

THE Freethinker

Founded 1881 by G. W. FOOTE.

Edited by CHAPMAN COHEN.

VOL. XXXV.—No. 49

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1915

PRICE TWOPENCE

No lie you can speak or act, but it will come after longer or shorter circulation, like a bill on Nature's reality, and be presented there for payment, with the answer "no effects."—THOMAS CARLYLE.

France and the Revival of Religion.

THERE are some stories that one doesn't need to wait for evidence to contradict. They bear on their face proof of untruthfulness, and to give them credence is evidence of one's mental incapacity to distinguish between the inherently probable and the inherently improbable. No one, for example, who is conversant with the facts of historical psychology would ever dream of seriously discussing whether two thousand years ago a certain person walked on the sea, had a lengthy interview with the Devil, or after he was dead—really and scientifically dead—came to life again. He would not ponder whether these things were true; all he would consider is the question of how people came to believe them to be true. Settle that question and you have settled everything. Lose sight of it, confine yourself to weighing the evidence for and against an inherently stupid and improbable tale, such as the Mons Angels, or any of those mentioned above, and you give absurdity a conviction of its rationality. There is only one sure way of killing a ridiculous story and that is to treat it as such from the very outset.

So when reports of a great religious revival began to appear in the religious press, one didn't need to start an inquiry as to their accuracy. As a matter of fact, I have had numerous letters from France that gave a flat contradiction to the report, but these were, from one point of view, quite unnecessary. One recognised the story as belonging to a class that is always on the borderland of existence awaiting the chance of coming to life. It belonged to the stock mythology of the pulpit—although it should be noted that the French clergy do not appear to have talked about the French Army becoming more religious. It was the English clergy who found the French piety increasing; but it may be that the French clergy returned the compliment. If they did the motive on both sides would be clear. We know how much religion our soldiers possess, and we know what kind of an increase there has been. The French people are probably as well informed concerning their own Army. So it was hoped that the spirit of emulation would be aroused by each holding up the other as an example. It is like miracles, which always happen somewhere else, to someone else, and at some other time.

Of course, those soldiers who took their religion seriously before the War would probably continue on the same lines. But that is all. At any rate, the notion that life in the Trenches would make people more religious is intrinsically absurd. A plunge into barbarism, such as all warfare involves, may accentuate the superstition of already superstitious natures, just as the War seems to have deepened the disregard for truth which is habitual with a number of the clergy during normal times. On the other hand, I know that the War has cleared from some

minds the last shreds of belief in the value of Christianity, and has seriously weakened it with others.

If one could be certain that the stories of increased religion amongst our soldiers were false, one could be still more certain when they were told them about France. French Freethought is made of sterner stuff than these tales would indicate. The French intellect is one of the most fearless and one of the most logical in Europe. It is never afraid of its conclusions, and seldom shrinks from pushing its ideas to their logical issue. This is, indeed, the cardinal fact about the French intellect which the average Englishman, with his eternal fumbling after a compromise, and his constant distrust of intellectual processes, never understands and never appreciates. It is his failure in this direction which leads him to accept the typical Frenchman as impracticable, flighty, and revolutionary, when in truth the French people are among the most direct, the most practical, and, fundamentally, the most conservative in Europe. The Englishman is apt to pride himself on being less "flighty," when in reality he is afflicted with mental timidity, and more practical, when his dislike to logical issues leads to much-needed reforms being delayed for two or three generations.

I have allowed myself to wander a little from the main thread of what I had in mind when I started writing, but I think that what has been said is really *apropos* of what is to follow. The other day, the Rev. Hugh Chapman was one of the speakers at a Lyceum Club gathering. When he was at the Front, a little while ago, he "asked General Joffre if religion had increased in the French Army since the War. General Joffre shook his dear old grey head, and answered cheerfully, 'No, but obedience and love of country; they are enough.'"

That is quite definite, and quite clear. And it is quite authoritative. If there is anyone who knows the French soldier, it is Joffre. If there is one leader in France that the Army venerates and trusts, it is Joffre. And he says there has been no increase in religion in the French Army. There has been nothing but increased obedience and a deeper love of country. And that, says Joffre, is enough. He does not insult his soldiers, as some English Christians have insulted ours, by telling them that they would do their work better if they trusted Jesus or prayed fervently. With a Frenchman's directness of mind, he named the two cardinal virtues in a soldier—love of country and obedience. All the rest follows. General Joffre's declaration ought to be enough to silence even English preachers. But will it? We shall see; and meanwhile it will be well to make a note of the French Commander-in-Chief's remark.

There has been no revival of religion in France, but there has been an attempt to prepare the way for a revival, and that preparation is of tremendous significance to the future of French Freethought. When the Church was disestablished in France, the Church met that move in the only way in which it could be met. It set to work to strengthen its hold on the people of the country, and, above all, to control as much as was possible of the educational machinery of the country. Of course, the elementary schools of France remain secular, but there are the higher schools, and, above all, the military schools and training colleges. In all of these there has been (if my information is correct, and I have no

reason to think it otherwise), of late years, systematic attempts—only too often unsuccessful—to get sound, trustworthy Catholics appointed as teachers and professors. Nothing can be said against the efficiency of these teachers. The Church is far too clever to send out inefficient agents. But they are there to serve the interests of the Church, and in numberless ways they do serve it. So well do they serve it that, in a large number of cases, Catholics are advanced over non-Catholics, and these latter are often, because of their non-religion, subjected to a boycott, in what are, avowedly, Secular institutions.

Now, it is extremely probable that the Church in France expects in a time of war to reap the benefit of what it has done in times of peace. It knows that a time of war is a time of social disorganisation, of moral anarchy, of a step backward in the scale of civilisation. It will not mean that Freethinkers will become reconverted to Christianity. French Freethought is of too intellectual a cast for that. But it does mean that the difficulties of Freethought propaganda will be greater for some time, while the social disorganisation and moral anarchy will strengthen the superstition which is always present with the mass of people in every country. And it is during this period of the War, and of the time immediately following the War, that the Church hopes to regain some of its lost power. Whether it will succeed, or with what measure of success its efforts will be rewarded, remains to be seen. But if it does meet with some success, I, for one, shall not be greatly surprised.

Not that any success it may meet with can alter the final result. The power of the Church of Rome has always rested on the fact that it could afford to wait. And against opposing Churches that was a very powerful factor. But in Freethought it is faced by an enemy that can afford to outwait it. The Roman Church has over and over again worn down a man or an organisation. But the one thing it has always been powerless against is the slow but persistent evolution of human intelligence. That, sooner or later, triumphs. Our defeats are never more than incidents in a great campaign. And in that contest we have with us the strength of indestructible facts and the insistent logic of life.

C. COHEN.

What Has Jesus Christ Done for the World?

IN the New Testament Jesus Christ is portrayed as the Savior of the world. The apostle Peter declared (Acts iv. 12) that "in none other is there salvation," and that "neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." Jesus is reported to have said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32); and prior to his Ascension he is represented as instructing his disciples thus: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). Paul gloried in the Gospel because he believed it to be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. i. 16). The Gospel Jesus regarded himself as the Savior of the world; and it was as such he was preached by the apostles. He described himself as omnipotent, all-influential in heaven and on earth; and it was as such that mankind were invited to believe in him. Well, has he ever done anything to verify the high claims which he made for himself, and which have always been made for him by his ordained ministers? When his hour came, he was lifted up from the earth, but has he drawn all men unto himself in consequence? All nations have not become his disciples, nor is there any likelihood of their soon doing so. It is extremely difficult

to ascertain how many Christians there are in the world, as no two statistics agree. According to *Chambers' Gazetteer of the World* for 1906, they only number 327,000,000; while *Whitaker's Almanac* for 1915 gives their number as 564,400,000. We will assume the accuracy of the figures supplied by the latter authority, and so admit that there are nearly seven hundred millions of Christians on the planet to-day, but we must not forget that there are upwards of one thousand and six hundred millions of non-Christians. Not far from two-thirds of the world's population are still, after two thousand years of vigorous evangelism, untouched by the Christian faith. This is wholly incredible on the assumption that Christ lives and has at his command all power in heaven and on earth. Had the Church been the habitation of the Holy Ghost, she would have conquered the whole world long ago. Her inability to do that proves her human origin and nature. As a purely human institution she has succeeded amazingly well; but as an alleged embodiment on earth of heaven's omnipotent love she has been a total failure.

Let us now glance at that portion of the world called Christendom. The men of God assure us that Christ won Europe some fifteen centuries ago, and has held it ever since; but what has he done for Europe? Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire early in the fourth century. It is wholly immaterial to our argument what the moral condition of the empire was prior to its establishment, the only really important point being what effect its adoption had upon the life and character of the people. Baronius was a celebrated Catholic ecclesiastical historian of the sixteenth century, who, at the request of the Pope, wrote a history of the Church down to the year 1198. When he reached the sixth century of the State establishment of Christianity, this is what he was obliged to say, Catholic though he was:—

"The tenth century was an iron age, barren of all goodness; a leaden age, abounding in all wickedness; and a dark age, remarkable above all others for the scarcity of writers and men of learning."

That there is no exaggeration in that statement is proved by the fact that Baronius wrote his *Annales* in reply to a Protestant history, entitled *Magdeburg Centuries*. The truth is that for six or seven centuries the world grew steadily worse under Christianity. During the tenth century, twenty-five popes and anti-popes sat in Peter's chair, and the worst forms of immorality and outrage reigned supreme in all departments of life. For more than fifty years the Church was governed by three notorious prostitutes, a noble and wealthy widow named Theodora and her two daughters, Theodora and Marozia. Pope Sergius III. was the paramour of Marozia, and Pope John X. paramour of Theodora the younger. Marozia caused this John to be imprisoned and put to death in the castle of St. Angelo. A son of Marozia became Pope as John XI., and a little later a boy of eighteen was raised to the papal chair as John XII., who, after a tempestuous career, was put to death by a man whose wife his Holiness had seduced. The tenth century has justly been characterised as "the most repulsive in the Christian annals."

Let us now jump to the fifteenth century and see what difference Christ had made during the four intervening centuries. There was a slight improvement in the second half of the eleventh century, but the twelfth was notorious for the irregularities of the clergy, who "saw no sin in simple fornication." The monasteries and nunneries were abodes of vice and corruption. The thirteenth century, in spite of the preaching of St. Francis, St. Antony, and St. Dominic, three of the most illustrious saints, has been described as "an age of violence, fraud, and impurity, such as can hardly be conceived now." The "shameless licentiousness" of the Scotch clergy moved the Pope to angry denunciation. The fourteenth century was characterised by "extraordinary license and crime," but the fifteenth exceeded all its predecessors in moral degradation and shamelessness. The popes of

this age were notoriously wanton, dishonest, cynical, and sanguinary. Rome touched a lower depth of depravity now than it had it ever done before. Leo X. did not even believe in the doctrines he was ordained to teach, while his character was abominable.

Is it not undeniable that Christ utterly failed to redeem and ennoble Europe during the eleven hundred years of his nominal supremacy in the West? The Ages of Faith were Dark Ages, when clergy and laity alike openly wallowed in moral filth. The fifteenth century, however, marked the commencement of a new movement in the direction of Humanism, which inevitably grew out of, and was the vital element in, the revival of learning. Naturally the reawakening of interest in Greek philosophy and poetry, and the fresh cultivation of the old classic spirit of inquiry, diverted men's minds from theology to literature, and through literature to science. The Church, whose word had been absolute law on every question so long, began to lose its hold upon the minds and consciences of the people, who, ere long, started to ask questions, to criticise, even to doubt. A process of general secularisation was initiated, and it has continued to work down to our own day, and even the Church itself has at last become, in many instances, more secular than spiritual. But the curious thing is that, in proportion as faith and spirituality lost ground, social life became saner and wholesomer. It is true that the majority of the people still profess, in a more or less lukewarm manner, their faith in Christ and his Church. Most of the Powers engaged in the present War are distinctly Christian, and are fighting in the name and for the glory of the Christian God. But even while the War is being conducted on the most cruel and savage lines, there is in all the countries affected an undercurrent of humanistic disapproval of the "game of beasts," and a strong yearning for peace.

To the question, What has Jesus Christ done for the world? the only true answer is, *Nothing but harm.* The "Fables of the Above," as Meredith tells us, are but opiates which minister false comfort to those who accept them. Strength for the conflicts of life they have never bestowed. The result of reliance upon God is weakness. It is the self-reliant alone who ever grow strong. Believers have been holding myriads of prayer-meetings for sixteen months to ask God for a speedy victory, and the War still goes on. Germany prays, as well as Great Britain, and each country believes that its cause is just; but the Prince of Peace takes absolutely no notice of either. He does nothing, never has done, and never will do anything for the world.

J. T. LLOYD.

Bible Society Balderdash.

"A heterogenous mass of clotted bosh."—THOMAS CARLYLE.

"The only hope for the future of society lies in the absolute extermination of Christianity."—G. W. FOOTE.

AGREEABLY to the law of supply and demand, the annual report of the British and Foreign Bible Society makes its appearance this year with the martial title, *The Book and the Sword*. In the piping times of peace, less militant titles are chosen, and less insistence is laid upon the warlike character of the Bible, which is often called the work of the "Prince of Peace." However, variety is the spice of life, and the latest report covers so various a field that it appeals to the taste of the jaded Freethinker, bored to distraction by the multifarious financial appeals from the innumerable churches, chapels, and tin-tabernacles of Christendom.

The editor of the report is a brilliant journalist, and he relieves the monotony of his continuous appeal for cash from his readers by introducing quotations from all kinds of writers, some of whom one hardly expects to find in a pious work of this kind. A pronounced Freethinker like Swinburne is dragged in by the heels to bolster the cause of superstition, and even Tolstol's fiction is laid under

contribution. Apt quotations are made from many authors, from honest John Bunyan to the ever-popular Longfellow, with the unerring skill of the patent medicine advertisers, who attract readers to their pills and potions by all the resources of literary artifice.

As an example of the up-to-date method of conveying information, one may refer to the statement that in the year 1914-1915 the British and Foreign Bible Society issued "the wonderful number of 10,162,413 copies of the Scriptures," an increase of 1,200,000 over the previous year. These, we are informed, were "sold at nominal prices all over the mission-fields of the world." The total issues by the Society since its foundation have exceeded 263,000,000 copies, of which more than 90,000,000 have been in English. The Society's list now includes versions in 487 distinct forms of speech, and the expenditure last year for translating, revising, printing, and binding was £129,062. By the most stringent war-time economy the Society's expenditure was brought down to £268,648, during a year "without parallel in living man's experience," and, as the report adds, "we can only praise God, because his own right hand has guided us and his holy arm has carried us through."

This is a decided mixture of keen business and luscious piety; but the reader must remember that the report is intended to invite subscriptions. In previous years the public used to be informed courteously that H.I.M. the German Emperor and the Viceroy of India, and other notable Christians, had contributed; but this year these important names have mysteriously disappeared. Their place is taken by His Grace the "Archbishop of Abyssinia," who has given his sacred "approval and aid" (amount not stated); and the European democracy is represented by a motley selection, including an "old-age pensioner" who "saved sixpence every week." Quite a touch of pathos is introduced by a Hertfordshire laundry-woman, who sent "56 threepenny pieces, 2 sixpences," and the following illiterate and heart-rending note:—

"Please excuse the small peaces of money, but we found out that god was more plesse with silver than copers, so we promised he should have all the threepenny peaces that came in our way. We are very poor, but we give them freely for his dear name."

The Chinese Christians do not appear to be so liberal, for we read that "a restaurant keeper" was fascinated by the genealogy in St. Matthew's Gospel, and is now "living a consistent Christian life," but this pious Celestial does not figure in the subscription list, so his conversion is, necessarily, incomplete.

One thing the report brings out quite clearly, and that is, the Germans are not all Atheists. The report states:—

"During the first eight months of war, and mainly through the kindness of friendly Germans, 360,000 Testaments and Gospels went out from our Berlin depot."

More testimony is given by a German pastor, confined in a detention camp in England, who received a consignment of books. He writes, "The Testaments and Gospels went like hot-cross buns, and I have none left. The men are continually asking for more." More convincing still is the evidence of a German missionary in Madras, who sent ten rupees, and added, "We would rather starve than forget the Bible Society." But the words of the editor of the report settle the matter, for he must know where the Society's work is done:—

"No feature in the War has been more grievous to English Christians than the hostility which it has created between the religious and theological life of England and Germany."

These are but a few specimens of the gems to be found in this work. That the appeal is worth issuing is evident, for the balance-sheet shows that the receipts last year totalled £266,734, and the expenses £268,648, and legacies received amounted to £57,665. The report itself costs a shilling, so that it is evident that the directors are as business like as they are pious.

These figures should make any Freethinker pause and reflect that Rationalist propaganda has to make headway not only against gross ignorance, but against a most heavily endowed system of superstition. The British and Foreign Bible Society is but one of many similar institutions which have enormous incomes. Hardly a week passes but one or the other of these organisations receives legacies. Against all this Free-thought is most severely handicapped. Its publications are boycotted in public libraries, and few booksellers have courage to stock them. In spite of it all, we are making headway. If Freethinkers would systematically support their own institutions there would soon be a great alteration, and the struggle would be carried on under far more favorable conditions. What is needed is continuous support, for spasmodic supplies embarrass rather than help. If every Freethinker contributed a small sum regularly for propagandist purposes, more literature could be issued and put into circulation. Every Free-thought pamphlet, and every copy of the *Freethinker*, are ambassadors for reason against superstition. In fighting this battle we are opposing a superstition entrenched behind mountains of money-bags. In money lies the power of the Bible, but, as Shakespeare reminds us, gold can "knit and break religions."

MIMNERMUS.

Life in a Spanish Monastery.

La Vida en los Conventos y Seminarios. Luis Astrana Marín. (Madrid: Gonsalez, Colección Mercurio.) 3½ pesetas.

A CONVENT not only means a holy habitation reserved for the "spouses of the Lord." It also implies a monastery of men devoted to the service of God, with an educational establishment attached, wherein the mind of the pupils is warped and softened in a religious direction. It is in the latter sense that the word is used in this work and in the present article.

Life in the convents, or monasteries and seminaries, of Spain, as depicted in this fascinating book, is something worse than a living death. Senor Astrana Marín, who tells us that he began to bear his cross at ten years of age, shows that existence in these haunts of sloth and superstition.....and other things is tantamount to a prolonged process of intellectual and moral suicide. His was not a cross willingly borne; a sound natural instinct, which he imbibed from his Freethinking uncle, made him rebel at the outset against the pestilent parental obsession that he had a distinct predilection to become a priest. Everybody around him repeated the refrain: "He is a very religious boy; he is a child who has received a call." The protégé of heaven began at once to feel quite bewildered. "My God!" said he, "what is this vocation, this call?" When he asked some of his little college friends what it all meant, one of them said, perhaps mockingly: "A call? Why, it is an invitation to dinner." And so, for the solution of his doubts, he went to the parish priest, and asked him to tell him what "a call" implied. "My son, a call is—so I think it is defined—a supernatural light, by means of which God inspires those whom he calls to enter a certain state or to make choice of a career. If you have received a call to become a priest, you should feel happy that the Lord doth guide thee by such a salutary path." And thus it came about that, after being badgered by his mother and castigated by the paternal rod because of his youthful inability to hear "the call," and after finding that everybody shared the opinion of the good priest, the brow-beaten and hypnotised favorite of heaven thought it best to agree that he really felt an intense aspiration towards a sacerdotal career! Acquiescence, at least, meant an end of the beatings which they gave him at home for refusing, and gave him the promise of decent treatment at the hands of everybody about him. But it also meant that his young life was to be carried out for burial during several years in a convent of barefoot Franciscan friars, men whose

souls, as he shows us, were as bare as their feet and as hard as their hearts.

The holy friars, whom our author saw within two hours of his appearance at the convent, were beings that seemed to have floated into Spain out of Dante's Inferno:—

"It was not wonder which was produced in my mind by these Cyclopean-framed Friars, so shallow and vain-glorious, from the clothes of each one of whom there was enough material to dress and enough filth to manure ten countries; but fear and abject terror—a terror that was deep-rooted, that froze your very marrow and sent your blood to your temples and made your cheeks purple with horror. There can be no doubt that, judging by the respect which the friars inspired, they must have been possessors of colossal talent!"

And as we shall see from these memorials of the author's collegiate life, men of this type are the gluttonous, narrow-minded, mediæval sensualists into whose hands the education of the rising generation is still committed in the Spain of this twentieth century.

Senor Marín gives an amusing picture of the inanities and solemn puerilities which constitute the elements of education in Spain. Before he was allowed to pass in and take up quarters in his cell, he had to be examined. The examination ran on the lines of nearly all the preliminary examinations in Spain. They asked him a few questions in his badly learnt Castilian Grammar, and told him to decline the plural of *unusquisque* in Latin, "all this being done with the exclusive object, so far as I could observe, of discovering whether my tongue would stumble in answering their questions." Then followed the extraction of a square root, and afterwards of a cube root, "but although I was able to resolve them arithmetically, I knew nothing of their utility, and could not think what advantage they could give me in after life."

Then came half-an-hour's fatiguing questions about the Holy Scriptures and Christian doctrine, "to which I replied at top speed, relying not on my good memory—which I never had—but on the mechanical accuracy acquired during the million and one times in which I had to rattle it off at school."

In Spain, knowledge of Sacred History and the Catechism is the Open Sesame—so Senor Marín tells us—not only to an ecclesiastical career but to the Bachillaureat. You may be wise in a thousand other directions, but if your answers on these two heads do not satisfy the examiners, you can neither serve God nor man in the land of Torquemada.

Having duly passed through the ordeal in the routine manner beloved by the ecclesiastical order (or disorder) of intellect, his candidature was approved. His entry into the convent was signalled by disgraceful ragging scenes, accompanied by brutalities of a coarse and indelicate character (p. 39).

From the description of the methods employed at the convent in teaching Latin, it is evident that the spirit of Squeers, the renowned pedagogue of Dotheboys Hall, is not dead; it is merely exported to Spain, and domiciled there in the holy haunts of ignorance and religion.

On the intellectual side the teaching, both in method and subject-matter, was sterilising—educational in no true sense, because it sought to force knowledge into bewildered minds rather than educe the latent powers and capacities of the learner. On the physical side, things were quite as bad. In the refectory, the Friars were adepts in the art of snatching away your plate and its original contents before you could land a few pieces in your expectant mouth. The result upon the inmates was a scramble against time, in order to gluttonously bolt their food before the holy harpies could pounce upon it. Another institution was the dungeon to which refractory or slothful students were consigned—a tumbledown, semi-obscure habitation, which was just underneath the reception-room. The author—and victim—describes the place as only comparable with some Siberian cell. As for the castigations that were administered under the penal system pre-

vailing at the convent, the author even now can only recall them to mind with horror and indignation.

The holy Cenobites, who in this place gave themselves airs of self-flagellating mortifiers of their rather greasy flesh, were careful to make ostentatious show in their cells of certain formidable blood-reeking "disciplines," or scourges. The blood must have been distilled from their noses or from the animals which they had sacrificed in the *cuisine*, for Senor Marin declares that diligent scrutiny made by him and others failed to discover any evidence of the famous scourgings and torturings which these devotees of religion were supposed to inflict upon their holy bodies. Nobody had ever seen them at the game, and nobody knew anybody who had witnessed the demoralising performance. The holy martyrs wore hair shirts sprinkled with blood, and loudly bemoaned their self-inflicted wounds and described their bodies as universally bruised. They related their temptations like visionaries that they were—or as they sought to appear. As Senor Marin remarks, these men must have entered into some compact with the Devil, for notwithstanding their temptations and flagellations, their fastings, their exorcisings, and their acts of penitence, a heavier and more robust brood of men did not exist. And no wonder! They lived like fighting-cocks! "Any king would have envied the life they led," says Senor Marin (p. 80), and the details given show that a replete and self-indulgent life was theirs.

Senor Marin lived amongst them for six years, and his description (pp. 78-80) of the high old time they had—their stomachs pampered with ham, chocolate, fruit of all kinds, liqueurs, and pastry; with their gifts of cigars, cigarettes, caramels, pastilles, etc., plenteously bestowed upon them by nuns, pious women (young and old), and other admirers—gives the lie to the tear-compelling fictions which tell us how hordes of sleek, well-fed, lusty men, led by the Holy Ghost, are wont to turn their backs on the earth and their eyes unto heaven.

During the years that Senor Marin lived in the convent, he had sufficient time to gauge the true character of the monastic instruction. Its principal effect is to castrate the will and kill the conscience of the young people who are caught in its relentless toils. Senor Marin's verdict is that few of its victims escape the corrosive influence of the monastic training. Like the small-pox, it stamps its trade mark on the child's mind, and clings to him even to the tomb. "I have known," he says,—

"admirable men, excellent poets, remarkable dramatists, profound writers, men, in fact, who by their streams of science and learning, by their indomitable will that seemed to be forged to win triumph after many disillusion and failures, ought to have shown themselves cured and purged of their early religious teaching."

But, no; according to Senor Marin's experience, they all carry the hall-mark of religion branded on their brow, and their tongues will ever speak of religion, even if it only be to criticise it bitterly and execrate it. They act after the manner of birds who sing the song of liberty though walled in by the bars of their cage.

But I have lingered too long this time over these palpitating, revealing pages, which throb with the heartbeats of the sincere and powerful writer who has been called the reincarnation of Quevedo. Senor Marin has left the narrow cloister; disillusion and disgust of the sacred haunts where faith centres itself in death, and makes a fetish of it, have given to Spain a great writer and to Spanish Freethought a brilliant personality. We shall look—I think, not in vain—for fresh literary triumphs from this young and distinguished writer. Spain needs men with vision clear to see the essential facts about its worm-eaten religion, and with courage to blazon the truth abroad in burning convincing words.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

A Slave of Self.

THE wind whistled and yelped about the gables of the house. Rain lashed the window panes outside the bolted wooden shutters. The chimney was a channel of sighs. Without deliberation he drew the chair nearer the fire, and felt inclined to shiver. The elements were at war, as it is somewhat unintelligibly described; and the noise of their boisterous battlings, acting in a strange antagonistic manner to his nature, made him feel that seclusion and peace, the quiet unostentatious happiness of the fireside, were beyond praise. He was glad to be away from the din of the strife. Here he could read and think. He was selfish.

Fury astonished, and mad passion nauseated him. Hate manifesting itself in uncontrollable ebullitions, and riding on the crest of temper, provoked in him a cold sarcastic antagonism. Tempestuous turmoil, acidulated by ignorance and prejudice, made him calmly analytical; and its seemingly hopeless inevitability, so perplexing in its apparent folly, forced him to retreat into a security as remote as possible. The mad moments of mother Nature and her son, Humanity, worried him.

Underneath our altruism, he thought, as if he saw the words written on the flames that licked the darkness, what egoists we must perforce be! Beneath the trimmings of our intellectual refinements what selfishness exists. The least storm will pull the velvet cloaks from our shoulders; will tear the trappings of embroidered linen from our limbs; and leave us naked, standing amidst the cold dreary ruins of our dreams.

A burst of the gale of passion, individual or national, will heat our minds to folly, and make frigid our blood. Trivial circumstance can puncture the balloons of our ideals, and the gravitation of the commonplace draws them down to its level, where they lie, all tattered and dirty, a mass of ignoble debris, in the mire around our feet.

Bereft of our multi-colored longings, how little we are, how insignificant; how unworthy of the name, rational beings! We become individualists whose monarch is self, slaves of the ego, with no redeeming philosophy, lower even than the brute, *because* we possess a few fragments of reason wherewith to make our brutality more brutal; we become merely men, with all man's puny weaknesses and none of man's grandeur. With the loss of our more worthy reason we lose our self-respect. Thought becomes mis-shapen and contorted, spasmodic and febrile. The dignity that is admirable sways as if intoxicated, and ultimately falls, breaking into a thousand pieces on the flag-stones of reality.

Tested in the fires of life, religions crumble and disappear in the ashes and cinders, irrecongnisable from the ugliness into which they descend. Faced by the contagious fever of rushing, restless, powerful things, weak philosophies perish and picturesque visions fade. In the throes of personal and national combat with adversity, creeds pass like shades from the empty thrones of dead gods. Surrounded by the sharply pointed lance tongues of banal worry, beliefs become thin, unprofitable, a prey to palsy. Under creed draperies are the economic facts, stern and relentless, like the forces of Nature. The essentials of life are not ideals nor dreams; they are bread and clothing and happiness. To possess and secure them thieves and hypocrites are made; to add to them rogues are manufactured; and in the striving for economic comfort and luxury, justice becomes a cold statue, truth a mere picture, righteousness an unintelligible poem, and all the human sympathies pieces of tattered, moth-eaten tapestry, fit only for the walls of an unvisited museum. Economic patriotism, even, is not entirely unknown. Mammon rules more willing and unwilling devotees than all the religions that ever lingered with man on his presumed pilgrimage of life. So did the untutored thoughts dart through his mind.

Economic egoists we are; and our creeds and ideals

I cannot worship what I cannot love.—Thomas Cooper.

are pastimes indulged in the intervals of rest. Personal happiness is more than the sacrificial service of God. Individual pleasure is more than the responsibility of principle. We immolate our grand ideas on the altar of the social commonplace. Underlying all the vainglorious assumption of altruism, patriotic or social, are the cares of to-day and the preparations for to-morrow, or the pleasures of the moment.

Before this elemental egoism, religions fly like dust on the wings of the wind. The appealing poetry of the pulpit degenerates to airy nonsense when the lowermost essentials of individual and social life assert themselves. Sentimentality is whipped into an exit mawkishly ludicrous, as the deep lying truths of life enter. When the ineradicable selfishness of our natures obtrudes itself, hypocrisy of the most objectionable type discolors our beliefs; we become whited sepulchres, within which circle the bats of ignominy. Our humanistic services lose their shine in the fires of self. We are weak when the armies of little heart-breaks assail us. We are easily out apart from the greatness of our minds.

Exceptions amongst us there are, it is true. Something cataclysmic might happen were there not. But as he sat gazing into the flames of an extravagant fire that insulted distress and poverty, that contemptuously ignored all the sufferings born from war, and the anxieties still lying in the capacious, prolific womb of that monster of social progress; as he sat reclining in an easy-chair that, to many old storm-stressed folk, would appear to have come from a corner of paradise; unable to look hardly anywhere in the room, except to be delighted by glimpses of artistic loveliness, perhaps it would have been foolish of him, he thought, and unnatural, too, not to have been happy. He might profess great sympathy, tender commiseration, admirable sorrow for the suffering ones of the world. He might emphasise, with much ostentation, his eagerness to endure privation and hardship, that the cause of the people might move more smoothly and speedily to triumphant success. He might pour the burning contents of the vials of his wrath upon the heads of a parasitical priesthood, and swear to leave no stone unturned till the poison was thoroughly subdued. But the magnetic power of the ego would slowly dim the radiance of the enthusiastic thoughts, and as slowly would he resume his slavery.

The knowledge that, not very far from where he sat in the lap of luxurious comfort, many people were huddling round a half-empty grate, did not diminish his enjoyment one whit. The knowledge that poor souls were tramping in the mire and rain and gale, along a pitch black road, beneath sagging trees, and just a few yards from his chair, poverty plodding on to penury for no apparent purpose, but heightened, it seemed, the sense of self-ease. He knew that others lived in slums with plenty of trouble and a few crusts, while he dwelt among a surfeit of pleasant things. He knew the strong used unknown weapons to make the weak more pliantly submissive. He knew that Mammon held the leash of the dogs of war, the wolves of poverty, dirt, disease, and degradation. He knew that no one could be spared from the fight against the terrors of darkness. But the arms of comfort were closely twined around his neck; her soft lips were tightly pressed to his; the enervating warmth of her breast suffused his with its sensuous charm. He was imprisoned in self.

Callousness was part of survival fitness. Hard-heartedness was portion of man's inheritance. Indifference was a section of the recognition of the inevitability of wrong. Despite the flaunting of charity banners, people would not move far outside the boundaries of self to remediate distress. Compassion rarely escapes its chrysalis of words; and thanksgiving seldom guarantees a chrysalisation in deeds. There is a mighty waving of flags, a great display of decorations, many pyrotechnic illuminations of finer emotions, much hypocrisy, very little truth. The world of men has innumerable rivers intersecting it, and the waters are tinted with kind-

ness and compassion, but, if they refresh, they never cleanse; their mission is temporary, not permanent; they are all solely individual, never national, in their operations. Self is the god whom we worship.

So he communed with himself in the glow of the fire-flames. The truth could not be hidden. He confessed himself; and he found he was somewhat disinterested in the griefs of the world, in its follies, and crimes, and tragedies; quietly unconcerned in the terrible drama that heaped up burden on the shoulders of innocence; he was blissfully content to have the world shut out with the lashing, wind-wrung rain, and the raging night. These things were remote from him; he was happy, and he cared not. He was a slave of self.

He wondered; he wondered if it were really true; and a smile flickered at the corners of his lips: for in the depths of his being, somewhere he could not locate, there stirred a hatred of the things that swept man into the torrent that plunged disastrously over the precipice of moral death, a hatred that slept only in his sleep, a hatred that, even now, as he thought of it, came surging up, avowing itself an enemy to his slavery. Like two well-matched combatants, these two facets of his nature fought their unending fight. They never rested. Hatred was ever eager for the fray. The most trivial circumstance, the simplest irresponsible words, brought it boiling to the surface. And yet, as he settled himself more comfortably in the big easy-chair, it seemed to him he tacitly reinforced the legions of his slavery. But why was it, he asked himself, this ease and security of his environment, the peace and happiness and beauty amidst which he lived, and the naturalness of his joy in the many lovely things Nature and man offered him, could not subdue his anger; why was it the hatred remained unvanquishable, so near his lips, so quick to spring into action? Would the duel never cease? He could not understand; and unconsciously, as if in mockery of his thoughts, the words dimmed in the fire-flames, and he slipped quietly, to the accompaniment of the storm, into thoughtlessness. He became a slave of self.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Acid Drops.

It is a pity, seeing that the right to affirm is a legal right, that the Act is not further amended so as to make its provisions clear, or that a plain declaration of the scope and nature of the Oaths Amendment Act is not displayed in every court of justice. The other day a "London doctor" came before Mr. Justice Horridge, and asked to affirm. The Judge said the rule on the subject was as follows:—

"Every person, upon objecting to being sworn should state the ground of such objection, either that he has no religious belief, or that taking the oath is contrary to his religious belief."

He, therefore, put to the witness the question, "Have you no religious belief?" To this the reply was "None," and the doctor's affirmation was taken without further comment. We are under the impression that while the Act gives the Judge the right to ask on what grounds a witness desires to affirm, he is not bound to do so. Certainly we have affirmed many times without any such question being put. And, in any case, it would seem desirable that a mere request to affirm should be taken as enough. The existence of adequate reasons should be taken for granted.

A discussion has taken place in the *Evening News* on the question, "Is Germany Past Forgiveness?" A number of replies were published, but the most touching one emanated from Mr. Arthur Machen, who said "we must forgive our enemies even as the judge forgives the criminal whom he sentences 'that you be hanged by the neck till you be dead. And may the Lord have mercy upon your soul.'" This is a beautiful example of Christian forgiveness, and so full of humanity.

Mr. A. Mansbridge is a bold man, and he suggested at the Southwark Diocesan Conference that the Church ought not to be outdone by trade unions and co-operators in regard to the higher ideals of life. If the suggestion bears fruit, the

organists, choristers, and vergers may hope to be paid adequately for their work.

Canon Browne, speaking at the Southwark Diocesan Conference, said there was no scope for the gifted woman in mothers' meetings and in Sunday-school work. Few people supposed that there was; but Church ecclesiastics amass knowledge very slowly.

A leading newspaper has been complaining bitterly that British toy-makers cannot make a wooden "Noah's Ark" to rival similar toys by German makers, and that the home-made animals do not please the little people. Perhaps an intercession service at St. Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey will meet the difficulty, although common sense would suggest that the nation that can build a Dreadnought can construct a "Noah's Ark."

The evening papers for November 22 contained the news that the Bishop of London had invited the Metropolitan clergy to assemble at the Church of St. Martins-in-the-Fields on the following day. The purpose was explained in the following paragraph:—

"In view of the great responsibility resting upon the Church at this time," the Bishop explains, the intention is to "wait upon God and to ask what is the meaning of the awful chastisement which has happened to the world, and especially where our own nation is wrong."

Now, that looked like business, and indicated a spasm of common sense. After explaining the religious significance of the War for about fifteen months, the Bishop has apparently found something wrong, and so he invites the clergy to "wait upon God" and ask him what the deuce he means by all this trouble and bloodshed. Certainly some kind of explanation is necessary, and we are only surprised that the deputation wasn't organised when the War broke out, instead of fifteen months afterwards. We suppose, however, that to explain it first, and afterwards find out what it is about, is the right kind of theological procedure.

Unfortunately, Wednesday's papers contained a very inadequate account of what was the result of waiting on God, and what kind of an answer—if any—the deputation received. What kind of an explanation did God give? Has it been submitted to the Censor, and did he decide that it was not such as ought to be published? Or was the answer to tell the Bishop and the rest of the clergy to mind their own business and not bother? Our curiosity is naturally aroused, as we feel sure that of the general public must be. Of course, it may be that as the deputation appointed its own time for the interview, there may have been no one in when it reached the Church of St. Martins-in-the-Fields. Anyway, it is disappointing to be told before, that all these people were going to "wait on God" to ask him the meaning of the War, and then not be told exactly what the answer was.

Here is a true recruiting story. A lady recruiter knocked at a house door. It was opened by a curate. "Madame," he said, when the lady had stated her business, "the clergy are exempt." "Oh," replied the lady, "that's a pity; I should have thought the Church could well have done without you."

Great interest is being taken in a Christian Science case in Berlin, in which an actress and a teacher both died without medical aid. They were attended by two women, who relied upon prayer, with the most unfortunate result. Yet the dear clergy will have their congregations believe that all Germans are Atheists.

The average Christian is not quite sure whether his religion teaches the resurrection of the body or the immortality of the soul; but he can at least thank heaven that he is not like the unreasoning brutes, and believe both.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, who can at least boast of a good old English name, has been parading his vast erudition in the *Times Recruiting Supplement*, and he informs a wondering world that "a dead set of tremendous violence is being made against the Divine program for humanity of Peace and Good Will." Meyer has spoken! The European War is a row about a program.

A lady of title has decided to give up wearing gloves, in order to set an example in dress economy. Other places, other manners. Mark Twain said that in the South Sea Islands, at local church parades, dusky belles used to wear gloves only, and think they were in the height of European fashion.

The Bishop of Salisbury has ordered that no War news is to be published in the parish magazines in his diocese, one of the magazines having already been withdrawn by authority. Pity the poor clergy! They will have to reserve their patriotism for the wars of the Old Testament.

The following ought to please Mr. Bottomley. At any rate, it is taken from a smartly written journal entitled *Business*, and business appears to be one of Mr. Bottomley's fetishes:—

"The nation could very well spare 'Ecclesiastical puppets,' as well as 'ministers of all other denominations.' Tens of thousands of these useless people could be drilled and trained to fight the enemy in France, or in the Balkans. This is no time for sentiment, but for action if Britain is to be saved from the yoke of Germany. Healthy, strong men, whether saints or sinners, must do their duty in the firing line."

By the way, if religious ministrations are absolutely necessary at home, why not liberate the eligible clergy by putting women in the pulpit? If women can serve as bus conductors, letter carriers, clerks, ammunition workers, etc., they could surely manage a sermon as well as the ordinary parson does. And in any case, they can be purchased at so much per dozen.

Says the Bishop of London, speaking at a metropolitan gathering, "Far rather would I be standing here, with some of my best friends dead in the trenches, than with England not involved, Belgium ravaged, France devastated, and England not stirring a finger." There's heroism for you! The Bishop is willing to sacrifice even his best friends rather than see England act dishonestly. Perhaps some of his friends would return the compliment. It may be that the Bishop had been reading how Mark Twain offered to back a certain venture so long as his friend had a shilling in his pocket—and was trying to be funny.

Reuter's special correspondent, describing the "ferocious fighting" on the Isonzo, says "men are often found bitten, but hand grenades are the favorite weapons." Ferocious, indeed! "Onward, Christian Soldiers!"

Speaking at Southend-on-Sea, the Bishop of Chelmsford said he believed that on his heart the words "East London" were written. It is a thousand pities that his clerical colleagues cannot see the touching inscription.

"Pessimist clubs are now in great vogue in London," says a Society paper. These institutions are superfluous, for churches and chapels are sufficiently pessimistic, remembering that the members believe that the majority of the human race is treading the primrose path to perdition.

The Rev. Father McKenna, of Westcliff-on-Sea, announces "Moonlight whist drives" on behalf of the Church Catholic. Surely there is enough moonshine in religion already.

Owing to a merry misprint, a newspaper referred to a Theosophical publication as "How we remember our past liver." Of course, it should have been "lives"; but it is a fine sarcasm on the Anglo-Indians who are bitten with the Theosophic craze.

The Rev. Dr. Warschauer has just made a marvellous discovery, which is sure to immortalise his name. It is to the War that he is indebted for it, and because of this the War must be regarded as the greatest of blessings in disguise. The discovery is that God loves war so much that those who die on the battlefield receive a special reward in the world to come. He says:—

"I cannot but think that a consecrated death must in the pure vision of the Highest expiate many a rash act of presumptuous sin, that blood so generously shed must wipe out many a stain.....This I seem to know, that there is something due to our dead heroes, of which the Divine Justice will in no wise allow them to be defrauded."

Surely, Dr. Warschauer must be aware that he is trying "to comfort the human want" by means not of facts, but of fables, and that what he offers to those who have lost dear ones in the War is not strength to bear up in their grief, but "an opiate boon, from the bosom of magical skies." There are three sermons in the *Christian World Pulpit* for November 24, in which mourners are assured that they shall join their lost ones in the life beyond and be for ever happy with them, but in which no attempt whatever is made to prove that there is a future state. Simply because the Gospel Jesus believed, these preachers assert that there is,

and they describe it with greater fulness than they could have done had they actually been there and seen it.

A lady, whose husband is at the Front, wrote to the vicar of a London parish: "My husband is in France, so will you please tell me how to get his elopement money?" The fighting man appears to have been a bit of a Solomon.

Mr. A. G. Hales, the famous war-correspondent, says that "when peace comes the white races are going to begin the new era, the era of spiritual power on earth. Not religion as we knew it of old, but the simple religion of manliness." Won't the dear clergy be delighted? Presumably, the colored brethren will still worship Christ.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, voicing the need for more money for Church work, said that East Ham possessed one clergyman to every 7,000 people. Evidently his lordship overlooked the Nonconformists and other fancy religionists.

The major had spent fifteen minutes in recording the various religions rife amongst the men. Prouder and prouder he grew as he worked his way down to the one Christadelphian; then, pink and smiling, he faced the last man. "Well, what is your religion?" And a still, sad voice murmured "Mormon"!

Mr. R. J. Campbell says that "the source of all pain is the compression of the spirit within that which is too small to hold it." We entirely disagree with the reverend gentleman, but wish to point out that, on the assumption that his statement is true, God must be held directly responsible for all the pain and sorrow in the world. There is no possible escape from that conclusion if the belief be held that God made man. If the spirit is compressed "within that which is too small to hold it," it follows of necessity that the Creator did his work very badly. Of course, Mr. Campbell's doctrine is incapable of any sort of verification, though it has come down from Plato.

The Bishop of Lincoln says it his intention to offer to the nation a spiritual example by cutting down his expenditure. Let us hope his lordship will not overdo it. It would never do to see a bishop with whiskers on the ends of his coat-sleeves.

In the British and Foreign Bible Society's annual report it states that a trooper in a Chilian cavalry regiment found a leaf torn from a Testament, and he "became a changed man." Perhaps that leaf had been used for wrapping up cayenne pepper.

Speaking at St. John's Church, Westminster, Archdeacon Wilberforce made a protest against a Suffragist meeting, and expressed a hope that "no soul from his parish would attend the meeting." Evidently the Archdeacon does not believe in "sitting on the fence" in political matters.

The growing anti-German feeling in literature has provoked sarcastic remarks from some literary men. In a recent issue of the *Daily News*, Mr. Philip Guedalla says, "If anyone were now so bold as to issue a Life of Luther, he would probably have to call it No. 1 in the 'Master Huns Series.'" Just so! And the dear clergy would add that Luther was an Atheist without knowing it!

The death of Dr. Booker Washington, the noted negro character, recalls the enormous prejudice that exists in America against colored folk. White Christians will not worship in the same church with their colored brethren. Yet the twelve disciples were not white men.

The following story, which has the ring of truth about it, is reprinted from the German *Vorwärts* by *Public Opinion*. It is told by a lady travelling in Germany, and goes far as a corrective to the meretricious glamor that some writers, even amongst ourselves, cast round the subject of war:—

"In the compartment there were two young girls, and afterward a man came in, accompanied by his wife. No sooner was the latter seated than she began counting slowly on her fingers: 'One, two, three'—and continued to repeat the words at short intervals.

"The young girls giggled, and whispered to one another about the singular conduct of the woman, though one could easily see that some grave event was the cause of her behavior. At last the man could contain himself no longer, and he addressed the girls: 'Perhaps you will stop your

silly laughing when you learn that my wife has lost three sons at the Front. I am now taking her to an asylum.' A sinister stillness at once made itself felt in the compartment."

How uncommonly humorous some religious writers are! Miss Katharine Tynan, in the course of an article in *New Days* remarks, "The gates of Heaven must be so constantly open in these days, that it is no wonder if the living spirit slips through for a little while to solace the bitter need of the one who is left." Miss Tynan means to be pathetic, but she only sets us pitying the poor door-keeper. Poor Peter must be awfully worried at having to open the door so often—thanks to the War—and the picture of those "interned" managing to slip out while he is grumbling at the number of newcomers, or examining their credentials to see if they have come to the right place, is really touching.

Ye Doubters—Believe!

BELIEVE,
And you will be saved
From doubting.
Doubt,
And you will be saved
From belief.
Believe,
And you will receive
A little book
To condone your grief.
Cultivate
The holy look
Ere 'tis too late
To weave
Into your weak fancy
A vision of a Paradise
Hereafter,
Where necromancy
And heavenly surprise
Hold eternal sway—
(So the holy ones say);
And laughter—
That sinful spook—
Knows not the light o' day;
No, never.
Oh! believe all,
Receive all,
Grieve ever.
Doubt;
Then prepare for the fire
That awaits the infidel,
Doubt—
(Saith the Holy Liar),
Then ye'll perish in Hell.
Reject
The truth of this subject,
And the Lord will reject thee.
Believe;
'Tis his Divine Decree.
Yea! believe;
"For I am the Light,
The Heavenly Seer"
(Or the deadly blight
Of a baneful fear).
"I show thee the way"
(Or lead thee astray—
Which is much the same,
Since you're blind and lame).
"Follow me. Follow me."
And believe,
Ye doubters—believe!

C. B. W.

THE HAUNTING THOUGHT.

The late Baron Brampton, perhaps better known as Sir Henry Hawkins, had an inveterate fear of draughts, and when in court would have all doors, windows, and ventilators closed, even on a broiling summer's day.

Apropos of this singularity a good story is told.

When Brampton died, his remains were cremated, and a certain famous lawyer went down to Golder's Green Crematorium to witness the ceremony.

When the furnace was opened, the K.C. stood by rather awe-struck to see the relics drawn out, but as the door swung open, a familiar voice came from the ashes—"Do shut that door; there's a terrible draught!"

G. W. Foote Memorial Fund.

IN response to many inquiries and suggestions from the friends of the late G. W. Foote, and as a tribute to his forty-five years of unselfish labor for Free-thought, it is proposed to raise a fund for the benefit of Mrs. Foote and her unmarried daughter. In doing this I believe I shall be acting in accord with the wish of all Freethinkers—and even others—through-out the country.

The question of provision for his wife in the event of his death was naturally a question which gave Mr. Foote great concern, and as the result of a long and serious conversation with him last June I gave him two promises. One was connected with the future of the *Freethinker*, the other concerned Mrs. Foote.

With regard to the first, readers are already acquainted with what has been done. The future of the paper was very dear to its founder, and that I was able to reassure him on that point is a circum-stance upon which I look back with infinite pleasure. On the one hand, I have secured that the *Freethinker* shall continue, and that it will be the *Freethinker*, the paper that so many of us love and have worked for. And on the other side, while Mrs. Foote remains prop-rietress I have arranged matters so that she can incur no financial responsibility in connection with its continuation.

I am writing now in fulfilment of the second promise. Mr. Foote's affairs are not yet settled, but it is quite clear that when all liabilities are met, what remains will represent no more than a temporary sufficiency. No one will be surprised at this, and, in the circumstances, each one will feel it to be a duty to endeavor to secure provision for the Widow of one whose forty-five years work for Free-thought, while earning the thanks and admira-tion of Freethinkers all over the world, prevented his making such provision for her himself. And not the least of the anxieties that beset every leader of such a movement as ours is the thought of how those dependent upon him will fare when Nature has claimed payment of the debt we must all liquidate one day.

Despite his anxiety, Mr. Foote expressed every confidence in those who had supported him for so many years, and I have every reason to believe that his confidence was not ill-based. It is partly due to this belief that I have headed this appeal "G. W. Foote Memorial Fund." The title may be a trifle unusual, but it is in essence a Memorial Fund, since contributions will be given because of appreciation of a great man's work for a great cause, and I believe that he would have regarded this method of showing appreciation of his work as being, in the circumstances, the best that could be devised. And for this reason I would beg *Free-thinker* readers to take this appeal as coming from one who can no longer himself address his friends.

Some subscriptions, and promises of subscriptions, have already been received. These amount to just over £100, as will be seen from the appended list. I have not distinguished the promises from the actual subscriptions, as this week it is only necessary to say what has been done. Next week there will appear a full list of the amounts actually received to date, and the contributions will be added to the weekly list as the promises are redeemed. This will keep the matter quite clear.

It is quite impossible to say at the moment what will be the actual disposition of the Fund—except that care will be taken that it is so used as to benefit

Mrs. Foote in the best manner. But whether it takes the form of an allowance or an investment—con-trolled, perhaps, by trustees—or an annuity, must depend upon the sum subscribed. In this direction Mrs. Foote will be guided by my advice, and what is finally decided on will be made public when the time arrives for decision. Until the Fund is closed—and I hope that the response will be such that this may be done at an early date—all subscriptions will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker* and placed to a separate account in the Clerkenwell Branch of the London, City, and Midland Bank. Cheques may be crossed, "G. W. Foote Memorial Fund," and all letters should be addressed to the Editor of the *Free-thinker*, The Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon-street, London, E.C. The accounts will be placed in the hands of a chartered accountant, whose certificate will be issued when the Fund is closed.

A word on another matter may be advisable. Had Mr. Foote lived, the 1916 President's Honorarium Fund—really a *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund—would have been opened in January. Many, I know, are expecting that this will be done. I may as well say at once that this will not be the case. By hard work, economy, and a determined effort to increase the circulation of the paper, I hope to pull through without reopening this Fund. I may not be able to succeed in this, but we shall see. At any rate, those who expected to subscribe to a 1916 "Honorarium Fund" will be able to deal more generously with the G. W. Foote Memorial Fund, which I regard, for the present, as of greater moment.

I may also be excused for expressing the hope that the response to this appeal will be not only prompt, but *adequate*. It should be, it ought to be, final. It is no shame that those who bear aloft the banner of Free-thought are without the generous emoluments that reward the chiefs of the army of superstition. But it is incumbent upon us to see that, when a great leader has fallen, the penalty that he paid while living for fighting *our* fight should not descend upon the shoulders of his widow or children. This is, perhaps, the last opportunity of showing in a direct and tangible manner, our appreciation of one of the greatest men who ever stood at the head of the Free-thought movement in this country, and I am confident that this appreciation will be shown in a manner that will do honor to the man and the cause he represented. The present is, I know, not a very favorable time for an appeal of this character, but death chooses its own coming, and we are left to face the consequences as best we may. That may even be taken as a reason for a more generous response from those who are in a position to help.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Subscriptions promised or received:—

	£	s.	d.
Halley Stewart	5	0	0
J. and H. King	10	10	0
E. B.	3	3	0
Colonel B. L. Reilly	1	1	0
J. Pendlebury... ..	5	0	0
J. Sumner	5	5	0
J. M. Gimson	10	0	0
G. McCluskey... ..	5	5	0
Captain G. B. Taylor	2	0	0
F. Akroyd	1	1	0
M. Glass	2	0	0
J. and J. M. Glashan	2	0	0
J. Breeze	2	2	0
L. Gjemre	5	0	0
T. Robertson	5	0	0
W. Mumby	10	0	0
E. Oliver	3	3	0
J. Bryce	0	10	0
W. A.	1	1	0
R. J. Fincken... ..	5	0	0
S. Gimson	5	0	0
H. Jessop	5	0	0
C. J. Peacock... ..	5	5	0
R. H. Side	2	0	0
Mrs. L. Luchens (N.Z.)	1	0	0
Total	£102	6	0

To Correspondents.

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

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Chas. E. Hearson, 11s.

MRS. L. LUCKEN (N.Z.).—Your subscription to the Honorarium Fund received. As the Fund is closed, we have transferred the amount to the G. W. Foote Memorial Fund, which will, we trust, meet with your approval.

W. DODD.—Sorry we missed you on Sunday, but we know the difficulties of Sunday travel, and recognised your reason for leaving early. The question at the end of your letter is answered in this week's "Special."

C. NAYLOR.—Very pleased to receive the congratulations of "an old and regular reader" of the *Freethinker*, also that you think the article, "A Note of Warning," was both timely and necessary. Personally, we always like to be ready for the worst, and if better arrives we are all the more pleased.

C. J. W.—Received, and will be used later. It will be more appropriate in three or four weeks' time.

H. ELSTOB.—There are few whose promise of support we value more than yours. We are sure we may rely upon you for any assistance you are able to give.

R. A. T.—We cannot deal with anonymous letters. Your name and address will be withheld from publication if desired, but they must accompany all communications as a guarantee of good faith.

E. SOLLITT writes, in reference to the obituary notice which appeared in last week's issue, that the holding of the service outside the cemetery gates was not due to Christian bigotry, but was in accordance with the wishes of his relatives, who declined to place themselves under an obligation by requesting the use of a religious building. We gladly publish this correction, and must ask those who send us these reports to be very careful of the facts before writing. We are, naturally, at the mercy of the people at the spot, and it is their duty to see that the information supplied should be of an absolutely reliable character.

E. B.—Many thanks for cuttings.

R. OGILVIE.—Don't lose patience. There are really few people who can stand alone, and the cheap repetition of popular catch-phrases is a very easy road to a certain kind of success. We trust that you will never have to complain that we have spoken less straightforwardly where the interests of *Freethought* are concerned.

A. MILLAR AND OTHERS.—Mr. Cohen deeply appreciates congratulations, and deeply values promises of support.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

We hope to see a record gathering of Freethinkers at the Queen's Hall to-day (Dec. 5), on the occasion of the G. W. Foote Memorial Meeting. The list of speakers is a good one, and the occasion a memorable one. No one has ever upheld the banner of militant *Freethought* with greater courage than our late leader, and the meeting ought to be, both in temper and size, worthy of the man and the cause. The doors open at 2.30, the speaking commences at 3 o'clock. The motto of all London Freethinkers, at least, to-day should be, "All roads lead to Langham-place." A full announcement of the meeting will be found on the last page of this issue.

Considering that we are in the midst of a European War, and that many thousands of Birmingham folk are engaged,

even during Sunday, on War work, Mr. Cohen's meetings in the Town Hall on Sunday last gave great satisfaction to all concerned. Both afternoon and evening, the lectures were followed with the closest appreciation and enthusiasm. The afternoon lecture on G. W. Foote bore eloquent tribute to the estimation in which our late leader was held by those present. The evening lecture was also received with great appreciation, and we understand that a lengthy report was taken for one of the local papers.

Mr. H. P. Ward, on behalf of the Chicago *Freethought* Society, writes to Mrs. Foote:—

"I felt completely stunned when I read in a Chicago newspaper, a few hours ago, an announcement of the death of your husband. It is utterly useless for me to try to find words to express my own grief. Thousands of Freethinkers throughout the world, when they hear the sad news, will deeply mourn with you over your irreparable loss, and their hearts will go forth towards you with profoundest sympathy. The *Freethought* Cause never had a champion more able, more courageous, more thorough, more devoted, than Mr. Foote. Only the future will be able, in some measure, to properly appraise his magnificent services and enormous sacrifices on behalf of the Movement to which he gave his whole being. But whilst we all grieve that Mr. Foote is dead, we, at the same time, rejoice that so splendid a character ever lived to adorn and strengthen Freedom's cause. He might have said, with even more propriety than Heine, 'Lay a sword upon my coffin, for I was an intrepid soldier in the war of the liberation of Humanity.' Your husband's memory will be an inspiration to more strenuous effort in the fight for mental liberty. And in the history of those who struggled with dauntless heroism to free their kind from superstition's blight, his name will ever have a leading place. Mr. M. M. Mangasarian joins with me in expressing to you our most heartfelt sympathy and our very kindest thoughts. —Very sincerely yours, H. PERCY WARD."

We have also received the following:—

"To the Editor of the *Freethinker*."

Sir,—At a meeting held on November 18, the committee of the Humanitarian League unanimously recorded their deep regret at the death of Mr. G. W. Foote, and their sense of the great loss which the humanitarian cause has sustained.

Nov. 22. Yours truly, K. WHITAKER,
Secretary, Humanitarian League."

Amongst recent deaths we noticed with regret that of Dr. Henry Charlton Bastian. Dr. Bastian was a "bonnie fechter," and anything he took up was bound to be pursued strenuously. In England he was one of the strongest advocates of what came to be known—although inaccurately—as the theory of spontaneous generation. He fought so hard for this that it overshadowed, to some extent, the very useful work he did in other directions. But Dr. Bastian claimed to have actually developed living forms from non-living material. He never managed to convince the bulk of the scientific world of this, and for our own part, we are also inclined to think his experiments inconclusive. Living material itself is a very complex substance, and must have an evolutionary history behind it. And it is only when that evolution is, so to speak, complete, that one would know that living matter had arrived. To be able to compress that evolution within the limits of an experiment seems a very unlikely thing.

As was to be expected, the journalists who noticed Dr. Bastian's death succeeded in misunderstanding this question. It was said that the scientific world rejected Dr. Bastian's theories; which is not true. What Huxley and Pasteur and Tyndall and others rejected was the reliability of Dr. Bastian's experiments. They said that they were inconclusive, and in this they may have been right. But as for Dr. Bastian's theory, namely, there is no break between the living and the non-living, and that the latter develops naturally from the former—that is a very different thing. They did not reject it, and they do not reject it now. We question whether there are 10 per cent. of European scientists of repute who will not affirm their conviction that "spontaneous generation" is a fact, although they may doubt the possibility of repeating the phenomena in laboratory experiments. But it is either that or supernatural intervention. And science will have none of the supernatural.

We knew that the War had affected things in America almost as much as in this country, and we are not surprised, although naturally very sorry, to see that the *New York Truthseeker* is feeling the pinch. It is now appealing

to its readers to make a special effort on its behalf, either to gain new subscribers or to send donations that will help to meet the necessary expenditure. We hope that the response will be prompt and liberal in both directions. The *Truthseeker* is, we think, the oldest Freethought paper in the world (it is eight years older than the *Freethinker*), and it must have enough friends in the United States who could between them bear the burden with ease. And what a burden the conduct and maintenance of a Freethought journal is, only those with practical experience can appreciate.

The following letter reaches us from an officer who, since the War started, has earned the D.C.M. and Cross of St. George. For his own reasons, he prefers not to give his name for publication:—

"DEAR SIR,—May I add my testimony as to the non-prevalence of religion in the firing line? I took part in all the fighting from the Retreat up to Ypres, and was wounded at Klein Lillebeke. After about a month in hospital and convalescent camp at La Havre, I rejoined the regiment. We returned to the trenches, and occupied various parts of the La Bassee sector until after Neuve Chapelle. I was then transferred to another corps, and after a few weeks in various camps in England, was drafted to the Dardanelles and Egypt, returning to England this month. I think this is likely to prove a greater experience of war than any parson has. Yet I can honestly say there are only three occasions on which I saw anything of unofficial religion:—A soldier (South Staffs, I think) reading a Gospel of St. Luke previous to going into action on the Aisne. A few enthusiastic Territorials, headed by three chaplains, tried to work up evening (Saturday and Sunday) services on the boat, but with little success. (The mess tables were crowded with card-players, etc.) While at Imbros, an enlisted Baptist local preacher was fairly successful with open-air Sunday evening services. His success was probably due to veiled personalities during his ranting. Also the services were held just outside the tents. Against these:—I have helped quite a score of dying men, and never has God or religion been mentioned except in an oath. One fellow was hit; he looked surprised, and gasped, 'God strike me bleedin' pink, I've stopped one,' and—died. Several called on girls' names, two said something about mother, one 'Good-bye, good-bye,' and one 'Thanks, mate.' Others cursed (usually the Germans), but the remainder died quietly. I've only met a few avowed Atheists, though, the state of most being indifference. I could always work up an argument, and the retreat was to the trench of 'There must be something.' 'What, they neither knew, nor cared, or thought about.' At one period we had voluntary church parade. It was so well attended that those after were filled by section n.c.o.'s detailing three or four men of the five required per section. I had charge of a section. Personally, I've changed my religion three times (with new identity discs) trying to dodge this parade. On attestation, my brother was allowed to give, Religion?—*Nil*; Atheist. But he found so many fatigues and duties on Sunday that he has been converted—for the duration of the War.—I am, Sir, yours, etc., ONE WHO HAS SEEN."

Mr. W. Collins' *Examiner* reprints "Our Greatest Historian," by Mimmermus, from these columns. The *Examiner*, we are pleased to see, is as virile as ever.

Historical Value of the Gospels.—III.

(Continued from p. 765.)

ANOTHER palpably veracious passage, this time in Mark, is the account of the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, with the attendant circumstance of his inability to do any "mighty work" there, "save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them." With regard to this, it may be remarked that faith-healing, in cases where no organic derangement exists, is quite possible and natural, though not to be recommended as a means to a perfect cure.

As a general rule, Jesus explicitly refused to perform miracles, even when challenged to do so. Both Mark and "Q" give evidence of this; the rejoinder to the Pharisees, "There shall no sign be given unto this generation," appears in both authorities. (Mark viii. 11-13; cf. Matt. xvi. 1-4. For "Q," see Matt. xii. 89, and Luke xi. 29. Note that "Matthew" repeats the saying in two passages, owing to his having copied from two authorities, without noticing their overlapping.) Few other sayings of Jesus are as well attested as this. This did not prevent his disciples, possibly even in his lifetime, from attributing the most impossible of miracles to him, which the simple Mark records without noticing the con-

tradiction between the miraculous stories and Jesus' plain refusal to perform such wonders.

Probably the refusal of Jesus to give a "sign" had a damping effect on his efforts to found the "kingdom of heaven" by the propaganda of voluntary communism, though the impracticability of his ideas would in any case, sooner or later, have arrested their progress. The effect of opposition on him was varying. At times he appears, from the sayings recorded in "Q" and Mark, to have been carried into fanatical extravagance by it. He threatened the indifferently and hostile with the approaching end of the world. Belief in the resurrection of the dead had been common among the Jews since the Maccabæan period, and was an article of faith with the Pharisees. It was expected that the apparition of the Messiah would be followed by the general resurrection, the judgment of all men (either by the Messiah or by Yahweh in person), and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, with the relegation of its adversaries to everlasting fire. The belief was a kind of hope in the impossible, springing from the misery of the period and the crushing of Jewish national ideals. (The delusions of the Anabaptists and the "Fifth-Monarchy Men" were very similar.) Jesus, at this stage of failure, and probably even from the first, predicted the advent of the resurrection and the last judgment at an early, though uncertain, date. ("But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.") In that day it would go ill with those who now rejected his teaching. He threatened the cities of Galilee that it should be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for them. Those who gave up their property and family ties to join him, on the other hand, would receive all that they had sacrificed and more, and eternal life into the bargain (Matt. vi. 33; Mark x. 28-30).

About this time, Jesus seems to have been instigated by his fanatical followers to proclaim himself openly as the coming Messiah. Mark attributes to Peter the first ascription to Jesus of this title. We read that Jesus "charged them that they should tell no man of him"—a very odd proceeding for one who is alleged to have been fully conscious not only of Messiahship, but of divinity! As a matter of fact, the claim seems to have been thrust upon him. The term "Son of Man," which he had previously applied to himself, is not necessarily Messianic. Ezekiel and the writer of "Daniel" also use it of themselves. In the sequel to Peter's proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah, we may see another and an opposite effect produced on Jesus by hostility and opposition—viz., an acute apprehension of a violent death, and a disinclination to challenge an open conflict with the religious authorities. His belief in the approaching cataclysm was unaffected, and he was even disposed to acquiesce in the Messianic rôle laid down for himself; but he now thinks that the consummation will be reached only through suffering, perhaps only through death. Probably Jesus began actually to tell his immediate followers to look forward to this. Such a supposition assists to explain the sequel.

Embittered by failure, and spurred, no doubt, to action by his fanatical disciples, Jesus determined to see if the populace of Jerusalem could be converted by a theatrical stroke. Hence the triumphal entry, planned and carried out shortly before the Passover. Jesus seems to have been far from certain of the issue, if indeed he did not actually expect a fatal outcome of the enterprise (to be followed, as he wildly imagined, by the resurrection of the dead, and his vindication and triumph). However this may have been, he rode into Jerusalem as planned, and met with, at least, a modicum of popular acclamation. We read that the authorities were, in fact, prevented by their dislike of a riot from arresting him at once. Jesus is reported to have followed up his entry into Jerusalem by the so-called "purging of the temple." It has been objected to this account, that any such attempt on his part must have been at once put down by the guards. But the so-called

"purging," according to Mark, was after all a very feeble protest. We are told that Jesus "began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple." It is possible enough that the Roman guard simply looked on in amusement at such a scene. They no doubt reflected, if they thought about it at all, that revolutions were not made by knocking down a few tables and chairs and hustling a few pedlars, and that the Jews might be left to settle their own petty squabbles.

It was otherwise with the Jewish authorities. It is clear that they lost no unnecessary time in dealing with the innovator who preached subversive ideas to the multitude, and who insulted the national worship. The arrest of Jesus appears to have followed closely after the foregoing episode. It must be observed, however, that the Gospel account of the *dénouement* contains some marked improbabilities. We are told that Judas received a sum of money in return for the somewhat unnecessary service of guiding the posse of soldiers to the spot where Jesus was. It would occur to most dispassionate critics that the authorities would surely be able to have Jesus shadowed and arrested, without the assistance of Judas. The part attributed to the latter, in fact, is unconvincing as it stands. If there is any truth in it, we must suppose that the following of Jesus at this time had become more formidable and desperate than has been supposed, and that the disciples had armed themselves to protect him, with or without his consent. In that case, Judas may have been bribed to enable the authorities to catch Jesus off his guard and with only a few followers. We are told, indeed, that some attempt at resistance was made (Mark xiv. 47).

The historical character of Judas has, I am aware, been disputed. His name occurs, however, as one of the twelve apostles in the list given by Mark, and adopted by the other Synoptics. Unless we are prepared to maintain that the twelve apostles are themselves a creation of the imagination, it is difficult, in the writer's judgment, to find an adequate reason why one of them should have falsely been represented as a traitor.

The charge on which Jesus was put to death was apparently that of sedition, or of claiming to be king of the Jews. (The "title" on the cross, given in approximately similar terms by all the Evangelists, leads us to this conclusion.) The triumphal entry, and the affray in the temple, probably afforded the evidence against him. The account of Jesus' examination before the Sanhedrin, it may be remarked, assists us in disposing of one more fiction in the Fourth Gospel. Mark informs us that one *false* charge against Jesus was that of having said, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands." Now the Fourth Gospel attributes to Jesus the actual words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The verbal difference between this alleged actual utterance of Jesus, and the "falsely" alleged utterance in Mark, is not such as to constitute much difference from the point of view of Jewish feeling. Either would have been regarded as blasphemous. If, therefore, Mark believed that words of this kind were falsely ascribed to Jesus, it follows that the ascription of them to him in the Fourth Gospel is discredited.

We may note in passing the story of Peter's denial, which can hardly be explained as other than historical, and that of the compulsion of Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross, which appears to be authenticated by the mention of his sons. Jesus' last articulate words, as recorded by Mark ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") also seem genuine.

The circumstances of the following days or weeks are, except of course for Christians (whose principle it is to believe the impossible), one of the unsolved riddles of history. The facts which alone are to be

inferred from Mark are, that the body of Jesus, after a few hours' suspension on the cross, was removed with the permission of Pilate, by a friendly member of the Sanhedrin called Joseph of Arimathea, and laid in a hollow in a rock, such as in those days was used for a tomb. This tomb is said elsewhere to have been, and doubtless was, the property of Joseph. Some thirty-six hours later (not "three days"), the tomb was, we are told, found empty by three women followers of Jesus, who were informed by a young man in white (Mark does not say "an angel") that Jesus had risen from the dead and was returning to Galilee, where he was to be seen. Mark adds that the women fled from the tomb and said nothing to anyone; "for they were afraid." This is the last phrase of the original Gospel which survives. It can hardly have been the real ending; and we can only suppose that Mark's own conclusion was, for some reason, suppressed by the Church at the time when the Canon of the New Testament was being made up. The ending we now have is, as stated in the margin of the Revised Version, absent from our oldest MSS., which date from the fourth century; and the twelve verses in question are probably, therefore, the latest and least authoritative verses in the New Testament.

ROBERT ARCH.

(To be continued.)

"Green Kittens."

ABOVE us was a grey sky, from which drizzled a rain that chilled us to the marrow. Around us was a prospect of dirty, yellow mud just perceptibly relieved by an occasional clump of trees and some scattered, ruined farmhouses. A deadly monotonous view, made the more depressing by the fact that we perceived it as we stood, knee-deep, in the evil-smelling, watery mud that covered the bottom of our ditches—or trenches as they are called in military parlance.

Since early morning, the duel of artillery had been murderous and deafening; a hellish booming, droning, and crashing of high-explosive and shrapnel shell. Sometimes a shell would drop and explode so near that great splashes of mud were thrown upon us in the trenches; and even the softest of mud hurts badly when hurled at one by the extremely violent impact and bursting of a high-explosive shell.

We of the infantry, with the bayonets fixed to our rifles, were waiting the signal to advance. Our nerves were strung to the utmost tension, and despite every effort to assume unconcern, we were all aquiver with great excitement.

I put myself to studying those near me. What social contrasts we were! But war and love of country had broken the barriers and had ranged us side by side—merchant and shopman, musician and artist, author and printer, bookseller and restaurant keeper—against the brutal enemy. I was much amused at the sight of ultra-fastidious John Longjaw, who was conveying canned beef and hard biscuit to his mouth with hands that would have disgraced a dustman in ordinary times. There was Will Big-head, a great stickler for propriety in the partaking of food and liquor, drinking from his water-bottle with about as much grace as a field-laborer swigging from a beer-jug. It was a comedy in the framing of grimmest tragedy.

I lit a cigarette and tried to ponder our situation amongst the surrounding inferno of explosion, but consecutive thought I found impossible; an intermissive vein of numbness ran through one's reflections. And many unsought recollections came to my mind; one was unusually vivid. It was of a farmhouse in the South of England, where once I had spent a holiday; I seemed to be in the lane leading up to it, but although walking, I made no progress. The vision of that farmhouse, the corn-fields and the lush meadows, was, in my then circumstances, like a glimpse of paradise. I was

enjoying my intense daydream when the sudden cessation of our artillery fire brought me so abruptly to reality that I felt as if I had been struck. We gripped our rifles and waited for the order to advance. It came. We struggled out of the mud and up the sides of the trenches, and gaining the level ground, tried to go forward at the double. I say we *tried* to advance at the double; as a matter of fact, we found ourselves unable to advance at the walk. We just floundered along, making ridiculous figures and very poor progress. Had our artillery done its work effectively in our section of the offensive, all would have gone well with us, and our waddle through Flanders mud would have ended in our occupying the enemy trenches; but here the guns failed us, and we became practice targets for German machine guns. A slight rise in the ground favoring us, we halted and made the most of the small cover thus afforded. Tat-tat-tat-tat went the machine guns as they sputtered their bullets at us; blop-bang went the bombs from the trench howitzers, as they dropped near us, killing and wounding some of our battalion, and scattering mud over most of us. All we could do was to lie prone on the mud and hope for the best. I could have laughed at the absurdity of our position but for the fact that dire necessity demanded it. There we lay, in a straggling line, behind a friendly few inches of muddy ridge, some of us sorely wounded, others slightly, all of us asprawl in that dreadful mire, and trying with difficulty to maintain our courage against the assaults of the enemy and the vile contact of the beastly ground. Suddenly, a salvo of shrapnel burst above us and a hail of bullets bespattered the ground about us. Will Bighead, who was alongside me, uttered a sharp cry and dug his fingers into the muddy soil. "They've got me, old man," he jerked out; then, as a violent spasm of pain caught him, he exclaimed, "Lord, help me!" I took a roll of bandage from my haversack, intending to give him first aid, but already he was in the death struggle and blood was flowing from his mouth. Will Bighead's death much depressed me, and his "Lord, help me!" roused bitter thoughts. Where was the Lord in this welter of slaughter? The men of four nations were engaged in reciprocal maiming and killing, and the All-mighty, All-knowing, All-loving Father of all looked on and did nothing. Why, his all-lovingness should have made impossible this carnage, which was a result of the workings of his omniscient almightiness.

The drizzle of the morning had now, late in the afternoon, developed into a drenching rain, and adding savagely to our misery. Here were we, supposedly civilised men in an age of civilisation, sprawling in filthy mud and soaked with rain, yet imbued with an eager desire to kill other supposedly civilised men who were doing their utmost to kill us. If there is a Supreme Being, is he helpless or does he amuse himself with the sufferings of mankind?

I cannot sufficiently express how gladly we welcomed the approach of night, which was yet, unfortunately, an hour distant. The machine-guns continued their venomous babbling, and the trench-howitzers kept on belching their shattering bombs at us, when suddenly our lieutenant began to act queerly. He started with a prolonged chuckle, then dabbled his fingers in the mud; then, assuming a very stern aspect, he glared at the man nearest him, Joe Jackson by name, and a typical Cockney. Joe was feeling inclined to ask the lieutenant what he thought of his beauty, when the officer spoke.

"Jackson," he said, "what have you done with my green kittens?"

"Green kittens!" exclaimed Jackson; "I ain't seen no green kittens. Do yer know where you are?"

"I want to know what you have done with my green kittens. Answer at once."

"I tell yer what," said Jackson; "if you was ter see a doctor, you'd find out about yer green kittens."

"Do you think I should?" said the crazed man.

"Sure yer would," replied Jackson.

"Then I'll go to see a doctor," said the lieutenant; and, getting up, he strolled leisurely away to the rear.

His appearance evoked a crescendo of machine-gun fire, but, marvellous to relate, he escaped even the slightest injury.

He was found next morning wandering about, making wild gesticulations, and babbling incoherent nonsense. The call of patriotism and love of justice found his highly-strung nature eagerly responsive, but the brutal bludgeon of war stunned him to a living death.

JAMES H. WATERS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOV. 25.

Mr. T. Gorniot occupied the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Baker, Bowman, Britten, Cohen, Cunningham, Davidson, Heaford, Judge, Leat, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rolf, Rosetti, Samuels, Silverstein, Wood, G. Wood, Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, Miss Pankhurst, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

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

New members were admitted for the Parent Society, all of whom, it is interesting to record, were men on active service.

Several letters of condolence on the death of the late President were received, and ordered to be acknowledged.

Mr. Cohen was asked, and consented, to draft a tract for the National Secular Society, to be circulated amongst children, as soon as his time permitted.

The death of an old and revered Vice-President, Mr. W. Davey, was reported, and a message of sympathy directed to be sent to his widow.

The report of the Sub-Committee elected to make arrangements for the Memorial Meeting at the Queen's Hall on December 5 was presented and adopted.

On the motion of Mr. Davidson, seconded by Mr. Rosetti, it was resolved:—

"That a committee of three be appointed to revise and re-draft the rules of the Society, and report to the Executive in time to be presented to the next Annual Conference."

Messrs. Davidson, Cohen, and Roger were then elected as a Sub-Committee for this purpose.

On the motion of Mr. Roger, seconded by Mr. Heaford, two resolutions were proposed and carried unanimously, the gist of them being the formation of a committee for the purpose of suggesting ways and means of reorganisation, with a view of getting into touch with unattached Freethinkers, and for the compilation of local lists of names and addresses towards that end, and the issuing of a circular to lapsed members, calling upon them to again associate themselves with the N. S. S., and thus help in the only practical way of doing honor to the memory of George William Foote.

After discussion, these were referred to the Sub-Committee for consideration, the Secretary receiving instructions to prepare certain details for their information.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

Obituary.

Our cause has lost another devoted and loyal supporter by the death of Mr. William K. Davey, Vice-President of the N. S. S., and Treasurer of the Kingsland Branch, in his 69th year, after many months of suffering, borne with remarkable cheerfulness.

Mr. Davey had been associated with us for forty years, and was an enthusiastic admirer and follower of the late Charles Bradlaugh. He was a regular attendant at the lectures of our late President, and read the *Freethinker* from its first number. He was an earnest and untiring propagandist with a kind and generous nature, whose name was rarely absent from any scheme to help his poorer colleagues. His wish to secure Cremation with a Secular Burial Service for all Freethinkers who desired it, amounted almost to an obsession, and the suggestion of a society for that purpose, discussed at two Conferences, practically originated with him. Yet, despite the fact that his immediate relatives and friends were fully aware of his wishes, William Davey received an earth burial—his particular abomination—in a common grave at Chingford Mount Cemetery on November 27.

The Secular Burial Service was read by Mr. J. T. Lloyd to a small number of friends, no opportunity being given to his numerous Secularist colleagues to pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of one of the most lovable and unselfish spirits they had known.—E. M. VANCE.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 3, Memorial Meeting to G. W. Foote. Speakers: C. Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, Herbert Burrows, Halley Stewart, A. B. Moss, S. H. Swinny, W. Heaford, and the Rev. Stewart Headlam. Doors open 2.30. Admission free.

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FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT, 1873.

CONTINUED BY E. M. MACDONALD, 1883-1909.

G. E. MACDONALD EDITOR.
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Mr. HALLEY STEWART Mr. S. H. SWINNY Mr. W. HEAFORD
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