

# The FREETHINKER

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*I think you will find it true, that, before any vice can fasten on a man, body, mind, or moral nature must be debilitated.*

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

## Views and Opinions.

### Civil War.

It was said last week, in commenting on Lord Bryce's lecture on "War and Progress," that our mental and moral development has failed to keep pace with our economic growth. One result of this, it was pointed out, is the failure to realize that in applying Darwinian principles to social evolution, the social organism is ceasing to be the group, and is rapidly becoming the humanity. And a direct consequence of this—one that is only fitfully seen, if even at all—is that the present conflict is, in very truth, of the nature of civil war. Technically, so many nations are at war. And there are political and geographical boundaries by which these nations may be defined. But in the deeper and truer sense can we really regard the European "nations"—to carry the analogy no further—as separate and independent groups or entities? Looking at the intellectual, moral, and physical requirements of Germany, France, Britain, Russia, and the rest, can we say with truth that each of these nations represent a separate organic entity? Most certainly they do not. Shut off any one of them completely from the rest, and its life would be a truncated one. They are not independent, they are interdependent. War between them means not alone a dissipation of energies that might be more usefully employed, it means the impossibility of each one living its fullest possible life so long as they remain divided by war. *War to-day between European nations is as much civil war as would have been a war between the North and South of England a couple of centuries ago.* \* \* \*

### Militarism and History.

"On a review of the whole nation," said Lord Bryce, "war would not be found to have quickened, but to have greatly retarded, the upward march of man." That this is a sound historical generalization, few who have carefully studied history will deny. Every nation in the past that has tried to build itself on a basis of military conquest has failed. The one genuinely military State of Ancient Greece, Sparta, possessed little real culture, and exerted no influence worth mentioning on the life of States surrounding it. The one clear effect of Roman Militarism was to sow the seeds of national weakness and decay. In more recent times, Christian Spain, neglecting the science and industry of its Mohammedan predecessors, and attempting to subsist by military conquest, only paved the way for its own disintegration. From the days of Ancient Assyria to those of Napoleon there is no exception to the rule that militarism carries within it the seed of its own destruction. Essentially parasitic in its nature, its whole tendency is to destroy the effectiveness of the social structure on which it lives.

As one writer has well put it, the nation that remains military decays. If it prospers, it does so in virtue of its taking part in the life of the world, and so ceases to be military.

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### Ruskin on War.

Against this we have the well-known saying of Ruskin that:—

All great nations learned their truth of word and strength of thought in war; that they were nourished in war and wasted by peace; taught by war and betrayed by peace—in a word, that they were born in war and expired in peace.

This much quoted passage has been sadly misunderstood in the quoting; although, on the face of it, it bears out what has just been said about the destructive consequences of militarism. For the purpose of war is, after all, peace. A nation fights, not to keep on fighting, but to conquer its opponent—in other words, to secure peace. And if it be true that nations are nourished by war and destroyed by peace, we reach the strangely curious conclusion that the more rapidly and the more certainly a nation conquers its enemies, the more certainly it secures its own destruction. What Ruskin had in front of him was the undoubted truth that all militarist nations have decayed. And the only safe conclusion from this is, that while a nation turned militarist can pursue its conquering career in virtue of the qualities that must obviously have been developed in peace, its military life is so sterile for anything save sheer destruction, that it is unable to maintain its existence under peaceful conditions.

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### Two Kinds of War.

But it should be remembered, in justice to Ruskin, that when he spoke in praise of war, he meant war as waged by a mere handful of combatants, by men who were filled with a pure love of adventure, or chivalrous desire to right admitted wrong. For modern war he had, and expressed, the most profound contempt. Remember, he says, that "whatever virtue or goodness there may be in this game of war rightly played, there is none when you thus play it with a multitude of human pawns." Above all, the ordeal by battle that Ruskin believed in was the ordeal which tested individual keenness of eye, strength of hand, and clarity of brain. "You must not make it the question which of the combatants has the largest gun, or which has got behind the biggest tree, or which has the wind in his face, or which has gunpowder made by the best chemicals, or iron smelted with the best coal, or the arguist mob at his back. Decide your battle, whether of nations or individuals, on these terms—and you have only multiplied confusion and added slaughter to iniquity." Ruskin's comments on the present-day clergy with their stupid vapouring on the moralizing effects of this war of machinery and sewer-like trenches, would have been poignant reading.

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### The Power of Thought.

The true line of national progress was properly indi-

cated by Lord Bryce as being due—

partly to competition, but chiefly to thought. Thought is not helped by war. It is the races that know how to think, rather than the far more numerous races that know only how to fight, that have led the world. Invention and scientific inquiry have given us improvements in the arts of life, and that knowledge of nature which has brought wealth and comfort. Thinking has produced literature and art.

This is finely put, as is also the following :—

Now, the thought of a people is more active when it is brought into contact with another, because each loses its variety and freedom of play when it has worked too long upon accustomed lines. Isolation retards progress; intercourse quickens it. Such contact with the process of learning which follows therefrom may happen by war, but happens far oftener in peace, and it is in peace that men have time and taste to profit fully by it. A study of history will enable us to dismiss with an easy conscience the theory of Treitschke that war is a medicine which Providence must be expected constantly to offer to the human race for its own good; and we may properly address ourselves at the end of a war undertaken to vindicate the eternal principles of right against the spirit of militarism and aggression to the task of trying to help forward the progress of mankind, not through the strifes and hatreds of the peoples, but rather by their friendly co-operation in the healing and enlightening works of peace.

I cite this with the greater pleasure because, as readers of this journal are aware, it is precisely the lesson I have been trying to enforce whenever I have dealt with the subject of the War. Neither the survival nor the supremacy of a people will ever be secured by its efficiency in the military prize ring. Above all, progress is not secured by that method. The peaceful trader is historically, a much greater civilizer than the most successful soldier. Civilization, in olden times, followed the great trade routes, and the same is broadly true of modern times also. This was not because the trader went his way filled with ideas of brotherhood and human progress. He cared very little about these things; but his influence made for civilization because it represented that peaceful intercourse which Lord Bryce properly regards as a prime condition of progressive culture.

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#### The Militarist Fallacy.

Bearing in mind all that has been said, applying it to the matter in hand, we are now in a position to realize the full force of the objection to the theory that war is a "biological necessity"; that it serves to keep a nation virile; or that it serves as an agent of civilization. For the central meaning and significance of social life is that it suspends the operation of the biological form of natural selection by substituting corporate action, and thus raises the struggle to the level of moral and intellectual progress expressed in terms of social improvement. In this sphere there is provided all necessary incentive to struggle, while the combative instinct in man receives full and, on the whole, beneficial expression. Second, there is no instance in history of a nation ever having been kept virile by war. Germany is no disproof of this. For whatever its power or greatness may be, it has been made during peace, and her rulers are now busy dissipating her inheritance in war. It is, moreover, quite obvious that, given even the most successful of military causes, a nation must cry a halt sooner or later in a career of conquest. If it continues long enough, it ends in ruin. If it pauses for recuperation, the pause itself is proof that its real strength comes from other than military activities.

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#### Intercourse versus Isolation.

Finally, militarism strikes at the foundations of pro-

gress because it presupposes barriers and isolation where intercourse is essential. Suppose the Romans had never landed in Britain. Suppose that the Norman invasion had never occurred, and that the succeeding waves of more peaceful invasion had never transpired. Suppose Britain had remained shut in by some Chinese wall, and secured against communication from the rest of the world. Does anyone imagine that English civilization would be what it is? Under such conditions any great degree of civilization would have been impossible. Of course, it may be said that the two examples cited were both military invasions, and go against me. But to this the reply is, that the *military* conquest was quite sterile, and what remained was really the fruits of peaceful intercourse. And so far as I am aware, there is no example of progress in civilization at any time or anywhere save from the impact of competing cultures or teachings. Isolation, to repeat Lord Bryce, retards progress; intercourse quickens it. Intercourse, the fuller and freer the better, gives room for variation, for struggle, for survival. We have thus all the elements of the Darwinian formula retained, but they are operative upon a higher plane. And it is the militarist, not in Germany alone, who loses sight of the whole import of history and of social evolution, in his endeavour to perpetuate activities that can be only a degree less disastrous to the conqueror than to the conquered.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Latest Theodicy.

At the recent meeting of the Free Church Council at Bradford, a Theological Conference was held before which a paper, entitled "The Theological Outlook in Time of War," was read by the Rev. A. E. Garvie, M.A., D.D., Principal of New College, Hampstead. As far as scholastic attainments are concerned, Principal Garvie is pre-eminently competent to discuss such a topic. We find that as a student he took first class honours in philosophy at Glasgow, and theology at Oxford; and for the last thirteen years he has been a teacher of theology in London. The natural inference is that he possesses special qualifications for dealing intelligently with theological subjects; and in the paper just mentioned, which was published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for March 22, he undertakes to justify the ways of God with man, particularly with reference to the present War. It affords me keen pleasure to admit that Principal Garvie does not indulge in the pious talk one so often hears, such as "that God has sent this War upon us for our sins, and that he is allowing it to go on until we have learnt the lesson it is intended to teach us." He is equally displeased with the saying that God could stop the War at any moment if he wished to do so. At this point, however, the Principal lays himself open to serious criticism. Whilst conceding that "the way in which many Christians speak about God's Providence entirely justifies the taunt of unbelief that God must be either not loving or not almighty, since he allows this War, he pours ridicule on the notion that the Divine Being can, or may, do anything we can conceive or desire." According to him, the term "omnipotence," as applied to the Deity, is inexact, because "there are certain metaphysical impossibilities in the very nature of reality," and, consequently, "certain moral impossibilities for God." I have no desire to deny the truth of that statement; but when Dr. Garvie goes on to affirm that God "has voluntarily, in creating man as a free personality, subjected himself in grace to man to certain limitations," he falls into the error of defend-

ing God's character at the expense of minimizing his power. He clearly perceives that if the belief in Divine omnipotence cherished by the overwhelming majority of Christians be accepted as true, "it may be confidently asserted that no theodicy, no justifying of the ways of God to man, is possible." I fully agree with him, and venture to observe, further, that the theodicy he himself elaborates is founded upon a false doctrine of man.

In order to be fair to Principal Garvie, I give his theory in his own words:—

God is, as Creator and Preserver, responsible for the creation of free personalities, for whom sin was a possibility, and for their continuance when sin became an actuality. That we must admit and maintain; and we can justify God's ways to man only as we can show that thus and thus only could he attain the Supreme Good of a humanity freely willing dependence on, communion with, submission and resemblance to, himself; and that he has resources of truth and grace in himself of which the promise and pledge are given in Christ, to secure that Supreme Good.

That is the whole of Christian theology in a nutshell, and the best we can say of it is that its alleged justification of the Divine character exists only in the author's own imagination. In the first place, there is not a scrap of evidence that man was created at all, or that matter, of which all existing things, animate and inanimate, are but so many different forms, ever began to be. In the estimation of the greatest thinkers, the Universe is at once infinite and eternal. Even Sir Oliver Lodge, theologian though he be, admits the eternity of existence and denies creation. His words are worth quoting:—

Whatever really and fundamentally exists must, so far as bare existence is concerned, be independent of time. It may go through many changes, and thus have a history; that is to say, must have definite time-relations, so far as its changes are concerned; but it can hardly be thought of as either going out of existence, or as coming into existence, at any given period, though it may completely change its form and accidents (*Life and Matter*, p. 101).

In the second place, there is no proof whatever that man was ever a perfect being. The history of the human race is one of slow but fairly steady progress. Physically, mentally, and morally it stands higher to-day than it ever did before. It is essentially an evolving race. Its wealth of ideas and the character of its ideals are now greater and better than at any previous period. This is the doctrine held by all anthropologists and by the most thoughtful divines, and it is difficult to see on what rational ground it can be rejected. In the third place, the conception of a free personality is wholly unscientific. Leibnitz declares that man "is free only in the sense of being exempt from external control," being in every other sense bound to submit to the law of his being. The character of every act is determined by an irresistible motive. Why is one man a drunkard, another a libertine, and another a philanthropist? Because of a constitutional impulse that cannot be gainsaid, and nothing short of a constitutional revolution can interfere with such impulses.

Dr. Garvie's doctrine of man is not only unscientific, in that it ignores the facts, but also dishonourable and discreditable to the Creator, whom it represents as, first, bringing into existence an imperfect creature, and, afterwards, as providing a scheme by which an imperfect, sinful humanity can be perfected and cleansed. Here we have a Creator creating a being who needs to be re-created, and who, if the re-creation does not take place, is doomed to endless perdition. The Principal is equally uncomplimentary to God in his treatment of him as Preserver:—

God's continuance of sinful mankind is itself an indication that in the end he will gain the mastery over sin,

and secure the supreme good of the community of free personalities, perfected in holiness and blessedness.

"In the end"! Already sinful mankind has been continued for countless thousands of years, and there is no sign whatever that its re-creation and redemption are about to occur. God as Preserver is as disappointing as he was as Creator. He perpetuates the evils of the world, and this itself is an indication, we are assured, that in the end he will blot them out. This is the most curious and abnormal logic we have ever come across. I do not hesitate for a moment to emphatically deny the existence of such an immoral Deity, whose cruelty knows no bounds. It is perfectly true that the natural order, on the whole, makes for progress; but the natural order, as such, works quite unconsciously and undesignedly. The law of heredity transmits from sire to son evil tendencies as readily as good ones; it knows no preferences. It is an incontrovertible fact that the innocent often suffer more than the guilty. This is a truth from which there can be no escape. Now, if Dr. Garvie is right, the natural order is an expression of the will of an infinitely good and loving Father, who is on the side of virtue only on the whole.

The Principal speaks with great confidence of God's punitive justice, which "must be regarded not only as necessary for man to deter from and prevent sin, but as also necessary to God as expressing the essential and eternal antagonism of his perfection to sin." The reverend gentleman must have forgotten that, according to his own teaching, it was God himself who made it possible for man to lose himself in sin; and, surely, to punish him for doing what his Maker qualified him to do, is to be guilty of a wicked distortion of justice. What the divines call the sins of the world are but the inevitable consequences of our Heavenly Father's creative blunder, and of the signal failure of his costly scheme to rectify that initial blunder. I assert that if the Deity described by the Principal exists, he must be held solely responsible for all the evils that are rampant in the world. And yet this is how the Principal applies his teaching:—

We may speak of the War as God's judgment on sin in the sense that it is the inevitable consequence of the sins of the nations in their relations with one another; but we must not speak of it as if it were an arbitrary punishment inflicted by God. We may say that it will go on until the nations have learned the lesson, not in the sense that God, by his direct action, will prolong it, as a schoolmaster might who was keeping his boys in as a punishment for some youthful escapade, but in the sense that it will go on until the nations are brought into the moral condition in which they will desire peace rather than a continuance of war.

I cannot but feel that Dr. Garvie has a remarkably accurate knowledge of the real causes of the War, but that his belief in God as Creator and Preserver of free personalities, who are sinful simply because they cannot help it, prevents him from conveying that knowledge to us in a thoroughly natural and sensible language. As a matter of fact, his exceedingly ingenious paper, instead of being a theodicy, or a justification of God's ways to man, is an exposure of the monstrous cruelty and injustice of the Deity whom he believes in and proclaims. Indeed, Freethinkers look upon every theodicy ever invented, from that of Leibnitz down to this presented to the Free Church Council, as a most cogent argument for Atheism. Dr. Garvie condemns the popular theology because of its crudeness and shallowness; but I must confess that, in my opinion, his own teaching in this paper deserves condemnation on the same ground. To speak of a Divine Love that never fails in a world like ours is sheer mockery. To preach the "Christian Gospel of the Crucified and Risen Lord, and the Fatherhood revealed therein," is a culpable waste of time and

energy, because nineteen centuries bear overwhelming evidence to the falseness and complete impotence of that Gospel.

J. T. LLOYD.

### "The Tan-faced Poet of the West."

I shall raise the despised head of Poetry again and render her worthy to be embraced and kissed by all the great and master spirits of our world.—Ben Jonson.

OF all the English-speaking countries outside the British Isles, America is the only one which has contributed anything of real consequence to the literature of the language. Australia and Canada are but in leading-strings. Doubtless they will, in time, form their own ideals, and shape their own literary future to noble ends. At present their literature is more or less an echo of the writing of the land of Shakespeare and Milton. The most notable among the men who laboured to lay the foundation of a national literature for America was Walt Whitman, the "tan-faced poet of the West."

There are poets who have revolted from the bonds of convention and tradition, and who have chosen to deliver their message by original modes of speech, but Walt Whitman went further than that. He tried to found a democratic art, free in its choice of style, and free in its choice of subject. Classicism he regarded as aristocratic. This American genius contended that democracy can never prove itself worthy until it founds and produces its own special forms of art, as distinctive in its own sphere, as all that exists or has been produced under opposite influences. Whitman, therefore, revolted from literary tradition of set purpose. With the music of the great poets in his ears, he deliberately elected to displace what exists. He knew the melodies of the great singers, whose language America has inherited. Yet he turned his broad back on it all.

His own work is unlike anything else in poetry. It was not the freak of a writer trying to be eccentric at all costs, but a new and extended criticism of life. If Whitman had merely re-arranged the old poetic materials, such a departure would in no sense be remarkable. He set himself resolutely the Herculean task of dealing with the world in the nineteenth century without any regard to convention. His contemporaries were content to carve cherry-stones, but this man elected to hew granite.

The appearance of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 raised a storm. To hear one party, you would fancy the author was a madman. According to another, his inspiration was as unbounded as his genius. Never did a book suffer so much from outward appearance. It was rugged and colloquial, astonishing to those who love poetry best when it sets noble thoughts to superb music. A man, at the first onset, must take breath at the end of a sentence; or, worse still, go to sleep in the midst of it. But these hardships became lighter as the traveller grew accustomed to the new road, and he speedily learned to admire and sympathize, just as he would admire an old cathedral, in spite of the quaint carvings and grotesque images on doors and buttresses.

Physically, Whitman was a remarkable personality. "He looks like a man," said the keen-eyed Abraham Lincoln, as he saw the poet from the window of the White House. In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman expressed his personality, and he insists on the supreme value of individuality. Shakespeare had asked:—

Which can say more

Than this rich praise, that you alone are you?

Shakespeare was addressing a beloved friend, but Whitman says the same thing to the whole world. Of "man,"

the American poet has nothing to say. In his universe there were only individuals. The man who held such ideas could not help being audacious, for this egoism is the centre from which Whitman's morality radiates. Morality to Whitman is simply the normal activity of a healthy nature, not the product of tradition or rationalism:—

I give nothing as duties,

What others give as duties I give as living impulses.

Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?

It is this idea, that whatever tastes sweet to the most perfect person is finally right, that underlies the much-abused poems, *Children of Adam*. It is the antipodes of the Christian ideal, and is, in some measure, a return to Nature. Whitman speaks of man's life in terms of Nature's life, and mingles them together. All the functions of human life are dear to him, because they bear about them a savour of the things that are sweet to him in the world:—

Of the smell of apples, of lemons, of the pairing of birds,

Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves.

From this exalted vantage ground Whitman always wrote. His was a manly attempt to raise noble functions, for twenty centuries tainted with obscenity, to their true dignity and natural relation to the universe. Emerson's praise was not overcharged when he commended Whitman's courage and his free and brave thought. The poet was no trained scientist, yet it is impossible to question that he had divined scientific truths of the utmost importance. Take his attitude towards sex and the body generally. For the lover there is nothing in the beloved impure and unclean. Most men, however advanced, would stop here. To Whitman it was true of every living creature. This conception of purity is but a poetic rendering of the scientific fact of the purity and beauty of organic life. It was a lesson most sorely needed in our overstrained civilization. "Dismiss whatever insults your own soul," is Whitman's insistent cry. The poet's message is based on Freethought, and he does not look upward to the blind sky:—

There is no god any more divine than yourself.

This is no random utterance, it is the general tenor of his teaching.

Whitman's phraseology is at once felicitous and un-borrowed, witness "the noiseless splash of sunrise," the "capricious and dainty sea," and the magnificent allusion to "the huge and thoughtful night." Two pieces in his *Leaves of Grass* outweigh much of his work. More than that, they are poems which no other American writer has equalled for passion and depth and nobility of thought. One of these is the opening song of "Sea Drift." It is the song which tells how, as a boy, the singer listened through the night to the bird's lament for his dead mate; how, with tears, he cried to the sea for consolation; and how:—

Answering, the sea,

Delaying not, hurrying not,

[daybreak

Whispered me through the night, and very plainly before

Lisped to me the low and delicious word "Death."

The second, "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloomed," is even more beautiful. It is, indeed, one of the loftiest threnodies ever written. Never has death been sung in a more sane and virile song than in this solemn death-carol by this poet of the people.

Whitman was a true singer of democracy, and he had a genuine love for his kind. He had the keenest sympathy with life, and all activity interested him. This world-wide love is the key to those poems of his in which he made what seems a catalogue of human occupations, merely naming the singing of the stevedores, the raftmen sounding their bugles, the Arab turning to the East. He gave other men credit for a sympathy as tire-

less as his own. This sympathy, which was his natural gift, was reinforced with emotion, sometimes very startling, as in his significant words, addressed to a prostitute, "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you." In all the poems on slavery and the war he lost himself in the great moment, and the claims of humanity are eternal in his songs. There is no false rhetoric or brazen bravado in his beautiful lines, "Dirge for Two Veterans":—

The moon gives you light,  
And the bugles and the drums give you music;  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,  
My heart gives you love.

"You who celebrate by-gones," Whitman says to the historians, "I project the history of the future," and, indeed, America has not yet grown up to his gorgeous dreams.

For thousands of years poet after poet has sung and wept and echoed the old, hopeless, immortal song of death as the last enemy, but Whitman's is a far other strain. The contemplation of death as a deliverer, dis-severed from any thoughts of future rewards or punishments, exalts him to ecstasy. He enforces the idea of death as of a dark, warm tide, silently rising and sweeping away the agonies of sentient existence. No poet peers with such longing and audacity into the "superb vistas of death." The awful dreams that may come in that sleep of death have no terror for him. The dead are made one with Nature. Death is "lovely and soothing," and the body, weary of life, turns like a tired child nestling close to the bosom of its mother:—

Dark mother, always gliding near with soft feet:  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome.  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all.

Truly Whitman was a pioneer, and he has left the priests and their superstitions far behind. Beyond the fabled hells, the tiresome purgatories, and the tawdry paradises, the resplendant vision of the great poet floods the sky and pours its serene splendour over the world.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Fossil Remains of Plants.

THE problem of plant development, particularly in relation to the higher vegetable life of to-day, was positively exasperating in its complexity until the discoveries of the last few years. Considerable light has now been thrown on the mystery, and in no department of the important science of botany is recently obtained knowledge more conclusive than that which relates to the Angiosperms, or modern flowering plants.

The data upon which botanists rely are to some extent derived from a detailed study of contemporaneous plants. The toilsome labours of science during the past two centuries have been largely devoted to the determination of the earth's flora, and to arranging a rational system of botanical classification. Where these efforts have been crowned with success, plants have been so grouped that from the evolutionary standpoint they are seen to be related among themselves, much as the various members of a human family are related to one another.

These natural affinities have in some measure been ascertained by applying the comparative method to the anatomy and physiology of plants. The famous Hofmeister, some seventy years ago, made plain the affinity which exists between the flowering plants and the higher cryptogams—the ferns and their relatives. He also indicated the kinship of the mosses to the cryptogams, and this pioneer's achievement, as Professor D. H. Scott reminds us, "still forms the foundation of all our knowledge of the affinities of these great groups of plants."

The information thus acquired has proved of priceless service to palæobotanists when studying the fossil fragments stored in the solid rocks. Through the comparison of living with extinct forms of floral life, they have been materially assisted in reaching sound conclusions concerning the paths traversed by vegetable nature in the innumerable modifications it has undergone.

It is, of course, an entire error to suppose that evolution is necessarily progressive. Although the available evidence clearly points to a general advance from the simpler to the more complex, yet to assume that existing modes of life are, as a matter of course, higher in the scale of being than their ancestors, would lead to a grave misconception of the truth. As a matter of fact, abundant evidence exists of degeneration in each of the great kingdoms of organic nature.

It has been very cogently observed that a botanical novice would quite naturally assume that the duckweeds—lowly blooming plants, relatively simple in structure, in which stem and leaf are scarcely distinguishable—are surviving representatives of an earlier stage in the development of flower-bearing plants. But botanists are almost unanimous in regarding the duckweeds as organisms which have fallen from a higher position in the vegetable world. These plants bear every appearance of having descended from superior land flora, but in consequence of the aquatic life they now lead, they have become degraded.

There is still some difference in opinion among experts as to the true position of the ferns and their allies when compared with the Bryophytes—the mosses and their relatives. From the human standpoint, the fern family is undoubtedly more exalted than the moss group, and it was at one time thought that the former was evolved, if not from the latter, at least from flora of a kindred character. This verdict is now questioned, and in the light of present knowledge many authorities have been constrained to conclude that the ferns are an older group than the mosses, which appear to have become degraded from a superior floral form. Indeed, Scott and others have come to regard the lowly bacteria as the degenerate descendants of more highly developed plants; but ampler data are essential before this difficulty can be solved.

Positive evidence, however, of the evolution of more specialized from less specialized floral organisms is available. No one can seriously contest the development of cultivated plants from wild ancestors. Although instances of reversion to the primitive state of plants previously cultivated have been alleged, there still remains overwhelming historical testimony concerning the original development of numerous cultivated plants, and in much the same manner the evidence of floral evolution yielded by the rocks is our surest guide in interpreting the past history of the vegetable kingdom as a whole.

The evolutionary story written in the rocks is broken and blurred. But certain fossil fragments present unmistakable proofs of the truth of the doctrine of descent. The palæobotanical evidence is not as yet so overwhelming as that furnished by animal remains, but the testimony increases in strength as the years roll by, and science will make the pile complete at last.

In some respects zoological fossils are more striking than those of plants. But as an eminent botanist says:—

Though there is nothing in plants quite like the skeleton, internal or external, of animals, so well adapted for preservation, and so valuable as evidence, yet in knowledge of outward form and anatomical structure the fossil-botanist has the best of it. Besides the impressions and casts of the stems, leaves, etc., which are

the best-known kinds of plant fossils, we have in certain formations the still more valuable petrified specimens, in which the mineral substance, originally in solution, has so thoroughly permeated the tissues as to preserve the minute structure. We are thus able to study by means of their sections the microscopic anatomy of many plants of the Coal Measures, with almost the same accuracy as if our specimens had just been gathered from the garden, instead of having lain buried in the earth for some millions of years.<sup>1</sup>

The Tertiary rocks are, geologically speaking, quite recent formations, and the several millions of years they represent sink to nothing in comparison with the vast lapses of time embraced by the earlier epochs of the earth's history. Yet the various divisions of the Tertiary Period are those during which the world's flora was broadly proportioned as at present. Marked changes have doubtless occurred in plant life in the course of this Period, but the same or similar classes of vegetation which now mantle our planet were in the ascendant right through Tertiary times, and the lowlier forms, conifers and mosses, have occupied a subordinate position.

In the Period which immediately preceded the Eocene, the earliest Tertiary division, we reach Cretaceous times. We now enter the concluding centuries of the Secondary or Mesozoic Period. In the later Cretaceous rocks little floral change is to be discerned. Some contemporary types of floral life are preserved in the more recent, and a few even in the more ancient, Cretaceous beds. But signs of change are manifest in the fossil plants of the older Cretaceous. A more primitive type of vegetation exercises sovereign sway. Gymnosperms (cone-bearing trees and their relatives) are now the leading forms of plant life, and the Angiosperms, so triumphant in later Tertiary times, reveal little promise of their coming dominion.

In the still earlier Jurassic formation, so famous for its remains of gigantic extinct reptiles, similar vegetable organisms to the Upper Cretaceous are represented by fossil remains. In Yorkshire and in the Midlands of England the deposits of the Jurassic Period have revealed a wondrous wealth of fossil plants.

Passing backwards into the even more ancient Triassic Period, we are rewarded with an abundant harvest of floral remains. The New Red Sandstone rocks were deposited in Triassic times, and these are abundantly represented in the Southern Britain; but so far they have yielded few fossil plants, although petrified flora are comparatively numerous in the New Sandstone formations of the Continent. To the evolutionist these remains are extremely important, inasmuch as they show their affinity to the later Jurassic, as well as to the more primitive Palæozoic flora.

The oldest life-bearing rocks are those of the Palæozoic Period, as their name implies. As we journey back in time from the opening of the Triassic Era, we arrive at Palæozoic times. The last days of the Palæozoic Period were passed in the Permian Epoch, so called from Perm, in Russia, where the deposits of this extremely remote era are represented in enormous proportions. Elsewhere in Europe, Permian rocks abound, but the Russian formation is the largest, and it contains a magnificent collection of fossil plants. A wide interval seems to separate the Permian from the preceding age; very faint traces of Triassic flora are revealed, and we seem to be transformed into a world of a much more primitive character. Colossal club mosses, horsetails, gymnosperms, and seed plants of classes utterly extinct are leading members of this celebrated "Permo-Carboniferous Flora, the most important in all the history of the Vegetable World."

<sup>1</sup> Professor D. H. Scott, F.R.S., *Evolution of Plants*, p. 20.

Still pursuing our travels into the remote and ever-remoter past, we arrive in the world as it existed in Carboniferous times. These were the years when the chief coal measures of the earth were formed. In the coal-fields—the entombed remains of immense swampy forests—are preserved the greatest treasures of ancient vegetable life in every conceivable fossil state.

And now proceeding backwards through the untold millions of years constituting Carboniferous times, we at last reach the Devonian Period, which owes its name to the Old Red Sandstone so extensively represented in the Devonshire rocks. The same formation occurs in Scotland and other countries, and it is of supreme value to the fossil botanist, as it imprisons the relics of the most primitive terrestrial plants, so far universally accepted as such by science. The Devonian deposits of Britain are poor in fossil flora as a whole. In some Irish formations of the Period the rocks have yielded numerous remains to the investigator. But it is in North America that the Old Red Sandstone has revealed its most abundant fossils.

Although these plant fossils are the earliest with certainty known, they are by no means primitive. On the whole, the Devonian flora is similar to the plants of the earlier Carboniferous, which succeeded the Devonian in order of time. Some, however, are special to the Devonian. This ancient vegetation was already highly developed, and presupposes a previously prolonged evolutionary career throughout the even more ancient Silurian and Cambrian Periods. But of these vast stretches of time extremely little is known concerning their floral life. And even in the later Devonian Period it is only the newer rocks which furnish very distinct information.

Alleged discoveries of ferns and mosses in Silurian rocks have so far been received with scepticism by most scientists. These plants, or their progenitors, must have lived in Silurian times, and incontestable proofs of their existence may be confidently expected. Seaweeds have already come to light in Silurian, and probably Cambrian deposits. With a more thorough examination of the primitive Palæozoic formations, many further discoveries will presumably be made.

For all practical purposes, the flora of the present and the past may be classified in four divisions, as follows:—

1. The Modern Tertiary and later Cretaceous; the Era of the Angiosperms or Higher Flowering Plants.
2. The Mesozoic Vegetation; the leading Period of the Gymnosperms.
3. The late Palæozoic Flora; the Epoch of the early Seed Plants and Cryptogams.
4. The most ancient of all; the older Palæozoic Period, the Age of the Algæ.

A broad survey of plant life as revealed by the palæontological record has now been submitted. More detailed study of the many and various phenomena associated with the deeply interesting and profoundly suggestive problem of the development of the vegetable kingdom may be reserved for subsequent treatment. Modern evolutionary science and philosophy are certain to exercise a constantly increasing influence in the coming years, and it is eminently desirable that all Rationalists should realize something of that magnificent mass of knowledge upon which the foundations of the doctrine of development so securely stand.

T. F. PALMER.

"Now is the time to return to the mediæval dream of a Christian and sovereign Europe," says the *Times Literary Supplement*. We hope, prayerfully, that the "sovereigns" will not include the two Kaisers.

## Acid Drops.

All are pious. The Allies, and also their enemies. There is one competition, that is of arms; there is another competition, that is of trade; and there is yet another competition, that is of religion. Our conviction that God is with us is firm and unshakable. The German Government returns thanks that "Providence's gracious bounty" has frustrated the Allies' designs by moving its people to subscribe to the War Loan. And the Albanians have issued an official prayer with "thanks to God and his Prophet" for all he has done for Germany and Austria, and asking him to acquire for the Albanians "the southern districts of our country, which are Valona, Kriea, Grenokastra, and other places." The thoughtfulness of thus guiding Providence over what might prove a geographical difficulty is beyond praise.

Those who wish the War to be a short one will have to reckon on the opposition of Dr. Bickersteth, Vicar of Leeds. This gentleman says that we cannot ask God for a short war, because the people of England would not learn their lesson in a short war. Of course, we all want the people of England to learn any lesson they ought to learn, but it seems a big price for the world to pay for the education of the inhabitants of these islands. Dr. Bickersteth says that one lesson of the War is that we need a national mission of repentance of hope. We beg to suggest that one lesson of the War is that a muzzling order for the clergy is one of the things of which we stand most in need.

What extraordinary items do get into the newspapers! In a report of the recent Kent air-raid one London journal said, "The congregation at Ramsgate Parish Church opened the evening service by singing the 91st Psalm," which refers to "the terror by night" and "the arrow that flieth by day." The association of arrows and aeroplanes seems like drawing the long-bow.

An Australian paper, the *Argus*, that has just reached us, represents Archdeacon Hindley as saying:—

In Australia the War, on the whole, has made devout people more devout. Attendance at church and Holy Communion have been larger, offerings have been more liberal, but, with the exception of a few parents and friends of soldiers at the Front, who have begun to attend for the first time, the War has left the vast majority of the people untouched. And it is not improbable that if peace were declared to-morrow, religion would have little part in the Commonwealth's rejoicing.

We believe the Archdeacon to be too pessimistic. If peace were declared, or when it is declared, we haven't the slightest doubt but that religion will take a very prominent place. If there are processions, the clergy will be in them. There will be thanksgiving services; officials will attend Church; and, generally, the parsons will behave as though but for them the War would never have ceased. Archdeacon Hindley may rest his soul in peace. He may trust his brother-clergy to romp in with all the bounce and bluster usual to them on such occasions.

Some of the Bermondsey clergy are to work one day a week in a munition factory. They should be able to preach very eloquently on the gentle art of loving one's enemies.

"We have no hymns of hate in England," writes Mr. Robert Blatchford. Has he forgotten the touching lines, "Confound their knavish tricks, frustrate their politics"?

In these days of high prices and—in some cases—reduced incomes, it is cheering to learn that the Rev. H. T. Smart, of Purley, Surrey, died leaving behind him the sum of £40,451.

"A Colonel's Wife" sends to the *Daily News* an account of a native Indian ammunition driver at Gallipoli who, although seriously wounded, declined to desist from his work until a substitute was found, on the ground that the men in the trenches needed his help. "A Colonel's Wife" draws from this the moral, that the only way in which we can

repay such conduct is by supporting Christian Missions in India. This seems more like punishment than reward. In any case, what good could Christianity do to a man of that stamp?

There are numerous instances extant of persons meeting with summary punishment for desecrating the Sabbath. To these we now have to add the case of the Rev. T. F. Stewart, who was killed while riding a motor cycle from Hartlebury to Droitwich, to take a service. The reverend gentleman was picked up from under the overturned cycle, and died in being removed to a hospital.

The much-boomed Prime Minister of Australia, who has achieved quite a notoriety on the strength of grandiloquent commonplaces that convey nothing definitely intelligible to any rational person, says that when he was at school in Wales he had his religious differences with other boys, and he was in the habit of stuffing his stockings with exercise books to protect his shins during the disputes. Religious argument, in school or out of it—when it is free and unfettered—nearly always resolves itself into the same method.

We do not know whether the Mayor of Huddersfield is a humorist or simply stupid. He may be merely a stupid man trying to be humorous. At any rate, to a man who claimed before the tribunal exemption on the ground of a conscientious objection, and who declared himself an Atheist, the Mayor said, "Have Atheists consciences, then?" We would advise the Mayor of Huddersfield not to take advantage of a position, for which he is evidently quite unfitted, in order to make remarks that are both stupid and impertinent.

So far as we can see, the majority of these local tribunals appear to have only succeeded in demonstrating their incapacity for exercising powers of a judicial character. They appear to labour under quite a delusion as to the nature of the task they are called on to perform, and exercise their powers with the unreasoning insolence of a Dogberry. Whether we agree with the conscientious objector or not, and whether we believe the Government should have allowed for their exemption or not, it is certain that the genuine conscientious objector is manifesting courage of a very high order in standing out in opposition to the overwhelming majority of his fellow citizens. And men with genuine convictions are, at all times, scarce enough for us to respect their being, even though we may disagree with the opinions expressed. At any rate, the spectacle of men being grossly insulted by members of these local tribunals for claiming a right conferred upon them by Act of Parliament, is a scene that, presently, all decent people will look back on with a feeling of shame.

Mr. Edward Clodd, in his interesting lecture on "Gibbon and Christianity" at South Place Institute, told a good story of a Catholic mother and a clergyman. Seeing that the mother prayed to the Virgin for her sick child, he asked why she did not intercede with Christ instead? She replied, "His heart is kind, but what does he know about children's complaints? It is his mother who knows these things!"

Some clergymen are not satisfied that the world-war is doing good to religion. The Rev. J. H. Weatherall, of Notting Hill Gate, says, "The Churches have lost all moral weight with the mass of the English people."

Puritanism still lingers in the United States, and the authorities at Toledo, Ohio, have prohibited the exhibition of the feminine anatomy north of the ankle. This lends interest to the famous American jest that it was a pity that Plymouth rock did not land on the pilgrim fathers, instead of the fathers landing on the rock.

The Young Women's Christian Association has engaged Drury Lane Theatre for a special performance in aid of the "canteens" and "rest-rooms" for women workers. The only religious item in the program will be the "divine Sarah" Bernhardt.

The *Beckenham and Penge Advertiser* gives the following summary of a soldier's daily life, as told in the words of well-known hymns:—

- 6.30 a.m., Reveille, "Christians, awake."  
 6.45 .. Rouse parade, "Art thou weary, art thou languid?"  
 7.0 .. Breakfast, "Meekly wait and murmur not."  
 7.15 .. C.O.'s parade, "When he cometh."  
 8.45 .. Manœuvres, "Fight the good fight."  
 11.45 .. Swedish drill, "Here we suffer grief and pain."  
 1.0 p.m., Dinner, "Come ye thankful people, come."  
 2.15 .. Rifle drill, "Go, labour on."  
 3.15 .. Lecture by officer, "Tell me the old, old story."  
 4.30 .. Dismiss, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."  
 5.0 .. Tea, "What means this eager, anxious throng."  
 6.0 .. Free for the night, "Oh, Lord, how happy we shall be."  
 6.30 .. Out of bounds, "We may not know, we cannot tell."  
 7.0 .. Route march, "Onward, Christian soldiers."  
 10.0 .. Last post, "All are safely gathered in."  
 10.15 .. Lights out, "Peace, perfect peace."  
 10.30 .. Inspection of guards, "Sleep on, beloved."  
 11.0 .. Night manœuvres, "The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended."

A writer in the *Stirling Journal* for March 9 says:—

It is surely a strange anomaly that among the few classes which are making a handsome thing out of the conditions brought about by the War are many ministers of the Gospel. At the declaration of Fiars' prices last week, when an advance in the price of grain, etc., of from 25 to 50 per cent. was fixed, the stipends of 800 ministers of the Church of Scotland were advanced at the same proportion. These stipends are, of course, regulated by the price of grain. A living of £300 becomes one of over £400, and so on. I am credibly informed that the stipend attached to St. Ninians Parish will be advanced by about £300. It is returned in the Church of Scotland Year Book for 1916 as £560 and manse, so that it becomes quite a "fat living" as the result of last week's Fiars' Court. Some neighbouring parishes also stand to be substantially increased in value as "livings." What sort of a world are we living in? At a time when our country is in dire peril, and when every business interest is more or less threatened with serious loss, if not actual ruin, we have the spectacle of a branch of the Christian Church waxing fat over the dearness of bread. I do not blame the lucky ministers involved, but surely a system of payment which begets such an anomaly is hopelessly wrong and unjust. It is, in fact, a scandal which the Church of Scotland, in its own interest, should make an end of.

We have not observed any desire on the part of the clergy to dispossess themselves of these gains resulting from the slaughter of their fellow-believers in Christ.

Writing in the *Daily Mail* on "Unhappy Childhood," Mr. Edwin Pugh says "every child is" a true offspring of "Adam and Eve." Mr. Pugh should be an authority on fiction.

The Government restriction of paper will have one good result if it reduces the sighs of the religious periodicals.

"Resist not evil," says the New Testament, also Christians are commanded to turn one cheek when the other is smitten. How, then, can Christians justify war? Dean Beeching finds an easy answer. Christians are not justified in resisting force that inflicts personal injury, but if the injury is inflicted on others, then the Christian is justified in using force in return. This, the Dean thinks, meets the religious objection of the conscientious objector; it also allows the Christian to shoulder a gun and set about killing Germans. The position is thus quite simple. If a Christian by himself is attacked, he must take it lying down. But if two Christians together are attacked, then it is their duty to attack in turn, each fighting for the other one. Being, we suppose, naturally obtuse, we cannot see the difference between this and individual resistance. It certainly makes no difference so far as the enemy is concerned. And if everybody is fighting for some one else, they might just as well be fighting for themselves. It is only another case of the famous islanders who lived by taking in each other's washing.

Of course, the root of the whole trouble is that Christian teaching was not intended to supply a social code. It was a counsel of individual perfection for the use of a select body of believers. These were to suffer for the "Lord's sake," and their sufferings here would be counted to their exceeding profit hereafter. This religious teaching is quite common in the East, and nothing would have astonished the primitive Christian teachers more than to have been asked how their rules would work when applied to society as a whole. They would have replied that they had nothing to do with this aspect of the matter. Their duty was to withdraw themselves from the world, and keep themselves untouched by its influence. The trouble began when Christianity took over the control of society and attempted to apply its teachings in a direction to which they were quite unfitted.

The death of the Rev. Stopford Brooke reminds us that the foremost clergymen of the previous generation were men of scholarly attainments. To-day the popular favourites are such profound theologians as the Bishop of London and Billy Sunday.

Despite the assertions of the clergy, things are not going well with religion. The War Savings Committee requests ladies not to buy new millinery, and this is bound to affect the attendance at places of worship.

The Bishop of London told a meeting of the Church Army that an old sea-captain had told him that he and some friends had counted the number of women entering public-houses. "He and his friends looked upon it as quite a holiday when they had to count only 400 an hour—the number was generally 800." We should dearly like to know that captain. We wonder whether his name is by any chance Munchausen? We should also like to know the public-house which served over thirteen women per minute for a whole hour. Allowing for an equal number of men, that publican must be doing a roaring trade. It is a tribute to the Bishop's sense of moderation that he did not make the number a round thousand. Many with a less scrupulous regard for truth would certainly have done so.

Thanksgiving Services were held in all the Deal Churches because some were killed in that town during the seaplane raid on Kent on March 19. It is true there were about a dozen killed elsewhere, and about thirty wounded, but the Deal Christians thanked God for looking after them. The opinions of the people who lived in the other places that suffered would be worth getting.

#### FAITH.

All Christians see at once how most absurd

It is, and even impious, to dare

With finite mind to read into his word

A literal meaning that it cannot bear;

As with his famous, "Blessed are the meek";

"To him that smiteth turn the other cheek."

Nay, let us rather look beyond the ill

We see, or think we see, in war's behests;

The eye of faith will help us, and the will

To hear the deep note of our interests.

All work for death is cursed, the thoughtless say,

Yet even bishops find munitions pay.

No angel yet has ever been observed

To help a Briton in a British trench,

But Britons were by horseback angels nerved

In a case unforeseen by Sir John French.

Praise God for sending them, uninterceded.....

But praise him more since they are rarely needed.

The War has issues far beyond our ken:

Men fall like grass before the August scythes;

It raises hell on earth;.....but then

It also raises the poor parson's tithes.

The dead lie thick beneath a foreign sod.....

But Mr. Bottomley believes in God.



## Mr. C. Cohen's Engagements.

April 16, Abertillery.

## To Correspondents.

"YOUNG AND HUMBLE FREETHINKER."—Why "Humble"? Darwin was far too great a thinker to overlook the limitations to the operation of Natural Selection by associated life. If you read again the fourth and fifth chapters of the *Descent of Man*, you will see this brought out in Darwin's best manner. And really the central significance of gregariousness is that the struggle for existence between individuals of the same group is thereby limited. This is still further the case when we deal with man, who, by adding to the power of his senses by instruments, by clothing, and by a number of artificial devices, progressively checks the operation of the biological form of the struggle. This was seen and admitted by both Darwin and Wallace.

COLLETTE JONES.—Thanks for second subscription to Fund. We are also pleased you think the new appearance of the *Freethinker* a "great improvement."

"ONE OUT FOR LIBERTY."—We don't quite follow your remarks. We certainly never had the impression that all "conscientious objectors" are Christians.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

R. D. VOSS.—We are obliged for your good wishes and compliments, which we hope to deserve.

G. GEYTEM.—We think a limited time for such things is best. And we have other things in view.

B. PLUMRIDGE.—Your query is beyond us.

C. CHAMBERS.—Your ideas are sound, and move along right lines. But you need greater care in expressing them. Writing, like other forms of activity, is a good deal of an art, and proficiency can only be obtained by constant practice.

F. WATSON.—We do not quite appreciate the "pothor." Patriotism is a specialized expression of the "herd" instinct common to all gregarious animals. It is, so to speak, an instinct that has become conscious of itself. It may, of course, be expressed wisely or unwisely, but there is little room for doubt as to its origin and nature.

"MANCHESTER."—Sorry to hear of your great loss. Please accept our most sincere condolence.

W. B. COLUMBINE.—Glad to receive your congratulations on what we have done, and are doing.

TOM RENNOLLS.—No "Special" this week.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

A fortnight ago we asked for the names and addresses of a hundred persons—preferably soldiers—to whom a month's supply of the *Freethinker* would be welcomed. A friend has been kind enough to defray the cost, and we hope the required number will be sent quickly. We already have a number of addresses on hand, but need more, and we desire to supply the whole hundred from a given date. If more than a hundred addresses are sent, we will send the remainder ourselves.

We flatter ourselves that we are holding our own well in the matter of circulation under most trying conditions, but we still have that thousand new readers to make up. The *Freethinker* is the only paper of its class, and one of the very few papers in the country that has continued unchanged during the whole of the War. This has, of course, meant hard work and watchfulness on the part of those responsible, but it has also been partly due to the loyal helpfulness of *Freethinker* readers. And while we thank them heartily for all they have done, we beg to remind them that we are still some distance from the desired thousand.

From a naturalist's point of view man is undoubtedly a "sport." The development of mind, the fact of self-consciousness, the possession of language, leading to the accumulation of experience by the means of tradition and written records, all lift him above the operation of many of the physical and biological forces that dominate the life of the lower animals. From this point of view our ever-welcome contributor, Keridon, is undoubtedly right in calling man a "Prodigy and Freak of Nature." He is veritably "an animal run to brain," and the consequences of this, with important conclusions therefrom, are well worked out in the booklet that lies before us, and which is advertised on the back pages of this issue. Originally published at One Shilling, it is now offered at half price, and we can heartily commend it to all who are interested in the deeper, but more important, aspects of social evolution. The number of copies available is very limited, and those who desire to possess a really suggestive essay on social evolution should lose no time in securing one.

We are indebted to the *Literary Guide* for several kindly notices of late, and we have to thank our contemporary for an appreciative note of our efforts, in its April issue. But what is called "our gallant fight to continue the publication of the *Freethinker*" may suggest to some minds that its continuation is in jeopardy. That, we are happy to say, is not the case. Our fight is to improve our circulation, and to meet the heavy extra charges that now affect every paper published. But the *Freethinker* will be kept going. There is no doubt whatever about that. We said that directly after the death of Mr. Foote, and we repeat it with every confidence now, hard though the struggle may be.

The *Literary Guide* puts the increased cost of its production at a halfpenny per copy, which agrees with what we said on the same topic some weeks back. As a means of meeting this, the *Guide* contemplates raising its price to twopence halfpenny. We regret that this should be found necessary, as a rise in price is almost certain to mean a falling off in circulation, and unless the increased charge is large enough to meet this reduced sale, the object of the rise is frustrated. Some of our readers have suggested the same course with the *Freethinker*, but we prefer to struggle along so long as is possible with the price and size of the paper unchanged. In the long run, we do not think that either ourselves or the movement will be worse off on this account.

## G. W. Foote Memorial Fund.

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

MARCH 31 was fixed on for the termination of this appeal, and as this issue is dated April 2, the Fund must now be considered as closed. The full £500 has not been realized, the exact sum contributed being £469 16s. 3d. The disposition of this Fund, with other matters of importance to the Freethought Movement, will be dealt with at length in next week's issue.

## "Roll of Honour"—Final List.

E. F. B., £5; E. B., 2s.; A. O. W., 2s. 6d.; S. E. C., 2s. 6d.; Collette Jones, £5; J. Roberts, 10s.; R. D. Voss, 10s. 6d.; G. Geytem, 2s. 6d.; John Shields, £1 1s.; J. Hayes, 5s.; G. Backhouse Church, 10s. 6d.; Miss M. Meredith, 10s. 6d.; A. Button, 8s.; H. Porter, 1s.; G. Vickers, 1s.; M. F. M., £1; W. F. C., 5s.; A. Pross, 1s.; F. and H. Holt, 5s.; W. B. Columbine, £5; G. Garrett, 2s. 6d.; John Weeks, 2s. 6d.; J. K. Harris, 3s.; C. Mayer, 3s. 9d.; E. Truelove, 5s.; George Gee, 1s.; J. E. Cooper, 1s.; Secular School, Failsworth, £1 1s.; Ladies' Weekly Subscribers, Secular School, Failsworth, £1 1s.; Gentlemen's Weekly Subscribers, Secular School, Failsworth, £1 1s.; Manchester, 10s. *Per Miss Vance*.—D. Wright, 5s.; Miss E. Morrison, 5s. *Per "Truth-seeker" (N.Y.)*.—F. Steen, 12s. 6d.

## Talks With Young Listeners.

### V.—Ruin and Renewal.

SONS of God married maids of the earth, and had giants for offspring; giants that were brutal and raging, and their wars shook hill and plain, and the world was like to a den of wild beasts. Yahweh looked down from heaven at this riot, and he said:—

“I will destroy man.”

But not the man Noah, who was of a quiet and just temper, and was a friend of animals, as well as of his fellow-humans.

So the young earth, which had been made very good, and now was evil, was to be brought to ruin; and Yahweh's plan of ruin was to sweep all the wicked race of men away in a vast flood. Eight souls, however, were to be saved from the wreck, and these were to float on the waters in a big house-boat, or covered Ark, which Noah and his three sons built by command of God. A door in the side led into the hull; upstairs you came to a second storey; and above rose a third storey, and in the roof was a flap, or trap-door; and the whole of the outside of this wooden ship was smeared with black stuff called bitumen.

Noah, the friend of animals and master of beasts of the forest and the wild, brought together a troop of goats, sheep, oxen, horses, asses, camels, and birds; the “clean” creatures (eatable by Jews) being in groups of seven, such as sheep, and the rest; and the “unclean” in pairs, such as badgers, hares, pigs, and camels. Walking or flying, the sevens and the twos passed into the three-storied house-boat, followed by four men and four wives; and Yahweh shut them in. The giants seem to have had no inkling of the secret, and were waging battle, and shedding blood, and turning the world into a shambles, when Yahweh opened the windows of the dome of heaven, and let the waters of his mighty sky fall in torrents of rain. Valleys were filled, little hills covered, then great hills, and then the highest peaks, till the Ark, with its strange load of passengers, floated alone on a wide sea, and all folk except eight were drowned.

At the end of forty days, Yahweh closed the windows in the dome, and the eight humans no longer heard the patter of rain on the roof of the house-boat, though they could still feel the roll and toss of their Ark on the tumbling ocean.

Noah pushed open the trap-door in the roof, and let a raven fly forth. This black fowl came not back. He also sent forth a dove, and this white-and-grey bird flew back, having found no place on which to perch. After seven days, he tossed the dove out again, and in a few hours it returned with an olive leaf in its beak, and Noah knew that the water had so gone down that trees rose above the deluge. After seven days, the dove flew forth once more, and it returned not.

When the earth was dry, the passengers joyfully came out of the house-boat, and found themselves on Mount Ararat. Then Noah piled up stones and earth in an altar, and on it he burned slain animals, and Yahweh, smelling the savour of the sacrifice, was well pleased, and spake as follows:—

“Noah, you and your sons are now to renew the race of man, and be lords of the animal world. You may eat of the flesh of animals, but have a care to drain away the blood from the meat, for the blood is taboo. Nor may man slay his fellow-man, for whoso kills a man kills my image. And so that you may know this promise of a new earth is sure, and that I will no more wreck the earth by flood, behold my bow!”

The eight people looked up, and, across the sky, saw the rainbow of the seven colours.

Now, after the death of Noah and his sons, and the sons of the sons, all the people of the race of Noah journeyed from the East Land, with wives, children, flocks, and herds to the plain of Shinar. The big caravan halted here, and the wise and elder men held a moot, or discussion, about things in general; and it was agreed that the whole tribe should settle in Shinar, and make a city, and, in the midst of it, build a citadel with a tower that should reach as high as Yahweh's blue dome. Using clay for brick, and bitumen for mortar, their brave hands were soon busy rearing this vast structure.

Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. It pleased him not to think that they should crowd together in Shinar, while so many broad lands waited for the touch of man's labour, and there were seas to be crossed, and unknown continents to be explored. So he cast a spell of confusion in their minds, and all of a sudden they uttered words in languages which some understood, and others did not understand; and all the plain of Shinar was a scene of uproar, and of mad and puzzled looks, and wild lifting of hands, and stamping of feet. But out of disorder came order; and the folk sorted themselves according to their languages, and some went east, and some west, and some south, and some north, over the face of the earth, leaving the citadel—the Tower of Babel—unfinished and lonely, a haunt for the owl, and a den for the jackal.

\* \* \* \*

The men of Babylon, the city of huge walls and towers, told a Flood story in their folk-lore many centuries before such tales got writ in the Hebrew book of Genesis. They told how the Gods were wroth with mankind, and planned a tremendous rainfall by way of doom. One of the Gods, named Ea, was friendly to our race, and he made up his godly mind to save Parnapishti the Pious. In a dream he warned the Pious One, and bade him build a ship, and coat its outside with bitumen, and divide the inside into many cabins. Into this Ark the Pious One took his family and slaves, his gold and silver, and a crowd of beasts of the field, and he bolted himself in, and Puzur Bel, the pilot, handled the helm. Then the black heavens poured out their waters, and all life perished in the Babylonian Deluge except the precious seeds of life in the house-boat of Parnapishti the Pious. Six days the tempest raged, and on the seventh, a calm followed. The Pious One opened a window in the roof, and sent out three birds, a dove, a swallow, and a raven. Two of these feathered scouts came back, but the raven never. The ship stranded on a hill, and the company of the saved marched out. A sacrifice was offered, and the Gods were pleased with the sweet smell. Perhaps this tale is meant for a drama of the Sun-God escaping in his ship of light and life from the gloomy storms of winter, and the gold and the silver are his glorious rays.

Our friends the Greeks had a myth of the Deluge. Here, again, the Gods resolved to destroy our forefathers; but here, again, the kindly Prometheus came to the rescue. He warned his son, Deucalion, of a coming flood, and advised him to build a little ship for two people. Deucalion had wedded his cousin, Pyrrha, and these two escaped the ruin. The flood was caused by the overflow of a river now called the Salambria, in Greece, and you can find it on the map. People who are very particular about dates in history say this affair happened in the year 1503 before Christ. The Deluge lasted nine days, and then the boat stranded on Mount Parnassus, the hill where the nine lovely Muses dwelt, and where poets and dreamers drank from the fountain of fancy. On the top of this mount the grateful couple offered sacrifices to the Father of Heaven. They went

to the Goddess, Themis, who held the scales of justice, and knew the secrets of law and order, and how to renew the world after ruin; and they asked her how the race of man might be restored.

"Veil your heads and faces," she said, "and, as you walk, throw backwards the bones of your Old Mother."

Now, who could this Old Mother be but the Earth, and what could the bones be but stones? So they covered their eyes, and picked up stones, and flung them over their shoulders, and the stones which the man threw became men, and the woman's stones became women; and if this wonderful event ever happened at all, it happened in 1503 B.C.; of that you may be perfectly sure. Perfectly sure!

F. J. GOULD.

## Letters to my Daughter.

### VII.

MY DEAR JOAN,—

You came to live with us in the time of spring flowers. At that time, in our little world, we had daffodils, white and yellow tulips, and some primroses. These were the flowers on which you first opened your eyes; their influence, by all the signs I notice, has not left you, but rather has it been intensified.

Curious though it may seem, your father's first impression of this world was first formed through flowers. Buttercups, cowslips, and lady smocks—gold and silver, the sun and moon—in a meadow where my earthly paradise was found, these flowers were the first companions for me when I was no bigger than you are. After this, there was a village green; and when I went to sleep at night it was to the sound of music far away. An old man, fond of children, used to play his magic concertina at night, and the country folk would dance. Once a year, the village well was dressed with flowers and boys and girls romped round a maypole.

These impressions, dear Joan, are engraved on my heart; not even the later inferno of church and Sunday-school can remove these, the sweetest, simplest, and most beautiful remembrances that I wish to have. Can a God who made a buttercup have anything to do with a preacher-man, fat and plump, who sent me shivering to bed with nasty thoughts, with my mind puzzled about a word called wicked? Can a God, if he exists, want to cause one tear in the eye of any child? Perish me, say I, if I think so low of a God if he exists. The stately lady smock told me nothing about him; the cowslip told me nothing; and I went to sleep in mid-nod-land, dreaming about bird's nests, or meadow-boots, or catching fishes in a clear brook. My homage to the best part of my childhood shall be used to make yours sweet, simple, and without fear of the black wretches who are not fit to kneel in the land of childhood.

Once again, I come to the music of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Many times have I listened to it, yet always with delight am I carried along from the entry of the fairies to their departure from the palace of Theseus. There is a singing fairy, whose song transports your father to that meadow:—

I serve the fairy queen  
To dew her orbs upon the green:  
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;  
In their gold coats spots you see.  
These be rubies, fairy favours,  
In those freckles live their savours.

When I hear her singing about the cowslips, I am in that meadow again; my hands are filled with wild flowers, and I don't think I should like you to see my eyes, as you would not understand. Later on, you may know why a poet wrote about music as being the art,

"Which is most nigh to tears and memory." At present, we will say that beauty in flowers and music are the birthright of all children. Having arrived at this conclusion, I think my letter has not been in vain. You will now see, dear Joan, that I have made a god formed of two qualities: colour and sound. With him, I think, we can safely entrust little children. Your present progress with a raspberry jam tart reminds me that I shall have to add another quality.

Your loving father, TRISTRAM.

## Skeleton Sermons.

### II.—Ananias and Sapphira.

ANANIAS was strongly dealt with. Unlike George Washington, he *could* tell a lie, and he told it. In consequence, he fell down dead. Where Ananias made his greatest mistake was in going into the Apostle's room himself to start the lying, and not sending his wife.

Of course, Peter knew the real state of the land-market as well as Ananias did. There was no "bluffing" or fooling with Peter, so he stretched forth his hand and the liar was "outed" on the spot.

Now, had the game been entrusted to the lady, the sharp and swift punishment meted out to Ananias would never have happened. She would have held up her skirts just sufficient to show her dainty yellow sandals and the lovely rounded ankles, as she tripped airily in with a smile enough to coax chickens away from corn:

"Good morning, Peter! Dear me, how well you are looking this morning! I am really half afraid to call on you by myself. You are looking positively charming, and you are just about the age when men are most dangerous to the heart of a susceptible woman."

After ten minutes or so of this "salting" the rooster's tail game, the cute little lady would suddenly exclaim, as a sort of casual afterthought:

"Oh, by the way, I want to pay you those horrid taxes; but you really looked so sweet that you drove all thought of business out of my poor, foolish, little head. Here is the money, ten pieces, and I am so sorry it isn't more; but, you know, dear boy, times are very bad with us poor people, and I feel all the poorer because you never call to see me now!"

That's the way a lady would have put the "come hether" on poor Peter, and he'd taken the ten pieces he knew should have been thirty, and probably fake the returns to oblige a lady.

A woman never seems more charming to a man than when she is wicked, and never appears more candid than when she is telling a lie strong enough to crack the ceiling above her. The fate of Ananias might easily have been averted had Sapphira made best use of her beguiling ways; and when that kind of woman, or any other good-looking woman, starts off to tell a lie, she generally does it with a similar sweetness and assumed candour that would fool the greatest saint that ever lived.

THE OWL.

### Pernicious Pars.

For some time past we have been deeply concerned by a serious falling off in the attendances to Sunday-schools. Let parents remember that the boys and girls of to-day are the men and women of to-morrow, and send their children to the Sunday-schools regularly. When we attempt to visualize the results of the little ones' non-attendance to the House of God, we find it impossible to be optimistic. Remember that the children are too young to be initiated into the divine mysteries of religion by any other means. The grown-ups are being educated in spiritual matters through

the medium of the Churches, to say nothing of the War; but the bairns are, unfortunately, too young to realize the glories of war, and must therefore be enlightened by the Sunday-schools. We therefore entreat parents to make every effort to compel their little ones to attend the Sabbath-school regularly, otherwise we shall be forced, in the interests of humanity, to suggest a Bill to the Government for compulsory attendance.—*Sunday-School Slave.*

Thank God for the recent Zeppelin raids. They bring the reality of religion into the heart and mind of the masses. These air raids force men, women, and children to their knees with a glorious fear of death, which brings them into close contact with their Creator. For who—Infidel or Freethinker, Labour, Conservative or Liberal—can deny the potency of prayer when a monstrous Zeppelin sails overhead, showering death-dealing bombs upon the Agnostic masses beneath? It is at such divine moments as these that the religious apathy of the average man and woman melts away, leaving their souls clear, both of cant and of materialistic indifference. It is at such supreme moments that the ordinary man or woman realizes the ghastly reality of the God they have so shamefully neglected.—*Verger's Vanguard.*

A correspondent recently drew our attention to Mr. Darwin's theory of the origin of man. Frankly, we are highly disgusted with it. Mr. Darwin believes, or professes to believe, that we are related in some mysterious way to the anthropoid apes and gorillas. This, in short, is Mr. Darwin's theory. Horrible, is it not? It involves the idea that the same all-wise Creator who fashioned us in his own image in the Garden of Eden, likewise fashioned the degenerate chimpanzee. Not a very flattering theory. We should like to point out to Mr. Darwin, whoever he is, that no tribe of monkeys has ever attained the perfection which Man has attained. Monkeys, forsooth! Let Mr. Darwin direct his energies upon some more fitting task in keeping with the times. Can he not invent some new machine-gun, shell, or cartridge? Is he oblivious of this great War? Has he never heard of Freedom, Honour, and Truth? For shame, Mr. Darwin! You would be much better employed shouldering a rifle in the trenches than evolving these absurd theories about the origin (sic) of your fellow-creatures. Remember, this is the twentieth century.—*Scientific Sabbatarian.*

ARTHUR F. THORN.

## Correspondence.

### NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of March 12 "Abracadabra" returns to his attack upon my conclusions. I should be inclined, from one point of view, to let the matter drop; it is all to the good that Freethinkers should differ on inessentials; moreover, it is of no real consequence, in the twentieth century, whether a certain man rode on a donkey into a certain town one day in the first century or not—and many of the points in dispute are of that nature. But it is of consequence that Freethinkers should argue in accordance with logic, and not in defiance of it; and it is also important that we should not misrepresent one another's positions. And the method by which I reach my conclusions is not "to strike out all the miraculous elements in the Gospel narratives, and then to label the remainder as probably historical." The grounds of my conclusions were given in my articles, and I need not recapitulate them here. In my letter of February 27 I gave further reasons for my acceptance of a certain theory of the date and authorship of the Second Gospel, which "Abracadabra," for some reason, labels as "apologetic." To those reasons I adhere.

"Abracadabra's" method is to assume that, whenever one of the evangelists claims that an event recorded by him was a fulfilment of prophecy, that event must necessarily have been invented on purpose to provide a fulfilment for that prophecy. Now the illogicality of this will be obvious if we take a parallel case. "Abracadabra" is probably aware that

certain cranky publications, sold not long ago on the book-stalls, profess to show that the events of the present War are fulfilments of Biblical prophecy. Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that in the year A.D. 4000 little or no record survives of the present War, except a copy of one of these books preserved by a fluke. Doubtless some "Abracadabra" of that day will argue that the European War, or at least this or that feature of it, was invented by the author of the book in question in order to "fulfil the prophecy." By just such logic as this does "Abracadabra" seek to prove that Jesus, so far as we can tell, uttered no parables, never had a disciple called Judas who betrayed him, etc.

Similarly with the story of the baptism. "Abracadabra" says that but for the miraculous voice from heaven "the writer would never have represented Jesus as baptized by John at all." Happily, the New Testament itself affords the parallel to this. In Acts ix. we are given an account of the conversion of St. Paul at the gates of Damascus, accompanied by miraculous circumstances (a light, a voice from heaven, etc.) which "Abracadabra" and I both reject. Are we, then, justified in saying, in the language of "Abracadabra," "But for this voice and vision, the writer would never have represented Paul as coming to Damascus at all"? By no means; for the first chapter of Galatians shows that Paul's conversion, voice or no voice, did take place at Damascus. Similarly, the "voice" on the occasion of Jesus' baptism is no reason for rejecting the whole story.

Lastly, as to the existence of the Q narratives in the first century. I am really surprised that "Abracadabra" should question this, seeing that it bears his own endorsement. In his article of January 23 he tells us, "Only the narratives recorded by two of the three Synoptists may be regarded as drawn from the common source document," i.e., the primitive Gospel. Q, then, comes from the primitive Gospel, according to "Abracadabra." This primitive Gospel he attributes, in his article of February 6, to the Matthew mentioned by Eusebius as bishop of Jerusalem, whose date he gives as about A.D. 78-85. So that "Abracadabra" himself stands committed to the theory that the Q narratives, among others, are derived from this first-century document—though he taunts me with holding almost the identical view of their origin that he does!

ROBERT ARCH.

### COLERIDGE AND SHELLEY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You suggest in your article on the late Mr. Foote that in my "Memories" I relate with "a certain amount of glee" that my paternal grandfather did not exert himself to prevent what was known as a "Shelley hunt" at Eton. I am sure you do not mean to misrepresent me, but I can assure you that my intention was not at all to sympathize with, much less to express glee at, the unkind treatment of Shelley at Eton; and if you look at the passage in my book again you will see that I mention the treatment of Shelley by my other grandfather, which was most kindly, and I leave the contrast in an obvious manner to the reader.

You also in your article compare my objection to Huxley's allusion to "the Gadarene pig affair" in his controversy with Gladstone with a supposed intentional omission on my part to mention Matthew Arnold's comparison of the Trinity with "three Lord Shaftesburys." The omission was not intentional, and I have nowhere at any time defended that phrase of Matthew Arnold. But as a matter of fact, I think there is a clear difference between these respective phrases and occasions.

Huxley's phrase was, in my opinion, a deliberate effort to offend Gladstone's religious susceptibilities, and seemed to me to be on that account vulgar and discourteous.

Matthew Arnold did not coin his phrase with the deliberate intention of hurting the feelings and violating the sensibilities of any particular controversial opponent.

I think these matters are largely ones of taste. Though I have no belief in the Heaven of the Mohammedans, I would not, in any controversy with an Islamite, use phrases that would be certain to offend his religious sensibilities, and that is exactly what Huxley seems to me to have done. I find no fault with him for disbelieving in the miracles related in the New Testament, nor for gravely and earnestly

arguing that they are quite unworthy of the belief of reasonable people, but I maintain that in all controversy deliberate offensiveness of phrase that must offend the religious sensibilities of an adversary is an exhibition of bad taste.

With much of your article I am quite in agreement.

STEPHEN COLERIDGE.

### FREE CHURCHMEN AND LIBERTY

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read with great interest Mr. Lloyd's articles in the *Freethinker* for March 12 and 19. In the first of these he criticizes some recent utterances of the Rev. Dr. Charles Brown at the City Temple, and refers to his intolerance of those who differ from him, while in the second he discusses the religious outlook, and mentions, incidentally, the pride of the Nonconformists in the liberties they have won for themselves.

These articles bring to my mind certain remarks made in the Presidential Address to the Free Church Council at Portsmouth in 1911, by the Rev. C. Brown, who, if I am not mistaken, is the gentleman referred to by Mr. Lloyd. A brief account appeared at the time in the *Daily Chronicle*, to which I wrote a letter criticizing the remarks in question.

As this was perhaps the occasion of his bitter attack on the Sunday League, of which Mr. Lloyd speaks, the following extract from my letter, which the *Daily Chronicle* was "unable to publish," may be of interest:—

Mr. Brown, after referring to their dearly won liberty to worship, asked, Why should they be debarred from active participation in State functions? Why should the Chaplain of the People's House of Representatives always be an Episcopalian? Why should they be excluded from exercising their ministry in the great cathedrals like St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, which really belonged to the nation? Why, indeed? But—and this apparently Mr. Brown did not ask—why should not Roman Catholics, Jews, Atheists, and bodies representing all shades of opinion, religious and otherwise, be accorded exactly the same right which he claims for Free Churchmen?

Later in his address Mr. Brown lamented the decay of Sunday observance, and stated that indifference in religion proceeded *pari passu* with increase of Sunday pleasure.

Now, when men claim liberty for themselves, they should surely be prepared to grant equal liberty to those who differ from them. But do we find this on the part of Free Churchmen? I think not.

Whenever the opportunity occurs they, with other religious persons, oppose the Sunday opening of licensed halls, theatres, places of refreshment, museums, and picture galleries; Sunday trading, bands, and papers, and in some cases Sunday trains and trams. But is not this a denial of liberty to others, and a step towards the compulsory attendance of all at their churches and chapels, thus taking us well on the way back to the intolerance of the Middle Ages, from which we seem, even now, to have scarcely escaped?

One ought to be able to look to Free Churchmen for a higher ideal of liberty than merely that of liberty for themselves as against the Church of England, and liberty to do to others as they are continually protesting they are being done by. Why do they not recognize that an increasing number of people do not, for various reasons, wish to go to church and chapel, and that such people should have the same right to spend their Sunday in their own way, even to golf and football (Mr. Brown had mentioned these sports, apparently regarding them as the last word in Sunday desecration, as Free Churchmen have to spend theirs)?

As the Rev. H. R. Gamble said....."there is no limit to the forces of fanaticism once they are let loose."

This brings out very clearly the following points:—(1) The intolerance shown by Free Churchmen in general to all who differ from them. (2) Their curiously warped idea of liberty. (3) Their readiness to share in any privileges and endowments enjoyed by the State Church, to which they profess, on principle, to be opposed. With them it is "Mydoxy," but not "Thydoxy"; and (4) the attitude of your much-vaunted "free" press towards letters criticizing the utterances of public men on religious and certain other matters.

Finally, with regard to toleration, let us never forget that fine passage in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*:—"The French Constitution hath abolished or renounced *Toleration* and *Intolerance*, and hath established Universal Right of Conscience. Toleration is not the *opposite* of Intolerance, but the *counterfeit* of it. Both are despotisms. The one

assumes to itself the right of withholding Liberty of Conscience, and the other of granting it. The one is the Pope armed with fire and faggot, and the other the Pope selling or granting indulgences. The former is Church and State, and the latter is church and traffic."

And two years earlier Mirabeau said:—"The most unlimited liberty of religion is in my eyes a right so sacred that to express it by the word toleration seems to me itself a sort of tyranny, since the authority which tolerates might also not tolerate."

I should not have troubled you with so long a letter but for the fact that for the time being, at any rate, our liberty of speech and conscience has all but disappeared, which, I need hardly point out, is a matter for the gravest concern.

J. A. TOMKINS.

### "De Rerum Natura."

To didactic verse  
I confess I'm averse,  
Tho' one might do worse  
Than oneself to immerse  
In Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

Great Poets have said,  
At least, so I've read,  
In poesies' bed  
Men ought not to wed  
Epicurean philosophy with  
Shelley.

'Twere a sin, the muse  
To insult and abuse;  
Men's minds to bemuse,  
Their ideas to confuse—  
Divine Keats in cap and in  
gown! O ye gods!

Yet sure 'tis no sin  
The world we live in  
To describe as a gin  
To trap all fools in?  
Let philosophy Parnassus  
ascend!

Tho' fools thee assail,  
And poets at thee rail,  
We bid thee all hail,  
And drink a wassail  
To thee, philosopher-poet,  
Lucretius.

HARRY SHAW.

### Obituary.

The members of the N. S. S. and readers of this journal will learn with regret of the irreparable loss sustained by our esteemed colleague, Mr. Walter Mann, by the death of his wife after four years of intense suffering. Mrs. Mann, who was 50 years of age, and a native of Gravesend, succumbed at Wolverhampton to that fell disease, tuberculosis, on Monday, March 20; she and her husband having already known the sorrow of laying to rest two boys, and a charming daughter just blossoming into womanhood. She bore her own sufferings with the fortitude of a convinced Freethinker, her only anxiety being as to the future of her family. Her increasing ill-health prevented her active co-operation, but she nevertheless took the keenest interest in her husband's views and literary work.

I had the privilege of her personal acquaintance, and remember the generous hospitality and enthusiastic welcome she gave to me and a party of Freethinkers, quite unknown to her, when we descended upon her unexpectedly some years ago in her home, then in Lincoln. Three young boys and their father are left to mourn the loss of this dear, self-sacrificing, and devoted woman. They have the heartfelt sympathy of Mr. Mann's numerous admirers.

A beautiful Secular Service was read by our Mr. J. T. Lloyd at the graveside; Mr. Dodd and Mr. Williams, of Cannock, being present, with others, to pay their last tribute of respect.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

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