

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. XXXVII.—No. 40

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1917

PRICE TWOPENCE

CONTENTS.

	Page.
Peace and War.—The Editor - - - - -	625
God and the War.—J. T. Lloyd - - - - -	626
A Friend of Shelley.—Minnermus - - - - -	627
The Invisible Demon King.—Arthur B. Moss - - - - -	628
Doing His Bit.—P. A. - - - - -	629
Reflections - - - - -	630
A False Quest.—Harry Shaw - - - - -	630
Acid Drops - - - - -	631
To Correspondents - - - - -	633
"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.—Chapman Cohen - - - - -	633
Sugar Plums - - - - -	633
New Testament Legends for Young Readers.—F. J. Gould - - - - -	634
The Myth of God.—E. Egerton Stafford - - - - -	635
"We Don't Want to Fight, but"..... John McMillan - - - - -	637
Letters to the Editor—Prejudice, 637; Atheist or Agnostic? - - - - -	638
Notice of Meetings - - - - -	638

Views and Opinions.

Peace and War.

Mr. Asquith, in his speech at Leeds on September 22, struck a sound note in the following passage:—

A peace however well initiated by the necessary ethnical and geographical changes, will not be worth many years' purchase if it permits the opening or re-opening of an era of what I may call veiled warfare. It is immaterial by what methods, whether of preparation or precaution, or in what form, naval, military, diplomatic or economic, the disturbing and disruptive forces are allowed to operate. *We must banish once for all from our maxims the time-worn fallacy that if you wish for peace you must make ready for war.*

The italics in the above passage are ours, and they are emphasized because the concluding sentence represents a real advance in political thinking. As we have said time after time, and long before this War began, the notion that you can secure peace by everybody getting ready for war is a psychological and political absurdity. No people in their senses would submit to the burden of preparation for war unless they thought war probable. And the longer preparations are continued, the more complete they become, the stronger and more compulsive becomes the psychological atmosphere, without which war would be almost an impossibility. To think that peace can be maintained by everybody being stronger than everybody else is a banality of which only a politician or a parson could be capable.

* * *

A New Starting-Point.

If, then, we are really bent on preventing a recurrence of the present world catastrophe, our duty is clear, and the broad lines of our future policy plain. This is to create in each country a sentiment, not in favour of getting more battleships, or more guns, or more men than anyone else, but the creation of a sentiment, a public spirit, to which the very idea of war shall be repellant. And in this direction we have an obvious point of departure. It is useless trying to convert the older men of the present generation. In the mass, their minds are

wedded to the "time-worn fallacy" denounced by Mr. Asquith. Under present conditions we may find our attempts to convert younger men partly frustrated by irrelevant talk about the necessity for prosecuting the War with vigour, etc., all of which may be admitted, but which remain quite irrelevant to the point at issue. That point is not how we are to finish the present War, but how we are to prevent future ones. And, we repeat, there is here a plain point of departure from the admittedly evil traditions of the past. *Let us commence with the children.* No one will claim that the children in our elementary schools will be needed in the present War. No one expects the War to last so long that the present generation of school children will be drafted into the Army. It follows, then, that every attempt to deliberately familiarize the minds of children with ideas of world empire, aggressive nationalism, with war, or militarism generally, is to furnish material for future wars. So long as warfare is believed to be an expression of national greatness and strength, instead of a proof of national weakness and blundering, war will be inevitable. The world has hitherto followed one line of education, with deplorable results. If we are to profit from the present War, we can only do so by pursuing a different policy. * * *

Mobilizing the Schools.

We are indebted to the *Nation* for directing our attention to a recent article in the *Teachers' World* which exemplifies in a first-rate manner "How Not to Do It." This particular issue of the *Teachers' World* is devoted to lessons of "Endurance," which is quite a good thing in its way. But the peculiarly sinister thing is the advocacy of the mobilization of the childish mind for the purpose of carrying on the War. School children are to be encouraged—"encouraged" by teachers means, with the children, moral compulsion—to write letters to the men at the Front, telling them to fight on until Germany is beaten, that everyone at home is resolved to endure until victory is won, etc. Very young children may copy a letter from the teacher's blackboard, the older ones will get a little help from the teachers, and so on. "A million letters sent now to our gallant fighting men may make all the difference." Now, do not let us be mistaken. We are not arguing that Germany should not be beaten; we are not arguing that we should not endure to the end, we do not deny that a German victory would be a disaster to the whole world. We merely protest against this kind of thing being done in our elementary schools. If we are fighting for the future of the race, let us begin with the future of the coming generation. We do not believe that our soldiers need this stimulating by unreal letters from children concerning matters which they do not and cannot understand. A childish letter, filled with childish talk and childish news, will come to the soldier in the fighting line like a gleam of paradise, and bring a real inspiration to "carry on" and preserve the homeland from a repetition of the present miseries. A letter from a child filled with stilted talk about a "German peace," "We're proud of you," "We'll see it through with

you;" will, and ought to sadden, if not disgust every-one who receives it. * * *

Save the Children.

One of the deadliest charges against Germany is not that its politicians have told lies and have broken treaties—neither thing is unique in the history of the world. The heaviest indictment was that drawn by Liebhricht in the words: "you have used the schools as a training stable for the Army." For years Germany had prostituted the minds of its children by militarizing the schools. Its military drill and discipline, its worship of the uniform, its distortion of history, had all the one end and aim. And we decline to believe that that which has wrought such evil in Germany can be without evil effects in Britain. We elders are bound, in some way or other, to hear the brunt of the War. We cannot escape it; we have no right to escape it. If we do not all share the actual dangers of the fighting line, we cannot escape war's brutalizing and demoralizing effects. Nor can we altogether save the children from its demoralizing influences. They must suffer from the relaxation of home life, and from the pervasive influence of the War spirit. But we ought, at least, to avoid lending our aid to the process. If we know anything at all of the minds of our soldiers then we can safely say that the vast majority of them would support us in saying, keep the children out of it. Let them know as little as possible about the War. Keep their minds as sweet and as clean as you can. Don't use the schools as training stables for militarism. * * *

The Truth About War.

We agree with the *Nation* that it is our duty to keep Prussianism out of the schools. We have no fear whatever of the *Prussian* getting there, but we are not so certain about keeping out his methods. We do not want the children to associate War with high ideals of sacrifice, endurance, nobility of conduct, and the supreme expression of devotion to country. Every one of these qualities can be better expressed and developed in connection with other aspects of life, and should be so expressed. We would rather they learned with Shelley:

War is a kind of superstition; the parade of arms and badges corrupts the imagination of men. How far more appropriate would be the symbols of an inconsolable grief, muffled drums, and melancholy music, and arms reversed, the livery of sorrow.....War waged for whatever motive extinguishes the sentiment of reason and justice in the mind. The motive is forgotten or only adverted to in a mechanical and habitual manner. A sentiment of confidence in brute force and in a contempt of death and danger is considered as the highest virtue, when in truth they are merely the means and the instruments capable of being perverted to destroy the cause they were assumed to promote.

If we are intelligently in earnest in a desire to end the era of war, let us take care that we paint war in its true colours. Hitherto it has lived on lies. Historians, poets, artists, teachers, have all lied about it—about its glory, and greatness, and nobility. Why not try telling the truth about it? Sacrifice, courage, devotion to duty, love of country, have no necessary connection with war. They are born of social life, and find their healthiest expression therein. War does but exploit these qualities to their own deterioration. To be alive to this fact is essential to real reform. It is above all essential to the true teacher. A glorification of militarism is bad enough in the outside world. It is still worse in the schools. The child of the present is the man of the future. A truism, and yet one that contains a truth too often ignored.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

God and the War.

THE Rev. W. Halliday Thompson, Vicar of St. Stephen's, Ealing, often lectures at Gresham College; and is generally known as a broad-minded, scholarly man, whose love of truth and fairplay make him eminently worth listening to on any subject. Such a clergyman, we may be sure, will only employ for the defence of God and Christianity the very soundest arguments available, and if he fails to win our assent to what he believes to be the truth, it will not be his fault, but that of the inherent weakness of his case. In his parish magazine he recently discussed the problem of war from various points of view, and we gladly admit, at the very outset, that the tone of the discussion is everything that could be desired. We deal with the article as reproduced in the *Middlesex County Times* for September 8. War is undoubtedly a most perplexing problem, especially to those who believe in the absolute and invincible sovereignty of God. Mr. Thompson declares that war, like every other event, has its causes and its meaning, and that "every one who has a theory of the Universe, must find some place in his theory for war." Broadly speaking, there are but two theories of the Universe, the Theistic and the Atheistic. Mr. Thompson mentions Agnosticism as another theory; but, on his own showing, Agnosticism is not a theory of the Universe, but a sorrowful confession that "we have not and can never have sufficient knowledge to form any theory at all," and, therefore, Agnosticism is dismissed as being of no account. With regard to the Atheistic or mechanical theory, Mr. Thompson has no remark of an illuminating character to make. He labours under the delusion that if all were matter and there were no spirit, mechanism or order, law and system, would be impossible; but he does not tell us why they would be impossible. He says:—

Mechanism is surely a conception which implies and necessitates mind; matter alone in any world, and in such a vast and diverse world as ours, seems incapable of giving rise to anything like machinery. From a mechanical point of view, war simply means that the machinery is not running smoothly, the wheels and cogs are out of place. There is no more to be said. The machine has no purpose, now it is out of gear, may be it is running down.

Judging from that extract we must reluctantly infer that Mr. Thompson does not understand the mechanistic conception of the Universe. He seems to think that to Atheists the world is a machine in the same sense that a plough, a reaper, or a locomotive is a machine—a something constructed, as a watch is constructed, by a mind external to itself. It is true that a machine of that kind does imply a maker; but his study of science ought to have shown Mr. Thompson that, according to the mechanistic view, the laws of mechanics, physics, and chemistry satisfactorily account, not for the construction or creation of the Universe, but for its evolution from the primordial nebulae, and that mind, like everything else, is a product of that process. Now, war is only a phase of the natural struggle for existence, modified by mind in the lower stages of its human development, and taking a comprehensive survey of its history, we learn that it has made for the Survival of the Fittest. At the root of it are ambition, jealousy, greed, lust of power, all quite human qualities. We are often told that the present War is to end war for all time to come; but there is absolutely nothing to suggest that so happy a result is in the least likely to be realized.

Mr. Thompson, strangely enough, candidly acknowledges the entire unprofitableness of all attempts to explain the War from the Divine side, saying:—

We have all sorts of wild and outrageous opinions

dogmatically supplying us with God's views of the War. Most of them do not hesitate to begin with the assumption that God sent the War. How consistently with the principle of Divine goodness, they reached that conviction it would be difficult to say. Others tell us that it is punishment sent upon us for our sins; it may be a punishment for sin, but only in a very indirect fashion can it be believed that the whip is wielded by perfect love. We have no justification whatever for asserting that all calamities are sent to punish us, and none, therefore, for believing or saying it about this or any other war.

This is thoroughly good sense, at any rate. Mr. Thompson takes all the responsibility, and boldly says that "we know it was not God but man who caused the War." "Then," he adds, "we are on safe grounds." Again:—

It is an intolerable thing to intelligent faith to be told that war comes from God, and is a Divine punishment upon nations and people; it is a presumption of the worst kind to read divine intentions into what we do not like, and to interpret our misfortunes by bringing in the name of the Most Holy. It is no worse to say that God sent the War than to say such a foolish thing as that God sent us a week's rain because we had worked on our allotments during Sunday. That is ignorant theology of the worst and most harmful type.

On this point the vicar is most emphatic: "One thing is certain, man caused the War, and not God; let us hold to that consistently, and do not let us listen to those who arrogate to themselves membership in the privy council of heaven." So far so good, and we are in complete agreement. But, after all, this species of reasoning only lands a clergyman in more and greater difficulties than it surmounts. The vital question is, Where does God come in at all, or what becomes of the theological dogma of the absolute Divine sovereignty? We are not aware whether Mr. Thompson is an evolutionist or a creationist, all we know is that he regards the Universe as being, in some sense, the work of God. The reverend gentleman is not ignorant of the terrible struggle that has characterized the ascent of life, and of how the law of Natural Selection has secured the Survival of the Fittest. The assumption is that all animals are automata, simply obedient to instincts planted within them by their Maker, over which they have no control whatever, while man received from the same Creator the awful gift of freedom, which enables him to set God at defiance and to thwart all his purposes. That is to say, God is supreme autocrat throughout the Universe, until we reach man, who possesses the power not only to ignore his sovereignty, but also to successfully resist it. In other words, man is greater and stronger than his Creator and Governor, and can go his own way in spite of the Divine will. For all wars among animals God alone is responsible, for they can only do his will. Mr. Thompson does not openly say this, but his doctrine of human liberty inevitably implies it. If God is not directly responsible for human wars, it follows that his relation to man is totally different from his relation to the rest of the Universe, which is flatly inconceivable. We do not hesitate to assert that the doctrine of the freedom of the human will is at once a contemptible and futile device to relieve the Supreme Being of all responsibility for the evils and wrongs so frightfully prevalent in the world, of which war is by no means the worst.

To be a consistent teacher, Mr. Thompson must shed his belief in a Divine Creator and Sovereign. Were he but an Atheist, how eminently true and wise the following observations would be:—

The War means the necessity of examination, not only of individual temper and aims, but of the plans upon which society is based. This present War is full of

antagonisms and enmities, there is but little harmony in our social organizations, here in England, as well as in Germany, and it is just these antagonisms between classes and strata of people which give rise to struggle and strife, whether national or civil. Our present system is hopelessly breaking down, and so the foundations must be wrong. We need to revise and reconstruct them, and the War is the pain which warns us of the disease.

Unfortunately, the article closes thus: "When we make a big effort ourselves to redeem ourselves from the passions which are at the root of all war, and to redeem the world from war, God will be on our side to help and inspire." That is the usual conclusion of all parsonic utterances, and any other conclusion would give the profession away. Our surprise is that so sensible a man as Mr. Thompson is capable of such gigantic inconsistency. If we do our very best, God will be on our side to help and inspire; but how does the vicar know that? Big human efforts are Divinely blessed, while little ones enjoy no benediction; but history contains not a shred of evidence either way. Furthermore, history does bear witness to the fact that belief in God has been directly responsible for numerous most bloody struggles, and that the religion of the Cross has often seriously checked the progress of the cause of peace. In every European war, particularly in the present one, the God of peace is appealed to by both sides as the Lord of Hosts, and the object of the horrible bloodshed is said to be the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. It is our firm conviction that had Buddhism won Europe, instead of Christianity, war would have ceased long ago, and the essential brotherhood of the race would have been established on a rational and permanent foundation.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Friend of Shelley.

We have a kindness for Leigh Hunt.—*Macaulay.*

AMID thousands of unloved and obscure graves at Kensal Green Cemetery is one with the arresting inscription: "Write me as one who loved his fellow men." This is the last resting-place of Leigh Hunt, the friend of Shelley and Byron and so many poets, and himself a singer of no mean quality.

Of his ancestry, Leigh Hunt presents a delightful picture in his *Autobiography*, stating that on his mother's side they were "all sailors and rough subjects with a mitigation of Quakerism," as on his father's side "they were all creoles and claret drinkers, very polite and clerical." Hunt's father was a clergyman, with an incorrigible propensity for conviviality, and the earliest recollections of his distinguished son were associated with the King's Bench prison, in which his father was placed for debt.

Leigh Hunt was educated, like Charles Lamb and Coleridge, at Christ's Hospital School, of which he has left a pleasant impression. "I am grateful to the Hospital," he wrote, "for having bred me up in old cloisters, for its having made me acquainted with the languages of Homer and Ovid, and for its having secured to me, on the whole, a well-trained and cheerful boyhood. It pressed no superstition on me." For some time after his school-days Hunt, characteristically, haunted the bookstalls and wrote verse. His temperament unfitted him for commercialism, and Dickens has satirized, somewhat unkindly, his failings in "Horace Skimpole" in *Bleak House*.

At twenty-three years of age Leigh Hunt joined his brother, John, in starting the *Examiner*. The motto of the paper was taken from the caustic lines of Swift, "Party is the madness of the many and the gain of a

few." During its fourteen years of strenuous existence the paper endured every species of good and bad fortune, and Leigh Hunt and his brother were sent to prison. The *Morning Post* published a fulsome article describing the Prince Regent (afterwards King George IV.) as an "Adonis in loveliness," and the *Examiner* staff dipped their pens in vitriol, and retorted that this "Adonis" was a fat man of fifty, a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who had just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity. The two brothers were prosecuted, and fined £500 each with two years' imprisonment.

Leigh Hunt's incarceration was not a holiday, nor was it a silent meditation among the tombs. He could not go beyond the prison walls, but he had rooms furnished by himself, and he enjoyed the society of his wife and family, and had frequent visitors. The learned Jeremy Bentham came and played battledore with him. The imprisonment may have affected Hunt's health, but it was a comedy compared to the treatment of Holyoake and Foote, condemned to their cells and the prison-yard. Besides, Hunt had facilities for writing, and composed *A Feast of the Poets*, *The Story of Rimini*, in addition to doing a vast amount of journalistic work.

Hunt's imprisonment brought him into unusual prominence. He had known Charles Lamb from boyhood, and Shelley some years. He now made the acquaintance of Keats, Byron, and Hazlitt. Indeed, he was always happy and fortunate in his friendships. Later in life he added to the circle the names of Carlyle, Dickens, Macaulay, Lytton, and Lord Houghton.

For this reason Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* is most excellent company, for he always writes naturally and unaffectedly, and his description of his famous friends is vastly entertaining. His accounts of his Italian travels, too, is an example of the best kind of such writing. His humour is never forced. A typical example is his youthful recollection of how he used, after a childish indulgence in bad language, to think with a shudder, when he received any mark of favour, "Ah! they little think I'm the boy who said damn."

An omniverous reader, Hunt secured the rare commendation of Macaulay for his "Catholic taste." Of all authors, indeed, and of most readers, Leigh Hunt had the keenest eye for merit, and the warmest appreciation of it wherever found. An active politician, he was never blind to the abilities of an opponent. Blameless himself in morals, he could admire the wit of Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Wycherley; and a Freethinker, he could see both wisdom and beauty in the old divines. It is to his credit that this universal knowledge, instead of puffing him up, only moved him to impart it. Next to the pleasure he took in books was that he derived from pointing out to others the pleasure in them. Witness his *Wit and Humour* and *Imagination and Fancy*, two of the finest and most readable handbooks in English literature. Hunt was always genuine in his criticisms. It was nothing to him whether an author was new or old, an Englishman or a foreigner, for his sympathies crossed all frontiers. Nor did he shrink from any literary comparison between two writers when he thought it appropriate. Thackeray had this same outspoken honesty, and in speaking of Fenimore Cooper's hero in the "Leather-Stocking" novels he says, "I think he is better than any of Scott's lot."

Few critics would deny Leigh Hunt's talent for poetry. There is no doubt that his verse had a very strong influence on his contemporaries, and that it inspired music much better than itself. After all, the poems, or some of them, form the only part of Leigh Hunt's voluminous

literary work likely to survive. Perhaps one of his happiest lyrics is the charming trifle addressed to Jane Welsh, afterwards Mrs. Carlyle:—

Jenny kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in!
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old—but add,
Jenny kissed me.

Some of his sonnets are excellent. One of the best is that on the Nile, written in rivalry with Shelley and Keats, commencing:—

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream.

This includes the magnificent description of—

The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands,

which is not only a very fine line, but the discovery of a cadence which has been imitated ever since. Hunt's sonnet on "A Lock of Milton's Hair" is a superb example of his enthusiasm for great writers:—

It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honoured pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers, when he leant blank-eyed,
And saw in fancy Adam and his bride,
With their rich locks, or his own Delphic wreath.

In "Abou Ben Adhem," the poem that has found its way into every anthology and every heart, he shows an unexpected depth and tenderness. It is Ariel turned Prospero, and showing in the transformation how antic and irresponsible a spirit Ariel is. It is appropriate that on Hunt's tombstone should appear lines from that fine poem which alone should make his name immortal. Hunt's first claim on posterity is genius, but he was more than a mere writer, for he fought in the Army of Human Liberation. He loved Liberty without misgiving, and Liberty, loving him in return, has crowned his grave with honour.

MIMNERMUS.

The Invisible Demon King.

For several weeks past my sleep at night has been very much disturbed by dreams—mostly unpleasant—but always extremely interesting while they lasted. Often when I have laid my head upon the pillow I have seen a strange light through the venetian blinds, and heard the propellers of an aeroplane as it glided along in the still air of a summer's night; and as I turned on my right side to get a more comfortable position before dozing gradually off to sleep, I have been suddenly aroused by what sounded like the booming of distant guns. When, however, I have examined into the cause of this startling noise, I have soon satisfied myself that it was only some foolish person a few doors off who had shut the door of his house with a quite unnecessary and violent bang. Sometimes a banging noise seemed to proceed from a covering up of my right ear, and then I would turn over on to my back and try to get some sleep in this position, but always with the consciousness that whatever sleep I got would be disturbed by dreams. One night while I lay drowsily in this position I had a most interesting vision. I dreamt that I had a visit from the Invisible Demon King. He came and stood by my bedside, and entered into a long conversation with me on the all-absorbing topic of the Great War, and I found, to my astonishment, that his views on the subject corresponded very closely to those of my own. I beckoned him to take a chair, and when I said that

I could see him quite plainly, he said, with a smile: "In your mind's eye, Horatio," and I was not at all surprised to hear him quote from Shakespeare. Further, he explained in a very affable way, that he understood that most Freethinkers were "able to see through him." When I asked him whether he was the same demon that appeared in the garden of Eden six thousand years ago and tempted Madame Eve with an apple? or the more ferocious Devil who afflicted such terrible sufferings upon poor old Job? or whether he was the more autocratic demon who commanded Jesus to transform stones into bread? or, worse still, whether he was the fiendish spirit that Christians said had become the eternal stoker in hell? he replied, with a merry twinkle in his eye, that he could see quite plainly that I was well acquainted with the malignant falsehoods Christians had circulated about him in all the centuries of the Christian faith, and he was glad of an opportunity of contradicting, in the most emphatic way, all the infamous lies that had been told concerning him. When I said that I would take the earliest opportunity of acquainting my friends of this denial he seemed quite pleased.

"But," I said, "will you be good enough to inform me what part you have taken in bringing about the terrible War which is now raging all over Europe, and what you would do if you had the power to bring it to a speedy termination?"

At this point he rose from his seat, and in the most polite fashion said: "I am truly glad, my friend, that you have asked me these questions, and I will try and answer them with perfect candour and honesty. I had nothing to do with bringing about this terrible War. I have never been consulted by any of the belligerents from the moment of its inception to the present time."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "Then you have not been in conflict with 'The Invisible King' of Mr. Wells' imagination, or any of the Gods, ancient or modern, concerning this matter?"

"Certainly not," replied my mysterious visitor; "as I have said, I have taken no part in the matter. All the plotting and scheming have emanated from the fertile brains of Kings, Kaisers, and Czars; of Ambassadors, and Politicians, and Statesmen, and spies of all nationalities, and of the great military authorities—they have done it all. It is to their machinations that all this crime and suffering and misery have been brought about, and terrible wars like this will never cease until the people become intelligent enough to understand their absolute futility and uselessness, and build up a civilization founded upon reason and human well-being."

I was going to interrupt by saying those were entirely my own sentiments, when my enlightened visitor smiled and continued: "But do not suppose for one moment that this result will be brought about in a short space of time. The processes of evolution are slow, very slow; but subsequent generations of men will live to see the realization in some measure of this noble ideal."

"Well spoken, my friend," I exclaimed; "I never imagined for a moment that you entertained such ideas, although I have always been satisfied that religious folk have grossly misrepresented your thoughts and aspirations. But never mind; I will try and put the matter right as soon as I get an opportunity of addressing my fellow-countrymen. But tell me, what part do you think the gods have played in this great War?"

"None whatever, and for a very sufficient reason—they have no existence apart from the brains of the men who conceive them and believe in them."

"Is it possible," I exclaimed with delight, "that you have no belief in the gods—that you are an Atheist?"

"I am, most assuredly. Why, if any of the gods existed who had infinite power and infinite goodness,

would he not have stopped the terrible slaughter by the exercise of his power?"

"That is exactly what I have said a thousand times."

"Yes, and that is exactly what any thoughtful person would have said who gave the matter a moment's consideration. A good God would never have allowed the War to have begun, let alone the awful crime that has followed in its wake—the horrible carnage, the wholesale massacre of women and children, and old men well-nigh verging on the grave. No, he could never have allowed it. His whole nature would have revolted against it. Neither gods nor devils have anything to do with these things. They are entirely the work of man. You may be sure of that."

"Thank you for this assurance," I said. "And I suppose, then, that man alone can supply the remedy?"

"Certainly," he replied, with a nod. He seemed, however, to speak more in a whisper, and I had great difficulty in following him. Presently his voice became so feeble that I could not hear him at all.

All of a sudden I heard a tremendous crash. I opened my eyes and looked around. My mysterious visitor had vanished, and in his place my daughter was by my bedside, telling me that I had better get up as there was a moonlight air-raid on; and what I had heard in reality was the falling of bombs on London, that some poor creatures at that very moment were being done to death by the murderers in the air. So I got up and dressed myself, and sought shelter in the passage; but when the raid was all over, I turned my thoughts to the strange vision I had had, and my conversation with the more modern representative of the old-fashioned theological conception of the Invisible Demon King. It was strange, passing strange, my friends, was it not?

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Doing His Bit.

A STUDY FROM LIFE OF AN ENGLISH CLERGYMAN.

Psalm lviii. which ventures to support the idea of reprisals, has been placed under the ban of the Church. The verses in the Psalm to which particular objection is taken are as follows:—

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous. He is a God that judgeth the earth.

He is a doctrinarian whose life consists of the things which are of no real importance, and have no relationship with the actual living world.

The light of reason cannot penetrate the intense darkness of his mind. His brain, under the influence of that deadly narcotic, Orthodox Christianity, refuses to function. The bones of the young manhood of Europe are bleaching, and the soul of Europe is perishing, but he pursues his daily routine quite contented in the knowledge that his soul is saved.

What are the death-throes of Europe compared to the doctrines of "The Blessed Trinity," "The Real Presence," and "The Virgin Birth"?

These and a hundred other theological dogmas are of more importance than the lives of millions of human beings.

He conceives God as an English clergyman—an enlarged edition of himself, very jealous about the exact significance of the doctrines of "The Real Presence," and "The Holy Trinity," a God who presides over the War, keeping a "Fatherly" eye upon the destinies of his people—a God to whom he can pray for a victory that will exterminate his enemies, but who would be righteously indignant if his people continued to sing Psalm lviii.

The will of God can only be made manifest through his divinely appointed ministers the English clergy. Knowledge is given only unto him, and he expounds with unlimited self-

assurance, and an air of infinite condescension the mysteries of God and the soul, life, death, and immortality, to men who have faced the hell of modern warfare without flinching, but he knows nothing of their souls or their lives.

He has never really lived, but he dogmatizes about life; never struggled for existence, but he minimizes the difficulties of those who have; never faced the ordeal of battle, but he offers his patronage and advice: "Be strong and of good courage" to those who have been through hell for him and his class.

He sings a hymn of praise as they go to their calvary. Murder, rapine, and hunger are stalking hand-in-hand through Europe; death rains from the firmament above, and crawls on treacherous feet in the waters beneath; little children, mothers, and wives are crushed to pulp; strong men are maimed; the human *debris* is scattered throughout the land. "In Europe is a voice heard—lamentation and weeping."

Bloody sunset is succeeded by still more bloody dawn, but he is "always merry and bright" in the consciousness that God has revealed his purpose to *him*, and saved *his* soul.

His courage and equanimity are such that, unmoved by the death-pangs of Humanity, he can find time to "do his bit" for righteousness and justice.

The wickedness of David has moved him to righteous indignation; he has placed Psalm lviii. under the "ban of Holy Church"; but he *still* administers "Holy Communion" to the profiteers.

Truly the way of the righteous clergyman passeth all understanding; verily, he moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.

P. A.

Reflections.

I CONCLUDE that all the laws with which a minister swells his portfolio are vain documents that can neither make us live nor prevent us from living.

It is well-nigh a matter of indifference whether we are governed one way or another, and ministers are only imposing because of their clothes and their carriages.

I have observed that the trade most natural to mankind is that of soldiering; it is the one towards which he is most carried by his instincts and his tastes, which are not all good. And apart from rare exceptions, of which I am one, man may be defined as an animal with a musket. Give him a handsome uniform and the hope of going to fight, he will be content. The military condition has this also in keeping with human nature, that one is never forced to think; and it is clear that we were not made to think.

Thought is a disease peculiar to certain individuals, and could not be propagated without bringing about promptly the end of the race. Soldiers live in bands, and man is a sociable animal. They wear costumes of blue and white, blue and red, gray and blue, ribbons, medals, plumes, and cockades; and these give to them the same prestige with women that the cock has with the hen. They go forth marauding and to war, and man is naturally thieving, libidinous, destructive, and sensible to glory.

It is astounding, Tournebroche, my son, that war and the chase, the mere thought of which ought to overwhelm us with shame and remorse in recalling to us the miserable necessities of our nature and our wickedness, should, on the contrary, serve as matter for the pride of men; that Christians should continue to honour the trade of butcher and headsmen when it is hereditary in the family; and that, in effect, among civilized peoples the greatness of the citizens is measured by the quantity of murder and carnage they carry in their blood.

I hold man free in his acts because my religion teaches it, but outside the Church (which is unequivocal), there is so little reason to believe in human liberty that I shudder in thinking of the verdicts of a justice that punishes actions of which the motives and the causes equally elude us, in which the will has often little part, and which are sometimes accomplished unconsciously.

Tournebroche, my son, consider that I am speaking of human justice, which is generally opposed and different to, the justice of God.

Judges do not sound the loins and do not read the heart, and the justice is crude and superficial. They are men; that is to say, feeble and corruptible, gentle to the strong and pitiless to the weak. They consecrate in their sentences the cruellest social iniquities; and it is difficult to distinguish in this partiality, what comes from their personal baseness and what is imposed on them by the duty of their profession, this duty being, in reality, to support the State in what it has of evil as well as what it has of good; to watch over the conservation of public morals, whether they are good or bad. Furthermore, it should be said that the magistrate is the defender, by virtue of his function, not only of the current prejudices to which we are all subject, but also of the time-worn prejudices which are conserved in the laws after they have been effaced from our minds and habits. And there is not a spirit ever so little meditative and free that does not feel how much there is of Gothic in the law, while the judge has not the right to feel it.

By the very nature of their profession, judges are inclined to see a culprit in every prisoner; and their zeal is so terrible to certain European peoples that they have them assisted, in important cases, by citizens chosen by lot. From which it appears that chance, in its blindness, secures the life and liberty of the accused better than the enlightenment of the judges can. It is true that these impromptu bourgeois judges, being ignorant of the law, they are summoned, not to apply them, but simply to decide, in one word, if there be occasion to apply them. We are told that in assizes of this character, absurd results are sometimes given, but the peoples that possess these institutions, cling to them as to a highly precious protection. I easily believe it. And I understand the acceptance of verdicts, rendered in this fashion, which may be inept and cruel, but of which the absurdity and barbarity are, so to speak, attributable to nobody. Injustice seems tolerable when it is sufficiently incoherent to appear involuntary.

Just now, this officer, who has so strong a sentiment of justice, suspected me of belonging to a party of robbers. I so far disapprove of theft and assassination, that I cannot endure even the copy of them regularized by the laws; and it is painful for me to see that judges have found no better means of punishing robbers and homicides than by imitating them. For, after all, Tournebroche, my son, what are fines and the death penalty, if not robbery and assassination perpetrated with an august exactitude? And do you not see that our justice merely tends, in all its pride, to this shame of avenging an evil by an evil, a suffering by a suffering, and in doubling misdemeanours and crimes in the name of equilibrium and symmetry?

Customs have more force than laws. Gentleness of demeanour and sweetness of soul are the only remedies which can reasonably be applied to legal barbarity. For to correct laws by laws is to take a slow and uncertain route.

My son, I have always observed that the troubles of men come to them from their prejudices, as spiders and beetles come from the dimness of cellars, and from the dampness of vaults. It is good to flourish the broom and the brush a little in all the dark corners. It is good even to give a little blow of the pick here and there in the walls of the cellar and garden to frighten the vermin and prepare the necessary ruins.—*Anatole France, "The Sayings of Jerome Coignard."*

A False Quest.

Man strives for things that are not worth the striving for;
And in his strenuous search for something that his soul
Has set itself to seize, he misses that which makes
This life a thing to be desired, and sears his soul.
Or else, caught in the toils of never-ending strife
That soulless men have made the thing that should be life,
He fails to feel the soul-destroying subtle stream
That bears him onward, till at length the sea is reached,
And there, engulfed in waters, cold and turgid,
Too late, he seeks his soul to save.....the mocking sea
For ever hides his soulless corse beneath the waves,
And earth and sky join in the chorus of the lost.

HARRY SHAW.

Acid Drops.

What is sadly needed in connection with the controversy between Theism and Atheism, or between scientific Determinism and its opponents, is a work that shall clear away the mass of accumulated irrelevances, and place the problem before new readers in its essential terms. Anyone with time and ability to do this, would be performing a public service. But Theists so habitually misstate the points at issue, and writers and speakers so often follow them over a mass of irrelevances, that the essential question seldom emerges into a clear light. The consequence is, that critics of scientific Determinism are confirmed in their misstatements, and the newcomer is often inclined to give the whole thing up as hopeless.

Thus, in the *British Medical Journal* for September 15, there occurs a review of a work by Professor Haldane on *Organism and Environment as Illustrated by the Physiology of Breathing*. We have not yet read the work, but we note that Professor Haldane believes, "It is not from the data of physiology, and still more clearly not from those of the physical sciences that we derive our conception of God." So far, good. But we gather from the reviewer that Professor Haldane believes we can get from the facts of the conscious life some idea of Deity. Why? Because "the conception of life is just as inadequate in connection with personality as are the conceptions of matter and energy in connection with life." Now, this is an example of sheer irrelevancy. An Atheist may fully agree with what is said without his Atheism being in the least disturbed. Closer attention to the philosophy of science would have enabled both Professor Haldane and his reviewer to realize that our conception of matter and energy is intended to cover a specific group of phenomena, the conception of life to cover another group, and so on. To say, therefore, that one conception cannot do duty for another is to proclaim a mare's nest. And only ignorance or thoughtlessness concerning the nature of scientific conceptions can make such comments of importance. All it means is, that as "conscious personality" gives us a group of phenomena presenting new features, a new conception is required to cover all the facts. But that is true of every rise in the scale of natural complexity. It has simply nothing to do with the question of God.

Still, after that, we are not surprised at the reviewer ending his article with the banalistic remark, "The life of such a man as Charles Darwin is, in truth a standing proof of the existence of God." Why Charles Darwin more than Charles Peace? The personality of the one is no more baffling than is the other. We should much enjoy putting the man who wrote that sentence through a five minutes' examination. We do not think there would be much difficulty in showing it to be pure nonsense, nor would one be entitled to feel conceited over the performance.

Why is it that when men "find God" they repeat, like parrots, the stock "arguments" of the clergy? Mr. H. G. Wells is writing like a Christian Evidence lecturer, and Mr. Horatio Bottomley, who ought to know better, is "out-Heroding Herod." Referring to the risks from mines and submarines at sea, Mr. Bottomley adds that this takes place "in the year of Our Lord 1917—after two thousand years of Christianity—in the twentieth century of Human Civilization." Surely it is an insult to the general reader to presuppose that he has never heard of ancient civilizations. The present civilization is nothing to boast of, otherwise there would not be thirty millions of men ready to murder one another.

The Deanery of Windsor is the " cushiest " job in the Church of England, says the *Daily News*. The Dean has absolutely nothing to do except to preside over the Chapter (which also does nothing) and to supervise the chapel services. He has £2,000 a year, and a capital house in the very Garden of England. "Blessed be ye poor!"

The Australian Young Men's Christian Association has leased the Aldwych Theatre, and high-class plays and operas

will be produced. An up-to-date canteen and cinema and orchestra will be among the principal attractions. Old-fashioned Christians will rub their eyes and wonder if the Y.M.C.A. is not treading the primrose path to perdition.

"Bread is by no means an essential food," says Dr. Reinhardt-Rutland. The clergy will hasten to assure us that the expression, "Give us this day our daily bread," means something else.

"R. H. C.," who is on the staff of the *New Age*, is a consummate egotist. In his article on "Readers and Writers," which appeared in the issue for September 6, he girds with great vehemence at the Rationalists, and particularly at the works published by the R.P.A. He finds such writers as Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Eden Phillpotts "unfortunately limited by a nineteenth century Rationalism," which Rationalism he pronounces dead. Mr. R. B. Kerr declares, on the contrary, that "the twentieth century is even more rationalistic than the nineteenth." "R. H. C." is bound to admit that there are Rationalists even to-day, but he charges them with being old fashioned. In the estimation of "reasonable observers," they are said to have lost "atmosphere." That "R. H. C." has "atmosphere" goes without saying, though there is nothing in his articles to indicate his possession of it.

"R. H. C.'s" article betrays either deliberate dishonesty or crass ignorance. He either does not know what Rationalism is, or he intentionally misrepresents it. When he says "what has alone distinguished the great Rationalists has not been their reason, but their hostility to every other faculty than reason." That is a wickedly mendacious statement. No great Rationalist has ever been so unutterably foolish as to despise all mental faculties other than the intellect, and certainly neither Mr. Eden Phillpotts nor Mr. Arnold Bennett has been guilty of such folly. It is a pity that a publication of such high literary merits opens its columns to such unpardonable trash.

The poor bishops are always declaring that they spend their stipends in keeping up their positions, but the Bishop of Hereford is more frank, and admits that he has saved enough cash to be able to dispense with a pension.

Speaking of a reformed Second Chamber, Lord Burnham suggested that "true leaders of Labour" should have a place there. It would be more to the purpose if he had suggested the removal of the bishops.

Mr. Vince, a well-known local Free Churchman, died in the pulpit while preaching near Reading. Had he been a Freethought lecturer there would have been a terrible moral.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been speaking at Dundee on the need of a higher birth-rate. He forgot to mention that the Roman Catholic Church had filled Europe with monasteries and nunneries.

Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, says "the world is sick of this accursed war and of the hypocrisy that surrounds it." Yet Christian ecclesiastics consecrated the regimental colours and christened the battleships.

A newspaper paragraph advertises Rochester Cathedral crypt as a raid shelter. What Secularists those Christians are! In moments of real danger the last thing they think of is the value of prayer.

Modern Palestine cannot be said to be flowing with milk and honey, but a member of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force writes that "cigarettes are cheap, and each man is allowed a small quantity of beer." If a man does not like the food, he can buy from "a wide assortment" of tinned luxuries." There is also "a small lending library." It all sounds so tempting that there seems some risk of a new crusade.

Newspaper editors have been making headlines concerning a munition-maker who earned £12 a week. The editors do not make headlines on the subject of bishops' salaries.

"If the war lasts another fifty or sixty years," says Mr. Justice Darling, "there will be no priests or ministers left." Why not? The dear clergy are very tender of their precious skins.

The Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel, is an exceedingly resourceful man, who leaves no stone unturned in the attempt to draw people to his church. Recently he spent a whole Sunday with "the outsiders," visiting streets, parks, public-houses, and cinemas during the hours services were being conducted in churches and chapels. He found all such places, except the public-houses, crowded with all sorts and conditions of people. He entered seven or eight cinemas, all of which were simply packed. The very sight of such throngs made his heart heavy with regret and pity. Of course, in thus spending the day, "he left the preachers and the saints severely alone and consorted with publicans and sinners." These sinners he first noticed were the Bohemians, who "were there in their thousands, knowing and caring nothing about the churches, and with no regard whatever for the Sabbath or for worship." Then he characterized as "the gipsies of our modern civilization," and the questions he asked were: "Are these the pioneers of the future, or the waste, the by-product, of the past? Do they represent the England that is coming, or is the true England in and of the Churches?" We know what his answer would be.

Mr. Phillips conversed with many working-men and women, and "found no doubt at all about God or religion. No working-man had anything but good to say of the churches," though he never darkened their doors. With how many working-men did the reverend gentleman get into conversation? If he addressed himself to more than two or three, we should doubt the accuracy of his report. We know thousands of working-people in London who are positively hostile to the Churches; and it is well known that the workers of Woolwich vigorously opposed the Anglican Crusade recently held there.

A writer in the *Star* says, "Frederick the Great and Bismarck have imposed upon them (the German people) a hideous religion of force." There is some confusion of thought in the remark. Frederick was a Freethinker and imposed no "religion." Bismarck was a Protestant, but was concerned with politics, even in his encounters with the Jesuits. Protestantism in Germany is derived from Martin Luther, and Catholicism is "imposed" from Rome.

Over ten million books and magazines have been sent to the troops through the generosity of the public and by the agency of the Post Office. If these are all read by the soldiers, it does not seem probable that the millions of Bibles are perused also.

"The world still is God's and not the Devil's," says a writer in the *Daily Mail*. The sentiment is familiar in the sermons of the Bishop of London, and in the utterances of Negro theologians.

Much spiritual meaning has been read into the red triangle sign of the Young Men's Christian Association. It is therefore, amusing to recall that the trade mark of Bass's beer is also a red triangle.

The great religious revival which the clergy said was to be the outcome of the War is conspicuous by its absence. There is, however, a great increase in petty thefts by new offenders, and the Courts have been kept unduly busy with cases of war-time pilfering.

The Vice-Chairman of the Council of St. Anne's Home, Bridlington, the institution in which the soldiers revolted against the regulation compelling attendance at a religious service twice daily, with the alternative of going to bed, has written a defence of the Home to the *Yorkshire Post*. His

defence is that the Home has been established for forty years, and all inmates know the rule. We do not see that this quite meets the case. If the Home is kept going for the purpose of doing good, and if the soldiers were received there—with a payment from the Pensions Committee—because they had been wounded in the country's service, compulsory attendance at religious service is an act of tyranny. If the Home is an attempt to force religion upon people under the guise or bribe of philanthropy, then its pretence of doing good is an act of hypocrisy.

The Vice-Chairman seems to think he has justified the Home when he says this has always been the rule. Sensible people will reply that it is high time that it was abolished, and that age in such a connection is no recommendation. And let us say quite plainly that to assume men and women who can justify such a rule have any real regard for liberty, or that they are intelligently concerned in a war for freedom is in the highest degree absurd. People who can champion or submit to such a regulation have not yet mastered the alphabet of real freedom.

The glorious free press of England is going from bad to worse, especially in the pandering to public ignorance. The tales of angels in Essex are obviously inserted for the mere purposes of sensationalism, without the slightest regard to truth. If this sort of thing results in increased circulations, we may expect further developments, such as "Cherubs in Cumberland," "Seraphs in Surrey," or "Fiends in Fleet Street."

From Mr. H. G. Wells' latest book, *The Soul of a Bishop*, it appears that the author considers that these ecclesiastics are of little use in war-time. Judging by the bishops' votes in the House of Lords, they are of no use in peace time either.

The Rev. Alfred Brandon, a former Baptist minister, has attained his 101st birthday, and the editors have been busy making headlines concerning the centenarian. Some of the Bible patriarchs were trundling hoops at that tender age.

We wonder who is responsible for plastering over the pedestal of Cleopatra's Needle with war posters? It surely marks the limit in stupid vandalism. The Houses of Parliament, or Buckingham Palace, we could have understood, but why the Needle? If the spirits of ancient Egypt hover round that ancient monument, how they must smile! And they might well wonder whether the advance between their day and ours is really worth talking about. We are a civilized people! An artistic people! See how readily we cleared the museums and art galleries! And how ready we were to economise on education! And, above all, we are a Christian people! That is the most significant thing of all.

Most of the London Churches are altering the hour of the evening service so that it may be over before air-raid time. Some have given up the evening service altogether. One could understand this policy in relation to a secular meeting, but to go to Church to demonstrate one's trust in the providence of God, and then close the service early in case Providence is not able to protect its devotees against air-raids strikes one as peculiar. The Bishop of Birmingham denies that God has anything to do with the weather. We know that he has nothing to do with many other things; one wonders what on earth he really does. Perhaps some Christian will explain?

We should have had no objection to giving a free advertisement to a day of "United Prayer" which was held at the Queen's Hall on Tuesday last. But we observe that there is to be no evening meeting, and we suggest that a good chance of proving the efficacy of prayer would be to arrange for prayer-meetings on fine moonlit nights, and pray for the absence of German aeroplanes.

"Have we anything to be thankful for?" was the subject which a Croydon minister used for a sermon. We wonder if he referred to the exemption of the clergy from military service.

To Correspondents.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 7, Failsworth; October 14, Leicester; October 21, Manchester; October 28, London; November 4, Abertillery; November 18, Birmingham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 7, Birmingham; October 14, Swansea; November 18, Manchester.

J. T. HELLWELL.—Yes, we think we have "a splendid staff of contributors." We venture to think it is the subject that brings the best out of them. And we have plenty other good contributors in reserve.

BRISTOLIAN.—It is almost impossible to answer your question in a paragraph. The relation of objects to consciousness is fundamentally a consciousness of the relation. Any construction of the external world must be based upon sensation primarily, and this applies to "reality." "Reality" can mean no more than a hypothetical basis of experience. Its use is justifiable, so far as it serves, to make experience intelligible, but no farther.

A. WILDMAN.—Hope you will be successful in forming a Branch of the N.S.S. in Southampton. If we can help, please let us know.

S. EDMONDS.—We are proud to have the warm support of a reader of twenty-four years' standing.

G. H. MURPHY.—Sorry we cannot recommend anything of the kind you require. It is out of our line, but as an outsider we would suggest that studying the technique of masters in the art would be the best guide.

J. H. ROLLINS (Dublin).—We have read Benjamin Swift's book and intended writing on it, but other things got in the way. Have we your name correctly?

W. G. HARRIS.—Glad to know you had a "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon and Evening" at Mr. Cohen's Birmingham lectures. May you have many more.

J. LLOYD JONES (Capetown).—Our congratulations and compliments to your wife.

G. GILLETI.—Good wishes are always acceptable. Yes, mental courage always was, and, we suppose, always will be, rare.

J. McMANUS.—There are no direct grants of State money to the Church of England now. But the Church does receive an indirect grant of money in the shape of release from taxation, and many grants have been made for the purpose of Church building. Tithes, mining royalties, etc., also represent, in many cases, examples of State aid. When compulsory Church rates were abolished, a sum of money was often paid out of the rates in the shape of commutation.

JAS. RAILTON.—We are flattered by your opinion that we have "put new life into the movement." Thanks for subscription.

A. G. LYE.—Yes; a record, as you say.

R. MORRIS.—The *Freethinker* has never had the circulation it deserved, but if we possessed the means for advertising it, we haven't the ghost of a doubt we could make it very much larger than it is.

REMIAP.—Translation received; shall appear.

ARTHUR KING.—Your letter to the Archbishop was very much to the point; but you could hardly expect him to receive it gratefully.

A. SPENCER.—We don't know of any English translation, but there may have been one. There is no Society now in the place you name.

A. J. REID.—Certainly, if the press and our public men had greater moral courage, the hollowness of modern religion would soon be plain to all.

D. GOUNIE.—We noticed the error, but thought it best to acknowledge as written. Thanks

J. GIBSON.—We cheerfully take the will for the deed, and in introducing the paper to new readers you are doing us a real and valuable service. You know our motto with regard to readers—You find, we keep.

MR. A. W. B. SHAW, in sending subscription to our Sustentation Fund, writes: "It is gratifying to see that the subscriptions are coming in so well, and I hope you may soon be relieved of all anxiety about matters financial. It is no easy task to edit such a paper as the *Freethinker*, which is better each week, and to have to look after the business side as well."

W. GREGORY.—We are pleased to have the appreciation of your Branch for what you call our "noble work." All we can say is it is enjoyable work.

P. W. WALSH.—It is more than good of you to send from your sick bed your mite towards the Sustentation Fund. We appreciate your good wishes and support more than we can say.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—It was quite a question of space, and we hope all correspondents will bear in mind that this is an editor's constant consideration. We quite agree that it is ridiculous to suppose that reprisals will stop air-raids. Besides, the Allies are bombing wherever they can. Our newspapers publish daily reports. Of course, little is said about civilians being killed; but the German papers are equally silent about the killing of English civilians by their raiders.

J. THOMPSON.—It is very good of you to have secured so many new readers, and to try for more.

JNO HUDSON.—Pleased to hear from you. The paper is making many new friends—and keeping them.

H. KENNEDY.—Certainly, a corner will be found for the anecdote.

H. L. VOIGHT.—We hope you will be able to resume your old activities when the War is over. Pleased to know that you take up so impartial an attitude in your business relations. We wish that all followed your example.

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.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

Fourth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £246 7s. 4d. A. G. Lye, 5s. Jas. Railton, 2s. 6d. K. Palmer, 2s. Four Well Wishers of the New Century Club, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. J. Neate, 10s. J. Mac, 5s. C. Masson, 4s. J. Y. B., 10s. A Friend, 15s. Mrs. G. W. Foote, £1 1s. Kingsland Branch, N. S. S., £1 1s. H. Boll, 5s. Eva and J. Fothergill, 2s. 6d. Four Friends in Sterenton, Ayrshire, per A. Millar—Robert Reid and Son, 4s.; James Bow, 4s.; James Ferguson, 2s.; Matthew Ferguson, 2s.—Total, 12s. A. W. B. Shaw, £5. D. C. Drummond, 10s. H. Kennedy, £2 2s. A Taxi Driver, 10s. R. C. Proctor, 10s. W. J. Beeton, 2s. 6d. Pte. J. Scott, 2s. Two Freethinkers in Barrow, 5s. Jno. Hudson, 10s. P. M. W., £1. J. Robinson (fourth subscription), 1s. F. W. Walsh, 2s. 6d. A. J. Marriot, 2s. 6d. Total: £263 8s. 10d.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

In spite of the brilliant summer weather of Sunday last, Mr. Cohen had two capital meetings at Swansea on Sunday last. On each occasion the hall was crowded—uncomfortably so in fact—but all present appeared to enjoy themselves. The members of the new Swansea Branch have worked with a will, and their efforts fully deserved the success achieved. The Branch has a very energetic secretary in the person of Mr. B. Dupree, and we congratulate the local Society on having so capable an official.

To-day (October 7) Mr. Cohen lectures twice, afternoon and evening, in the Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth. Manchester friends will please note.

A new departure is being made in Birmingham by the local Branch of the N. S. S., which has taken the Repertory Theatre for a course of four lectures. The first lecture will be delivered this evening (Oct. 7) by Mr. J. T. Lloyd. If the meetings receive the support they deserve, they will be continued beyond those already arranged. In any case, we hope that all Birmingham Freethinkers will see that Mr. Lloyd gets the audience he deserves. It is a capital opportunity to introduce an inquiring Christian friend to the meetings. The lecture commences at 7 o'clock.

An Edinburgh correspondent complains of the irregular delivery of his paper by the local newsagent. We can

only say that the delay is due to no fault at this end, and where we receive complaints we do all we can to remedy them. We hope our friends will do all they can to help by applying pressure at their end. The same gentleman writes that he was told the *Freethinker* had been charged to him by the wholesale agent as a threepenny paper. Perhaps he thought it was well worth it.

From the *Cape Argus* :—

A young lady witness in a charge of theft, dealt with by the A.R.M. at the Second Criminal Court yesterday, declined to be sworn. "I am an atheist," she declared, "and will speak only the truth."

The lady in question is, we are proud to say, the wife of one of our readers. We hope her example will have its proper influence on all members of the "sterner" sex. She is, certainly, a fine example to her own.

The *National Weekly* had no less than three quotations from the *Freethinker* in a single issue of recent date. We are glad to note this as an indication of the way in which the press boycott is being slowly broken down. The *National Weekly* was a sixpenny journal, but is now under new management, and has been reduced to twopence. It is characterized by a breadth of view and sanity of utterance much to be commended. We say this because we feel it to be deserved, not from any ulterior motive.

Encouraged by the success of their last winter's meetings, the North London Branch are continuing their debates on Sunday evenings at the St. Pancras Reform Club, 15, Victoria Road, Kentish Town, at 7.30. An interesting little syllabus of fixtures up to Christmas has reached us, from which we learn that several well-known Freethought speakers and writers are taking part in the discussions. Admission is free, and every member of the audience has an opportunity of presenting his or her view. The subjects will be announced in our Guide Notice every week, and we wish the venture the success it deserves.

A young Dublinite, from whom we hope to hear more, writes :—

I have to smile when I read your outbursts against British molehills of superstition. Have you ever been in Ireland, holy Ireland, where, even at the present moment—in this year of science, 1917—our numerous shops of piety display post-cards of a soldier miraculously reinvested with speech and hearing, last August, in one of our hospitals, through the God-sent intervention of the "Little Flower"! Ireland, where a word against the supreme pontiff produces, on the part of females, undue displays of the whites of the eyes: Ireland, where a fictitious freedom is demanded by slaves blinded to a greater thralldom, a greater need? Your columns are as empty of notes on Irish progress—I say progress, for a worm will turn and a snail ascend—as our shops are empty of your paper. I know but one shop that sells it. Truly we are a rich pasture, watered by a divine hand! Really, I think, you should do something for our regeneration. Yet what could you do? Were all hoardings to display propagandist leaflets, were every person the recipient of pamphlets, the only result would be the indignant assertion of divine authority and its sympathetic reception. Come over to Ireland and help us. You could include our chief cities in your itinerant lectures—but no, don't do that; the time for martyrdom is not yet. For a first attempt, perhaps, this letter is a trifle long, but I cannot refrain from adding that the *Freethinker* affords me genuine pleasure, reminiscent and anticipatory, and a feeling of fellowship I have never yet known.

We do not in the least complain of the length of this letter. Nor will our readers. It is too racy for complaint. The only part of Ireland we have lectured in is Belfast. And our experience there was quite gratifying.

"Arley Lane" writes a two-column descriptive account of Mr. Cohen's evening lecture in the Birmingham Town Hall on September 23rd. The report is well done, and is written in "Arley Lane's" well known racy and reflective manner. He notes that the audience was large, attentive, appreciative, and, he adds, possessed the quality of being early which proved an interest, and sat eager and attentive during the lecture.

New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

V.—MORE HEALING AND PREACHING.

A GROUP of grey-bearded Jews came to Jesus and salaamed, and said politely,

"We beg you to do a favour to our Roman friend, the Captain of the Hundred. Though he belongs to the nation that conquered us, this centurion loves our Hebrew nation, and he has even built us a synagogue in this city of Capernaum. He has a sick servant whom he wishes you to save from death. Sir, we beseech you to do this."

Jesus set out for the Roman officer's house. He had nearly reached the door, when two or three people came out to say the Captain felt he ought not to trouble the Master of the Jinn to enter; for just as he—a Roman officer—was readily obeyed by his men, even at one short command, so the sickness demons would fly if Jesus would but speak one masterly word.

"Do you hear that?" asked Jesus of the crowd who followed him. "This man has more faith in my power than any Jew has."

The servant was able to shake off the demon the very next moment.

The day after, Jesus went into a city called Nain, and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. From the city gate came forth a sad procession, following a bier, on which lay a young man dead. The dead man's mother wept. She had lost first her husband, and now her only son.

When Jesus saw her, he had pity on her, and said, "Weep not."

He touched the bier. The bearers stood still.

"Young man," cried Jesus, "rise!"

The dead sat up, began to speak, and embraced his mother.

"A prophet, a prophet!" shouted the people. "Praise God! A great prophet has come among us!"

From village to village, and from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south, the report of this wonder flew.

John the Baptist heard the story. He was now in prison. He had dared, in his plain, blunt way, to rebuke King Herod Antipas for his bad deeds. The King's answer was to clap the pioneer in jail. And John the prisoner sent two of his friends to put the question to Jesus,—

"Are you the Mighty Prophet who will baptize folk with fire, and fan the evil chaff away from the good wheat?"

They followed the Master of the Jinn from place to place, watching his acts of power; and then returned to tell the prisoner how the blind eyes saw, deaf ears heard, lame legs walked easily, lepers lost their impure skins, and the dead sat up on their biers.

Alas for the brave pioneer! We saw him, as a baby, named Heaven's Gift (John). We saw him living in the desert. We saw him baptizing in Jordan's stream. We saw him rebuke a king. And the last scene takes place in the prison cell. By order of Herod Antipas, the valiant and honest John is beheaded. When old Zacharias smiled for joy, and sang the hymn of triumph, and called the child "The Prophet of the Highest," he little thought John would die a martyr's death in the darkness of a royal jail.

One day, a Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him. But he supposed that Jesus, being a sort of peasant-prophet, and not a gentlemanly scribe, would not care for the usual good manners. So he brought no water to wash his feet; he gave him no kiss of welcome; he sprinkled no perfumed oil on his guest's hair,

An outcast woman—not poor, but not at all respectable—entered the dining-room, for such rooms had open doors, and passers-by might enter without being thought rude.

She knelt beside the couch on which the Prophet sat, and she cried, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped the drops with her long hair. She opened an alabaster box of ointment, and poured the sweet scent upon the feet of the teacher whose words she loved to hear.

A grimace and a frown from the Pharisee made Jesus say,—

"Simon, my friend,"—

"Yes, master?"

"It may interest you to hear what a man did to two debtors, neither of whom had a penny to pay the debt with. One owed 500 silver pence, the other 50. He let both go free. And which do you think loved him most for his kindness?"

"The 500 pence debtor, I have doubt."

"Just so. And now look at this woman. She is a sinner, and has lived a life not at all respectable; while you, friend Simon, have been genteel and correct. She is the 500 debtor, you the 50. You gave me no washing-water, no kiss, no perfumed oil. She, in her thankfulness, gave me her tears, pressed a kiss upon my feet, and anointed them with oil. And her many sins are forgiven."

The genteel and correct persons who sat round the dining-table looked disgusted. Jesus quietly told the woman to go in peace.

She had heard him tell how the kingdom was open to those who, as honest trees, bare honest fruit. Even if sinners sinned they could repent; they could step out on a new road; they could become good trees. She was glad.

Thus, some folk, like Simon the Pharisee, paid little heed to the Prophet; others, like the crying woman, admired him, and listened with respect to his words. He made all this clear to the people one day by reciting a simple story:—

A sower went out over a ploughed field to sow his corn seed; and the field had different sorts of soil in it, and different things happened to the seed. Some grains fell on the beaten path, trodden hard by the feet of men, and of course they could not sink into the earth. Birds swooped down, and ate the grains. Some seeds fell on rock, where there was but a slight layer of soil; and the corn plants, unable to strike deep root, grew but a little while, and then withered away. Some grains got scattered among thorn bushes, and the bushes choked off the growing corn. Other grains fell on splendid soil, and sprang up in fine, healthy plants; and the ears of corn were full of grain, yielding a hundredfold profit to the farmer.

That is to say, some people were poor scholars, and did not take in the teacher's lessons; others took in the grains of wise teaching, and bore fruit in plenty, by leading a kindly life.

When the crowds of villagers, fishermen, and all the rest had gone home, Jesus would chat with his twelve Missionaries (Apostles), and show them how to interest the people by such stories. For it was of no use to bore the folk with dull and harsh sermons. They must tell lively and charming tales, or parables. A man (said he) who wants to light a room, must put his candle on a candlestick, so that it can throw its rays on all sides of a room. A good story-teller threw a light that cheered and helped. But dull and stodgy preachers, who told no happy tales, were like silly men who put the candle inside a pot, or under a bed, where none could enjoy the blessed light.¹

¹ So I interpret Luke viii. 16, 17.

It was at this time, when Jesus began his parable-telling, that a message was brought to him. His mother, Mary, and his brothers, wished to come and talk with him; but, so great was the crowd that gathered to listen to his stories, his family were not able to get near. He called to the people's mind his tale of the sower who sowed words of wise teaching, and then he exclaimed,—

"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? All who hear the word and do it as well as hear it,—these folk I count as my mother and my brethren."

* * * *

In the time when the Gospels were written (second century), people believed many stories of rising from the dead.

A Greek myth told how a lady, named Alcestis, so loved her husband that she gave her own life to the Death-god in order to save that of her beloved. As she sickened, he got stronger. As she died, he felt quite well. He placed her body in a vault. Just then, who should call at his house but his friend Herakles, the lion-killer? When Herakles heard what had happened, he offered to fetch Alcestis back from the tomb, and he stepped into the vault just as Death came in to bear the heroic woman away. Herakles gripped hold of Death, and would not let him go until he promised to spare Alcestis; and she sat up, and began to speak, and returned to her husband.

Another Greek story is that of the musician Orpheus, who went down into the shadow-world of Hades, hoping to bring back his dead wife. His music on the stringed lyre so pleased the queen of the Underworld that she allowed Orpheus to take his wife away with him on condition that he did not look at his beloved until they reached the upper world and the sunlight. He could not wait; he looked; and she fled away down, and he saw her no more. In the Gospel times, people formed Orpheus societies, or Orphic societies, and worshipped the Raiser of the Dead, and sang songs, and repeated prayers to Gods and Demons; and they claimed to know what happened to souls that passed into the Kingdom of Death. They delighted in pictures of Orpheus, holding his lyre, and surrounded by beasts which had once been wild, but had been tamed by the sweet power of his music. The lyre of Orpheus could even make rocks and trees move and dance to the charming tunes.

F. J. GOULD.

The Myth of God.

THE idea of God is a myth. It is a "false hypothesis" put forward as an explanation of the origin, constitution, and continuance of the universe.

Ever since the feelings of awe and wonder were evolved in man, the human mind has endeavoured to explain the phenomena of existence in harmony with those feelings. But, unfortunately, awe and wonder have often proved too strong for man's desire for accuracy, and the emotions have been allowed to usurp the place of reason. As man has looked out upon surrounding objects, and as those objects have made certain impressions upon his sense-organs, he has felt in varying degrees a desire to formulate some sort of explanation of the origin and nature of things. Idea after idea has been put forward to account for the universe; theory has followed theory; and philosophy has given place to philosophy, as regards prominence in the minds of men, until the whole sea of human thought is seething with conflicting systems of science, philosophy, and theology.

It has been impossible, and is likely to continue to be impossible, for man to live without trying to frame for himself some hypothesis concerning the universe, and

particularly the earth on which we live. It is only natural that it should be so. Life would, indeed, be sordid to many of us if we did not at some time or other exercise our minds in trying to solve the perplexing problems with which we are surrounded.

Not the least prominent among the theories put forward to explain universal phenomena is the idea of God in all its variations. Many of us have come to the conclusion that there is no evidence of the existence of a supernatural being in objective actuality, and corresponding to any one of the myriad variations of the God-idea with which the minds of men have been troubled; but the field of thought has yet to be cleared of a great deal of confusion which has gathered around this question.

The days of mythical thinking have not yet passed away, nor are there signs that they are likely to do so with any great rapidity. Men of the twentieth century can evolve myths as easily as they were evolved by the ancients. No doubt modern myths often differ in form from those of passed ages, but they are to be found in every branch of literature. Much of our thinking will appear to be as mythical to future generations as ancient stories of gods and nymphs appear to us now.

We must learn to accustom ourselves to the idea that a myth is not necessarily a story that was told in the early days of man's history. It is not necessarily something gross and unseemly, or something foolish and fantastical said about an ancient deity. A myth may be an argument that is considered to be one of the most profound and acceptable arguments put forward to account for some phenomena, religious, sociological, or otherwise. An argument or belief which finds wide acceptance is mythical in proportion to the degree of fallacy which it contains.¹ One of the greatest tasks before those who are engaged in guiding the education of the world is that of training the human mind to avoid creating myths. This would be difficult enough if there were no ideas about supernaturalism to be contended with; but with such ideas holding vast sway the work is colossal.

It is interesting, yet often saddening, to note the various forms which have been given to the God-idea as man has tried to frame some conception of a being more mighty and wiser than himself but after his own image.

That the idea of God has had only one mode of origin is a position that is not capable of being proved in view of the fact that while we are able to obtain a great deal of information concerning the early development of religious ideas, it is impossible to be accurate in every detail.

Corpse-worship was, no doubt, one origin of the God idea. For some time the mind of early man would not realize that a dead relative had fallen into anything more than a sleep, from which he would ultimately awake and return to his daily toils. For a few days he would be looked upon as someone acting mysteriously, and his awakening would be anxiously looked for. But as the sleep continued, the relatives of the dead man would begin to form new ideas concerning him. They would gradually realize that he was no more to join them in their daily tasks. Probably it would be recollected that when the man was awake he was usually active, and was able to speak and make signs to his fellows. But it would now be observed that for the past few days the corpse had been motionless; it had neither spoken nor made signs. The mystery would thus be increased, and lacking the spiritualistic

theory, those to whom the dead man belonged might feel disposed to worship the corpse. If the dead man were loved and respected by his kinsmen during his life, he would be worshipped with feelings of love; but if he had been a tyrant, then fear would be the motive for worshipping the corpse. As the corpse decayed and vanished, it might occur to those who loved their now dead relative that he must be living somewhere, as they cannot bear to think he has ceased to exist. And those who feared their former tyrant might think that the tyrant had tricked them, and having got up again was now going about in a mysterious manner trying to do them harm. Gradually the worship of the corpse might evolve into the worship of something spiritual.

In other tribes dreams were probably the germ of the God-idea. During sleep we have subjective experiences which are often similar to our experiences in everyday life. To primitive man his dream experiences would be proof that he was able to live apart from his body, and confirmation of this would be given when several members of the same tribe related their dream experiences. In this way belief in another life would be evolved, and the deification of a relative or friend would be made possible. When it was found that the departed spirit of a dead person did not return, as after an ordinary sleep, it might be thought that he had gone to another land where he might be of importance. This being so, he must be communicated with by prayer, and useful things must be sent to him by being placed at or in his grave. Sacrifices must be made to appease him if he is feared, and to do him honour if he is loved. In time beloved and highly respected persons would become family or tribal gods.

It is probable that some tribes of early man formed their first God-idea by reflecting about the heavenly bodies. These would be looked upon as mysterious beings who could influence mankind for good or evil, and, therefore, would require to be prayed to and offered sacrifice by all who desired prosperity. In this way the sun has been worshipped as the god of light and warmth—the God of fertilization and giver of all life. The moon has been rendered homage as the queen of heaven or spirit of the night, while the planets and stars have been revered as the guardian gods of various departments of life, and as influencing the destiny of individuals believed to be under their power.

Fetish worship, or the worship of natural and artificial objects, has held sway over the minds of many primitive men, and in many places has not lost its sway up to the present time.

The fetish worshipped by men of primitive culture was made of wood, stone, and the bones of animals, or, perhaps, a drop of water was taken from a sacred river and carried about by the person who had taken a fancy to it. The fetish was believed to have some magical power by which it protected its devotee, but if it failed to do this, the worshipper often took the liberty of throwing his little god away. Man often judges and condemns his God while professing to be a most devout worshipper. It is to be feared that fetishism has been much more wider spread than we are usually prepared to admit, as we not infrequently meet with people, living amidst modern civilization, who carry on their persons relics of fetishism in the shape of a cross, an anchor, or some other charm or symbol.

Another widespread belief was that men were under the influence of good and evil demons to whom prosperity or failure in life was largely due, and at death the souls of men were escorted either to heaven or hell by good or bad demons. Among so-called Pagan peoples the demons were believed to be in the service of the gods, a belief transmitted to both Roman Catholic and Protestant

¹ See J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, Intro., pp. 18-19, (1910 ed.).

Christians who believe in God and his kingdom of angels and the Devil with his progeny of imps.

Animals, rivers, trees, etc., have also been objects of worship owing to their usefulness to man. Or, in many instances, nothing but a peculiar fancy for a certain animal, river, or tree may have been the origin of its ultimately becoming the god or goddess of a tribe. So, too, natural objects have been looked upon as being under the guardianship of gods, and the imagination of superstitious man has filled pantheons with flower-gods, river-gods, rain-gods, tree-gods, fire-gods, storm-gods, and gods of the hills and dales, with a host of corresponding goddesses, and a multitude of nymphs and fairies. Virtues and vices have been deified, hearth and home have received their protecting and sanctifying gods and goddesses, and nations have been advised, guided, and reprov'd by a supernatural ruler.

In this way has the human mind tried to explain the many problems presented to it by the mysterious phenomena of nature. Man has professed to see, in what has been going on around him, evidence of the existence and constant activity of supernatural power. Sometimes this power was thought to belong to many gods, at other times it has been attributed to two or three gods, and a portion of the human race has believed in one Almighty and solitary governor of the universe. But Monotheism is a no less mythical attempt to explain universal phenomena than Polytheism, as we shall discover if we examine the various and often-learned arguments put forward in support of Monotheism. There is no reason why we should apply the term "myth" to the false ideas and beliefs of antiquity and not to those of modern times. This being so, we should not hesitate to describe as mythical any modern idea of God which can be proved to be untenable on grounds of reason. Let us turn our attention to some of the chief arguments for belief in the existence of a wise, loving, and all-powerful God, who is father to all mankind. As Dr. James Orr has said in *The Christian View of God and the World*: "If God is a reality, the whole universe rests on a supernatural basis." On the other hand, if God is a myth, then the universe is natural in its origin, constitution, and continuance. Here the theologically minded, and all who take a purely natural view of things, come to the parting of the ways.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be concluded.)

"We Don't Want to Fight, but".....

We are covered with shame. We apologise. We abjectly apologise. We sit in sackcloth and ashes. We have suggested that the clergy are patriotic, but not to the extent of risking their skins. Again, we apologise. We have been brought to a realization of facts through reading "Our Correspondence Column" in *The Dawn of Day*, a magazine published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. This column purports to answer "Questions commonly asked about the Bible or Church, or other religious matters.....provided they are of sufficient general interest," and it is significant that two of the answers are to such questions as "Why do not the Clergy fight?" and "Why do French priests fight?"

We had thought that the clergy did not fight because they did not want to, but we were mistaken. We are informed "that the clergy are under orders, in their case 'Holy Orders,' and it is their duty to obey their bishops.....but the bishops have felt bound to keep the old rule by which the clergy are forbidden to fight."

Bishops did not always respect the rule not to kill with the sword, to the extent of avoiding battle, but with a fine reading of the law went into battle with a very serviceable weapon—the mace. The name of Morton, Bishop of Ely, in the Lancastrian plots; or Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, afterwards Cardinal, suggests much; while the warlike tendencies of the clergy are strongly emphasized by the four abbots who led the "Pilgrimage of Grace" to defend their incomes.

The answer, however, discovers that some priests still have fighting blood, so "when a priest has found himself impelled by conscience to offer himself as a combatant, and the bishop is satisfied that arrangements can be made for carrying on the parish in his absence, leave to go has been granted in a number of instances."

Notice that artistic touch, "a number of instances." Beautiful! Considering that those who want to fight are breaking a rule, ordinary mortals would conclude that the fighting parsons would require to satisfy the bishop as to their conscientious desire to fight. But 'tis not so.

Next we are informed that, "Of course, it might happen that the State called up every man to fight, including ministers of religion; then the clergy would gladly go." This reads well, but it is rather unfortunate that the answer to "Why do the French priests fight?" should be, "They are compelled to fight by a law of the French Republic, which was introduced as part of a deliberate policy of persecuting the French Church. This should not be quoted as a model for imitation by the British State."

In other words, the clergy would gladly fight if they were forced to, but for goodness sake don't force them. Extraordinarily courageous are the clergy—*The Dawn of Day* says so.

But, again, we must apologise. "The young priests generally have felt that their right place is where the young men of the country are, and so nearly all have offered their services as chaplains to the Forces, though it has not been possible to accept all who volunteered."

There are only two slight omissions here which necessitate the insertion after services of, "well behind the firing line," and after Forces, "with officers' emoluments." The desperate plight of the clergy is shown in these two replies. They have lost the power to gull the mass of the people, and they know it. The unquestioning attitude of the people has gone, and with it the power of the priest. It is, indeed, the dawn of day, of the glorious day when the scales shall have dropped from the eyes of man, and, he, seeing, cease to flounder in the morass of superstition, but struggling to the path of Reason, move quickly to the goals of Humanity, Intellectual Freedom, and Economic Equity.

JOHN MACMILLAN.

Correspondence.

PREJUDICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like to thank Mr. W. Mann for his courteous reply to my letter. Upon the main question we must, I fear, agree to differ—by which I would not be understood as saying that I regard the survival of personality as a proven fact, I merely suspend judgment; but his letter introduces a very interesting side-issue, upon which I would welcome the opportunity, with your permission, to say a word or two.

"Nobody," Mr. Mann writes, "condemns a man for being prejudiced in favour of morality and virtue." I did not, I think, say anything in respect of condemning prejudice; I said only that prejudice appeared to me to be inconsistent

with free thought. I say it again; and I would not be prepared to qualify that opinion in any way, to allow excuses or exemptions on whatever account, to grant to the Freethinker special dispensations in favour of certain ideas embodied in certain words. He must bring *everything* to the unfettered tribunal of his intellect. A particular face value has grown upon such words as "morality" and "virtue"; but that does not relieve every intelligent man from his individual responsibility to enquire into the basis of that value; he is not entitled comfortably to imbibe it with his mother's milk and leave it unexamined. For my own part, I think that a standard of conduct, roughly—though only roughly—corresponding with that which in modern civilization is called morality, is necessary and desirable in the interests of orderly social life. That is not a prejudice; it is the fruit of elementary reason.

If our minds are held in the thralldom of prejudice in the respects which appear to Mr. Mann to be excusable, we are debarred from changing or modifying our ethical code to suit changing conditions. Let us take out a single instance. It is a principle of morality that a man shall have only one wife. It is a principle that has suited the majority of people, and which, therefore, on the whole, has worked fairly well, though some of us may have thought that it was unwisely and unjustly overstrained in its application. Now, assume, for argument's sake, that this War lasts for four or five years longer and denudes the world of twenty millions of young men from the white races. If we are "prejudiced in favour of morality and virtue," the monogamous principle must stand, in spite of that denudation; our minds are not free to deal with it, we cannot modify it, however desirable, and otherwise, such a course might appear to be in the interests of society, or of a particular nation. I believe that if even fifty millions of young men were lost, such a frankly prejudiced man, for example, as Lord Halifax would be found standing upon the disappearing remnant of the white world, proudly waving his flag of opposition "to the very utmost of our power," while the submerging waves of black, and brown, and yellow gathered round it. Mr. Mann, logically, would have to stand with him.

HUBERT WALES.

ATHEIST OR AGNOSTIC?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I set out, as shortly as your valuable space demands, the reasons why, even after reading your able comments on my letter in to-day's issue of the *Freethinker*, I still prefer to call myself Agnostic?

The difference between us seems to lie in our different ideas as to what is conceivable and what is not. About the word "God" by itself, we agree that it means nothing, and therefore, as you well say, "neither belief nor disbelief can be admitted." But where I differ from you is in your reply (to use your own words—italics mine), "I *disbelieve* in any such existence," to a Theist who assures you that "there exists a God who is omnipotent, or omniscient, or is a 'First Cause,' or who is 'pure mind,' etc." These adjectives, "omnipotent," "omniscient," etc., tacked on to the word "God," evidently bring it, for you, within the limits of conceivability, so that you can definitely say, "I *disbelieve*."

In my view, this is not so. Any special God, such as the God of the Christians, is still for me the word "God" with certain attributes—"infinitely good," "omnipotent," etc.—attached to it; and these attributes do not interest me: to have any meaning at all, they must themselves be attached to something with a meaning. The question for me is, *What* is it that is omnipotent? and to this I can get no reply. So my answer to your Theist would still be not "I *disbelieve*," but "I am an Agnostic—one who does not know what you mean." But if anyone chooses to call me an Atheist, they can do so. I certainly do not use the word "Agnostic" as a sop to the foolish bigotry of the pious.

September 30.

J. BLAIR WILLIAMS.

At Tarleton Church women are employed as singers. May we describe them as church belles?

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, Oct. 11, at 7.30.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7, "Is Conscriptio Necessary?" Affirmative, A. Eager. Open debate.

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA PARK BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.15, George Rule, "Gospel Contradictions."

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

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Yates and Dales; 6.30, Messrs. Swasey, Saphin, and Shaller.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, J. T. Lloyd, "Humanism *versus* Christianity."

FAIRSWORTH (Secular School, Pole Lane): Chapman Cohen, 2.45, "Morality Without God"; 6.30, "Christianity, Before and After the War."

GOD AND THE AIR-RAID.

The Massacre of the Innocents.

A Propagandist Leaflet.

By C. COHEN.

Price 9d. per 100.

6s. per 1,000.

(Post free 1s.)

(Post free 6s. 6d.)

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents (God and the Air-Raid)*, C. Cohen. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 9d. per hundred, post free 1s. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

RATIONALIST PEACE SOCIETY

38 CURSITOR STREET, LONDON, E.C.

President: THE RT. HON. J. M. ROBERTSON, M.P.

Chairman: MRS. H. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

The Rationalist Peace Society was formed in 1910 to carry on a propaganda in the interest of International Peace on essentially and avowedly Rationalist lines, without reference to religious sanctions of any kind. The annual subscription is fixed at a minimum of one shilling.

COMFORTABLE APARTMENTS, 4½ miles from Leicester.—Widow, without family, with spare rooms, with gas, can receive visitors for week-ends or longer. Moderate charges.—MRS. W. PALMER, King Street, Enderby, near Leicester.

BUSINESS MAN wants two or three Unfurnished Rooms, one on ground floor, in N.W. or W. district, near tube or rail to City.—Send terms to ANDERSON, 11 Salisbury Road, Forest Gate. E. 7.

Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE.

MALTHUSIAN LEAGUE,
QUEEN ANNE'S CHAMBERS, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

A Great Work at a Low Price.

The Non-Religion of the Future.

BY

MARIE JEAN GUYAU.

Published 17s. net. Price 4s.
(Postage 6d.)

For a Freethinker's Bookshelf.

DARWINISM TO-DAY.

BY PROFESSOR V. L. KELLOGG.

A Discussion of the present standing of Darwinism in the light of later and alternative theories of the Development of Species.

Published 7s. 6d. net. Price 3s., postage 5d.

STUDIES IN ROMAN HISTORY.

BY DR. E. G. HARDY.

Vol. I.—Christianity and the Roman Government.

Vol. II.—The Armies and the Empire.

Published 12s. net. Price 3s. 9d., postage 6d.

HISTORY OF SACERDOTAL CELIBACY.

BY H. C. LEA.

In two handsome volumes, large 8vo., published at 21s. net. Price 7s., postage 7d.

This is the Third and Revised Edition, 1907, of the Standard and Authoritative Work on Sacerdotal Celibacy. Since its issue in 1867 it has held the first place in the literature of the subject, nor is it likely to lose that position.

THE ENGLISH WOMAN: STUDIES IN HER PSYCHIC EVOLUTION.

BY D. STAARS.

Published 9s. net. Price 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

An Evolutionary and Historic Essay on Woman. With Biographical Sketches of Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, and others.

THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT OF ANIMALS.

BY E. P. EVANS.

A Careful Study of one of the most curious of Mediaeval Superstitious Practices. There is an Appendix of Documents which adds considerably to the value of the work. Published 1906. With Frontispiece.

384 pp. Published 7s. 6d. Price 2s., postage 5d.

THE WORLD'S DESIRES; OR, THE RESULTS OF MONISM.

An Elementary Treatise on a Realistic Religion and Philosophy of Human Life.

BY E. A. ASHCROFT.

440 pp., published at 10s. 6d. Price 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

Mr. Ashcroft writes from the point of view of a convinced Freethinker, and deals with the question of Man and the Universe in a thoroughly suggestive manner.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL MORALS.

BY CARVETH READ.

Professor of Philosophy in the University of London. 8vo. 1909. Published at 7s. 6d. net. Price 3s., postage 5d.

A Fine Exposition of Morals from the standpoint of a Rationalistic Naturalism.

BY THE HON. A. S. G. CANNING.

INTOLERANCE AMONG CHRISTIANS.

Published 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

RELIGIOUS STRIFE IN BRITISH HISTORY.

Published 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 5d.

THE POLITICAL PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Published 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

The Three Volumes post free for 5s.

THREE ESSAYS ON RELIGION.

BY J. S. MILL.

Published at 5s. Price 1s. 6d., postage 4d.

There is no need to praise Mill's Essays on Nature, The Utility of Religion, and Theism. The work has become a Classic in the History of Freethought. No greater attack on the morality of nature and the God of natural theology has ever been made than in this work.

DETERMINISM OR FREE WILL?

BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

CONTENTS.

I. The Question Stated.—II. "Freedom" and "Will."—III. Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice.—IV. Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism.—V. Professor James on "The Dilemma of Determinism."—VI. The Nature and Implications of Responsibility.—VII. Determinism and Character.—VIII. A Problem in Determinism.—IX. Environment.

Cloth, 1s. 9d., postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.

BY G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL.

For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians. New Edition. 162 pp. Cloth. Price 1s., postage 2d.

FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT.

BY G. W. FOOTE.

First Series, with Portrait, 216 pp. Cloth. Price 2s. 6d. net, postage 4d. Second Series, 302 pp. Cloth. Price 2s. 6d. net, postage 4d. The Two Volumes post free for 5s.

Pamphlets.

BY G. W. FOOTE.

ROME OR ATHEISM? Price 2d., postage 1d.

BIBLE AND BEER. Price 1d., postage 1d.

MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY. Price 1d., postage 1d.

MY RESURRECTION. Price 1d., postage 1d.

THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER. Price 1d., postage 1d.

CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. Price 2d., postage 1d.

BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

SOCIALISM, ATHEISM, AND CHRISTIANITY. Price 1d., postage 1d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS. Price 1d., postage 1d.

DEITY AND DESIGN. Price 1d., postage 1d.

WAR AND CIVILIZATION. Price 1d., postage 1d.

RELIGION AND THE CHILD. Price 1d., postage 1d.

BY J. T. LLOYD.

PRAYER: ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND FUTILITY. Price 2d., postage 1d.

Pamphlets—continued.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

WHY AM I AN AGNOSTIC? Price 1d., postage ½d.
 MISTAKES OF MOSES. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM. Price 3d., postage 1d.
 WOODEN GOD. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 DO I BLASPHEME? Price 1d., postage ½d.
 HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON
 SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 THE GODS. Price 2d., postage 1d.
 LIVE TOPICS. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 ABRAHAM LINCOLN. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 LIMITS OF TOLERATION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 ROME OR REASON. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED? Price 1d.,
 postage ½d.
 CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 SOCIAL SALVATION. Price 1d., postage ½d.

By WALTER MANN.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. Price 2d.,
 postage ½d.
 THE RELIGION OF FAMOUS MEN. Price 1d., post-
 age ½d.

By MIMNERMUS.

FREETHOUGHT AND LITERATURE. Price 1d., post-
 age ½d.

By J. BENTHAM.

UTILITARIANISM Price 1d., postage ½d.

By LORD BACON.

PAGAN MYTHOLOGY. Price 3d., postage 1½d.

By D. HUME.

ESSAY ON SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 MORTALITY OF SOUL. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 LIBERTY AND NECESSITY. Price 1d., postage ½d.

By M. MANGASARIAN.

MARTYRDOM OF HYPATIA. Price 1d., postage ½d.

By DIDEROT AND HOLBACH.

CODE OF NATURE. Price 1d., postage ½d.

By ANTHONY COLLINS.

FREEWILL AND NECESSITY. Price 3d., postage 1d.

*About 1d. in the 1s. should be added on all Foreign and
 Colonial orders.*

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President :

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary :

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration :—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation

Dated this.....day of.....19.....

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

Immediate Practical Objects.

The Legitimation of Bequests to Secular or the Free-thought Societies, for the maintenance and propagation of heterodox opinions on matters of religion, on the same conditions as apply to Christian or Theistic churches or organizations.

The Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, in order that Religion may be canvassed as freely as other subjects, without fear of fine or imprisonment.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the State Churches in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Abolition of all Religious Teaching and Bible Reading in Schools or other educational establishments supported by the State.

The Opening of all endowed educational institutions to the children and youth of all classes alike.

The Abrogation of all laws interfering with the free use of Sunday for the purpose of culture and recreation; and the Sunday opening of State and Municipal Museums, Libraries, and Art Galleries.

A Reform of the Marriage Laws, especially to secure equal justice for husband and wife, and a reasonable liberty and facility of divorce.

The Equalization of the legal status of men and women, so that all rights may be independent of sexual distinctions.

The Protection of children from all forms of violence, and from the greed of those who would make a profit out of their premature labour.

The Abolition of all hereditary distinctions and privileges fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood.

The Improvement, by all just and wise means, of the conditions of daily life for the masses of the people, especially in towns and cities, where insanitary and incommensurable dwellings, and the want of open spaces, cause physical weakness and disease, and the deterioration of family life.

The Promotion of the right and duty of Labour to organize itself for its moral and economical advancement, and of its claim to legal protection in such combinations.

The Substitution of the idea of Reform for that of Punishment in the treatment of criminals, so that gaols may no longer be places of brutalization, or even of mere detention, but places of physical, intellectual, and moral elevation for those who are afflicted with anti-social tendencies.

An Extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure them humane treatment and legal protection against cruelty.

The Promotion of Peace between nations, and the substitution of Arbitration for War in the settlement of international disputes.