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Views and Opinions.

George Meredith and Fighting Freethought.

Mr. Edward Clodd's very enjoyable *Memories* has already been noticed in these columns, and we are not writing with any intention of minimizing its importance. On the contrary, its gallery of well-known names, with the assertion of their heretical opinions, makes it a volume of peculiar interest to Freethinkers. It proves what we have often said, that the best brains of the country are with us, and greater scorn of conviction and more moral courage would set this intellectual force in open and avowed hostility to the established religion. But while thanking Mr. Clodd for his volume of reminiscences, there is one statement made which calls for a word or two of critical comment from one who has the honour of representing the militant side of Freethought activity. Speaking of George Meredith, Mr. Clodd says:—

He was a Freethinker in the broadest sense of an epithet which, even to this day, carries discredit in the application. "The man who has no mind of his own," he said, "lends it to the priests." He supported Secular Education as the only solution of the religious difficulty; he aided with money the aggressive methods of the late Mr. Foote, to whom was addressed the last letter that he wrote, promising support to the *Freethinker*. He thus showed himself more in sympathy with these methods than with the patient policy of the Rationalist Press Association, which works on the lines laid down by Lord Morley, "We do not attack, we explain."

* * *

The Futility of Compromise.

Although we are only concerned with one sentence in the above quotation, we have given the whole for the better comprehension of the part. On a question of fact, however, I may note that Meredith did more than promise support to the *Freethinker*, he gave it, in the form of a cheque towards its maintenance. And, further, what stands out in Mr. Clodd's summary is, that Meredith, a fighting spirit himself, was quick to appreciate an uncompromising fighter in what he described as "the best of causes." A man who could say, as

Meredith did of the Christian creed, "Was there ever a more clumsy set of thaumaturgic fables made into fundamentals of a revealed religion?" must have had a whole-hearted contempt for Christianity. We may safely assume, also, his realization of the fact that a "clumsy set of thaumaturgic fables," entrenched as Christianity is entrenched, with the barbed wire protection of tradition, wealth, and vested interests, was not to be beaten by half-hearted attacks. As well try to break in the German front by spraying it with rosewater. High explosives are needed in the one case as in the other. With such an enemy as Christianity, compromise is not only taken by the Churches as a sign of weakness, it is a sign of weakness. There is no room for compromise. Christianity is either fundamentally true or it is fundamentally false. If true, there is no need for any Freethought organization to exist to explain it. If false, it should be described in a way that every man and woman can appreciate. In this matter, Kingdon Clifford laid down the right rule once and for all:—

If a thing is true, let us all believe it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. If a thing is untrue, let us all disbelieve it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. Truth is a thing to be shouted from the housetops, not to be whispered over rosewater after dinner, when the ladies are gone away.

* * *

A Peculiar Fallacy.

It will be observed that Mr. Clodd's explanation of Meredith's appreciation of the *Freethinker* is that he had little sympathy with the R. P. A., which works on Lord Morley's lines, "We do not attack, we explain." We are not aware that the R. P. A. has ever put this forward officially, although it may have done so. In any case, how it conducts its propaganda is its own business, and on that I have no desire to say a word of criticism. It is the implied line of cleavage between the N. S. S. and the R. P. A. that makes us rub our eyes, and strikes us as peculiarly fallacious. Meredith, we can imagine, would have had a good laugh over such an "explanation." He might have asked, as we ask, "What kind of an explanation of Christianity is it that is not an attack?" And if such a thing is forthcoming, what is its value so far as Freethinkers are concerned? If the R. P. A. does not attack Christianity, then we have seriously misread many of its publications. What are Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology* and *Pagan Christs* but attacks on Christianity? They are deliberately that or nothing. And when Mr. Clodd himself analyses the idea of God and traces it to the fear-stricken mind of the primitive savage, is he not attacking the whole structure of Theism? Would his writing be worth, to Freethinkers, the paper it is printed on, if it were not an attack? To say we attack by way of explanation is intelligible. To say we do not attack, we explain, is downright nonsense. Lord Morely should have known better than make so indefensible a statement. An explanation of Christianity that does not attack is waste of time. Indeed, it can only fail to attack by failing to explain.

To Explain is to Attack.

If no Freethinker can explain Christianity without attacking it, it is equally true that there can be no real attack without explanation. We are not aware how much Mr. Clodd knows of the work of Mr. Foote, or of the N. S. S., or of the *Freethinker*, but he certainly writes as though he were under the impression that our policy was that of an irrational bludgeoning of a thing we dislike. We know that this impression is abroad, and also that in Christian circles it is carefully cultivated, but it is sheer superstition for all that. It is no more than a variation on the old religious stupidity that Freethought is destructive and not constructive. Attack and explanation do not here only go side by side, they are two sides of the same thing. To say merely that one disbelieves in Christianity is not an attack, but a statement of difference. And so soon as one begins to give reasons for dissent—to discuss the illogicality of specific beliefs, to assert their incongruity with known facts, and to point out how such beliefs originated and from what causes they developed, one is furnishing all the explanation that is possible. And this is not only the line pursued by the *Freethinker*, but so far as we are aware, there has never been, in substance, any other, although more or less courtly language or methods may have been employed by different Freethinking fighters. And if Mr. Clodd cares to glance through a volume of the *Freethinker*—any one of its thirty-six volumes will serve—he will find more explanations of Christianity than in the whole of Lord Morley's writings, and at least as much as has ever been given in any series of publications in the name of Freethought. * * *

A Real Difference.

If it is desirable to discuss methods of advocacy, and we should be the last to avoid such a discussion, the distinction must be found not along lines of attack *versus* explanation, but of definiteness *versus* indefiniteness. The attack on Christianity may be put forward with an apologetic air, or in the spirit of one who demands and will have the right to free expression. The language used may be of a plain and unmistakable character, so plain that no person will be left in doubt as to one's meaning; or it may be of such an indefinite and circumlocutory nature that ordinary folk will be unaffected, the initiated will approve, and the orthodox will submit for fear of something more drastic. One may say that Christianity is false, and whatsoever is good and true that is associated therewith belongs to humanity, and not to a "clumsy set of thaumaturgic fables," and say it in such a way that everyone knows one's meaning; or, one may say that Christianity is probably not true, expend much ink or words in talking about the ideals enshrined in Christianity, of the noble character of its founder, and hint vaguely at what must be said plainly if it is to do any good at all. That is the real issue—between directness and indirectness, vagueness of speech and definiteness of utterance. There can be no other of consequence among those who are convinced that Christianity is false. And it is quite clear that the plan adopted will be finally determined by character or temperament. The man who is timid by nature, fearful of social ostracism, and overawed by convention, will adopt the one plan. The fighter who cares little or nothing for these things will adopt the other. It would be idle for either to blame the other. And the issue, be it observed, is hardly ever raised by the bolder fighter. He is usually willing to take whatever help the other is willing to give. It is raised by the more conventional character who claims a superiority of method by way of apology for his timidity.

The Democratizing of Freethought.

In this country, for well over a century and a half, there have been two broadly contrasted movements in the Freethought world. The one has never seriously regarded Freethought as suitable to the mass of the people. Heresy was thought to be, as Leslie Stephen somewhere remarks, something like hair powder in the seventeenth century, suitable only to the "upper classes." Religion was still to serve its purpose of keeping "the people" in order. Against this tendency there was, commencing with some of the eighteenth century Deistical writers, a definite movement for bringing Freethought home to the masses. They saw that if ever Freethought was to accomplish the liberation of life, it must appeal to a much wider circle than the professedly cultured classes. This movement received a definite impress and impetus through the writings of Paine. Paine's great offence was not what he said, but the way in which he said it. He wrote for the people—not for the mob, but for the people. And it will be remembered by those who know the history of the time, that many who shared his opinions stood aloof from the fight because he said what he had to say with a simple directness that could be understood by all. Paine shocked those "superior" people who could never deliver themselves from the obsession that the truth about religion was something, to use Clifford's words, "to be whispered over rosewater"—in a way the common people cannot understand. But from Paine's time popular fighting Freethought has never been without its representatives. Its leaders have always realized, more or less clearly, that the sole security for progress lies in the democratization of knowledge. They have pinned their faith to a direct and uncompromising attack on all forms of superstition. In that attack they have availed themselves of all the resources of science, philosophy, and literature. They have been amongst the great explainers of religion to the masses of the people. They have not adopted the meaningless formula, "We do not attack, we explain," but the really servicable one, "We attack because we explain." Our attack on religion is an explanation. Our explanation of religion is an attack. For he who understands religion is in no danger of falling a victim to its snares.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Is Christianity a Growing Force in the World?"

In the religious press there is at present a superabundant crop of articles and symposiums dealing with the prospects of the Christian religion as a factor in the life of the world. One of these symposiums is to be found in the *Christian Commonwealth* for December 6, and it has features peculiarly its own. For one thing, it appears in a journal which claims to be all things to all religions, being the enemy only of no-religion. Ever since the advent of the New Theology, our contemporary has been its chief organ. Almost every "ism" that bears a religious name finds a ready advocacy in its columns. It is broad without depth, tolerant with discretion, and nominally non-theological. To the question at the head of this article it presents "the answer of scientists, writers, ecclesiastics, social workers, etc." We are of opinion that the Editor would have acted more wisely had he omitted his own lengthy introduction, and allowed his contributors to speak for themselves, leaving the readers to form their own conclusions as to the merits of the discussion. The Editor informs us that, in the present number, he gives us but an instalment of the contributions received; but it is note-

worthy that among the writers included in this instalment the majority are ecclesiastics and novelists, and whilst the former are all agreed that Christianity, so far from being a failure, is, on the whole, the supreme success of the ages, the latter are equally unanimous in pronouncing it a comparative, if not a total, failure. Sir Robert Anderson, on the one hand, says, in his own extravagant fashion:—

The horrors of the War are not due to the failure of Christianity, but to the national apostacy from it. The triumphs since the Reformation transcend everything recorded in the history of the ages since apostolic times.

Mr. H. G. Wells, on the other hand, thinks that "Christianity is a declining force in the world." Then he adds:—

Men are becoming more merciful, honest, faithful, cleaner in their personal lives, socially more conscious of the claims of others, and eager to find a way of living on terms of equality, fraternity, and fellowship with all mankind, quite independently of the Christian Churches.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, as usual, is tantalizingly vague and elusive, but makes no secret of his opinion that orthodox Christianity "has probably lost ground during the last half century to pure Hedonism," and "is losing ground relatively owing to the automatic persecution of it, which our commercial system produces."

It is not with the contributors to this symposium, however, that we wish to deal, but with the introduction, presumably from the pen of the Editor, whom we first knew as a reporter of Dr. Parker's sermons. He begins by summarizing the conclusions that have been reached. He says that "in one respect there is almost entire unanimity," namely, that "the hope of the world is not in Materialism, nor in the material organization of society." He claims that man is fundamentally spiritual and that the world has a spiritual meaning and a spiritual goal. Here is a clear echo of Mr. Campbell's oft-repeated assertion from the City Temple pulpit; but no definition is offered of either Materialism or spirituality, and we are quite sure that the Editor misconceives both. Spirit is utterly unknown to science, and a "material organization of society" is fully as inconceivable to the so-called Materialist. The notion of spirit implies supernaturalism, and supernaturalism is scientifically unthinkable. The Editor declares that if the symposium has done nothing else but elicit the superiority of the spiritual, we have every reason to be grateful for it; but we stoutly maintain that it has done nothing of the kind. We hold that the scientific standpoint of thirty years ago obtains to-day. The world has always been governed by ideas, good or bad, noble or ignoble, but never by the Materialism denounced by the *Christian Commonwealth*. Take Germany, for example, which is supposed by many in this country to be dominated by Materialism. Even a dignitary of the Anglican Church, like Dean Welldon, has the audacity to "urge that the German writers who are ultimately responsible for the War, or for the spirit which has brought about the War, are men like Nietzsche who hate Christianity." In the first place, Nietzsche was not a Materialist, and he hated and despised imperial Germany quite as ardently as he did Christianity. Furthermore, we have learned from absolutely reliable German sources, as well as from Professor Dawse Hicks's luminous article on German Philosophy in the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1914, that "for the vagaries of Nietzsche's dilettantism the academical representatives of philosophy are, of course, in no way responsible, and many of them have spared no pains to expose its clumsy contradictions and absurdities." Besides, we have the further evidence of Professor Eucken, who surely knows Germany better than Bishop Welldon, that German religion is the most tremendous spiritual force in the

world. As a matter of simple fact, there is no connection whatever between the War and scientific Materialism; and to say that the War is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Materialism is to betray the grossest and most inexcusable ignorance about those who are imagined to affect that form of philosophy.

The symposium having, as the Editor alleges, elicited the conclusion that man is "fundamentally spiritual," and that the world has "a spiritual meaning and a spiritual goal," the question arises, By which means can "this spiritual goal of the world and life be reached?" It is here, according to the Editor, "that divergent lines of thought emerge and differences become conscious." But, he adds, "even here a categorical surrender of Christianity *in toto corde* is rare among our contributors." Of course, the contributors were discreetly selected. He inclines to the inference that those who reject Christianity "appear to have in their minds a Christianity which is a doctrinal scheme and not an ethical idealism." Mr. Campbell made great use of that distinction during the days of his triumph at the City Temple; but he has now realized that it is a distinction based upon no real difference. Mr. Dawson is still in the dark on that point. "Christianity is not a doctrine," he says, "but a Person; not a creed, but a Life." It is almost incredible that an intelligent man could be responsible for such an obvious fallacy. Is it not self-evident that life is meaningless unless it incarnates or exemplifies some idea or ideas? But ideas, to be of any practical service, must be expressed and formulated by means of language; and as soon as they are so expressed and systematized they are so many doctrines and dogmas. It is the height of absurdity to call Christianity a life. If it is the life of Jesus that is meant, it stands to reason that Christianity is some definite form of teaching concerning that life. The life of Jesus is identically the same as that of any ordinary human being, unless by some system of teaching it is represented to be something different. Mr. Dawson must be aware of the vast number of interpretations of the life of Jesus which have been adopted even by those who regard him as no more than a man. Equally preposterous is it to identify Christianity with a person. If it be the person of Christ that is meant, the identification is valueless, even unintelligible, unless based upon some specific conception of that person. As is well known, the conceptions entertained of the person of Christ are practically innumerable. Even among the New Theologians there is a great diversity of views as to what Jesus ought to mean to human life.

The Editor quotes, with warm appreciation, the following remark by Professor Bosanquet, "What Christianity promises is a grasp by faith, against appearance, of supreme values," and then adds this of his own:—

These values, e.g., love, beauty, and delight, do not decrease by sharing, and give at once absolute control and facility in dealing with the secondary values, namely, wealth and power, which are essentially means, not ends.

We contend that this is a *reductio ad absurdum* of Christianity, because these supreme values have flourished and do flourish abundantly in the complete absence of it. They are in no sense Christian, but purely human, values; and in no countries under the sun is an ampler wealth of them to be seen than in Pagan China and Japan. The spirit of patriotism, self-sacrifice, and vicarious service, which has shown itself to be so conspicuous in connection with the War, is referred to by the pulpit as a most precious fruit borne by the Christian tree; but the same noble spirit blossomed into glorious activity in Japan during its unforgettable war

with Russia. So magnificent was the display of it there on that occasion that the Editor of the *Hibbert Journal* was compelled to ask, "Is the Moral Superiority of Europe in Danger?" and to answer his own question very largely in the affirmative. The truth is, that Christianity is in the melting-pot, and out of the pot shall eventually issue pure Humanism, without a trace of the supernatural in it at all.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Atheist as Hero.

Woman on Her Own, False Gods, The Red Robe, by Eugene Brieux. Jenkins. 1916.

FRENCH literature possesses certain distinctive and individual qualities which gives it a peculiar value to the world. If it had never existed, the literature of the world would have been poorer and of less account. From the time of Abelard to that of Anatole France, Gallic literature has been one blaze of splendid scepticism. Hence a volume of English translations of M. Eugene Brieux's brilliant plays is a matter of congratulation, for this dramatist is the greatest playwright France has produced since Moliere. Indeed, Mr. Bernard Shaw considers M. Brieux as the most important dramatic author now living in Europe.

The translations include three of M. Brieux's plays, *Woman on Her Own, False Gods*, and *The Red Robe*, which deal with the woman question, religion, and the shortcomings of the French legal system. For M. Brieux is by way of being an apostle, and has an enthusiasm for humanity. He is a disciple of Herbert Spencer, and the influence of the greatest philosopher of modern times is traceable in all that he writes. Especially is this noticeable in his play, *False Gods*, which brings before us the eternal struggle between reason and faith through the medium of human passion and emotion.

The English title of *False Gods*, which was such a success at His Majesty's Theatre, is, in reality, a concession to Mrs. Grundy. The original name, *La Foi*, should have been retained, for faith is the subject of the discussion, and not the claims of rival gods. It was, however, too much to expect that an actor-manager, who had bowdlerized Shakespeare, would openly flout the clergy, and the title was a sop to the many-headed clerical cerberus. Happily, the subject-matter was spared, and the British public witnessed the rare spectacle of a play with an Atheist as a hero, which was a welcome relief to an order of things to which they had become inured by custom.

The scene of *False Gods* is ancient Egypt, the motherland of superstition, and the annual sacrifice of a maiden to the gods is at hand. Yaouma, the beautiful, is hoping that she may be chosen. Then comes her Atheist lover, Satni. The girl is chosen, and the battle between reason and faith begins. Satni's arguments are ineffective with his beloved. There are no gods, he insists, but she answers that they are stronger than love; "You, who were all the world to me, are now as nothing." He appeals to her intellect. Men made the gods, and not the gods made men. There is no heaven and hell. The sacred river Nile will rise whether she die or live. He even threatens to use force to save her, and she tells him that if he does so she will hate him and kill herself. Yaouma is saved by a mere accident, and the Atheist is credited with a miracle, in spite of his scornful denials. Finally, he rouses all by his vehemence. Why do priests prate of gods? Because men are poor, ignorant, and miserable. It is to keep men and women in slavery and to prevent revolution that they are promised happiness in another world. Religion is all lies. The people

are stirred at last, and rebel and smash their gods. Only one of Isis is left, and a pathetic farewell is given by a belated worshipper to the last of the gods. "O thou who didst not heal, but didst console me." It is a palpable hit, and explains present-day religion in a sentence.

Always serious, M. Brieux uses his art for propagandist ends as much as Rousseau, Voltaire, or Zola. His play, *La Robe Rouge*, is an indictment of French criminal practice; *Les Bienfaiteurs*, a denunciation of spurious philanthropy; *La Petite Amie*, a fulmination against the tyranny of the marriage "dot"; *La Foi*, is far the most serious, and concerned with the deepest problem of life. The message is Gambetta's—"Clericalism, that is the enemy." Two of his plays have, in their English dress, been forbidden by the Censor, to whom a grandmotherly Government has entrusted the pleasing task of keeping the stage free from almost anything save "legs and tomfoolery." These two plays, *Maternity* and *The Three Daughters of Monsieur Dupont*, have been translated by Mrs. Bernard Shaw and Mr. St. John Hankin. The theme of the first play is the folly of permitting over-population, and of the second a relentless revelation of middle-class life. Another play, *Damaged Goods*, which has been translated by Mr. John Pollock, deals boldly with an awful subject of disease.

Some years ago Mr. Bernard Shaw, in introducing M. Brieux to the reading public in an English dress, expressed his astonishment that the Parisians had elected M. Brieux to the French Academy, instead of letting him starve and then putting up a statue to him. It was a characteristic Shavian jest, for it is precisely because France values her "intellectuals" that she is so great as a nation. In honouring M. Brieux, she has not only rewarded a distinguished author, but set the seal of her approbation upon a writer who worthily carried on the great intellectual tradition which has made her sons the Vanguard of Progress.

MIMNERMUS.

Science as the Servitor of Man.

III.

(Continued from p. 795.)

IN the phenomena of combustion already elaborated we have noted instances of the association of energy with chemical change. But the phenomena of combustion and luminosity represent physical and chemical transformations accompanied with an *evolution* of heat. There are, however, substances in Nature which possess the property of *absorbing* heat, so that the ultimate product is more fully charged with energy than the initial substance. Otherwise stated, energy must be added to these initial substances if they are to display the greatest energy of which they are capable. Chemists distinguish between "*exothermal* reactions, or reactions by evolution of heat, and *endothermal* reactions, or reactions accompanied by absorption or taking in of heat energy."

Explosives are constantly in operation just now throughout the whole vast theatre of human slaughter, and a consideration of the chemistry of these destructive substances should prove interesting. All explosive materials contain an immense amount of potential energy stored up within them. A vivid idea of what this implies is furnished by the fact that, with modern explosives, the chemical changes which occur take the form of extremely rapid combustion, with the development of gaseous substances which expand into a volume which, at the temperature of the explosion, is possibly from 10,000 to 15,000 times as large as the volume of the explosive itself.

Roger Bacon, in the thirteenth century, is credited with the discovery of the first real explosive known to man. This mild explosive—gunpowder—is composed of potassium nitrate or saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal, and its detonating powers depend on the rapid combustion of its sulphur and charcoal at the expense of the oxygen residing in the saltpetre. For naval and military operations in warfare it has long since been superseded, but it remains of considerable importance in mining, and is utilized in the fabrication of fireworks.

It was in 1846—with the discovery that cotton, through the action of nitric acid, is transformed into a very powerful explosive—that the development of modern detonators began. Cotton is compounded of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon, which form the substance cellulose. Nitro-cotton, or guncotton, when ignited, flames very fiercely, but no explosion occurs. The molecule of guncotton is normally in a state of high instability, so much so that when a small quantity of fulminate of mercury is exploded near it, it quickly decomposes and evolves a large volume of gaseous substances. These gases are all colourless; no solid materials are formed, so that, unlike gunpowder, guncotton explodes without creating smoke.

Damp guncotton fails to ignite when a light is applied to it, but if submitted to the shock of a fulminate of mercury detonator it explodes just as if it were dry. For example, "torpedoes and sea-mines are charged with rolls of moist guncotton which have been subjected to a high pressure (six tons per square inch), and so compressed into hard blocks."

Owing to the rapidity of the decomposition of its material, the explosive powers of guncotton are tremendous. It is stated that while two pounds of gunpowder need one-hundredth of a second for full combustion, two pounds of guncotton require one fifty-thousandth part of a second only. "Brisance," as the shattering power of nitro-cotton is termed, results from this fact. As a high explosive, guncotton is extremely efficient, but as a low or propulsive detonator, its disruptive consequences render it unsuitable. These would simply shatter the gun.

The important distinction between the conduct of high and low explosives has been excellently illustrated by a familiar experiment. A thread of fine sewing cotton is fastened to a moderately heavy weight, suspended so that it may vibrate easily. By gently pulling the thread, the attached weight may be set in active motion. This is similar to the comparatively sluggish action of a low explosive. But if the cotton thread be energetically pulled, it snaps. This illustrates the performance of a high explosive.

As a propellant, therefore, guncotton has its drawbacks. But the value of a smokeless explosive is so great that chemists determined to surmount the difficulty arising from its violent rate of explosion. Their endeavours to subdue the guncotton were crowned with complete success. In a mixture of ether and alcohol, and other liquids, nitro-cotton will dissolve, and, after these solvents have been passed off as vapour, the nitro-cotton remains in the form of a gelatine-like substance which is called collodion. In this gelatinized state the rupturing qualities of guncotton are materially lessened. This form of nitro-cotton was the first smokeless powder devised.

The Swedish scientist, Nobel, made further notable progress in the chemistry of detonating substances. As Professor Findlay reminds us, in his chapter on "Energy, Fuel, and Explosives," glycerine is prepared from animal and vegetable fats and oils, and when this preparation is modified with

a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acids, it behaves similarly to cotton, and yields a substance, "nitro-glycerine,"

which is a liquid, and very powerful explosive. This substance, discovered by Nobel, was difficult to handle on account of its great sensitiveness to shock, and was the cause of many fatal accidents; but it was found that if the liquid nitro-glycerine was mixed with kieselguhr, a fine earth composed of the siliceous skeletons of marine diatoms, the explosive could be transported and handled with comparative freedom from danger. In this form nitro-glycerine has been largely used under the name of dynamite, its explosion being brought about by means of a fulminate of mercury detonator.

Blasting gelatine is a mixture of guncotton and nitro-glycerine. This is an extremely powerful explosive, as might be inferred from the fact that it is a mixture of two potent detonators.

Another valuable explosive is cordite, invented by Sir Frederick Abel. This is manufactured by blending a paste of 65 per cent. nitro-cotton and 30 per cent. nitro-glycerine, and then adding 5 per cent. of vaseline. This mixture is subsequently driven by hydraulic pressure through a die, when it assumes a cordlike appearance. From this circumstance it derives its name of cordite. In its completed form cordite is less liable to accident than other explosives, and guncotton gelatinized in various ways is now essential to all propulsive ammunition.

There are, however, other explosives of importance, which are derived from the distillation of coal. The two outstanding examples of these are picric acid and trinitrotoluene. Picric acid, or trinitrophenol, is formed when carbolic acid is manipulated with a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acids. As an ordinary chemical it is a crystalline substance long utilized as a yellow dye in the silk industry. It melts at a temperature of 252 F., and in this liquid condition is poured into the shell. The French gave the name of melanite to this molten picric acid because of its yellow hue, while in England it is termed lyddite, because its services as a powerful explosive were originally demonstrated at Lydd, in Kent. Picric acid may be handled without danger, although its destructive powers are far greater than those of guncotton or dynamite. The latent energy of this detonator is tremendous, for when a pound of picric acid is exploded through the agency of another detonator, it liberates an amount of energy equivalent to that necessary to raise more than a ton weight to a height of over a hundred yards. Picric acid, however, possesses the property of combining with metal compounds which are more readily detonated than itself, and then becomes a dangerous explosive.

To remedy this defect, another explosive has been brought into use. This is derived from one of the hydrocarbons, toluene, and termed trinitrotoluene, or T. N. T. This is also a solid substance, and will withstand very hard treatment without risk of reprisals. Experts assure us that a bullet may be discharged into this explosive without disturbing it. When it does detonate, T. N. T. explodes almost as violently as picric acid, but owing to the incompleteness of the oxidation of the carbon contained in the compound, it generates thick black volumes of carbonaceous material. These sable clouds are responsible for the pet names of "Coal Boxes" and "Jack Johnsons" which our men have conferred on the shells charged with T. N. T.

Possibly some may think that "Science as the Devil's Handmaiden" would form a more appropriate title for this article than the one chosen. But not merely for purposes of slaughter and destruction are these terrible explosives in request. They are eminently serviceable in the humaner arts of peace, and have rendered yeoman's assistance in such engineering triumphs as the building of the Assouan Dam, and the Suez and Panama Canals. They have made possible the tunnelling of impassable mountains, and are indispensable in mining and other

departments of sane civilization. Even when the world is normal, the production of explosives is considerable. At Nobel's factory in Ayrshire, and elsewhere in the British Isles, the annual output is from 17,000 to 18,000 tons.

These formidable weapons which science has placed at man's disposal are, unfortunately, too freely expended in evil deeds. May the day soon dawn when humanity will devote all the secrets science has wrested from Nature towards the furtherance of the reign of perpetual peace among men.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

The Clash of Religions.

Delight. By Eden Phillpotts. Published by Cecil Palmer and Hayward, Oakley House, Bloomsbury, London.

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT says that "the proper use of poetry is to be heard or read, not to be talked about; to be felt, not to be judged or appraised." In theory I agree with that observation, but in practice wholly depart from it. There is nothing I enjoy more than to talk about poetry, and to judge or appraise it, comparing this poet with that, endlessly. Poetry is a concrete and artistic expression of human emotions or sentiments in rhythmical language. Mr. Phillpotts has just presented us with a small volume of verse in which that conception of poetry is beautifully exemplified. The first and longest poem, which gives its title to the book, is a touching love story, exquisitely told.

The heroine's beautiful name was Nuzhat;
Just "Delight" the word means: you may rhyme it
with star.
Not a flower of the field, or a bird on a tree
Was so gentle, so comely, so joyous as she.

She was the daughter of a Syrian merchant, and a Christian. A clerk, named Shadad, "an intelligent fellow," fell in love with her; but he was a Moham-medan.

And all that was lovely and precious and fair
To young Shadad seemed less than a strand of her
hair,
While everything splendid and noble and grand,
Unto Nuzhat was not worth one touch of his hand.

It was ideal love, and as we all know—

Alma Venus, poor Pagan, knows nothing of creeds,
Or the grief and confusion that clash of them breeds.
She'll find a rare girl and a brave, handsome boy,
Then most thoughtlessly throw them together with
joy.

And yet religion stood between the two passionate lovers, and kept them apart. In spite of all efforts, lovingly made by a faithful friend, "to make them see sense," religion remained a barrier to a happy union between them.

While Nuzhat worshipped Three Gods and Shadad but One, the course of true love was bound to be dark and difficult.

Both lovers grew thin; then at last came a day
When his agonized self the sad clerk tore away
From the township of Jaffa. He carried his pain
To a billet Cook's offered him somewhere in Spain.

Genuine love can never be destroyed, but religious differences hinder its development and sadden the hearts in which it dwells. Mr. Phillpotts works this out with exceeding impressiveness and beauty. Nuzhat and Shadad professed different religions; but Ruskin and the woman he loved were kept apart simply because they held different versions of the same religion. Religion is always an obstacle to the highest life.

Delight contains eighteen other pieces, and they are all eminently worth reading. One, entitled "Shake-

spere's Birthday," I am impelled to give in full:—

Imperishable, on the topmost height
Of human mastery, like one sole star
Hung in a sky whose constellations far
Throw a dim halo for his steadfast light,
He shines; nor all the centuries can mar
His ambient beam, enduring still as bright
As when it woke in magnitude and might
Upon the wonder of his avatar.

The secret of all secrets that have birth
In brain and heart of man he found and told,
And rang their truth and tragedy and mirth
On dulcet bells of everlasting gold,
Still chiming to the children of the Earth,
Ageless for ever, though Time's self be old.

The book is beautifully got up, with a dozen apt illustrations, and I trust it will have, as it deserves, a wide circulation.

J. T. L.

Acid Drops.

We know nothing of the proceedings of a recent meeting of the National Council of Social Purity, presided over by the Bishop of Birmingham, save a brief notice in the *Church Times*; but we see that a Roman Catholic priest, Canon Brown, attributed the "weakening of moral restraint" among young people to the fact that the people had excluded "the priest from the schools." And on this the *Church Times* remarks:—

It is quite certain that moral teaching without religion is ineffectual. There is no strong appeal in its sanction, and the tinge of emotion is lacking in its teachers, there being little or nothing in it to stir emotion. Consequently, the precepts of morality fall upon deaf ears and fail to reach the heart. But, when morality is tinged with emotion, and its precepts are delivered as of Divine sanction, and duty is seen to be the return on man's part of the love borne him by God in Christ, it ceases to be the cold and dead abstraction that it otherwise seems to be. So long as the people is determined to banish the priest from the schools it will pay the penalty in the deterioration of character in its children.

Thus the Churchman supports the Catholic priest on an issue that is wholly false, but witnesses to a state of things from which they both, as priests, suffer.

So far as this Roman Catholic priest is concerned, we may remind him that, of all Christian priests, none keep so tight a hand over their flock as those of his own order. The vast majority of Catholics attend Catholic schools, from which the priest is not excluded. And with what result? A few years ago the Government issued a return giving the religion of the inmates of prisons. This return gave to the Roman Catholics 247 per 100,000 of denomination, the Church of England coming next with 118. Of course, this included adults; but the "moral restraint" imposed upon "young people" could not have been very efficient for it to have so soon lost influence. And if either the Roman Catholic priest or the Church of England writer will institute an inquiry into the biographies of ill-doers, he will find that a very large proportion have come from religious homes, and have duly received religious instruction.

For the rest, the utterance of the *Church Times* provides the strongest of all reasons why the less the priests have to do with the training of the young the better. A teacher who starts out with the conviction that there are no really effective natural sanctions for morality, and who can see nothing in human nature or in human affection that can provide inspiration to right conduct, cannot fail to have a wholly unhealthy influence on those committed to his care. He demoralizes in the very attempt to moralize. Moral education is not to him the education and development of given qualities of human nature, but the imposing of "moral restraints" on a more or less criminal character. One need look no further than this for the cause of the historic failure of the Christian Churches. The one real lesson of life here is, keep the children away

from the priests. As priests, there is no more dangerous influence to which the young may be exposed.

The Salvation Army is raising a coolie corps in India for loading and unloading ships. The "Army" is also interested in Canadian emigration, and does a vast deal of trading everywhere. It looks as if they will soon be too busy to call sinners to repentance.

Admiral Swinton Holland says the amount of ignorance among sailors as to Christianity is extraordinary. He asked one man where he was baptized, and he replied, "On my arm." Admiral Holland should be content with things as they are. While his men are ignorant of Christianity they are more likely to believe it. Once they begin to understand it, they have taken the first step towards its rejection.

The *Challenge* says that "the bishops are either divinely appointed or they are nothing." A very straightforward issue. Either they are the mouthpiece of God or they are a rank imposture. And we are quite certain they are *not* divinely appointed.

According to the Publishers' Association, only one person out of 150 buys books. This is not the worst, for so many buy trashy novels. Maybe, that is one of the reasons why Christianity flourishes.

The Bishop of Willesden says we should remember that Christ came into the world poor. He might have added that, unlike their Master, the bishops leave the world with money in the bank.

The Bishop of Southwark says that about fifty clergy were working abroad among the soldiers and sailors. There are about 25,000 Church of England parsons, so there was little need for the press to label the Army Chaplains as "Clergy-men Heroes."

The Vicar of Burton-on-Trent says that in consequence of holding the Church Service in the afternoon instead of in the evening, the Church attendance has decreased by 33 per cent. The fact speaks volumes for the alleged increase of religious devotion among the people.

Providence having temporarily withdrawn its protection from the Rev. A. C. Higgins, that gentleman was charged at Bow Street with "insulting behaviour towards several boys." The magistrate said his conduct was scandalous, and ordered him to find a surety of £25 to be of good behaviour in the future.

We missed the following passage in a letter from a wounded Australian soldier to the *Sunday Chronicle*, but discovered it in the *Orkney Herald* for December 6:—

We from down under have an idea, which is a greatly mistaken one, that we are fighting for the cause of liberty. Yet when we get wounded and are invalided to England, we find there are no liberties left for Englishmen to enjoy or those over yonder to fight for.

We find there are hordes of officials everywhere bossing everything. You can only drink at a certain time; you must turn off your lights at a certain time. Why, God knows, when a wire from the coast could always tell you to douse the glims. You can't even buy a girl a packet of chocolates—lollies we call them—after a certain time, and you've got to starve after a certain time.

Special constables, "armed with a little brief authority," as our mutual friend Shakespeare says, indulge in all kinds of petty tyrannies where their neighbours are concerned. You ought to live in these parts to know what I mean.

The faddists and cranks of all sorts are having the time of their lives behind poor Tommy's back. They had never the pluck to say much or to do much before the War. Even a well-known military man is allowed by your Government to write articles for the papers on how to keep us soldiers moral when he ought to be thinking things out to shorten the War.

Your bishops urge us to repent—of what? A smug-faced young clergyman visited me when I was in hospital and gave me a bunch of tracts and told me to repent. I nearly

hit him in the jaw. The pasty-faced skunk had never seen anything more terrible in his life than a mothers' meeting, and he had the cheek to tell me—a man who had lived in a rain of shot and shell and blood for two years—to repent.

I kept my temper, and only said, "If you want me to repent of having sent a couple of dozen of Germans to their long sleep, then I'll see you damned first." And then I got a lecture from the sister for using bad language. That didn't worry me.

There seems a considerable amount of "horse-sense" about this Australian.

The Rev. A. D. Belden, of Westcliff, recently criticized, on Sabbatarian grounds, a Sunday concert given in behalf of wounded soldiers at Southend-on-Sea. The promoter of the concert, in a letter to the local press, smartly retorted that a precisely similar musical programme was given at a Nonconformist chapel. That reduced the reverend gentleman to silence.

The late "God-annointed" Emperor Francis Joseph, of Austria, besides large personal wealth, enjoyed a State salary of over a million pounds a year. Yet Christians believe that the "King of Kings" was born in a stable and died a pauper.

An object-lesson in the veracity and reliability of the "free press" of England was given on the occasion of the death of the "Apostolic" Austrian Emperor. Almost all the obituary notices were attacks on the dead monarch. Yet a few years since these same newspapers were publishing columns of fulsome flattery concerning Francis Joseph and his private and public troubles. It is quite as entertaining as a revue—and more instructive.

The Bishop of Birmingham has written a preface to a book on the social evil. What a perennial attraction this subject is to the clerical mind.

The Bishop of Southwell says he fully agrees with the self-denial idea at Christmas. The "self-denial" of the bishops is an object-lesson in ecclesiastical Christianity, for many of them live in palaces; are styled "my lord"; and eke out an arduous existence on the salaries of princes.

Mr. Pett Ridge, the novelist, has been telling good stories of Cockney wit. *Inter alia*, he related the following:—

One stormy and blustering night the conductor of an omnibus near the Marble Arch said to his driver, "I wish I was in 'Eaven.'" "For my part," said the driver, "I would rather be in a nice warm pub." "Yes," retorted the conductor, "you always want the best of everything."

Speaking at Bedford College, Mr. Alfred Noyes said, "all great art is based upon the first four words in the greatest book in our literature, 'In the beginning, God.'" It would be difficult to crowd more nonsense into the same number of words. Greek and Roman art and literature, and many another, owe nothing to the Bible, which is a Jewish work; and science knows nothing about a "beginning" or "God." It is to be hoped that Bedford College has other and more reliable sources of information than Mr. Noyes.

At the Southwark Diocesan Conference on December 5, the Rev. H. Elkerton suggested that the subject of peace might be put on the list for discussion. The meeting, however, voted against the discussion of the topic. So much for the humanizing influence of the Christian Church. It could, and did, discuss how to carry on the War, but it was out of place to consider how to bring about peace. And as an example of War economy, a cheque was presented to the Archdeacon of Kingston-on-Thames, and a set of furs to his daughter.

In a recent issue we gave an outline of the career of Pastor Russell. A South African correspondent now sends us a copy of the *East London Daily Dispatch* containing the record of one "Dr." Gibson, who has just been given an indeterminate sentence at the Rand Criminal Sessions. Several times im-

prisoned, this man married no less than six different women, deserting each one of them after fleecing them of considerable sums of money. In his time he had been forger, burglar, prison breaker, and general "crook." He was, says the *Dispatch*, "a close student of theology, and wherever he lived, made it a practice to attend church regularly." For some time he filled the pulpit of a Presbyterian Church in Toronto, the congregation of which made him a handsome present when he left. He is now imprisoned for an indefinite period, and he will no doubt be as assiduous as ever in attendance at chapel.

With raisins at well-nigh a halfpenny each, and sugar a penny a lump, the merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows will be shorn of much of its hilarity. Christians, in search of the delights of the simple life, might turn up the Prophet Ezekiel's cooking recipes.

The clerical campaign against stage-morals continues, and people are kindly invited to write to the authorities and give careful details of anything offensive. Some day, perhaps, people will write to the dear bishops pointing out the "purple passages" in the Bible, and then the fat will be in the fire.

William Onions, better known by the name of "Spring Onions," who died recently at the age of eighty-four, made 500 appearances before the Police Courts on account of a continuous thirst and its after effects. When nearly seventy years of age he was converted by the Church Army and became a teetotaler. He was, probably, the most distinguished convert that the Church Army ever made. The story of "Spring Onions" ought to bring tears to all eyes.

Principal Ritchie ridicules the prophecy that "when the lads come back" they will bring "a breath of life to the Churches." He admits that the War will leave those who will be fortunate enough to survive it, very much where it found them, and that, meantime, its terrible experiences make as many Atheists as Christians, though, according to the Principal, to the former the War is "a savour of death unto death." He admits, further, that, in this country, even the Churches have not yet turned to God.

I see Pearsons' are just about to publish a book on *Cleansing London*, by the Bishop of London. Well, well, isn't it a pity the Bishop let the place get so dirty before he put on his apron and set to work at the job?—*London Opinion*.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been asking Englishmen to pray for the repose of the soul of the deceased Austrian Kaiser, and a Sunday paper remarks that it would be "much better that they should pray for Europe to be saved from such enemies of the human race." We fear both petitions would share the same fate.

One of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's poems, *The Sons of the Suburbs*, has been "censored." One of the verses had a reference to a clergyman's daughter who takes to gin. Evidently, the wielder of the blue pencil thought that this was letting the cat out of the bag.

In a complimentary puff concerning Mr. H. G. Wells, the novelist, a Sunday paper says that a cab-driver remarked, "Mr. Wells, he ain't no ordinary writer. He don't write these love-stories. He's got brains, 'e's a thinker, 'e knows." The dialect is somewhat stagey; but we fancy that when Mr. Wells "found God," he left his thinker at home.

Journalists are supposed to turn Christian for half-an-hour whilst they write their leading articles, and their piety is usually of a peculiarly elusive character. A London newspaper recently contained an appeal on behalf of "war-shrines," and in another column referred to present-day conditions in Germany in the following sarcastic terms: "Generals are not quarrelling about stage-morals, and no

bishops are investigating energy-sapping controversies about human frailties in general."

Bishop Bury, whose diocese is Northern and Central Europe, claims to be the only Englishman who has entered Germany during the War. In an interview with a Press representative, the Bishop's most interesting remark was that the prisoners at Ruhleben were allowed to sing "God Save the King." Is this a further proof that the Germans are Atheists?

Poor old Providence is heavily handicapped by material considerations. Since the lighting orders have been enforced in London, street accidents have greatly increased. Yet, we are told, the eagle eye of Providence watches the sparrows fall.

St. Helen's Parish Church, Lancashire, has caught fire. Apparently, Providence is too busy to bother about its own houses.

A Sunday newspaper has a column article on "Miracles in War Time." The most remarkable is the conversion of a "two-horse power oil-engine which had failed to act." Christians must have "two-horse power" brains to believe such nonsense.

An open-air shrine has been placed in Chatham churchyard. This seems a fitting place to commemorate a dying religion.

All Welsh married Baptist ministers have had their stipends raised to £130, with £5 for each child under fifteen years. You can always trust the clergy to look after the meat that perisheth.

A contemporary refers to the "twilight sleep" of the Christian Church. There must be some mistake; people who indulge in "twilight sleep" always produce something.

Religion.

The Bible
Is a libel
Against Humanity.
The chattering
And word-scattering
Of the Clergy,
And the Priest,
Is a Feast
Of Holy Vanity
And parasitic energy.
'Tis not by the "action"
Of the Magic Rod
Of Almighty God
That bane superstition
Is increased;
But of that Myth, the using
Of the Myth's "divinity"—
Causing unclean action
In each Social Institution
Of Man;
Only Reason can ban
Such, when Reason Man is choosing.
'Tis decreased,
Less and less, with Truth's dissemination,
By which it is rejected.
'Neath the dark, gleamless hood
Of Theologic-Falsehood.
All such is protected,
And lives most where lives dissipation.
To this last,
Does each religious "revival"
Owe its periodic survival,
And 'twill be past
Only when Man endeavours to find
Saner use for the activities of his mind.

C. B. W.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 17, Liverpool; January 7, Chesterfield; January 14, Nottingham; January 28, Swansea; February 4, Abertillery; March 18, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 17, Avondale Hall, Clapham. December 31, Abertillery.
- T, LEWINS.—You are quite mistaken. We are pleased to say that we have a large number of lady readers, and they are amongst the warmest admirers. And we have been several times on the verge of remarking on the proportion of ladies who have subscribed to our Sustentation Fund.
- W. HICKMAN.—Have forwarded your letter to Robert Moreland.
- G. LUNN.—Thanks for good wishes. Your desire is shared by many; but by January 14 the Sustentation Fund will have been open for three months, and that should be quite long enough for such a purpose.
- E. B.—Thanks for pointing out the error. We will see that the correction is duly made.
- AN IPSWICH reader writes to ask whether others in that town will not follow his example by inducing their newsagents to take and display extra copies of the *Freethinker*? We should, of course, be very pleased if they would do so. It is a very good way of helping.
- H. R. WRIGHT.—Any Freethought you can introduce into public libraries is a step in the right direction. One never knows how many may be reached in this way.
- J. REID.—Sorry to hear of your mother's death. You have our deepest sympathy in the loss of one who can never be replaced.
- A. M.—Just a little too far off for a casual call, although we have no doubt we should enjoy it.
- A. R. READE.—Many thanks for the collection of newspaper cuttings, which are interesting and valuable. They constitute part of an historic record, and, as such, we are very pleased to have them.
- G. F.—The document is quite in order, so far as we can judge, but we hope it will be many years before it is executed.
- P. S.—We believe that all people of the class you name are open to prosecution, but it is only in the more glaring cases of imposture that the police interfere.
- KERIDON.—We quite agree with your opinion that Mr. Lloyd's reply to Sir Ray Lankester is both "dignified and scholarly." The original article of Sir Ray Lankester called for a much more severe handling than it received, since it would have been no great credit to even the pulpit.
- W. J. M.—Posters sent to newsagents. Thanks for your interest in the paper.
- J. W.—We are looking forward to the re-beginning of lectures in Manchester at an early date. Our chief difficulty is to get a suitable hall. Perhaps some Manchester friends who see this paragraph will help in the matter by informing either us or Miss Vance, at the N. S. S. office, of any hall they know of that is available, and how far they are willing to co-operate in arranging for meetings.
- POETICUS is informed by several correspondents that the line referred to in his letter last week is from Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*, line 939, stanza 135.
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- 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.*

Sugar Plums.

Owing to the vagaries of the Post Office we are unable to publish this week's continuation of Mr. W. Mann's "Christian and Pagan Morality." We regret the break, but the fault is none of ours, and the delayed article will appear in our next issue.

Liverpool "saints" will please note that Mr. Cohen lectures in the Alexandra Hall, Islington Square, Liverpool,

to-day (December 17). The afternoon lecture, at 3 o'clock, is on "Woman, the Bible, and the National Mission," and in the evening, at 7, "Will Christianity Survive the War?" Alexandra Hall is the old meeting-place of the Liverpool Branch, and we understand that good meetings are anticipated. Unfortunately, the conditions of tenancy do not allow tickets of admission to be sold at the hall, but they may be purchased beforehand (6d. and 1s.) from the Secretary, Mr. W. McKelvie, 21 Glebe Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool. Perhaps some of our friends would take tickets for disposal amongst their friends. This would at least advertise the meetings.

Mr. Lloyd lectures this evening at the Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham. We hope that the weather will be a little more gracious on this occasion than on the last, and also that local Freethinkers will do their best to bring as many friends as they can to the meeting. The lecture commences at 7 o'clock, and the hall is within a few minutes of Clapham Road Tube Station.

We are doing our best to keep the propaganda alive in various places, and even to open up new centres, but the work is more difficult than it has ever been. Advertising is very much more costly than it was, the War and things connected therewith preoccupies the minds of many. And now we see that there is to be a fifty per cent. increase on railway tickets. So we think it may safely be said that never in the history of Freethought propaganda have the difficulties been so great as they are at present. It has been more *dangerous*, but in the days of legal prosecutions there were all the benefits of advertisement, and the ever present inspiration of a fight. To-day's difficulties call for qualities that are of an even rarer kind than those which made men and women face imprisonment. The situation needs all the courage and doggedness of old, but they must be exercised, so to speak, in private, and the inspiration has to be found in an unquenchable conviction in the ultimate triumph of our cause.

Most of our readers will be as interested as we were in the following passage in a letter from a regular reader:—

In a letter which I received recently from my son, who is serving on the transport ———, the following passage occurred: "I received the *Freethinkers*, and was delighted to get them. I read them all through, and passed them on. It seems to me that every number is better than the last, and you may be sure with what pleasure I look forward to getting the paper; whatever you do, don't fail to send it each week. You will be glad to know that I am continually sowing the good seed."

Our correspondent adds that he found this passage "particularly cheerful." So do we.

In these times the only thing that one can be sure of is the unexpected, with the added certainty that it will be something unpleasant. We had hoped that we had seen the worst of the paper trouble, but in that we were evidently mistaken. Our stock of paper will last us for several months yet, and a few days ago we tried to place an order for enough to last until the end of next year. We were met with a refusal to undertake any new contract at existing prices—already high enough—and were told that, while no price could be quoted at present, we could rest assured that we should have to pay more. Luckily, we can wait for a couple of months, to see what turn the market takes. We bought in advance to the limit of our resources—resources, it should be mentioned, represented by money borrowed from friends who were good enough to help—and should have wished to lay in a still larger stock. We must now await developments, and prepare to seize the first favourable chance that offers. One thing seems pretty certain, and that is, with the now certain prolongation of the War, our difficulties will increase rather than diminish, and the situation is well calculated to give one a nice, comfortable feeling of reckless jollity suitable to Christmas-time.

Meanwhile, we hope that all intending subscribers will note that our Sustentation Fund will close on January 14. We have received enough to cover our deficit up to the beginning

of October last—the end of our first year of formal editorship; and as we calculate our loss to be £16 or £17 per calendar month, about enough to cover our loss up to date. If the Fund closes at about its present figure, it means that we shall have to repeat the experiment of last year, and go short ourselves in order to make up the deficit. Frankly, we can ill afford to do this, and would rather see the Fund brought up to a figure that would bring us within reasonable distance of this year's estimated deficit. Those who have helped have done so generously, and we thank them for their aid; but there must be hundreds of readers quite able, and even willing, to help, but who have not yet done so. We are convinced that their number is large enough to place the *Freethinker* in safety for some considerable time, and we should like to see this done. We think we can say with confidence that the *Freethinker* has been useful to many in a way that cannot be represented in cash terms; and the present offers an opportunity when that help can be acknowledged at the most critical period in the history of the paper. We are doing *our* best to keep the paper unchanged, and intend to keep at it to the end.

Mr. F. E. Collins, in sending list of donations to our Sustentation Fund, writes:—

Allow me to congratulate you on the splendid make up of the *Freethinker*. I have been a reader of this paper for over twenty years, and can honestly say, to my mind it has never been quite as good as it is to-day.

The North London Branch Debating Society brings its present Session to a close this evening (December 17), when Mr. A. D. Eagar opens a debate on "The Inadequacy of the Economic Concept of History." These meetings have been so successful as to warrant their continuance in January. Friends interested should write for the new Syllabus to the Secretary, A. S. de Garmo, or to the General Secretary, N. S. S.

Mr. Howell Smith's Discussion Class held its first meeting with quite satisfactory results. About twenty were in attendance, and it was decided to use Mr. J. A. Farrer's *Paganism and Christianity* as a basis for discussion. We hope for much from classes of this character, and those who wish to join should send their names to Miss Vance, at the Society's offices.

Auguste Comte and Positivism is the title of a lecture by F. J. Gould (Watts & Co., 1d.), which presents within a brief compass an attractive outline of the Positivist philosophy. It will probably induce in many a desire for a closer acquaintance with the work of the great French Freethinker, and if it has this effect, no one will be better pleased than the author of the pamphlet.

The Pioneer Press has on sale a limited number of copies of *Evolution, and Its Bearings on Religion*, by A. J. Dadson. The book is well written, and on the right lines. It is illustrated, and was published at 6s., but is now being offered at 1s. 6d., postage 3d. As only a few copies are available they should be written for at once.

Our Sustentation Fund.

THE object of this Fund is to make good the loss on the *Freethinker*—entirely due to increased cost of materials, etc.—from October, 1915, to October, 1916, and to provide against the inevitable further losses during the continuation of the War. This Fund will close on January 14.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £217 8s.—A Lover of Art, 5s.; A. Beak, 2s. 6d.; Iris, 2s. 6d.; G. Lunn, 5s.; R. Terroni, 5s.; J. Weeks, 2s. 6d.; Mary Rogerson, 10s.; H. A. H., in memory of Mr. Foote, from a Freethinker's family, 12s.; G. R. Baulks, 2s.; Tested, 5s.; L. Foster, 2s. 6d. *Per F. Collins* W. K. Bennett, 1s.; F. Howell, 1s.; W. T. Andrews, 1s.; A. Vanderhout, 5s.; V. Collins, 5s.; W. Smith, 2s. 6d.; J. Tarry, 2s. 6d.; H. Tarry, 2s. 6d.; W. Aberdeen, 2s. 6d.; J. Sullivan, 2s.; F. Collins, 2s. 6d.—total, £1 7s. 6d.

Anatole France.

To earn the obloquy of certain journals is almost in itself a commendation; and I hope that the tirade against Anatole France which the editor of the *Church Times* permits himself, in the course of a review of a work on French fiction in his issue of November 24, will induce many to make the acquaintance of the great French novelist's works, who have not hitherto done so.

The Editor's onslaught is such a perfect gem, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of reproducing it, or readers of the *Freethinker* that of reading it. If a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, a thing of perfect perversity is often equally so. Here is the effusion:—

We do not like Anatole France. He is a bitter foe of the Christian religion; he has written pages of almost incredible lasciviousness, and, before the war, he set himself to oppose consistently the whole movement on which, in our opinion, the regeneration of France depended. There may still be some people who think that genius excuses everything, but we are not among them. Some years ago a complimentary banquet was given here to M. France on the occasion of a visit he paid to London, and we remember the astonishment with which we read the list of the guests on that occasion, and our wonder whether they really understood the causes for which M. France stands. He has been one of the evil geniuses of his country, and it is to be hoped that his request in the early days of the war to be allowed to wear the uniform of the French soldier was the symbol of a profound repentance. It is pleasant to find that M. Guerard (the author of the book under review) is discriminating in his admiration, and that he does not praise that abominable book *La Revolte des Anges*. But M. France has written much that is almost as bad, and his later books are very different from that charming early story, *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*. It is perhaps as well to say that we do not expect all novels to be written *virginibus puerisque*; we believe that they should be honest "criticisms of life," but the blasphemy which M. Anatole France permits himself is beyond all bounds of toleration.

It is entirely natural that the Editor of the *Church Times* should not like Anatole France. It is no more possible that he should like him, holding the views he does, than that we should like Father Benson or Guy Thorne. Yet what a lesson is conveyed in these names alone! If we are asked what literary art Freethought has produced, we can point to the greatest living master of fiction in the world, and even if we confine our attention to this country, the names of Thomas Hardy, Eden Phillpotts, H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and many more leap to the lips. But if we ask in turn for the names of contemporary orthodox Christian men of letters, we can only think, among British authors, of Mr. Belloc, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and the late Father Benson as possessing any eminence whatever; and even in the more fruitful field of French literature, such Catholic writers as Bourget are admittedly far below the level of Anatole France.

It is true, as the *Church Times* says, that M. France is "a bitter foe of the Christian religion"; and it might be added that he is a most effective foe. He knows what he is writing about; he is deeply versed in Catholic doctrine and legend; and this gives him a rapier-touch which, as in the opening part of *L'Ile des Pingouins* and in *La Revolte des Anges*, which the *Church Times* so execrates, causes the mysteries of "revealed" religion to dissolve in inextinguishable laughter. I defy anyone with an open mind, *i.e.*, anyone whose mind is not artificially screwed up to the degree of "faith" which will swallow anything, to read either of the above books with-

out seeing, as they never saw before, the barbaric puerility of the Christian religion.

The *Church Times*, of course, calls Anatole France "lascivious," just as those obscurantists who object to Zola's social philosophy try to dispose of him by calling him a "pornographer." Certainly Anatole France has written pages which do not permit of translation into English, though we might retort that he is at least guiltless of having perpetrated anything so torrid as some parts of the Pentateuch, to which we have never known the *Church Times* take exception. The fact is, a different standard in the matter of literary decency prevails in this country, thanks to the Puritan tradition, from that obtaining in France and on the Continent generally. We may differ as to the respective merits of these traditional standards; and obviously neither can be altered in a day nor a year. But we may as well recognize the fact that Anatole France is merely continuing the tradition which former French fictionists, from Rabelais to Theophile Gautier, have handed down to him, and that it is absurd to judge his work by the peculiarly strict standard governing British and American story-writing.

But Anatole France is much more than a satirist of religion and a teller of gay stories. He is a man with a mission; and this brings me to the accusation of the *Church Times* that he has opposed the "regeneration" of France, and been an evil genius to his country. Anatole France is a militant Socialist in politics, and has consistently set himself against not only clericalism, but its twin brother, militarism. This does not mean that he is opposed to the defence of his country. On the contrary, even before the War, he insisted that "nations must enter the federation of the world alive, and not dead," and he has never opposed the maintenance of an army so long as this remains necessary to national existence. But he has set his face like a flint against the undue ascendancy of the military profession, and the subordination of grave social interests to real or alleged military exigencies, which is properly called "militarism." It was the Dreyfus affair which drew him into public work. Along with Zola, Jaures, and Clemenceau, Anatole France contended that the unhappy Jewish officer, convicted and sentenced for espionage, was unscrupulously sacrificed to official reluctance to admit a mistake once made, and to the determination of the clerical party to uphold a conviction which seemed to support their anti-Semitic agitation. As we know, the suicide and confession of the forger, Colonel Henry, confirmed the allegations of the "Dreyfusards"; and thanks to their insistence, in the teeth of Catholic agitation which did its best to discredit a great country in the eyes of the world, reparation was made.

When the *Church Times* says that Anatole France opposed "the whole movement on which the regeneration of France depended," it is necessary to point out that the movement to which it refers was one having for its object the restoration of the ascendancy of that Church, and that militarist spirit, to which France owed the Dreyfus affair, and from which she has partially, at any rate, delivered herself by such salutary reforms as the expulsion of the monastic orders and the disestablishment of the Church. It is entirely false to insinuate, as the *Church Times* does, that Anatole France, by offering his services in the present War, expressed "repentance" for his past. The act was consistent with his whole career. Anatole France is an internationalist, but not an anti-nationalist, and he wishes his country to live, and not die, but to live free in body and spirit, not the slave of religious dogma and jack-booted authority. He believes in that most fundamental of the rights of man, the right to happiness; and by the supreme artistic expression which he has given to that belief, and the con-

sistent way in which he has championed it, he has earned from us, his fellow-Freethinkers, our thanks and homage.

ROBERT ARCH.

Talks With Young Listeners.

XX.—Our Last Old Testament Talk.

A PIOUS Jew would take pleasure in thinking of himself as a sheep being led through mountain passes by a strong and faithful sheep-master:—

Yahweh is my shepherd; I shall not lack. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters.....Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you, O Lord, are with me; your rod protects me.

This is part of the 23rd Psalm in the Book of "Psalms," the number of these hymns for the Temple and for the family circle, or for singing to oneself alone, being 150. Many of them are called the Psalms of David, but it is not at all likely that David composed any of them; and perhaps all of them were written by poets and priests after the Exile; that is, after about 500 B.C.

Another book is called "Proverbs," and the first verse begins by saying—"The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David." But here, again, we cannot suppose King Solomon made these maxims. Many minds gave birth to them, and they were collected into a book three or four hundred years B.C. Very wise and striking are some of these sayings, such as:—

Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise.

There is he that maketh himself rich, and hath nothing. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.

A soft answer turneth away wrath.

A man that hath friends must show himself friendly.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The Hebrew books which make up the Old Testament are the Jewish Bible, and the Jews seem to have fixed on these books as being the true "sacred" writings by about the first century; that is, the time when Plutarch was composing his famous lives of the Greek and Roman heroes and statesmen.

And here ends all I have to say as to the Old Testament.

But, besides the rolls of parchment on which these scriptures were written, the ancient Jews used to keep other books in their meeting-houses, or synagogues. But they never felt sure that these other books were good enough to be called "sacred," so they placed them in cupboards, or side-rooms, of the synagogues, and called them "Hidden Books," or (in Greek) the Apocrypha. Many years ago, when I was a choir-boy at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, I used to hear the priest read the books of the Apocrypha as well as the books of the Old Testament, and the Gospels and other books of the New Testament. But since then the ministers have ceased reading these "Hidden" books in the churches. I have just time to note a few things about the Apocrypha.

In one of the twelve books, called "Ecclesiasticus," is the well-known proverb—"He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled." It also contains the verses, often repeated, about the great men of history:—

Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us.

The Lord manifested in them great glory, even his mighty power from the beginning:.....

Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their understanding men of learning for the people; wise were their words in their instruction;

Such as sought out musical tunes, and set forth verses in writing :

All these were honoured in their generations, and were a glory in their days ;.....

Their bodies were buried in peace, and their name liveth for evermore.

And I will conclude with the very brief telling of three of the "Hidden" or "Apocryphal" stories.

I.—THE TRAVELS OF TOBIAS.

Old blind Tobit was an exile in the Assyrian land, and so good-hearted that he could not sit down to a good dinner without, if possible, having some poor hungry stranger as his guest. He had a fine young fellow for a son, named Tobias, whom he sent a long journey into Media to fetch some money left there in trust with a friend ; and Tobias took a hired man with him for company, also a little dog. The hired man was shrewd and handy, and, when they had caught a fish in the river Tigris, he showed his young master how to work charms by burning the fish's liver, the smoke whereof would drive away demons. This was very useful knowledge, of course !

On the road they called at a house where kinsfolk of Tobias dwelt, and here the young man fell in love with the daughter Sarah, and they were married. Sarah had had seven husbands, each of whom had died on his wedding-day, through the evil spell of the demon Asmodeus. Our hero smoked the demon out of the place, and triumphed ! Meanwhile, the hired man had gone on to Media, procured the bags of money, properly sealed, and hurried back. Bride, bridegroom, hired man, and little dog returned to the Assyrian land, where mother Anna was watching every day for their home-coming. Tobias applied some fish-liver ointment to his father's eyes, and restored his sight, and happy was old Tobit to see his pretty daughter-in-law. Then they called in the hired man to pay him his wages, but he declined any payment. "In fact," he said, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels." And at that he vanished.

There is a picture of Tobias and the Angel in our National Gallery. The dog is in the picture.

II.—A HEROINE.

In the city of Bethulia lived a rich farmer, who had a goodly estate outside the walls. One day, in barley-harvest, he was in the hot fields, and had a sunstroke and died. His wife, a beautiful woman, named Judith, put on sackcloth for mourning, and never wished to marry again. She managed her estate thriftily ; for she had land, cattle, slaves, silver and gold ; and there was none that gave her an evil word.

Grievous disaster fell on the land of Judæa, when the Assyrians swarmed into the country, under command of the fierce and brutal captain, Holofernes. In the course of his terrible warrings, he camped in front of Bethulia ; and then Judith planned a plan for the salvation of her native land. She dressed gaily, and plaited her hair, and glittered with chains, bracelets, and earrings ; and went out to the enemy camp, only her maid being with her.

The guards, who were astonished to see this handsome lady, conducted her to the tent of Holofernes ; and she made a salaam, and did reverence unto him. She explained to him that she quite well knew that he, by his skill and valour, must surely conquer ; and, besides, the folk of her city were very stupid ; and, though God had bidden them not to touch certain offerings of corn and oil, yet they would certainly do so before long, since they were near starving in the siege. It was her habit to converse with God early every morning, and God would tell her when the citizens did this sin, and then would be the time for Holofernes to attack.

All this he believed ; and he gave her a nice tent to stay in, and early each dawn the guards saw her go out of the camp to a quiet spot to pray.

One evening the swaggering and leering Holofernes invited her to his tent for a feast, and she and her maid went, and he lolled on a couch adorned with purple hangings, gold, and emeralds. Drinking himself drunk, he slept, and when all had left the tent except the two women, Judith took his scimitar and hacked off his head, and the maid carried it. The guards saw the two women go out to pray. But they went on and on till they brought the good news to the city. The Assyrians were struck with panic and fled ; the city was saved ; the women of Israel wore garlands of olive-leaves ; and Judith and a crowd of dames and maids, wearing garlands, danced a processional dance of thanksgiving, the men marching behind, clad in armour.

Judith lived in honour all her days, and she died in the city of Bethulia at the age of 105.

III.—JUDAS MACCABEUS.

In the village of Modin an altar to a Greek god was built by order of the king, Antiochus, and an officer stood by inviting the Jewish villagers to offer sacrifice and incense. One man stepped forward to obey, whereupon an old man, trembling with pious rage, rushed forward and slew the man and the king's officer. All the country was as if set on fire by the Greek tyranny, for the Jews were being driven to sacrifice unclean pigs, to bow to Zeus and the God of the Vine, and other gods such as men worshipped in Athens.

Judas Maccabeus, son of the zealous old man of Modin, raised the banner of rebellion, and the heroes of Judæa followed him to victory or death. He burned the camp of the Greek leader Gorgias, and his men captured spoil of gold, silver, and blue and purple cloth ; and the victors sang the psalm—"Yahweh's mercy is good, and endureth for ever." Judas marched into Jerusalem, and broke down the image and altar of Zeus, which had been an Abomination to the Jews, and the ancient manner of worship was restored, and festival was kept with harps and cymbals and songs.

The king died, but the Greeks still oppressed the people, and elephants carried the enemy warriors into battle. But Judas had no fear of elephants or tyrants ; and at the famous fight at Beth-horon he was victorious again ; and so mighty a name had he, that the Republic of Rome received his messengers with honour. But at the battle of Elasa he fell, sword in hand ; and he was buried at Modin amid sorrowful cries of "How is the mighty fallen, the saviour of Israel !"

The old winter festival (Christmas time), when many lights were lit and green branches adorned the houses, was made into a new holiday, in memory of the cleansing of the Temple by Judas ; and this Feast of the Dedication is still kept up for eight December days by the modern Jews, who illumine their houses and synagogues.

Neither Jews nor Gentiles will ever forget the heroism of Judas and his comrades who fought for their national independence. "Their name liveth for evermore."

F. J. GOULD.

Biology, Economics, and War.

PERHAPS there is no sphere of activity in which human energy has been more disastrously expended than in that of warfare. That war, as a method of settling disputes, should have persisted into modern civilization is a fine realistic ironical compliment to our boasted progress and enlightenment. The present great European conflict

makes one almost despair of humanity. But perhaps we have been apt to expect too much of mankind. We have been so much in the habit of looking at all things—even war—through the idealistic glasses of the metaphysician and the theologian. Let us try to look at the problem of war from the standpoint of biology and economics. From this standpoint we must answer the question: Is war between nation and nation a mode of strife to which mankind shall always be condemned? We may concede at the outset that strife in one form or another is likely to be the lot of humanity. But why in the form of inter-human war? Will it never be possible for man to give up making war upon his fellow-man, in order to strive for supremacy over external nature, and to enter more fully, and with better grace, into the higher strife of intellectual conflict?

There are many who think that war is a biological and economic necessity. Let us take the evidence of biology first. Strife on the biological plane takes place in the process of sexual reproduction. It manifests itself in the activity of the spermatozoa in their unconscious efforts to coalesce with the ovum of the female animal. As Haeckel says: "Only one out of the millions of male ciliated cells which press round the ovum penetrates to its nucleus" (*The Riddle*, p. 23, R.P.A. ed.).

Is it surprising that the tendency to strife should be transmitted to the new creature, whether animal or man, when we remember that its chief characteristics are latent in the newly formed protoplasmic cell?

But we shall probably better realize the magnitude of the warfare which takes place in the animal world, and in the world of plants, if we take a glance at the struggle for existence which is perpetually going on. An instructive study on this head is to be found in the third chapter of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

The rate of increase in the organic world is so great that millions of beings must of necessity be killed off in the struggle for existence which follows as a result of more organic beings coming into the world than can be fed. To quote Darwin's own words: "There is no exception to the rule that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate, that if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of a single pair" (*Origin of Species*, p. 79).

Thousands of animals come into the world from time to time simply to be destroyed and eaten by other animals. In fact, this world is so beautifully constituted that fighting, for food and space whereon to live, is one of its most outstanding features. Seedlings and insects are eaten by birds and fowl, while the latter two are killed by man or devoured by other animals, often no less wild than man himself. Animals kill and devour members of their own or other species; they destroy plant-life for the purposes of obtaining food; and, with the same object, they wage war against man, who returns the compliment whenever possible. Thus the spirit of warfare is perpetuated.

But warfare is not only the result of the necessity of obtaining food; it is a frequent preliminary to that blessed phase of life known as courtship. In several chapters of *The Descent of Man*, Darwin gives instances of the furious fights that take place between the males of insects, fishes, reptiles, birds, and mammals, especially at the time of courtship. Even the beautiful and fragile male butterflies are given to fighting for the object of their choice. With birds, some of the most ferocious and bloody battles take place. As Darwin says: "The season of love is that of battle; but the males of some birds, as of the game-fowl and ruff, and even the young males of the wild turkey and grouse, are ready to fight whenever they meet" (*Descent of Man*, p. 560).

Considering that man is so closely related to the higher animals that he is as much a product of the general biological processes of the world as any other animal, it is not astounding that the animal tendencies to strife should have been passed on to him. Food is a biological necessity, and man, during the course of his evolution, has often had to fight in order to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Sometimes the fight has been between one tribe and another; sometimes between man and external nature, particularly the animal world. These facts have led many people to adopt the unqualified statement that war is a "biological necessity." At first sight it seems to be so; but before we try to settle this point, let us turn to the sphere of economics.

As human society developed, the biological necessity of obtaining food played a fundamental part as a determinant in the economic relations that evolved between man and man. Those tribes and societies of human beings that were able to secure food supplies most regularly were the ones most likely to survive in the struggle for existence, especially if they realized the importance of economizing the quantities of food obtained, and of taking care of the sources of supply. It is not surprising, therefore, that the economics of primitive society frequently became the cause of fierce wars. What more rational than for tribe B to strive to dispossess tribe A of its means of subsistence, and to see in that the easiest way of solving its own difficulty of finding food supplies? Primitive ideas of co-operation were limited, as a rule, by the boundaries of the tribe. Men of the same tribe would co-operate in order to obtain food, but instead of joining with another tribe to exploit Nature for the same purpose, they made war upon each other.

Much evidence might be gathered with regard to the part played by economic factors in wars that have been fought by nations desiring to acquire colonies. It was the economic factor that dominated the war between England and France from 1756-63. Each nation strove for supremacy in India and Canada, in order to acquire room for economic development. The belief that one's own nation should have the monopoly of the world's trade markets seems to have been held by merchants and statesmen of both France and England.

That many of those who set themselves up to be our guides in economic thought still hold the theory that a nation must become supreme in the economic world, in order to be both prosperous and happy, is evidenced by the reception given to a recent book on *Eclipse or Empire*, by H. B. Gray and S. Turner. The book is in many respects a fine one. It draws attention to the fact that England has of late been lagging behind in the industrial world; it points out that in our empire there are almost unlimited sources of materials for development; and it calls upon Englishmen throughout the empire to work for economic supremacy. The idea of empire expansion as a means of salvation from eclipses seems to dominate the book. As if being the supreme economic empire of the world would solve all our social troubles.

The authors do not seem to realize that it is quite possible for an empire to flourish economically, as against other empires, while a large section of its own people enjoy anything but prosperity. Nor do they seem to realize that if Englishmen think that the position of "top dog" in the economic world should be theirs, and set themselves to expand the empire for the sake of empire, war will follow sooner or later. Other progressive nations are bound to seek room for expansion out of the same desire for dominion, unless statesmen and others begin to realize that mere increase in commerce and industry does not constitute the highest aim that a nation or empire can have.

I must now instance how economic factors have been the primary cause of war between one class and another of the same nation. Prior to the French Revolution of 1789 the economic condition of France was deplorable. Wealth was in the hands of a comparatively few members of society. The aristocracy lived in luxury and wantonness, while the lower orders became more and more steeped in misery, except some few members who derived some wealth from the disintegrating estates of noble lords who squandered their substance.

The successful peasants gradually formed the middle class which became the factory owners and shopkeepers. As they began to feel the oppression of the aristocracy upon their industry and commerce, and as they looked around and saw the economic degradation of the people in general, some of the more enlightened spread ideas of revolt. The middle class tried to bring about reform by parliamentary methods, which met with resistance, until open revolt was necessary. In this the middle class would have failed had not the peasants, who were living in misery, been imbued with ideas of revolt and come to their aid. War against the aristocrats became inevitable. Unfortunately, for the peasants, a large section of the middle class of the status of factory owners and traders had as little love for those below as for those above. As Kropotkin says, in his great work on *The French Revolution*, when speaking of the middle class:—

What they wanted was what economists have called freedom of industry and commerce, but which really meant the relieving of industry from the harassing and repressing supervision of the State, and the giving to it full liberty to exploit the worker, who was still to be deprived of his freedom (p. 8).

But into the details of the opposition of the middle class to the peasants, on economic grounds, I cannot enter. It is sufficient to have drawn attention to the part played by economic conditions in bringing about war between the classes of a nation. I must now return to the question, Is war a biological and economic necessity from which we can never escape?

To this question our answer must be conditional. In the animal world, below man, war is a biological necessity wherever food supply is not in ratio to the requirements of reproduction of species, and that seems to be pretty general. With primitive man war is a biological and economic necessity wherever the same conditions exist, or even where the food supply is plentiful, if rival families or tribes desire to obtain possession of a given source of supply. In this case, war takes place, owing to primitive man not having reached the conception that it is better for those of different tribes to join hands in order to exploit the resources of nature, than to fight for a given limited source of supply. This is the crux of the problem. It would be foolish to say that all wars have been caused by economic factors; but from time to time, when biologic and economic conditions have been pressing on tribes or nations, war has been a necessity. Why? Because, on the biological side of his evolution, man has not reached to that stage of psychological development which will enable him to master the economic conditions in which he finds himself. While nations think the *only* way to solve their problems of increasing population is to acquire more territory, war will be inevitable. When nations realize that the true way to solve all economic problems is to exploit the earth for the benefit of all, and to colonize unoccupied parts of the earth on international lines, then war will cease to be a biologic and economic necessity.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Gipsy Smith, the evangelist, has left for France, where he will serve with the Y.M.C.A. at the back of the Front.

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, 15 Victoria Road, off Kentish Town Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate, "Inadequacy of the Economic Concept of History." Opened by A. D. Eager.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Avondale Hall, Landor Road, Clapham, S.W.): 7, J. T. Lloyd, "The Farce of Trust in God."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—Lectures temporarily suspended.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington Square): Chapman Cohen, 3, "Woman, the Bible, and the National Mission"; 7, "Will Christianity Survive the War?"

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