

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED • 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN ■ ■ EDITOR 1881-1915 G.W. FOOTE

VOL. XXXVI.—No. 43

SUNDAY OCTOBER 22, 1916

PRICE TWOPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Our Neutral Deity.

From a sermon delivered at Ebenezer Chapel, Swansea, by the Rev. Dr. Price, I gather there is an old lady in that gentleman's congregation with a good dose of what Americans call "horse-sense." This old lady had lost her son in the trenches, and to Dr. Price she put the plain question, "Why does not God take the German Emperor by the scruff of the neck and force him to come forward and make peace?" Now that, I say, is a sensible sort of a question, and it is the way a sensible sort of a God would behave. At least, I may assume this latter point because it is the way in which a sensible sort of a man would behave, and it would be rank blasphemy to infer that God is more stupid than man. For, after all, that is the very thing the Allies are trying to do. They are all endeavouring to take the German Emperor by the scruff of the neck and force him to make peace. There is no other purpose in our fighting. It is the end to which millions of lives are being sacrificed, and millions of others overcast with the shadow of a great sorrow. Why, then, does not God act in the same way? Perhaps he can't. Perhaps he won't. Perhaps, like President Wilson, he would say he doesn't know what its all about. At any rate, he does nothing; and a God who does nothing in such times as these is apt to get the cold shoulder. Neutrality may be all right with men, it is the most dangerous of all policies with gods. Very early in the War Mr. Churchill warned Italy that if it did not come in while the fighting was on it could not expect any share in the spoils of victory. And if God persists in doing nothing before peace is proclaimed, he must expect but scant gratitude afterwards.

* * *

What God Might Have Done.

When Jenny Geddes threw the stool at the head of the preacher, she did what thousands of Scotch men and women approved her doing. It was a case of a general feeling finding expression. And when Dr. Price's old lady framed her question, she was putting into words what many thousands of people are feeling. Why

doesn't God end the War? It is his business as much as anybody's. It is his world that is being hacked to pieces, his children who are doing all they can to overpopulate heaven—or the other place. God, as the preachers have always told us, is not only the creator of the universe, he is its moral ruler. He holds the balance between right and wrong. He knows when every sparrow falls to the ground, and cannot, surely, be ignorant of our daily casualty lists. Why, then, doesn't he take the German Emperor by the scruff of the neck—metaphorically, of course—and compel him to make peace on terms agreeable to the Allies? So far as we can see, all he has done hitherto is to save a few wayside crosses from destruction, and to send a few angels to save a retreating British Army from annihilation. We are thankful for such things, but they are, after all, petty and piffling at the side of the much larger things that might have been done. God might have saved Belgium, Serbia, Poland. He might compel Germany to make peace at once, and so avoid another year—perhaps longer—of slaughter. Even, if tardy, this would be striking, dramatic. The Bishop of London would rejoice, and the Freethinker would be confounded. But to leave it to "Men, Munitions, and Money" to settle the whole business, is to read men a lesson that many will not fail to learn. * * *

The Sorrows of God.

One reply made by theologians is that God meant men to live in peace with one and another, and he must not be blamed if mankind chooses differently. Poor Deity! Marie Corelli wrote a novel called *The Sorrows of Satan*, but she could have written a much larger one on *The Sorrows of God*. For, from the theological point of view, Satan does not appear to have done badly; it is God who seems to have been on the losing side right through. The old teaching used to be, God made man for his glory; but it never failed to make it plain that the Devil got most of him. God meant the earth to be for the benefit of all, but Mr. Asquith once complained that the House of Lords prevented God's purpose being realized. God meant that man should be sober, but the brewers prevent his object being attained. God, says the Bishop of London, intended that mankind should worship him, but Freethinkers baulk his purpose here. God meant mankind to live in peace, but the German military caste decree otherwise. Was there ever a more unfortunate Deity? He is chockful of good intentions, and there it all ends. Man gets in his way, and frustrates the "divine purpose." Apparently the world would have been all right if God had not said "Let us make man." The greatest blunder ever made was when God made man—unless it was that of man making God. * * *

God's Purifying Process.

Another reply is that God has "permitted" the War in order to purify the nations. They had all become more or less corrupt, and idle, and careless, and irreligious, and luxurious; and so Providence "permitted,"

or arranged, the moral tonic of a European War. It is so like Deity to "permit" all these things to be, and then "permit" a huge War to remedy them. How much easier it would have been to have prevented the growth of the evils the War is assumed to correct! And how will it correct them? It looks as though, at the very lowest, some three or four millions of men will be killed before the War comes to an end. In what way will the War teach them? At best, they are being killed to give somebody else the benefit of their death. But if it is really true that God "permits" the War because of our sins, why blame Germany for causing it? On this theory Germany is really an instrument in the hands of God. Had Germany not acted as she did, there would have been no War, and we should all have gone on in the same old way. If the Rev. F. B. Meyer is right, and the War is intended to purify us all, then the claim that Germany is destined to be the moral regenerator of Europe is absolutely sound.

* * *

The Decay of Deity.

All religious argument begins in folly and ends in confusion. Its folly was less apparent and its confusion less marked in an earlier age than our own. But to-day the world has become too vast and too complex for the Deity it once honoured. A God who impresses one generation with his power, earns the indifference or the contempt of another by his impotence. And amid all the cant and folly of speech to which the War has given rise, there does emerge the single truth that it has caused many to check their religious beliefs by the grim facts of a world-war. It is these who are realizing how paltry and inadequate religious theories are when brought to the touchstone of reality. A God who does nothing is bad enough; still, one can treat him with the indifference he deserves. But a God with whom all the barbarity and cruelty of the world is part of a "plan" is horrible and demoralizing. To realize that one were in the grip of such a being would unnerve the strongest. Fortunately, even religious people do not realize all that such a theory involves. They say that these things form part of the divine scheme of human betterment; they act as though no such scheme existed. And as to the Atheist, he is beset by no such nightmare. He sees the evil in the world, as also the good, and he sees both without misunderstanding. If he works without hope of help from the gods, he also works without fear of their displeasure. Human development is from the brute upward, and if there is enough of the brute still working in man to remind us of his origin, there is enough of the human active to inspire us to fresh efforts for its complete emancipation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Invisible Lord.

CHRISTIANS admit that the object of their faith and worship lives behind the veil, and is never seen by them. This is quite as true of God the Son as of God the Father. All the so-called realities of the Christian religion are invisible, and it is only by faith that any dealings with them are possible. They all centre round Jesus Christ, who is never seen by eyes of flesh. In orthodox theology he is described as a Divine and Human Being, or a God-man, who lived for a few years among men. The following is the Biblical view of him: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The meaning of that verse is that the only evidence we have of the existence of God is the declaration concerning him which Jesus Christ made during his life

on earth. His contention was that he had come down from God on purpose to make him known. When people said to him, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," all he answered was, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Indeed, some theologians hold that, apart from Jesus Christ, God is both unknown and unknowable. Consequently, they cling with the utmost tenacity to the belief in the historicity of the Gospel Jesus. He, too, is now invisible; but for some thirty years, nineteen centuries ago, he dwelt among the Jews, revealing his glory to them, though they were too blind to see it. Dr. Selbie, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, in a sermon preached at this year's meeting of the Mundesley Bible Conference, lays great stress on the evidential value of the life and work of the Gospel Jesus. This is how he puts it:—

At the centre of our faith there is not an idea, not a form of sound words, not a conception merely, but a Person, the Man Christ Jesus. What difference does that make? you say. It makes all the difference in the world, because it gives you your individual point of contact with the source of Christian power; it helps you individually to come into living touch with that which Christianity can do for you, and in you.

Dr. Selbie does not disparage Christian doctrines, nor does he utter a word against creeds; but he maintains that these things are but secondary, and that they point back to something else, namely, to a historic Figure. On this point, however, the reverend gentleman harbours some doubt:—

What about the historicity of the person of Jesus Christ? Has not that been in these latter days rather suspect? Can we believe as we used to do, can we see him in history as we used to do? Well, I am bound in all frankness to answer, Not quite. There are some things that we cannot quite shape to ourselves, even regarding the person of Jesus Christ, as our fathers did. We have to be prepared for changes in this direction as well as in many others.

That is an admission of the utmost importance, though the preacher himself does not seem to realize its true significance. He claims to have carefully studied the subject for many years, and to have tried to be perfectly candid in regard to it; and yet he ventures upon the following wholly illogical testimony:—

When all has been said and done; when criticism has had its perfect work, there yet remains enough in regard to the person, the teaching, and the work of Jesus Christ, for faith, for hope, for salvation, and for sanctification.

Is not Principal Selbie aware that criticism eliminates all claims of Divinity from the Gospels, and treats Jesus as nothing more than a man? Has he read *Jesus*, by Arno Neumann, and is he prepared to affirm that Neumann preserves enough of the Gospel story "for faith, for hope, for salvation, and for sanctification"? He is doubtless familiar with the views of Professor P. W. Schmiedel, expressed in his article on the Gospels in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, but is he satisfied that in it "there yet remains enough in regard to the person, the teaching, and the work of Jesus Christ," for the justification of the evangelical discourses he is in the habit of delivering up and down the country? The truth is that criticism has established the unhistoricity of the Gospel Jesus, and that many Christian critics are doing their best to construct a historical character from the materials at their disposal in the existing documents.

Dr. Selbie cuts the ground from under his own feet when he admits that criticism has made it impossible for us to believe just as our fathers used to do. If the Gospels are not infallible, if their portrait of Jesus Christ is in any sense or degree defective, it necessarily follows that they cannot be relied upon on any point

whatever, and certain portions of them are acknowledged to be legendary; no two critics will agree as to where the line between fact and fable should be drawn. Of course, the Principal's attitude to criticism is determined by his theology. To him, no matter what the higher criticism may say, Jesus is God manifested in the flesh as the Saviour of the world, and as such he will continue to present him to his hearers. He finds no difficulty in understanding and accepting Jesus "as he is set before us in the New Testament."

The Gospel Jesus is for Dr. Selbie the centre of his faith, the very root out of which Christianity grew. A few people saw his form and heard his voice during the days of his flesh, and to the majority of them his claims were so absurd that they were not taken seriously. His own nation treated him as a madman, rejecting with scorn both him and his teaching. He is now invisible, like the Father; but the Principal believes that he still lives and has infinite power at his command:—

We have never seen him in the flesh, but we can see him every day; we have never listened to his words with our human ears, but we can hear him speaking in his Word constantly. Sight is not the necessary thing. I do not know what it is. Call it imagination, call it faith, call it spiritual vision, call it what you will—you can come into touch with Jesus Christ in the most real and effective fashion.

So simply and innocently is the case for Christianity given away. God in Christ is an imaginary being, on Dr. Selbie's own showing, existing only for those who believe in him. To those who have no faith he is non-existent. Those whose faith is strong and radiant enjoy sweetest fellowship with him. His saving love is a joyous reality to them; and their happiness knows no bound. He never reveals himself to unbelievers, and he is known to believers only in proportion to the strength and intensity of their faith. If they neglect prayer even for a day he becomes less real to them. Atheists find him absolutely silent and inactive. The only rational inference is that he is a pure myth, like Osiris, Zeus, or Attis.

J. T. LLOYD.

Freethought and Literature.

(Continued from p. 661.)

II.

Song is not truth, not wisdom, but the rose
Upon truth's lips, the light in wisdom's eyes.

—William Watson.

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

—Shelley.

The torch of liberty, which fell from the dying hands of old Landor, was taken up by Algernon Charles Swinburne. In his beautiful verse we recognize the old voice of the masters, so sweet, so august, so unmistakable in its quality, which makes English poetry the supreme literary glory of the modern world. No poet since Shelley sang more loftily, or with more fiery passion, or with finer thought than Swinburne when he arraigned priestcraft before the bar of Humanity and Truth. His most heretical poems will be found in *Songs Before Sunrise*. The powerful *Hymn to Man* is frankly, even triumphantly, Atheistic. In the prelude he writes:—

Because man's soul is man's god still,
What wind soever waft his will
Save his own soul's light overhead
None leads him, and none ever led.

In another passage he treats the priests with fearful derision. He represents them calling on the Deity, and he concludes with fearful irony:—

Thou art smitten, thou God; thou art smitten; thy
death is upon thee, O Lord;

And the love-song of Earth as thou diest resounds
through the wind of her wings—
Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of
things.

In his lines apostrophizing Christ on the cross he sings, with more than Voltaire's bitterness:—

Thy blood the priests make poison of,
And in gold shekels coin thy love.

Swinburne often sneers at prayer, as in the following scornful lines:—

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate;
And these shall answer you again,
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?

Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,
That all ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure?
Or what thing have ye found on high
Past the blind sky?

In the noble *Hymn to Proserpine* the poet wears the prophet's mantle:—

O ghastly stories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees
bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but, standing, look to the end.

Another of the great Victorian poets, Matthew Arnold, had an underlying vein of Secularism in his writings. Although no one understood better the value of reticence in literature, he knew the worth of ridicule as a weapon. Arnold poked fun at the Trinity, comparing that august abstraction to "three Lord Shaftesburys," and he never showed weariness of the pleasant pastime of baiting bishops. All his life he was girding at the Nonconformists for their narrowness, and he used to quote, playfully, his own front-name with humorous resignation as only an instance of the sort of thing one had to put up with. Arnold's theological opinions were based largely on the works of those Freethinkers, Ewald and Renan. How essentially Arnold's imagination had become rationalized may be seen in his language about death, particularly in his monody on his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, and his poems, *Geist's Grave* and *Dover Beach*.

"George Eliot," whose fame as a poet is only overshadowed by her greatness as a novelist, was one of the freest of thinkers on all subjects. Her first literary venture was a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, a thunderous engine of revolt against orthodoxy. She also translated Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, and Spinoza's *Ethics*. Her beautiful poem, *The Spanish Gipsy*, is as full of Positivism as an egg is full of meat. She counts among the pioneers, for she was one of the first to attempt to free the life of the nation from ecclesiastical rule, as she had, indeed, freed herself.

Edward Fitzgerald, the friend of Tennyson and Thackeray, and the author of the magnificent version of *Omar Khayyam*, was as much an Epicurean as the old Persian himself. Fitzgerald's translation is even finer than the original. It is "a planet larger than the sun which cast it," as Tennyson happily expressed it. Fitzgerald deepened the profanities of Omar, and where the Persian is merely heterodox, Fitzgerald is often blasphemous. He dipped the old-world poet's arrows in venom:—

O threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing, at least, is certain—this life flies;
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.

William Morris, a versatile genius who bulked as largely in the social world as he did in literature, was a Freethinker, and his scepticism comes out clearly in his treatment of the subject of death. He is as materialistic as Swinburne in regarding death as "the popped sleep,

the end of all." Secularism is expressed constantly in his verse; as in the dignified lines:—

O thou who clingest still to life and love,
Though nought of good, no god, thou may'st discern,
Though nought that is, thine utmost woe can move,
Though no soul knows wherewith thine heart doth yearn,
Yet since thy weary lips no curse can learn,
Cast no least thing thou loved'st once away,
Since yet, perchance, thine eyes shall see the day.

That shy genius, James Thomson, the author of the sonorous *City of Dreadful Night*, the finest pessimistic poem in the English language, was a militant Atheist, and Atheism is the dominant note of his writings. He does not apologize for it; he positively delights in it:—

And now at last authentic word I bring,
Witnessed by every dead and living thing;
There is no God; no fiend divine
Made us and tortured us! If we pine
It is to satiate no being's gall;
It was the blind delusion of a dream,
That living person, conscious and supreme.

Robert Buchanan, poet, novelist, and dramatist, knew many fluctuations of feeling and belief regarding belief in Deity; but in all his moods he was consistently anti-Christian. The religious world generally regarded the poet as a blasphemer, and his *Wandering Jew* is one of the most profane of poems. In one of his sonnets he expressly voices negation. "Does God exist at all?" asks the poet:—

I found Thee not by the starved widow's bed,
Nor in the sick-rooms where my dear ones died;
In cities vast I hearkened for Thy tread
And heard a thousand call Thee, wretched-eyed,
Worn out and bitter. But the heavens denied
Their melancholy Maker. From the dead
Assurance came, nor answer! Then I fled
Into these wastes and raised my hands, and cried,
"The seasons pass—the sky is as a pall"—
Then wasted hands on withering hearts we press—
There is no God, in vain we plead and call,
In vain with weary eyes we search and guess
Like children in an empty house set all,
Castaway children, lorn and fatherless.

William Watson is at the head of the present school of poets, and he is heretical. He has never concealed his scepticism, and in *The Eloping Angels* he has expressed himself with Byronic freedom; whilst in *The Unknown God* he voices iconoclasm:—

A God whose ghost in arch and aisle
Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb;
But follows in a little while
Odin and Zeus to equal doom;
A God of kindred seed and line,
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

In *The Purple East* and *A Year of Shame* he showed his love of humanity:—

Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day.

Rudyard Kipling pleased the clergy with his "Recessional," but there is a lot of profanity in his writings. Tomlinson is sufficient to flutter the doves of orthodoxy. Tomlinson was neither good enough for heaven nor bad enough for hell, so after his death the poet sends him to earth again:—

And—the God that ye took from a printed book be
with you, Tomlinson.

Another passage runs:—

The devil he blew on a branded soul, and set it
aside to cool;—
Do you think I would waste my good pit coal on the
hide of a brain-sick fool?

Kipling is blasphemous in his *Bolivar*:—

Just a pack o' rotten plates putted up with tar,
In we came, an' time enough, 'cross Bilbao Bar;
Overloaded, undermanned, meant to founder, we
Euchred God Almighty's storm, bluffed the eternal sea.

There is food for thought in the verse which tells of a Hindoo maiden's amazement at Christianity:—

Look, you have cast out Love! What Gods are these
You bid me please?
The Three in One, the One in Three? Not so!
To my own Gods I go.
It may be they shall give me greater ease
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities.

This Anglo-Indian poet is fond of quoting Oriental proverbs. "Your Gods and my Gods—do you or I know which are the stronger?" he asks in *Life's Handicap*.

William Blake, John Addington Symonds, and Philip Bourke Marston were all Freethinkers. Rationalism pervades George Meredith's magnificent poems no less than his world-renowned novels. Andrew Lang, a dainty poet and a most delightful critic, was also a Rationalist. There is a frank note of iconoclasm in Thomas Hardy's writings, both in prose and verse. In the earlier novels there is a Pagan flavour, but as the author advances in intellectual power the note deepens, until, in *Tess of the Durberville*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain. Both works are an arraignment of Providence. The most characteristic of his poems is *God's Funeral*, the title of which indicates the audacity of the treatment. "Sadder than those who wept in Babylon" follow the mourners. It is a daring piece of work, comparable to Heine's vision of a dying god having the last sacraments of the Church administered to him.

MIMNERMUS.

(To be continued.)

The Great Disappointment.

It has been said that life is made up of appointments and disappointments; yet, although it is usually the non-fulfilment of the appointment that causes the disappointment, it is the latter which leaves the greater impression on the memory.

In the following I am aware that I am treading on delicate ground, and lay myself open to much criticism; but of this I am not afraid.

It must be admitted by every fair-minded man or woman that everyone is justified in thinking for themselves.

It is no crime to ask "Why?"

It is a crime to take for granted everything which is taught, a crime against society.

It is the duty of every sane person to do his utmost to prove all things—to prove them right or prove them wrong; to prove whether they be facts or fallacies.

Until recent years the Bible has been held by Christian nations to be the Word of God, and this was never disputed; in fact, no one dared question its divine authority in the face of the Church. To do so meant death, or some lesser punishment. The Church was the sole interpreter of the Scripture.

During modern times some bold persons have dared to think for themselves, and came to the conclusion that the parsons and priests had been teaching a lot of things for which there was no proof. They dared to contradict the Church. The Church rose up in arms, and tried to crush them; and many of these pioneers of Freethought, these seekers after truth, suffered much at the hands of the angry hordes of Christ's disciples.

But once the seed had been sown, once the little spark was fanned, once the thought had been given expression, it was impossible to destroy it, to trample it under foot, to crush it out of existence.

And thus at the present day it is a fact that the religion of Christianity has lost its power, has lost its hold on mankind.

The child of the future will not be brought up to lisp "Gentle Jesus" at its mother's knee, or be taught the eternal agonies of a fiery hell.

In the future there will be no bishops to grow fat on extravagant salaries, or parsons and priests to rob the poor.

For the poor shall be taught to think for themselves, and to ask the why and the wherefore of things.

Through science shall wonderful *Nature* be revealed to all.

Nature, that great God whose laws are unalterable, majestic, almighty, invincible; controlling a myriad of universes with a mathematical precision which never errs.

I have entitled this article "The Great Disappointment." I will try to explain.

Let it be known that I am not a Christian. I do not believe in the Bible; consequently, I do not believe in the God and Christ of the Bible.

I believe in gods. There are many gods. The Chinese have gods, and are just as sincere in their belief in them as any Christian is in his belief in the Bible God.

You may call me an Agnostic if you like. But if any prefer to call me an Atheist they may do so; it makes no difference to me. I am called a Freethinker because I dare to think for myself.

Brought up by parents professing Christianity, I was, in my young days, taught the Bible stories, and believed them all as true.

That God made the world out of nothing in seven days; that he created a man something like my father, and took a rib from his side with which to make a woman; that the man and woman lived in a beautiful garden; that they went about naked, and knew no sin; that the woman was tempted by a big snake to pick an apple from a tree, the fruit of which God had forbidden them to eat; that she yielded to the temptation—did pick, did eat, and gave also a bite unto the man; that by eating this apple they knew the difference between good and evil, and that they chose the evil; that thus, by one man's disobedience, sin entered into the world, were things I took for absolute facts as straight from the mouth of God.

That God, through the Holy Ghost, caused a virgin to conceive and bear a son; that this son was God's Son

—God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man; that this God-man, called Jesus, was put to death on a wooden cross at a place called Calvary; that by dying he became the Saviour of the world, and that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life, was a teaching I never doubted.

My idea of the Bible God was very vague. A powerful personality, a mighty spirit, a something to be dreaded, to be feared. A being who had power to do the impossible, power to reward and punish. A wonderful being who dwelt in a place called heaven, where the streets are paved with gold, sitting on a great throne, surrounded by a multitude of angels robed in garments of spotless white, wings growing out of their shoulders, playing on golden harps and singing God's praises for ever, and ever, and ever.

Truly a beautiful delusion.

And I believed it.

But as years went on I began to think about these things. I waded through the Old Testament—that record of the bloody deeds of a vicious, bloodthirsty God—and it made me sick. I studied the Gospels and Epistles, and became soaked with Paulisms and the sayings of the Carpenter of Nazareth. The more I read the Bible, the more disgusted with it I became.

That Christianity was a fraud I soon became convinced. I could not reconcile the teachings of Christianity with common sense. I could not believe that

which I could not prove. The stories of creation, of the flood, of the staying of the sun in the heavens, of the man in the fish's belly, of the parting of the waters of the Red Sea, of the immaculate conception, of the Nazarene's miracles, of the resurrection, of the last judgment, were, to me, absolutely contrary to sensible reasoning, absurd in the extreme.

Jesus Christ, if ever such a person existed, could not hope to compete with a modern, tenth-rate conjurer.

The Christian myth is on its last legs. This is an age of science and progress, which is slowly but surely working out the emancipation of poor, struggling humanity.

"The Great Disappointment"? Yes. Christianity is the great disappointment. Christianity—the great mythical fabric which has, in the hands of crafty men, deluded the nations for centuries. Christianity—the cause of bloody wars, of national disputes, lending a cloak of mock modesty to immorality, harbouring the thief, the traitor, the cur.

WILLIAM HILL.

Hong Kong.

Book Chat.

Of all the institutions that were ever born of perverted human ingenuity, there has never been none more "devilish" in its conception nor more frightful in its realization than the Inquisition. It is an institution that is, fortunately, almost unique in the history of mankind. And it is peculiarly Christian in its origin and application. Secret in its operation, swift in its action, it established spies everywhere, and in such a way that no man felt himself safe, not even in the very bosom of his family. Other institutions have warred against what men did; the Inquisition warred against what men thought. And dreadful as were the number of men and women put to death by the Inquisition wherever it established itself, its influence was still more disastrous on the lives of those whom it suffered to live, and on the thought of the times in which it flourished. Against the bare fact of the establishment of the Inquisition all the claimed good of the Christian Church is as nought. The more reason that everybody, Christian and Freethinker, should have at hand a plain and concise statement of what the Inquisition was, how it began, what it did, what was its matter of working. This has been admirably provided by Mr. C. T. Gorham in *The Spanish Inquisition* (Watts & Co.; 1s. 6d. net). Mr. Gorham's essay is largely based on Mr. H. C. Lea's monumental work, and it tells the horrible story with admirable brevity and restraint. In this case Mr. Gorham's moderate tone does but add force to the indictment. We cordially commend the book to all Freethinkers, and still more to all Christians.

After a considerable interval—due, we believe, to the ukase of the Press Censor—we have received a copy of the Chicago magazine, *The Open Court* (Chicago and London; 6d. monthly). It seems slighter than of old, due probably to the price of paper, but its contents are as good as ever. "Moral Law and the Bible," by Arthur J. Westermayr, and "Natural Morality," by B. S. Lyman, will well repay reading, and there is a couple of pages on a pamphlet published in France in 1911, which might be a description of the opening phases of the War, instead of a warning as to what would most probably happen.

The Truthseeker Company (New York) sends us a copy of *Eternity: World-War Thoughts on Life and Death, Religion, and the Theory of Evolution* (6s.), by Professor Haeckel. Presumably the fact of the book being

written during the War period is responsible for its being called *World-War Thoughts*. Otherwise there is no apparent reason why the War should be used in the title at all. True, there are in the original edition a number of observations about the War, which the publishers have very wisely gathered together in some twenty-five pages at the end of the volume. We wish they had been omitted altogether. They offer a very one-sided view of the position of this country, and their only utility is to show that men of science may lose their mental balance during a time of war as well as ordinary folk. We have had illustrations of this in our own country, and these pages show that the phenomenon is not confined to Britain. For the rest, the volume contains a very interesting and instructive review of the general teachings of evolution, with their application to ethics, religion, and life. Admirers of Hæckel—and we count ourselves among the number—will read these with thankfulness and profit, and ignore the political polemic. One thing stands out quite plainly. The War has not dulled the wonderful vitality of this champion of evolution. One is apt to forget, in reading his vigorous lines, that he was born as far back as 1834.

In *Green Alleys* (Heinemann; 6s. net.) Mr. Eden Phillpotts forsakes his familiar and loved Dartmoor for the hop-fields of Kent. Slightly less sophisticated than the Dartmoor types of character with which the author has made his readers familiar, there is the same primitive directness of vision about the dwellers in the Kentish hop fields that belongs of right to all who dwell close to Mother Nature. It is possible to call this last novel of Mr. Phillpotts a novel with a purpose, since the principal male character is an illegitimate, and several of the author's characters tilt vigorously at the laws with regard to illegitimates, which the author well says are a disgrace to civilization. But the purpose of the novel—if one may call it so—is never allowed to become too obtrusive. Mr. Phillpotts does not preach, which is the fatal weakness of most novels with a purpose, and nearly all his characters are alive. We say nearly all because we find one character, that of Witherden, a little unconvincing. But he serves as a foil for Mr. Phillpotts' views on illegitimacy, and it is likely that to that purpose he owes his birth. The descriptive pages of the book are very finely done, and were these gathered together they might be not inaptly described as an Epic of the Hop. It is a book that one can read with both pleasure and profit.

The faculty of writing so as to be loved and understood by children is comparatively rare, and there are few who possess it in such a marked degree as our contributor Mr. F. J. Gould. In *Worth While People* (Watts & Co.; 2s. 6d.) Mr. Gould has brought together a collection of stories gleaned from all ages and from all parts of the world, and retold in his own characteristic and inimitable manner. Even adults—that is, healthy adults—may read these stories with pleasure, but to boys and girls of, say, from eight to thirteen years of age, they will be things of pure delight. Perhaps the best criticism of this volume—we are sure it is the one Mr. Gould will like best—was that passed by our own boy (aged eight). Some time ago he plumped unhesitatingly for the same author's *Children's Plutarch* out of a number of similar books he had read. And after two days' reading of *Worth While People*, he decided that it was better than the *Plutarch*. And we have a sneaking conviction that if children were left to choose their own books, the selection would be a more serviceable one than when it is made by adults. No better present for boy or girl could be found than *Worth While People*.

Acid Drops.

The Bishop of London has licensed about seventy women to deliver addresses in institutions and business houses during the National Mission. But they are not permitted to speak in the churches. That is sacred to men. We should have imagined that no self-respecting woman would have accepted an office which is so created as to carry with it a stigma of inferiority, if not of degradation. But it is one of the peculiar features of Christianity that it not only degraded woman, but induced her to take a pride in her own degradation.

Our poor, poverty-stricken bishops! The wife of the Bishop of Chichester told a *Daily Mail* man that in ordinary years they used sixty tons of coal in the episcopal palace. This winter, in the interests of national economy, the Bishop has decided to live in a smaller place, and with fewer servants. Hear, hear! But we wonder who will get the savings. Probably they will be invested in six per cent. War Bonds, and the nation will have the honour of paying the interest.

We see from a New York paper that Father Joques, one of the seventeenth century missionaries to the North American Indians is shortly to be canonized. Truly, the North American Indians have reason to remember these early pioneers of the Cross. What were then trackless forests, with no other habitation than clusters of often-moved wigwams, are now numerous solidly built cities and towns. The sparse and scanty population has now grown to over seventy millions. Trains and electric cars now travel through spaces over which the earlier inhabitants either tramped on foot or rode on horseback. The arts and sciences flourish where they were previously unknown. A simple nature religion has been replaced by a highly elaborated ritual, and a handful of medicine-men by many thousands of priests. All this, and more, is the outcome of the labours of men such as Father Joques and others who came after him. None will deny, then, that this worthy Jesuit has earned his canonization. It ought to be added that these cities are inhabited by white men; it is they who enjoy the art and science and other benefits of civilization. The native possessors of the soil are represented by a vanishing handful of poverty-stricken, demoralized natives, with the prospect of a more or less speedy extinction. So let us be thankful for the good work of Father Joques.

An interesting *contretemps* is reported in *Truth*, which says:—

It was, perhaps, a little thoughtless of the authorities to arrange that on the Sunday morning when the National Mission opened, and all good people should have attended Divine service, our musical visitors from France should regale an appreciative audience of Londoners with an attractive programme on the Horse Guards Parade—more or less midway between the Abbey and St. Paul's. Many people, I am afraid, who were hesitating as to which of these churches they would honour with their presence settled the question by lingering around the Republican band.

And a very good settlement, too.

"Is baptism necessary to salvation?" has been a fruitful subject of debate among Christians for wasting valuable time. A Baptist minister, the Rev. J. Moffat Logan, who gained some notoriety by debating with Mr. Foote in the early 'nineties, took the negative side in a debate on this question, his ministerial opponent solemnly affirming that baptism by immersion was essential to man's salvation. We are now reminded that it was, at one time, considered necessary in another connection. Baptism—this time by *christening*—was the passport to the State of Matrimony, and the clergy insisted upon its presentation. The reading of a paragraph in a recent *Observer*, which was reprinted from its issue of October 6, 1816, is responsible for the above observations. It reads as follows:—

At Deene, near Wandford, Lincolnshire. Mr. Wm. Giddings, aged 38, was married to Miss Hannah Spendilo, aged 16: when the pair first appeared at the altar, the clergyman asked the young woman whether she was a Christian; her answer

convinced him that she had not been baptized, and therefore he refused to perform the marriage ceremony. The couple then left the church, but returned shortly afterwards with godfathers and godmothers, when the intended bride was christened and married.

Let us hope that she obtained more satisfaction from the outcome of the latter ceremony than from the former.

A correspondent informs us that in Liverpool a billposter has stuck up some large bills advertising the National Mission, and immediately below, forming, as it were, a continuation of the message, is the announcement, in large letters, "Shell Out"—the name of a music-hall revue. We congratulate the billposter on his sense of the fitness of things.

The bishops have named their new crusade a "mission of repentance and hope." The bishops themselves have much to repent for, and there is very little hope that the ecclesiastical leopard will change its spots.

The Rector of Kilmarth in his Parish Magazine for October says:—

There are in the immediate neighbourhood certain lewd men, some of them married with families of their own, who are not worthy of the name of man, who are setting themselves out to destroy the innocence and rob young girls of their purity.

We condemned, and rightly so, the Hun for his despicable conduct to the helpless women and girls of Belgium and France, but it would seem that we have just as big blackguards in Derbyshire.

The diabolical scandals which have come before us in this village during the last month are enough to make every decent man in the village ashamed of his sex. And we, one and all, ought to do all that lies in our power so as to arouse public opinion on the question, so that such scandals shall in future be impossible.

And yet we send missions to the heathen!

From the *Evening News* we learn that one of the relics from the Zeppelin crew that came down at Cuffley was a velvet-bound Bible. This has been taken charge of by the authorities; but we presume they would not object to lend it to the Bishop of London, to be used as proof that the Zeppelins are manned by Atheists.

The Rev. Herbert Brook has made a most startling discovery, which is calculated to revolutionize social life. He read a paper at the Birmingham meeting of the Congregational Union, in which he informed his fellow-Christians that "holy love was not emotional love." We always thought that love was a pure emotion; but we were radically mistaken. What love is we are not told; but the reverend gentleman was strongly convinced that "some nations on the battlefield (ourselves and our Allies) were acting on the principle of the holy love of Almighty God." What that means we don't pretend to know; but Mr. Brook talked *ex cathedra* thus:—

God himself, and God in Christ [two different beings, evidently] was always working out his purpose. If nations fell in with his purpose all was well; if they obstructed his purpose [as the Germans clearly did!], they learnt from Scripture and all history how God went to war against them, and they [we, the British nation] must go to war with him for the carrying out of his purpose.

Well done, Mr. Brook! He ends by making another and more wonderful discovery still, namely, that the British are helping God to beat the Germans. This discovery, added to the other, that love is *not* an emotion, will certainly place the crown of immortality upon the discoverer's brainy head!

Religious indifference is alarmingly on the increase throughout the length and breadth of the land. According to the *Christian Commonwealth* the clergy generally complain of diminished congregations and depleted funds; and in some places the average attendance at Sunday-schools is said to have declined by as much as one-third. The Rev. A. J. Waldron, late of Brixton, states that "children of fourteen and upward have largely fallen away from the Sunday-

schools." The War, instead of reviving religion, as many expected it to do, is having the opposite effect in the majority of cases. Even the most popular preachers seem to do no more than hold their own. The general trend is away from the Churches and even from Christianity itself.

In an address to Baptist Churches, published in the *Christian World*, there prevails a tone of utter pessimism. We read:—

The fear of God has almost gone; the belief in a final judgment has lost much of its intensity and restraining force; the righteous Fatherhood of God has been perverted into a paternal fondness with little moral discrimination; the exceeding sinfulness of sin is unconsciously denied, and the burden which Bunyan's pilgrim groaned under until he left it at the Cross produces little groaning and disturbance now.

Religion is in the dying process, and its ministers are rehearsing the dirge that will be sung at its obsequies a little later on.

At Northampton, the Rector of Bugbroke was summoned for ringing the bells of his church during prohibited hours. (The prohibition is connected with the precautions against Zeppelin raids.) The Rector pleaded the powers given him by the Act of Uniformity, and the justices, believing that an offence had been "unwittingly committed," dismissed the case. How on earth the offence could have been unwittingly committed in face of the Rector's plea only the wisdom of these local justices can explain. Had the offence been committed by an ordinary householder, these same officials would doubtless have lectured the offender on the gravity of his misdeed, and fined him accordingly.

It is quite all right! The Master of Baliol College, in the course of an address delivered at Bristol, said that the working class has "a real and growing religious sense." One feels quite impressed by this testimony, coming as it does from an Oxford professor whose walk in life has brought him into such intimate relations with the working classes.

The late pastor of Califaria Baptist Chapel was summoned at Llanelly for being drunk, and fined five shillings. If he had been a Freethought lecturer, the moral would have been simple. Being a clergyman, everyone must act as they think best in the matter.

The Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. H. Hertz, says that there are no less than 25,000 Jewish soldiers serving with the colours. This is one proof of the composite nature of a professedly "Christian" country.

The Bishop of London and his petticoated admirers have very little good to say about music-halls. "Adjutant" Orsbom, of the Salvation Army, however, says "we rely chiefly upon the music-hall song to get our crowds."

The Dean of Rochester, speaking at Strood, said he knew a curate who had worked for forty years for only £10. During the same period, it is interesting to recall, the bishops of the same church received seven and a quarter millions of money.

"The civilian is bloodthirsty because he knows nothing of war," writes Mr. Douglas Newton. Perhaps the same reason explains why the clergy are so bellicose.

In the East of Europe gipsies have been forced into the ranks. The Nomad tribes would have been left in peace if there were no mad "divine-right" emperors.

Some ecclesiastics are trying to persuade the people that the War has made us religious. The fact is that it has made everybody extremely critical of religious professions and pretensions. Even bishops are not spared. Thus: the Rev. Hubert Handley, Vicar of St. Thomas, Camden Town, preaching at St. Sepulchre's, Holborn, went straight to the root of one strange anomaly when he suggested that English bishops should live in simple houses rather than in palaces. The real root of the evil (*i.e.*, indifference to the call of reli-

gion) was the worldliness of the Church, the worldly grandeur of its chief ministers.

You lodge them in magnificent mansions, palaces, and castles (said the preacher, according to a report in the *Daily Telegraph* of September 25), and you turn into their coffers incomes of thousands. He did not say the bishops made any personal profit for themselves, and he knew they spent their incomes largely on the work of the Church; but year after year they stood before the nation as grandees, as regal magnates, and the result was that the people would not have their message.

For fifteen years I have been writing and speaking, but I have always shown respect to my superiors in this matter. Now I can have no respect, and will throw it to the winds, and declare God's wrath against this sin, which is at the root of the powerlessness of the Church.

This outspoken cleric is, we believe, the author of the volume on *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*, which made something of a sensation when it was published; but apparently it has effected no appreciable change, or the author would have seen no need for this further castigation. It is, however, thoroughly well deserved; but not only should the housing of bishops be criticized, but the housing of the lesser lights of the Church might be referred to, for usually they are hidden under very magnificent bushels, particularly in cathedral closes and rural rectories. Here their state contrasts very mockingly with the slums that are not very far off in the towns, and with the hovels in which the rural labourer barely gets sheltered from the elements. We can quite believe that zealous men like Mr. Handley abhor the system which tolerates preferment to these places, but others seem to bear the infliction with great fortitude, and compound for any little worldliness on their part by severely denouncing the worldliness and materialism of the men who are not able to get on in the world so well.

The Vicar of Selby is appealing for funds to insure the Abbey Church to the value of £50,000 against air raids. Why not save the money, and trust to the power of prayer? It would greatly impress the unbelieving.

Father Bernard Vaughan says it is a house-to-house-going clergy that makes a church-going people. We may remind his reverence that it was the house-to-house-going predilections of the clergy of his own Church that had a deal to do with bringing about the Protestant Reformation. Husbands and fathers found there could be too much of a house-to-house-going clergy.

Welsh Nonconformists are greatly disturbed over the number of young theological students who have gone over to the Anglican Church. These men are clothed, lodged and trained at the expense of the denominations, and there is a movement on foot to enforce students to give a written undertaking to devote themselves to the denomination to which they belong. Religious conviction by guarantee, or inspiration as per contract, seems a fitting description of this arrangement.

During the past fifty years there has been a marked intellectual decline in the clergy of the Church of England, remarked Bishop Welldon, of Manchester. And the decline is physical no less than intellectual, judging by the number of fighting parsons.

The restraining power of religion was not very apparent in the case of a military deserter, and also a gospel preacher, who was committed for trial at Southend, Essex, for bigamy.

"London a hundred years ago was more Godly than it is to-day," is a pearl of wisdom from the Bishop of London. His lordship might have added that the metropolis was then more dirty, more criminal, more drunken, and worse in every respect.

The Italian bishop of Durazzo, who was arrested at Scutari by the Austrians, was transported by aeroplane to Durazzo. This is the first occasion of a bishop emulating the aerial trip mentioned in the Gospels.

Archbishop Bonzano, Apostolic delegate in New York, is quite joyful over the establishment of a censorship in Europe. He sees in it a justification of the policy of the Roman Church. No one, he says, blames a nation at war for establishing a censorship; why, then, blame the Church for establishing a censorship in the shape of an Index? We suppose the answer is that the censorship is at best a temporary precaution, although its absurdities and blunders are such that it is an open question whether the good it does is equalled by the evil it inflicts. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Index was deliberately designed to prevent the circulation of all knowledge of which the Church disapproves. Still, it is significant to find the Apostolic delegate blessing one of the worst features of the War.

The Index of the Church, we are told, was a prohibition of "unclean literature." Well, it depends upon what one calls "unclean." Were the writings of Galileo, or Kepler, or Newton "unclean"? Were the hundreds of other scientific writings—we leave out other books—that were placed upon the Index "unclean"? But a book placed upon the Index was not a mere indication that the book was undesirable; its possession was a crime. And as late as 1869 Pius IX. issued a reminder that any Catholic found possessing a book named on the Index was subject to excommunication. Father Bonzano must try again. Our own censorship is bad enough, but its evil is admitted, and its temporary character declared. The Roman Catholic Index is one of the vilest things ever created; and nothing like it has ever existed outside Christianity. When it is a question of evil institutions, that religion can always take an easy first.

An advertisement in a provincial paper runs, "Wanted, two bricklayers and elderly man to drive horse." That animal must have the temper of a Christian Evidence lecturer.

In a recent issue the *London Star* said:—

A strike has occurred amongst the offertory collectors at a prominent chapel at Peterborough, as a protest against a conscientious objector, a single man of military age, who is in the habit of taking round an offertory box.

The deacons have been plainly told by many members of the congregation, who have sons fighting, that they would absolutely decline to place offerings in the box handled by the conscientious objector, who they think ought long ago to have been fighting.

And yet these same deacons, and this same flock, will join heartily in the Christmas flapdoodle about herald angels singing Peace on Earth; and without hesitation will hymn their Prince of Peace hymns as heartily in war as ever. But if it is right to do this in peace, it cannot be right to do it in war, or vice versa. One attitude must be wrong. If Christ is a warrior in war and a pacificator in peace, truly do Peterborough deacons and congregations make gods in their own image. And, by the way, on the point of conscience, how many of these rebels were Passive Resisters a while back, and publicly advertised consciences which defied the Government to the extent of withholding the education rate until the local authorities summoned them and ordered them to pay up, when they did so! Rare courage, that. But can they now logically blame objectors to the military service who claim to be obeying the voice of their conscience and to defying the authorities at the risk, not of small inconvenience and big advertisement, but of prolonged imprisonment, mental torture, and even death itself, under the strain of conditions imposed on unfit constitutions.

A respectable evening paper, referring to London's health report, says "Measles have wallowed in a veritable holocaust." A cynic might remark that this was a playful way of patting Providence on the head.

A newspaper paragraph states that 1,400 coins made up a £10 offertory at Egham Parish Church. Salvation is fairly cheap at Egham.

The Half-Priest is the title of a recent publication. It would describe admirably the High Church clergy, many of whom are married and pose as priests.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 22, Sheffield; October 29, Barrow-in-Furness; November 5, Brixton; November 12, Glasgow; December 10, Leicester; January 14, Nottingham; February 4, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 29, Sheffield; November 19, Birmingham; December 31, Abertillery.
- MRS. F. BURNS.—We are quite sure of your warm interest in the *Freethinker*, which we very much appreciate.
- N. R.—Membership form sent as requested. Your experience is interesting, and we are pleased to find that our literature has been of so much help to you. We should like to see the *Freethinker* at a penny, but that is impossible under present circumstances.
- J. B. MIDDLETON.—Glad you found our statement so satisfactory. Our friends generally expected a much more serious loss than is the case. The fact that the *Freethinker* is one of the very few papers to make headway during the War is most encouraging.
- S. W. SOPER.—Suggestions will be considered.
- DALMUIR.—Sorry we cannot publish so lengthy a defence of Christianity by way of a defence of prophecy. It is not likely that many Christians would thank us if we did publish, even though we had the space to spare.
- T. ROBERTS.—We appreciate your wish that every Welshman who is a *Freethinker* will send along a subscription to our Sustentation Fund. If it were realized, Wales alone would supply all that is needed.
- T. O. (Llanelly).—Paper received. Glad you think the *Freethinker* is "better than ever."
- A WAYMARK.—Will take the first opportunity of writing on the subject named. The rest of your letter duly noted.
- W. MORRIS.—(1) We can only say that we never experienced any trouble in the direction you suggest. (2) Men of strong character are apt to create antagonisms, as they create strong friendships. We are, however, very pleased to have your views so frankly expressed. (3) Certainly, as you say, the Freethought cause is now going ahead.
- C. JORDAN.—Not surprised that your soldier son, who was in the retreat from Mons, heard nothing about the angels until you told him. All the lying on that head appears to have been done at home. The soldiers were too busy.
- J. H. ROUND.—(1) Things have changed considerably since the days of the apostles. (2) The *Agnostic Journal* has been dead for some years. It died with its editor, "Saladin."
- H. GOOD.—No need for alarm in that direction. The *Freethinker* is quite safe. If we had to burgle the paper and commandeer labour, it should make its weekly appearance regularly. England without the *Freethinker* is simply unthinkable.
- BRISTOLIAN.—Your account of your lady friend whose revulsion against the belief in hell was aroused by her child's fear of fire is very interesting, and we regret that we have not space for the story in full. The story illustrates the general truth that a mere word is often enough to quicken the mind into active hostility to Christian doctrines.
- J. ROBERTSON.—We think of adopting your suggestion with reference to the Fund.
- J. STANWAY.—Thanks for subscription and cutting. The latter will be very useful.
- H. SPENCE.—Sympathy from a fellow-sufferer.
- A. G. DALE.—We shall be pleased to start a Branch of the N. S. S. in Bradford, or anywhere else, so soon as there are enough friends to undertake the necessary local arrangements.
- 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.
- 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.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.
- 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.

Our Sustentation Fund.

THE purpose of this Fund is to clear off the deficit incurred in running the *Freethinker* since October, 1915. A full statement of the position of the paper, financial and otherwise, was made in our issue for October 1. The loss was actually much smaller than might have been anticipated, and it appears to be the general wish of our readers that a reserve fund should be created to meet such further losses as are inevitable during the continuation of the War. This is a matter which is entirely in the hands of our readers, and the result will show whether this desire is realized or not. For our own part, we can only repeat what we have already said, that both the response to the appeal for a Sustentation Fund, and the appreciation shown for what has been done, has been most gratifying and encouraging.

Mr. J. Foot, in wishing us "better luck and less need of it," says:—

Herewith my poor mite towards the Sustentation Fund, which circumstances, not my will, limits to such meagre proportions. Meagre, because if placed on the mean basis of a business transaction I should still be your debtor; and when placed on the better basis of gratitude for the excellent work you are doing in spite of such huge difficulties, I feel that I can only say "Thank You," and again "Thank You."

Mr. J. Sumner (Birmingham) writes:—

Allow me to congratulate you upon the remarkable success, for I can regard it as none else, with which you have been able to conduct the *Freethinker* during these troublous times, and to hope that before long these will be at an end. It will give me very much pleasure to contribute five guineas per year for the ensuing three years if necessary.

A very old friend of the Freethought cause, Mr. G. L. Alward, of Grimsby, says:—

Mrs. Alward and myself are delighted to see the very active and determined way you are carrying forward the Freethought cause. For about fifty years we and some of our family have been associated with the movement. Had my two departed brothers been alive to read your articles on the War and the curse that Christianity has brought with it, they would say the *Freethinker* is the only publication that places the issue before the people.

An "Essex Tommy" sends us, with the greatest pleasure, his week's wages before leaving for abroad.

Miss A. M. Baker, in sending subscription, thinks:—

You may well be pleased with the result of your year's editorship. It is most satisfactory in these days of trouble.

Mr. A. W. B. Shaw writes from Dublin:—

I enclose £2, and trust you will not measure my sympathy with the "best of causes" by the meagreness of my contribution. Allow me to say that the *Freethinker* is better than ever, and quite fulfils the description which a newspaper man gave me in these words: "I am a press man myself, and can tell you there is more intellect behind that little paper than all the press in the United Kingdom."

THIRD LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £117 16s.—Sir Hiram S. Maxim, £10; H. Spence, 5s.; Dr. C. R. Niven, £1 1s.; W. W., 2s. 6d.; J. Stanway, 10s.; G. Sanders, 5s.; Jas. Robertson, 5s.; W. Cliffe, £1 1s.; Essexian, 7s.; J. Foot, 10s.; A. B., 15s.; Mrs. F. Burns, 10s.; K. J., 2s. 6d.; Mr., Mrs., and Master Neate, 10s.; W. E. Jarmaine, 2s.; K. C. Clarkson, £2; R. Wood, 5s.; Miss A. Baker, £2; J. Breese, £1 1s.; J. V. Davies, 2s.; T. Roberts, 1s.; D. G. Tacchi, £1; C. Jortan, 2s. 6d.; W. Morris, 4s.; A. Waymark, 1s.; H. Good, 10s.; M. T. M., 10s. 6d.; J. A. Reid, 1s. 6d.; J. Lazarnick, £1 1s.; A. D. Corrick, £1; H. A. W., 5s.; G. H., 5s.; T. Scott, £1; W.

Fitzpatrick, 5s.; A. J. Marriott, 5s.; A. W. B. Shaw, £2; D. C. Edwards, 11s. 6d.; L. E. Tate, 5s.; A. H. Deacon, 2s. 6d.; C. S. Mayer, 4s. 8d. J. Preston, 2s. 6d. *Per Miss Vance*:—Robert Stirton and Friends (Dundee), 15s.

Sugar Plums.

Many of our readers are doing what they can to induce newsagents to display the *Freethinker* for sale. Wherever this is done the results are satisfactory, and we are obliged to those who are helping us in this way. We are informed, however, that some newsagents say they would be quite willing to show the paper, but their wholesale agents inform them that the *Freethinker* is not sent to them on sale or return. We cannot understand this, as the *Freethinker* is supplied to all agents on sale or return. There is no exception to this rule, and we shall be glad of particulars wherever and whenever such statements are made.

An attempt is being made to restart the secular propaganda in Sheffield. Mr. Cohen lectures there to-day (October 22), afternoon at 3, and evening at 6. The meetings will be held in the Foresters' Hall, Trippet Lane, and we hope to see a good muster of local friends. An attempt was made to get one of the large picture palaces for the meetings, but without success. Tickets for the meeting may be obtained of Mr. T. Dennis, 38 Gifford Road, Heeley, and Mr. J. V. Grimes, 70 Lansdown Road, Sheffield, or at the hall prior to the meeting. Both these gentlemen have been working like Trojans to make the meetings a success, and we hope their efforts will be rewarded.

In order to discuss the general situation at Sheffield with a view to further work, Mr. Cohen has arranged to meet Sheffield friends at the Foresters' Hall on Saturday evening, at 7. He hopes to meet as many friends as possible on that occasion.

Mr. Cohen brought back with him from Birmingham on October 9 the materials for an attack of ptomaine poisoning, which duly developed. He managed to get through Tuesday's work on the paper at some inconvenience, but was compelled to do as little as possible for several days. But he was unable to take the chair at the Bradlaugh Fellowship Dinner as arranged, much as he regretted having to break an engagement. Much correspondence has also had to stand over as a result, and those who have written him will now understand the delay. As Mr. Cohen can't afford at present to be ill, he promptly got better, and is now almost himself again.

The *Birmingham Weekly Mercury* for October 14 contains a lengthy descriptive report of Mr. Cohen's recent lecture in the Birmingham Town Hall.

We know our readers are always interested in letters from Freethinkers in our Army abroad, hence our reason for printing the following:—

To-day is Sunday and, as usual, I have just received the *Freethinker* by the mail, for which much thanks. It is read well by my battery weekly, and is the cause of many healthy discussions, which come as a diversion.

The Bishop of London has been very often talked about amongst us with regard to his speeches, to wit, the one recently at St. James's, Piccadilly, which some of us read in the *Daily Mirror*. The *Freethinker* this week appropriately sums up the whole thing when it says: "The Bishop is following the cheap and easy plan of dealing with obvious effects and leaving untouched their causes." That, to my mind, is the explanation of most of the Christian dilemma.

This War goes on apace, and from a once "Contemptible little Army" has arisen a larger and much stronger one, capable I [and many more] think of giving the "knock out" as Mr. Lloyd-George calls it.

One hope I have among others is that another "Contemptible little Army" is striding along on a similar route. Both are hard nuts to crack. "Persevere and win."

I am 46 years of age, and have had time to think a little, but I have come across many youngsters out here who are following up the path of Reason, and they are not loth to state their opinions.

We are pleased to hear Mr. Lloyd had two splendid meetings at Glasgow on Sunday last. We go to press too early to have received news of the result of his Falkirk meeting, but we hope that was as satisfactory. Generally speaking, Freethought is "booming" all round.

We have long felt the need, as we daresay others have, of developing the educational side of the Freethought Movement, chiefly with a view to the supply of speakers. A tentative effort is to be made at once, and Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., will be pleased to meet some of the younger members of the Movement at the N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C., on Tuesday, Oct. 24, at 7 o'clock. The purpose of the meeting is to mark out lines for classes that will be helpful to candidates for the platform. Of some of these proposed classes Mr. Howell Smith has kindly volunteered to take charge.

We are glad to hear that the attendance at the debates arranged by the North London Branch, N. S. S., is increasing every week. Next Sunday's subject (see Lecture Notice) should induce the local Socialists to break a lance, as the suggestion proposed by the Opener is, we understand, put forward as an alternative to the Socialist solution.

We note that the Government has seen fit to further restrict the importation of paper. Hitherto, two-thirds of the 1914 importation has been allowed. Now it is to be one-half. So there may be more trouble ahead. As a further encouragement, it has been settled for all compositors to have three shillings per week extra as a war bonus, in addition to the rise in wages already made.

We are glad to note that a lengthy, and lively, correspondence for and against Christianity has been running through the *Hong Kong Telegraph*. The correspondence was, we understand, initiated by one of our subscribers; and the manner in which it has been taken up evidences a large amount of Freethought amongst the Europeans there.

The War in the East and the Failure of Christian Civilization.

A Lecture by G. W. Foote at Queen's Hall, W.
October 27, 1912.

In the south-east of Europe—I won't say they are at daggers drawn, though apparently they have been doing even that—they have each other by the throat. I don't believe all I read in the papers, because I know the Christian sources through which all this information comes. And when a Christian is writing history, never trust him. The Turk is engaged in another occupation for him—running away. Well, I should believe it when its a little more clearly proved. That's never been his great fault yet—running away. When a Mohammedan runs away from a Christian, then is his doomsday near. You could not expect a nation like Turkey, with the legacy of ages of misgovernment, to set its house in order in five minutes. What has been done has been the work of the young Turk, and they are, almost to a man, Freethinkers, and have been educated in Western colleges. Even the best of men cannot take up a nation with all its heritage of good and evil and shape it into nothing but right and wisdom. Man moves slowly, and we have had to learn that lesson again lately. But surely the country that enjoys representative government might have been a little more kind to the nation that was hoping to realize it. Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, when the Czar sent the Duma away, said, "The Duma is dead; but long live the Duma." Nobody seems to be talking like this about the Turk. Why? Because he is a Mohammedan; he belongs to a different faith. He doesn't belong to the brotherhood of nations—except to Freethinkers. All nations that

are trying to do a little better work for themselves and the world belong to the brotherhood of nations. Certainly the Turk seems, for the present, to be getting the worst of it, but we must remember that the psychological moment that was seized upon to attack him was wonderfully fortunate for the attackers and wonderfully unfortunate for him, because he had sent a great part of his resources to Africa. Moreover, the whole military situation had been arranged with a view to the continuation of the war with Italy. The Turk was comparatively unprepared. Well, that is what they call Christian charity. The Western Powers might have settled all the trouble in the Balkans any time for the last twenty or thirty years. And why don't they do it? Any half-dozen well meaning men, with fair heads upon their shoulders instead of theologically soaked turnips, might have brought a reasonable solution to the whole difficulty. What is the reasonable solution? Self-Government. Not that we are so fond of it. We delight in recommending it—to our neighbours. Why have not the Western Powers settled this trumpery question? Because they hate each other, mistrust each other, and realize the truth of Swift's sentence that "most men have religion enough to make them hate each other."

I say that mutual mistrust, jealousy, and hatred, are the characteristics of Christian nations in international affairs. I remember speaking in this very hall early in the summer, and I said for one thing I did not believe in anything at all except the growth of a better spirit of mutual confidence and respect amongst the people of the various countries of the world. Mr. Norman Angel, for instance, writes a very interesting and, in its way, powerful book, pointing out what a terrible cost war would be, and even the winner would lose. Well, the old Duke of Wellington told a lady all those years ago that the next bad thing to a defeat was a victory. And he knew what he was talking about. What nation in the world was ever kept from fighting because its pockets were empty? There never was such a case. Every time Russia has wanted to fight, notwithstanding her poverty (I am speaking politically, and of the difficulty of raising a loan in the money-market), she has gone to war and pulled through somehow. We talk about the reduction of armaments. Now, can you imagine a couple of men living in the same street that hate each other. Some day or other either one will kill the other or they will kill each other. Each of them has got six revolvers. Somebody in the same street persuades them to come to a meeting and discuss the reduction of armaments, and at the finish each goes home with three revolvers—and if that is not enough for murder, what is? Nations will never stop fighting because guns are dear. What is it that makes them fight? First they are bamboozled by those whom they suppose are watching their interests. Labour has to talk in the open; money can talk with closed doors. The cards are on the table in the one case, and, too often, they are under it in the other. Again, while men hate each other—Christianity has never intentionally prevented that, but, on the contrary, set up all sorts of feuds between Catholic and Protestant, and between both of them and the Jew and the Free-thinker.—I say that while men hate each other they will fight. And they won't count the cost. And what we have got to do is to bring a better spirit of mutual regard, based upon common self respect, into the relationship of the masses of the people in every part of the world. Nothing else will do it. They will find money for fighting; they will find the weapons; they will find the armies; they will find the navies. Why, look you. In 1901 (and the blessed Gospel of peace was as popular then as it is now) the United Kingdom spent thirty-one millions on the Navy. In 1911 she spent forty-four

millions. Germany spent nine and a half millions; in 1907 and in 1911 she spent twenty-two millions. The United States spent sixteen millions in 1907 and twenty-six millions in 1911, and all the smaller powers spent in proportion.

Look at the military expenditure. I wrote a little pamphlet some twenty-five years ago, *The Shadow of the Sword*, which some of the Christian editors praised—in fact, the last insult was paid to me when the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes said it was "Christlike." Those Christian powers spend two hundred and sixty-six millions a year on armies and one hundred and forty-two millions a year on navies, making a total of four hundred millions, which is just double what it was when I wrote that pamphlet. This is mad helter-skelter down the road of mutual hatred and ruin. The world can't go on in this way. Something must happen, and if the ruling classes, or such that still remain in spite of representative government, do not bring about a change, other forces will bring it about.

The bulk of the people will say, "We are sick of it; sick of you. You are accepting the brand of Cain, which we don't want upon the brow of all of us. Why should we fight our brethren in France, or Germany, or Austria, or Russia, or Spain, or the United States, or China, or Japan? Why, it might be better if we turned round and fought you. At any rate, we mean to have no more of it, and we are not going to fight against our fellow members of the great human family." But we shall never realize that until we realize something else. Thomas Paine wrote a book called *The Rights of Man*. The British Government challenged it in a Criminal Court, and if Paine had not fled from England he would in all probability have been hung, if not drawn and quartered. The Government put the book down, and even Thomas Paine recognized that he had begun at the wrong end. He wrote a book then called *The Age of Reason*. That's it! You will never get the rights of man until you get the age of reason. And when, in my humble way, I hear people saying to me why don't you devote yourself to that cause, this cause, or another cause (all good for advancement), I reply, "I am attacking as well as I can the citadel of evil. I don't want to go wasting my time over large impossible areas." When the Germans were in France, what did they try to do? Capture Paris. Why? because that's the head. Capture the head, and you have got the body. Capture the man and woman intellectually, and you have got them politically, socially, morally. So that work at least is clear. I have done it in the past, and I will do it while strength remains.

Shadows of Sadness.

HUGE masses of black cloud hang over the southern horizon, reflecting the ruddy glare of the setting sun. Across the sea stretches a wavering band of brilliant red. Innumerable colours tint the waves; and the pink gossamers that float placidly over the pearly heavens seem to have stolen from the realms of dreamland to see what the world of real men was like.

It is a night that the æsthete would glory in, and, in a sense, hug to his bosom. A poet would linger in the loveliness as one can easily imagine a fairy would in a buttercup's bower at evenfall. From the shoulders of the reformer would fall, at the prompting of the beauty, all the burdens of his doubt, all the cravings of his mind, all the weariness of his heart. The scientist would renounce his questionings, and refresh his brain in the relaxation engendered by the strange accumulative effects, of whose causes, perhaps, he was seeking more

conclusive knowledge. From the exquisite loveliness of the fleece-flecked sea, scintillating in what might be called a perfect rhapsody of colouration, from the mild beauty of the overhead clouds, from the strong passionate grandeur of the blood-red sun and its stream of livid light, from the stern black rocks that guard the shore, and from the storm portents that crowd ominously in the womb of the wind, there might come a silent song to the soul, breathing wordless ideas beyond interpretation.

Sometimes, however, the mind cannot mingle harmoniously with Nature. It takes a theme of its own, using the changes of the great mother, the manifestations of her power, the realities of her inexplicable charm, as guides merely, leading ultimately, perchance, to some brooding thought. After all, man is not the master of his fate, nor is he always the conqueror of his soul. More frequently, maybe, than otherwise, in intellectual things, as in social and economic affairs, he is a slave, doomed to the terribly relentless law of absolute obedience. The monarch who claims this subjugation may be the thought of a genius struggling for expression, at another moment it may be a weak pitiable idea, tottering along the rim of a precipice, every step heralding the nearing disaster; and the two monarchs dwell in the same professedly noble palace. We, the slaves, serve them.

Obedient to the call of the clinging idea, I traced, in the design of Nature's royal dress, the pictures brooding thoughts had woven. There is no sequence in these thoughts; they are gusts of mentality blown over expansive deserts. There is activity in them perhaps; but the energy is often of the Devil. There may be passion in them, and sensitiveness, and love and hate, and wonder and awe; but the emotions are wayward, and pass ineffectively, leaving but a blank space, a windless desert, from which the spirit escapes with a sigh of joy. To the pitiless master I was a slave.

Horrors moaned in the weird sea song, and lifted strenuous voices as the waves lashed the rocks with spray. The shrieks and yells of thousands of dying men echoed distressfully in the tragic clamour of the swirling waters. The rivers of blood, that are fertilizing the earth of Europe, seemed, for the moment, to issue from some huge rent in the heart of the sun, and come slowly, awfully, inevitably, over the face of the yielding sea to a sorrow-stricken country. Behind the rocks of a grief that grimly glared at the devouring waters, recognizing the remoteness of their triumph, lay great shadows of sadness, peaceable, quiet, even calm, in the solemnity of their deathlikeness; and the white lips of the waves seemed but to intensify the black significance.

Sea-birds glided through the air, their uncanny callings ringing gruesomely in the turmoil around the rocks, like bursts of demoniacal laughter piercing a mournful death chant. They supplied the sarcasm, the cynicism, to the drama. All the bitterness of rampant folly they poured spasmodically into the hopelessness of it. Their voices dropped rich grains of irony into the utter melancholy of the tragedy. They were the mad mourners of the desperate play. They were the philosophic fools of the piece. As they wheeled above the incarnadined sea, they uttered harsh bursts of insane glee to witness the mad spectacle of millions of men murdering each other for God knows what reason. Their hard metallic merriment aroused itself to a pitch of fury at the sight of the miserable folly. At times they would plunge into the blood-red flood, and rise, screaming devilishly, as if jeering at the savage brutality.

They fought a relentless fight amongst themselves it is true. Life meant death. Existence was destruction. Their hate was bitter and strong; hatred guarded joy for them. Battle meant food. Determined vigilance, directed

against powerful enemies whose aim, also, was like their own, represented an ever ready preparedness. They were fighters, even to the death; and they recognized and suffered it.

Instinct, not reason, guided them. Life-needs prompted them to their sanguinary actions. Nature made them warriors. They lacked the rationality of man.

No wonder they shrieked with fiendish amusement at the uselessness of that great monarch, Reason, to man. No wonder they felt impelled to cynical mirth at the crimes socially committed by humanity. No wonder they laughed at the hollow professions, the hypocrisy, the crude deceitfulness of the man-god, as far above them in intelligence as the sun is in light-power above the moon.

Into the spasm-shot brain of the sea-birds I put thoughts grey and sorrowful as waters under storm-clouds. Beneath the sarcastic mockery gleamed ideas full of the very essence of human misery, disjointed, weak, insufficient, yet trembling with that sympathetic pity that finds words pitfalls to avoid. The terrible tragedy of it all moved sarcasm to tears, and, as the sea-birds' calls drifted away, the bitterness softened, and the silence was shaken by tremulous weeping.

Popularity may stand agape with wonderment at the spectacle of that river of blood; may pick from it crystalline corals of valour; may feel the thrill of its great magnificence; may estimate its values as beyond all historic standards; and may gloat in its powers and achievements with a pride and prejudice that undermine authority; but the darkness will not be less dark, nor the horrors less horrible, nor the crimes less decisively criminal. Despite everything said, the sorrowfulness, the grief, the folly, the silliness of the drama refuse to be hidden or subdued. The gruesomeness of the tragedy cannot be over emphasized. Extenuating circumstances offer no loophole for the entrance of Justice. Reason abides not in it or near it. Condemnation only is suitable.

So the brooding thoughts mirror themselves in the manifestations of Nature, seeing, perhaps, some elusive consolation in the old truth of the internecine ravage and rapine of her several parts; but dimmed by a doubt that weakens, maybe, their power, while it leaves their sincerity alone; for the law of compensation ever seems to operate, bringing the affairs of men to a balance that is certain, if at times it is obscure. Knowing this, one does wrong to mourn over the criminal follies of society, and yet, how can one help it? Knowing that the lowly means or forces of social and mental progress are, ultimately, stronger, more endurable, and must triumph, one does wrong to allow the tragedy to overcome the mind; and yet, somehow, there are times when one cannot avoid it. Down upon the soul fall shadows of the sadness of life, and in the gloom the soul becomes sick.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Correspondence.

DARWIN AND MALTHUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Dr. B. Dunlop in his brief and hasty note, printed in your issue of October 1, deploras the alleged fact that Freethinkers make inaccurate references to Malthus. Now, I love accuracy, and honesty, too. The passage in my article to which my critic takes exception, reads as follows: "As Darwin realized, through reading Malthus, the plant and animal populations of the globe increase faster than their means of subsistence. *Many more organisms are begotten than can survive.*"

Curiously enough, Dr. Dunlop quotes the first sentence, but ignores the second italicized sentence, which obviously

qualifies the first. The doctor then solemnly states that populations cannot increase faster than their means of subsistence. Permanently, of course, they cannot, but temporarily they may, and sometimes do. Presumably, if there is no pressure of population, then there is no struggle, apart from which there is no evolution. And that this truism was clearly illustrated in the course of the articles on Evolution should be apparent to the most careless reader.

Moreover, in Malthus's *Principle of Population*, p. 11, Ward, Lock, 1890, the following occurs:—

We will suppose the means of subsistence in any country just equal to the easy support of its inhabitants. The constant effort towards population, which is found to act even in the most vicious societies, increases the number of people before the means of subsistence are increased. The food, therefore, which before supported eleven millions, must now be divided among eleven millions and a half. The poor, consequently, must live much worse, and many of them reduced to severe distress.

I am a neo-Malthusian, and also happen to be one of the few people who have read Malthus's masterpiece. But, as Bettany so wisely says:—

It is quite safe to say that of the multitudes who have denounced "Malthus on Population".....very few have read this book, or know anything of the life and character of its author; and many who advocate what is termed neo-Malthusianism would appear either to be in the same case or to have conveniently forgotten what Malthus really taught.

T. F. PALMER.

GERMAN BIRTH-RATE AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In a very useful note you say that "it is Germany's increase of population that is one of the root causes of the present trouble." A Malthusian would prefer to say it was her *excessive birth-rate*. Until 1910, Germany had a birth-rate of over 30 (the figures are rates per thousand per annum) and a death-rate of over 17. If she had had a birth-rate of 23, her death-rate would have been about 10. Thus in both cases her population would have been increasing at the very rapid rate of 13. But in the latter case it would have increased without serious poverty—and, therefore, without the social unrest which leads rulers, in their own interest, to pick quarrels abroad, and thus to turn the attention of the masses away from the Government.

In other words, Germany's birth-rate was over 30, therefore her death-rate should not have been more than 10, *i.e.*, would not have been if there had been sufficient food for all. But, of course, she could not possibly increase her food-growing and food-buying powers rapidly enough to maintain a rate of increase of 20. So her rulers had to choose, as Napoleon said of France, between reducing the birth-rate and making war. Being Christians like Treitschke, Bernhardi, Kaiser & Co., they decided for war. It is now for rational pacifists to urge that birth-rates should everywhere be reduced until poverty has disappeared.

B. DUNLOP, M.B.

THE SUSTENTATION FUND.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is gratifying to note the prompt response which has been made to your appeal for funds. I wish it every success, and I trust the money will continue to roll in until everything is on a thoroughly sound footing, and the editorial-managerial mind not only free from immediate care, but able to contemplate expenditure on extension if need be.

I see a good many weekly papers—and sixpenny ones, too—but none is equal in value to the *Freethinker* as an intellectual tonic and educator of the reason to get at grips with subjects.

Apart from sending money and good wishes, I also send a few cuttings from papers that come under my notice, and I would suggest that if other readers would make a point of doing you the same service, they would ease the Editorial search-party considerably, and would, by widening the scope of the references, widen the field of interest and enlarge the

circle of readers. Parish magazines and local newspapers are fruitful sources of paragraphs for good-tempered but critical "Acid Drops," and I believe if your readers would glean as many of these as they could, and drop them into your letter-box, they would, at great pleasure to themselves, make up a Literary Sustentation Fund—if you will pardon the term—which would have a very satisfactory result on the circulation, another way of keeping things going and easing your burdens.

SUSTENTATOR.

[We are obliged to "Sustentator" for his proposal, but it is only fair to state that many of our readers do already help us considerably in the way he suggests.—Ed.]

Parsons and the War.

Tune: "I Would Be Like An Angel."

I'd love to face the Germans,
And with the Allies stand;
A knapsack on my shoulders,
A sword within my hand.

But there's a greater mission,
The greatest one I know;
And that's to fight for Jesus,
And lay the Devil low.

I'm trained to fight such battles,
I'm armed to fight and win;
My faith is all-sufficient,
For Satan and his sin.

And, oh the dream of glory!
When Satan is no more;
When all have found the Saviour,
Away on Canaan's shore.

I'd like to fight the Kaiser,
And bring about his fall!
But pledged against his rival,
I must obey the call.

God knows I would be willing
To bravely take the field,
And fight the wicked Germans,
If Satan would but yield;

But while the greater menace
Fills Christians full of dread,
I must be true to Jesus
Until the Devil's dead!

H. SANDERS.

A new book bears the title, *The God's Carnival*. It has nothing to do with the European War.

The Bishop of Birmingham attributes the isolation of the Church of England to "the becushioned seats." But most of the seats are as empty as the sermons.

Mr. H. G. Wells says "our sons have shown us God." Have they, indeed! And the reverend fathers have professed to do the same thing for centuries—but the genial novelist overlooks them.

A writer in the Nonconformist *Daily News* says that a "passionate affection for and devotion to Jesus Christ, the man, is typical of Russian religion." There seems to be a good deal of devotion also to plaster images of Christ.

The merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows is to be celebrated on the battle-fronts, and money is being raised for the provision of Christmas puddings to the soldiers. Feasting at Yuletide is a survival from Pagan days, and the custom will last longer than the Christian religion.

Bishop Wellton is quite a candid friend of the Church, and at a Men's Society meeting at Manchester, he said "The vote of the bishops in the House of Lords in the past had brought no credit to the Church." In the past, forsooth The leopard has not changed its spots.

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, "Social Reconstruction." Opener, A. Eager.

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, H. V. Storey, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, Percy S. Wilde, a Lecture.

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Kells and Dales, "More Queries"; 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Beale, and Hyatt.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): J. H. Edwards, 3, "Kipling's Kinks"; 6, "Khayyam's Quatrains."

BRADFORD (Laycock's Temperance Hotel, 1 Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7, Rev. R. Roberts, "Thomas Paine: a Slandered Genius."

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