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Views and Opinions.

Crusading at Woolwich.

From a newspaper paragraph we learn that Woolwich is to be made the theatre of a special spiritual crusade. War work has brought a large number of people—male and female—into the Woolwich area, and the crusade is being organized under the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a number of bishops, together with the help of visitors, "Pilgrims of Prayer," etc. Subscriptions are, of course, invited, the purpose of the crusade being "to raise the whole moral tone of the social and industrial life as a first step in the reconstruction of modern conditions, in the belief that such reconstruction can only be effectively achieved on a Christian foundation." What exactly is meant by a Christian foundation is not stated, but judging from experience it will resolve itself into the acceptance of certain doctrines which will have about as much influence in improving social conditions as a knowledge of astronomy has in altering the price of margarine. And if the clergymen engaged in this crusade really believe that it will lead to a reconstruction of social conditions, one can only admire their simplicity. If they believe it! One suspects the expression is a mere formula, and that the real purpose of the crusade is, as usual, to "keep the people in order."

* * *

A One-sided Conversion.

Now we do not deny that if the "whole moral tone" of the people of Woolwich could be raised it would be a good thing. Let us raise the moral tone of everybody, everywhere, and as soon as possible. What puzzles us is why the efforts of the clergy are restricted to Woolwich or Whitechapel. Why not give Park Lane or Mayfair a chance of salvation? Why not raise the whole moral tone of people in these districts? Why not initiate a crusade to raise the moral tone of those who, even during a time of war, cannot resist the opportunity of plundering the community in all directions? Why is it assumed that these missions are only necessary to the working-class? Or, if the assumption is justifiable, and

the absence of a settled income and a good house really make a difference of "moral tone," would it not seem that the right way to go to work to remedy the matter is not to organize a "spiritual crusade," but to see that settled incomes and good homes are commoner? Could any body of clergymen be found who would storm Mayfair with the avowed object of raising the "moral tone" of its inhabitants? We doubt it. And imagine the indignation that would be evoked if it were attempted, or even suggested! Think of what would happen if the homes of the "upper classes" were entered, in the way that the homes of the "lower classes" are invaded, by district visitors and the like, with the avowed purpose of improving their moral tone? No, it is the working-class that are subject to this kind of thing. And while we do not marvel at the policy, we do marvel that the working-class (we stick to the conventional phraseology) do not more generally resent the impertinence of the pose and the insult of the inquisition. And if the insult is not more generally recognized by both the working-class and the clergy, we can only attribute this to the inherited servility of the one and to the ingrained arrogance of the other. At any rate, we suggest to the working-people in the Woolwich area that as an indication that they are not lacking in self-respect, they give these crusaders their marching orders in plain set terms. The man who submits to this kind of impertinent patronage may indicate his need for improvement, but he quite demonstrates the impossibility of his achieving it.

* * *

Conversion with a Purpose.

But it would be a mistake to imagine that these "spiritual crusades" were without some definite purpose, even though many engaged in it are blind to its real object. These missions to the "masses" serve a dual purpose. They salve the conscience of the "upper class"; they hold the lower class in check, and keep them properly thankful for the inestimable blessings of a "Christian society." The past two centuries have seen a gradual shifting of the obligation of the landed classes on to the back of the nation at large. There has been during the last hundred and fifty years the development of a commercial system that has gone far towards destroying all human connection between employer and employed, and of a financial system that recognizes no obligation save keeping within the letter of a law largely made in its own interests. Innumerable social and economic evils have developed, and in not a single instance has Christianity offered any opposition to their growth. Neither landowner, nor manufacturer, nor financier has ever found a fervent profession of Christianity inconsistent with an exaction of all that commercial and financial rules permitted. The rich have spent freely on "the Lord," as our churches and missions show, but they have wrung all they could from the labourer. One hundred years ago, the factory-owner who was keeping children of six years of age at work in his mills, was most anxious they should be taught the Catechism and the truths of Christianity. To-day our governing classes

are equally zealous in the same direction. An anodyne for the conscience of one class, a narcotic for the potential activities of another class. In neither direction can Christianity be excelled. A slave code is naturally beloved by the slaveowner; and if the slave comes to hug his chains, that, too, is no new phenomenon in the history of the world. * * *

The First Step.

Think of it! The Bishops of Southwark, London, Oxford, Rochester, Lichfield, Edinburgh, Woolwich, Kingston, Kensington, and Dover, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and followed by a number of the minor clergy, all organized to raise the moral tone of Woolwich! What a desperate place Woolwich must be! And how much better will it be when the crusade is all over? Will they say anything about the real problems that affect Woolwich? We are afraid not. They will talk of the beauty of the religious life, and the greatness of Christianity in keeping so many men and women engaged in making guns and shells; but will they say anything of the real questions that lie at the root of social reorganization? We know they will not do so, because they are not there to do so. They are there to keep the people in order. Their work is to perpetuate the Christian ideal of a society formed of a multitude dependent for existence upon the charity or interested philanthropy of a few. We are not, we repeat, surprised at these missions to the working classes; we are only saddened that so many thousands lack the courage and foresight to resent the insult, and send these missioning busybodies packing. And we are quite certain that until the working classes develop enough self-respect to do this, they will not have taken the first solid step towards genuine social reform.

* * *

The Slave Creed.

In sober truth, Christianity has always lived by mental, moral, and political pauperization. Independence of mind and character it neither desired nor permitted—save under protest. It preached submission and humility to the poor, it encouraged an interested almsgiving with the rich, and so bred servility on the one side and supercilious self-righteousness on the other. To suffer in silence was a virtue, to revolt against established authority a sin. The late Czar in Russia, the Kaiser in Germany, the tyrant everywhere, has found it one of his most useful allies. Under its shadow the civic independence of the Roman world withered and died. It did teach the spiritual equality of men before God, but it emphasized the social inequality of men on earth as the condition of its realization. Habits engendered by so many generations of growth, and customs sanctified by centuries of rule, are not discarded or destroyed in a day. It is never the moral condition of such large numbers of our population that surprise us so much as their patience and their submission. It is really wonderful that so many should be content under prevailing conditions, but it would be more wonderful still if, with a religion such as Christianity enthroned for so many centuries, social conditions were better than they are.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

MISSIONARIES.

Again, I have to put on record that I have absolutely no sympathy with missionaries. I cannot see the necessity for missions to the heathen; as yet, there should be no crumbs to fall from the children's table, while the children of Europe are in such a shameful state, as many of them are, far worse than any heathen I have ever seen in Africa.—*Mary Gaunt, "Alone in West Africa."*

Humanism Caricatured.

THE Rev. Father Figgis is a distinguished member of the Catholic party in the Church of England, and he exhibits outstanding peculiarities. He is at once broad and narrow, liberal and conservative, a man of the world, and an ardent ecclesiastic. As preacher he is plain-spoken, powerful, and popular, and in almost every discourse his characteristics are in full evidence. During the month of August he delivered four sermons, under the general title of "Hopes for English Religion," at Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair, which were published weekly in the *Church Times*. In the issue for August 31 the last appeared, in which Father Figgis's peculiarities are all seen in the highest degree of manifestation. The subject is Humanism, the treatment of which is both inaccurate and absurd. Basing his address upon words attributed to the Gospel Jesus, namely, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10), Father Figgis opens thus:—

The most dangerous notion that modern Christianity has to combat is that it means a shrinking from life, that by its moral system it closes the avenues of human experience, and that in that it is wedded to the tradition which starves the mind.

As a matter of fact, Christianity itself is rooted and grounded in that "most dangerous notion," and has, of course, never even attempted to combat it. On the contrary, it has always done its utmost to encourage and promote it. The Gospel Jesus lays it down as a fundamental principle that no man can be his disciple without hating "his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also" (Luke xiv. 26). St. Paul expresses the same sentiment thus: "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 2). St. John, also, commits himself to the same ascetic rule: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii. 15). Now that New Testament disparagement of the world and its life has been strictly insisted upon by the Church in all periods of its history. The assertion that "the Church is the true home of the soul and the body" is utterly false. Lecky informs us that for many centuries the orthodox saints "all regarded the body as an unmingled evil, its passions and its beauty as the most deadly of temptations" (*The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, vol. i., p. 230).

Father Figgis claims that "in the Christian Church each man in the degree and measure of his capacity can have not less but more of the love of beauty as shown in art, letters, and music"; but is he not aware that from the sixth century to the twelfth, "the ascetic ideal of ugliness was most supreme in art?" Has he forgotten how terribly hideous Roman mosaics were during that long period, and that the love of beauty was practically asleep in Christendom until it was gradually reawakened and enthroned by the revival of learning? Christianity, as such, has never been the friend of art for its own sake. Indeed, those who were children fifty and sixty years ago remember well how sharply they were rebuked whenever they displayed in looks and speech any keen enjoyment of beautiful things. The conclusion from which there is no honourable escape is that it was as the result of the secularization of art that beauty began to regain the position it had occupied in Greek and Roman art. More than that, as Lecky well points out, "the sense of beauty gradually encroached upon and absorbed the feeling of reverence," which was "a

form of religious decay very far from being confined to the history of art" (*Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 260).

The same thing is true of the love of beauty as shown in letters. The Church has always frowned upon what it called profane literature. Mommsen assures us that "it is a mistaken opinion that antiquity was materially inferior to our own times in the general diffusion of elementary attainments. Even among the lower classes and slaves there was considerable knowledge of reading, writing, and counting; in the case of a slave steward, for instance, Cato, following the example of Mago, takes for granted the ability to read and write" (*The History of Rome*, vol. ii., p. 391). But so soon as Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, a blow was dealt to education from which it has not yet fully recovered. Within a century all the Pagan schools were closed, and both clergy and laity sank into a state of almost total illiteracy. It is well known how Theodosius II. put a stop to all public lecturing by men of learning, and with what ferocity Justinian burned Pagan books, imprisoned and tortured Pagan professors, and plundered and suppressed the schools of Athens which had been in existence for nine hundred years. Even in the fifteenth century enthusiasts for classical studies were denounced as Pagans. Is it not on record that Pope Gregory the Great showed his hatred of everything that bore the stamp of Paganism by attacking the temples and mutilating the statues of Rome, by anathematizing classical poets and philosophers, by reducing to ashes the Palatine library. Throughout the Middle Ages science was under ecclesiastical ban, and scientists were imprisoned, tortured, and, in cases, put to death. Father Figgis is, doubtless, a lover of beauty, as shown in letters, but he is radically mistaken when he declares that Christianity either produces or sanctions the purest literary culture. He cannot be ignorant of the fact that the chief fault of Leo X. was, not that he disregarded the moral law, or indulged in vulgar vices, but that he was a man of the world devoted to the pleasures of the chase, with a passion for amusements, and a lively interest in classical art and literature, and that St. Bernard is held in highest esteem because he despised the world and lived alone for heaven. Yes, it is true that there is a gulf between the Church and culture even to-day, and there is no way of getting rid of this gulf except at the expense of completely changing the character of the Church.

Curiously enough, Father Figgis has the hardihood to affirm that religion and culture ministered to the whole life of the people "in the great age of the thirteenth century." He says:—

Bishop Creighton was right in saying that the greatest age yet known was the thirteenth century. There we find the high water-mark of achievement in the greatest Gothic, like the Sainte Chapelle and all the subsidiaries. Poetry never surpassed the *Divine Comedy* of Dante; and the intellectual activity of the universities of those days put ours to shame, and it was not the possession merely of a class. Every part of life was claimed for God.

It must be admitted that in some respects the thirteenth century was a truly great age. Father Figgis mentions three aspects of its greatness, namely, architecture, poetry, and scholarship. It is easy, he says, to sneer at its barbarism; but we must not forget that it was then the beautiful church in Paris known as Sainte Chapelle was built, and Dante's famous poem composed. It is to this age, too, that we owe the magnificent cathedrals of Amiens and Chartres, and it was during this century that the wonderful preachers, St. Francis, St. Antony, and St. Dominic arose. It was in truth an age of many saints; but it was not an age of moral elevation and

social purity. Cotter Morison describes it as "an age of violence, fraud, and impurity, such as can hardly be conceived now" (*The Service of Man*, p. 64). Has Father Figgis never read Archbishop Rigaud's *Regestrum Visitationum*, which covers the years 1248 to 1269, Cardinal Peter Damiani's *Liber Gomorheanus*, or even Dean Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*? If he has not, he is guilty of trifling with his subject and of grossly insulting his congregation; but if he has, it is difficult to believe in his honesty. Morally and socially, the thirteenth century was one of the lowest and worst ages known to us. Rigaud and Amiani portray it in the darkest colours. We learn from Pope Honorius III. that the Scotch clergy were addicted to "shameless licentiousness"; and we also read that a ship sailed from pious France carrying three hundred prostitutes for the French soldiers who were fighting for the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracens.

With such facts before us, it is nothing but sheer mockery to assert that Christianity is "the sanction of Humanism in its best sense." It is well known that modern Humanism is a system of thinking in which, as J. A. Symonds observes, the study of man, in the totality of his being, is made central and dominant, and that it began to manifest itself as a determined revolt against the scholasticism, or metaphysical theology, of the Middle Ages. In Italy, it very nearly supplanted Christianity altogether. For upwards of seventy years the Christian religion was of very little account, some eminent ecclesiastics going the length of mocking at it, and treating Christ as a profitable myth, as Leo X. is said to have done. In Italy, however, Humanism, as a movement, had exhausted itself before the end of the first half of the sixteenth century. The truth is that Christianity and Humanism cannot exist and prosper together, and that in proportion as the one flourishes the other of necessity languishes. Father Figgis, for all his profession to the contrary, is not a Humanist. He holds the view that it is not worth while to live, to seek after truth, or to go on "with laborious toil unless we believe ourselves to have permanent value," or unless "we think we are immortal beings." We maintain, on the contrary, that virtue, morality, or social service is not dependent for its value upon the duration of individual existence. Though the individual's span of life may be but short, the race endures. Personally we are mortal, but whatever service we render our fellow-beings is immortal; and surely it is worth while to do our utmost to improve the race of which we are members, though the night may soon close in upon us and put an end to our existence. Humanism does not include the hope of immortality, which is nothing but a perversion of the natural love of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Living Master of Literature.

In our fat England the gardener, Time, is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and tracteries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them.—*George Meredith*.

I love life which is earthy life, life as it is.—In this well of life I feel further from death.—*Anatole France*.

AMONG modern English writers whose fame would seem to be assured, Mr. Thomas Hardy occupies the foremost place, and it is pleasant to reflect that he is an "intellectual." In his works there is the welcome brilliancy and spirit of the modern school united with lasting elements of excellence. The precise place Mr. Hardy will ultimately occupy among the Olympians we cannot venture to anticipate the judgment of Time by deciding. But that he has gained a true and lasting success, the magnificent works he has given us bear very sufficient

testimony. Mr. Hardy has won his present enviable position after years of labour. His first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, bears date as far back as the "seventies" of the last century. Since that time, his reputation has been steadily on the increase, until at the present he is paying the penalty of popularity in the attacks of a herd of imitators.

From *Far from the Madding Crowd* to *Jude the Obscure*—what a splendid range of novels. The characters, too, from Bathsheba to Sue Bridehead, seem taken from real life. The heroine, as in *Two on a Tower*, who woos a lover younger than herself, is frequent in these novels and in real experience. She is almost ignored by the circulating library writers, whose many books proclaim their industry rather than their ability. The women in Mr. Hardy's pages are not invariably charming, but they are entirely feminine, and their moods and whims are depicted by a master-hand. In his knowledge of "the concrete Unknowable," he is as wide and as true as Shakespeare; as modern as Meredith. He is no less successful with his male characters; witness Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Dr. Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders*, Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Angel Clare in *Tess*, or the unfortunate hero in *Jude the Obscure*.

When, like many others, one knew Mr. Hardy's novels without knowing the Wessex peasantry, the type seemed exaggerated; but a sojourn in the West Country redeems them from the reproach of caricature. Closer knowledge reveals his photographic power of reproducing life, for Mr. Hardy writes of these sons and daughters of the soil without sentiment, and, rarer still, without patronage; with the manlier tone of kinship with the least of these that, whined as it may be by specious hypocrites, is yet the noblest truth of our common life.

More than that, Mr. Hardy has sown broadcast over his work the most delightful, ironical humour. Not one of his rustics, of his working-class folk, but has a special originality, a native pleasantry—jovial or sly—and a cast of drollery. Few novelists have strewed over their work such abundant irony. He is, indeed, a master of the lash—as fertile as Heine, as pitiless as Gibbon, as acidulated as Renan.

Mr. Hardy has been called pessimist, but there is no lack of comedy in his novels. *The Hand of Ethelberta*, that most whimsical story, is as full of wondrous comedy as an egg is full of meat. *The Laodicean* is somewhat more eccentric. In each a far-fetched idea is worked out with earnestness, and in the true spirit of the highest comedy. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, written in his sunniest mood, is still his most popular work. From the opening description of Gabriel Oak's smile to the ringing down of the curtain, it is a joy to anyone who possesses taste and perception enough to discriminate between a Molieresque humour and a riotous Charlie Chaplin farce.

One can hardly recall a modern writer who cares less for poetic justice and virtue rewarded. Nemesis, indeed, dogs the guilty in his novels, as in the immortal Greek tragedies. As his characters fulfil their doom, they drag the innocent to misery with them, as though they were actual people in real life. In *The Woodlanders*, *Tess*, and *Jude the Obscure* tragedies "too deep for tears" grow out of trivial courses, true to the course of mundane things. *Life's Little Ironies*, a volume of short stories, as perfect as anything of Daudet or Maupassant, revealing some of the most delicate and faultless work of this great artist, is full of the same lesson.

Ordinary life attracts him. His favourite heroes are farmers, artisans, labourers, and middle-class characters. From these externally prosaic existences, this great magician makes us behold the eternal comedy and

tragedy of the human heart. We meet in his pages once more the failure of will, the calculations of egoism, pride, coquetry, passion, hatred, love, all our foibles, all our littleness, and all our errors. Small wonder that the smile on his face is often near tears.

The constant value in fiction is the manifestation of human nature. Viewed from this point of view, Mr. Hardy's work stands fair and full above that of all contemporary literature. What shapes arise as you recall it! Not sawdust dolls, not shadows, but full-blooded creations, moving in a living world, instinct with the fire of life. Where in all contemporary fiction is there nobler work than the more poignant scenes in *Tess*, or that other showing the dying Jude and the choristers, or the quiet figure of the bereaved girl in the closing scene of *The Woodlanders*, as wonderful in its way as Millet's picture of "The Angelus." In these is struck the consummate tragic note, as in the pages of Æschylus and our own Shakespeare. They wring the heart as keenly as actual, individual experience. For they are life sublimed by passing through an imagination of singular capacity and a nature of uncommon force.

The attentive reader cannot fail to notice the essential Secularism embedded in these admirable novels and stories. Even in the earlier books, amid their picturesque colour, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scents and sounds, we find a frank Paganism. As the author advances in reputation and grows in intellectual power, the note deepens, until, in *Tess*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and, finally, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain. *Jude* is a masterpiece among masterpieces. It is a noble and significant work, worthy in every way of the greatest living English novelist. It is an arraignment of Providence, and as we read we recall the biting words of the blinded Gloucester in the greatest of all tragedies:—

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.

It is a further proof of Mr. Hardy's genius that he has achieved success in poetry no less than in prose, and as he gets older he turns more and more readily to the Muses, and writes with all the zest and enthusiasm of a young poet beginning his career instead of a veteran who has enriched the literature of Europe with masterpieces for two generations. To open *The Dynasts* is to be confronted with a book of singular dramatic power, and one full of the pure stuff of poetry. Another volume of verse, *Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries*, shows his keen vision and understanding. Take, for example, that fine and imaginative poem, "God's Funeral." The author pictures a slow procession moving across a plain at twilight, and bearing a strange form. He listens to the lament of the mourners for the being they have themselves created, and whom they cannot any longer keep alive:—

Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled.
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And long suffering and mercies manifold.

"Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon" follow the mourners, and some of them refuse to believe that all is over; and "dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom," the scene closes. It is a daring piece of work, comparable to Heine's vision of a dying God having the last sacraments of the Church administered to him, albeit there is none of the terrible irony of the Continental poet.

Contemporary literature is so sugary, so full of romantic imaginings, that such writing brings a sense of largeness; a reminder of the great winds and waters and wide horizons of the West Country, where men and women know how to live and how to die, not submissively but

fiercely. Modern drawing-room readers are ill-prepared for Mr. Hardy's virile verse, and primly straighten themselves as his muse passes. But others there are who perceive the distinction conferred on literature by the writings of a bright and particular genius. Mr. Hardy's advice to us is to face the facts of life and to trust humanity:—

The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced
With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

Not to know and to exult in Mr. Hardy's finest work is to be dead to literature, or ignorant of the great effects of modern English speech. It is impossible to read his pages without feeling ourselves won by his intense sympathy, which covers everything as the arch of heaven. He has enlarged our ideas of life and the world. We feel, as we put his books back in their places, that we are more at peace with ourselves, calmer in face of the problems of destiny. And not for an instant does he cease to be an artist. By his genius he had added a wondrous chamber to the house beautiful of art.

MIMNERMUS.

Science, Telepathy, and Communion with the Dead.

IX.

(Continued from p. 566.)

When we are banished from the earthly body, are we to join the wordy rabble which speaks by the mouth or the pen of the mediums? These wild utterances do not seem as a rule like revelations of the secrets of the prison-house, but rather like gibberings from a lunatic asylum, peopled by inmates of vulgar behaviour and the lowest morals; creatures that lie and cheat, give false names and unverifiable addresses. But the fact that things are unpleasant is no evidence that they are untrue; besides in some cases the "personalities" talk very good sense, quote Plotinus, and write really charming poetry. So much depends on whose ghost it is; but still more, on whose lips or hands it is by which it communicates. That is the main difficulty about the spirit hypothesis; the unmistakable colour which the communications get through the medium. The late Mr. Frederick Myers cites Homer and Plato in the original through Mrs. Verrall, who is a lecturer at Cambridge; through Mrs. Holland, whose culture is not classical, he quotes nothing more abstruse than Tennyson and Rossetti; whereas, through Mrs. Piper, the postmaster's wife, he can only ejaculate bluntly, "Browning."—*The "Times" Literary Supplement*, July 9, 1908.

It should be stated that Sir Oliver Lodge's son Raymond was killed in the trenches at the Front on September 14, 1915, a circumstance that I am quite sure every Freethinker wholeheartedly deploras. Everyone who came in contact with Raymond testifies to his sterling qualities. His letters home reveal a lovable and charming personality, which is reflected in the portrait given in the book. The heart aches to realize that this fine young fellow, carefully educated, trained, and cultured to perfection, in the morning of life, should be thus, in a moment, shattered and broken, cast as rubbish to the void, in this savage and brutish War.

On August 8, 1915, a few weeks before Raymond's death, a Miss Robbins was having a sitting with Mrs. Piper, then in America, when a message was received from the spirit of Myers, communicated to Mrs. Piper by the spirit of Richard Hodgson. Miss Alta Piper (Mrs. Piper's daughter) sent the message on to Sir Oliver Lodge. It runs as follows:—

Hodgson: "Now, Lodge, while we are not here as of old, *i.e.*, not quite, we are here enough to take and give messages. Myers says you take the part of the poet, and he will act as Faunus. Faunus!"

Miss Robbins: "Faunus?"

Hodgson: "Yes, Myers. *Protect*. He (Lodge) will understand.

"What have you to say, Lodge? Good work. Ask Verrall, she will also understand. Arthur says so." [This "Arthur" means Dr. Arthur Verrall, the deceased husband of Mrs. Verrall.]

Miss Robbins: "Do you mean Arthur Tennyson?"

Hodgson: "No. Myers knows. So does—. You got mixed (to Miss R.). But Myers is straight about poet and Faunus."¹

Sir Oliver Lodge promptly communicated the message to Mrs. Verrall, as the spirits advised. Mrs. Verrall referred him to Horace's Ode (*Carm.*, ii., xvii., 27-30), where Horace describes himself as nearly killed by a falling tree, the impending blow being lightened by Faunus, the guardian of the poets. "Sir Oliver, naturally enough, could not make head or tail of the message, but was inclined to think that it referred to some possibly approaching financial loss to himself which Myers might propose to avert—an instance of, at any rate, the 'futility' of spiritualistic messages or warnings."²

Sir Oliver did not connect the message with Raymond until after his death in action on September 14, 1915. He then wrote to the Rev. M. A. Bayfield about the matter, complaining that Myers "had not been able to ward off the blow." This clerical gentleman rose to the occasion, and interpreted the oracle as follows (it is astonishing how many different interpretations these spirit messages may be made to assume; the spirits seem to make a point of being as vague and ambiguous as possible). The Rev. Bayfield explains that the "lightening of the blow" referred, not to Raymond, but to Sir Oliver himself, and that the "warning" was intended to "protect" Sir Oliver from being overwhelmed by the news of the death of his son. Major Cook observes:—

This somewhat far-fetched interpretation Sir Oliver accepts as final and convincing. It probably explains in great measure Sir Oliver's acceptance, on equally slight grounds, of all the other "evidences" regarding Raymond's "communications" to him and to his family which followed.

To the writer, at any rate, the following explanation of the "message" appears at least equally probable and, indeed, in all the circumstances of the case, at any rate less far-fetched, than that of the Rev. Bayfield:

Mrs. Piper being, through her daughter, Miss Alta, in frequent correspondence with Sir Oliver, may well have been, and in all probability (as indicated above) was, aware that he had a son at the front, like many other people, with several sons, at the time in England. The "message," if it means anything at all, much more closely resembles an intimation of (and a counting by Mrs. Piper on) the extreme probability that this son of Sir Oliver's at the front would be wounded, but, through the spirit-intervention of Myers, *like Horace the Poet*, not killed.³

Major Cook further points out that Raymond Lodge was born in the year of Mrs. Piper's first visit to England, in 1889; and being a boy of seventeen, and possibly away at school at the time of Mrs. Piper's second visit in 1906, may not have been known to her at all. "It is much more probable that Mrs. Piper had Raymond's eldest brother Oliver in her mind as, probably, the son of Sir Oliver at the front. Moreover, Oliver is the 'poet' of the family, and has written and published a volume of his poems. The allusion to the 'poet,' therefore, in the message, and the implied happening to *him* of some physical injury ('Myers is straight about poet and Faunus'), are natural enough in Mrs. Piper's own

¹ Sir Oliver Lodge, *Raymond*, pp. 90-91.

² W. Cook, *Reflections on Raymond*, p. 46.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

mouth, writing, or normal consciousness, and do not appear to call for any 'supernormal' or other explanation than a desire on Mrs. Piper's part to supply material, through Sir Oliver Lodge, for the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research, which she habitually does."¹

On the other hand, as the same writer points out, if the message really came from the spirit calling itself "Myers," then, "on the plain interpretation of the message, 'Myers' is not a spirit of Truth, but—as Oliver Cromwell described a similarly reported 'communicator'—a 'lying devil'; for 'Myers' predicted what did not happen, and undertook what he did not perform."

To sum up the matter, the message, as a prophecy, was false; for Raymond was not "protected" by Myers, but was killed. As a warning it was a dead failure, for Sir Oliver Lodge did not connect the message with Raymond at all until after his death, but inclined to think that it referred to some financial loss to himself which Myers might avert.

If Myers could see what was coming, and wished to warn Sir Oliver, surely he would have sent a plain and straightforward message which anyone could understand, and not this vague and ambiguous rigmarole, capable of several meanings and of application to several different persons.

The plain fact is, that Mrs. Piper made a shot at a venture. She knew that one of Sir Oliver's sons was at the Front, and speculated on the chance of his being wounded, but purposely made the message so vague that, in the event of nothing happening, it could not be cited as a false prophecy, and, in fact, could be applied to any misfortune that might happen to any of Sir Oliver's family, or to Sir Oliver himself.

We now come to the photograph incident, which Sir Oliver Lodge describes as "a peculiarly good piece of evidence," "a first-class case," and as "one of the best pieces of evidence." Major Cook has analyzed this first-class piece of evidence in his little book, *Reflections on "Raymond."* Let us, in his company, see what Sir Oliver considers good evidence.

On August 24, 1915, a "group photograph" of twenty-one officers, with Second-Lieutenant Raymond Lodge among them, was taken in France. Three negatives were made, and these, with proofs only, were submitted by the photographer to Captain Boast, a brother officer of Raymond's. As the photographer had not enough printing-paper to supply all the officers with copies, Captain Boast purchased the negatives and sent them for printing to Messrs. Gale and Polden, in England, who received them on October 15, 1915. A large number of photographs appear to have been printed from these negatives, for Mrs. B. P. Cheves—the mother of the Medical Officer attached to Raymond's regiment—alone had, on November 28, 1915, half a dozen copies in her possession (with a key to the names). On this date Mrs. Cheves wrote to Lady Lodge, offering her one of the photographs; to which, naturally, Lady Lodge promptly replied, asking it to be sent. There was some unexplained delay in forwarding the photograph, and, in reply to a letter of inquiry by Lady Lodge regarding this, another note was received from Mrs. Cheves on December 7, stating that the photograph was being sent off. So there was at least a nine days' interval between the reception of the news of the existence of the photograph in Sir Oliver's household and the reception of the photograph itself. It is important to bear this in mind, as we shall see.

It is not known positively whether Raymond ever saw the photograph. He never saw the negatives; and

Captain Boast, writing in reply to Sir Oliver's query on this point nearly eleven months after the photograph was taken, thinks that Raymond did see the proofs, but "cannot say positively," although he regards it as "highly probable." On September 12 Raymond went into the trenches, and on September 14 was killed in action.

Sir Oliver Lodge claims that the first intimation of the existence of this photograph was from the spirit of Raymond himself. On September 27, Mr. Vout Peters, a medium, at a sitting with Lady Lodge, professed to receive a message from the spirit of Raymond through the agency of his "familiar spirit," or control, "Moonstone." He refers to the existence of *this particular* group photograph (so Sir Oliver asserts), saying, "He is particular that I should tell you of this."

On December 3, 1915, two months and six days afterwards, Mrs. Leonard (another medium), speaking for the spirit of Raymond through her "familiar spirit," "Feda," describes this photograph with remarkable accuracy.

Sir Oliver Lodge claims that we have here genuine supernormal evidence of Raymond's "surviving personality" in giving this information, because on September 27 the negatives were not yet in England, and on December 3 neither he (Sir Oliver Lodge) nor any member of his family had as yet seen a print or copy of it.

Let us consider the communication of the medium, Mr. Vout Peters, through the agency of "Moonstone" (this "Moonstone" is supposed to be the spirit of a patriarch who lived to a hundred years, and was a "yogi" in his earth-life), who is in communication with Raymond. This is the communication:—

"You have several portraits of this boy. *Before he went away* you had a good portrait of him—two—no, three. [Note by Sir Oliver: "Fully as many as that."] Two where he is alone, and one where he is in a group of other men. He is particular that I should tell you this. In one you see his walking-stick." [Note by Miss Kennedy: "'Moonstone' (*i.e.*, Peters) here put an imaginary stick under his arm."] [Note by Sir Oliver: "Not known yet."]

This is the only reference to any group photo given by Peters. In his later sitting with Sir Oliver, on October 29, 1915—a month before news of the photo arrived—he makes no mention of it.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

The Christian Law.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

A new law I give unto you, that ye love one another.

The Papal Peace Note has been received with almost universal derision.

TALK not of peace, 'tis treason;
Hold thou no truce with reason;
Grim death must have his season—
This is the Christian law.

The maimed and halt pass by;
Still let the children die;
Still the widow's cry—
This is the Christian law.

Loud let the great guns thunder;
Bid nations lust and plunder;
Thy brethren tear asunder—
This is the Christian law.

Behold the Nazarene,
No more in love serene;
Let hate thy vision screen—
This is the Christian law.

GADFLY.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

Acid Drops.

By the courtesy of the editor of the *Literary Guide*, we have been supplied with an advance copy of a letter by Mr. Edward Clodd in reply to our "Views and Opinions" of last week, and also in answer to a letter written by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. Mr. Clodd admits that our comments on his "few words" were fair, and he desires "with apologies" to cancel them. As Mr. Clodd thus retires with credit from a quite indefensible position which ought never to have been taken up, there is no more to be said on that point.

A word or two, however, is called for in connection with certain sentences from the late Sir Leslie Stephen and Professor Huxley which Mr. Clodd says he had in mind. "The Agnostic," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "is one who asserts that there are limits to the sphere of human intelligence." And Professor Huxley says: "In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable. That I take to be the Agnostic faith." But with all due respect to both these gentlemen, and as it is best to use perfectly plain language, we desire to say that so far as the relation of Agnosticism to belief in a God or in religion is concerned, they were talking undiluted nonsense. The counsel is excellent, but it would be ridiculous to count the voicing of these ancient platitudes as the real reason for coining such a word as Agnostic. It was the question of belief in a God which both these writers had in mind, and their great concern seems to have been to discover a word that should escape the odium attached to Atheism by the religious world. That they misled others only serves to make their action the more regrettable. And in relation to the existence of God there are only two positions—either one believes, and is a Theist, or one does not believe in a God and is an Atheist. And, in the name of all that is sensible, if a man or woman is an Atheist, why not say so?

The converted Atheist has again made his appearance; this time in the pages of the *Royal Magazine*. His sponsor is the Rev. F. H. Gillingham, the cricketer-parson, who says that this particular Atheist joined a college mission and became a Church stalwart. No name is mentioned, and the mission is also nameless. Perhaps the Rev. F. H. Gillingham will oblige with further details?

The Rev. A. C. Dixon, Spurgeon's successor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, says, "Faith in Jesus as one would have faith in Gladstone or Lloyd George saves nobody." Is this a compliment to the distinguished Welsh Baptist?

The clerical mind is a fearful and a wonderful thing. This is how the Rev. F. H. Gillingham, of Bermondsey, refers to the birth of his infant son: "The spell which some evil magician cast over the rectory has now been broken; our little son is the first child born in the rectory for many years." The owner of this massive intellect defends the Christian religion in the pages of a popular monthly magazine.

The *Church Times* expresses its disapproval of the desire of a party in the Anglican Church to revise the Bible by deleting the imprecatory Psalms. In its issue for September 7 it says:—

We grieve to find that there lived in the early nineteenth century rectors capable of sharing the strange fancies of the Lectionary Revision Committee of to-day. It appears that in a certain village, when the clerk gave out the 94th Psalm:—

O God, to whom revenge belongs,

Thy vengeance now disclose,

the young rector tapped the partition, and said out, for all the church to hear: "Handy, I don't worship such a Being; sing the evening hymn." But such is the Deity revealed in all parts of the Bible, even in the New Testament, where he is represented as tormenting unbelievers in hell-fire for ever and ever. The only possible refuge for tender-hearted people is to be found in Atheism.

The clerical contention that war has an uplifting tendency is not borne out by facts. There are 90 cases, comprising 140 prisoners, down for trial at the Old Bailey. This is a much heavier list than usual.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton considers that the War against the Central Powers and their Allies is "a peculiarly Christian and peculiarly humanitarian duty." Why does he drag in humanitarian?

Mr. Horatio Bottomley is proving a very awkward convert to Christianity. Writing in the *Sunday Pictorial*, he bursts out, "Cursed be the peacemongers. Clap the lot of them in gaol." Where does Mr. Bottomley expect to spend eternity?

Mr. Austin Harrison has been girding at the English Sunday. "Most places closed," he says, "hardly anywhere to go. Little to do. Few public places of amusement open." That is one of the many blessings springing from the Christian superstition.

The new political movement is described as an effort to form a "stable party." The description would apply to the Christian religion.

Referring to the appalling condition of children during the first half of the nineteenth century, the *Daily News* says "Religion offered them no protection." Yet religion had been in existence for thousands of years.

Principal Selbie, of Mansfield College, Oxford, contributed a highly amusing article to the *Christian World* for September 6, in which he displays a most intimate knowledge of God and his relations with men. He deplores the fact that "many of our intercessions are based on a radically false conception" of the Divine Being, with the result that "men speak to him as though he required to be told of the horror and wickedness abroad in the world, and as though he would not do the right and kind thing until he was asked." But, surely, all prayer is based on that assumption, for otherwise it would have no meaning at all. Three years ago this month churches and chapels held crowded prayer-meetings, at all of which God was passionately asked, pleaded with, to give us a speedy victory. The belief was, as the Bishop of London and Sir William Robertson Nicoll assured us, that if we asked for it earnestly and often enough, God would grant our petition. The futility of that prayer is now known to us all; and no such crowded meetings for intercession are any longer held.

Dr. Selbie admits the decay of the prayer-meeting because the people have lost their faith in the efficacy of prayer. And the people are right. Like the belief in God, prayer is the offspring of ignorance and fear. The Principal knows this as well as we do, and yet as a minister of the Gospel he must urge his fellow-beings to cultivate the habit of prayer, though fully aware that no prayer has ever been answered by a supernatural being. Why culpably waste time and energy, then, on so profitless a performance!

The *Christian World* points out that Church Parade attendance is voluntary in the American Army, and about one in thirteen attend the services. Uncle Sam's soldiers will not fight the worse on that account.

The power of the Church is fast waning, and notably so in social life. Seventy-six decrees nisi were made absolute in the Vacation Court recently. Evidently, more people than ever refuse to believe that those whom "God" hath joined, may not be put asunder.

Providence still has its playful moods. Lightning struck a provincial munitions works recently, and an explosion followed, causing great excitement. A number of women workers fainted.

Chief Constable Stevenson, of Glasgow, is much concerned with the growth of "criminality" amongst boys. Addressing the Scottish Sabbath School Union, he said that the "only

real deterrent," apart from committal to an industrial school, was whipping. We should have thought that the fallacy of flogging as a moral agent was clear to all intelligent people by now; but it is suggestive that its advocacy should come from a speaker before a Sabbath School Union. How is whipping boys going to counteract the War atmosphere, the absence from home of the father, and the fact of the mother being often away also, engaged on munition-making? In this direction we are paying the price of War. We have all been more or less brutalized this past three years, and it is absurd to expect children to escape. To indulge in a new brutality will only make things worse.

The Lord's Prayer contains a supplication for daily bread, but Providence does not pay much attention to it. In the recent gale at Yaverland, near Newport, Isle of Wight, sheaves of wheat were blown over the cliffs into the sea.

A writer in a daily paper deals with the question of amusement in mathematics, but adds, "I still cannot see myself laughing over the Rule of Three—though I have a dim recollection of weeping over it." Let him dry his tears, and try to solve the tangle of the Trinity.

In a leading article, the *Daily Chronicle* refers to the Vatican as "the ancient repository of Christian virtues." Yet Catholics have covered Europe with fraudulent religious relics.

The Nonconformist *Daily News* expresses astonishment that the great Duke of Marlborough was dubbed "Corporal John," and Napoleon "the little Corporal." Yet Christians profess to believe that the King of Kings was a carpenter.

The *Daily Chronicle* retails a good story of one of Huxley's scientific meetings which was interrupted by a simple-minded parson. It was wrong, he asserted, to disturb the fossil fragments of the Silurian period, for they might be the bones of fallen angels precipitated into the slime after the Deluge. What a comment on the clerical opposition to science.

"Presbyter is but priest writ large," says old John Milton. And Nonconformity apes the arrogance of the older forms of the Christian superstition. At a big Wesleyan meeting recently, Sir Robert Perks referred to reconstruction after the War, and added, "We should feel far more satisfied with these committees if there were among the members fewer Agnostics, fewer Jews, and fewer members of the Fabian Society." Mark the Christian humility! Although Agnostics, Jews, and Socialists are citizens quite as much as Nonconformists, yet this Wesleyan would have them excluded from public life. This is the spirit that once lighted the fires of Smithfield.

A waistcoat worn by King Edward VII., when Prince of Wales, at the marriage of his sister, the Princess Royal, was sold recently for six shillings. How the clergy will smile! They know how to make thousands of pounds from exhibiting the clothing of a man who never lived.

About thirty convalescent soldiers at St. Anne's Convalescent home have protested against a rule of the establishment which beats anything we have read of for bigotry and tyranny. The rule is that the men must attend religious service twice a day or go to bed. We cannot conceive a greater indignity than this being sent to bed like a naughty child for not attending church. Men who submit to it are hardly worth keeping alive. And those who enforce it never ought to have been born.

A Kentish organist estimates that, during nine years, he has smoked a hundredweight of tobacco. As a rule, "sulphurous and tormenting flames" are confined to the pulpit.

Among the schoolboy "howlers," told by the late Headmaster of Eton, is the following:—

A long time ago they wrote the Apostles' Creed. Nobody believed it. So they waited a bit and wrote the Nicene

Creed. Still nobody believed it. So they waited a bit and wrote the Athanasian Creed, and they had to believe that.

Luckily they only had to believe it. If they had been forced to understand it, the prospect would have been too horrible for contemplation.

An application came recently before the magistrates of the Worthing Petty Sessions for permission to open the Dome and Theatre for cinema performances. The application was opposed by that relic of the Stone Age, the Lord's Day Observance Society, on the ground that to grant it would mean a desecration of the Sabbath. The military representative and the police both supported the application on the ground that the cinema provided a harmless entertainment for soldiers, and that it meant less drunkenness and less harm in other directions. Ultimately the Bench granted the application, and the supporters of the Lord's Day Observance Society went their way sorrowing.

"To-day devout worshippers at the cathedrals and churches of Russia are fewer in number than they were," says Mr. A. H. Fletcher, in *Cassell's Magazine*. We are pleased to hear it. The Church in Russia has played an evil part in the life of the nation, and it was only to be expected it would suffer when the awakening came. But what of our own press, which gave such wide publicity to two such windbags as the Bishop of London and Mr. Stephen Graham in their praise of the religious life of Russia?

Amazing beyond comment is the credulity of Professor David Smith, who figures so prominently in the *British Weekly*, to which he contributes two articles every week. In the issue for September 6, dealing with to-day's International Lesson for Sunday-schools, he surpasses even himself in treating pure legend as literal fact. The subject is the story of the miraculous escape of the three young Jews when thrown into the over-heated furnace, as related in Daniel, which story Dr. Smith instructs Sunday-school teachers to accept as veritable history, well knowing that Biblical critics regard the Book of Daniel as wholly unhistorical. We sincerely pity the tens of thousands of young people who will be victimized to-day by this mediæval and utterly discredited method of expounding Scripture.

The Book of Daniel was written, as internal evidence clearly shows, between the years 169 and 165 B.C., and has for its object the glorification of Jehovah as infinitely superior to all other gods. Now, the miraculous incidents recorded belong to a period not later than 600-560 B.C., and no reference whatever to them is to be found anywhere else. Probably, the author believed that they had actually happened; but, in any case, he knew that the recital of them would comfort the superstitious and much-trying Hebrews during the horrors of the Maccabæan age. The Book abounds with historical inaccuracies and discrepancies; but Dr. Smith is blind to them all, and contents himself with pietistic platitudes and anti-scientific statements which are completely out of date in the present state of Biblical criticism.

A correspondent sends us the following: An unoffending person in Peckham named Davies last week unwittingly shocked Christendom by changing his name by deed-poll to *W. J. Christ*. A correspondent of the *Weekly Dispatch* is much disturbed, and feels that the Chancery Court has committed a grave blunder in permitting such a name substitute, and thus "doing violence to religious sentiment." The *Weekly Dispatch*, in giving publicity to this "horror," apparently forgets that in Spain and South America the "Christian" name of "Jesus" is a common one, and it is no unusual thing to ask Jesus, one's odd man, to get in the coal, or tell Jesus, one's stable boy, to take a day off at the races! Surely it is high time that we, in this England, were sufficiently broad minded to permit an honest tradesman to change his name without holding up our hands in hypocritical horror, and casting Christian cobblestones at him in the press. Perhaps you, Sir, in the *Freethinker*, will uphold for once the cause of Mr. Christ, who, in this case, is apparently genuine.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

It is never a pleasant task to appeal for money, but so far as it can be robbed of its unpleasantness, this has been done by the prompt and hearty support given to the *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund. And gratified as I naturally am to see so prompt a response, I confess to being still more pleased with the generous tone of the letters that accompanied many of the subscriptions. These have given me renewed encouragement in a situation that is peculiarly trying. Some letters received are of so personal a tone that I cannot do more than acknowledge them in this way. I can only hope I have earned a part of the compliments they offer. Readers will, however, be interested in excerpts from some of the letters received.

From Mr. F. W. Hall we get the following cheery letter:—

In answer to your appeal in this week's *Freethinker*, I have pleasure in enclosing cheque for £50, and trust the deficit will be quickly made up. It affords me the utmost pleasure to thus have the opportunity of showing my intense appreciation of the excellent way in which the journal is conducted in the interests of what I firmly believe to be the very best of causes.

Mr. H. Jessop, in sending his cheque for £25, writes:—

I congratulate you on your successful year. It's wonderful! I don't know how you do it, but I hope all Freethinkers will support you by seeing you are not short of cash.

Lady Maxim forwards a cheque for £6 "to a cause that Sir Hiram had very much at heart."

Mr. J. Sumner writes:—

To have kept the flag up during the past three years of the War is in itself an achievement, but to have increased the circulation and to have improved the paper too, in face of all adverse circumstances, must, I think, induce a glow of appreciation in the circle of its readers which will speedily result in the liquidation of the debt.

Mr. R. Wood writes:—

You may well feel proud of your wonderful achievement under most trying circumstances. You put the matter very modestly.....but I trust and expect that this modest appeal will be promptly and satisfactorily responded to.

Dr. McDermott, in forwarding cheque, hopes that "in the future history of the *Freethinker* it may not be necessary to encroach upon the private exchequer of its editor and moving spirit." In self-defence I must say that it is not an encroachment upon *my* private exchequer, which, alas! is non-existent. Credit should be given to those friends who have obliged me with loans sufficient to meet the calls upon the paper. My share was to undertake personal responsibility for repayment.

Mr. E. D. Side writes on behalf of a family of sturdy Freethinkers:—

It is indeed a pleasure to feel we are helping you in your successful effort to keep the *Freethinker* not only going, but of such high quality during the War. It is decidedly the best twopennyworth of brains in the market, supplied by real men; and each twopennyworth contains enough to invigorate and strengthen one, however strong in the Cause.

Another old friend of the *Freethinker*, E. B., writes:—

Will you please accept the enclosed as a humble offering from E. B. You have managed wonderfully, and your self-sacrifice in going without salary, and, more-

over, making yourself responsible for borrowed money on behalf of the *Freethinker*, is above all praise.

Mr. W. Mumby wishes all success to the Fund, and thinks the *Freethinker* is more needed now than ever.

"If I were a praying man," writes Mr. J. McGlashan, "you should have my prayers morning, noon, and night for your health and success. Please accept my thanks for your very able conduct of the only paper of its kind." We cheerfully dispense with the prayers of such men as Mr. McGlashan, so long as we have their appreciation and good wishes.

Mr. and Mrs. Harden send cheque with hopes that the *Freethinker* will long keep going, and in memory of their only son, Capt. Allen Harden, D.C.M., mentioned in dispatches, after two and a half years' service, who died of wounds at Dir-es-Salaam, August 3, 1917, aged 24 years. "A born Freethinker." We beg to offer Mr. and Mrs. Harden our sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

C. W. B., in enclosing cheque for £5, hopes that this time the Fund will be kept open for six months. One may assume that the idea behind the suggestion is expressed in set terms by several other subscribers, who hope that enough will be raised to see the *Freethinker* through the War. Of course, if this were done, it would lessen the worry; and one must, apparently, count on at least another year of war. And, naturally, the conditions become more difficult the longer the War continues.

We have many other letters from which we should like to quote, but must defer doing so until next week.

The following represents the subscriptions received up to the time of our going to press:—

First List of Subscriptions.

F. W. Hall, £50. H. Jessop, £25. Lady Sarah Maxim, £6. T. Robertson, £5. Dr. P. M. McDermott, £5 5s. W. Mumby, £5. S. M. Gimson, £5 5s. J. B. Middleton, £5. J. Pendlebury, £3. Miss Pendlebury, 2s. 6d. Collette Jones, £1 1s. D. D. B., £2 2s. T. A. McKee, 2s. 6d. W. H. Harrap, 6s. E. A. McDonald, £1. J. L., 2s. E. J. Jones (Liverpool), 2s. 6d. J. Hamilton (South Shields), 5s. W. R. Munton, £5. Dr. J. Laing, £3 3s. S. M. Peacock, £1 1s. A. R. Wykes, 10s. R. Wood, 15s. Greevz Fysher, £1. J. Sumner, £5 5s. S. Scott, £1. J. G. Finlay, £2. W. A., £1. T. A. Williams, 2s. 6d. E. B., £1 1s. James Davie, £5. R. H. Side, £2. E. D. Side, £2. Mrs. E. D. Side, £1. Miss A. Harris, 5s. G. Backhouse Church, 5s. J. Newton, £1 1s. J. Withy, 10s. R. W. Blakeley, £1 1s. W. B. Columbine, £5 5s. Major G. O. Warren, 5s. G. Alward, £2 2s. A. H. Smith, 10s. 6d. G. R. Harker, 10s. J. Shields, £1 1s. S. Gimson, £3. J. and J. McGlashan, £2. Mrs. H. Parsons, 10s. 6d. H. Austin, 2s. 6d. L. W. (Manchester), 5s. R. Wilson, £1. C. W. B., £5. E. L. G. (Dundee), £1. Surgeon-General D. Sinclair, £2. J. Breese, £1 1s. S. Clowes, 5s. John Roberts, £1 1s. H. Mitchell, 2s. 6d. J. A. Fallows, £5. T. T. (Glasgow), 2s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Bowman, 5s. Dr. R. T. Nichols, £5 5s. J. R., 1s. Old Member, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. Harden, £1 1s. A. Delve, £2 2s. P. and J. P., 10s. Dr. C. R. Niven, £1 1s. S. Hudson, £1. H. Irving, 10s. G. Samuels, 5s. A. Davies, 5s. A. Vinestock, 5s. J. Davies, 2s. J. Robertson, 5s. J. H. Waters, 10s. T. H. Elstob, £1. A. D., 10s. J. A. Reid, 1s. 6d. J. Daley, 1s. J. G. Bartram, 5s. J. Close, 5s. Frank Maclachlan, £1. R. Daniell, 2s. 6d.

Total: £198 18s. 6d.

To Correspondents.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

September 23, Birmingham Town Hall; September 30, Swansea; October 7, Failsforth; October 14, Leicester; October 21, Manchester; October 28, London; November 4, Abertillery.

R. WILSON.—We are flattered by your opinion that, in our hands, the *Freethinker* "will have a long life and an honourable one." We think we can promise it shall have an honourable life, and if it does not have a long one, it will not be for want of hard work on our part.

H. AUSTIN writes that finding an index to this paper would be useful, he compiled one by taking a copy-book, writing down a table of contents each week, and adding author, title, date, and any explanatory note needed. Undoubtedly this plan saves time in the end, and most probably many of our readers adopt a similar plan.

G. ALWARD.—We are much obliged for your subscription to Sustentation Fund, and also for promise to contribute further if necessary. That, we hope, will not be, but we shall see. Anyway, your cheerful help is encouraging.

T. A. WILLIAMS.—The fact of your not going "all the way" with us is a tribute to your own liberality of mind, and cheering to ourselves. Many thanks.

CORPL. A. V. HARRIS.—Glad you found the literature sent useful for distribution. We are sending you on some pamphlets that may prove useful. Shall always be pleased to hear from you and of your experience.

W. PLOTTS (U.S.A.).—Subscription for *Freethinker* received. Pleased to know you think this paper deserves a wide circulation outside of England. Will you be good enough to let us know particulars of the letter sent to this office and to which you received no response. The address of this paper is always at the foot of Correspondence Column and on last page.

Y. O. C.—We have several times thought of starting a Children's Column. When we can get a little more assistance on the paper we may do so.

G. GROVE.—A very ancient fable now; but, as you say, it is hard to overtake a lie.

J. R.—Your subscription indicates the right kind of spirit, and so long as that is general among our readers we can face the future with confidence.

G. J. BARTRAM.—Very sorry to hear of the death of yet another young Tyneside *Freethinker*. Please convey our sympathy to the right quarter.

A. M.—It does one good to see you have your heart so much in the cause.

MR. MOUNTAIN.—There are some things that one could not easily pass over. This was one of them. Please to know that your "fondness for the *Freethinker* grows weekly."

MR. AND MRS. BOWMAN.—Thanks for remittance and appreciation of paper.

C. S. MAYER.—Sorry we are unable to give you the exact address, but a letter c/o the University, California, would be almost certain to reach its destination.

T. A. MCKEE.—We hope the future will be brighter for you than you seem to anticipate; but whatever it is, your letter shows you will face it with courage.

F. DORRINGTON.—We agree with you that it would be well to reprint many of the late G. W. Foote's articles. We are always on the point of doing so, but the pressure of matter awaiting publication prevents realization. However, we will try and reprint some occasionally.

P. RIPLEY.—Shall appear.

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.

Mr. Cohen commences his Autumn lecturing campaign with two lectures in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on September 23. As the Town Hall has a seating capacity of between 2,000 and 3,000, we hope that local Freethinkers will do their best to see that it is well filled on both occasions. A well filled hall helps both speaker and audience.

A Freethinker writes from the Front:—

Apropos of God's wonderful preservation of crucifixes, let me give you a true authenticated fact.

On a recent part of the Front, during the German retreat, attached to a large roadside crucifix was a tin can, tied by wire. A Tommy, when releasing same, was, along with the crucifix, severely damaged, owing to a bomb, being concealed in tin can, exploding.

A suitable postcard, subscribed by the boys, has been forwarded to the Rev. J. Thomas, of Chelmsford, who ascribed the heavy storms of late to the fact of Divine displeasure at people working on their allotments on Sunday. He will receive a shock. A pity these gentry, who are in such close touch with God, cannot ask him to stop the War. Probably that would be asking him too much.

We had a parson lecturing last Monday on "Why Marry?" He is single.

Business as usual—on both sides.

The same correspondent vouches for the truth of the following story:—

A body of troops entraining for the Front were being supplied with refreshments (on payment of course). Two or three men had been supplied with tea. Shortly afterwards they returned to the coffee-stall and told the lady helps that the tea just supplied to them they had used for making cocoa, could they have more, it was just as serviceable as hot water?

At the last moment considerations of space compel us to hold over a fresh instalment of Mr. Palmer's excellent articles on "The Rise and Progress of Mental Power." We much regret having to do this, but good things are worth waiting for, and Mr. Palmer's readers will kindly reserve their mildest malediction for the editorial head.

The North London Branch N. S. S. has arranged a Whist Drive for Wednesday, October 3, to be held in the Large Hall, St. Pancras Reform Club, Victoria Road, Kentish Town. Tickets, price 1s. (for members and friends only), may be obtained from the Secretary of the Branch, Miss Lane, 29 Burton Street, King's Cross, W.C.1; Miss Brandes, 89 Union Grove, Wandsworth, S.W.; and from all Branch Secretaries. Prizes, of course, will be given. Early applications for tickets should be made, as the number is limited.

The Prayer Importunate.

A CHANCE phrase often succeeds in making a sharp appeal to the imagination, opening out interesting fields of speculation. Such a phrase is "a daring Christian thinker" just encountered in a volume entitled *Prayer in War Time*, by Sir W. Robertson Nicoll. What can constitute "a daring Christian thinker" at this time of day? A generation ago such a reputation was easily gained. An attempt to soften the crudity of any demented dogma was quite enough. Dean Farrar, for instance, became an "advanced" thinker by merely doubting the number of thermal units in store for those who spurned the narrow way. Nowadays one can occupy a Christian pulpit in a state of complete dogmatic nudity, and play shuttlecock with the faith of our fathers without creating

more than a mild sensation. And if one is capable of more or less skilfully punning on the terminology of the creeds and articles no sensation would be created at all. This is, in fact, theological modernism. Other avenues of hardihood have been opened out by publicly damning the Sultan, and, more recently, thanking God for the Zeppelins; though, in this latter case, we are willing to admit daring. Altogether, we are inclined to think that Dr. Nicoll himself is, perhaps, as deserving of such a distinction as anyone; to write a volume on the subject of prayer at this moment of the world's history is courageous to a degree.

It is more than courageous; it is audacious. For consider what the present situation is as expressed by John Galsworthy:—

God on the lips of each potentate and under a hundred thousand spires prayer that twenty-two million servants of Christ may receive from God the blessed strength to tear and blow each other to pieces, to ravage and burn, to wrench husbands from wives, fathers from their children, to starve the poor, and everywhere destroy the works of the spirit. Prayer under the hundred thousand spires for the blessed strength of God, to use the noblest, most loyal instincts of the human race to the ends of carnage!

No supernatural creed—in these days when two and two are put together—can stand against such reeling subversions.

But Galsworthy is but a humble uninspired scribe with a negligible following of thoughtful men with big hearts. The editor of the *British Weekly* leads religious Nonconformity, is an Honourable Knight, and has "done his bit" in the Great War by helping to raise to power a prayerful premier. Such a dignitary is not likely to yield with unseemly haste to the logic of the moment. Besides, Nonconformity has never struck us as being particularly interested in elementary mathematics, and reeling under subversions may be to it but a normal and blessed exercise of faith. It is British Nonconformity that constitutes Dr. Nicoll's public.

Pace Galsworthy then. Dr. Nicoll "is very deeply convinced that if we are to see the end of this horrible anarchy we must far more seriously as a nation and as individuals give ourselves to prayer." "It is our business to pray for victory on the battlefield." "We must pray for our soldiers and sailors, and pray, as far as possible, for each by name." It is both "lawful and right." The one thing wanted, in fact, above all, is a "nation of pray-ers." Not only pray-ers, but "good pray-ers." The distinction is important, and has interesting implications. Prayer is not, or should not be, a poor stuttering mode of communication between man and his maker. It should be based on principles which Dr. Nicoll, *en rapport* with the celestial mind, undertakes to "apply to our present circumstances." It is his knowledge of the ingredients of the "good prayer" which will make, one would think, his volume both useful and timely to believers. For none, we take it, cares to pray for an altogether unreasonable period without encouragement. The believer in Prayer without Ceasing, be he ever so enthusiastic for a "Wait and See" policy, is apt to faint by the wayside if the waiting is indefinite and the state of "low visibility" permanent. Learning that he is but a poor pray-er, he, naturally, turns to a celebrated divine for the correct form of incantation. Dr. Nicoll, being a veritable John Wellington Wells, can tell him how, when, and where to pray; in short, how to pray "with acceptance."

Our mind not being in tune with the Infinite, we are, naturally, puzzled over the recommendations. When Dr. Nicoll admits, as he is bound to, that God answers prayer as he thinks fit, one would expect him in logic to put in a good word for the prayer of resignation, expressed

or unexpressed. But no, God does not mean our prayers to be "a mere sign of acquiescence." Some degree of garrulity is preferable to a simple "Thy will be done." The "prayer of yearning" also is damned with faint praise. No doubt it has its points, but "prayer succeeds by the intensity of the will power put into it." The prayer with the greatest chance of materializing, then, is the "importunate prayer." "God," we are told, "loves to be entreated, pleaded with, wrestled with." These are the prayers that tell, unless, of course, we are hopelessly literal-minded and expect to get what we pray for. "Ask and ye shall receive," says Holy Writ, but it is not promised, mark you, that you shall receive what you ask for. This is a shallow interpretation confined to fellows careless alike of ablutions and aspirates, who bellow out blasphemies from egg-boxes in public places. Students of High Olympus know better. They know how the gods delight in laying verbal pitfalls. Note how ingeniously Midas, for instance, was tripped up over a phrase, and his case was only one of thousands. Perfectly justifiable, then, and in strict accord with precedent is the reading: Ask for bread and you may receive a stone; seek for comfort and you may receive tribulation; knock at the door of Paradise but abandon hope all you that enter there.

If we accept, and we might as well, that the importunate prayer is the prayer that God loves best, then the Deity, for one, has managed to drain some satisfaction from the last three years. One importunate prayer has been urged with troublesome urgency and reiteration:—

Fathers, mothers, wives, lovers pray that prayer and wonder how it is with their dearest in these vallies and heights of death..... Oftentimes they are stricken and blinded by receiving the tidings that this one prayer the nearest to the heart and the dearest can be uttered no more. Each name on the long list on which our eyes fasten every morning means the stilling of an importunate prayer, often of many importunate prayers, which for weeks and months and years have been lifted to God..... We know very well, however, that promises which attach to prayer do not and cannot attach to every petition. We know that not all of our prayers can be granted. Not everyone can come back whole or even wounded from the battlefield.

Still, "We must be importunate in prayer—*importunate that is for that answer God is always willing to bestow.*" We have taken the liberty to italicize this last qualification, for it seems to us not only to discourage the Christian business man, but to chill into non-existence the importunity of the most devout. In spite of the puffs preliminary the prayer importunate is turning out to be but a sorry speculation. But we have Dr. Nicoll's word for it that it is the best line in prayer-going.

We know, with the writer, that many prayers are not answered; but this seems to be the only point where our information coincides. We do not know of any prayer that is answered, and here we are led to infer that our knowledge is much less than his. Still, we have something approaching a conviction that Dr. Nicoll also knows not of any such thing. We are convinced, also, that he is really profoundly ignorant of a Deity "that loves to be entreated, pleaded with, and wrestled with," and measures out his favours accordingly. We believe, in short, that he knows very little indeed about such matters, but that he has simply got into a habit of emulating Merlin when his followers clamour for a sign.

The circumstances responsible for the importunate prayer, the anguish and sincerity that characterize them, make an appeal to us if not to the Deity; and in no particular instance can one feel inclined for either remonstrance or criticism. We must content ourselves

with the one satisfactory fact that from this plethora of petitionings, in every case one form or other of human love emerges. One member of the human family feels the presence of another to be in degree necessary to his or her happiness, and it is from this great outstanding fact of love that all hopes of human regeneration spring. There can be no doubt, either, that the value of prayer is being questioned by thousands owing to the failure of the one importunate prayer. All these, if desirous of helping on the time when the sum-total of human grief will be diminished, will be thrown back upon human effort and human resource. It may seem to some a black day when the help of Omnipotence is dispensed with. With the help of Omnipotence, the day is black enough—so black, indeed, that Humanists cannot afford to lose the help of anyone of heart and head at present endeavouring to alter the course of events by importuning the atmosphere. When the poignancy of their grief is over, and they are prepared for stouter counsel, they must be told once more of the evil that is wrought by want of thought, and learn that they must stand erect and with eyes very wide open indeed if they are ever to come to grips with the Infamous. T. H. E.

The "New Republic" and the New Religion.

MR. JOSEPH McCABE has recently remarked upon the absence of anything like a weighty Freethought movement in the United States of America. When one considers in what manner the Churches in this country have been driven to theological re-statement and to social activity by the pressure of humanist movements outside them, one is not surprised to discover that organized religion in America, comparatively undisturbed by such movements, maintains much that has here been discarded.

In a recent issue (June 9, 1917), of the *New Republic*, a journal which in the realm of politics expresses the democratic ideals of President Wilson with marked distinction, and is consequently widely quoted in Europe, there was an article on "The Future of Religion," by Professor Kirsopp Lane, of Harvard. In this article there is expressed that vague, nebulous view of religion which one associates with the new theologians from Mr. Campbell to Mr. Wells. That such an article should appear in the *New Republic* is a remarkable evidence of the backwardness of our Trans-Atlantic cousins in those tasks of research and rational reconstruction to which, every year, an increasing body of the most intelligent of our population is devoting itself.

Professor Kirsopp Lane, for all he teaches early Christian history at Harvard, paints a picture of the theologians and preachers of America which is as black as any Rationalist could make it. "I am pessimistic," he writes, "about the present attitude and the future fate of the Churches."

His pessimism is, to be sure, justifiable enough on his own showing. He writes of "ministers of religion" who "are tragically ignorant of the history of religious thought"; of the God of their conception as "a God outside the universe which he created, playing, as it were, tricks with it, in alternating moments of super-human love and infra-human wrath. He has unlimited power, but he does not use it to prevent evil." This sort of God, says the Professor bluntly, "is not conceivable by a rational mind."

There is growing up in America inevitably, as in every free country, a generation which cannot stomach this theological reaction, and is looking for more

rational and nobler principles. What sort of provision can this learned Christian Professor make for it?

Just as his strictures on orthodox theologians and ministers are those which have been the commonplaces of criticism in this country for many years, so his notion of religion for the future is the commonplace and utterly unsatisfactory notion of a non-anthropomorphic view of God, and of religion as a part of life and not as something "added on to life."

Professor Kirsopp Lane gives no hint that it is being found possible to get along quite well without God; but he is greatly concerned to establish the possibility of a concept of God and of religion that shall not conflict with the best thought and the highest emotion of men.

I confess that some of his arguments are ingenious, but none of them are at all convincing. For example, he says:—

It must be remembered that the exact phrase "a personal God" scarcely belongs to the great period of formative Christian theology. (If any doubt this let them try to translate "a personal God" into Greek.)

It is a little astonishing to be told that "a personal God" is a phrase that "scarcely belongs to the great period of formative Christian theology." Dr. Kirsopp Lane's stress is, of course, on the words "*the exact phrase*," and the theologian will readily perceive what he is driving at, and that he might be able to make an academic case of sorts for this contention. But what does it matter? The real question of the moderns is not as to this or that conception of God. It is as to whether *any* conception of God is possible, nay, is not in conflict with all that we know of the origins and development of the world and of mankind?

In precisely the same manner—I had almost written the same tricky manner—the slightly more practical problem of the relations of religion and life are dealt with. Thus:—

In early or mediæval thought the belief obtained that religion was something added on to life. A man might do his work well and be a good and useful member of society; but unless he was religious and did the extra things which religion demanded, he was a lost soul. This is the implication of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*..... Now the situation is changed; religion is valued as a part of ordinary life, so far as it makes men good citizens, and the whole idea of salvation by some appendix to life, controlled by some special class, is in abeyance and to most of us repugnant. We agree with the poet, though perhaps not in his sense, that "the daily round, the common task, will furnish all we need to ask."

Now, this is an argument with which we are very familiar. When the supernatural faith has failed, when everything that the theologians have taught has proved futile to arrest the progress of enquiry and mental emancipation, when, despite all the obstacles of the Churches, men come face to face with realities; the people who provided the obstacles, the powers that veiled the realities, say—"these realities to which you have come—these are religion!"

It is an argument which could only be swallowed by a person of more than mediæval credulity, and one not without awkward consequences for those who make use of it. Professor Kirsopp Lane does make use of it thus recklessly:—

.....This is religion. It is the real thing; and the religious nature of the whole mind of the modern man is being revealed to the student of historical theology, as he sees how, in war and in peace, men subordinate their own interests to those of some higher aim in which, express it how they may, they find the true purpose of life. Therefore, that this is religion I do not doubt; but whether it will officially retain that name is another question.

There is only one escape for the Professor from the charge of reckless superficiality. Is he not, after all, attempting to provide an easy road from faith to reason? For he says:—

Faith is not the antithesis of doubt, which is only another name for intelligence, but of timidity. It is the power which leads men to go on, knowing that that which is beyond is good, and trusting themselves to the guidance of life. It means forgetting the things which are behind and reaching out to the things which are before. In his own sphere the business man of to-day has done this; in his own very different sphere the man of science has done this. To continue in Biblical language, they have used the talents entrusted to them and need not be afraid to stand before the Son of Man.

And he concludes:—

But the professional ecclesiastic has insisted on keeping his talent unchanged, removed from the commerce of the market, and the time is approaching when it will be taken from him and be given to others; he himself will retain merely the hole in the ground in which he once hid it. He may continue to call that hole religion or God or Christianity or anything which he likes, and perhaps he will be allowed by others to do so, for men who are in earnest have little time and small inclination to contend about words. But the reality will be elsewhere, even if it be under another name, and the children of the new age will follow the reality, not the name.

Put into plain English, this means that religion for every man is the following out of truth and duty, that it is, in a word, the fine conception of enlightened humanity. Why, then, call it religion—a name with an ugly history; and why seek to attach to these antiquated legends and formulæ of the past the ever-growing body of truth which mankind has learned, despite the opposition of their professional defenders?

Professor Kirsopp Lane says he is an optimist about religion! But what he is optimistic about is humanity—like all the theologians of the modern school who are not really theologians at all. ALAN HANDSACRE.

Correspondence.

INFANT MORTALITY AND THE BIRTH-RATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Is "Y. C." quite justified in his contention that a high birth-rate necessarily connotes a high infant mortality rate?

The following points, I think, will show that there is at least another side to the question.

1. The Jews are strikingly prolific, yet both their infant and general mortality are low.
2. The Irish have a high birth-rate and a low infant mortality rate.
3. The birth-rate in England and Wales began to decrease since 1870, yet the infant mortality rate was never so high as it was in the decennium 1891-1900.
4. Some medical officers of health, particularly Dr. Hope, of Liverpool, have shown that there are families in which 50 per cent. of the children have died before reaching their second birthday, yet other families having the same number of children and living under similar conditions of sanitation, in the same streets and districts, have been enabled to rear all their children.

This point is also of importance in showing how small is the effect of sanitation in affecting infant mortality; and is now generally admitted by sanitary authorities. At a Public Health Conference, a few years ago, Dr. Buchan, Medical Officer of Health for Bradford, declared that there was a general consensus of opinion among sanitary experts that sanitation has little or no effect upon infant mortality. This opinion was generally endorsed by Dr. S. G. Moore, Medical

Officer of Health for Huddersfield, in his Milroy Lectures of last year.

5. Have not the records of the Tribunal Courts constantly shown that the biggest families have often the most robust children?
6. That the factors of infant mortality are not quite so obvious as is generally supposed, may be gathered from the following facts:—
 - (a) On the Isle of St. Kilda, off the north-west coast of Scotland, from 50 to 60 per cent. of the children born there died before they were nine days old. They were born apparently quite healthy, and if they succeeded in surviving the first fortnight after birth, there was no further danger. This remarkable mortality continued for about 150 years, until the beginning of this century.
 - (b) Coal-mining villages throughout England and Wales have extraordinarily high infant mortality rates. Even when ideally situated, and when both the housing and sanitation are quite satisfactory (I am now speaking from actual personal experience), the rate of infant mortality is often much higher than that of the poorest parts of the East End of London.
 - (c) The infant mortality of Malta is very high; averaging, for the past fifteen years, about 210 per 1,000 births. Yet its sanitation is quite up-to-date; and there is practically no industrial employment of mothers. Comparing Malta with the towns of Sicily and of Southern Italy, although their sanitation is in an extremely backward condition indeed; yet the infant mortality of the latter is much lower than that of Malta.

My own opinion is that the schools for mothers have provided the key to the solution of the problem: "Feed the expectant and nursing mother with an adequate supply of wholesome food, so that she may be able to feed her baby at the breast." I believe that also explains the low infant mortality obtaining among the Jews and the Irish.

J. MCGHEE.

SOCIALISM AND FREETHOUGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although the *Freethinker's* special province is the exposure of religious fraud and the emancipation of the people from the religious superstitions which enervate and impoverish them, yet there are economic superstitions equally baneful, because the free expression of honest thought is now impossible except for the few who possess economic independence. And so I was very glad to read Mr. Thos. A. Jackson's article on the above subject in your issue of to-day, and thus learn so many details about the famous Karl Marx.

Mr. Jackson, however, concludes with the categorical statement that "every genuine Socialist *must* be a Freethinker," which is clearly meaningless unless we know just what the terms used connote. I certainly do not limit my definition of a Socialist to those only who accept the Marxian economic philosophy, any more than I limit my definition of a Freethinker to those only who accept the religious philosophy of our respected Editor. A Socialist seems to me to be one who sees the folly and injustice of our present social system, and thinks they can best be remedied by collective ownership and management of industry; while a Freethinker seems to me to be one who has enough independence of character to think out his opinions for himself, and who abjures all authority in the exercise of his reason or the expression of his views, and is, moreover, eager to allow the same freedom of thought and expression to those who differ from him.

In view of those two definitions, it is certainly not true that every Socialist must be a Freethinker. There are many degrees in Socialism, e.g., a man may believe in nationalizing the railways, the mines, and the shipping, in addition to what is already nationalized, viz., the Army and the Navy and the Post Office, without going any further; so far he would be a Socialist, without any reference to his belief in a God or the reverse. Besides that, if we had a complete system

of State Socialism—every form of industry under the control of State officials—it is true that we should all be sure of good food, clothing, and shelter, so long as we behaved ourselves in accordance with the regulations, as in the Army and Navy now; but I very much fear that our freedom of thought and expression would not be nearly so great as in the present economic variety show.

Since the War broke out, we have had a fairly good experience of the tyranny and inefficiency of a socialistic bureaucracy, which have been endured solely because we are seriously threatened by an infinitely worse tyranny in the hands of a German bureaucracy.

And when we trace the present disparities of wealth to their source, they are found to rest on the two great monopolies of land and banking, causing enormous increments of unearned wealth to fall into the hands of a few privileged persons. A National Bank, furnishing banking facilities at their true labour cost of half per cent., would give us a non-interest-bearing currency. The land could then be nationalized by buying out its present owners, who would soon cease to enjoy unearned incomes, because the money they received would have lost its unjust power of automatic increase. So far, then, I am a Socialist; and as I acknowledge no authorities in forming my views on any subject, I am also a genuine Freethinker.

September 2, 1917. G. O. WARREN, MAJOR (retired).

Obituary.

It was with sincere regret that we learned recently of the death of Mr. George Taylor, of Liverpool, a man whose devotion to Freethought was well known and appreciated. We refrained from saying anything at the time, as we were informed, that a Church of England Service had been conducted at the cremation, which took place at Anfield Cemetery. On inquiry, we learned that this was done at the instance of Mrs. Taylor, against the desire of the dead man and also in spite of the protest of his son, who would, naturally and properly, have liked to see his father's wishes carried out. Unfortunately, the power of the next of kin in this matter is absolute; and where religious prejudice overcomes one's respect for the memory and the expressed wish of the dead, he or she orders matters to his or her liking. For ourselves, we can only regret that so sturdy a Freethinker was exposed to this last insult. Mr. Taylor made no secret of his opinions while living; he was prompt and generous in the support he gave to Freethought propaganda; and his death removes a much-respected member from the ranks of Liverpool Freethinkers.—C. C.

We regret to report the death of Mr. Alfred Ford, of Rotherhithe, in the sixty-sixth year of his age. He was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, and a great admirer of the late G. W. Foote. He had a long and painful illness, which he endured with remarkable fortitude, and during which he availed himself of every opportunity to express his Freethought convictions. He had two sons in the Army, one of whom was killed some time ago. The funeral took place at Brockley Cemetery on Tuesday afternoon, September 4, when a Secular Service was conducted. He had asked his friend, Mr. G. Hollamby, to see that he was buried "without any of the men of God stepping in." "They had me at my birth and at my wedding," he added, "but I don't want them to have me at my death." We tender the widow and family our sincere sympathy in their bereavement.—J. T. L.

With deep regret I record the death of another young Freethinker, Private Robert William Warner, aged twenty-one, of Gateshead, who was killed in action on August 10. Decayed the son of Mrs. Alice and the late George Warner, both pronounced Freethinkers, the latter being well known locally as an outdoor advocate of Freethought in Newcastle. Young Warner was of a more retiring disposition than his father, but his cheery voice and happy countenance will be greatly missed. Readers of the *Freethinker* will sympathize with his sorrowing mother and stepfather, Mr. Jas. Blackhall, in their sad bereavement.—J. G. B.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

MR. A. D. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, Sept. 20, at 7.30.

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, E. Burke, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, E. Burke, a Lecture.

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

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

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 3.30, Percy S. Wilde, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 7, Mr. Miller, "Charles Bradlaugh: His Life and Work."

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

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