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CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Mr. Clodd and Atheists.—The Editor</i>	561
<i>The Bible and Foreign Missions.—J. T. Lloyd</i>	562
<i>The Ineffable Mr. Wells.—Mimmermus</i>	563
<i>In the Clouds.—A. Millar</i>	564
<i>Science, Telepathy, and Communion with the Dead.</i> —W. Mann	565
<i>Acid Drops</i>	567
<i>A "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.—Chapman Cohen</i>	569
<i>To Correspondents</i>	570
<i>Sugar Plums</i>	570
<i>A Soliloquy.—W. H. Smith</i>	570
<i>New Testament Legends for Young Readers.—F. J. Gould</i>	571
<i>The Rise and Progress of Mental Power.—T. F. Palmer</i>	572
<i>N. S. S. Executive Report</i>	574
<i>Obituary</i>	574
<i>Notice of Meetings</i>	574
<i>Books and Pamphlets</i>	575

Views and Opinions.

Mr. Clodd and Atheists.

Some Christian apologists have a convenient way of dealing with Atheists. First of all they prove they are a bad lot, and then, if that fails in its purpose, they declare that Atheism is a myth, and Atheists are non-existent. One is used to this mixture of stupidity and impertinence from Christians—the poor devils must do the best they can with a bad case—but one hardly expects Freethinkers to condescend to the use of weapons borrowed from the Christian armoury. We are consequently surprised to find Mr. Edward Clodd informing readers of the *Literary Guide* that, while he does know Agnostics, "I don't know any Atheists; I thought that that type was extinct." Of course, if Mr. Clodd says he doesn't know any Atheists, one must take his word for it; but one cannot help wondering what kind of world it is in which he has been dwelling. For even as Chairman of the Rationalist Press Association, he must have come into contact with some of the leading associates of that body who *are* Atheists. If he did not meet them, it is surprising to find that he does not know what their opinions are. And, if I may be pardoned mentioning it, there is the *Freethinker*. Its late editor was an Atheist, as was Charles Bradlaugh, as is the present writer. And really we could, were it necessary, fill a large hall with metropolitan Atheists who would be very much alive. All of which goes to prove that a man may be very much at home when writing about primitive folk, and very much at sea when he is dealing with the living people around him.

* * *

Are Atheists Extinct?

Now, it would be absurd on our part to object to Mr. Clodd calling himself an Agnostic if he prefers that nebulous term. All we object to is his declaring extinct those who disagree with him. No one likes to be killed in this summary fashion, banished existence without rhyme or reason; and, worst of all, remaining conscious of

one's non-existence. To be dead on the word of Mr. Clodd, and yet feel alive on the irrefutable testimony of one's own consciousness! That is the consideration that gives us pause, and makes us wonder whether it is we who are dreaming or Mr. Clodd who is wholly at sea about what he writes? And we are really curious to know in what way Mr. Clodd differentiates the Agnostics he knows—and is even proud of knowing—from the Atheists he does not know, and declares to be extinct. We are, of course, paying no regard here to labels, but attending only to opinions. What is it that differentiates a logical Agnosticism from Atheism as stated by all who may profess to some authority in stating it? We will not quote here Holyoake, or Bradlaugh, or Foote; they are dead, but we hope not, in the higher sense, extinct. We will not cite many who are living, because Mr. Clodd may reply he knows them not. We simply take the following:—

The best argument for the use of the name Agnostic is simply that the word Atheist has been so long covered with all manner of ignorant calumny that it is expedient to use a new term which, though in some respects faulty, has a fair start, and will in time have a recognized meaning. The case, so stated, is reasonable; but there is the *per contra* that, whatever the motive with which the name is used, it is now tacked to half a dozen conflicting forms of doctrine, varying loosely between Theism and Pantheism. The name of Atheist escapes that drawback. Its unpopularity has saved it from half-hearted and half-minded patronage.

We select that expression of opinion because it belongs to Mr. J. M. Robertson, an associate of the body of which Mr. Clodd was the chairman. And no one will be more surprised than Mr. Robertson to learn that he is extinct.

* * *

The Use of Compromise.

For our part we have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Robertson is absolutely in the right. There may be many excuses for using "Agnostic" rather than "Atheist"; but there is only one argument, and that is a poor one. This is, that "Atheist" is misunderstood; to which the Atheist might retort that, by itself, "Agnostic" cannot be understood at all. It may mean philosophic Agnosticism, *i.e.*, a statement of ignorance concerning what lies beyond our cognizance; and that does not really concern "God" at all. Or it may mean want of belief in God; and in that case it *is* Atheism under another name, and Mr. Clodd is himself a living specimen of what he declares to be an extinct type. You have, thus, to add an explanation of a term which is selected as in itself explanatory, while rejecting one which is clean cut and self-explanatory—save to such as are interested in misrepresenting it. For as a Theist is one with a "Theos," or a belief in God, so an Atheist is one without a "Theos" or a belief in God. And when one looks at the matter historically, one realizes that the very currency of the word Agnostic is itself proof of the prevalence of Atheism. Atheism has an historical connotation of evil due to the prevalence and the intoler-

ance of religious belief. And quite naturally in this country, where moral courage in connection with intellectual affairs is so often lacking, it followed that as Atheism became the dominant characteristic of a growing number of minds, there should be an attempt to find a name of a more "respectable" kind. This relieves people from the pains of a strict conformity without exposing them to the penalties of an uncompromising nonconformity. But this is, after all, a blessing in disguise. It has, in Mr. Robertson's words, saved it "from half-hearted and half-minded patronage." And we may direct Mr. Clodd's attention to the fact that, on the Continent, there is not the same hesitation amongst public men in avowing themselves Atheists. One can imagine the amusement at an International Freethought Conference if one of the speakers described Atheists as extinct.

* * *

Can We Suspend Judgment?

An attempt is often made to justify the use of "Agnostic" by representing it as connoting a suspension of judgment as against the decisive rejection of Atheism. But a suspension about what? We properly suspend judgment when we understand the proposition before us, and where the evidence on either side is indecisive. But is that the case here? Is Mr. Clodd in a state of mental suspense concerning the "gods" of anthropology, that series of magnified non-natural men about which he has himself written? Does he not know as well as anyone that the god of modern religion is no more than a refinement of these savage gods, of whose non-existence he has no doubt whatever? And if we leave out that class of gods, what other gods have we? "God," by itself, means nothing; and we cannot suspend judgment on a proposition that is not understood. Or if "God" is used in the sense of "supreme mind," it is surely the height of folly to call a thing mind while denying it all the qualities by which mind is known. "Mind," that does not possess the peculiar qualities of the only mind with which we are acquainted, is not mind at all, but something quite different. Really, between the statement that A does not exist, and the statement that A does exist, but differs in every particular from all the other A's, there is no difference whatever. Statements of this kind do not demand a suspensory state of mind, they deserve and should receive a decisive negative.

* * *

Atheism the Logical Issue.

The only genuine plea for Agnosticism is the one indicated above. It has protected some from the bitterness of the attack on Atheism, and, so far, it may be said, for those who needed it, to have justified its existence. In any other direction it is a decided failure. On the other hand, it has given birth to a "religious Agnosticism" and a "reverent Agnosticism," both of which work hard to prove that they are "truly religious," if only we properly understand that very ambiguous word; and on the other hand, it has provided splendid material for demolition by keen philosophic minds of a religious type, to which attack the only reply of the Agnostic is to use the arguments of a just discarded Atheism. It is not, therefore, the case that the Atheist is extinct. The number of avowed Atheists has always been comparatively small, as was only natural with a word which had to bear the full weight of religious intolerance. But to-day they are more numerous than ever before—more numerous in the sense of those who openly avow their Atheism, and more numerous still in the case of those who prefer to use another, if more misleading, term to describe their position. If these will have it so, they must; but it is strange for a parent to be told that his family is extinct when he sees around him so numerous a progeny.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Bible and Foreign Missions.

RELIGION, in its more primitive form, may be defined as a belief in a supernatural being or beings, on whom man regarded himself as dependent for all he was and had, and to whom he deemed himself responsible for all he did, together with the feelings and practices to which such a belief inevitably gave rise. Originally, no doubt, deities were simply superhuman powers, invisible and impersonal, but conceived of as resembling man's second-self or spirit. Such powers, or beings, personal or impersonal, it must be borne in mind, were never objects of knowledge, the belief in them being the outcome of ignorance and fear. As Professor Gilbert Murray well says, religion owes its origin to a primitive "Age of Ignorance," and one is tempted to regard "Primal Stupidity as the normal beginning of all religion, or almost as the normal raw material out of which religion is made (*Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 16). With this "normal beginning" in mind, we are enabled to appreciate the history of religion, its evolution from stage to stage until it attains to its highest forms in Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism—from Polydæmonism to Christian Theism. Of the three universalistic religions, Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, not one of them really answers to the name. Buddhism has about five hundred millions of adherents; Christianity, some three hundred and a half millions; and Mohammedanism, nearly two hundred and thirty millions. Buddhists, Christians, and Mohammedans number approximately 1,048,000,000, whilst the population of the world is estimated at 1,623,000,000.

It is but fair to mention that Bishop Boyd Carpenter, in an article entitled "The Christian Church," in the tenth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, supplies a table according to which the number of Christians in the year 1896 was 500,000,000, while in statistics found in *Whitaker's Almanac* for 1916, Buddhists number only 138,031,000. In reality, it is wholly immaterial whether Christians or Buddhists are the more numerous, the most important point being that Christianity triumphed over Paganism in the West by forcibly crushing it, while Buddhism won India by means of moral suasion. The disciples of the Prince of Peace went everywhere with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other, while the followers of the Buddha made converts by the simple preaching of the Gospel of Truth and Love. And this brings us to the most vital of all religious facts, namely, that the value of a religion is determined not by the number of its adherents, but by its effect upon character. Both Christians and Mohammedans have always been lovers of war; they have both gained converts at the point of the sword; whereas Buddhism denounces war in all its forms, forbids blood-sacrifice, abolishes slavery, and founds hospitals for man and beast. And yet Christianity pronounces Buddhism a false and dangerous religion, and does its utmost to supplant it, regarding itself as the only true and Divinely revealed way of salvation for a lost and ruined world. It claims to be the only universal or world-religion, and seeks to destroy all other cults in the name of God. The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of the Lord, in which alone is the Divine Will concerning man fully and finally revealed. It was in this belief that the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded upwards of a hundred years ago; and all the great Missionary Societies came into existence because of the conviction firmly held that all non-Christians are under God's wrath and go to hell when they die. The Bible is God's love-gift to a perishing race, the sole true Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to all who hear and believe it.

Such was the creed of our forefathers a hundred years ago, who did all within their power to make it known to the Heathen World. To-day, however, that theology is held by comparatively very few, with the result that Foreign Missions are no longer looked upon in the light in which they were initiated. To the *Christian Commonwealth* for August 29, the Rev. W. Garrett Horder, of Ealing, contributes a leading article, entitled "The One Standard for Missions," in which he declares that the whole Bible should not be given to the Heathen. The Old Testament, for example, should "be treated as only the early morning, and not the 'noonday, of the Divine revealings to men.'" Missionaries ought to realize that the Old Testament is so defective a book that it is not "their duty to translate and present it alongside of the New Testament to those they seek to convert to the Christian faith."

It is therefore to the last degree important that Christianity should be presented to Heathendom only through its own distinctive message without the shadow cast over its Gospel of grace by some parts of the former Scriptures. Is it not time, therefore, boldly to face the situation and resolve to send to non-Christian peoples the New Testament, or that Testament with only those parts of the Old Testament which are fully in accord with it, such as selected parts of the Psalter from which all imprecatory notes have been excluded, and those passages of the Prophets which run along the line of and are filled with the Gospel spirit?.....For example, it cannot be good for the adherents of other faiths to have presented to them the war-like stories contained in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, which even in Christendom have done much to justify and excite warlike doings. Such stories cannot be brought into harmony with the essential teaching of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Horder is perfectly right and fully justified in calling attention to the impropriety of treating the whole Bible as Divinely inspired and infallible. He assures us that there is no "need to present as infallibly true and therefore to be accepted the Cosmogony presented in the Book of Genesis." As a matter of fact the Mosaic Cosmogony has been scientifically proved to be utterly false; and Canon Driver did not hesitate to admit that the first ten chapters in the Book of Genesis are unhistorical. Mr. Horder proceeds thus:—

Beyond this there is surely much in the account of the sacrificial worship, described in the Old Testament, which must be repellent, say, to the Buddhist, who recoils from the slaughter of any form of animal life. To him the sacrifice of bulls and goats must seem quite shocking. And since such sacrifice of animal life forms no part of the Christian faith, it is quite needless to bring it before him in a book which is not one of the Christian Scriptures.

Mr. Horder forgets, however, that the sacrificial worship, described in the Old Testament is represented as being, not only in complete harmony with the Divine Will, but ordained and enjoined by Jehovah. The reverend gentleman does not condemn the Jewish sacrificial system as absolutely futile as well as horribly cruel, but merely points out that to a Buddhist it would seem quite shocking. But is it not, and should it not seem quite so to all alike? Mr. Horder says that "such sacrifice of animal life forms no part of the Christian faith"; but is he not aware that the Christian faith is utterly discredited in the eyes of thoughtful people by its account of the more than shocking sacrifice of the innocent Son of God? The Jews offered not only peace-offerings, but holocausts, unto God to get rid of their sins, and that practice was discontinued only because the sinless God-man was immolated on Heaven's altar in order that he might become the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, without which reconciliation with the angry Sovereign of the Universe would have been eternally impossible.

In this sacrifice Mr. Horder sees nothing shocking or immoral. The Gospel message which he wants Heathendom to hear and believe is that God accepted the sacrificial offering on Calvary as the external ground on which he could receive into his favour and fully pardon the rebels of the fall. Why, the New Testament is an infinitely more dangerous document than the Old, and should never be sent to Heathen lands. Dr. T. R. Glover recently said with pride that Christianity is not good conduct, nor escape from hell, but "Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ nailed to the cross." "The cross of Christ," he added, "is the great central fact of our religion. To Paul it was the centre of all his preaching, as well as of his philosophy and theology, and personal religion." That is entirely true. In Christianity there are but two plain facts, namely, the historical Jesus, and the historical Cross; and without the latter the former is of no significance. Christians are dependent upon no vague, nebulous, ethical principle, but upon a slain, buried, and risen Saviour-God. Our loving Heavenly Father could not have accepted and forgiven one of us had not his only begotten and beloved Son offered himself a ransom for us all. Such is Christianity, and to ask an honest Buddhist to substitute it for his own religion is to inflict upon him the worst possible insult.

There are true and beautiful passages in the Old Testament in both poetry and prose; but its central conception of Jehovah is cruel, and wicked, and degrading. In the New Testament there are extremely few paragraphs which charm us, while the central story in both Gospels and Epistles is fundamentally incredible, being an outrage upon reason, an insufferable affront to the moral sense, and an unpardonable offence against God, if he exists.

The Bible, the whole Bible, must be put in the same category as all other Sacred Books, and Christianity must be looked upon as one of many similar religions, as mythical in its nature, and as destined to pass away, discredited, as the others.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Ineffable Mr. Wells.

It is not only our enemies, those desperate characters, it is we ourselves who know not what we do; thence springs the glimmering hope that perhaps we do better than we think.

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Thou art a worthy man, notwithstanding that there be some do call thee the Ratter.—*The Chronicles of Artemas.*

CLOTHED in motley, and banging a bladder, Mr. H. G. Wells has for years frequented the camp of the Army of Human Liberation. A licensed jester, his quips and cranks often amused the soldiers of progress. Latterly, however, his jibes have taken a bitter tone, especially since he has "found God"; or, perhaps, "God" has found him. Maybe, they have found each other. And the mutual recognition of two such distinguished personalities has been an event of newspaper importance. For, like so many worthy folk in similar condition, Mr. Wells has proceeded to make himself a public nuisance. One of his pastimes, since his conversion, has been the hurling of insults at his former associates; and, curiously, his jibes have taken the familiar form of the stock arguments of those polite patterers, the Christian Evidence Society lecturers. Presumably, Mr. Wells' conversion has depressed his levity, for the process reminds us of how Edward Gibbon, the historian, learnt Greek "at the cost of many tears and not a little blood."

As a popular novelist, Mr. Wells has a numerous following, not so large as that of Miss Ethel Dell or Mr. Charles Garvice, but still respectable in point of numbers. Therefore it would be unwise to ignore him

altogether. What needs comment is his rehashing of the stale objections which have done so much service on so many Christian pulpits and platforms, particularly when he says, in *God the Invisible King*, that "without God the service of man is no better than a hobby or a sentimentalism or an hypocrisy in the undisciplined prison of the mortal life." Since this fatuous utterance, Mr. Wells has gone out of his way to taunt Freethinkers with their lack of philanthropic work, and with having no charitable and educational institutions in connection with their movement. He adds, further, that the "professed Atheists and Agnostics" he has known "have been careful and comfortable people—and just a little self-righteous."

Such remarks show that Mr. Wells knows very little of the movement with which he was for a few months associated. Freethought is a poor, struggling cause, its members are comparatively few and scattered; and it has no wealthy endowments to lessen the current cost of a national propaganda. Still, the Freethought Party does manage to relieve its necessitous members; and the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund is well supported, and is probably the only fund which is administered without a single farthing of expense. Until a short time ago it was not possible to bequeath money for Freethought purposes with any real prospect of the trust being carried into effect, as it was in the power of the next-of-kin to invalidate the legacy on the ground that it was illegal. The recent Bowman Case has altered this; but Freethought was robbed of thousands of pounds before this memorable legal victory.

Let Mr. Wells ponder the case of Stephen Girard, the famous American Freethinker. At his death, this large-hearted man left large bequests to charities, the principal being a munificent endowment of an orphanage. By express provision in his will, no ecclesiastic, or minister of religion, was to hold any connection with the college, or even to be admitted as a visitor: but the staff of the institution were required to instruct the pupils in secular morality and leave them to adopt their own religious opinions. This will has been most shamefully perverted, for the officials are all Christians, and, in order to keep within the letter of the law, only laymen are so employed.

Does Mr. Wells know that Florence Nightingale, "the lady with the lamp," who ministered to the poor soldiers in the Crimea, was a heretic? Has this one-time Fabian and former Rationalist never heard of Walt Whitman, who spent four years of his life in attending the war-hospitals during the American Civil War, and who wrecked his superb constitution by his untiring devotion to his suffering fellows? And what of Robert Owen, who not only built the first infant schools, and improved the dwellings of his workpeople, but sought to construct the ideal society of the future? Mr. Wells ought to have heard of University College School, which was founded by Freethinkers to further the principles of Secular Education. Even the activities of the Humanitarian League, which has done such magnificent work in so many humanistic directions for a quarter of a century, should be sufficient to silence Mr. Wells in his campaign of insult and calumny.

Other names leap to the memory. Thomas Paine pleaded for the abolition of slavery; advocated the freedom of the press, the extension of the suffrage to the people, the provision of old-age pensions for the poor. He besought the French Republic not to imitate the bad example of Monarchy, and not to stain itself with blood. Was it "sentimentalism" or "hypocrisy" that caused Paine to nearly lose his own life by pleading for humanity? Shelley, the Atheist poet, was a thorough humanitarian. To help the needy and to relieve the

sick seemed to him a simple duty, which he carried out cheerfully. He inquired personally into the circumstances of his charities, visited the sick in their homes, and kept a list of poor persons whom he assisted. At Marlow he suffered from acute ophthalmia, contracted whilst visiting the afflicted lace-makers in their cottages. So practical was Shelley that he even went to the length of attending a London hospital in order to acquire medical knowledge that should prove of service to the sick he visited. Is this a further example of Freethought "hypocrisy?"

Mr. Wells is guilty of the worst form of cant. As a Socialist, he ought to know that charity is very good in its way, but what the world wants is justice. If the world were run on fair and reasonable lines there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist. If, however, belief in God is necessary to make a man a humanitarian, how comes it that the votes of the bishops in the House of Lords is a shameful record? Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working-classes have been opposed by these God-believing ecclesiastics. Nothing but self-interest excites their action. None even voted for the abolition of the flogging of women in prison, or for the abolition of the whip in the Army and Navy. Since Mr. Wells himself has "found God" his manners have worsened. Perhaps he remembers the legal advice, "no case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney." By attempting to discredit Freethought, he shields, in a measure, his newly-found "god" from the searchlights of rational criticism.

Like Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Wells has a taste for taking things easily. He likes to patronize new ideas without losing the advantages arising from friendliness towards the old ones. He prefers to enter the arena when the fighting is nearly over, and to share in the victories that were won by better men than himself. Kid-glove reformers, like Mr. Wells, have never been wanting when all danger is over. Their function is to rebuke and insult the pioneers, and to enjoy the social, political, and financial profits of this ingenious policy. It is said that Mr. Wells receives handsome cheques from his publishers for his writings. We do not grudge him his thirty pieces of silver, which should be the rate for his attacks on his Freethought friends, many of whom have grown grey in the service of humanity.

MIMNERMUS.

In the Clouds.

THE dreamer, the idealist, poet, reformer, etc., is often accused of having his mental habitation in the clouds, and the accusation is often quite justified. Such is one extreme. There is the other, as Burns expressed it in "The Bard's Epitaph":—

Reader attend, whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or, darkling, grubs this earthly hole
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent cautious self control
Is wisdom's root.

Ruskin was an intensely practical man, but the artist in him was for ever finding fresh beauties in the skies, and he spoke reprovingly of the many who were so dull and indifferent to the mutable majesty of that inverted dome. Shade and shape and hue, the gleams of morning and the glow of eve, the noon's triumphal splendours, were to him a perpetual delight; he speculated on the "Beyond," but did not let it disturb the philosophical tranquillity of his mind; sufficient for him was the order

and artistry of Nature's magnificent and spacial interior. Shelley did justice to the cloud, Byron to the moon, Shakespeare to the stars. But what poet of any eminence has not soared mentally in all the regions of space, and returned to earth bringing with him the music of the spheres. Lesser writers have smaller horizons, but such, in their degree, at times, may rest and luxuriate, and survey with quiet pride their house beautiful. Others, again, are more hard to please, and seek out inventions such as those of whom a mordant rhymer said:—

We must please the pious crowd
With mansions in a cloud
And a kingdom in the far-off Milky Way.

The present writer awoke the other moment from a deep dream of peace—a noonday snooze, in fact—and behold! the beauty of the clouds and azure made him sigh with delight.

Wonderful, wonderful, and more wonderful!

There was a prowling wind, and the sound of an intermittent pressure on the window-sash. It was what in summer is called "broken weather"—local showers, sunshine, and a soft, far-seen purity of atmosphere. Great white cumulous clouds moved slowly apart on a serene expanse of deepest blue, or came together, diffused, and were leaden grey again even as one looked. Elsewhere were lesser strips of azure and seeming plateaus, sunlit, in the celestial Alps, and innumerable azure lakes with light brown and golden shores, or darkening and lightening in varied shades; and now and then the white sunlight flashed, fanlike, as the great panorama moved and changed. What regions consecrate, what undiscovered country, shadowland, fairyland, never-never land, illusion land, and dreamland; yet land of rest and true and natural delight! One looks, and looks again; fresh and sweet and eternally young, the largesse of that gracious dome refreshes eye and heart and mind; one feels young, refreshed, renewed; one is happy; even external lines of care are smoothed away; one thinks of Wordsworth's line:—

And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

Some sea-washed rampart hills bound the western view, a mere mass of granite and heather, with tall central peaks piercing the cloud and perusing the azure skies, a rough and rocky isle, yet clad in soft aerial-tinted robe, reclining in slumberous adolescence, or chaste and wistful like awakening womanhood in a maiden's eyes. In the moist, clear twilight, also, new and nameless investitures are seen. In their dim chamber of the West the hills seem sinking into rest, and white "blanket" clouds, with kindly stealth, have stolen from behind to wrap them for repose; or, pausing midway, permit the view of royalty while the light remains. Light detached vapours here and there float and cling around the sleeping hills. But it requires an Anatole France to do justice to such a scene. For instance, in a Neapolitan passage in *Sylvestre Bonnard*, he says: "A single lamp burned in the niche of a Madonna. The purity and transparency of the air gave a celestial softness and clearness to the very darkness itself, and one could find one's way without difficulty under such a limpid night." Such I had been trying—vainly—to say; but there it is in the easy touch of "the master's hand."

There are "white-caps" on the waves suggesting Tennyson's Greek fire in his cosmic lines:—

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow,
Draw down the hard Aonian hills,
And sow the dust of continents to be.

One by one the lights are extinguished round the

couch of beauty in the West; shapes dissolve and colours fade; but we can still, with Keats,—

.....Behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance.

Anon to sleep till wakes the smiling morn of a world diurnally renewed.

A. MILLAR.

Science, Telepathy, and Communion with the Dead.

VIII.

(Continued from p. 555.)

In 1837 the French Academy appointed a commission to examine the marvels presented by blindfold subjects who had been submitted to what was called animal magnetism. All their pretensions were dissipated; there was neither magnetism nor any power of second sight. This report was disputed. Dr. Buden then offered a prize of 3,000 francs to any person, somnambulist or otherwise, who could read without the use of his eyes. Six candidates from different parts of France presented themselves, for animal magnetism and somnambulism were then epidemic. A new commission was appointed; new failures occurred. Trials went on until October, 1840, when at the close of a series of ignominious failures, in which the tricks of each pretender in succession were unmasked, the Academy decided that it would no longer take notice of any communication relative to the imposture and folly, miscalled animal magnetism and clairvoyance. The same thing occurred with Sir James Simpson, who twenty years afterwards, when similar pretences were rife in the United Kingdom, and somnambulists and clairvoyants and thought-readers were again taking the field, offered to present a £50 note, which he had locked in a box and placed in a bank, to anyone who could read the number as the note lay in the box. It was never claimed. Mr. Labouchere's similar experiment with the so-called thought-reader Bishop is of quite recent date, but was performed under much less rigid conditions, and by a person whose pretensions, although they excited a great deal of attention, were more than usually absurd.—*Dr. Ernest Hart, "The New Witchcraft," pp. 23-24.*

MRS. HENRY SIDGWICK, who has made a careful analysis of Mrs. Piper's trance phenomena, running to a volume of 650 pages, comes to the conclusion that "however true it may be that there is really communication between the living and the dead, the intelligence communicating directly through Mrs. Piper's organism is Mrs. Piper."¹ And she cites the testimony of Professor William James, who favoured the idea of the spirits communicating through Mrs. Piper—"all being dream creations of Mrs. Piper, probably having no existence except when she is in a trance, but consolidated by repetition into personalities consistent enough to play their several roles."²

How, then, can we account for Mrs. Piper's success as a medium for so many years, and for the unbounded confidence reposed in her by men like Sir Oliver Lodge? Upon what facts is this confidence based?

As we have seen, Mrs. Piper has made no revelations in science; her efforts in astronomy were utterly childish and puerile. Her attempts at prophecy have turned out to be ridiculously wide of the mark. She has never revealed a scrap of useful knowledge in all the years of her mediumship.

Mr. Podmore, who made a long and exhaustive examination of Mrs. Piper's trance utterances, observes that "her real strength lies in describing the diseases, personal idiosyncrasies, thoughts, feelings, and character of the sitter and his friends; their loves, hates, quarrels, sympathies, and mutual relationships in general; trivial but insignificant incidents in their past histories, and the like. Not only is information on such points as these more difficult to acquire by normal means, but it

¹ *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research*, part lxxi., vol. xxviii., p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

is much more difficult to retain in the memory."¹ Well, if we grant that though difficult, it was not impossible, to acquire the information sought in a natural way, and credit Mrs. Piper with a very capable memory, there is no need for any supernormal explanation, especially if we consider her method of imparting her trance revelations. For, as Podmore further points out:—

Her trance personality does not commonly deal in precise and categorical statements of fact; names are frequently uttered or written piecemeal and in tentative form; diseases are diagnosed by symptoms often by no means distinctive; persons are indicated by descriptions of a dubious kind; incidents and relationships are shadowed forth by obscure and inadequate hints. In a word, the information given is very generally incomplete or of uncertain meaning, and needs expert interpretation.²

Yes, and it is "expert interpretation" that can always be relied upon from the believers in Mrs. Piper.

Podmore, in stating his difference of opinion with Professor Hyslop in regard to Mrs. Piper, concludes: "I cannot point to a single instance in which a precise and unambiguous piece of information has been furnished of a kind which could not have proceeded from the medium's own mind, working upon the materials provided and the hints let drop by the sitter. I agree with Professor Hyslop in rejecting telepathy as the explanation of these latest revelations, not, however, as being inadequate, but as being superfluous. I do not ask the reader to accept my judgment on the case. The point of the illustration is that a subject in which it is possible for two honest and fairly competent investigators from the same set of facts to deduce such divergent conclusions is clearly not yet sufficiently advanced to serve as a basis for any but the most modest generalizations."³

We have given instances of the uniform failure of mediums to answer test questions, notably in the case of Mrs. Verrall's and Myers' test letter; and, as Podmore observes:—

A weighty objection to accepting Mrs. Piper's trance personalities at their own valuation is that they have again and again failed to answer the test questions put to them, and that the manner of their failure has often proved more fatal to their claim than the failure itself. Thus, the *soi-disant* (spirit of) Hannah Wild on several occasions dictated (through Mrs. Piper) what professed to be a copy of the contents of a sealed letter written by the real Hannah Wild before her death, for the express purpose of the test; and all these versions were entirely wide of the mark.⁴

In conclusion, Podmore declares: "It is impossible to believe that in these trance utterances (of Mrs. Piper) we are listening to authentic and unembarrassed messages from the dead." But Sir Oliver Lodge finds no difficulty in believing it and in trying to foist his belief on everybody else.

Sir Oliver Lodge tells us that Mrs. Piper has revealed things while in a state of trance that she had no knowledge of during her ordinary state. For instance, he claims that the spirit of Dr. Phinuit—through the mediumship of Mrs. Piper—recognized a ring worn by Lady Lodge as having been given to Sir Oliver Lodge for her by an aunt shortly before her death. He also called for a locket that Lady Lodge sometimes wears, but was not wearing at the time, which had belonged to her father forty years ago, and many similar insignificant and useless facts. Sir Oliver Lodge declares that Mrs. Piper did not know, and could not have known, the facts concerning these articles. "But," as Dr. Mercier very

pertinently points out, "what opportunity had Dr. Phinuit of knowing these things? We have no evidence except Mrs. Piper's assertion that Dr. Phinuit ever existed even in the spirit; and we have no evidence at all that he ever existed in the flesh.....Now it is significant that though we do not know what opportunities Dr. Phinuit had of studying the Lodge family, we do know something of the opportunities that Mrs. Piper had of studying it. Mrs. Piper seems to have been a frequent visitor of the Lodges. She stayed in their house, on one visit for nine days, and on another for five days, at a time; and *neither Mrs. Piper nor Sir Oliver Lodge has ever been cross-examined with respect to these visits.*"¹

As Dr. Mercier further remarks, when ladies stay in the same house on intimate terms they sometimes visit one another in their respective bedrooms, and then it is usual for the visitor to admire her hostess's possessions, and to go into little raptures over them; and upon this encouragement the hostess may relate how the trinket that is so sweet came into her possession, or what its history is. Or Mrs. Piper may have gained the knowledge from the daughter of the house, who may have been wearing the trinkets for the time being. Or she may have picked up the information during the course of ordinary conversation. All sorts of topics turn up in conversation when a guest is staying in the house, and it would be quite possible for Mrs. Piper to turn the conversation on to the subject of trinkets such as these, for the express purpose of using the information during her trance sittings.

This is borne out by the fact, noticed by Dr. Mercier, that: "As Phinuit, or Mrs. Piper, I think we may as well give him his proper name, becomes more and more intimate with the Lodge family, the skilful guesses and well-directed shots either become fewer, or they become better directed, for mistakes are better avoided, and 'fishing' becomes less conspicuous."

Dr. Mercier asks Sir Oliver to point out "where the necessity is for the performance of a miracle?" and proceeds:—

For let there be no mistake, no misunderstanding. What you assert is the occurrence of the miraculous. You may call Dr. Phinuit a "discarnate intelligence" and his knowledge supernormal, but I submit to you that a discarnate intelligence is another name for a ghost or spook; and supernormal is another name for supernatural or miraculous. Can you deny it? Do you deny it? If so, please point out the difference between a discarnate intelligence and a spook, between what is merely supernormal and what is supernatural and miraculous. I suggest that you avoid the old and well-known and well-established words because they are discredited, and you as "a scientific" man are ashamed to use them; and I suggest that you use the terms discarnate intelligence and supernormal to soften down the shock that your readers would receive from the use of ghost or spook, or supernatural or miraculous, and to make them suppose that what you ask them to believe is something less than a ghost, and something less than a miracle.²

In his latest book, *Raymond* (named after Sir Oliver Lodge's youngest son, who was killed at the Front in 1915), Sir Oliver Lodge claims that he was forewarned by the spirits of the impending death of his son, the spirits also informing him of the existence of a photograph of Raymond, in a group, taken while serving in France, and of which the family were previously quite unaware.

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

¹ Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., pp. 341-342.

² *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 344.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 346-346.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 346.

¹ Dr. Charles A. Mercier, *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge* (1917), pp. 114-115. The italics are Dr. Mercier's.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

Acid Drops.

We seriously call the attention of the House of Convocation, Upper and Lower, the Free Church Council, and the clergy generally, to the spell of wet weather we have experienced. It is a matter that calls for explanation. The effect on the home-grown food supply is disastrous, and to produce food is now an urgent necessity of the nation. We are fighting "God's fight," says the Bishop of London, and it is only fair that he should do his share. But to attack our food supply is to help Germany—there is no doubt about that. And whether our food is diminished by Germans in submarines, or by Providence through incessant rain, the result is the same. Providence, in blasting the English harvest, is helping Germany. That is the plain logic of the situation. We know what would be thought of Haig if he destroyed the ammunition needed for the Army. What will the clergy say of God, who is destroying the food of the British people?

We cannot, of course, acquit God of responsibility for the weather. That would be quite atheistic. And as not a sparrow falls to the ground without God's cognizance, there must be some "providential message" in so many hundred tons of water being sent at the wrong time. So we can quite sympathize with a writer in the *Church Times* for August 31: "When military operations of the first order are frustrated by rain in July, and a harvest of phenomenal promise and importance is threatened with ruin by rain in August, we must ask what gentler warning God could give us of the helplessness of independent human effort?" God is anxious to show us that we must not do without him—not because we cannot, for obviously, if he had left the weather alone, we might have gone on all right, but because we must not. And if we won't take notice of him, then he sends us a gentle warning, with, presumably, worse things to follow.

And that is just the trouble with gods. They demand so much attention, and if they don't get it immediately start upsetting things. One must be always telling them they are great, and good, and holy, and wise, not because one knows they are anything of the kind, but just because we think it pleases them, and they will get "riled" if we act otherwise. And there is one thing about gods, you can't pile the flattery on too thickly. Lord Beaconsfield said that all people were open to flattery, and when you got to the throne you could put it on with a trowel. When you get above the throne you can discard even the trowel, and when flattering the gods can pile on by the hog'shead. What the world needs is a God who will attend to his own business, and not need eternally reminding of little things here and there, or getting into a temper and upsetting the weather because we haven't paid sufficient attention to him.

Another letter on the same subject appears, also in the *Church Times*, above the signature, "Francis M. Downton, Temple Balsall." We are convinced that Mr. Downton is a clergyman, or holds a brief for the clergy. The gist of his communication may be expressed in the following terms: God has made us for himself, and yet our practical contempt of him is notorious; his worship is the purpose of our existence, but we deliberately neglect his worship and live exclusively for ourselves. Indeed, our defiance of God and the ordinances of his house is our greatest sin. We spend his holy day for our own pleasure, abandoning the Church which he himself has founded, and in which his glory dwells. Well, the truth is that nothing we do can prosper without God's blessing, and that blessing will be withheld until we repent. *The harvest is now seriously menaced by wind and rain because of our national apostacy from Divine worship.* Therefore, if he wish to save the harvest, let us forthwith return to our God, realizing "that there can be no work of national importance to compare with the offering of the Holy Eucharist on Sunday and obedience to the laws which are bound up with it." And this is the twentieth century!

The Bishop of Peterborough has been holding services in

Leicestershire, and has been walking from village to village. This form of locomotion is so unusual for a bishop that the press has been publishing paragraphs concerning the right reverend Father-in-God's heroism.

The week ended with a burst of fierce fighting in Flanders. At home the clergy are still busy at their old pastime of fierce talking.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley says that Demos is a "new god." Has Mr. Wells' deity been put on the shelf already?

The story of the three angels who were seen in the sky with the word "Peace" written across them appears to have impressed many pious people. It seems a pity that the celestial advertisement did not add the date on which peace will be ushered in.

The Bishop of London has been visiting some of the naval bases. We thought he was paid to attend to the foundations of belief.

A contemporary asks why Freethought is banned by the press. The answer is that newspapers are money-making enterprises, and have no concern with truth. As Lowell says, the pious editor does not believe in principle, but has great concern in interest.

A contemporary points out a schoolboy's howler from a scholar's story: "The parson sat writing his sermon in his sanctumonium." When that boy grows up he will learn that the dear clergy often buy their sermons ready for use.

Following the lead of the Bishop of St. Asaph, some of the more influential Church members of North Wales are still resisting as far as possible the movement to erect new science buildings at Bangor College as a memorial to the soldiers of North Wales. The Hon. Alice Pennant, whilst admitting in a press letter that this object is an "excellent" one, prefers "a military school for sons and brothers of men killed in the war, with facilities for religious education." She does not support Mr. R. J. Thomas's scheme, because "Whereas it has been proved by military statistics that between 60 and 70 per cent. of Welshmen in the Army are Churchmen, it is therefore impossible to feel it can be a suitable memorial to them to send a subscription to that institution in North Wales, which hopes and intends (at the end of the war) to profit by a share in the plunder of the Church to which they belonged." And so an "excellent" object fails to enlist her sympathy because it will inadvertently receive from the State a small portion of what the Church previously considered it consistent with its dignity to accept. The lady's action is easy to understand, but difficult to appreciate.

Even if the military statistics are accepted, the hon. lady is forgetting the 30 per cent. who, it is more than possible, would have some very pointed comments to make on the scheme launched by the 70 per cent. loyal Churchmen. Now, Mr. Thomas's scheme is not only admittedly "excellent"—it is *unsectarian*. We submit that this is its very fault. But to return to the figures. In pre-War days it is well known that the Established Church recruits always bulked in statistics handsomely by means of methods known to anyone who took the trouble to inquire. Now that we have a conscript Army, such statistics must bear a reasonable relation to the actual figures of membership of the various religious bodies. Now, does anyone believe that the Established Church members number from 60 to 70 per cent. of the population of Wales? The Army statisticians have, in fact, got themselves into a very laughable quandary—so laughable, indeed, that we think there is very little likelihood of the religious returns of the Army ever being made public.

It is astonishing what a difference, in the estimation of Christian writers, it makes when a nation goes to war—on the right side. A writer in the *Christian World* dealing with China's declaration of war against Germany, says that China "with her wide tolerance, her intellect, her industry, her

democratic tendencies, her sweet reasonableness and love of peace," etc. We are not disputing the possession of these qualities by the Chinese; on the contrary, it is only what we ourselves have said years ago. Only the statement reads curiously in view of our missionary activity in China, and the way in which the Western Powers have treated her. Does it look as though the people possessing the national characteristics indicated above have anything to learn worth learning, in morals or sociology, from that Western world which is offering us the present spectacle?

A writer in the *Sunday Herald* says "the approbation of celibacy as the highest spiritual condition still lingers among the clergy." This reminds us of Horace Smith's caustic definition of celibacy as "a vow a man takes that he will enjoy none but other men's wives."

A firm of London laundrymen advertise that they are "launderers to the House of Lords." Does this firm wash the fine lawn sleeves of the lordly followers of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth?

The *Newspaper World* reports that 563 papers have increased their price owing to war conditions. Many of these periodicals are seen in the service of religion, which is supposed to be "without money and without price."

Professional defenders of the Christian superstition are endeavouring to impress people that the War is helping, and not retarding, religion. Referring to the religious opinions of soldiers, Mr. A. K. Yapp, the National Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, made the following remark: "You can't always judge Tommy by his language, and I believe there is more religion in his blasphemy than in the Kaiser's pious utterances." If profanity be a proof of piety, the Young Men's Christian Association had better help in repealing the Blasphemy Laws.

The United States has put an embargo on the export of sulphur. So far, it has not reduced the amount of brimstone in sermons and Sunday-school addresses.

We are not opposed to the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Luther's defiance of the Pope, because we regard the Protestant Reformation as marking one of the earliest stages in the disintegration of the Christian religion, which has been going on more or less steadily ever since. "A Scottish Churchman," however, objects to the proposed celebration on the ground that "Luther's German God is our Devil." But "A Scottish Churchman" forgets, surely, that prior to the outbreak of the War the German God was our British God as well. Was not Luther's martial hymn often sung in our places of worship? Writing as recently as 1908, did not the late Right Rev. Dr. Wilkinson, Bishop of North and Central Europe, hold up the Germans as a people whose Christian piety was of a superior order to our own? Did he not also find the source of Germany's greatness as a world-power in the fact that she had adopted "religious education in all her primary and secondary schools"? "A Scottish Churchman's" judgment is evidently blinded by prejudice and bigotry, as is admitted even by the *Christian World*, though our contemporary itself suffers more or less from the same affliction.

The Rev. Rhondda Williams relates how a bankrupt fish-monger, whose deficiency was £1,000, excused himself on the plea "that he had been unable to give proper attention to business because of his devotion to theological studies." Such a scoundrel deserves severest castigation; but Mr. Williams is radically wrong when he says that if Paul had been the official receiver he would have condemned his conduct in the most scathing terms. Probably; but then the man could have sheltered behind the apostle's exhortation in Colossians iii. 1-4, and thus break the force of his rule in Romans xii. 11. If a man's mind is fixed upon the things that are above, he is bound to be slothful in relation to the things which are on the earth. A wonderful storehouse of practical contradictions is the Bible, and it would be passing

strange if among them all any man failed to find "a present help" in trouble.

The Rev. R. C. Gillie, M.A., of Marylebone Presbyterian Church, London, claimed, in a recent interview, which appears in the *Christian World* for August 30, that "the general outlook for the Churches is not so discouraging"; that "the Churches show a steadfastness which is surprising," though it is true that "some people have left us since the War, men and women of vague beliefs and sentimental attachments," whom the Church can perhaps "afford to lose." Bear in mind that those are the words of a man of God who is love, of a minister of Christ who died for the ungodly in order to save them. Evidently, Mr. Gillie's heart is empty of that saving love of which his Master's heart is said to be full to overflowing.

How shallow and illusory is Mr. Gillie's optimism. This is what he said:—

Of course, I do not forget the discouraging fact that Anglican Free Churches alike appeal to only a limited minority of the general population.

If that sentence is not a virtual confession that the Church, in the character of a God-filled institution, is the most dismal failure in history, what on earth is it? Christianity has been at work in this land for fifteen or sixteen hundred years, and yet in this twentieth century it "appeals to only a limited minority of the general population." The wonder of wonders is that, with that undoubted fact staring them in the face, men like Mr. Gillie, have the timidity to affirm that "the general outlook for the Churches is not so discouraging."

Criticizing the Archbishop of Canterbury's attitude on the question of reprisals in war, the *Globe* indulges in some hard hitting, and concludes: "Stand out of our way and leave us to protect the children your prayers are powerless to save."

For sixty-three years vicar of the City Church of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, the Rev. C. C. Collins has resigned at the age of ninety-one. Interviewed by a London journalist, Mr. Collins said that the resident population of his parish was about 97, and the congregation "pitiably small—mostly caretakers." Such is religion in the heart of the capital of the Empire.

The *Daily Telegraph* has unearthed some pre-war sermons (June, 1914), of the German Chancellor, Dr. Michaelis, which prove that there is no doubt of his Christianity. In one of these sermons he is reported as saying, in view of the great struggle that lay before the German people:—

If we go into this fight by ourselves, with our selfish nature, relying on our own strength, we shall suffer shipwreck. There is only possibility, but that is a perfect one. There was One who renounced everything. Who from self-less love gave up His life for others, and Who has told us, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." That is a mighty struggle which goes on within us. Let it be laid to all who have not fought it out to the end. It needs more courage than all the things of which people think that they demand bravery from us. It needs more courage to place oneself decisively on the side of Jesus, and to vow and render Him unconditional obedience, come what may, than it does to fight one's first Mensur (students' duel), or to confront an excited Parliament, or to approach a refined and noble woman, and ask her to be one's own, or to do any of the other things which are regarded in our life as signs of pluck. All that is nothing in comparison with the decision in our life for Christ with all its consequences. But this course we must attain, and only those who have this courage, and then obediently tread the path which God shows them, are the men of whom God can make use.

Presumably, the *Daily Telegraph* has some hazy notion that these utterances prove the hypocrisy of Dr. Michaelis. We see in them nothing of the kind. All we see is that Christianity will lend itself to the dominant passion, whether of a man or of a nation. That is one of its greatest evils. Whether one desires to murder a fellow human being or help him, either can be done in the name of Christianity. And this is not hypocrisy. It is evidence only that in matters of conduct there is no more misleading guide possible than Christianity.

A "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

At the opening of the fourth year of war circumstances again compel me to invite contributions towards a *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund.

It has fallen to my lot to control this paper during three of the most difficult years it has ever experienced. During the first year, my chief concern was to guard it against adverse circumstances, such as caused many papers to disappear altogether. The second year brought with it a great and rapid increase in the cost of production. As was stated last year, this extra cost amounted to about £6 per week, but in spite of that, the deficit on the year was only £175. This was quickly made good through the generosity of the paper's readers, and a balance left in hand. As for some years the *Freethinker* had barely met, by sales, the cost of production, the amount of the deficit indicated a distinct advance.

I was then hoping that affairs had reached their worst, even if no improvement occurred. During the past year, however, there has been a still further all-round rise in cost, the most serious item being that of paper, which now stands at about four times the pre-war figure. The result is that, instead of the deficit being lower than last year, it has been increased to just over £250, which I am seeking to make good by means of a Special Fund.

Two things should be borne in mind in connection with this deficit. First, the increase represents only a portion of the added cost of production during the past year. Part of it has been met by a rising circulation. We are thus advancing in spite of all obstacles. Second, the old Honorarium Fund (which was really a Sustentation Fund) and realized £300 per year, has been dropped since I assumed the Editorship. Thus the call upon the friends of the paper is still less than was necessary in the pre-war period.

I believe that all who appreciate the difficulties of the situation will agree that the deficit is smaller than might have been anticipated. Even to exist in these times is an achievement, and I feel proud of the fact that during the three years of war the *Freethinker* has maintained both its size and price unchanged. What that means in the shape of worry and watchfulness will be recognized by all who have observed the plans adopted by the whole of the newspaper press. Scores of papers have gone under in the struggle, and there is scarcely a propagandist organ that has not either raised its price or appealed for financial help—some have done both. Thus, so well established a paper as the *Clarion* has found it necessary to raise a fund of between £2,000 and £3,000, and the *Christian Commonwealth* has raised nearly £2,000 in addition to doubling the price of the journal. It is possible that the paper shortage may necessitate some economy in the size of the *Freethinker* in the future, but any alteration will be delayed until the last moment.

With regard to the deficit, it should be stated that the whole of the sum is represented by a debt owing to me. The *Freethinker* has no reserve capital—nor, for that matter, have I. The modest amount I agreed to take as Editor and contributor has remained unpaid since October last, and this, together with money borrowed on my personal security for the use of the paper, represents the whole of the deficit. Otherwise the *Freethinker* is free of debt. All demands, including payments to contributors, have been met as they became due. This, I think, is the better way of conducting business.

Of course, the loss on the paper might have been

met by a rise in price, say from twopence to threepence. This, had I consulted my personal convenience only, would have saved me a lot of anxiety, and also spared me the unwelcome task of making this appeal. But I thought, and still think, that the interests of the Cause which the *Freethinker* represents are best served by keeping the price unchanged. So far, this policy has been quite justified by results. The circulation of the *Freethinker* is to-day larger than it has been for some years, and, I think, it is exerting a wider and deeper influence. Its contents, week after week, show what a large and able staff of writers the paper has at its service; in this direction the *Freethinker* still maintains its reputation for what its late editor called "fundamental brain work." Newsagents show a greater readiness to display the paper for sale, and the wholesale agents handle it with greater freedom. But for the tremendous increase in the cost of production, the *Freethinker* would now be paying its way, and a Special Fund unnecessary. When normal conditions return I have hopes of placing the paper on a self-supporting basis. That is the end I set myself when I assumed editorial and financial responsibility, and that ambition will not be lightly surrendered. At any rate, to find the *Freethinker* in its present position after three years of war is an achievement that carries great promise for the future.

It is only proper to say that the present position of the paper is largely due to the number of its readers who have done gallant service in securing new subscribers. Many have worked with a will in this direction, and I take this opportunity of once more thanking them most heartily for all they have done.

Hard as the fight has been, and is, I am not at all discouraged; quite the contrary. The difficulties have been greater than were anticipated, but they have been met with a success that is striking in view of the prevailing circumstances. It is, therefore, with the utmost confidence in the paper and in the loyalty of its readers, that I am asking the help of all who appreciate the value of the *Freethinker* to the "best of causes." It has kept the flag flying during these three disastrous years, and has served as a rallying point for Freethinkers at home, and with the Army and Navy in every part of the war area. It has made new friends and many converts; and what it has done in the face of conditions that made many of its friends dubious of its power to survive, is a promise of better things under more favourable circumstances. But the *Freethinker* has not only survived, it is stronger than ever; and I feel, therefore, it may be safely said that it has a legitimate claim upon all who believe in and appreciate the work it is doing.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to me, and addressed Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Full acknowledgment of all subscriptions received will be made in the *Freethinker*, the accounts of which are under the supervision of an official accountant.

The first list of subscriptions to date will appear next week, and I have every confidence that it will be one that will give increased confidence to all who have at heart the welfare of the great Cause which this paper represents.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The vicar was away, and the *locum tenens*, on his arrival in the vestry on the first Sunday, found the organ blower—a regular character—awaiting him.

"Well, what is your exact position here, my man?" asked the clergyman.

"Well, sir," was the reply, "some folk calls me a sextant, some says as I'm a beetle, but the vicar 'e always calls me a virgin."—*Raymond Blathwayt*, "Through Life and Round the World."

To Correspondents.

- J. BURRELL.—Thanks for your nine new readers. These added to your previous recruits makes your record a good one. So far as a difficult task can be made easier by cheerful help, it is being done by friends like yourself. Will attend to the other matter.
- G. BEDBOROUGH.—Many thanks for the charmingly bound copies of your booklets. If we say they are a pleasure to the eye, we hope it will not be taken as an implied depreciation of the works themselves. As usual, these are stimulative, and no reader should ask for more.
- A. H. FISHER.—The group to which you refer is now quite extinct. Want of funds had something, but not all, to do with it.
- VERRES.—The idea is a pretty one, but verse not quite up to standard. Thanks for sending.
- H. HIND.—The exhumed prophecy is most probably "fake." Thanks for your trouble in copying and sending.
- R. M.—You may be right, but we would stake our head on it that you are absolutely wrong.
- H. IRVING.—Have noted your reminder and acted on it.
- R. COMPTON.—Thanks for birthday greetings, but how did you know the date? You are wrong, however, in one thing. We have not completed our first half century—not until next year.
- J. MCGHEE.—Sorry to have to hold over your reply to "Y. C." until next week.
- A. BRENTON.—Many thanks for picture. We quite agree with your estimate of the subject. Curiously, the only *unrational* figure is the one devoted to religion.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Louis Brandes, £2 2s.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- 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.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 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. 4, and not to the Editor.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- 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.

The Pioneer Press is now offering for sale copies of Guyau's *Non-Religion of the Future* at just under one-fourth of the published price. Marie Jean Guyau was one of the most brilliant of French Freethinkers, and his death, at the early age of 34, robbed the world of a striking personality. He was the author of a number of philanthropic works; his two direct contributions to Freethought being *Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction*, translated in 1898, and *Non-Religion of the Future* in 1897. Both are important works, although the high price of the latter, 17s. net, kept it from a good many who would have liked to possess a copy. It is now being offered at 4s., postage 6d. Those who wish for a copy should write at once.

The Report of the House of Lords Judgment in the Bowman Case is now in the hands of the printers, and will be issued as early as possible. It is a verbatim report of the judgments, and will have as preface a brief history of the case written by Mr. Cohen. The price is not yet fixed, but it will, probably, be one shilling. The price will be kept low in order to ensure as wide a circulation as possible.

The following is part of a letter written "somewhere" in

the theatre of war:—

It is rather refreshing to observe the rebellious spirit prevalent in the bosoms of the youthful officers, and also surprising to see what unanimity there is among people from far removed domiciles.

Last night in the smoke-room there were two canny Scots in the — (a Highland regiment); a Rhodesian farmer in the — Artillery; a three-parts Dutch fellow in the —: a Portuguese — going to Central Africa; and myself. The opinion was found to be unanimous that the writing on the wall must have appeared some years ago now, and that the end of the War will find the Churches nearly defunct.

You would have screamed to hear the Portuguese tackling a padre on board; his main argument appeared to be that seeing the Roman Catholics and Protestants are large enough bodies to include at least a percentage of clever men, the mere fact of them differing so vitally in a religion based on the same book is proof that neither can be correct; and that as the said religion is admittedly based on mysteries, it cannot be logically accepted as a standard of truth. So what was a poor fellow to do but go his own way.

The old padre nearly burst, and seemed to regret having graciously given the Portuguese (a Roman Catholic) *permission to discuss* the matter with him. It is funny!

The writer of the above has two brothers officers abroad, and his father has completed a year's service with the Forces. All are readers of the *Freethinker*.

Members of Newcastle Branch are requested to note a meeting will be held on Sunday at 6.30 in the Collingwood Hall, Clayton Street, to elect officers, etc.

We have received letters replying to articles in our last issue by Mr. T. A. Jackson and "Y. C.," which we are obliged to hold over until next week. Kant said space and time were categories of the understanding. When it comes to finding space for articles and time to deal with all that comes along, we are tempted to use much stronger language.

A correspondence upon "Sabbatarianism" is running in the *National Weekly*, in which the Freethought position is well sustained by "Pagan" and "Wide-awake," and the other side by "Christian." "Wide-awake" writes on the position of the Bishop of London, and says: "The time has gone by when any sane man can consider any 'message' from so inconsistent a prelate." We wonder if "Christian" will continue the discussion.

This is not an esperantist journal, but we cheerfully pass on the information that one of our readers, Mr. W. Banter, of 16 Spring Street, Paddington, W., is trying to form an esperantist class for the winter. Those of our readers who are interested will take the hint.

A Soliloquy.

WINDS sigh and blow, tides ebb and flow,
Leaves fall and wither;
Life comes and goes; who is there knows
Its whence, or whither?

Yet parsons tell us there's a hell
That endeth never;
Where those who sin, when once they are in,
Will roast for ever.

While they at rest among the blest;
Their bliss eternal;
Ne'er think, nor heed all those who feed
The fire infernal.

And thus they prove that God is love,
A defamation;
'Tis time that they had in their day
A reformation.

Life's problem still remains, and will,
A mystery;
When all is well, and parson's hell
But history.

W. H. SMITH (Harcloch, New Zealand).

New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

IV.—DEMONS CONQUERED AND DISCIPLES WON.

THOUSANDS of people stood on the beach of white pebbles, and all were very still and silent as they fixed their eyes upon a fisherman's boat that lay moored on the lake. The voice of Jesus, the preacher, rang out across the water. He sat in the boat and talked of the kingdom. It seemed so different from the solemn Rabbis who sat in pulpits in synagogues.

When the last word was spoken, the peasants, camel-drivers, muleteers, masons, fish-picklers, and the rest, scattered homewards, talking of the new teacher as they went. Then Jesus turned to the man who had politely lent him the seat in the boat.

"Push your boat out, Simon Peter, and drop your nets," he said.

"No good will that be, sir," replied the fisherman. "We set the net all last night and got nothing. But I will do it to oblige you."

Huge was his surprise when the net was so heavy with fresh-water fish—carp, barbel, bolty, etc.—that the net started to burst, and he shouted to his mates in a neighbouring boat to come to his aid. Presently the whole boat was full of fish, and Simon Peter fell on his knees and stammered—

"Oh, my lord, you are too great a man to be in such a humble ship as mine, and I am but a common fellow and a sinner."

"Have no fear," said the preacher, "leave your fish-catching business and follow me. I will teach you to catch men."

Simon Peter, James, and John—three fishers of the Galilean lake—were the preacher's first comrades, and learners, or disciples. They were to learn how to throw demons out of sick and unhappy people, and to teach men the way of the kingdom.

The lessons began at once. A leper, with horrible and discoloured skin, bent in lowly salaam before Jesus, and asked to be cured.

"Be healed," said Jesus; and straightway the leper rose up, fresh, clean, and wholesome; and the Wonder-worker told him to go with a gift of thankfulness to the priests at the Temple. Two birds—sparrows would do—might be the gifts.

Another lesson. Jesus sat in the centre court of a house with a big mob of hearers all about him. All of a sudden a cracking was heard above; the roof seemed to open; hands were seen tearing a hole in the plaster and woodwork; and, amid falling dust, down came a mattress hung by ropes, and on this lay a poor creature with palsied and helpless limbs. His friends had got to the roof by the stairway which rose by one of the walls. Not being able to push through the crowd, this was their singular plan.

"Man," said Jesus, "the sins you have done are pardoned."

"Strange talk!" murmured a group of Pharisees.

The Pharisees were men well-off, well-learned in reading and writing, and mighty and noisy in their prayers to heaven.

"Well," said Jesus, "if you doubt my power to pardon sins, what think you of this?"

He uttered a short, quick command, and the man, a miserable invalid the moment before, leaped up, shouldered his mattress, ropes and all, and strode out with joyful cries; and the place echoed with the people's shouts: "Wondrous! Strange! We never saw the like!"

A new disciple was Levi—a tax collector; one of

those officers who went to houses, and farms, and bazaars, demanding money dues for the Roman Government. Such men met sour and disagreeable looks wherever they went, though, after all, somebody must needs collect the rates and taxes, and these collectors, or "publicans," were often honest fellows, and they never put on airs with noisy praying and pious upturning of the eyes.

Levi made a great feast, and had open house, and scores of people, peasants, camel-drivers, fish-picklers, sweepers, and the rest, swarmed to his tables, and sat in company with Jesus and the three fishers.

"Scandalous!" sneered the Pharisees and gentle-folk. "Fancy this man calling himself a teacher, and he eats and drinks with the riff-raff of the towns and villages."

"Yes, I do," said Jesus. "My business is to lead the riff-raff and sinners to repentance, and to the Kingdom. You good folk—you righteous souls—don't need a healer. Only the sick need a physician."

The gentle-folk somehow felt there was a sting in his quiet words. He was sarcastic.

He appeared quite too free and easy for these snug persons, the Pharisees. It annoyed them very much one Saturday, that is, one Sabbath, when they saw him and his followers crossing a field of corn and gathering wheat-ears, and briskly rubbing them till they worked the grains out, blew the chaff away, and chewed the raw wheat.

Shocking! To go to all this labour on the sacred day, the seventh day, the Lord's day, the day on which respectable Jews would not plough, would not sow, would not reap, would not weave, would not tie knots, would not light fires, would not carry parcels, would not ride horses, would not clap hands, would not bind up a sprained wrist. And now these vulgar cads were eating raw wheat!

On another Sabbath day, when Jesus met a man whose withered hand hung useless at his side, the Pharisees grimly watched.

"Come this way," bade the Wonder-worker, and the man approached, and hundreds of eyes gazed eagerly.

"Now, I put it to you men," said Jesus, "is it right to do a kind act on the Seventh Day? Is it right to save life on the Sabbath?"

Nobody replied.

"Stretch out your hand," commanded the Master of Demons.

The man did so, and a roar of delight rose from the crowd, while the Pharisees hurried away, expressing their disgust at such horrid things being done on the holy day of God.

One night the preacher spent the hours of darkness on a mountain alone in the wilderness of rocks. He was a pioneer, a path-finder, a leader in a new road; and he was lonely, but he was brave. The night was passed in prayer to heaven.

Next day, he invited twelve men to form his band of Apostles, or Missionaries; or, as some would say, Delegates. We have already heard of the three fishers, and the tax-gatherer; others were Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James (not the fisherman), Simon the Zealot, Judas, and another Judas called Iscariot. This committee of Twelve he chose on the mountain; and then, followed by his Delegates, he walked down the rugged path to the plain. A large company of people had assembled, and many were lame, sick, and feeble-minded.

The Twelve Apostles carefully noted all he did. They hoped soon to throw out the demons of disease and madness as easily as the Master of the Jinn did.

The Master healed every invalid, every cripple, every lunatic, every idiot.

When most of the crowd had gone homeward, his Apostles and many who were glad to hear his teachings formed a circle of listeners, and waited for his words. He looked round upon the audience,—no rich folk were they; they knew what it was to have scant meals; they often suffered bitter sorrows, and wept bitter tears; and they had been scorned and cursed. So he said:—

“Blessings on you poor people; yours is the kingdom. Blessings on you hungry people; you shall have your fill of food. Blessings on you who shed tears; you shall laugh for joy. Blessings on you who are hated for being my comrades. Leap for gladness; you will have reward in heaven. The rich men shall have woe; the bloated men shall be hungry; the laughing men shall cry. But you, my friends, I ask you to love your enemies. If a man strikes one side of your face, turn to him the other. Lend your money, and claim it not back. Heaven will pay you. You shall be children of the Highest One in heaven. Be not hard in judging others. Why make a fuss about a speck in your brother's eye, while your own has a great beam in it? You hypocrites! get rid of your beam before you worry about his mote! Every tree is known by its fruit, good or bad. You are trees. Bear honest and wholesome fruit. Don't gabble 'Lord, Lord' to me. Act right. If a man does true and good deeds, his house stands firm on a rock, and no storm will shake it. But if a man talks, and does not act, his wretched hut is thrown down when the storm comes to test it, and the ruin of it is great.”

* * * *

From such stories it is plain to see that the people of the Gospel age were sufferers from many diseases and troubles, and that they were very ready to believe in men with magical power to conquer the disease demons, worry demons, and weakness demons. Such a man Jesus was supposed to be. Not very much then was known about the human body, the way its organs worked, and how sickness was caused. To-day, we have a science, or exact knowledge, of the human body, and the doctor, the surgeon, and the sanitarian (or health-teacher) are our helpers and healers; and neither they nor we think that demons cause illness or accident. To-day, the Masters of the Jinn are men like Ronald Ross, who found that malaria is caused by mosquitoes, and so helped to trace yellow fever to mosquitoes. Other Masters have found ways to kill off the tse-tse fly which causes the terrible sleeping-sickness of Africa. We get rid of flies and other such troubles, instead of trying to cast out demons.

As to the Pharisees. The Gospel makes very ugly pictures of them, and they remind us of the unpleasant persons in Charles Dickens's novels, whom he calls Chadband and Stiggins. But we learn from the history of the Jews, that some Pharisees were men of noble life and high thought. Such a man was the scribe, or teacher, Hillel, who, on being asked for the meaning of true religion, answered, “Do not do to others that which you would not like done to yourself; this is the whole extent of the Law.”

One of the Twelve Apostles, as you saw, was Simon Peter. Some people think his story is a kind of shadow of the story of the Roman God Janus. This God had two faces, one looking east, the other west, as if at the sunrise and sunset, the opening day and the closing day. He had a key in his hand for opening and shutting great doors. In his honour the Romans offered gifts on twelve altars; and they called him the leader, or First God, of the twelve months; hence the first month was named Janus-month, January. He was God of all that travel

to and fro on land and sea; and one of his symbols, or signs, was a ship, meaning the passage over waters. Now, in the Gospels, Peter is a ship-master; he is the first of the Twelve Apostles; and Jesus gives him the keys of heaven and earth.¹ Later on, we shall hear of his escape through the open door of a prison.

Our poet Milton, in his beautiful lines to his friend Edward King (*Lycidas*), pictures Peter, the “Pilot of the Galilean Lake,” holding two keys, a golden one to open gates, and an iron one to shut.

F. J. GOULD.

The Rise and Progress of Mental Power.

VI.

(Continued from p. 550.)

DEAF-MUTES who, in the nature of the case, have never heard a word spoken, are yet capable of uttering vocal sounds which, to them, possess a definite meaning. In idiots, also, rudimentary articulation appears to serve their feeble requirements. From normal infants, mammals, and talking birds, various sounds proceed to which they attach a meaning. Harsh tones and menacing gestures are understood by all the higher animals, and when we discover that mammals appreciate the sinister significance of the word “stick,” it is apparent that a marked mental advance has been made. In company with the mentally deranged and infants, certain of the birds and mammals grasp the import of words which they are themselves unable to articulate. Doubtless, the appreciation of tones enters into the understanding of words to some extent, but careful tests disclose the fact that words alone convey a distinct meaning to some superior animals. Babies, a few weeks from birth, distinguish the difference between tones and gestures, but the comprehension of words alone does not dawn until the second year.

A terrier, possessed by Prof. Gerald Yeo, was trained to keep a morsel of food on its snout till it received the verbal signal “Paid for”; and it was of no consequence in what tones these words were uttered. For even if they were introduced in an ordinary stream of conversation, the dog distinguished them, and immediately tossed the food into his mouth. Seeing this, I thought it worth while to try whether the animal would be able to distinguish the words “Paid for” from others presenting a close similarity of sound; and, therefore, while he was expecting the signal, I said, “Pinafore”; the dog gave a start, and very nearly threw the food off his nose; but immediately arrested the movement, evidently perceiving his mistake (Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Man*, p. 125).

This trial was repeated on various later occasions, and invariably with the same result. A second dog was then taught to perform in a similar way and responded just like the first. Numerous shepherds, sportsmen, gamekeepers, poachers, and others have already furnished, and could further supply most incontestable evidences of the association in the mind of the dog of certain words with certain objects or acts. Sally, the chimpanzee in Regent's Park, learnt from her keeper not merely the meaning of words and phrases but of short sentences as well.

Were the lower creatures capable of speech, it is a fair inference that they would employ simple words to signify simple ideas. Clearly, there is no greater mental capacity requisite to utter the word “open” than is necessary to cause a cat to bump a window, scratch at a door, or rattle a handle when desiring admission. Two

¹ Matthew xvii., 19.

of these animals constantly under the writer's observation perform all these acts without receiving any instruction whatever.

The power of articulation exists in several birds, but clever as these animals are, their mental capacities are poor when compared with those of the higher mammalia. Were these animals also in possession of the anatomical structures essential to articulation, they would completely eclipse the birds. Yet, although on a lower mental level than monkeys, dogs, elephants, etc., birds, unquestionably, do associate certain words with certain persons or things. It is utterly futile to allege the contrary. The late Sir Samuel Wilks, F.R.S., when referring to a parrot of his own, stated:—

If the servants enter the room Poll will be ready with one of their expressions, and in their own tone of voice. It is clear that there is a close association in the bird's mind between certain phrases and certain persons or objects, for their presence or voice at once suggests some special word. For instance, my coachman, when coming for orders, has so often been told half-past two, that no sooner does he come to the door than Poll exclaims "Half-past two.".....Some noises that she utters have been obtained from the objects themselves, as that of a cork screw at the sight of a bottle of wine.....The passage of a servant down the hall to open the front door suggests a noise of moving hinges, followed by a loud whistle for a cab.

To what degree the language of signs would have developed is an open question had not superior means of communication been available. But the sense of hearing, even more advantageous in some respects than the sense of sight, admirably responded to vocal display. Simple gestures are so realistic that they are everywhere understood, but as ideas grow more abstract, the signs essential to their expression tend to assume an arbitrary and conventionalized form. It is true that elaborated signs may convey with even greater rapidity than spoken language our ideas on familiar topics, but only with the sacrifice of the simple signs universally understood.

Gesture language likewise labours under the grave disadvantage of being cumbersome, as well as possessing little utility in aiding us in the conception and expression of abstract ideas. Uttered words are not necessarily restricted to concrete things; they also serve to signalize our concepts of abstractions of whatever order that have been evolved from our percepts and receipts of concrete bodies. Therefore, while they render excellent service in conveying information of our ordinary experiences, gestures are entirely eclipsed by the power of the word in the realms of abstract thought. It would, for example, prove practically impossible to translate into sign language a paragraph of Mansel or Spinoza.

For these and other important reasons the voice has emerged the victor in the evolution of language. As Prof. Whitney, the eminent philologist points out, this triumph of speech is a case of the survival of the fittest:—

The advantages of the voice are numerous and obvious. There is first its economy, as employing a mechanism that is available for little else, and leaving free for other purposes those indispensable instruments, the hands.

Again, the various tones of the voice can be easily heard at a distance at which gestures become indistinct. Vocal utterance is not hindered by intervening objects, while it permits the eyes as well as the hands of the speaker full liberty to occupy themselves in other ways. It is as useful in the dark as in the day, and a call or shout will command attention where all other devices prove unsuccessful.

Curiously enough, inquiry revealed the circumstance

that uneducated deaf-mutes think in pictures only. Abstract ideas seem to them impossible, and Romanes was unable to discover a single deaf-mute who possessed any notions of the supernatural before such conceptions were conveyed to him by means of signs. Persistently proclaimed as intuitive by theologians, it seems singular that the religious sense should be entirely absent in deaf-mutes born in civilized society, and that, prior to education, it is difficult to make them realize the religious fancies their friends and relatives endeavour to impart. "For instance," writes Romanes,

the Rev. S. Smith tells me that one of his pupils, previous to education, supposed the Bible to have been printed by a printing press in the sky, which was worked by printers of enormous strength—this being the only interpretation the deaf-mute could assign to the gestures whereby his parents had sought to make him understand that they believed the Bible to contain a revelation from a God of power who lives in heaven. Similarly, Mr. Graham Bell informs me of another, though similar case, in which the deaf-mute supposed the object of going to church to be that of doing obeisance to the clergy.

Much as an excited man betrays by his brogue or foreign accent his alien origin, so do the more impulsive races retain various of those primitive gestures no longer requisite for the expression of their thoughts. For although grimaces, shrugs, and gestures are now unnecessary to the possessors of a well-developed language, they continue to employ the signs so essential to our children, and to the uncivilized in making known their desires. These and other facts plainly indicate the truth that all tongues, even the most elaborated, have arisen from primitive languages of tone and gesture.

A long and largely barren controversy has raged over the problem of self-consciousness. It is conceded that the human infant and the lower animals not only realize the objective existence of bodies around them, but also realize their relations one to another. But it is sometimes objected that, although brutes are fully conscious of the objects which comprise surrounding nature, they entirely lack that individual or self-consciousness ever present in the human race. If this point be granted, it is essential to the evolutionist to show that man's peculiar self-awareness is derived from the less-developed consciousness of animals.

Considerable insight concerning this problem may be obtained through a discriminating study of the more intelligent animals, while, in the human child, we possess cogent evidence of the transition from the one stage of mental progress to the other. In early infancy the child is much less developed mentally than numerous adult animal forms.

The self-conscious condition has its basis in animals so organized that they are compelled to realize that all the various organs which constitute their bodies form a common whole. All such a creature's sensations of pleasure and pain, its perceptually and receptually relates to its own structure. The animal easily distinguishes its own body and the parts that compose it from foreign objects. It learns to seek satisfactory conditions, and to shun unsatisfactory conditions of life. These and various other causes serve to provide the firm basis of a unified feeling of individual existence. Moreover, higher animals are conscious of the mental states of other organisms, as they conclusively prove by their complex conduct when at play, in difficulty and danger, or when by means of wiles and stratagems they circumvent or overthrow their foes or competitors in the conflict of existence.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 30.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Brandes, Eager, Leat, Neate, Neary, Palmer, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Thurlow, and Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, Mrs. Rolfe, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the last meeting read and confirmed. Monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

New members were received for Battersea, Manchester, Regent's Park, and Swansea Branches, and the Parent Society.

An application for the formation of a new Branch at Battersea was received, and, the Executive's requirements having been fulfilled, permission was granted.

The Secretary reported that the Protest Committee against the Prohibition of Sales of Literature in L.C.C. Parks had now to meet five summonses issued against sellers of literature, three of these being against members of the N.S.S. Two summonses had been adjourned pending the hearing of the mandamus in the High Court, and the remainder were yet to be heard. In the meantime, the Committee were appealing urgently for funds to carry on the defence.

The difficulty of securing halls for winter meetings in London and the suburbs was discussed, and as all arrangements for a winter campaign were at a deadlock until this could be somewhat overcome, the members present undertook to make local inquiries.

Resolution XII. *re* an interim conference, passed at the Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday, was then dealt with, and it was finally agreed that as the present unprecedented circumstances made it imperative that it should be held in London, it should take place on October 28, to be followed by a public meeting in the evening.

The Secretary reported receipt of a grant of £10 from Mr. Cohen's Propaganda Fund.

Various items of routine business were disposed of and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

Obituary.

Mr. Robert and Mrs. Mary Lewins, who have for many years been earnest members of the Newcastle Branch of the N.S.S., will have in readers of the *Freethinker* many sympathetic friends in their great sorrow, owing to the sad loss of their dear son, Lance-Corporal George S. Lewins, aged nineteen years, who died in France from wounds received in action on August 25. A quiet, unassuming youth with a wide knowledge of books, and one of whom much was hoped. One more innocent victim robbed of the happiness of a useful life.

J. G. B.

It is with regret I have to record the death, on August 30 of Thomas Cooke, of Hyde. He had reached his seventy-third year. Mr. Cooke was an old Freethinker of thirty-five years standing. His politics were advanced. He was an anti-vaccinationist of a most pronounced type. His household goods had often been taken by the authorities to pay fines. He was also a strong temperance advocate, being a life teetotaler, and his father and grandfather were also temperance men—the three between them accounting for considerably more than one hundred years of advocacy. A Secular Service was held at the Manchester Crematorium on Monday last, whither his remains were conveyed, at which a number of friends attended, the organ being brought into use in the course of the ceremony.

T. SANDERS.

The poor are at times curiously callous. I well remember once saying good-bye to a dying man. He was as conscious as I am now at the present moment. As I let go of his hand, his old wife said quite casually: "What day'll suit you for the funeral, sir?"

"Ain't she in a 'urry, sir?" whispered the poor fellow, with a smile.—*Raymond Blathwayt, "Through Life and Round the World."*

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.

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.15, a Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7, Mr. Thurlow, "Bible and Creation v. Science."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 6.30, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 3.30, R. D. Howell Smith, B.A., a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, E. Burke, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 7, Mr. Miller, a Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Kells; 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Swasey, and Hyatt.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

SHEFFIELD N. S. S. (Poole Square): 7.15, T. Dennis, "The Christian Scarecrow; or, The Fallacy of the Judgment Day."

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COMFORTABLE APARTMENTS, 4½ miles from Leicester.—Widow, without family, would be pleased to hear from Freethinkers wishing to spend their holidays in the Midlands.—MRS. W. PALMER, King Street, Enderby, near Leicester.

WILL "Ted" (E. F.) write as promised, on Saturday, August 26, at South Kensington Station, to broad-minded "D.," who is anxiously awaiting to hear?

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