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Intellectual freedom is only the right to be honest.
COL. INGERSOLL.

From the Enemy's Camp.

WHEN Charles Bradlaugh died many religious writers acted as though Freethought had come to the end of its tether. In some undefined way the attack on Christianity was assumed to have been bound up with the great Iconoclast, so that when he passed away the fight was supposed to be over and Christianity had nothing more to fear. Some have kept up this elaborate and very stupid pretence, and have explained the continued attack on superstition as nothing more than the activities of a few belated followers of the Bradlaugh tradition. Even the spectacle of Freethought growing by leaps and bounds all over the civilised world did not cure this class of people of a piece of stupidity masquerading as a policy. To vary a popular simile, they stuck their noses in their Bibles and refused to see beyond the printed page.

Evidently the death of G. W. Foote has given some folk the chance of playing the same game over again. One religious paper, for example, referred to him as "the last of the Victorians," and cheered up its readers with the information that the *Freethinker* was engaged in the hopeless task of trying to keep alive ideas that were healthy fifty years ago, but had been completely shattered by the advance of modern science. Thus we had the picture of the religious weekly as the mouthpiece of advanced science, and the poor old *Freethinker* hobbling along with its cargo of obsolete science and out-of-date theology.

Now we have Mr. Cecil Chesterton, who contributes to *New Days*, apropos of the death of Mr. Foote, an article which he calls "The Passing of the Rationalist." It was not the passing of a Rationalist, but the Rationalist. It is the Bradlaugh game over again. Freethought propaganda, which died twenty-four years ago with Bradlaugh, dies over again with Foote. Christians can sleep easy o' nights. Their arch-enemy is dead. The school of thought "of which the *Freethinker* is now the only remaining exponent," has "proved its own insufficiency." Mr. Cecil Chesterton says so, and if he says it often enough, he will no doubt believe it. Perhaps he has already practised the method long enough to have achieved this result. I do not know, because at the risk of being called as old-fashioned and as out-of-date as G. W. Foote, I have not a very extensive acquaintance with so advanced a thinker as Mr. Cecil Chesterton.

In truth, to be quite serious, the whole pose is supremely silly, and shows the *poseur* to be out of touch with the very fundamentals of a scientific sociology. The greatest man that ever lived could not give vitality to an idea unless there were something in the general situation that gave it significance and importance. The ideas for which a great man stands do not owe their inherent strength to him; his contribution is to supply the driving force of personal character, and bring them a stage nearer their realisation. But the power of a Bradlaugh and a Foote combined could never have given Free-

thought the hold it had, and has, upon the general mind, were it not for the fact that they stood as the mouthpieces of truths that many people were feeling without being able to give them adequate expression. Individuals, in short, do not create ideas, so much as ideas create individuals. Ideas are fundamentally a social product, born of that psychological heredity which makes man here a savage, and there a civilised human being. No sociology which ignores that fact is worthy of serious consideration. I had almost written "no theology," but it is very hard indeed to say what is too stupid to form the material for a system of theology.

But I do not wish it to be understood that all of Mr. Chesterton's article is on a level with the words. On the contrary, parts of it are very good; and with the exception of the title and the conclusion, the bulk of it has little to which a Freethinker would object, and much with which he may feel pleased. His article is written round a sentence in the *New Statesman's* notice of the death of Mr. Foote, from which I cited some passages two or three weeks ago. These passages were preceded—perhaps as a sop to the theological cerberus—by the following:—

"The world, which has been taught by William James and Henri Bergson, and has come to take for granted the subtler accommodations of modern theologians, finds it as impossible to read the Secularist controversies of the eighteen-seventies as it does Paine's *Age of Reason*, or the arithmetical puzzles about the Pentateuch that the Zulu convert put to Bishop Colenso."

Now this sort of thing is very common, very showy, and very shallow. Mr. Chesterton is absolutely correct when he says that this kind of ink-distributing "means nothing—literally nothing. There is no thinking in it.....The man who writes or speaks like that has never taken the trouble to ask what his own principles are or why he believes in them." Anyone who can write or speak can turn out yards of this kind of stuff to order. The New Theology was full of it, before it languished under the weight of its own verbosity. "Advanced" theology is still full of it. Hardly anyone—except Freethinkers—ever dreams of asking what it means, or whether it means anything at all; and thousands go on delighting in a cascade of words, imagining they are absorbing ideas. It would be a good test to make these people sit down and write out in plain, ordinary English just what ideas they have in their minds when they speak or write thus. With them speech does not disguise thought—there is nothing but speech.

Secularists, says Mr. Chesterton, stand out from other Nonconformists "not only in integrity of conscience, but in lucidity of mind. For instance:—

"The *Freethinker* would print a paragraph something to this effect: 'The Heavenly Father has just killed three hundred of his children on the London and North Western Railway.' The writer in the *New Statesman* would doubtless be greatly shocked at what he would probably call the 'crudity' and 'narrowness' of such an appeal. But, after all, it is an argument, and as far as it goes, a good argument. Probably it is the strongest argument that can be used against the existence of God."

Now, while I do not agree that this is the *strongest* argument—or even a *good* argument—against the existence of God; it is an argument against a God of the kind in which current religion believes. If we are told that the world is ruled by an all-powerful and loving Father, it is not "crude" or "narrow" to

point to things in nature which any human being would be denounced for permitting, and hung for perpetrating, as an objection to the theory. It is simple common sense. If such things are, then such a God does not exist. If such a God exists, such things ought not to be. This is not a "crude" argument at all; it is a plain argument. The offence lies, not in its crudity, but in unanswerableness, and I am glad to see Mr. Chesterton driving this lesson home. Of course, Mr. Chesterton believes that *he* can answer it—with the aid of St. Thomas Aquinas. But that only proves that although he has got rid of some delusions, he still cherishes others.

Here, however, is a passage that is almost wholly good, and I sincerely hope that Christians will ponder it:—

"Very much the same may be said of the accusations of violence and 'vulgarity' brought against Mr. Foote and his school. A Christian may reasonably blame a man for rejecting the truth of the Christian Faith—though only God can know how far he is really blamable, how far his condition is the result of invincible ignorance, and how far of voluntary error. But no man can logically blame another for assailing the Christian Faith with vituperation and ridicule if he believes it to be false. Such vituperation and ridicule were used by the Christians themselves against Paganism, and rightly so used. It is the plain duty of every man who loves truth, to be merciless in the destruction of what he believes to be falsehood."

This is extremely well said, and reminds me very strongly of a passage in a sermon by Dr. Arnold—the father of Matthew Arnold. Arnold asked, "Why should we ask the unbeliever to treat religion reverently because other people reverence it?" And he very properly replied that this is asking the Freethinker to "reverence" something which he considers quite unworthy. The claim for "reverence" is a stupid claim—made on behalf of a stupid theory. It lies at the root of much intolerance; it is at the foundation of the modern—but quite absurd—reading of the Blasphemy Laws, that a man may attack religion provided he does it "reverently." As though there should be no distinction in the mind of the Freethinker between the handling of what he believes to be good and true, and what he believes to be evil and false. And, fundamentally, the objection to ridicule, when levelled against religion, is due to the fact that the religious man is not concerned with the establishment of truth, as such. His concern lies with the acceptance of a proposition. This proposition is true because it is part of his religion. It is not part of his religion because it is true.

Moreover, the only basis for the charge of "vulgarity" so lightly brought against Militant Free-thought is this same claim that one must treat "reverently" a belief which one regards as false and wholly mischievous. No one accuses Free-thought advocates of overstepping the bounds of "decency" when dealing with a question of politics, or of art, or of literature, or of sociology. The charge is only brought in relation to religion.

And the singularity of the charge is enough to awaken suspicion. How comes it that the same people who can deal with every other subject in a quite unobjectionable manner, become wholly objectionable when dealing with the question of religion? Does the fault lie with the Freethinker or with the religionist? Is there any more in it than the old claim that religious opinions must be protected in a way such as is not found necessary with any other opinion whatsoever?

For myself, I cordially welcome the voice from the camp of the enemy. It is a complete endorsement of the policy of Militant Free-thought, and a timely rebuke to those who conduct the attack on superstition with an apologetic air that robs their blows of half their force. "It is the plain duty of every man who loves truth to be merciless in the destruction of what he believes to be falsehood." We Freethinkers never claimed more, and I hope we shall never practice less. It expresses in a sentence the policy for which this journal has always stood.

C. COHEN.

Extravaganza.

SOON after the commencement of the War almost every British pulpit resounded with violent denunciations of the Atheism and Materialism which, it was claimed, had dominated Germany for several generations, and which alone had to be held responsible for the overbearing militarism with which that God-forsaken country was cursed. Prominent among the preachers who took part in that gross misrepresentation were the Bishop of Zanzibar, Dr. Clifford, Dr. Campbell Morgan, and Principal Griffith-Jones. The last-named gentleman contributed an article to the *Christian World*, in which he asserted that Nietzscheanism was accountable for the outbreak of the warlike spirit in Europe. The poisonous seed of that God-denying philosophy had germinated, sprouted, and grown to ripeness in the intellectual and moral soil of Prussia, and we were then "reaping a harvest of blood and tears." Everybody is now aware that Nietzscheanism has never been dominant within the bounds of the German Empire, and the pulpit has been silent on the subject for some time because it can no longer hoodwink even its own extremely gullible public. We are now assured, on the same notoriously unreliable authority, that Germany is much addicted to prayer, that both Catholics and Protestants are flocking to their respective sanctuaries to beseech their Heavenly Ally to prove his loyalty to their cause by speedily crowning it with victory, and that even the German soldier is distinguished for his piety. Nevertheless, the Principal of the Yorkshire United Independent College still remains in an unrepentant state. He no longer singles out Nietzsche as the corrupter of the land of Goethe and Richter, but he persists in the allegation that prior to the War, Germany was under the dominion of a naturalistic, negative criticism, which was inimical to spiritual religion. Even on this point Dr. Griffith-Jones is in error. There was an influential school of destructive criticism there, it is true, but there was also an evangelical school, which exerted a much greater influence upon the Churches. It must also be borne in mind that the Catholics form, at least, a third of the German population.

Principal Griffith-Jones declares, in an interview published in the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 17, that "this War is going to finish the old phases of religious thinking." Then he immediately makes this momentous announcement:—

"The negative phase is finished. The critical movement has largely spent itself. Little remains to be done on that side; in fact, I would say that nothing more can be undone, the undoing of which is of any value to the world. The time has come for a new handling of religion from the constructive side. The trouble caused by the critical movement has been due to the fact that it has been largely based on a naturalistic interpretation of the universe. It is no accident that the home of Naturalism is to be found in Germany. German criticism has eliminated supernaturalism."

That extract is as inaccurate as it is possible for it to be. There is absolutely no evidence that "the negative phase is finished" either in Germany or Great Britain; and it is highly probable that there will be a marked revival of it after the War, much more likely, at any rate, than that there will occur a revival of supernatural religion. It is also a palpable falsehood to say that "German criticism has eliminated supernaturalism." It has done nothing of the sort. Many German champions of the Higher Criticism are firm believers in supernaturalism; and the same thing is true of corresponding critics in our own country. Dr. George Adam Smith, Principal of Aberdeen University, is a fair representative of the advanced school of Biblical criticism; but he also belongs to the most backward school of evangelical believers, as any reader of his sermons can testify. His *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* shows him to be at once a courageous defender of all the conclusions of the Higher Criticism and a fervent advocate of the inspiration of the

Bible. In our judgment, such a double and self-contradictory position is logically impossible, and is only held by divines who allow a superstitious belief to override the findings of their intellects; but the fact remains that that thoroughly illogical position is maintained by practically all Higher Critics. One naturally infers, from his language, that Dr. Griffith-Jones himself is a member of this irrational school.

According to the Principal, German destructive criticism almost led British scholars by the nose. He says:—

"The enormous industry and thorough, painstaking methods of the German scholars threw a spell upon us. We did not see where we were being led. The implicit factors of German criticism were never clearly stated. This War has meant a great illumination as to the direction in which religious thought, under the guidance of German scholarship, was tending."

What a simple-minded, artless, and guileless lot British scholars are, to be sure. Prior to the War they innocently sat at the feet of the Germans, eagerly drinking the ceaseless stream of wisdom that flowed from their superior brains. They did not have the gumption to discern the effect that relishable learning would have upon their religious thinking. But God mercifully sent the War as an eye-opener; and now they know what a fortunate awakening they have experienced. Of course, there were a few unconsciously wise ones, Principal Griffith-Jones being amongst them, who "resisted the critical movement in the interest of what was called religious conservatism," and who are now devoutly grateful to find that they were "intuitively right." Who can any longer doubt but that the War is the greatest blessing in the guise of an all ruinous curse?

Principal Griffith-Jones now proceeds to enlighten us as to what the British people are "at heart." Although so easily led intellectually astray by the clever Germans, they yet possess an instinct which ultimately looks well after "the rights of the soul." Nevertheless, it needed the bloodiest war in history to rouse that instinct to action. And yet, the Principal adds:—

"At heart the British people are mystics. Frank Naturalism does not attract us. We are naturally believers in the supernatural. What else can explain the extraordinary response of the British people in this War? The Army we have put in the field is like nothing else on earth. If that Army were wiped out we should have lost a generation of great English souls. Patriotism and religion have created that magnificent force. Every man in it is there because he hates fighting and wants to finish fighting."

We are second to none in admiration of the British soldier, but to imagine that our Army is composed of conspicuous saints, is to be guilty of the most outrageous extravagance. It is perfectly true that great multitudes of our people are hopelessly superstitious. With what avidity they translated the fiction of the Mons Angels into the terms of an actual incident, in the entire absence of evidence. The only man found willing to swear that he saw the celestial warriors, was not within a hundred miles of the spot. We have just expressed the opinion that our Army is not composed of shining saints, though Dr. Horton has declared that it is. Canon Adderley shares our opinion, and says that judging from two letters he has received from the Trenches, it is perfectly evident that religion is in very little evidence there, "in spite of the rosy accounts given by some bishops," one of whom described the troops as "very God-fearing and a splendid example to the people at home," though he had only "spent a half-holiday" amongst them. The writer of the second letter added that his chaplain, on reading that rosy account, remarked that it was a great pity those very God-fearing men, who were such splendid examples to the people at home, had all been killed before he went out. From Canon Adderley's description we cannot gather any confirmation of Dr. Horton's assertion that religion flourishes to an incredible extent at the Front. Furthermore, it is abundantly borne out by the facts disclosed to us

from time to time that the Freethought soldier is fully as patriotic and makes quite as splendid a fighter as his believing comrade.

Like many of his brethren, Principal Griffith-Jones surveys the future in a spirit of glowing optimism. He utters the conviction that "the great days of religion are still to come," because "the War has brought us face to face with the alternative to Christianity—a Godless civilisation in which power is enthroned as the only deity to worship." We cherish an equally strong conviction that the great days of religion occurred many centuries ago, and that ever since the middle of the fifteenth century there has been going on a gradual secularisation of all departments of life, even of the Church itself, which is to-day, in many instances, more secular than spiritual. We are also equally certain that, whether we admire the German type of civilisation or not, it is by no means Godless. God is at its very core, and God fills it through and through. The Kaiser has again and again emphatically declared that "as regards religious instruction, the ethical side of it should be given the greatest prominence, the chief stress being laid on the pupils being educated in the fear of God and in joyful acceptance of the Christian faith, to be exacting towards themselves, and tolerant towards others."

What Principal Griffith-Jones has given us is an extravaganza, which, in the nature of things, is incapable of serving any cause. J. T. LLOYD.

Optimist and Meliorist.

Browning, R., *The Ring and the Book* (Nelson, 1s.); *Browning's Poems*, World's Classics (2 vols., 1s. each); *Matthew Arnold's Poems*, World's Classics (Oxford Press, 1s.).

THE whirligig of time brings its revenges. Those of us who have reached middle age often see the literary gods of our youthful idolatry discarded, and some unexpected idols installed in their place. The verdict of posterity is so frequently different to the verdict of contemporaries. Take the case of Robert Browning and Matthew Arnold; both of whose publications are now to be had at a price within the reach of millions. Browning is not nearly so popular as he once was. He is neither so much read nor so much quoted. Arnold's reputation, on the other hand, is steadily widening, and, in the opinion of competent critics, is likely to go on increasing.

What is the reason of this? We think it lies in the fact that Robert Browning allied his genius to the then current beliefs, which are now in the melting-pot; whilst Matthew Arnold, with a surer vision, perceived the dawn of a new day, and heralded it. An additional reason is that Arnold's voice is clearer and sweeter. If his compass was a narrow one, it was, within its limits, dangerously near perfection. Browning too often used a megaphone instead of a silver trumpet, and in matters artistic beauty of expression is the alpha and omega of success.

Browning had a robust faith. He was as anthropomorphic as any of the flat-chested warriors of the Salvation Army. This is Browning's way of expressing his childlike belief:—

"'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! My flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek, and I find it! O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee: a man like to me
Thou shalt love, and be loved by, for ever; a hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

Another sentimental Christian belief finds expression in the words of Pompilia, praying for her murderer:—

"We shall not meet in this world or the next,
But where will God be absent? In his light
Is healing, in his shadow, healing too —
Let Guido touch the shadow, and be healed."

Browning was quite emphatic about dogmas; but

he was cocksure concerning immortality. He apostrophises the dead Evelyn Hope:—

"So hush—I will give you this leaf to keep;
See, I shut it inside the sweet, cold hand!
There, that is our secret; go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand."

With blithe, critical assurance he expresses the current, shallow ideas regarding Freethought:—

"What can I gain on the denying side?
I'll make no conflagration."

The author of *The Ring and the Book* did not lack critical acumen, but, like Newman and Pascal, he chloroformed his intellect with superstition. As Joubert wittily says, it is so easy to believe in God if one does not trouble about definitions. In "Christmas Eve" the poet listens to the professor who, after demolishing the divinity of Christ, tells his audience that the myth thus destroyed still leaves a man. The poet then goes on to say that if Christ were not God, he was nothing. The same idea occurs in "A Death in the Desert":—

"Call Christ, then, the illimitable God, or lost!"

Browning's optimism was as impertinent as that of Dr. Pangloss. To read Browning in sickness, or in sorrow or suffering, in the last resort would be an absurdity. There are moments when the statement, "God's in his heaven," seems questionable to the staunchest believer. And there are frequent moments when "All's right with the world" is a gratuitous insult to common sense and eyesight. Optimism is well, but, pushed too far, it becomes sheer insensibility.

Whilst Browning strung beautiful beads, Arnold fused more durable metal. Swinburne regarded the author of "The Scholar Gipsy" as "the most efficient, the surest-footed poet" of his generation, and there can be no doubt that the times are reopening for his poetry, which is full of foretastes of the morrow.

Despite his kid-glove Oxford manner, Arnold was a Freethinker. How essentially his imagination had become secularised is often seen in his language on death. In his monody on his friend Clough, he refers to his "morningless and unawakening sleep." In "Geist's Grave," a fine poem on a favorite dog, he strikes the same note:—

"Stern law of every mortal lot,
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what,
Of second life I know not where."

The magnificent lines on "Dover Beach" reveal the extent of his breach with Orthodoxy. Arnold always possessed an exquisite tact, a self-restraint, which made him anything but an extremist. He was neither optimist nor pessimist, but a meliorist. Like old-world Horace, he had a liking for the "golden mean." Here is an example:—

"The sophist sneers: Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong.
The pious wail: Forsake
A world these sophists throng.
Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man!"

Maybe, because Matthew Arnold was reticent in quantity, the hard-won popularity has been less in peril. Now, with his life's work that shows fully the power and splendor of his work, it is only fitting that it should receive recognition as a new and important force in literature. Arnold has the style of the great masters. In the still, cool atmosphere of the future his verse will be clearer, stronger, than it sounds to us. The pure flame of his genius was enkindled at the Eternal Altar, the Altar of the Religion of Humanity, which was standing before any other was built, and will endure when every other has crumbled into dust.

MIMNERMUS.

The Plants of the Sea.—II.

(Concluded from p. 742.)

SAVE in the Arctic seas where the grinding action of the ice precludes the presence of life, nearly all the world's coasts form the habitation of algæ. These

water-plants are both red and brown in color. The brown algæ are most abundant, and not infrequently attain giant dimensions. In the Southern Ocean *Macrocystis pyrifera* will sometimes grow to a length of 700 or 800 feet. The ordinary brown algæ of the shores are of the genus *Fucus*, and at a lower water-mark the genus *Laminaria* is in the ascendant. Each of these botanical genera is associated with its own special animal population.

The world-famous Gulf Weed which is such a conspicuous feature of the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic is a brown alga. Its technical title is *Sargassum bacciferum*, and it is readily recognised by its little "berry-like bladders." Differences of opinion exist concerning this plant's reproductive processes, which completer knowledge will decide. But the Gulf Weed appears to possess no generative organs, and many authorities believe that it develops vegetatively. As the older parts of the plant become enfeebled, they steadily lose their ability to float, and they die as they descend into the watery deeps. It is worth noting that species of *Sargassum* which are rooted on the rocks, like the littoral algæ previously mentioned, have been discovered in the West Indian waters and on the Central American shores. Apart from the fact that the Gulf Weed is able to live and develop independently on the ocean stream, it is highly probable that the floating forest of *Sargassum* is constantly renewed by plants which are broken from their coastal dwelling-place by the action of the sea waves, and floated on the marine currents until they are congregated in the immense Atlantic whirl which encompasses the Sargasso Sea. A wonderful wealth of life consisting of Polyzoa, fishes, crabs, molluscs, and many other organisms, resides among these huge tangles of weed. All these creatures display color adaptations of a very striking character, despite the circumstance that none of these animals were originally natives of the open seas. The Sargasso Sea thus presents a rich field for investigation to the marine biologists of the future.

Two remarkably distinct types are presented by the red algæ. A leading authority declares:—

"The one is soft and delicate, with extremely fine ramifications, like the *Polysiphonia* of the English coasts. The other grows in round masses, or with ramifications, always encrusted with calcareous matter. These are the corallines which play a great role in tropical water, some forms like *Lithothamnium*, making up a large part of the coral reefs, other species encrusting rocks and protecting them from erosion. They date back at least to the Jurassic period, and in Tertiary times they built up a large part of certain geological formations."

In marked contrast to the algæ attached to the coasts which develop to a size so enormous, the floating algæ are all diminutive, the larger proportion being microscopic in minuteness. These pelagic algæ exist in every part of the Photic Zone in boundless profusion, while in the subsurface areas of this region their numbers rise beyond all reasonable computation. These plants are of supreme moment to the sea animals as, with the exception of the attached algæ and the nutritious substances transported from the land by the action of the rivers, they are the ultimate begetters of all the organic matters which supply aquatic animals with food.

Among the brown algæ are the Diatoms, lowly plants distributed in all parts of the globe, in ponds and streams, in the ocean, and even in moist soil. The Diatoms not only drift over the sea, but they are found clinging to other organisms such as allied algæ, and animal forms that dwell in the ocean. Viewed under the microscope, Diatoms become structures of exquisite beauty. Unlike all other algæ, they adorn themselves with delicate silicated cell-walls. Some species of these normally passive organisms are motile, and glide through the water or along the sand and slime. A large proportion of these tiny plants need to modify their form so as to adapt their floating capacity to the changing conditions of viscosity which the water undergoes.

A great effort to maintain their surface habitat is demanded of the Diatoms, as the viscosity lessens with a rising temperature. The Diatoms then develop special organs of suspension to enable them to remain near the surface. Adaptation has proceeded even farther than this. Like various butterflies and moths, several species of these aquatic plants present in the temperate regions two unlike forms. The summer forms of the same Diatoms are so dissimilar to those of winter that they were originally classified as distinct species. The influence of environment is clearly instanced by these phenomena. The summer appearance of these temperate dwelling Diatoms is constantly presented by these plants in tropical seas, while the winter attire of the species of temperate regions is the permanent garb of the Diatoms of the polar oceans.

Another adaptation to meet the requirements of life may be seen in the Diatoms that dwell in the coastal waters. In the neighborhood of land where the physical conditions are far more variable than those of the open sea, the majority of Diatoms have evolved peculiar organs, which are entirely absent in oceanic species. These organs are termed resting spores, and they enable their possessors to survive during the period of storm and stress. At this season the cell substances of the Diatoms shrink into a dense mass at the cell's centre. They then develop a new highly protective integument within the old cell-wall, which is discarded as soon as the resting spore is completely encircled. Being now endowed with a higher specific gravity, the Diatoms descend either into the deep sea layers or into the ocean bed itself if near the coast, where they remain in safety from the elements until more favorable conditions allow them to resume their previous mode of life.

Out in the open sea Diatoms are met with in greatest abundance where the ocean waters are mixed with the soil particles carried from the land, and where the salinity is less than the average. This is the case in regions where rivers pour vast volumes of sediment into the sea; where the waters are freer from salt, as in the Arctic and Antarctic Oceans; and in the region of the heaviest rainfall, in the Indian and Pacific areas. In the tropical regions of the Pacific, where the freshness of the surface waters is very considerable, there is evidence that all silica secreting organisms are more amply represented than in the saltier Atlantic.

Now, if salt be introduced into turbid water, the clayey particles in suspension will sink to the bottom. It appears that there is little silica in solution or suspension in waters containing a high percentage of salt, and this circumstance proves an important factor in deciding the distribution of organisms dependent upon the secretion of silica. In various areas, and notably in the vast Southern Ocean, the frustules of deceased Diatoms settle on the sea floor in numbers so extraordinary that the resulting accumulation is called Diatom ooze. The distribution of these minute plants consequently becomes a considerable factor in sowing the dust destined to build up coming continents.

The Peridineans are mobile single-celled algæ, or in any case they resemble them in various ways. These unicellular organisms do not secrete flinty skeletons like the Diatoms, and as they die their remains are dissolved, so that they leave no record of their former existence. Of these primitive plants there are several kinds, and a very considerable range of variation is to be found among them.

Highly interesting organisms are the globular flagellates which deck themselves with shield-like coverings, occasionally decorated with a central spine. These calcareous shields are termed rhabdoliths and coccoliths, and had been dredged by the abysses of the ocean long before their living possessors, the coccospheres and rhabdospheres were detected during the *Challenger* expedition on the surface of the sea. These strange organisms are a very ancient race. They have left their remains in the oldest fossiliferous rocks, and their fossils show

that these flagellates have undergone remarkably slight modification in the course of millions of years. But although these organisms themselves respond but little to the passing centuries, they have, doubtless, assisted in the transformation of many higher modes of life. In contemporary Arctic and Antarctic waters, coccospheres are represented by species destitute of shields which flourish in those seas in prodigal abundance.

Symbiosis, that intimate association for mutual benefit found on land between plants such as the algæ and lichens, and even between animals much higher in the scale of life, is not unknown in the oceans. Minute brown algæ of the equatorial waters enter into partnership with radiolarians. This union of animal and vegetable cells is apparently beneficial to both, as the starch evolved by the yellow alga cells, in company with the plant's elaboration of oxygen, furnish food to the radiolarians, while the carbon-dioxide expired by the animal is extremely useful to the plant. These yellow algæ also enter into union with foraminifera, corals, and other lowly animals, and they also live as independent organisms drifting over the sea. Other remarkable symbiotic phenomena are under investigation, and when the inquiry is complete a large chapter will be added to the expanding volume of marine biology.

The air, the soil, the ponds and streams, and the great ocean, all sustain a vast microbial population. Those plants known as Bacteria are probably the very lowest forms of living matter, although they have doubtless risen from still lower forms. Bacteria are related to the Fungi, and are more numerous and more extensively distributed than any other mode of life. And not only are they everywhere abundant in the air, on earth, and in the waters, but they seem as parasites both baneful and beneficial among all animals and plants. The Bacteria reproduce themselves by division or through the development of spores. Higher organic Nature could not exist in the absence of Bacteria, for these primitive plants prepare the substances essential to the processes of metabolism. Wherever organic matter is undergoing decomposition, active bacterial agents are always responsible. For this reason the presence of Bacteria in the seas, not merely at the surface, but at all depths, and in the coldest oceans, was suspected long prior to their actual discovery.

Carbonaceous and nitrogenous substances are indispensable to the great majority of Bacteria. These substances they derive from organic matter. Among the Bacteria are those that generate the phenomena of fermentation, while others produce the putrefactive processes. The waste products of living organisms, and the remains of the dead, the refuse of domestic and industrial existence, all finally enter into the earth or pass into the sea. As a rule, these waste materials are chemically unsuitable for the sustenance of plants. It is imperative that they should first undergo a transformation, in the course of which their chemical constitution is rearranged. The Bacteria are the all-important actors in this transformation, which is absolutely necessary to the maintenance of higher floral and faunal metabolism. In truth, every particle of living matter is destined, sooner or later, to serve as the food of bacterial life.

As we have seen, the aquatic Bacteria are most abundant in the vicinity of the coasts, and in shallow seas that are provided with a plentiful supply of dead organic matter, and are less numerous on open ocean surfaces and in deep waters of low temperature. Bacteria are particularly abundant in the bed of the sea where falling particles settle. This region is the "mud line," and the Bacteria are constantly at work in producing this mud, which in this area takes the place of sand. These organisms are well in evidence in the surface waters, and they are extremely active in those regions where warm and frigid currents meet. In consequence of the rise in temperature which occurs where such currents mingle, Bacteria which remain inert in colder waters, assume much greater activity in bringing about a rapid decomposition of bodies, which decompose

much more slowly in colder conditions. In such circumstances, the Bacteria prepare a generous food-supply for superior plants. Many observers have been powerfully impressed by the marked abundance of pelagic algæ in such regions. This phenomenon is of general occurrence in all parts of the Southern Ocean, in the Northern Atlantic to the south-west of Iceland, and elsewhere.

Although they are entirely unknown in terrestrial waters, phosphorescent Bacteria are quite common in the seas. At all temperatures, and especially at comparatively high temperatures, the Bacteria are busy decomposing the bodies of defunct fishes and other organisms. We thus discover that the Bacteria render food available to plants higher in the scale of life than themselves; that these vegetable forms, in their turn, furnish nutriment for herbivorous animals; and that these are then compelled to render up their lives to enable the carnivorous denizens of the oceans to fulfil their functions in the ceaseless cycle of animated Nature.

T. F. PALMER.

The Great Trunk Call.

"YESSIR. Just wait one moment. Mr. Harrison is now a'using the 'phone, Sir. He's got another two minutes. Just step inside the waiting-room, Sir. All the daily papers in there, Sir—this way, Sir."

I followed the liveried attendant into a large waiting-room hung with several large texts. One read, "Rock of Ages," another "God Bless our Home," another "Work for the Night is Coming," and a current *John Bull* placard which read, "Naughty Old Man in the Moon." Beneath this last sat Mr. Bottomley himself reading a back number of the *Police Budget*. He held the blood-colored paper in one hand, while with the other he played with some loose silver in his trouser pocket. Under the text "God Bless our Home," sat Mr. Begbie, deeply engrossed in the *Financial News*. Next to him, and under the text "Rock of Ages," sat Mr. Campbell, reading Mr. Bottomley's article in the *Sunday Pictorial* upon "God and the War." He sighed deeply and closed his eyes devoutly, then consulted his gold watch. I looked around. Under the text "Work for the Night is Coming," sprawled the notorious Baron 'Armsworth, fast asleep. One text, Mr. Harrison's, apparently, was painted in black letters upon a blue background, and read, "Every Girl is Wanted." The seat under this text was vacant. At the further end of the room I noticed a small counter, upon which stood many bottles, syphons, cigar-boxes, packets of chewing-gum, and sticks of chocolate, etc. A little boy, attired in a green page's suit, was in attendance at this counter. A moment later there was a violent movement behind the plush curtains at the other end of the room, and Mr. Harrison appeared, slightly flushed and excited. Mr. Begbie immediately arose and advanced towards him. He muttered something inaudibly and pointed furtively at Mr. Bottomley, who was still deeply engrossed in the *Police Budget*. He then handed Mr. Harrison a second copy of the *Financial News*, which he took absently and thrust into his breast pocket.

"How is he to-day?" asked Mr. Begbie timidly. Mr. Harrison shook his head dumbly, pushed past Mr. Begbie, and crossed over to his text—where he sat down and produced a pocket-book.

"I'm next," suddenly exclaimed Mr. Bottomley, placing the *Police Budget* in his pocket and rising hurriedly to his feet. "I'm next." The attendant beckoned him towards the plush curtain, and a second later a loud humming sound became audible.

"He's through," exclaimed Mr. Campbell, with shining eyes. "He always manages to get through first go off."

"Marvellous man," muttered Mr. Begbie, crossing his legs irresistibly.

"God always loves the lost sheep best," continued Mr. Campbell, "and as I intend pointing out next Sunday to my readers, God did not invent sin,

he merely allowed it in order to allow man"..... (Mr. Begbie chortled aloud and winked at Mr. Harrison). "As I was saying," continued Mr. Campbell, "God merely allowed sin, just as he allowed the War. Once this truth is realised we need have no fear about anything."

As he finished speaking, the little boy in a green suit walked past them with a tray. "Any milk, buns, chewing-gum, or chockerlate?" Mr. Begbie bought a bun, and Mr. Campbell a piece of chewing-gum, while Mr. Harrison purchased a stick of chockerlate, which he broke up into minute portions and placed in his pocket with the *Financial News*. Baron 'Armsworth moved.

An hour later this company of journalists, lawyers, and theologians assembled in the inner room and exchanged their notes.

"God is not very well to-day," commenced Mr. Bottomley, gravely, "I told him all about the fresh interest which I am stirring up in the minds of the population, but God said he took no further notice of this world. It appears that he has some other universe in the process of manufacture which is an improvement upon this. I am authorised to write a special article on the subject for my noble friend the Baron. It will appear next Lord's Day. I may add that there is still some hope of my influence improving things generally. God does not desire us to cease striving after the elusive thread of old—on the contrary." Mr. Bottomley sat down, and blew his nose.

Mr. Campbell then stood up. "God is very sad," he commenced, arranging his notes, "very, very sad. Mothers are praying to him—millions of mothers—all praying for the safety of their dear children during the present crisis..... Very sad..... I am therefore appointing myself, with the special permission of God, to interpret to these millions of distressed individuals, the truth about life, death, eternity and the War. God assures me that he can do nothing during the crisis. God can simply allow things, as I intend to point out in my special article next Sabbath. God does not create War. No. He simply allows it—for the benefit of the Allies." Mr. Campbell sat down and glanced around with a relieved sigh.

The next to get up was Mr. Begbie, who strutted round the room several times before speaking. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed at last, "I have little to say except that, with the exception of God, I am the best recruiting power in the land." (Mr. Bottomley laughed). "Yes, Sir," repeated Mr. Begbie, "I am acknowledged both by earth and heaven as the most competent beguiler of youth in existence. Read my poems again—read—." At this moment he was interrupted by all the others, who commenced stamping their feet together as they shouted the refrain of Mr. Begbie's most popular war chant. Mr. Begbie smiled proudly and sat down.

When the chorus had been sung twice, Mr. Harrison arose. "My interview was quite satisfactory; the Great Architect of the Universe approves of my share in the propagation of solid truth during the crisis. I have special permission for an article upon 'The Morality of Reprisals.' I am now going home to write it. Good-day, gentlemen."

The attendant showed Mr. Harrison out. When he had gone the others gazed apprehensively at the Baron, who was still fast asleep.

"What about his call?" inquired Mr. Bottomley anxiously, turning towards Mr. Begbie.

"Oh! him," retorted Mr. Begbie, carelessly. "He doesn't need any interview. God takes him for granted."

I had heard enough, so purchasing a packet of chewing-gum, I made a hurried exit through the plush curtains.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

The noblest employment of the mind is the study of nature or truth.—Aristotle.

Christ and the Armenians.

Of course at this distance we do not know how much truth there is in the repeated reports that from four to five hundred thousand Armenians are being exterminated. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Armenians have been massacred by Turks. Only about twenty years ago Abdul Hamid, who was finally pulled down from his throne, destroyed nearly a quarter of a million of his Christian subjects by turning the mob upon them. Nor is it our purpose to put the whole blame for Armenian massacres on their Moslem rulers, but it will be admitted that the Armenians have rarely enjoyed any sunshine during a long past, which has been uncommonly dark for them.

It was about sixteen hundred years ago that the Armenians, worshippers of the Olympian gods, were converted to Christianity. Armenia was the first country in the world in which Christianity became the State religion. Before Rome or Greece, Armenia was Christian, and for over fifteen centuries the Armenians have tenaciously clung to the religion of Christ, surrounded though they have been, and are to this day, by powerful nations—Turkey and Persia—both fanatically hostile to that religion, in defence of which the Armenians have shed seas of blood for every drop of blood that Christ may have shed for them. The sacrifices which this ancient race has made for its creed, and the insults, outrages, and tortures it has endured through the centuries, are appalling even to contemplate.

If a poor, peasant, and ill-equipped people have suffered so much for Christ, what has Christ done for them?

Had the Armenians never embraced the Christian religion, had they remained Pagans, calling upon gods that did not exist, and lifting their hearts and hands to deaf and dumb idols, would their lot have been much worse than it is at this moment? Is it possible to think of a worse plight than theirs? Neither Europe nor Asia is in a position to help them. The Armenians lift their faces, gashed and bleeding, to heaven—holding in their arms their outraged and mutilated children. "O God! O Christ!" they cry. But who hears them?

Time and again entire villages have been wiped out, homes have been desecrated, the aged clubbed into insensibility, the young men murdered in cold blood, the children torn from their parents, the girls carried off into Turkish harems—and Christ from his heaven has looked down and done nothing. But how do we know that he has done nothing? Because sixteen hundred years are long enough for a God to do something, if he could, or would.

It is not Christ that saves, else he would have saved the poor Armenians. Safety lies in strength.

M. M. MANGASARIAN in the *Truthseeker* (New York).

Farewell.

FAREWELL to him, great foe of dark belief,
Devoted, constant, strong and absolute,
Whose fiery words gave tongues unto the mute,
Inspiring thousands. Now in this new grief
His life uplifts us, gives from death relief,
Carries the message that shall yet refute
The lies of enemies who still impute
Their baseness to our Atheist-in-Chief.

So we shall grieve not in the days to come,
When Freedom's warriors have not Bradlaugh's friend
And mantle-bearer leading in the fight.
New men shall rise, fresh youth be given to some,
By thought of him; and all shall braver bend
Into the battle for the gates of light.

JULIAN ST. OREY.

A discussion has taken place in a London newspaper on the ideal age, and the correspondents appear to agree that the best time in a man's life is thirty-five. What amusing answers the Biblical patriarchs could have given to the question. Imagine a man being in his prime at four or five hundred years of age.

What filmy-eyed innocence is displayed by journalists who write pious paragraphs for the press. Recently a leading London newspaper declared that the Rev. R. J. Campbell's vogue was so great twenty years ago that barbers would interrupt the process of shaving to ask their customers if they agreed with Campbell about Free Will. Fancy anyone, outside Colney Hatch, discussing theology with a man with an open razor in his hand!

Acid Drops.

A quite understandable and warrantable feeling of indignation has been raised by the advice of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York recommending the younger clergy not to enlist. Point has been given to this feeling by the fact that various other people have been imprisoned and fined for speaking in such a manner as to discourage recruiting. Mr. Snowden raised the matter in the House of Commons the other day, in the form of a question as to whether the Government intended prosecuting the Archbishops, or whether it would restrict its attention to poorly placed people. Of course, Mr. Cave, the new Solicitor-General, answered "in the negative." And in reply to a further question whether the same rule would apply to other denominations, said that all ministers of religion would be placed on the same footing.

This is no doubt very comforting to ministers of religion, but it hardly meets the point at issue. This is not whether all ministers of religion are to be treated alike, but why any of them should be permitted to enjoy a privilege not possessed by other people. If we were to advise certain numbers of eligible men not to enlist because we thought they would be better at home, we should be liable to prosecution. If any minister of religion advises his fellows in the ministry in this sense, he is to be allowed to act with impunity. And Mr. Cave, as a good Christian and a lawyer, sees nothing wrong about the situation.

The Bishop of Lincoln has also been dealing with the same question. He says:—

"I should like to put on paper what my view is, and what I desire you to do. I do not approve of the priest of the Church of England enlisting as a combatant—it is not in accordance with his Ordination vows, it is against the law of custom and the instinct of the Church of England. That is the decision of all the English Bishops. If conscription ever came, the clergy, I am persuaded, would be exempt.....The nation and Empire are not safe unless England is really a Christian nation, and her people are praying people. This we shall not be, nor remain, unless we have an adequate supply of earnest clergy amongst us. Their labors are as vital to England's success as the heroism of the men at the Front."

You see the Bishop's argument advances in proper logical order. Thus: The nation and Empire are not safe unless we are prayerful and Christian. We cannot be prayerful and Christian unless we have a good supply of the clergy to keep us up to the mark. Therefore, the labors of the clergy are vital to our winning the War. The only objection is that the argument assumes at the beginning all it proves at the end. When the situation in the Dardanelles was found to be critical, the Government did not ask the clergy to see that the people were more prayerful and more Christian; it sent out Lord Kitchener to examine the situation. And Lord Derby's appeal has not been to the Christianity of the nation, but to its pluck, to its sense of duty, to its manhood. So far, we have only the opinion of the clergy that their presence at home is necessary to our winning the War—unless we take it in a sense far from flattering to the "Black Army."

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, speaking at the Lord Mayor's banquet, compared present-day prophets to people who say, watching a congregation coming out of church, "These are not people whom any sane man would employ upon any great work. Haven't they all just described themselves as miserable sinners? And if they don't know, who should know?" Surely, Mr. Balfour, who has written charmingly of *The Foundations of Belief*, has heard of religious hypocrisy.

The clergy are tireless in asserting that the Germans are all Atheists, but ministers have very peculiar notions of their own regarding unbelief. A correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, describing one of the English internment camps, writes that the Germans were "singing that German hymn which has been sung so often on the battlefield by victorious Prussian troops, 'Now Thank We All Our God.'" The hymn-singing Atheists are as romantic as the angels on horseback seen at Mons.

People nowadays prefer their piety potted as well as their plays. A recent service at St. Peter's Church, Hatton-garden, only lasted twenty minutes, and the star turns included Miss Carrie Tubb, the famous vocalist, and the Bishop of Norwich. We daresay the lady was as much an attraction as the bishop.

In his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for November 18, Professor David Smith supplies us with a

notable instance of the ill effects of pietism. A lady believed that she was called of God to the work of evangelism; and it so happened that, while conducting a mission some distance from her home, she received a message that one of her children was dying, and that if she would see him alive she must return at once. She continued her mission, and the boy died without seeing his mother. Her excuse for not returning was that "the work of God" was paramount. We have also heard of a clergyman whose father died whilst he was prosecuting a mission; and he justified himself for not attending his father's funeral on the ground that, if he had attended it, several sinners might have missed the salvation of their souls. The truth is that religion dehumanises those who earnestly profess it, causing them to neglect some of the most important obligations imposed upon them by Nature.

Dr. Orchard is doubtless an exceedingly smart man, but even he falls into curious errors at times. In a recent sermon on man's need of God, he emphasised the failure of all humanistic alternatives; but we beg to remind him that humanism has never been tried. The reverend gentleman asks where are we to look when men go mad in crowds? Well, have not men gone mad in crowds multitudes of times; are not men mad in crowds in Europe at this moment, under the alleged reign of the Christian God? Christianity has lamentably failed to keep the world in order. It is the height of folly to denounce humanism as a failure before it has had a chance. Let it have its fair innings first.

Principal Whyte, of Edinburgh, says that "what God has promised he is also able to perform"; but in the Bible the Lord is represented as making many promises which have never been fulfilled. As a matter of fact, God neither gives nor performs any promises whatsoever. Absolutely nothing has ever been accomplished in human history that human beings could not have done themselves. When the divines have their attention called to this fact, they try to explain it by saying that, for some mysterious reason, God has seen fit to work only through human instruments, and that, consequently, his activity cannot transcend their very limited capacities. That is to say, there is no evidence whatever that God ever does anything at all.

A leading article in a London newspaper bore the astonishing title, "The Dead do not Die." It may be an open question; but the deceased's relatives usually have courage enough to spend the "club money."

The Book of Common Prayer, which represents the wisdom of the Government religion, states that a man "may not marry his grandmother" or "his wife's grandmother." Nobody except heavenly minded clergymen would ever imagine such a contingency.

Miss Phyllis Campbell is one of the witnesses of the Mons Angels—that is, she claims to know people who said they saw them. This lady has just published a little book on her experiences as a nurse, to which Mr. W. L. Courtney writes a preface. Miss Campbell relates some stories of supernatural visitations on the battlefield, and Mr. Courtney remarks on them:—

"Let us leave it at that. It is a beautiful legend, far too beautiful to be vulgarised by rationalistic comment or a too inquisitive press. In moments of extreme nervous stress men in history have seen visions or dreamed dreams, and found a real inspiration therein. Shall we dare to tell them that they are the victims of a purely subjective delusion, when in the strength of their faith they have won the victory?"

This is very nice, and if it were accepted as no more than a beautiful legend, or a narrative of visions seen by men under "extreme nervous stress," we can assure Mr. Courtney that there would be no occasion for "rationalistic comment." But Mr. Courtney must know that these stories are cited and circulated for a very definite purpose. The angelic visitors are claimed to have been actual, objective existences, and are utilised to support a whole system of theology. The exordium that Mr. Courtney reads the Rationalist should really be addressed to Dr. Horton and men of his type. For it is the Rationalist who treats them as visions seen under the stress of nervous strain; it is the Christian who insists that they are of a quite different character.

The Bishop of Willesden has made a public protest against the menu used at the Lord Mayor's banquet, which he declares included "turtle soup and six courses, and punch with six different kinds of expensive wines and liqueurs." This, the Bishop declares, was an "outrage." What an anchorite he must be! Does he imagine that the City Fathers would dine off stale bread and communion port at a shilling a bottle?

The Rev. H. E. Thomas, an Oswestry clergyman, died in the vestry at Wrexham Parish Church, after delivering a sermon. Had he been a Secularist lecturer, the incident would have had great ethical significance. As it is, there is no moral.

Rev. W. Operton, of Abertillery, Mon., has a keen eye for business, although a clergyman. The other day he told his congregation that he had no patience with those who had comfortable homes, and yet anything would do for the house of God. That is, of course, the parson's point of view. For our part, we would rather see, any day, comfortable homes than expensively built churches. Poor homes have a knack of helping to perpetuate a poor type of human being, while the one made most comfortable by an expensive church is the parson himself. And we fancy that none of the clergy have an objection to *their* homes being as comfortable as is possible.

At the same place—Abertillery—the Rev. Wildblood (what a name for a parson!) told his Wesleyan hearers that the evolution theory had collapsed. This catastrophe must have occurred in Abertillery, as it seems all right everywhere else. The reason for the collapse of evolution is that passions which "we" thought (who the deuce is "we"?) had died out, are shown by the present War to be still alive and active. Therefore, the theory of evolution is dead, "killed by the logic of modern facts." Well, if that is how Rev. Wildblood understands evolution, we would recommend him to study one of the shilling or sixpenny manuals that are now on the market. There is really no excuse for anybody's ignorance on the subject nowadays—except inability to grasp its meaning.

Dr. Hugh Black has been mentioned as a possible successor to the Rev. R. J. Campbell at the City Temple. At one time he was assistant to Dr. Alexander Whyte, at St. George's Church, Edinburgh, and North Country humorists used to refer to the clerical combination as "Black and Whyte."

One of the largest ammunition works in the world is situated at Bethlehem, Penn., U.S.A., and nearly 40 000 men are employed there. This is an ironical circumstance, remembering that the "Prince of Peace" was born at Bethlehem.

Under the heading, "Clergy Who Have Fallen at the Front," the *Daily Mirror* gives a list of three parsons who have died in the War as combatants. As there are about 50,000 parsons in England alone, this is not an heroic figure.

Mrs. Alice Diggle, of Norden, Lancashire, has died at the age of 101, and the newspapers are making headlines about the matter. What would the editors have said if they had lived in the days of Noah and Methuselah, who were trundling hoops at the age at which Mrs. Diggle died?

Despite the early exposure in the columns of the *Freethinker*, the legend of the "angels" at Mons is still spreading like a prairie fire. Not only has a picture been exhibited at the cinema theatres, but a Christmas supplement to one of the papers contains an illustration of the "angels." The artist has depicted the "angels" as comely ladies with sixty-foot wings. The original artist, who invented the yarn, described them as shiny soldiers on horseback. Presumably, the pious believer may indulge his taste in angels to his heart's content.

"Longing for the Living God" was the title of a recent sermon by the Rev. Dr. Orchard. *Living* gods are, we admit, very difficult indeed to find, but dead gods are amongst the most plentiful of things. History is full of them. And the curious thing is that gods are more interesting when dead than ever they were while living, and far less dangerous.

"The great days of religion are to come," says Rev. Griffith Jones. Quite so; the great days of religion have always been in the past, or are going to be in the future. They never happen to be in the present. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to verify statements concerning the past, and impossible to disprove those about the future. And verification is the one thing that theology dreads.

What nonsense newspapers do print! A daily paper refers to the "young men of fifty" who are filling business positions. This reminds us of the humorist's remark that bishops are the only persons who never get old, the reason being that they think at sixty exactly as they did at sixteen.

To Correspondents.

MR. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 28, Birmingham Town Hall; December 5, Queen's Hall (London); 12, Leicester; 19, Portsmouth.

S. AYRES.—Not being in the habit of saying things we don't mean, we meant that the *Freethinker* would be kept going. As the New York *Truthseeker* remarks, the *Freethinker* has become "an institution." We venture to add that it is a unique one. It has always had a distinctive note, and that we hope to maintain. Certainly, the death of a man like G. W. Foote is a heavy loss to a paper, but the best of us cannot live forever, and when death takes a great worker, there is reason, not for despair, but for more strenuous endeavor on the part of those who remain.

B. N. KHOTARI (Calcutta).—We find ourselves in agreement with the philosophy of the *Indian Daily News* writer, except so when he attributes the War to the people having lost Christianity. We are of opinion that with less Christianity, people would have been more likely to have taken steps years ago that would have made the War impossible.

(Mrs.) L. BRADSHAW.—Your own letter is one of the "cheerful rays" which you hope we shall meet in our work.

"L."—Received, and hope to use at an early date.

S. W. WHITFIELD writes expressing his regret at the news of Mr. Foote's death; says that the *Freethinker* "is very welcome out here in the Trenches." From the letters received, we judge there must be some very effective propagandist work going on at the Front.

S. F. BEBBINGTON (Omdurman), in sending subscription for the *Freethinker*, says he writes as "one of the many for whom this War has destroyed the last remnant of the Christian superstition, and the *Freethinker* has been a great help." He has also obtained many new readers.

W. H. BATES.—Letter redirected to London address, as requested.

WOMAN ATHEIST.—It is a regrettable fact that amongst church attendants the majority are women. And so long as women do not take their legitimate part in public life, as individuals, we imagine this will remain so. That is the main reason why the Churches have always opposed the equality of the sexes. But the recognition of the preponderance of women at church services in no wise implies the inherent inferiority of the feminine intellect. It is no more than a recognition of the fact that the average women, owing to their history and education, are more susceptible to the emotional appeal than are men.

F. S. CARTER (South Africa).—Certainly expense might be saved by printing the *Freethinker* on a cheaper paper, but we much prefer to keep to the present quality, and we think we see a way of doing so.

J. W. WATERBORD.—Many thanks for your cordial good wishes, which we appreciate.

J. KING.—(1) No one but a fool invites a prosecution for blasphemy; but if it comes, the only thing to do is to fight it.

(2) The cutting and stitching of the *Freethinker*, we feel certain would be appreciated; but it involves expense, and at present we are avoiding all unnecessary outlay. When the War is over, we may adopt the suggestion. (3) We think it obvious that Mr. Lloyd does not select the clergymen criticised out of any admiration for their abilities, but they are representative preachers, and in attending to them one is attending, by implication, to many others.

T. H. P.—We have no doubt whatever that what you suggest could be done if it is found necessary. But we prefer to try, for a time at least, without it.

W. J. KING.—Excellent work, and a branch of Freethought activity which we hope to see properly organised in the future. It is highly regrettable that it has been neglected for so long.

D. COBMAC.—Glad you think the Memorial Number a "masterpiece." Your opinion of its merits, we are pleased to say, is shared by the general body of our readers.

A. HEWITT.—We hope to continue to deserve your good opinion. We can only promise to try.

A. READE.—The payments of the Bishops and Archbishops of the Church of England rest with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The funds are derived from interest on endowments, tithes, mining royalties, rents from houses and lands, etc., etc. It is quite easy to get into trouble if one speaks the truth about religion. But a little trouble lends interest to life.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for useful batch of cuttings. Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Will all those who have written Mr. Cohen concerning Mrs. Foote, please take this as an acknowledgment of their communications. Mr. Cohen will write fully on the matter next week.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (November 28) in the Town Hall, Birmingham. In the afternoon, at 3, his subject is "G. W. Foote: Freethinker and Pioneer," and this should attract all Freethinkers, and not a few Christians. In the evening, at 7, he lectures on "Mr. Balfour on God and Man." This will be an examination of Mr. Balfour's Gifford Lectures, which were hailed by the religious and general press as an important contribution to the subject of Theism. Admission to both meetings is free. There are some reserved seats, tickets for which may be had on application to Mr. J. Partridge, 245 Shenstone-road, Rotten-park, Birmingham. Tea will be provided, in the Town Hall, between the afternoon and evening meetings.

We print on the back page of this issue a full announcement concerning the G. W. Foote Memorial Meeting on December 5. The list of speakers is, we may safely say, a good one, and it is possible that there may be others. Some whom we should like to have seen there are unable to be present owing to having other engagements on that day. Slips announcing the meeting are now ready, and can be obtained either at the N. S. S. offices or at the Pioneer Press. We sincerely hope that London Freethinkers will do their best to circulate these advertisements of the meeting. One cannot announce a London meeting by posters, as can be done in the provinces, and there is only this method and that of newspaper advertisements available. We trust, therefore, to Freethinkers doing their best to make the Memorial Meeting worthy of the Cause and of G. W. Foote. We need hardly say that all seats are free, and the occasion should serve as a very favorable one for introducing Christian friends.

We are pleased to hear that Mr. Lloyd had a very large meeting at Failsworth on Sunday evening last. This, we may suppose, is one more evidence of the way in which religion has revived owing to the War. The truth is that a more serious note has come over the country, and Freethought lectures are reaping the benefit of the change.

We are glad to learn, from the report in the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, as well as from private advices, that the recent discussion between Mr. Clifford Williams and the editor of the *Mercury* on the "Existence of God," was a complete success. Perfect courtesy prevailed throughout the discussion, and the audience appears to have been a large one. The *Mercury* prints a four column report of the debate, in addition to a two column descriptive sketch by "Arley Lane." The debate seems to have created considerable interest—which is one of the chief benefits of such encounters.

We are not at all surprised to learn from some of our correspondents that our Memorial Number has been the means of gaining many new readers. Regular readers find it an excellent issue for distribution, and their praise of it is a handsome reward for all responsible for its appearance and contents.

Too late for insertion in last week's issue, we received notice of a resolution passed by the Manchester Branch of the N. S. S., expressing its sense of the "irreparable loss" Freethought has sustained in the death of Mr. Foote, and tendering the deepest sympathy with Mrs. Foote and family.

The *R. P. A. Annual* for 1916 (price 6d.) contains the usual budget of interesting articles, the balance being well held between those dealing with the War and those discussing more permanent topics. Amongst the latter, Professor Bury deals with the significance of contingent events in history, and suggests a method of explaining their final relation in terms of causation. Miss Jane Barlow writes informally on "Common Sense in Ireland," and points out that "for the last seventy years or so Ireland has been governed by the simple expedient of bribing the clergy to keep the people pacified." This is quite in line with the historic function of religion in sociology, and fully explains its support by established interests. Miss Barlow is also, we think, correct in saying that the priests frequently regard Home Rule with dread. In this matter they are between the Devil and the Deep Sea. To oppose Home Rule means to lose the support of numbers of their followers, while its realisation means the separation of the religious interest from national aspirations, and the consequent growth of the secular side of life.

Amongst the War articles, Mr. John M. Robertson deals in his usual trenchant manner with "Religion in War-Time," and Mr. Adam Gowans White discusses the Mons Angels. Mr. McCabe asks the question, "Has Rationalism Corrupted

Germany?" and has little difficulty in rebutting the charge that the militarism of Germany and the brutality of some of its soldiers is due to the growth of Freethought. We regret, however, to find Mr. McCabe writing, "I wish to hear of a large flotilla of our aeroplanes dropping bombs on Cologne. I expect that a number of children and adults would be killed, and I regret it; but it seems to me to be the proper way to put an end to a large category of German outrages." That seems to us a mistaken policy, if only because it is based upon a very defective psychology. If Zeppelin outrages here drive some English people to advocate reprisals in kind, why should we expect that our bomb-dropping is going to have any other effect than that of intensifying German brutality? That policy would only result in intensifying a policy that has already left an indelible stain on the German nation, and for our part we prefer to see that stain localised rather than extended.

The Fourth Gospel.

CONCLUSION.

IN the first three Gospels the accounts of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ are merely three slightly varied copies of the same older narratives. So, also, are the accounts of Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre: but there the threefold agreement ends. In the accounts of the appearances of the risen Jesus to his disciples the three Synoptists appear to have followed other legendary stories not found in the primitive Gospel, or to have reconstructed and amplified some of the more ancient narratives. As an example of the latter method, Luke has made a long and dramatic story out of two verses in the Second Gospel (Mark xvi. 12, 13; Luke xxiv. 18—35).

In the Fourth Gospel we find, as might be expected, a set of perfectly new resurrection stories, every one of them being of a totally different character from any in the three Synoptical Gospels. These alleged events fill two chapters (xx., xxi.), and are of a more absurd nature than those in the Synoptics. And such being the case, I pass these chapters without further notice. The last verse of this Gospel reads:—

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books that should be written."

In this last utterance of the pseudo-John we find one of the well-known characteristics of that fraudulent writer—his thoroughly reckless assertion. His statement is, of course, a silly and gratuitous falsehood; for he knew perfectly well that nothing was known of the sayings and doings of the Gospel Jesus, save those contained in the Gospels and apocryphal writings in circulation in his day. A manuscript copy of all those documents would not fill a single room fitted up with shelves as a library.

From the first sentence of the "Gospel of John" to the last verse of that evangel we find a completely new series of events recorded, as well as an altogether new Jesus. The public ministry of the Savior is changed from Galilee to Judea; the preaching of the Baptist is of an entirely new character; the institution of the "Lord's Supper" is set aside and its place filled by a four-chapter oration; the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus are placed upon a different day, and new details are added. The new Jesus never gives utterance to any of the sayings found in the first three Gospels, and never speaks in parables. His teaching, if the rodomontade placed in his mouth deserves the name, is of a totally different character to that of the Jesus in the other three Gospels—the two Jesuses having not a single idea in common. The miracles of the Fourth Gospel, too, are of a different nature. It may safely be said that the three Synoptists never heard of the Turning water into wine, of the healing of the Nobleman's son, of the multitude of "sick, blind, halt, withered" folk who lay around a pool in Jerusalem waiting for an angel to come down and agitate the water, of the healing of a man "born blind," or of the raising of Lazarus from the tomb. Had these wonders been known to have been wrought by Jesus, at the time the first three Gospels were being written, we should have found them recorded in all three.

The great mass of Christians, who only read the Gospels to find comforting texts, know nothing about the matters here stated. The Savior of the Fourth Gospel is named "Jesus," and that fact is quite sufficient for them. Were the Savior of the latter Gospel called Jeremiah, and John the Baptist Zedekiah, they would perceive the difference at once. I was speaking, the other day, to a clergyman in my neighborhood on the subject, and he opened his eyes wide with wonder and denied that there was any difference. I also found from further questioning that he believed everything contained in the Bible from cover to cover, and knew nothing whatever of rational Bible criticism. If all the clergy were like this reverend gentleman, their only equipment for preaching would be their blind unreasoning faith, resulting from their dense ignorance. There are, however, a few amongst the clergy who actually do read the Gospels with an eye to criticism. One of these is Dr. J. A. Robinson, Dean of Westminster. In his *Study of the Gospels* this gentleman describes the impression made on the mind of one who, after a critical study of the three Synoptics, takes up the "Gospel of John" and reads the first chapter. Dean Robinson says:—

"How remote do these theological statements (in the prologue) appear from a Gospel narrative of the life of Christ.....Our surprise is not lessened as we read on. Great abstract conceptions are presented in rapid succession: life, light, witness, flesh, glory, grace, truth..... The scene is unfamiliar and the voices are strange. We hear not a word of John the Baptist's preaching of repentance, or even of his baptism. It is a new story altogether.....A wholly new story of the beginnings of discipleship is offered us.....Here, then, is a fair sample of the difficulty which this Gospel from beginning to end presents to those who come to it fresh from the study of the Synoptic narratives. The whole atmosphere seems different.....Not only do the old characters appear in new situations, but the utterances of all the speakers seem to bear another impress.....The style and diction of the Lord and the narrator are indistinguishable, and they are notably different from the manner in which Christ speaks in the Synoptic Gospels.The contrast cannot be removed; it is heightened rather than diminished as we follow it into details."

This extract certainly shows the very wide distance that separates a critical scholar from the ordinary run of uncritical and uninformed clergymen. Yet, notwithstanding the fact just stated, Dr. Robinson appears to hold to the traditional view—that the writer was the apostle John. At any rate, he does not like to admit that the Gospel is an impudent forgery, though all his criticism points to that undoubted fact. He also says of the whole narrative running through the Fourth Gospel: "It is not history in the lower sense of a contemporary narrative of events as they appeared to the youthful John as onlooker: it is not an exact reproduction of the very words spoken by or to Christ." According to this apologetic statement, a narrative of events which actually occurred is history certainly, but only "in a lower sense"; while a fabricated narrative of purely imaginary events is history "in a higher sense." It will thus be seen that Dean Robinson is, after all, more a Christian apologist than a rational critic, and that he is not troubled with too much of ordinary common sense.

Setting aside, now, all the new events and situations in the Fourth Gospel, it is upon the language and teaching of the Jesus of that Gospel that the charge of forgery can be most conclusively proved. The language employed by the latter Jesus is long, rambling, involved, full of silly quibbles, and largely metaphorical; while that of the Jesus of the Synoptics is, by comparison, simple, clear, and different in every respect. The difference is not merely one of coloring; it is a difference both of words and ideas, of style and forms of thought. The Fourth Gospel Jesus preaches no gospel: he merely talks ridiculous nonsense, and wrangles and quibbles with the most learned among the Jews. Instead of teaching, he tries to puzzle his hearers with absurd metaphorical utterances, which he never explains. He proclaims himself the Good Shepherd, the Door of the sheep,

the True vine, the Light of the world, the Bread of life, and other absurdities. This religious mountebank of the Fourth Gospel could by no possibility whatever be the same Jesus as is portrayed in the Synoptical Gospels: one of the two must therefore be rejected as fictitious. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were simply compilers who drew their accounts from existing writings. The pseudo-John, however, presents us with wholly new matter, more especially in the discourses which he has ascribed to Jesus. Now there are peculiarities of expression in the "Gospel of John" which are found in no other book of the New Testament, save in the "Epistle of John"—a fact which proves the Gospel and the Epistle to have been composed by the same writer. But if, further, we compare the language of the Epistle with that of the Gospel, we find that the writer of the Epistle has placed his own words and ideas in the mouth of his Savior.

In the "Epistle of John" we have a sample of the ordinary composition, both as to the choice of words and style, of the pseudo-John when writing to confirm the faith of his fellow-Christians. Yet in this short Epistle we find a considerable number of ideas and peculiarities of expression, which in the "Gospel of John" are placed in the mouth of Jesus. In other words, the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel had the same ideas and used the same forms of expression as the pseudo-John. In the following examples a saying of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is compared with an expression of the pseudo-John in his Epistle, the Gospel saying being given first—the references of each appearing in brackets.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (iii. 16)—"Herein was the love of God.....that God sent his only begotten Son into the world" (iv. 9).

"But the witness which I have is greater.....the Father.....he hath borne witness of me" (v. 36)—"The witness of God is greater.....he hath borne witness concerning his Son" (v. 9).

"This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (vi. 29)—"And this is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son" (iii. 23).

"Ye are of your father the devil: he was a murderer from the beginning" (viii. 44)—"He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (iii. 8).

"He that is of God heareth the words of God.....ye are not of God" (viii. 47)—"He who is not of God heareth us not" (iv. 6).

"Walk while ye have the light.....he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (xii. 35)—"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship.....But he that hateth his brother walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth" (i. 7; ii. 11).

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you" (xiii. 33)—"Little children, it is the last hour" (ii. 18).

"A new commandment I give unto you" (xiii. 34)—"Again, a new commandment write I unto you" (ii. 8).

"Even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (xiii. 34)—"If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (iv. 11).

"And whatsoever ye ask in my name that will I do" (xiv. 13)—"And whatsoever ye ask we receive of him" (iii. 22).

"If ye love me ye will keep my commandments" (xiv. 15)—"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (v. 3).

"The Comforter.....even the spirit of truth" (xiv. 6)—"By this we know the spirit of truth" (iv. 6).

"If a man love me, he will keep my word" (xiv. 23)—"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God" (ii. 5).

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (xv. 5)—"He that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him" (iii. 24).

"These things have I spoken unto you.....that your joy may be fulfilled" (xv. 11)—"And these things we write that your joy may be fulfilled" (ii. 4).

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (xv. 13)—"Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us" (iii. 16).

"If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before you" (xv. 18)—"Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you" (iii. 13).

"If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world.....therefore the world hateth you" (xv. 19)—"They are of the world; therefore speak they as of the world" (iv. 5).

"But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (xvi. 33)—"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (v. 4).

33)—"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (v. 4).

"Even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (xvii. 21)—"He that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And.....he abideth in us" (iii. 24).

"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (xviii. 37)—"Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth" (iii. 19).

When commenting on the grand oration of Jesus which fills four and a half chapters of the Fourth Gospel, I remarked that no one having heard that oration but once could keep it in his memory for years, and then write it down verbatim. We now see that the speech was not a question of memory at all. The pseudo-John simply composed all the sayings himself, using his customary language when speaking or writing on the Christian religion.

ABRACADABRA.

A Valiant Freethought Editor.

LATE reports through the London *Freethinker* had raised hopes for the recovery of its editor, G. W. Foote, from his long illness. These signs of improvement are often deceptive. Recalling the death of E. M. Macdonald, then editor of the *Truthseeker*, six years ago, we remember that in the number preceding that which recorded his end, he announced that he was "better" and "encouraged." It would appear that sometimes the return of pulse, temperature, and respiration to the normal may indicate weakness rather than strength.

Mr. Foote was within two years of the age at which his great predecessor, Charles Bradlaugh, died. Less than Bradlaugh in stature, he was still a man of rugged build, and with the care which he might have taken of his health he should have been good for more years of life. However, the travel, exposure, and disregard of bodily well-being necessitated by his work as a Freethought lecturer and leader, may be pleaded in his behalf. It was not true of him that all a man hath he will give for his life. All that he had he was willing to give to the cause, and this included his time, strength, great abilities as writer and orator—"yea, and his life also."

Mr. Foote made but one visit to America. It was in 1896, the year of the death of Samuel P. Putnam, which took place during his stay. Our personal recollections of the man are pleasant to dwell upon. Herbert Spencer, in commenting upon his own visit to America, said that Englishmen abroad had gained for their race the name of being critical, refractory, and hard to please; and he fancied that he had himself done something to maintain the reputation of his countrymen in that respect. Mr. Foote, on the contrary, proved to be readily adaptable to things as he found them. Even his speech did not betray him. In testimony of this we may reproduce some words written of him when memory was fresh. In some "observations" (with the production of which it is likely the name of the present editor of this paper has long been dissociated) we said:—

"Personally, Mr. Foote is handsomer than he looks—that is, than he looks in any of his pictures. He would be taken for a doctor, or at least a professor, since he has the manner of the learned. He is cosmopolitan, though, and might be an American, or a German except for his speech, which is United States with only occasional lapses into English. He brought the essential number of h's with him, and uses them in their appropriate connections. His dress is not peculiar. He is a man above nationality, so far as one can judge. On all topics of interest he is radical to the verge of reasonableness, and his thought is trammelled only by obstructive facts. Wherever he may go, he will not attract attention as a 'stranger in these parts.'"

Or again:—

"The word 'imperturbable' describes him fairly. Other Englishmen, I have observed, are at times impatient. They are choleric or jolly as the occasion may dispose. Foote is bland or humorous. We were on the way to New Rochelle, N. Y., by rail to visit the Paine monument. The weather should have been pleasant,

but was not. As the train passed gloomily through the land of melancholy days, somebody apologised for the rain. Foote paid interested attention and replied, 'Well, you can't help it, you know,' and thereupon composed himself for forty winks. You see, he might have said 'beastly,' but he scored a point by not offering that criticism."

He proved splendidly entertaining and impressive as a speaker. One was not obliged to overlook mannerisms different from our own in order to appreciate his lectures, which were literary and scientific, besides being orations. He was eloquent without effort, and his climaxes were appeals to reason more than to the hearing and emotions.

Mr. Foote had to his credit two triumphs for freedom of speech and religious equality. In his trial for blasphemy he won from the Court the decision that merely to deny the truth of Christianity or to attack religion is not unlawful, so long as improper language is not held; and by the incorporation of the Secular Society, Limited, he legalised organised Freethought, as was established in the recent failure of an attempt to break the will of a Freethinker who had bequeathed his estate to that Society. This latter decision came but a short time before he died, so that if it can ever be said that death was swallowed up in victory, the words are true in his case. He had held all his life that peace would never come to the world while its inhabitants placed any interest whatever, whether of politics or religion, above the good of humanity; and at the last he closed his eyes grimly upon scenes of war that verified his assertion of the powerlessness of Christianity to achieve the brotherhood of man.

His last appearance in New York was on the evening of December 15, 1896, at a farewell dinner held in the Hotel Marlborough, in honor of himself and Charles Watts, and in memory of Samuel P. Putnam, who had just died. The closing words of his address were these:—

"We stand to-night here under the shadow of a great sorrow, but let us recollect that sorrow is not new to the world, that the world is always under the shadow of death. And let us remember that the brave dead would never wish for unmanly sorrow in the living. Let us remember that the only way we can show any affection for the dead is by loving the living. Let us remember that we can only serve the past and the future through the present. Instead of nursing our grief when a comrade falls by our side, let us look to our swords and see that they are true, in order that we may be ready to meet the enemy—Superstition—the only enemy of the human race. Instead of being saddened by unmanly grief, we may feel the influence of the dead and be ready to plunge into the thick of the fray in which our only sorrow is that they are not by our side."

Here is an admonition to his comrades in England and America, who, without mourning the dead leader in "unmanly grief," may feel and act under his influence, and thus continue the work as he would were he still with us in bodily presence and strength.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Historical Value of the Gospels.—II.

(Continued from p. 749.)

FROM the foregoing summary it will be gathered that only two strata in the Gospel narratives can with certainty be assigned to the first century, viz., Mark's Gospel (except the last twelve verses, which are admittedly an interpolation), and the common element in "Matthew" and "Luke" (Q). Mark, we have seen, after serving as interpreter to Peter, subsequently wrote his Gospel at Rome, probably about A D 70-85. The "sayings" used by the other Synoptics in common may have taken shape in Palestine about the same date, or a little earlier or later. In no case have we any record of the acts or teaching of Jesus dating from less than forty years or so after the crucifixion.

It will be clear that this dispenses us from the necessity of accepting as historical any material which is only to be found in either "Matthew" or

"Luke." It is, of course, possible that the compilers of these Gospels, as we have them, used, in some cases, matter which had floated down from the first century, independently of Mark and of the earlier written "sayings." We have, however, nothing to go upon but probability here; and we are justified in rejecting as a late accretion any incident or saying which we find only in one of these two Gospels, and which we have not any special reason to believe to be authentic. Thus we may set aside the legends of the infancy of Jesus, the episode of Peter's attempt to walk on the water (Matt. xiv. 28-31), the passage about Peter and the keys (Matt. xvi. 17-19), the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth (Matt. xvii. 24-27), the procedure for dealing with an impenitent "brother" (Matt. xviii. 16-18), the suicide of Judas (Matt. xxvii. 8-10), the dream of Pilate's wife (Matt. xxvii. 19), Pilate washing his hands (Matt. xxvii. 24-25), the resurrection of the "saints" after the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. xxvii. 52-53), the guard set at the tomb of Jesus (Matt. xxvii. 62-66), and the apparition of the angel (Matt. xxviii. 2-4). All these passages are peculiar to "Matthew," and seem to have been inserted in the Gospel by the final compiler in the second century. Even "Luke" knows nothing of them, or gives a quite different version. Some of these embellishments in "Matthew" seem to suggest that this Gospel took its final shape at Rome; the privileged position attributed to Peter, for example, may have been invented to support the claims of the bishop of Rome to superiority, even at that early date.

Similarly, in "Luke" there are various passages which we may reject outright, so far as their historical value is concerned. Besides the infancy legends, these include the miracle of the draught of fishes (Luke v. 1-10), the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke vii. 11-17), the story of the ten lepers (Luke xvii. 11-19), the bloody sweat in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 44), and almost the whole of "Luke's" account of the crucifixion and resurrection (Luke xxiii. and xxiv.). There is, however, a great deal of other matter peculiar to "Luke," mostly contained in chapters x. to xvii., which, from its volume and homogeneous tendency, seems to point to an independent source used by him, rather than to ordinary invention or accretion. The matter in question contains a large number of sayings and parables attributed to Jesus, but with an extreme anti-Jewish tendency (see in particular the parables of the good Samaritan, Luke x. 30-37, the "master of the house," Luke xiii. 25-30, the prodigal son, Luke xv. 11-32, and the nobleman who received a kingdom, Luke xix. 11-27). If this material, as seems probable, was drawn by the writer of the Third Gospel from an existing documentary source, it was evidently from some collection of discourses used by the extreme anti-Jewish, or Pauline, party in the Church, and not known, or not accepted, by the other Gospel-writers. We know that the heretic Marcion, in the middle of the second century, aimed at destroying all traces of Judaism in Christianity, and also that he was accused by Irenæus, who wrote a generation later, of circulating a "mutilated" Gospel of "Luke" which supported his own views. There is, however, some reason to suppose that Marcion's Gospel was the original in this case, and "Luke's" derived from it. The anti-Jewish document, then, which "Luke" used in compiling his Gospel, may actually have been this heretical work of Marcion. As a vehicle of history, its value would not be very great.

We may now return to the consideration of what we have seen to be the real first-century strata in the Synoptic Gospels, viz., Mark, and the mass of sayings which appear in both "Matthew" and "Luke." Although we have seen that these materials actually date from the first century, it must not be supposed that they are therefore to be accepted without reserve as history. Even the fact of Mark's relations with Peter, if accepted, gives us absolutely no guarantee of this. We know that Mark, for example, has preserved numerous accounts of miracles which, to a modern mind, are absolutely incredible and contrary

to the known laws of nature, such as the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the stilling of the tempest, and the walking on the waves. There is nothing surprising in this, when we consider the ease with which miracles were, and are, manufactured and believed in the East, and that between Jesus and the date of Mark's Gospel more than forty years had elapsed in which the inventive faculty could have full play, unchecked by any written record. The fact need not lead us to the lengths to which some critics have gone, who deny the historical existence of Jesus altogether. The lives of other religious worthies, such as Apollonius of Tyana, Mohammed, and St. Francis, abound with incredible incidents, without our being compelled on that account to doubt that they lived.

The only criterion, therefore, of the historical character of this or that incident in the life of Jesus, is probability pure and simple. In some cases an incident is an obvious invention; in others, there appear strong motives for invention, to say the least. Others, on the contrary, can hardly be supposed to have been invented by Christians, who alone would be tempted to invent anything. It is improbable, for example, that the fact of the crucifixion was invented. To this fact, moreover, we have the additional testimony of Paul, who wrote from twenty to thirty years after the occurrence, and who knew the principal disciples of Jesus.

By applying the rules of probability to Mark's Gospel, we are able to determine at any rate some outline of the facts of Jesus' career. In this, of course, the very crudities of Mark are of assistance. When Mark relates something which, so far from favoring the supernatural view of Jesus, actually goes to discredit it, we may safely use it as a nucleus of historical fact.

According to Mark (who knows nothing, of course, of the Virgin Birth, or the infancy of Jesus), the founder of Christianity was a disciple of John the Baptist, who was apparently an Essene preacher in the reign of Tiberius, and who is referred to by Josephus. According to the Gospel, "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in the Jordan." There seems no reason to doubt this. Anyone setting out to invent a life of Jesus would certainly have insisted on his originality.

The next piece of undoubted history in Mark occurs in chapter iii. 20-21. According to this, the friends of Jesus, hearing of his activities, "went out to lay hold on him; for they said, He is beside himself." This would not have been invented; a fabricator might have made the enemies of Jesus take this line, but not his friends. The incident is also intrinsically probable.

We probably have another touch of history in Mark iv. 10-12, which records that Jesus' public teaching was cast entirely in the form of parables, while his real meaning was unfolded only to his immediate followers. This, it may be observed, contradicts and discredits the Fourth Gospel, which gives whole chapters of direct doctrinal teaching alleged to have been delivered by Jesus to "the Jews" or "the multitude." If the question is raised, why Mark's statement should be accepted here rather than the other, we may remark that a fabricator would not go to the trouble of concocting out of his head a number of more or less obscure parables, unless it had previously been a generally known fact that the parable had been Jesus' special form of discourse. John the Presbyter, setting out to forge a Gospel in the name of the apostle John in the interests of a particular view of Jesus' personality, did not trouble about parables, but put directly into the mouth of Jesus what he wanted to say. That the historical Jesus, as a matter of fact, did speak in parables is far more probable than the contrary hypothesis.

It by no means follows, of course, that all the parables given in the Gospels are genuine parables of Jesus. Many probably are; for the temptation to fabricate parables, for the early Christians, would be a good deal less than the temptation, e.g., to fabricate

miracles, prophecies, or points of doctrine. It is likely enough, indeed, that a larger proportion of the genuine teaching of Jesus is to be found by examining the parables than by any other method.

The parables given by Mark are few. The first one, the parable of the sower, may be genuine, though we have no means of ascertaining this. The only point in it which, if genuine, would throw any special light on the matter of Jesus' propaganda is the allusion to the seed that fell among thorns, stated to denote those whose conversion is frustrated by "the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in." This would correspond with the hypothesis that Jesus, like his master John the Baptist, was under the influence, to begin with at any rate, of the Essenes, and endeavored to found a community of poor men who had renounced the ties of property and the family, and lived in a sort of wandering communistic colony. This is, in fact, the most plausible theory of the original nature of Christianity, as distinct from the doctrines of the Churches, that can be formulated. It is evident that Jesus and his immediate disciples had no thought of abolishing the Jewish religion. The saying, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall," which is found in both "Matthew" and "Luke," and belonged therefore to the early stratum of "sayings," discourages the idea that Jesus attacked in any way the religious beliefs or practices of the majority of the Jews. A propagandist communism, however, quite apart from any religious unorthodoxy, would set against it the whole established order of society, and would account for the hostility felt by the Pharisees and Sadducees to Jesus and his followers. An examination of the early stratum of discourses, used by both "Matthew" and "Luke," and termed "Q," shows that the impression of Jesus left upon the mind of the early church of Palestine, at any rate in the latter part of the first century, was that of one who had made open war upon property and the family. There are certain sayings, moreover, which, by their very harshness or oddity, incline the reader to doubt whether they could have been pure inventions. *E.g.*, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth! I came not to send peace, but a sword! I came to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." The two anecdotes of Jesus which contain the saying about "having not where to lay his head," and the injunction to "follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead," respectively, also form part of "Q," and appear genuine. The latter particularly, with its look of brutality, would not have been invented for Jesus by a later age. We know that Paul's converts were enjoined to observe family duties strictly.

(To be continued.) ROBERT ARCH.

Obituary.

At Lawnswood Cemetery, Leeds, on November 18, the remains of Matt. Sollit, aged 75, were cremated. He was an ardent Atheist and philosophical Anarchist, and for many years was conspicuous at every gathering where propagandist work could be done. In early life he was a sailor, and visited nearly every quarter of the globe, storing his receptive mind with varied knowledge, which was afterwards humorously and persistently communicated to his fellow-men whenever an opportunity presented itself. He was a brave and sturdy soldier of freedom, and died, as the result of an accident, professing the principles he loved to expound. A goodly number of friends and comrades braved the inclement weather to pay a last tribute of respect to the deceased, and Mr. T. A. Jackson pronounced an eloquent address over the body prior to the cremation. A slight exhibition of Christian bigotry passed almost unnoticed on this mournful occasion. The funeral service had to be conducted outside the crematorium chamber in cold and snowy weather, the orthodox official probably thinking that the occasional use of the room for religious performances should secure it from the contamination of a Secularist audience.—G. W.

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COUNTRY.
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BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall); C. Cohen, 3, "George William Foote: Freethinker and Pioneer"; 7, "Mr. Balfour on God and Man."

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