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Views and Opinions.

God's Opportunity.

"Providence" has had many chances during the past three years of vindicating its existence. Putting on one side the credit it might have gained by preventing the War altogether, there was the affair of the *Lusitania*, the torpedoing of hospital ships, the bombing of hospitals, the slaughter of women and children during air raids, all of which might have been prevented in such a way as to make the workings of God clear to all. Last of all there was the failure of the Papal peace note. That having failed, as it was bound to fail, for the Pope dare not denounce his Catholic supporters, and Protestant Christians naturally looked askance at Roman Catholic interference, "Providence" again had its chance. Some spectacular move might have been attempted. We do not say how; it is not within our province to advise omnipotence. But something might have been done. For, after all, the problem is really God's problem. We are all his children, and when the children fall out it is a parent's duty to make peace—if he can. But all we are certain of is the bald fact that "Providence" has shamefully neglected its opportunities. It is leaving the War to be finished by purely mundane methods, and if sensible people draw a logical conclusion from the situation Providence will have only itself to blame.

* * *

The World With and Without God.

We Londoners have sat night after night listening to the roar of guns and the crashing of bombs, with the realization of all the misery and horror these sounds implied. And many, as they sat quite helpless amid the infernal din, may have reflected, as we did, that this was the year of our Lord 1917, that this brutal warfare was not being waged by "Heathen" or "Pagan" peoples, but by the foremost Christian nations of the world. These nations have "enjoyed" Christian teaching for centuries. They have been energetic in fitting out missionary societies to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth—or, at least, such parts of the earth as promised some

kind of commercial return. Churches have been planted everywhere, Bibles distributed with almost the profusion of tradesmen's circulars, while parsons wander about by the thousand. Whatever else Europe has lacked, there has been no shortage of religion. And so we sat and listened to the roar of guns and bombs, and wondered how much worse the world could have been had it never heard of Christianity. It is easily conceivable that it might have been better. It is hardly likely that it would have been worse. Christians are fond of saying what will happen if the world gives up its faith in Christ. Well, the world retains its faith in Christ, and we know what has happened. We can place the fears of interested prophecy against the evidence of recorded fact. The world with and the world without Christianity. We know what it is in the one case. It doesn't seem to demand extraordinary courage to risk what it may become in the other eventuality. It might be better. It could hardly be worse.

* * *

Is God Dead?

"God," said the Bishop of London, the other day, "is not dead." "If 'no sparrow falls to the ground without your Father'.....then no life in this great city is unwatched and unmarked by God. It is not his will that one of his little ones shall perish, and therefore it is blasphemous to say or think that bombing defenceless women and children is according to the will of God." But if there is no life unwatched and unmarked by God, by whose will does it happen that women and children are bombed? How can anything happen without his will? He can change men's hearts—that is the true significance of the Christian doctrine of grace. Why doesn't he change the hearts of the German High Command? And if these things happen against God's will, are we to believe that God's will can only be done if the Kaiser and Hindenburg and Von Tirpitz agree with it? Is Providence a dependency of Germany? God knows all about it; he marks every life in this "great city"! Well, we know all about it. The Government knows all about it. But this gives precious little satisfaction. Nay, the people are shrieking against the Government because adequate steps have not been taken to prevent these raids. Can it be wondered at if God is included in the same condemnation? God, says the Bishop, is not dead. Maybe not; perhaps he has only retired from active service. If not, will some Christian be good enough to tell us what God is doing in this War? America has joined the Allies. Japan has come to the help of Christendom, and the followers of Confucius have decided to prevent Christians butchering each other without end. Europe sent China Christian missionaries to teach her Christianity. She retorts by sending us help to recover decency. It is a magnificent reprisal. What is God doing? If, with the power to do something, he does nothing, is he not helping the wrong against the right? God is not dead. That is the Bishop's opinion. But he is impotent. That is a fact—at least it is the only conclusion consonant with elementary decency.

What the War Does.

Is it to be wondered that, when people reflect on all that is going on, they end by dismissing a God who, while knowing all and marking all, does nothing? Says "Vexatus," in the *Sunday Chronicle*:—

There were preachers who affirmed that we needed this war as a regenerator. They are now, I hope, disillusioned. War is not a regenerator. It is a brutalizing curse.

This war has revived the jungle instincts and dragged us back. It has shown us the profiteer, pitiless as the shark or the tiger. It has made vast numbers of people Atheists. It has inflicted unspeakable agony on humanity, and destroyed the noblest of our kind.

We agree with all this; it is only what we have ourselves said many times since the War commenced. But we do not understand why the making of people Atheists should be associated with a process of brutalization. For it was not Atheists who made the War; it was not Atheism that led up to the War. They were Christians who prepared the War and who made it possible. All the brutality, the greed, the lying that have been expressed during the War were fostered before the War actually began. This War began in a world saturated with Christianity, and if it ends with a world in which Atheism is more pronounced, there will be small cause for regret. Men cannot be more like the shark and tiger as Atheists than they have been, and are, as believers in God. Of course, the War is making many Atheists. That is undeniable. But this is not due to the brutalizing effects of war, but because the War has opened the eyes of thousands to the utter uselessness and falsity of religion. The "Providence of God" is an insult to human intelligence in the light of the last three years, the "Heavenly Father" an outrage on human decency when mumbled by a well-paid Bishop over the bodies of newly slaughtered children.

* * *

Missing His Chance.

This War has been for God a period of lost opportunities. Nothing has been done to end it that could not have been done without him. Belgium was overrun by Germany, and he did nothing. Serbia was laid waste, and he remained quiescent. Poland was ravaged, and he remained silent. Towns were bombed and children murdered, still he gave no sign. More, over and over again on the Western Front the British advance has been stayed, and the German defence helped, by a sudden change in the weather from fair to stormy. And we have a right to expect better treatment. For in this War we are God's Ally. The Bishop of London and hundreds of clergymen have told us so. More, Mr. Bottomley has told us so; and, as Omar says, "He knows, He knows." We have a right to demand that God shall do something to prove that he is not leaving his Allies in the lurch. If we are to trust Mr. Harold Begbie, he has sent angels to cheer up the wounded on the battlefield. Let him send a few to paralyse the arms of German gunners, or blind the eyes of raiding airmen. There are scores of ways in which God might help; there is not a single way in which he does help. Men and women are learning the moral of the situation. We live in strenuous times, and we have no use for a God who does nothing. And whether he cannot or will not help, he does not. God does nothing. We knew it before the War began. Thousands have realized it since. To them the War gave God a superb chance for vindicating his power. He failed to rise to the occasion; and in the minds of multitudes the Deity's epitaph has been written, "Died of lost opportunities."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A False Apology for God.

THE Rev. John A. Hutton, D.D., of Glasgow, is a Presbyterian divine of world-wide reputation, who is in great demand both as preacher and as writer of semi-theological articles for the religious press. In the *Christian World* for October 4, he discusses the subject of "Repentance and Reconciliation" in a style peculiar to himself. He begins by declaring that in these times of terror there is only one thing that needs to be said. With much truth he avers that in his own view, "the one thing which seems to touch the seat of the present misery is that the dominant peoples of the earth are not at one as to the Nature and Will of God." A truer and more pertinent observation was never made. There never has been among mankind anything like unanimity of belief as to the nature and will of God. Not only is the German conception of the Supreme Being different from the British conception, but scarcely any two persons in any nation are theologically at one. Dr. Hutton himself admits that to men of the world this diversity of views on God is "an abstract and impalpable cause with which to associate such concrete and disastrous things as hatred and the shedding of blood." He makes another admission:—

Men of the world will even go so far as to say that the idea of God is one that never occurred to those who were responsible first and last for the present outrage.

So far as the argument is concerned, it is wholly immaterial who are responsible for the War, the fact being that any nation's Deity is its own character objectified—nothing more and nothing less. Carlyle pointed this out long ago in his *Heroes and Hero Worship*, and Matthew Arnold elaborated it in several of his works, particularly in *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible*. Of the existence of any other Divinity there is no evidence whatever. Dr. Hutton contends that "the things which have greatest influence with us are the things which work unconsciously," which may be perfectly true; but, surely, if there were a God, he would make himself known, and exert the wholesomest influence consciously. It is easy enough to say "that it was the absence of any controlling thought of God which made it possible for nations to harden into such a condition of hatred and suspicion and fear that open war becomes a kind of relief to them"; but it is not so easy to explain why the Christian God, if he exists, did not exercise such a controlling influence upon his children as to prevent their hardening into such a deplorable condition. If there be no God, the War is no mystery; but if there is, he is fully as incomprehensible as the Athanasian Creed represents him to be.

Of course, Dr. Hutton is professionally bound to retain and defend the idea of God; but his method of doing so is open to serious criticism. He says:—

The putting away of God, the neglect to cultivate that delicate apprehension of the Unseen which is at once the strongest and the weakest thing in man, is followed inevitably not by an indifference towards God, but by an attitude of deepening hostility to all the ideas about life, about the nature of man, about our task here in this world, about the secret treacheries of our human nature, ideas which found their reason and source in the great idea of a Holy God. The denial or neglect of God is not the end of a process, on attaining which man may continue his journey with some slight adjustment of himself to the new outlook. The denial of God, sooner or later, comes to be the denial of the ultimate decency of the Universe.

That extract is eminently worthy of the parsonic mind. Every statement in it is false. It is utterly untrue to say that all ideas about life, about the nature of man,

and so forth, find "their reason and source in the great idea of a Holy God." That may accurately be said of all *Christian* ideas about man and his destiny; but there is no escape from the conclusion that all natural ideas find their reason and source in Nature itself, being the direct products of the evolutionary process. Ideas do not descend from above, but ascend from beneath. It is quite true that Atheists maintain an attitude of deepening hostility to all ideas of an alleged supernatural origin, and towards that religion "whose heart is in the other world," their belief being in this world alone. The crowning falsehood of the extract is in the closing sentence: "The denial of God, sooner or later, comes to be the denial of the ultimate decency of the Universe." The natural inference from that statement is that at present the Universe is in a state of lamentable indecency, which, surely, cannot be creditable to the God Dr. Hutton so enthusiastically champions. Is not an indecent Universe the complete negation of a God of infinite power, justice, and love? And yet, in spite of his faith in such a Deity, who sits on the throne as invincible Sovereign, the reverend gentleman is unable to announce anything better than the *ultimate* decency of the Universe.

Without the belief in God, Dr. Hutton does not see "how in the long run men and nations are to continue to live in harmony, or are to continue to be able to resist the predatory instincts of licentious human nature"; but is he blind to the fact that when the belief in God was strongest there was the least harmony in society? Has he forgotten the Thirty Years' War, which was waged simply because men did believe in God, but could not see eye to eye as to the best method of serving him? Again and again has the belief in God been made the pretext for war in Christendom. Dr. Hutton knows as well as we do that the tendency of religion has always been, not to unite, but to divide mankind into opposing factions, and so cause all sorts of decimating conflicts. And yet he has the audacity to predict that the denial of God would make an harmonious human life impossible.

The curious thing is that nations which pretend to be at peace with God are now at war with one another, and that they all claim God as their invisible but effective Ally. Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, and Turks are sure that God is fighting for and with them, and will eventually give them a glorious victory. All the powers on the other side cherish the like conviction and hope, and are buoyed up thereby. Now, Dr. Hutton assures us that without repentance can we have peace, neither with God nor with one another as individuals or as nations. He claims, and rightly claims, that we have all done wrong, that we have a hundred causes for self-abasement, that we have permitted and have honoured courses, and policies, and sayings of the most ignoble character, and that the only way to permanent peace lies in repentance and reconciliation. All this is, doubtless, only too true; but to drag the name of God into it is to proclaim God's dismal failure as Governor of the world. When Jesus was born the legend says that the angels were heard singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." The legend further declares that when he faced the end, he exclaimed: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." We know that neither the angelic song, nor Jesus' prediction of his own triumph, has been fulfilled; and the unavoidable inference is that the religion of the Cross, lacking all reality as a supernatural factor, has mainly served, in the hands of its priests, as an instrument to raise them into a position of iniquitous lordship over the minds and consciences of credulous people. Survey the history of the Church and

assert, if you dare, that there ever has been a time when Christianity proved itself to be a supernatural force for the world's redemption. We frankly admit that the Church has been a tremendous power in the world, and that many Christians have been exceedingly good and useful people, but, at the same time, we do not hesitate to characterize the Church as an institution that has never justified its own claims, or to affirm that the excellent character displayed by many professing Christians is a purely human product. Neither God nor Christ has ever demonstrated his existence by any interference in human affairs.

Dr. Hutton does not know what a world without God would be like; and yet China, according to the testimony of those who know it best, is a highly moral country, in which there are millions of beautiful, almost ideal homes, though, to all intents and purposes, it has never had any definite doctrine of God, nor felt the need of the Christian religion. The same thing is true of Japan also. Is it not also true that even in Christendom the conditions of life have improved in proportion as the Christian faith has declined? A hundred years ago Great Britain was more religious than it is to-day; but would Dr. Hutton like the country to revert to the moral, social, and political state which then prevailed?

J. T. LOYD.

The Exodus from Houndsditch.

Miching mallecho—this means mischief.

—Shakespeare, "Hamlet."

Uplift thy cross and go. Thy doom is said.

—Robert Buchanan, "The Wandering Jew."

CHARLES BRADLAUGH who was, in his own characteristic way, a keen theologian, declared that religions did not die, but they changed; and Christianity itself is undergoing a transformation. The alteration has been taking place so quietly that it appears to have been wrought with the complete unconsciousness of clergy and congregations alike.

In England, the lamented Canon Farrar and other clergymen seem to have been the prime movers in this silent revolution. With quiet persistence they persuaded a very large number of their co-religionists that "hell," contrary to belief, was slightly less monotonous than "heaven" itself, and that everlasting punishment meant only an eternity of unpleasantness. Blood and brimstone were eliminated from the dictionary of the educated clergy. After that came the deluge, which has brought upon its flood undogmatic religionism and the rest of the beautiful nonsense which now passes for the religion of Christ. This dilution of dogma has had its disintegrating effect upon all the Churches. Painful Sabbaths have been replaced by pleasant Sunday afternoons. String bands and soloists take the place of leather-lunged preachers. Labour Members of Parliament, lady preachers, and other notorieties, threaten to oust the very parsons from their pulpits. This can have but one meaning; it is the secularizing of Christianity. Some time since, at a leading London Nonconformist place of worship, a well-known actor and a famous contributor to *Punch* occupied the pulpit to pronounce eulogiums upon a world-renowned Freethinker. The great queue of people outside the chapel gave the finishing touch of comedy. It was magnificent, but it was not Christianity as taught for twenty centuries. It shocks one; it is like meeting one's pet dog in the form of sausages.

Nor is this all. The Prayer Book itself has suffered. Changes have been made in the hallowed volume, and barbarous portions of the Psalms eliminated. It has

even been suggested that the "strong language" in the Marriage Service is to be toned down. "Angels and ministers of grace defend us." If this sort of thing goes on, the Holy Bible and the *Winning Post* will be the only publications untouched by the dainty blue pencil of the censor.

The Christian superstition is crumbling. Never was there so little religion, never so much Secularism, as at the present day. Never have men attended churches and chapels so little; never have they attended hospital and philanthropic meetings so assiduously. Christianity is being absorbed by Secularism. The supernatural element in Christianity no longer satisfies, for no faith can satisfy which is based upon outworn ideas and outgrown ignorance. The mind of man is vigorously bestirring itself. Scepticism means approach to the truth, and truth cannot consort with the superstitions of the past. Men nowadays no longer accept upon mere trust the religious misbeliefs of their remote and ignorant ancestors. Over the pulpits of the fast emptying churches is inscribed: "To the glory of God." That is the voice of the past. Secularism sounds the triumphant note of the future, "to the service of man." For nearly twenty centuries the Churches have been praying "Our Father," and the day of human brotherhood seems farther off than ever. Secularism does not pray, but it works for the ennobling service of man for man, which will lead ultimately to the elimination of Christian superstition and to the glorification of humanity.

Straws show which way the wind is blowing. A statement of the task of the Free Churches after the War, published recently in the *Daily Chronicle*, shows clearly the Secularistic tendencies of the Nonconformist Churches. It mentions that the Free Church Council represents the local councils, to which 10,000 Free Churches send delegates, and then adds:—

The local councils are composed of men and women who are peculiarly interested in the exemplary behaviour of the people, in the education, welfare, and health of the children, in fair wages, in sound housing conditions—in a word, in religion.

In this precious definition of religion, the empty dogmas of orthodoxy have become of less importance than the snows of yesteryear. Nor, in the particular circumstances, is this so entirely surprising. Such awful facts as the world-war, with its attendant horrors, must make thoughtful men and women pause in reciting the Christian shibboleths. Few, we imagine, feel inclined to refer to a Heavenly Father at the moment when the conception implies that he is devouring his own children by hundreds of thousands. Their hands would be less inclined than usual to go up to "that inverted bowl we call the sky." Such unspeakable horrors as this world-war are hard to reconcile with any consolatory scheme of religion.

And, mark you, who hears the pathetic cry of humanity in anguish? Is it the thorn-crowned Messiah with his thousands of angels, or the Divine Mother with cohorts of cherubim, who come to succour the unhappy victims? Not at all! Mankind is left to its own resources, and it is to the ready sympathy of other men and women that the victims have to turn in the bitterest hours of sorrow and disaster.

Such a spectacle brings home to everyone the growth and change of ideas. Knowledge has widened in ways never dreamed of in the Eastern philosophy of the Christian religion. New tones have grown into human sentiment. All the lights and shadows of life have shifted, and its whole surface has been dyed in different colours. Naturally, we are progressing beyond the reach of outworn ideals. They voice different views which men have outgrown. They can make no direct response to

them. At their note their minds and feelings rouse to no movement except amazement. They come like the "horns of Elfland, faintly blowing," and men realize that they were meant for other ears than ours, and are but an echo from the far-off days of ignorance and bigotry. The conscience of the race is rising above dogmas. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which marches to certain victory under the glorious banners of Liberty and Fraternity.

MIMNERMUS.

Light on the Present Crisis.

AN orthodox friend of long standing, who believes the Bible from cover to cover, has the habit of enclosing, whenever he writes, a religious tract for my especial benefit. Most of these have been of the usual character; but the last to come to hand relates to the War, and bears the title, *Light on the Present Crisis*. It is a small sixteen-page pamphlet, written by the Rev. Leonard Newby, of St. Julian's Vicarage, Shrewsbury, and furnishes a good example of the War being a fulfilment of prophecy. The "light" which this reverend gentleman sheds on the present crisis commences as follows:—

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for all must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows (Matt. xxiv. 6-8).

The italics are the reverend's own, and in case the reader should not perceive that the foregoing is really a "light" upon the subject, the Rev. L. Newby undertakes to expound the passage and make the matter clear to him. He says:—

The prophetic period to which the words of the above passage refer has *now* arrived. Nation is rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and the sword is being bathed in human blood to an extent which hitherto has been unknown in this sad and weary world's history. Men and women are propounding questions one to another to which they can find no satisfactory answer, and no wonder, for the vexed question of the hour can only be answered by *intelligent students* of the prophetic Word.

Here we see that the Rev. L. Newby naturally ranks himself among "the *intelligent students* of the prophetic Word" who are adepts in the correct interpretation of prophecy. He assumes as a matter of course that the so-called "prediction" of the destruction of Jerusalem, from which the foregoing three verses are taken, was uttered by an historical Jesus about the year A.D. 30. But, as an "intelligent student" of Gospel history, he ought to have known that this grand "prophecy" could not have been written until after the event to which it refers had taken place. The reasons for the conclusion are many. I will only say here that there was nothing in the history of the Jews up to the year A.D. 66 (when the war with the Romans commenced) that could lead anyone to suppose that such a terrible and unforeseen event was ever likely to occur. Neither could anyone who lived in the time of Jesus know that in A.D. 65 the emperor Nero would send such an unjust, tyrannical, and senseless creature as Gessius Florus to be procurator of Judæa; nor could anybody know that it was the bullying and injustice of this man that goaded the Jews into taking up arms against the Romans. This great war was not foreseen in the time of Jesus. Matt. xxiv. is not a prediction, though written in that form. The writer could with perfect confidence say that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed; for he wrote after

A.D. 70. We know, also, that this great "prophecy" is a purely literary composition, modelled upon passages selected from the Old Testament and Apocryphal writings, and was never spoken, as represented.

The reverend gentleman then goes on to say: "It would be impossible to answer a tithe of the questions which perplexed men and women are asking concerning this great European War; but by God's grace I will try and answer five questions, not out of my imagination, but out of the Word of Truth."

Here it may be necessary to reassure the reader by saying that I have no intention of going into those "five questions"; the first will be sufficient. This reads:—

Does not this terrible war with its unnameable atrocities justify us in fearing that there may be no God after all? If there was a God, would He not stretch forth His mighty hand and confound the politics and frustrate the knavish tricks of those whose creed is that might is right, and that the weakest must be crushed?

The mere fact that such a question is propounded by a clergyman may be taken as indicating that it had been seriously asked by professing Christians in his district. But whether there is, or is not, a being called "God" in some part of the Universe is a matter of very little importance. One fact, however, is certain: as far back as human records go, this God, if God there be, has given no sign of his existence. Wherever it is possible to verify ancient history, events ascribed to the action of this Being are found to be either fictitious or due to natural causes. Hence, whether a God exists or not, he never speaks, he never acts, or in any way makes his presence known; neither does he interfere in human affairs.

Leaving this matter, let us now see what is the Rev. Newby's answer to his own question. That reverend gentleman, in reply, says that if the great European War "had not come sooner or later, God's Word would have been falsified, for the prophetic period described as '*the times of the Gentiles*' is rapidly running out."

Here it should be noted that the words in italics are an addition to Matthew's version of the grand "prophecy" inserted by Luke (xxi. 24) apparently on his own authority. Continuing his "enlightening" remarks, the Rev. L. Newby says:—

Instead of this war proving that God does not exist, it is rather a testimony to His faithfulness, and an overwhelming reminder that *not a word* He has spoken shall fail to come to pass.....The European war writes the fact in large letters "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.".....But if there were a God, would he not intervene at a crisis like this? My answer is HE WILL. Read the second Psalm—"the Lord shall have the nations in derision.....He shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Thus, when the British, French, and Americans, with an overwhelming number of men, guns, and aeroplanes, have broken the German armies, and have driven them out of Belgium and France, the Lord God will intervene in order that his words in Matt. xxiv. and Luke xxi. shall not be falsified. This is really amusing.

Let us now look at the three verses in Matt. xxiv. which the Rev. Newby quotes as a prediction of the present War. He does not tell us how he knew them to be such; he merely says that the fact could only be known to "*intelligent students of the prophetic Word*"—of whom "by God's grace" he was one. This is, no doubt, interesting; but, like everything connected with religion, it requires verification.

In Matt. xxiv. the disciples drew the attention of Jesus to "the buildings of the temple," whereupon their Master said, "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be

left here one stone upon another." Shortly afterwards the disciples asked him, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The reply of Jesus to the first question—When shall the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple take place?—is given in Matt. xxiv. 4-28; the events relating to his second coming and the end of the world occupy the remainder of the chapter.

With regard to the first question, Jesus might have said, had he possessed foreknowledge, that the holy city and the temple would be destroyed forty years later; but the method he adopted was that of naming a number of supposed notable events which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, during those forty years prior to A.D. 70, the first notable event specified is the appearance of many false Christs; after which comes the passage under consideration, that "nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom," etc. This event was therefore to happen many years *before* the destruction of the holy city—say about A.D. 35. Yet it is this statement that the Rev. Newby quotes as a "prophecy" referring to the present European War. Anyone with a grain of sense will see that this so-called "prophecy" *must* refer to wars between A.D. 30 and 70, and to no other period. Even if *no* such wars of nations occurred during that interval, as history shows to be the case, those falsely predicted wars could not be shifted to any later period. Our "intelligent student" of prophecy is thus shewn to be hopelessly blind, and "as wrong as wrong can be."

Again, the writer of Matt. xxiv. had no idea that there ever could be such a war as that now in progress; for he says that the Jewish-Roman war was "such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be."

Furthermore, the writer of Matt. xxiv. says that "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days" all the tribes of the earth "shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels.....and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds," etc. There could thus, according to the prediction, be no European War in 1914-1917. But as the "Son of man" did not come to judge the world "*immediately after*" the destruction of Jerusalem, as he had promised, then the so-called "Word of God" which gave that promise is undoubtedly "falsified," whether the Rev. Leonard Newby may think so or not. The question, in this case, is simply one of fact.

ABRACADABRA.

Home Our Heaven.

DUBLIN people have reason to be inordinately proud of their splendid slums, but when they boast that their poor have quite the worst dwellings in the world, as a superior slumologist, I must beg to differ. In every country I have honoured with my presence, I have always chosen my home among the the most wretched habitations, for experience has taught me that a rotten house is invariably cheaper than a good one, and society has ever decreed that even the cheapest was always too dear for me.

Leaving the States out of the question, and confining our attention to Europe, some real rotters of houses may be found in what my wife, with excellent reason, called La Smell France. Oh, Nantes, where is thy stink? The lovely Loire, with malodorous melancholy more niffy than the Liffey, flows past the stately maison from the *cinquieme etage* of which we had to descend *en bas* to a loathsome cellar where water trickled down the walls, and rats nestled lovingly in the canopy over

our bed. We sought not the shelter of the cellar for our children fearful of bombs, for those were days of "peace," but the country being in flood, the law of supply and demand (and the rapacity of the Bretons) made dry, habitable rooms expensive. We got rather friendly with the rats, who had decidedly anti-Malthusian principles. One patriarchal old chap with a white beard was a particular friend of mine. We called him Tolstoy, and on maturer acquaintance Leo. He had an ugly weal on his left posterior, some militant Christian, doubtless, taking a mean advantage of Leo's attitude of non-resistance, having endeavoured to make a sacrifice of him.

Ah, me, the beauties of Brittainy are vividly brought back to mind on reading the Mesopotamia report!

The essential difference between the poor of France and those of Dublin is that the *ctageries* of the Republic throw their refuse out of the windows—readers of *Candide* are aware of this—while the Dublin tenementers, not having achieved their republic yet, still retain their respectability, and store all their waste products in a whited sepulchre called "the yard."

Now, lest readers wonder what all this has to do with Freethought, I hasten to assure them that one's method of worshipping, or one's attitude towards creation, is very largely bound up with the manner in which garbage is disposed of. In Scottish tenements the rule is that the "bucket" must be carried out to the street in early morning. Many a cold winter morning in my fifty-storey garret (nine stories from the back) have I cursed Protestantism, hygiene, flights of stairs, and the east wind of Edinburgh. Frequently I have lain awake all night, oppressed by thoughts of that ghastly bucket, and the early advent of the muck cart, when the previous evening, I could have shot the contents out of the nine storey window, and then enjoyed sweet repose.

Now, Scottish Presbyterians admit that the accumulation of egg-shells, potato parings, and ashes, is a corollary of civilized Christian life, and think highly of one assiduous in the emptying of buckets, provided always that the rite is performed orderly, and at an early hour, and with becoming gravity.

On the contrary, Catholics making a virtue of ignorance, it is in keeping with their Agnosticism about life generally that they could not discuss the subject, and as for throwing rubbish out of the window—why that would not be decent; and, though we may be poor, we are all respectable in Dublin. First, we have no rubbish, then, if we have just a little, we, with becoming Catholic shame furtively convey it to the bin in "the yard." There our responsibility ends. Occasionally, when the landlord has been nearly "gassed"—by the vegetable matter outside the house—while endeavouring to collect rent from the human vegetation inside, he deputes "a boy" to "do" the yard.

This youth—an old age pensioner—sets about cleaning the Augean gables. He wields a brush charged with whitewash—Ireland's emblem of purity—and is said to possess miraculous powers, for by his gestures effluvium is exorcized, the yard is "done," and we may again resume our offerings.

True, if it were not for the yards and their abominations, infant mortality might not be so high in Dublin; but then we would not have the ministrations of elderly spinsters who visit us for our health, and tell us that "John has rickets, Margaret adenoids; take Malcolm to Dr. Sawbones to get hacked about to see what's wrong with him; baby ought to have been weaned last Wednesday—must be taken to hospital to be weighed; kill all flies, keep that window open to let in fresh air" (from the yard!), etc.

I like a joke, and these social workers (salaried) sometimes amuse me; but I am no mathematician, and when they ask conundrums about cubic space, I am sarcastic to them—that is, I tell them to go to hell. Now, although "To hell with the King" is chalked outside our house, and similar sentiments are commonplaces in Dublin, the slum-dwellers are extremely docile and respectful, and take meekly all "insolence of office." The ladies of the locality, in friendly badinage, occasionally characterize each other as the illegitimate offspring of an ensanguined female of commercialized passion; but that merely shows their veneration for the sacrament of matrimony. The poor, I regret to say, are a disappointment everywhere, and in Dublin they are particularly subservient. Poverty, as a passing phase, I can endure, with an utter disregard of the conventions, a frank acceptance of all the makeshifts required to keep in life, and a healthy hatred of interfering busybodies; but poverty as a permanent condition, with a "dud" suit, celluloid collar, a reputation for respectability, and a wife who has to char—well, I wouldn't look quite as contented as Murphy. Confound the fellow; so long as he smiles, we will never make any progress.

After all, morality is for the poor. Let us congratulate them on their cleanliness (fancy a man being pleased that his wife was thought clean!), commend them for their thrift, admire them for their honesty (meaning their acceptance of the principle of being stolen from), insist, of course, on their humility (a "humble person" is frequently advertised for in Dublin); then, if we want to finish the job properly, let us turn the priests on them with all their lies, and they are now at our mercy, to use for our political ends, to exploit for our economic aggrandizement, to experiment on their dirty bodies that we may have knowledge to patch up our bodies, and to fozzle their minds that they may always remain fools.

A Scottish bailie of my acquaintance once told me a touching story of Andrew Carnegie. The millionaire was having a pow-wow with some parochial body on the cadge. "Ah," said Andrew, unctuously, as his eye lighted on the text, "Heaven our Home," "now that's just my philosophy, only I would express it differently, and make it 'Home our Heaven.'" I expressed wonder to my friend that that doctrine had not carried conviction in America, for I had heard of quite a large number of Carnegie's workers who, during a labour dispute, suddenly left this world, at the sound of firearms; probably they had interpreted the text as "Heaven our Homestead." The bailie called me a blaspheming ruffian, and a man incapable of any right feeling.

Truth to tell, I agree with the Laird of Skibo. I do believe in making our home—however mean it may be, a temple of love and joy. And, believing as I do that this life is all, I am tremendously keen on seeing that my children shall enjoy all the really good things of the world. If the inhabitants of slums only felt debased and degraded by their vile environment, and longed for something better, and were prepared to fight everything and everybody that stood in their way, there might be hope. But they have neither imagination nor vision to think a full and beautiful life. A room passes for a house, window-boxes in lieu of a garden, floorcloth for carpet, and an annual half-day in the country for the children's "fresh air"; for, to the poor, all things are poor, as Bernard Shaw would like to have said.

I may be told that the housing problem is an economic one, and I do not lose sight of that factor. I do not accuse the Church of being the basic cause of the slums in Dublin. This, however, I do say, that wherever Catholicism flourishes (look at the "Irish" quarter anywhere), there also is squalor, degradation, and ignorance; and the Church always strives to perpetuate poverty. Here

and there we may find a priest of "forward" social opinions; but, just as the Church takes advantage of the Sinn Fein Movement *up to a point*, she knows full well that republics on earth don't usually think kindly of kingdoms in heaven. That is how it seems to a rationalist mind; but to the complex, scientific, nay, super-normal intelligence of Mr. Holy Ghost Wells (B.Sc.), it appears simple to visualize an invisible monarch of an unearthly Republic. So, whenever there is any agitation about Dublin slums, the priests will get the wire to butt in, but should there be the remotest chance of any drastic change for the better, rest assured they will resist with all their strength; for with better housing, more leisure, and increase of knowledge, a spirit of independence and fearlessness would be created, and the priests would soon find their occupation like that of Othello.

J. EFFEL.

Acid Drops.

The War has shaken the faith of a great many people; it appears to have affected even that of Mr. Bottomley. "Never again," he says, "if there be a God, can there be such a Devil's Holiday." "If there be a God"! Can it be possible that after solemnly assuring everybody—on the guarantee of an increasing circulation—that there is a God and a future life, that Mr. Bottomley is beginning to have doubts? May we suggest that, if there be a God, the War ought never to have happened at all? And if God couldn't prevent it in 1914, what reason have we for believing he will or can prevent another war in, say, 1924? Still, it is good to note the evidence of a chastened spirit. Mr. Bottomley has even promised not to prophesy any more. He solemnly announces that he has "discarded the mantle of the Prophet." This, he explains, is not because his data was wrong, but because other people prevented his prophecies being realized. That is really the funniest excuse we have ever seen for the non-realization of a prophecy.

The other Monday morning a Swansea fruiterer displayed a box of large mouldy plums bearing the inscription "In affectionate remembrance of the Swansea Council and the Sunday Observance Act of 1676." We congratulate the shopkeeper on his wit. It is too much to hope that it will have any effect on Swansea Sabbatarians.

Unconscious humour is often excellent. Mr. Horatio Bottomley has been advertising on a large scale a series of articles on the War, and a prominent part of the notice was occupied by a portrait of himself, with the words underneath in large type, "Somewhere in Hell."

Tales of angels having been seen at Grays and Waltham Abbey have been current, but a real specimen was brought into a case at Willesden Police Court. A woman, asking for a summons against her husband, told the Bench, "On Saturdays and Sundays he's a little angel, but the rest of the week he isn't worth living with."

A boy, who had been placed on probation at the Home for Working Boys at Maida Vale, was charged at the Guildhall with failing to attend church. He was ordered to attend church in the future. If he does not, we presume he will be punished. If he does, he will be forgiven. So, as a first step in the process of moralizing, the Alderman proposes to make him a hypocrite.

A forty-line paragraph appeared in the press describing the "coolness" of the Archbishop of Canterbury and other clergy in conducting an induction service during an air-raid. There is nothing very heroic in their action, for the church in which they officiated is a substantial building. Far greater heroism was displayed by tens of thousands of poor mothers and children in small, jerry-built houses; but ordinary folk do not have press agents.

When the Zeppelins raided the Metropolis the Bishop of London cheered us up by saying that the present War was a "day of God," and that we ought to thank God for being "allowed the honour of a little danger." We think everybody has had enough honour during the past week or two, and the honour's list, in the shape of casualties, is unpleasantly large. The Bishop is now not quite so certain on the matter, but he still says of the recent raids that "this is our lot of danger" and we should "be proud of it." We really don't know what there is to be proud of. We have sat for nights with the guns roaring and bombs bursting all around, and we did not feel in the least proud. The Bishop says each murdered child is being carried one by one to Paradise. We wonder how he knows. And we wonder how many parents will be comforted by this stupid cant? If the "white wings of the Holy Ghost" would protect the children from bombs, we are quite sure that parents would prefer it to those same wings being used as transport waggons to heaven.

When Christians are in a tight corner they act much as other folk do. In view of the air-raids a large number of churches altered the time of their evening services. This shows the decay of belief in the efficacy of prayer.

A Sunday paper published recently an article on "Oriental Fictions." No mention was made of the fairy tales of the Bible.

Christ said "Swear not at all," but Christians almost invariably swear in courts—and elsewhere. Court "swearing" is not so simple as it appears, for Mr. Herbert Nield, K.C., recently uttered the reproof, "A police-officer ought never to say 'I swear by the Almighty God,' as though there were many deities, and they were choosing one." This was sufficient to make the poor policeman turn as blue as his uniform.

The Rev. P. J. Kelly, a Yorkshire vicar, has resigned his living and joined the Royal Garrison Artillery as a gunner. The living is worth £500 a year, and a gunner gets about a shilling a day. The reverend gentleman's example should be emulated by the thousands of clergy of military age.

A writer in the *Daily Chronicle* states that "it wasn't war that first brought death into the world and all our woe." Surely, a most chaste reference to Eve and the apple.

The *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans) of September 2, reports a striking case of the effects of ardent preaching. The Rev. G. J. Kelly delivered two sermons one Sunday, and returned home thinking out a new sermon on the text "Slay Utterly." He went to bed, but was unable to sleep. After a while he rose and went out towards the house of a family named Moore. As he approached the house he heard a voice saying: "Go in and slay utterly." He found an axe, and went into a room where four children were sleeping. Then came the voice again: "Suffer little children to come unto me." Kelly replied: "Lord, they're coming now," and killed the children. He then entered another room, found the mother and father asleep, and killed them. Of course, Kelly was insane. But equally, of course, there is nothing worse than religion for ill-balanced minds. And well-balanced minds have no need of it.

Pious folk always had a sneaking fondness for profiteering, and it shows itself in their hymns, as, for instance, in the lines:—

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee
Who givest all.

"Scholar and saint" is the way in which a *Daily Telegraph* reviewer describes the Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead. "Scholar" is a very elastic term, and we are quite willing to concede the title of "saint." Many better men than he have been called that. And we remember that this saint

once openly professed the opinion that all people who did not believe in immortality bestialized life, and ought to be shut out from human society. We do not suggest that this conviction is incompatible with sainthood; far from it. Men of a most "saintly" character have before now been notable for extreme narrowness of view, and even savagery of persecution. It is often, in fact, the saint that spoils the man. On the whole, we incline to the opinion that the world has suffered more from its saints than from its sinners.

A Spiritualist, of Grimsby, was summoned the other day by his charwoman for maintenance of her illegitimate child. The defendant said he had consulted the spirits, and they had denied that he was the father of the child. The testimony of spirits evidently does not count for much in Grimsby Police Court, as the magistrate made the usual order. A foolish girl, and a designing rogue.

The congregation was singing—

God is our refuge and our strength;
In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid.

The Church officer—a wag—to test their faith, put his head in at the door and shouted "Fire!" In the rush for the exits the parson led.

The *Midland Daily Telegraph*, of October 1, contains an account of the prosecution of twelve boys charged with stealing from the Market Hall, Coventry. The Chairman of the court said it was a most painful thing to find such boys becoming thieves in view of the fact that most of the boys were attending Sunday-school. Some of the thefts were committed by the boys on their way from Sunday-school. Now, if they had been attending schools where religious instruction was non-existent, we have no doubt the Chairman would have delivered a homily on the evils of Secular Education. As these boys were getting plenty of religious education, no moral was necessary.

From the *Christian World* :—

Rev. W. Pedr Williams visited an Essex town on Friday to preach at the harvest thanksgiving service. But Mr. Williams had just got to close grips with his subject when warning of an air-raid was received, *the gas failed*, and the audience quietly dispersed.

Italics are ours. We have been wondering whose, or what, gas was it that failed?

The *Daily News* quotes the following from a morning paper:—

AIR-RAIDS.—Peaceful country rectory, Hampshire, well out of danger zone, can receive three or four paying guests. Large garden, beautiful scenery, high, bracing. Simple life. £10 each weekly. References exchanged.

It may be a simple life, but evidently not a very simple parson.

The *Daily Mirror* says that on an ocean liner leaving port the other day, it was observed that a number of passengers threw pennies into the sea. This was done in the belief that it would secure immunity from submarines. Students of folk-lore will see in the action a survival of a primitive form of sacrifice, and also how little removed from the primitive mind is the intelligence of a large number of our "civilized" fellow-beings.

Private Woodhouse, of the King's Own Lancaster Regiment, is said to have had his life saved through carrying a New Testament. He was shot through the arm, but a bullet failed to enter his breast owing to his carrying God's Word. We are glad to hear it, but we would remark that some of our readers who have carried the *Freethinker* into action have never been hit at all. Now, if every soldier carried a copy of this paper with him

A little Acton girl, who had been much impressed by a visit to the "pictures," rose from her knees at her bedside, looking unusually thoughtful. "What is the matter?" asked

her mother. The unexpected reply was: "I was just thinking, won't God laugh when Charlie Chaplin goes to heaven!"

The President of the Free Church Council, Rev. W. B. Selbie, says that 85 to 90 per cent. of the men in the Army are out of any vital relation to the Christian Church. But he doesn't believe the Church has failed. We wonder what Dr. Selbie would consider failure. If, with all the generations during which the Churches have controlled life, they can now claim only 10 per cent. of the people. What greater proof of failure is required?

Some of our schoolmasters appear to be men of robust faith. The Rev. J. Gow, of Westminster School, says, "I believe in miracles, and by prayer miracles more wonderful than those of long ago are being wrought every day." We do not recall any contemporary instances of persons being raised from the dead, or even of cases of thousands of people being fed with a few sardines and rolls, but perhaps the reverend gentleman will narrate his experience. The nearest approach to the miraculous that we remember are the cases of the angels at Mons and elsewhere—and they were bogeys.

The Rev. Principal Selbie says that "the Church is more self-sacrificing than ever." Have the dear bishops and leading ministers forgone part of their salaries, or are they deciding that the clergy shall take their share of military service?

The commercial side of Christianity is emphasized in the transference of Sir A. Yapp from the Young Men's Christian Association to the Food Economy Campaign. So smart was he at gathering subscriptions on behalf of the Y.M.C.A. that wags insisted that those letters stood for "Yapp's Money-Collecting Association."

Parish magazines, like all other mundane things, change with the times. Even in their treatment of Freethinkers, Christians are becoming more polite. In the *Crown Magazine*, edited by the Rev. G. E. Thorn, of Peckham, there is a reference to Abraham Lincoln: "He was a man of strict morality, abstemious, and familiar with the Bible, though not a professed member of any Church." We wonder how many innocent readers of this magazine will realize that Abraham Lincoln was a Freethinker? For our own part, we prefer the bad manners of older days to the nebulous and unctuous insolence in use to-day.

The *Daily Chronicle* announces that "the Free Church Council contemplates a great 'push' throughout the country during the autumn and winter." It would be far more to the purpose if the Free Church Council released all able-bodied Nonconformist ministers for active service in the real "push" abroad.

Church congregations are not the brainiest folk, but surely it was unnecessary for the Rev. C. Hutchinson, Rector of Rayne, Essex, to ask his parishioners not to bring wheat and corn to church for harvest festival decorations this year.

A brand of matches bears the fascinating name "Adam and Eve." It is a happy title, for it suggests an ancient attempt at match-making.

The Romish Church appears to possess an excellent press agency, for paragraphs are always appearing in the newspapers. A recent paragraph mentions the names of converts, one of whom is the Rev. R. A. Knox, youngest son of the Bishop of Manchester. This conversion will scarcely undo the work of the Protestant Reformation.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been poking fun at Mr. H. G. Wells and his "brand-new God," and says that in *The Soul of a Bishop* the popular novelist "has created a brand-new Jesus Christ of his own. The Jesus of Mr. Wells has given his followers neither a creed nor a morality, neither a Church organization, nor a priesthood." Father Vaughan is in too much of a hurry. Rome itself was not built in a day.

To Correspondents.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

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

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

A. M.—“If God does anything, he does everything. If he does not do everything, he does nothing.” In another form the idea belongs to Goethe. But an idea is one's own when one has thoroughly assimilated it.

A. WILDMAN.—The General Secretary, Miss Vance, will write you on the matter.

F. F. CORNELL.—Papers are being sent.

A. G. BARKER.—We should say that this particular author regrets having tried to boom his own book. Unfortunately, there are many writers whose chief concern in writing is not whether a subject in itself is worth writing about, but whether there will be a demand for a book on that topic. And more harm is done in this way than in any other. Beware of the writer who has always a book ready for every passing phase of opinion.

H. R. SWIFT.—We are never “bored” with the experiences of Freethinkers such as yourself. We get many such letters, and our only regret is that we cannot make all public.

MR. AND MRS. H. ROSETTI, in sending their contribution to the Fund, write, “It is the only way in which we can attempt to discharge a debt of gratitude towards so admirable a paper. We hope our little son may grow to have as much pleasure in reading it as his father and mother have had.” We sincerely hope so.

J. H. MINETT.—Pleased you find “Views and Opinions” so much to your taste.

F. C. WYKES.—We do not intend increasing the price. Thanks for appreciation.

J. GOUDIE.—Appeared in the *Freethinker* some years ago.

H. ROBSON.—We saw the report. The stupidity of the Bishop of London commands almost admiration—it is so near perfection of its kind.

J. SANDERS.—Thanks. We sincerely hope that things will be brighter in the near future.

MR. G. W. OGILVIE thinks the *Freethinker* “deserves to be in the highest niche in the temple of literature.” Well, it already holds a high place in the esteem of thousands of intelligent men and women. And the only way to command the unthinking is to sink to their level.

T. FISHER.—It seems to be part of a pseudo-philosophical and very verbose book in defence of Theism. But the pages are not very appetizing.

ADELAIDE GRAY (Toronto).—We have received letter enclosing a one-dollar bill; but you do not say to what purpose you wish this put. Will you please instruct us on the subject?

G. LUNN.—Yes, the ready help of our readers has been very gratifying. Pleased to know you regard it as a means by which readers can record their thanks for anything we may have done. And to help the Cause is the kind of thanks we value most.

T. H. HOW.—It is nothing new to find “leading” men expressing the views voiced by Freethinkers years ago. Mr. Asquith's remarks, which, we cited, are, as you say, a case in point.

W. BIRDON.—Will write on the subject you name when an opportunity presents itself.

MISS VANCE, General Secretary N.S.S., would be glad to hear from any Freethinker, resident in Bristol, who could find time to visit “one of ours” home from the front and awaiting an operation, in the Southern General Hospital, Bristol Royal Infirmary, who is a long distance from his own home and friends.

H. DAWSON.—Doan's *Bible Myths* is, probably, the book you mean. It is published by the Truthseeker Co., New York.

T. C.—We quite agree that the sentence was a monstrous one. Four months' hard labour for a boy of sixteen seems a capital way of manufacturing a criminal.

R. STIRTON.—Glad to know you think the *Freethinker* worthy of its best traditions.

B. DUNLOP AND H. IRVING.—Next week.

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.

Fifth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £263 8s. 10d. J. Higgins, £2 2s. W. Fitzpatrick, 10s. J. S. N. (Bedford), 10s. D. Richards, 2s. W. Milroy, 5s. J. Milroy, 5s. R. V., 2s. 6d. R. M., 2s. 6d. G. W. Ogilvie, £1 1s. A. J. Watson, 2s. 6d. C. Jortan, 1s. H. W. and E. B. Side, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 10s. F. C. Wykes, 7s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Minett, £1. G. F. Shoults, £5. J. N. Williams, 1s. F. Gray, 2s. 6d. S. E., 2s. H. B. Harrison, 2s. 6d. W. Mather (second subscription), 10s. H. Dawson, 5s. E. E. Donat, 10s. R. R. Goodman, 2s. 6d. W. Lamb (Bedford), 5s. J. T. R., 2s. 6d. J. Blackhall, 2s. 6d. Joshua Ratcliffe, £1. S. E. Owen, £1 1s. F. C., 2s. 6d. George Brady, £2 2s. T. Johnson, 3s. R. Stirton and Friends (Dundee), £1 10s. G. Lunn, 2s. 6d. J. Robinson (fifth subscription), 1s. D. Woodstock, 5s. W. Mendez, 10s. J. Keily, 5s. “Ernest,” 10s. Per Manchester Branch, N.S.S.—H. Black, 5s.; Mrs. Bayfield, 2s. 6d.; G. Brown, 1s. Total: £285 15s. 10d.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures this evening, October 14, in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. His subject is: “Why Men Believe in God, with Special Reference to Mr. H. G. Wells.”

To-day (October 14) Mr. Lloyd lectures, afternoon and evening, in the Elysium, High Street, Swansea. This is Mr. Lloyd's first visit to Swansea as a Freethought speaker, and we hope to hear that he has had the audience he deserves. Freethinkers will do well to bring their Christian friends and acquaintances to the meetings. We venture to predict that they will be pleased they attended.

We have a whole batch of letters from soldiers awaiting notice, and while we cannot quote from all, we think our readers will be interested in the following. From a South African reader we get this:—

I was born and brought up a Freethinker, so I suppose there is no particular credit due to me in that I am an Atheist. I have signed on on three separate occasions since the outbreak of the War. On the two first occasions there were no objections raised when I asked to affirm instead of taking the oath. But on the last occasion, at Potchefstroom, when they were filling in my attestation form, they asked the usual question, “What religion?” and when I said nil, the sergeant said I must have some religion or they wouldn't be able to accept me as a recruit. Thanks to the *Freethinker*, I knew my position exactly, and told him he couldn't possibly refuse me on such grounds. I was then taken before the C. O. of the regiment. He also was of the opinion that unless I took the oath I wasn't eligible as a recruit; but after I had explained matters to him, he had my papers filled in and sent me to the Staff-Colonel to be fixed up. The Colonel, who is a Roman Catholic, tried to bully me into changing my mind. He went so far as to suggest that I would be put on all sorts of unpleasant fatigues while the rest of the regiment were on Church Parade when I got over on this side. But I stuck to my guns and in the end I affirmed.

I have since found that there is at least one avowed Atheist with us, and there are several who call themselves Agnostics, but they are all down as Church of England.

I am, naturally, rather notorious in the regiment, and several pious gentlemen have made it their duty to try and convert me. But although not too well lettered, I have found that a good memory, combined with regular reading of the *Freethinker*, is all that is needed to squash all their arguments.

Pte. J. Scott writes:—

Nothing cheered me up more in France than the *Freethinker*. I had six Freethinkers in my push in the last fight at Ypres. It is all rot about a religious revival after the War.

Men are more willing and ready to listen to Atheism than religion in France. I have been four times wounded, and been through most of the fighting, but I never experienced any fears about a future life, nor did I get hardened to the awful and hellish sights of war. The person who writes about the glory of war is a fool, or has some ulterior motive.

This correspondent points out what an important factor the weather is in this War, and also how frequently the British advance has been prevented, and the Germans favoured, by the weather. In Arras, "we had grand weather up to the morning of the battle, and then it rained all day. At night it snowed, and in the morning there were four inches of snow, and thousands of poor wounded lay out in it all night." Other instances of the same kind are given, and Pte. Scott concludes:—

Now, both sides pray, and I suppose both believe in an answer to prayer. If I did believe in God, I should say he was certainly on the German side.

Which seems a not illogical conclusion. Indeed, some of our own clergy, it will be remembered, have dwelt on the way in which the weather has helped the Germans in order to reprove our sins, and have asserted that it was God's method of bringing us to a more religious frame of mind.

Mr. G. Brady writes:—

I have great pleasure in enclosing two postal orders, value £2, being subscription to the Sustentation Fund (sounds rather "Free Kirky" to a Scotsman), and trust the amount, when realized, will prove a record. I cannot help thinking the number of contributors is very small, but probably that is accounted for by the sadly abnormal times. In conclusion, let me add my congratulations on the manner in which you are proving yourself a worthy successor to our late wise and valiant leader.

With regard to the latter part of the letter, we can only say we have done our best. As to the first part, we would remind our correspondent that all have not yet contributed who intend doing so. We have every confidence that the number will be materially increased, and the sum realized will go a good way towards meeting the loss during the present year.

Mr. E. B. Side writes on behalf of himself and brother, two members of a united freethinking family:—

Your road has been all uphill, and sheer courage in what you know to be a righteous cause is taking you slowly but surely to the summit.

If others could only imagine what is at the other side of that hill, then the milestones would present the appearance of a graveyard.

I have sent many copies of the *Freethinker* to various military and naval depots during the War, and have received pleasing results from same.

H. Dawson sends the following reminder of our early days:—

To the pale-faced, curly-headed youth who, years ago, "beneath the spreading chestnut tree" at Wood Green, faced a howling, half-demented Christian mob unmoved, and declared, "I came here to deliver an address on —, and I am going to deliver it, with or without your sanction." And he delivered it, and many others; and has ever since, fine weather or storm, fought the same battle against the enemies of mankind, with the same conquering composure. I am just getting out of the results of a twelve months' ago accident, and can testify that in the months of grave danger I never for a moment had a doubt of the wisdom of my position as an Atheist. Please put the enclosed dollar to the Sustentation Fund, and accept thanks; and every good wish to you and yours in the almost herculean task of making our Society what it should and can be.

We are pleased to learn that the Birmingham experiment in the Repertory Theatre opened with a very successful meeting on Sunday last. Mr. Lloyd was the lecturer, and there was a good audience, and, we need hardly say, a good lecture. It is hoped that the meetings will be continued beyond the present course; and they will be, if local friends do their duty. The next meeting will be held on October 21.

The author of *A History of Penal Methods*, Mr. George Ives, M.A., whose valuable work was reviewed in these

columns some few months ago, opens a discussion on "The Treatment of Crime" for the North London Branch this evening (Oct. 14). Mr. Ives is well qualified to speak on this subject, and should attract a large audience. For further particulars, see our Guide Notices.

We are asked to announce that the Whist Drive originally arranged by this Branch for members and friends for Wednesday, October 3, and postponed in consequence of their engagements clashing with those of the German air-raiders, will now be held on Wednesday, October 17, at 7 p.m. Tickets, price 1s., may be obtained from all Branch Secretaries, and direct from Miss H. Lane, 29 Burton Street, W.C.1. For the information of the nervous, we may say the St. Pancras Reform Club, where the Drive will be held, has a concrete and commodious basement.

We were pleased to see in the local press an appreciative notice of Mr. S. M. Peacock, of South Shields, whose obituary appears in another column. Our acquaintance with Mr. Peacock goes back now about a quarter of a century, and we desire to take this opportunity of paying our tribute of respect to a brave and single-minded soldier in the Army of Freethought. All Freethinkers in South Shields looked upon him as their leader, and we never knew him as aught but worthy of their respect and confidence.

The Secretary of the South Shields Branch writes, that it was felt there remained so much that could not be said at the graveside of its former leader by those more or less intimately associated with him in his over thirty years' service to Secularism, a special meeting should be called to consider the above and other matters in connection with the movement locally. Hence a meeting is called for to-day, Sunday, October 14, in order to give those a chance who were unable, owing to the call of work or business, to attend the funeral.

We are asked to announce that the South London Branch inaugurates its winter meetings with a Social Evening on October 14, to be held in the Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. The function commences at 7.30, and the nearest Tube station is Kennington Gate. The hall may also be reached by tram or 'bus.

The senior member for Northampton is Mr. C. A. McCurdy. The other day this gentleman visited the works of the the Integral Propellers Company, and, in introducing the M.P. to the workmen, the manager said that Mr. McCurdy represented a constituency which returned one of the greatest friends the working classes ever had. We can only hope that the present representative acts up to the example set by his great predecessor.

Our readers will be pleased to see the pen of "Abra-cadabra" once more active in these columns. Various causes—among them, we regret to say, ill-health—have prevented his writing of late; but in the future we hope to see his pen more regularly employed in the great war against superstition.

Death of S. M. Peacock.

TYNESIDE Freethinkers have lost a widely known and well-respected worker by the death of Samuel Morley Peacock, of South Shields. For very many years—dating back to the earlier Bradlaugh days—Mr. Peacock had been well known as a Militant Freethinker, and one who had also taken an active part in the public life of his adopted town. During the days of the old School Board he sat for many years on that body, and the respect in which he was generally held, in view of his active identification with Freethought propaganda—says much for the sterling worth of his character. Unlike

many public men, his Freethought was an avowed part of his public life. At the beginning of his career he encountered a deal of prejudice, but his strength and independence gradually wore this down. Everybody knew him for what he was, and his efforts at personal propaganda were sustained and vigorous. His interest in the *Freethinker* and the cause it represented remained unweakened to the end.

The funeral took place on Saturday, October 6, at Harton Cemetery, in the presence of a large and representative gathering, which included the Mayor, Alderman Allen, a number of members of the Council, and representatives of other public bodies. A prior engagement prevented Mr. Cohen being present and conducting the service, or he would certainly have paid this tribute of respect to so old and esteemed a worker. In his absence the service was read by the Branch Secretary, Mr. R. Chapman, and a speech was made by Alderman John Taylor, ex-mayor, of South Shields, who dwelt specially upon Mr. Peacock's services in connection with the School Board, and his continuous and ungrudging labours in everything that concerned the school life of the town.

Singularly destitute of personal ambition, Samuel Morley Peacock played a valuable part in that movement of ideas which ultimately weighs heaviest in the world's affairs. His death has robbed Freethought of a staunch friend, and an indefatigable propagandist. The deepest sympathy will be felt by all with Mrs. Peacock, his constant and unfailing associate, in their long and happy married life.—C. C.

The Story of the Sugar Industry.

IN 1850 the price of sugar in England was 7d. or 8d. a pound, and, as the years rolled by, it steadily fell to 1½d. or 2d. It was universally assumed that this commodity would never again become either scarce or dear. The consumption of sugar in our Isles and in the United States was, in 1913, per head of population, nearly three times that of France or Germany, while it completely dwarfed that of most other European countries. Italy's average consumption of a mere 6·7 per head was very different to the British consumption of 78·7 lb. per unit of population.

With the world in arms, the prices of most necessities of life rapidly rose, and the grocers' shops have been besieged by the exasperated housewife in her frequently frustrated search for that now precious sugar which had long been so plentiful that its constant supply was taken for granted everywhere and practically by all.

Until sugar became almost unprocurable, few people realized its real value as an article of diet, or possessed any adequate idea of its importance as a preservative. Yet the use of sugar, like that of tea and coffee, is comparatively modern, and our rude forefathers had no direct sweetening substance save honey. The sugar, so plentiful and inexpensive, and of a quality so excellent, until the great catastrophe led to a scarcity which is almost a famine, is a striking example of what Sir William Tilden describes as "a practically pure chemical compound which serves as an important food-stuff, and is very rapidly assimilated when taken into the stomach."

Sugar is a common constituent of plants. It occurs in many of the grasses, notably in the sugar-cane, a gigantic grass, of which several varieties exist in a state of cultivation. Sugar is found in the sap of numerous forest trees; in various roots and seeds; in

sweet fruits, and in the honey of flowers. Thousands of years ago the sugar cane was cultivated in India, and from that country the knowledge of sugar spread to adjacent lands. The classical writers, Herodotus, Strabo, and Seneca, among others, refer to sugar as "honey of canes," or "honey made with human hands." The Chinese admit their debt to ancient India for their acquaintance with the sugar-making art. Two passages in the Hebrew Bible prove that old Israel had heard of sugar canes. Its culture seems to have disappeared with the downfall of Pagan civilization in Europe, to reappear when the Arabs began to grow the cane in their Mediterranean colonies; and by the tenth century of our era the Moors had established their plantations in Spain. At a later date Egyptian cane sugar became an article of commerce which was shipped by the Venetian merchants to London, from which port English wool was sent in exchange.

After the discovery of America in the fifteenth century, the cane was grown and its juices elaborated into sugar in the Spanish and Portuguese settlements in the West Indies and Brazil. In 1563 that bold seaman, Hawkins, brought sugar from San Domingo to England, while our own planters were cultivating the cane in Barbadoes.

In addition to the cane, sugar-beet, sugar maple, and sorgum are grown for the sugar they yield. The cane flourishes best in warm, humid countries, where sea-breezes prevail, and in which there occur fair intervals of sunshine. In these the plant is extensively raised. The stem of the various varieties of sugar cane ranges from 6 feet to 14 feet in height. The cane is propagated by placing pieces of the stem in the soil, and the new plants arise from the buds which grow out of the stem. Once planted, the cane throws up from its underground "stoles" or roots new plants every season, sometimes for a score of years, when replanting becomes necessary. When ripe the rind of the cane is covered on its exterior with a waxy substance. The interior of the cane contains the cells holding the sugar juice, and there also are found long bundles of fibres whose function it is to send from the soil the nutriment and moisture essential to the growth and maturity of the plant. A most important office is served by the leaves which, in the presence of sun-light, absorb carbonic acid from the atmosphere. And it is this assimilation of carbon by the plant that, in combination with the water conveyed by the fibres, elaborates the invaluable compound which we term sugar.

In the full vigour of its growth the plant's stem from base to apex is adorned with huge tropical leaves, and the cane is crowned by a mass of verdure spread before the sun. When ripe the slender cane is richly stored with choice sugar. Harvesting is expeditiously conducted, for when the cane is cut down and the tops cast aside, it is loaded up on waggons and despatched without delay to the factory. When mature the sugar content demands prompt attention as it deteriorates very quickly. Primitive methods prevail in Formosa and elsewhere, but those growers who supply the world annually with its 7,000,000 tons of cane sugar utilize the resources of science in preparing their commodity for human consumption. The successful cane cultivator is now as much concerned in his tropical home with the problems of soil, moisture, fertilizers, and the chemical constituents of this or that variety of cane as his stern competitor the sugar beet grower in the temperate regions of the globe.

The East and West Indies, British Guiana, and Queensland are all noted for their cane sugar. During recent years, however, the beet sugar industry has proved a serious rival to that of the Indian planter.

Curiously enough the rise of the beet trade was incidentally due to the Napoleonic campaigns. As a consequence of these wars Continental Europe was deprived of the West Indian product, and the several countries were driven to extract sugar from the beet which is so readily cultivated in Europe; Belgium, Austria, Hungary, Northern France, Southern Russia, and Germany all materially increased their acreage of sugar beet. In the British Isles the plant was not grown, although our climate is favourable to its culture. Owing to this and other circumstances, when the present War came we were practically dependent upon Germany, France, and the Netherlands for two-thirds of our imported raw sugar.

The Board of Trade returns for 1913 sufficiently indicate the vast imports of sugar into the United Kingdom in normal times. Apart from molasses, glucose, jams, confectionery, etc., nearly forty million hundredweight of sugar itself (loaf, crystal, and powdered) valued at £23,000,000 was imported into Britain.

Our best white sugar is mainly a mixture of cane and beet sugar which is chiefly manufactured for table use in Germany, the Low Countries, and Austria-Hungary, our leading sources of supply. There is no warranty for the prejudice against beet sugar which many still cherish. As Professor Tilden, the eminent chemist states:—

Forty or more years ago there was substantial foundation for the prevalent objection to beet sugar which in those days retained.....a peculiar evil smell and an appreciable quantity of potassium chloride by which its sweetening power was sensibly diminished. With the removal of these impurities by the processes of refining, sugar from whatever source it is derived has, like every other definite chemical compound, specific properties of its own by which it is always distinguished from every other chemical compound. Hence until it has been shown that sugar derived from beet differs from sugar obtained from the cane in crystalline form, in its action on polarized light, in solubility in water and sweetening power.....there is no justification for the suspicion that they are not identical" (*Chemical Discovery and Invention in the Twentieth Century*, p. 412, 1916).

It is interesting to observe the profound changes which have occurred in the course of the evolution of the modern sugar industry. Sixty years since London was our chief sugar centre. Half our imports were unloaded on the Thames, the other half being distributed on the Clyde, in Liverpool, Bristol, and other ports. In 1860 nearly all imported sugar arrived in a raw state, and the later refining processes were conducted in this country. In 1900, 63 per cent. of the commodity came to us fully prepared for use. The total imports of sugar were, in 1860, the raw article, 434,776 tons; refined 13,303. Forty years afterwards imported raw sugar had risen to 661,747 tons, while foreign refined sugar had bounded from 13,000 to nearly one million tons.

These remarkable changes are explained by the fact that in 1860 our sugar was mainly imported from British possessions, notably the West Indies, Mauritius, and India. The other chief sources of supply were the Spanish Indies, Manilla, and Brazil. In those days the Metropolis was the principal centre of the then very important sugar refining industry, which manufactured nearly all the loaf sugar consumed in Britain. The "sugar houses" formed the staple industry of the East End of London. In the words of George Martineau:—

From Whitechapel eastward to Mile End, and southward through St. George's-in-the-East to the gates of London Docks, their chimneys were to be seen on all hands. The London Docks and the East and

West India Docks were full of raw sugar destined for these various refineries.

Great waggons drawn by fine horses, each loaded with six hogsheads—about five tons of sugar—largely from Jamaica, rolled near the Jamaica Road to the score of busy refineries of the district, while smaller vehicles were actively occupied in delivering the finished commodity destined for the use of the consumer.

Better machinery and improved methods of manufacture then led to a great advance in the art of sugar refining on the banks of the Clyde. From 1854 to 1880 the total production of refined sugar at Greenock and Glasgow increased more than fivefold. A period of stagnation then supervened, and then a rapid decline set in. Despite the enormously increased consumption of sugar, the business of the Clyde refiners had dwindled in the period 1897-1900 to about half that of the 'eighties.

Bristol's once world-famous sugar refineries have all passed away. The leading port for the Brazilian trade, Liverpool, was long celebrated for its sugar and its syrup, but its former glories as a sugar centre have become dimmed. Manchester had at the head of its once noted refinery the versatile Alfred Fryer, the inventor of Fryer's concretor and the recognized spokesman of the British refiners in their conflicts with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Half a century ago there were twenty refineries in London, and now two alone survive. After the closure of Duncan's great factories at Clyde wharf at the London Victoria Docks in 1886, another remarkable man arose in the person of Henry Tate, who seized the occasion to place cube sugar on the market, and this he accomplished with triumphant success.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

The Myth of God.

II.

(Concluded from p. 637.)

It is affirmed by theologians that in the existence of the universe we have a presupposition of the existence of a being who is the necessary basis and cause of the universe. Nothing with which we are acquainted through the study of natural phenomena is independent in its existence; everything is at all points dependent upon something else. This being so, the universe is not made up of self-subsistent parts. Therefore the universe, as a whole, is not self-subsistent. Everything around us is in a state of fluctuation; we see nothing that is permanent and so constituted that it can be relied upon to continue in existence throughout externity, and act as basis for the existence of other parts of the universe. But, continues the theologian, the human mind, by its very nature, is not capable of believing that there is no necessary being existing as a foundation for all the interdependent parts of the universe of which we have knowledge. The mind must consequently draw the inference that there is a self-existent being which is the everlasting basis of the universe. That is, there must be something upon which all things else can depend, or the human mind can only conceive of everything as in a state of chaos.

Such is the theological argument. It is admitted, however, that this line of argument is not strong enough of itself to prove that there is a God in the full religious sense of the term. Still, when the theologian has proved to his own satisfaction that we cannot escape the conclusion that the existence of many interdependent beings implies the existence of a self-subsistent being, and when

he has assumed that the self-subsistent being must be outside of the universe, the first step towards creating a God of a highly abstract type has been taken.

It is true that, by a process of strictly logical thought, the human mind works its way back to the idea that the transitory parts of the universe had their origin in something that is by nature self-existent. Nevertheless the religious use of the argument is unwarranted by facts.

The fallacy of the argument, as developed by the theologians, lies in the assumption that the universe cannot be self-existent, and, therefore, we must seek for its origin in some being apart from itself. This, however, is not necessary. The fact that the various parts of the universe, as seen by us, are not permanent and self-existent, is no proof that the universe as a whole, in its fundamental reality, is not self-existent and eternal. The individual parts of the universe, which we distinguish as being separate from and yet dependent upon each other, and which appear to be subject to destruction, are only so with regard to form. The various forms which the underlying reality or real substance of the universe takes on are transitory; but it must be remembered that a change of form is not a destruction of reality beyond that of form. This being so, the term "universe" stands for the sum-total of an indestructible reality, which is eternally in motion and is perpetually taking on new forms. And until it is proved that there was a time when the substance of which the universe consists was not in existence, or, if in existence, was not in motion and ever changing its forms of manifestation, it is not necessary to assume that there is a being of which we can speak as the cause and basis of the existence of the universe. If, as far as we are able to ascertain, indestructibility is at present the inherent nature of the fundamental substance of the universe; if only the forms under which things appear can be destroyed; and if we have no evidence of the possible non-existence of the universe, then it is unreasonable to assume that the universe was created. Whatever can be created can also be destroyed, and we are contradicting the theory of the indestructibility of matter and motion when we affirm that the existence of the universe was caused by some eternal being distinct from the universe. The ideas of the indestructibility of matter and motion cannot be reconciled with the idea of a being that is the cause of all things. If we accept the indestructibility of matter and motion as facts, they destroy the idea that there was a time when matter and motion were not, and this latter idea is essential to the idea of a creator.

Perhaps the most popular of the arguments put forward in support of belief in the existence of a Divine Creator is the Design Argument, now so often tricked out in an evolutionary guise. It may be summarized thus: In organisms we see an adaptation of means to ends, just the same as in human art. The variations in organisms are not indefinite; they occur in the direction of producing given organisms of a higher order. As one theologian puts it, an ear does not appear where an eye has begun to develop, because a ground plan is adhered to in the midst of all variations. The whole evolution of the universe gives evidence of order, plan, harmony, and beauty; and this leads us to conclude that there is a divine mind at work in the universe.....

Any attempt to draw an analogy between design in human art and design in Nature, for the purpose of proving a designer of Nature to be in existence, must be inaccurate. In the case of human art, there is ample opportunity for someone to see not only the art, which gives evidence of the existence of a designer, but also the designer himself. But we know of no possibility of man being able to go to the back of Nature in order to look at some God employed at the task of executing his

designs. Until this can be done, the analogy is false. We know that men make things according to design, and therefore we are justified in concluding that a designer has been at work whenever we see something like the things which we know men design and make—that is, unless we have evidence to the contrary. But we do not know what a god would be likely to make, so we are not justified in concluding that Nature has a god for its author because we see many things that *seem* to have come into being according to a plan. That certain causes have worked towards the production of a particular effect must not be taken as evidence of design unless the probabilities of design being necessary are greater than the contrary, or unless it is possible to produce the designer. Given a quantity of matter in a state of motion, and *something* must result; but it is illogical to infer that there is a mind directing the movements of the matter, because every atom of it has contributed its quota towards bringing about the result.

Not infrequently human beings are considered to be the chief causes of events which they did not design. When intending to secure peace, a statesman may, by an unfortunate remark, bring about war. A careless person, without designing it, may set a building on fire by throwing down a lighted match. Without planning to do it, a business man may ruin himself by a single speculation. Yet in these cases there may be at first sight an appearance of design; but experience has taught us that results are not always to be relied upon to indicate whether they were designed or not.

As to Dr. Orr's remark that an ear does not come where an eye has begun to develop, and that a ground plan is adhered to in the midst of all variations, one would like to ask the learned theologian whether a ground plan is adhered to when an eye incapable of seeing is produced, and, if so, wherein lies the wisdom of his divine and all-wise Designer? That ears should not develop where eyes have begun to grow is, no doubt, a very useful arrangement; at least, some of us would look rather funny if ears did develop in so capricious a manner.

It is sometimes argued that the presence of reason in man, and in Nature at large, bespeaks the existence of an absolute thinker, who is the fountain from which all thought flows. But there can be no absolute thinker in a universe where there are many thinkers, because the existence of more than one thinker implies relativity. And with regard to reason in man, and in the order of things around us, we must note that at best man's reason is not perfect, but is continually struggling after accuracy of thought, and is comparatively small when placed in contrast to the vast amount of unreason in humanity; while we too often suffer from the habit of projecting our own reason into Nature around us, and then imagining that we see things developing according to a very rational method. But the method of which we are often conscious is in our own minds, and is reasonable in proportion to the degree of reasonableness of our own thought. A person with a distorted mind may see in Nature around him nothing but chaos, while a man of sound mind sees a sequence of events, which he may call reasonable according to his conception of what constitutes rationality.

Theologians are not satisfied with a wise and powerful God; they desire one who is moral, and able to take care of humanity in a fatherly way. The desire is laudable enough, but it increases the theologian's difficulties. The presence of conscience as man's indwelling representative of a divine being who is entitled to impose his will upon us, is adduced as evidence that the universe is evolved on moral lines, and, therefore, must be the product of a moral God. By the assumption that

conscience is the representative of a God, a halo of mysticism and mystification is thrown around an otherwise harmless word. Conscience, which is nothing more than a feeling that we ought to do what we believe to be right, and ought not to do what we believe to be wrong, has developed with human society. As men have experienced pain and pleasure, and realized that they do not like the one, but desire the other, they have developed a feeling that they ought not to treat their fellows so as to cause them pain, while they ought to try to give them pleasure, if they themselves desire their fellows to avoid giving them pain, and to act so as to give them pleasure. Actions causing pleasure came to be acknowledged as duties, and actions causing avoidable pain were looked upon as the opposite to duty. In this way conscience developed, as reason discovered what was right and what was wrong, and classified our actions accordingly. In some men, conscience, or the sense of doing right and avoiding wrongdoing, developed until it became imperative, or nearly so. But in others it evolved to a lesser degree of authority, and throughout the world the power of conscience may be observed to vary with different individuals, and in many persons seems scarcely to exist. Not only so; but many of us need only to reflect on our past experience to discover that our own conscience is less imperative when we are about to do one kind of wrong than when we are about to do another. In some people, conscience is very imperative when they would stay away from church; but in the same persons it is not imperative when they wish to pervert the truth.

The fatherhood of God is a mere fiction in face of the misery, poverty, disease, injustice, and all kinds of suffering which are in this sorrow-stricken world. The coming into the world of millions of people who will never be adequately provided for; the ignorance of millions who should be educated, and who desire to be educated; the slow and often unnecessarily painful process of both individual and social development; the wreck of empires when a high, though as yet imperfect, stage of civilization has been reached, are facts which indisputably contradict the doctrine of the fatherhood of God.

In spite of all that may be said against the idea of God as an explanation of the universe, it is still put forward as the best working hypothesis for theological thought, or as an adequate explanation of philosophical and religious problems. But the idea of God is mythical, as we are unable to discover an objective reality corresponding to the idea; and so far as our knowledge of the universe goes, the idea of God is an unnecessary hypothesis, which adds to the difficulty of our problems, the solution of which can only be attained by the exercise of unfettered reason, to which the God of modern theology is as much a myth as any of the gods of the ancients.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Correspondence.

ATHEIST OR AGNOSTIC?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to the recent correspondence on the above subject, it may be of interest to see Coleridge's opinion:—

Little do these men know what atheism is. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind, or goodness of heart, to be an Atheist.

In this connection, the old philosophical question seems pertinent:—

Is the difference between a difference in kind and a difference in degree, in itself, a difference in kind, or a difference in degree?

E. B.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

MR. A. D. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, Oct. 19, at 7.30.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7, George Ives, M.A., F.Z.S., "The Treatment of Crime." Open debate.—Wednesday, Oct. 17, at 7, Whist Drive.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.): 7, Social. Music, singing, and addresses.

WEST CENTRAL HALL (31 Alfred Place, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, W.): 3.30, Monsieur M. Deshumbert, "Our Ideal" (in French).

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Ratcliffe, and Kells.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, C. Cohen, "Why Men Believe in God." With special reference to H. G. Wells.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, J. Hammond, "Secularism: its Principles and Objects."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, 2nd floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, "Secularism and Secularists." With special reference to the late Mr. S. M. Peacock.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, "Elysium," High Street): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Self-Reliance versus Trust in God"; 7, "From Pulpit to Secular Platform."

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REPRISAL LEAFLET.—No. 1.

THE *Times* announces that their article, entitled "The Ferment of Revolution," is to be issued as a pamphlet. In reply to that capitalist attack upon Co-operation and Trade Unionism, the *National Weekly* is reprinting in a leaflet the Notes of "Trade Unionist" from the issue of Oct. 6th, correcting the misstatements of the *Times* Correspondent.—Send 9d. in ½d. stamps to the MANAGER, *National Weekly*, Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C. 2, and a hundred copies will be sent you post free for distribution.

Where to Obtain the "Freethinker."

The following is not a complete list of newsagents who supply the "Freethinker," and we shall be obliged for other addresses for publication. The "Freethinker" may be obtained on order from any newsagent or railway bookstall.

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E.—E. T. Pendrill, 26 Bushfield Street, Bishopsgate. M. Papier, 86 Commercial Street. B. Ruderman, 71 Hanbury Street, Spitalfields. J. Knight & Co., 3 Ripple Road, Barking. Messrs. Duncumb & Sons, 287 High Street, Stratford.
E.C.—W. S. Dexter, 6, Byward St. Rose & Co., 133 Clerkenwell Rd. Mr. Siveridge, 88 Fenchurch St. J. J. Jaques, 191 Old St.
N.—C. Walker & Son, 84 Grove Rd., Holloway. Mr. Keogh, Seven Sisters Rd. (near Finsbury Park). Mr. West, New Rd., Lower Edmonton. T. Perry, 17 Fore St., Edmonton. H. Hampton, 80 Holloway Rd. E. S. Smith, 7 Turnpike Lane, Hornsey.
N.W.—W. I. Tarbatt, 316 Kentish Town Road. W. Lloyd, 5 Falkland Road, Kentish Town.
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