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Views and Opinions.

Christendom and the War.

The existence of a state of war between Germany and the United States brings all the great Christian nations of the world into the conflict. It is difficult to see how America could have remained outside much longer, the submarine warfare making its decision no more than an act of self-defence. Its influence on the War is likely to be as much moral as material, although in a war such as this one the moral factor is of more than usual importance. Still the situation is ghastly. Over nineteen centuries after the alleged birth of Christ, creator of the Gospel of the doctrine of human peace and brotherhood—to follow the orthodox legend—and three-fourths of the human race at war. And a war forced upon the world by Christians. That is the outstanding fact. Against the will of Christians no such War would be possible. The non-Christian peoples—Turkey, Japan, China—have admittedly been dragged into it through the action of the Christian nations of the world. And people ask: "Is Christianity a failure?" as though the question admitted of discussion. The War itself is proof of failure—failure unmistakable and complete.

* * *

A Blow at Nationalism.

One thing America's appearance in the War area has certainly done. It has put yet another nail in the coffin of the doctrine of the narrower form of Nationalism. Situated 3,000 miles away, it might have been thought that America could have stood apart from the War until the end. But the logic of events has been too powerful for that. The course of affairs have shown that American interests—moral and material—are not distinct from, and independent of, European interests. America can no more live a *full* life shut off from its 3,000 miles away neighbours than can any one of the countries of Europe. Inter-communion of ideas, interchange of commodities have robbed nations of their old-time independence. Such independence as is left is political only, and even that has its limits. The fact of one nation after another

being dragged into the War, the kindred fact that the intense nationalism of Germany is blamed for the outbreak of War, is proof that as an end nationalism belongs to an order of ideas that have largely outlived their useful application to life. Nationalism leads direct to that deification of the State as the supreme end which finds its expression in the worst aspects of German political life. As a means to an end the conception of the State is tolerable. As an end in itself it is with civilized peoples wholly vicious. Against the conception of the State we must learn to place that of the community. For the State is exclusive—a closed circle. The community is expansive and inclusive. It expands as life expands; it includes all that ministers to the fullest human life. More than ever we are driven to the conception of an internationalism based upon co-operation, goodwill, and the fullest and freest exchange of all that ministers to human welfare.

* * *

Opportunist Christianity.

Let it be noted, and remembered for use after the War, that in not one of the belligerent countries have the Churches stood as a force for peace, restraint, or security. Statesmen *may* have wished for peace so long as it was possible for them to do so. The Churches everywhere remained passive and ineffective. And yet the chance was before them to play such a part as might have served to win some measure of respect from even their intellectual opponents. In a world at war they might have stood as the visible symbols of a doctrine of human fellowship and goodwill. That the world is at war, and the passion of ill-will of necessity rampant, did not make the need for their restraining influence less, but more. We do not mean that the clergy should have opposed the War, only that the more determined the nation was for war, the more united it was in the pursuit of the War, the greater the need for holding aloft those ethical ideals which run the risk of being trampled under foot during war, and which must be maintained and enforced if the world is to resume the march of civilization. As it is, thousands of Christians have experienced an almost unconscious revulsion at the belicose attitude of the Churches. Large numbers have, we are convinced, broken their connection with the Churches on that account. The Church had its chance during the War—and lost it. We are convinced it will pay the full price of its blunder when the War is over. It would have been wiser to have left war to the layman.

* * *

Christianity in Russia.

And of all the countries engaged in the War, the influence of the Church has been nowhere so evil as in Russia. For centuries the Christian Church in Russia has acted as the great instrument of the Government in the enslavement of the people. To keep the mass of the people drunken and pious was the policy, and to that policy the Church lent its full assistance. With sixty to seventy per cent. of the population unable to read or write, the task was not hard. But all students of Russia

are aware that the tyranny of the Government would have been impossible but for the mental dragooning by the Church. And to all the evils committed by the late Russian Government since the outbreak of war—the pogroms of Jews, the outraging of defenceless peoples, the imprisonment of reformers—the Church gave its blessing. And that Church, it should never be forgotten, received the blessing of sloppy pietists like Mr. Stephen Graham, and empty-headed prelates like the Bishop of London. The new Russia will have yet to deal with the Church. Policy will demand—in view of the superstition of the people—caution; but we venture to predict that any reaction that is attempted will again have the support of the Russian Church. There is too great an element of freethinking among the leaders of the Revolution to leave doubt on that head.

* * *

“God’s Justice”!

Meanwhile, our own Churches can only meet the catastrophe of the War, and its impeachment of Christianity, by the repetition of formulæ that are an insult to human intelligence. How ridiculous the Christian talk of “God’s justice” and “Divine retribution” looks in the face of facts. Put it that Germany is wholly responsible for this War—not a very sensible or scientific view when one takes the records of *all* nations for the past century and a half. Or take the more defensible view that Germany is immediately responsible for the War, and add that of all Germany, the Kaiser and a small group with him are the responsible persons. How will “God’s justice” work itself out? Suppose the Kaiser were dethroned, and the governing group in Germany destroyed. That may be justified on the ground of expediency, of punishment for evil done, of the need for protecting the world against similar outbreaks in the future. But what has justice, ethical justice, to do with all this? Over a large part of Europe thousands of peaceful homes have been ruined, myriads of peaceful lives destroyed, and the living left with a memory of such horrors as all of us only three years ago thought impossible in a civilized country. How can any punishment that either God or man may invent and inflict wipe out all this suffering and terror? Suppose hell be a fact instead of a myth, and that God will deal with these men in the after life. Will that make the matter better? The lives remain lost; the homes remain ruined; the wrong done remains done.

The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

* * *

An Impeachment of Deity.

I know all the talk of the benefits that will accrue to civilization from the War, of the idealism that has sent the world’s youth into it, of the cheerful spirit of sacrifice evoked. All of this—grossly exaggerated as it is—might be true, and still the pious jargon about “God’s justice” remain viciously untrue. It is not they who have sacrificed who will reap the reward. We who remain reap whatever good may come from their death. The old, the young, the unborn, all may have cause to bless those who have laid down their lives in defence of freedom. This is a statement of fact, but it is not a justification of the process. Advance in civilization may be possible by no other method, and recognizing this we bow to the inevitable. The Atheist may do this without shame, but not the Theist. For he believes that lack of this process is a personal, intelligent, powerful, and *loving* God. He designed it; he set the process going, and now calmly watches its course. And it is *man* who steps in and tries by every

means in his power to correct the iniquity of God’s plan. Surely it should have been his place to prevent as it is man’s ambition to redress? The burning, shell-ruined towns and villages of France and Belgium, the shattered homes and outraged women, and hecatombs of corpses, all constitute an indictment of the Kaiser and the Junker class. But still more strongly is it being borne in upon the minds of thousands of men and women that, if there is a God, the War is, above all, an indictment of *him*. “God’s in his heaven; all’s right with the world” will satisfy only those minds narcotized by an irrational creed. Rather is the world a picture of men killed and women outraged in a world governed by a God too omnipotent to rule or careless to intervene. And both the intellect and the humanity of man must sooner or later revolt against a deity of that description.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Roots of the Christian Tree.

III.

CHRISTIANITY was by no means the only religion that borrowed ideas and customs while it was being made, the fact being that practically all religions did the same on a larger or a smaller scale. Harnack is of opinion that Christianity was an unconscious borrower; but he frankly admits that it did “learn and borrow from many quarters,” and that “it would be impossible to imagine it existing amid all the wealth and vigour of these religions, had it not drawn pith and flavour even from them.” Then he adds:—

These religions fertilized the ground for it, and the new grain and seed which fell upon that soil sent down its roots and grew to be a mighty tree. Here is a religion which embraces everything, and yet it can always be expressed in perfectly simple terms.....The Syncretism of this religion is further shown by its faculty for incorporating the most diverse nationalities—Parthians, Medes and Elamites, Greeks and barbarians. It laughed at the barriers of nationality (*Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 392).

Harnack goes so far as to state definitely that in Asia Minor, “more than in any other country, did Christianity amalgamate with Hellenism, with the result that an actual transition and interfusion took place, which, contrary to the development at Alexandria, affected, not merely religious philosophy, but all departments of human existence.” Then he significantly adds:—

Here Paganism was absorbed. There were no fierce struggles. Paganism simply disappeared, to emerge again, in proportion to the measure of its disappearance, in the Christian Church. Nowhere else did the conquest and “extirpation” of Paganism occasion so little trouble. The fact is, it was not extirpation at all. It was transformation (*Ibid*, vol. ii., p. 328).

We shall now proceed to enumerate some of the doctrines for which Christianity was indebted to older religions. It is well known that in the Pauline conception of the Christian religion the Fall occupies a fundamental position. Two heads of humanity are recognized, two representative men, the one being Adam, in whom humanity fell from the state of perfection in which it had been created, and the other, Christ, in whom humanity may recover all that it lost in Eden. These two men are contrasted in Romans v. 12-21, and 1 Cor. xv. 20-22; and out of this contrast is formulated the Pauline Gospel. But whence came the doctrine of the Fall? The story is told in Genesis; but in the rest of Old Testament literature there is no reference whatever to it. Neither Psalmist nor Prophet

seems to possess any knowledge of it; and the Gospel Jesus shares the ignorance. As a matter of fact, Paul is the only Biblical writer to make use of it; and in his scheme of redemption it is all important. Had it not been for Adam there would have been no Christ and no need of salvation; and in the absence of Eden there would have been no Calvary. Now, this doctrine of the Fall is to be found in a document known as *Kore Kosmou*, which was composed between five and four hundred years before Christ. This work treats of the origin of all things. It tells us of the creation of heavenly souls and of sacred animals. Unfortunately, the heavenly souls rebelled and lost their heavenliness, with the result that they were embodied as men. Salvation comes through the interposition of Osiris and Isis. The souls objected strongly to their enfleshment by God, and continually wailed at their sad fate.

The wail of the imprisoned souls is answered by God, that if they are sinless they shall dwell in the fields of Heaven (fields of Aalu), if blameable, then on earth; if they improve, they shall regain Heaven; but if they sin worse, they shall become animals (Petrie, *Personal Religion in Egypt Before Christianity*, p. 43).

This closely resembles the view promulgated by Plato in several dialogues. Hesiod, too, describes the primitive state as free from toil, sickness, sorrow, and all kinds of evil; and with this description most Greek poets and philosophers agree. Now, the writer of the Pauline Epistles was evidently acquainted with Pagan mythology, and could adapt the various theories therein contained to the requirements of the new cult in process of formation.

Humanity fell, then, in Adam, its first head, and in its second head, Christ, it is raised to a higher elevation than it occupied before its fall. This is what Paul says about them:—

The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. xv. 48, 49).

M. Loisy characterizes the two men thus:—

The Messiah whom they (the Jews) expected was not come for them, did not belong to them; the Heavenly Man belonged to humanity. Neither did the Gods of the mysteries belong to the country of their origin; they had ceased to be national Gods that they might become universal Saviours. And the Christian myth was no more a fact of history than were the Pagan myths; the Heavenly Man of Paul was no more a real person than Attis; the idea of universal salvation by the death of Christ was no more consistent in itself than that of salvation procured by the death of Osiris. These are analogous conceptions, dreams of one family, built on the same theme with similar imagery (*The Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911).

In the Oriental religions salvation was effected by a mystic union with a dying and resurrected Saviour-God, and on consulting the Pauline Epistles we find that Christianity advocates the same doctrine. There were two rites which symbolized that conception of salvation in its fulness, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Usually Baptism is thought of as simply the door of admission into the Christian Church; and in the apostolic age it signified little more. The ritual was exceedingly simple, and needed no special minister to perform it. Converts were baptized immediately upon their recognition of Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. But ere long the influence of the mystery-religions began to show itself. Dr. Hatch tells us that "so early as the time of Justin Martyr we find a name given to baptism which comes straight from the Greek mysteries—the

name 'enlightenment.' It came to be the constant technical term." "Seal" was another name derived from the mysteries, and in course of time it became customary to seal the baptized upon the forehead as a sign of a new ownership. In the Epistle to the Romans the indebtedness to the mysteries is most perceptible. In chapter vi., verses 3-11, there is no trace of the simple apostolic rite:—

Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

That whole passage could have been written only by one who was under the sway of a deeply realistic mysticism. The idea of dying in order to undergo a new birth came from the Pagan mysteries. As time went on the mysticism in baptism became more marked still. "The Marcosians and some Valentinian schools believed in a baptism that was an absolute sundering of the baptized from the corruptible world, and an emancipation into a perfect and eternal life." What was this?

It was but the old belief in the effect of the mysteries thrown into a Christian form. So also another Gnostic school is said to have not only treated the truths of Christianity as sacred, but also to have felt about them what the initiated were supposed to feel about the mysteries—"I swear by him who is above all, by the Good One, to keep these mysteries and to reveal them to no one"; and after that oath each seemed to feel the power of God to be upon him, as it were the password of entrance into the highest mysteries. As soon as the oath had been taken, he sees what no eye has seen, and hears what no ear has heard, and drinks of the living water—which is their baptism, as they think, a spring of water springing up within them to everlasting life (Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, pp. 306-7).

In the face of such incontrovertible facts what can be thought of the following claim so proudly advanced by Paul in Galatians i. 11-12?

For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the Gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.

Let us wait and see.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Funniest Book in the World.

Do I view this world as a vale of tears?

Ah, reverend sir, not I.

—Browning.

It has ever been a source of wonder to Freethinkers how Christians have ever been able to maintain, after a perusal of the Bible, that their deity was entitled to the credit of benevolence. The pious opinion really seemed in the nature of an unmerited compliment, unsupported by any evidence. The grim exponents of the religion of the "Man of Sorrows" seldom smiled themselves, the study of "God's Word" having, apparently, a depressing effect upon them. So much was this the case that one could tell Christians by their facial expression. Nay, more, the tell-tale features advertised how far the victim was suffering from the disease of religiosity. From the slight droop of the mouth which distinguished the Catholic and the High Churchman to the resemblance to a tired funeral horse worn by the flat-chested warriors of the Church and Salvation Armies, one might classify them accurately.

Christians were cankered through with austerity. Generation after generation had been stifled under a

religious system which was sunless, joyless, and graceless. The results were to be seen in the dull, dismal, dreary, rectangular frequenters of the churches, chapels, and tin tabernacles. The professional pulpit-punchers and Bible-bangers were, so far, incapable of honest laughter than any undertaker was a merry Andrew compared with them. In short, the Christian world was in the meshes of darkness and despair. This Gospel that life for the majority of the human race was but the ante-chamber to an eternal torture-chamber, which was in reality an arraignment not merely of the Christian deity but of human nature itself, finally transformed this fair world of ours, for all Christians, into a darker and more terrible hell than the genius of Dante or Milton conceived.

All this unmerited suffering might have been avoided if the earliest theologians had possessed the saving grace of humour, and been able to see a joke without a surgical operation. It is entirely owing to the mental shortcomings and density of these Oriental gentlemen that the Christian religion is a nightmare rather than a pleasant dream. These intellectual babes and sucklings misconceived the central idea of the Bible. Innocently and artlessly they took a work of humour and read it in all seriousness. We all know the fearful results, besides which a madman's dream appears as perfect sanity.

The Bible is, in reality, a work of humour. We must, however, "speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us." The Holy Ghost's humour is not as our humour, nor his jests as our jests. Transcribed by barbarians, the Bible is not so satirical as Heine, so ironical as Gibbon, nor so modern as Anatole France. Quip, repartee, and epigrams are strangers to the Biblical pages. Maybe, a ghostly humour is best suited to a book by a ghostly author. Although we cannot say that there is a laugh on every page, a smile in every chapter, the prehistoric fun of the Bible will suffice. There are sly stories, Rabelaisian anecdotes, and quaint burlesques, sufficient to have enlightened the theologians, had they possessed the capacity of being amused.

As a humourist, the Holy Ghost somewhat resembles Artemus Ward, although he is the famous American's superior as a writer of fiction. The Ghost is a showman, absolutely calm about his exhibits, as a showman should be. He says the most deliciously funny things without turning a hair. That astonishing story of Jonah and the lodging-house whale is the perfection of unemotional joking. Whilst reading, we fairly sympathize with the poor whale who had a bed-sitting-room in his interior. The humour, too, of the tale of the grand old gardener, Adam, is infectious. He is stated to have been the first man. If he had been a shoemaker, he would also have been the last man. He starts life at full age, and without the assistance of any parents. He is able to throw hundredweights about on his first day on the earth, and he lives to be near a thousand years old. The nautical yarn of Noah's Ark is a masterpiece, in its way, including, as it does, the suggestion that millions of creatures, from elephants to lice, were crammed into a seaworthy pantehnicon. The climax is reached in the further suggestion that only two fleas accompanied eight Orientals on the excursion. The stories of the talking snake in Eden, Daniel in the lion's den, the ten plagues, the tower of Babel, and Ezekiel's memorable banquet are also examples of Eastern humour. The life of the "Man of Sorrows" in the later pages is sufficient to make a bronze statue burst into smiles. When the hero walks the waves, argues with a fig-tree, turns water into wine, feeds thousands with some buns and a few sardines, and finally sails away in the ether like an aeroplane, we feel that the *Arabian Nights* and

the *Adventures of Mother Shipton* are sober history in comparison.

We admit cheerfully that there is a falling off in the latter pages. There is, however, a sprinkling of fun, a day's march between each jest, but what of that? A pearl is none the less a pearl even if it is surrounded by an intolerable deal of oyster. Learned men, who find out everything in time, have discovered some additional jocosities. Mark Twain has pointed out that the phrase, "the street which is called straight," is ironic; for he adds, the thoroughfare in question is "straighter than a corkscrew, but not so straight as a rainbow." Lord Byron, a gallant admirer of female beauty, found a sarcastic reference to a lady's nose as resembling "the tower which looketh unto Damascus." Professor Huxley extracted much fun from the anecdote of the bedevilled pigs, but never met a rasher opponent than Gladstone, who was as innocent of humour as the "high-brows" who find Bacon in Shakespeare. Colonel Ingersoll, too, made tens of thousands laugh with his *Mistakes of Moses*, founded entirely on the sacred volume.

Fed on such food, Christians should have waxed fat and jolly. To class the Holy Scriptures as sober history, or earnest fiction, is absurd. It is a wonder-book of riotous, exuberant, Oriental imagination. If people would only read the volume instead of chattering about it, such innocent misconception would be impossible. The Ghost is a more subtle humourist than people give him credit for, and rightly read, would add to the gaiety of nations. The refusal of the stupid, good, pious folk to see his jokes must have astonished and perplexed the Ghost. He never expressed his own amusement, but "let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on his damask cheek." If he had let himself go, he must have held his two sides, which are six, until his three heads, which are one, fairly ached from the explosion.

MIMNERMUS.

The Monarch of Cereals.

III.

(Continued from p. 220).

WASHINGTON, its first President, in 1796, submitted to the United States its need of a national board of agriculture. But it was not until 1839 that Congress voted the magnificent sum of 1,000 dollars for the improvement of husbandry, and in 1862 Lincoln established a National Department, while in 1889 Cleveland developed it still further; and now the reigning Executive Body is one of the most efficient in the world. In Germany, the pioneer labours of Liebig, those of Gilbert and Laws in England, and of Boussingault in France, in the realms of experiment, were followed on a large scale in the States; so that over twenty years ago fifty-five stations were in active operation in the great Republic. These have more than fulfilled all reasonable expectations, and at several of these agricultural centres important new varieties of wheat and other cereals have been evolved, which amplify the return some bushels per acre without adding to the cost of production, thus increasing enormously the annual yield. And it may be stated that splendid agricultural colleges of the most progressive character now exist in most of the territories and States.

Virgil, the Roman poet, in his *Georgics*, mentions selection in a manner which indicates that in classic times its advantages were understood. Early in the nineteenth century, Shireff, the northern agriculturist, proved that, by selecting the best wheats, the stock could be advanced; and in 1857 Hallett, in England, conducted a series of experiments with excellent results.

For each successive sowing he invariably selected the choicest heads and kernels, and in five short seasons the length of the original ear of corn was doubled, "the number of grains per head was nearly trebled, and the tillering power (the number of ears springing from one root) was increased over fivefold." Such are the results that the experimental stations are designed to secure. And hybridization has also yielded most satisfactory returns. Not merely is the crop increased, but the quality of the kernel is improved and the value of the straw enhanced. Some of Biffen's Cambridge creations and Farrer's Australian products prove immune to disease, while hybrids evolved by Dr. Saunders and others display valuable economic characteristics.

Saunders desired to develop early maturing wheats, and this he has achieved by hybridizing Russian and American varieties. It has been asserted that the acquired characteristics of these artificially bred cereals fail to retain permanently their acquired features; but the hybrids originated by Hays and Saunders certainly appear to do so. The improvements already accomplished are remarkable, but the achievements of the future will doubtless eclipse all these. Luther Burbank declares that if "a new wheat were bred that would yield only one grain more to each head, Nature would produce annually, without effort or cost for man, 15,000,000 extra bushels in the United States alone."

There is every reason to assume that, once these improved varieties have been created, their general excellence may be maintained, if they are cultivated in an environment of similar character to that which witnessed their birth and upbringing. The vegetable kingdom as a whole responds readily to the application of the selective principle. To cite the sugar beets alone, the use of scientific selection has increased, in less than a century, their sugar contents more than 100 per cent.

With rude implements the primitive agriculturist first turned the soil to receive his poor but precious grain. And even now manual labour remains the leading factor in tillage in vast regions of the globe. Where man-power is plentiful, as in India, it is to-day possible to successfully compete in the corn-markets of the world with cereal-producing countries provided with all the advantages conferred by modern labour-saving machinery. Despite her backward agricultural condition, India ranks fourth among the wheat-raising centres of the earth. Muscular labour is almost universal among the corn-growers of China, Japan, and other States, while it is still very largely employed in Egypt, Southern Europe, and the less advanced Republics of Latin America.

In the grey mists of antiquity man subdued the horse and ox and bent them to his service. In order of development the ox appears to have been subjected to agricultural requirements before the horse, but customs varied in different lands. Still, generally speaking, the ox was yoked to the plough in periods of tillage more primitive than those that witness the use of the horse. The plough to which the tamed animals were attached was evolved from the early hoe. Very ancient ploughs were drawn by a couple of men, two others holding them to the ground. In ancient Egypt and China wooden ploughs, little better than bent boughs, were in use. In later times of antiquity improvements were made, and the rude ploughs were pointed with metal among various communities. During the long Dark Ages no material advance took place, and the Pilgrim Fathers, in the seventeenth century, carried to their new home in America the archaic ideas of their time. The earliest ploughs employed in Illinois were those of the French settlers. These—

were of wood, with a small point of iron tied on with straps of raw hide. The oxen were yoked to them by

their horns. This method of hitching was rivalled only in Saxony and Ireland, where the horses were fastened to the plow by their tails. An attempt was made to abolish this practice in Ireland by Act of Parliament in 1634. Arthur Young (1741-1820) mentioned it in his time however, and Gibbins maintained that it was still to be found in remote parts of Ireland as late as 1896 (*Book of Wheat*, pp. 61, 62).

So persistent are ancient agricultural types that a crooked branch was utilized as a plough in California in 1835, while ploughs practically the same as those employed in the period of Pericles (450 B.C.) are still in use in modern Greece. In the more secluded parts of Russia the implements are equally rude, and some of the more advanced nations of Europe have made little progress since Roman times.

It is a far cry from such antiquated implements to a steam-plough, or a plough drawn by five horses, which turns 250 acres of arable land in a few weeks. For over a thousand years progress was at a standstill, and even when economic and other necessities cried loudly for improvement, discovery and invention were impeded by popular prejudice and superstition. Even after British farmers had been persuaded to test the improved iron plough, they asserted that the iron caused the weeds to grow, and in the New World metal ploughs were accused of poisoning the land and preventing the progress of the crops. Seeders, drills, threshing machines, and other implements of modern invention have encountered stern opposition from the rural community. And the writer remembers ancient peasants, and even veteran farmers, who sulkily deplored the vanished glories of the old-fashioned scythe when this had receded before the mowing machine, an implement which they regarded as a noxious example of new-fangled notions.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

The Red House on the Hill.

THERE is a spray of eglantine in a shady corner, the white buds expanding still; in a neighbouring pot are white marigolds, clover, grasses, and the wondrous hues of the wild vetch; in another corner a young sycamore adds storey to storey of gracious twin leafage, each new pair appearing at the top as the old divide. A miracle, a study in determinism, these shapes go back to carboniferous times, faithfully preserved in the mould of Nature, that never weighed a scruple wrong, and never can! Outside, the soft, cloudy dawn, where the sky looks through like the very eye of love, and grey mists crown the azure hills and tint with many-coloured light and shade the quiet seas.

What a sad and miserable world we inhabit; what wretched life the benighted Freethinker leads! Let the following letter prove the pious contention. God bless our holy men. Amen!

"It is a long time since we broke the silence of the void, and now perhaps the thunder of our diction will make the space between us a shaky expanse for the little midges. I liked your little pen-picture. It put me in mind of *Beulah*, *Vashti*, *St. Elmo*, those luminous pen-pictures of the American authoress, Wilson, but minus their 'ridiculous excess.' I see again the Red House on the Hill overlooking the Bay, that we passed so often on our cycles, and called it the Shell House. Everybody knows it. To them it is an oasis in the desert, an inn on the road; or, better still, like a kindred soul met at length by the languishing spirit of long isolation, and, in the words of Dickens, 'recalled to life.' Since last writing, I have been living in a condition of, say,

doice far niente. I think our moods are like the weather: they are good and bad; and when the weather does not go with them, we rail at the gods, and think we could have managed better. However, I believe it is contrast makes life worth living, or at least interesting, and there is zest in the sport of circumstance. Perhaps there is more interest in life when you have money—principle and interest; both sweet things! You can invest it in some factory where women waste their being and children crook their bones. Money is power. Ah, it is great to have power—not the power that kings and statesmen wield, but the power of mind, of vision, that rises far above these, and sees all things in true perspective, point of view and proportion, with the natural order of human relationships and social duties that helps, and the disorder that hinders, progress. He is a true hero who can use this power wisely. What though the world rise against him; it will just have to sit down again, as it has had to do before.

No man can tether time nor tide.

And there is a tide in the affairs of men. The mind in question is the highest by-product of evolution. From thwarted light leaps colour's flame. It is loved by the wise, to whom its thought is known; it is loved by the simple because it is simple too. As the child looks with eyes of wonder at its parents as each new wonder is unfolded to the curious mind, so the simpletons look up to the great man when they see the thing is true the sage has told them; for they know, also, there is a 'greatness' which is not simple and beneficent, but that only confuses and ensnares. So he who runs may read. Even the simple know the Emancipator. The sages are not prophets, but they look from a higher elevation; they see life constantly, and see it whole. The average man is in the valley still, with all those glorious peaks to scale.

"I must tell you of my great find. My mother attended a sale where were put up eight volumes of poetry. The man next her said 'Sixpence,' and of course she said 'Sevenpence,' and the eight volumes were handed to her. She gave them me last time I was home. It was like getting a windfall. Eight volumes, still uncut, published at 5s. each, for 7d.—not a penny for each! Pope, two volumes; Dryden, two; Milton, two; Shenstone, one; Thomson, of *The Seasons*, one. So, you see, brains are very cheap at times. Have got through Shenstone, and find him a master of pathos and humour. You can see at once Burns's indebtedness to this poet, and whom he refers to in 'The Vision,' *i.e.*:—

Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-smelting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"I am going to read Pope next; have read the *Essay on Man*, but none of his pastorals or tales.

"I think that Mr. Palmer has settled the foxglove controversy; but since writing, I was speaking to a botanist friend, and he says the name 'dead man's fingers' is applied to the foxglove in the rural districts all over Scotland; but he could not say how the name originated, unless it were that the bells represent fingers, and the foxglove is a member of the nightshade family, and rank poison."

So ends the epistle, with the customary etceteras. Such are some of the mental and physical hues and shapes that float and glow, adrift or still, this rich, sweet evening in July around the Red House on the Hill.

MENANDER.

Holy Wars.

WHEN all is said and done the fact remains that all the great Holy Wars in history have been fought by Christians. It was a holy war when Charlemagne offered the Northern Pagans baptism or death. It was a holy war when Alva butchered and burnt in the Netherlands. It was a holy war when the Great Armada sailed for England. It was a holy war when the heretics were destroyed by myriads in the massacre of St. Bartholomew. It was a holy war when Louis XVI. dragonnaded the Huguenots and swept the survivors out of France. It was a holy war when Germany was devastated and depopulated for thirty long years. It was a holy war when the Moriscos and the Jews were driven, in the midst of unspeakable barbarities, out of Spain. It was a holy war when the Spanish conquerors of America, with the Pope's blessing, carried fire and slaughter amongst the mild and hospitable Indians. It was a holy war when the Protestants and Catholics, from England to Poland, fought each other all over the continent of Europe. It was a holy war when the Catholics burnt the Protestants, and the Protestants burnt the Catholics, for a mere difference of opinion. And it has been a holy war every time the Christians have let themselves loose, with massacre and violation, upon the poor, inoffensive Jews.

But the greatest of all holy wars was the Holy War—the Crusades. It lasted a hundred and ninety-four years, and was, as Fuller said, "for continuance the longest, for bloodshed the cruellest, for pretences the most pious the world ever saw." Christianity hurled itself against Mohammedanism in nine successive crusades, with the professed object of wresting the Holy Land from the hands of the "infidels." It was captured and held for a while; and then lost again for ever. The bogus Sepulchre of Christ—for it is no more—was still left in the custody of unbelievers. And in less than two centuries afterwards the Turkish crescent floated over the first Christian cathedral in Europe, in the first Christian city ever built—the city of Constantine.

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

ATHEISM IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As one who has been extremely interested in the articles on "The French Revolution," by Robert Arch, I am loth to offer any criticism other than apprizement. But there is one point that I must protest against, and that is, that Mr. Arch seems to have caught the general fever of *bourgeois* historians in selecting, in article after article, as many abusive terms as possible for Hebert, the editor of the *Pere Duchene*. Mr. Arch tells us that Hebert played to the "lower tastes of his readers," using the "vilest slang of the gutter," at the expense of "dignity and decency." Hebert, we are told, was a "gutter journalist" not "worthy of respect," and the *Pere Duchene*, Mr. Arch looks upon with the eyes of an utter Philistine, as a "disreputable paper."

Now, has Mr. Arch seen the *Pere Duchene*, or is he depending upon historians? If he has seen it, will he kindly tell us what difference he finds between the *Pere Duchene* and the *Freethinker*? Hebert is fond of ridicule. He finds it the best weapon in his cause, but so does the *Freethinker* sometimes. He is certainly fond of such phrases as (I speak from memory) *Va au le diable!* (Go to the Devil!) *Que le diable!* (What the Devil!) *damnation*, and occasionally a stronger *malediction*, but surely these do not make Hebert "indecent," "disreputable," etc.

If, however, Mr. Arch is depending on the historians, then I can understand his attitude. But, nevertheless, he has been misled. Hebert was an Atheist, and he made the "unkindest cuts" at religion that I know of during the period of the Revolution. We need not wonder therefore that the pious, respectable *bourgeois* historians should be shocked at Hebert.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

Acid Drops.

What wonderful fellows are our newspaper guides! They see the invisible, even while they overlook the obvious. Thus Mr. W. T. Massey, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* and other papers, says that the cheers with which our soldiers greeted the sight of Palestine, after their victory over the Turks, was due to their expression of delight "at reaching a country hallowed by the greatest events in the world's history, the birthplace of Christ, and the cradle of the rights of humanity." We pass over the historical accuracy of the description; we are too greatly impressed by the picture of the British Tommy "overcome" by these profound reflections. That is really touching, and so truthful. We do not doubt that Mr. Massey felt this way; it is his business so to do. He is writing for a Christian audience, and is paid to have the appropriate feelings on such occasions. But we must confess that we should never have thought it of the Army. That is why we are overcome—almost to the point of tears.

And we wonder what *were* the "rights of humanity" that were born in Palestine? It was not the ideal of democracy. That comes to us from Greece. It was not the ideal of a settled, recognized, jurisprudence. That is Roman. It was not the equality of the sexes. Palestine would certainly never have given the woman the vote. It was not free discussion, or freedom of thought. Nothing was farther from Palestine than that ideal. What on earth were the rights of humanity that were born in Palestine? What a good thing it is that these newspaper men do not have to explain what they mean—so long as they can gush and sentimentalize in accordance with the prevailing prejudice.

Mr. H. G. Wells has not only found one "God," but he is chaperoning other deities. He has written an introduction to M. Loyson's book, *The Gods in Battle*, which is a reply to Romaine Rolland's volume, *Above the Battle*. Perhaps Mr. Wells only did it to please the publishers.

The Church Army has invaded the Buckingham Palace Road, and is using part of the Royal Mews as a hostelry. The Christian religion originated in a stable, and it looks as if it would finish in another.

"What's in a name?" asked Shakespeare. Yet it causes surprise to find that the vicar of a Bryanston Square church is named Bernard Shaw, and that a Westcliff-on-Sea curate bears the name of Hebert Spencer.

In spite of the shortage of paper, editors find room for much nonsense in their columns. A London newspaper recently headed a report, "Boy Branded by a Fiend." The "fiend" proved to be a woman, who was sentenced to three months' hard labour for cruelty to her eight-year-old nephew. But why do editors play to the gallery in this manner?

A London picture-paper points out that the Archbishop of Canterbury formerly lived in a "modest dwelling house," whilst Bishop of Rochester. It did not add that the salary of the Bishop of Rochester is £4,000, and that of the Archbishop £15,000, yearly.

Pious folk are often wanting in a sense of humour. Referring to the crop of war rumours, Mr. Charles Hawtrej, the actor, wrote to a daily paper, saying that the Dutch had

taken Holland. This brought a letter of remonstrance from a country parson, protesting that "the Dutch are the people—the native people—of Holland." Isn't it delicious?

The Rev. Bernard Snell says there is far more fellowships in a public-house than in the average Christian Church. After all, this is not so high a compliment to the public-house as it seems.

The Self-Denial campaign of the Salvation Army realized over £95,000. It is astonishing how easily money can be obtained when the appeal is associated with superstition. Perhaps the best punishment for many who gave would be to make them see exactly how the money is spent.

Judging from the Scotch—or is it Scottish?—newspapers the War seems to be giving religion in the north a bit of a shaking. The clergy are being criticized with a freedom that is quite unusual, and some pretty plain opinions are being expressed both on them and their religion. Of course, this dissent from orthodoxy is of more than ten years' growth, but, up to now, the mask of religious hypocrisy has been worn generally, and the newspapers have been careful of letters reflecting on Christianity. The War seems to have broken the ice, that is all. And one may safely assume that when the newspapers publish so much there is a great deal more behind. From which we draw the moral that the time for Scottish Freethinkers to strike is now. They can drive home the moral of the War. There is no moral for Christians to draw.

A story is going the rounds that a country clergyman tendered his services to the National Service Department, and described his capacity as that of "organizer." As his handwriting was bad, this was read as "organgrinder."

The Rev. A. O. Belden, of Westcliff-on-Sea, says only 10 per cent. of the population of that place attend places of worship. Just so! But then the gallant 10 per cent. want to rule the roost.

Sir Harry Johnston, at the end of the present War, would "restore the kingdom of Israel to the Jews." The *Star* says this "would be easier than restoring the Jews to the kingdom of Israel."

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been ill, and has been ordered away to recuperate by his medical advisers. Fresh air and doctors are a secularistic solution of the matter; but, surely, an archbishop ought to rely on prayer alone.

Dr. W. J. O'Sullivan, a sanitary expert, declares that germs taken from mummies four thousand years old, quickly become active again. An editor, commenting on this, asks if germs are immortal. Perhaps the clergy, who pose as authorities on immortality, will oblige with an answer.

"Christianity must copy the soldier, as it has always done," says Dr. W. E. Orchard. Was he thinking of the Church and Salvation Armies, or of the Christian ministers, who are "too proud to fight," but are brave enough to see the real soldiers go the Front?

French priests are urging the claims of a new Joan of Arc, who hears voices and sees visions. The report adds that many thousands of pilgrims have travelled to kneel at the same altar. Presumably, the good, kind priests look after the offertories.

We were pleased to see the following in the *Christian World*:—

Rev. G. E. Darlaston, M.A., addressing the Women's League of the London Congregational Union on Tuesday, expressed his opinion that some professional evangelists at the Front did more harm than good. They pushed men off their balance, and then claimed them as converts. The emotional strain of some of the meetings held at the Front was very

great. The mention made of father, mother, and wife was positively painful. He had often felt that in another minute the men would be sobbing. Men looked back on those moments as times when they had lost their balance, and looked upon the minister as one who had taken a mean advantage of them. It was bringing religion into disrepute, and was not, in his opinion, the religion of Christ. The men felt, too, that it provided a very unfortunate contrast to the soldierly ideal, the spirit of "Take your luck" or "Be a sport."

Decidedly the pretence of our Army being eaten up with religion is wearing thin.

Apropos of a clergyman's complaint that there was no sign of prayer during a Zeppelin raid, a writer in the *London Mail* remarks:—

Perhaps I may be a trifle irreverent, but it struck me as being rather unbecoming for a lot of people to rush out of their houses when a Zeppelin was passing over and to beseech a nervous curate to pray for them. Feeling, however, that I had probably not absorbed the police instructions correctly, I re-read them, but could find no trace of advice advocating prayer as an efficient proof against Zepps. God is not only on the side of the big battalions. He is also on the side of the anti-aircraft gunners and aviators who shoot the straightest. Therefore, parson hunting during a raid may be a dangerous pastime. It is preferable to leave it to other sky pilots.

The clerical statement that the Germans are Atheists is constantly being exposed as a falsehood. The *Evening News* states that "Among Germany's 70,000,000 inhabitants are 25,000,000 Roman Catholics. For years the Catholic Centre has been called "trumps" in German politics. All Chancellors require to dicker for their support in Government measures.

The supply of coal in London and many large towns is very short. We wonder if there is a shortage in the place so often mentioned in sermons.

A Yorkshire Young Men's Christian Association Conference at Leeds has adopted a big scheme of after-war work, including guilds of handicrafts and training in village industries. This organization seems more concerned with commercialism than Christianity.

The Rev. A. Waller, of St. Paul's Church, Westcliff-on-Sea, has written *A Revised Decalogue*, in which some caustic criticism on present-day religion is embedded. Here are some examples: "Thou mayest by priestly permission have any graven image"; "Thou shalt do no murder, except by authority"; "Thou shalt not privately annex anything contrary to public morality rules." We fear Mr. Waller's "decalogue" will share the same fate as the one Christians pretend to obey.

Mr. Coulson Kernahan declares that Oscar Wilde's great ambition was to restore "pure Christianity to the world," and he told Mr. Kernahan that he hoped to write the epic of the Cross, the Iliad of Christianity, which shall live for all time." Truly "pure Christianity" and Oscar Wilde suggest a very curious combination.

"Jerusalem," says the *Daily News*, "has been modernized in many ways" by tourist traffic. Yet the Cooks' excursionists still pay money to see the sacred side-shows as their ignorant predecessors did in the old days.

Twenty-five years ago a man named William Parris was charged with murder in Mississippi (U.S.A.). Sentenced to be hanged, he was saved by the rope breaking, and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Now there has just died in Columbia a man named Joseph Beard, who has confessed to being the real murderer. But Beard had become religious, otherwise he might never have confessed his crime. On his death-bed Beard, because, he said, "I want to purge my soul; I want to be certain of heaven," confessed to the murder—and died immediately after. Thus we see

the wonderful power of religion. It did not prevent Beard committing the murder; it didn't make him confess to clear an innocent man; but it purged his soul, and made him certain of heaven. Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!

Providence appears to treat places of worship with high-sniffing contempt. Hundreds of churches have been destroyed on the Continent, and now we hear that there are "serious fissures" in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

"An utter failure and colossal fraud" is a South Norwood curate's opinion of the recent National Mission of Repentance and Hope. It would be a pity to elaborate this gem of criticism.

Dr. Jowett, who has received an invitation to the pastorate of Westminster Chapel, London, is the minister of a New York church, and receives the modest salary of £2,400 yearly. This is quite a small sum compared with the Archbishop of Canterbury's £15,000, or the Bishop of London's £10,000.

Mr. Arthur Henderson says that "the alienation of the masses from organized Christianity is due to our divisions." Just as if the average man cares a straw for the tweedledums or tweedledees of theology.

Mr. Joseph Shaylor, who has been connected with book-selling for over half a century, in an interview in a London newspaper, says that the old evangelistic literature, such as that associated with Moody and Sankey, has fallen into disrepute, and there is to-day a sparser demand for "hot Gospelling" due to larger and more tolerant views.

"There was no diminution in the death-rate," says Dean Inge, "until men began to study drains." What Secularists these Christians are!

Pernicious Parodies.

AFTER THE WAR.

(With apologies to "After the Ball Was Over.")

AFTER the War is over,
After the blood is dry,
After the Pope has blessed us,
After the Bishop's cry:
"See that our Church is busy,
Fleeing the lowly poor."
There'll be another War, boys,
After—the—War!

THE BETTER PART.

(With apologies to "Two Little Girls in Blue, Lads.")

Two sleek young men in black, lads,
Two sleek young men in black,
Shoving us into the trenches,
While they themselves hang back!
Two nice little commissions,
"Captains" in khaki suits;
Two nice, well-fed, little chaplains,
With a private to polish their boots.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Little Johnny, aged nine, asked his parents for a drum; who, in order to instil some religious instinct in the boy, told him he must pray to God for the drum. After the boy had prayed for four nights, the parents thought it time to let the drum appear; and on the fifth night the father quietly placed the drum on the bed whilst Johnny was praying: "God bless father and mother, make Johnny a good little boy, and send Johnny a drum." Johnny, having finished his prayer, looked up, saw the drum on the bed, and exclaimed: "Now, who the hell put that there?"

To Correspondents.

- T. HAYES-JAMES.—Delighted to learn that you have so far acted on our suggestion in a recent "Special" as to secure a new subscriber. We hope other readers will follow your excellent example.
- G. LEWIS.—Thanks. Cuttings are always useful.
- G. HARDING.—We do not know of any *good* history of the War, and do not expect that any has been written. No writer would be allowed to say all he knew, and an impartial and trustworthy narrative is simply impossible under present conditions.
- T. A. W.—We are obliged for sight of the letter. It will be useful in connection with an article we are publishing in a week or two on the same topic. Pleased to know you admire the *Freethinker* so much.
- C. W. MARSHALL.—Thanks for sight of the appreciative letters from the soldiers to whom you have been sending the *Freethinker*. We have every reason for believing that many have made their first acquaintance with the paper in this way.
- E. H. OLDS (N.Z.).—Remittance received, and handed to Shop Manager. Thanks for account of affairs in your part of the world.
- G. BEDBOROUGH.—This is a rather tardy acknowledgment of the receipt of your dainty little booklet, but none the less hearty on that account. The "Sayings" are very much to the point. Pleased to have your congratulations on what you call our "energy and optimism."
- R. G. SMITH.—Thanks for promise of support. The paper and pamphlets are being sent as desired.
- W. C. DODD.—There *should* be no difficulty in getting the *Freethinker* at any newsagents. We are gratified to have your appreciation of the paper.
- G. S.—Your ideas are good, but the verse is hardly up to our standard of publication.
- W. BYNION.—We don't exactly see in what way we can help. If there is a particular point on which we could help, we should be pleased to do so; but one can hardly write a reply to so general a statement as the one you cite.
- W. RANCOTT.—We have no recollection of having received the letter to which you refer. We are always willing to insert letters in reply to articles, provided they are courteous, to the point, and brief.
- C. W. MARSHALL.—Pleased to have the picture of the house in which Shelley lived at Marlow. Such mementoes are always interesting.
- MR. NEVIL BOURN writes to point out that "tune" should read *rune* in his verses on "At a Graveside" in last week's issue.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen had a very successful meeting at Swansea on Sunday last. A very much larger hall had been taken than on the occasion of his previous visit, and the gathering quite justified the venture. The lecture was followed with the closest attention, and at its conclusion there was a long run of questions, with a little opposition. There was also a good sale of literature, which is always a good sign. In the evening it was resolved to found a Branch of the N. S. S. at Swansea, and a number of members were enrolled. Mr. Dupree, of 60 Alexandra Road, has consented to act as Secretary, and in his energetic hands the new Branch has every prospect of a successful career.

Under the auspices of the National Secular Society a course of three lectures is being arranged at South Place

Institute on the evenings of April 29, May 6, and 13. Mr. Cohen will open the course, and will be followed by Mr. J. T. Lloyd and Mr. Harry Snell. Full particulars as to subjects, etc., will follow in due course.

We are sorry that pressure on our space necessitates our holding over until next week a further instalment of Mr. Mann's excellent articles on "Spiritualism." They will be resumed next week. We have reason to know that these articles are being followed with considerable interest, and we are considering the question of their republication in pamphlet form.

It seems likely that a Board of Trade order will shortly be issued prohibiting the practice of "returns" in the newspaper trade. This will mean that copies of the *Freethinker* can only be secured by ordering them in advance, as newsagents will not risk ordering on the chance of selling them. Of course there is nothing to prevent readers who are interested getting their newsagent to take and display an extra copy or so, and taking the unsold copies themselves. That is often done now, and when it is done the copies displayed are most often sold and new subscribers gained.

In thanking us for sending *Freethinkers*, really supplied by some of our readers, Corporal J. Benton writes from Egypt:—

Our meetings here in the C.E.M.S. Hut are few and far between now, as our parson here does not relish too much open discussion. His idea of that is to occupy the platform as he does his pulpit; and as he is generally backed up by one or two officers, the opposition is always at a disadvantage. However, only about two per cent. of the troops take him at all seriously. One discussion to take place shortly, by a Non-conformist parson, is "The Failure of the Church." This is only one way of bluffing the troops from the real issue, "The Failure of Christianity" in general. The section of Christian Arabs here, "the Copts," are generally known on account of their filthy habits, and everyone admits the Mohammedans are cleaner in every way. Our library here contains several of Mr. Eden Phillpott's novels, which seem to be especial favourites of the troops.

The Falkirk Branch of the N. S. S. has arranged for a lecture on "Robert Ingersoll," by the Rev. E. T. Russell, at the Co-Operative Hall, Falkirk, on Sunday, April 22, at 3 o'clock. A lecture on Ingersoll by a clergyman, followed by discussion, should be interesting.

The Right to Affirm.

By the Oaths Amendment Act of 1888 affirmation may take the place of an oath in courts of law and in all other places where the taking of an oath is necessary.

Affirmation may be claimed on one of two grounds. (1) On the ground of having no religious belief, (2) on the ground of an oath being contrary to one's religious belief.

A judge or other official may ask on what ground affirmation is claimed, but no further question is warranted, and all such additional questions should be respectfully and firmly declined.

In all cases where any trouble or difficulty occurs it would be well to inform us of the circumstances at once.

The newspaper is the plague, or black death, of the modern world. It is an open sewer, running down each side of the street, and displaying the foulness of every day, day by day, morning and evening. Everything that, having once happened, has ceased to exist; the newspaper sets before you, beating the bones of the buried without pity, without shame, and without understanding. Its pride is that it is the record of facts, but it tells you no fact twice in the same way; for it gorges its insatiable appetite upon rumour. All the hypocrisies of the State, of the Church, of the market-place, cling together for once in brotherly love, and speak with unanimous voice.—Arthur Symons, "Studies in Prose and Verse."

The French Revolution.

IX.

THE SMASH.

(Continued from p. 198.)

FRANCE WAS NOW (April, 1794) under a veritable tyranny, in which freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of thought were alike impossible. The Committee of Public Safety, which had come into power as the representative of the democratic movement against the privileges of wealth, kicked down the ladder it had climbed by. Municipal independence, the pillar of democracy, was suppressed, and France was administered by nominees of the Government, called "national agents," in every town and village. The municipality of Paris was filled up in a similar way.

It was now the object of Robespierre to carry out his cherished project of remodelling France after the pattern of Rousseau's State. To all appearance, he was supreme. In truth, however, he never commanded the allegiance of his colleagues in the Government, and was, to the last, pretty much at the mercy of the specialist members of it. Except two members of the Committee of Public Safety, Couthon and St. Just, and one member of the Committee of General Security, David the painter, none of them shared his aspiration for a Deistic "reign of the saints." They supported him simply because no one else possessed the authority with the Convention, the Jacobins' Club, and the country at large, without which they felt that their power would crumble into dust.

His first step was to obtain from the Convention a recognition of Rousseau's "civil religion." At his behest, it was decreed in May that "the French nation recognizes the existence of a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul," and a system of national festivals was instituted in honour of the new bogey. Robespierre declared war on Freethought. He proclaimed that the truth of any doctrine was a matter of indifference, provided that it was useful to the State; and from the point of view of Robespierre, with his ideal of a disciplinarian and Puritanical Republic, religion was indisputably useful. On June 8, the inaugural festival was held in Paris. The Convention, headed by Robespierre as president, took part in it in a body; speeches were made, hymns were sung, and emblematic figures of Atheism and Anarchy were burnt.

This day, however, marked the beginning of the end. In spite of artistic design and efficient organization, the new religion did not catch on. The fact was, Robespierre's popularity was waning. For the democratic rank and file, he had ceased to be the people's man, the incorruptible tribune, and had become a tyrant, the incarnation of the reigning repression. He was audibly reviled at the festival of the Supreme Being. A strong man, like Danton, could have made short work of him that day.

Two days later, June 10, 1794 (22nd Prairial, year II., as the date is more generally remembered), Robespierre must needs add the last straw to the camel's burden by a new Terrorist law, which he proposed through his mouthpiece, Couthon. The Revolutionary Tribunal was divided into sections; prisoners were deprived of the right of defence; and capital punishment was extended to cover such vague offences as "undermining morality," "corrupting the public conscience," and the like. As the Tribunal was packed with Robespierre's creatures, he hoped by this law to clear out of his way all who, on whatever grounds, should object to fall in with his politico-religious projects.

The rate of executions now rose by leaps and bounds.

Men and women went to the guillotine in batches of twenty, thirty, and even fifty a day. Men who had been saved in the September massacres, men for whom Marat had interceded, now fell victims to the calculating callousness of Robespierre and the brutality of the Committee of General Security. The populace, who had at first felt vindictively towards the victims of the "Terror," now turned against it, and looked with sullen, growing resentment at these daily hecatombs.

A breach between Robespierre and his colleagues hastened the end. He had intended to use the new law to decimate the party of the "Mountain" in the Convention, who were the chief obstruction to his new schemes. This the Committees would not allow. He withdrew from their sittings, and with St. Just and Couthon laid his plans anew.

Meanwhile the French victory of Fleurus, which restored Belgium to the Republic, ended the last pretence of "military necessity" which could be offered as an excuse for the "Terror."

The tension broke on July 26 (8 Thermidor), when Robespierre in the Convention attacked some of his "Montagnard" enemies by name, demanded a fresh election of the committees, and the punishment of certain deputies who, as commissioners in the departments, had been involved in ultra-Terrorist or "de-christianizing" measures. The same evening the Jacobins' Club applauded Robespierre's speech, and expelled Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, his principal opponents in the Government. They hastily laid their plans for action. Robespierre must be destroyed, even at the risk of losing the reins of power themselves. They conferred with the threatened "Montagnards," Tallien, Barras, and others, who, in their turn, sounded the men of the "Marsh" and secured their support. On July 27 (9 Thermidor), St. Just, Robespierre's lieutenant, rose in the Convention, intending to make a conciliatory speech which might allay the storm and postpone the conflict. The "Montagnards," however, would not let him proceed. Their deadly fear was lest Robespierre and his friends should appeal to the "Marsh," pose as the champions of religion and order, and turn the tables on the conspirators. St. Just and Robespierre were shouted down. Robespierre struggled to speak, trying (as his enemies had anticipated) to whip up the Conservative majority against his opponents, but was not allowed to do so. His voice failed; he sat down; and a "Montagnard" deputy proposed and carried a motion for his arrest. The "Marsh," not knowing Robespierre's plans, but glad to take advantage of the split in the Government to assert themselves at last, voted it unanimously. His brother, St. Just, Couthon, and Lebas were arrested with him. The packed municipality, filled with Robespierre's supporters, came to the rescue of their leader, forbade the prisons to receive any prisoners that day, and attempted to raise the people against the Convention. The people, however, were in no humour to rise on behalf of Robespierre. The Hotel de Ville was stormed by the forces mustered by the Convention; Robespierre, his jaw broken by a pistol shot, and his friends were made prisoners again; and the next day they were all sent to the guillotine. The bulk of the municipality followed them a day later.

Nominally what had happened was that the Government, supported by the Convention, had defeated and destroyed three of its members who had sought to overthrow it. Actually the Democratic Party had been forced to call in the reactionaries to save them from decimation by their own leaders. The democratic machine had broken down with a smash, and the

"Marsh," the Conservative majority in the Convention, found themselves in a position to dictate policy.

They did not at first realize their own power. For the first few weeks after the 9 Thermidor, though the "Terror" ceased at once, the spell of democratic ascendancy seemed unbroken. The Convention voted that the ashes of Marat, still a popular hero, should be transferred to the Pantheon. The religious question was temporarily settled by a measure of disestablishment, in which, for the first time, the principle was recognized that the State has no concern with religious opinions.

However, in the months of August and September, 1794, the "Marsh" awoke to their opportunity. They demanded, and obtained, representation on the Committees of Government. There was no longer the moral force in the Democratic Party to resist the reaction.

A formidable secession from the "Mountain" took place. Many of the erstwhile democrats, such as Tallien, Barras, and Merlin of Thionville, had lost their enthusiasm for the Revolution. This cannot be altogether accounted for by disgust with the "Terror." Many of these men had been Terrorists themselves, and Barras and Freron had been among the very worst. A more sinister reason for their recantation lay in the fact that they, in common with many other men of the middle classes, had made their fortunes in the Revolution. They had bought up property belonging to the Church and the aristocracy, and were now the owners of large estates. Tallien had married a rich Spanish widow, the notorious Senora Cabarrus, whom he had met at Bordeaux when he was commissioner there, and who now inspired from her *salon* the forces of reaction. Of such men was the new reactionary party, the "Thermidorian" Party, composed.

The "Mountain" was reduced to a small Radical rump, consisting of the ex-members of the Terrorist Government, such as Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, and of a number of men like Romme, joint author of the Revolutionary Calendar, who preserved inflexibly the principles of the Democratic Republic, and fought a losing battle against the overwhelming forces of the "Marsh" and the "Thermidorians."

Such was the position when, in September and October, 1794, the last struggle of the Revolution began.

(To be continued.) ROBERT ARCH.

Stories Concerning Authority.

BY "MULTATULI" (EDUARD DOUWES DEKKER).

I.

THERE was once a traveller who set out upon a journey. In his charge he had a great store of gold and silver. Fearing that he might be waylaid and robbed, he had armed himself and his company. Apparently he had little to fear, because his company numbered more than all the robbers of that country put together. He was so well armed and so strong in numbers that a whole army could not have taken his wealth from him.

In an evil moment for them, certain robbers set upon him, and would have repented their rashness to the end of their days if most of them had not been killed on the spot.

One of these robbers, whom the fate of his brother-thieves had made wary, sought counsel of a holy hermit who was wise in all things, for he had lived for ages in the sole company of two bones of a dead man and a jar of water.

"What must I do, O man of holiness," he asked, "to get for myself the wealth of this traveller?"

"Nothing is easier," replied the pious hermit. "You must take the noose you see lying there, and throw it over his head; then you will have no more trouble with him. Moreover, he will command his servants to kneel before you and to deliver up to you all you desire."

And it happened as the holy man had said. But, alas! the traveller and his company found themselves in sore straits.

This noose is called "Faith," and it has preserved its virtue to this day.

II.

"Please tell me, father, why it is that the sun does not tumble down?" And the father, who felt foolish because he could not say why the sun did not tumble down, punished his child for asking an awkward question.

Fearing his father's anger, the child asked no more questions, neither why the sun did not tumble down nor many other things he would have liked so much to know.

The poor child never grew up to be a man, although he lived for six thousand years—and even longer. *And he has remained stupid and ignorant to this day.*

III.

"The first king," said Voltaire, "was a lucky soldier." Yet I don't know that this is the case. There are many, or even more, chances that the first king was someone who had dealings with certain holy hermits that used to furnish people with a peculiar slip knot, known as the *noose of faith*.

However that may be, I can vouch for the truth of the following story:—

Krates was very strong. With a mere jerk of the arm he could level the strongest oaken fence. He could kill thirteen enemies at a blow. When he coughed, the compression of the air caused fires to break out, and at the slightest of his movements the moon trembled.

Because of these great talents, Krates was made king, and he died after he had been king for some time.

But his son, Krates the Younger, was a rickety creature. Yet his ricketiness did not prevent him from wishing to be king in the place of his father, who had been so strong.

He was seated upon a wooden chair—he called it a throne—and he was saying to himself: "I am king."

"Why are you king?" asked the people, who were still simple, and knew nothing of the law of heredity.

"Because my mother cohabited in the same hut with Old Krates, who is dead."

He said "palace," but it was really a hut.

The people knew nothing of this sort of logic, and when Krates II. commanded: "Come here!" everyone went away. And when he said: "Go away!" they came to him. In short, authority went speedily to the Devil, and Krates II. had not wit enough to take advantage of his people's malice by commanding the opposite of what he wanted them to do.

In an opposition newspaper of the time we read: "Why, O Krates, art thou bandy-legged and imbecile? Why sittest thou in the seat of him who dwelt in the same hut with the woman who bore thee? Get thou up, and depart, and say no more to us: 'Get ye gone!' or 'Come ye here!' as if thou wast the old Krates. Where are the oak fences thrown down with the fillip of a mighty arm? The moon trembles not even if thou dreamest of splitting the universe. Thou couldst not kill a louse, and no fires break out when thou sneezest.Get thou up, and give place to another who can do these things that are useful!"

Thus spoke the opposition. Krates II. would no doubt have been obliged to give up his chair which he called a

throne if an old nurse had not addressed the people in this wise :—

"Listen to me, my friends, for I was nurse to little Krates when he was smaller than he is to-day. Now, when he came into the world his father dropped oil upon his forehead, and a little of it fell upon the nipple of my breast. *Therefore* it is unnecessary for him to knock down oaken fences with a fillip of his hand, nor has he any need to make the moon tremble or to cause fires to break out when he coughs. I can assure you that"

But the eloquent nurse had no need to finish her sentence. The conclusion was so obvious that the whole people—the editorial staff of the opposition more noisily than the others—cried out with one voice :—

BEHOLD THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD!

And Krates continued to sit in the chair which he called a throne.

And he still sits there to this day.

—From *Love-Letters* (1861).

(Translated by) GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Strong Meekness.

THE pastor was speaking about the meekness of Jesus Christ. Like all the other highly entertaining virtues of the Lord, as rendered by the pulpit, this meekness was considerably different to the ordinary quality. Not that it was more complex or more illuminating. Not that it lacked human character or human simplicity. No; the meekness of Jesus Christ had been misinterpreted. It was not understood. We were too prone to vision our Lord as effeminate. For this the pulpit was responsible. Jesus Christ was no weakling. He was no emasculated example of masculinity. He was a man, with a man's strength. His meekness was strong meekness. Had not he used a whip to clear the temple of profanity and defilement? Was he a weak man who, amidst cowering followers, and beset by angry waves, stood up in a little cockle-shell of a boat, and bid the waves to cease their fret, and command the storm to stillness? Was he a weak, meek, man who endured the tortures of that eclipsing episode of Calvary? And so on. But the pastor did not tell us it was easy to be strongly meek when we knew, beforehand, that we were victorious.

The preacher proceeded to interpret strong meekness. Cowardliness it was to suffer others to bear adversity alone. When the weak are oppressed the Christlike man would rise in wrath against the tyranny that grinds them into the mire. The meek man will not stay his hand when evil flings its animosity against his friends; nor will he sit down and allow the Devil in human form to molest them. Against the robber, the murderer, the malefactor, will the meek man fight; and his antagonism will be all the more indomitable because of his meekness. But when he, himself, is personally opposed by these various devilish things, he will faithfully turn his eyes heavenward, looking to God, and, murmuring some verbal soft soap, will deliver himself into the tenderly solicitous hands of his divine Father. In the performance of this, perhaps, sorrow-stricken duty will lie the proof of the strength of his meekness. His own life is in God's keeping; the welfare of his fellows, to the best of his ability, in his.

Such was the pulp administered to us the other Sunday; and such was the minister's lying method of escaping from a nasty morass.

Confronted by the War, and its relationship to Christianity, the pastor, apparently, was mentally distressed; and in his illumination of the only true and real meaning of meekness he conveniently forgot Truth.

Behind his endeavour to elucidate the mysteries of meekness stood the moloch of War, its mouth wide open in one monstrous grin, its eyes full of scorn, its attitude one of contempt. Germany was the aggressive devil, the culprit, the modern national malefactor, against which even Christ, whose life-teaching was mildness and meekness, would have turned his ire, because he knew his friends were in peril. To have complacently accepted the dominion of Prussianism would have been sin. This War was righteous just in so far as it was the uprising of our national meekness against tyranny; and no one could deny that the Lord Jesus Christ gave Britain his sympathy. But if Christ had been Britain, what would he have done? Endured another Calvary with the same object?

Practically speaking, meekness became strong meekness when it was necessary to discover some way of escape from the mass of contradictions with which the European catastrophe deluged Christianity. It was essential to provide certain qualifications to the sermonic commandments of the Son of God. Disobedience to the dictates of Deity had to be made circumstantially righteous. Absolute denial of the laws of God, as explicitly published for humanity in the Sermon on the Mount, had to be made perfectly justifiable. And so it came about that we, as a nation, in our present war-paint, although we were breaking all the divine commandments, were but following the example of Jesus Christ, and being strongly meek. We were fighting against evil for others. We were doing just what the Lord would have done when human circumstances knocked holes in his high-falutin' philosophy.

The pastor forgot that his knowledge of the true causes of the War was as filmy as mine; and until we thoroughly understood the beginnings thereof we were being merely ignorantly dogmatic when we asserted that wrong was right because it appeared, under superficial circumstances, righteous. He forgot that the commandments of God were not formulated upon passing confusions, but upon permanent truths; and that the former could not, therefore, be made to fit into the divine philosophy of life. Consequently, what directly and quite flagrantly denied the truth of the commandments of Jesus Christ was wrong all the time. Under no circumstances could it be right. If war did not harmonize faithfully with these simple precepts, then war was wrong, despite what sagacious people might say to the contrary; and it became the duty of the followers of the lowly Nazarene to say so, and to endure whatever penalties this Christian nation would surely impose upon them.

To introduce qualifications to a commandment is no more than hypocrisy. Conveniently to overlook the responsibilities attached to the word of command from the Heavenly Field Marshall is treachery. Disobedience is cowardice. Expediency is a broken crutch to principle. The serviceableness of the law of God is either a fact or a fable; it is a fact if, in emergency, it is useful; it is a fable if, in emergency, it has to be cast aside as useless. There is no Jesus Christ on a battle-field. Strong meekness is a lie manufactured in order to clothe the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in khaki.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Christianity the Symbolism of Factuality.

WHEN Mr. Lloyd tells us that he "accepts the scientific view that the universe is infinite in extent and of eternal duration," although "unable to believe in an Infinite and

Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," he is making a most interesting confession of faith. For does he not here, to use his own words, "part company with known facts and speculate upon unverifiable assumptions?" It is philosophy with theology, and not science, which postulates such beliefs, although Spencer called his the "one absolute certainty." Science is concerned with phenomena only, and no phenomenon or sum total of phenomena can possibly be proved to be either infinite or eternal. The supreme question is, not how far Spencer believed in the Infinite or Eternal Energy as apart from and of prior existence to the universe, but whether such an energy exists at all. We can only know of it by its effects. What it is in itself, whether Personal (or as I would prefer to think of it as Super-Personal) or Impersonal, whether it transcends or is immanent, or is partly transcendental, partly immanent in the phenomenal universe (the only universe of which we have any direct knowledge) is a matter of speculation.

Mr. Lloyd and his friends may incline to one belief or view; I and my friends have as much right to incline to the other belief or view. For all ultimate beliefs are acts of faith, and cannot be conclusively proved by demonstration. It is, therefore, altogether gratuitous to regard those whose act of faith leads them to believe in God as on a lower intellectual level than that of those who disbelieve. It is to me surpassing strange that while Mr. Lloyd is prepared to dogmatize concerning the infinity in extent and the eternity in duration of the universe (or can he demonstrate this?), he should, at the same time, cavil at my belief (which was Spencer's) in an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed. The one sort of belief is equivalent to the other, for both are beliefs.

Mr. Lloyd says that "to a student of the Four Gospels nothing can be more certain than that Jesus regarded God as a person apart from and above the Universe, and whose will the Universe fulfilled." I do not deny this, and yet I think it is very questionable indeed whether Jesus (as we know Him in the Gospels) thought of the Father as *merely* transcendent. Much of His recorded teaching (e.g., "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father") seems to suggest that He also believed in the immanence of God; nor did He confine that belief to His own person. I refuse to be tied down to a particular interpretation of the creed, however time-honoured this may be. For the underlying theory of the Christian Church is that we are dependent upon the Living Spirit for the interpretation of the facts of life, including past history, and not upon what various people, whether living or dead, may have thought the Christian Creed meant. To me Christianity is the symbolism of factuality, but the factuality is far more important than the symbolism.

Further, it seems to me that Mr. Lloyd is as unscientific in denying that there is evidence of loving purpose in the universe—so far as we know it—as we should be if we denied that there is much which conflicts or seems to conflict with love. To state that the world is "chock-full of evils and wrongs, of injustice and oppression, etc.," is to say an obvious and trite truism. It is true, that is, relatively to our standards of right and wrong, truth, and justice, etc. But if it be meant in any absolute or ultimate sense, how does he know? Surely this is a piece of rash dogmatism as gross as any which Mr. Lloyd would censure among religionists. For here, if I may return the retort courteous, in Mr. Lloyd's own words: "the curious thing is that whilst affecting Agnosticism" concerning the origin and destiny of the vast world process, Mr. Lloyd "immediately blossoms out into a full-fledged Gnostic" who knows what is and

what is not consistent with the nature of the force underlying all phenomena!

For any view that the intelligent human mind can form of the ultimate significance of the Universe must be in the nature of a venture of faith, and the vast majority of the greatest minds have put the religious rather than the sceptical interpretation upon the data which are at our disposal. Even at the present time of world-tragedy, we find so vigorous and reflecting a mind as that of H. G. Wells becoming far more sure and definite in this faith.

Mr. Lloyd and those who think with him always appear to confuse two totally different things—Traditional and Essential Christianity. The former, I believe, is a waning belief; but there are many indications (as seen, for instance, in the *R.P.A. Annual* for 1917, in Colonel Younghusband's *Mutual Influence*, in Wells's most recent writings, etc.) that the latter is a waxing force. When Mr. Lloyd speaks of what I have called the Father-heart at work in human nature as "a purely natural process," this does not necessarily exclude the working of the superhuman. For Spencer's Eternal and Infinite Energy is admittedly superhuman. His complaint that the Christian Church has not yet seen its prophecy of ultimate triumph fulfilled is curious, to say the least, as coming from one whose whole intellectual attitude should make him conscious of the enormously slow and gradual evolution of Human Society. The Christian Church is not yet 2,000 years old, and yet here is a modern scientific spirit complaining because the highest ideal of human fellowship which it, amid terrible follies, weaknesses, and aberrations, has succeeded in holding up to the world, has not yet been realized. To me, the very fact that we are in a position to sit in judgment upon all such follies and crimes of which the Church in particular and humanity in general have been, and still are, guilty is satisfactory proof that the Christian Ideal and Hope will eventually be reached. There is far more evidence of the Father-heart, Brother-heart (call it what you will) in humanity to-day than there was, say, 10,000 years ago. It does not follow that because "the mills of God grind slowly" that they are not grinding at all, or that the finest wheat-flour will not be the ultimate deposit. Man having come so far on his journey is, I am convinced, destined to go the whole way. Rationalism, in helping to rid the jungle of much that hinders, will not succeed (to vary the metaphor) in torpedoing Humanity's Hope. And this Hope and Ideal is that with which we are concerned.

FRANCIS E. POWELL.

Obituary.

The brief announcement of the death of John Robertson, of 13 Dover Street, W., after an operation for appendicitis, aged 77, marks the passing away of yet another of my old friends and comrades in the Secularist Movement. For upwards of forty years I knew John Robertson (not to be confounded with John M. Robertson) as a silent but very valuable worker. His activity was practically confined to committee and administrative affairs, which did not bring him into public prominence. In the N. S. S., the Hall of Science, and later in the Bradlaugh Fellowship, he rendered service that was highly appreciated. He was always ready and generous in assisting the poorer brethren in time of need, and I never applied to him in vain on behalf of any case that I could recommend. His death is the cause of deep grief to the diminishing number of friends who knew him, and who always regarded him with affection.

GEO. STANDRING.

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