

THE Freethinker

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When the world has once got hold of a lie, it is astonishing how hard it is to get it out of the world. You beat about the head, till it seems to have given up the ghost, and lo! the next day it is as healthy as ever.

—LORD LYTTON.

Ambidextrous Providence.

A search for God was fruitless. Who can forget the heartrending cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat"? There was nothing the unfortunate man longed for so much as a face-to-face interview with his Divine Creator; but he could not find him anywhere. He went forward, but his Maker was not there; and backward, but he could not perceive him: he could not find him. On the right hand also the hard-driven monarch found that he was hiding himself from the Creator. Thus the Creator refused to meet and listen to the case of his much-trying creature. The Rev. J. D. Jones, M.A., D.D., of Bournemouth, enjoys much better luck than ever fell to the lot of poor Job. In a sermon which appears in the *Richmond Hill Magazine* for September, this eminently fortunate preacher declares that he can see God everywhere. He

"Unwonted events have happened, and as a result we are rent and torn with anxiety. We begin to have doubts as to the triumph of the cause of right. The retreat of the Russians and the fall of Warsaw have filled us with something like panic. I am not pretending that these happenings are not disappointing and hard to bear. They are. But the question I want to ask is this, Is not God in these events? The retreat of the Russians and the fall of Warsaw, are not these as really providential as the deliverance at the Marne?"

Dr. Jones is convinced that we could not "bear up" through the trials and disappointments of life "were it not for our faith that God is in them, and that somehow and sometime they will work together for our good." He desires the recovery of that bold faith which enabled the prophet to represent God as saying, "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord that doeth all these things." Thus God is an ambidextrous being, who works by both hands with equal facility." This is a startling discovery which Dr. Jones has made while diligently digging in the mine of his text. He admits that Job had a large element of the Agnostic faith, as indeed we all have; but he also claims that "if you will look closer, you will see that through this Agnosticism there throbs a strong and wholesome faith." This faith seems to this preacher to reach its climax in the recognition that it is God who works even on the left hand."

Let us watch this ambidextrous Deity at his alleged work. The first curious thing that strikes us is that, though he works with equal ease by either hand, there is yet a vast difference between the working of the right and the left. From the right issue blessing and prosperity, peace and joy; from the left, suffering and sorrow, grief and pain, sickness and death. It is Dr. Jones who makes this distinction between the Divine hands, such an idea never having occurred to the grief-stricken Job; and

yet if we believe in God at all, there is no escape from the reverend gentleman's conclusion as to the universality of his Providence. If he is supreme, the actual Sovereign of the Universe, we must believe that the hard as well as the pleasant things of life come from him. In the discourse under discussion, Dr. Jones concentrates his attention upon the God of the Left Hand, whom we are obliged to characterise as a sinister God. His Providence, we are assured, is universal, not partial. It is he who provides, or ordains, all that comes to pass, reverses as well as successes, defeats as well as victories, losses as well as gains. Dr. Jones maintains that "sometimes he works on the left hand"; but we venture to suggest that, if he works at all, he generally, not sometimes, does so on the left hand. Taking history as our guide, we are irresistibly drawn to the inference that, if there is a Divine Providence, it is mostly left-handed. Even the reverend gentleman himself affirms that God, not sometimes, but "often works by means of the unpleasant and distasteful events of life." Job, as represented in the drama, could not discern the marks of a righteous Providence either in God's dealings with himself or in his dealings with mankind generally. Elihu, in his replies, utterly fails to justify the ways of the Divine Being with men, and falls back, in a cowardly fashion, upon the thought of the complete irresponsibility of the omnipotence of Heaven. In other words, he concludes that God is a despot who is subject to no law of morality.

"As flies to wanton boys, so are we to the Gods.
They kill us for their sport."

Dr. Jones's contention is that "the Bible is full of instances of God using trouble and disappointment to accomplish his purposes, and making what looks like defeat and disaster further his gracious ends." Three of such instances are Joseph's servitude in Egypt, Paul's imprisonment at Rome, and the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. These are utilised as notable illustrations of the left-handed operations of the Deity. The account of Joseph's servitude in Egypt is largely, if not wholly, legendary, and Paul's imprisonment at Rome is an event concerning which very little is really known. Coming to the crucifixion, we are surprised to find a Christian minister bold enough to characterise that so-called central and supreme event in history as an instance of the left-handed activity of the God of love. At first, the disciples regarded it as an instance of "defeat and irretrievable disaster," "the triumph of wickedness and wrong."

"But many days had not passed before they began to see that God was in that Cross, that the shame and suffering and death were the cup which the Father gave his Son to drink. And they were not long before they discovered that by the sacrifice and suffering of the Cross Christ was winning his kingdom. Because he suffered, he was glorified; because he was lifted up in shame and contempt, he drew all men unto him. The Cross became his throne. To-day that Cross looks down from the summit of innumerable buildings, it hangs on innumerable necks, it adorns innumerable watch-chains. The type of shame has become a symbol of pride and glory. For by this we understand that the Cross was no mistake, no calamity, no defeat—but God's chosen instrument of conquest."

That may sound like wisdom when delivered from a pulpit, and look exceedingly plausible on the printed

page; but the moment we begin to examine it with critical care it is seen to be nothing but empty rhetoric, with scarcely a word of historical truth in it. It is true that the crucifix hangs from many a neck and adorns not a few watch-chains, but that only proves how great a power superstition still wields in Christendom. But when did the Prince of Peace ever occupy his throne and reign? When did he draw all men unto himself, and make them lovers of truth, justice, and peace? The truth is that if he had a kingdom, he has never come into it. Dr. Jones is a magnificent rhetorician, but he dare not look the facts in the face and assert that the Cross has been "God's chosen instrument of conquest." As a matter of fact, the world stood higher, intellectually, politically, and morally, before the Cross came in its Christian acceptation than it did for at least a thousand years under its dominion. We challenge Dr. Jones to dispassionately study ecclesiastical history as related by Christian writers, such as Baronius, Neander, Milman, and Schaff, and then declare that he is proud of the so-called Church of God. Historical Christianity has been a malignant factor, making for disunion, bitter controversy, disastrous persecution, and savage war.

Dr. Jones ought to be profoundly thankful that the God in whose name he makes so many ignorant and foolish statements has never broken his eternal silence. He has never been provoked to utter a single word of approval or disapproval. Waxing very courageous, Dr. Jones pronounces God's Providence a universal providence, in other words, an ambidextrous providence. With its left hand it sinks the *Titanic*, causing the loss of a thousand more or less valuable lives; and with its right it detains a prominent London clergyman at home and so prevents him from travelling by and going down with that famous leviathan of the deep. With its left hand it has brought on and conducts the present War on lines of the most horrible frightfulness and inhumanity ever heard of, thereby cruelly murdering several millions of innocent men in the prime of life; but what its right hand is doing just now no tongue can tell. The *Daily Telegraph* reported the other day a sad incident which, in Dr. Jones's pulpit language, would have read that with its left hand Providence deprived the son of the High Commissioner of New Zealand of his sight by allowing a shell to burst so close to him that the concussion forced out both his eyes, while it laid its right hand on the shoulders of the bereaved family to comfort them with the assurance that the God of love will, ultimately, enable them to realise that the loss of his sight was to their loved one the greatest blessing in disguise. Such is Dr. Jones's teaching from the pulpit, which we readily admit is thoroughly Biblical in its character. But if there be a God of truth, justice, and love, he was never more flagrantly and atrociously blasphemed than he is in this sermon now under criticism. Take the following sample:—

"We are obsessed by the thought of the power which the German nation has developed, and we forget God. My brethren, the fall of Warsaw, I admit, has been a bitter experience. God has been working on the left hand. Yes—but God has been working. Let us not forget that! The calamity has happened not because Germany willed it—but because God permitted it. It does not mean that the cause of truth and right is going to be defeated. It means that this is God's method of bringing that triumph about."

The Kaiser boasted that Warsaw fell because God was on the side of, and graciously assisted, the German Army; and most assuredly the Kaiser knows quite as much, or quite as little, about God and his plans as Dr. Jones of Bournemouth. God takes absolutely no notice of what either says about him. He is utterly silent, he is consistently indifferent to all that happens, and the War goes on just exactly as it would go on were he not in existence. The only rational conclusion possible to us is that he does not exist, and, consequently, has never worked, either on the right hand or on the left. Man's destiny is in his own keeping and he must work it out the best way he can, learning wisdom by his mistakes, gather-

ing strength through the exposure of his weakness, gaining victories at the cost of numerous defeats, and realising the essential solidarity of his race by means of many foolish and bloody conflicts.

J. T. LLOYD.

Freethought, Religion, and Death.—II.

(Concluded from p. 562.)

IN putting forward his arguments for human immortality, the Christian quietly assumes that he is the champion of a lofty view of human nature. The man who accepts death as the end of individual existence is taking a low view of life. In sober truth, the case is the other way about. Consider the position. If human life, considered with reference to this world alone, is adequate as an incentive to action, and the consequence of actions is an adequate reward for endeavor, it is admitted that the religious argument breaks down. To support this argument, it is necessary to prove that life, divorced from the conception of immortality, can never reach the highest possible level. Natural human society is powerless in itself to serve as an adequate motive or reward. This is, of course, an arguable proposition; but whether true or not, there can be no question that it involves a lower view of human nature than does the naturalistic one. The Freethinker pays human nature the compliment of believing that in itself, and by itself, it is adequate to all that may be demanded of it. He does not believe that supernatural hopes and fears are necessary to its well-being. The religionist denies this, and affirms that some supernatural incentive or hope is needed to that end. If the Freethinker is wrong, it is obvious that his fault consists in taking a too optimistic view of human nature. His fault is not that he takes a too low view, but a too high view, of man and his possibilities. Substantially the difference in dispute is that which separates the man who is honest from a conviction of the value of honesty, and he who refrains from stealing because he feels certain of detection, or afraid of losing something that he might otherwise gain.

Thus, the writer from whom I have already quoted says, in expressing his view of the value of the belief in immortality:—

"If human life is but a by-product of the unconscious play of physical forces, like a candle flame soon to be blown out or burnt out, what a paltry thing it is!"

But the question of where human life springs from; or, for the matter of that, where it will end, are questions quite apart from that of the value and capabilities of human life now. There are immense possibilities of happiness and achievement in human life, viewed with reference to the term of existence here alone. The world is full of curious and beautiful things, and its pleasures do undoubtedly outweigh its pains. The relations between ourselves and others remain quite unaffected by the question of whether death ends the individual or merely starts him on a new career of existence. It is a defensible proposition that life is well worth living. So is the reverse of the proposition. But it is pure nonsense to say that life is a "paltry thing" merely because the individual ceases at the grave. It is unrestricted egotism, disguised under the form of religious aspiration.

If I cannot live for ever, then is the universe a failure? That is what this religious argument amounts to. And to state it renders further reiteration needless. But it is never stated in so intelligible and so unequivocal a manner. Instead of this, it is accompanied by much talk of growth, of wasted lives being made good, of an evolution with an end. Thus:—

"Seeing that man is the goal towards which every thing has tended from the beginning, seeing that the one eternal and infinite Energy has labored through the ages at the production of man, and man is the heir of all the ages, nothing conceivable seems too great or

glorious to believe concerning his destiny.....If there is no limit to human growth in knowledge and wisdom, in love and constructive power, in beauty and joy, we are invested with a magnificent worth and dignity."

All this is little more than pure verbiage. It has no real connection with the point at issue. It is a mixture of fallacy and folly. What, for instance, is meant by man being the goal towards which everything has tended from the beginning? Whatever truth is in that applies to everything. It is quite as true of the microbe as it is of man. If the "infinite and eternal Energy" labored to produce man, it labored also to produce the microbe of disease that destroys him. If the one is here, so is the other; and one might conceive a religious microbe thanking an almighty microbe for having created it, and declaring that, unless it were allowed to live forever, and to continue in some microbic heaven to grow in strength and virulence, the whole universe is a failure. It is quite a question of point of view. Or, again, seeing that the present is linked to the past in terms of causation, and that the present grows out of the past, might we not as reasonably say that this "infinite and eternal Energy" has from all time been preparing for the present welter of blood and misery as disclosed by the European War? As a matter of fact, there are no "ends" in nature; there are only results. And each result becomes a factor in the production of some further result. It is human folly which makes an "end" of a "result."

"If there is no limit to human growth." Well, it all depends upon what is meant by human growth. Does it mean individual growth? Or is it racial growth that is intended? Probably it is put in this vague manner because the thought behind it is vague, and indefiniteness is the great friend of metaphysics. Individually there is a very sharp limit to human growth—much sharper than the vast majority of people conceive to be the case. It is quite clear that individual life is not capable of continuous growth even here. Acquisitions are made most rapidly during youth, the power to acquire becomes weaker after middle age, in old age it is quite a negligible quantity, the last stage being generally a period of loss or degradation. Apart from this, the old saying that one can't put a quart in a pint pot applies here. Growth requires acquisition, acquisition is determined by capacity, and this, while an indefinite quantity, is certainly not an unlimited one.

Again, when we say that the individual grows indefinitely, what exactly do we mean? We compare the individual of to-day with the one of two or three thousand years ago, and we assume that the former is superior to the latter. But, considered as an individual, is this quite true? In what way is the sailor, or the soldier, or the citizen, or the scientist, superior to their representatives of two thousand years ago? The modern ones exert greater power and possess greater knowledge, true. But, given the knowledge of to-day, is there any reason for believing that the sailor, the citizen, or the scientist in the days of ancient Assyria could not have used it as effectively as our contemporaries? Neither sound theory nor fact lends support to any such view. Our superiority is not individual, but social. The growth of man is entirely a phenomenon of social heredity. We inherit more, and we are therefore in a position to use more. If it had been possible to have surrounded a generation of ancient Assyrians, from infancy upward, with all the knowledge, the appliances, the mechanical inventions, that environ a modern generation, they would have been capable of using them all as wisely—or as unwisely as we do.

It is a mere trick of the imagination that converts this fact of social growth into a characteristic of individual life. And it is part of the religious fallacy to assume that this growth—wholly a consequence of the social medium—will continue in some other world and divorced from that social environment which gives it reality and meaning. Our growth, whatever be its nature, is certainly conditioned by, and has relevancy to, a social environment such as exists here. Our feelings, our sentiments, even our desires

have reference to this life, and that in a far deeper sense than is usually conceived. It is not the conviction of immortality that makes life valuable; on the contrary, it is the underlying and partly unconscious certainty of its mortality that gives life its greatest value, and serves as the seed-plot of human affection. The dreariness of all pictured immortalities is a commonplace, and in this it only reflects the pregnant truth that if life were not as "a candle-flame," likely to be "blown out or burnt out," it would become so dreary, so insupportable, that, as in the old Greek legend, men would pray to the gods for the mortality of which they had been deprived.

Growth is not, then, something that has reference to a life beyond the grave. It has meaning and value only in relation to life here. It is not fundamentally personal, but social. Man, as an individual, becomes more powerful with the passing of the generations, precisely because he is a mere link in the chain of humanity, without which he would cease to be recognised human. It is the race that grows, not the individual. And, in the same way, it is the race only of which continued existence may be predicated. The old Greek simile of life, as a torch handed on from generation to generation, is the truer view. It is at all events the true symbol of growth, of progress, of civilisation. We are what we are because of the past generations of men and women who have lived and toiled and died. We inherit the fruits of their labors, as those who come after us will inherit the fruits of our struggles and conquests. No other immortality than is involved in this is conceivable. One might almost say that none other is possible. And to those whose minds are not distorted by religious teachings, it is questionable whether any other is really desirable.

C. COHEN.

Edgar Saltus.

"I am now of all humors, that have showed themselves humors, since the days of Goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock at midnight."

—SHAKESPEARE, *Henry IV.*

EDGAR SALTUS is an American author who should be known better on this side of the Atlantic. He is an American only in the sense that Henry James is one, and he is a writer of cosmopolitan culture and sympathies. With Paine he would say, "The world is my country," and he cannot arbitrarily be described as anything else than a writer in English. Assuredly, he calls for recognition as much as D'Annunzio, Anatole France, or Maxim Gorky, and others for who so many English altars have flamed in worship.

Characteristically, Edgar Saltus began his literary career with a book on Balzac. It was brief, bright, and imbued with the spirit of the matter. A year later he completed his work on *The Philosophy of Disenchantment*, a remarkable exposition of the teachings of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Leopardi, and other pessimistic thinkers. This was followed by a brilliant and illuminating work, *The Anatomy of Negation*. Throughout the book the style is sustained, light is combined with depth, the matter is as remarkable as the manner. The prefatory note informs us that:—

"The accompanying pages are intended to convey a tableau of anti-Theism from Kapila to Leconte de Lisle. The anti-Theistic tendencies of England and America have been treated by other writers. In the present volume, therefore, that branch of the subject is not discussed. To avoid misconception, it may be added that no attempt has been made to prove anything."

In a note to a later edition he says that:—

"In brief, it was the writer's endeavor to divest his reader of one or two idle pre-occupations, and to leave him serene in spirit, and of better cheer than before."

As a commentary on the irony of the preceding remarks, we quote the following lines, as daring and as eloquent as Ingersoll:—

"The Orient is asleep in the ashes of her gods. The star of Ormuzd has burned out in the skies. On the

banks of her sacred seas, Greece, hushed for evermore, rests on the divine limbs of her white immortals. In the sepulchre of the pale Nazarene, humanity guards its last divinity. Every promise is unfulfilled. There is no light save, perchance, in death. One torture more, one more throb of the heart, and after it nothing. The grave opens, a little flesh falls in, and the weeds of forgetfulness, which soon hide the tomb, grow eternally above its vanities. And still the voice of the living, of the past and the unjust, of kings, of felons, and of beasts, will be raised unsilenced, until humanity, unsatisfied as before, and yet impatient for the peace which life has disturbed, is tossed at last, with its shattered globe and forgotten gods, to fertilise the furrows of space where worlds ferment."

The man who could write like this was endowed, in no small measure, with the blood-royal of literature. In one of his later novels, a principal character is made to say "I would rather have written *Salamambo* than have built the Brooklyn bridge. It was more difficult, and it will last longer." This characteristic remark presents his ambition in a sentence.

All Saltus's books are thought-compelling. As an essayist he stands in the first rank, his *Pomps of Satan* being a work of unflagging interest. Instead of nature and the world of dreams, the author gives us society and the world of reality. Instead of vague desires and regret, we have cynical criticism, and the style is in epigrammatic sentences. The subjects are varied and curious, such as *The Gilded Gang*, *Vanity Square*, *The Golden Fold*. *The Toilet of Venus* describes the ever-changing human fashions. The book possesses the first necessity of essays, of being eminently readable. The author has little admiration for developments in his own country, "The Benighted States," as he calls it:—

"Never, perhaps, except in the Rome of the Cæsars, has there been gathered together in one city a set so rich, so idle, so profoundly uninterested in anything save themselves."

This is the manner in which Edgar Saltus abruptly hurls out his gibes and his epigrams. All that easy zest, that curling his tongue round his subject, his freedom from enthusiasm, were possible only to a man who simplified his life by dividing it well, and not by cultivating one side at the expense of another.

His novels form a collection which almost merit his claim to be considered the English Balzac. In his work, *Mary Magdalen*, he has produced a most successful and daring reconquest of antiquity that has been attempted of recent years. *Mary Magdalen* is not a sensational novel for a railway journey. It is nothing to do with pastime, it is a piece of literature. Mr. Saltus has reconstructed a Bible legend, just as Flaubert presented a story of Ancient Carthage in his *Salamambo*. He has treated the story with freedom, power, and with poetry. He frequently touches the sublime, he never approaches the ridiculous. There is no hysteria—a rare thing with contemporary writers.

All Mr. Saltus's novels are provocative. *Mr. Incoul's Misadventure*, *The Truth about Tristram Varek*, *Eden*, *A Transaction in Hearts*, *Madam Sapphira*, to name but a few, form a notable collection. His enemies, and like most strongly individual artists he has many, delight in referring to his indebtedness to Balzac. Their malice is proof that they dread Saltus's success, and shudder lest the milk-and-water novel of the circulating libraries should be found insipid beside the inspiring liquid brewed by the disciple of Flaubert and Balzac.

Edgar Saltus has proved his poetic temperament in many passages of beautiful prose. He has also written a little book of verse. The following is a fair example of his muse:—

"Heine's malicious eyes have gazed in mine,
And I have sat at Leopardi's feet,
And once I heard the lute-strings divine
That Sappho and the Lesbian girls repeat,
But yet what night have I not sought in vain
To meet and muse with Emerson again."

A many-sided man of genius, he has relished the tableau of life. He has loved to see the garden where Horace smiled at Rome, the midnight supper-table where Voltaire challenged the best wits of

Europe, the chateau of old Montaigne, or the river-haunts of Whitman. Saltus's nationality has given him a characteristic energy. He has shown us that the American can compete successfully with the admired Continental writers. We may yet hope to see his ultimate place among our leading writers freely conceded. In what rank of that group he should come it were futile to ask now. If the position we should choose prove to be above the one which Time will decide, it is at least with honest belief in the vigor of his work, and no blind liking that ignores its shortcoming. Edgar Saltus is a philosopher, a poet, a critic, a novelist, and that rare thing in our populous world of laborious scribblers, a really fine writer of English.

MIMNERMUS.

The Fourth Gospel.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

IN all four Gospel narratives the Jesus therein portrayed knew nothing more of earthly or heavenly "things" than the Gospel writers knew: similarly, the Jesus of those Gospels believed all the absurdities which the writers believed. The last-mentioned fact is clearly exemplified in the imaginary Jesus of the Fourth Gospel. In John v. 14 it is recorded that Jesus, after healing a man who "had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity," said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Here Jesus is represented as believing, as did the Presbyter John, that diseases and afflictions—when not produced by indwelling demons (Matt. ix. 33, xii. 22; Luke xiii. 16)—were sent as a punishment for sins committed by the afflicted person. This was, in fact, the belief of the multitude in the Presbyter John's day. There is no way of getting away from this position; for the pseudo-Jesus of the Fourth Gospel could only give utterance to the ideas placed in his mouth by the pseudo-John.

In John ix. 1—4 the same writer introduces a question which, from the popular point of view, was no doubt considered puzzling in his time—the case of a man afflicted from birth. This reads:—

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

The question here put in the mouths of the disciples, clearly shows that affliction, by whomsoever borne, were, in the writer's opinion, inflicted as a punishment for some great sin, the only point in doubt being as to who in this particular case was the sinner. A child born blind could not, of course, have sinned before birth: the guilty person must therefore have been one of the parents, the punishment being laid on the child in accordance with the Biblical statement that the Lord God "visited the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" (Exod. xx. 5). And this being the case, the foolish question of the disciples was introduced merely to give the pseudo-Jesus an opportunity for replying. In his reply Jesus did not tell his disciples that the popular belief was erroneous, but only that the case of the man born blind was an exceptional one. The Jesus of the Synoptics did, however, in some measure correct this ignorant notion (Luke xiii. 1—5); but the cases he referred to were of quite a different nature.

What, then, is the reason assigned by the Savior of the Fourth Gospel for the man having been born blind? The man, that Savior states, was thus afflicted in order that "the works of God should be made manifest in him." Now, according to the utterances of the pseudo-Jesus, "the works of God" were the miracles of healing alleged to have been wrought by that Savior. We thus arrive at the astounding statement that the man was born blind, and lived

for twenty years or more in darkness, a burden to himself and his parents, for no other purpose than that he might be cured by the pseudo-Jesus when that miracle-worker appeared upon the scene. And it is the writer of this narrative who tells us that "God is love" (1 John iv. 16). What an exalted idea that writer must have had of his God, and of the way in which the Christian deity showed his love to his creatures.

The method employed by Jesus to heal the blind man is thus recorded:—

"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

This very undignified action of the Savior reads like a modern conjuring trick. In Matt. ix. 29 the Jesus of the Synoptics gives sight to two blind men by simply touching their eyes, and in Matt. xx. 34 he opens the eyes of two other blind men by also touching their eyes. In Luke xviii. 42 and Mark x. 52 Jesus heals a blind man by saying, "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole." There is but one other instance of the cure of blindness recorded in the first three Gospels (Mark viii. 23, 24), and in this case Jesus "spat on the eyes" of the blind man, and "laid his hands upon him," after which the man said he saw "men as trees walking"; whereupon Jesus "again laid his hands upon his eyes," and the man then "saw all things clearly." The Presbyter John, as we know, was acquainted with the Gospel of Mark—from which he took the statement about "two hundred pennyworth of bread" in the miracle of the loaves and fishes. This last account of Mark evidently suggested to him a similar but improved narrative of Jesus giving sight to a blind man. The making a dab of mud with saliva, the smearing it on the man's eyes, and the sending him to the pool of Siloam—accessories which tended to render the miracle appear more dramatic—were all his own original conceptions.

The statement that the blind man, after washing away the dirt from his eyes "came back seeing" is one which is not in harmony with fact. The pseudo-John appears to have thought that when once sight was given to him, he would be able to see and recognise things like other men. That writer did not know that the man would be in the same position as a young baby, with an unknown world of colored objects appearing close to his eyes amidst a glare of light, and that he would have to learn what they were, and their relative distances from him and from each other, and a host of other circumstances. Yet the man who had lived in darkness his whole life, and only knew a few small objects by feeling, is represented as being on precisely the same level as other men the moment he had washed his eyes, and as understanding and recognising everything around him just the same as if he had never been blind.

The little comedy between the Pharisees and the blind man (ix. 8, 34) is well worth reading, and shows that the pseudo-John was not deficient in low cunning and repartee, as well as some degree of finesse. The scornful reply of the Pharisees to the man, in verse 34, further points to the belief that either the man or his parents had sinned. This should read: "Thou was born wholly in sins, and dost thou teach us"?

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

I come now to what is perhaps the greatest of all the miracles recorded in the Fourth Gospel, and one which was never witnessed by any human being. This is the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John xi). According to the story, Lazarus was a native of Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, and he had two sisters, Martha and Mary, who were converts of Jesus. On one occasion when this Savior was holding forth on the eastern side of the Jordan, the sisters sent word to him, saying, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Upon hearing this, Jesus said to his disciples "This sickness is not unto death,

but for the glory of God, that the Son may be glorified." In other words, Lazarus was smitten with a disease in order that Jesus might receive honor by healing him. He did not, however, hasten to Bethany, but "abode at that time two days in the place where he was." When, at length, he was about to set out for Bethany, he said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." To this the disciples replied, "Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will do well." In this case, contrary to his usual custom, Jesus condescended to explain his meaning, and said "Lazarus is dead."

After wending his weary way westward, the Savior at length reached the outskirts of the village, and there came to a halt. Hearing that he had arrived in the neighborhood, first one sister, then the other, came to him bewailing her brother's loss, and each addressed him in identically the same words—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." This gentle rebuke was a fine touch on the part of the writer. The pseudo-Jesus attempted to console them by saying that their brother should rise again; but this they understood as referring to the general resurrection of all men at some future time—and the Savior did not deceive them. Meantime, the Jews who were collected in the house of mourning had followed the sisters, and when Jesus heard the latter "wailing" and the other Jewish mourners participating in the wailing, he "groaned in the spirit," and asked "Where have ye laid him"?—to which they replied "Lord, come and see." This scene at last became so deeply affecting that the Savior himself, filled with compassion, was moved to tears—"Jesus wept." Said then the Jews who witnessed the Savior's emotion, "Behold how he loved him"!

Coming to the tomb Jesus groaned again, and said "Take ye away the stone." In reply to this command one of the sisters said "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Ignoring this fact, and the stone having been removed, Jesus "lifted up his eyes" heavenward, and made a short address to "the Father." This done, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth": whereupon "he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin." The feet being bound, we may suppose that the corpse came out hopping.

This little drama, when carefully read, will be seen to display a considerable degree of dramatic talent, more especially when it is borne in mind that it was written as long ago as the second century, and that the dialogue and accessories were all drawn solely from the writer's imagination. The making Jesus weep, however, was a mistake; for that Savior, knowing that he was about to call the man back to life, could not feel any real sorrow. He has said himself that what happened to Lazarus was pre-ordained in order to crown himself with fresh glory. It would have been more natural for the writer to have made the pseudo-Jesus say: "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy brother shall return from the land of the shadow of death this very day" (Jer. xxxi. 16).

It is scarcely necessary to say that no one possessing a grain of common sense could believe that a man who had been dead four days, in whose body disintegration had commenced its work, could be recalled to life by the command "Lazarus, come forth." To believe such a story, some very strong and unimpeachable evidence—positively overwhelming—must be forthcoming. And what is the evidence? The only evidence we possess is that the account was written by the man who fabricated the story of an angel coming down from heaven "at certain seasons" to agitate the water of a pool in Jerusalem, and that whoever then first stepped into the pool was healed of any disease he had—by the man who, upon several occasions, has represented his Savior as uttering deliberate falsehoods—by the man who has re-written and falsified some of the more ancient Gospel narratives. This is the man we are asked to believe was the apostle John and a witness of what he relates.

In the primitive Gospel from which the Synoptists drew the main portion of their narratives, there was but one case of raising from the dead—that of the Ruler's daughter—and all three have recorded it (Matt. ix., Mark v., Luke viii.). To this Luke added another—that of the Widow's son (Luke vii.) taken from some later apocryphal source. Neither of these has the pseudo-John recorded. That writer preferred to concoct a new case himself—and one which he thought would redound more to the glory of his Savior. This, as we have seen, he has done. There cannot be the smallest doubt that not one of the three Synoptists had ever heard that Jesus had a friend—and one that he loved—named Lazarus, or that this friend was recalled to life after he had been dead four days. This Lazarus was evidently a creation of the pseudo-John himself.

ABRACADABRA.

Christianity a Religion of Hate, and NOT of Love.

"THE Christians are the enemies of the human race."—Saying attributed to one of the great Roman Emperors.

"'Twas never merry England since gentlemen first were."—Jack Cade.

"I tremble for my country should your religion ever get a foothold there."—Famous Chinese statesman.

"The loathsome hairy tigers of the West."—Famous Chinese writer, author of *China's One Hope*.

"Do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith."—Paul of Tarsus.

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."—Paul of Tarsus.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."—Paul of Tarsus. (A clear allusion to, and approbation of, the primitive cannibal sacrifice, in which the sacrificing priest robbed himself in the reeking fell of the human victim.)

"If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off," etc.—Christ. (Lutheran application in Belgium.)

"Verily, I came not to bring peace, but a sword."—Christ. (Lutheran application in Belgium.)

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."—Christ. (Lutheran application in Belgium.)

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—Christ. (Lutheran combination and application of the two texts in Belgium.)

"Ye are perfected by suffering."—Christ. (Lutheran combination and application of the two texts in Belgium.)

"Take up your cross meekly and follow me." "He that is not with me is against me."—Jesus Christ.

"That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same."—Old Testament.

"It is well seen, oh God, how thou goest; how thou, my God and King, goest in the sanctuary. The priests go before, the minstrels follow after; in the midst are the damsels playing upon the timbrels."—Old Testament. (It is now admitted on all hands that this divine jack-in-a-box was precisely the same fetich, set up in the form of a short black pillar or column, such as are seen in profusion in the South Hindoo temples at the present day.)

"I used to think man was a being devoted to high aims and high purposes. Now I should be sorry to think there was in man anything but the mere breath of his body."—Final judgment of Charles Darwin.

"It is all folly."—Last words of Dean Swift.

"Life's but a walking shadow. A poor player
That struts his little hour upon the stage
And then is seen no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."—Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the great Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—St. James.

The above selection of passages from the inspired Word of God, and others criticising its infallible pretensions, show that, like all other dualistic superstitions, it began as sacrificial cannibalism, and was then toned down to phallic worship—of a much gloomier kind, however, than the genial revivals of Southern Hindooism. I have quoted the text from St. James to illustrate the identity existing between the gloomy fanaticism of the Christian Church Militant in its original and modern Hindooism, the expression "great Father of Lights" being identical with that of the Vedas,

"the Father of the Shining Ones." As time went on, however, some of the maxims of the non-Deistic religions of the Far East, in which they form a coherent part of the philosophy, were taken from their natural setting, and cobbled together to provide a sort of superficial patchwork covering for the Christian *Ark of the Faith*, much as certain caddis-worms adorn their tube externally with fragments of glass and grains of spar. In this way the doctrine of forgiveness of injuries was filched from Buddhism, where it formed a rational first step in the practical discipline of that religion, without in its new collocation having the smallest mitigating effect upon the inherent ferocity of the superstition it had been filched to adorn. Not otherwise, the Chinese Golden Rule was stolen and perverted to bolster up the brutality of a creed the essence of which is sacrificial cannibalism.

The evolution of the Chinese Golden Rule, "Do not unto others what you would not that they should do to you," has been already traced by me elsewhere. After being emasculated, to surrogate the Christian lie, and applied for that purpose in the form, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you," it received new life and potency in the final form of its practical application by English land-grabbers and Imperialists: "Do unto others, as you would not they should do unto you." The Sermon on the Mount, in which a good many of these old saws are furnished up, is now admitted to have as much reality as the set speeches in Livy's *History* or the magnificent funeral oration of Mark Anthony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Without his miracles, his Sermon on the Mount, his Lord's Prayer, his miraculous birth, his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Lord, Adonis, or Moloch of Christian theft, murder, and sacrificial cannibalism, our Lord Jesus Christ becomes so shadowy a figure, and one so devoid of any coherent moral, religious, or philosophical significance, that it is difficult to understand why the Christians make such a fuss about it, or why they are turning Europe into a shambles (or at any rate the rabid Central European believers in it), as an object-lesson and justification of the Freethinker's objection to their blind and bloodthirsty fetish, and the fascination of which it is the essence and origin.

W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A., Trin. Coll., Cam.

Acid Drops.

Last week we published an account of an affidavit sworn before Mr. Hazlehurst, J.P., by Private Cleaver, of the 1st Cheshire Regiment, that he, personally, was at Mons, and saw the vision of angels with his own eyes. Mr. Hazlehurst travelled forty miles, twice, in order to get the affidavit, and said it was worth travelling half over the earth to get such a testimony. Mr. Hazlehurst acted in perfect good faith, as was shown by his subsequent proceedings; for, hearing a rumor that Private Cleaver's testimony was not above suspicion, Mr. Hazlehurst wrote to the headquarters of the Cheshire Regiment, and in reply received the following:—

"Records Office, Cheshire Regt.,
8 Claremont-bank, Shrewsbury.

August 26, 1915.

10515 R. Cleaver,
Cheshire Regt. (S.R.).

With regard to your inquiries concerning the above man, the following are the particulars concerning him:—He mobilised at Chester on August 22, 1914. He was posted out to the 1st Battalion, Expeditionary Force, France, with a draft on September 6, 1914. He returned to England on December 8, 1914, sick.

J. HIECENS (? Hicks),
Major for Colonel I/C Records, No. 4
District, Cheshire Regt."

Mr. Hazlehurst very properly sent a copy of this letter to the press. It appeared in the *Daily Mail* of September 2.

So much for the first and only definitely localisable testimony to the angelic vision. When Private Cleaver arrived in France, the battle of Mons had ended, and the Germans were retreating in turn. Private Cleaver had not even the excuse to offer that he was subject to an hallucination. He is merely a very plain, ordinary kind of a liar. Mr. Hazlehurst, with a faith that is almost pathetic, asks, "Will none of the officers who were at Mons, and saw the angels of whom Miss Marrable speaks, come forward and confess it?" We must remind Mr. Hazlehurst that Miss Marrable has denied having had any communications from officers. She only heard that there were such officers in existence. And these are just as visionary as the angels themselves.

Meanwhile, we would draw attention to the fact that it is a layman who, having found himself deceived, has the

and the courage to publicly say so. Those prominent clergymen, Dr. Horton, the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Clifton, etc., having spread the story, before Mr. ... exposure, remained silent afterwards. They with-
 nothing; they apologised for nothing. Having told
 for business reasons, they stuck to it from the same
 If Church members had any genuine regard for the
 of their creed, they would insist upon these clergy-
 either producing the evidence they had, or else apolo-
 for having said that they possessed letters from
 We have said, over and over again, that the ethic
 the pulpit is much inferior to the ethic of laymen, and
 Hazlehurst's conduct proves the truth of what we said.

The War is making some men think. In his recent work,
National Influence, Sir Francis Younghusband writes that the
 present condition of Europe "does not bear on the face of
 the mark of a perfectly good and wise God's handiwork."
 It requires "the eye of Faith" to perceive the
 of "Our Heavenly Father" in the spectacle of
 100,000 Christians trying to murder each other.

Christians claim most of the virtues, but facts are stubborn
 Dr. Saleeby reminds us that Christians "show
 homage to Infancy at the chief festival of the Christian
 by the overlaying of twice as many babies in Christmas
 as in any other week in the year."

A new play has been produced in London under the quaint
 title *The Big Drum*. It has nothing to do with the Church
 or Salvation Armies.

"I. B. is sly, sir, sly, but devilish tough." So said the Major
in a recent sermon of Canon Newbolt's. The Canon notes
 for some years "there has been an increasing tendency
 among those who control the nation to look askance at religion,"
 then, like Major Bagstock, he gets devilish sly. "Ger-
 man influence has dazzled us," hence our neglect of religion
 in national affairs. But why German influence? Well, that
 is just where Canon Newbolt-Bagstock comes in. Ger-
 man and everything German, from submarines to Christmas
 trees are now anathema, and by attributing the decline of
 religion to German influence the Canon seeks to enlist a
 fervid patriotism on the side of the Church. It is devilish
 and none the less ridiculous.

The secularising of national life is neither German, Eng-
 lish, French, nor Russian. It is part of the general process
 of civilisation. France was not under the glamor of German
 influence when it secularised the State, nor was Portugal.
 German scholarship had never existed, or had never
 been heard of outside Germany, the secularising of national
 life would have gone on just the same. Statesmen, in this
 emergency at least, have not sought to avoid religion, they
 have been forced to do so by the growth of public opinion.
 The beginning of this movement dates back to the Renais-
 sance, the Church has been fighting it for centuries, and it
 is no more stay the movement now by attempts to enlist
 German opinion than Mrs. Partington succeeded in
 keeping back the Atlantic.

Canon Newbolt also declares that "if the State with-
 draws its sanction and patronage from the Church, it
 is not the Church which will suffer, but the State." It
 is the assumption that the reverend gentleman's state-
 ment is true, we naturally ask, Why then do Church
 people oppose Disestablishment with such angry vigor?
 simply because they love the State so much? Is
 because they alone are such ideal patriots? On the
 contrary, the Anglican clergy resist Disestablishment because
 they are convinced that it would seriously injure, if not
 wreck, the Church, in the service of which they
 are living. It is a purely selfish resistance, whatever
 a popular preacher like Canon Newbolt may say.

Again, why does the Canon so ruthlessly attack the prin-
 ciple of Secular Education? He knows perfectly well that
 the continued establishment of the Episcopal Church involves
 an injustice to all Nonconformists, Catholic and Protestant
 alike, yet he denounces Disestablishment as a threatened
 danger. He is equally well aware that the teaching of
 the Christian religion in State-supported schools is dis-
 criminatingly unfair to Jews and Freethinkers; but so strong
 is his religious prejudice that he would willingly make
 religious instruction a vital part of the curriculum in all
 schools. How strange it is that the belief in Christianity
 should destroy the sense of justice and fairplay towards

outsiders in those who cherish it. They are apparently in-
 capable of realising that those who differ from them are as
 fully entitled to all the rights and privileges of citizenship as
 themselves.

Canon Newbolt is inaccurate as well as unfair. Whether
 the inaccuracy is due to ignorance or to prejudice, or to both,
 we know not; but all the facts known to us stamp as utterly
 false the assertion that German culture is without God. In
 official Germany, God occupies the most prominent of all
 positions. The Kaiser is the most pious man in Europe.
 Both his speeches and his sermons inculcate submission
 to the Divine Sovereign of the universe and glad obedience
 to Christ the Savior. The Canon cannot have read, or has
 forgotten, the many expressions of loyalty to heaven which
 the Emperor has from time to time made, all of which have
 been published. He prides himself upon possessing a Chris-
 tian army and presiding over a Christian nation. Even
 Field-Marshal von Hindenburg admitted, the other day,
 that his successes in the East were the outcome of the
 direct intervention of the Almighty. Why do the clergy
 persist in lying about the religious attitude of Germany,
 and on what intelligible ground are they so cocksure that
 this country is fighting for God, while the Germans are
 fighting against him? They must be either ignorant and
 prejudiced, or deliberate liars.

According to the newspapers, a special tax on all bachelors
 is to be imposed in Saxony. Won't the Catholic clergy be
 pleased?

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been seriously ill, but
 is now on the road to recovery. How it must distress his
 Grace to be kept back from the "pearly gates" and "golden
 streets" he has so often preached of.

Since the outbreak of the War, Nietzsche has been one of
 the subjects of animosity from clergymen who have never
 read his works. Nietzsche denounced German pride of race
 as a "mendacious race-swindle," and he was a scathing
 critic of Teutonic megalomania. But Nietzsche was a Free-
 thinker, and Christians never love their enemies.

"Blue-books" are to be issued at popular prices, to ensure
 their greater circulation. None of them will be half so
 "blue" as the Bible, which can be obtained "under cost
 price."

Commenting on the suggestion that the salaries of Mem-
 bers of Parliament should be stopped during war-time, Mr.
 Joseph King, M.P., points out in the *Daily News* that there
 are bigger salaries that could be reduced, such as those of
 the Archbishop of Canterbury, £15,000 a year and two
 houses; the Archbishop of York, £10,000 and house. A
 shrewd hit at the Government religion, but Mr. King might
 have mentioned the bishops, who follow their Savior, on the
 salaries of managing directors.

The Young Men's Christian Association is rapidly becoming
 a universal provider, and we look forward to the time when
 it will supply all articles, from a tin-tack to a white elephant.
 At present it is selling coffee, cake, cigarettes, and other
 food-stuffs, running entertainments and concerts, and pro-
 viding cinema shows. It also supplies bagatelle boards,
 billiard cues, ping-pong balls, gramophones and records,
 books and magazines. One would imagine that the Society
 worshiped William Whiteley instead of Jesus Christ.

Submarine craft, says the *Daily Telegraph*, "must not be
 allowed to infringe the laws of God" by sinking harmless
 passenger vessels. We thoroughly endorse the sentiment
 expressed, but the phrasing is unfortunate. For the German
 submarine method of warfare is, as near as may be, an imi-
 tation of God's method. Germany sinks a passenger vessel
 and drowns inoffensive civilians, women, and children. God
 sends a hurricane, or an earthquake, or a disease, and wipes
 out whole districts and kills thousands. Germany sends
 civilian travellers to their death without warning, as in
 the case of the *Lusitania* and the *Arabic*. But what
 warning did God give the 1,500 passengers who went down
 on the *Titanic*? If the workings of nature exemplify the
 laws of God, Germany may claim with justice that it is try-
 ing to copy Deity. It may never succeed in achieving an
 absolute copy of God's method, but it is doing its best.

It is still a moot question in theology what proportion of
 mankind will ultimately be saved and go to heaven. Many

writers, like Massillon, represent the number of the saved, or elect, as so infinitesimally small that it would almost drive a saint to despair, "as if the Church had been established for the express purpose of populating hell." But Professor Pohle, of the University of Breslau, in a work entitled *Grace, Actual and Habitual*, takes a more optimistic view of the case, though even in his estimation the number of God's elect is limited. Here is his conclusion:—

"In our pessimistic age it is more grateful and consoling to assume that the majority of Christians, especially Catholics, will be saved. If we add to this number not a few Jews, Mohammedans, and Heathens, it is probably safe to estimate the number of the elect as at least equal to that of the reprobates. Were it smaller, it could be said to the shame and offence of the Divine Majesty and mercy that the future kingdom of Satan is larger than the kingdom of Christ."

For a Catholic, Professor Pohle is astonishingly liberal-minded; and yet even he is not distressed by the thought that the loving Father of the race has seen fit to elect only half its number to eternal life and glory, while leaving the other half to undergo never-ending destruction in the brimstone flames of hell. Is not Atheism immeasurably more rational and humane than such a cold-blooded, cruel Theism?

"Some unexpected tastes" in literature have been discovered by the Young Men's Christian Association in their "hut libraries" says an informative "puff" in a London newspaper. Dickens, Lytton, Kingsley, Lever, Stevenson, Scott, Dumas, Blackmore, and Charles Reade are among the favorites. It looks as if the Bible was a back number.

"I would," says Mr. Stephen Paget in the *Cornhill*, "set lessons on the War—downright lessons with good marks and bad marks—in every nursery in the kingdom." We would do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, we would, if we could, keep all ideas of the War away from every nursery in the kingdom. However lengthy the War may be, it is not likely to last long enough for the present generation of children to take part in it, and to bring them up on ideas of war, is to do exactly what we have all been blaming Germany for doing. The world complains that for thirty or forty years the German Government has turned the educational resources of the country into a gigantic military recruiting agency. It has taught that military supremacy is the chief end of national existence, and the result is seen in the creation of the greatest war-machine that history has known. If we are really sincere in our expressed desire for peaceful co-operation between nations in place of armed watchfulness, our policy should be to keep ideas of militarism away from our children; familiarise them with notions of justice, honor, and right, and thus prepare the ground for a reasoned anti-militarism as they grow older. Mr. Paget's plan is to perpetuate exactly those ideas that make war a practical certainty. The nursery and the elementary school are the two places from which militarism should be absolutely excluded.

"Patriotism at its worst," says Mr. Paget, "is better for children than Atheism at its best." Nonsense of this kind carries with it its own refutation to intelligent minds. Patriotism at its best may be an admirable thing, but patriotism at its worst—patriotism, that is, which encourages a total blindness to the faults of one's own country, and therefore bars the way to improvement, while at the same time developing a stupid hatred of everything outside one's nation—this kind of patriotism is amongst the greatest disasters that can overtake a people. Such expressions as these of Mr. Paget's are excusable if uttered in the heat of verbal controversy. But when a man deliberately writes them down in cold blood it is evident that he has quite lost his mental balance. A month in a quiet sanatorium seems the best remedy for such a state of mind.

The clergy are still repeating their nonsense concerning the Atheism of the Germans. At the opening of the Reichstag the German Chancellor announced that the Empire's motto for the second year of the War was, "With God nothing is impossible." Except, apparently, the truthfulness of the clergy.

Some of the clergy profess to believe that the present European War is helpful to religion, but all Christians do not agree with them. Sir William Ramsay says "the present War is" the *reductio ad absurdum* of European Christian civilisation."

A book has been published with the quaint title, *The Art of Being Still*. It should be dedicated to the clergy, the majority of whom work one day a week.

The Bishop of Manchester has been unburdening his great mind on the subject of the War. "The finest War-work," he says, "is to care for the nation's babies." It sounds as if his lordship were addressing a congregation of nursemaids.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll has now taken to preaching exceedingly sensational sermons to the readers of the *British Weekly*, the majority of whom are more or less orthodox Christians. The subject around which they all revolve is, of course, the War. In the leading article for September 2 the War appears as the "Red Touchstone." In some mysterious manner it searches all men's hearts, and tests their beliefs and their ideals. For example, it searches people's religion, and tests their faith to its core. It has made it quite possible once more to believe in the Devil, and to "grasp the dark truth of immortality." So also the War is teaching us to recognise the fuller and deeper meaning in the Bible." It is perfectly true that the War is shattering thousands of family circles, but that only helps to remind us how heaven's family circle was shattered when God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son to die for its salvation. Sir William is a past master in the art of doling out pietistic platitudes for the confirmation and consolation of spiritual babes. If he is right, the present European conflict is the greatest and most priceless godsend the Churches have ever experienced. Was ever such nauseating twaddle offered as sound sense and gullible humanity before? No wonder George Meredith was so fearfully irritated by the parsony that he called them "these sappers of our strength"—a name to which they answer now more fully, perhaps, than they ever did before.

Sir William informs us further that "the last book in the Bible might be called the book of the wars and victories of the Lord." That is perfectly true; and it is also true that the Bible, taken as a whole, is the most warlike volume in existence. The wars recorded in it were as cruel and barbarous as any in all history, and its Deity was a man of war, who fought his people's battles, the Lord of Hosts being his pet name. No wonder the Kaiser is pious.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley says that "England is God's country." Some parts of it deserve the insult.

Sir William Ramsay, in an interview published in *Great Thoughts*, says: "In the case of the Arab historians one is struck with the fact that there are six pages of rubbish to one page of rational history, whereas in the Old Testament any person who has the historical sense feels he is standing on historical ground." The "ground" is rather fluid in the case of Noah's Ark and Jonah's "whale."

The *Christian World* for September 2 quotes a silly utterance of Billy Sunday as worthy to take its place among the "Voices of the Day." Here it is in all its native hideousness:—

"If a minister believes and teaches evolution, he is a stinking skunk, a hypocrite, and a liar." Billy Sunday is the most phenomenally successful of all American revivalists, and the most liberally feed. No wonder that a popular American journalist once observed in the presence that of all people on earth the Americans are the most easily duped by all sorts of unscrupulous quacks!

The Rev. Dinsdale T. Young is an old-fashioned believer of the most courageous order. The progress of knowledge, the march of science, and the gradual secularisation of institutions, including the Church, do not disturb him in the least, his faith in the Bible as the Word of the living God being as firm as ever. To him the Book not merely contains as the new theologians aver, but *is* the Word of God from cover to cover. In his blind enthusiasm the ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference exclaims, "Oh, amazing book, the Bible!" and then adopts the following language of "a learned and lovely defender of the Bible." "Its eclipse would be the return of chaos; its extinction the epitaph of history." We readily admit that Mr. Young's position is the only logically consistent one, and we greatly admire his courage in so heroically defending it, but we smile with more pity than disdain at his childish credulity, which so few, even of his Wesleyan brethren, now share.

The personality of Satan has often been discussed by parsons, but it is now an open secret. In a recent dispatch from the Dardanelles, Sir Ian Hamilton referred to the machine-gun as "the invention of the Devil." Sir Hiram Maxim is the author of the machine-gun, and his "maxims" are more proper than the maxims of Jesus.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1915.—Received from March 15: Previously acknowledged, £141 11s. 4d. Received since:— W. D. Corrick, £1; A. W. Coleman, £2; Sergt. W. R. Snell, 14s. 6d.; H. Boll, 5s. Per J. Thompson—D. Smith, 2s.; G. Black, 2s. 6d.; W. Thompson, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. J. Thompson, 2s. 6d.; J. Brownlie, 2s.; J. Thompson, 2s. 6d.

T. W. KEY (South Africa).—We are pleased to hear from the son of one who was, as you say, one of the earliest subscribers to the *Freethinker*, and we are quite sure that any jottings of his religious experiences in this country and in South Africa would be of interest to ourselves and to our readers. Why not try and induce him to put those experiences into article form? We feel assured that what you call the "aggressive puritanism and duplicity" of religious leaders in South Africa must have had a great effect on the people of that country, and if *Freethinkers* do not record the fact, it is certain that Christians will not do so. By all means get him to the work. Too much valuable information of this kind has been lost through the diffidence of *Freethinkers*.

C. L. WILSON (Toronto).—Thanks for hint about Wakefield newspaper. Sorry we have not the time to undertake any writing for a paper so far away as the *Toronto Daily News*. The other matter is reserved for further consideration.

"EUREK."—Will appear later. Overcrowded at present. J. A. REID.—Your suggestion was received, and noted; but suggestions, however admirable, are not always practicable at the moment. We have not, however, lost sight of it, and it may be acted on as soon as the general situation admits of new ventures.

W. J. HOLMES.—The letter you enclose appears to be one of the stupid "prayer chains" that are nearly always being worked. It is started by a fanatic and carried on by fools. There is nothing more in it. You and your friends being selected as recipients merely implies that someone knew your address.

W. D. CORRICK.—We cannot refer back at the moment, but we are under the impression that Mr. Shaw's attack on Secular Education has already been dealt with in these columns. No one regrets the necessity for the Honorarium Fund more than we do, but regrets have to yield to facts, and the necessity which is supreme is that of keeping a paper such as the *Freethinker* afloat. We note your remark that "the necessity makes it a pleasure to be able to help," and we believe that feeling is general among those who subscribe to the Fund. Mr. Foote hopes to be at the office again in the very near future.

E. B.—Thanks for excerpts, which will prove useful. Some paragraphs were already standing with reference to the Mons affair.

G. DEANE.—The expression, "Indifference between good and evil, the just and the unjust, liberty and oppression, is simply Atheism," is pure cant. It is a form of words which religious people get into the habit of using without seriously troubling themselves as to their meaning. It is enough that it serves to attack Atheism. How Atheists like Garibaldi or Shelley would have smiled at such an outburst!

C. BRIDGES.—Our time is never "wasted" when reading the suggestions of those who are interested in the welfare of this paper. But we do not think that your suggestion, if acted upon, would obviate prejudice against us. The best way, and, ultimately, the only way, is to get people to read the *Freethinker*. The wearing down of their prejudice will generally follow.

W. J. WILLIAMS.—We are not surprised that your friend with the Mediterranean Force finds it difficult to connect the present-day Greeks with Socrates, Plato, and Demosthenes. But he must allow for the centuries of Christianity that have intervened between. Thanks for his good wishes, and congratulations on your being the (spiritual) father to so promising a convert.

F. ARCHER.—Your appreciation of the *Freethinker* is acceptable. We are pleased also to learn that you are introducing it into new quarters with some amount of success.

S. H.—You ask why we are suspicious of conversions from *Freethought* to Christianity, and not of conversions from Christianity to *Freethought*. We beg to submit that there is a vital difference between the two cases. A man may not know the truth about a subject, and so his mistaken beliefs will remain. But once a man does know, he cannot undo that knowledge at will. It remains a part of his mental stock-in-trade. Certain interests may induce him to feign ignorance afterwards, but the knowledge acquired remains.

Wants 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.

Late-coming 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.

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Personal.

I SEE a note in the *Humanitarian* that Mr. Howard Williams, one of the League's best friends, has made an excellent recovery from a recent severe illness. We have this on the authority of Mr. H. S. Salt. "Another good friend of our movement," Mr. Salt says, "who has been disabled by illness, but whose health, we trust, is now re-established, is Mr. G. W. Foote, the editor of the *Freethinker*, a paper which has never feared or failed to lend its support to the cause of humaneness. And of how many papers can that be truly said?" * * *

A tablet has been erected outside the house where George Jacob Holyoake lived for so many years at Brighton. I often called upon him there and had a chat with him, which I always enjoyed. He was full of reminiscences, both of persons and incidents, and I remembered that the first time I listened to him I thought him more talkative than I expected to find one of the gods pictured in my youthful imagination; but in after years I found that he was always worth listening to, except when, as it would sometimes happen, his own face flashed a little too much across the picture. I liked him best, I think, when he spoke of Garibaldi, whom he had known personally, and helped to welcome when he landed in England. Holyoake's enthusiasm for the veteran, some people said, was too fervid to be real in the light of his temperament, but I believe they were mistaken. His eye spoke worship (at least for once) and his voice rang true.

Who, indeed, could feel aught but the genuine emotion of praise before the grand simplicity of that noble figure whose character and achievements outdid those of all the moderns and most of the ancients, who knew no byways, but only an object and the way to it. I had a friend once (long since dead) who met Garibaldi by the roadside in Italy when his name was in all men's mouths. In the course of talk the great soldier asked my friend if he could eat anything, was he hungry? My friend replied, although not very enthusiastically, for it was a sweltering day, that he could manage something; whereupon the hero, who had conquered kingdoms for Freedom, thrust his own hand under his red shirt and produced—what does the reader think?—a piece of dry bread, which he broke and gave half to his guest and munched the other half himself. What a man!

But I must not fill my space in this way. My theme is really Holyoake, and not Garibaldi. Holyoake must have been born "easy." He was hustled about in early days, and he suffered imprisonment for blasphemy, but I never saw him in a hurry. Indeed, he told his gaolers that they would have to carry him to "divine service" and bring him back, which I really think he would have found rather agreeable than otherwise. Nature, too, seems to have been undecided about him in his youth, for he talked neither like a man nor a woman. It was the most extraordinary voice I ever heard. It was squeaky; sometimes you thought he would crack; but it was singularly clear, and you could never mistake what he said. I once heard him in a lecture for the Co-operative people at Shields stop in the midst of his address after some very bad coughing. To console the audience, he said something like this: "Ladies and gentlemen. Don't be alarmed! It is inconvenient to both of us, but not dangerous to either of us." Then he got the cough down, and recovered his voice, such as it was. And yet, though I speak thus of his voice, I have sometimes felt a thrill in listening to him. There was something curious about it at times. I cannot describe it; I can only say that at such moments men who are sometimes called great orators sank in comparison with him.

Holyoake was delicate throughout his life, yet he lived to eighty-seven, and buried almost everyone he knew. He was in the Freethought movement before Bradlaugh and long after him, although, of course, his powers were much impaired. Nor, indeed, did he ever possess a tithe of Bradlaugh's magnificent energy. He belonged, after all, to a greater generation than ours, and he caught some of its spirit. Merely to have lived then was something, and long may that tablet at Brighton include the name of Holyoake as one of the great men of a nobler age.

* * *

I am astonished at Mr. Bottomley's calling Mr. Ramsay Macdonald a bastard. Now that he has "found Christ," he ought to be very careful about such things. If Tolstoi openly called Jesus Christ a bastard, and gloried in it as one of the greatest virtues, why should Mr. Macdonald be ashamed of his alleged origin? It wasn't his fault, if true. He was present, like every other man, at his own birth, but he cannot fairly be charged with much responsibility for the event. "Bastard" is a technical English word. Some people think it is slang, but it is nothing of the sort. It is a grave word belonging to the dictionary of ethics. So Mr. Macdonald need not trouble about being charged with keeping such company as, say, Mr. Bottomley's Savior, or William the Conqueror—the greater of which I leave him to decide. And as for the mothers of Mr. Macdonald and of the gentleman whom Mr. Bottomley has made his god, I should imagine that a Scotch servant-girl was quite as good as a carpenter's wife. They're a bonnie lot, those Scotch servant-girls.

* * *

No doubt Mr. Bottomley has made a great discovery. It appears that the late leader of the Labor Party calls himself James Ramsay Macdonald when his real name is James Macdonald Ramsay. Prodigious! How could such a crime ever be forgiven? Mr. Bottomley seems to have found the unforgivable sin. Such is the result of having a Scotch servant-girl for a mother; but, by the way, who was the father? This is often an obscure point.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

We are not surprised at receiving several letters from readers endorsing the remarks made in this column last week on the subject of conscription. Freethinkers cannot—and, indeed, ought not—avoid taking part in the discussion of political and other subjects as they arise, but it is always well for those who make the advocacy of Freethought their main object to see that these outside questions are not identified with it. There are differences among Freethinkers on political and social questions, as there are amongst Christians, but these differences should not be allowed to interfere with common action in a common cause. And it must always be borne in mind that, while there are numerous societies and agencies through which political and social propaganda may be carried, the war against supernaturalism can only be carried on successfully in one way, and that is by keeping to the one thing in which all Freethinkers are in substantial agreement. This has always been the policy of the *Freethinker*, and we are pleased to find that it meets with the approval of our readers.

Apropos of Mr. Cohen's article on "Freethought, Religion, and Death," a correspondent writes:—"It is quite undeniable that religion gives little relief to sorrow for the loss of a loved one. The contrary may often be urged. The keenness of the pangs of separation (at death) are greater or less according to the sense and sensibility, refinement and imagination of the mourner. I recall one poignant case of a very sweet and patient noble mother, whose religious sentiment and conviction were as deep and strong as her grief was great, who sat by the bedside of her dying daughter, a young woman. In response to suggested hopes of recovery, the poor mother, who *knew*, cried, 'Aye, she'll be better when she sees the King in his beauty!' and later, in the last moment of dissolution, threw herself upon the body with the heartrending cry, 'Farewell, my wee Grace!' It seems almost sacrilegious to subject such sorrow to rational analysis, but these exclamations were cries of despair.

Love was stricken to the heart, Love that would have died a hundred times to save this one life, Love that would not have bartered another year of her daughter's presence for eternity and all the angels of heaven—irrational also, but characteristically and *beautifully* human! The 'heavenly kingdom' at its best is but the shadow and the pale reflection, the ridiculous and gratuitous sublimation of majestic and merely human attributes. 'It is finished!' says the dying 'Savior' on the cross. Pathetic delusion, preposterous claim. No; it is only beginning. Man is but finding himself and the richness and glory, the infinite possibilities of this finite scene." "Beautifully human!" That is the real fact that fronts us in the presence of a great sorrow, and before which the trivialities and artificialities of religion fade into nothingness.

The following comes from one of our soldiers, at present a prisoner of war in Germany, acknowledging the receipt of a parcel of *Freethinkers*:—"DEAR SIR,—Your parcel arrived all right. Myself and comrades are enjoying the contents, especially Dr. Horton's nightmare. I should like to tell you what my comrades say about him, but I am afraid the Censor would object. Some day I will let you know all about it. We were there, and I wish Dr. Horton had been there also. With respects to the Grand Old Man (Mr. G. W. Foote).—Yours faithfully, W. HOLBROOK." Our correspondent's reference is, of course, to the Mons angels. He was there, and knows what rubbish the whole story is. We are glad to see by the message above printed that Mr. Holbrook is in good spirits and, we hope, is in good health.

The Case Against Christianity, by A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., presents in a brief compass an outline of the main argument against the current faith. The case is well put, although of necessity the size of the pamphlet makes it a suggestive rather than a complete statement of the argument. So far as "inquiring Christians" are concerned, this may prove an advantage rather than otherwise. It will enlighten without shocking, and so lead them to further examination of their faith. And that is, or should be, the chief aim of the propagandist. Mr. Howell Smith writes with firmness, but with the utmost fairness and courtesy, and we hope that his pamphlet will have the circulation it deserves. It is well printed, with a neat cover, and issued at the popular price of one penny.

Freethought papers, we are glad to see, appear to be getting through the War period as successfully as those of a more orthodox type, and more successfully than many. The *New York Truthseeker* continues to reach us regularly with its usual budget of pithy paragraphs and thought provoking articles, and the *Examiner* (Christchurch, N.Z.) shows no change in either quantity or quality. The last issue to hand contains a reprint of one of Mr. Lloyd's articles from these columns on "Agnosticism and the War."

Spiritual Healing.

THERE are periodically in the history of mankind times when, impatient of the slow progress of natural inquiry, large numbers of people seek to anticipate the orderly course of events: much in the same way as readers of tales of mystery invent solutions—usually incorrect—of the problem with which the book deals. Even with so many of the facts before them, it is a curious commentary on the limited scope of human logic how seldom a correct solution is arrived at. Yet there are many who, unable to solve comparatively simple problems, readily assert their competence to give a correct answer to much more difficult questions. They are of the school of those who settled the etiology of mental disorders by saying "demoniacal possession," or who accounted for the moral derelictions of manhood by that well-worn phrase, "original sin." Science not having arrived at a solution of many problems, and having consequently to admit its inability to explain certain processes, nescience calmly appropriates the territory and hoists its flag thereon. Mental processes, being to a very large extent still unexplained, provide the theorician with much material for his hypotheses—duly labelled with high-sounding names; whilst the charlatan, realising that an assumption of knowledge is sufficient to impress the more humbly ignorant, makes capital out of a gullible public.

Certain members of the clerical and medical pro-

...having been impressed by the rapid developments which had taken place in regard to "Spiritual" and "Faith" healing movements, decided to hold a conference to discuss the claims in respect of cures asserted miraculous powers, or by the exercise of some special, personal gift of healing. The first conference was held in 1910, and a second one in 1911. A committee, consisting of eminent members of both professions, was appointed to make further investigations; and after numerous meetings, at which the evidence of many witnesses were taken, the committee issued a Report, under the title of "Spiritual Healing." It may be at once stated that their report does not advance our knowledge as to how certain changes are brought about by the influences which are termed variously "Mental," "Spiritual," "Psychic," "Healing by Suggestion," "Gifts of Healing." The members of the committee were probably the least likely to imagine that it would. If, however, conscientious endeavors to arrive at the truth had cleared the ground of error, misconception, assumptions, chicanery, and imposture, they need not feel that their efforts have been fruitless.

It was to be expected, there was much difference of opinion among the witnesses even in regard to the definition of "Spiritual" healing, and also as to whether there was any difference between it and "Mental" healing. The wonder is that the whole proceedings did not resolve themselves into a logical and orderly method of inquiry. The members of the committee, we are told, "there was considerable divergence of opinion as to whether moral excellence in the healer, or the healed, was an essential condition of success in 'spiritual healing.'.....Most of the witnesses were agreed that while moral excellence was not requisite on the part of the patient, yet faith, at least expectation of benefit, was an important contributory factor."

In regard to the question as to whether organic diseases have been healed by these means, it is stated that though beneficial results have been obtained in cases of functional or nervous disorders, obsessions, alcoholism, drug habits, vicious propensities, etc., no satisfactorily certified case was adduced which had been cured in this way. It is interesting to note in this connection that the committee "are aware that no sharply defined fundamental distinction can be drawn between 'organic' and 'functional' ailments"; for just as it is difficult to draw a dividing line between functional and organic, so it is no easy matter to distinguish between "natural" and "supernatural." Indeed, the committee go so far as to state that they believe that "Divine Power is exercised in conformity with, through, the operation of natural laws."

It appears to be obvious that the whole matter is one of terminology. As Dr. Means Lawrence, in the preface to his *Primitive Psycho-Therapy and Quackery*, says: "One ruling force.....the power of the imagination, has always been the potent therapeutic agent, whether in the word of command, in medical scripts, or in the methods of quackery." It has not mattered what theological system has held sway, or whether, indeed, the ægis of any particular cult has been invoked. The results have been innumerable cases extraordinary and miraculous—or are reported to have been so. This being so, it would appear to be gratuitous to invoke supernatural powers as the prime or only movers; or, if any one is called upon, why not another? And as the active principle does not seem to be a prerequisite of human excellence—demon or deity! The gods of one group of human beings have so frequently been the devils of other sects, that this may the more easily be understood. When the human mind could advance no further," said Swedenborg, "it admired its last result, and accordingly took it for God; seeking its god from the ground of mere admiration, at the point where

reason ceases and thought itself is forced to stop." It is a saying not inapplicable apparently even at the present time! Certain changes are brought about in the human organism by means of influences which are assuredly less obvious than pills or paregoric, and multitudes utter exclamations of surprise, and marvel greatly. The illustration may be crude, but it is possibly not without some value.

The selection of cases which shall be included in the category of the miraculous is a purely arbitrary one: much as certain diseases are called functional and others organic. Primitive metaphysical speculations have taken deep root, and only with difficulty will they be eradicated even in that limited sphere of human activity which is designated—somewhat hastily—medical science. As for that branch of the healing art which deals with "mental" conditions, one may well say, "Oh, Psychology! What evils are committed in thy name."

The wonder would be if so intricate and highly organised a structure as the nervous system failed to respond to influences or stimuli, even when these cannot be detected—consciously—by our rather crude methods. The more unstable the equilibrium, too, the more easily is it upset. Even where there is no marked instability, however, there may be a difference of reaction, although there is no appreciable difference in the stimulus: for instance, if, instead of the pious Dr. Watts, a rather quick-tempered schoolmaster (with a cane somewhere in the vicinity) had addressed the sluggard, a very different reply would have been elicited from that heavy-headed person! The example is so prosaic as to appear almost ridiculous; but a little examination will show that the sluggard is animated by a strong belief in the powers—occult, if he is outside the bedroom door—of the schoolmaster: a form of a *posteriori* argument. From this example we may observe also that it is a question of applying the correct stimulus if we are desirous of liberating the maximum amount of energy. The stimulus may be a blow with a cudgel, or it may be merely the spoken word; and surely between the two there is only a difference of degree. There are immense stores of energy in the nervous system—how great may be easily understood by anyone who will watch an epileptic fit or any other convulsive seizure—and this energy is constantly being stored up and released. In response to a stimulus—tactile, visual, auditory, etc.—a certain amount is set free into, let us say, the arm, and the arm is moved. This is not necessarily accompanied by consciousness; that is to say, there is not a sufficient stimulus transmitted to the cells in which consciousness arises to awaken them. This is, indeed, the routine method of the nervous system: the heart, the lungs, the abdominal viscera, etc., go steadily on with their work without appealing to consciousness; and only a very limited amount of the functioning of the body is scrutinised by those cells in which consciousness resides. The rest of the working is carried out under the supervision of those areas which are conveniently called subconscious.

When organisms attack the body, it is the subconscious portions of the nervous system which determine the flow of the protective materials to the invaded area; and it is only when this reaches a certain degree of intensity that we become conscious of what is taking place. Even then we are powerless by any effort of will to alter this flow. Why should this be if those higher functions of the nervous system—exalted into an entity, and called mind—are so powerful? In the same manner, with the disorders termed functional, there is either a diminution or a cessation of the current of energy, which the "mind" is powerless to alter. Some stimulus must be administered, and whether this takes the form of the old-fashioned drastic method of hurling a bucket of water at the unfortunate hysteric, or whether it is some milder form of calling into action certain latent energy by suggestion or by some other mode of "psychic" healing, there is little difference if the result be considered. It is obvious, too, that the same method of treatment is not likely to prove effi-

acious in different disorders. This is readily admitted when ordinary physical diseases are under consideration; but, when brain and nerve functions are in disorder, there are still many people who, retaining perhaps unconsciously the animistic beliefs of their early ancestors, feel that some outside or supernatural power must be invoked, otherwise no cure can be looked for. Ignorance was ever wont to clothe itself with a garment of phraseology, and in the present time there are no signs of any remarkable change in this respect.

H. J. N.

The Star of Bethlehem.

NINETEEN hundred and fifteen years ago, if we are to believe the Gospel, a number of astrologers came from a wild region called "the east" to Judæa. They were led thither by a wonderful star, which apparently accommodated itself to their rate of locomotion, and descended low enough to journey visibly over the earth's surface. This bit of celestial pyrotechny was of course the star of some great person's nativity, and on arriving at a house in Bethlehem, over which it rested, they learned that an uncrowned and unanointed King of the Jews had just been born in a stable and was cradled in a manger. After giving him the presents they had considerably brought with them, they returned to "the east," and were never heard of afterwards. What is still more curious, they were never mentioned in the whole course of that wonderful child's career, although their visit to Bethlehem, and the subsequent massacre of the innocents, should have kept them fresh in the memory of every inhabitant of Palestine.

It is also recorded in the New Testament that the birth of this wonderful child was marked by the appearance of angels to some nameless shepherds in an unknown place. These angelic visitors proclaimed peace on earth and goodwill towards men, or peace among the restricted class of men in whom the Lord "is well pleased," as the Revised Version expresses it.

Accordingly, it has been the custom of Christian scribes and preachers to celebrate the astral herald of Christ's nativity as the morning star of a new day. Every fresh Christmas sees this threadbare theme new-worn. Pulpiteers and pious journalists expatiate *ad nauseam* on the immorality and brutality of pre-Christian civilisation, and the goodness and tenderness which have gradually crept over the world as Christianity has advanced. Fortunately for these professional apologists, they can presume on the most utter ignorance of their readers and hearers, and, neglecting history and the logic of facts, they are able to give a free rein to their cheap and tawdry rhetoric. Nor does it in the least interfere with their periodical jublations that while they praise their perfect system, which has had nineteen centuries to produce its perfect fruit, they are obliged to bewail the ghastly diseases of Christian civilisation; its chronic pauperism, its rampant vices, its widespread drunkenness, its criminality, its costly military systems, outvieing anything which even Rome ever witnessed, and the frightful scale of its wars, as well of its warlike preparations, which are a strange commentary on the gospel of peace. True, there are some dissonant voices in this well-practised chorus, but they are nearly lost in the swelling volume of sound. A Shelley sings of "the Galilean serpent," and a Swinburne of "the poison of the crucifix." Such voices, however, are only audible to discriminating ears, and so the sweet songsters of orthodoxy keep the concert pretty much to themselves.

Glancing back over the centuries of history with a free and fearless eye, who can truthfully assert that the Star of Bethlehem was the herald of a better day? It is quite obvious to the candid student that Christianity wrought no practical improvement on the great body of the Roman Empire, either before or after it secured the patronage of Constantine. The early Christian emperors were not a whit more moral

than the Pagan Cæsars. They were simply pale copies of great originals; and if their vices were less flagrant and monstrous than those of a Nero or a Caligula, their virtues were insignificant beside those of an Augustus or an Antoninus. Nor is it easy to see in what respect the gladiatorial shows at Rome were worse than the faction-fights at Constantinople. Still less is it easy to see how the burning and torturing of Christians by pagans were any worse than the burning and torturings of heretics by their fellow Christians.

Intellectually, Christianity merely substituted a new and vigorous superstition for an old and dying one, which was gradually being supplanted among the educated classes by a prudent, though spirited, philosophy. The gods of Olympus gave place to the Trinity and the Devil, who wielded all the arbitrary power of their predecessors without exhibiting any of their grace or *bonhomie*. The national religions succumbed to one of universal pretensions, and that spirit of mutual toleration was succeeded by a malignant fanaticism which regarded every difference of opinion as a crime. And while the national religions were always more or less subservient to temporary welfare, the new religion dwarfed this world into the mere vestibule of heaven or hell.

Borrowing the bigotry of Judaism, exalting faith as the supreme virtue, and denouncing unbelief as the blackest sin, Christianity did its best to obscure and degrade morality. At the same time it arrested intellectual progress, which always follows mental dissatisfaction and the restless spirit of inquiry. The proof of this can be given in a sentence. During six or seven centuries of undisputed supremacy Christianity could not point to a single new discovery in science, or to a single new book of the least importance to literature. What more damning impeachment than this could be conceived? Nor can it be answered by pointing to what Christendom has since produced, for there was no sign of improvement until Arabian science flashed its light upon the darkness of Europe. Even then the Church intercepted its rays as far as possible, and she might have succeeded in restoring the old darkness had it not been for the Renaissance, which was simply the revelation of the classic art, literature, and philosophy of Greece and Rome, and the political reconstruction of Europe, which, by inducing quarrels between princes and popes, led to the so-called Reformation.

Since the Reformation the progress of Europe has been wonderful, but it has not been inspired by Christianity. The leading minds in every branch of intellectual activity have been accounted heretics by their own generation, and the nearer we approach to our own day the more distinct is the line of separation between the Churches and the great discoverers and thinkers. It is now impossible to give an accurate list of the chief scientists and writers in Christendom without including three sceptics for every believer.

But while the progressive movement is wholly inspired by scepticism, and mainly conducted by Freethinkers, the government, that is the organised forces of society, is in the hands of orthodoxy, which rules in our legislative halls, our courts of justice, our universities, our schools, and in every department of the public service. Obviously, therefore, it is orthodoxy that must bear the responsibility for the chronic evils and the low tone of society. Let us look into these phenomena and see what that responsibility amounts to.

What has the Gospel of Peace brought us to? Europe has now more than ten times as many soldiers as sufficed to preserve the peace and integrity of the Roman Empire when it was surrounded by hostile and predatory barbarians. Europe is, in fact, an armed camp, not for the repulsion of barbarians, but for internecine war among Christian states. After nineteen centuries of the Gospel of Peace, Christendom is darkened by the shadow of the sword, and the highest honors are paid to successful generals who are skilled in the art of slaughter.

Treating man as a spiritual instead of a material entity, Christianity has no remedy for the vices it

reprobates. Drunkenness is not diminished by sermons, nor are the grosser forms of vice lessened by unctuous texts, while families crowd single rooms, while filth breeds fever, and promiscuous herding destroys modesty and self-respect. No amount of futile appeals to the will, but by wise political and social changes, can this state of things be altered. Christianity wastes its breath in preaching "righteousness," while Freethought strives for practical reform.

Hypocrisy, which is one of the meanest vices, is essentially a Christian product. Orthodox travellers are so sure that they find very little of it in the heathen world, but when they return to Christendom they find it circulating in the very atmosphere. The reason of this melancholy fact is not remote. The cause is entirely due to the exaltation of belief over fact, and the erection of false and impossible standards which are openly revered and privately despised. Theophrastus gives us one Character of a Hypocrite, and not a particularly offensive one. The literature of Christendom gives us scores of the disgusting type.

The benefits of Christianity appear in the apologies of its professional champions, its evils are written on the pages of impartial history. What real progress has it ever achieved? Deny it the right to appropriate all the improvement of the secular intellect, and the natural growth of humanity, and how has it to boast of its own? But the miseries inflicted on mankind are appalling in their magnitude and number. It has shed oceans of blood, and bitter tears have rolled from myriads of eyes under its iron tyranny. It closed every thinker's eyes, it kept men in darkness and slavery. It made bow at the foot of the altar and the throne. It reached poverty to the poor and took its share of the wealth of the rich. It invented the rack, the screw, and the wheel. It illustrated its love with the flames of a thousand stakes. It has been a curse rather than a blessing. And its star of Bethlehem was not the herald of a glad new day, but the portent of a long and dismal and disastrous night.

Reprinted.
G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

MR. SIMPSON'S DEFENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."
So far as the object of Mr. Simpson's article, "Teutons and the New Testament," was to discuss the judgment of German professors as a class, I have no objection to say in criticism of it. I have little faith, myself, in the professorial mind in or out of Germany; and Freethinkers may gather comfort from the reflection that Mr. Simpson's article is a generalisation, if true, disables the judgment not only of the materialist Haeckel, but of the idealist Eucken; and of the Harnack who rejects miracles, but of the Harnack who supports the historical accuracy of Acts. Any professor, in fact, based on the general eccentricity of their conclusions is bound to cut both ways, and to disprove their own side of the angels."
I still think, however, that Freethinkers have fair cause to complain in Mr. Simpson's article. It was not only an attack on German professors, but also palpably an attack on Freethought. Mr. Simpson's conclusion was an expression of the influence over the minds of ordinary people that, after the War, the New Testament writings such as has been denied them for a generation by the doctrinaire mentality of the Teuton." This, by the way, is the distinct suggestion that the prevalence of the doctrine in England has been principally due to German influence; and at a time when a considerable amount of odium attaches to the name "German," such a conclusion, unless proved to be true, is most unfair. Hence the version on Mr. Simpson's failure to recognise the influence of other critics of the historical character of the New Testament besides Germans. As a matter of fact, I think that the influence of German writers in the dissemination of Freethought in England has been small in proportion to their volume. Indeed, the obscurity of German

style, and the comparative unfamiliarity of English readers with the German language, has probably reduced their influence to a minimum. The writings of Huxley alone have probably had as great an effect in undermining religion in this country as all the German theologians put together. Anyone, in fact, who has read through Huxley's volume on *Science and Christian Tradition*—containing the celebrated controversy with Gladstone and others over the Gadarene miracle—will feel that, by his logic and lucidity, Huxley's influence with Englishmen was bound to be greater than that of any professional theologian. Personally, I think that Huxley's articles, together with Renan's seven erudite volumes on the origin of Christianity, are the best pieces of work on the subject in any language.

With regard to the discrepancies between the Acts and the Pauline epistles, Mr. Simpson is content to suggest that the difficulties are "mainly due to want of knowledge." I can only say that this will not do. If, to construct a parallel case, we had a letter of John Wesley which stated that on one occasion he had paid a private visit of a fortnight to a friend in London, but that after that visit, the churchgoers of the metropolis still only knew of him by hearsay; and if, in a subsequent document, of uncertain authorship and date, it were found to be recorded that, on the occasion in question, Wesley had preached publicly in London, and had been compelled to leave for fear of being mobbed for his opinions; would any competent critic regard the latter account as consistent with the former? And if the anonymous document went on to describe Wesley's missions as having been formally approved at a Church Congress, and as having been carried on in close agreement with the then heads of the Church of England, whereas we knew from Wesley's own correspondence that he had been in sharp conflict with them, would this tend to corroborate the historical accuracy of the document in question? These discrepancies could hardly be explained away as due to our "want of knowledge." Yet of just such a kind are the divergences between Acts and the Pauline Epistles as to Paul's relations with the Church of Jerusalem.

I should like to discuss the question how far it is justifiable or otherwise to reject a miracle *a priori*, but will not trespass so far on your space. It is a philosophical question more than anything else, and I will just say that, in my opinion, there are some canons of possibility and impossibility which enable us to deny the truth of certain stories offhand without laying ourselves open to a charge of "dogmatism." One such instance, in my opinion, is the alleged objective existence of that sort of quasi-human aerial organism, which alone would correspond to the description of visible "angels" as given in the Mons stories.

ROBERT ARCH.

GERMAN SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—We are all, I think, pretty familiar now with the spectacle of earnest Christians furiously declaiming that they, and they alone, are the true patriots and haters of everything German, because of their Christianity, while Freethinkers must be unpatriotic and lovers of everything German, because of their Freethought.

The following passages from the debate between Mr. W. T. Lee and Mr. G. W. Foote should, therefore, prove of particular interest at the moment.

Theism or Atheism, page 77:—

"Mr. Lee: Mr. Foote referred to Weismann and seems to imagine that I thought there is a strange claim in a German scientist.

Mr. Foote: I said there is no magic in a German name.

Mr. Lee: That implied the same. The reason I emphasised that Weismann was a German was that a great deal of our philosophy and science comes from Germany. The foremost thinkers in Europe to-day are to be found in Germany; great experimenters and observers in Germany have given to the world facts and inferences from facts, which English and other thinkers have been careful to follow out. That is why I emphasised German."

Page 79:—

"Mr. Foote: Now, with respect to Germany. I do not object to Germany. My only surprise was that 'German' should be put before 'science' as it was. Science is not English, French, German, or of any nationality. Science is universal. Science speaks a universal language when it speaks fact and truth. And I deny that all our English science and philosophy comes from Germany. *It is a libel upon England*. Charles Darwin, the greatest biologist of this century, was an Englishman."

As Mr. Lee is their accredited champion, the Christian Evidence Society ought to really explain his fulsome admiration of Germany. It will give them something to do.

H. CUTNER.

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