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## Views and Opinions.

### The War and a Future Life.

Has the War really intensified the interest people feel in the question of a future life? For our own part we see no reason why it should have had this effect, and certainly no evidence of it is observable. Some of those who have always believed in a future life may have more energetically asserted their conviction, but those who did not are where they were. Naturally, the clergy, like the rest of the army of profiteers, do their best to exploit the War. For some time after the War began they talked about the revival of religion, and this was kept up until the presence of evidence to the contrary became too strong for even the "Black Army" to resist. Again, on the face of it, there is no reason why the War should excite a belief in a future life. Death is not peculiar to war time—there are only more deaths in a given period. And death must always be an individual matter, bringing its keenest sorrow to individual circles. Finally, we have the consideration that there is, so to speak, a saturation point in human emotion. And the War has lasted so long, the death roll has been so gigantic, that the edge of feeling has been blunted. We are all more callous to death than we were. One does not start or shriek in the presence of the usual, and death is now an everyday affair to all.

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### Spiritualism and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

The other day Sir Arthur Conan Doyle delivered an address before the Eastbrook Brotherhood, Bradford, and in dealing with his belief in Spiritualism he said:—

> When the War came it brought earnestness unto all our souls, and made us look more closely at our own beliefs and reassess their values. In the presence of an agonized world, hearing every day of the deaths of the flower of our race in the first promise of their unfulfilled youth, seeing around us wives and mothers who had no clear conception whither their loved ones had gone. I seemed suddenly to see that this subject with which I had so long dallied, was not merely a force outside the rules of science but that it was really.....a breaking down of the walls between two worlds.....The objective side of it ceased to interest me, for having made up my mind that it was true, there was an end of the matter. A new revelation seemed to me to be in course of delivery to the human race.

We may well be excused preferring Conan Doyle, the novelist, to Conan Doyle, the philosopher, for it appears from this that Sir Arthur's convictions as to the truth of Spiritualism is little more than a sudden yielding to emotional tension. And there is a certain ingenuousness in the confession that the objective side of the phenomena ceased to interest him, seeing that it is the objective aspect that is of crucial importance. For if the phenomena is subjective, all question of fraud might be set on one side; it would still leave Spiritualism unproven. True, Sir Arthur remarks later, that the "physical phenomena" "had been proved up to the hilt for all who cared to examine the evidence," but to that one can enter a flat contradiction. Many people have examined the evidence and found it quite inconclusive. The same evidence, produced before the same audience, has left some entirely sceptical, and even antagonistic. And this represents a clear line of demarcation between the evidence for Spiritualism and normal scientific proof. A scientific demonstration duly and properly carried out is conclusive to all normal minds. It is a peculiarity of the evidence for Spiritualism that while it convinces one here and there, it leaves the majority as they were.

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### Religion and Death.

It has been part of the talk of the pulpit since the War opened that our soldiers are nerved to face death by their belief in God and a future life, and that those who remain are consoled for the loss of those dear to them by the belief in a continued existence elsewhere. One regrets to find Sir Arthur Conan Doyle descending to the same kind of chatter. For both statements are essentially untrue. It has been our lot—as it has doubtless been the lot of others—to come into contact with both Freethinkers and Christians whose sons—sometimes an only son, and sometimes an only child—were reported killed. We have tried, honestly tried, to detect a difference in these parents that could be attributed to their views on religion, and have been unable to do so. Differences there have been; but these are all explainable in terms of temperament of character, of training. The religious ones have used a religious formula in expressing their feelings, as one might expect; the non-religious have expressed their feelings in another way. But apart from these superficial and accidental differences, there was a substantial and deeply underlying identity. The religious belief has not consoled; the absence of it has not led to undue or intensified depression. Indeed, those who looked below the surface could detect an underlying community of heartfelt sorrow in the presence of an irrecoverable loss. And well it is that it should be so. It is well that in the face of so great and universal a fact as death, mankind should realize its own unity, even though it be but a momentary

glimpse seen through tear-dimmed eyes over an open grave.

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Facing Death.

And of those who actually face death, whether in civil life or in the fighting line, what is to be said? Is there any difference here? Those who are in the fighting line will best appreciate the absurdity of the question. The soldier, like the civilian, dies as he has lived, and the thought of a future life troubles him not at all. It is not that they all have definite opinions on the subject; they have not. It is simply that the future life does not enter into their calculations. Here, for example, is a letter published in the *Spectator* of a recent date. It is written by a boy who was killed on his twenty-first birthday:—

> My dear Dad,—This letter is being written on the eve of our "going over the top" in a big attack. It is only because I know by this time what are the odds against one's returning unhurt that I write it. It will only be sent in the event of my being killed in action. You, I know, my dear Dad, will bear the shock as bravely as you have always borne the strain of my being out here. Yet I should like, if possible, to help you to carry on with as stout a heart as I hope to jump "the bags." I believe I have told you before that I do not fear death itself; the "Beyond" has no terrors for me. I am quite content to die for the cause for which I have given up nearly three years of my life, and I only hope that I may meet death with as brave a front as I have seen other men do before. My one regret is that the opportunity has been denied me to repay you to the best of my ability for the lavish kindness and devotedness which you have always shown me.

Now, that is not what would be called a religious letter; but it is better—it is a manly letter. It is written by one who is resolved to do his duty as he sees it. He is more concerned for the sorrow his death will cause to those he leaves than he is about his own fate. And the man is built of poor stuff indeed who would not rather see his fellow man facing death in this spirit than with his mouth filled with the traditional jargon of religion.

* * *

Affection and the Grave.

We detest, far more than we can express in mere words, this exploitation of a great human sorrow in the interest of this or that particular superstition. The endeavour to minister to a mind distressed, we can all, we hope, understand and appreciate. The comfort that may be derived from a friendly hand-clasp or from human association, we all admit. But to claim that the inculcation of a belief in a future life dulls the edge of grief, or reconciles a parent to the death of a child, is sheer cant. It has no such effect; it never has had any such effect; it would not be well that it should have such an effect. Human affection is centred as much on the fact of death as on the fact of life. The grave that takes, gives; and human mortality is the ultimate condition of human love. And I am certain that even though men and women, without exception, believed in a future life, the main currents of human joy and sorrow would remain the same. It is this world that remains dominant. And while we shall, we hope, never see the death of our friends without sorrow, we may all learn to face death in their case and our own without fear.

Chapman Cohen.

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We hear much of martyrs and confessors—of those who were slain by the sword or consumed in the fire; but we know little of that still larger number who by the mere threat of persecution have been driven into an outward abandonment of their real opinions, and who thus forced into an apostasy the heart abhors, have passed the remainder of their life in the practice of a constant and humiliating hypocrisy.—*T. H. Buckle.*

## One Horizon, or Two?

The Rev. Professor W. M. Clow, D.D., was for some years a regular contributor to the *British Weekly*, and is now a writer in *The Life of Faith*. He is an exceedingly orthodox divine who avails himself of every opportunity to defend the faith once delivered to the saints. In an article, entitled "Spiritual Issues in the Light of the War," which appeared in *The Life of Faith* for September 26, he admits that "this world-wide War is not only raising questions which trouble our minds and vex our hearts," but is also "setting the things which have been most surely believed on their trial." Like all his brethren, he feels quite sure that the ultimate effect of the War on religion will be in every sense beneficial. Already "it is opening men's eyes to the value and the power of the solemn certainties of the Christian faith." We are assured that "the Christian certainties are being purged from the alloy which trivial interpretations have mingled with them, and the pure gold of the truth in Jesus is shining out before men's eyes." Many chaplains at the Front, and not a few clergymen at home, find no justification for Dr. Clow's optimistic conclusions. Indeed, the Professor contradicts himself in the very article just mentioned. He says:—

> This War, with its merciless cruelties, its coarse passions, its callous wrongs, and its pitiful hypocrisies, is the handwriting on the broad page of history which proclaims that men have ceased to live in the fear of God.

What about "the Christian doctrine that every man, as a spiritual being and a child of God, has two horizons?" It is probably true that to such a doctrine "the whole New Testament bears witness," and that Paul recognizes its truth and sums it up when he speaks of "things seen and temporal," and "things unseen and eternal"; but the fact remains that the majority of mankind live with only one horizon, and are quite content. Professor Clow cannot close his eyes to the truth that—

> To-day the sea of faith which was once at the full is now
> Retreating to the breath
> Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world.

For this serious decline of faith the Professor assigns three causes, namely, our over-absorption in this present world, the haze which has fallen upon the great certainties, and the failure of the witness of believers, the chief of which is the last. We are confidently assured that "if Christian men and women were living supernatural lives no man would doubt the supernatural." As a matter of fact, no human being has ever lived such a life. Christians profess to have been supernaturally born the moment they gave their hearts to Christ; but not one of them has ever shown the least evidence of such a birth. It is in their professions alone that they are superior to other people. To talk of the failure of their witness is, therefore, sheer folly, for they cannot bear witness to that of which they have no experience. "We have but faith," says Tennyson; "we cannot know"; and everybody is aware that the irresistible tendency of faith is to decay. Even a veteran like Dr. Clifford recently confessed that to believe is the most difficult task in the world. Even clergymen often complain that, in spite of never-ceasing prayer, doubt assails them again and again, for which they hold the Devil responsible. Poor old Devil must have an extremely broad back to bear all the blame heaped upon it; but the truth is that nothing is more natural than to doubt the supernatural. The haze spoken of by Dr. Clow rests, not upon the supernatural, but upon the belief in it, the

supernatural being, not a thing that exists, but a thing imagined; not an object of knowledge, but of faith.

Dr. Clow repeatedly refers to the Christian certainties, or the solemn certainties of the Christian faith. In reality there are no such certainties. Nothing is certain except the world in which we live. In Browning's poems we meet characters who are very sure of God and their own souls; but we have it on the authority of his intimate friend, Mrs. Sutherland Orr, that Browning himself was a thoroughgoing Agnostic, who professed to know nothing of any supernatural certainties. Dr. Clow alludes to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, of which he says:—

> The reader will remember that when he had closed the volumes of that marvellous history, where the very thought of God has been stubbornly excluded, the spiritual world had passed almost out of sight. The reader had become so engrossed by the splendid pageant of history, with its record of the proud ambitions of emperors, the achievements of statesmen, the tramp of armies, and all the lustre of those famous centuries, that God and heaven and the love of Christ had become a fading dream. In this time we are all absorbed by this present world. Never was it more interesting, more fascinating, more engrossing.

The Professor has not the hardihood to declare that Gibbon's history is inaccurate, or that its record of the ambitions, motives, achievements, and failures of men and women is not reliable; but he forgets that there was nothing in the falling empire that reflected credit on the justice and goodness of God, or upon the cleansing love of Christ. Does Dr. Clow really see much lustre or splendour in those dark centuries covered by Gibbon's history? Whatever God may be to the imagination of zealous Christians, it is incontrovertible that God has never been active in history, so that Gibbon was perfectly justified in ignoring him.

The Professor affirms that with most people faith is either an inheritance or a contagion. We are surprised that a scholarly man should fall into the error of regarding religion as an inheritance. Religion is no more inheritable than learning or carpentry. In no sense whatever can it be pronounced a legacy. A sire cannot bequeath his faith to his son, as he can a sum of money or a family heirloom. And yet Dr. Clow, ignoring or misrepresenting the great law of heredity, tells us again and again that there is a faith which is merely an inheritance, and that it is of but very little use. That religion is a contagion is beyond all doubt. Contagion means the communication of disease from person to person by contact, direct or indirect. In the overwhelming majority of cases the contagion occurs in early childhood, the agents being parents and teachers. Like many other diseases, the natural tendency of religion is to cure itself out of existence. Experience shows clearly how supremely difficult it is to prevent the faith from working itself out of a child's mind. Most of us retain vivid recollections of supperless nights as punishment for religious forgetfulness. Religion was not congenial to us; our very constitution rebelled against it, and often effected its ejection. Parents, Sunday-school teachers, and clergymen worked hard to prevent the religious virus from oozing out of us; and in numerous instances their efforts were defeated by purely natural causes. Religion is really a child's complaint, and those who escape it in childhood seldom take it after they have reached years of intelligence. Moreover, even those who remain religious in mature life know full well how often their nature revolts against the habit of prayer and so-called communion with God. Dr. Clow himself says:—

> The faith in the unseen is like a fire which burns low, a tide whose waters ebb, a light whose shining grows dim. There is needed, for every period of life as our years advance, *a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit*. We are all familiar with those times which may last for years, when the things once surely believed, the great and solemn certainties, seem to pale, and we are in danger of living with one horizon. This baptism may be ours almost for the asking. It cannot be ours unless we ask.

That extract supports our contention that the belief in the supernatural is foreign to our nature, that religion is a disease which our constitution is ever trying to throw off, and that if we are true to ourselves we will have nothing to do with horizon number two. One horizon at a time is sufficient. This world is all we need, and more than many of us are able to put to the best advantage. Dr. Clow gives his whole case away when he states that the Holy Spirit will do nothing unless he is asked, and that we must become what we ought to be before we are entitled to ask him. In reality, we must be our own saviours while giving God all the credit and glory.

J. T. Lloyd.

## Swinburne's Literary Father.

> The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
> Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
> Of darkness and magnificence of night.—*Swinburne.*

Thackeray, in the beginning of his famous lectures on the "The Four Georges," makes affectionate mention of an old friend whose life extended back into the eighteenth century. "I often thought," he says, "as I took my kind old friend's hand, how, with it, I held on to the old society." Even such a link with the past is Walter Savage Landor, whose virile writings bridge the gulf between great Freethinkers at the commencement and the end of the nineteenth century.

Shelley, who died whilst the century was yet young, was an enthusiastic admirer of Landor; and Swinburne, the most golden-voiced of our recent poets, sat at Landor's feet and found inspiration in his wisdom. How lovingly Swinburne refers to the elder singer:—

> I found him whom I shall not find
> Till all grief end,
> In holiest age our mightiest mind,
> Father and friend.

Nor was this a mere tribute of affection. Landor cast the spell of genius upon all who came near him. Robert Southey, who had so many opportunities of judging, has left a magnificent tribute to his memory. De Quincey, Dickens, Emerson, and Charles Lamb have all combined in their various ways to render affectionate tribute to that "deep-mouthed Bœtian," as Byron called him. Robert Browning dedicated his *Luria* to Landor. It is given to few to inspire such love among friends, or fear among enemies. Carlyle, visiting him in old age, found him "stirring company; a proud, irascible, trenchant, yet generous, veracious, and very dignified old man; quite a ducal or royal man in the temper of him."

Landor's literary activity extended over seventy years. He was a poet embodying revolutionary aspirations in classic language. He was a literary dramatist of great power, and, above all, he was a critic in the widest sense of that much abused word. The *Imaginary Conversations*, on which competent judges have bestowed unstinted praise, is his masterpiece. There is nothing like it in the range of English literature. It is a great panorama of historic persons, and includes such famous characters as Plato, in far-off Greece, to our own Porson; Hannibal, of old-world Carthage, to David Hume; Seneca to his own friend, Robert Southey. He has painted them all with masterly touches; kings, and greater than kings, statesmen and fair ladies, philosophers and prelates,

writers and scientists, of all ages and of all types. Epicurus discusses philosophy in his garden; Montaigne smiles at the worthy Scaliger; Melancthon reproves Calvin.

How perfectly, too, has Landor caught the relation of the French Court and the great lying Church in the bitterly ironic conversation between Louis XIV. and Pere La Chaise, when the monarch confesses the most heinous crimes and the courtly and obsequious confessor imposes the most trifling penances. Scene succeeds scene, each richer and fuller than its predecessor, supplementing one another, and all go to make a magnificent picture of "life, like a dome of many-coloured glass."

When Landor is at his best, not many are so perfect as he. There are few things more pathetic than his portrait of the unhappy Anne Boleyn. He represents the pious and hypocritical Henry coming disguised to see Anne in the condemned cell. Very touchingly does he express her womanly desire to see her child, "Could I but kiss her once again, it would comfort my heart or break it."

For long Landor's work was "caviare to the general." His masterpiece was venomously and ignorantly described as "the adventures of seven volumes, which are seven valleys of dry bones." This lack of contemporary appreciation is the more remarkable because Landor was a real and remarkable genius. In nearly every page of his writing there is high thinking and rare eloquence. Indeed, a well-edited selection of his works would be one of the most beautiful books in the language. Although Landor addressed a small audience while he lived, he looked confidently to the future; "I shall dine late; but the drawing-room will be well-lighted, the guests few and select."

The chief of Landor's other books is undoubtedly *Pericles and Aspasia*. Another of his works, *The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare for Deer-Stealing*, evoked Charles Lamb's happy epigram that it could only have been written by "the man who did write it, or he of whom it was written." Landor's poetry is not bulky in quantity, for few poets have won such recognition with such a small nosegay of verse. The exquisite lines on *Rose Aylmer* have found their way into many anthologies and many hearts, while the sympathetic lines on the death of Charles Lamb are an exquisite tribute to a splendid genius and an heroic man. The single stanza, in his own inimitable manner, prefixed to one of his last books, epitomizes his life and aims in four lines:—

> I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
> Nature I loved; and next to Nature, Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

For those who care for concentration and restraint in literature, Landor's writings are full of delight. As a man he was dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love. Withal, he was a typical Englishman, with an appetite for the heroic. He showed this when, on Napoleon's invasion of Spain, he went over, and, with his own energy and money, raised a regiment, with whom he marched to the seat of war. A man of letters, he was also a man of action.

Landor has been called a grand old Pagan, and his sympathies were always secular rather than religious. The eternal arrogance of priests always roused his opposition, and he never forgot Milton's advice that "Presbyter is priest writ large." There are many sceptical thrusts in his writings. Writing of the Bible, he makes Melancthon say of Calvin:—

> The book of good news, under your interpretation, tells people not only that they may go and be damned, but, unless they are lucky, they must inevitably.

And, again, referring to religious persecution:—

> The unsoundness of doctrine is not cut off nor cauterised; the professor is. The head falls on the scaffold, or fire surrounds the stake, because a doctrine is bloodless and incombustible. Fierce, outrageous animals, for want of the man who has escaped them, lacerate and trample his cloak or bonnet. This, although the work of brutes, is not half so brutal as the practice of theologians, seizing the man himself, instead of bonnet or cloak.

In another page he returns to the attack:—

> There is scarcely a text in the Holy Scriptures to which there is not an opposite text, written in characters equally large and legible; and there has usually been a sword laid upon each.

He has some sly hits at spiritual intoxication:—

> At last the zealot is so infatuated by the serious mockeries he imitates and repeats that he really takes his own voice for God's. Is it not wonderful that the words of eternal life should have hitherto produced only eternal litigation?

One of his "conversations" closes with the magnificent words: "There is nothing on earth divine besides humanity," and that was the keynote of his writings from the time when, at college, he was dubbed "a mad Jacobin," until his death, when he had made an imperishable name for himself. A Warwickshire man, he was cradled in the same county as Shakespeare, and there was something of "the Master" in Landor's genius. Carlyle said finely of one of Landor's best literary efforts, published when the "old lion" was over eighty years of age: "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians. The unsubduable old Roman!"

The last years of Landor's stormy life were spent in peace. On reading of Algernon Swinburne's visit to the old man shortly before his death, one is reminded of Turner's supreme picture, "The Fighting Temeraire," where the old battleship is being towed to her last berth, and transfigured by the last glance of day's expiring glory. The symbolism of that great painting is exalted in the harmony between the memories of brave old Landor and his abiding quiet, for whom for ever "All winds are quiet as the sun, all waters as the shore."

Mimnermus.

## The Enigma of Death: A Solution.

Not very long ago, a friend who takes a great interest in Spiritualism sent me an article bearing the above title, written by Mr. J. J. Morse, the editor of *The Two Worlds*, which has been reprinted in pamphlet form. It is apparently an attempt to prove the survival of the soul after death on grounds quite apart from Spiritualism. As readers will doubtless perceive by the extracts here given, it is a chapter based upon big assumptions, and, as such, does not require much comment. I give all the main points.

> The torn and mangled bodies of men strew the blood-stained fields, and science has been prostituted to serve the most appalling methods of effecting separation between spirits and their habiliments of flesh (p. 1).

Here is the first big assumption, the object of the pamphlet being to show that the so-called "spirits" could separate from "their habiliments of flesh."

> Can we find the reason for the enigma death in the living organism?.....If we can find in the thing that IS the evidence of the thing THAT IS TO BE, then the enigma is solvable (p. 5).

Here, again, is the assumption of a soul or spirit that will survive the death of the body. Needless to say, we

have no evidence of the existence of such a "thing" in the body.

> Is the dissolution of the body synchronous with the dissipating of that which we call self-consciousness. If the latter is *not* the case, by what means is self-consciousness continued after bodily death? (p. 7).

Here is another tacit assumption, and it is made without evidence of any kind that self-consciousness *can* survive the death of the body. It rests with those who assert that self-consciousness can survive to adduce some evidence in support of that assertion, or in corroboration of the belief.

> Is it conceivable that all this vast expenditure of time and energy on the part of nature in the making of a man has only resulted in the production of a mannikin to shuffle across the stage for threescore years and ten, and then at the end to be "cast as rubbish to the void"? If so, our man is but a mannikin, who jabbers and struts a space, and then falls to pieces (p. 8).

Just so; but is it seemly to speak in this way of rational men who know perfectly well that cosmic evolution in the past was not carried on for "the making of man," though the advent of the animal kingdom happened to be one of the results?

> My thought is on something we call energy, but which to my mind may more suitably be called God, and it is because of my belief in the inextinguishable nature of this, may I call it, Divine energy, that I hold not only that the human is not the limits for the expression of that energy, nor either the so-called material universe, that I claim that our survival of bodily death is an inevitable sequence of the mighty processes that have resulted in bringing man upon the scene (p. 9).

This is rather a long sentence, and somewhat mixed; but if Mr. Morse elects to call the energy in Nature "God" and "Divine," he is, of course, at perfect liberty to do so. This change of name, however, does not alter the character of the energy in any part of the Universe; neither does it give anything supposed to reside in the body—the "soul" or "spirit," for instance—the power to live after death. Even the claim that this survival is "inevitable" does not affect the matter in the least.

> Is this life a rudimentary state preceding further and higher stages of personal being? If so, the enigma of death is resolvable. If not, then death is dying in very truth (p. 10).

Here I would suggest that Mr. Morse should get on with his proof of immortality, and not ask so many foolish questions. This life is the only one known to science; the future state to which Spiritualists look forward is a lower one, in which people who on earth had sterling common sense speak the most outrageous nonsense.

> From the day of Anton Mesmer the world has had presented evidence of the functioning of consciousness along supra-normal lines of action.....There is abundant and irrefragable evidence that men can see without eyes.....that men hear independently of the ordinary methods of audation, that they feel independently of the ordinary process of sensation (p. 11).

The first statement here refers to the fact of a strong, masterful will dominating a very weak one; the second is a reference to clairvoyance and clairaudience, in which the medium professes to see and hold converse with "spirits" of the dead—which no one else present in the room can see. As an example, I take the case of Mr. Horace Leaf, Spiritualist lecturer and clairvoyant, who told a lady who visited him that he could see "a form called Elizabeth" behind her chair, and said that there were "a crowd of spirits" beside her, including "Grandfather Edward, Uncle John, and Maria." The lady informed the magistrate that not one of those "spirits" was known to her, either as deceased relatives or friends.

To another lady who came to him, Mr. Leaf said, "I see an elderly lady with grey hair behind your chair. I get the name of Annie or Anna Manning." Upon being told by his visitor that she did not know any such person, he said, "It must be a relative or something of that sort." Then, after a pause, he said, "I get the name of a man, a spirit with a short beard. He is brought in by the spirit of a woman, so that you may recognize the woman. I get Edward." His visitor said that she knew of no such deceased person of that name in her family or among her acquaintances. She gave him his fee—5s.—and left the premises. After hearing other witnesses, the magistrate fined Mr. Leaf £25 and costs, or two months in the second division. On the same day (Feb. 24, 1917) three other mediums were convicted of fraud—Madame Vox, Mrs. Fielder, and Madame Leslie—the first being fined, and the other two sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Not one of the four mediums was able to see without eyes or hear without ears, as they professed to do.

> If the supra functions exist they require organs adapted to their expressions. Then this supra organism must be in organized form, and will be emitted from the body at death in a corresponding form (p. 12).

Here we see that the claims made by clairvoyants and others are assumed to be conclusive evidence of the existence of "supra functions" in the body, which necessitate "supra organs" to perform those functions. Mr. Morse does not, however, explain how it is that science knows nothing of such organs.

> Andrew Jackson Davis has described what he observed of the process of dying.....He tells us that the central pivot (really the point of consciousness) emerged from the *superior* brain, and attracted it to the ethereal elements constituting the supra body. That these enveloped the head of the dying form, and presently this sunlike halo assumed shape and form. In appearance this form, Davis tells us, was human (p. 13).

"Davis tells us!" And who in the name of all that's sane is "Davis"? Mr. Morse does not tell us. The question, however, can be answered. Andrew Jackson Davis, also called the "Poughkeepsie Seer," was a religious crank in America of the Swedenborg type, who "held forth" in the early days of Spiritualism half a century ago. Having read that Paul was "caught up to the third heaven," he claimed to have clairvoyant visions of several heavens, one above the other, to which disembodied spirits rose as they grew in wisdom and love. He never, of course, saw anything of the kind; neither did he "observe the process of dying," as here stated. He fraudulently invented the latter scene, knowing that it could not be proved that he had *not* seen what he described. And it is to the inane utterances of this mendacious crank that Mr. Morse appeals in support of his ridiculous theories.

Having got nearly to the end of his pamphlet without being able to advance one single scrap of evidence in support of a future life, Mr. Morse is compelled at last to fall back upon Spiritualism. He says:—

> The facts of Spiritualism *do* establish man's survival. .....Our mediums are the present day living witnesses of the existence of the supra-normal powers to which reference has been made.....Their psychic faculties are the link between the normal world and the supra-normal world. Those faculties are the points of contact between the two states of life (p. 15).

Here, it will be seen, all the alleged "facts of Spiritualism" are entirely dependent upon the "psychic faculties" of the mediums. If the latter fail, there are no other Spiritualistic "facts" to put in their place. In the earlier forms of Spiritualism many of the mediums were detected in deliberate acts of fraud; but in the new

forms of that "ism" the automatists, whether fraudulent or not, run little risk of detection—unless a fee is demanded of inquirers, as in the case of Mr. Leaf and others. The question then arises, Are the mediums of the present day more moral or more reliable than their "physical phenomena" predecessors? The answer is, that we have no reason for supposing that they are; neither have we any evidence known to science that there is a living entity in the human body which is capable of surviving death.

After reading this one-sided "solution" of what is called "the enigma of death," it has occurred to me that it might not be amiss to examine the Christian idea of immortality in the endeavour to see where and when it arose, what was actually believed, and what facts, if any, might be adduced in support of it. This I shall commence in the next paper.

Abracadabra.

## "A Field Card to God."

How to begin to address you is in itself problematical—an enigma. You, whom nobody can define, and whose mysterious depths remain unprobed, are surely deserving of a title so exalted and so superb, even as no poet of the highest calibre has yet created. No mere majestic titles for you; these sink into an abyss of indignity and are, apparently, superficial before your vast greatness. And as I, poor little mortal, cannot coin the terms of sublimity soaring high enough into the empyrean such as befit your great immortality, I begin humbly as I would to one who has my reverence and deep respect, and trust that you, in your infinite greatness, will not think me too presumptive or familiar.

The few queries which I am about to submit to you—I deem necessary to acquaint you with the fact—are echoed and re-echoed in thousands of hearts; in hearts torn asunder with grief and sorrow; in minds turned by despair and misery. Tell me, O God, whether it is your wish that we were cast into this great inferno of war; whether you preordained that hell be let loose on earth and the Devil play havoc with the universe; whether it was your wish that death, grief, misery, despair, and heartrending sorrow walk hand in hand, reaping their rich harvest among mankind? Now, let us be logical.

The Bible teaches us that you are Almighty. So be it. Then you *could* have prevented this worldly scourge, and even never have fashioned it; wherefore, my little mind cannot comprehend why you *did* fashion it, and still permit it to continue. We are told that you move in a mysterious way. Aye, verily you do.

Merciful God, it surely cannot be your wish that your children die the awful death of the battlefield—to perish by the hand of man. Can it be your wish to sever limbs of multitudes of your own likeness and creation; to inflict pain and anguish broadcast, and to drown your own world in sorrow? If it *is* your wish, O where is your mercy? If it is *not*, where is your almightyness? I entreat you not to be angry with your humble child for questioning those properties of yours, which we are assured by the chroniclers of the Scriptures, that you possess. We do not understand, and *because* we do not understand, we begin to waver in our faith in you.

If it is your wish to punish offenders, show us a symbol that *you* are at work, so that they who have invoked your wrath may know that they are receiving their deserts justly, and at whose powerful hands; but *all* who have known the pangs of suffering, the tortues of hell itself in this great ordeal, are surely not invariably steeped in iniquity, deserving of your terrible chastisement.

We, who had implicit faith in your great power, and sought of you for guidance, as do the little children and the stricken blind, are we to be left to our own limited resources? Are we to be forsaken in the hour of need? O, surely not. Is not this the opportune moment for exhibiting your limitless power; for teaching us the power of God Almighty? Remember, O God, that millions are wavering in their belief in you. We are perilously near a brink from which you can save us. We are but frail humans, and blind tolerance has its limitations. This diabolical conflict has been instrumental in hurling thousands of believers in you into the gulf of doubt; and your stupendous unlimited capabilities, with which you are credited, are by many now only accepted with reserve. Symptoms of doubt are beginning to be entertained by many a brokenhearted woman smitten by the loss of a dear one. Staunch and devout believers in you heretofore are now uttering the question almost in the throes of despair, "Can there be a God to allow all this?" Behold! Open the gates of the city of refuge to your children; O respond to our cry with a token of enlightenment, guiding us in your Divine path.

I am writing from the scene of devastation, of destruction, and of annihilation of innocent manhood. I have witnessed death in cruel forms—limbless misshapes of beloved fathers, sons, husbands, and brothers—all lain low by the vile scourge of battle. The gruesomeness and tragedy of it all eat deeply into my soul—and set me pondering. Many a strange and fleeting thought passes me, and innumerable questions arise to my lips. Why? Why?

It has been said that the whole responsibility for this great happening is attributable to the wiles and evil desires of an individual. Many think that it is the actual work of the Devil. Others vouch that they are but synonymous. "Ha, Ha!" even in my bitterness I must laugh—though I am sure it is an offence to do so when addressing you seriously—for which I beseech your pardon. These puny mortals who profess to knowledge have surely forgotten that you are *Almighty*, and that an insignificant human—though he be a Teuton Majesty—is but clay in your mighty hands, to be moulded at *your* will. Do you not reign supreme? It is, therefore, unquestionably *your* will that all this be. Again occur a paradox and a question. *A merciful, just, and loving God has willed evil and destruction.* Again, Why? Why?

Perhaps there is an explanation, a solution to the bewildering mystery, which is denied us. But until *we* comprehend, we waver in our faith. So come, I beseech you, show us, teach us to know that there is a God, supreme, Almighty, merciful, and just. Vanish our doubts. Testify that God is not a mythological character, but of Divine existence. Then Atheists, Agnostics, and the multitudes of waverers will flock to you, O God, in all sincerity and everlasting hope.

"Somewhere" in Macedonia. Mark Roseman.

## The Sphinx.

I saw the sphinx in a wasted land,
Broken and old and brown;
I followed its gaze with a steady hand
Where the skies go bending down.

I thought of the years those unshut eyes
Had stared away to the east;
I wondered if under the ancient skies
They had builded a man as a beast.

But the stone spoke not, it eyes were blind,
It gave neither sign nor nod;
Surely, I said, "our ancient kind
Have builded an image of God."

Cairo. C. W. B.

## Acid Drops.

Another attempt is to be made to induce the Prime Minister to agree to a National Day of Prayer. The World's Evangelical Alliance is to interview Mr. Lloyd George in order to find out why such a day has not, up to the present, been appointed. The reason seems obvious. It would have served no useful purpose. Mr. Lloyd George has said that various things were essential to winning the War, but he never mentioned prayer as a national necessity. The other day he did say we intended giving the Germans "Hell," but he said nothing about giving them prayer. A National Day of Prayer would be the one thing to make England ridiculous in the eyes of the world.

The crowning impudence of the proposal is contained in the remark: "The Prime Minister would be informed that a day of prayer was wanted, not merely by a section of the Christian people, but by all classes, not only in England, but throughout the Empire." Of course, if one sets out to tell a lie, it may as well be a "thumping" lie, and the Alliance must be more stupid than even we think it if it imagines that the Prime Minister will swallow such a story. He knows better. If all classes want a day of prayer they can easily have it by praying. No one will stop them. Besides, Mr. Lloyd George is a politician, and if there had been a general demand for a day of prayer he would have long since found that essential to winning the War. The real aim is to engineer a colossal act of mingled stupidity and hypocrisy. And, we observe, that the Alliance has cancelled its evening meetings on account of probable air-raids. Why not hold them, and trust to prayer for protection?

Writing on the subject of the work of the National Sunday League, Mr. Pett Ridge says, "The League extended the Sabbath day's journey which, under the old law, was limited to one mile." Just so. And the League also introduced a little sweetness and light into the English Sunday, which, until a few years ago, was devoted to spirituous and spiritual intoxication.

Speaking at the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union, the Rev. Stanley Wicks said "children should not be pitch-forked into the Church at the age of sixteen after a talk with the minister in the vestry." This shows how Church membership returns are compiled.

Some controversy has arisen in the press as to whether Mr. Lloyd George, in a recent interview, used the expression: "We'll give them (the Germans) hell." Mr. George states that he has no recollection of using it, but the language was reproduced in several papers. After all, the sentiment is Christian, if not statesmanlike.

Theological prejudice too frequently mars the pages of the liberal and fair-minded *Daily News*. In a recent article, with the pleasing title of "Pan-Anglicanism," Bishop Colenso is referred to as "the arithmetical bishop who could not forgive Moses for having written a book of Numbers." The fact is that Colenso made a slashing attack on the Pentateuch, and thousands of people had their faith undermined in consequence of the bishop's criticisms. The religious world was too ignorant to know that most of Colenso's arguments were borrowed from Paine and other Freethinkers, but the Christians read the bishop when they would not have read the iconoclasts. To-day the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is discredited, and Colenso had his share in the work. As it was, it took the bright and brainy Christians many generations to realize that poor old Moses could hardly have written an account of his own funeral.

Some of the present-day novelists appear to be taking themselves very seriously on religious matters. Mr. H. G. Wells has "found God"—a brand new one—and now Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of *Sherlock Holmes*, announces "a new revelation," which makes religion no longer a matter of faith, but of experience. Sir Arthur's panacea is based on "psychical phenomena," which sounds suspiciously like our old friend "Sludge the Medium." Perhaps this outbreak of fancy religionism is the boasted "revival of piety" which the clergy so often speak of. If so, the novelists will be more pleased than the parsons.

"A U.F.C. Bishop" writes to the *Dundee Courier* in defence of reprisals. He argues that the policy is quite Christian, since God said "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." He conveniently forgets the saying attributed to Jesus, "Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, Love your enemies." If there is any meaning in language, that means a clear abrogation of the old rule. A reply to that is, we are loving our enemies when we correct their bad habits—which is exactly what the Germans say of us. We do not believe them, neither do they believe us. It will take a lot of argument to persuade Englishmen that German airmen are animated by a desire for our improvement when they drop bombs on London or Ramsgate; and it will be equally hard to convince the enemy that we are inspired by philanthropy in dropping bombs on German towns. And the cant of religion only makes a bad business the more detestable.

If we believe that the killing of English women and children by German airmen serves but to nerve us to more strenuous efforts to beat the enemy, one would like to know on what ground we believe that the killing of German women and children by English airmen will have any other result on the enemy? If we are not sending our airmen to attack women and children, but only to bomb munition works, etc., in Germany, then the killing of civilians is incidental—is not a matter of reprisals at all; it is part of the normal operations of war. If we really wish to kill German women and children, is it necessary to go to Germany at all? There are plenty in this country. If, again, the bombing of ammunition works is legitimate warfare, how many parts of Britain are there that could not be legitimately bombed? We are not arguing that German towns should not be bombed. We are only wishful for a little serious and straightforward thinking on the matter. The whole business of the War is, as we have often said, a competition in brutality. When one side used gas, the other was compelled to follow, or be beaten. And so with other things. One side sets the pace, and the other is compelled to follow. If we must have reprisals, let us have them; only do let us import courage and honesty into our doings.

The ancient wheeze of the camel and the eye of the needle will be recalled by the announcement that the late Rev. Sir V. D. Vyvyan, of Withiel, Cornwall, left estate to the value of £213,997.

Blessed be ye poor! £33,843 was all the Rev. A. Hanburg, of Bayswater, left of this world's goods, and the Rev. W. G. Walker, of Knockie, Salop, left only £22,253. Neither wished to leave it—they would have preferred to take it with them.

The most curious will we have seen for some time is that of the Rev. H. E. Robson, of Caversham, Reading. According to a *Daily Telegraph* report:—

> He desired that some of the principal arteries of his body shall be severed, to make sure life is extinct, and the doctor who shall do this operation is to receive £20 for such operation; and his remains are to be cremated and disposed of as the executors may determine, *and he directed that no religious rite or ceremony of any description shall be held over his uncremated remains.*

We do not know what this means—whether Mr. Robson was waiting until he was dead to let the world know his real opinions, or simply that he disliked ceremonies. It is a strange will—for a clergyman.

An apologist for the clergy says that parsons who fight run counter to Canon law. The point raised is purely ecclesiastic, for the clergy have no objection to consecrating regi-

mental flags and christening battleships. Nor do they object to drawing decent salaries as Army Chaplains. In olden times priests were not so tender of their skins.

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People who were allowed to shelter in a London police-station during a recent air-raid stole a clock, some boots, and provisions. At an East London Police-Court a thief stole the Testament. The last item shows that one of the thieves was pious.

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The *Spectator* is responsible for the following addition to child-Scripture stories:—

> One little boy, told to write all he knew of Elijah, speaking truly for himself, wrote: "We do not know much of this holy man," and added: "But we know that he went for a cruise with a widow."

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The Bishop of Bath and Wells has issued a solemn caution against using wafers at Holy Communion in place of even war-time bread. Bearing in mind that the food-controller prohibited the giving of bread to pigeons, we wonder he has not had courage enough to prohibit it being used for this kind of ecclesiastical tomfoolery.

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Man, says the Rev. Bernard J. Snell, cannot do without religion. We have heard this before, and from many others beside Mr. Snell. Perhaps some of these gentlemen will one day set themselves the task of dealing with the fact that millions of men and women are without religion, and are none the worse for its absence. We fancy that all such a generalization means is that the clergy cannot get along without religion—and that is quite obvious.

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Mr. Walter Winans writes a very vigorous article in the *Star* for October 8, on "The Horse in War-Time." Mr. Winans points out that cruelty to horses has been on the increase during the War, the number of half-starved-looking horses having greatly increased. We are not surprised at this, and it is one more proof of the brutalization that overtakes a world at war. Mr. Winans says he has received hundreds of letters from "all classes" joining in his protest against this cruelty to horses, and then adds:—

> I said "from all classes," but there I was wrong—I have not yet received one from a clergyman, nor has a clergyman come to my assistance when I have interfered in a case of cruelty.

This is a good example of the humanity encouraged by religion.

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The "Divine-Human personality"—by which, we suppose, is meant Jesus Christ—"was never more strongly evidenced than in the War." So says the Bishop of London; and he knows as much about it as anyone else. This "Divine-Human personality," says the Bishop, saved the Worcesters in October, 1914; it preserved Paris and safeguarded the Channel ports, and stimulated "the miraculous outburst of national endeavour and sacrifice which had made the past years memorable." But the "Divine-Human personality" has very obvious limitations. It could preserve Paris—"Infidel Paris"—but not pious London. It could safeguard the Channel ports, but not Belgium or Serbia. It could stimulate sacrifice, but could do nothing to prevent the acquisition of huge profits by those who were gambling in the food-stuffs of the people. Finally, it could not prevent the destruction of thousands of useful members of society, but it could protect the Bishop of London and his kind. Really, it is time the work of this "Divine-Human personality" was handed over to a committee of level-headed men and women.

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The inappropriateness of hymns is often so striking as almost to suggest a deliberate attempt at sarcasm. Thus, the *Daily Chronicle* reports that during the recent London air-raids a woman told her children to sing, "Hark, hark, my soul, it is the Lord," while the bombs were falling around. Of course, from the Theistic point of view, it was the Lord behind it all; but most people would be content to say it was the Germans.

"The Dean of Durham says the fearful experiences of the last three years have unsettled many beliefs and on many devout minds the dark shadow of doubt had fallen, and, he asks, who can wonder? Well, at any rate, the 'beliefs' existed during the time the war was fructifying, especially among the priesthood of Prussia. As far as the priests of Prussia are concerned, at any rate, we may ask not what effect the War has had on beliefs, but how far beliefs were responsible for the War. The 'belief' embodied in the phrase 'Gott mit uns' was certainly a formidable factor in Germany's preparations."—*The South African Review.*

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The *Church Times* is very angry with the *Daily Telegraph* for having written a sensible article on the question of divorce. The *D. T.* had written that it sees no reason why "men and women who have unfortunately found in one another not the affinities they had hoped for but their very antipathies should not be able, after a proper interval of time, to try again in other quarters, if they feel disposed to embark upon such an adventure twice." That, we think, is a view that will commend itself to many; but the *Church Times* points out austerely that "marriage is not an appointment of the State"; all the State does is to legalize it, "securing to the married couple and their issue rights of property and inheritance and so forth. What the State has conferred it can withdraw, but it cannot touch marriage." This strikes us as being delightfully mixed. So far as marriage is the equivalent of the union of two people, it is a natural fact, and antedates both theology and the State. But so far as it is a legalized condition, it is essentially a State-conferred right, and nothing else. It is true that the Church claimed precedence of the State here, but it is precisely this claim that the modern mind rejects. The form of marriage—like all other institutions—must ultimately be determined by its effect on human welfare. There is no other test that will commend itself to common sense.

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An organization, with the resounding title of The World's Evangelical Alliance, is attempting to arrange a Day of National Prayer to ask for a "victory over the Devil incarnate." The prospect is a terrible one for the clergy, for, if their request is granted, their occupation will be gone.

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Jesus commanded his apostles to take nothing with them in the shape of gold and silver when they went on their journeys. But that is a long while ago, and they didn't know everything down in Judee. The American Episcopal Church is sending a real live bishop out to the War zone, and is appealing for five hundred thousand dollars for his maintenance. Luckily, this move is *not* a measure of the intelligence which America brings to bear on the War. If it were, we should wish her on the side of Germany.

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We don't pretend to be at all interested or concerned over the question of Sunday Matins, and we haven't the slightest trace of respect for people who can discuss such a topic with gravity. Its intellectual value is no greater than that of a mob of savages discussing the value of some particular piece of primitive magic. But we note that day after day the *Times* is giving its space to a discussion of the topic, and this, with the constant assurance of the great danger fronting the nation, and of the need for economy, and for the intelligent direction of all our efforts, gives one occasion to think furiously. Men who can spend their time discussing such topics are of doubtful value to any community.

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Mr. James Douglas, writing to the *Star*, calls Dr. Horton "a saint." The popular Nonconformist minister has one saintly quality: he cannot mind his own business.

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Mr. Pett Ridge had a clever hit at the open-air evangelists who frequent the street corners with an harmonium and three lady friends. He parodies one of the orators: "I've broken nearly every one of the ten commandments over and over again. Sometimes I've done scarcely anything else. But, thank goodness, I've never failed, whatever was 'appening, to keep my religion."

## To Correspondents.

### C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 21, Manchester; October 28, London; November 4, Abertillery; November 18, Birmingham; November 25, Nuneaton.

J. T. Lloyd's Lecture Engagements.—November 18, Manchester.

J. Roberts.—The *Freethinker* has been sent regularly, so that the non-arrival is not due to any fault at this end. We are glad to know that the men look for it with such eagerness. Always pleased to hear from you.

Mr. S. Pulman writes:—"I enclose £1, to be placed to the *Freethinker* Sustentation Fund. The ready response to your appeal is in itself a great tribute to the high order of your editorship and the excellency of the matter contributed by your staff. Fifty years ago I became a reader of the *National Reformer*, and have been a constant reader of the *Freethinker* since its birth, under the auspices of our late President and Editor, G. W. Foote. If I may dare an opinion here, permit me to say that the contents of the paper to-day is all that can be desired."

E. Starling.—The local Secretary is Mr. J. Bartram, 107 Morley Street, Heaton. He will be very pleased to put you in touch with Newcastle Freethinkers. We note your remark about the Y.M.C.A. huts. Without at all detracting from whatever help they have been to the men, it is quite obvious that the organization has utilized the War as a great advertising opportunity, and of many of their operations we know there is a story to be told very different from that which appears in the press.

A. J. Marriott.—We quite appreciate your concern for the preservation of British liberty, and agree that while we are fighting for it abroad, we stand no small danger of losing it at home. We have pointed this out several times, and also that our own particular "Prussians" are making use of the War to that end. For our own part, we object to slavery, whether the collar be placed round our neck by German or Briton.

W. Mendez.—We have not seen the book you name, but if you think it worth our reading, we should be pleased to see the work.

G. R.—Pleased to have your opinion that the *Freethinker* is one of the few "fair and intelligent papers on the market." We do try to be fair, and we hope we are intelligent. We already had a couple of paragraphs written on the subject, but the cutting will be useful in other directions

C. Harpur.—Sorry that the length of your letter prevented publication. All we can say now is, that there is not the direct antithesis between believing and not believing that you seem to infer. If I do not believe that Smith stole a watch, it does not follow that I believe he did not steal it. It may mean that I have no belief on the subject. Belief must rest on some sort of evidence, and where there is no evidence there should be no belief. To take your own illustration. I may not believe that Bacon wrote *Hamlet*, but I may also be without the belief that he did not write it. I may be without any belief on the subject either way.

J. W. Gilliam (Capetown).—Used, as you will see. Very pleased to add your congratulations to the store. The good wishes of friends are always welcome.

Ignotus.—Thanks. Shall appear shortly.

E. A. McDonald.—Have passed on the cutting. Perhaps the secret of the vogue of such articles is the fact that there is an enormous mass of latent superstition among the people, and an appeal to this, in however indirect a manner, arouses interest. And that is all the ordinary newspaper appears to care about.

W. M.—An edition of Schopenhauer's chief work, *The World as Will and Idea*, is published in three vols., price 31s. 6d. There are several volumes of essays published by Swan Sonnenschein at about 2s. 6d. per vol, and a volume of selected essays in Bohn's Popular Library at 1s. We know nothing of the Society you name.

C. Budge.—As you say, it is a game of sheer humbug. But that gentleman knows the kind of intelligence to which he appeals. And the humbug gets more flagrant each week.

H. Caerwey (Partick).—Sorry we have not the figures by us, but should say that the *Church of England Year Book* would give you as much information as is available.

*Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

*The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (Oct. 21) Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures—afternoon at 3, evening at 6.30—in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester. Those who wish to obtain tickets for the meetings beforehand may do so from the Secretary, Mr. H. Black, 446 Great Cheetham Street, E. Higher Broughton; Messrs. S. Pulman, 68 Tib Street; H. Mountain, 50 York Avenue; R. Owen, 368 Collyhurst Road; G. Brown, 22 Fairfield Road; F. F. Greenhall, 34 Goulden Street, Pendleton; and Mrs. Bayfield, 61 Claude Road, Chorlton. We hope that Manchester friends generally will do their best to see that the hall is well filled on both occasions. To meet the convenience of visitors from a distance, arrangements have been made to provide tea between the afternoon and evening meetings.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (October 21) in the Institute, Abertillery, both afternoon and evening. Mr. Lloyd is always sure of a warm welcome, and we hope to hear the "Standing Room Only" notice has had to be utilized.

Mr. H. Irving writes in reference to the recent discussion on Atheism and Agnosticism:—

> In his debate with the Rev. W. T. Lee, at Derby, G. W. Foote, with a fine scorn for lexicographers, explained the meaning of Atheism *per se;* and fully detailed what Atheists meant by it, using the arguments of Charles Bradlaugh as a representative Atheist. The only difference between Mr. J. Blair Williams and Charles Bradlaugh appears to lie in the notice they take of the Theist's conception of God. Mr. Williams, like the raven with its eternal "Nevermore," reiterates to every proposition of the Theist, "I don't know what you mean." Bradlaugh exhausted thought to combat every conception of the Inconceivable put before him. The Atheist is without God. The Agnostic has less than a fraction of God. Where is the difference?

Miss Vance informs us that a number of N.S.S. members have not yet habituated themselves to the new rule that all subscriptions to the Society become due in January. At any rate, some who should have remitted have not yet done so. We are asked, therefore, to give all members a reminder to this effect, and we gladly do so. And we expect and hope to hear that all overdue subscriptions have been received. If those who send increase their subscription, by way of a self-inflicted penance, everybody concerned will be delighted.

On Sunday last the South London Branch inaugurated its winter course of lectures with a successful "Social" in the Trade Union Hall, 30, Brixton Road, S.W. An excellent programme of instrumental and vocal music had been arranged by Mr. Holland, and was thoroughly enjoyed by an appreciative audience. The members are highly pleased with their new place of meeting, which is both "cosy" and conveniently situated—being close to the Oval Tube Station, and the L.C.C. tram centre, Kennington Gate. There is also available another hall in the basement which would afford safe shelter during an air-raid.

At the Executive Meeting on Thursday last permission was given for the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. at Goldthorpe, near Rotherham. We wish the new Branch every success, and we are hoping to see many more such Branches established in the near future. It can be done, if only Freethinkers resolve it shall be done. During the past two years no application for help has been refused to any area where there was a prospect of doing Freethought work. But it is obvious that local Freethinkers must bestir themselves first.

We understand that Mr. Heinemann has acquired the copyright in Swinburne's works published and unpublished. It will be good news to Freethinking lovers of the poet to know that there are in preparation cheap pocket editions of "Poems and Ballads" (first and second series), "Songs before Sunrise," "Atalanta in Calydon," "Erectheus," and "Tristan of Lyonesse." We are sorry that Mr. Heinemann cannot give us any definite date of issue.

The following is interesting as a specimen of the other sort of warfare that is going on in the midst of the more material combat. It is the reply of a young man of eighteen in response to a letter from one of religious opinions:—

> Whether the War ends this year or not, the bare fact remains, and I hope the people will remember it, that the Church, *supposed* to be the greatest moral uplifting teacher in the world, has had nearly 2,000 years in which to teach the fact that wars can be averted and are useless, and has failed utterly and most awfully to do so; in fact, the clergy of the belligerents openly applaud and assist the ruthless slaughter of thousands of the children of God, as they smugly call them, from their secure pulpits. Do away with, if you will, this rotten system, and, I say with you, substitute sound moral and common-sense teaching culled from the greatest progressive thinkers and philosophers of the centuries, irrespective of their caste, colour, and religious thoughts, then, I believe, you will have a basis on which a grand democratic system of society can be built. The work of Jesus was, as you say, grand, but it stands out so distinctly simply because his was the first recorded of that type. Other men since his time have done as much, and more, for the welfare of humanity, even to laying down their lives in the cause they loved; but they have not been the victims of circumstances, prophecies, and such ancient superstitions as Jesus was in his time, consequently, their work has not been thrust forward so greatly. Set Jesus up as an example and a teacher, and set forth those of his teachings which would help to reconstruct society, if you like, but don't set him up as an impossible son of a impossible God, and you will get some good out of his work.

## "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

I had intended this week fixing a very early date for the closing of this Fund, but refrain from doing so for several reasons. Last year it was complained that I closed the list too peremptorily, and so prevented many sending who would have liked to contribute.

There are always some who will not send until the last minute, although as I must soon name a closing date, I hope those who wish to subscribe will do so as early as possible. It will have been observed that the deficit on last year was very promptly cleared off, and a good step made towards meeting the weekly loss that must be regarded as inevitable during the continuance of the War. This, of course, makes the situation so much easier for me, and if the deficit is met in advance, it will do away with the necessity for borrowing the money, which I have had to do up to now.

Lastly, and this finally determined me to keep the Fund open for awhile longer, the outlook is none too cheerful. This month I have been compelled to arrange for a supply of paper at a still further advanced price, and, in addition to this, there is another increase coming in the wages of compositors. The men ask for an advance of six shillings per week, and the employers have offered three. The matter is still under discussion, and the advance will be something between these two amounts. In any case the advance is to date from the first of October.

The future, as will be seen, is very uncertain. I do not fear for the paper, readers may rest content on that head. I had thought of meeting these further increases by reducing the paper to twelve pages, but I have now decided to struggle along with the paper unchanged. But it *is* a struggle. The paper is still forging ahead in the matter of circulation—the increase is small each month, but it is steadily mounting. The disappointing thing is that every time one puts on a few extra shillings a week from sales, all of it, and often more, is swallowed up in increased cost of production. Still, it is promising for the time when conditions once more become normal.

But I am not in the least disheartened. I know I have the full support of *Freethinker* readers, and I have every confidence in our united ability to weather the storm. We must just keep smiling and keep fighting. Whatever sacrifice that fighting involves, we have the supreme satisfaction of knowing that it could not be made in the furtherance of a better cause.

### Sixth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £285 15s. 10d. V. P. (Plymouth), £1. H. Tucker, 10s. D. Wright, 5s. W. W. Braddock, 7s. 6d. A. J. Marriott (second subscription), 8s. W. E. and A. W. Kerslake, 8s. J. C. B., 5s. J. Y. R., 5s. W. R., 2s. 6d. M. R., 2s. 6d. A. B., 2s. 6d. M. S., £4 10s. E. Reynolds, 5s. Tim, 2s. 6d. Postman, 2s. 6d. W. T. Newman, 2s. 6d. J. S. Buckle, 10s. G. G., 5s. Vera, 1s. F. Creswell, £1. J. Roberts (Boulogne), 1s. S. Pulman, £1. J. Weeks, 2s. 6d. B. Adams, £1. A few Friends, per H. J. Slack, 5s. 6d. J. Railton, 2s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, 10s. F. E. Monks, 5s. E. Simpson, 5s. W. Mather (third subscription), 10s. G. R. Harker (second subscription), 10s. Per E. Pinder—G. H. Folwell, £1; S. Leeson, 10s.; A. B. Taylor, 2s.; E. Pinder, 5s.; C. Pell, 2s.; R. Wheatley, 2s.; H. Woolley, 10s.; G. Martin, 2s.; G. H. Hopkins, 2s. 6d. F. M. Grieg, 2s. Total: £304 1s. 4d.

Correction—"J. Hamon, £1," in our issue for September 30, should have read "J. O'Connor, £1."

Chapman Cohen.

## The Story of the Sugar Industry.

II.

(*Continued from p. 652.*)

The once scorned sugar beet is an unassuming vegetable of northern lands. A near relative of the mangel-wurzel, a cattle-feeding root, the beet is an excellent pickle, and forms a decided addition to a salad. The plant's modest leaves absorb the rays of the sun; they serve to preserve the soil's moisture by hindering evaporation, while preparing the sugar, which is stored in the small bulging root, whose tapering rootlets are thrust into the earth in search of water and food. This seemingly insignificant plant, with a root weighing thirty-two ounces only, not merely furnishes man with half his sugar, but it supplies a larger percentage of the sweetening substance than is at present obtained from the opulent cane. Nevertheless, where soil and climate are favourable the sugar-yielding powers of the cane prove twice those of the beet per acre.

The most bountiful cane crops are grown where the plant is intensively cultivated. In the West Indies and other centres the crop is grown in one plantation for several years, but in Java and elsewhere it is cultivated as a rotation crop, and other plants occupy the soil in alternate seasons. While fifty years ago West Indian planters were elated when a couple of hogsheads (about one and a half tons) of muscovado sugar were yielded by an acre of land, to-day, in Java, the average return has risen to the gratifying total of over four tons per acre. Indeed, many Javan estates produce at least five tons an acre, an achievement which constitutes a splendid tribute to scientific agriculture.

Beet culture has been artificially stimulated by various States with serious consequences to the cane grower. The policy pursued by European Governments in developing the beet industry has been copied by the United States both with regard to the beet products of its own northern growers and those of the planters in the more tropical American possessions. As a result of this preferential treatment, the sugar industry has increased enormously in the Western Republic. Since the Brussels Convention of 1902, little sugar has entered the United States from Europe. But the internal

resources of the States are sufficient to maintain a constant supply for American use. The total consumption of the States is about 3,000,000 tons, but its own sugar areas, with the assistance of Hawaii, Porto Rico, Cuba, and other American possessions, can easily furnish all the sugar needed. Cuba revels in the sunshine of Government preference, and that island's production of cane sugar has risen enormously in consequence. Cuban sugar is annually turned out to the tune of nearly 2,000,000 tons.

The coarse, unclean sugar, so long produced in Formosa for the Chinese stomach has been replaced since the Japanese occupation of the island by modern methods of manufacture. The Japanese first ascertained how the heaviest crops, both of beet and cane, were obtained. The native planters were then instructed in the art of successful cane cultivation. Various forms of waste were eliminated, suitable manures were introduced, and factories have been established for the purpose of supplying Japan with high grade sugar. Should this experiment succeed, and its prospects are good, it is probable that Japan will enter the world's markets as a sugar refining State to the detriment of Hong Kong refineries which have so long been predominant in the Chinese trade.

Even in Peru, a rainless land, some of the finest crops in the world have beea grown where the parched soil has been irrigated. And in the Sandwich Islands, in exceptional seasons, the yield of the cane has proved even more remunerative than the magnificent Javan crops. The flower of the cultivated cane so rarely sets its seed, that, until a few years ago, the plant was invariably propagated with cuttings. The wild varieties of the sugar cane, however, develop seed which is capable of reproduction. From plants produced from seed a selection has been made, and it is found that many of these are equal and sometimes superior to the cultivated kinds. There is, now, every prospect of a permanent improvement in the quality, yield, and disease-proof powers of the novel varieties called into existence by the magic voice of science. Now that the selective principle is at last being applied by planters, the cane is assured of a lengthy career as a sugar-producing crop.

In the Old World the evolution of the sugar beet has been in operation for more than a century. Magraff discovered sugar in the common beet in 1747, but its sugar content proved to be 2 to 4 per cent. only. Fifty years rolled away, when Archard, another German, succeeded in extracting this sugar from the root. In the early stages of the industry the beet was made to yield five or six per cent. of sugar, which has since increased to an average of 16 per cent. The year 1908 proved a record period, and the yield for the German Empire was about 17 per cent., while the Bohemian crop was even more generous. These remarkable results are almost entirely attributable to the scientific seedsman. Through a rigorous selection of the choicest seeds each season the nurseryman has obtained this invaluable advance.

Beet is a costly crop to the grower, and, unfortnnately, the seasons are frequently unfavourable to the plant's growth and maturity, and a dearth of beet usually means a serious shortage in the world's sugar supplies. There remains ample scope for a far larger acreage and productivity, both in cane and beet, if the requirements of the sugar consumers are to be permanently met. The yielding powers of the beet raising countries vary considerably. While the German farmers raise between ten and fourteen tons of roots to the acre, the Austrian return is considerably below this, while Russia produces per acre some six or seven tons only.

The planters possess one important advantage over their beet producing rivals. Their crops are ripe at very various seasons of the year in the several cane regions of the tropical area. Cane sugar is, therefore, available for the refiner at different periods. In this respect it is quite unlike the beet product which is thrown on the market at a stated time. In one year two crops are grown in British Guiana, and these are gathered in May and October. The sugar season commences in January in the West Indies, save in Cuba, where it begins in December, while the Argentine is active in June. Java's crops are ready in May, Australia's sugar is ripe in June, and August is the harvesting time in Mauritius and Natal.

In primitive countries antiquated methods are still employed in extracting the juice of the sugar from the cane. But in the leading sugar fabricating centres modern machinery has followed in the wake of intensive husbandry. Half the juice was at one time left in the canes when the stems were simply crushed by rude rollers worked by human or animal labour. In Barbadoes windmills are still engaged in sugar manufacture. But this prosperous island is admirably adapted to the use of wind power which forms a fairly constant and, certainly cheap substitute for the steam utilized elsewhere. In districts where sugar is elaborated on a very large scale, the three roller mill propelled by steam power soon became the order of the day. About 60 per cent. of the juice was thus extracted, but further improvement became a great desideratum when the beet industry threatened the cane. The apparatus now in use is described as

> a combination of three of these roller-mills set tandem fashion, with carriers to convey the crushed cane from the first to the second, and from the second to the third. It might be imagined that when the crushed cane, called megass—or, in French, *bagasse*—issues from the third mill it has lost all its juice. Unfortunately, this is not so, and therefore other expedients have been adopted to still further reduce the quantity of sugar left in the megass. The rollers in the second and third mill are placed closer together in order more completely to squeeze the now attenuated strips of crushed cane. These mills are also driven at a slightly slower speed. But.....it was found that the first of the two crushings in the front mill did not do much more than break the outside rind of the cane, and that a larger quantity of cane could be worked with the same power if the cane could be cut or torn up to a certain extent before entering the first rollers.—(Martineau, *Sugar*, pp. 27, 28, 1910).

Cane cutters and other contrivances were therefore adopted, and more sugar was extracted. But further economy became necessary, and more efficient methods were devised. Still, even now there remains considerable scope for further improvement.

As previously stated, the delicate sugar cane must be promptly harvested when ripe, and its subsequent treatment admits of no delay. The hardy beetroot, on the contrary, does not readily lose its sugar-yielding powers, and may be delivered at the sugar factory in prime condition weeks after it is removed from the soil. When completely cleaned, with its rootlets cut away and its leaves shorn off, the root is ready for the refiner's hand. Formerly the beets were pulped in a machine, and the juice driven out of the pulp by hydraulic pressure. This wasteful process was at one time considered the acme of perfection. But some doubted, and Robert, an Austrian refiner, introduced a new system of beet juice extraction, known as the diffusion method. Robert's reform was so revolutionary that within ten years his process was everywhere in use throughout Austria and Germany. Both from the scientific and industrial standpoint, the

diffusion principle has proved so extremely important that a brief description of its applications will be appreciated by the thoughtful as attractive and informative alike.

T. F. Palmer.

*(To be continued.)*

## Critical Chat.

### Some New Swinburne Poems.

I was once afflicted with a freethinking friend who successfully disguised a distaste, I may almost say a contempt, for English poetry under a yeasty enthusiasm for Swinburne. I must confess to have been taken in by his rampant eulogies until one day he began to anoint with unctuous adulation the head of another freethinking poet—or shall I say poetess?—who is known to the illiterate on both sides of the Atlantic as the "divine Ella," and as Mrs. Wheeler Wilcox to those who have the misfortune not to be numbered among her admirers. But that is neither here nor there. What I want to suggest, without, I trust, giving needless offence to any serious and well-meaning person, is that an admiration for Swinburne unqualified by reservations unmistakably points to a want of critical balance. I yield to no one in my appreciation of the poet's superb lyrical gift, his passionate hatred of tyranny and hypocrisy, and, on the technical side of the art, his discovery of new and wonderful verse-rhythms; but I do not agree with some of my friends who seem to think that his most flamboyant anti-clerical and anti-theistic diatribes are his principal claim to remembrance. These attacks are, no doubt, sincere enough, and in some moods one enjoys their violence; but however stimulating they may be at first reading, one is wearied in the end by these screaming and unintermittent imprecations. Those of us who know the whole of his work have, however, the satisfaction of being certain that his splenetic attacks on priestcraft are but an insignificant part, insignificant alike in quantity and quality, and that his best poetry draws upon the more permanent and more human emotions.

A book of new poems by Swinburne, although they may not add anything to his reputation, is an event of some importance, especially for those of us who are old enough to remember the thrill of anticipatory delight with which we opened the pages of *Tristan of Lyonesse*. The volume now before us (*Posthumous Poems*. Heinemann; 6s. net) is edited by Mr. Edmund Gosse and Mr. T. J. Wise. With one exception, noted below, it is made up of poems which Swinburne wrote between 1887 and 1907, and left unprinted for some reason or other. The manuscripts were sold to Mr. Wise by Watts-Dunton, whose interest in his friend's work, Mr. Gosse uncharitably avers, had become entirely a financial one. But when a man has been a sort of male nurse to an irritable and ailing poet for twenty years, he has probably had enough of him and his work for all time, and it is hardly to be wondered at if his interest be partly, or even wholly, financial. There was no shrewder critic of modern verse than Watts-Dunton, and no one knew better than he did the weak places in his friend's poetical armour. However that may be, Mr. Gosse has given us a number of poems for the first time, or comparatively for the first time, because some of them I have seen in the British Museum in privately printed copies. The place of honour is given to eleven Border Ballads in imitation of the old songs before they had suffered from restoration at the hands of Bishop Percy, and others who were irritated by the rough versification and crude romantic passion. Swinburne had in him an element of barbaric violence that made him a ready sympathiser with the quarrelsome and amorous spirit of his ancestral raiders of cattle and maids. In confirmation of this sympathy with primitive modes of feeling, Mr. Gosse tells us that when William Morris was printing some of the old ballads at the Kelmscott Press, he was not well enough to continue to work. On looking round for a likely man to take his place as editor, Swinburne's name was mentioned. "Oh, no!" said Morris, "that would never do. He would be writing-in verses that none of us would be able to tell from the original stuff." There is a little exaggeration here. Swinburne was not less a decorative artist than Rossetti and Morris. His imitations, although interesting to us and valuable to him as exercises in narrative verse, in which his strength did not naturally lie, have by no means the simplicity and directness of the best of the traditional ballads. His gravest defect is that he did not know when he had said enough. The pathos is too often wrapped up in the cotton-wool of verbiage. The inspiration is literary instead of being natural. A comparison with "Clerk Saunders," or the fine Scots ballad "Tam-lane," would bring out clearly the difference. But, after all, Swinburne's poems are imitations, and, in spite of Morris' judgment, would deceive no one sufficiently practised in the two forms of poetry.

Swinburne's undergraduate verse is represented by "The Death of Sir John Franklin" and an "Ode to Mazzini." The first of these is supposed by Mr. Gosse to have been sent in for the Newdigate for 1858. This date is disputed by competent authorities, who assign the poem to 1860. The subject set for 1858 was "The Discovery of the North-West Passage"; but this, it will be noted, was not the theme of Swinburne's poem, which is written, by the way, not in heroic couplets, as required by the Prize-rules, but with an elaborate scheme of rhymes. The punctuation, if Mr. Gosse represents the manuscript correctly, is bad enough to damn the verses even with the least academic of examiners. However that may be, and in spite of its inflation and wordiness, the poem has some moving passages, and a long, rhythmic swing that indicated the direction in which our greatest master of metre achieved success. He pictures the brave companions of the great Arctic explorer winter-bound among the ice lying gigantic to either hand, remembering how in England the "warm land were starred with gracious flowers in the green front of spring," and recalling with moving pathos:—

> Slight words they used to say, slight work to do
> When every day was more than many springs,
> And the strong April moved at heart, and made
> Sweet mock at fortune and the seat of kings .....
> And now they know not if such things be done,
> Nor how the old ways and old places fare,
> Nor whether there be change in the glad sun,
> Defect and loss in all the fragrant air.
> New feet are in the waymarks of their feet,
> The bitter savour of remembered sweet
> No doubt did touch their lips in some sharp guise,
> No doubt the pain of thought and fever-heat
> Put passion in the patience of their eyes.

The tribute to Mazzini is a long, pseudo-Pindaric ode, inchoate, rhetorical, and violent, with not even one of those felicitous passages which come as a surprise to us in Cowley's experiments with the much-abused form. The subject affords free play to the poet's genius for vigorous imprecation. He curses with hearty emphasis all the things he holds most vile—the tyranny and stupidity of kings, the trustless lips and bloody hand of Austria, the guile of Rome and her minions, prepared to sell Italy as Judas sold his Master. The ode was written when Swinburne was twenty, and if it be not poetry, it is at least resounding rhetoric.

As a contrast to these more serious exercises in the poet's art, Mr. Gosse prints an amusing parody of

Tennyson's "Despair." Swinburne calls his poem "Disgust: a Dramatic Monologue." A note prefixed to the verses tells us that "a woman and her husband having been converted from Freethought to Calvinism, and being utterly miserable in consequence, resolve to end themselves by poison. The man dies, but the woman is rescued by application of the stomach-pump." The wife speaks:—

You would like to know, if I please, how it was that our troubles began?
You see, we were brought up Agnostics, I and my poor old man.
And we got some idea of selection and evolution, you know—
Professor Huxley's doing—where does he expect to go!

Well, then came trouble on trouble on trouble, I may say, a peck—
And his cousin was wanted one day on the charge of forging a cheque—
And his puppy died of the mange—my parrot choked on its perch.
This was the consequence, was it, of not going weekly to church?

The manifold disasters which, if we are to believe M. Paul Bourget, ever dog the steps of those who forsake the Gospel for a more rational creed, turn the head of the unfortunate husband, and he sends to the chemist for two packets of strychnine.

Nay—but first we thought it was rational—only fair—
To give both parties a hearing—and went to the meeting-house there,
At the curve of the street that runs from the Stag to the old Blue Lion,
"Little Zion" they call it—a deal more "little" than "Zion."

And the preacher preached from the text, "Come out of her."
Hadn't we come?
And we thought of the shepherd in *Pickwick*—and fancied a flavour of rum
Balmily borne on the wind of his words—and my man said, "Well,
Let's get out of this, my dear—for his text has a brimstone smell."

So we went, O God, out of the chapel—and gazed, ah God, at the sea.
And I said nothing to him. And he said nothing to me.

This is a much better parody than any one of those printed under the title of *Heptalogia: Specimens of Seven Poets*, but it is a long way from perfection. Swinburne had too strongly marked an individuality to shine as a parodist, for whose art is needed much mental adaptability. He could not have written anything to equal Mr. J. C. Squire's "Merciful Widow."

The shorter poems include tributes to Shelley, Landor, Leconte de Lisle, and Karl Blind, some stupid abuse of Parnell, a few pleasant lyrical efforts, and a version of the *Dies Irae*. One of the poems, "To a Leeds Poet," is included by mistake, as the two stanzas are a part of a set of verses to the memory of J. W. Inchbold that appeared in the third series of *Poems and Ballads* (Collected Works, vol. iii., p. 252).

Geo. Underwood.

## National Secular Society.

### Interim Conference.

At the last Annual Conference a resolution was passed approving the holding of an Interim Conference for the purpose of discussing such matters as do not affect the constitution of the Society. War conditions prevent this Conference being held in any other place than London, and also limits the choice of halls. The Executive has, however, secured the use of Chandos Hall for Sunday, October 28, and two meetings will be held on that date. The afternoon meeting will commence at 2.30, and will be for Members of the N. S. S. and Branch Delegates only. The order of business will be (*a*) the discussion of such special resolutions as have been sent to the Executive; and (*b*) a general discussion of the position of the N. S. S. in relation to social, ethical, and political questions. The evening meeting, commencing at 6.30, will be open to the public. The proceedings will take the form of a general discussion on "The Present Position of Freethought." The Churches are all busy discussing their future as affected by the War, and it is well that Freethinkers should also be getting ready for the strenuous times before them. The discussion is to be a *general* one, and by that is meant that it will not be confined to set platform speeches. The President of the N. S. S. will take the chair at both gatherings.

Chapman Cohen, *President, N. S. S.*

## The Fugitive.

It had been a field day—each Freethinker will recall many of his own experience; great moments, red letter days, purple passages in his life. We had gone—the little leaven of idealists in our litte north-western town—to hear a famous miners' leader, a man of the people, above all, a man of trusted renown, combining in his person those three great qualities so rarely found in one man—courage, honesty, and intelligence; and which presuppose the minor virtues—tact, sagacity, judgment, eloquence, etc. He sounded the sanest human and the wisest political note on the War. At least, the large audience thought so, and cheered and cheered and cheered. "Honours" were nothing to him. He could meet kings, dukes, diplomatists, ministers, face to face, as man to man—*provided*, he said, *always provided, I have "my own people" behind me.* One of us, at the close, stepped on the platform and shook hands with the speaker, assured him there was one other promising movement on foot, and handed him a copy of the *Freethinker*. This War, said the speaker, patting the title with his hand, this War has gone a long way to kill the old faith. We all came home jubilant and hopeful. Such is the magic of the human voice and the common aspiration.

One of us that night talked with a friend till very late on certain superficial aspects of sociology, with only occasional revelations of the deeps and the fundamentals. Small talk is very boring just after being enthused by the significant things. I, for it was the writer, escaped at last into the quiet of my own home, and found within those walls what the hunted hare in its form may find—the great peace of the wilderness—the sheltering rushes swaying in the wind, sighing overhead—divinest lullaby! The fugitive was free, and at ease for an hour; what blessed ease, what rich reflection; this is the reward of the battle of life. I turned out the lights. In the dim glow of the fire the solid chairs were fantastic, shadowy things. Shadows were all around, and seemed to descend like slumber on the soul. Within that flickering firelight and those quiet, dim, answering walls was peace, perfect peace, and home sweet home with its household gods, familiar things, and nearest, dearest loves, and the soft yet strident, far yet near, menacing yet soothing monotone of the "homeless sea" kept sounding evermore!

And the War, as I sat there, in that precious fugitive hour seemed far away, impossible, grotesque, absurd. Surely the soul of man is fugitive from such slaughter; surely the trend is toward a better world. If not, then you and I and all of us are fugitive indeed.

Menander.

## Correspondence.

### SOCIALISM AND FREETHOUGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Sir,—A correspondent said in a recent issue that if we had Socialism we should all be sure of food. Yes, if the birth-rate were sufficiently restricted. For example, it is inconceivable that in a country with a birth-rate of 44 per thousand per annum, like Russia, the food supply could be increased rapidly enough to provide an adequate allowance for all. With food enough for all, Russia's death-rate would be less than 10 per thousand; so the survival-rate would be over 34 per thousand. Yet the highest steady survival-rate in the world is only 17 per thousand; and this occurs in New Zealand which, being a new and rich country, is exceptionally favourable for rapid increase of population. Surely, there-

fore, no country could, under any social system, maintain a survival-rate of twice 17. Russia is bound to have terrible poverty and trouble until her birth-rate is greatly reduced.

Freethinkers, whether Socialists or Individualists, should all be Malthusians (indeed, what are evolutionists but Malthusians?), and should realize that every fall of the birth-rate is a nail in the coffin of religion, poverty, and war. I entreat them to realize that there could be no poverty and war if wage-earners ceased to have more than two children per family.

B. Dunlop, M.B.

## "GOD AND THE WAR."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Sir,—I enjoyed reading last week's *Freethinker*. Among other things, I was interested in Mr. Lloyd's article on "God and the War." There is, however, a point on which I would like to ask him a question or two. He says in one place:—

> War is only a phase of the natural struggle for existence..... at the root of it are ambition, jealousy, greed, lust of power, all quite human qualities.....We are often told that the present War is to end war for all time, but there is absolutely nothing to suggest that so happy a result is the least likely to be realized.

Then, at the end of the article, he says:—

> It is our firm conviction that, had Buddhism won Europe instead of Christianity, war would have ceased long ago, and the essential brotherhood of the race would have been established on a rational and permanent foundation.

The two statements appear to be rather contradictory, and I would like Mr. Lloyd to explain:—

(1) Does he think that any religion—Buddhism, Christianity, or other—will ever abolish the natural struggle for existence, of which he admits war is a phase?

(2) Does he mean that, while Buddhism is pacific in its teaching, Christianity encourages militarism?

(3) If so, will he kindly point out where, in his teaching, the Founder of Christianity countenances or sanctions international war?

A. Russell.

## National Secular Society.

Report of Monthly Executive Meeting Postponed from September 27 on Account of Air-Raids.

President: C. Cohen in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Braddock, Brandes, Eagar, Lazarnick, Leat, Neary, Palmer, Samuels, Spence, Thurlow, Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, and the Secretary.

A large number of new members were received for Battersea, Birmingham, Goldthorpe, Manchester, Newcastle, North London, South London, Sheffield, and Swansea.

Permission was also given for the formation of a new Branch at Goldthorpe, near Rotherham.

The report of the Joint Committee of Protest was received, from which it was gathered that the hearing of the Mandamus calling upon the Council to show cause for their action in prohibiting sales of literature in the Parks, would be before the High Court in a few days. As this action would incur heavy legal expenses, Mr. Cohen promised his assistance, if necessary, as Editor of the *Freethinker*, in making the Committee's appeal for funds widely known.

The death of Mr. Samuel Morley Peacock, a highly esteemed Vice-President of the National Secular Society, was reported, and the Secretary was instructed to send a message of sympathy to his widow.

Arrangements for the Interim Conference were discussed. It was reported that the greatest difficulty had been experienced in obtaining halls, and it was arranged to hold it at Chandos Hall on October 28, commencing at 2.30.

Notices of motion from Branches for the Agenda were considered and accepted, and it was resolved that at the conclusion of the formal business of the Conference a discussion be opened on the relation of Freethought to general subjects now and after the War.

Various items of official business were transacted, and the calling of the next meeting was left to the President and Secretary.

E. M. Vance, *General Secretary*.

## 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. 26, at 7.30.

North London Branch N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Will Esperanto Become a Universal Language?" Affirmative, Chas. H. Edmonds. Open debate.

South London Branch N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Tube Station): 7, "Freethought Symposium." Speakers: Messrs. Roger, Howell Smith, B.A., Holland, Wilde, and Miss G. Brandes.

Outdoor.

Hyde Park: 11.30, Messrs. Shaller and Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Kells, Ratcliffe, and Dales.

### COUNTRY.

Indoor.

Birmingham Branch N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, E. Clifford Williams, "Secularism the True Philosophy of Life."

New Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Challenge of Unbelief"; 6.30, "Why Men Believe in God." With special reference to H. G. Wells.

## 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.*

### London.

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.

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