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### CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Mr. Wells and God.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	625
<i>Stray Thoughts.—J. T. Lloyd</i> . . . . .	626
<i>The Laureate of Secularism.—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	627
<i>The Religion of Beethoven.—H. George Farmer</i> . . . . .	628
<i>Another Converted Atheist.—C. C.</i> . . . . .	630
<i>The Religious Cadger.—Ignotus</i> . . . . .	630
<i>Providence and Zeppelins</i> . . . . .	631
<i>A "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund</i> . . . . .	633
<i>To Correspondents</i> . . . . .	634
<i>Sugar Plums</i> . . . . .	634
<i>The Present Position of Evolution.—T. F. Palmer</i> . . . . .	635
<i>Fifty Years of Freethought.—C. E. S.</i> . . . . .	636
<i>Letter to the Editor—Darwin and Malthus</i> . . . . .	637

### Views and Opinions.

**Mr. Wells and God.**  
I have not yet found time to read Mr. G. H. Wells's latest work, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, but a couple of excerpts from it caught my eye on glancing over one of the daily papers. Mr. Wells's novel, it should be said, deals with the experience of a Mr. Britling just prior to and during the War. And in some instances I fancy Mr. Britling's opinions are those of Mr. Wells. Thus, when a woman whose husband is reported "missing," asks:—

Do you believe in God? Either there is no God or he is an idiot. He is a slobbering idiot. He is like some idiot who pulls off the wings of flies.

**Mr. Britling replies:—**  
Yes, I do believe in God. It is the theologians who are to blame for the absolute ideas about God—that he is all-powerful. God is not absolute, God is finite, a finite God who struggles in his great and comprehensive way as we struggle in our weak and silly way; who is with us. If I thought there was an omnipotent God who looked down on battles and deaths and all the waste and horror of this war able to prevent these things, and doing them to amuse himself, I would spit in his empty face. But God is within nature and necessity; God is the innermost thing: closer is he than breathing and nearer than hands and feet.

And that, I rather fancy, is the way that Mr. Wells would talk if he were asked to express his opinions on religion.

\* \* \*

**More "Blasphemy."**  
The "blasphemy" of these two passages is quite refreshing. And although Mr. Wells sets a God of his own against the God of other people, the blasphemy remains—particularly that put into the mouth of the distressed widow. And, as in the case of *The Brook Kerith*, these descriptions of the orthodox Deity, the God of the established Churches and Chapels, are accepted by reviewers as a matter of course. The newspapers are not shocked; and if the newspapers are not shocked, one may safely say that the general public are not either. For if the public were shocked, it may be taken for granted that these organs of public opinion and mirrors of popular prejudice would be shocked likewise. "Either

there is no God, or he is an idiot." If that is not blasphemy, then blasphemy was never written. It is true that Martin Luther once referred to "poor half-witted God," and expressed an opinion that the sharper-witted Devil would get the better of him. But that was a long while ago; and to find God the Son referred to in one novel as a temporarily deranged sheep-breeder, and God the Father in another novel as an idiot, and both authors still at large, is startling. At this rate, we shall soon have the *Freethinker* sold in churches as an orthodox publication.

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### Logical v. Illogical Nonsense.

Now, assuming that Mr. Britling's God is the God of Mr. Wells—and I assume this because the orthodox Deity is described as an idiot, and Mr. Wells says, through Mr. Britling, that if such a God existed he would "spit in his empty face"—is this other kind of Deity any real improvement on the old one? The God of the theologians is, I admit, nonsensical—so are all gods, for the matter of that; but he was, or is, if the phrase be allowed, a logical piece of nonsense. The development of religious thought drove the believer in Deity to think about creation—the origin of existence, and "God" developed from the *most* powerful to the *all*-powerful. He was made all-powerful because there was nothing to limit his power. He called everything into being. He planned everything, he set things going; and, when pressed, the Theist can always satisfy himself with the retort that all we see is part of the "divine plan"; that apparent or transient evil is working towards a real or ultimate good, etc., etc. All of which on analysis is, I admit, nonsense. But it is, as I have said, logical nonsense. Mr. Wells's theodicy represents nonsense without the logic.

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### The Great Unemployed.

In the beginning the gods did everything. Nowadays the great thing is to find them something to do. In the sciences there clearly is no chance of employment. The physicist, the chemist, the biologist, persist in going about their labours as though God did not exist, and the sociologist and moralist follow their example. Even the War, which has brought employment to so many, and which has shown that Christians possess the capacity for organizing to take life, even though centuries have demonstrated their unwillingness to organize for the purpose of preserving it, has not brought employment for the gods. They remain as idle as ever. And some alarm is naturally felt lest, in the newly developed desire to eliminate social drones, the gods may be eliminated with them. For they clearly toil not, neither do they spin. They lead not, neither do they advise. And yet Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed as they are—did not demand or command a tithe of the service and wealth that is squandered in their service. They are the great unemployed of the modern intellectual world.

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### A Plea for Compassion.

Mr. Britling-Wells's God is a compromise without a

settlement. If there is a God of the orthodox type he must have the power to stop a war of this kind, and must have had the power to have prevented it. That he has done neither of these things is to infer that he preferred things as they are. That is, the world being God's world—and we have the authority of the Bishop of London for this,—it is as he would have it be. And on this thesis he is—to use the language of Mr. Wells—"like some idiot who pulls off the wings of flies," or as Mr. W. H. Mallock described the God revealed by Nature, "A scatter-brained, semi-powerful, semi-impotent monster." But, says Mr. Wells, God is not of that kind. He is a finite God, struggling in a great way, as we struggle in our weak and silly way. So we are adjured not to blame God. He is a finite God who is with us (does "us" include humanity, or is it a proper patriotic kind of Deity who is only bothering about the British Empire?) and doing his best. Which reminds one of the notice hung over the piano in an American mining camp: "Gentleman, Please don't shoot the Pianist. He's doing his best." Thus Mr. Wells. Don't shoot, God is doing his best in his great and comprehensive way, as we are doing our best in our weak and silly way. But Mr. Wells should have reflected that silliness may be comprehensive as well as wisdom. And this finite struggling God, who is doing his best, may not be acting with greater wisdom than his creatures—if we are his creatures. At any rate, if they refrain from shooting, it may be they do not consider the game worthy the waste of powder.

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#### Δ Useless Deity.

"God is within Nature and necessity." But what is the use of this kind of God, anyway? He is a part of Nature, with no more freedom of action, no more controlling or directing power than any other natural force. He may be with "us," but in this case "us" represents not the British Empire, nor even the Allies, it covers all—Germans, Austrians, Turks, and Bulgarians. He is with us all, working with all. He is behind the German as well as the British gunner. He was with the Germans when they shot Nurse Cavell, he is with those who are trying to avenge her. Truly a comprehensive kind of a struggling Deity, and one who runs man hard for blundering and silliness. A God who is everywhere might as well be nowhere; a God who is everything might as usefully be nothing. Like many professional theologians, Mr. Wells is labouring under the delusion that a God becomes more impressive as he becomes less important. If the world, like Mr. Britling-Wells, grows ashamed of the God who was Nature's master, it is not likely to tolerate for long a God who turns out to be no more than a part of the natural order, and as helpless within that order as man himself.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Stray Thoughts.

THE arguments advanced by Freethought writers have been described as "seemingly convincing," and as the one who so described them is a zealous worker in connection with the Christian propaganda, we may legitimately regard his characterization as a high compliment. If to a Christian worker our reasoning has the appearance of being thoroughly sound and conclusive, we may congratulate ourselves upon the fact that our mission is not wholly in vain. Possibly, however, the compliment just referred to was paid to us because the writer does not understand what Freethought really is and seeks to accomplish; for he also said, after reading a single copy of the *Freethinker*, that we teach "a hopeless gospel."

Had he contented himself with denouncing our gospel as false and misleading, he would have been within his rights as a critic, and we would have challenged him to justify his condemnation with arguments "seemingly convincing"; but to declare that the contents of any single copy, or of any number of copies, of this journal, present a "hopeless gospel" is a culpable and inexcusable misuse of terms. Of course, it is in one sense wholly immaterial what the assistant editor of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church Magazine, South London, thinks of the *Freethinker*; but inasmuch as Mr. Dolleny merely re-echoes a common mistake not only about this journal in particular, but concerning Freethought in general, it may be advisable to expose its fundamental fallaciousness. In order to do this effectually, we must call attention to one or two commonplaces. The first is the undoubted failure of the Christian Gospel. Neither Mr. Dolleny nor any other champion of that Gospel can honestly dispute that statement. We frankly admit that Christianity has always ministered great comfort to superstitious people. It is beyond all question that multitudes of the so-called illustrious saints of history, canonized and uncanonized, were rendered supremely happy by what they believed to be their intimate communion with God in Christ. The same thing is true to a certain extent of those present-day Christians who are genuine enthusiasts, or fanatics. They are not numerous in any community, as every clergyman knows very well; but religion yields them great joy. An old-fashioned prayer-meeting sends them into fits of delirious enjoyment. This, we say, cannot be doubted by anyone who is in the least familiar with the facts of Christian life. Religion is an emotional luxury to thousands of people; but we are bound to add, that like all other luxuries, it enervates and debases the character of those who indulge in it. But while it is undeniable that religion gives boundless delight to a comparatively small number of its professors, it is equally incontrovertible that as a reforming force in society it has been and is a complete fiasco. Someone may object by pointing out that, in spite of the War and its unmentionable horrors, the social life of the world is, on the whole, saner and happier than it ever was before. As a statement of fact, the objection is legitimate; but it loses its force as an objection when it is pointed out that this social betterment has synchronized with and been in proportion to the decay of supernatural belief and the corresponding loss of the Church's power.

Another commonplace is that the Christian Gospel has failed because it is not true. The God it preaches supplies no evidence whatever of his existence. Nothing whatever that happens in the world wakes him up into action. The God in Christ emotionally eulogized from a million pulpits is as great a myth as Osiris or Zeus. If he does not exist, is it any wonder that the Gospel which bears his name is incapable of morally transforming humanity and filling the earth with peace and prosperity? As Nietzsche says somewhere, the fault with religious fanatics is that they have not heard and realized that God is dead, and that he is dead simply because he never lived. In their blindness through prejudice, they keep on saying that if the Gospel has failed it is through no fault of God, but of those to whom he has entrusted its destiny. It is the Church, God's appointed instrument, that is to blame, they cry out in desperation. This is an utterly futile apology, because the Church's failure is equally God's, whose Head he is said to be. To hold the Church responsible is tantamount to throwing the responsibility upon the shoulders of the Holy Ghost, whose temple she claims to be, and which he is supposed to fill with his glory and power. There is no escape from the unpleasant fact for believers

that the impotence of the Church virtually proves the non-existence of God.

Does any sensible person seriously mean to say, face to face with such incontrovertible facts, that the Christian Gospel is a particularly hopeful one? Is not two thousand years' trial sufficient to establish its inherent worthlessness? Having been confessedly a lamentable failure for nineteen centuries, can it reasonably be expected to be a stupendous success in the twentieth? Now, we wish to know the ground on which Secularism can be pronounced "a hopeless gospel," or to get an admission that to call it such is an egregious misnomer. For one thing, Secularism has not as yet been tried except by an insignificant minority in any community. It is not a system that has broken down in the test, like Christianity. Those who have put it to the test of experience are thoroughly well satisfied with the result. It has delivered them from many a fictitious bugbear set up to frighten the ignorant and simple. It has given them a fresh and wholesomer outlook upon life and its possibilities. It has supplied them with a natural and fully rational ideal of life, and inspired them with a high and noble motive to altruistic conduct. "But it holds out no hope of a better life to come beyond the tomb," someone hysterically exclaims, and we maintain that that is one of its chief merits. The hope of immortality is a disease that has had its origin in disease. The overwhelming majority of mankind undergo a pathological, not a natural, death. That is to say, they die from accident or disease when the love of life is still strong within them; and it is from this prematureness of death, from this unexhausted clinging to life when the death-stroke falls, that the desire for a second life has arisen. It is a disease, and the Gospel in which it figures as a God-given instinct is infinitely worse than hopeless; it is a distinctly lying Gospel. In the etymological signification of the term, Freethought possesses no Gospel at all. It does not even pretend to have any good news, either from or concerning God, to deliver to a lost and ruined race. And yet it does have good news to impart, the best of all news that ever fell upon humanity's ears. It is this: *That humanity has within itself adequate resources to supply all its own needs, and that all its interests are confined to the present life.* And without being too particular about the word, we characterize this news as an extremely hopeful Gospel. Dr. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, says that "man is more than mind; he is a spirit." Now, of the existence of anything higher than mind there is no psychological evidence. Spirit or soul is simply a metaphysical invention, a pure hypothesis with no fact whatever to support it; and it is upon this invention or naked hypothesis that the theologian bases his personal God-idea. In the *Christian World* for September 21, Dr. Jones says:—

The fact is that even the life of the intellect leaves the deepest and noblest part of man's nature unprovided. Man is more than mind, he is a spirit. He is more than intellect, he is a soul; and the soul cries out for God, the living God. And we have to get to that deep level soul-life—life in God and for God—before we know what real satisfaction means.

Like other divines, Dr. Jones cannot find room or need for religion except at the expense of splitting man up into two radically different entities, for which division there is absolutely no warrant in modern psychology. All dualistic theories are scientifically unsound, and owe their origin alone to metaphysical speculations. Man is a member of the animal world, and has no more need of a God than a monkey or a horse, and from whom he only differs by being a little further up in the evolutionary scale. All his powers, as well as all his needs, are germinally present in lower species. What we find

in him is but the highest known development of the herd-instincts, with the various forms of morality to which they give rise. The herd-instincts are the starting-point of social life; and as a member of society man only needs to learn how to live to the best advantage of all concerned; and this he can surely do without any ghostly aid from beyond the stars. Everyone of us knows what his relationships in life are, and it ought to be equally clear that our whole business consists in honouring them all. The reason why we are so backward in social progress is because we have been waiting for some supernatural being or power to set all things right, instead of attempting the task ourselves. Now, at last, science is opening our eyes to the fact that we are but children of the earth, whose supreme privilege as well as duty is to learn how to live together for the highest good of all. All else is superstition, vanity, and useless vexation.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Laureate of Secularism.

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!  
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!  
Poor perfect voice, most blythe when most forlorn,  
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers,  
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears.

—Swinburne.

There can be little doubt that James Thomson's fame will grow, and there will be an increasing interest in his life and work.—G. W. Foote.

AMONG the men and women of genius associated with the modern Freethought movement in England, few are so assured of the recognition of posterity as James Thomson, the poet who wrote *The City of Dreadful Night*.

It is quite possible to overrate and to underestimate Thomson's merits, but no one, we suppose, would contend that he was other than a genuine and unmistakable poet. He was a very unequal writer, sometimes soaring to the pure ether of the great singers, and sometimes falling to the lower slopes of Parnassus. He had, indeed, his faults; but against them must be placed his unbalanced, imaginative, reckless nature. There can hardly be a sadder story in the whole history of literature, though Chatterton, Villon, Poe, Oscar Wilde, and Verlaine are among them. To be at once a genius and a drudge, to live in poverty and to die an outcast's death, is as melancholy a lot as can be imagined. Nor would he deserve less pity if we denied his genius. His faults, whatever they may have been, injured himself alone; but poetic genius he most certainly had. It was a genius of the morbid kind, and many circumstances of his life forbade its full development.

James Thomson was born at Port Glasgow in 1834, and died in a London hospital in 1882. There is an atmosphere of mystery about him, for he had a dual personality. There were two Thomsons, one the darling of the muses, the other the victim of melancholia. The Thomson whom literature knows was an extraordinarily picturesque man. He wrote verse as an eagle flies, and his prose is the work of an artist in words. His eulogy of Shelley, his translation of Leopardi, and his superb satires, *The Story of a Famous Jewish Firm*, and *Religion in the Rocky Mountains*, would alone have made the reputation of a lesser man. In addition, he wrote *The City of Dreadful Night*, which excited the admiration of all discerning judges, including the priceless praise of George Eliot and of George Meredith, who "found many pages that no other English poet could have written."

It was in the columns of the *National Reformer*, then edited by Charles Bradlaugh, that *The City of Dreadful Night* first appeared. Bradlaugh met Thomson when

the poet was an Army schoolmaster at Ballincollig, and the Napoleon of the English Freethought Movement did a direct service to literature by publishing Thomson's masterpiece, and by encouragement at a time when he most needed it. For six years after its appearance in the *National Reformer*, this powerful and original poem was offered in vain to commercially minded publishers, and it was not until Bertram Dobell interested himself in the work that it appeared in book form. Two years later Thomson died in his forty-ninth year.

*The City of Dreadful Night* is unique. The alchemy of the poet's rare genius transmuted pessimism itself into the fine gold of true poetry. His splendid verses go by wrapt in imperial purple in a great procession:—

The City is of Night; perchance of Death  
But certainly of Night; for never there  
Can come the lucid morning's fragrant breath  
After the dew dawning's cold grey air;  
The moon and stars may shine with scorn or pity;  
The sun has never visited that city,  
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.

This poem is a new note in literature, and very different to the pessimism of earlier singers. It is common to speak of Byron as a pessimist, and Schopenhauer was fond of quoting the lines from *Euthanasia*:—

Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,  
Count o'er thy days from anguish free,  
And know, whatever thou hast been,  
'Tis something better not to be.

This, however, is the veriest "mouthing and cox-combry" when set beside the molten passion of *The City of Dreadful Night*, which, to use Dante Rossetti's expressive phrase, "makes a goblin of the sun."

Some years after Thomson's death, Meredith summed up his opinion of the man and his work:—

He was a man of big heart, of such entire sincerity that he wrote directly from the impression carved in him by his desolate experience of life.....Bright achievement was plucked out of the most tragic life in our literature.

But the world, even to Thomson, was not all gloom. He had periods of real happiness when he rejoiced in sunshine. *Sunday at Hampstead* and *Sunday up the River* are poems that have the keenest zest of life. Moreover, the poet was a man of fine and noble sympathies. In one of his poems, *The Polish Insurgent*, he portrays a Pole ready to die for his native country, although he realizes that his sacrifice will be in vain:—

Must a man have hope to fight?  
Can a man not fight in despair?  
Must the soul cower down for the body's weakness  
And slaver the Devil's hoof with meekness,  
Nor care nor dare to share  
Certain defeat with the right.

This is not popular writing, but it is worth many "Recessionals." Throughout so many of Thomson's poems there is this poignant, personal note, and it is this which makes it so rich in the pure stuff of poetry; for if, as Wordsworth says, poetry is emotion remembered in tranquillity, few men have had the gift in a more liberal measure than James Thomson.

In Thomson's poetry there are few love songs, for the author of *The City of Dreadful Night* was little of the amorist. The most glowing sparkles of Thomson's muse, in her most ardent moods, pale before the glow of such passages as those of Romeo in the chamber of Juliet, or Wilhelm Meister with his beloved, while the moon whitened the poplars and the music of the strolling minstrels came through the calm night. Of all poets of genius, Thomson is the least successful in love poetry. He was not deficient in lyrical impulse, but his amorous excursions in verse will not stand comparison with his lines on the Polish patriot or the sonorous melody of *The City of Dreadful Night*, in which the poet sang to a larger music in a richer voice.

Thomson was not, as a genius, in the first rank of poets simply because his range was limited, but within that range he was a consummate artist and his work perfection. If to write the finest pessimistic poem in the English language constitutes a claim on posterity, and we are certain it does, then James Thomson, the Secularist, will occupy a niche in the Valhalla of Literature.

Thomson was a militant Freethinker. He voices Materialism more openly than any reactionary ever dared to praise a corrupt Christianity, or a senseless superstition. He does not apologize for his Materialism—he delights in it. It is because he thinks sincerely that Materialism is absolutely true that his heart goes out to it:—

Our mother feedeth thus our little life,  
That we in turn may feed her with our death;  
The great sea sways, one interwoven strife,  
Wherefrom the sun inhales a subtle breath,  
To float the heavens sublime in form and hue,  
Then turning cold and dark in order due,  
Rain weeping back to swell the sea beneath.  
One part of me shall feed a little worm,  
And it a bird on which a man may feed;  
One lime the mould, one nourish insect sperm,  
One thrill sweet grass, one pulse in bitter weed,  
This swell a fruit; and that evolve in air  
Another trickle to a springlet's lair,  
Another paint a daisy on the mead.

With cosmic interchange of parts for all,  
Through all the modes of being numberless  
Of every element as may befall,  
And if earth's general soul hath consciousness,  
Their new life must with strange new joy be  
Of perfect law all perfectly fulfilled, [thrilled,  
No sin, no fear, no failure, no excess.

This Secularism runs through his writings. Intense is his love of Nature:—

Live out your whole free life while yet on earth,  
Seize the quick present, prize your one sure boon,  
Though brief, each day a golden sun hath birth,  
Though dim, the night is gleamed with stars and moon;  
Love out your cordial love; hate out your hate;  
Be strong to grasp a foe, to clasp a friend;  
Your wants true laws are, thirst and hunger sate;  
Feel you have been yourselves when comes the end.

All lofty aspiration, and all suffering excited his sympathy. As for himself, melancholy marked him for its own, and beckoned him to misery as he sat at the feast or glowed at the revel. All that seething turmoil of passions, of which he formed the figure, is stilled. The long days with no pleasure in them were so drearily many. The silver chord was so slowly loosed, the golden bowl was broken on the wheel. His very friends grew tired. He never paraded his anguish nor tried to conceal it, or assumed stoical airs. Let us think gently of him. Like the brave captain of a doomed ship, he never lost his heart, but eyed the danger steadily until the inevitable fate overwhelmed him, and the gallant ship went down.

Ah, within our mother's breast,  
From toil and tumult, sin and sorrow free,  
Sphered beyond hope and dread, divinely calm,  
He lies, all gathered into perfect rest;  
And o'er the trance of his eternity  
The cypress waves more holy than the palm.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Religion of Beethoven.

X.

(Concluded from p. 613.)

In *Christus am Oelberge*, which is really a work for the concert-room, it may be said that we do not get Beethoven's real attitude towards religious music, because this art form was not regulated by, nor even part of the Church. This argument will not hold good

very far, for we shall see that when Beethoven came to use the ritualistic text of the Latin Mass, which was regulated by the Church, he was even far more "improper."

Such a rebel as Beethoven could not possibly have followed the old beaten track and tradition of the Church. When Breitkopf and Hartel told him that there was no market for Church music, he replied, "You are quite right, when it is composed by mere thorough-bassists." These latter were the faithful servants of custom and tradition, whom the Church encouraged, and their names and works were legion; hence the glutted market. But Beethoven would have none of it, as we shall see.

Beethoven's first liturgic work was the *Mass in C*, and this, although many critics to-day look upon it as of normal aspect, bears many traces of a thoroughly unfettered outlook. Macfarren admits that "it might scarcely have proceeded from an entirely orthodox thinker." This work, which Beethoven had "especially at heart," was written for Haydn's patron, Prince Esterhazy, and produced at the Eisenstadt Chapel. Beethoven himself admitted to Breitkopf and Hartel that in this Mass he had "treated the text as it has hitherto seldom been treated." Its unorthodox bearing, either religious or artistic, seems to have been apparent from the very first. Hummel, who was present at the first performance, laughed at it, whilst the Prince was so startled that he said to Beethoven, "What have you been at now?" The *Kyrie* is certainly fairly conventional, and much of the *Gloria* also. In the latter, however, we see how Beethoven seems to have delighted in disturbing religious calm and quietude, by flashes of genius. At the words *adoramus te*, as though to show his complete resignation and fidelity to the text, he drops immediately into the tonality of an old-world ecclesiastical mode, and then all of a sudden, at the word *glorificamus*, a most surprising chord is hurled at you, as much as to say, "Come back to earth!" The *Credo*, which has always been treated with great attention and deference to the spirit of the text, is certainly not in the beaten track. But more flagrant is his defiance of the demands of the liturgy. For instance, after the *factus est*, it is proper to make a pause or an interlude, to enable the congregation to rise from their knees; yet here Beethoven (although he observes it in his later Mass) actually brings in the *basses forte*, right on the top of the word *est*. If the *Incarnatus* runs, musically, on normal lines, the *Crucifixus* assuredly does not. The whole section is most dramatic, and utterly unchurchlike. I am inclined to think that the *passus passus* must have startled the dovescotes of religious respectability. Everything is so beautifully still from *Pontia Pilato*, as is prescribed by the Church, and *passus passus* is sighed so plaintively that one is disarmed by its naivete and simplicity; and just as one expects a conventional fall of the cadence, at *sepultus est*, to E flat, *passus passus* is thundered out upon a most unfriendly chord, which almost takes one's breath away. Beethoven closes this section with another most astounding musical heresy—the D of the altos hitting the E flat of the trebles in a most jarring dissonance, which is without parallel in Church music. It was, no doubt, such disturbing elements as these which led Beethoven's biographer, Nohl, to say that the *Mass in C* was "not a religious composition," since the composer "missed the spirit of the text." This last remark is, of course, merely a matter of opinion. Beethoven did not miss the "spirit of the subject," but only the "spirit of the Church," and for that, all real lovers of art will be thankful, since it is evident that to have caught the "spirit of the subject" as the Church and Nohl would have it, Beethoven would necessarily have missed the spirit of himself.

## XI.

It is, however, in the *Mass in D*, which is entitled the *Missa Solennis*, that we see Beethoven's most complete emancipation from the bondage of the spiritual and liturgic influences of the Church. The work was originally designed, although not finished in time, for the ceremony of the installation of his patron, the Archduke Rudolphe, as Archbishop of Olmutz. It is clear, therefore (and there is internal evidence as well), that Beethoven had the Church ceremonial clearly before him, as in the previous Mass. Yet, in spite of this, the work contains many features both in form and spirit which are in opposition to the Church's formulæ. It has been suggested that this unorthodoxy was perhaps due to the fact that, not having the work finished in time for its original purpose, Beethoven altered its scope and character, knowing that it was for the concert platform. The *Kyrie*, *Credo*, and *Agnus Dei* were indeed produced at a concert at the Karnthnerthor Theatre, Vienna, when the clergy and the censor protested against such profanities, compelling Beethoven, much to his anger, to substitute German words and advertise them as hymns. But the idea of the concert platform was not the reason of Beethoven's "heresies" in the *Missa Solennis*, for some of its most glaring rebellion was written long before the original liturgic purpose had passed.

First of all, the dimensions and the technical difficulties of the *Missa Solennis* must place it outside the Church's repertoire. Even if the *Kyrie* is worked out on the strict lines of the Church, the remainder is not so docile. In the *Gloria*, the traditional custom of working up the end from the *Quoniam tu solus* becomes with Beethoven a veritable torrent of voices and instruments, ending with a terrific climax. In it is comprised the masterly fugue on *in gloria Dei Patris*. One remarkable example of Beethoven's ideas taken as musical concepts may be seen at the words *Pater omnipotens*, where a tremendous chord marked *fff.* occurs. It is the only occasion that he uses the triple *forte* sign in the Mass, and we can see in these two bars Beethoven's conception of a deity. This God of triple *forte* is utterly Pagan—a God of thunderbolts, not the God of Christendom—the loving Father Almighty. Whilst the *Crucifixus* is intensely dramatic, the concluding fugue, *Et vitam venturi* (the most exacting vocal piece in Church music), is a fearfully tumultuous thing, as far from religion (in the Church sense) as East is from West. Indeed, after this terrific tonal piling of Pelion on Ossa, one would imagine that the remaining portions of the Mass, usually the most conventionally treated, would not come in for much independent treatment. Yet even in the *Agnus Dei* the "realistic" mind of Beethoven would not be subdued.

Edward Holmes, a mid-nineteenth century English critic, who was in favour of music being freed from the trammels of the Church, and even defended Beethoven on these grounds, insisted, however, that in the *Agnus Dei* we should not sacrifice "the spirit of devout contrition." Yet it is in this very portion of the Mass that Beethoven defies the spirit of the Church more pointedly than before, reading the text from a plane hitherto unknown. Could anything be more "realistic" and unchurchlike than his tone-pictures of the horrors of war, where, right in the midst of the *Dona nobis pacem*, come war's "threat'ning drum" and "trumpet's loud alarms"? So far away they begin, but nearer and nearer grow the sounds, until the clash of arms and the cries for mercy become so intense as to literally affright the senses, banishing all thought of prayer or devotion. The interlude leading to the *finale* is a most brutal, barbaric, and inhuman thing, which cannot bear being

listened to out of its indigenous atmosphere. And what a wonderful ending! A stroke of genius, unhampered by any creed or dogma. Nothing save the picture mattered to Beethoven. The "threat'ning drum" of war has died away to just a murmur, and the voices speak content and joy as they cry *pacem, pacem*. But all is hushed in an instant when the "threat'ning drum," which was thought departed, is yet heard in the distance, throwing the mind's eye and ear back to the preceding strife. Again comes the cry for "peace," and again the answer of the distant drum. It is most sublime, even to read of it. But it is more so in musical reality. This very drum phrase is a most realistic, yet audacious, conception. It murmurs a B flat, a note antagonistic to the prevailing harmonies, which was clearly Beethoven's intention, so as to express the contrariety of the poetic context. This heresy of Beethoven's, with the note of the war drum, has alarmed the Philistines, and, like their kin who draped Leonardo's *Leda* and edited Sir Richard Burton, they have actually dared, in print, to alter this B flat of Beethoven's, to suit their small minds.

## XII.

Fortunately, the *Missa Solennis*, which Beethoven considered his "most finished work," does not belong to religion nor to this "lesser fry," as Shakespeare would say, but to the wide world. "Its astounding grandeur," says Schluter, "leaves no room for religious feeling." Like Swinburne's *Hymn to Man*, it is a veritable hymn to humanity, "before the glory of which all that pertains to any particular Church, to any particular priesthood, vanishes as shadows in the noonday sun."<sup>1</sup> W. H. Hadow, who was so scandalized at Beethoven's "un-christian hand" in the *Mount of Olives*, sees in the *Missa Solennis* a "war of gods and giants, with the lightning for sword and the clamorous wind for batteries." Surely these are no tones for the House of God, for the chaste ritual of "ghostly men," and the services of one who said, "Blessed are the meek"?

The *Missa Solennis* must always prove a thorn in the side of orthodoxy, and so, in a biography of Beethoven published a few years ago, we are told that this work has elements that "woefully detract from its value as helpful Church music." "Every man," we are informed, "welcomes music that will keep him in his devotion, not art that carries the mind away from the Church into the world." That has been the attitude of the Mother Church from the days when Augustine adjured believers to turn their hearts away from worldly music, down to the *Moto Proprio* of Pius X. But it is too late for any protest from Rome, or elsewhere, to direct or influence music. The Church and religion, that once could bend music as their handmaid, is now impotent. Since the first open hostility of Ludwig van Beethoven to the Church's formulæ, all the greatest minds in art have followed in his path, which has been, if not against the Church, away from it.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

## Another Converted Atheist.

It is astonishing how many great and able leaders the Freethought party lose without being aware of it. While they are with us their greatness, and ability, and leadership is recognized by neither Christians nor Freethinkers. And Christians only discover these qualities when the atavistic phenomenon of reconversion to Christianity occurs. And this, which to the Freethinker is evidence of the lapse of an honest man into knavery,

<sup>1</sup> Dannreuther, *Macmillan's Magazine*.

or of a sensible one into folly, is to the Christian proof of a return to sanity and of the existence of a lofty spiritual nature. From which one may draw the conclusion that while under Christian influences a man's character sinks and sinks until he becomes a Secularist; under the influence of Freethought his character grows and grows until he becomes a Christian. As a school for the training of character Secularism is evidently vastly superior to Christianity.

In the columns of that religiously picturesque purveyor of pious piffle, the *Christian Herald*, we came recently across the following:—

For nearly thirty years Mr. George Berrisford had been regarded as the leader and ablest exponent of the Agnostic and Atheistic party in Sheffield..... Eighteen months ago he was converted, and is now as earnest in his propagation of the Christian doctrine as he was formerly of the infidel opinion.

We disregard the reasons set out by Mr. Berrisford for his return to the faith, which may or may not be the real ones. Frankly, we do not care either way. But we have a word or two to say on the question of fact:—

(1) We have known Sheffield, in relation to Freethought, for about twenty-five years, but have never known of a Mr. Berrisford as a leader of Freethought, nor do we know anyone who ever regarded him as the "ablest exponent" of Freethought.

(2) A Mr. George Berrisford did turn up at a National Secular Society's Conference at Leeds some four or five years ago, when he confessed to Miss Vance that he had only recently left Christianity.

(3) A Mr. George Berrisford did afterwards become connected with Secularists in Sheffield, and we remember having a conversation with him on one of our lecturing visits there. His chief concern then was to learn if there was a prospect of a settled living being made on the Freethought platform. We told him we were doubtful. Freethought speakers had to be content with soldiers' rations when they were available, and to go without when they were not.

(4) The next we heard of Mr. Berrisford he had left the Secular Society to lecture on Free Trade, and later that he had rejoined the Christian fold, where we hope he will remain.

We have written the above, partly because we have been asked by several about Mr. Berrisford, partly because of the *Christian Herald* paragraph.

Our own opinion is that Mr. Berrisford is not worth bothering about, and that Sheffield Secularists would be well advised not to supply him with gratuitous advertisements by troubling with him.

C. C.

## The Religious Cadger.

THE following case, reported in the *Scotsman* newspaper of recent date, is but typical of many:—

In Hamilton Sheriff Court yesterday, before Hon. Sheriff H. S. Keith, Agnes Porter, or Danks, 114 Naburn Street (S. S.) Glasgow, pleaded guilty of falsely representing that she was a collector of subscriptions for the Scottish Protestant Association and Bible Christian Union, 132 West Nile Street, Glasgow, whereby she induced persons to give her sums amounting to £7 17s. 4d., which sum she appropriated to her own use. A total of 111 persons had given subscriptions in sums varying from 2d. to 5s., and they belonged to Strathaven, Hamilton, Dalserf, Motherwell, Carfin, Wishaw, etc. The Fiscal described the fraud as most deliberate and systematic, remarking that the accused had even called at post offices and on the wives of policemen. The Court passed sentence of fourteen days imprisonment.

The persistence of the importunate professional beggar is past finding out, and the gullibility of their "gulls" passeth all understanding. Some people, no doubt, count the riddance of intrusive volubility cheap at sixpence, or even a shilling; but the public should be more on their guard against the house-to-house canvasser. I observed on a house door, the other day, the notice, "no hawkers, no canvassers, no circulars," but it takes more than that to discourage or repel the ingratiating "moucher." In some districts particularly, his number is legion. The busy housewife seldom thinks of asking for the exhibition of credentials. Upon occasion, if she is not irritated by these pests, she may bestow a coin in the belief that she is contributing to some laudable scheme, and thus gain some little internal satisfaction in the midst of her multifarious activities. But what we wish to point out is, that this pernicious system of canvassing is growing to such proportions as to be a positive nuisance. And the most confident American "drummer" cannot surpass in assurance and confidence the beggar—especially for religious schemes—at home.

In one aspect of the matter we have another revelation of the decadence of religious belief. This canvassing system, established by religious bodies, is but one of a number devised to galvanize Christianity. If Christianity were the power in the world that its representatives claim it to be, where would be the necessity for this constant appeal to all and sundry for money?

In Scotland, the old Strict Baptists declined to allow any but their own communicants to contribute to the maintenance of the sect. They had no ordained ministry and the services were conducted by the more intelligent members of the community. But the times have changed. The blatancy of the Salvation Army has abolished all such scruples and reserve. The religious cadger is out for money—he cares not whence it comes or from whom. It may be blood-stained or beer-stained, it is all the same to him, so long as it finds its way into his hands. He goes upon a platform and shouts to an ignorant crowd of people, inviting them to come and buy salvation without money and without price!

An Established Church is, of course, the most outstanding example of legalized immorality. Here we have public funds diverted from public purposes to maintain a clergy whose so-called "commission" from on high is held by many members of the public to be unfounded and false. And yet Established Churches have their organized groups of snuffling beggars for this, that, and the other object.

Why should it be illegal for a destitute person to beg for bread and legal for a religious person to beg for the support of his particular sect?

IGNOTUS.

### Acid Drops.

"Providence" had a fine chance to distinguish itself on the morning of last Sunday. But, as usual, it did nothing. The Zeppelin raid, as ineffective from the military point of view as it was bestial from that of human decency, came off with "Providence" sitting up aloft, watching the show. The Christian Germans slaughtered the Christian English, and the Lord did nothing to prevent the massacre. Ridiculous as is the belief in a presiding Deity under normal circumstances, it becomes utterly contemptible under such circumstances as these. Everyone can understand and appreciate the resentful feeling against the whole German people on account of these senseless and brutal raids; but, surely, feeling against a Deity supine enough to prevent such outrages would not be less keen if people were in the habit of applying intelligence to their religious beliefs.

The most cruel satire upon the German raid was an Intercession Service, held in the open air, in one of the raided districts on the morning after. Did they sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," we wonder?

To encourage a spirit of serenity during Zeppelin raids, the *Christian Commonwealth* advises the reading of Mr. R. J. Campbell's *Fellowship with God*. Why not send a parcel to Germany? It might have the effect of stopping the raider coming, which would be much better. But the picture of a nervous person sitting up reading *Fellowship with God* to develop serenity while a Zep. hovers overhead is really funny.

That insufferable mountain of vanity, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, is reported thus: "It was only upon the news that God was dead that the Prussian Empire dared to be born." It is news to learn that a *fetus* exercises any choice or will power before it is delivered from the womb. And it would seem to be confirmation of the Prussian claim to God's friendship that the latter should quietly "slip awa'" so as not to be an obstacle to Hun ambitions.

"Women are better than men. All the good things we know are learned from our mothers, our sisters and our wives." This is Canon Langbridge's sweeping compliment to the fair sex. But fine words butter no parsnips. And why shouldn't the whole world have the advantage of these "good things"? If you "go to it," why shouldn't the Deity be feminine instead of masculine? The Canon's compliment warrants this.

The Rev. Lord William Cecil says: "Religion has stepped back to something like our Christmas decorations—a very beautiful thing in its way, but rather unimportant." With a reservation as to the æsthetic aspect of this proposition, we cordially concur with his lordship, and congratulate him on his discovery and his courage in proclaiming it. But if a poor curate followed the same lines! Ah, what?

Sir Henry Johnston is quoted by a weekly paper as having said: "It is impossible to think of a happy English village without its clergyman, priest, or pastor as a social factor of great importance." We can imagine how this will set the parsons purring! What a calamity would their disappearance portend! People would desert their whist drives, picnics, and billiard tables, and eschew for ever smoking concerts and inn-parlour arguments. They would go about weeping and wringing their hands, and crying in chorus, "Oh for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still!" How could they play without their parsons? How, indeed!

The Bishop of London is continuing his stupid but characteristic talk about the comparative blessing of the War. At Victoria Park last Sunday he told the people that the War saved a worse calamity, because it stopped a great industrial strike. We are inclined to believe that some people would regard even the War as a "Godsend" if it averted that, but it is unkind of the Bishop to so give them away. And the Bishop's stupidity suggests the question, "Is the industrial trouble abolished or only postponed?" And what a commentary upon Christian civilization! Even this War is welcome, because it averts domestic trouble—for a time.

Familiarity with killing, from reading war news, has had its inevitable effect. I was last night at a cinematograph theatre where a film was shown, a so-called "comic" film; where men were drowned in a submarine after vainly attempting to save themselves. This was greeted with shrieks of laughter, and when the hero of the film, after a gallant struggle with death, was drowned and the submarine went down with all on board, the whole theatre resounded with merriment.—*Daily Mirror*.

A Commission of Bishops, laymen, and clergy will submit to the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States a proposition that the first five Commandments shall be printed without any of the arguments or reasons at present attaching to them. The Com-

mission says that "Arguments for the observance of the Divine law are not essential to the laws themselves." We really think it wise for religious folk to eliminate argument as much as and wherever possible. It is always dangerous in matters of religion. We notice that no suggestion is made concerning the tenth Commandment. The wife is still lumped in with the husband's ox and ass as amongst the things that are his.

There is said to be much resentment amongst men home from the Front on leave to have to salute Members of Parliament dressed up as officers, and who have never been away from Westminster. We wonder what they feel concerning the khaki-clad figures of the clergy? There is the Bishop of London, for instance, who dresses up in khaki to visit the camp in Salisbury, and then talks as though he is ready to sacrifice any number of men to crush the enemy.

Wonderfully and fearfully made is the parsonic mind. An inquirer asks the Rev. Professor David Smith, in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for September 21, if praying for victory in the War does not mean trying to induce the Referee "to favour our side." Not suspecting that "J. M. H." is in all probability pulling his leg, the learned divine falls beautifully into the trap laid for him. Instead of coming at once to the point at issue, he plays round about it, trying vainly to show that prayer is not asking for things but the soul's effort to co-operate with God in the carrying out of his eternal plans. "God is not the Referee at all," he says, "he is the Protagonist":—

Every conflict is his, and it is the high glory of his sons that he suffers them to bear a part in winning the triumph of the cause which is his and theirs. The presupposition is that we have responded to his call and taken his side; and, therefore, prayer is not asking him to fight for us, but vowing to fight for him, consecrating ourselves anew to the task, and seeking grace to be faithful.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, editor of the *British Weekly*, advised British Christians, nearly two years ago, when our supply of shells was disgracefully inadequate, to ask for "a speedy victory," assuring them that if they asked hard enough they would get it. If God exists, Sir William is right, and the Professor is talking sheer nonsense, and flatly contradicting the Bible into the bargain. You never know where to find these elusive divines.

The *Daily Telegraph* says: "Until now a parent who took an interest in what his children were taught has been the rarest of rare birds." The fact of the War has sent parents to the Bible, and particularly to a perusal of the more lurid patches of the Old Testament. Result: reduced attendance at Sunday-school.

The *Church Family Newspaper* says: "We must try and live the free life of sons, not the frightened life of timid schoolboys." Are the children of God kicking against the pricks, and threatening to rise in rebellion against the discipline of this present life, "God's school"? Anyway, there are a good many truants from grace these days. But isn't it the case that chastening from God is a proof of his love? The ungrateful little wretches!

H. R. H. Prince Henry was confirmed recently at Windsor Castle Chapel in the presence of the King and Queen, and the rite was performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Christians may still display the notice, "Patronised by Royalty."

"Colonel" Kitching, of the Salvation Army, says that some of the German Salvationists went into action with their usual jerseys under their military uniforms. As they have the words "Blood and Fire" on their Salvation jerseys, and "God with Us" on their military uniforms, they ought to feel that they are not such Atheists as the clergy say.

The Bishop of London is not quite so sure as he once was that the Germans are Atheists. Speaking in London, he denied that Germany was a Christian nation, although there

were many Christians and many devoted people in that country. Was he thinking of the Kaiser's patronage of the British and Foreign Bible Society?

The age of chivalry is not yet over. The Bishop of London has decided, after much prayerful consideration, that selected women may be permitted to speak in parish halls or school-rooms. In another two thousand years we may hope, reasonably, that Christians will admit the equality of the sexes.

"Christian Brotherhood is not racial or national, it is universal," says Dr. Clifford. How comes it, then, that after two thousand years of "Christian Brotherhood" there are millions of Christians facing one another in battle array?

An attempt is being made to introduce a syllabus of Bible teaching into the Swansea schools. At a recent meeting of the Education Committee—we quote from the *South Wales Daily Post*:—

The Swansea Women's Citizens' Union sent on a resolution that the committee be asked to provide a syllabus for Bible teaching in the day schools, the Union being convinced that the building up of real manhood and womanhood was quite impossible, apart from Bible teaching; also that it was very deplorable that the children should not have the privilege of studying the highest literature of the Bible. It was further asked that a deputation wait upon the committee in the matter.

In reply to questions, the Chairman said that Bible reading was now given,

Mr. John Lewis moved that the committee receive the deputation at the next meeting and hear what the ladies had to say.

The Chairman: You are treading on thorny ground.

Ald. Tutton suggested that it would introduce a controversial Biblical question.

Mr. Lewis: I am strongly opposed to that.

Mrs. Morris Roberts declared that the previous attempt to introduce Bible teaching was an utter failure, and she did not think it was practicable.

The motion was withdrawn and the letter allowed to lie on the table.

We congratulate the Education Committee on its decision. We should much like to know who is behind the Women's Citizens' Union.

The Bishop of London has evidently had enough of outdoor "heckling" after his experience on Tower Hill. At a recent address in the churchyard of St. James's, Piccadilly, he declined to allow questions, even written ones. The subject of his address was one that he and his brother, Father Vaughan, are both proud—the immorality of London streets, parks, and music-halls. We do not question the existence of much immorality in these places, and even in churches; but we would observe that his lordship is speaking of a population which for the most part professes Christianity, and it will not do to pose as though it is a case of the pure Christian *versus* the impure non-Christian. To such a ridiculous pose the reply is simple. If all Christians led decent, sober lives, the immorality of this country would be a negligible quantity. And if all Christian employers treated their employees properly, the class of women singled out by the Bishop for his attention would be diminished very considerably. The Bishop is following the cheap and easy plan of dealing with obvious effects and leaving untouched their causes.

The Wesleyan Quarterly Meeting at Gainsborough passed a resolution asking the Committee of Privileges to make "persistent representations" to the War Office "to put an end to the profane and blasphemous language used towards the sons of our Church—who are largely volunteers and not conscripts—by the non-commissioned officers on drill and parade." What we specially admire in this resolution is the "Our Church." You can swear at whoever you please, say the Gainsborough Methodists, but don't swear at our men. So that in the event of the War Office being impressed by the Committee of Privileges, we may expect a drill-sergeant to inquire whether a man is a member of "Our Church" before indulging in the classic language of the parade ground. These Christians must be sectarian even in their swearing. And, of course, the refining influence of war must not be coarsened or contaminated by swearing.

## A "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE present month will see the completion of the first year of my formal editorship of the *Freethinker*, and the present is an opportune time for my promised statement as to the position of the paper.

The loss of so outstanding a personality as G. W. Foote, who had edited the *Freethinker* for the first thirty years of its existence, with whom it had become, so to speak, identified, was heavy enough in itself; but we were also in the midst of a world-war, papers were falling right and left, and the cost of production was rising. Added to all was the loss of readers due to enlistment, which meant the securing of new ones if the circulation was to be kept up. Finally, the *Freethinker* was a paper without capital, paying the expenditure of to-day with the income of yesterday—sometimes with that of the morrow. It was the worst time the *Freethinker* had ever faced, and I was not at all surprised that many of its friends felt nervous about its future.

Luckily, I was not new to the work of management. I knew what the position had been for some years, I knew what it was at the time, and I had hopes that by putting into operation certain plans for improving the *Freethinker* circulation, things would go on at least as well as, if not better than, before. So when numerous friends urged me to keep the Honorarium Fund in existence (which usually reached about £300) I declined. It was really a *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund, but I hoped to be able to do without it; and, in any case, I thought it better to wait a year, so that everyone, including myself, might be well-informed on the subject.

Hitherto, for some years, the financial position of the paper had been this: its income met all charges, including contributors, cost of production, etc., but left nothing for the Editor. It was upon that basis I laid my plans at Mr. Foote's death, and upon that basis they have proved quite successful.

But I had not calculated upon the immensely increased cost of production. In October, paper had advanced enough to make a difference, with other advances, of close on £2 per week. For that I was prepared. But in November and December there came an actual shortage of paper, with a rapid and great increase of cost. It was this that upset my calculations, and removed for a time the hope of making the paper self-supporting. Luckily, I managed to lay hold of enough money to secure a good supply of paper, to be sure of the journal's appearance. But the price! Perhaps this will be realized when I say that our original quality of paper cannot be purchased to-day at less than two and a half times the original cost. Even purchasing when I did, the expense of paper was nearly double, and machining, wages of compositors, etc., have all advanced. To put the matter in a nutshell, the increased cost of producing the *Freethinker* for the past year has been, in round figures, just on £300.

That is the black side of the picture. But there is a brighter side.

(1) The *Freethinker* has been kept in existence, and its circulation is better than it was a year ago—in spite of the loss of readers caused by enlistment. I think I may also say that its tone and quality have been maintained. It has made many new readers, and its old ones have sent me scores of enthusiastic letters of appreciation. There has also been, during the past year, many notices of it in the general press, as well as reprints from its columns.

(2) New type has been purchased, so that the paper could be reset throughout, and its appearance improved

thereby. I ought to add that the greater part of this cost has not fallen upon current expenses. It has been contributed by friends.

(3) Some small amount of advertising has been attempted, and has met with success. More could have been done in this direction had resources permitted.

(4) While the increased expense has been about £300, the actual loss is less than two-thirds of that amount. This has amounted to about £175. Particular attention should be paid to this, because it means that under anything like normal conditions the *Freethinker* would have been quite self-supporting. And it is full of promise once normal conditions are resumed.

I could, of course, have made an attempt to meet the increased expense by reducing the size or raising the price of the *Freethinker*—which would mean diminished utility—and I was loth to do anything which would involve that. So I decided to go ahead, and at the end of the year do what very many had been urging me to do at the beginning—open a Sustentation Fund to make good the deficit. That is the main purpose for which I am now writing.

With regard to this debt, perhaps I ought to say—it will remove any misapprehension—that it is not due to extravagant demands on the part of the Editor. I see no reason why the matter should not be public, and I may as well say that for my work as Editor, Contributor, and General Manager, I had arranged to take two guineas per week. I do not think that will be considered an extravagant sum. Up to the present I have, however, drawn nothing at all. The whole of the agreed salary is owing to me, and is included in the deficit of £175. Those who are paid contributors have received their small acknowledgements as usual, precisely as in Mr. Foote's time. Business accounts have been paid as presented. The balance of the £175—that above my unpaid salary—represents a loan for which I am personally responsible.

I think, then, I am justified in regarding this report as a cheery one. For the paper to have earned £125 more during war-time than it did in times of peace, is something of which all who have helped to bring this about may feel proud. The *Freethinker* flag has been kept flying when others have been lowered. I have managed to restart the lecturing platform in many places, and recommenced publishing. This branch of our propaganda, I may promise, will not again be allowed to languish. I have had a busy and trying year, but it has not been without its compensations; and against the loss on the *Freethinker*, I see that a paper such as the *Clarion* has been compelled to raise nearly £2,000 to meet expenses, and the *Christian Commonwealth* has raised £1,000 for the same purpose. If we can do what we have done during a time of war, we may look forward with confidence to the return of peace.

It is with the utmost confidence, then, however unwillingly, that I am opening a *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund. I have every hope that the sum required will be readily subscribed, and I should like the subscription list to disappear from the columns of the *Freethinker* as speedily as possible. When this deficit is wiped off it will relieve my mind of some anxiety, and I can press forward with renewed energy to another year's work. By the end of that period I hope to have a still more cheery report to lay before my readers.

All cheques and postal orders should be made payable to me, and addressed, Editor of the *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. Full acknowledgements will appear, as usual, in this journal, of all sums received.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 1, Abertillery; October 8, Birmingham; October 22, Sheffield; October 29, Barrow-in-Furness; November 5, Buxton; November 12, Glasgow; December 10, Leicester; January 14, Nottingham.

## To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 1, Failsworth; October 8, Leicester; October 15, Glasgow; October 29, Sheffield.
- C. CHAMBERS.—(1) We are pleased to learn from you that one of our readers has gained the Military Service Medal in France. He is not, however, the first of our readers who has earned distinction during the War. Please give him our congratulations. (2) We do not quite understand the latter part of your letter. Perhaps you could give us more information—in confidence, of course.
- KEPLER.—Your reply to C. Hebbes will appear next week. Crowded out of this issue.
- A. RADLEY.—Thanks for cuttings.
- W. R.—Thanks for cuttings. Friends who keep us supplied in this way give us a real help with our weekly labours.
- C. R. P. (Newcastle-on-Tyne).—Sorry to learn that you have had some little difficulty in getting your paper. We daresay your explanation is the correct one.
- W. CASSELLS.—We hope that your anticipation of the good that will be effected by Mr. Cohen's pamphlet, *War and Civilization*, will be realized.
- C. S.—Your enjoyment of Mr. Lloyd's lecture was, we are sure, shared by all present. Pity you did not put your question to Mr. Lloyd. Conscience is, in origin, social. It is the tribal sense, the tribal ideas of right and wrong, speaking through the individual. And its authority can never be higher than that.
- "BONNIE DUNDEE."—Crowded out this week. Useful for next issue. Thanks.
- FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN SUBSCRIBER:—"I find your paper a regular intellectual feast, and one of bold and manly courage. Its influence, I find, has a commercial value as well as a social one (over me). Truth, sane reasoning, and courage are expressed in all your issues; and I find that, unconsciously, these earthly qualities are finding expression in my character."
- J. SANDARS.—As early as possible.
- W. P. BALL, E. B., AND OTHERS are cordially thanked for their weekly batch of useful cuttings.
- IGNOTUS.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- J. EMS.—We do not think any further legal action will be taken with reference to *The Brook Kerith*. It is not that Christians would not like to see the book suppressed, but they do not feel sure of succeeding in the attempt.
- W. RANDS.—We have no objection whatever to your local paper borrowing from the *Freethinker*, but we should prefer that some acknowledgment be made.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Collection, Queen's (Minor) Hall, September 24, £3 6s. 4d.; "Essexian," 7s. 6d.
- G. BRADFIELD.—You are probably right in thinking that all Freethinkers are not so ready as they ought to be to claim the right to affirm. Pleased you think the paper "splendid."
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.*
- 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.*
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- 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.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (October 1) at Abertillery, Mon. The afternoon lecture, at 3 o'clock, is on "Jesus Christ in Fact and Fiction," and will deal with Mr. George Moore's *The Brook Kerith*, and Mr. G. B. Shaw's preface to his last volume of plays. The evening lecture, at 6 o'clock, will deal with "Woman, the Bible, and the Bishops." This is the opening meeting of the Winter Session, and we have no doubt there will be the usual crowded gatherings.

Next Sunday (October 8) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Birmingham Town Hall. Full particulars will be given next week. Meanwhile, we desire to call the attention of local friends to the necessity of advertising this meeting as much as is possible. The Town Hall is a very large building, and takes some filling. And a well filled hall is inspiring to both speaker and audience.

Last Sunday's meeting to commemorate the Jubilee of the N. S. S. and the anniversary of Bradlaugh's birthday was, from every point of view, a complete success. The Queen's (Minor) Hall was filled—which, in view of the darkened streets and the Zeppelin raid of the previous evening, was in itself encouraging, and both speakers and audience enjoyed themselves thoroughly. After a brief introduction by the President, Mr. Lloyd led the way with the speeches with an eloquent tribute to the life and work of Bradlaugh, and Mr. Moss followed with an appeal for hearty support for the N. S. S. on account of its great past, and—he hoped—greater future. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner favoured the Right Hon. W. E. Russell with a scathing reply to his recent comment on her father, and one regretted that Mr. Russell was not present to listen. Mr. Snell was in fine form in a fitting speech that was full of humour, and Mr. Heaford showed that there was some truth in his idea that Freethought endowed its champions with eternal youth. A closing speech from Mr. Cohen brought to an end a meeting that was a striking compliment to the vitality and vigour of the Freethought movement.

A very pretty incident connected with the meeting was the presentation of a bouquet, tied up with the old Bradlaugh colours, to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner at the conclusion of her speech. The little lady who presented the bouquet did it "as though to the manner born."

The Anniversary Meeting, with the two previous ones held at the Queen's Hall, was proof that the public is ready for a very vigorous campaign, and, thanks to the Special Propaganda Fund, we shall do our best to see that the campaign proceeds. Arrangements are pending for halls in other parts of London, and we have arranged to open up work in Nottingham, Sheffield, and Barrow-in-Furness. Other places will follow.

We had intended writing some notes this week on the past and—still more important—concerning the future of the N. S. S. Want of space compels our postponing this to some future occasion.

Mr. Lloyd lectures to-day (October 1), afternoon and evening, at the Failsworth Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth. There will doubtless be good meetings, as is usual, at these Anniversary Services, and many Manchester friends will, we hope, take advantage of Mr. Lloyd's visit to pay Failsworth a visit, particularly as Manchester is, for the moment, in a state of inactivity so far as Freethought propaganda is concerned.

Mr. F. Verinder, who is the Chairman of the Joint Committee for maintaining the rights of propaganda in the L.C.C. parks, made an ineffectual attempt to induce the Council to suspend the operation of their Ukase against the sale of literature in the parks until a reply has been given the deputation that waited on it before the vacation. Under

the circumstances, therefore, there is nothing for it but to proceed with the sale of literature as usual, and await results. It is quite evident that to give way now, and refrain from selling until such time as the Council chooses to reply, would be a tactical blunder. To regain a sur-rendered right is infinitely harder than the maintenance of a right as already established. This was the unanimous view taken by the Joint Committee, and it is the view taken by the Executive of the N. S. S. All Branches of the Society that carry on their propaganda in the parks will continue as usual. Literature will be sold on October 1 as before, and it will be for the Council to take the next step. We know that we shall have the united assistance of the Freethought Party in this fight, and we are determined to resist this attack on the freedom of propaganda to the utmost of our ability.

We are glad to say that the recently published pamphlets by Mr. Mann and Mr. Cohen are selling well. The offer of *War and Civilization* and *Religion and the Child* at 6s. per 100 has been well received, and we are pleased to see many friends taking the opportunity of indulging in a little inexpensive propaganda by purchasing parcels. A pamphlet given to a friend is often the beginning of a lasting interest in the Cause.

Mr. Lloyd's pamphlet on *Prayer: Its Origin, Nature, and Futility*, is in the press, and we hope to publish it in the course of a week. We have others in hand, which will be out as soon as possible.

The North London Branch has secured winter quarters at the St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, Kentish Town Road, N.W., and open their session this evening at 7.30 with a debate on the subject, "Is Man a Machine?" It will be opened by Mr. T. F. Palmer, the valued contributor to this journal. "Saints" are earnestly invited, and there will be an opportunity for all present to take part in the discussion. We hope to hear of a well-attended meeting.

Mr. Cohen has been invited to take the Chair at the Annual Dinner of the Bradlaugh Fellowship, and he has accepted the invitation. The function is to take place at the Bolougne Restaurant, Gerrard Street, W., on Wednesday, October 11. The number of diners will be strictly limited, and those wishing to attend should write to the Secretary, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 1 Malvern Road, Dalston, N.E., who will send all particulars.

The South Shields Branch is to-day (Sunday) devoting the opening of a series of monthly meetings to a modest reflex of the N. S. S. Anniversary proceedings, with the addition of some local colouring, conducted by Tyneside veterans. The Branch Secretary has promised some interesting historical details to prepare the way. Important business matters will be discussed by the members, apart from the public gathering. The proceedings will commence at 7 o'clock.

The New York *Truthseeker* reprints, with suitable acknowledgment, our recent front-page article on "The Religion of Sensible Men." We are glad to see that, although the War has had its influence on American publishing, it does not appear to have affected our contemporary. It is as lively and as versatile as ever.

A request, signed by the Assistant Controller of the Post Office, has been sent to the Secular Society, Limited, asking for the favour of a regular weekly contribution of literature for the use of the troops. As the Society has not at present any literature at its disposal for this purpose, it has been handed to us, and we will do what we can to oblige. We already send a weekly supply to many men at the Front, and should have liked to do more, but our resources are limited. And we have good reason for saying that the Freethought literature sent is not the least interesting among the parcels received.

## The Present Position of Evolution.

### VII.

(Concluded from p. 619.)

OF course, those more faithful disciples of Charles Darwin who admit the influences of environmental factors are placed in no such dilemma. To them the incident forces of nature which make up the media of animals and plants are quite capable of evolving attributes, beautiful or ugly, as the case may be, that are of no vital importance to their possessors.

Finding insurmountable difficulties in the attempt to dispense entirely with Lamarckian agencies, some of the more moderate anti-Lamarckians seem disposed to favour a compromise between the two extreme positions. Professors Baldwin and Lloyd Morgan, and one or two other biologists,—

have propounded a theory which has variously been called "organic selection," "orthoplasy," "ontogenetic" or "coincident selection." On this theory, the individually acquired characters, though not transmitted to the offspring, serve to tide the successive generations over the critical period until germinal (inborn) variations of the same kind appear, which are inheritable. Ontogenetic (individually acquired) adaptations and natural selection work together towards the same end.

Considerations of space forbid more than a running reference to the numerous supplementary hypotheses from time to time put forward to supply alleged deficiencies in the principle of Selection. Among these are the theories of Isolation, Physiological Selection, and Panmixia. A considerable amount of largely superfluous energy has been expended on the problem of the preservation of those serviceable variations which from time to time arise in the organic realm. Some suggested that such useful variations, when displayed by one or very few individuals, would be swamped as the varying organisms were compelled to mate with normal types. That this appeared a powerful objection even to instructed minds, until quite recently, is proved by the late Lord Salisbury's Presidential Address to the British Association. In the course of this address, Lord Salisbury airily remarked that in artificial selection breeders, in order to evolve a desired variety, deliberately bring the right mates together. Then his lordship proceeded to inquire:—

But in Natural Selection who is to supply the breeder's place?.....What is to secure that the two individuals of opposite sexes in the primeval forest who have been both accidentally blessed with the same advantageous variation shall meet, and transmit by inheritance that variation to their successors?

One might have imagined that Lord Rayleigh, or some other scientific agriculturalist, would have reminded the noble President that pedigree horses, bulls, or rams are not necessarily paired with high-born mares, cows, or ewes in order to perpetuate the paternal strain in their progeny. As Herbert Spencer, not without a touch of scorn, said:—

It needs but to remember the care with which is specified (in stud and herd-books) a descent from some noted sire which lived several generations ago to recognize the prevailing belief that a variation existing in a particular animal is transmitted in a greater or less degree to posterity, quite apart from the possession of the same variation by the animal with which it is mated; and this belief is held by men who, as breeders, stake large profits on its truth.

Once more, in Mendelian inheritance the characteristics shown by the species hybridized, prior to their hybridization, are seldom, if ever, completely lost, as they constantly reappear in subsequent generations. Were

Natural Selection the only factor involved, considerable risk would be run of the swamping of the useful variation; but in co-operation with the various other factors of organic evolution, the persistence of the modification may be confidently anticipated.

The doctrines of the Mutationist school of evolutionists, and of that body of biologists who proclaim the existence of a law of progressive advance in organic forms—the theory of Orthogenesis—must in conclusion be briefly sketched. Since Darwin's day it has been demonstrated that variations are sometimes far more pronounced than that naturalist thought, or even suspected. Darwin traced organic transformation to the steady increment of small fluctuations of a favourable character. Marked variations he knew to occasionally occur in Nature, such as that which originated the Ancon breed of sheep; but such extreme modifications seemed so rare that they appeared to perform but a very subordinate part in the genesis of species.

Contemporary Mutationists, however, regard these discontinuous variations as a leading agency in organic transformation. Von Kolliker, as far back as 1854, and Korschinsky more recently, advanced hypotheses of a kindred nature to those advocated by the biological group now led by de Vries and Bateson. De Vries has furnished evidence that the whitlow grass (*Draba verna*), which is usually considered a good species in the systematic sense, really consists of more than two hundred subspecies. The violet (*Viola tricolour*), again, is composed of many quite easily distinguishable forms. In the opinion of de Vries, whose studies of the mutations and fluctuations of the evening primrose (*Oenothera*) have been very extensive, new plant species arise through mutation or heterogenesis at a single step, and ever afterwards truly reproduce their transformed state. The elementary species thus produced may possess qualities beneficial, baneful, or neutral in their effects upon the plant in the struggle for existence. If beneficial, they are selected, and survive; if detrimental, their possessors perish.

Apart from the circumstance that in place of the gradual modifications postulated by Darwin as the instruments of organic change, the Mutationist theory requires relatively large variations, the two views may be considered as substantially identical. For each hypothesis regards Selection as the deciding factor in the perpetuation of species. But whether the Mutationist principle will withstand the test of time is a disputed question. In some quarters, at least, its importance appears to have been somewhat exaggerated.

Attempts have been made to prove that Mutation is antagonistic to Darwin's views. But as de Vries himself states in his essay on *Variation in Darwin and Modern Science*: "On the contrary, it is in the fullest harmony with the great principle laid down by Darwin." And again: "Mutability provides the new characters and new elementary species. Natural Selection, on the other hand, decides what is to live and what to die."

Also we may in this connection recall the unfortunate fact that when, two years since, Professor Bateson delivered the Presidential Address of the British Association, certain oracles of Fleet Street seized the occasion to misrepresent that eminent scientist's attitude towards evolution. But the Professor's confession of faith is before the world. In his essay on *Heredity and Variation in Modern Lights*, Bateson asserts: "With faith in evolution unshaken—if indeed the word faith can be used in application to that which is certain—we look on the manner and causation of adapted differentiation as still wholly mysterious." With Samuel Butler, Bateson concludes that "the 'Origin of Variation,' whatever it is, is the only true 'Origin of Species.'" In other words,

evolution is an established fact, but its precise modes of genesis and development are the problems which await solution.

There remain the theories of Orthogenesis, which, taken generally, assume that the lines followed by living forms in the course of their evolution are from their very beginning strictly limited. Two prominent advocates of Orthogenesis were Professors Cope and Eimer, who based their mechanistic philosophy on Lamarckian principles. Like de Vries, Eimer derived his theories from living studies, although, instead of plants, he investigated the colour markings of lizards, butterflies, molluscs, and other animals. According to Eimer, this type of development is almost entirely dependent upon the interplay between the organism and the enviroing conditions, and the characteristics thus initiated are transmitted to descendants. Cope's views were very similar, and he accumulated an imposing array of palæontological evidence in support of them. Many organic forms certainly appear to have developed on well-marked lines. This is regarded by Cope and others as furnishing evidence of a growth-force (bathmism), which advances along mechanical paths. Orthogenesis also supplies a thinkable theory of the genesis of variations, and it is the only available hypothesis which "accounts for the excessive formation of certain features in animals which so often lead to the extinction of their possessors."

Much more might be set down on this fascinating and far-reaching theme, but our task is now at an end. We are fully conscious of the imperfections of our sketch. The phenomena of evolution are so vast that volumes are requisite to deal in anything remotely resembling completeness with their endless ramifications. Probably all the various factors referred to in this series of articles play some part in the development and maintenance of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Theories, however, may come and go, but the solid facts upon which evolution so securely stands must abide for ever. It is most certain that the pageant of Nature is not a created contrivance, but an evolved and expanded growth. As Darwin wrote in concluding his *Origin*:—

It is interesting to contemplate a tangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing in the bushes, with various insects floating about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constituted forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us.

T. F. PALMER.

## Fifty Years for Freethought.

### Jubilee of the National Secular Society.

THE half century's record of the National Secular Society and the birthday of Charles Bradlaugh, the first President and founder of the Society, and one of the most famous English Freethinkers, were honoured at a memorable meeting held on Sunday at the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham Place, London, W., when a representative platform of British "intellectuals" graced the platform, including such well-known names as Mr. Chapman Cohen, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, the only surviving daughter of the great leader, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, Messrs. A. B. Moss and W. Heaford, and Mr. Harry Snell, of the Secular Education League, and others.

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN, the President, and Editor of the *Freethinker*, occupied the chair, and in his opening remarks said popular Freethought meant bringing the results of the latest type of Biblical criticism home to the minds of the people. It dated from the days of the great French Revolution, the essence of which was democratic or nothing. Great and proud-spirited Thomas Paine sowed the seeds of

popular Rationalism. Fifty years ago theology was very different to what it is to-day. Evolution was only seven years old at the birth of the National Secular Society. If the English people knew their best friends, no Society deserved better than the N. S. S. It had never paltered with its principles or lowered its flag. Its wonderful ideal made it one of the most remarkable societies in the British Isles.

MR. J. T. LLOYD said Bradlaugh was a great man and accomplished great work, and that cannot be questioned. Forty-seven years ago George Meredith sat under him, and said, "This is a man who cannot be laughed at and sneered down. He will become a powerful speaker." Bradlaugh won for himself an honoured position in the front rank of English orators. He lives as a personality devoted to public wellbeing. Born to lead and to command, he had a passion for truth and righteousness. He attacked Christianity because the truth was not in it, and must be swept away. The Church-employed persecution but helped the Cause to victory. His career was one of the most strenuous of the nineteenth century. Bradlaugh never yielded; he was adamant, but he had a generous heart. What is the harvest of his life-work? The theology of half a century ago is dead. The God-idea is still with us, and this we must attack again and again until it too disappears.

The veteran Mr. A. B. Moss followed, and said that although suffering from a sad calamity, he could not refrain from speaking of Bradlaugh and Secularism. Bradlaugh had been called a demagogue, but he faced the world with opinions diametrically opposed to those of the masses. He spoke the truth. Had he been orthodox, his statue might have been seen in half the towns in England. Bradlaugh's views will be as fresh a hundred years hence. His message was Secularism and that Knowledge is Power. His speeches ring with passages of power. Bradlaugh was the first president of the N. S. S., and I revere his successor, George William Foote, and I also revere his young successor, Chapman Cohen. Lend him your aid, for his work is that of liberating his fellows.

MRS. BRADLAUGH BONNER said commemorations were useful in reminding us of the road we have travelled, and workers of to-day may gain fresh inspiration. It is gratifying to find so many gathering in his honour so many years after his death. Even to-day Christian libellers still insult his memory, and he has been dead twenty-five years. They declare Bradlaugh's opinions to be dismal. He believed in individual liberty and in religious freedom. Very little work has been done since Bradlaugh's time in the direction of the sweeping away of the Blasphemy Laws. Bradlaugh was in favour of public economy, and against militarism. He taught Malthusianism and Republicanism. If Germany and Austria had been republics, there would have been no war. Freethought, which he also taught, was not dismal. The really dismal doctrines are embodied in the Christian religion, which regards men and women as miserable sinners. The task before us is to organize, so that fifty years hence we may ensure liberty of conscience for all, the greatest of all liberties.

MR. HARRY SNELL said that looking back over the fifty years of the National Secular Society he saw that it had been always true to his principles. Bradlaugh was the rallying point of Freethinkers of years ago. It used to be said that the Freethought movement stands for nothing; but the movement stands for freedom of thought. Under the inspiration of Bradlaugh he devoted himself to human service. Men walked miles to hear Bradlaugh speak. The success is to be measured by the distance travelled in the past fifty years. The contemptible little Army of Freethought has triumphed over the great Army of Superstition, and driven it into the last ditch. Freethought has destroyed the horrors of religion. Things that used to be said by Freethinkers are now repeated by deans in their pulpits. The fight of the future will be between Catholicism and Freethought, and one of the great duties is to get the priest out of the schools. Freethought is only at the beginning of its career.

MR. W. HEAFORD said he did not recognize himself as a veteran, for the Cause had kept his heart young. Bradlaugh and the National Secular Society were necessary to the keeping alive of principles which will redeem this country.

Democracy, Freedom, and Justice were the watchwords of the Society, and Bradlaugh had as his ideal national reformation. The titanic figures of Bradlaugh, Watts, Carlile, Southwell, and Foote are associated with the principles of Secularism, the religion of this world, a religion which gives God no trouble.

In a final speech MR. COHEN said the meeting was a magnificent success. A man who could inspire feelings which are lively a quarter of a century after his death must have been a remarkable personality, and Bradlaugh was all that. Critics say that Bradlaugh's speeches appear old-fashioned; much of it as regards the form of attack may have been, but that was simply because we had travelled so far since then, but his principles were immortal. The best admiration for Bradlaugh and other great Freethinkers was to do one's best for the Cause itself. Besides the great leaders, there were thousands of unknown men and women who have also helped the Cause. Bradlaugh did not sacrifice himself, so much as he realized himself, and whatever a man gives to a cause such as Freethought, he reaps a tenfold return. The fight between Reason and Unreason is not by any means over, and there is plenty of fighting before the Party. The best way to remove the Blasphemy Laws is to create more Freethinkers.

The meeting was in every way notable, for it marked another step forward in the national movement for intellectual liberty founded by Charles Bradlaugh fifty years ago. Great changes have taken place during the National Secular Society's existence, the outstanding feature of which has been the growth of toleration. The National Secular Society has ever been in the vanguard of progress, and has sheltered behind it all the weaker "intellectuals," who otherwise had been crushed by the weight of orthodoxy. As the little *Revenge* earned an undying name by hurling itself against the giant battleships of the Spanish Armada, so the Secularists have displayed extraordinary courage in attacking the heart of the Armada of Superstition. In the ripe years to come recognition must be given to the superb courage which, disregarding any reward, was satisfied with the proud knowledge that their action would diffuse the blessings of intellectual Liberty to countless thousands of their countrymen. For in that happy time the stormy note of conflict will be changed to the unflattering trumpet calls of final victory.

C. E. S.

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## Correspondence.

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### DARWIN AND MALTHUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is always disappointing to me to find Freethinkers making inaccurate references to Malthus, for I regard Neo-Malthusianism as Applied Rationalism. Mr. T. F. Palmer writes: "As Darwin realized through reading Malthus, the plant and animal populations of the globe increase faster than their means of subsistence." The whole point is that populations *cannot* increase faster than their means of subsistence, and that painful evolution results from their constantly *trying* to do so.

B. DUNLOP, M.B.

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Considerable discussion has taken place in the *Daily News* on the clergy being too proud to fight. This divorce between precept and practice is no new thing. Shakespeare noticed that ungracious pastors showed the thorny way to heaven, whilst they trod the primrose path of dalliance.

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In an interview in a Sunday paper, "Colonel" Kitching, of the Salvation Army, said there were branches of the S.A. in Germany and Austria, but not in other enemy countries. This is a broad hint that the Turkish Mohammedans and Bulgarian Christians are not enamoured with the Booth crusade.

## 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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "Is Man a Machine?" Opener, T. F. Palmer; opposer, A. D. Eager.

## OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.30, H. Storey, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S. : 11.15, R. Miller, a Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Shaller and Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Smith; 6.15, Messrs. Beale, Hyatt, and Saphin.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, a Lecture.

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): C. Cohen, 3, "Jesus Christ, in Fact and in Fiction"; 6, "Woman, the Bible, and the Bishops."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation Street): 7, E. Clifford Williams, "Secularism the True Philosophy of Life."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, second floor, Fowler Street): 7, Open Conference, "Secularism: 1866-1916."

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