that many have also reached her as Secretary of the Secular Society, Ltd. All those who have written must please take this as sufficient acknowledgment of their receipt—at any rate for the present.

Mr. W. W. Collins says in the *Examiner* that the result of the trial before Mr. Justice Joyce "more than justifies the wise forethought of Mr. Foote in founding the Secular Society, Limited, and we rejoice because the victory crowns a life's work which has been 'guided by reason and inspired by Humanity.'"

The *Examiner* reprints from these columns Mr. Lloyd's article "The Instinct of Faith." We are glad to note that the *Examiner* is as lively and, we are sure, as useful as ever.

The following has, of course, reference to the first hearing before Mr. Justice Joyce:—

"N. Z. Rationalist Assn., 17/6/15.

"DEAR SIR,—At the meeting of the General Committee of the above Association on Tuesday last, it was unanimously resolved 'that a letter be forwarded to Mr. G. Foote, President of the National Secular Society, congratulating him on the result of the Bowman will case,' a result which was due to his farsightedness in founding the Secular Society.

"I have much pleasure in transmitting the above resolution, and asking you to accept my own personal congratulations,—Believe me, yours faithfully,

J. W. CAMPBELL, Hon. Sec."

Our New Zealand friends will be still more pleased when the result of the appeal case is heard by them.

From a paragraph in the New York *Truthseeker* we see that Japan has prohibited the teaching of religion in the schools of Korea. The prohibition comes into force gradually, but completes itself within ten years.

## The World's Premier Plant.

THE immense importance of cotton in the preparation and propulsion of explosives has awakened the world to the part played by the products of this plant in the murderous business of war. But peace also profits from the services rendered by this wonderful vegetable growth, and, indeed, in no small measure. The looms of Lancashire would soon become silent without it, and it is justly asserted that the trespass of one of the deadly parasites which prey upon the cotton plant's green leaf means "more to England than the advance of the Russian Army on her Asian outposts."

Cotton is incontestably the one vegetable organism for which Nature furnishes no substitute. The destruction of one fruit may be made good by the cultivation of another. The extinction of timber trees of one or more kinds would merely lead us to secure a substitute. Rye or maize will serve instead of wheat, should circumstances require the change, but for cotton there is no other available plant that lends itself to cultivation on a large scale which can conceivably meet the world's immense and ever-increasing needs for the raiment with which it covers its nakedness.

With the culture of cotton has been closely associated the sombre story of negro slavery in the Southern States of Northern America, and it was inseparably connected with a pitiless period when the normally civil populations of a great continent smote each other to the dust.

Among American agricultural exports, cotton reigns supreme. In 1906 the exports of cotton and cotton-seed products slightly exceeded those of all other agricultural exports combined. Professor Burkett, a leading American authority, tells us, in his standard work on Cotton, that if we—

"Take all other animal and vegetable products exported any year—wheat, corn, barley, oats, rye, flour, meal, oatmeal, fruits, vegetables, liquors, tobacco, wine, cattle, hogs, horses, sheep, beef, pork, mutton, butter, cheese, canned goods, lard, oils, wool, hides, skins, etc.—the entire contribution except cotton, furnished etc.—the outside world by every American farm, ranch, dairy, fruit farm and garden, from Maine to California, from Michigan to Texas, from Alaska to Hawaii, including the South's not unimportant share—take all this, and with the proceeds of one year's cotton and cotton-seed exports, the Southern cotton-grower can buy the whole colossal aggregation, still have a surplus of several hundred thousand left as pin-money, and be ready to start business again with the more than 200,000,000 dollars he gets annually for supplying the 25,000,000 spindles in his own country."

Cotton, like the poor, is always with us in some shape or other. In every clime, from birth to the grave, in the palace or the cot—in frigid Scandinavia or in tropical Africa—it is the main material of clothing. It is increasingly demanded for innumerable domestic requirements, and its use as a food for cattle and sheep constantly increases as the years roll by.

Cotton-seed oil enters into the composition of soap. Our bedclothes, carpets, window curtains, towels and handkerchiefs, and that kind of "silk" made up from mercerised cotton, are all indebted to the leading New World staple. This all-encroaching cotton forms part of the very food we consume. Cottolene has taken the place of lard in the manufacture of biscuits. It is stated that "olive oil" has more probably come "from a Texas cotton farm than from an Italian villa." Either as an ingredient or as an adjunct, cotton enters into the most diverse performances of life. It may minister to the mining of our coal, as the collier's laborious task is frequently made possible by the rays of the cotton-oil lamp. The *Times*, the *Freethinker*, and the *War Cry* alike, are in all probability printed on cotton paper. France covers the khaki-clad warrior "somewhere in France." It assists in the killing and maiming of living creatures; and when the broken soldier is placed in the surgeon's hands, cotton is used to soothe the mortally injured, as well as the wounded who are restored to health.

The cotton-plants both of the East and the West comprise the numerous species of the genus *Gossypium*. This genus belongs to the botanical order Malvaceæ, and is allied to the mallow and the hollyhock, with other related plants. This relationship becomes apparent at a glance both in the foliage and flowers of the cotton-plant, as may be seen in the specimens at Kew Gardens and the British Museum Herbaria. The beautiful colored plate which forms the frontispiece to Sir George Watt's *Wild and Cultivated Cotton Plants of the World* presents this resemblance clearly, and this and his other fine illustrations may be useful to those who are unable to visit Kew or to study the specimens in the South Kensington collection.

No general agreement exists among authorities as to the number of species of cotton, and of varieties a little army may be said to abound. In fact, the cotton plant is probably the most variable of all cultivated plants. Soil, climate, and cultivation have united to bring into being an ever-lengthening list of new varieties, and the evolution of fresh forms is still proceeding. Thousands of years before its introduction into Europe the cotton-plant was well known in Egypt, Corea, China, India, South America, and the Lesser Antilles. Its distribution denotes a high antiquity, and appears to date from a period when the geographical conditions of the earth's surface were far different from what they are to-day. For all practical purposes, the cotton of commerce may be reduced to five species: *Gossypium Barba-*

or Sea Island cotton; *Gossypium herbaceum*; *G. arboretum*; and *G. neglectum*. The first of these has the highest commercial value, and the splendid long-stapled silky wool known as Sea Island is one of its varieties, but only a limited quantity can be produced. Its area of cultivation is confined to the coasts of Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and the soil of the neighboring earth and atmosphere if it is to attain full development. Sea Island lint yields a smaller percentage per plant than the more extensively cultivated Upland cotton, but it realises a higher price, owing to its longer staple and superior quality. Some of the finest counts are almost invariably obtained from Sea Island cotton. A single pound of choice cotton can be spun to a thread 160 miles

The Sea Island plant will grow from six to twelve feet in height. Its seeds are small, very dark in color, and perfectly smooth, so that the downy fleece—the all-important product of the plant—is easily separated from the seeds. But the influences of a saline environment soon manifest themselves when the Island is sown on inland farms. Deprived of the saline constituents of its coast habitat, the plants grow larger, lose their original smoothness, and become covered with a multitude of hairy growths. Nevertheless, a considerable quantity of the cotton is raised in Alabama, Texas, Louisiana, and other States from varieties of this species. Here, again, the atmospheric surroundings have asserted their power. The plant dwindles in size (four to six feet in height), the wool becomes shorter in staple, and is harder to separate from the seeds than in the case of the Sea Island species.

The hairy cotton (*Gossypium herbaceum*) was introduced into America from the Orient. It is extremely well adapted to upland growth, and its botanical characteristics indicate the character of its appearance. India is regarded as the original habitat of the herbaceous cotton, and from its native home it spread to Arabia, Africa, Persia, and China. The hairy vine-cotton is nearly related to this species, and the main American form is the long-staple Upland cotton. The hairy cotton-plant (*Gossypium hirsutum*) is another upland growth. It resembles the Sea Island species, and is by some biologists considered a variety of that stock. Its primal home has been Mexico, but it is now found in all parts of the cotton world.

*Gossypium arboretum*—Tree-cotton—owes its name to its tall and treelike growth. It sometimes attains a height of twenty feet. Its wool or lint is short, and clings very obstinately to the seeds. This species is raised in America; its chief seat of culture is in the West Indies; but it is not a very valuable product.

Another more important indigenous Indian cotton is the species (*G. neglectum*). This is extensively raised in India as a farm crop. The celebrated Madras cloth is manufactured from neglectum cotton, and other varieties of this species produce the famous Madras longcloth is

A brief description of the cotton-plant itself may be given. The cotton of commerce, which is cultivated on such a vast scale in the Southern States of America, is a small annual shrub, which spreads its branches widely. "The limbs," writes the longest at the bottom of the stalk, and short and light at the top. The flowers are white, or pale yellow or cream colored the first day, become darker or bluish on the second day, and fall to the ground on the third or fourth day, leaving a tiny boll developed in the axils. This boll develops and enlarges until maturity, when it is not unlike the size and shape of a hen's egg. As it matures, the boll cracks and opens the three to four compartments which hold the seed and the fibrous wool known as lint that is now to be gathered, ginned, and pressed into the cotton of commerce.

No exact figures are available concerning the total amount of cotton annually produced throughout the

globe. In India, China, and tropical Africa, in parts of Russia, in Mexico, Brazil, and elsewhere, considerable, and in some cases very large, quantities of cotton are turned into wearing apparel in their respective localities, and consequently escape all statistical inquiry. But it may be safely asserted, however, that quite two-thirds of the world's crop is grown in the American cotton-belt, and there is much reason for the opinion that the Western World will long enjoy pre-eminence in this particular staple. India and China are probably the most ancient cotton-producing countries. Five centuries before our era cotton was largely utilised in the home manufactures of India, and the garments of the natives then consisted, as they still mainly consist, of clothing made from this plant. Ancient India, more than two thousand years ago, had evolved an elaborate system of hand-spinning, weaving, and dyeing, which has undergone no material change throughout the succeeding centuries. "The people," writes Mr. W. J. Freeman,—

"though remarkable for their intelligence whilst Europe was in a state of barbarism, made no approximation to the mechanical operations of modern times, nor was the cultivation of cotton either improved or considerably extended. Possessing soil, climate, and apparently all the requisite elements from Nature for the production of cotton to an almost boundless extent, and of a useful and acceptable quality, India, for a long series of years, did but little towards supplying the manufactures of other countries with the raw materials they required."

In the period 1788 to 1850, the East India Company made many attempts to improve the cultivation and to increase the yield of the Indian cotton farms. Cottons from other countries were introduced into the Eastern Peninsular, but the numerous experiments proved practically unsuccessful. Sanguine observers, some shrewd men among them, still hope for better results from the cultivation of indigenous and Egyptian cottons. India undoubtedly suffers from certain climatal disadvantages in cotton culture; the weather is too dry in some regions, and too moist in others, and the rains do not always fall at the season most suitable to the plant's development. And although India ranks next to America in cotton production, the average annual growth only approximates to three million bales, each of 500 lb., which are drawn from cotton fields of twenty million acres. The farming methods of India must, indeed, be primitive if we are to judge from the poorness of the crop. In America, in 1906, from a total area of 28,686,000 acres, a crop of 13,505,265 bales was produced. It is greatly to be regretted that the Indian staple is very short, and quite unsuited to the requirements of the Lancashire cotton factories. One-half of the Indian-grown cotton is consumed in the mills of India, the balance being exported abroad; but in 1906 Great Britain imported less than 5 per cent. of the Eastern staple.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

The Church and the War.—1914-15.

"The thing which was now stirring Europe was not the work of God but the work of the Devil."—Archbishop of Canterbury, preaching at Westminster Abbey, August 2, 1914. Salary, £15,000 per annum.

"One of the great decisive days of God which come about every hundred years in human history," was the Bishop of London's view of the position.—*Daily Chronicle*, October 28, 1914.

"The real cry should have been 'Nothing as usual,' for there had never been such a day of God for a thousand years."—Bishop of London, May 6, 1915.

Preaching at St. Jude's South Kensington, yesterday morning, the Bishop of London said: "When people speak of the danger to London from Zeppelins, I think they should thank God that they are allowed to have a bit of danger. We do not want to leave all the danger for the boys in the firing line. Thank God we are allowed the honor of a little danger, and I shall be ashamed of London if we do not face our little bit of danger with absolutely unshaken nerves."—

*Daily Express*, June 7, 1915. The Bishop is still at large, drawing his £10,000 per annum.

The Bishop of London at St. Paul's Cathedral said: "Ideally, of course, war was inconsistent with Christianity; but God could only get out of each age the morality of which the age was capable. Christian principles would finally make war impossible, but it might take another 2,000 years to educate the world to that point. Meanwhile, God always had to let us choose the gospel of the second best."—*Morning Post*, June 10, 1915. The Bishop's use of the words "could" and "had to," shows how he cannot believe that God is omnipotent.

"We can realise the anxiety of professional Christian apologists to saddle somebody else with the responsibility for this tremendous carnage when we read the sermon which Archdeacon Holmes delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral on the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity. It is published in the *Church Times*, and reveals with quite unusual frankness the difficulties of the Christian. He said:—

"The heart as well as head will ask: What is the good of a God in the skies to me? What part is he taking in the War down here? The difficulty is a very real one—and none the less difficult to deal with owing to the *Ego-et-Res* attitude of the German Emperor towards the Almighty. But, there it is—and there is a truth in what we so often heard said, "God, not Satan, is my real difficulty." I have no difficulty about believing in a Devil at such a time as this.

"But God! God is my puzzle. Where does God come in? What is his place on the map of events? Why does he not intervene and stop the War? After all, we are asked, is there so very much difference between Herod, who orders the death of the babes of Bethlehem, and God who could save them but does not? Is there so very much difference between the sanhedrim which permits the stoning of Stephen, or Saul who holds the clothes of the throwers that they may shoot their stones with more unerring aim, and God who stands by and lets them do it?"

This is excellent and unexpected common sense, and the preacher shows next that it is not enough to talk about the 'permissive will' of God, because, 'if he permits what he could stop, and allows it to continue, it only seems to make him a *participis criminis* in the deed.' To this terrible difficulty the Archdeacon has no clear answer to give. He thinks there must be a divine 'purpose' behind the War, but he soon realises, like an honest man—although an archdeacon—the hopelessness of the solution, for he says:—

'Of course, this does not dispose of the difficulty or explain God like the answer to a sum. There will be no final answer to the question on earth; and it is not clear that we should be much better or happier if there was.'

To the riddle of existence he is, after all, reduced to giving the same answer as the rest of us—he 'gives it up.' But as Christianity has always pretended to its dupes that it held the great secret which it would reveal to them, it is not easy for the majority of its prestidigitateurs to admit this. They cannot explain why their Deity permitted this War; hence their anxiety, as we said last month, to find a scapegoat in the infidel."—*Literary Guide*.

God or Devil, they are equally vile to allow this War. But do they exist at all? Let us see what others say on the subject.

"In the ordinary acceptance of the word it may be granted that there is no absolutely convincing proof of God's existence. It may be doubted if any actual demonstration of the existence of a Divine Being can be adduced."—*The Natural Religion*, by the Rev. Vernon Staley, with a Preface by the Rev. J. R. Illingworth, M.A., Bampton Lecturer, 1894, p. 53.

"Either God is unwilling to abolish evil or he is unable; if he is unwilling he is not good, if he is unable he is not omnipotent."—St. Augustine.

"If God is not perfectly good and also perfectly powerful, he is not God."—*A Chinese Appeal to Christendom*, p. 129.

"The question of miracles was some form of the question whether God made and governs the world."—Rev. J. B. Strong at the Church Congress, 1912.

"The continuance of war through thousands of years is inconsistent with the direction of a beneficent and omnipotent God."—Ouida.

"That if a personal Deity existed he would be responsible for all the horrors which desolate human life and which every hour of the War brings forth. The only excuse for God is that he does not exist."—Dr. Karmin.

"In reply to Messrs. Barrett and Macfie, I would say, every gun or machine had a designer; but if a cow had a designer, who or what designed the designer that designed the cow?"—Sir Hiram Maxim.

"The sun, moon, mountains, rivers, animals, almost everything, have been regarded as gods, and men have

prayed to them and sacrificed to them. As mankind advanced in knowledge the belief in gods decreased, and nearly all educated people believe either in one God or none. The old argument that, as every effect must have a cause, the universe must have a cause, which is God, is met by the obvious rejoinder that, if every effect must have a cause, God must also have a cause. It is just as easy to imagine a universe without a cause as a universe without a cause. The existence of God cannot be demonstrated, but is a very general belief. Each man makes his own God, which word represents the highest ideal of an individual. Hence, one man's God may be better and nobler than that of another, as each man is the measure of his own ideal or God. Theologians who profess belief in an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good God have never been able to give a rational explanation of all the pain, misery and evil which exists in the world; and some have been obliged to admit that God allows an evil spirit, Satan, to tempt everybody. If God had wished sin to abound, what more could he have done than to appoint a being to the office of tempting mankind at all times and places? Any parent who allows his children to associate with bad characters would deserve censure."—Mr. E. L. Marsden.

"There is nothing more modifiable than God. His ideas are infinite. To the Adaman Islanders he is a person dwelling in a stone house with his wife, who possesses an engaging personality of a green shrimp; and from this happy domestic centre he administers the affairs of the world."—*Literary Guide*.

This religion has much to recommend it, as one cannot partake of the adorable body of the shrimp without being accused of cannibalism.

The Primate tell us this War is "the work of the Devil." The Bishop of London attributes it to God.

Archdeacon Holmes asks, "Where does God come in?"

"In no department of human knowledge is more distinguished than by a resolute effort to mark the exact frontiers of its knowledge and ignorance; to hesitate when hesitation is necessary; to despair of knowledge when knowledge is ascertainably out of reach. Science at the highest and most momentous of all subjects this precision may be asked for."—Canon Liddon.

Again, in his New Year's Message for 1905, the Archbishop of Canterbury condemns indifference to truth as vice, "drifting along the current of popular opinion" as a sin. He invites and persuades us to use "the sadly neglected powers and privileges of rational thought and common sense."

The duty of thinking, therefore, is now recognised by the Church—it was not formerly so. But what will be the result of this thinking? In his book, *The Hearts of Men*, Mr. Fielding tells us that "no man has ever sat down calmly unbiassed to reason out his religion, and not a man has ever been always religious, do not invalidate what I say by rejecting it." Mr. Fielding adds, "The great men of the world are not men of one subject, he is also on other subjects. Men who are strictly religious, who believe in that or whatever their faith may be, consider it above all else beyond argument.....It is emotion, not reason; feeling, not induction."—*The Hearts of Men*, pp. 142-3).

"Does not this deep and sympathetic writer furnish us with a true picture of men's hearts? What if, after conceding their privileges of rational thought and common sense, the majority of men find that Christianity no longer satisfies them either intellectual satisfaction or moral support? if they finally arrive at the conclusion that Christianity is a superstition which can no longer bear the light of modern knowledge? These are the grave questions which we must confront us."—*The Churches and Modern Thought*.

"The incalculable injury which irrational superstitions have done to credulous humanity is conspicuously revealed in the ceaseless conflict of confessions of faith. Of all the conflicts which nations have waged against each other with sword, the religious wars have been the bloodiest; and of individuals, those that arise from religious differences are still the most painful. Think of the millions of forms of discord that have scattered the happiness of families and of individuals, those that arise from religious differences are still the most painful. Think of the millions who have lost their lives in Christian persecutions, in the conflicts of Islam and of the Reformation, by the Inquisition and under the charge of witchcraft. Or think of the greater number of luckless men who, through religious differences, have been plunged into family troubles, lost the esteem of their fellow citizens and their peace of mind, the community, or have been compelled to fly from their country. The official confession of faith becomes most pernicious of all when it is associated with the political aims of

modern State, and is enforced as religious instruction in schools. The child's mind is thus early diverted from the pursuit of the truth and impregnated with superstition. Every friend of humanity should do all in his power to make unsectarian schools as one of the most valuable institutions of the modern State."—Professor Haeckel.

be bold enough to be honest, and honest enough to let us use the same kind of reason and common sense about God and religion as we do to all other subjects. Do not accept other subjects with the blind faith of a fanatic.

agnosticism is the highest of duties and blind faith the one respectable sin."—Professor Huxley.

if there was an omnipotent God he must be a ghastly monster and maim each other by every diabolical means, to permit the immeasurable physical suffering, mental bereavement, destruction, incalculable ruin, and all other horrors of war, including pillage, rape, incendiarism, and massacres. Are earthquakes, shipwrecks, fires, plagues, suffering, conceivable in a God of love?

but it is when we open the Book of Nature, that book written in blood and tears; it is when we study the laws of life, that we see plainly how elusive is this theory of Love. In all things there is cruel, profligate, and wasteful waste. Of all the animals that are born, a few shall survive. Is it the law of a kind creator that no other shall rise to excellence except by being fatal to the others?"—*The Martyrdom of Man.*

man, made in God's image is the worst of all, for he eats every edible animal, bird and fish, and kills all the others that are the least use to him.

land and in sea the animal creation chase and maim and devour each other. The beautiful swallow on the wing devours the equally beautiful gnat. The graceful sparrow, like a fair, white bird, goes glancing above the magnificence of the tropical seas. His flight is one of grace; he is pursued by the ravenous dolphin. The ichneumon lays eggs under the skin of the caterpillar; the eggs hatched by the warmth of the caterpillar's blood. They devour the larva which devour the caterpillar alive. The caterpillar's darling, dies dreadfully of diphtheria. A tidal wave sweeps landward, and 20,000 human beings are drowned and the beautiful city is a heap of ruins, and its inhabitants charred or mangled corpses. And the Heavenly Father, who is love and has power to save, makes no sign... man helps man, only man pities; only man tries to save.—*Robert Blatchford in God and My Neighbor.*

How long will people remain dupes of ignorant priests and their sacred magic wherewith God has endowed them? How long will they be able to change the contents of a baker's shop into an adorable body of Jesus Christ, which they and their children eat, and then it goes with the rest of their food down the drain sewer.

Mr. Lecky's work there is a reference to *The Sight of the Future*, a quite modern tract "for children and young persons" by the Rev. J. Furniss, C.S.S.R., published *permissu* of the authorities. These few lines are enough: "The fourth child is the boiling kettle.....in the middle of it there is a fire. His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two flames come out of his ears.....Sometimes he opens his mouth and a blazing fire rolls out.....The little child is in a hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. It is a little child; very likely God saw it would get worse and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in hell. So God, in his mercy, called it out of the world in its early childhood."

A clergyman of the Church of England, who was staying in my house a short time ago, told me he had the power to forgive me all my sins, if he chose to do so, but that if he chose not to do so, then even God himself could not forgive me. All sects have much to answer for, and Protestants are no exception. Do well to remember that Calvin had Servetus burnt for attacking the doctrine of the Trinity."—Guido Banks in the *Daily Telegraph.*

Can man go on indefinitely professing creeds for which there is no tangible proof? It is scarcely credible. We have our minds from credulity and superstition and our friends there is nothing supernatural, and that this is the evidence of a God is a myth for which there is not a shadow of evidence. If there is, let the Church produce it. The "revelations" in their irrational revelations is mere superstition. Let the German Emperor keep his old ally—the Pope—well suited to each other; but let us take the advice of Canterbury's advice and use "the sadly

neglected powers and privileges of rational thought and common sense," and study nature and science, which will give us true knowledge and enable us to live our lives in the best possible way.

OSCE.

Correspondence.

"WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—From the steps of St. Paul's, in true melodramatic style, the ten-thousand-a-year Bishop of London has told us that Belgium in her poverty was greater than Belgium rich with the rubber trade from the Congo—"for she stood pure in soul, unconquerable in spirit, untarnished in fame. She had lost her wealth. She had found her soul."

I thought at once of the 124 condemned clerical schools in London, in which the conditions are so utterly disgusting that little children in them can have no possible chance of "finding their souls."

I thought, too, that perhaps the Church, minus so much of its enormous wealth as would enable it to meet its legal obligations and put its schools into a decent condition, might possibly be less ignoble, less utterly contemptible, than the Church as we know it to-day—in short, it might be in the way towards "finding its soul." The ecclesiastical politicians who control the Church are by no means as astute as I have thought them, or they would not permit of such humbug in times so terribly serious as the present.

M. BRIDGES ADAMS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JULY 29

Present: Messrs. Britten, Cohen, Cowell, Cunningham, Davidson, Gorniot, Jackson, Leat, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, Thurlow, Wood, White, Miss Kough and Miss Stanley.

In Mr. Foote's absence, Mr. Cohen was elected to the chair.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly financial statement was presented and adopted.

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

The Secretary reported a highly successful Demonstration held at Hyde Park on July 25. The Demonstration held in Finsbury Park on the same day was somewhat spoilt by the inclemency of the weather.

The Sub-Committee elected at the last meeting to consider and advise upon Resolutions 10 and 13 (incorporated) on the Conference Agenda re the formation of Branches and continuity of Branch work, presented their report, together with a draft of a new form of application and conditions. After a full discussion, the report was unanimously adopted, and the Secretary received instructions for printing. Messrs. Davidson, Rosetti, and Shore were thanked for their services.

Details being incomplete, the discussion of Resolution 11 was adjourned to the next meeting.

The alteration in the time of this meeting, made last month, being found inconvenient, it was resolved to revert to the former hour—namely, 8 p.m.

Pleasure was unanimously expressed on hearing of the reported improvement in the President's health.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

The Land of Trust.

Through many kingdoms have I sped,  
And found illusions lost for aye;  
But I have to a land been led,  
Where I shall ever make my stay.

I looked into a child's blue eyes,  
And found this magic rosy land,  
Where all is perfect, nothing dies,  
And all may walk on Heaven's strand.

Oh come with me to Fairyland,  
Where all is peace and gods are just,  
Where virtue spurns the rude command  
In this, the childlike Land of Trust.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

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#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. Rosetti, a Lecture; 6.15, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6, F. Schaller, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 7.30, a Lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, E. Burke, "The Tyranny of Words, Formulae, and Dogmas."

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