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It is always more comfortable to follow conscience than intellect; for after every failure conscience has some excuse, some consolation. Therefore there are more conscientious than wise people.—NIETZSCHE.

A Look Round.

NINETEEN-SIXTEEN opens, as did 1915, under the shadow of the "Great War." With this tremendous conflict—which no one commenced and no one seems able to end—it would be little better than a mockery to offer the customary good wishes. "A Happy New Year" sounds peculiarly ironical when there are many thousands of homes rendered desolate by a death on some distant battlefield, and while the shadow of death hangs over so many thousands of other homes that have hitherto escaped unscathed. The only wish that one ought to express by way of greeting is that the War may soon come to an end. And even then, the outlook is far from cheering. After the fever will come reaction, and the maimed and crippled men that will be seen in the midst of each nation engaged in the War will be but concrete reminders of the scars that will be left on the face of European civilization.

Naturally, in the year that has closed there is little to chronicle in the shape of the growth of advanced ideas. Some progress there has been, in spite of the War, but it is little enough in all conscience. Advanced political and social ideas are in a state of abeyance. Some people are openly jubilant over this; others disguise their jubilancy under the form of care for social harmony. Numbers of the clergy, for example, have praised the peace that has been brought about by the War. They point out that, prior to the outbreak of the War, political parties pursued their warfare with the utmost bitterness. In the Labour world, we were threatened with strikes on a colossal scale, and the hatred between Capital and Labour was deepening. Revolt was the order of the day. Even the women were in revolt.

At the touch of war, they say, all this was altered. Political strife ceased. Labour troubles quieted down. Even the women suspended their campaign in favour of the Franchise. All this, we are told, was so much to the good. I deny it absolutely. Party politics and social conflicts and feminist agitation were at least disputes about the better organizing and ordering of social life. It is along that road—the path of discussion, agitation, and experiment—that progress lies. The value of the various ideals involved in these contests was not settled by the War; the issue was suspended for a time. The suspension may have been necessary, but that does not alter its character. The War, in truth, meant the suspension of a contest in the sphere of social, political, and intellectual ideas and ideals, in favour of a contest in the sphere of armed force. If that be progress, then, indeed, the less we have of it the better.

For, there is no disputing the fact, the psychological environment has become of a distinctly coarser kind. We have become habituated to the coarseness and brutality of war, and it will take

time for our minds to recover their sensitiveness. Two years ago the loss of fifty people at sea would have filled us with horror, and an explosion that caused the death of a score would have brought the tears to our eyes. Now the death of a few hundreds leaves us unmoved, and we laugh at those "cranks" who dreamed of an internationalism that would bind the peoples of the world in the bonds of a common brotherhood. We have breakfasted and supped for so long on the horrors served up in the newspapers, that we are getting callous. The shadow of the sword is over us all.

So far as the progress of Freethought is concerned, there is something to be placed to the credit side of the account. When the War opened, we were promised a great revival of religion. That revival never matured. What occurred was of quite an opposite character. The clergy are fond of telling us that in the presence of a great shock men's minds turn instinctively to religion. Of all men this is certainly not true. It may be true of some; but in such cases they are religious before the shock is experienced. It is more often the case that, when brought face to face with the realities of existence, numbers are for the first time able to put their inculcated religious beliefs to the test, and when that is done, their artificiality becomes clear. I do not believe that a single person has had his or her objections to religion removed by the War. It is inconceivable that this should be so. But I do know of scores—and these can only be a fragment of the whole number—who have for the first time during the past sixteen months been brought to seriously question the truth of religion. I believe there were never so many people in this country who are conscious of their dissatisfaction with religion as there are at the present moment.

In spite, then, of the War, in spite of the smaller amount of propaganda work since the outbreak of war, Freethought has distinctly gained ground. It is not, as the clergy have told us, the Materialism of Germany, or of England, or of anywhere else, that the War has tested. It is the religion of Christendom that has been upon its trial. And it stands convicted, at the worst, of complicity with and, at best, of impotence in regard to, this disaster which has overtaken Europe. A religion that, after so many centuries of control, could not better civilize its followers is unworthy of trust. A God who could not or would not prevent such a war is unworthy of worship.

To turn to more intimate matters. This sixteen months of war has been a trying time for the newspaper world. Practically all papers are losing money, or are barely making ends meet. For papers such as this one, the position has been peculiarly difficult. All of them have had to decrease the number of pages, and some have been compelled to make public appeals for assistance. There has been not alone the disorganization and diversion of interest consequent on the War, but the increased—and still increasing—price of materials. And one cannot raise the price of a weekly paper as one may put sixpence or a shilling extra on some articles of trade. One feels that a paper able to live through a time such as the present is indestructible.

Very soon after Mr. Foote's death some "doleful Jemmies" wrote me in fear for the safety of the

Freethinker. Their concern did them credit, even if their fears were not encouraging. And they had before them the fate of the *National Reformer*, which collapsed so soon after Bradlaugh's death. One must admit, also, that for a paper and a movement to lose so great a fighter and so brilliant a writer as G. W. Foote was a very heavy blow. No one felt that more than I did, but my experience with the paper, and my twenty-five years of Freethought work had made me familiar with the strength of our position, and I did not feel so alarmed as some. Further, the circulation of the paper had been kept up during the whole of the War, and that gave me additional confidence concerning the future. So some of these fearful ones became reassured, and now I think I may comfort and inspire them still further. I am more confident than ever that the future of the paper is secure. Even this War must cease one day, and when it does we shall reap the benefit of our struggle while it lasted.

Nearly three months ago I said that I intended making a resolute endeavour to improve the circulation of the *Freethinker*. It is, of course, early yet to say how far the methods adopted will solve the problem, but they are beginning to work. There has been an improvement in circulation, and one which I hope will continue. Unfortunately, the cost of paper and printing also increases, so that in one sense what is gained on the swings is lost on the roundabouts. Still, prices must descend to the normal one day, and then the way will be smoother. Meanwhile, increase of circulation is everything, it means not only more readers and a better income, it means wider influence and increased usefulness in every way. *And every fresh hundred subscribers gained makes it easier to get another hundred.*

What we now need is a thousand new subscribers. Other papers are asking for a thousand pounds in subscriptions. I prefer a thousand readers. Given that, and all anxiety will be removed. And I do not think getting them an impossible task. It is pleasing to record that from the scores of appreciative letters received since Mr. Foote's death, I know that many are taking up the work of pushing the sale of the paper with enthusiasm, and if those who really care for the future of the *Freethinker* throw themselves into the work, that thousand readers should be secured before 1916 has passed away.

One other point on this head. I had hoped to give *Freethinker* readers a New Year's gift in the shape of a paper set throughout in new type. This I now find must be deferred for a little while. The cost of type is at present nearly double what it was, and so that must wait, at least, for the present. But the project will take concrete form at no very distant date. There are other developments also in contemplation which will, I believe, make for the increased popularity and usefulness of the paper, and which will mature in due course. Everyone connected with the paper is willing and anxious to do all they can to ensure success; the rest depends upon circumstances beyond their control, chief of which is the whole-hearted co-operation of our readers.

While, therefore, the outlook is not of the brightest, it is not wholly black. There are gleams of light here and there, and these will, I believe, get stronger and broader. Circumstances of various kinds may obstruct the growth of Freethought, but nothing can prevent its ultimate triumph. The times are exceptionally trying, but trying times are likely to be stirring times, and when the European and Christian War is over, I believe we shall witness a fight between the forces of progress and reaction, such as has not been seen in our time. In that contest Freethought may play a great part. If the victory is to rest with the forces of progress, it must play a great part. For Freethought is not something that is acquired through progress, it is the essential condition of all progress worth the having.

C. COHEN.

The War and Christ.

CHRISTMAS has once more been celebrated in the usual manner by the Churches, and innumerable attempts have been made to explain why the advent of Jesus has produced so little change in the political and moral condition of the world. Prior to the outbreak of war, we were constantly reminded of the priceless benefits bestowed upon mankind by the Babe born at Bethlehem. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, editor of the *British Weekly*, published a series of articles, in which he undertook to enumerate all those benefits, one of them being the vast improvement in the conduct of modern warfare. While Sir William regretfully admitted that Christianity had not yet abolished war, he vigorously contended that it had rendered it quite impossible for a war to be waged in the horribly savage and brutal fashion so frightfully common under Paganism. The reverend knight has ere now discovered how completely mistaken he was, and we have been vainly expecting him to say so in his journal. It is highly significant, however, that clergymen no longer boast of the miraculous triumphs of the Christian faith. Dr. Frank Ballard, for example, boldly maintains not merely that Christianity has not achieved the splendid success at one time claimed for it, but has not been tried even as an experiment. Both he and his brethren used to pride themselves upon the unspeakable privilege of being ministers of the Christian Church, but now he sorrowfully confesses that a Christian Church does not exist. He is reported to have spoken thus:—

If Germany and Europe had been truly Christian, the War would not have occurred. The first lesson they had to learn, as they faced with tear-dimmed eyes and aching hearts the present situation, was to face the realities. How was it, some asked, that after two thousand years of Christianity, they could have a war like this? This was childish talk. They had not had two thousand years of Christianity, they had not had one year of Christianity; they had not a Christian nation, not even a Christian Church.

Principal Griffith-Jones, of the United College, Bradford, adopts practically the same tone. Some time ago he addressed a Sunday Society on the evils of militarism, and, at the close, someone asked him, "What price Christianity now?" He took up the challenge, and asked the speaker to answer him one plain, simple question, which was this: "If Jesus Christ had had his way with the world, would this War have taken place at all?" After a few moments' silence, a weak voice answered "No." Not satisfied with that answer, the Principal demanded a vote of the audience on the question; and by a majority it was decided that if Christ had had his way the War would have been impossible. Dr. Griffith-Jones relates that incident in an address he has just delivered as President of the Bradford and District Free Church Council, and which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for December 15. What he claims is, that "if Christianity had been really practised by the nations now at war, in their relations one with the other; if this War were due to the breakdown of the law of conduct proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, then we could talk of the breakdown of Christianity with something like justice." He confidently declares that the very opposite is the case, and then offers the following curious explanation of the War:—

It is the ethic of the natural man that has been practised in the international policies of the world from the beginning till now, with only one or two incidents by way of brilliant exception to diversify the record. And it is the breakdown of the ethic of the natural man that is lit up by the lurid fires of this world-conflict.....If anything is clear it is this, not that the ethic of Christianity has failed, for it has never been tried yet, but the ethic of the natural man—the ethic of self-seeking, and greed, and lust for power. This War proclaims, in trumpet tones loud enough for the dead to hear, not that Christianity is dead and done with, but that Christianity is the only chance this poor world has to save it from self-destruction.

The most striking feature of that extract is the amazing puerility of its argument. Christianity has

been in existence for two thousand years without being once tried. During the whole of that long period it has remained the deadest of dead letters. With scarcely a single break, the world has been under the dominion of the natural man from the beginning till now; and to the natural man Dr. Griffith-Jones gives a shockingly bad character. We are all quite prepared to defend him against the charge of being governed by self-seeking, greed, and lust for power. There are tens of thousands of natural men who are entirely free from such undesirable attributes, and, taking them on an average, they will compare very favourably with the so-called spiritual men, so taken. Now, assuming, for argument's sake, the inferiority and essential wickedness of the natural man, how are we to account for his invariable supremacy in history? How is it that his ethic has been practised in the international policies of the world, to the total exclusion of the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount? Is it because the sovereignty of God is but a term that has signified absolutely nothing in the actual government of the world? Is it because Christ laboured under a delusion when he said that he had all power in heaven and on earth, and that by means of it he would draw all men unto himself? A few years ago the pulpit rang with the praises of the irresistible and all-conquering Redeemer, who was said to sit on the throne; but to-day we are told that, as yet, he has done literally nothing, the natural man having kept him in the background, inactive, through all the falsely called Christian centuries. And yet Christianity, which has been here for two thousand years without being ever tried, is recommended as the only hope of the future, the only chance poor humanity has to save it from self-destruction. The absurdity of such a position is so patent that one is astonished to find that it is taken seriously by anybody. Here we have two eminent Doctors of Divinity, two well-known ministers of Christ, who have the temerity to assure us that the War, in which millions of men have already heroically sacrificed their lives, is destined to result in the complete triumph of Christianity, which up to the present has never been tried.

One cannot help being amused at the extreme *naivete* which characterizes Principal Griffith-Jones's description of himself and his brethren. He says:—

We are in the nation as witnesses to the reality and sovereignty of spiritual and unseen forces. We represent the interests of the Kingdom of God in the world.....We stand for things eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, but which God hath revealed to them that love him. We have been on the Sacred Mount, we have seen the vision, and it is our business to bring the whole world under its sway.

If that portraiture were true to life, we would be eager to understand why such wonderfully endowed persons have exerted practically no influence over their fellow-beings. They are conceited enough, in all conscience; and yet nothing stares them in the face so persistently and so piercingly as their own utter impotence. Big, boastful words stream out of their mouths continually, they picture themselves as clothed with power from high, as being the very temples of the Holy Ghost, and the instruments by whom the Lord Jesus does his saving work; and yet they have no voice whatever in the administration of the great world's affairs. Outside their own immediate circles nobody dreams of taking them seriously, or of paying any real heed to what they say about their God. As a matter of fact, their self-portraiture is as thoroughly false as it is superficially flattering, and the big world simply laughs at it. Sometimes they tell us that they have been supernaturally born, and that they carry the Divine nature about with them; but there is not the shadow of evidence that their lives are supernaturally energized and guided. As their mouthpiece, Principal Griffith-Jones admits that Christianity "has never yet been tried on any but the smallest scale," and then adds:—

We must preach it on a national and international scale for the future. We know that when it has been

practised on the personal scale it has never failed to justify itself as the finest and noblest fruit of human character.

Well, let us test that claim by an appeal to history. St. Bernard, of Clairvaux, is universally regarded as one of the greatest and most illustrious saints that ever lived. His piety knew no bounds, and his loyalty to the Church never wavered; but his character bristled with many undesirable and hateful qualities. Anyone who dared to think for himself found in Bernard a most bitter and implacable enemy. It is on record with what violent, relentless animosity he persecuted that brilliant intellectualist, Peter Abelard, until he brought about his condemnation at the Council of Sens, and its confirmation afterwards by the Pope. It is also on record how he drove Europe mad by preaching a new crusade for reclaiming the Holy Land from the all-triumphant infidels. By his marvellous eloquence he set France and Germany afire with the insane crusading zeal, and Louis VII. of France and Conrad III. of Germany placed themselves at the heads of enormous armies, which reached Constantinople, where they were subjected to the most terrible hardships, and where eventually they were either dispersed or annihilated. Bernard hated the Mohammedans with perfect hatred, which he succeeded in communicating to the crowds that flocked to hear him. Christians have always been terrific and disastrous haters of heretics and Atheists, and orthodoxy does not permit them to be anything else.

Christmas is once more a thing of the past, and we are again reminded of the fact which is becoming more and more firmly established every year, namely, that the only Christianity known to history is historically played out, and that its discredited champions, realizing this, are now predicting the triumph of another Christianity, which never has been and never can be defined; and for this new religion we shall be indebted to this calamitous and devastating War. Hitherto the Churches have never recognized the true Christ, but when the War comes to an end we shall all know and love and adore and serve him from hearts aflame with ever-deepening loyalty. Such is the prophecy, and the fate of all past Christian prophecies teaches us how to treat this one.

J. T. LLOYD.

Tennyson's Theology.

Ah, two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

One far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

—TENNYSON.

He (Tennyson) was the only poet since Lucretius, who has taken the troubles to understand the work and tendency of the men of science.—T. H. HUXLEY.

PROFESSIONAL defenders of orthodoxy are never tired of pointing to Tennyson as a typically Christian poet. It must be a relief to them to turn from the productions of such poetasters as Heber and Keble, whose minor verse would never be allotted real poetic rank, save by those to whose religious feelings they happen to give pleasure. Very different was the regard with which Alfred Tennyson looked upon the world. A Christian, it may be, to the end, the fabric of his creed was shot through and through with scepticism. Tennyson's intellectual courage was far from complete; he was not armed at all points. He made unjustifiable reservations and claims philosophically inadmissible; but the great grief of his life was, mentally, life's greatest boon to him. It forced a naturally religious and timid man to face and fight the spectres of the mind, and to tell his generation, with a commendable candour, the progress and the issue of the struggle.

Granted foreknowledge of his great affection for Arthur Hallam and the tragic end of that affection,

In Memoriam might have been expected from the pen which wrote *The Two Voices* and *Maud* :—

A still small voice spoke unto me,
Thou art so full of misery;
Were it not better not to be?

He found an answer to the dull murmur in his heart, but the reply was unsatisfactory, and the spectres of doubt were never laid finally :—

A life of nothings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth.

They reared their heads again and again, and made of "this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire," a terrible witness to human insignificance :—

A sad astrology—the boundless plan
That made you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

Many years later, when he wrote that pessimistic poem, *Despair*, the utterance was not merely dramatic, but its bitterness was inspired by memories of many hours of personal doubt :—

And the suns of the limitless universe sparkled and shone
in the sky,
Flashing with fires as of God; but we know that their
light was a lie—
Bright as with deathless hope—but, however, they
sparkled and shone,
The dark little worlds running round them were worlds
of woe like our own—
No soul in the heavens above, no soul in the earth below,
A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and woe.

Tennyson often felt chilled and awed in the vastnesses of time and space :—

Many an æon moulded earth before her highest, man,
was born;
Many an æon, too, may pass when earth is manless and
forlorn.

At moments he breaks out with a cry of angry contempt of himself and the impotent race to which he belongs :—

What is it all but the trouble of ants, in the gleam of a
million million of suns?

Tennyson goes far beyond the mere affirmations of orthodoxy, and he does not shrink from posing some of the more powerful reasons for doubt and denial. He failed, however, to speak the final word, because, with that timidity, which was one of the flaws of a noble nature, he did not dare to follow his intellect. In religious speculation he never did actually launch out into the deep sea. He hugged the shore, ever directing his prow towards the illimitable ocean, but ever seeking safety under the shadow of the land. It was the safe rather than the heroic course that Tennyson exalted in the world of thought and action. He nearly always crushed his doubts, refusing to let them shake his belief in the opinions forced on him in his childhood. For more adventurous minds, Tennyson, as a teacher, can never give the full satisfaction which they can derive from Shelley, Swinburne, or Meredith, and others who have gone forward bravely wherever their intellect may have led.

Certainly, Tennyson held the fundamental Christian dogmas very loosely. No thoroughly convinced believer could have written of :—

The shadow cloaked from head to foot
Who keeps the keys of all the creeds.

What, indeed, can be said of the lines speaking of one :—

Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form.

Or, the oft-quoted :—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

On one point Tennyson was in open revolt. He had nothing but contempt for the inhuman dogma of an everlasting hell. He proclaimed himself a Universalist in the lines in which he hoped—

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life should be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.

In his old age Tennyson denounces the same damnable dogma, and his words lose nothing by being put in the mouth of an Agnostic :—

What! I should call on that infinite Love that has served
us so well?
Infinite cruelty, rather, that made everlasting hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoomed us, and does what he
will with his own,
Better our dead, brute mother who never has heard us
groan.

The poet's fiercest attack on this savage doctrine occurs in *Rizpah*, that splendid poem throbbing with humanity. The passionate words of the poor, old, dying woman, full of love for her son, who was hanged for robbing the mail, are too deep for tears. They give the quintessence of the ethical revolt against the awful superstition; which "makes a goblin of the sun" :—

Election, election, and reprobation—it's all very well,
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in
hell.
And if he be lost—but to save my soul, that is all your
desire;
Do you think that I care for my soul, if my boy be gone
to the fire?

Tennyson wrote strongly enough about hell, but timidity runs through much of his work, bounding his outlook, shortening his hands, cramping the effort of which, had it been backed by courage, such a genius as his might have been capable. To discuss philosophy mildly, to possess a languid enthusiasm for Freedom, and to thank "God" for the sea which protected this country from "the mad fool-fury of the Seine," was Tennyson's ideal of the perfect life.

One turns from such a feast of husks, such "vacant chaff well-meant for grain." Tennyson was nearer, in his theological standpoint, to Mr. Facing-Both-Ways than to the leaders of thought. "Pity 'tis, 'tis true," that this most beautiful singer should have had no better message for his contemporaries.

As in every powerful individuality in touch with intellectual hopes and fears, there was in Tennyson a dual personality. There was the poetic child, pleased with the fairy tales of religion, happy in the dim light of the Temple of Faith, and the sadder and the wiser man who insisted on the arbitration of reason. It was because he lived to see the gradual victory of Rationalism that in his later years his voice so often wailed in despair. It was the poet of the dual personality protesting, and protesting vastly too much, against the logic of the thinker.

MIMNERMUS.

The Later Phases of Sea Supremacy.

WHEN, as was shown in the third article on "The Evolution of the Sea Power," the allied foes of England drew back from invasion, they deemed it safer to assail the outlying possessions of Britain, and these they determined to attack. The American waters, the Mediterranean, the West Indies, and the coasts of India became the chief centres of conflict. The enemy triumphs were few; one only proved of any serious consequence. This was in America, where the French were able to afford priceless assistance to the revolted Colonists. French soldiers joined the American Army and the French Navy materially assisted the insurgents in compelling the capitulation at Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781. This catastrophe proved the Waterloo of the War of Independence, and George III. was obliged to acknowledge the birth of the United States of America.

In the Mediterranean, Minorca was lost to the enemy owing to our inability to relieve it. In all the other theatres of war the English easily held their own. Despite the dashing deeds of the brilliant Suffren, the French sea-captain, England emerged from the conflict in the East as the winner. In the West Indies nothing of moment was lost, and numerous and formidable as were the attempts to capture

Gibraltar, it was never surrendered to the enemy. In 1780, the year of the Gordon Riots in London, Holland's fleet was despatched to second the navies of France and Spain, but Britain proved herself superior to the three powers combined.

Still, the sea struggle at its termination was seen to be indecisive. The Allies failed to inflict a mortal blow, while the British Fleet permitted its antagonists too much freedom. The older tactics were out of date owing to the new conditions that had arisen, and it was reserved for a later generation to establish a sea supremacy which remained unchallenged from the days of Trafalgar to the outbreak of the World War now raging with such sanguinary fury.

The rising of an outraged people against the cynical and despotic dominion of courts and priests, was destined to develop into a titanic struggle which shook the entire continent of Europe and echoed throughout the world. The French Revolution has so influenced all subsequent events that it is justly regarded as one of the great epochs in the history of humanity. That this upheaval was largely caused by the misgovernment of previous centuries, and, above all, by the awful waste of blood and treasure witnessed during the reign of Louis XIV., appears unquestionable. Young France was not only inspired by a passion to liberate herself from the yoke of her oppressors, but, at the outset, she was generously anxious that other downtrodden peoples should participate in her newly acquired freedom.

The alarmed European Crowns banded themselves together to crush a risen race, and the Reign of Terror resulted. If we could form a picture of a warm-hearted and enthusiastic people overwhelmed on a large scale by similar, if nobler emotions, than those that led, some months ago, to the sacking of German shops in London, we might imagine something of the intensified feelings which induced the French people to regard every member of the order which had crushed them to the dust with dark and sinister misgivings.

The ancient enemies, France and England, were soon engaged in a bloody struggle. While Napoleon soon carried all before him on the European continent, and every part of it, directly or indirectly, felt the force of his arms; England was protected by her island isolation from invasion. While other States found their industries paralyzed, England became the great manufacturing nation of the world. Her shipyards turned out vessels on an unprecedented scale, and the tonnage of her shipping doubled. England now became the great heart of the world's commerce. Her sacrifices in blood were as nothing in comparison with those of her Allies, or of France. England held the purse-strings, subsidized foreign armies, and acted as the director of monarchical Europe. The soil of the native land remained unassailable. Britain emerged from the combat the victor, not because of her army, for that amounted to very little, but because she was sovereign of the seas.

Whether Admiral Mahan was right or wrong in his estimate of the younger Pitt's peerless wisdom in conducting the war, is a matter that need not detain us. Suffice to say, that despite the enormous growth of English manufactures, and the extended activity of the shipbuilding yards, the war was so prolonged that a vast amount of misery, poverty, and disease overwhelmed whole sections of the community. The land-owning, financial, and commercial magnates flourished exceedingly, but the labouring masses were subjected to dire distress.

From 1795 to 1798 the British Navy was supreme. Holland, now in the hands of France, became an enemy, and the Cape, at that time a Dutch colony, was occupied. Trinidad now became English, the Spaniards now being in the war on the side of France. Jervis routed the Spaniards off Cape St. Vincent, and Duncan defeated the Dutch in a sea-fight near Camperdown. But again the Government wavered, and the French built up another fleet at Toulon. Pitt strove to secure a cessation of hos-

tilities, but France scornfully rejected all proposals for peace.

All hope of a successful invasion of England was abandoned between 1798 and 1802. India and Egypt were made the objectives of French assault instead. Napoleon led the expedition to Egypt which sailed down the Mediterranean. The French ships had departed from port before Nelson arrived, and that immortal seaman made for Alexandria, where the French purposed landing. They succeeded in evading him, reached Egypt in safety, and seized the Nile country. In August, Nelson crushed the French Navy in Aboukir Bay, but no effective blockade was carried out, and Napoleon embraced the opportunity afforded him to return to France. The European land coalition against France was soon dissolved by Napoleon's successes, and England was left to continue the contest alone. Bitter indeed were the mortifications of England, despite the fact that the French were compelled to capitulate in Egypt.

Peace was at last signed in 1802. Under this peace, the Treaty of Amiens, France was given the possession of the Western Rhine, which included the Netherlands. The Low Countries, whose independence Britain justly held to be essential to her safety, thus passed under the dominion of a foreign foe. Napoleon still pursued an aggressive policy, and it grew more and more certain that the reopening of hostilities was merely a matter of months.

England declared war on France in May, 1803. Napoleon had long regarded England as the chief obstacle to his supremacy. From 1803 to 1805 the British Isles were threatened with invasion. A large armament was gathered at Boulogne, and an attempt was made to establish a French naval force in the Channel powerful enough to enable the French Army to be landed in England. Spain, menaced alike by British sea power and French land supremacy, came to the conclusion that the French were the more dangerous, and decided to join them. The French and Spanish Navies were now united, but almost all the plans of their commanders miscarried when, after a long period of patient waiting, Nelson utterly overwhelmed the combined fleets at Trafalgar on October 21, 1805. By this disaster, Napoleon's dream of invasion was completely dissipated.

The projected invasion of Britain being thus brought to naught, a determined attempt was made to starve England into submission. The continental countries were forbidden, under pains and penalties, to trade with the pestilent English. Under the Berlin Decrees of 1806 and the Milan Decrees of 1807 the whole world was ordered to cease commercial intercourse with England. Britain responded with Orders in Council which asserted that all trade with French dominions or with any State which complied with Napoleon's demands must be intercepted.

The British Navy kept the trade routes clear. The Danish Fleet was captured, and smuggling on a wholesale scale was carried on with the connivance of the English Government. Napoleon was, by necessity, driven to occasionally ignore his own decrees, and the English granted licenses by the thousand to enable their merchants to trade in vessels sailing under the colours of nations subordinate to Napoleon. Even French merchantmen were employed for this purpose. This ruse was adopted to save the precious cargoes from capture by enemy cruisers. Nor is any apology for these proceedings called for. British commerce had suffered so seriously from Napoleon's policy that great privation had occurred. Russia's ports were reopened to England, and Napoleon failed to cut off this important Baltic trade. The invasion of Russia followed in 1812, to be succeeded by the terrible retreat from Moscow, when Napoleon's power being shattered, the revolt of the oppressed States supervened, and the system established by the marvellous Corsican fell with a crash.

Meanwhile, the maritime power of the United States was steadily rising and, even at this period, showed signs of a brilliant future. The Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America were beginning to shake off the yoke of their European rulers. Brazil

slowly severed her connection with Portugal, while the Spanish colonies grew tired of the burdens placed upon them by the mother country. Spain was so exhausted by the wars that she was unable to coerce her mutinous sons. All Spain's vast American mainland possessions secured their independence. A long period of anarchy resulted, but Latin America has since become a splendid area for profitable investment, as well as a leading centre for the supply of raw materials and food stuffs for more densely populated lands.

All the sea progress of the ages, however, has not been altogether due to struggle and strife. That in the present stage of man's progress a fighting navy is necessary to a maritime power is undeniable. Trade advantages first impelled man to explore the ocean, and his war-vessels were built to protect the commerce he had gained. He sailed down the river and crept round the coast before he ventured to cross the broad sea. Early voyages over the deep were so slow that no perishable commodities could be carried.

The great modern navigators mapped out the oceans, but many details remained for future discovery. It is gratifying to observe that Mr. Hannay emphasizes the important achievements of those scientific voyagers who began in the eighteenth century that charting and surveying of the oceans which has now reached so high a pitch of perfection. He says:—

The name of our own countryman, Captain Cook, stands at the head of the whole body of those by whom the knowledge has been gained for the benefit of the world.....His task was to complete what he could not finish, to cross and recross the Pacific, intent on surveying and charting. He set up a standard of thoroughness, and care, which has never been surpassed. He found so much to do, and the knowledge that he gathered was so well recorded that the position he holds is unique. Nobody has had so vast a space, so superficially known, to survey.

Cook doubtless possessed the advantage of instruments not available to his predecessors. Harrison's chronometer enabled Cook to ascertain his longitude with ease. The ocean paths discovered by the aid of the chronometer were made plain to the seafarer by the modern lighthouse. Ships could journey in the dark in the least frequented waters. That early beacon, the Pharos of Alexandria, goes back to 381 B.C., but many of the towers now built on wave-swept rocks are triumphs of modern engineering. Swift and certain voyages at present possible owe their existence to the bounties of science alone. Let this be remembered to her credit when the applications of science and discovery are being so extensively utilized in the services of sanguinary strife.

Compared with previous centuries, the last hundred years has been a period of naval peace. A century ago, in all the leading seas, piracy was rampant. The sea power of England was employed to police the oceans. Piracy in the Mediterranean and the West Indies was stamped out by the British Fleet, with the friendly co-operation of Holland and the United States. But although there have been fewer naval battles, sea power has largely assisted in wars waged on land. In the Crimean War, in the Boer War, in the present conflict, and in all our "little wars" too numerous to specify, all our expeditionary forces were shipped to the scene of action. In the American Civil War, the Federal Fleet proved a decisive factor in the struggle. The war in which Japan humiliated China was settled on the sea. And, when later, little Japan took her courage in both hands, and withstood the Russian Colossus, naval triumph prepared the way for the success of the terrestrial struggle.

A century ago the finest vessels afloat were constructed of wood, although they had been evolved into a state of efficiency entirely unknown in antecedent ages. The steam-driven iron ship then appeared. With the increased power of shell-fire, the older timber vessels were too easily sunk or

burnt. One scientific discovery and invention succeeded another so rapidly that the marine services were revolutionized. England's firmly established industries, her immense stores of coal and iron, and her ability to import from abroad all that she could not furnish at home, gave her pre-eminence as a sea State.

America entered the competitive arena, and was for a time regarded as a serious rival. But England soon regained the lead in shipping and shipbuilding, and now seems likely to command more than a fair share in the various maritime industries for many generations to come.

There is every reason to suppose that Japan has a great future as a sea Power, which may minimise England's supremacy in the Far Eastern world. The unification of Italy has led to her building a powerful Fleet. But the chief competitor of Britain is most likely to be Germany. The War so far has shown the overwhelming superiority of the English Navy, which has safeguarded our shores, protected our world-wide commerce, transported millions of men to foreign climes, and carried provisions, clothing, and armaments of every description to our own forces and to those of our Allies, in incredible quantities. Although largely dependent upon outside sources for food and the other necessaries of life, England has suffered little inconvenience, thanks to the services of her incomparable Fleet. Germany, on the other hand, has seen her ships swept from the seas, her ports become solitudes, and her great ocean armaments locked up against attack by the enemy Navy they were intended to destroy. For a long time to come, England appears destined to reign as proud mistress of the seas. And all patriotism apart, what race can show a cleaner record than ours, and what other people can claim a clearer right to the possession of the empire of the waves?

T. F. PALMER.

Letters to my Daughter.—II.

MY DEAR JOAN,—

To-day you have asked me what is the meaning of "God Save Our Gracious King"? I don't know, and I have told you so. You have also asked your slightly puritan aunt who God is. She replied that he is someone who takes care of you. And you, with that simplicity which I envy, said, in plain and direct language, "He doesn't!" Was there ever such a joyful parent in the implied compliment? And yet I suppose the faint echo of praise must be given to your mother. You will never have to ask anyone who she is, and all little girls and boys in the world know whom is meant by that one word, which is, and has been, on the lips of all. I know of no word sweeter; and, at odd times, when I see you sitting on her knee, listening to some eternal story, I feel that I am near the very doors of heaven—a heaven that can be shared by everyone. When she and I have set our sails for the Great Voyage, I trust that memory will bring to you nothing for tears, that the fragrance of the name of your mother will be found in your deeds, and that this world, despite the actions of bad people, shall be purified by thoughts of a name nobler than that of God.

It is some time ago now since you went in the garden to touch the crocuses. Those the colour of gold were your favourites. Those with the delicate blue veins running down to the centre come next. Those the colour of your eyes and the colour of a cloudless summer sky, you loved also. You remember how sad we were when they fell down flat. Never mind, we said, they are going to sleep now. That was the time when the gillyflowers told us that they were going to come out, so that we could forget the snows and winter rain; it was the end of spring. This morning when I went to see if the crocuses were still asleep, there were rows of tiny green spikes, all telling me that the blue and golden cups were just beginning to wake up, and soon they would be here.

I wonder if you remember one cold night, when you were wrapped in an eiderdown and picked up by your mother, and we all sat together waiting for the unknown. We were ready to escape from tumbling bricks and mortar; then I realized the awful failure of the black-coated men; then it was that my hatred of Christian religion became unspeakable. Up above were men from a Christian country, and down on earth were Christians. Do not ask me why my bookshelf has Rabelais, Lucretius, Shelley, Swinburne, and the pretty covered book called *The Light of Asia*? They will all be yours one day; when your eyes and ears are tired of hypocrisy, perhaps you may turn to their pages for a quiet refreshing hour.

Let me see; I have been talking about crocuses. It is very quaint, but sixteen tons of nitro-glycerine will not cause one yellow bloom to laugh at you in the sunshine. The same weight will not cause a sick man to smile; but a bunch of those dear flowers will.

Yes, sit on the rug and laugh at us—teach us, for we are stupid; lead us, for we are blind. Yes, teach us to laugh at the black devils called priests, who assuredly will be hurled from their place of tyranny. Lead us to that land of simplicity where a curly head confounds a philosopher.

Your mother tells me that nearly all the shops were sold out of Fairy Books; it is the best news I have heard to-day, as I do not read the newspapers. She, with a more practical mind, lights the fire with them. And that reminds me that I have a story to tell you about a brave man who stole Fire so that you and your millions of little brothers and sisters could—roast chestnuts.—Your loving Father,

TRISTRAM.

Acid Drops.

"Why does not God stop the War?" is a question that has been asked over and over again during the past eighteen months, and now Father Bernard Vaughan comes along with his answer. God, he says, is drawing good out of the War, because it is bringing some people back to religion:—

"Personally," said Father Vaughan, "I feel that it would take eternity to thank God for not having stopped this war as He might have done. If it had been deferred for ten years, my beloved country would have been a Mongolian desert. Talk of Belgium, speak of Poland, of the Serbians and the Armenians; that is child's play to what would have become of hated England. Our dear island home, with its cathedrals, minsters, and abbeys would have been utterly destroyed; we should have had nothing left us but 'our eyes to weep with.' But God, being Almighty and wise, and loving, has spared us, and we do not know here the horrors of Belgium and Poland and the despair of the Armenians."

It is quite plain. God allowed the War in order to save England the horrors of Belgium, Poland, and Servia. Of course, it doesn't matter so much about these other countries, the great thing is to save England. Commend us to English religion for unadulterated selfishness and stupid conceit.

In the giant statue of Von Hindenburg, at Berlin, the eyes are said to be several feet apart. This reminds us of the angel Gabriel, who, according to Oriental legend, has eyes so far apart that it would take a good-sized camel three days to travel from one to the other.

Our Austrian enemies also know how to use the Bible. The *Arbeiter Zeitung* says:—

While the Pope is nobly devoting his entire activity and all his power to reconciling the battling nations his Austrian apostles find nothing better to do than to point out that neither in the Old Testament nor in the New is war forbidden, that war, in fact, is quite compatible with the religion of love.

We need only add that the Pope's Austrian apostles are indisputably right. There is nothing in either the Old or New Testaments against war. And it is obviously compatible with the religion of love as practised in Christendom.

The London County Council has again been debating the question of the influence of cinematograph films on children—and has duly ventilated all the usual nonsense. One member said he had "personal knowledge that a large

number of boys in an industrial school owed their presence there to petty thefts which they had committed in order to get money for picture palaces." We do not doubt for a moment that many boys who may have stolen money spent it on picture palaces, just as adults steal and spend the proceeds on clothes, or jewellery, or theatres—or even on building churches or contributing to missions. But suppose the picture palaces had not been there, would these same boys not have stolen? Did boys not steal before picture palaces existed? And will they not steal even if all picture palaces are closed? For ourselves, we haven't the least doubt that if Sunday-schools were as attractive to boys as picture palaces, and all had to pay for admission, it might be found that many boys were in industrial schools because they had stolen money in order to go there.

The whole incident is very stupid, and would not be worth noting except for the insight it gives into the quality of many of those who act as our moral guides. Some years ago the favourite object of attack was the "penny dreadfuls," and their suppression was asked for, for the same reason that the cinematograph is now blamed. In each case the reasoning is the same. If boys steal, and spend the money on buying "penny dreadfuls," suppress the papers. If they spend their plunder in picture palaces, prevent their going to such places. It never occurs to these people that stealing may continue even if these particular avenues of expenditure are closed. If the County Councillors inquired how many of these boys in industrial homes came from families where they were uncared for, and without either proper example or training, they would be pursuing a far more fruitful line of investigation. As it is, there is too much of the method of the old-fashioned missionary tract about the inquiry for it to be productive of any good whatsoever.

The clergy like to have their fingers in every pie. They are "too proud to fight" themselves, but they want to be in the limelight. Accordingly, they are arranging for a "day of national prayer." If, however, prayer is efficacious, why trouble about armies at all?

According to the *Boston Herald*, U.S.A., a titled lady and an American Baptist minister have vouched for the orthodoxy of Charles Darwin and Professor Huxley. Presently, we expect to hear that both of these distinguished scientists were members of Billy Sunday's Bible-class.

The British Army should be the admiration of all clergymen. All sorts of men enter the recruiting offices, and reappear as adherents of the Government religion, or as Catholics and Wesleyans. *On paper*, there is not a solitary Atheist in the Army. Surely, we must be reaching the Millennium.

Archbishop Carr, an Australian Catholic ecclesiastic, attributes the European War to the displeasure of the Deity. "God," says the Archbishop, "was angry with the nations. In many countries infidelity, false philosophy, and materialism led to denial and forgetfulness." Why forgetfulness? The German soldiers' belts bear the inscription, "God with us."

The *Evening News* says, with becoming gravity, "A dancing dervish, a Matabele witch-doctor—you may almost consider either of them a sort of clergyman." Exactly! They are all in the same line of business.

What's in a name? Sir John Bann, at a London County Council meeting, inquired what should be done with such names as Martin Luther-street, Handel-street, and Hanover-square. There are more humorous titles than German names. A thoroughfare in the East End, named Christian-street, is inhabited mainly by Jewish people.

The *International Psychic Gazette* for December publishes a lecture by a Mr. Robert King on "The Angel Helpers at Mons." The value of his lecture may be gauged by his remark that on inquiring of a friend who had been at Mons whether he had seen the angels, the friend replied, "No, not personally; and I am not surprised that I know nothing about it." We are not surprised either. No one ever does see such things personally. It is always some other fellow who sees them, and he is naturally hard to find.

"When a boy was charged at Ascot with stealing, his mother said she had taken steps to keep him right in future—she had already withdrawn the boy from the church choir."—*Star*.

An interesting article by "Student-in-Arms," appears in a recent issue of the *Spectator*. "Student-in-Arms" set out to discover the attitude of the mass of the people towards Christianity. He found that there was very little religion to talk about. Of life in the barrack-room he says:—

The life of the barrack-room is dull and rather petty. In point of fact, it bears somewhat the same relation to ordinary working-class life as salt-water baths do to the sea. We used to read that Brill's Baths were "salt as the sea but safer." Well, barrack life is narrow and rather sordid, like the life of all working men, and it lacks the spice of risk. There is no risk of losing your job and starving. Your bread and margarine are safe whatever happens. As a result the more heroic qualities are not called into action. The virtues of the barrack-room are unselfishness in small things. A few of the men were frankly bestial, obsessed by two ideas—beer and women. But for the most part they were good fellows. They were intensely loyal to their comrades, very ready to share whatever they had with a chum, extraordinarily generous and chivalrous if any one was in trouble, and that quite apart from his deserts. At any rate, it was easy to see that they believed wholeheartedly in unselfishness and in charity to the unfortunate, even if they did not always live up to their beliefs. It was the same sort of quality, too that they admired in other people. They liked an officer who was free with his money, took trouble to understand them if they were in difficulties, and considered their welfare. They were extremely quick to see through any one who pretended to be better than he was. This they disliked more than anything else. The man they admired most was the man who, though obviously a gentleman, did not trade on it. That, surely, is the trait which in the Gospel is called humility. They certainly did believe in unselfishness, generosity, charity, and humility. But it was doubtful whether they ever connected these qualities with the profession and practice of Christianity.

At the Front, the endeavour of a great many chaplains, according to "Student-in-Arms," is to frighten soldiers into religion. And, he says:—

We were all rather indignant. We might be a little bit frightened inside; but we were not going to admit it. Above all, we were not going to turn religious at the last minute because we were afraid. So one man began to scoff at the Old Testament, David and Bathsheba, Jonah and the whale, and so forth. Another capped him by laughing at the feeding of the five thousand. A third said that in his opinion any one who pretended to be a Christian in the Army must be a humbug. The Sergeant-Major was fatuously apologetic and shocked, and applied the closure by putting out the light and ordering silence.

It was not much, but enough to convince me that the soldier, and in this case the soldier means the working man, does not in the least connect the things that he really believes in with Christianity. He thinks that Christianity consists in believing the Bible and setting up to be better than your neighbours. By believing the Bible he means believing that Jonah was swallowed by the whale. By setting up to be better than your neighbours he means not drinking, not swearing, and preferably not smoking, being close-fisted with your money, avoiding the companionship of doubtful characters, and refusing to acknowledge that such have any claim upon you.

This is surely nothing short of tragedy. Here were men who believed absolutely in the Christian virtues of unselfishness, generosity, charity, and humility, without ever connecting them in their minds with Christ; and at the same time what they did associate with Christianity was just on a par with the formalism and smug self-righteousness which Christ spent His whole life in trying to destroy.

In some respects this may not be a bad picture, but it calls for one or two comments. We fancy that a closer acquaintance with the men would show that belief in Christianity—and, of course, disbelief in it—means much more than "Student-in-Arms" appears to think. But apart from this we venture to protest against calling unselfishness, charity, generosity, etc., "Christian virtues." They are not Christian virtues, although they may be preached by Christians. They are *human* virtues; human in their origin and application. They are no more Christian than Jewish, Buddhist, or Mohammedan. And, unconsciously, "Student-in-Arms" is illustrating the spirit of smug self-righteousness against which he protests. The instinct of the soldier in not connecting human virtues with any form of religious belief is fundamentally sound and healthy. They never will so connect it until their social sense is perverted by theological teaching.

In an account of the generosity of Red Indians, mentioned in a recent publication on missionary life, it is stated that the coloured folk gave pieces of print, tobacco, tea, fire-bags, and knives and forks at the collection on Communion Sundays. We hope the cutlery did not bear the name of the nearest railway hotel.

"The Angels of Mons," like Charley's Aunt, are still running. A song has been published on the subject, and we hope that the music is not so thin as the original yarn.

"You Can't Kill Father Christmas," runs an advertisement in a religious contemporary. We are very pleased to notice that there is one thing Christians cannot kill.

"The Clerical View" is a headline in a newspaper. As so many clergymen wear spectacles, it is likely to be a near-sighted one.

A book has been published with the title of *The Fruits of Silence*. The volume deals with "the use of prayer without words." Would not an Oriental praying-barrel answer the purpose?

The *Daily News* recently said "Most of us, without knowing it, like the truth adulterated." Oh, Fie! And in a leading Free Church paper, too!

The "Agnostic element which infests the public parks," says *New Days* is a "mixture of ignorance and viciousness," and the presence of such people "in public places during a time like the present is an offence against common decency." The writer adds, "Will the *Freethinker* kindly note?" Well, we have noted, but we think it would have been a real kindness not to have done so. To copy the language of *New Days*, when ignorance and viciousness become so pronounced it would be kinder to pass it without notice than to call attention to its existence. We console ourselves with the reflection that the exposure is not so cruel as it seems. When a man has reached the stage of writing such stuff, it is very unlikely that he will possess sufficient sensibility to feel the shame of having his words reproduced.

Mr. Gordon Selfridge says, "the great thing is to regard business as a great, zestful game, with plenty of mirth to brighten it." My lords, the bishops, would not agree with Mr. Selfridge, and they are very keen business men.

The *Times* says: "The birth of a son to the Dean of St. Paul's and to the Rev. Dr. David, Headmaster of Rugby, is announced on our front page to-day." It seems that the age of miracles is not yet past.

"The Poor Cleric in War-Time" is the title of an article in a London paper. What about the poorer organists, vergers, and choristers?

A Sunday paper offered a prize of five shillings for the best accounts of odd people that the readers had heard of. None of the printed replies referred to the odd folk in the Bible, and there is quite an army of them.

The newspapers describe the giant statue of Admiral Von Tirpitz at Berlin as "a wooden idol." There are plenty of others in the Catholic churches of Europe.

The clerical assurance that religion is benefiting by the War is constantly being challenged by facts. Thirty-two decrees nisi were declared absolute at the Divorce Court in one day. Dear old Mother Church frowns at divorce.

A Christian War Prayer.

O PRINCE OF PEACE, to thee we humbly pray,
Grant us thy help when we go forth to slay,
Renew our zeal for slaughter, day by day;
O Prince of Peace.

O Gentle Christ, thy name we ever bless,
Help us to make the children fatherless,
And turn the beauteous land to wilderness;
O Gentle Christ.

O Gracious Lord, in thee we put our trust,
Help us to deal the deadly bayonet thrust,
And pin the twisting bodies in the dust;
O Gracious Lord.

O Loving Christ, the brotherhood of man
We all were preaching when the War began,
But aid us now our brothers' deaths to plan;
O Loving Christ.

O Righteous Lord, upon the bloody soil
Help us the efforts of our foes to spoil,
In triumph, thine the honour, ours the spoil;
O Righteous Lord.

E. J. M.

To Correspondents.

JACK BARTON.—We never attempt to reply to those gentlemen who are ready to explain the Bible by a series of juggles with "sacred numbers," and we would advise others to follow the same plan. It is really a case for a mental pathologist.

H. L. HIGGINS.—We intend to do as you suggest in the very near future.

G. LUNN.—We have done our best to carry out our promise to our late leader, and we are gratified that our endeavours are appreciated.

FREETHINKERS in Lincoln and neighbourhood are asked to communicate with Mr. H. Du Rose, of 77 Raser-lane, Lincoln, with a view to commencing Freethought work in the city.

R. CHAPMAN.—Glad to hear that our par. of last week is bearing fruit.

R. H. EMINSON (U.S.A.).—Received, and will appear shortly.

J. HUDSON.—Next week.

F. COLLINS.—Thanks for help, which we appreciate.

E. A. McDONALD.—You will see that we have already allocated your remittances in the way you suggest.

W. E. KERSLAKE.—Portrait of Mr. Foote sent as desired. Sorry that other portraits are not available.

W. W.—We remember you quite well, and our recollections are very pleasant ones. Glad you think the *Freethinker* has "as much virility as ever." We are happy to say that your opinion is a very general one.

G. H.—We have read very carefully the copy sent, and, so far as we can see, it is strictly in order. Some of the provisions are a trifle unusual, but they are quite legal. The only suggestion we can make is in the direction of simplification. The less complex such documents are the better. It saves misunderstandings and expensive litigation.

J. WILLIAMS.—We had already noticed the reported decision of the Superintendent of Police at Aberystwith to prosecute the purchaser as well as the seller of all goods on a Sunday. The Superintendent is probably a pious person, but we do not think his action would be illegal—only unusual. We do not think there has ever been a case where the purchaser has been prosecuted, but we think the Act would cover it. And if it were done, the absurdity of the Act would become the more apparent—which is the reason, perhaps, why it has not been attempted.

DISGUSTED JUROR.—Let us know exactly what occurred, and we will see what can be done.

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

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.

G. W. Foote Memorial Fund.

(To take the form of a Presentation to Mrs. Foote.)

"The Roll of Honour."—Fourth List.

Previously acknowledged, £215 7s.—J. C. Shufflebotham, £1 1s.; A. J. Marriot, 2s. 6d.; F. W., 5s.; J. H. Munday, £2 2s.; F. H. H., 5s.; H. Bee, 2s. 6d.; W. Bailey, £5; Constance, £1; A. H. Smith, £1; W. E. and A. M. Kerslake, 10s. 6d.; J. Withy, 10s.; W. W., 2s. 6d.; John Grange, £1 1s.; Mrs. W. Hatty, 10s.; Dr. J. Laing, £5; W. P. Adamson, 10s. 6d.; X. Y. Z., 11s. 6d.; H. Organ, 2s. 6d.

Per F. Collins: A. Vanderhout, 5s.; J. Tarry, 5s.; A. Claydon, 5s.; V. Collins, 5s.; Mrs. Collins, 2s.; D. Aberdeen, 2s. 6d.; W. Smith, 2s. 6d.; H. Larry, 3s.; W. Andrews, 2s.; J. Garratt, 2s.; S. Vanderhout, 2s.; W. K. Bennett, 1s.; A. Casey, 1s.; A. Price, 1s.; F. Howell, 1s.; G. Haslewood, 1s.; J. Calloway, 1s.—Total, £2 2s.

Per Miss Vance: H. A. Lupton, 10s.; T. Vine, 10s. 6d.; M. T. M., £2 2s.

Sugar Plums.

At the beginning of the new year we have set ourselves a task in the fulfilment of which we beg the co-operation of all our readers. This is to gain a thousand new readers. It is no easy task during war-time, but we do not think it is an impossible one. Only a fraction of the Freethinkers of Britain subscribe for this journal, and there is every reason why all of them should do so. And if our readers will lend their assistance, that thousand ought to be secured within the next three months. It can be done. If we only make up our mind that it shall be done, it will be done. We have already advanced a little in the direction of an improvement in circulation. And that little is not merely an earnest of better things in store; it makes those better things easier of attainment. We are anxious to effect various improvements in the paper, and are only waiting for an increased circulation to give them actuality.

There should be—at any rate, there need be—no difficulty in obtaining this paper in any part of Britain. All the large wholesale agents—Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons, W. Dawson and Sons, Horace Marshall, George Vicars, etc.—have the paper on their lists, and can supply it if ordered. If there is any difficulty anywhere, we should be obliged to hear of it, and arrangements could then be made for sending the paper direct.

In order to put into practice one plan we have in view, we should be obliged if readers would assist us in compiling a list of newsagents from whom the *Freethinker* may be purchased. The name and address on a postcard will be quite sufficient for our purpose, but as early as possible, please.

We frequently have enquiries from readers for something dealing with the Bible and with religion suitable for children. There is, we feel, great need for something of the kind, and this week, in addition to the charming little article by 'Tristram,' we print the first of a couple of articles by Mr. F. J. Gould. There are very few writers more capable of dealing with this topic than Mr. Gould. His peculiar aptitude for instructing children is well known and widely appreciated, and we call special attention to these writings because we feel they meet a real need. We shall be curious to learn how far our readers agree with us on this point.

Of course, the ideal plan would be to leave the question of religion alone until the child is old enough to discuss the subject in the light of acquired knowledge and comparative maturity. But circumstances prevent this. Other children have religion forced upon them, the Freethinker's child sees religion all round it, and this leads to the inevitable question. And the difficulty in answering this is the difficulty of getting the child's point of view. Only those who have made a serious attempt to appreciate the mind of the child will realize what a problem this is. It is useless treating a child of ten or twelve years of age as an infant. There is nothing that children resent more. And to argue as though it were fully grown up is futile. One must catch the child's point of view, always remembering that a child's logic is deadly in its accuracy, once the premises are granted, and its sense of justice keen.

We see that one of the weekly papers points out that good patriots need not be alarmed at the name of "Turkish" bath. It is not Turkish in origin. That is so. The bath, so-called, is the old Roman one. But its change of name carries a moral. Nothing was cheaper and more generally used amongst the Romans than the bath. And we should still know it as the Roman bath, but for Christianity. But the neglect by the early Christian Church of sanitation, and its positive denunciation of bathing as a heathenish luxury, led to its disuse and forgetfulness. The first public bath in this country did not exist until the nineteenth century. When, however, the seat of the Roman Government was transferred to Byzantium (Constantinople), the bath went also, and was duly adopted by the Turks on their conquest of the city. Its reintroduction into the rest of Europe as the Turkish bath followed in the natural order of events.

A very highly appreciative sketch of Mr. Foote's life and work, accompanied by a reproduction of the portrait from our Memorial issue, appears in *La Libre Pensée Internationale* for December 11.

They said this mystery never shall cease;
The priest promotes war and the soldier peace.
—William Blake.

The War Problem and the Peace Outlook.

THE Jews of old found it difficult in their captivity to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Similarly, the defeated and disillusioned hosts of Pacifism can scarcely cry Peace, Peace, where there is no peace, and especially now, when the conditions of a stable peace are everywhere absent from a war-cursed world. In view of the awful spectacle of universal strife, with its unprecedented waste of treasure (life in these glorious days being of no account), and of the omnipresent carnival of crime and inhumanity displayed towards the mere civilian, we can only wring our hands with the futile helplessness of despair. It is useless for such undesirables as humanitarians to uplift the voice of protest against these horrors while the Zeppelins above and the submarines below and all the multitudinous devices of devilish cruelty which now lacerate the bosom of Mother Earth are ploughing deep wounds in thousands of human hearts, and at the same time searing men's souls with the brand of inextinguishable hate. The long-dreaded Pandemonium of Armageddon, the coming of which some of us, and certainly myself, saw prefigured in, and prepared by, the recent developments of international politics having now blossomed into a lusty reality we can do no more for many a long year to come than resign ourselves to the dismal reign of terror which is now overwhelming a congeries of nations whose civilization merely implies an uncanny pre-eminence in the noble art of killing. The end of this ruthless War will not close the fearful spectacle; it will only end the first act of a long, long tragedy that may possibly engulf civilization in irreparable ruin.

There used to be abroad in the land a sort of credulous optimism which believed that this affair was the "*lutte finale*"; that the present War would exhaust the vindictive bloodthirstiness of the Christian nations, and would secure for an all too mad world the conditions of a lasting peace; and this pious delusion made it easy for some of us to bear the tribulations of the present crisis in human affairs with martyr-like resignation. I do not think that it requires any gift of prophecy to say at once that such a dream is doomed to disappointment. I have no doubt that Great Britain and the Allies can win, and I believe that they will win, and that they deserve to win in having espoused a cause which is intimately bound up with the sacred rights of nationalities and of international justice. But the grim spirit of primeval chaos, which even to-day presides over human affairs, would seem to take a fiendish delight in treating individuals and nations, not according to their deserts, whether it be for good or for evil, but according to some non-ethical principle of caprice which is determined by the arbitrary possession of material force in a few more or less unscrupulous hands appurtenant to kings, princes, potentates, and powers in the super-Miltonic sense. We shall, I reiterate, win; in more accurate terms, we shall not lose.....everything, and certainly not our national debt; the technical victory, I believe, will be ours, not in our having succeeded in stemming at every point the flood of carnage and rapine which modern Christian barbarians have let loose upon the world, but in the sense that we shall have exhausted and in part driven back the hitherto conquering hosts of Kultur by dint of a destructive man-killing process which for one or two generations may possibly stay the barbaric onslaught upon us of the Teutonic hordes who, having annexed God, also want to annex the universe. In other words, all the symptoms around us, all the available facts before us, seem to indicate that the Allies will gain merely a delusive negative victory, inasmuch as they bid fair only to succeed (to my deep regret I say it) in bringing about an indeterminate issue to the present struggle. By that, I mean a result which will leave Belgium, France, Russia, and Serbia either without compensation for their immense loss of life and treasure, or with compensation in amount and char-

acter inadequate to secure the full reinstatement of the ante-bellum economic conditions of those countries. The smug, self-satisfied pietists who praise God from whom all blessings flow; the holy humbugs who believe that not a scrap of shrapnel falls to the ground except by the will of God, and even the very Zeppelins over our heads are all numbered by an All-Seeing Merciful Providence,—these fervid uncritical Christians, who would have us believe that the affairs of this world are ruled by the Lord of Hosts and not by an unconscionable host of lords, have got to reconcile these pitiful beliefs with the fact that the power of prayer and the ordinary tears and entreaties of outraged humanity will have failed to secure the martyr nations of Europe from the calculated fury of German lust and rapine. In Belgium and North France, in Poland and Serbia, the national life-stream will have been polluted beyond all possibility of cleansing by scoundrels who sated their lust for blood and outrage with impunity, by which I mean that the criminals who enacted these horrors will never be rooted out and gibbeted by appropriate punishment, and that the foulest page in modern history will be allowed to close with the intolerable sense of shame left rankling for ever-lasting in the breasts of the victim nations and individuals, amid the lifelong exultation of the men in high places and low who ordered or perpetrated these villainies. These pæans of joy will be shared by the Chauvinistic historians and philosophers, the Kaisers and statesmen of the Central Empires, who will point to these infamies, which are the first stages of the long-dreaded rebarbarising of civilization, as the just reward of all those who would dare to resist the blandishments of Kultur.

On the other side of the picture we can see that already certain holy optimists at home are asking us to thank God that this War has been visited upon us. This is evidenced by a recent sermon by Father Bernard Vaughan, the thesis of which was this: "Why does not God stop this War? If he were Almighty and All-loving, he would have done so long ago." Not so, is the reverend Father's answer to this question. God did not stop the War because, being Almighty, he could draw good out of it, and being All-loving, he did so—the corroborating instance cited being that of a young cavalry officer whom the War had brought to the confessional, with hopes of heaven superadded, just before he was blown to pieces in the trenches. "Personally,"* said Father Vaughan, "I feel that it would take eternity to thank God for not having stopped the War as he might have done." And the selfish reason of Father Vaughan's thankfulness is that the immediate outbreak of the War has spared England from enduring even worse horrors than those which were meted out to Belgium and Poland, to the Serbians and the Armenians! Accordingly, the holy Father said that "he thanked God that this War had come about, because it had made us turn from Odin back again to Christ." It is quite evident from these inspired lucubrations of God's *locum tenens* in Farm Street that it would require an earthquake and a score of miracles to convert some people from a lot of Christianity to a little common sense.

We shall never destroy the German war-spirit by investing its infernal functions with the heavenly purposes set forth in Father Vaughan's sermon. The spirit which burnt Louvain and Rheims, which torpedoed the *Lusitania* and gave German school-children a holiday to rejoice over the event, and also invented blinding and asphyxiating gases; the bullying, overbearing Imperial prepotence which threatens neutral nations with extinction, and launches bombs and dynamite upon American towns and cities, or that stoops to employ its Ambassadors and Consuls as its agents for the wholesale corruption and assassination of neutral citizens, will not be exorcised by Father Vaughan's futile palaverings, nor even by the temporary collapse of its present power to terrorise and enslave the nations of the world. The will to destroy will outlive the momentary exhaustion of the power

* *Daily Chronicle*, December 13, 1915.

to exercise the fiendish will to dominate the recalcitrant races who refuse to acknowledge the supernatural attributes of the "All-Highest." That spirit is a demon that cannot be driven out by prayer and fasting, nor even by the promiscuous distribution of platitudinous tracts. A spirit which is drunk with innocent blood and cloyed with feasting upon every impure delight cannot be quenched by any appeals which emanate from the standard-bearers of Peace, nor will it yield to the blandishments of neutral and enemy apostles of Reason. The "perishers" that live by the sword can only perish by the sword—a truism which holds equally good of nations and institutions as of individuals. And the fierce nation which has recently flaunted itself with every species of insolence and ferocity as a specifically pirate nation acknowledging no treaty and no code of honour but what suits its piratical ends has no right to expect any other treatment than that ordinarily dealt out to the nomad rovers of the sea.

But the modern pirates on the high seas of Kultur will, if I mistake not the signs and warnings, find in the Allies an all too generous foe, who will be both weak and meek when the terms of peace come up for settlement. The well-calculated policy of frightfulness will have been fought back into defeat under peculiar strategic economic and other conditions evidently resulting in the practical stalemating of war operations on either side and a common paralysis of exhaustion. At the point where German frightfulness will inevitably fail in its nefarious purpose, the Allies will have become too obsessed with a milksop fear of handling the weapon which will have dropped from the wearied hands of an unscrupulous foe. This hesitancy will, in my view, sound the death-knell of European civilization. A nation which shamelessly flouted the rights of other nations will find that its national integrity will be left unimpaired by the conquering Allies. Having pounded other communities in the dust, impoverished them, driven their Kings into exile, and levied blackmail from their subjects, it will be allowed to retain its ferocious dynasties and continue to enjoy its economic advantages unimpaired by the conqueror. In a word, the symptoms are clear that we shall be lured to ultimate destruction by loving our enemies and turning our cheeks to the smiter. The effect of this meek impolicy of submission to evil upon a proud nation like the Germans, whose rulers acknowledge no logic but that of the sword, will prove fatal to the peace of mankind. It will be read as a sign of weakness, and cause the German nation to rally to its Kaisers in slavish readiness for a war of revenge.

And that is why a Pacifist of the Pacifists, like myself, who hates war with every drop of his blood, can only just now see the horizon of the future aflame with the conflagration of terrible century-long strife between the nations. And as Britain's four million soldiers are not joining themselves with the Allied hosts in order once and for ever to shatter, mangle, and destroy every vestige—military, economic, and dynastic—of the foul monster of Prussianism, I can only regard the present agony of the nations as the sinister prelude to fresh wars of even more catastrophic nature than the present reign of terror. Quite evidently, as Mr. Outhwaite stated the other night in the House of Commons, there is nothing doing just now in Christianity.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Talks With Young Listeners.

THE WORKMAN.

WOULD you be surprised to see a house come out of a tree? or out of a high rock? or out of a mud pit?

Yet such things happen every day. Do not men cut down trees to make planks and beams, and carve square stones out of the rock of the quarry, and bake mud or clay into bricks? And are not houses built out of planks, beams, stones, and bricks?

I know of nothing in the world more wonderful; no, not even the building of the palace of Aladdin. You can read in the *Arabian Nights* how the Chinese youth, Aladdin, rubbed a magic lamp, and there came a huge genie, who said, "I am ready to obey thee as thy slave." So Aladdin told him to prepare a palace fit to receive a princess; and presently, the mansion was made, its walls being of gold and silver, its windows adorned with diamonds, red rubies, and green emeralds, and its storehouses full of valuables, its stables full of the finest horses, its gardens full of lovely plants. All this creation was done by magic, and in the twinkling of an eye, and nobody knows how! But when I have looked at men,—only just common men, only just men who toil with two hands, and who kiss their children before they go out to work in the morning,—building houses, or making furniture, or driving horses, or labouring in garden or field, and growing food for cities and nations, I have thought the workman was the most wonderful thing on earth. He is the creator of blessings out of mud, clay, trees, quarries.

Folk in old days thought the same, but they spoke of it in a different way. They saw that man would die off the face of the earth if the worker did not make huts, and shelters, and pots, and pans, and beds, and clothes, and if he did not grow plants, and rear cattle, and catch fish, and shoot birds, and create a home for his family. When they gazed round on the vast world, they thought this, too, was created by a worker whom very few people had ever seen, and whom they named God. After the toil of the day, when mother and father and girls and boys were gathered about the fire of logs in the mud hut, the long-bearded grandfather would tell a myth, or story, of the unseen Worker.* For instance:—

"It was all dark and black everywhere in the old time ere there was a sun or a moon, or a tree, or a man, and water spread far and wide in the gloom, and only one thing was alive, and that was something that breathed. The breath of the Worker breathed on the vast ocean.

"At last the breath spoke in a voice like yours or mine, and the voice said, 'Let there be light.' The black old night fled away, along with dusk and evening, and the first morning began, and the evening and the morning were the first day that ever was. The Worker was God.

"When the light faded, the great breath breathed again, and the Worker worked from twilight till the next dawn, and in the night he had cut the waters into two parts, one in the high heaven whence the rain falls, and one below, with air between; and the evening and the morning were the second day.

"Again the Worker worked, and the voice said to itself (for there was none to listen), 'Appear, O earth.' At that call, the land came up, clad in trees and shrubs and leaves of grass, and its shore was washed by a wide, wide sea; and, in the rays of the dawn, it shone a very fair scene, and the Worker was pleased with his work. The third day had passed.

"Great was his toil the next night, for in the black roof overhead, which kept the upper waters from falling, he placed the lamps of the stars, and a large lamp of the moon, and as the fourth day was ending, lo! he had made a sun which rose up from the dark to give morning light and warmth to the new earth.

"The fifth day was the day of life, and the work of the Worker moved, and flew, and swam, for he created fishes and birds, and the voice said to fish and fowl, 'Live and breed, and male and female shall be parents of the young.'

"Greatest of all was the sixth day, and when the evening sun went down, the voice summoned from the darkness the beasts of the desert and forest, the coiling serpent, the sheep, goats, and cattle and horses, and,—oh! children, who comes as master of the earth and sea and all things living and growing? Man comes, the male and the female, the father and

* Greek, *muthos*, or *myth*, means a saying, telling, tale, folk-story.

the mother, who will be fruitful in sons and daughters. The sun rises, and its light falls on man, and man's earth, and the Worker is glad to see his work."

"What happened on the seventh day, grandfather?"

"What happens after you have toiled and sweated very hard?"

"We are tired."

"And you rest. So the voice was still, and the breath breathed soft, and God rested from all his work which he created and made."

Here ended the grandsire's mouth-tale, or myth, or poem. Perhaps, if he had skill on the three-stringed or seven-stringed lyre, he might recite the creation-song in a musical tone, twanging the strings as he sang. Seldom did any of his hearers ever ask,—

"Grandfather, how do you know these things took place?"

Or, if anybody did, his companions would eye him coldly, and rebuke him.

For in those ancient days people believed the tales told by blind Homer the poet (if he was blind), or Hesiod, who sang about Gods and Works and Days so sweetly that Greek children learned his verses by heart, and repeated them to mother and father. Indeed, all nations had their myths. The Creation myth which I have supposed the grandfather to tell by the fireside will be found, written in other words, in the first chapter of the Hebrew Bible, and the first three verses of the next chapter. "Genesis" is the book of the beginning, or birth, of the world.

In the flat land, about fifty miles south of Bagdad (which we hear of in the great War to-day) lie ruins of walls and towers, mostly covered with earth and sand. These ruins are what is left of the mighty town of Babylon, from whose gates armies marched forth to conquer. High walls ran round the city for fifty-five miles, and on the top of the walls was a road broad enough for a four-horse chariot to drive. A ditch or moat of water was cut at the foot of the wall outside. A hundred gates led from the city to the gardens, fields, and plantations of tall palm-trees in the plain outside the city.

The king's writers, or scribes, stamped letters on clay slabs, and the slabs were baked hard, and thus to-day many of these tablets remain for learned men to read. On such tablets has been found a myth of creation; but, as the clay tablets have been much broken, it is as hard to read the tale as it is to read a letter torn to pieces, some of the pieces being lost. But the story goes something like this:—

There was once nothing in the world but darkness, but the darkness was alive, for it was a vast and black beast, or dragon, named Tiamat. Out of this darkness were born Gods, and so the dragon was the mother of the Gods.

Now one of the Gods was that lovely thing which we call Light, and his name in the land of Babylon was Marduk. As soon as Light came into the world, he hated Darkness, and what could be expected but a frightful war between Marduk and the ugly, black, cloudy, stormy, shadowy Dragon? Of course, Light conquered, and with his flashing knife he cut Darkness into two halves, and one half he placed above the roof of the sky, and the other horrid piece lay spread out below, and air was in between. Then our clever Worker made sun, moon, and stars, as houses for the Gods, and next he made the earth, and plants, and animals, and, last of all, men.

Girls and boys who live in London can go to the British Museum, and see great pictures, cut on stone, of the combat between the valiant Marduk, cap-tain of Light, and the beastly old Dragon, who has beak and claws. Even if you cannot go to the British Museum, you can look out of your window at break of day, and see the sweet and blessed Light coming up in the east, and slowly pressing down the monster of the Night. And if, in these sad War days, you can handle a gold sovereign, you will see the same old fight going on in the picture of St. George of the Light slaying the Dragon of Darkness.

(To be concluded.) F. J. GOULD.

Some Well-Known Freethinkers I Have Met.—II.

W. J. RAMSEY.

IN my peregrinations up and down the country, I have met with all kinds of Freethinkers. Some were born of Catholic parents, trained in the teachings of Catholicism, and under the influence of the priest from their childhood, yet have nevertheless had the courage, on hearing the gospel of Freethought, to break away from their old associations and come out into the pure atmosphere of intellectual freedom and proudly proclaim to the world the glory of their emancipation. Hundreds have I met, who, like myself, were once sincere members of the Church of England, believed without inquiry or critical examination the tenets of the Christian faith, but who, when they had examined them in the light of reason and common sense, had no hesitation in rejecting them.

Some I have known who were once Parsees, and had thrown over their ancient belief to come over to the new faith, founded upon accurate deductions from modern science and verified day by day by reason and experience.

On rare occasions I have come across a few, very few, but very "choice spirits," if I may use the term, who were once members of the Jewish faith, but have had the great strength of mind to outgrow all the old superstitions of Judaism, and come boldly into the ranks of Freethought.

Forty years ago, it was a very rare thing to find a Freethinker who was born of Freethought parents; but I remember my old friend, W. J. Ramsey—"Bill Ramsey" as we call him—telling us at one of the Bradlaugh Fellowship Dinners that his father was a Freethinker, and he had never known what it was to be a Christian. He had been a Freethinker all his life, and his parents had brought him up without his mind being contaminated by any of the insidious germs of superstition.

William James Ramsey was born in London on June 8, 1844. His earliest recollections of his father, who was an "old-time" Freethinker, was of him telling him, as a lad, of the wonderful achievements of Charles Southwell, Henry Hetherington, James Watson, and other Freethought heroes of his early days. When William was about three years old his father removed to his native city, Norwich, where young Ramsey spent his boyhood days.

In 1859 the Freethinkers of Norwich invited "Iconoclast" to deliver an open-air lecture in a space known as Chapel Fields. This gave young Ramsey the opportunity of his life. He heard the great Charles Bradlaugh, who, at that time, although only a young man of twenty-six years of age, had in him the potency and promise of the great career which he soon made for himself.

At the very first hearing of "Iconoclast," young Ramsey was inspired with boyish enthusiasm, though the occasion was rather unpropitious, for Charles Bradlaugh was pelted with stones and clods of grass, and a boy companion whom young Ramsey took with him to hear the young infidel orator, actually joined the infuriated bigots. He and young Ramsey quickly came to blows, which ended in a right down "royal scrap." It was the first fight that young Ramsey had for Freethought, and he has been engaged in many more or less intellectual fights for Freethought ever since.

In 1868 William Ramsey came back to London to live, and at once became a regular attendant at the old Hall of Science in Bell Yard, City Road. When the lease on those premises ended, the new Hall of Science took its place in Old Street, City Road. This was the building that the great Spurgeon referred to as "a corrugated iron shed, opposite a lunatic asylum." Charles Bradlaugh acknowledged that it was only a poor kind of place compared with the Metropolitan Tabernacle; but, said he, the people

are attracted to this place by the love of truth; whereas most of those who flock to Spurgeon's Tabernacle are drawn there by the fear of hell. Young Ramsey was a member of the Hall of Science Club and Institute from the start and took an active part in the various classes that were established there. He was Secretary of the Logic Class and a member of the Elocution Class, and of the Secular Sunday School. There was also a Propagandist Society, of which W. J. Ramsey was a member, and the only surviving member of this Society that he can call to mind is the veteran Freethinker, Mr. T. Thurlow, an old friend of Ramsey's of nearly fifty years standing.

In 1869 W. Ramsey first became acquainted with our late leader, G. W. Foote, and began a friendship that lasted right through life.

In 1871 Mr. Ramsey took over the bookstall and became the permanent Chairman of the Hall of Science lectures, a position that he held for sixteen years. Two years later, when the hall was made into a club, he became President. After this, Mr. Ramsey became active in another field, for I find that in 1873 he was elected on the Council of the National Sunday League, and took an active part in the movement for the opening of museums and art galleries on Sundays, remaining a member of that Council for over ten years.

About 1871 Mr. Bradlaugh resided at Turner Street, Commercial Road, and as Mr. Ramsey lived in Bethnal Green, he was a frequent visitor to Mr. Bradlaugh, who often entrusted him with various commissions to execute. One of these was to organize a small band of open-air speakers, which he accomplished, and their meetings used to take place at Mr. Bradlaugh's house until 1877, when he removed to St. John's Wood.

When the rupture took place between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Charles Watts over the publication of the "Knowlton Pamphlet," Mr. Bradlaugh decided to become his own publisher, and offered Mr. Ramsey the position of Manager, which offer he accepted. This position he held until his imprisonment in 1883 for publishing the indicted number of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote, as Editor, was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, Mr. Ramsey to nine months, and Mr. Kemp to three months. In his defence before Mr. Justice North, Mr. Ramsey made a well-considered and able speech.

The *Freethinker* itself was started by Mr. Foote and Mr. Ramsey in 1881, Mr. Foote acting as Editor and Mr. Ramsey as Proprietor and Manager, and I think there can be little doubt that the prosecution was a Government one—the object being to keep Mr. Bradlaugh out of the House of Commons by making him responsible for the publication of the *Freethinker* through his Manager, Mr. Ramsey. The Government failed; Bradlaugh knew too much for them, as he had proved in previous Government prosecutions.

Mr. Ramsey has delivered many hundreds of Freethought lectures both indoor and out for a period covering almost fifty years as a propagandist lecturer. I have heard him lecture many times, and I am bound to say that he was one of the most humorous and entertaining lecturers I have ever heard. He suits an outdoor audience admirably, giving them plenty of wit and humour as well as a good deal of useful information, and nobody can say when they have heard "Bill Ramsey" that they had a dull time.

Following Bradlaugh's example, Mr. Ramsey has devoted a good deal of his time to political work, and even at the present time, when I regret to say he is seriously ill, he holds the honoured position of Vice-Chairman of the Metropolitan Radical Federation. He is also the Secretary of the Bradlaugh Fellowship, a Society which he helped to form in 1904, which position he hopes to hold to the end of his life.

This is indeed a good record for a veteran warrior in the cause of Freethought, which it would be well for the rising generations of Freethinkers to emulate.

ARTHUR B. MOSS

The Pagan Day.

Out of the East there comes the dawn,
 Pearl and sapphire, silver and gold,
 And cloudy splendours rolled:
 Soft as the eye of nymph or fawn,
 Lighting at morn the wood and wold,
 And the emerald lawn,
 Cometh the silent-sandalled dawn.

Out of the zenith cometh noon,
 Islands and seas of blue and grey;
 And the lord of the day
 Godlike smiles from his throne immune,
 While all things own his sovereign sway:
 And man needs not to pray
 To the god of the glowing noon.

Out of the West there cometh night:
 Crimson robes of the dreamy eve
 The cloudy shadows weave,
 Soothing and sweet and restful quite,
 Ling'ring, lessening, loving light,
 Taking its smiling leave,
 Bidding to *all*, good-night, good-night. A. M.

CHEAP AT THE PRICE.

An old lawyer died, and, to everyone's surprise, left no property, not even enough to pay for burying him, so a collection was organised for that purpose, the subscriptions to which were limited to one shilling.

In fear and doubt a collector approached a notorious miser, and asked him to give a shilling to a good cause.

"What is it?" asked the miser.

"To bury a lawyer——" began the visitor.

"What!" exclaimed the miser. And pulling a sovereign out of his pocket, he thrust it into the astonished collectors' hand, saying with emphasis: "Here, take this, and bury nineteen more."

THE FRUITS OF CONVERSION.

A properly instructed Christian native was overheard telling his brother how he had lent another boy three shillings, which amount had never been returned. After relating the facts of the case he concluded as follows: "It's lungile, by and bye lo boy file yena hamba lapa Heaven, lo Jesus yena kaluma: Iney indaba, wena, ikona nika lo boy three bob [It's all right. Bye-and-bye that boy will die and go to heaven, and Jesus will say to him, "How is it you have not paid back that boy his three bob?" etc., etc.] ; go to h—l, you blanky blanking blankard!"—*Gatooma Mail* (S.W. Africa).

THE POET'S FAITH.

You say, "Where goest thou?" I cannot tell,
 And still go on. If but the way be straight,
 It cannot go amiss! before me lies
 Dawn and the Day; the Night behind me; that
 Suffices me; I break the bounds; I see,
 And nothing more; believe and nothing less.
 My future is not one of my concerns.

—Victor Hugo.

Time respects only those institutions which time itself has played its part in building up. That which violence wins for us to-day, another act of violence may wrest from us to-morrow. Those stages of progress are alone enduring which have rooted themselves in the mind and conscience of mankind before receiving the final sanction of legislation. The only means of realizing what is good is to teach it by education and propagate it by example.—*Francisco Ferrer*.

The Transatlantic journalists have been very merry at the expense of Mr. Ford's peace propaganda steamer-trip, and some of the jests have a flavour of profanity. "Ford's Noah's Ark," is one description, but the gem comes from a New Yorker who says that the scheme has no more chance of succeeding than a snowball has of freezing in hell.

Despite the War, a large number of inventions were patented during the year, 280 of which were the work of ladies. The famous invention of the angels at Mons is not in the list.

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By C. COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

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Secretary—Miss E. M. VANCH.

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PROGRAMME FOR 1916.

THE programme of the R. P. A. for the forthcoming year, as regards additions to its list of publications, has not yet been decided upon; but it is possible to indicate some of the books which are being written, or have been arranged for. Mr. J. M. Robertson has all but completed the first of two popular handbooks on the Historical Jesus, and it will be ready early in the spring. About the same time there may be expected the new Moncure Conway Memorial Lecture, which is to be delivered by Mr. Edward Clodd, who has chosen as his theme *Gibbon and Christianity*. Mr. Adam Gowans Whyte has well in hand his illustrated children's gift-book, the aim of which will be to impart a knowledge of some of the world's wonders in an attractive and easily understandable style, and without any theological predilections. Mr. Joseph McCabe is drawing upon his encyclopaedic knowledge with a view to preparing a history of Marriage and Divorce, especially in relation to the attitude of the Churches. He may also slightly revise his *Evolution of Mind* for publication in cheap form. In conjunction with the Union of Ethical Societies, there will be published in April a sevenpenny volume, entitled *A Generation of Religious Progress*, comprising essays by Sir Ray Lankester, Mr. William Archer, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, Mr. Joseph McCabe, and others. Mr. C. T. Gorham is engaged upon the difficult task of compiling a history of the Spanish Inquisition within the compass of a hundred pages. Mr. Walter M. Gallichan, whose name is well known to Rationalists, is writing a shilling volume on *The Religion of Kindness*, which may not be altogether appropriate in the midst of Armageddon, although the message of sympathy which it will endeavour to popularize is more than ever needed to bring the world back to sanity. Most of the foregoing publications will probably be available to members of the R. P. A. during 1916, as well as others which may be later suggested.