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Views and Opinions.

The Poor Clergy.

There was more in Mr. Ben Tillet's resolution asking that the Military Service Act be applied to the clergy than met the eye. It was really an expression of the general dissatisfaction at the attitude of the clergy during the War, and of the growing conviction of their utter uselessness in the modern world. In this matter Mr. Tillet plays the part of a social barometer. At the opening of the War the clergy were treated with the most supreme neglect. And no one feels the need of them even now. And when they began to recruit for the Army, encouraged conscription, but demanded complete exemption for their order, the neglect became contemptuous. Nothing the clergy could do has altered this. They have made the most of those clergymen who have enlisted, and also of the few who have distinguished themselves afterwards. They have likewise lavishly advertised every good word that has been said on their behalf. But no one in his senses ever doubted that there were good men, and brave men, in the pulpit. It is the order, the caste, the profession, which invites contempt, and of late it has been receiving it in generous measure. So that one begins to almost pity even the clergy.

* * *

The Failure of the Church.

It is to the credit of even religious people in this country that clerical activity on behalf of the War was instinctively resented by many even while they applauded. They really felt that war was a bad business, even though it was impossible to keep out of it; that nothing could civilize it, or even humanize it; and that so long as it existed it placed a premium on barbarism. And they realized that, whoever's the business of finding men for the War and of fanning the military spirit that the clergy should be of a different character. This feeling was well expressed by a "Staff Captain" in the columns of the pious *Daily News*. For some individual clergymen, he said, the soldiers have the highest regard—as men. (The qualification is significant.) But he added:—

I freely confess that a strange padre prompts in few of us the right feeling of comradeship. We are merely

polite. I do think, when the feeling is analysed, that it is his calling we resent. War is now so utterly unholy a business that, though we grant the man of God should be where sins are thickest, yet in some obscure way we feel the Church is much to blame for the whole horrible affair. What, in God's name, has it been doing for centuries?.....

But, somehow, the sight of the cloth, what with poison gas, mines, bombs, and high explosives.....well, most soldiers, I think, feel the Church is somewhat late, and has missed nearly everything.

That, from all I can gather, represents what I think is the predominant feeling among soldiers. They had heard so much of the prevalence and power of Christian love and Christian brotherhood, and they had accepted much of this talk at its face value. And now the awakening has come to thousands. They begin to realize that this talk of Christian brotherhood is the merest cant; that under its ægis brutality and barbarism flourish luxuriantly; and quite naturally and properly they ask what is the value of a Church that has claimed the moral leadership of the world when such things can come to be? They "feel the Church is much to blame for the whole horrible affair"—not that it caused the War; but that, with all its power and position, it failed utterly to prevent its occurrence. And the feeling is justified.

* * *

A Lady on the Clergy.

"Staff Captain's" comment on the clergy was promptly followed up by a letter from Miss Edith Durham, a lady who was out during the two last Balkan wars, and who has done much hard work since this War commenced. Her remarks on the subject are of sufficient interest and importance to warrant their being quoted in almost their entirety. She says:—

After seven months hard canteen work in English camps abroad few things have more impressed me than the contempt of the Tommy for the man who shelters behind a coffee-counter by day and reels off hymns, prayers, and advice to Tommy every evening. "Who's 'e to jaw me 'ow to die? Why don't 'e come out in the trenches and show me issself?"

Smug theology students, many of them strong and fit say, in explanation: "If it hadn't been for the war I should have been ordained by now. So I am not eligible for military service." A large number of these students, so far as my own experience goes, are not out to preach Christ, but to run some particular church or churchlet. I used to be disgusted with the fierce hatred that rages in the Balkan Peninsula between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. But they are pale beside the hatreds I have seen raging among the varieties of Christians who, with the aid of cake and coffee, try to impose their views upon Tommy.

"If we had not got here in time," said a Scotch minister in my presence, "this hut would have fallen into the hands of the Anglicans!" With equal joy did an Anglican arrange for the confirmation into the Church of England of a lad who had been brought up Roman Catholic. I could give numerous examples of this unseemly scramble for influence among so-called Chris-

tians. And quite as many of the entire lack of any attempt to carry out Christ's teaching.

There are noble exceptions. I have heard some admirable and helpful addresses from an Army chaplain. I have also heard some that filled one with amazement. A chaplain, for example, preached to a full church to a congregation a large part of which had recently come from one of the very worst corners of this hideous war. We may presume that they hoped for words of help and comfort. What they got was a long and highly unsuccessful attempt to whitewash Jacob and explain away his swindling of Esau!

Miss Durham, it will be observed, not only endorses what the "Staff Captain" said concerning the opinion soldiers have of the clergy; she carries the indictment very much further. * * *

Cakes, Coffee, and the Gospel.

I like Miss Durham's phrase about those Christians who, "with the aid of cake and coffee, try to impose their views upon Tommy." It exposes in a pretty sentence a species of fraud to which modern Christianity is greatly addicted, and which has been much in evidence during the War. To take an example most favourable to Christians. I have heard a deal of praise, and I believe it to be deserved, of the services rendered the men by the Y.M.C.A. tents. These tents are raised by public subscriptions from people of all religions and from those of no religion at all. Soldiers returning from wet and filthy trenches greatly appreciate the comfort provided, and I have no wish to rob those responsible for their management of any credit that is properly their due. I may mention, in passing, that many of the letters I have received from the Front—some of them asking for copies of the *Freethinker* to be sent out—have been written upon Y.M.C.A. paper. It is the use made of these efforts by the clergy at home with which I am concerned. At the Front, according to Miss Durham, the provision of cake and coffee is used to induce "Tommy" to become religious. At home the cake and coffee are used to persuade the people of the immense value of Christianity to the nation in a time of crisis. In times of peace we are used to seeing ridiculous Christian doctrines floated on free soup and buoyed up by blankets from the benevolent. And that, I say, is obtaining credit for Christianity under false pretences. A Niagara of soup or coffee will not prove the truth of Christianity, neither will a Mount Blanc of blankets. And it is something to the credit of "Tommy" that he resents the attempt to impose upon him by this means.

* * *

A Competition for Clients.

Still more illuminating is Miss Durham's description of the competition between the sects for the patronage of the soldier. That kind of thing, also, we are well acquainted with in times of peace. When Mr. Charles Booth wrote his monumental work, *Life and Labour in London*, he described the various religious sects as fighting for the patronage of the poor—with the lure of soup-kitchens and the like—with all the energy of needy commercial travellers. Poverty and distress were chiefly interesting to them as so many opportunities for the capture of new adherents. And when war broke out the chief concern of the clergy was again of a sectarian nature. The welfare of "Tommy" was the bait to be used to impress upon the people at home the value of Christianity. Each sect must see to it that it was well to the front in this scramble for self-advertisement. We have here the explanation of the clerical cry for more chaplains in the Army—a cry that to be genuine should have come from the soldiers. It is the explanation of the clerical zeal for recruiting, and it explains why, when Conscription became law, the clergy demanded exemp-

tion for their class for fear that a lessening of the number at home would lead to a weakening of their power. All they could see in this travail of the nations was an opportunity for sectarian aggrandisement. The Ethiopian has not changed his skin, nor the leopard its spots. The Church is truly the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And in that lies its condemnation. CHAPMAN COHEN.

Pulpit Blindness.

THE Rev. David Brook, M.A., D.C.L. (Oxon), is one of the most prominent of Free Church clergymen, being at once an accomplished scholar and a popular preacher. He has been President of the National Free Church Council, and also of his own denomination—the United Methodist Free Church. He is at present Superintendent of the United Methodist Church, Ashton Circuit. Upon settling down in that capacity, a few weeks ago, he delivered a characteristic discourse on "The Name that is above every name." Of course, Dr. Brook and his people imagine that they are in possession of the truth, and that what they strive for they know to be the right. The reverend gentleman declared that "the claims of Jesus are very widely recognized." He did not say what the claims of Jesus are; but if they are the claims made for him by most of the orthodox Churches, it is not true that they are widely recognized outside those Churches. According to a report in the *Herald* for September 2, he said:—

In England, and in many other countries, even among those who did not attend church, those claims were received with acquiescence, and often with reverence. A typical Hyde Park crowd on Sunday afternoon resented any depreciation of Jesus Christ. The criticism of their churches was usually not that they believed in Jesus Christ, but rather that they were not faithful to their belief, that they did not act upon it.

It is extremely risky to speak for the non-church goers who form such an enormous majority of the population. The natural inference is that they do not believe much, at least that they do not believe in the Churches, otherwise they would not be outsiders. It is more risky still to refer to "a typical Hyde Park crowd," because no such crowd exists. All "isms" under the sun are both attacked and defended in Hyde Park. If Dr. Brook knows Hyde Park, he is aware that every Christian heresy ever heard of finds its champions there, as well as its opponents. The Churches are very freely criticized by people who profess to be Christians, a very fair share of the attacks falling to the lot of the ministers. Dr. Brook brands such critics as rank cowards, who have no *locus standi*.

We are not here concerned with believing or semi-believing critics of the Churches, but rather with Dr. Brook's assertion that Hyde Park "criticism of the Churches is usually not that they believe in Jesus Christ," which we are bound to characterize as false. Every Sunday—morning, afternoon, and evening, and some other days as well, Hyde Park resounds with vigorous assaults upon the Christian Gospel itself in all its forms. It is by no means a rare occurrence to hear the belief in Jesus Christ denounced as rank superstition, and the listening and largely approving crowds are often the biggest and most enthusiastic in the Park.

What are the claims of Jesus Christ? Judging by the discourse before us, Dr. Brook claims for him a distinct place in the Deity. To worship Christ is to treat him as a Divine Being, "begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one

substance with the Father." From this point of view Unitarians do not recognize the claims of Jesus Christ, for to them he is only a man; and is not this the reason why they do not belong to the National Free Church Council? The truth is that, comparatively speaking, only a very small number of people are whole-hearted believers in the Deity of Christ. Another of the claims of Jesus is that he died for the salvation of the world. Paul says that he loved us and gave himself up for us, and John announces that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Does Dr. Brook mean to allege that this claim is very widely recognized? Who can contemplate the state of the world to-day and calmly pronounce it a redeemed world? Dr. Campbell Morgan said the other day that "grace is mightier than sin," and yet admitted that the two are in deadly conflict, which means that neither is mightier than the other. "Sin," he adds, "means missing the mark—failure, dislocation between God and man, and between man and man. In this War we see this dislocation." Again, "Grace means the healing forces of God, which restore the lost order. Sin is big, but grace is always bigger than sin can ever become, with all its growing." It evidently did not occur to the reverend gentleman that he was contradicting himself, or giving the lie direct to his own words, all the time. The grace of Christ has been fighting sin for two thousand years, and yet in this War sin is rampant, abounding, victorious. Dr. Morgan virtually admits this when he asserts that "human folly and sin will break down, and grace will triumph." As yet, human folly and sin hold their own; they have never broken down, nor has grace triumphed. The Gospel Jesus predicted that if he were lifted up and crucified, he would draw all men unto himself; but after nineteen centuries that bold prophecy remains unfulfilled. Dr. Brook believes that Christ died for him and, we suppose, for all mankind; but so far as our race is concerned, he must have died absolutely in vain. At this very moment sin is mightier than grace, God's healing forces proving of no avail against its ravages.

Another claim of Jesus is that he is King as well as Saviour. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is made to claim kingship, but also significantly to add: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Now a kingdom intended for some other world can be of no use for this. His disciples speak of him as sitting on his throne and reigning; but that can be of no practical interest to us, since neither his throne nor his kingdom is of this world. Surely the Prince of Peace is not reigning in Europe just now. Can Dr. Brook be ignorant of the fact that this is being emphasized day by day by hosts of stalwart Freethinkers in the open spaces of London and other cities, and that the crowds of hearers do not resent it in the least, well knowing it to be true?

Reading the reverend gentleman's sermon one would come to the conclusion that the whole world is on the eve of turning Christian, and that militant unbelievers are conspicuous only by their absence. People generally agree to the claims of Jesus, but multitudes hesitate to actually become followers of the Lamb from various motives. Many are held back by fear of the new and larger world into which discipleship would usher them. They feel that if they became Christians they would have fresh responsibilities, and would have to be more consistent. The preacher calls this hesitancy "rank cowardice," and maintains that those who suffer from it ought to be heartily ashamed of themselves. Others linger on the threshold because Christ has as yet captured only their mind, and left their heart unconvinced. Our own observation and experience teach us

that intellectual believers are few and far between. Religion is, unfortunately, an affair of the emotions. With Christians the heart sways the head and keeps it in captivity. It has never been borne in upon us that hard thought generates heat, though we have often noticed that heat of feelings rather discourages independent thinking. We have known people to remain emotionally religious for a considerable time after the intellect had cast out all religious beliefs. As a rule, hard thought, uninfluenced by emotional leanings, ends in Atheism. We once knew an ardent believer who used to say, "I dare not think," and he died a Christian. Indeed, Dr. Brook's sermon is merely an emotional appeal, and he tells us that the heart is the place for Christ, not the head.

It is a radical error to aver that the world thinks well of Jesus Christ and is within a little of being won to his side. As a matter of fact, Christ never meant less to the world than he does just now. It is gradually putting the Bible in its proper position among all the other Sacred Writings of the East. It is also discovering the hollowness of the high claim which the Church has been making for herself in all ages, and with the Church, the Christ, her creation, must go. Christianity has been a terrific power in the world, but its golden age is past, never to return. The trend of the times is away from ecclesiasticism and supernaturalism, and toward the coming reign of reason and commonsense.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Gospel Writ in Steel.

If Christians would teach infidels to be just to Christianity, they should themselves be just to infidelity.

—John Stuart Mill.

I have searched over the grounds of my belief, and if wife and child and name and fame were all to be lost to me one after the other as the penalty, still I will not lie.

—Thomas Henry Huxley.

The State has tried to take men's religion under its control; it has tried to take all their thoughts and all their actions under its control.—G. W. Foote.

CHRISTIAN apologists never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the religion they profess. It is well, therefore, to attempt to dispel the gross ignorance everywhere displayed as to the persecution of Freethinkers by their orthodox opponents. Curiously, although trials for blasphemy have been numerous, the comparatively enlightened nineteenth century holds the unenviable record for the number of blasphemy and free-speech prosecutions, and the early years of the present century bid fair to rival the bad record of its predecessor. The reason is not far to seek. The working-classes have woken to intellectual issues, and Church and State have united in a most unholy alliance to strangle Freedom.

A hundred years ago the lion-hearted Thomas Paine was dead, but his "soul was marching on." His books were very much alive, and were being circulated widely. This was one of the earliest efforts made to rouse the workers with the Freethought evangel, and the pioneers suffered terribly for publishing and circulating that thunderous engine of revolt, *The Age of Reason*. There were critics of the Bible, it is true, before Thomas Paine's day, but they were mainly scholars, whose works were not easily understood by ordinary folk. Paine himself, a man of real and unmistakable genius, had sprung from the people, and he spoke their tongue and made their thoughts articulate. But boldly and courageously as Paine might write, his books would have been still-born but for the heroism of the Freethinkers. Richard Carlile, a paladin of progress, endured over nine years' imprisonment in this terrible struggle.

The clergy were thoroughly aroused by so determined a resistance, and hesitated at nothing. They even attacked women, and Carlile's brave wife and sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. His shopmen stepped into the breach, and one after the other went to prison, and eventually divided among them forty years' imprisonment. Think of it all! One small circle of Freethinkers serving between them over fifty years in prison for the right of free-speech in a country pretending to be in the van of civilization.

The example of Paine was soon emulated. Charles Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy* put the absurdities of Christianity in plain fashion before the people, and this was followed by John Clarke's *Critical Life of Jesus*. Robert Cooper's *Holy Scriptures Analysed* was another powerful attack on Bibliolatry. Thoroughly alarmed, Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter, voiced the clerical terror in no uncertain sound from his seat in the House of Lords. Great excitement followed, and the enemy closed their ranks. For the first time the State clergy and Nonconformist ministers joined hands, and started many new prosecutions against the hated Freethinkers. John Cleave and Henry Hetherington were both prosecuted and sentenced. The Freethinkers fought valiantly, and they tested the law to see if it could reach high-class offenders. A counter prosecution was commenced against Moxon and other publishers for selling Shelley's *Atheistic Queen Mab*, for which so many Freethinkers had suffered. The brilliant ruse succeeded, and Freethought won a step forward.

The first distinctive Freethought journal, *The Oracle of Reason*, edited by the brilliant and audacious Charles Southwell, was the next storm-centre. Before many issues had been published, the editor was prosecuted, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and a fine of £100. George Jacob Holyoake, the second editor of the paper, was the next victim. For a jesting remark after a lecture he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Thomas Paterson, the third editor, shared the same fate as his predecessors. His defence, published under the caustic title of *God versus Paterson*, was startling in its audacity, and earned for its author the affectionate title of "Bulldog." These prosecutions were not confined to England, and up in Scotland two stalwart Freethinkers, Robinson and Finlay, were sentenced. Then a Freethought heroine, Matilda Roalfe, stepped into the danger-zone, and was imprisoned for selling *The Age of Reason*. The sacrifice of the pioneers was not in vain, and the hydra of Clericalism was forced to recoil by the sheer courage of the "infidels."

There was quiet for a time; but in 1857 Pooley, a poor Cornish labourer, was sentenced to nearly two years' imprisonment for chalking words on a parson's gate. Happily, this case attracted the attention of two Rationalists of European reputation, Henry Thomas Buckle, the historian, and John Stuart Mill, who stirred the intellectual world by denouncing such abominable persecution. At the trial of Porley the prosecuting counsel was the famous John Duke Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of England, and by the irony of events, the judge in the memorable blasphemy trial of 1883. It was in that year that the *Freethinker* trials took place, when George William Foote was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and his two colleagues, William James Ramsey and Kemp, to nine and three months respectively. Petitions for release were signed by almost everyone of intellectual eminence in England, and the honoured name of Herbert Spencer headed this famous protest. An agitation was commenced against the Blasphemy Laws, which Judge Stephen well described as "ferocious," but still disgrace the Statute Book of an Empire, which to-day numbers more non-Christian

subjects than Christian. The prosecution of 1883, indeed, elicited such widespread and universal condemnation that for some years the law fell into abeyance; but during the past few years there has been a recrudescence of persecution, directed mainly against isolated and unimportant Freethinkers. Emboldened, however, by the reaction caused by the War, an attempt was made at Bow Street Police Court recently to suppress Mr. George Moore's *The Brook Kerith*, and the summons was supported by that distinguished Christian, Lord Alfred Douglas.

In earlier days imprisonment was by no means the only indignity imposed. Daniel Isaac Eaton, who was championed by the poet Shelley, was not only prosecuted seven times, but had the pillory inflicted, and £2,500 worth of books destroyed. Shelley himself was judicially declared, because of his Freethought, to be unfit to be the guardian of his own children. Many years later a similar dishonour was inflicted on Mrs. Annie Besant, who was at that time a prominent Freethought leader. A large number of the prosecutions of the unstamped press were simply disguised blasphemy trials. The authorities covered the odiousness of their acts under cover of proceedings against unstamped papers or pamphlets. Charles Bradlaugh had to fight thirteen years for his right to represent Northampton in the House of Commons, and only his alertness prevented his imprisonment for blasphemy. The late Marquis of Queensberry was deprived of his seat in the House of Lords on account of his known infidelity. Last, but certainly not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes were diverted to other channels, but, happily, the genius of George William Foote stopped this highway robbery. In addition, our leaders have been involved in constant and costly lawsuits, deluged with personal abuse, and have also been the victims of a concerted press boycott.

The Christian Church sentenced the Freethinkers to prison, but the Freethinkers have sentenced the Church to death. The clergy, entrenched behind their money-bags, no longer have isolated Freethinkers to deal with, but are now confronted with a compact army, upon whose banners is inscribed the significant and stirring phrase of the great Voltaire, "Crush the Infamous."

MIMNERMUS.

The Religion of Beethoven.

(Continued from p. 597.)

With Voltaire, I believe that "a few fly-bites cannot stop a spirited horse."—*Beethoven's Letters* (May 10, 1826).

VIII.

LET us see how far Beethoven's Rationalism is to be recognized in his art, or shall we say how far it influenced it? This can be traced in his so-called religious works—an oratorio and two masses, which reveal the fact that Beethoven either ignored or was hostile to both religious and ecclesiastical conventions. The Philistines have naturally been very wroth that Beethoven should have treated the conventicle so contemptuously. Whilst some have been indignant that such an "un-Christian hand" should have touched sacred themes others have sought to excuse the composer by saying that "he did not understand the real spirit of Church music." The truth is, one must get at the back of Beethoven's mind, as it were, to grasp his attitude. We must not forget that he was a Rationalist, and not only an unbeliever in Christianity, but even a scoffer at its dogmas. The oratorio and the mass therefore had no attraction for him on the religious

side, and were simply vehicles for the expression of his art; and, as a musician, he looked upon them as he would the cantata or opera, merely as art forms. Apart from Beethoven's Rationalism in itself, it must be remembered that the very conservative law and custom of the Church, that sacred subjects should be treated in certain specific ways, was bound to be antagonistic to such a free mind as his. Even in modern times we know what the Church has demanded of composers. Jakob, who speaks authoritatively for the Roman Catholic faith, says: "No branch of art exists for its own sake alone. Art is a servant, and it either serves God or the world, the eternal or the temporal, the spirit or the flesh. Ecclesiastical art must derive its rule and form from the Church."¹ Even in free Protestant Britain the music of the concert-room, if it touches upon sacred themes, has its law or, at least, custom. A layman like Joseph Bennett speaks thus:—

The Incarnation, the Suffering, the Death, the Resurrection, the Ascension—at the very thought of these things, all true Christendom becomes inspired with love, reverence, and awe. Approaching them the composer enters a Holy of Holies, and must be careful how he treads. He had better leave outside every form of æstheticism that cannot be made strictly subordinate to his religious devotion. He may not use his theme as a mere vehicle for his art.²

In Beethoven's day the strictures of the policeman and puritans of art were much about the same as the above, and we can imagine what Beethoven thought of these "rigorists and devotees of antiquity." That he displayed an "unchristian hand" in his treatment of sacred themes may be readily admitted, but we cannot agree to excuse him on the grounds that he was not acquainted with the requirements of the Church regarding music, and that had he been so, he might have adopted a different course. On the contrary, Beethoven knew perfectly well what was required of him in this respect. He says in his diary (1818): "To write true Church music, look through the old monkish chorales." Again, to Freudenberg (1824), he says: "Pure Church music ought to be performed by voices only, except a *Gloria*, or some similar text. For this reason I prefer Palestrina; but it is folly to imitate him without having his genius and religious views." This last remark appears to be the crux of the whole question. Beethoven knew precisely what the Churches demanded, but Rationalist as he was, he felt that he could no more express his art within the scope of any demands of ritual than he could express his religion within the dictates of a creed.

IX.

It is Beethoven's solitary oratorio, *Christus am Ölberge* (The Mount of Olives), that we first see the thoroughly secular mind of the composer. The fact that the subject was taken from the Holy Writ did not, of course, weigh considerably with Beethoven, and we have seen his attitude on this point towards the Vienna *Musikfreunde* who suggested an oratorio to him, and received a reply from Beethoven that he preferred "the immortal poets"—Homer, Schiller, and Klopstock, which was scarcely complimentary to the Scriptures. Even the particular sacredness of this story of Christ on the Mount does not seem (by the music) to have affected him in the slightest degree. The episode appealed to him simply from its strong emotional and dramatic situation, and to such he brought his genius.

W. H. Hadow, who has complained³ of Beethoven's "unchristian hand" and his "impropriety of treatment"

in this particular work, tells us further that "our Lord is treated without the slightest reticence or restraint," and that "the great *Alleluia* at the close is purely pantheistic, as different from Handel's as Goethe is from Milton." All this is true enough, but we must bear in mind that Beethoven does not seem to have accepted the divinity of Christ, which is borne out by the report that he once narrowly escaped excommunication for having said that Jesus Christ was only a poor human being and a Jew! It will be remembered that Byron, in his preface to *Cain*, remarked how difficult it was for him to make Satan "talk like a clergyman." It was much about the same with Beethoven. How could he be expected to make Christ talk and act like a God when he felt that he was only "a poor human being and a Jew"?

His liberty or impropriety with the character of Christ, whom he makes—by the way—a tenor, is, no doubt, contrary to all precedent. To the meanest observer it is evident that if the characters were dressed in tinsel and in the full flood of the limelight, they could certainly not be more "stagey" than Beethoven has made them in this work. According to Schindler, it appears that Beethoven in later years acknowledged that he treated Christ in rather too operatic a style. That is the very word—"operatic"—for the "Man of Sorrows" is made to sing a lengthy *scena ed aria* finishing with the stock requisite of a *bel canto* tenor—a *cadenza*, with a top A flat. In the Solo and Chorus (No. 6) the Seraph has no easy time of it, running about with brilliant scale passages touching top E, and concluding with a *cadenza* up to top C. The Duet of Christ and the Seraph is also a very florid affair, but the Trio for Christ, the Seraph, and Peter is certainly the most lively thing of its kind in sacred music. Rockstro says it is not only secular but, in some places, "absolutely sparkling." Half-way through this Trio there is a quasi recitative, almost an anti-climax, where Christ has to get up to top B flat—which is no ordinary compass for a tenor. Now, the mind of a composer which can do this sort of thing is either flagrantly irreverent or naively simple. To inflict such technical difficulties as these upon the character of one, whom half the world has been taught to love and worship as the "Man of Sorrows," simply engenders a serious disturbance of ideals. Beethoven, evidently, never thought for one moment of the incongruity, not to say impropriety, of the "Man of Sorrows" missing this top B flat! And, besides, a *tenore leggero* is out of all keeping with the character of a God. Bach was far more "proper" in the *St. Matthew Passion* in making Christ a *basso*. There may not be much to quarrel over in this, but the truth is that humanity, from primitive times, seem to have linked serious expression and thought with a deep bass voice. Anthropologists tell us that "medicine men" cultivate the *basso profondo*. Our priests to-day do the same. It is so necessary to "other world-ism." Ghosts, as we know, always talk in deep sepulchral tones.

It is no wonder, indeed, that here in these "tight little islands," where we are so utterly respectable, this oratorio should have been considered "improper" and "extravagant." The idea that Christ should even make his appearance as a character gave great offence, and an attempt was made to "palliate the evil" by substituting another *libretto*, dealing with David in the wilderness, entitled *Engedi*, and even as late as 1905, this "Bowdlerized" version was actually given at one of the leading festivals in this country.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

(To be concluded.)

¹ Jakob, *Die Kunst im Dienste der Kirche*.

² *Musical Times*, January, 1884.

³ *Oxford History of Music*.

Correspondence.

A QUESTION OF LOGIC.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have for some considerable time past been a regular and diligent reader of the *Freethinker*, and am much impressed with the high ethical standard its contributors endeavour to sustain, championing as they do the free development of the human mind and the indefeasible right of reason to predominate in human affairs. Your organ is so obviously motivated by the mainspring of reason that I hesitate to raise any criticism of its contentions, especially when, as I feel it highly probable, it may be my own obtuseness which discerns imperfections where none in fact exist. My main object therefore in making any observations at all is that they may be the means of removing a lurking false impression of my own. Let me say at once that I am in hearty accord with, and in some measure actively support, its ruthless propaganda against all forms of superstitious dogma whatsoever, and especially of that form of it styled "Christianity," with which we in this country are brought into immediate contact. The case against these superstitious cults is so unassailable as to leave in any alert mind no loophole for doubt to creep in. At the same time, it seems to me that many of the arguments advanced by our Freethought friends cannot all be said to be of the same unanswerable character. It is often urged, for instance, that the loose ethical standard of our social life is largely due to the domination of the Christian religion and its deadening influence over the masses. On the other hand, we are again told that Christianity is an ever dwindling force, and now receives such small support, that few, especially of the intellectuals, pay it homage. How can it be justifiably urged that this is a fast dying creed, with little influence, and then make it responsible for the growth of evils and retrogressive influences generally? Again, if the permeation of Christian morality in our social fabric not only did not arrest evil tendencies, but actually fostered them, is it not logical to contend that the emancipation of the people from the thralldom of superstitious domination, should have been demonstrated in a higher ethical standard in the world, not, as we see, in Armageddon? I think it must be urged, can in fact logically be urged, that the social life of the world is better to-day than at any previous time in the history of mankind, and has been so improved in proportion as superstitions have been banished from our midst, despite lugubrious assertions of Christian apologists to the contrary, and this Armageddon, in which we are embroiled, though it might appear to confound this view, I regard as a cataclysmic phenomenon, which, like earthquakes and other great natural upheavals, are inevitable in the course of evolutionary change. Unless my contention is right, and it can be proved that there has been a permanent uplift of mankind, we shall, I fear, have considerable difficulty with the illiterate and unreflecting minds in rebutting the Christian argument that the debasement of mankind, culminating in this horrible War, is a direct consequence of the contemptuous neglect of Christian ideals

H. C. HERBES.

Mr. Balfour Bourne, K.C., in a volume of legal reminiscences says that the worst of witnesses are parsons. The reason he gives is that—

Having been used to an autocratic pulpit they do not take kindly to the chair where the bladder of their pomposity may be pricked by a sharp question.

And that we should imagine touches the spot.

A daily paper, referring to Marshal Hindenburg's new appointment, says that Berlin possesses a "pagau-like statue" of the general. There are thousands of religious statues throughout Christian Europe, representing persons who never existed. But they are Christian and not Pagan idols.

An enthusiastic Church paper declares that the Mission of Hope and Repentance will crush infidelity like a Nasmyth hammer. With emphasis on the "myth."

Acid Drops.

The August issue of the *Magazine* (Wesleyan Methodist) contains an article on Japanese education which has a moral for all patriots whose patriotism is upon a higher level than that of hatred of some other nation. It points out that the motive force of Japanese progress is the system of education, which has succeeded in practically banishing illiteracy. In this it is in striking contrast to British-India, where only ten per cent. of the men and one per cent. of the women are literate. In Japan, her leaders saw in education the salvation of the people. Like France, after the war of 1870, it set to work to regenerate its schools, and, like France, the result was a regeneration of the people.

And the significant fact—significant to those who are clamouring for religious education as the one thing necessary, is that education in Japan is secular in character. It has nothing to do with religion. On this it may be best to take the language of this Wesleyan magazine. In the moral instruction imparted to boys and girls:—

Nothing is said about man's relationship with his Maker, or with any supernatural agency. The only obligations that are discussed are those which human beings owe to each other. In other words, morality is separated from religion, and instruction that is given is calculated to conduce to the betterment of this life.

The instruction is excellent. No duty that a human being is liable to be called upon to discharge towards another person is left unmentioned. Every one is taught to be faithful and reverent to the monarch, who, by the way, is spoken of as "Tenno," never as "Mikado." The children are admonished to cherish filial piety; to respect their elders; to love their brothers and sisters; to repress selfishness, covetousness, and all other evil passions; to cultivate the virtues; and to be gentle in speech and in action.....Japan has found that such ethical training as it imparts to the young is of immense value to the nation as a whole.

One wonders why, if religious instruction is not necessary to the development of moral character amongst the Japanese, should it be considered necessary amongst Christians? Does it mean that Christians are so inferior to the Japanese that the latter responds to a moral appeal which leaves the former cold?

The Bishop of London says that in spite of his annual £10,000 he is £2,000 poorer than when he was appointed. No details are given, and we confess to some curiosity as to how the figures are reached. We remember that some years ago his lordship published a balance-sheet showing that after he had paid for the upkeep of his houses, servants, carriages, and his own living and clothing, he had very little left. Our own position is much worse. For after paying for all our food and clothing and living, we have nothing at all left—and very often a deficit.

A correspondence has taken place in a daily paper regarding wines, and some correspondents make very disparaging remarks concerning the bouquet and quality of colonial vintages. One very cross writer says some of them are not fit to drink, but are only useful for cleaning jewellery. We wonder if he has ever tasted Communion wine?

The *Daily News* states that "the problem of the City (of London) churches is to be solved in the near future by grouping the churches four or five together under a single incumbent.—The parish of St. Alphege boasts a sleeping population of 36, and that of St. Mary of 57." As the whole population does not attend the churches, they cannot be so crowded as the picture palaces.

According to the Rev. N. Jones (R.C.) "When one gave up the Faith to become a Freethinker, it was nearly always due to a previous long course of public or secret sins, an unclean or crooked manner of life, that perverted the mind and morals, so that one sought in unbelief a salve for a guilty conscience." Such statements are too contemptible for serious discussion, we can only remind Father Jones that

the last Government prison returns gives the Roman Catholics as 247 per 100,000 of the denominations, the next highest being the Church of England with 118 per 100,000. It is evident, therefore, that a great many evil-living Roman Catholics do *not* fly to Freethought as a relief for an evil conscience.

An inquiry is being conducted in Montreal in relation to an alleged system of "graft" that has been going on for about two years in connection with the city administration. One of the three men concerned gave his evidence (we quote from the *Montreal Daily Mail*) as follows:—

The Mayor came to me and brought me to Cote's office and there he said: "We will work together like Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We will take an oath that when one of us brings a report for his department the others will support it."

I asked if this was the custom, and he said: "Yes, the Ministers at Ottawa do this, and we will do the same"..... He then went to Crepeau's office and brought a Bible, and he said we must swear each to support the other up to the finish of our term of office. Cote then kissed the Bible twice and said, "That is finished." The Mayor then kissed it once and I kissed it once. Your Honour, what I am now saying is the truth.

The picture of the three sticking together "like Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" to carry out their plans, and swearing loyalty to each on the Bible, is a fine instance of the moralizing power of religious belief.

Sir George Kekewich, formerly Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education, considers that the Kaiser is "Anti-christ," and adds that "I would hang him in the streets of Louvain." One can but admire Sir George's beautiful devotion to the Divine commands, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Love your enemies."

The Rev. Archer Turner, a naval chaplain, writing in the *Guardian*, speaks of those clergymen who "are not brave enough to read the Marriage Service without expurgating it." This may partially explain why the clergy "are too proud to fight."

The claim of Apostolic Succession, made by the Bishops, has had a rude shock over the question of allowing women to speak in Churches. As the *Guardian* points out, the public is presented with the "not very edifying spectacle of certain Bishops who will, and certain Bishops who won't." To adopt their own quaint language, the Bishops are between the Devil and the deep sea.

The appearance of letters on the question of the clergy and the schools—mostly against the former having anything to do with the latter—in the pages of the *Schoolmaster* is a good and welcome indication of the trend of opinion. The *Schoolmaster* is the organ of the National Union of Teachers, and the opinions expressed there possess more than usual interest. The cause of Secular Education will gain enormously when teachers generally find the courage to speak boldly on this subject, which hitherto they have not done. Those who are intimate with members of the teaching profession know that very few of them care for the interference of the clergy in education, and very many of them would cheerfully see the religious lesson banished from the schools altogether. The difficulty has been, and is, to get teachers publicly to express their opinions on this subject. That is why we welcome the appearance of such letters as appear in the *Schoolmaster*, and should be delighted to find that journal taking a more definite stand on this matter.

The Bible Society publishes letters giving "evidence of the great part" played by the Bible in the War. One is from a Canadian officer—unnamed—who says that he saw one of a group of soldiers take out his New Testament and cut it up into parts and distribute it among his fellows. That is very striking, but we wonder whether, by any chance, these men happened to be short of cigarette papers?

A Sunday paper, referring to the films shown at the cinema theatres, says that grave objection is taken to the repre-

sentation of picture-plays dealing with murders, robberies, and other crimes in the calendar. We should like to hear that pious editor's candid opinion of the Old Testament, which deals with vice in many forms with a realism unattainable in any picture-theatre.

The Christian misrepresentation concerning "German Atheism" is refuted by a speech of the Rev. Dr. Ott, the German army chaplain, in which he says the Kaiser is "a father of the Church" and that his troops "bear the banner of Christ among the banners of victory." The Atheism of the Germans seems as remarkable as the valour of English clergymen.

Some good has come, even out of Nazareth. The *Daily Chronicle* quotes the following from a book by Professor Forster, of Munich, on "Christianity and War":—

The teaching of true Christianity has hitherto been that, by practising charity to all men and by persistent war against our own bad passions and instincts, we will in time tread the only path to God and save our souls alive. But the new Christianity, as taught by these new theologians of the War, is that the Christianity of the Gospels has not been given to the world as the measure of international relations.....Let us wait until after the War and see how much unity we possess, how much we are willing to sacrifice, how much our ideals are worth. The heroism of the battlefield is a different thing from the daily heroism, sacrifice, and discipline in family or calling or society. Believe me that these great virtues will not be strengthened, and that out of the depths of this War-fury quite unsuspected and terrible things, big with destiny, will come, and to combat which all the healing powers of religious and ethical fervour will have to be exercised if our spiritual life is to exist at all.

As the *Daily Chronicle* quite appreciates this castigation of the German clergy, perhaps it may presently devote some attention to our own clergy who have been saying much that excites the anger of Professor Forster.

A suggestion was made recently to the Arbroath Established Presbytery asking that a resolution should be passed approving the exemption from military service of sincere conscientious objectors. Whereupon up rose the Rev. A. Douglas and said that he had seen "many diseased developments of the religious instinct in connection with the War, but none more contemptible than that known as conscientious objection." Now that is worth recording. For a long time parsons have preached that the way to overcome brute force is by love—never practising it, of course, but preaching it. They have a figurehead who was led "like a lamb to the slaughter," and who taught the doctrine of non-resistance. And when someone takes them at their word and declines to countenance war in any form, the same preachers call it a "diseased development of the religious instinct"! What on earth can they think of their Lord and Master? And what would happen if Jesus were to come again while the War is on and be brought before a military tribunal? In all probability he would be refused exemption and handed over to a military escort. Impossible and impracticable as the conscientious objector may be, we have no hesitation in saying that there is more honesty in his composition than in that of the Rev. A. Douglas, of Arbroath.

There is a delicious story, with a spice of profanity, in Mr. Shane Leslie's *The End of a Chapter*. Mr. Asquith, when receiving some French delegates, wore the uniform of an elder brother of Trinity House, and this drew a query from a visitor. The incarnation of English dissent explained in French, "I am an elder brother of the Trinity." The Frenchman bowed politely, and said, "Ah! we have left all that sort of thing behind us in France."

A Sunday paper has published a correspondence on "Life After Death." Sir William Crookes, who is a Spiritualist, says: "I think that this war, with its many supernatural manifestations and its vast death-roll, will hasten the time when the mass of mankind will come to think as I do." If Sir William read the *Freethinker* instead of the parish

magazines, he would realize the value of the "supernatural" angels on horseback and other pious perversions.

Father Vaughan has been writing on "England's Empty Cradles" in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, and says: "I believe there are more petted dogs than petted children in London." Father Vaughan is as credulous with regard to social matters as he is with regard to Bible legends.

A medical correspondent writes us from South Africa apropos a case of insanity amongst mission natives:—

The number of these that go mad is remarkable [but not at all surprising]; our asylums for coloured people are full and remain full, the majority of the inmates are mission natives. I myself recently had to "certify" one. Many others become not insane exactly but excited [if this word can be applied to their mental condition] and become Insurrectionaries. One of these latter was some time ago removed from a station in Natal, where he was haranguing a trainful of natives concerning a mission he had received from Jehovah and *Jehovina!* Two, clad in long black cassocks with large scarlet cross on left breast, who had come all the way from Taungs, beyond Kimberley, were arrested in this town for shouting and yelling more or less seditious matter, calculated to stir up the natives against the white people, and reading from religious books in support of what they had to say. While I suppose you have noticed the trouble being caused to the Nigerian authorities by Elijah II.

A message from *Jehovina!* Perhaps the idea of an unmarried Deity with a son shocked the native sense of propriety.

A London daily paper had the following innocent reference to the "Song of Solomon" which ran "My beloved is mine and I am his," says the love-song of the wisest man of the old world. Sultan Solomon's "beloveds" were purchased by the gross, and even a schoolboy ought to know that the old chieftain was not a Plato or a Socrates.

The assistant editor of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church Magazine, South London, recently invested in a copy of the *Freethinker*, a fact we are pleased to record, even though, as he says, it was "out of curiosity." After reading this organ of "a hopeless gospel," it made Mr. Dolleny, the aforesaid assistant editor, "value our religion all the more." That being the case, we hope that St. Peter's Church will recommend all its worshippers to become regular subscribers to this paper, and we shall be pleased to supply Mr. Dolleny with a weekly supply on sale or return. It will perhaps make them value their religion all the more. As Mr. Dolleny adds that many people are led astray by our "seemingly convincing arguments," we are afraid he may think this a rather dangerous policy. On the whole, we regretfully incline to the opinion that Mr. Dolleny has his doubts about the religious value of the *Freethinker*.

According to the teaching of the Anglican High Church an episcopally ordained priest has had committed to him "the tremendous power of Absolution." He can remit or he can retain sins. It matters not whether he is a saint or a villain, a good or a bad man, if he is in Holy Orders, he can bestow full forgiveness upon the penitent person before him. "The priest's powers do not depend upon his goodness or spirituality. Some things depend upon those qualities, but not his capacity to pronounce Absolution." "What sheer nonsense," someone may exclaim. Quite so; and yet it must be admitted that the priest does all there is to be done. Sins against God are as mythical as God himself; and as a representative of God the priest is a conscious or unconscious fraud. There is no such thing as Absolution, except as a mischievous superstition; and the priest, by hearing confession and pronouncing Absolution, is doing his best to encourage and perpetuate that superstition. That is all he does, or can do.

While a certain Scotch minister was conducting religious services in an asylum for the insane, one of the inmates cried out wildly, "I say, have we got to listen to this?" The minister, surprised and confused, turned to the keeper and

said, "Shall I stop speaking?" The keeper replied, "No, no. Talk awa', talk awa', mon. That'll no happen again. Yon man has only yin lucid moment ilka seven years."

The Bishops' Council, not content with looking after the morals of London, is extending its campaign to seaside places. Booksellers' shops have been visited and tradesmen intimidated. Would it not be better if the Bishops' Council turned its attention to the unseemly passages in the Bible?

"The Devil is passing out of fashion. Genial clergy are preaching him out of existence," says Mr. Stephen Leacock. Just so! But there are clergymen, and others, who are the reverse of genial, such as Catholic priests and the officers of the Salvation Army. Their sermons and addresses are still smoky, and smell of brimstone.

At the Trades Union Congress the Catholic Mr. Sexton defended the clergy on the debate on their exclusion from military service. It is appropriate that a Sexton should defend a dying religion.

Replying to the charge of cowardice against the clergy, the Bishop of London says there are 1,300 chaplains in the Army, and 300 naval chaplains. All these, however, are non-combatants, and army chaplains are very well paid for their work. There are about 25,000 clergy of the Church of England, and a large number are of military age.

A right-reverend Father-in-God finds himself obliged to cancel many of his engagements owing to the shortage of petrol. The bishop's flesh is willing, but the spirit is lacking.

A tame poet who writes for the London Press refers to the "blushing apple." This fruit ought to blush, for the clergy tell us that it "brought death into the world, and all our woe."

The Bishop of London has volunteered a statement regarding his £10,000 a year salary. He says that after fifteen years he is £2,000 the poorer than when he started. Poor man! We hope that he will not spend his last days in the workhouse.

The Council of the National Mission caused some uneasiness by using the expression "a woman's equality of calling." It has now explained that it did not mean by this "identity of relation," only that whatever women are called to do is of equal value. But she must not speak in the Church. That is reserved for men.

Mr. Michael Macdagh tells the following story of an Irishman at the Front. A chaplain came upon a man who was beating a donkey. "Why do you beat the poor animal so much?" remonstrated the priest; and he recalled a legend popular in Ireland by saying, "Don't you know from the cross on the ass's back, that it was on an ass Our Lord went into Jerusalem?" "But, father," said the soldier, "if Our Lord had this lazy ould ass He wouldn't be there yet."

Archy, aged only three and a half, but already thinking deeply about the wickedness of the German Emperor, had been punished by his nurse for spitting, a sin which she considered to have been directly prompted by Satan.

Archy: "Nannie, are there bad angels as well as good ones?"

Nannie: "Yes, darling; when you are naughty the bad angels are making you so."

Archy: "Have the bad angels a master, like the good ones?"

Nannie affords full information, upon which Archy reflects. Archy (two hours later): "That bad gentleman, Nannie—Mr. Satan, that you were telling me about—is a German, I suppose, and spits. God, of course, is English."—*Lady Poore, "Recollections of an Admiral's Wife."*

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

September 24, Queen's Hall, London; October 1, Abertillery; October 8, Birmingham; October 22, Sheffield; October 29, Barrow-in-Furness.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—September 24, Queen's Hall; October 1, Failsforth; October 8, Leicester; October 29, Sheffield.

T. EWALD.—The Bishop of London's argument for God, based on the earth being surrounded by seventy miles of atmosphere, reminds us of the parson who thanked God for having caused death to come at the end of life instead of in the middle of it. For downright silliness his lordship holds first place. And our glorious Constitution gives him £10,000 a year, two palaces, and a seat in the House of Lords.

ALROY.—It is gratifying to learn that several of your friends read your copy of the *Freethinker*, but it would be still more pleasing if they became subscribers to the paper on their own account.

Y. C.—Thanks for verse, but it was noticed by us in a recent issue GLASGOW READER.—The sermon by Robert Hall, in the *Presbyterian Magazine*, is a very old one—early nineteenth century. Thanks all the same.

S. E. NOAKES.—We saw the agreement that is alleged to have existed between the Roumanian and Austrian Governments for the purpose of checking "modern currents and ideas of Free-thought, Socialism, Anarchism," etc., but cannot say if it is genuine or not. For our part, we consider it not at all unlikely. Freethought is hated by both Governments.

H. PEARCE.—We are not at all surprised. It may interest you to learn that although Thomas a Beckett was murdered in mid-winter, so very inconvenient a time for pilgrimages, and, of course, interfered so much with the "gate money," that the Pope was induced to put off the day of translation to mid-summer. There was naturally a consideration demanded. Half the net profits went to the Pope.

J. STANWAY.—The publishing address of the *Buddhist Review* is 43 Pennywern Road, Earl's Court, London, S.W.

A. M.—Always pleased to hear from you. Thanks for appreciation of our notes on Mr. Moore's *The Brook Kerith*. The typed MSS. came safely to hand, but—space, more space, is what we need. However, will use as soon as possible.

S. M.—We don't care a jot either way.

T. MARTIN.—A very good way of helping would be to join the N.S.S. There are numerous ways in which one can help the Cause if they are so inclined.

H. EMBERSON.—The discussion of the comparative merits of Freethinkers and Christians is not a very profitable subject, although Freethinkers would have to be poor indeed did they not reach the standard of the average Christian. Still, it is the comparative merits of Christianity and Freethought which is of moment, and you should keep your Christian friend to that issue.

S. AYRES.—You are not at all "worrying" us in showing concern about the *Freethinker*—quite the contrary. We shall be writing at length on the subject soon—perhaps next week.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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.

We hope that all London Freethinkers have in mind to-day's (Sept. 24) demonstration at the Queen's (Minor) Hall. The occasion is a noteworthy one, and the gathering ought to be worthy of the occasion. Every Freethinker must be interested in the Jubilee of a Society such as the N.S.S., and there are thousands not Freethinkers who will be interested in paying tribute to the memory of so great a figure as Charles Bradlaugh. A list of the speakers will be found on the back page of this issue, and we think me may say that from the oratorical point of view the platform will be quite all right. All we have to add is that the speaking commences at 6.30 prompt. The doors open at 6 o'clock.

We are not writing at any length on the Jubilee of the N. S. S. as we prefer to leave that to the report of the Queen's Hall meeting. But we feel justified in saying that no society has more cause to feel proud of its record than the N. S. S. The odds against it were enormous at its birth, and they are enormous still. It has never had more than a hand to mouth existence, financially, but it has, nevertheless, maintained a steady fight against the wealthiest and most strongly entrenched superstition in the world. And although it would be folly to attribute all the changes that have come over the world of religious opinion to the work of the N. S. S., there is no denying that it has played a great part in bringing these changes about. It has kept the truth about religion before the people, and in the more liberal theological atmosphere of to-day, in the changed notions of Sunday recreation, and of freedom of speech and discussion, we see some of the fruits of the Secularist activity of the past half century.

The heavy downpour on Sunday last affected the audience somewhat at the Queen's (Minor) Hall, but in the circumstances the meeting was a very good one. Mr. Lloyd's lecture was listened to with the greatest appreciation, and the success of the meetings show that London is ripe for a vigorous propaganda, and the experiment will doubtless be repeated before the winter is over. Mr. A. D. Howell Smith officiated as chairman, with much satisfaction to everyone concerned.

We are afraid that amid the distractions of a European War many people will be losing sight of movements that deserve their support, but which are not kept well before their notice. For this reason we desire to call special attention to Mr. Harry Snell's appeal in another column of this issue on behalf of the Secular Education League. So soon as the education question comes before Parliament, and it is bound to come before long, there will be urgent need for the activities of the League, and the only way to prepare for that moment is for all sympathisers with the League to give it their support now. As Mr. Cohen is on the Executive Committee all Freethinkers may rest assured that the League is worthy of their assistance.

A friend has been good enough to send us a report of Mr. Foote's lecture on "Christianity and the War in the East," delivered at the Queen's (Minor) Hall at the close of 1912. All of our readers will be interested in seeing this in print, and we intend giving them the benefit of it in the course of the next two or three weeks.

Death of Mr. Stanley Moss.

The shadow of death is at present over many homes, and we deeply regret to learn of its presence in that of our old friend and contributor, Mr. A. B. Moss. News has reached Mr. Moss that his son Stanley, aged 28, died in France on September 4, from wounds received during a British attack. Mr. Moss, junior, was as staunch a Freethinker as was his father, and, we believe, something of a musician. His death is a heavy blow to Mr. and Mrs. Moss, the latter of whom has been in poor health for some time, and we feel sure that in conveying to them our deepest sympathy, we may with confidence add that of Freethinkers throughout the country.

Haeckel, and others. To these biologists the moulding powers of the environment, coupled with the inheritance of functionally wrought changes, are contributory agencies in species formation. The ultra-Darwinians, headed by the late Professor Weismann, on the contrary, exalt Natural Selection as the all-sufficient cause of organic adaptation, while those Lamarckians who reject the Selectionist principle altogether request their opponents, particularly those of the all-sufficiency school, for tangible evidence of the truth of their claims. This is turning the tables with a vengeance. Conceivably, as Professor Lloyd Morgan suggests, the doctrine of Selection is "more a logical conclusion than a matter of direct observation." As the writer attempted to show in a previous paper, there is direct evidence furnished by mice, as well as that provided by the late Professor Weldon's experiments with crabs. Then, as Dr. Herbert points out:—

Cesnola fixed specimens of the brown and green varieties of *Mantis religiosa* on plants, and found that the individuals tied to plants of a harmonious colour escaped death; while the others, being conspicuous through their colour contrast with the plant, were mostly devoured. Poulton and Sanders made similar experiments with the pupæ of a butterfly (*Vanessa urticae*) and had similar results. This tends to show that protective colouration is a real survival factor, giving a decided advantage to its possessors in the struggle for existence.

The next objection to Selection is harder to overcome. It may be granted that the favourable variations manifested by organisms may enable them to survive in terms of Selection. But how are the variations which form the material upon which Natural Selection operates, themselves produced? Really, it appears much more than probable that the Lamarckian factors have had something to do with the genesis of variations. This contention would be ungrudgingly granted by those Darwinians who combine the Lamarckian factors with the agency of Selection, and thus far decline to follow Weismann's disciples, who claim the power to unlock every door in organic nature with a single key. Natural Selection is a potent key, but it fails to fit in all the locks.

According to Wallace, not merely every organ, but every peculiarity in colour and habit, almost everything, in fact, which distinguishes one organism from another, must, in the light of Selection, possess, or at some moment have possessed, some special advantage to the organism concerned. Now, there exist countless characteristics that are manifested by plants and animals to which no conceivable utility can be assigned. Doubtless it was logically imperative for Wallace as a sole Selectionist to assume the utilitarian character of the innumerable variations displayed in Nature. Obviously, if all things have arisen through the influences of Selection, then all novel, and even abnormal attributes, should be serviceable to their possessors. This argument applies to Weismann's party just as much as it applies to Wallace. Darwin apparently believed that Selection concerned itself with those variations which are useful instruments in the warfare of life. Why Selection should, in addition to the serviceable variations it may preserve, also give preference to useless and even dangerous characteristics, it is decidedly difficult to understand. Romanes subjected Wallace's plea for universal utility to a remorseless criticism, and claimed, one is inclined to think with justice, to have utterly demolished it.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Priestly mummeries will last as long as there is a demand for them.—G. W. Foote.

The Meaning of Death.

Le Sens de la Mort. Par Paul Bourget. (Plon-Nourrit).

THE tract is a form of literature to which everyone in his right senses gives a wide berth. In the guise of a story it is invariably as useless as it is annoying and unconvincing. M. Paul Bourget's latest novel is an Anti-Rationalist tract, the only effect of which will be to irritate the unconverted, and I doubt if its inherent pragmatism will commend it to the more intelligent believer. It was published at the end of last year, and has, I believe, sold well in France—far better than I should have expected from the high traditional standard by which fiction is judged in that country. Its success, no doubt, is partly due to the insane desire of many unintelligent, and even some intelligent, people to exalt intuition, with all its vagaries, religious and philosophic, at the expense of scientific method.

Apparently it is this desire that has prompted an English publisher to issue a translation, which appeared a little while ago, and was promptly "turned down" by every critic with any respect at all for the art of fiction. This English version is called *The Night Cometh* (Chatto & Windus), an extremely silly title intended to catch the stupidly sentimental sort who have a religious horror of clear thinking, who go about bawling at the top of their voices that science is bankrupt, that the naughty Victorian age of Rationalism is as dead as Queen Anne, and the only things that will save us are, as Mr. Chesterton is never tired of telling his admirers, the Catholic faith and beer.

With the characteristic kindness of the tribe of publishers who, like the Devil, are not as black as they are painted, a charming little criticism is printed on the dust-cover. The tired reviewer and the novel reader of average intelligence are assured that the book has a strong dramatic interest, that it raises the problem of a life after death, and that it offers a solution. I must confess that I have not read, and that I don't intend to read, the translation. I therefore cannot say what may be in it; but in the original, which I shall analyse below, I am unable to find that any problem has been raised; or, in any case, not clearly raised, and I am perfectly certain that no solution is offered. But perhaps it is unreasonable to expect a tradesman to describe his wares honestly, without he is compelled to do so by an Act of Parliament.

Before attempting to give an idea of M. Bourget's tract in novel form, I propose to glance for a moment at the novelist's career. The Freethinker who happens to refer to his copy of J. M. Wheeler's invaluable *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, will be surprised to find Bourget figuring therein as a Rationalist. We are told that he is a French man of letters, born in 1852, that he has made himself famous by his novels, essays on contemporary psychology, studies of Renan, etc.; that he belongs to the Naturalistic School, his methods, however, being less crude than those of some of his colleagues; and that his insight is most subtle and his style exquisite. It would be handsome praise if it were only true; but Mr. Wheeler was inclined to be somewhat over-enthusiastic when the subject was a Freethinker, and here certainly gives M. Bourget credit for virtues he does not possess, at any rate, not in the superlative degree.

What we have here to note is that Bourget came to fiction with a mind trained in philosophical studies. He had read attentively, and pondered deeply the work of Spinoza and the modern thinkers of France, England, and Germany. He had examined the conscience of his own time in a series of critical studies of leading French

writers. The two volumes of *Essays on Contemporary Psychology*, a rather pretentiously scientific name for a group of articles on Stendhal, Flaubert, Baudelaire, the Goucourts, Tourgenief, etc., make up the more vital part of his work, if we except his verse, which he discarded so soon as he got clear of the Bohemia of the Latin Quarter and became a fashionable novelist. He seems to have taken very easily the impress of his surroundings. He tells us in one of his poems how, as a boy, the Christian religion had been killed in him by the verses of Alfred de Musset. A course of Renan and Taine had made a revival of the early religious instinct apparently impossible. When Mr. Wheeler wrote his notice, about 1888, Bourget's writing showed no trace of any reaction from the Scientific Naturalism of the period. Up to 1889, his fiction was merely an extension of Zola's method; it was realism applied to high, instead of low, life. He was aristocratic and sentimental where others were plebeian and violent, his readers imagining that they were getting something different merely because the point of view had been slightly changed. Not an aristocrat by birth, like Tolstoi, whom he affected to despise as a "nefarious Utopian," but rather a vulgar snob by nature, he has always delighted in the wealth, luxury, and titles of the fashionable world to which his success gave him the entrance. He will give you elaborate descriptions of the manners and morals of high life, but it would be hard to find a single living figure in the whole of his work. If it is true that the only fine fiction is that which grows out of a writer's inner life, Bourget is unfortunate in that he has no spiritual depths, no roots that go down into the soul of humanity. In 1889, when he published his *Le Disciple*, he achieved a popular success—not an artistic one, mind you!—by an open denunciation of science as the basis of civilization. The Plebeian and the Rationalist became, opportunely, a Royalist and a Religious Sentimentalist. Up to that time he had looked upon man as an adulterous animal, whose lubricities, if served up with piquant psychological sauce, were calculated to hit exactly the taste of his fashionable feminine admirers. After his conversion to Neo-Catholicism, he devoted his energy mainly to reactionary tracts in the shape of novels, each one becoming heavier and duller, until he reaches the climax in the story at the head of this article. Occasionally, he has reverted to his traffics in fashionable adultery, blending mysticism with sensuality. With his friend Brunetiere, the literary critic, he openly professed his belief in the doctrines of the Catholic Church, about 1899. I may note that not a few Catholics are inclined to regard Bourget's Catholicism as pragmatism or political.

I will now try to give an idea of the subject of the story. Michel Ortegue is a brilliant surgeon, a specialist in cerebro-spinal diseases, who, when the present War opens, has set up a magnificently equipped private hospital. He is supposed to represent the Materialism of the wicked nineteenth century—the Materialism which is usually qualified by our religious friends as crass, or hard, or brutal. Certainly some of his remarks are meant to shock, for instance, when he refers to Jesus as the "Quack of Nazareth," but I do not know that such brutal plainness is quite characteristic of even Victorian Rationalism. However that may be, he is a wealthy, refined, and educated man for whom the supernatural does not exist, and who has no use for religion in his scheme of life. When he is forty-four and world-famous, he marries a young girl of great beauty. She has been religious as a child, but the influence of her father has led her into the broad way of scepticism. They begin their married life with perfect community of thought and feeling, working enthusiastically in the cause of suffering humanity.

There now comes upon the scene a cousin of Madame Ortegue's, he is Le Gallic, a soldier, and a perfectly sincere though simple Christian, whose reasons for the faith that is in him are no more intelligent than those of the average believer. This is the type of mind M. Bourget sets over against the Rationalist, who is, of course, unsympathetic, overbearing, and dogmatic; unlike, shall I say, that gentle and retiring bulwark of Christendom, Dr. Frank Ballard. Le Gallic is about to leave for the Front, and it may be, to die for his country. Not unnaturally, as a religious man, he imagines that his suffering and possible death are part of the divine scheme, and as such, have meaning as an expiation of his own faults and those of others. Ortegue points out that, for our own faults, we may make expiation, although we never asked for life, but emphatically not for those of other people.

Shortly after Le Gallic has left the tragedy begins. Ortegue is attacked by a frightful malady; he diagnoses it as cancer of the pancreas. He keeps the secret from everyone except his assistant, to whom he explains the nature of the disease. His suffering, we are told, confirms his disbelief in a God who has stricken him down just when his knowledge is of most importance for suffering humanity. His brain and nervous system reel beneath the blow, and his personal character deteriorates under the malign influence of the morphia he injects to alleviate the pain and to enable him to work. Le Gallic has been wounded in the head and is sent to Ortegue for treatment. The surgeon becomes suspicious of his wife's sisterly affection for Le Gallic, whom she nurses with devotion. Suspicious of the young man's influence, and with these notions in his head, he tells her of the evil that has come upon him, and gets her to promise that she will die with him. It is this unnatural compact that makes the tragedy of the story, or, rather, would make it if it were not so unreal, so obviously the outcome of the desire of a reactionary thinker to blacken the Rationalist at any cost. When a man is driven mad by the agony of an incurable disease, by the frustration of all his plans for work and happiness here on earth, is it strange that he should act irrationally?

The assistant accidentally overhears the arrangement between husband and wife, and constitutes himself the instrument by which she is saved from a Quixotic death. Ortegue shortens his agonies by taking his own life—about the best thing he could do—and Le Gallic, after a heated argument on religion, dies in the odour of sanctity, a model of Catholic virtue, if not of Catholic intelligence. The wife lives on, cherishing no doubt, the memory of these two men, the one a Rationalist ardently devoted to the cause of humanity, bearing pain, up to a certain point, with Stoic fortitude; the other, a simple and devout Catholic, whose one strong point was his immovable faith. They both die, the one quietly and with resignation, the other with the frantic exacerbation of a mind distraught. M. Bourget, or the teller of the story—the surgeon's assistant—draws the conclusion that of the "two hypotheses on death, whose application I have been able to contemplate in the case of these two men, one is *utilizable*, the other not." I merely put it that the conclusion is as childish as the arguments are irrelevant to the point to be proved. As a novel, the so-called story has no suppleness, no vitality; as an argument against the claims of Materialism to be the only guide to life, it is beneath contempt.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

A Y.M.C.A. hut, opened by Lord French, has been named after William Shakespeare. Have the young Christians used up all the names of the saints of the Calendar?

Secular Education and the Coming Fight.

THE European War has enormously reinforced the trite saying that, in warfare, victory awaits the side that has seen the wisdom of preparing for the contest. That the Allied Nations seem, at long last, to be on the winning side, is due to their great fortune in being enabled to get time to prepare while the War was actually going on. But the experiment of postponing the work of preparation until hostilities have begun has been proved to be too dangerous to be repeated, and all lovers of human liberty should immediately turn their attention to the task of preparing for the internal war that will begin directly the present War is over. Immediately the guns in France and Belgium are silent, a new war will begin in the schools of England; the prize of victory will be the souls of the nation's children, on whose shoulders we shall leave an empire's responsibilities, and every adherent of the principle of Secular Education should prepare to resist at all costs what may well be the greatest danger that the twentieth century will have to face. For what shall it profit a nation if it frees itself from a military tyranny and at the same time hands the mental freedom of its children over to the Churches and their priests?

I appeal, therefore, to all Freethinkers to prepare for the great fight which may, at any time, be upon us. The issue is clear, it is fundamental, and our defence of civic liberties should be as formidable as the attack upon them. In the matter of mental liberty let us not be "too late" in our preparations, nor underestimate the magnitude of the fight before us. The forces of clerical reaction are already organized, and they are being carefully drilled. The Churches have an immensely powerful organization at their disposal; their attack upon other people's liberties is not in the least likely to be hampered by lack of money to provide service in the propaganda of their views; they will endeavour to suborn the Press, and the country will be flooded with sensational literature for the purpose of trying to stampede it into allowing them to further increase their present unjust strangle-hold upon its educational system. They will try to physic an alarm-stricken British public into the belief that religious instruction in the elementary schools is a necessary condition of their national safety, and that the churches and chapels are the suffering and unoffending bulwarks of their freedom. It will be a repetition of an oft-told story. The soldier's valour having won a nation's security, the priest will once more appropriate the credit.

The signal for a general attack on the mind of the nation was made quite recently by Lord Parmoor in a letter to the *Times*, which was written up and paraphrased in nearly all the reactionary papers in the country, which, for this purpose, means all the papers. "A Secularist parent," he wrote, "has the right to withdraw his children from religious instruction; he is not entitled to go further, and to claim to enforce upon those who desire religious instruction for their children a secular system which they distrust and despise." Now, to "distrust and despise" a secular system of education, is to "distrust and despise" an education in which all the knowledge is left in and all the speculation omitted; for Secular Education means that education in State-aided schools should be confined to subjects defined as "secular" in the Official Code. It does not mean that views opposed to those which any parent may hold upon religion would be taught to his child, but only that the State would be neutral upon a matter which is

the proper responsibility of the parent, and of the Church to which he happens to belong.

What Lord Parmoor really asks for is, that his own particular view of religion should be taught by the State, by State teachers, out of State money contributed by all the citizens of the Realm, most of whom do not believe it. But he does not ask that the "Secularist" should have *his view of life* taught to his children out of taxation which Lord Parmoor helps to pay. No, the "Secularist" may, as a privilege, withdraw his children from actual instruction, but he is to be compelled to pay for that which he is unwilling to have taught to children of his own, being taught to children who are less fortunate in their parents. That is the Church's idea of justice—and it is characteristic.

The Secular Education League is watching the situation very carefully, and the Churches will not by any means have things all their own way without a tremendous fight. During the period of the War the League has suffered a considerable diminution of income, and the time has come when all who desire to help it in the coming fight should add their names to its list of members, and give it all the financial help they can. There was never a juster cause to fight for, and if its friends support it promptly and adequately its principles will prevail.

H. SNELL.

19 Buckingham Street, W.C.

Bradlaugh's Birthday.

THIS is the Man who shook the Church and State
Of mighty England: statesmen, churchmen bowed,
With maddened lawyers, in a beaten crowd
Before his private throne. Long must we wait
For such another prince of high debate,
Who never could be conquered, never cowed.
Brave, towering, massive, hero-browed:
This is the Man whom we now celebrate.

England, remember your great Son to-day
With us, for he is worthy of your pride,
The valiant fighting Englishman, whose deeds
In all heroic records long will stay.
Let him be honoured greatly, far and wide,
The bold Iconoclast the old world needs. H. V. S.

The Clergy.

THEY sing of "Jesus Christ our Lord,"
And mumble "Praise to thee,"
Then bow and bless War's bloody sword,
And beg for £ s. d.

They prate of Peace, and boast that we
With mighty guns must win.
Then slyly take their usual fee,
And roll their eyes at sin. A. F. T.

PATRIOTIC OVER-ZEAL.

In a recent sermon a Hamburg pastor said: "We have sufficient submarines to bring England to her knees in a few months, and—we do not use them. We have Zeppelins enough to bring down the haughtiest people on earth, and—we spare our enemy. God has given us the best general of our days, a man who has made himself known to the enemy as the terror of Russia, and we are constantly waiting in expectation of him dealing great blows to the Russians. This mistaken policy of sparing the enemy is contrary to God's word, and will be set down as disobedience to his holy will."

The *Hamburg Echo*, commenting on above, says: "Such expressions of hatred are an abuse of office and of the pulpit, and nothing can be worse. Thousands of our people will ask if a man is to be permitted to make such misuse of the pulpit and thus help to protract this most terrible of all wars."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham Place, W.): 6.30, Public Meeting. Speakers: Chapman Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, H. Snell, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner.

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Hammer Owen, "A Tribute to Charles Bradlaugh."

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, A. D. Howell Smith, "Charles Bradlaugh."

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Smith and Dales, "Evolution and the War"; 6.30, Messrs. Beale, Hyatt, and Saphin.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, F. Schaller, "Charles Bradlaugh, the Great Reformer."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, A. D. Howell Smith, "Charles Bradlaugh."

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, Victor Roger, "Some Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Assembly Room, Market Hotel, Station Street): 6.30, Bradlaugh Sunday. Meeting of Members and Friends.

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